

## MASKS AND DRAMA

The theater was a sacred place to the Greeks. The performances put on there were believed to be religious ceremonies in nature, and they were usually very lengthy. In the heyday of Greek drama, visitors would arrive in the early morning, in hopes of getting good seats, since the closest and best were reserved for priests and city officials, and other such important people. There was a charge to attend, but the poor could attend for free. Almost all men were welcome. Women could attend, but usually only married women did so, and they were all supposed to sit in the very back. The people could look forward to staying a whole day!

This whole time was not spent waiting, however. Even though many brought food with them for the time that they would spend, they could enjoy the company of their friends and fellow citizens, and then they would be able to enjoy the drama that would unfold before them. Typically there might be as many as four plays in a day. The Athenian festival dedicated to Dionysos (dee-OH-nuh-sohs), God of Wine and often of Life itself, celebrated drama by holding four full days of special theatrical performances, tragedies for the first three, and then a day of comedy on the last. This pattern was sometimes followed by the theaters even outside the festival, in a smaller version; they would have three tragedies in a day, followed by the fourth, a comedy.

Greek theater was a very exciting thing. Most all of the plays had some element of gods and non-human beings, like Satyrs, Nymphs, and the like. Usually there was some lesson to be learned from the tale, and oftentimes plays would take a story from mythology and bring it to life. The actors, who were all male, would wear masks and sometimes wigs (or do their hair in different styles according to their role) to perform on stage. They usually took their cues from the main actor, which was the protagonist. There were secondary and tertiary actors added eventually. It is unknown as to how many actors were typically on the stage at any given time, but it is believed that most actors had to play several parts in any performance.

The play was typically accompanied by a chorus of singing men. It is not known as to exactly the extent of the chorus, but it is believed that they sang and sometimes may have even danced, and that their own performance accentuated themes in the play. The chorus may have been used to underline certain things that the writer wanted the audience to understand.

Tragedies, which usually did not have a happy ending, were often accompanied by what was called a "Satyr play", where the chorus may have adopted the roles of Satyrs. The Satyr play was usually an amusing follow-up

that was lighter and more rural than the tragedy, even making fun of (or more appropriately, *satirizing*) the work that had just been seen. This lightened the mood of the audience, which could be very low after witnessing the sometimes heart-wrenching sadness of a tragedy.

Some of the plays that were thought of as the best were rewarded, with the main actor, the writer, and the sponsor awarded an ivy wreath, to wear on their heads. Although it may not seem like much, the fame and the glory associated with this wreath were more than enough to satisfy.

Below are included masks for you to print out and color of Kallikrates and Kouris! You can color them any way you wish. You can attach a wooden stick at the bottom, or you can punch holes in the sides and tie a string around the mask, to attach it to your head. Be sure to remember to cut out the eyeholes so that you can see!



