

Essay Assignment 3: Writing about Drama ([Back](#))

Due Dates

Wednesday, October 17: Draft of at least 600 words due for peer critique.

Attach your word-processing file to a message under "Drafts for Peer Critique" in the Unit 3 conference of [WebBoard](#).

Friday, October 26: Revised Draft of at least 1000 words due.

Attach your word-processing file to a message under "Revised Drafts" in the Unit 3 conference of [WebBoard](#).

Read this page carefully. Essay Assignment 3 is different from the other essays you have written for the course so far. Like Essays 1 and 2, Essay 3 is an analytical and persuasive essay on a work of literature, but, in Essay 3, you will be using, citing, and documenting material from secondary sources as part of your analysis of Sophocles' [Antigone](#). We will be using the MLA style of documentation. Also, the minimum required length for Essay 3 is longer than the minimum length for the first two essay assignments.

Essay Assignment 3

Essay Assignment 3 is an essay of at least 1000 words that analyzes and explains some aspect of Sophocles' [Antigone](#) (605-640). For example, you might focus on a character or characters or on a prominent theme in the play. Whatever topic you choose, your paper should help your audience understand the play. You can assume that your audience has read [Antigone](#), so do not simply summarize the play. Instead, give your audience an interpretation of [Antigone](#), some insightful explanation of the play that will help your audience understand its meaning and significance.

To help you develop and support your interpretation, you need to use material from at least two credible and scholarly online secondary sources. Your primary source (the play) and your secondary sources (works that comment on the play) must be cited and documented according to MLA standards, and you must include with your paper an additional "Works Cited" page. (Failure to cite and document sources properly may result in plagiarism!) A minimum of two secondary sources (not including the play itself, your primary source) is required for this paper, but using more secondary sources may help you strengthen your paper.

Using Credible and Scholarly Secondary Sources

The secondary sources should comment specifically on the aspect or aspects of the play that you analyze in your essay. The sources need to be analytical, scholarly, and credible. Please note that the great majority of online sources you will find on [Antigone](#) are not good sources for your paper. Do not use general study guides, student essays on the play, or other sources that do not offer well-developed and well-supported analyses of the play. Below are examples of the kinds of source you should use. You can use these sources if they relate to your approach to the play, but I encourage you also to try to find your own credible online sources:

Scholarly Sources on Sophocles' Antigone

(The web sites linked below are the kinds of scholarly sources appropriate for a college-level research paper.)

- D. W. Myatt's [Antigone: A New Translation](#) (The short introduction provides some insightful ideas.)
- Paul Epstein's [The Recovery of a Comprehensive View of Greek Tragedy](#)
- Brian Arkins' ["Sexuality in Fifth-Century Athens"](#) (Although this essay focuses on sexuality, it provides good insights into the role of women in Athens at about the time when Sophocles was writing.)
- Stephanie E. Chamberlain's ["It's best to keep the established laws': Antigone's Act of Cultural Conformity"](#)
- The Connection's [Radio Program on Sophocles' Antigone](#) (This is an audio file of a radio call-in show on [Antigone](#). The guests are well-respected scholars. Click "Listen Now" near the top of the page to access the Real Player file.)

Of course, there are many more online resources for Sophocles' [Antigone](#), some good, most not. See [Search the Web](#) for more information, and remember to assess web sites carefully for credibility.

Online Subscription Databases

You can use your favorite search engine to try to locate sources on [Antigone](#), but good sources that are scholarly and analytical enough to be used in a college-level paper are not easy to find.

ProQuest Direct and FirstSearch are subscription databases that provide access to scholarly journals and magazines that are not otherwise available on the Internet. The databases require access codes and passwords, which I will give you. Most of the sources in these databases are credible. See [Using ProQuest and FirstSearch](#) for brief instructions for using these databases.

- [ProQuest Direct](#)
- [FirstSearch Database](#)
- [IVCC's Jacobs Library](#)

Please use only online sources in your essay. This is because I will check how well you use material from secondary sources in your essay, so I need to have easy access to those sources. Print sources (books and journals) still tend to be better sources for critical comments on [Antigone](#), but some excellent resources on the play are available on the Internet and World Wide Web, and online databases such as ProQuest and First Search provide access to articles that originally appeared in print sources. Part of the grade for Essay 3 will depend on the quality of secondary sources you use for your paper. Look for in-depth and scholarly essays from credible sources. Most of the sources on [Antigone](#) available on the Internet do not meet this criteria, but some do.

The web sites linked near the bottom of this page and on the [Unit 3](#) web page explain how to use, cite, and document material from secondary sources. However, please ask questions in WebBoard about anything that is unclear to you. Citing and documenting online sources correctly is often challenging for students, and guessing almost guarantees that you will get something wrong. All that you need to do is ask, and I will respond promptly!

Using Secondary Sources and Citing and Documenting Sources

In many ways Essay 3 is just like the other essay you have written, but the major difference is the required use of material from secondary sources and the correct citation and documentation of those sources. Make sure to read carefully the information in the textbook and the linked web handouts linked below concerning the use, citation, and documentation of material from sources.

- [Plagiarism](#)
- [Citing Sources](#)
- [Citing and Documenting Online Sources](#)
- [Documenting Sources from Online Subscription Databases](#) (for ProQuest and FirstSearch)
- [Using Secondary Sources Effectively](#)
- [MLA Documentation and the Works Cited Page](#)
- [Paragraph on Antigone with MLA Citations and Documentation](#)
- [Assessing the Credibility of Web Sites](#)

Plagiarism

The possibility of plagiarism increases when material from several different sources enters an essay. Remember this general rule: you should always distinguish clearly your ideas and words from ideas and words of other writers. If that distinction becomes blurred, the essay most likely contains plagiarism. For most information about plagiarism, see selected links on the [Unit 3](#) web page.

Other Important Web Pages

The information below is copied and pasted from the earlier essay assignments. All of the linked web pages below are important and should help you with your essay assignments.

- [Requirements for All Papers](#)
- [The Proper Format for Essays](#)
- [Getting Started on Papers](#)
- [Integrating and Using Quotations Properly](#)
- [Organizing and Developing a Persuasive Essay](#)
- [Organizing and Developing Persuasive Paragraphs](#)
- [Evaluation and Grading Criteria for Papers](#)
- [Revision Checklist](#)

Read the Introductory Material for Antigone (603-604)

Make sure to read and understand the brief introductory and background material for

Antigone on pages 603-604 of the textbook. The background for Antigone would have been familiar to a Greek audience, and, to understand what is happening in the play, especially at the beginning, you need to be familiar with some of that background information. The mythological background is summarized well in the textbook.

Greek Drama

Sophocles' Antigone is not a difficult play. Even though the play was originally written in Greek over 2400 years ago, we have a modern English translation, and the main story line is fairly clear and easy to understand. The only aspect of the play that will probably be somewhat confusing is the Chorus.

Greek drama has its beginnings in religious performances in which a group would chant hymns. Eventually, one of the performers stood apart from the rest of the Chorus, making dialogue possible between the performer and the Chorus, and playwrights soon began writing parts for other performers as well. This evolution of Greek drama was occurring just before and at the time when Sophocles was writing. In fact, one of Sophocles' innovations was increasing the number of actors on the stage from two to three. Antigone takes us way back to the very early days of drama!

Even with the addition of more actors, the Chorus remained. The Chorus often provides the audience with background information, which can be somewhat confusing to modern readers. Most importantly, though, the Chorus usually serves as a group of "ideal" spectators and commentators on the action of a play. You might imagine the Chorus as a group of wise citizens, people who know what they are talking about. The comments of the Chorus therefore provide us with a good way to measure how a classical Greek audience might respond to what happens in a play. For example, if the Chorus expresses shock and disapproval at the actions of a character, you can bet that this is a reflection of how Sophocles' contemporaries would have reacted when watching the play. However, it is worth noting that the Chorus can be influenced by the action of a play and by other characters; consequently, the Chorus might not always react to events appropriately. In Antigone, for instance, Creon's authoritative rule seems to intimidate the Chorus at times, perhaps causing the Chorus to accept some of Creon's decisions too complacently. Nonetheless, the Chorus generally serves as a good guide to help readers understand how we ought to react to characters and events.

One member of the Chorus, the "Leader" in our translation, stands apart from the other Chorus members and often interacts with the characters on stage, whereas the Chorus as a whole usually chants its lines between events of the play.

You Are There!

The production of plays was a big event in Athens. As you read the play, try to imagine yourself as a member of the classical Greek audience first viewing the play. The year is 442 B.C., and you are seated in the Theater of Dionysus at Athens, along with about 17,000 other Athenians, enjoying the festivities of the "Great Dionysia," an annual celebration highlighted by the presentation of plays by some of the best Greek playwrights alive. The playwrights are in competition for prizes, and, while you know

that Sophocles has a great reputation, you do not yet know that he will go on to win first place at the Great Dionysia an amazing 18 times.

It's a special day: you are wearing your best toga; everyone you know is at the theater; the government and wealthy citizens have generously funded the festivities; and prisoners are even released from Athenian jails to join the celebration.

You will already know the plots and mythological backgrounds of the plays you will watch. Your interest will be in how well the playwrights tell the stories you are already familiar with: how they unfold the plot, how they establish and resolve conflict, and how they portray the characters. The plays are presented as a sort of a blend of drama, religious ceremony, and opera.

Notice the Universal Relevance

Even though Antigone is over 2400 years old, from a different time and culture than our own, the issues that arise from the play are just as relevant today as they were when the play was first produced. As you read the play, look for issues or themes that rise above the immediate story and are relevant to all of our lives.

In WebBoard, you will find a conference area titled "Questions." Please send any questions that you have about this essay assignment, and I will be happy to respond.