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Sophocles, Translated by Ian Johnston

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Sophocles (c. 496 BC to 406 BC), the great Athenian tragic dramatist, wrote Ajax early in his career, perhaps around 440 BC. It is one of the seven plays which survive from the more than one hundred and twenty plays Sophocles wrote.Ajax presents the story of the final day in the life of one of the most glorious heroes from the world of the Iliad, the great Ajax, king of Salamis, the finest warrior after Achilles, who is driven mad by the gods, commits unspeakable atrocities, and then must face up to what he has done, particularly to the shame he must now encounter from his colleagues and his family. How can a hero who has always lived by the traditional heroic code continue living after such a disgrace? Ajax s resolution of this problem is one of the very greatest scenes in tragic drama. In the character of Odysseus, Ajax s great enemy, Sophocles also explores how a society which has moved beyond the heroic age should deal with such disasters.Ian Johnston new translation is an accurate and fluent rendition of Sophocles text, especially suitable for dramatic production.

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