THE CAMBRIDGE GREEK PLAY 2016

EDUCATION PACK

BY SOPHOCLES

ANTIGONE

LYSISTRATA

BY ARISTOPHANES

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

THE CAMBRIDGE GREEK PLAY 2016

ANTIGONE
LYSISTRATA

12-15 OCTOBER 2016, 2:30 AND 7:45PM

DIRECTOR	Helen Eastman	COMPOSER	Alex Silverman
DESIGNER	Neil Irish	LIGHTING	Neill Brinkworth

Box Office: 01223 503333 cambridgeartstheatre.com

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Free talks are offered at 1:30PM each day;
booking essential via the Box Office

Text by Poppy Lindsley, Rosanna Omitowoju, Hollie Witton, Alan Bowman, Helen Eastman
Design and typesetting by Jacob Baldwin and Hannah Grace Taylor

The Cambridge Greek Play website **cambridgegreekplay.com** makes archival material on every play since 1882 freely available, including:

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- educational packs for **Medea** (2007), **Agamemnon** (2010) and the **Prometheus/Frogs** double bill (2013)
- behind the scenes videos and interviews (2010 and 2013)
- recordings of the pre-show school talks in 2013
- video and audio recordings of **Prometheus** and **Frogs** (2013)

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THE PRODUCTION

ANTIGONE SYNOPSIS

Thebes has been devastated by civil war, wherein Oedipus' two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, fight for the throne to their deaths. Their sister, Antigone, is left to bury them and to honour their memory. However, Antigone's uncle, Creon, now King of Thebes, has forbidden proper funeral rites for Polynices, accusing him of being a traitor. On the outskirts of the city, under cover of night, Antigone consults with her sister, Ismene, on how to bury Polynices. Unlike Antigone, Ismene refuses to risk breaking the laws of Creon.

The Chorus of Theban citizens enter, singing a narrative of the civil war between the two brothers. The Chorus presents Polynices negatively, condemning him for his monstrous betrayal of his city, and contrasting his actions with those of Creon.

Creon enters, damning Polynices and all those who hope to bury him and disobey state law. Hesitantly, the Sentry enters to announce that someone has attempted to bury the body. A furious Creon demands the name of the culprit from the Sentry, who leaves to investigate.

A papyrus fragment of Sophocles' Antigone, showing lines 242-246. Found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt 1897-1906, this papyrus is around 2000 years old.
Case Western Reserve University

The Chorus sing of man's achievements over the natural and divine world, and contrast the laws of man with those of the gods.

Driven by family and religious obligations, Antigone disobeys Creon's orders and Ismene's advice, and buries Polynices. The Sentry reveals this betrayal to Creon and flees the city, fearing Creon's reaction. Creon confronts the sisters Antigone and Ismene about the burial. Creon and Antigone, both strong personalities, forcefully argue their point. Creon sentences Antigone to death.

The Chorus sing of the terrifying power of the gods: no mortal can hope to match their authority.

When Haemon, Creon's son, hears the news of Antigone's sentence, he hopes to persuade his father to change his mind. Blinded by power and stubbornness, Creon refuses to listen. Haemon's anger rises as he argues with his father about the values of leadership and family. Creon remains firm in his judgement and Haemon leaves, swearing never to forgive his father.

The Chorus sing of the power of love and its destructive force. The Chorus tells the audience that love drives all actions, as Antigone is led to her tomb where she will be left to die. She contemplates her death, questioning which laws she has broken. The Chorus suggest she has brought on her own fate.

Fearing that he may be in the wrong, Creon consults the prophet Tiresias, who warns that killing Antigone would bring about Creon's destruction. Creon, worried by Tiresias' prediction, asks the Chorus what he should do and decides to reverse his punishment of Antigone.

The Chorus sing a hymn to the god Dionysus associated with the city of Thebes, realising that not even the gods could stop the inevitable tragic end.

A Messenger arrives and tells Eurydice, Creon's wife, what has happened in Antigone's tomb: Creon, intending to reverse his punishment, had found Antigone dead and Haemon crying over the body. Overcome with grief, Haemon had tried to attack Creon, his father, before turning his sword on himself and taking his own life. Eurydice, shocked at her son's death, returns home.

Creon enters, bringing the body of his son for burial and, together with the Chorus, laments his loss. His suffering has not yet ended, however: the Messenger returns with news of Eurydice's suicide. Alone and devastated, Creon is left to consider his actions and his fate at the hands of the gods.

A bust of Sophocles, the author of Antigone. He lived from about 497/6-406/5 BCE. One of the most celebrated playwrights in Athens, he is one of just three Ancient Greek tragedians whose plays survive today.
Pushkin Museum, Moscow

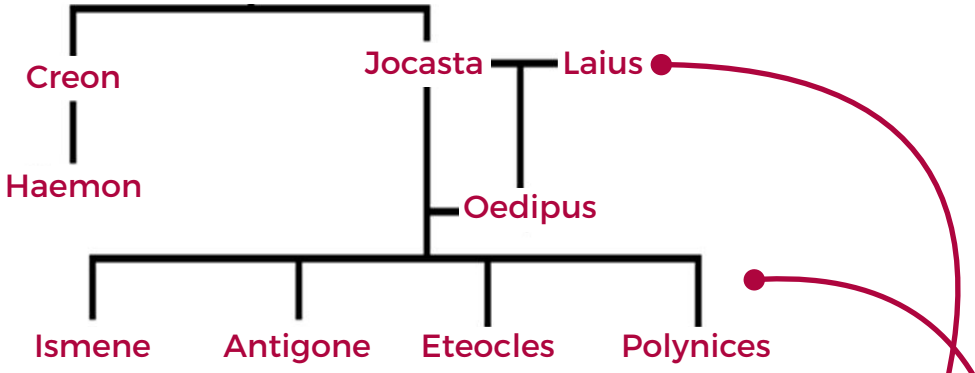
ACTIVITY ONE

After reading this synopsis, can you pick out some themes that run throughout the play?

For example: the gods.

THE MYTH OF OEDIPUS

To gain a greater understanding of Antigone, it is important to be familiar with its context in the myth of Oedipus.



Oedipus is the son of **Jocasta** and **Laius**, the King and Queen of **Thebes**. When Oedipus is born, a prophet predicts that the baby was fated to kill his father and marry his mother. In order to prevent this, Laius orders his son to be killed. However, Oedipus is shown mercy by the executioner and is taken to **Corinth** where he grows up with adoptive parents.

In time, Oedipus consults the **Delphic Oracle** and is shocked to discover his fate: that he would murder his father and marry his mother. Determined that the prophecy is not fulfilled, Oedipus flees Corinth and his adoptive parents for Thebes - unwittingly sealing his fate.

Some years later, **Oedipus**, now King of Thebes, has four children by **Jocasta**. A plague descends on Thebes, and the revelation of Oedipus' true origin is finally exposed. This results in Jocasta's suicide, the exile of Oedipus with **Antigone** and, eventually, his death. After the death of their parents, **Polynices** and **Eteocles** fight each other for the throne. Polynices, seeking help from other Greek forces, leads an army against Thebes, where he fights his brother, resulting in both their deaths. Here the play begins, with **Antigone** and **Ismene** the sole descendants of Oedipus.

ACTIVITY TWO

Do you think Oedipus is to blame for his family's tragic fate? In groups, make a case for both sides and discuss the role of fate in Greek tragedy.

CHARACTER PROFILES

Antigone

Wall Info Photos +

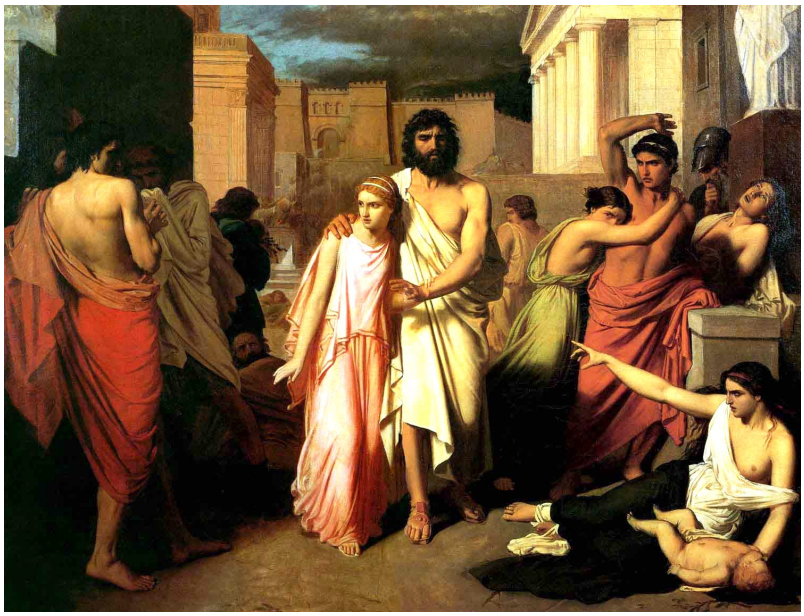
Update Status Write Note Add Photos Video

1. Daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta and sister to Ismene, Polynices and Eteocles.
2. Has a strong relationship with her family and is willing to die to protect their memory.
3. After discovering her brothers' deaths, goes against the decree of her uncle and buries Polynices.
4. Is self-assured, strong-willed in her actions, and stubborn when facing opposition, which ensures her tragic fate when she disobeys her uncle's orders.

ACTIVITY THREE

After reading this character analysis, create similar analyses for the following characters:

Creon Ismene The Sentry Haemon Tiresias



A painting showing the plague of Thebes, during which the truth about Oedipus' family relations is revealed.
Charles François Jalabert

THE CONFRONTATION

ANTIGONE

Of course I did. It wasn't Zeus, not in the least, who made this proclamation - not to me. Nor did that Justice, dwelling with the gods beneath the earth, ordain such laws for men. Nor did I think your edict had such force that you, a mere mortal, could override the gods, the great unwritten, unshakable traditions. They are alive, not just today or yesterday: they live forever, from the first time, and no one knows when they first saw the light.

These laws - I was not about to break them, not out of fear of some man's wounded pride, and face the retribution of the gods. Die I must, I've known it all my life - how could I keep from knowing? - even without your death-sentence ringing in my ears. And if I am to die before my time I consider that a gain. Who on earth, alive in the midst of so much grief as I, could fail to find his death a rich reward? So for me, at least, to meet this doom of yours is precious little pain. But if I had allowed my own mother's son to rot, an unburied corpse-that would have been an agony! This is nothing. And if my present actions strike you as foolish, let's just say I've been accused of folly by a fool.

LEADER Like father like daughter, passionate, wild... she hasn't learned to bend before adversity.

CREON No? Believe me, the stiffest stubborn wills fall the hardest; the toughest iron, tempered strong in the white-hot fire, you'll see it crack and shatter first of all. And I've known spirited horses you can break with a light bit - proud, rebellious horses. There's no room for pride, not in a slave, not with the lord and master standing by.

This girl was an old hand at insolence when she overrode the edicts we made public. But once she had done it - the insolence, twice over - to glory in it, laughing, mocking us to our face with what she'd done. I am not the man, not now: she is the man if this victory goes to her and she goes free.

ACTIVITY FOUR

On these two pages, we have printed an extract from Antigone (lines 499-542, translated R. Fagles).

1. **Make a list of both Antigone's and Creon's arguments for their actions.**
2. **Who do you think has the better argument?**
3. **Do you think Antigone's and Creon's arguments would be justifiable in a court of law in 2016?**

TRANSLATING TRAGEDY

Sophocles' Antigone was written in approximately 441 BCE and, since then, there have been many translations and adaptations of the text. Our understanding of the text has, therefore, changed with time.

ACTIVITY FIVE

Read the translations of the last verse of the play.

1. **Find any synonyms.**
2. **Which is your favourite translation?**
3. **What are the greatest differences and similarities in the translations?**

TIMBERLAEK WERTENBAKER (2013)

This is certain: only good judgement
secures good fortune. One must never
be irreverent to the gods.
Those who puffed themselves up with
great words have been dealt great blows.
In old age, they have learnt judgement.

DIANE J. RAYOR (2011)

By far, good sense is the first principle
Of happiness. One must not disrespect
What belongs to the gods.
Great blows punish
Great boasting by arrogant men,
And teach good sense in old age.

Don Taylor (2012)

The key to human happiness
Is to nurture wisdom in your heart,
For man to attend to man's business
And let the gods play their part:
Above all, to stand in awe
Of the eternal, unalterable law.
The proud man may pretend
In his arrogance to despise
Everything but himself. In the end
The gods will bring him to grief.

David Constantine (2013)

But we
Even now all follow him still and the way
Is down. Our biddable hand
Never to strike again
Will be hacked off. But she who saw everything
Could help nobody but the enemy who now
Is coming and quickly will wipe us out. For time is short
And disaster all around and never enough of time
To live on thoughtlessly and easily
From compliance to crime and
Become wise in old age.

R. C. Jebb (1888)

Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness; and reverence towards the gods must be inviolate. Great words of prideful men are ever punished with great blows, and, in old age, teach the chastened to be wise.

IN PICTURES

ACTIVITY SIX

Study the pictures below and identify which part of the play they depict. The synopsis on page 4 will help!

You could consider the following:

- The placing and position of the characters.
- The way body language portrays relationships.
- The use of light and perspective.

Do the characters look the way you imagined them?

A painting of a famous scene from Antigone by Nikiforos Lytras. (1865)
National Gallery of Greece, Alexandros Soutzos Museum

Athenian red-figure vase painting by the Dolon Painter. (380-370 BCE)

A photograph from the last time the Cambridge Greek Play staged Antigone, in February 1959. Directed by Alan Ker, the set was based on Minoan civilisation.
Cambridge Greek Play Committee

A painting of the sisters Antigone and Ismene by Emil Teschendorff.
(19th Century AD)

A recent adaptation of Antigone at London's Barbican.
(2015)

An adaptation of Antigone at the National Theatre.
(2012)

LYSISTRATA SYNOPSIS

The Peloponnesian War is raging between Athens and Sparta, each with its own allied city states. Lysistrata has called a meeting with women from across Greece. As the play opens, she is waiting for them at the Athenian Acropolis; she complains to Calonice about the weakness of women. When the women arrive, Lysistrata calls the meeting to order and persuades the women to stop having sex with their husbands until a peace treaty is signed to stop the war. The women reluctantly agree. They sacrifice a bottle of wine in celebration of their oath and retreat to the Acropolis.

The Chorus of old men arrive with logs, ready to prepare a fire at the gates of the Acropolis, complaining about the actions of the women. They begin to light their fires to force the women out when the Chorus of women enter, spotting the smoke from the fires and carrying jugs of water. Led by Stratyllis, the Chorus of women collide with the male Chorus. Stratyllis argues with the men, who threaten to set the women on fire. The argument ends with Stratyllis ordering the women to throw water on the men.

A black-figure depiction of the Peloponnesian War. Fought between 431-404 BCE, it resulted in a massive reshaping of the ancient Greek world.

The Magistrate enters with policemen to find the men soaking wet. The male Chorus accuses the women in the Acropolis of unlawful behaviour and the Magistrate orders that the doors of the Acropolis be forced open. When Lysistrata, Calonice, and Myrrhine come out, the Magistrate tries to arrest Lysistrata and retake the Acropolis, but Lysistrata commands the women to beat the men back. The men are held back, and the women retreat to the Acropolis. Lysistrata explains to the Magistrate why they have taken over the treasury: the women resent being ignored during the men's wars as they feel equally affected by its outcome. Lysistrata demands that, from now on, the women be put in charge of ending the war.

The Magistrate refuses to believe anything Lysistrata says, but is overcome by the women and dressed in their clothing, as the female chorus dance around and make fun of him.

With their fun finished, the women send the Magistrate back to the men. The male Chorus meet him and insult the women, refusing to accept that women are in charge of their city.

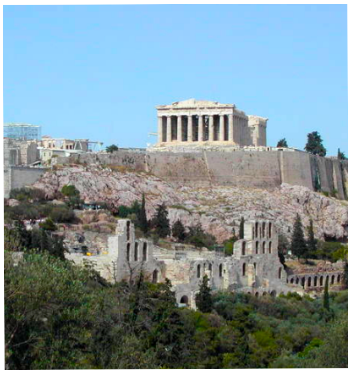
The female Chorus replies and sings about responsibilities in the state and duties, both religious and familial. The women start to throw objects at the men and the male Chorus try to fight back, attacking Stratyllis. However, the women charge out from the Acropolis and drive the men away.

Some days later, Lysistrata expresses concern that many women are trying to leave the Acropolis to see their husbands, thus breaking the sex strike. The male Chorus try to trick the women into leaving the Acropolis, but the female Chorus remain firm and beat the men away.

Myrrhine's husband, Cinesias, comes to the Acropolis with their child and begs to see his wife. Lysistrata allows Myrrhine to go down into the city, reminding her of her oath. Myrrhine soothes her crying baby and pretends to listen to her husband's pleas for her return and favours. Although appearing to be ready to make love to her husband, she forces him to promise to make peace before leaving him in bed and disappearing back up to the Acropolis. The male chorus feel Cinesias' frustration while the female Chorus praise Myrrhine's efforts.

A Spartan herald comes to Athens to discuss the situation of all women in Greece. Both the Magistrate and the Herald agree to a treaty to save the men of Greece, while

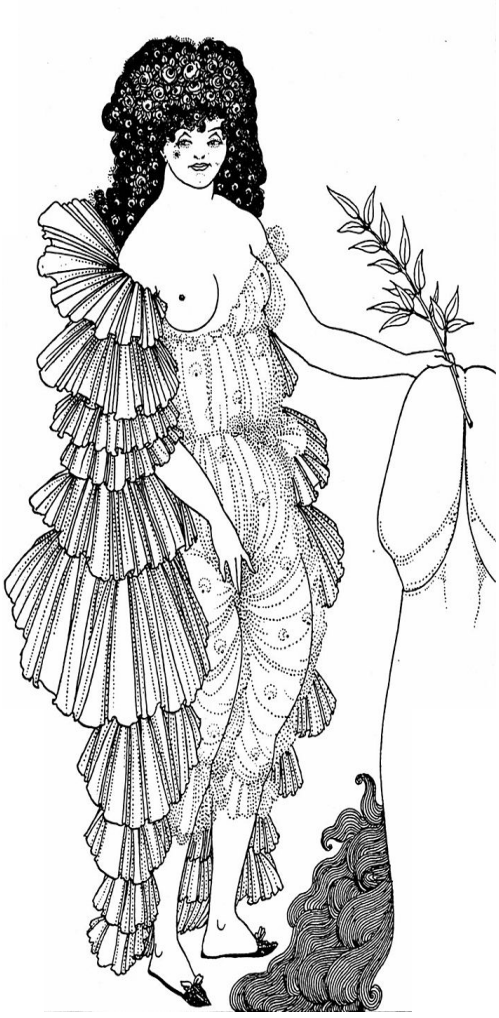
A bust of Aristophanes, the author of Lysistrata. He lived from 450-388 BCE, and eleven of his plays survive today. His early work is representative of Old Comedy, a period marked by the use of the Chorus.
Uffizi Gallery, Florence



The women retreat to the Acropolis, a compound which towers high above the city of Athens.
UNESCO

the female Chorus and male Chorus agree that they need each other and join in a dance. Meanwhile, the Spartan and Athenian delegations meet at the Acropolis, both complaining that the women have not returned. Lysistrata enters with the Chorus and a female servant. The servant is naked and distracts the delegates from both cities, as Lysistrata persuades them to make peace. Her argument is based on their shared ancestry and history of defeating common enemies. Using the servant as a map of Greece, the delegates decide on each other's land rights as a fantasy end to the war. Both sides agree on peace and Lysistrata returns the women of Greece and ends the sex strike.

The unified Chorus sing of a great feast to mark the end of the war. As the Spartan and Athenian men dine, the women enter from the Acropolis to join in the celebrations. The chorus end the play, with both men and women dancing and singing together.



ACTIVITY SEVEN

Choose a scene from the synopsis and write a list of emotions that you think the characters would feel.

A 19th Century depiction of Lysistrata by Aubrey Beardsley. The English illustrator's work was influenced by Japanese woodcuts.

ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

After reading the synopsis, you might agree that Aristophanes' Lysistrata involves a lot of quarrelling! The skill of oratory was a vital part of Classical Athenian society and daily life.

ACTIVITY EIGHT

Write an argument from the point of view of Lysistrata, fighting for the right of women to have a say in the politics of Athens.

Consider how you would:

1. **Use confrontational language and rhetoric**
2. **Respond to the men's counter-arguments**
3. **Make your argument persuasive**
4. **Inject humour into your argument**

Having written your own argument, you might want to compare it to one of Lysistrata's (as on page 21).

Marble thrones at the Theatre of Dionysus, Athens, where Aristophanes' Lysistrata was likely first performed.
Photo Francesco Bini

THE CHORUS

Detail of a theatre mask from a Roman-era sarcophagus.
Antalya Museum, Turkey

Most Greek comedies of this period included a Chorus alongside the main characters.

A Chorus is a group of 24 actors who work together as a united voice in the play. Tragedies also had a Chorus, numbering 50 originally, but later 12 or 15. The Chorus typically represents the general population of a story, singing odes, dancing and aiding the transition of scenes by introducing characters or providing them with insight.

Early tragedies and comedies relied heavily on a Chorus, as there was only one other speaking actor. But even in Lysistrata, the Chorus plays a vital role. This is because it is unusually split into separate male and female Choruses. The two only come together at the end of the play to symbolise the end of the men and women's dispute.

ACTIVITY NINE

Choose the part of the leader of the male or female Chorus from the passage on the next page.

1. **In groups, perform the speeches to each other and try to win the argument!**
2. **What are the differences between the arguments?**
3. **Can you describe the position of women in Ancient Greece in comparison to men by considering the two speeches?**
4. **August Schlegel wrote in 1846 that the Chorus was like an "ideal spectator" - an audience surrogate. This was controversial. Do you think he was right?**

Passages: lines 626-35, 648-57 (translated J. Henderson)

MEN'S LEADER

It's shocking, you know, that they're lecturing the citizens now, and running their mouths - mere women! - about brazen shields. And to top it off they're trying to make peace between us and the men of Sparta, who are no more trustworthy than a starving wolf. Actually, this plot they weave against us, gentlemen, aims at tyranny! Well, they'll never tyrannise over me: from now on I'll be on my guard, I'll "carry my sword in a myrtle branch" and go to market fully armed right up beside Aristogiton. I'll stand beside him like this (**POSING LIKE ARISTOGITON'S STATUE**): that way I'll be ready to smack this godforsaken old hag right in the jaw! (**ADVANCES ON THE WOMEN'S LEADER**)

WOMEN'S LEADER

Thus I owe it to the city to offer some good advice. And even if I was born a woman, don't hold it against me if I manage to suggest something better than what we've got now. I have a stake in our community: my contribution is men. You miserable geezers have no stake, since you've squandered your paternal inheritance, won in the Persian Wars, and now pay no taxes in return. On the contrary, we're all headed for bankruptcy on account of you! Have you anything to grunt in rebuttal? Any more trouble from you and I'll clobber you with this rawhide boot right in the jaw! (**RAISES HER FOOT AT THE MEN'S LEADER**)

MEN VS WOMEN

LYSISTRATA Before now, and for quite some time, we maintained our decorum and suffered <in silence> whatever you men did, because you wouldn't let us make a sound. But you weren't exactly all we could ask for. No, we knew only too well what you were up to, and many a time we'd hear in our homes about a bad decision you'd made on some great issue of state. Then, masking the pain in our hearts, we'd put on a smile and ask you, "How did the Assembly go today? Any decision about a rider to the peace treaty? And my husband would say, "What's that to you? Shut up!" And I'd shut up.

OLD WOMAN 1 I wouldn't have shut up!

MAGISTRATE If you hadn't shut up you'd have got a beating!

LYSISTRATA Well, that's why I did shut up-then. But later on we began to hear about even worse decisions you'd made, and then we would ask, "Husband, how come you're handling this so stupidly?" And right away he'd glare at me and tell me to get back to my sewing if I didn't want major damage to my head: "War shall be the business of menfolk," unquote.

MAGISTRATE He was right on the mark, I say.

LYSISTRATA How could he be right, you sorry fool, when we were forbidden to offer advice even when your policy was wrong? But then, when we began to hear you in the streets openly crying, "There isn't a man left in the land," and someone else saying, "God knows, there isn't, not a one," after that we women decided to lose no more time, and to band together to save Greece. What was the point of waiting any longer? So, if you're ready to listen to your turn as we give you good advice, and to shut up as we had to, we can put you back on the right track.

ACTIVITY TEN

On these two pages, we have printed an extract from Aristophanes' Lysistrata.
(lines 507-531, translated J. Henderson)

1. **How does Aristophanes portray differences in his characters from the dialogues in this passage?** (eg. through Lysistrata's tone)

2. **How do the female and male characters in the play differ? Do you think it makes the play funnier?**

3. **Can you think of any modern comedies that employ differences between men and women?**

GREEK COMEDY ADAPTED

Lysistrata was first performed in Athens in 411 BCE during one of the religious and artistic festivals celebrating the god Dionysus. Aristophanes' Lysistrata has since been performed and interpreted in very many ways: through art, film and theatre. Below are some examples of the ways people have interpreted Lysistrata.

ACTIVITY ELEVEN

Study each photograph. What element does each interpretation primarily highlight? What scene or character is the artist interested in?

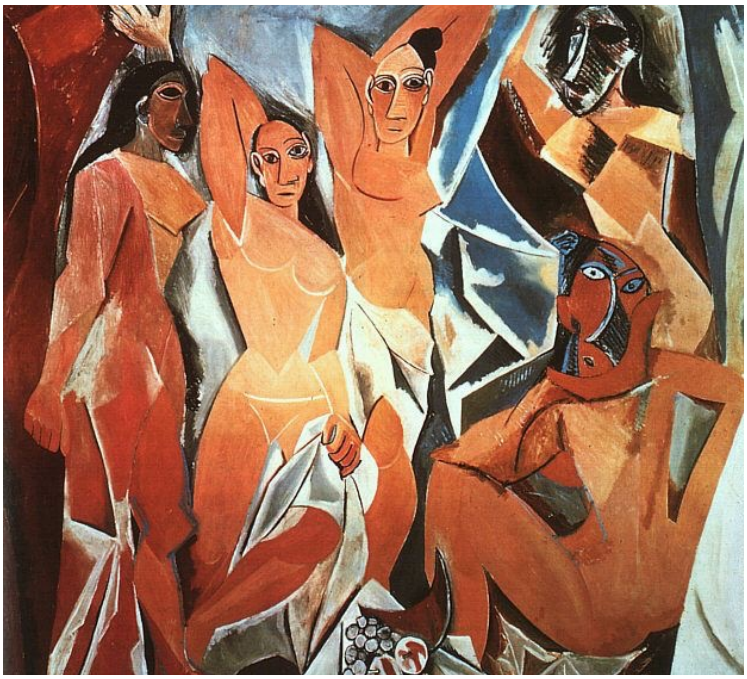
Now think about your own interpretation of Lysistrata. What time period would you set it in? Would you depict the characters differently to the examples below? What medium of art would you prefer to display your understanding of the play?

Discuss your interpretations in groups.

Spike Lee's Chi-Raq, a film that focuses on gang violence in Chicago, where women withhold sex until the gangs lay down arms. (2015)

The last time Lysistrata was staged as the Greek Play in Cambridge in 1986. Lysistrata was played by Caroline Tuckwell.
Photo Nick Moore
Cambridge Greek Play Committee

Lysistrata Jones, a Broadway musical which roots the story in basketball championships. (2011/12)



Pablo Picasso's painting for the 1934 edition of Lysistrata.

WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

by Rosanna Omitowoju, King's College

Why study women in the ancient world? The answer is obvious, but no less true for being so. 'Because it is really fascinating' is the easy answer. The slightly longer version is 'because you only have to turn on your radio, TV, or computer to find the next incarnation of the way that the modern world still struggles with the issue of how to view women.' A few weeks ago it was internet trolling and the degree to which that is gendered; last week it was Donald Trump's alleged misogyny (and by the time you read this, he may be only a few weeks away from being president of the USA!); yesterday I turned on the radio to an item about women's reproductive rights in the light of the zika virus. This list could be endless.

We are accustomed to thinking that we are somehow 'advanced' in the West, that we have at least a fighting chance of thinking the 'right' way about fundamental issues of human rights and personhood: but we still struggle with basic issues of how to treat a group which makes up over half of the world's population. So one thing which it is important to remember when studying women in the ancient world is that it should be done in a spirit of enquiry and humility, not with a sort of intellectual colonialism where we (western students and scholars) look down on the benighted them (in this case, ancient Athenians) just to see how wrong they are (with the implication that we are so 'right'). That's not of course to say that we should look in a morally neutral way and not call out problematic issues with how men treated women in the famously 'democratic' city of Athens. But it does mean that we should also be prepared to learn a thing or two along the way, perhaps spotting some of the origins of our own culture's troubled way of thinking about women. Or perhaps - more shocking to our sensibilities and expectations - seeing ways in which even ancient Athenian men could teach us something useful, even if we have to look pretty hard to find it.

The key thing to say for Lysistrata and Antigone is that they show us a moment when Athenian culture is struggling pretty hard with their versions of the problems we are still troubled by. I always sum this up in two rather banal ways to my students when I am trying to explain why women feature so heavily in the theatre of 5th Century Athens.

The first is to say that women symbolize a crucial conundrum for Athenian men. For an Athenian man, the answer to the question 'what is the opposite to me?' is 'woman'. Culturally constructed male and female identities polarize the roles and spheres of men and women: inside/outside; public/private; rational/emotional: self controlled/need to be controlled etc ad infinitum. But if we ask the same man the question 'what is most like you?' the answer to that question has to be the same: 'woman'. She shares language, culture, social structure, the most intense concerns of family, the human position in relation to a frightening divine world; again the list is almost endless. And this conundrum leaves confusions which social rules try to control and make less scary: if we say men must be 'like this' and women 'like that' then we have a set of guidelines and the whole thing might just work. But the other thing I say to my students is that drama, perhaps particularly tragedy, puts on show a moment which I call the 'yes, but not when…' moment. What I mean by that is that they show us the time of crisis when characters needed to spot when a social rule shouldn't be followed, or should be followed in a different way. Virgins are supposed to be devoted to the concerns of the males of their natal family, for instance. Yes: but not when it leads to their destruction and the destruction of another family and prevents the continuance of both those families into the future.

The Athenians struggled with these questions: but they certainly knew they didn't have the answers. Maybe some politicians today could learn a thing or two!

ACTIVITY TWELVE

Antigone and Lysistrata are two strong female protagonists in their plays.

1. Do you think they are similar in any way?
2. Do you think they are successful in getting their way?
3. Do you think the women in the plays threaten the male characters the same way they did in real life in ancient Athens?

THE ACTORS

Hollie Witton, who plays Calonice in Lysistrata, gives a Q-and-A session about performing in the Cambridge Greek Play 2016.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN THE CAMBRIDGE GREEK PLAY?

Cambridge is a university rich in opportunity, but the Greek Play is definitely unique. Having been quite active with extracurricular drama in my first year I wanted to experience a different kind of play and be able to work with a professional and experienced team. I had studied Greek theatre in an academic context but hadn't had the chance to perform it before, Lysistrata and Antigone are great plays that also have challenging parts for women, which was an exciting factor of the project for me. I was also encouraged by the incorporation of music into the traditional texts, although the rehearsal process helped to improve my sight reading skills, right from the auditions we were given feedback from Alex (Silverman, Composer) on our vocal quality and performance and it was really encouraging to be able to work in multiple disciplines. Whilst there is already opportunity to participate in musicals and a huge range of plays in Cambridge, the Greek chorus is not often tackled and I was intrigued by the process of moulding a group into the connected and diverse community that successful chorus work requires.

ARE THERE CHALLENGES PERFORMING IN A LANGUAGE YOU ARE NOT FLUENT IN?

As an EDE (Education with English and Drama) student I came to the play with no significant foreign language skills, unlike cast members with a Classics background who were already familiar with reading the Greek letters. The Classics Department were really helpful, providing Greek language sessions in groups and independently to make sure that we were doing the play justice. When the text is up on its feet it becomes a lot harder to perform than if the script were in English because you can't improvise if you forget a line, so the Greek has to be second nature by the time we got to the stage. We spend so much time learning our own lines that we would come to do a scene and realise that we have no idea what anyone else is saying! Performing with this initial barrier means that body language becomes extremely important, you have to be very aware of those on stage with you and there's a trust that develops because you have to support each other so much.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS ANY BENEFIT OF PERFORMING THE PLAYS IN THEIR ORIGINAL LANGUAGE?

When everything comes together it is surprisingly powerful to experience the plays in the Ancient Greek and to see how the audience is still connected with the performance. As an academic it is really interesting to be able to explore the comedy of Lysistrata in the way that it was originally intended, some of Aristophanes humour ended up being funny because of how bizarre it sounds, something that often gets lost in modern translations trying to make comparisons that are relevant to a contemporary audience. Ancient Greek has arguably become a paper language, only really studied and not fully used, so to experience an audience interacting with it is really special and helped to emphasise the rich history of the plays. Learning the language (to an extent) was a major challenge, the Greek Play is a once in a lifetime experience for an actor and brings something new and exciting to the process of putting on a show.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH LEARNING AND CREATING YOUR CHARACTER?

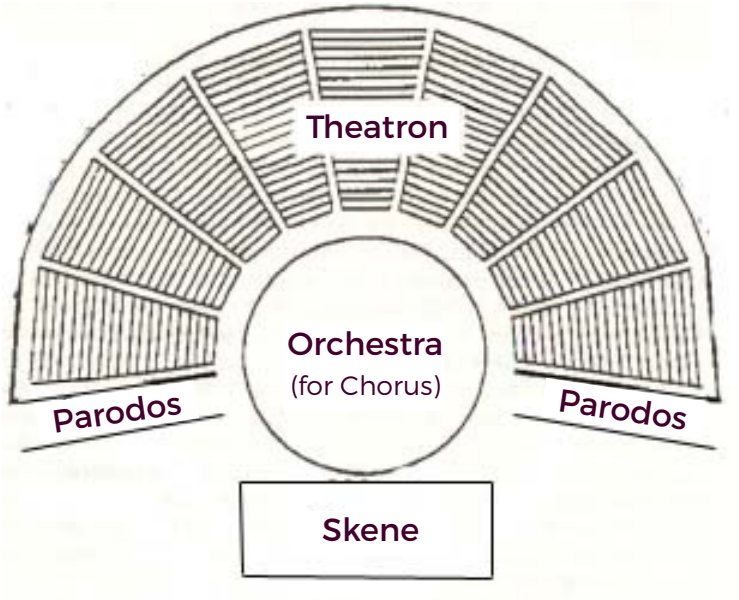
I am predominantly involved in Lysistrata, playing Calonice, and being in the comedy meant that there is a lot more freedom to develop our characters. At the end of Easter Term we had a week's workshop and were able to explore everyone's personalities and see how that fit with character. Helen (Eastman, Director) had very distinct idea from the start of what she wanted Calonice to be, but was also really open to any opinions and suggestions. It was fun building up layers of a normally quite small character, as Lysistrata's friend Calonice has the opportunity to provide a very humorous antithesis. We found her to be a surprisingly relatable character in the end underneath all her comedy, hopefully something that we are able to show on the stage!

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE DURING THE GREEK PLAY?

Meeting students from other courses and colleges is always the best part of a play for me, and with the Greek Play there are quite a few people who come for the classics rather than the drama and found a new enjoyment for theatre through the more academic sides of the project. I really love getting to know people who have so much enthusiasm for a subject I have very little knowledge of. Getting to spend so much time on the play is also a privilege. Often in Cambridge, theatre consists of a two week or three week rehearsal period from casting to stage and there is never enough time to really enjoy the process and get to know a cast, the way that we are able to with the Greek Play.

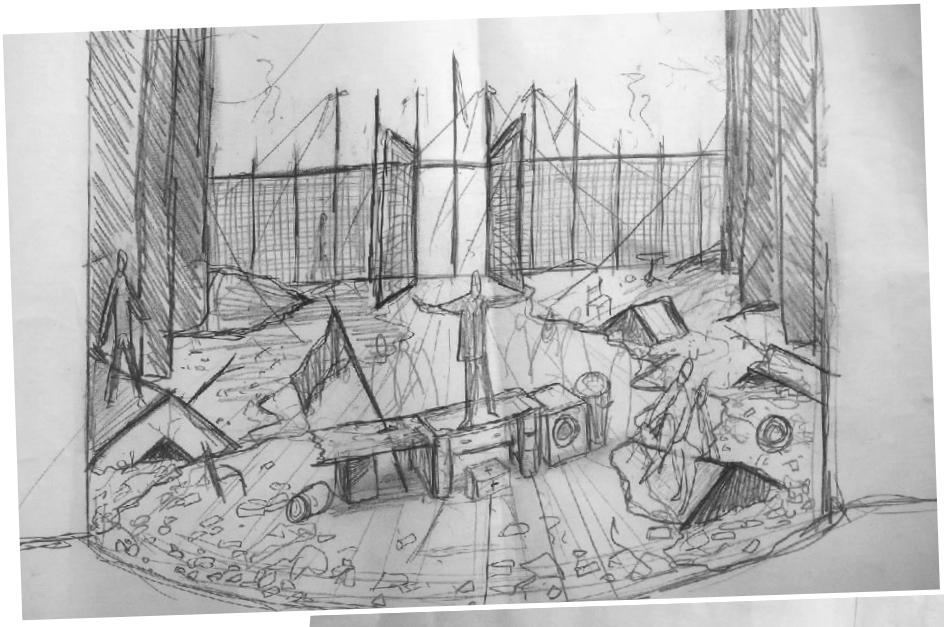
THE SET

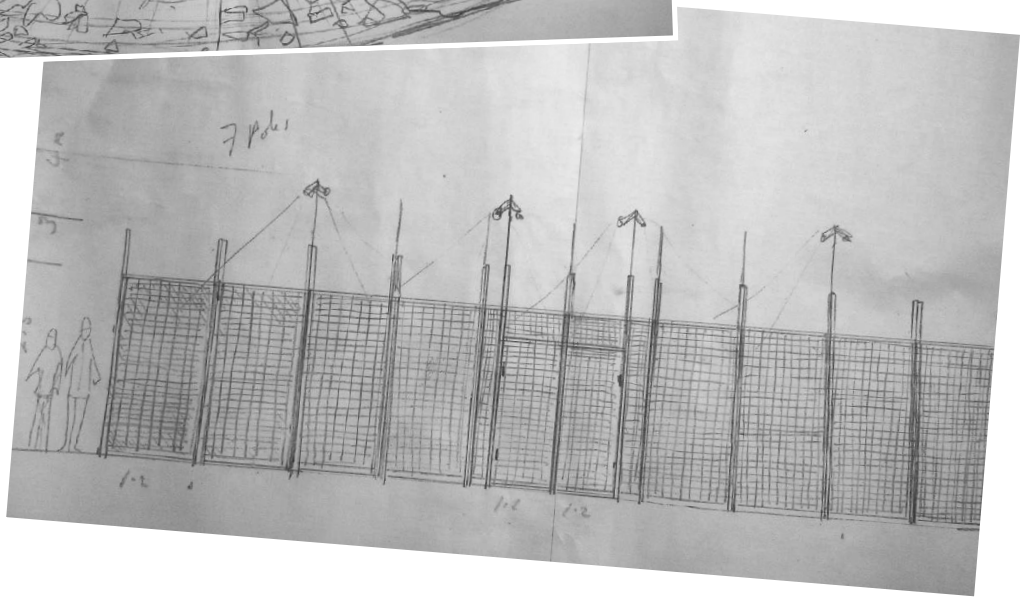
Ancient Greek theatres have a very distinctive format, designed to create the best experience for a large audience in the open air. All set design has an important role in helping the audience understand the play, because the visual aesthetics of a play complement and highlight its themes. Neil Irish, Designer, took inspiration from contemporary conflicts to create this year's staging for Sophocles' Antigone.



A typical Greek theatre of the 5th Century BCE. The Theatre of Dionysus at Athens, where Antigone and Lysistrata were likely first performed, is in the same configuration.

The inspiration for this year's performance of Antigone comes from contemporary conflict. This 1940 photograph shows Winston Churchill inspecting South London in the aftermath of an air raid.





These blueprints are © Neil Irish and used with permission

ACTIVITY THIRTEEN

Looking at how Neil Irish has taken inspiration from recent wars, decide on your own interpretation of Antigone or Lysistrata and design a stage that ties in with your idea.

- **What will your interpretation use as inspiration?**
  eg. a time period in history
- **Does your interpretation focus on a specific theme?**
  eg. family, war, the gods
- **How will you best display your theme through the set?**
  eg. through a prop, colour, lighting

THE MUSIC

Performed over 2000 years ago, we have little knowledge of what the music and other original aesthetics were like when the plays were first staged. As a result, designing and setting Greek drama to music is completely unique to each production. Alan Bowman, Musical Director, goes into detail below about his role in the Cambridge Greek Play 2016, and the process of working on a play originally written for an audience in the 5th Century BCE.

The role of Musical Director is somewhat of a balancing act. The texts are thousands of years old, while the music is composed during rehearsals and only finalised a few days before the curtain goes up. Marrying up this old and new to create some fantastic music is my challenge.

The first step is working with the cast to make sure they are comfortable singing in Ancient Greek. This language contains sounds that even highly trained opera singers are not used to making, so a lot of practice is needed to produce the right sounds every time. Making new sounds will also affect vocal technique, so I'll be keeping an eye on this – from how to breathe deeply to keeping the jaw and tongue loose.

Rhythm is hugely important in Ancient Greek texts. Alex Silverman (our composer) does a fantastic job of putting these rhythms into the music. It's one thing to play or sing a rhythm that's written down, but quite another to feel like the rhythm is 'natural'. However, the cast should feel the rhythm instinctively, the same way that the rhythm of "I'm fine, thank you, how are you?" is 'natural' to everyone who speaks English. Lots of repetition will go in to making this correct!

The Orchestra will be playing on modern instruments, but the music needs to come across as having an 'ancient feel' in the way the orchestra plays. This can be quite subtle – getting louder or quieter a little more slowly than normal, using less vibrato and

having a strong bass section all need to be considered. Further, like the cast, the orchestra will need to feel the rhythms as instinctive.

Choruses are key in any Greek play and creating a cohesive sound will be difficult. We have a huge range of singing styles in our cast (from folk to opera) and they need to be blended together. The way to achieve this is making the chorus aware of each other – they need to realise if they are too loud or not quite in time with everyone else. Alongside Director Helen Eastman I'll be putting the chorus through their paces to create this.

The last big challenge is a personal one – I will be conducting the show most nights, so I need to ensure that all the music starts correctly and that I follow the solo singers. Listening to a dead language being sung and responding musically during the show is going to difficult and great fun!

The Cambridge Greek Play is hugely demanding for everyone involved, but this is what makes it so exciting. As the above shows, there are several challenges which are unique to Ancient Greek texts. Thankfully, our cast is hugely talented and I can't wait to start working with them. The results should be fantastic.

ACTIVITY FOURTEEN

Looking at how Alan Bowman helps to set Ancient Greek drama to music, read the choral ode from Antigone on the next page and decide how a group could most effectively perform it.

Consider:

- **Should you sing in unison?**
- **What kind of rhythm should each line follow?**
- **Will one speaker take the lead and help others follow?**
- **Would different types of music change the response to the audience?**
- **Which song would you like to set this verse to?**

Antigone 395-405

(Translated R. Fagles)

And speech and thought, quick as the wind

And the mood and mind for law that rules the city-

All these he has taught himself

And shelter from the arrows of the frost

When there's rough lodging under the cold clear sky

And the shafts of lashing rain-

Ready, resourceful man!

Never without resources

never an impasse as he marches on the future-

Only Death, from Death alone he will find no rescue

But from desperate plagues he has plotted his escapes.

THE DIRECTOR

Helen Eastman, the Director, gives an exclusive Q-and-A about the Cambridge Greek Play 2016.

IS PERFORMING AN ANCIENT PLAY IN ITS ORIGINAL LANGUAGE A BARRIER OR AN AID TO THE AUDIENCE'S UNDERSTANDING?

For me, the reason to perform it in the original language, is to give people an opportunity to hear the incredible sound of the language. Greek drama is full of diverse, and very moving, rhythms and metres. Having decided to present the play in the original language, our job is to make sure that's not a barrier to understanding, by making the production as clear as possible, dramatically, and making sure we use a visual language to tell the story as well. The sounds of the original play are a real aid to emotionally understanding what's going on. When the plot is very tense, Sophocles uses tense rhythms for the chorus, or when it's a moment of sadness, the rhythms tell us that, and make us feel it.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFICULTIES OF DIRECTING A PLAY IN THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE?

Well, the start of the rehearsal process is tough. Most of the actors don't know Greek when we start, so it's a huge challenge. We find lots of innovative ways to rehearse until everyone is on top of the words...

We have subtitles, and we try to make them really integrated with the production.

BOTH ANTIGONE AND LYSISTRATA HAVE STRONG FEMALE PROTAGONISTS, WAS THAT AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHOOSING THESE TWO PLAYS TOGETHER?

Yes. Absolutely. Both plays start with a woman suggesting to another woman that they take political action. In

Antigone, the other woman (Ismene) says ‘no’. Antigone goes it alone, ends up dead and it’s a tragedy. In Lysistrata, the other woman (Calonice) says, ‘ok’, and all the other women come on board. They protest together, which makes them powerful, and they get what they want (-ish) and it’s a comedy. So I think I’ve put the plays together, very simply, to show the difference between one woman on her own, trying to make a stand, and the power of collective action from all women.

DO YOU THINK MODERN DAY AUDIENCES CAN RELATE TO THEATRE WRITTEN CENTURIES AGO?

Definitely. That’s why these plays are produced so often (well, one of the reasons). Not only can we relate to the plays, we can also take some solace in the fact that people were facing many of the same issues and challenges 2000 years ago. That’s not to say that there aren’t many things in the plays that were specific to the time they were written in, but there’s also a lot that transcends.

DO YOU THINK PLACING PLAYS IN DIFFERENT HISTORICAL SETTINGS RATHER THAN THE ORIGINAL CLASSICAL SETTING ADD TO THE UNDERSTANDING AND ENJOYMENT OF THEM?

Well, we can't place the plays in their original setting. Even if we tried to reconstruct an authentic performance (outdoors, masked, all male, on a Mediterranean hillside) we would still not be an authentic audience. So that original experience isn't something we can recreate. So given that we have to find a new way to watch these plays, one solution is a new setting which is closer to our audience's frame of reference. It's a challenge to do that well, and maintain a balance between fidelity to the original and accessibility and relevance for the contemporary audience. But when it works it can be very powerful.

THIS IS YOUR THIRD TIME BEING INVOLVED IN THE CAMBRIDGE GREEK PLAY. WHAT BRINGS YOU BACK?

The opportunity to work on these plays in the original (which is rare). And the infectious enthusiasm, brilliance and talent of all the students (acting, stage management, technical, musicians, subtitlers... and every part of the production). It's a wonderful project to be part of.

Pictures (above and page 33) show the first stages of rehearsals for the Cambridge Greek Play 2016.
Photographs Katherine McDonald

THE CAMBRIDGE GREEK PLAY 2016

ANTIGONE
LYSISTRATA

12-15 OCTOBER 2016, 2:30 AND 7:45PM

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Arts Theatre

Faculty *of* Classics