**Sophocles**

Sophocles was born about 496 BC in Colonus Hippius (now part of Athens), he was to become one of the great playwrights of the golden age. The son of a wealthy merchant, he would enjoy all the comforts of a thriving Greek empire.

Sophocles was provided with the best traditional aristocratic education. He studied all of the arts. By the age of sixteen, he was already known for his beauty and grace and was chosen to lead a choir of boys at a celebration of the victory of Salamis in 480 BC. In 468 BC, at the age of 28, he defeated Aeschylus, whose pre-eminence as a tragic poet had long been undisputed, in a dramatic competition.

In 441 BC he was in turn defeated in one of the annual Athenian dramatic competitions by Euripides. From 468 BC, however, Sophocles won first prize about 20 times and many second prizes. His life, which ended in 406 BC at about the age of 90, coincided with the period of Athenian greatness. He was not politically active or militarily inclined, but the Athenians twice elected him to high military office.

Sophocles wrote more than 100 plays of which seven complete tragedies and fragments of 80 or 90 others are preserved. He was the first to add a third actor. He also abolished the trilogic form. Sophocles chose to make each tragedy a complete entity in itself--as a result, he had to pack all of his action into the shorter form, and this clearly offered greater dramatic possibilities.

Sophocles also effected a transformation in the spirit and significance of a tragedy; thereafter, although religion and morality were still major dramatic themes, the plights, decisions and fates of individuals became the chief interest of Greek tragedy.

*Adapted from http://www.ancientgreece.com/s/People/Sophocles/*