

Oedipus Study Guide 2016

Prologue

1. What do you learn about the city and Oedipus from the stage directions and opening speech?
2. What is Oedipus like? What are his attitudes about people and himself?
3. What does the priest tell us about the city and Oedipus?
4. What expectations are put on Oedipus? Is this ironic?
5. How does Oedipus answer the priest and the supplicants? Is this ironic? Is this foreshadowing?
6. What happened with Laius? What does Oedipus plan to do? Is this ironic?

Parados

1. What is the chorus saying here? To whom do they pray? How does this represent the voice of the people?

Episode 1

2. What curse does Oedipus place on the murderer?
3. What is ironic about this scene?
4. Who is Tiresias? Is there anything symbolic or significant about him?
5. What is his response at first? Why?
6. How does Oedipus respond? What does this reveal about his character?
7. Any other incidents of rage in Oedipus's life?
8. What does Tiresias finally say?
9. How does Oedipus react?
10. How does the Choragos react?
11. What is Tiresias's prophecy?
12. Why doesn't Oedipus recognize the truth?

Stasimon 1

1. What is discussed in each stanza? What are the reactions of the chorus?

Episode 2

2. What is the conflict/debate between Oedipus and Creon?
3. What character traits are revealed during this agon?
4. How is Creon different from Oedipus? A foil? How does he view Oedipus?
5. What does Jocasta want them to do? What is her attitude towards the prophecies? Is this ironic?
6. Why does Oedipus think that he has killed Laius? What do we learn about the feast, the roads, the prophecy at Delphi, his parents?
7. What links Oedipus to Laius?
8. Why does he want to interview the survivor?
9. What conflicts have emerged so far? Which are central?

Stasimon 2

1. Why does the chorus separate itself from Oedipus?
2. What sins are mentioned? What is said about religion?

Episode 3

1. What good news is brought by the messenger from Corinth?
2. How do Oedipus and Jocasta treat the oracles?
3. How is this good news about Polybus ironically reversed?
4. Does Jocasta know something that Oedipus doesn't?
5. Who wants to continue pursuing the truth? Why?
6. What does Jocasta intend on doing when she enters the palace?

Stasimon 3

7. What is the chorus anticipating? How do you know?

Episode 4

1. Why won't the herdsman look at Oedipus?
2. What do all of the coincidences suggest about the fate of Oedipus?
3. What does Oedipus discover?

Stasimon 4

1. What moral is drawn about the life of Oedipus?
2. How is Oedipus's life summarized?
3. What does the chorus feel about Oedipus? (hint: think catharsis!)

Exodus

1. What happens to Jocasta? What does Oedipus do? What does he want?
2. Who does he blame for his tragedy?
3. What is Creon like as the new king? Explain with examples.

Final Short Essay Questions-YOU MUST ANSWER # 7, #8, and #9 and 2 others.

1. Discuss the structure of the play? Why is it structured this way? What is the most important moment in the play? Where does the anagnorisis occur? The reversal? The catastrophe?
2. What is the central conflict of the play? How many arguments occur in the play? See stichomythia (syntax term). How are the conflicts resolved?
3. Discuss the coincidences in the play? Are they believable? Convincing? How many occur before the play begins? Why?
4. Discuss the role of the two messengers in Oedipus.
5. How is Oedipus an archetypal hero? Is he more than one type of archetypal hero? How does the object of Oedipus's search change throughout the course of the play?
6. Is Jocasta a tragic hero? Explain using Aristotle's definition of tragedy and tragic hero (SEE YOUR BOOK).
7. Several image chains run throughout *Oedipus Rex*. Cite several examples of each of the following and show how each series of images is integrated with the theme of the play.
 - (a) ship metaphors and harbor haven symbolism
 - (b) metaphors of vision of blindness vs sight
 - (c) hunting and tracking metaphors
8. What is the meaning of the work as a whole? Support the theme with evidence from the text. Hint: Think essay prompt!
9. Explain the concept of determinism/fate vs free will. Give examples of fate and free will in the play. Is Oedipus to blame for his tragic downfall?

