CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Ajax, Electra, The Women of Trachis and Philoctetes

Sophocles · *c. 450-409 BC · Lewis Campbell (Sophocles: The Seven Plays in English Verse, 1883; Project Gutenberg #14484). The hosted file is the seven-play volume.*

Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, intent on some surprisal of thy foes: so Athena speaks to Odysseus, at the start of Aias, in Lewis Campbell's English verse. The catalogue title names four plays; the hosted file is Campbell's Seven Plays (PG #14484) and also contains Antigone, King Oedipus, and Oedipus at Colonos. For grades 10–12. Quote the plays, not only the prefaces. Keep Campbell's "Aias" and "Laërtiades."

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a school read a file whose catalogue title names four plays, when the hosted volume is Campbell's seven, including the three Theban plays, and how should Aias be taught as a wounded spirit without making the suicide a spectacle?

"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"

Aias, Athena's opening

The hosted file is Lewis Campbell's Seven Plays in English Verse (1883, PG #14484). The contents are Antigone, Aias, King Oedipus, Electra, The Trachinian Maidens, Philoctetes, and Oedipus at Colonos. The catalogue title names only four; say what is actually here. The first of those four, Aias (Ajax), opens with Athena to Odysseus, Laërtiades, by the seaward camp. Teach the wounded honour, and the funeral at the close, with gravity, for grades 10–12. No spectacle of the sword. Quote Campbell, and keep his "Aias."

KEY CHARACTERS

Athena, and Odysseus (Laërtiades)
Who open Aias by the seaward camp

Aias
The son of Telamon, a wounded spirit; teach the honour and the close, without spectacle. Campbell's name is Aias.

Tecmessa, and Teucer
The captive-bride and the half-brother, faithful when the generals are not

The people of the other six plays
Electra, the Trachinian women, Philoctetes, and the three Theban plays in this same volume

A GODDESS, AND A MAN SCANNING FOOTPRINTS

> *"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"*
>
> Aias, Athena's opening

Grades 10–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Seven Plays, Not Four

THE FILE AS A WHOLE

Campbell's volume, as the source note records, also contains the three Theban plays. A school should name all seven, and should not teach the Theban plays from this file under silence.

- Translator: Lewis Campbell, 1883, PG #14484.
- Contents: Antigone, Aias, King Oedipus, Electra, The Trachinian Maidens, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonos.
- For grades 10–12.
- Prefaces stand first; quote the plays.

> *"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"*
>
> Aias, Athena's opening

02

Athena, and Laërtiades

AIAS, THE OPENING

Athena, above, has often seen Odysseus intent on some surprisal of his foes. She finds him by the seaward camp, where Aias holds the last place in the line, scanning fresh footprints. The man has just come home, his hands reeking with a dreadful toil.

- The first lines are exact. Keep "Laërtiades" and "Aias" as Campbell prints them.
- The place is the shore of the Troad, toward the end of the Trojan War.
- Do not import a later translator's "Ajax" into a quotation of this file.
- 10–12.

> *"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"*
>
> Aias, Athena's opening

03

A Wounded Spirit

AIAS

Aias, denied the arms of Achilles, has been turned from the generals to a terrible mistake. The play is about honour, shame, and a death, and then about a funeral won against tyrannical reclamations. Teach the wound; do not make the sword a spectacle.

- Gravity. No gore on the map.
- Tecmessa and Teucer belong to the human cost and to the fidelity at the close.
- Odysseus's later magnanimity is part of the play, not a reversal to skip.
- Finish the play if you assign it.

> *"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"*
>
> Aias, Athena's opening

04

Electra, Trachinian Maidens, Philoctetes

THE OTHER THREE OF THE TITLE

Electra, The Trachinian Maidens (Women of Trachis), and Philoctetes are in this same verse. Teach each as itself: a daughter's long wait, a wife and a poisoned gift, a wounded man on an island.

- Keep Campbell's title The Trachinian Maidens if you quote this file's heading.
- Philoctetes is a play of a bow, a wound, and a young man under orders; teach the test of honesty.
- Electra here is Sophocles, in Campbell, not Euripides' Electra in Murray.
- Name the play you are in.

> *"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"*
>
> Aias, Athena's opening

05

The Theban Plays, Also Here

ANTIGONE, KING OEDIPUS, OEDIPUS AT COLONOS

These three are in the volume. If a class meets them in this file, say so, and quote Campbell, not another English silently substituted.

- The catalogue title does not name them; the file does. Honesty first.
- Do not pretend this map has taught the Theban plays in full.
- 10–12.
- Quote this file.

> *"Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes; As now I find thee by the seaward camp, Where"*
>
> Aias, Athena's opening

Seven Plays, Not Four · Wounded Honour · Fidelity at a Funeral · A Bow and a Wound · Gravity

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 10–12

1. The hosted file is Lewis Campbell's Seven Plays, 1883, PG #14484, not only the four plays in the catalogue title. Contents: Antigone, Aias, King Oedipus, Electra, The Trachinian Maidens, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonos. Say what is actually here.
2. Aias opens: "Oft have I seen thee, Laërtiades, Intent on some surprisal of thy foes." Keep Campbell's "Aias" and "Laërtiades." For grades 10–12.
3. Teach Aias as a wounded spirit. Gravity. No gore on the map. Finish the funeral as well as the wound. Tecmessa and Teucer matter.
4. Electra in this file is Sophocles, not Euripides' Electra in Murray. Keep the plays distinct.
5. Quote Campbell when you are in this file. Prefaces stand first; quote the plays.