



“The Grouch” by Menander—An Example of Greek New Comedy

Guide for Curriculum Unit 84.02.07
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Everyone needs a good laugh! Students and teachers alike can enjoy the slap-stick humor of Greek New Comedy, originally presented 2,000 years ago, as if it were written yesterday. Comedy, as we now know it, is traced in this unit to the Greeks and is highlighted by one particular play, “The Dyskolos” (“The Grouch”) by Menander, one of New Comedy’s foremost playwrights.

The language is simple and the theme, universal:

boy meets girl and falls madly in love; girl’s overly protective father is extremely particular about his daughter’s future and disapproves of the young man; father is in desperate trouble and is saved by the young man; young man gets girl in the end.

The unit contains background material on Menander’s life and on Greek Old, Middle, and New Comedy. It also contains a synopsis of the play, notes on character development and technical information on suggested masks and costumes (there are 15 scaled-down drawings of stock masks on graph paper which students can easily reproduce in order to present the play or to enhance their enjoyment of a staged reading).

In all, it is an historical, critical, and technical approach to a very funny play which can be enjoyed in today’s classrooms.

(Recommended for English Literature, World History, Drama and E.S.O.L. classes for grades 6 through 12)

Key Words

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