

This passage begins with the word “deinos,” which means both wonderful and terrible, and is one of the most ambiguous words in the Greek language. Various interpretations and translations have been offered of its meaning in this choral ode, known as the “Ode to Man,” and each group of performers will need to decide which of the two meanings to use.

Chorus

strophe 1

Wonders / terrors are many, and none is more **wonderful / terrible** than man. |335 This spans the sea, even when it surges white before the gales of the south wind, and makes a path under swells that threaten to engulf him. Earth, too, the eldest of the gods, the unwilting, the unwearied, |340 he wears away to his own ends, turning the soil with the offspring of horses as the plows weave to and fro year after year.

antistrophe 1

The feather-brained tribe of birds |345 and the clans of wild beasts and the sea-brood of the sea he snares in the meshes of his twisted nets, and he leads them captive, very-skilled man. He masters by his arts |350 the beast who dwells in the wilds and roams the hills. He tames the shaggy-maned horse, putting the yoke upon its neck, and tames the tireless mountain bull.

strophe 2

Speech and thought fast as the wind |355 and the moods that give order to a city he has taught himself, and how to flee the arrows of the inhospitable frost under clear skies and the arrows of the storming rain. |360 He has resource for everything. Lacking resource in nothing he strides towards what must come. From Hades alone he shall procure no escape, but from hopeless diseases he has devised flights.

antistrophe 2

|365 Possessing resourceful skill, a subtlety beyond expectation, he moves now to evil, now to good. When he honors the laws of the land and the justice of the gods to which he is bound by oath, |370 he stands high in his city. But banned from his city is he who, thanks to his rashness, couples with disgrace. Never may he share my home, |375 never think my thoughts, who does these things!

The Guard enters, leading in Antigone.

anapests

What marvel sent by superhuman forces is this? My mind goes in two different directions! I know her. How can I deny that this girl is Antigone? O unhappy child |380 of your unhappy father, of Oedipus! What can this mean? What! Surely they aren't bringing you captive for disobeying the king's laws and being caught in foolishness?