

Classical Passage  
AGE Ch. 16

1. The specter of human sacrifice haunted ancient Greek mythology, especially when it was dramatized in the form of Greek tragedy. Among the more famous of these narratives was the story of Iphigenia, the oldest daughter of Agamemnon, the king who led the Greek forces to the Trojan War. He faced the divine command to sacrifice Iphigenia on the altar to the goddess Artemis in order get his troops to the war, a horror Euripides developed into a tragedy called Iphigenia at Aulis. In an earlier play, however, Euripides had made an adventure story out of a version of the myth where Iphigenia escapes the sacrifice and is transported to the far-off land of the Taurians. There she serves the goddess Artemis as a priestess. Many years later, her younger brother, Orestes, and his best friend, Pylades, arrive in the land of the Taurians, unaware that Iphigenia is even alive. Paradoxically, Iphigenia is supposed to make a human sacrifice of any foreigners to come to the temple. When she realizes that her newest victims are in fact fellow Greeks, she agrees to spare Pylades, so that he may deliver a message back to her family in Greece (not yet realizing that her own brother is right before her). To be sure that Pylades will in fact deliver her message, she demands that he swear an oath, and so begins one of the most famous recognition scenes in world literature:

ORESTES

ἢ κἀντιδώσεις τῷδε τοὺς αὐτοὺς λόγους;

IPHIGENIA

τί χρῆμα δράσειν ἢ τί μὴ δράσειν; λέγε.

ORESTES

ἐκ γῆς ἀφήσειν μὴ θάνοντα βαρβάρου.

Iphigenia agrees. Orestes then asks whether the king of the Taurians will agree to the plan.

IPHIGENIA

ναί· πείσω σφε...

Orestes then says that the swearing of the oath can go on. Iphigenia makes Pylades swear that he will give the messages to her friends.

PYLADES

τοῖς σοῖς φίλοισι γράμματ' ἀποδώσω τάδε.

IPHIGENIA

κάγὼ σὲ σώσω...

Pylades then worries that if there is an accident and the letter is lost, he will not be able to deliver the message. He says in part, if there is a shipwreck:

PYLADES

...σῶμα δ' ἐκσώσω μόνον.

Iphigenia then says she will read the letter aloud to Pylades, so that he can either deliver the letter or relay the message.

IPHIGENIA

λόγῳ φράσω σοι πάντ' ἀπαγγεῖλαι φίλοις...  
τὸ σῶμα σώσας τοὺς λόγους σώσεις ἐμοί.

Iphigenia begins reading the letter aloud, a letter wherein she is writing to Orestes and explaining how she herself is still alive. At one point Orestes shouts out:

ORESTES

Πυλάδη, τί λέξω;

Iphigenia ignores the interruptions and insists on reading the letter to the end, at which point Pylades declares:

PYLADES

τὸν δ' ὄρκον ὃν κατώμοσ' ἐμπεδώσομεν. ἰδοῦ, φέρω σοι δέλτον ἀποδίδωμί τε, Ὀρέστα, τῆσδε σῆς κασιγνήτης πάρα.

selections from Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 737-92

ἀπαγγεῖλαι (inf act) report  
ἀντιδίδωμι -δώσω give in return  
βαρβάρου (gen sg) ἡ foreign, barbarian  
(modifies γῆς)  
γῆς (gen sg) ἡ earth, land  
γράμμα -ατος τό letter, writing  
δέλτον (acc sg) ἡ tablet  
δράω, δράσω do  
ἐγώ (nom sg) I  
ἐκσώσω ~ σώσω  
ἐμοί (dat sg) me  
ἐμπεδῶ -ώσω establish, accomplish  
ἤ makes a yes/no question  
θάνων -οντος ὁ dead  
ἰδοῦ Look!  
κάγώ = καί ἐγώ  
κάντιδώσεις = καί ἀντιδώσεις  
κασιγνήτης (gen sg) ἡ sister  
κατώμοσ' (1st sg) swore

λέγω, λέξω say, talk  
λέγε (a command, from λέγω)  
λόγους (acc pl) λόγῳ (dat sg) ὁ word  
μόνον only  
ναί yes  
Ὅρέστα (vocative case, indicating a direct  
form of address)  
ὄρκον (acc sg) ὁ oath  
πάντ' = πάντα (acc pl) τό everything  
πάρα = παρά (the shift in accent indicates that  
it is *postpositive*, i.e., the nouns that it governs  
precede, rather than follow, the preposition)  
σέ (acc sg) σοι (dat sg) you  
σῆς (gen sg) ἡ / σοῖς (dat pl) ὁ your  
σφε (acc sg) him  
σώσας (nom sg) by saving  
φέρω carry  
φίλοις/φίλοισι (dat pl) ὁ friends, family  
φράζω -σω declare