

*MINNESOTA WRITING PROJECT
DEMONSTRATION LESSON TEMPLATE*

Title: The Art of Imitation: Writing an Aristotelian Tragedy

Grade appropriate: High School or College

Approximate length of time to complete lesson: At least a week (five hours)

Objective (s) to be covered: Students will define tragedy as a generic category, identify and analyze Aristotelian elements in Greek/Roman tragedies, apply their understanding of the genre by composing their own tragedy, and evaluate Aristotle's definition of tragedy within a modern context.

Specific standards addressed: Comprehension: The student will understand the meaning of informational, expository or persuasive texts, using a variety of strategies and will demonstrate literal, interpretive, inferential and evaluative comprehension. Literature: The student will actively engage in the reading process and read, understand, respond to, analyze, interpret, evaluate and appreciate a wide variety of fiction, poetic and nonfiction texts. Elements of Composition: The student will engage in a writing process with attention to audience, organization, focus, quality of ideas, and a purpose.

Brief summary/outline: This unit begins with a discussion/prewriting of students' understanding of the term "tragedy," particularly within a 9/11 context. Then students read selections of Aristotle's *Poetics* – since this is a difficult text, students need a lot of time and guidance to work their way through it in order to identify the definition of tragedy that Aristotle presents. To fully understand his definition, students read one or more Greek or Roman tragedies; since Sophocles' *Oedipus* fits the definition best, students read the play and/or watch a stage production, and analyze the text using a "Final Word Protocol," which encourages structured close reading and participation by all students. After identifying the elements of the definition in a tragedy, students write their own tragedies using the plots of current news articles, movies, or other well-known stories. Students share their tragedies with their classmates and then read Arthur Miller's "Tragedy and the Common Man," an essay which critiques Aristotle's notion of a tragic hero. Students then evaluate, either through writing or discussion, the relevance of Aristotle's definition within a post-9/11 world.

Resources: Aristotle, *Poetics* (London: Penguin Books, 1996); Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man," *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller* (New York: De Capo Press, 1996); "Final Word Protocol"
(www.turningpts.org/pdf/FinalWordProtocol.pdf)

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