

Please answer **TWO** of the following questions in English. (100%)

**Question 1 (50%)**

The following excerpt is taken from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Please read the passage concerning the sacrifice of Agamemnon's own daughter Iphigenia carefully and give a close reading of your understanding of it.

THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENIA

*A chorus of old men comes on stage as the sentinel goes in through the door of the palace with his news. Their song recalls the day, ten years back, when the army departed for Troy and an omen appeared that the prophet Calchas feared might have terrible consequences. A pair of eagles, royal birds, seized and devoured a pregnant hare; the kings, Calchas proclaimed, would destroy the city of Troy and its as yet unborn generations. But he foresaw the anger of the goddess Artemis, the protector of wild life, and feared she might send adverse winds to prevent the expedition from sailing. The winds came, as he feared, and kept the ships idle at Aulis.*

So it was that day the king,  
the steersman at the helm of Greece,  
would never blame a word the prophet said—  
swept away by the wrenching winds of fortune  
he conspired! Weatherbound we could not sail,  
our stores exhausted, fighting strength hard-pressed,  
and the squadrons rode in the shallows off Chalkis  
where the riptide crashes, drags,

and winds from the north pinned down our hulls at Aulis,  
port of anguish . . . head winds starving,  
sheets and the cables snapped  
and the men's minds strayed,  
the pride, the bloom of Greece  
was raked as time ground on,  
ground down, and then the cure for the storm  
and it was harsher—Calchas cried,  
"My captains, Artemis must have blood!"—  
so harsh the sons of Atreus  
dashed their sceptres on the rocks,  
could not hold back the tears,

and I still can hear the older warlord saying,  
"Obey, obey, or a heavy doom will crush me!—  
Oh but doom *will* crush me  
once I rend my child,  
the glory of my house—  
a father's hands are stained,  
blood of a young girl streaks the altar.  
Pain both ways and what is worse?  
Desert the fleets, fail the alliance?  
No, but stop the winds with a virgin's blood,  
feed their lust, their fury?—feed their fury!—  
Law is law!—  
Let all go well."

And once he slipped his neck in the strap of Fate,  
his spirit veering black, impure, unholy,  
once he turned he stopped at nothing,  
seized with the frenzy  
blinding driving to outrage—  
wretched frenzy, cause of all our grief!  
Yes, he had the heart  
to sacrifice his daughter,  
to bless the war that avenged a woman's loss,  
a bridal rite that sped the men-of-war.

"My father, father!"—she might pray to the winds;  
no innocence moves her judges mad for war.  
Her father called his henchmen on,  
on with a prayer,  
"Hoist her over the altar  
like a yearling, give it all your strength!  
She's fainting—lift her,  
sweep her robes around her,  
but slip this strap in her gentle curving lips . . .  
here, gag her hard, a sound will curse the house"—

and the bridle chokes her voice . . . her saffron robes  
pouring over the sand  
her glance like arrows showering  
wounding every murderer through with pity  
clear as a picture, live,  
she strains to call their names . . .  
I remember often the days with father's guests  
when over the feast her voice unbroken,  
pure as the hymn her loving father  
bearing third libations, sang to Saving Zeus—  
transfixed with joy, Atreus' offspring  
throbbing out their love.

What comes next? I cannot see it, cannot say.  
The strong techniques of Calchas do their work.  
But Justice turns the balance scales,  
sees that we suffer  
and we suffer and we learn.  
And we will know the future when it comes.  
Greet it too early, weep too soon.  
It all comes clear in the light of day.

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## Question 2 (50%)

The following story is taken from the *New Testament*. Please read the story of "The Prodigal Son" carefully and give a close reading of your understanding of it.

A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

