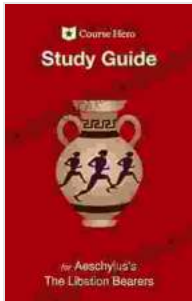


The Libation Bearers: A Comprehensive Study Guide for Aeschylus' Masterpiece



Study Guide for Aeschylus's *The Libation Bearers* (Course Hero Study Guides) by Byron Eggenschwiler

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1032 KB

Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 29 pages

Lending : Enabled

Paperback : 35 pages

Item Weight : 5.1 ounces

Dimensions : 8.5 x 0.08 x 11 inches



Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers* is a powerful and moving tragedy that explores themes of revenge, justice, and fate. This comprehensive study guide will provide you with everything you need to know about the play, including a detailed summary, character analysis, themes, and discussion questions.

Summary

The Libation Bearers is the second play in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy. It tells the story of Orestes, who returns to his homeland to avenge the murder of his father, Agamemnon. Orestes is aided by his sister, Electra, and together they plot to kill their mother, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus. The play is full of suspense and drama, and its characters are complex and well-developed.

Character Analysis

Orestes

Orestes is a complex and tragic figure. He is driven by a desire for revenge, but he is also aware of the moral implications of his actions. Orestes is haunted by the Furies, who represent the guilt and shame that he feels for killing his mother. However, he is also a determined and courageous hero, and he is ultimately successful in avenging his father's death.

Electra

Electra is a strong and independent woman who has suffered greatly. She has been forced to live in poverty and obscurity, and she has been constantly reminded of the murder of her father. Electra is bitter and resentful, but she is also fiercely loyal to her brother. She helps Orestes plan and execute the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, and she is ultimately rewarded for her loyalty.

Clytemnestra

Clytemnestra is a complex and controversial figure. She is a powerful and ambitious woman, but she is also capable of great cruelty. Clytemnestra murdered her husband, Agamemnon, and she has ruled Argos with an iron fist ever since. She is a formidable opponent for Orestes and Electra, but she is ultimately defeated and killed.

Aegisthus

Aegisthus is Clytemnestra's lover and co-ruler of Argos. He is a weak and cowardly man who is dominated by Clytemnestra. Aegisthus is ultimately killed by Orestes.

Themes

Revenge

Revenge is a central theme in *The Libation Bearers*. Orestes is driven by a desire to avenge the murder of his father, and he is willing to go to any lengths to achieve his goal. However, the play also explores the moral implications of revenge. Orestes is haunted by the Furies, and he ultimately realizes that revenge is not the answer to his problems.

Justice

Justice is another important theme in *The Libation Bearers*. Orestes believes that he is justified in killing Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, but the play raises questions about the nature of justice. Is it right to take revenge into one's own hands? Is there a difference between justice and revenge?

Fate

Fate is a powerful force in *The Libation Bearers*. The characters are all bound by fate, and they are unable to escape their destinies. Clytemnestra is destined to be killed by her son, and Orestes is destined to be haunted by the Furies. The play explores the tension between free will and fate, and it raises questions about the role of the gods in human affairs.

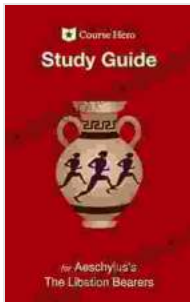
Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of Orestes as a character? Is he a hero or a villain? Is he justified in killing Clytemnestra and Aegisthus?
2. How does the play explore the theme of revenge? What are the moral implications of revenge?

3. What does the play say about the nature of justice? Is there a difference between justice and revenge?
4. How does the play explore the theme of fate? Are the characters free to make their own choices, or are they bound by fate?
5. What is the overall message of the play? What does Aeschylus want to say about the human condition?

Further Reading

- The Libation Bearers on Britannica.com
- The Libation Bearers on PoetryFoundation.org
- Oedipus Rex Meets Oedipus Schmex: The Libation Bearers by Aeschylus reviewed by Stephen Greenblatt



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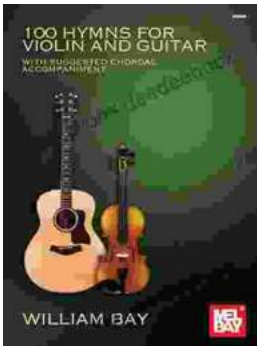
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