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greek tragedy ancient greek τραγωδία romanized tragōidía is one of the three principal theatrical genres from ancient greece and greek inhabited anatolia along with comedy and the satyr play greek tragedy was a popular and influential form of drama performed in theatres across ancient greece from the late 6th century bce the most famous playwrights of the genre were aeschylus sophocles and euripides and many of their works were still performed centuries after their initial premiere i challenge myself here to write up seven elementary plot outlines i call them overviews for seven greek tragedies 1 agamemnon and 2 libation bearers and 3 eumenides by aeschylus 4 oedipus at colonus and 5 oedipus tyrannus by sophocles 6 hippolytus and 7 bacchae or bacchic women by euripides greek tragedy euripides holding the mask of tragedy sculpture c 480 406 bce greek tragedy was not itself intended as an immediate contribution to political debate though in its exploration of issues sometimes by means of rapid question and answer dialogue its debt to rhetoric is obvious this is particularly true of some plays by sophocles euripides and aeschylus the most influential greek tragedians wrote during the 5th century bce their works continue to captivate and move audiences today offering a timeless examination of the human experience and the universal struggles we all face 1 prometheus bound by aeschylus as greek tragedy developed from hymns of praise to local gods to the complex works of aeschylus sophocles and euripides the theater adapted accordingly all the while the theater remained an essentially simple building and affected the way the tragic poets developed their works even the etymology of the word tragedy is far from established the most generally accepted source is the greek tragōidia or goat song from tragos goat and aeidein to sing in the thought of plato c 427 347 bce the history of the criticism of tragedy began with speculation on the role of censorship to plato in the dialogue on the laws the state was the noblest work of art a representation mimēsis of the fairest and best life greek tragedy and comedy were parts of important civic and religious celebrations in ancient greece the very term greek tragedy carries an immense weight of cultural and critical baggage even though the cultural prestige of the genre is often the inspiration for us to read produce or see these plays this very prestige interferes with our ability to appreciate them the great age of tragedy was short it began with thespis but the first surviving tragedy is aeschylus persians performed in 472 b c e it ends with the deaths of sophocles and euripides just before the athenian defeat in the peloponnesian war what is greek tragedy how are we to understand and study it today laura swift s greek tragedy themes and contexts offers a clear and brief answer to undergraduate and advanced school pupils who are seeking a more thorough grounding in the topic ancient greek tragedy 101 series intends to deepen the reader s knowledge of the greek tragedies rooted in sixth century b c the fundamental purpose of this series is to present a detailed informative background and understanding of the elements of greek tragedy as well as its prominent tragedians greek tragedies were structured as follows prologue the presentation of the tragedy s topic delivered through a monologue or dialogue parode parados an explanation of what has happened in greek tragedy hubris leads to conflict if not punishment or death although when orestes with hubris took it upon himself to revenge his father by killing his mother athena exonerated him hubris or fatal pride was the downfall of many greek heroes in ancient myth in classical mythology hubris was considered a very dangerous shortcoming it was an act of arrogance usually where the hero attempted to assume godlike status aristophanic comedies have a more elaborate structure than the typical tragedy the chorus is also larger 24 as opposed to 12 15 prologue as in tragedies parode entrance ode as in tragedies but the chorus takes up a position either for or against the hero i examine the six most pressing questions any company faces with the task of staging a greek tragedy the theatre space the chorus the actor s role the relationship between tragedy and politics the translation and the representation of the gods and heroes φόβος and ἔλεος pity and fear are famously or notoriously associated with tragedy in aristotle s poetics as the proper pleasure of tragedy they are importantly connected to ancient understandings of the genre and of the emotional response to works of art yet their precise meaning their linkage to one another and the typical structure of an ancient greek tragedy is a series of alternating dialogue and choral lyric sections there are exceptions and technical divisions naturally do not explain intellectual and emotional soft power aspects of a great greek tragedy

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