

# ETHICAL DILEMMAS THROUGH THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDIES



# Preface

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Project: VAST: Values Across Space & Time

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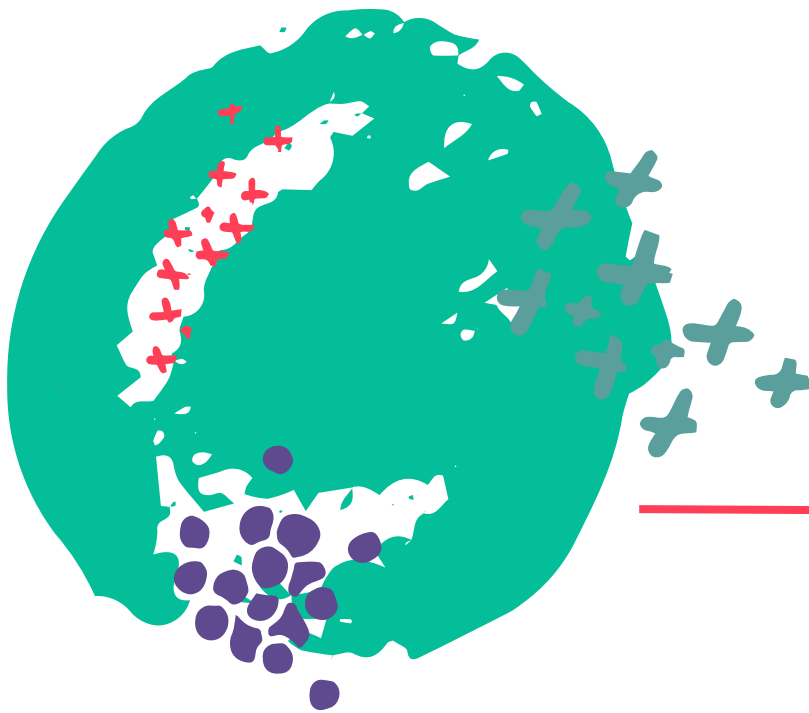
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**overview**

The H2020 European research project VAST- Values Across Space & Time is a collaboration among the National Center for Scientific Research ‘Demokritos’ (Greece), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), the Athens & Epidaurus Festival (Greece), Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy), Fairytale Museum (Cyprus), Museo Galileo (Italy), Universidade NOVA de Lisboa – NOVA (Portugal) and Semantika (Slovenia).

The project envisions to study the dissemination of the European values (such as freedom, democracy, equality, tolerance, dialogue, human dignity, the rule of law) in space and time through the use of digitised materials and intangible cultural artefacts as well as to explore the communication, reception and perception of these values in the modern era. For the purposes of this research, three pilots have been described concerning: 1. the theatre/ancient drama, 2. the scientific texts of the 17th century, 3. the fairy tales.

A digital platform has been developed, as part of the project, with open access to citizens. In this platform, values-related scientific and educational materials and research evidence/results will be posted, as well as various tools for scientific and research study.

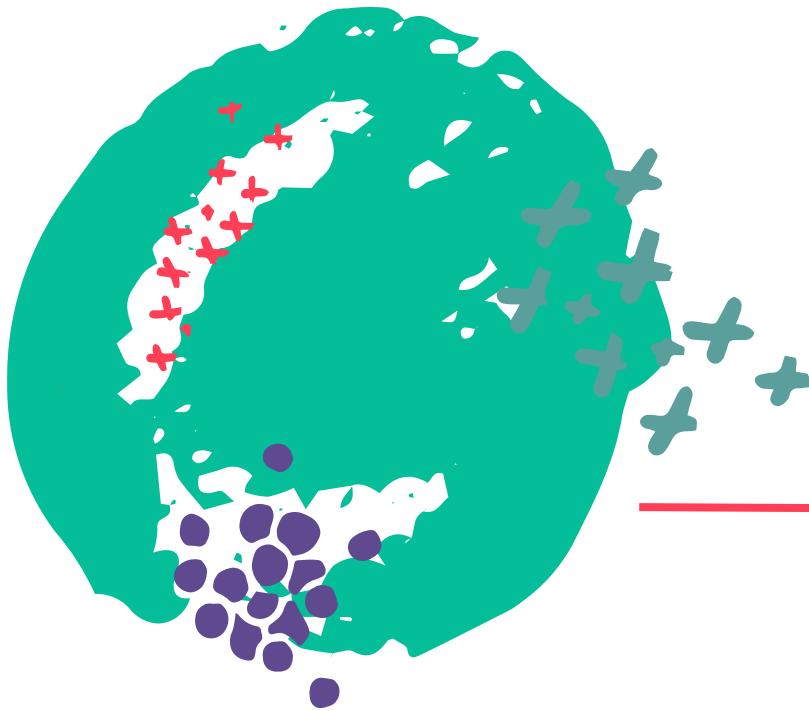
Do not miss visiting!

The educational activity “Ethical dilemmas through the ancient Greek tragedies” has been designed as part of the VAST project framework and is aimed at young people. This activity has been designed based on the principles of experiential learning and a collaborative teaching approach, where the active participation of students is encouraged through dialogue and practice, and has been piloted in the context of our collaboration with schools and museums.

According to the Council of Europe and the principles of democratic citizenship and human rights education, the educational process must, beyond imparting knowledge, aim at highlighting values, as well as cultivating attitudes and skills aimed at raising awareness and to motivate young people for further thought and reflection.

This educational guide was designed to present and distribute recommended educational material to educators/museum curators who wish to work towards this direction.

Enjoy reading!



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**activity**

# Institution

National Centre of Scientific Research "Demokritos"



## Audience

16 to 18 years old

# Title

Ethical dilemmas through the ancient Greek tragedies

## Description

Ancient tragedies were created in order to (re)educate and teach citizens through imitation. By using drama, the city-state sought to cultivate moral virtue in its citizens, so that they could coexist in harmony with each other and ensure the city's well-being. The expression and promotion of moral values, as well as reflections on human beings and the way in which the heroes are called upon to make decisions, based on morality and the consequences of their choices, were a basic aim of the Greek tragedians, a fact that is perceived by readers/viewers in every era.

In the context of this educational program, students will be asked to reflect on the concept of values and how each of us perceives and prioritizes them, as well as their role in the decision-making process. Taking the ancient tragedies 'The Seven at Thebes' (Aeschylus) and 'Antigone' (Sophocles) as a stimuli, we will highlight the moral dilemmas that the heroes had to deal with, with the aim of inviting students to reflect on the role of values, as well as the criteria we set each time, in the process of solving a ethical dilemma and making a decision.



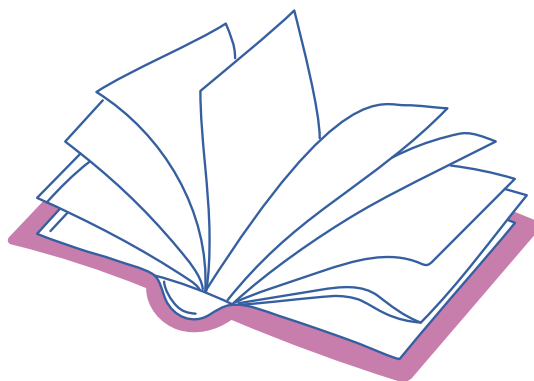


# Educational Objectives



Through this educational activity, students are encouraged to:

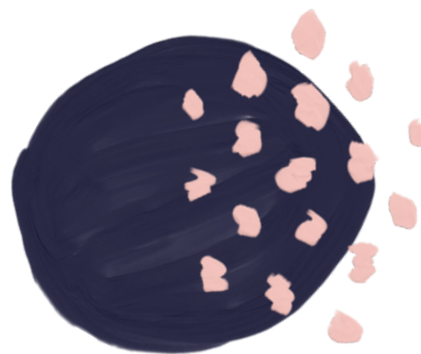
- 1 reflect on moral values and their role in our lives as active citizens
- 2 discuss how to cultivate and promote these values
- 3 reflect on moral dilemmas and the role of values in the decision-making process
- 4 to work together in groups and exchange thoughts and reflections



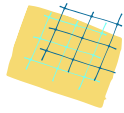
# Expected outcomes

On completion of the activity, students will be able to:

- 1 establish a common conceptual framework regarding the concept of moral values
- 2 understand the timelessness of values
- 3 understand the diversity of how they are perceived by each of us
- 4 understand the important role of values in their everyday life as active citizens and in the decision-making process



# Structure



Duration

60' - 90'

Educational materials/tools

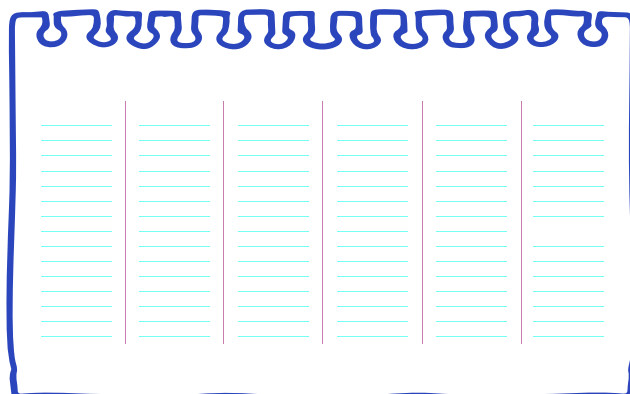
- **Brainstorming**
- **Discussion and reflection**
- **Working in groups**

Educator/facilitator


**1 educator/facilitator for each group of 10-15 students**

Target group

**Youth 16-18 years old/adults**



## Modules/sections (design)




<b>Welcome</b>	Duration: 15'	Materials/tools: Ice breaker activity	Described in pages: 10-11
<b>1st part of the activity</b>	Duration: 15'	Materials/tools: Brainstorming / Discussion White board	Described in pages: 12
<b>2nd part of the activity</b>	Duration: 15'	Materials/tools: Brainstorming / Discussion White board	Described in pages: 13-14
<b>3rd part of the activity</b>	Duration: 20'	Materials/tools: Work in groups	Described in pages: 15-16
<b>Farewell - Activity evaluation</b>	Described in pages: 17		

### **A. Introduction (5')**

Welcome of the participants & information about the activity.


### **B. Ice breaker activity (10')**

The facilitator/educator can choose an ice breaker activity in order to get to know the group members and make them feel more familiar with each other. Suggested activities:



**Describe yourself**

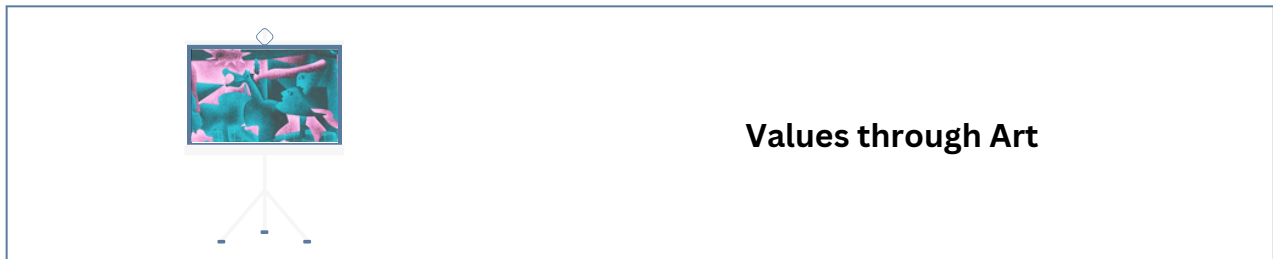
The facilitator/educator encourages the students to write on a piece of paper two (2) characteristics/values/emotions that they think describe themselves and one (1) that does not. They then walk freely around the room and when the animator gives the signal, they should look for a pair and each person should mention the three (3) characteristics/values/emotions they wrote on the piece of paper and ask the other person to guess which one is 'lying'.



**For me the most important thing is...**

All the students are in a circle. Among them is the animator, who holds the end of a tangle. On the basis of the phrase 'For me the most important thing is...', the facilitator encourages the pupils to express themselves freely by throwing the tangle to each of them and instructing each participant who speaks to hold one end and then throw it to the next.

After all the participants have taken the floor, a cobweb has been created in the middle of the circle, somehow connecting all the members of the circle. The students are encouraged to return the tangle to its original form (reverse), mentioning what was said as the most important by the classmate who had given them the floor.



On the occasion of viewing a work(s) of art, students are invited to freely express their thoughts/feelings about the image(s). The educator/facilitator can freely choose any kind of art that expresses him/her, however, he/she is encouraged to choose different kinds of approaches/techniques in order to bring out a variety of thoughts and feelings.

Indicative suggested works:

- i. Guernica, Pablo Picasso
- ii. The Kiss, Gustaf Klimt
- iii. Impression: The rising sun, Claude Monet

*Note/Tip for the educator/facilitator: The facilitator/educator is encouraged to note on the whiteboard the values/feelings mentioned during the experiential activity in order to use these ideas as a trigger for the next activity.*

## 1st part of the activity: *What is the concept of values?*

In this part, the facilitator/educator is asked to discuss with the students the concept of values, defining a common conceptual framework. Based on the previous activity and the thoughts/values/emotions heard, the facilitator/educator encourages the pupils to reflect on and define values.



### **Discussion**

Suggested questions:

1. What was everything we shared before? (feelings, values, etc.)
2. What would qualify as a value? What other values do you know?
3. What does value mean? How is it cultivated?
4. Do values influence our lives? If so, in what way? (decision-making process, moral dilemmas, character formation, etc.)

The aim is to form a common conceptual framework regarding the concept of value, as well as to create a set/list of values.

In order to make the conceptual framework of values clearer and for the students to reflect in practice on the role of values in decision-making and in shaping the character and behaviour of each individual, the educator/facilitator invokes the story of Sophocles' Antigone as an example.

*Tip: During the discussion, it is important to use an example from the students' everyday life in order for them to reflect practically on how our values influence the decisions we make. E.g. using a mobile phone in school, despite a regulation prohibiting it → obeying the law # freedom of choice/choice with potential costs*

## 2nd part of the activity: *Values through 'Antigone'*

In this part, the facilitator/educator encourages the students to reflect on values by focusing on the ethical dilemma. The activity begins with a brief reference to the history of the family of the Labdacides, focusing on the story of the two brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, and the conflict that arose between them over their ascension to the throne, resulting in their deaths ('Seven at Thebes', Aeschylus). As a continuation of the story, reference is also made to the story of 'Antigone' and her decision to bury her dead brother despite Creon's prohibition, which led to a conflict between them (Antigone, Sophocles). The following is briefly described in the narrative:

- A. narrative plot
- B. main characters
- C. moral dilemma(s)



### Discussion

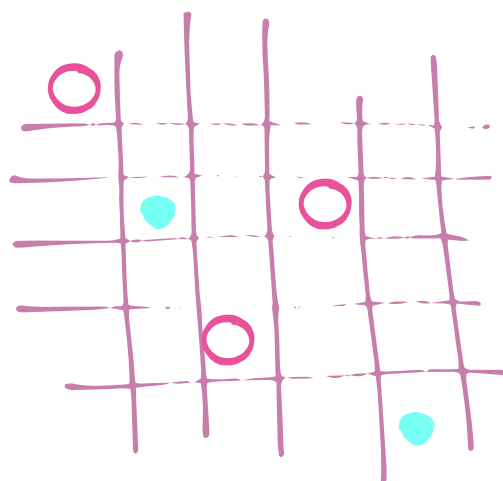
The aim of the activity is to focus on the concept of the ethical dilemma and its building blocks:

- focus/targeting → what is the dilemma? (specific reference)
- hero/character → who is the main hero/character called upon to manage the dilemma?
- options → what options does he/she have, among which he/she is asked to choose?
- values → what are the values that express/represent each choice?
- consequences → what are the consequences of each choice?



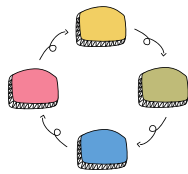
The facilitator/educator encourages the students to focus on these questions and reflect around them through free discussion in plenary.

*Tip: The facilitator/educator is encouraged to briefly record on the board the answers to each question in order to guide the next activity.*



### 3rd part of the activity *Outline of the hero/heroine's value profile*

- In this part, the facilitator/educator encourages the students to work in groups (5-6 people/group) and create a common mind map focusing on the profile of a hero/heroine.



**Common mind map**

For example, one group/s is encouraged to create a map according to the moral dilemma that Creon has to deal with and the other group/s a map according to the moral dilemma that Polynices has to deal with. Each map should reflect the following:

- the ethical dilemma
- the choices and the one who finally decided
- the values that emerge through his choice
- the consequences of the choice

The facilitator/educator distributes white papers (size A1/A0) and colorful markers to the students and encourages them to work in groups and create a visual result, which they will then present to the plenary.



Once this work is completed, one representative of each group or the members of the group as a whole are invited to present their work to the plenary. The facilitator or one of the students can record on the whiteboard the values per hero/heroine that emerge from the presentations, in order to create a set of common values shared by all the groups.

Tip: At the beginning of the task, the facilitator/educator encourages the groups to start by finding the name of their group, which will be printed at the top of the worksheet.

Να κινηθεί κατά της Θήβας;

1) Πόλη: να αντισταθεί στον εφετεριστή αδερφό του - διεκδίκηση εξουσίας  
 2) Οίκος: να διατηρήσει τις σχέσεις με τον αδερφό του

**ΠΟΛΥΝΕΙΚΗΣ**

Αξίες

1) Πόλη:
 

- υπακοή στην διαταγή του πατέρα
- δικαιοσύνη
- τιμή

2) Οίκος:
 

- αγάπη για την οικογένεια
- αδερφοσύνη
- ελπίδα

Επιλογή  
 Με βάση τις αξίες της πατρίδας & την αποκατάσταση της τάξης  
 => θάνατος και ατίμωση

OPATOI

**ΚΡΕΟΝΤΑΣ**

«Οποια παραβεί τον νόμο, τιμωρείται σε δημοσιο λιθοβολισμό!»

• Βασιλιάς της Θήβας  
 • Θεός της Αντιγόνης

**Απόφαση:**  
 Θανατική ποινή για την Αντιγόνη!

**ΝΟΜΟΣ:** Απαγόρευση ταφής του Πολυνείκη.

**ΑΞΙΕΣ:**

- Πατρίδα και αγάπη για εκείνη
- Υπακοή στο νόμο
- Διατήρηση της εξουσίας
- Δικαιοσύνη

**ΚΑΤΑ:**

- Καταπάτηση του θεσμού της οικογένειας
- Έλλειψη σεβασμού προς τους θεούς

**ΥΠΕΡ:**

- ΤΗΡΗΣΗ ΝΟΜΟΥ
- ΠΡΑΤΤΕΙ ΣΥΜΦΩΝΑ ΜΕ ΤΟΝ ΝΟΜΟ

Το χαρμάνι του Κρέοντα

✦ Made by: Βαλία, Θωραή, Γωγώ, Μελίνα, Σιρολίνα Σωτηρίου

## Farewell - Activity evaluation

At the end of the activity, the educator/facilitator is asked to summarize what has happened, focusing on some points that he/she considers most important. It is suggested that the facilitator/educator should focus on the conceptual framework of values, as formed during the discussion, as well as highlight the dimension of the diversity of values, as a result of the different way each person perceives and prioritizes them and, consequently, our choices in terms of decision-making.

The animator is then encouraged to distribute an evaluation questionnaire of the activity to the students (Appendix I).



# APPENDIX - I

## Ethical dilemmas through ancient tragedies

### Evaluation Questionnaire

1. Gender \*

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

2. Age \*

- <13 years old
- 13-15 years old
- 15-18 years old
- >18 years old

3. Where do you live; \*

- Big City/Capital (>100.000 residents)
- Big city suburb
- Small city (<100.000 residents)
- Province (<30.000 κάτοικοι)

4. What is your mother language? \*

5. What motivated you to participate in this particular educational activity? \*

- curiosity
- interest of the topic
- obligation, as it was in class time
- other

6. How would you evaluate the activity, in terms of? \*

<b>I didn't like at all</b>	<b>I didn't like</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>I liked</b>	<b>I liked a lot</b>
<b>the content</b>				

	<b>I didn't like at all</b>	<b>I didn't like</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>I liked</b>	<b>I liked a lot</b>
the structure the duration					

7. How would you evaluate the following parts/points of the activity? \*

interactive activity (brainstorming - what are values/feelings)	<b>I didn't like at all</b>	<b>I didn't like</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>I liked</b>	<b>I liked a lot</b>
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Ethical dilemma - stages of  
resolution (short  
presentation - discussion)

Resolving an ethical  
dilemma - values  
emergence (group work)

presentation of each group

Discussion - Reflection

8. During your participation did you have the time to express your thoughts? \*

Yes



- No
- I don't know

9. During your participation were you able to work with your classmates and exchange views? \*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

10. Would you like to participate again in a similar activity? \*

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

11. How often would you like to participate in similar educational activities with the school?\*

- 1 time per week
- 1-2 times per month
- >10 times during the school year

<10 times during the school year φορές

12. What does 'value' mean to you? \*

- personal rules
- way of thinking & behaviour
- ideally
- lifestyle
- ideology
- other

13. What values does Polynices represent? \*

- love
- gender equality
- freedom (speech/thought)
- democracy
- obedience to the law
- family

- honor
- respect
- personal interest
- justice
- collective interest
- courage
- religion
- other

14. What values do you think clash in the conflict with the decision of Polynices? \*

- obedience to the Laws of the State // obedience to the unwritten laws
- obedience to the Rules // vigilantism
- gender equality // powerful predominance
- family // state
- love // personal benefit/duty
- justice // injustice

- Personal Interest // Collective Interest
- other

15. What values does Kreon represent? \*

- love
- equality
- freedom (of speech/thought/action)
- democracy
- obedience to the law
- family
- honor
- respect
- personal interest
- justice
- collective interest
- courage

- religion
- other

16. What values do you think clash in the conflict with the decision of Kreon? \*

- obedience to the Laws of the State // obedience to the unwritten laws
- obedience to the Rules // vigilantism
- gender equality // powerful predominance
- family // state
- love // personal benefit/duty
- justice // injustice
- Personal Interest // Collective Interest
- other

Is there anything you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your time!



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