War in Three Voices

Compare how Greek history, epic poetry, and drama present war.

AWH.C.6.4.E "History, Poetry, Drama: Herodotus, Homer, Aeschylus"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows how its author presents war, and circle a phrase that shows how the work gathers stories or reaches an audience.

Three Ways to Tell of War

1 In the fifth century BCE, Greek communities still talked about the Persian invasions. Herodotus traveled and asked people what they remembered about these wars. In his Histories, he reports speeches, customs, battles, and stories he heard from different groups. When accounts disagree, he sometimes presents more than one version and tells readers which he finds more convincing. His description of the Greek stand at Thermopylae, for example, places a fierce battle within a larger story about Persian expansion. His method was not modern fact-checking, but his questions made competing accounts part of the record.

2 Long before Herodotus wrote, stories of the Trojan War circulated as epic poetry. The Iliad, attributed to Homer, was shaped for performance aloud. It follows a short stretch of the war, especially Achilles' anger after a dispute with another Greek leader. Warriors win glory, but their choices also bring grief to families and friends. Gods enter the action, and speeches reveal what characters fear or desire. The poem tells us much about the values its audiences explored, such as honor and loyalty. It is not a firsthand report that can prove the details of an ancient siege.

3 In 472 BCE, Aeschylus brought another war to the stage in The Persians. His tragedy looks back on the Greek victory at Salamis, but its setting is the Persian royal court. Actors and a chorus voice the dread of people waiting for news, then the grief that follows a messenger's report of defeat. This choice lets a Greek audience confront the cost of victory through the enemy's loss. Unlike Herodotus, Aeschylus does not weigh conflicting reports for readers. Unlike Homer, he dramatizes a recent conflict known to his audience, not a legendary war.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Herodotus handle accounts that disagree, and how is that different from the way the Iliad tells its story?

2. How do Homer and Aeschylus each show a human cost of war? Give one detail from each work.

3. Herodotus and Aeschylus both address the Persian invasions. How does each present those wars?

4. Why would it be misleading to treat all three works as identical eyewitness records? Give two reasons from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town that has just lost a battle. Write a five-sentence audio-guide plan for an exhibit about this imagined event, using two of these forms: history, epic poetry, or tragedy. Explain what each form would show, and name a question visitors would still need to investigate.

ANSWER KEY

War in Three Voices

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.6.4.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows how its author presents war, and circle a phrase that shows how the work gathers stories or reaches an audience. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Herodotus handle accounts that disagree, and how is that different from the way the Iliad tells its story?	**Herodotus sometimes presents competing accounts and judges which is more convincing. The Iliad tells a performed epic story through characters, speeches, and gods.**
2	How do Homer and Aeschylus each show a human cost of war? Give one detail from each work.	**In the Iliad, warriors' choices bring grief to families and friends. In The Persians, people at the Persian court dread the news and grieve after the report of defeat.**
3	Herodotus and Aeschylus both address the Persian invasions. How does each present those wars?	**Herodotus gathers accounts and places battles within a larger history of Persian expansion. Aeschylus stages a tragedy about the Persian court's response to defeat.**
4	Why would it be misleading to treat all three works as identical eyewitness records? Give two reasons from the passage.	**The Iliad is not a firsthand report of the Trojan War, and The Persians is a staged tragedy. Herodotus gathered accounts, but his method was not modern fact-checking.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For the imagined town's defeat, I would pair a historical inquiry with a tragedy. The historian would interview survivors on both sides and note where their accounts conflict. Onstage, a chorus of townspeople could wait for news and mourn when a messenger arrives. The inquiry would show what people claim happened, while the tragedy would help visitors feel the loss. Visitors would still need to investigate which reports are supported by other evidence.

Accept other passage-supported comparisons in Part 2. For Part 3, look for two distinct forms applied to the imagined battle and a question that calls for further investigation.