Greek tragedy are most often connected to and seen as an extension to drama. They are based around a protagonist’s downfall and many times center on a fatal flaw or mistake. They are also said to include some sort of conflict in them “whether that conflict is between two characters, two different sets of laws, two different conceptions of justice, or a tragic hero struggling against his fate” (Moodle). Two parts in the Oresteia by  Aeschylus; The Libation Bearers and Eumenides, as well as Antigone by Sophocles are all representative of this natural tragic conflict.

Antigone by Sophocles is a tragedy by every meaning. Antigone herself is a great example of a tragic hero, and the play follows her events and eventual death. The tragic conflict in Antigone is the conflict between two different types of law’s. It deals with mortal laws versus holy laws; the laws of the God’s, and it questions which one overwhelms the other. Creon, now ruler of Thebes, has made it so that the brother of Antigone; Polyneices (leader of the rebels) , will not have holy rites, nor will his body be buried. His body was chosen to be left on the battlefield, as food for wild animals. At the time, this was considered the ultimate insulting act. Antigone however, believes that no matter who the person is or was, they should have a proper burial. This is where the conflict between different types of laws originates. Antigone is a believer that no matter what sins the person committed, they deserve a proper burial and holy rites. Not only is this to respect the person, but it is also a way of respecting the God’s. As burial is a holy act, it is therefore an act that must be done in order to maintain respect of the God’s. “But I will bury him; and if I must die, I say that this crime is holy: I shall lie down with him in death, and I shall be as dear to him as he to me.” (Antigone, 56-58)  Here Antigone shows that she believes holy law is more powerful than mortal. She says if she is to die then she will. Her crime is holy, she is doing what the God’s would want, and so they shall not judge her when she enters the afterlife. Creon’s view of this however, is that Polyneices was a rebel leader, and does not deserve the right to burial. He decides this, being the ruler of Thebes, and expects it to be done. The conflict arises when Antigone will not allow mortal power and law, even the ruler of Thebes, to contradict a holy act and law that should always take place to respect the God’s.

The Oresteia by Aeschylus breeds many conflicts. The main conflict that arises from this play is the conflict between conceptions of justice. Throughout the play, over and over you hear about how vengeance is the only true form of justice. How bloodshed leads to more more bloodshed in order to justify these actions. The only way for justice to occur is to murder the person who committed the act, yet this then leads to someone looking to avenge the person who was just killed. “Hostile words for hostile words-let it be done. One murderous stroke is paid off by another lethal blow. The one who acts must suffer." So runs the ancient saying, now three generations old..” (The Libation Bearers 310–315) This shows that the chorus in the play knows how this justice works and has nothing to say about it, merely that it is natural law and how things go. This concept of justice is challenged in the play, taking place at the end. Following the original concept of justice, Orestes, son of Agamemnon, avenged his father by killing his mother and her lover. Because of this, he was now haunted by the furies. Following this natural law of justice, he must now meet his death for the murders he committed. Where the concepts of justice conflict, is when Orestes is in court for his crimes. He is tried by the furies, and instead of the normal sentencing at the time, death, Orestes has a chance to defend himself for his crimes and is eventually seen to be not guilty. This justice is completely different than what has always happened, but with the help of the Goddess Athena, this new type of justice is made law in Athens. Because of this, there is now set actions for people to defend themselves, and for justice to be fair and different rather than always completely set in stone. Athena and her actions stops this endless cycle of blood for blood, and allowed everyone in the future to be tried fairly. This concept of justice was the stepping stone for modern law, and acts as one of the first examples of modern democracy.

In Eumenides, the conflict that is present is between the old God’s and the new. The story takes place after Zeus overthrew the older God’s and follows the idea of his making way for the Olympians; the new God’s. There is a struggle that takes place between the different entities. The two types of God’s are represented by one of their own. Apollo is shown representing the new Gods, the Olympians. He is part of the new group in power, young, and representing what they fought for and achieved. The Furies represent the Old God’s. Being one of the ancient deities overthrown, castaways seen as below the new generation. Apollo and the Furies however, do not just represent the old and the new. They represent the ideology behind each side, and these play an integral role in causing the conflict that occurs. Apollo also represents youth, he represents civilization and order, all that was lacking when the old God’s were in power. The Furies represent chaos and the uncivilized, all that there was when they were in power. The conflict in this play is resolved by Athena. Dealing again with how Orestes should be punished, Athena decides that everyone should have a right to be tried, and fairly, but also shows that there is a place for the older way of thinking. “Older art thou than I, and I will bear

With this thy fury. Know, although thou be more wise in ancient wisdom, yet have from Zeus no scanted measure of the same” (Eumenides 59) She is saying that while the new God’s and their ways are needed, represented by a fair trial, the old God’s will continue to play a huge part in modern Athens. They are older and wiser, and Zeus is younger and stronger. The conflict should not be decided by one taking over the other, but by both working together, and using aspects of both societies.