

The Frogs Key Info

Writer: Aristophanes | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

- **Full Title:** The Frogs (Βάτραχοι in Greek)
- **Author:** Aristophanes (c. 446 – c. 386 BCE)
- **Title of the Author:** Father of Comedy / Father of Old Comedy / The greatest comic playwright of ancient Athens
- **Source:** Based on Greek mythology, Athenian politics, and cultural life; it mixes a mythological journey to the Underworld with satire on literature, drama, and contemporary Athenian society.
- **Written Time:** First performed in 405 BCE, during the City Dionysia festival in Athens.
- **First Performed:** 405 BCE at the City Dionysia festival, where it won first prize.
- **First Published:** 405 BCE
- **Genre:** Old Comedy / Satirical Drama / Literary Criticism Play
- **Form:** Verse drama written in Ancient Greek; it combines comic dialogue in iambic trimeter with choral odes (the “frog chorus” is especially famous).
- **Structure:** Divided into two major halves: 1. The journey of Dionysus to the Underworld to bring back a great tragedian. 2. The debate (Agon) between Aeschylus and Euripides in Hades to decide who is the greater poet.
- **Tone:** Comic, satirical, witty, playful, exaggerated, but also serious in its cultural criticism.
- **Point of View:** Primarily dramatic dialogue; perspectives shift between Dionysus, Xanthias (his slave), the Chorus of Frogs, Euripides, Aeschylus, and other characters in the Underworld.
- **Significance:** One of Aristophanes’ most famous plays; it is unique as both a comedy and a work of literary criticism. It provides valuable insight into how Athenians viewed tragedy, especially the contrast between Aeschylus and Euripides. It also reflects the cultural anxiety of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. It seeks moral and political guidance from poets.
- **Language:** Ancient Greek.

- **Famous Line:** “We are the chorus of the frogs, brekekekex koax koax!” (imitating frog sounds; one of the most quoted comic refrains in literature).
- **Setting:**
- **Time Setting:** During the Peloponnesian War, late 5th century BCE.
- **Place Setting:** Starts in Athens, then moves to the mythological Underworld (Hades).

Key Notes

Literary Criticism: This play is not just comedy but also the first literary-critical drama of the ancient world. In the underworld, Dionysus arranges a contest between two tragic poets, Aeschylus and Euripides. Both try to prove their superiority. Here, they debate about poetic style, the purpose of poetry, and the power of drama. Aristophanes wanted to show that a poet is not only an artist but also a guide for society.

Chorus of Frogs: The most famous part of the play is the chorus of frogs, who chant “Brekekekex koax koax.” On his way to the underworld, Dionysus is accompanied by this chorus. The strange sound of the frogs has become a lasting symbol of Greek comedy. It is not only for humor but also creates rhythm, joy, and a peculiar atmosphere within the play.

Politics of Athens: The Frogs was written during the Peloponnesian War, when Athens was facing defeat and disorder. In this play, Aristophanes directly says that society needs good poets and dramatists because they teach morality and guide the nation. His satire on the political crisis of Athens is clear.

Aeschylus vs. Euripides: The central dramatic scene of the play is the debate (Agon) between Aeschylus and Euripides. Euripides tries to prove himself as a modern and rational poet, while Aeschylus defends the ancient values of heroism, religion, and epic grandeur. In the end, Dionysus chooses Aeschylus to return because he believes that in a time of crisis, Athens needs his powerful voice.