

Agrippa d'Aubigné
Les Tragiques
worksheet

1. about the author and his work

Using reliable sources, find out more about this author:

- what was his full name? when did he live?
- what are the most remarkable events of his life?
- what place does *Les Tragiques* take in his literary œuvre?
 - You may like to read d'Aubigné's memoirs ("Sa vie à ses enfants") in *Agrippa d'Aubigné. Œuvres*, ed. by Henri Weber, Jacques Bailbé and Marguerite Soulié (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 381-463.
- To what extent was Agrippa d'Aubigné a courtier? A soldier? A political thinker? An historian?

2. about *Les Tragiques* (in general)

Find out more about *Les Tragiques*:

- when was *Les Tragiques* written? What was its compositional history?
- when and how was it first published? what do the circumstances of publication say about the work? what was the further publication history of the work?
- what is it about? what was the author's intention in composing this work?
 - Draw up a fairly detailed plan of the structure of *Les Tragiques*, with a brief description for each 'book'. Don't forget the paratexts either!

3. reading *Les Tragiques*

First read the extracts indicated on your reading list; then answer the following:

- D'Aub. finds much of his imaginary in Classical Antiquity and in the Bible. Find some examples in the extracts you have read. How do you explain these two apparently diverse pools of imagery? How are they reconciled?
- Compare and contrast the images of parentage and kinship found in I, 97-130; I, 501-562; and V, 705-1054.
- Find out more about Henri III and his court and read II, 773-864. What techniques does d'Aubigné use to vilify this king? Do you think d'Aubigné's portrayal of Henri III is at all justified? Why (not)?
- Read V, 705-1054 and draw up a plan of this episode. Could it possibly be considered a credible account of the Saint-Bartholomew's Day massacre? Why (not)?
- In V, 702-03 A. d'Aubigné announces the Saint-Bartholomew's Day massacre as 'une tragédie/ qui efface le reste'. How is this tragic image maintained? What does it convey to the reader?

4. topics for discussion

- 'Le livre de la colère et de l'espérance' (Jacques Bailbé): to what extent do you agree with this description of d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*?

- To what extent, and in what way, is d'Aubigné's *Tragiques* a search for 'la rigoureuse vérité' (préface, l. 152)?
- 'More than an expression of protestant allegiance, d'Aubigné's *Tragiques* is a frenzied attempt to restore justice in the world.' Discuss.
- Write a commentary of either VII, 695-731 or VII, 981-1003.
- Read another one of d'Aubigné's works (or a sizeable extract in the case of the longer writings): how does it relate / compare to *Les Tragiques*?
- Discuss the portrayal of violence in one of the 'books' of *Les Tragiques*.