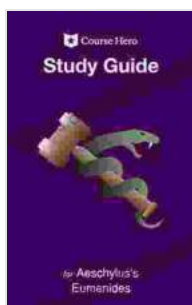


# A Comprehensive Study Guide for Aeschylus' Eumenides

Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, the third play in his *Oresteia* trilogy, is a powerful and complex work that explores themes of justice, revenge, and the nature of the gods. The play tells the story of Orestes, who has killed his mother Clytemnestra in revenge for her murder of his father Agamemnon. Pursued by the Furies, Orestes seeks refuge at the temple of Apollo, where he is put on trial by Athena. The outcome of the trial will determine not only Orestes' fate but also the future of Athens.

The play opens with Orestes arriving at the temple of Apollo in Delphi. He is pursued by the Furies, who are determined to avenge Clytemnestra's death. Apollo tells Orestes that he will protect him and that he will be judged by Athena.

Athena arrives and establishes a court to hear Orestes' case. The Furies present their case, arguing that Orestes has committed a terrible crime and that he must be punished. Apollo defends Orestes, arguing that he was justified in killing Clytemnestra because she had murdered Agamemnon.



## Study Guide for Aeschylus's *Eumenides* (Course Hero Study Guides) by Course Hero

★★★★☆ 4.9 out of 5

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The trial ends with Athena casting the deciding vote in Orestes' favor. The Furies are furious, but Athena convinces them to accept the verdict. The play ends with the Furies being transformed into the Eumenides, or "Kindly Ones."

The Eumenides features a cast of complex and compelling characters.

- **Orestes:** The son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Orestes is a tragic figure who is haunted by the guilt of killing his mother. He is torn between his desire for justice and his fear of the Furies.
- **The Furies:** The Furies are ancient deities who are responsible for punishing those who have committed crimes. They are relentless and unforgiving, and they pursue Orestes with a vengeance.
- **Apollo:** The god of prophecy and healing, Apollo protects Orestes from the Furies. He believes that Orestes is justified in killing Clytemnestra, and he argues his case at the trial.
- **Athena:** The goddess of wisdom and justice, Athena presides over the trial of Orestes. She is a powerful and fair judge, and she ultimately decides Orestes' fate.

The Eumenides explores a number of complex and important themes.

- **Justice:** The play raises questions about the nature of justice. Is it always right to avenge a crime? Is there ever a justification for killing another person?

- **Revenge:** The play also explores the theme of revenge. The Furies are determined to avenge Clytemnestra's death, but their revenge is ultimately self-destructive.
- **Fate:** The play suggests that fate plays a role in human affairs. Orestes is destined to kill Clytemnestra, and the Furies are destined to pursue him.
- **The Nature of the Gods:** The play also explores the nature of the gods. The gods are powerful beings, but they are also flawed. They can be vengeful and unforgiving, but they can also be merciful and compassionate.

Aeschylus uses a variety of literary devices in the Eumenides to create a powerful and moving work of art.

- **Imagery:** Aeschylus uses vivid imagery to create a sense of atmosphere and to convey the emotions of his characters. For example, he describes the Furies as "black-robed goddesses" with "snakes for hair."
- **Symbolism:** Aeschylus also uses symbolism to convey deeper meanings. For example, the Furies represent the forces of chaos and destruction, while Apollo represents the forces of order and reason.
- **Metaphor:** Aeschylus uses metaphors to compare two things that are not alike in order to create a new and unexpected understanding. For example, he compares the Furies to "dogs" and to "flies."
- **Irony:** Aeschylus uses irony to create a sense of tension and suspense. For example, the play ends with the Furies being transformed into the Eumenides, or "Kindly Ones." This is ironic

because the Furies have been anything but kind to Orestes throughout the play.

Aeschylus' Eumenides is a powerful and thought-provoking play that explores complex and important themes. The play is a masterpiece of Greek tragedy, and it continues to be relevant to audiences today.



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