Sophocles¸ Oedipus the King notes

**Stages of a plot**

* Exposition/instruction, introduces tone, mood, character, setting, background and sets the conflict.
* Inciting incident, introduces the central conflict.
* Rising action, develops the conflict to a high point of intensity.
* The climax, point of interest and suspense
* Crisis/ turning point, something decisive happens to determine the future course of events and eventual working out of the conflict.
* The falling action, the events that follow the climax.
* The resolution, the point at which the central conflict is ended, or resolved.
* The denouement, the final part of a plot and that ties up loose ends.

**Setting**

Thebes, Athenian country.

The gods of Greece, oracle of Delphi,

**Characters in the drama**

* OEDIPUS
* Jocasta
* CREON
* Teiresias
* Priest
* MESSENGER
* Shepherd
* An Attendant
* Chorus
* Kings Attendant
* Citizens of Thebes
* Queen’s Attendant

**Synopsis**

* King Oedipus before he was born was declared by a wicked spell of god Apollo that he would kill his father and marry his mother. His parents, Lairs and Jocasta give a Shepherd the child to abandon to Cithaeron to die but he decides to give it to a Corinth shepherd who gives it to Polybus to adopt. He runs away from Corinth to avoid killing his father and marry his mother whom he thought were Polybus and Merope. He unwittingly kills his father at Phocis and unwittingly marries his mother when he becomes king of Thebes. The gods decide to have the killer of Lairs punished. Oedipus ironically looks for Laius’ killer who turns out to be himself. He comes to know his origin and blinds himself as surrenders to fate.

**Lessons**

* Pride goes before a fall. Oedipus is so self-conceited that he does not listen to advice of anybody. Creon asks him to hear the word from Pyrthian house of Apollo from within the palace but he rules is out that the people must hear it. Not only does he refuse to take Teiresias’ caution that they rather leave the matter so that each of them attends to their own affairs, he does not heed but he also refuses Jocasta’s despite the warning. This leads to his tragedy and blindness. It also builds the theme of determination.
* Handicapped is not inability. A person having physical inabilities or deformities does not limit their functionality or their other abilities. Teiresias is physically blind but a great seer. He can discern and tell buried truth. He explicitly tells Oedipus that killer he seeks is himself (Oedipus). The gods can choose whoever they like to execute their will. Even the mimed and handicapped are vessels worth of the supernatural use.
* Physical sight can be spiritual blindness
* The gods define ones destiny
* There is no flying from fate
* What must be, must be.
* Fate leads the willing but drives the stubborn.
* He theta is born to be hanged shall never be drowned.
* Pride is the sworn enemy to content
* Plenty breeds pride
* Remember you are but man.
* No man is indispensable
* All must be as God wills.
* A friend in need is a friend indeed.
* Shame is at times unbearable
* Be slow to judge
* Kings come and go
* One’s strength can be their weaknesses
* There is nowhere to run and hide from fate.
* Suffering is a consolation to some people.
* Kindness is sometimes not the right thing to do.
* Talents are ones strength and power.
* If something is to be done right, do it yourself.
* A true parent cannot kill their own children.
* Assumptions can sometimes misleading.
* No mortal being is considered happy before he dies and buried in peace.
* Wisdom is better than power.
* Power comes and goes.
* Life is not a bed of roses.
* Self-control is a rare gift.

***Plot highlight***

* The Thebans come to OEDIPUS insupplication, they lay their prayer before him.
* OEDIPUS pledges his services to help.
* CREON comes back from the Pythian house of Apollo with answer to the cause of the affliction upon the children of Cadmus.
* OEDIPUS refuses to receive the message in secret but public.
* The killer of Lairs- the unclean thing in Thebes should be got rid of. Killed or banished.
* The OEDIPUS commits himself to selflessly find the killer of Laius.
* OEDIPUS, Priest, and supplants leave.
* CHORUS re-echoes the plight and blight of the Thebans
* OEDIPUS comes back from the palace. He asks for the killer of Laius to come forth, or if it a foreigner and anybody with information regarding such a killer will be appreciated and rewarded, or else face the sentence and curses he pronounces.
* CHORUS is mortified by the pronouncements and seeks to guide OEDIPUS in his search for Laius’ killer.
* Teiresias is brought and an exchange ensues between OEDIPUS and him.
* OEDIPUS accuses Teiresias of conspiring to kill Laius
* Teiresias declares OEDIPUS the killer of Laius.
* OEDIPUS accuses Teiresias of plotting against him with CREON
* Teiresias makes shocking utterances about the killer of Laius.
* CHORUS is confounded
* CREON comes and asks the CHORUS whether indeed the libels he hears OEDIPUS has labelled upon him were really uttered by him.
* OEDIPUS comes and straight away attacks CREON for plotting against him.
* CREON denies the accusation and relates his loyalty to OEDIPUS.
* Jocasta comes and separates the two quarrelling men.
* CREON swears a curse of he is guilty of the allegations
* She asks OEDIPUS to believe Croon’s innocence on the ground of his oath
* After CREON extents, Jocasta asks the CHORUS what exact how the trouble was made. CHORUS says it was on mere calumny and need to be ignored.
* OEDIPUS once asked by Jocasta inquiries from him, he willingly tells her of his suspicions of CREON.
* She consoles him mot to believe so and tells him of how a prophecy was once told her son she borne with Laius was an evil creature that would kill Laius. For precautions, Laius had the boy killed according to her, so prophecies were mere words.
* OEDIPUS gets disturbs and asks specifically how Laius met his death.
* He retells the story of his life and a prophecy of how he would kill his father and marry his mother.
* He asks for the shepherd to be called so he can relate his story with his. He mow suspects he killed Laius.
* The CHORUS makes a prayer to still be found worthy and fear for those who profane the gods’ names.
* Jocasta comes to make prayers for the sake of the king who is in wrought.
* A MESSENGER comes from Corinth bearing news of Phoebus’ death.
* OEDIPUS is called to hear the news.
* OEDIPUS despite this, still fears to go back to Corinth because his ‘mother’, Merope still lives , so part of the prophecy might still come to pass.
* MESSENGER declares that he, OEDIPUS, is not Polybus’ son, and gives some details. The question of OEDIPUS’ birth is risen.
* Jocasta cautions OEDIPUS not to proceed with the quest to find his birth details and when he insists to talk to the shepherd.
* CHORUS asks why the queen leaves in haste
* The shepherd turns up, hesitates to speaks, threatened then he speaks out.
* OEDIPUS laments,

‘Alas! All out! All known, no more concealment!

O Light! May I never look on you again,

Revealed as I am, sinful in my begetting,

Sinful in marriage, sinful in shedding of blood!’

* CHORUS says an elegy for OEDIPUS
* Enter an Attendant in lamentation of horror concerning Jocasta and OEDIPUS.
* OEDIPUS in agony comes and gives reasons why he blinded himself.
* OEDIPUS’ lamentation
* CREON comes and sympathises with OEDIPUS.
* OEDIPUS’ plea to CREON.
* OEDIPUS and his daughters
* OEDIPUS led away.
* CHORUS

**Incidents, passages, and extracts**

Read the each passages below and answer the questions that follow.

OEDIPUS: Children, new blood of Cadmus' ancient line -

What is the meaning of this supplication,

These branches and garlands, the incense filling the city,

These prayers for the healing of pain, these lamentations?

I have not thought it fit to rely on my messengers,

But am here to learn for myself - 1, OEDIPUS,

Whose name is known afar.

(To the Priest.) You, reverend sir,

In right of age should speak for all of them.

What is the matter? Some fear? Something you desire?

I would willingly do anything to help you;

Indeed I should be heartless, were I to stop my ears

To a general petition such as this.

Priest: My lord and king: we are gathered here, as you sec,

Young and old, from the tenderest chicks to the age-bent

seniors;

Priests: 1 of Zeus - and the pick of our young manhood.

More sit in the market-place, carrying boughs like these,

And around the twin altars of Pallas and the sacred embers

Of divination, beside the river of Ismenus.

You too have seen our city's affliction, caught

In a tide of death from which there is no escaping —

Death in the fruitful flowering of her soil;

Death in the pastures; death in the womb of woman;

And pestilence, a fiery demon gripping the city,

Stripping the house of Cadmus, to fatten hell

With profusion of lamentation.

If we come to you now, sir, as your suppliants,

I and these children, it is not as holding you

The equal of gods, but as the first of men,

Whether in the ordinary business of mortal life,

Or in the encounters of man with more than man.

It was you, we remember, a newcomer to Cadmus' town,

That broke our bondage to the vile Enchantress.

With no foreknowledge or hint that we could give,

But, as we truly believe, with the help of God,

You gave us back our life.

Now, OEDIPUS great and glorious, we seek

Your help again. Find some deliverance for us

By any way that god or man can show.

We know that experience of trials past gives strength

To present counsel. Therefore, O greatest of men,

Restore our city to life. Have a care for your fame.

Your diligence saved us once; let it not be said

That under your rule we were raised up only to fall.

Save, save our city, and keep her safe for ever.

Under the same bright star that gave us then

Good fortune, guide us into good to-day.

If you are to be our King, as now you are,

Be king of living men, not emptiness.

Surely there is no strength in wall or ship,

Where men are lacking and no life breathes within them.

OEDIPUS:

I grieve for you, my children. Believe me, I know

All that you desire of me, all that you suffer;

And while you suffer, none suffers more than I.

You have your several griefs, each for himself;

But my heart bears the weight of my own, and yours

And all my people's sorrows. I am not asleep.

I weep; and walk through endless ways of thought.

But I have not been idle; one thing I have already done

The only thing that promised hope. My kinsman

CREON, the son of Menoeceus, has been sent

To the Pythian house of Apollo, to learn what act

Or word of mine could help you. This is the day

I reckoned he should return. It troubles me

That he is not already here. But when he comes,

Whatever the god requires, upon my honour

It shall be done.

1. What is happening here?
2. What character of OEDIPUS is portrayed here?
3. What is the relationship between the Thebans and OEDIPUS?
4. What happens after here?

CREON: Good news. That is to say that good may come

Even out of painful matters, if all goes well.

OEDIPUS: And the answer? You hold me between fear and hope. The answer?

CREON:I will tell you - if you wish me to speak in the presence of all.

If not, let us go in.

OEDIPUS: Speak before all.

Their plight concerns me now, more than my life.

Ceon: This, then, is the answer, and this the plain command

Of Phoebus our lord. There is an unclean thing,

Born and nursed on our soil, polluting our soil,

Which must be driven away, not kept to destroy us.

OEDIPUS: What unclean thing? And what purification is required?

CREON: The banishment of a man, or the payment of blood for blood.

For the shedding of blood is the cause of our city's peril.

OEDIPUS: What blood does he mean? Did he say who it was that died?

CREON: We had a king, sir, before you came to lead us.

His name was Laius.

OEDIPUS: I know. I never saw him.

CREON: He was killed. And clearly the meaning of the god's

Command

Is that we bring the unknown killer to justice.

OEDIPUS: And where might he be? Where shall we hope to uncover

The faded traces of that far-distant crime?

CREON: Here - the god said. Seek, and ye shall find.

Unsought goes undetected.

1. What leads to this passage?
2. What characters of OEDIPUS is revealed here?
3. What is the character of CREON?
4. What is the irony in this context?
5. What is the conflict?
6. How does this affect the rest of the play?
7. Chorus: In Thebes, City of Light, from the Pythian House of Gold

The gracious voice of heaven is heard.

With fear my heart is riven, fear of what shall be told.

O Healer of Delos, hear!

Fear is upon us. What wilt thou do?

Things new, or old as the circling year?

Speak to us, Daughter of Golden Hope! Come, deathless

word!

Deathless Athena! First, Daughter of Zeus, on thee

We call; then on thy sister Queen

Artemis, over our city enthroned in her majesty;

And Phoebus, Lord of the Bow;

Show us again your threefold power **Incidents, passages, and extracts**

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In a tide of death from which there is no escaping —

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The equal of gods, but as the first of men,

Whether in the ordinary business of mortal life,

Or in the encounters of man with more than man.

It was you, we remember, a newcomer to Cadmus' town,

That broke our bondage to the vile Enchantress.

With no foreknowledge or hint that we could give,

But, as we truly believe, with the help of God,

You gave us back our life.

Now, OEDIPUS great and glorious, we seek

Your help again. Find some deliverance for us

By any way that god or man can show.

We know that experience of trials past gives strength

To present counsel. Therefore, O greatest of men,

Restore our city to life. Have a care for your fame.

Your diligence saved us once; let it not be said

That under your rule we were raised up only to fall.

Save, save our city, and keep her safe for ever.

Under the same bright star that gave us then

Good fortune, guide us into good to-day.

If you are to be our King, as now you are,

Be king of living men, not emptiness.

Surely there is no strength in wall or ship,

Where men are lacking and no life breathes within them.

OEDIPUS:

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All that you desire of me, all that you suffer;

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You have your several griefs, each for himself;

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That he is not already here. But when he comes,

Whatever the god requires, upon my honour

It shall be done.

1. What is happening here?
2. What character of OEDIPUS is portrayed here?
3. What is the relationship between the Thebans and OEDIPUS?
4. What happens after here?

This hour, as in ages long ago.

From the fire and pain of pestilence save us and make us

Sorrows beyond all telling - [clean.

Sickness rife in our ranks, outstripping

Invention of remedy - blight

On barren earth,

And barren agonies of birth -

Life after life from the wild-fire winging

Swiftly into the night.

Beyond all telling, the city

Reeks with the death in her streets, death-bringing.

None weeps, and her children die,

None by to pity.

Mothers at every altar kneel.

Golden Athena, come near to our crying!

Apollo, hear us and heal!

Not with the rattle of bronze, but loud around us

The battle is raging, swift the death-fiend flying.

Fling to the farthest corners of the sea,

Or to some bleak North bay,

The onset of his armoury!

Night's agony grows into tortured day.

Zeus, let thy thunders crush, thy lightning slay!

Slay with thy golden bow, Lycean! Slay him,

Artemis, over the Lycian hills resplendent!

Bacchus, our name-god, golden in the dance

Of Maenad revelry,

Euoe! thy fiery torch advance

To slay the Death-god, the grim enemy,

God whom all other gods abhor to see.

1. What happens before this passage?
2. Describe the mood of the passage.
3. What is the role of Chorus in here?
4. What is the concern of the Chorus?
5. What dramatic techniques are here?
6. How does this passage develop the relationship between the Chorus and gods?
7. OEDIPUS: You have prayed ; and your prayers shall be answer-

ed with help and release

If you will obey me, and are willing to put in hand

The remedy your distress requires. I speak

As a stranger, except by hearsay, to what has passed

And the story that has been told - without this clue

I should make but little headway in my search.

Therefore, as a citizen newly received among you,

It is to you, Thebans, I make this proclamation:

If any one of you knows whose hand it was

That killed Laius, the son of Labdacus,

Let him declare it fully, now, to me.

(He pauses: there is silence.)

Or if any man's conscience is guilty, let him give himself up.

He will suffer the less. His fate will be nothing worse

Than banishment. No other harm will touch him.

(The hearers are still silent.)

Or, if some alien is known to have been the assassin,

Declare it. The informer shall have his reward of me,

As well as the thanks he will earn from all of you.

[Silence still.)

But - if you will not speak, and any man

Is found to be screening himself or another, in fear,

I here pronounce my sentence upon his head:

No matter who he may be, he is forbidden

Shelter or intercourse with any man

In all this country over which I rule;

From fellowship of prayer or sacrifice

Or lustral rite is excommunicated;

Expelled from every house, unclean, accursed,

In accordance with the word of the Pythian oracle.

Thus I shall have done my duty to the god,

And to the dead. And it is my solemn prayer

That the unknown murderer, and his accomplices,

If such there be, may wear the brand of shame

For their shameful act, unfriended, to their life's end.

Nor do I exempt myself from the imprecation:

If, with my knowledge, house or hearth of mine

Receive the guilty man, upon my head

Lie all the curses I have laid on others.

It is for you to see this faithfully carried out,

As in duty bound to me, and to the god,

And to our suffering plague-tormented country.

Indeed I am surprised that no purification was made,

Even without the express command of heaven.

The death of a man so worthy, and your King,

Should surely have been probed to the utmost. Be that as it

may,

Now that I hold the place that he once held -

His bed, his wife - whose children, had fate so willed,

Would have grown to be another bond of blood between

And upon him, alas, has this disaster fallen; [us -

I mean to fight for him now, as I would fight

For my own father, and leave no way untried

To bring to light the killer of Laius,

The son of Labdacus, the son of Polydorus, the son of Cad-

mus, the son of Agenor.

The gods curse all that disobey this charge!

For them the earth be barren of harvest, for them

Women be childless; and may this present calamity,

And worse than this, pursue them to their death!

For the rest - you sons of Cadmus who are on my side -

May Justice and all the gods be with you for ever.

Chorus: Under your curse, O King, I make bold to answer:

I am not the man, nor can I point him out.

The question came from Phoebus, and he, if anyone,

Could surely tell us who the offender is.

1. Relate the events that lead to this passage.
2. Describe the character of OEDIPUS in this passage.
3. What feelings are evoked in you in this passage?
4. Comment on the contribution of this passage to the development of play.
5. What is the dramatic irony in the passage?
6. OEDIPUS: Teiresias, we know there is nothing beyond your ken;

Lore sacred and profane, all heavenly and earthly knowledge

Are in your grasp. In your heart, if not with the eye,

You see our city's condition: we look to you

As our only help and protector. We have sent -

They may have told you - to Phoebus, and he has answered.

The only way of deliverance from our plague

Is for us to find out the killers of Laius

And kill or banish them.

Now, sir, spare not your skill

In bird-lore or whatever other arts

Of prophecy you profess. It is for yourself,

It is for Thebes, it is for me. Come, save us all,

Save all that is polluted by this death.

We look to you. To help his fellow-men

With all his power is man's most noble work.

Teiresias: Wise words; but O, when wisdom brings no profit,

To be wise is to suffer. And why did I forget this,

Who knew it well? I never should have come.

OEDIPUS: It seems you bring us little encouragement.

Teiresias: Let me go home. It will be easier thus

For you to bear your burden, and me mine.

OEDIPUS: Take care, sir. You show yourself no friend to Thebes,

Whose son you are, if you refuse to answer.

Teiresias: It is because I see your words, sir, tending

To no good end; therefore I guard my own.

OEDIPUS: By the gods! If you know, do not refuse to speak!

We all beseech you; we are all your suppliants.

Teiresias: You are all deluded. I refuse to utter

The heavy secrets of my soul - and yours.

OEDIPUS: What? Something you know, and will not tell? You mean

To fail us and to see your city perish?

Teiresias: I mean to spare you, and myself. Ask me

No more. It is useless. I will tell you nothing.

OEDIPUS: Nothing? Insolent scoundrel, you would rouse

A stone to fury! Will you never speak?

You are determined to be obstinate to the end?

Teiresias: Do not blame me; put your own house in order.

OEDIPUS: Hear him! Such words - such insults to the State

Would move a saint to anger.

Teiresias: What will be will be, though I should never speak again.

OEDIPUS: What is to be, it is your trade to tell.

Teiresias: I tell no more. Rage with what wrath you will.

OEDIPUS: I shall; and speak my mind unflinchingly.

I tell you I do believe you had a hand

In plotting, and all but doing, this very act.

If you had eyes to see with, I would have said

Your hand, and yours alone, had done it all.

Teiresias: You would so? Then hear this: upon your head

Is the ban your lips have uttered - from this day forth

Never to speak to me or any here.

You are the cursed polluter of this land.

1. What event lead to this passage?
2. What character of OEDIPUS and Teiresias are portrayed?
3. What exactly is happening in this passage?
4. What happens follows this passage?
5. Identify the themes in the passage.

OEDIPUS: You dare to say it! Have you no shame at all?

And do you expect to escape the consequence?

Teiresias: I have escaped. The truth is my defence.

OEDIPUS: Whose work is this? This is no soothsaying.

Teiresias: You taught me. You made me say it against my will.

OEDIPUS: Say it again. Let there be no mistake.

Teiresias: Was it not plain? Or will you tempt me further?

OEDIPUS: I would have it beyond all doubt. Say it again.

Teiresias: I say that the killer you are seeking is yourself.

OEDIPUS: The second time. You shall be sorry for this.

Teiresias: Will you have more, to feed your anger?

OEDIPUS: Yes!

More, and more madness. Tell us all you know.

Teiresias: I know, as you do not, that you are living

In sinful union with the one you love,

Living in ignorance of your own undoing.

OEDIPUS: Do you think you can say such things with impunity?

Teiresias: I do - if truth has any power to save.

OEDIPUS: It has - but not for you; no, not for you,

Shameless and brainless, sightless, senseless sot!

Teiresias: You are to be pitied, uttering such taunts

As all men's mouths must someday cast at you.

OEDIPUS: Living in perpetual night, you cannot harm

Me, nor any man else that sees the light.

Teiresias: No; it is not for me to bring you down.

That is in Apollo's hands, and he will do it.

1. What circumstances precede this passage?
2. Comment on the dramatic techniques in the passage
3. Discuss the dramatic irony in this passage.
4. What conflict is in this context?
5. How does Apollo bring OEDIPUS down in the play?

OEDIPUS {scenting a possible connection with CREON's embassy):

CREON! Was this trick his, then, if not yours?

Teiresias: Not CREON either. Your enemy is yourself.

OEDIPUS (pursuing his own thought):

Ah, riches and royalty, and wit matched against wit

In the race of life, must they always be mated with envy?

Must CREON, so long my friend, my most trusted friend,

Stalk me by stealth, and study to dispossess me

Of the power this city has given me - freely given -

Not of my asking - setting this schemer on me,

This pedlar of fraudulent magical tricks, with eyes

Wide open for profit, but blind in prophecy?

(To Teiresias) What was your vaunted seer craft ever worth?

And where were you, when the Dog-faced Witch was here?

Had you any word of deliverance then for our people?

There was a riddle too deep for common wits;

A seer should have answered it; but answer came there none

From you; bird-lore and god-craft all were silent.

Until J came - 1, ignorant OEDIPUS, came -

And stopped the riddler's mouth, guessing the truth

By mother- wit, not bird-lore. This is the man

Whom you would dispossess, hoping to stand

Nearest to CREON's throne. You shall repent,

You and your fellow-plotter, of your zeal

For scapegoat-hunting. Were you not as old

As you appear to be, sharp punishment

Would soon convince you of your wickedness.

Chorus: Sir, to our thinking, both of you have spoken

In the heat of anger. Surely this is not well,

When all our thought should be, how to discharge

The god's command.

Teiresias: King though you are, one right -

To answer - makes us equal; and I claim it.

It is not you, but Loxias, whom I serve;

Nor am I bound to CREON's patronage.

You are pleased to mock my blindness. Have you eyes,

And do not see your own damnation? Eyes,

And cannot see what company you keep?

Whose son are you? I tell you, you have sinned -

And do not know it - against your own on earth

And in the grave. A swift and two-edged sword,

Your mother's and your father's curse, shall sweep you

Out of this land. Those now clear-seeing eyes

Shall then be darkened, then no place be deaf,

No corner of Cithaeron echoless,

To your loud crying, when you learn the truth

Of that sweet marriage-song that hailed you home

To the fair-seeming haven of your hopes -

With more, more misery than you can guess,

To show you what you are, and who they are

That call you father. Rail as you will at CREON,

And at my speaking - you shall be trodden down

With fouler scorn than ever fell on man.

1. What leads to this passage?
2. What conflict is portrayed here?
3. Discuss the irony in this passage.
4. How does this encounter between OEDIPUS and Teiresias affect the rest of the play?
5. How do Teiresias’ words come true?

OEDIPUS: Shall I bear more of this? Out of my sight!

Go! Quickly, go! Back where you came from! Go!

Teiresias: I will. It was your wish brought me here, not mine.

OEDIPUS: Had I known what madness I was to listen to,

I would have spared myself the trouble.

Teiresias: Mad I may seem

To you. Your parents would not think me so.

OEDIPUS: What's that? My parents? Who then ... gave me birth?

Teiresias: This day brings you your birth; and brings you death.

OEDIPUS: Man, must you still wrap up your words in riddles?

Teiresias: Were you not famed for skill at solving riddles?

OEDIPUS: You taunt me with the gift that is my greatness?

Teiresias: Your great misfortune, and your ruin.

OEDIPUS: No matter!

I have saved this land from ruin. I am content.

Teiresias: ‘Well, I will go. Your hand, boy. Take me home.

OEDIPUS: We well can spare you. Let him take you home.

Teiresias: When I have said my all. Thus, to your face,

Fearful of nothing you can do to me:

The man for whom you have ordered hue and cry,

The killer of Laius - that man is here;

Passing for an alien, a sojourner here among us;

But, as presently shall appear, a Theban born,

To his cost. He that came seeing, blind shall he go;

Rich now, then a beggar; stick-in-hand, groping his way

To a land of exile; brother, as it shall be shown,

And father at once, to the children he cherishes; son,

And husband, to the woman who bore him; father-killer,

And father-supplanter.

Go in, and think on this.

When you can prove me wrong, then call me blind.

1. What events lead to this passage?
2. Who is blinds in the passage and why?
3. How do the revelations here come true?
4. Comment on the dramatic devices in the passage

Chorus: From the Delphian rock the heavenly voice denounces

The shedder of blood, the doer of deeds unnamed.

Who is the man?

Let him fly with the speed of horses racing the wind.

The son of Zeus, armed with his fires, his lightnings,

Leaps to destroy,

And the Fates sure-footed close around him.

Out from the snowy dawn on high Parnassus

The order flashed, to hunt a man from his hiding.

And where is he?

In forest or cave, a wild ox roaming the mountains,

Footing a friendless way; but the deathless voices

Live in his ear;

From the Heart of Earth they cry against him.

Terrible things indeed has the prophet spoken.

We cannot believe, we cannot deny; all's dark.

We fear, but we cannot see, what is before us.

Was there a quarrel between the house of Labdacus

And the son of Polybus? None that we ever knew,

For which to impugn the name of OEDIPUS,

Or seek to avenge the house of Labdacus

For the undiscovered death.

All secrets of earth are known to Zeus and Apollo;

But of mortal prophets, that one knows more than another

No man can surely say; wisdom is given

To all in their several degrees. I impute no blame

Till blame is proved. He faced the winged Enchantress,

And stood to the test, winning golden opinions.

Never, therefore, will I consent

To think him other than good.

1. What events does the CHORUS refer to here?
2. What themes are here?
3. What is the conflict exposed in the passage?
4. Comment on the character of the Chorus.

OEDIPUS: Well, sir? What brings you here?

Have you the face to stand before my door,

Proved plotter against my life, thief of my crown?

Do you take me for a coward, or a fool?

Did you suppose I wanted eyes to see

The plot preparing, wits to counter it?

And what a foolish plot! You, without backing

Of friends or purse, to go in quest of kingship!

Kingdoms are won by men and moneybags.

CREON: Hear my reply. And when you know, then judge.

OEDIPUS: I doubt your eloquence will teach me much.

You are my bitterest enemy; that I know.

CREON: First, let me tell you –

OEDIPUS: Tell me anything

Except that you are honest.

CREON: Can you believe

This obstinacy does you any good?

OEDIPUS: Can you believe that you may carry on

Intrigues against your house and go scot-free?

CREON: I should be a fool to believe it. Tell me, though,

What wrong you think I have done you.

OEDIPUS: Was it you

That made me bring that canting prophet here?

CREON: It was; and I would do the same again.

OEDIPUS: Tell me ... how long ago did Laius ...

CREON: Did Laius - what? I do not understand.

OEDIPUS: How long is it since Laius ... disappeared?

CREON: A long time now; longer than I can say.

OEDIPUS: Was this old prophet at his business then?

CREON: Yes, held in equal honour then as now.

OEDIPUS: In those days, did he ever mention me?

CREON: Not in my hearing.

OEDIPUS: Was there no inquest made

Into this death?

CREON: Indeed there was. In vain.

OEDIPUS: And the man of wisdom - why was he silent then?

CREON: I do not presume to say more than I know.

OEDIPUS: One thing you know, and would be wise to confess.

CREON: What I know I will freely confess. What do I know?

OEDIPUS: This: that without your prompting, the fortune-teller

Would never have dared to name me killer of Laius.

CREON: If he did so, you know best. But give me leave,

As you have questioned me, to question you.

OEDIPUS: Ask on. You cannot prove me guilty of blood.

CREON: Are you my sister's husband?

OEDIPUS: Sir, I am.

CREON: And she your equal partner in rule and possession?

OEDIPUS: All that she can desire is hers by right.

CREON: Have I a third and equal share of honour?

OEDIPUS: You have; so much the more your proven falseness.

CREON: But I deny it. Reason with yourself,

As I; and ask, would any man exchange

A quiet life, with royal rank assured,

For an uneasy throne? To be a king

In name, was never part of my ambition;

Enough for me to live a kingly life.

What more could any moderate man desire?

I have your ear for all my fair requests;

But, in your place, I should have much to do

That irked me. How could kingship please me more

Than royalty and rule without regret?

I am not yet so besotted as to seek

More honours than are good for me. I stand

In all men's favour, I am all men's friend.

"Why, those who seek your audience, ask for me,

Knowing that way the surest to success!

And would I change this life for the other? No;

None but a fool would be so faithless. Treason?

That's not my policy, nor, if I know it,

The policy of any friend of mine.

To test me; first, go to the Pythian shrine;

Ask if the message I brought back was true.

Second; prove me guilty of any compact

With the soothsayer; then take me and condemn

To death. My voice will join with yours in the sentence.

But charged behind my back on blind suspicion

I will not be. To slur a good man's name

With baseless slander is one crime - another

Is rashly to mistake bad men for good.

Cast out an honest friend, and you cast out

Your life, your dearest treasure. Time will teach

The truth of this; for time alone can prove

The honest man; one day proclaims the sinner.

Chorus: Good words; and fitting for a prudent man

To hear and heed. Quick thoughts are seldom safest.

OEDIPUS: When a quick plotter's on the move, my friend,

It's safest to be quick in counter-plotting.

Am I to sit and wait for him, and lose

My opportunity while he takes his?

CREON: What do you want then? Will you banish me?

OEDIPUS: By no means. I would have you dead, not banished.

CREON: If you can show in what way I have wronged you

OEDIPUS: Still clinging to your obstinate arguments?

CREON: Because I know you are wrong.

OEDIPUS: I know I am right.

CREON: In your own eyes, not in mine.

OEDIPUS: You are a knave.

CREON: And what if you are mistaken?

OEDIPUS: Kings must rule.

CREON: Not when they rule unjustly.

OEDIPUS: Hear him, Thebes!

My city!

CREON: Yours? Is she not also mine?

1. What leads to this passage?
2. What is the relationship between OEDIPUS andCREON portrayed here?
3. What character of OEDIPUS andCREON are developed here?
4. What feelings are provoked in you in this passage?
5. What happens immediately after this?

Jocasta: What is the meaning of this loud argument,

You quarrelsome men? I wonder you are not ashamed,

In this time of distress, to air your private troubles.

Come in, my husband; and CREON, you go home.

You are making much of some unimportant grievance.

CREON: Not so, my sister. Your husband OEDIPUS

Condemns me out of hand with a terrible sentence,

A choice of death or banishment.

OEDIPUS: It is true.

I have found him craftily plotting against my person.

CREON: May the curse of heaven rest on me for ever,

If I am guilty of any such design!

Jocasta: For the love of God, believe it, OEDIPUS!

For his oath's sake, O believe it, and for mine

And theirs who are here to witness!

Chorus: Consent, O King, consent.

Be merciful, and learn to yield.

OEDIPUS: And why should I repent?

Chorus: His oath should be his shield.

Who never played you false before.

OEDIPUS: You know for what you pray?

Chorus: We know.

OEDIPUS: Say more.

Chorus: He swore

His friendship; is it right to cast away

A friend, condemned unheard.

Upon an idle word?

OEDIPUS: In asking this you ask my death or banishment.

Chorus: Forbid the thought! O by the Lord of Life,

The Sun, forbid! Lost may I be

To God and man, if it was ever mine.

But while our people pine,

My heart is racked anew

If you,

My princes, add your strife

To our old misery.

OEDIPUS: Then let him go; even though it mean my death

Or exile in disgrace. Your voice, not his,

Has won my mercy; him I hate for ever.

CREON: In mercy obdurate, as harsh in anger -

Such natures earn self-torture.

OEDIPUS: Will you begone?

CREON: I will; unjustly judged by you alone.

1. What events lead to this passage?
2. What conflict is developed here?
3. Discuss the character Jocasta in this passage?

Jocasta: Then absolve yourself at once. For I can tell you,

No man possesses the secret of divination.

And I have proof. An oracle was given to Laius -

From Phoebus, no; but from his ministers -

That he should die by the hands of his own child,

His child and mine. What came of it? Laius,

It is common knowledge, was killed by outland robbers

At a place where three roads meet. As for the child,

It was not yet three days old, when he cast it out

(By other hands, not his) with rivetted ankles

To perish on the empty mountain-side.

There, then, Apollo did not so contrive it.

The offspring did not kill the father; the father,

For all his fears, was killed - not by his son.

Yet such were the prophets' warnings. Why should you,

Then, heed them for a moment? What he intends,

The god will show us in his own good time.

OEDIPUS: My wife, what you have said has troubled me.

My mind goes back ... and something in me moves...

Jocasta: Why? What is the matter? How you turn and start!

OEDIPUS: Did you not say that Laius was killed

At a place where three roads meet?

Jocasta: That was the story;

And is the story still.

OEDIPUS: Where? In what country?

Jocasta: The land called Phocis - where the road divides,

Leading to Delphi and to Daulia.

OEDIPUS: How long ago did it happen?

Jocasta: It became known

A little time before your reign began.

OEDIPUS: O God, what wilt thou do to me!

Jocasta: Why, OEDIPUS,

What weighs upon your mind?

OEDIPUS: O do not ask!

But tell me, what was Laius like? How old?

Jocasta: Tall - silver-frosted hair - about your figure.

OEDIPUS: Ah, wretch! Am I unwittingly self-cursed?

Jocasta: What, O my King, what is it? You frighten me.

OEDIPUS: Had then the prophet eyes? O is it possible?

To prove it certain, tell me one thing more.

Jocasta: You frighten me. I will tell you all I know.

OEDIPUS: How was the King attended? By a few,

Or in full state with numerous bodyguard?

Jocasta: Five men in all, a herald leading them;

One carriage only, in which King Laius rode.

OEDIPUS: Clearer, alas, too clear! Who told you this?

Jocasta: A servant, the only survivor that returned.

OEDIPUS: Is he still in the household?

Jocasta: No. When he came back,

And found you king in his late master's place,

He earnestly begged me to let him go away

Into the country to become a shepherd,

Far from the city's eyes. I let him go.

Poor fellow, he might have asked a greater favour;

He was a good slave.

OEDIPUS: Could we have him here

Without delay?

Jocasta: We could. Why do you ask?

OEDIPUS: O wife, I fear ... I fear that I have said

Too much, and therefore I must see this man.

1. Place this context
2. What happens before this passage?
3. What conflict is portrayed here?
4. What is the irony here?
5. How does this passage affect the development of the plot?
6. How does this passage affect the play?

My father was a Corinthian, Polybus;

My mother a Dorian, Merope. At home

I rose to be a person of some pre-eminence;

Until a strange thing happened - a curious thing -

Though perhaps I took it to heart more than it deserved.

One day at table, a fellow who had been drinking deeply

Made bold to say I was not my father's son.

That hurt me; but for the time I suffered in silence

As well as I could. Next day I approached my parents

And asked them to tell me the truth. They were bitterly

That anyone should dare to put such a story about; [angry

And I was relieved. Yet somehow the smart remained;

And a thing like that soon passes from hand to hand.

So, without my parents' knowledge, I went to Pytho;

But came back disappointed of any answer

To the question I asked, having heard instead a tale

Of horror and misery: how I must marry my mother,

And become the parent of a misbegotten brood,

An offence to all mankind - and kill my father.

At this I fled away, putting the stars

Between me and Corinth, never to see home again,

That no such horror should ever come to pass.

My journey brought mc into the neighbourhood where

Your late king met his end. Listen, my wife:

This is the truth.

When I came to the place where three roads join, I met

A herald followed by a horse-drawn carriage, and a man

Seated therein, just as you have described.

The leader roughly ordered me out of the way;

And his venerable master joined in with a surly command.

It was the driver that thrust me aside, and him I struck,

For I was angry. The old man saw it, leaning from the

carriage,

Waited until I passed, then, seizing for weapon

The driver's two-pronged goad, struck me on the head.

He paid with interest for his temerity;

Quick as lightning, the staff in this right hand

Did its work; he tumbled headlong out of the carriage,

And every man of them there I killed.

But now,

If the blood of Laius ran in this stranger's veins,

Is there any more wretched mortal than I, more hated

By God and man? It is I whom no stranger, no citizen,

Must take to his house; I to whom none may speak;

On me is the curse that none but I have laid.

His wife! - these hands that killed him have touched her\

Is this my sin? Am I not utterly foul?

Banished from here, and in my banishment

Debarred from home and from my fatherland,

Which I must shun for ever, lest I live

To make my mother my wife, and kill my father...

My father ... Polybus, to whom I owe my life.

Can it be any but some monstrous god

Of evil that has sent this doom upon me?

O never, never, holy powers above,

May that day come! May I be sooner dead

And blotted from the face of earth, than live

To bear the scars of such vile circumstance.

1. What circumstances lead to this passage?
2. What happens just before this passage?
3. Comment on the themes here?
4. What changes has OEDIPUS undergone?
5. What is the dramatic irony here?

Chorus:

I only ask to live, with pure faith keeping

In word and deed that Law which leaps the sky,

Made of no mortal mould, undimmed, unsleeping

Whose living godhead does not age or die.

Pride breeds the Tyrant; swollen with ill-found booty,

From castled height Pride tumbles to the pit,

All footing lost. Zeal, stripped for civic duty,

No law forbids; may God still prosper it.

Who walks his own high-handed way, disdaining

True righteousness and holy ornament;

Who falsely wins, all sacred things profaning;

Shall he escape his doomed pride's punishment?

Shall he by any armour be defended

From God's sharp wrath, who casts out right for wrong?

If wickedness for virtue be commended,

Farewell, sweet harmonies of sacred song;

Farewell, Abaean and Olympian altar;

Farewell, O Heart of Earth, inviolate shrine,

If at this time your omens fail or falter,

And man no longer own your voice divine.

Zeus! If thou livest, all-ruling, all-pervading,

Awake; old oracles are out of mind;

Apollo's name denied, his glory fading;

There is no godliness in all mankind.

1. What leads to this passage?
2. What is the concern of the CHORUS in this passage?
3. What themes are here?
4. What happens after?

Messenger: No. Polybus is no kin of yours.

OEDIPUS: No kin?

Polybus not my father?

Messenger: No more than I.

OEDIPUS: Come, sir; no more than you? Explain yourself.

Messenger: I am not your father, neither is Polybus.

OEDIPUS: How comes it then that I was called his son?

Messenger: I will tell you. You were given to him - by me.

OEDIPUS: Given? And yet he loved me as his son?

Messenger: He had no other.

OEDIPUS: Was I ... found? Or bought?

Messenger: Found, in a wooded hollow of Cithaeron.

OEDIPUS: What brought you there?

Messenger: Sheep-tending on the mountain.

OEDIPUS: Were you a hireling shepherd then?

Messenger: I was;

And, by that happy chance, your rescuer.

OEDIPUS: Why, was I in pain or danger when you took me?

Messenger: The infirmity in your ankles tells the tale.

OEDIPUS: Oh, that old trouble; need we mention it?

Messenger: Your ankles were rivetted, and I set you free.

OEDIPUS: It is true; I have carried the stigma from my cradle.

Messenger: To it you owe your present name.

OEDIPUS: O Gods!

Was this my father's or my mother's doing?

Messenger: I cannot say. Ask him who gave you to me.

OEDIPUS: Gave me? Did you not find me, then, yourself?

Messenger: Another shepherd entrusted you to my care.

OEDIPUS: And who was he? Can you tell us who he was?

Messenger: I think he was said to be one of Laius' men.

OEDIPUS: Laius? Our former king?

Messenger: Why, yes; King Laius.

The man was one of his servants.

OEDIPUS: Is he alive?

And could I see him?

Messenger: Your people here should know.

OEDIPUS: Good men, does any of you know the fellow -

This shepherd of whom he speaks? Has anyone seen him

In the pastures or in the city? Speak if you know.

Now is the chance to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Chorus: I think he will prove to be that same countryman

Whom you have already asked to see. The Queen

Is the one most able to tell you if this is so.

OEDIPUS: My wife, you knowthe man whom we have sent for.

Is that the man he means?

1. Who is the MESSENGER in the passage?
2. Explain what leads to this passage.
3. What events does this passage lead to

Jocasta [white with terror): What does it matter

What man he means? It makes no difference now...

Forget what he has told you ... It makes no difference.

OEDIPUS: Nonsense: I must pursue this trail to the end,

Till I have unravelled the mystery of my birth.

Jocasta: No! In God's name -if you want to live, this

Must not go on. Have I not suffered enough? [quest

OEDIPUS: There is nothing to fear. Though I be proved slave-born

To the third generation, your honour is not impugned.

Jocasta: Yet do not do it. I implore you, do not do it.

OEDIPUS: I must. I cannot leave the truth unknown.

Jocasta: I know I am right. I am warning you for your

good.

OEDIPUS: My 'good' has been my bugbear long enough.

Jocasta: Doomed man! O never live to learn the truth!

OEDIPUS: Go, someone; fetch the shepherd. Leave the lady

To enjoy her pride of birth.

Jocasta: O lost and damned!

This is my last and only word to you

CHORUS: Why has the Queen, sir, left us in such deep passion?

I fear some vile catastrophe will out

From what she dare not tell.

OEDIPUS: Let all come out,

However vile! However base it be,

I must unlock the secret of my birth.

The woman, with more than woman's pride, is shamed

By my low origin. I am the child of Fortune,

The giver of good, and I shall not be shamed.

She is my mother; my sisters are the Seasons;

My rising and my falling march with theirs.

Born thus, I ask to be no other man

Than that I am, and will know who I am.

If my prophetic eye fails not, tomorrow's moon

Makes known to all the earth

The secret of our master's birth.

Cithaeron's name shall fill

Our song; his father, mother, nurse was she,

And for this boon

To our great King, praised shall Cithaeron be.

Phoebus our Lord, be this according to thy will.

Was this the offspring born of some primeval sprite

By the love-glance beguiled

Of mountain-haunting Pan? Or child

Of Loxias, very son

To our bright God who walks the high grass-lands?

Did he delight

Cyllene's lord? Did Dionysus' hands

Receive him from a nymph he loved on Helicon?

1. What happens before this context?
2. Describe the behaviour of Jocasta and Oedipusin this passage.
3. What is the concern in this passage?
4. What happens after this passage?

OEDIPUS: Come now, old shepherd - please to look at me,

And answer my questions. Were you in Laius' service?

Shepherd: Indeed I was, sir; born and bred, not bought.

OEDIPUS: What trade or occupation did you follow?

Shepherd: The most part of my life a shepherd, sir.

OEDIPUS: What part of the country did you mostly work?

Shepherd: 'T would be ... Cithaeron - or somewhere thereabouts.

OEDIPUS: Do you remember having seen this man before?

Shepherd: What man is that, sir? Where would I have seen him?

OEDIPUS: This man. Did you ever meet him anywhere?

Shepherd:I cannot say I did, sir - not to remember.

Messenger: I am not surprised. I'll jog his memory.

He won't forget the days when he and I

Were neighbours on Cithaeron - he with two flocks

And I with one; three seasons we were there

From spring to autumn; and I would drive my flock

Back Corinth way for winter, and he to Thebes

To Laius' folds. Was that the way it was?

Shepherd: Ay, that's how it was. 'Tis many years ago.

Messenger: Well then, maybe you remember a baby boy

You gave me, and asked me to rear it as my own?

Shepherd (with frightened eyes):

What do you mean? What are you asking me to say?

Messenger: Why, my old friend, here stands your baby boy!

Shepherd: Damn you, man, hold your tongue!

OEDIPUS: Come, come, old fellow;

He speaks more honestly than you, I think.

Shepherd: Why, how have I offended, honourable master?

OEDIPUS: Not answering straightly his question about that child.

Shepherd: He doesn't know what he is saying. He is making a mistake.

OEDIPUS: If you won't speak willingly, we must make you speak.

Shepherd: Don't hurt an old man, sir, for the love of God!

OEDIPUS: Pinion his arms, there!

Shepherd: O sir, why, what is this?

What more do you ask to know?

OEDIPUS: This child he speaks of-

Was it you that gave it to him?

Shepherd: Yes, it was.

I wish I might have died that very day.

OEDIPUS: As you shall now, unless you tell the truth.

Shepherd: 'Twill be my death to tell it.

OEDIPUS: Evasion still!

Shepherd: Have I not said I gave it him? What more?

OEDIPUS: Where did it come from? Your home or another’s?

Shepherd: Not mine. Another man's.

OEDIPUS: What man? What house?

Shepherd: By all the gods, master, ask me no more!

OEDIPUS: Answer! If I must speak again, you die!

Shepherd: It was ... a child of Laius' house.

OEDIPUS: A slave? Or of his own begetting?

Shepherd: Must I tell?

OEDIPUS: You must. And I must hear.

Shepherd: It was his child,

They said. Your lady could tell the truth of it.

OEDIPUS: She gave it you?

Shepherd: Yes, master.

OEDIPUS: To what purpose?

Shepherd: To be destroyed.

OEDIPUS: The child she bore!

Shepherd: Yes, master.

They said 'twas on account of some wicked spell.

OEDIPUS: What spell?

Shepherd: Saying the child should kill its father.

OEDIPUS: In God's name, what made you give it to this man?

Shepherd: I hadn't the heart to destroy it, master. I thought

'He will take it away to another country, his home'.

He took it and saved its life - to come to this!

If you are the man, O then your life is lost!

OEDIPUS: Alas! All out! All known, no more concealment!

O Light! May I never look on you again,

Revealed as I am, sinful in my begetting,

Sinful in marriage, sinful in shedding of blood!

1. What leads to this passage?
2. What character of Oedipus is developed here?
3. How does this event affect the rest of the play?
4. What dramatic techniques are in this passage?

Chorus:

All the generations of mortal man add up to nothing!

Show me the man whose happiness was anything more than

illusion

Followed by disillusion.

Here is the instance, here is OEDIPUS, here is the reason

Why I will call no mortal creature happy.

With what supreme sureness of aim he winged his quarry;

Grasped every prize, by Zeus! once he had drowned the

The Claw-foot Lady. [She-devil,

He was our bastion against disaster, our honoured King;

All Thebes was proud of the majesty of his name.

And now, where is a more heart-rending story of

affliction?

Where a more awful swerve into the arms of torment?

Oedipus, that proud head!

When the same bosom enfolded the son and the father,

Could not the engendering clay have shouted aloud its

indignation?

Time sees all; and now he has found you, when you least

expected it;

Has found you and judged that marriage-mockery, bride-

This is your elegy: [groom-son!

1 wish I had never seen you, offspring of Laius,

Yesterday my morning of light, now my night of endless

darkness!

1. What events precede this passage?
2. Explain the themes in the passage.
3. What verdict does the Chorus give here?
4. What is the dramatic satisfaction in this passage?

Attendant:

O you most honourable lords of the city of Thebes,

Weep for the things you shall hear, the things you must see,

If you are true sons and loyal to the house of Labdacus.

Not all the waters of Ister, the waters of Phasis,

Can wash this dwelling clean of the foulness within,

Clean of the deliberate acts that soon shall be known,

Of all horrible acts most horrible, wilfully chosen.

Chorus:

Already we have wept enough for the things we have

known,

The things we have seen. What more will your story add?

Attendant: First, and in brief - Her Majesty is dead.

Chorus: Alas, poor soul: what brought her to this end?

Attendant: Her own hand did it. You that have not seen,

And shall not see, this worst, shall suffer the less.

But I that saw, will remember, and will tell what I re-

member

Of her last agony.

You saw her cross the threshold

In desperate passion. Straight to her bridal-bed

She hurried, fastening her fingers in her hair.

There in her chamber, the doors flung sharply to,

She cried aloud to Laius long since dead,

Remembering the son she bore long since, the son

By whom the sire was slain, the son to whom

The mother bore yet other children, fruit

Of luckless misbegetting. There she bewailed

The twice confounded issue of her wifehood -

Husband begotten of husband, child of child.

So much we heard. Her death was hidden from us.

Before we could see out her tragedy,

The King broke in with piercing cries, and all

Had eyes only for him. This way and that

He strode among us. 'A sword, a sword!' he cried;

' Where is that wife, no wife of mine - that soil

Where I was sown, and whence I reaped my harvest! '

While thus he raved, some demon guided him -

For none of us dared speak - to where she was.

As if in answer to some leader's call

With wild hallooing cries he hurled himself

Upon the locked doors, bending by main force

The bolts out of their sockets - and stumbled in.

We saw a knotted pendulum, a noose,

A strangled woman swinging before our eyes.

The King saw too, and with heart-rending groans

Untied the rope, and laid her on the ground.

But worse was yet to see. Her dress was pinned

With golden brooches, which the King snatched out

And thrust, from full arm's length, into his eyes -

Eyes that should see no longer his shame, his guilt,

No longer see those they should never have seen,

Nor see, unseeing, those he had longed to see,

Henceforth seeing nothing but night ... To this wild tune

He pierced his eyeballs time and time again,

Till bloody tears ran down his beard - not drops

But in full spate a whole cascade descending

In drenching cataracts of scarlet rain.

Thus two have sinned; and on two heads, not one -

On man and wife - falls mingled punishment.

Their old long happiness of former times

Was happiness earned with justice; but to-day

Calamity, death, ruin, tears, and shame,

All ills that there are names for - all are here.

Chorus: And he - how is he now? Does he still suffer?

Attendant: He shouts for someone to unbar the doors.

And show all Thebes the father's murderer,

The mother's - shame forbids the unholy word.

Incontinently he will fly the country

To rid his house of the curse of his own lips;

But scarcely has the strength, poor sufferer,

And none to guide him. He cannot bear the pain.

As you shall see. The doors are opening.

Yes, you shall see a sorry spectacle

That loathing cannot choose but pity ...

1. What is events lead to this passage?
2. What plight has befallen Oedipus ands Jocasta?
3. How is the conflict developed here?
4. What conflict is developed in the passage?
5. What dramatic satisfaction in brought out in this passage?

Chorus: Ah!

Horror beyond all bearing!

Foulest disfigurement

That ever I saw! O cruel,

Insensate agony!

What demon of destiny

With swift assault outstriding

Has ridden you down?

0 tortured head!

1 dare not see, I am hiding

My eyes, I cannot bear

What most I long to see;

And what I long to hear,

That most I dread.

OEDIPUS: O agony!

Where am I? Is this my voice

That is borne on the air?

What fate has come to me?

Chorus: Unspeakable to mortal ear,

Too terrible for eyes to see.

OEDIPUS: O dark intolerable inescapable night

That has no day!

Cloud that no air can take away!

O and again

That piercing pain,

Torture in the flesh and in the souls dark memory.

Chorus: It must be so; such suffering must needs be borne

Twice; once in the body and once in the soul.

OEDIPUS: Is that my true and ever-faithful friend

Still at my side?

Your hand shall be the blind man s guide.

Are you still near?

That voice I hear

Is yours, although your face I cannot see.

Chorus:

Those eyes - how could you do what you have done?

What evil power has driven you to this end?

OEDIPUS: Apollo, friends, Apollo

Has laid this agony upon me;

Not by his hand; I did it.

What should I do with eyes

Where all is ugliness?

Chorus: It cannot be denied.

OEDIPUS: Where is there any beauty

For me to see? Where loveliness

Of sight or sound? Away!

Lead me quickly away

Out of this land. I am lost,

Hated of gods, no man so damned.

1. What happens before this passage?
2. What character of Oedipus is exposed in this passage?
3. How is Oedipus’ state a fulfilment of fate?
4. What feelings does this passage evoke in you?

Chorus: Twice-tormented; in the spirit, as in the flesh.

Would you had never lived to read this riddle.

OEDIPUS: Cursed be the benefactor

That loosed my feet and gave me life

For death; a poor exchange.

Death would have been a boon

To me and all of mine.

Chorus: We could have wished it so.

OEDIPUS: Now, shedder of father's blood,

Husband of mother, is my name;

Godless and child of shame,

Begetter of brother-sons;

What infamy remains

That is not spoken of Oedipus?

Chorus: Yet to my thinking this act was ill-advised;

It would have been better to die than live in blindness.

OEDIPUS: I will not believe that this was not the best

That could have been done. Teach me no other lesson.

How could I meet my father beyond the grave

With seeing eyes; or my unhappy mother,

Against whom I have committed such heinous sin

As no mere death could pay for? Could I still love

To look at my children, begotten as they were begotten

Could I want eyes to see that pretty sight?

To see the towers of Thebes, her holy images,

Which I, her noblest, most unhappy son

Have forbidden myself to see - having commanded

All men to cast away the offence, the unclean,

Whom the gods have declared accursed, the son of Laius,

And, having proved myself that branded man,

Could I want sight to face this people's stare?

No! Hearing neither! Had I any way

To dam that channel too, I would not rest

Till I had prisoned up this body of shame

In total blankness. For the mind to dwell

Beyond the reach of pain, were peace indeed.

Cithaeron! Foster-mother! Did you shelter me

For this? Could you not let me die that instant,

Instead of saving me to tell the world

How I was got? Corinth, and Polybus,

My seeming home and parent, did you think

What foul corruption festered under the bloom

Of your adopted son's young loveliness? -

Now found all evil and of evil born.

That silent crossroad in the forest clearing -

That copse beside the place where three roads met,

Whose soil I watered with my father's blood,

My blood - will they remember what they saw,

And what I came that way to Thebes to do?

Incestuous sin! Breeding where I was bred!

Father, brother, and son; bride, wife, and mother;

Confounded in one monstrous matrimony!

All human filthiness in one crime compounded!

Unspeakable acts - I speak no more of them.

Hide me at once, for God's love, hide me away,

Away! Kill me! Drown me in the depths of the sea!

Take me! (The CHORUS shrink from his groping hands)

For pity, touch me, and take me away!

Touch me, and have no fear. On no man else

But on me alone is the scourge of my punishment.

1. Why is the Chorus afraid to touch Oedipus?
2. Describe Oedipus’ response to his fate in the passage.
3. How is Oedipus vile thing in the passage?
4. What is the theme in the passage?
5. What is the irony in this passage?
6. Explain the dramatic satisfaction in this passage.

CREON: Oedipus, I am not here to scoff at your fall,

Nor yet to reproach you for your past misdeeds.

My friends, remember your respect for the Lord of Life,

The Sun above us - if not for the children of men.

The unclean must not remain in the eye of day;

Nor earth nor air nor water may receive it.

Take him within; piety at least demands

That none but kinsmen should hear and see such suffering.

OEDIPUS: I only ask one thing, my gentle friend,

Whose gentleness to such a one as I am

Was more than could be hoped for. One thing only -

For God's love - for your good, not mine –

CREON: What thing,

So humbly begged?

OEDIPUS: Cast me away this instant

Out of this land, out of the sight of man.

CREON: Be sure it would have been done without delay,

But that I await instruction from the god.

OEDIPUS:

Is not his instruction already plain? The parricide,

The unclean one, was to die; and here he stands.

CREON: It was so. Yet in the present turn of events

We need more certain guidance.

OEDIPUS: For my lost life?

Will you ask the god's direction for one so damned?

CREON: Have you not found good cause to trust him?

1. Explain the character of Creon portrayed in this passage.
2. Describe Oedipus plight in this passage.
3. What is the Irony in this passage?

OEDIPUS: Yes.

Then I have only this to ask, of your goodness:

The funeral rites of her that lies within,

Provide as you think fit. She is your sister,

And you will do rightly by her. As for me,

No longer let my living presence curse

This fatherland of mine, but let me go

And live upon the mountains - and die there.

Cithaeron! Name for ever linked with mine -

On Mount Cithaeron, which my parents chose

To be my deathbed, I will go and die

Obedient to their desires. And yet I know,

Not age, nor sickness, nor any common accident

Can end my life; I was not snatched from death

That once, unless to be preserved

For some more awful destiny. Be it so.

And the children ... Don't trouble yourself about the boys,

Creon; they will be able to fend for themselves

Wherever they go. But the girls, poor little mites,

Have never known a meal without their father;

Everything was shared between us. Take care of them,

Creon ...

Creon... If I could touch them once, and weep...

Once more...

If you would permit it,

Gracious and generous...

Just touch them once, and I could think I had them

Once more before my eyes...

1. What is Oedipus’ plight here?
2. What feelings does this passage provoke in you?
3. What is the dramatic satisfaction in this passage?

CREON:

They are here. I had them brought to you. I knew

How much you loved them - how you love them still.

OEDIPUS:

Heaven bless you, Creon, for this, and make your way

Smoother than mine has been.

Where are you, children?

Come, feel your brother's hands. It was their work

That darkened these clear eyes - your father's eyes

As once you knew them, though he never saw

Nor knew what he did when he became your father.

They cannot see you; but they weep with you.

I think of your sorrowful life in the days to come,

When you must face the world: the holy days,

High days and days of state, joyless for you,

Returning sadly home while others play.

And when you look for marriage, will there be men,

Will there be one man brave enough to outface

The scandal that will cling to all my children

And children's children? Is there a name of ill

That is not ours? A father that killed his father;

Despoiled his birth-bed; begetting where he was begot;

Thus they will brand you. Where will you then find

husbands?

There will be none, my children, for you; your days

Can only end in fruitless maidenhood.

Menoeceus' son, you are their kinsman still;

You are their only father; we are no more,

Who gave them life. These lost waifs must not wander

Homeless and husbandless; they must not see

Such days as I shall see. Take care of them,

So young, so poor, so lost to all but you.

You will do it? ... Your hand to pledge your promise.

(CREON gives his hand.) Friend!

Children, there is much that you will understand

When you are older; you cannot bear it now.

But in your prayers ask this: that you may live

Not more nor less than well, and so live better

Than did your father.

1. What events lead to this passage? “rr

“ll What is the relationship between Creon and Oedipus?

1. Comment on the change on the passage.

Essay questions

1. Who is to blame for Oedipus’ plight?
2. Oedipus is to blame for his own plight, discuss.
3. What is the role of Oedipus in his fate?
4. Discuss the role of the gods in Oedipus fate.

“

and ideas

Fate and free will

Tools of fate

* Prophecies
* Fates
* gods
* Man’s kindness
* Man’s talk
* Man’s curiosity
* Riddles
* Pride
* Anger
* Ignorance
* Man’s abilities
* Man’s weaknesses
* Man’s strength
* Man’s parenthood
* Inabilities
* Anger
* Man’s fear
* Power

Tracking fate in Oedipus the king

* An oracle/ his minister from Phoebus was given to Laius that he would die by the hands of his own child.
* Laius cast the child to die at the empty mountain side of Cithaeron but the Shepherd did have the heart to do it.
* The Shepherd/MESSENGER from Corinth.
* The drunkards talk
* OEDIPUS’ unrest and curiosity
* The oracle in Corinth
* OEDIPUS’ fear and solution… running away
* The encounter of strangers , anger, ego, pride, ignorance
* Riddle unravelling
* The Sphinx
* OEDIPUS rewarded with Jocasta and Thebes.
* People’s trust of OEDIPUS
* OEDIPUS’ power , pride and restlessness
* OEDIPUS’ pronouncements and curses upon the killer of Laius.
* OEDIPUS anger with Teiresias
* Teiresias’ prophecy / revelation
* Polybus’ death
* Merope being alive
* OEDIPUS’ ignorance of his birth parents.
* OEDIPUS’ quest to know his birth , origin
* OEDIPUS pride and lack of caution
* OEDIPUS’ ‘foreign’ status.
* Jocasta fear of shame, killed himself
* OEDIPUS being possessed by a demon
* OEDIPUS blinding himself.

The role of the gods in OEDIPUS’ fate

* Before OEDIPUS was born, in fact even before he is named, Apollo’s oracle said he would kill his father.
* Uses shepherd’s compassion for the child to save it.
* Coincidences.
* Uses rumours
* Uses an oracle in Corinth
* Has Lairs Killed by a stranger.
* OEDIPUS’ ability to solve riddles

**Power**

* OEDIPUS is a king with so much power
* The Thebans seek a solution from power
* Power of the gods
* Power of the oracle
* Power of the CHORUS
* Power of wisdom
* Power of the queen
* CREONs loyalty
* Power of the prophecy and the prophets
* Power of a curse
* Power of shame
* Fear of loss of power
* Authority of power

**Determination**

* OEDIPUS comes to hear the Thebans.
* CREON sent to Pythian temple
* OEDIPUS tells CREON to openly disclose the answer from god Apollo.
* OEDIPUS commits himself to find the killer of Laius
* Teiresias is sent for.
* OEDIPUS commands Teiresias to disclose the killer of Laius.
* OEDIPUS discloses he killed a man of his own free will.
* OEDIPUS sends for the shepherd who escaped the murder scene and once entrusted by the late Laius to kill the baby.
* OEDIPUS threatens to harm the shepherd if he didn’t tell what he did with the baby.
* OEDIPUS blinds himself.
* OEDIPUS pleads to be to be thrown out Thebes.
* OEDIPUS runs away from Corinth lest he kills his father and marries his mother.
* The late Laius condemns the baby to death.
* Jocasta commits suicide.

**Wisdom and knowledge**

**Memory and the past**

**Man’s effort to thwart fate.**

**Characters and characterisation**

OEDIPUS: son to the Late Laius whom he kills unwittingly and marries Jocasta.

His strength;

* First and foremost, OEDIPUS is practical. He is a man of action and deeds. He looks for a solution for the suffering of the Thebans by sending Croon to the temple of Apollo. He runs away from Corinth to avoid killing his father and marrying his mother as the oracles portend. He literary blinds himself. The practical aspect in him makes him an admirable character and a tragic one.
* Secondly, he is exceptionally intelligent.
* Thirdly, he is wise.
* In addition, he is just and fair.
* Furthermore, he is selflessly humane and sympathetic.
* Coupled with this, he is peace loving.
* More so, he is excessively proud.
* Along with the above. He is a renowned riddler.
* Besides, he is devotedly determined.
* Likewise, he is overly confident.
* In the same line, he is cruelly unfair.
* Additionally, he is lovingly responsible.
* On top of that, he is delicately Loving and caring.
* Lastly, he is a valiantly a stoic and brave.
* To add to that Oedipus is a tragic character. His life was destined to be a dark one. Before he was born, an oracle of Apollo declare the child unclean thing.
* Apart from that, he is true and sincere,
* Last but not the least, Conscience, have the sense of right and wrong. He has moral and integrity obligations.
* Over and above ,

OEDIPUS’ weaknesses

* Last but not the least, he is superstitious. He believes is oracles and believes the gods hate him and men after his true identity is revealed. He also believes no man can ever marry his daughters. This builds the theme of fate.
* Provocative , insulting
* Aggressive
* Profane
* Naïve, ignorant
* Abusive
* Self-conceited
* Arrogant
* Reckless
* Hasty
* Confident

Oedipus’ role in the plot of the play.

* He is the king of Thebes.
* Solves the riddle of the Sphinx.
* He comes to address the Thebans who come to the palace for supplication.
* Promises to find a solution to the plight the Thebans are trapped in.
* Sends Creon to find an answer from Pythian house of Apollo for guidance.
* Asks Creon to disclose the answer from the Pythian house before the Thebans.
* Offers a less punishment to the killer if he comes to confess.
* Curses the killer and any accomplice to the thief.
* Calls for prophet Teiresias to disclose the killer.
* Quarrels with Teiresias and spites his blindness.
* Accuses Teiresias and Creon for trying to overthrow him.
* Confesses killing a man at a cross road who should be king Laius.
* Calls form the shepherd who escaped and is now far away.
* Unwittingly marries his mother.
* Blinds himself.
* Turns out to be the cause of the plight of the Thebans.

Oedipus’ role in the development of the play.

* The title is about him.
* The major protagonist
* The plot is about him, the inciting, crisis, climax, and denouement
* The themes of fate, determination , man’s will
* The conflict is between him and fate
* The title is based on him.
* Lessons are a reflection of OEDIPUS.
* Suspense
* Dramatic satisfaction messages
* Flashback
* Represents victims of fate. He is pony the hands of supernatural gods.

Jocasta:

* Loving and caring
* Peace loving
* Religious
* Tragic character
* Authoritative
* Supportive
* Remorseful and penitent

Jocasta’s role in the development of the plot.

* Mother to Oedipus.
* An accomplice with the late Laius to kill the baby.
* Unwittingly becomes a wife to Oedipus.
* Mother to four children apart from Oedipus.
* Arbitrates between Oedipus andCreon.
* Gives a description of how Laius looks like to Oedipus which opens up his eyes.
* Profanes prophecy.
* Consoles Oedipus.
* Correlates the story of the shepherd and thinks Oedipus innocent.
* Advises Oedipus to stop prying into his birth.
* Commits suicide contributing to the tragedy of the play.

Jocasta’s role in the development of the play.

* A pony in the hands of the gods.
* A minor character.
* Victim of fate.
* The themes.
* Characterisation.
* Conflict
* Lessons
* Plot,
* Suspense
* Dramatic satisfaction

Chorus, the Theban elders.

* Meek.
* Wise and knowledgeable
* Peaceful
* Moderate
* Observant
* Cautious, ‘I impute no blame till blame is proved’.

Role of the Chorus

* Provides interlude moments
* Summarises preceding events
* Gives a reflection of events
* Foreshadows proceeding events
* Gives prayer
* Advices, counsellor
* Represents Thebans, ‘citizens’ CREON addresses them.
* Friend to all parties.
* Thematic concerns
* Lessons, shudder of blood is denounced by the heavens.
* Dramatic reliefs
* Voice of wisdom
* Neutral character
* Recount the plight of the Thebans.
* Mark the end of scenes
* The conflict analysis
* Character analysis of OEDIPUS.

CREON

* Loyal
* Handy
* Wise and knowledgeable
* Religious
* Responsible
* Cautious
* Kind and sympathetic
* Humane

Role of Creon to the plot

* He goes to the Pythian house of Apollo to find an answer for Oedipus.
* Adviser to Oedipus.
* Advises Oedipus that Teiresias be called to find the killer.
* Quarrels with Oedipus.
* Voice of wisdom.
* Reverse the gods.
* Treats Oedipus with sympathy.
* Becomes the regent to the throne.
* The king after the downfall of Oedipus.

Role of Creon to the development of the play

* The plot
* Conflict
* Themes
* Lessons
* Setting
* Suspense
* Voice of wisdom
* Character
* Teiresias.
* Confrontation
* Denouement
* Dramatic satisfaction

Teiresias’ character

* Open
* Cautious
* Paradoxical
* Ironical
* Full of riddles
* Brave and daring
* Righteous
* Assertive
* Wise
* Ominous

Teiresias’ role

* Represents the gods.
* A righteous prophet.
* Voice of wisdom
* Character development of Oedipus
* Plot rising action.
* Foreshadows Oedipus end.
* Represents the wise.
* Stands for the truth.
* Themes of fate and determination.

Character of the Shepherd

* Humane
* Disloyal
* Disobedient
* Secretive
* Cautious
* Forgetful
* Pretentious
* Ignorant
* Blind
* Foolish
* Regretful
* Profaned the gods, wicked spell.

Role of the Shepherd

* Entrusted by the late king Laius.
* Saved the baby, Oedipus, from death and gives it to a Shepherd from Corinth.
* Fate uses his sympathy and humanity to save the baby Oedipus.
* Survives death at the crossroad to tell the tale upside down.
* Verifies that if Oedipus is the child he gave to the Shepherd from Corinth then his life is ‘lost’.
* Condemns the oracle as ‘wicked spell ‘.
* Helps to unravel Oedipus’ birth.
* Brings the plot to its resolution.
* The theme of fate and man’s attempt to thwart the will of the Fates.
* Correlates the Messenger of Corinth’s declaration of Oedipus not being from Corinth but Thebes.

**Dramatic techniques in the play**

* Title
* The plot revolves around Oedipus. The exposition, rising action, crisis point, climax, falling action, resolution and denouement.
* The major conflict is between him and wicked spell, prophecy, fate and the gods especially Apollo.
* The theme of fate and man’s will is advanced by him.
* How he is king how he comes to power.
* The lessons portrayed by him.
* Victim of the gods.
* Setting.
* Theme of determination.
* The dramatic irony.
* The confrontations
* The tragedy.
* The dramatic satisfaction.
* Pace
* The plot takes place within a day. It is swift.
* Action moves from one into another.
* Coincidences help in this.
* It is a narrative play.
* The audience is already aware of the events and so the events happens as fast as their expectations.
* Character traits
* A variety of unique characters are created and so appealing.
* Oedipus the famous, loved and full of determination and self-righteous.
* Poetry/verse
* The play is in verse.
* Setting
* Thebes.
* King’s palace, and matrimonial bed.
* Alters in the forecourt.
* The palace outside.
* Pythian house of Apollo.
* Cithaeron.
* Corinth
* Phocis
* Scenery
* Costumes
* “his head is crowned with full-berries”
* Props
* Chorus
* Symbolism
* Branches and garlands
* Incense filling the city
* Smiling
* Blindness
* Crowned with bay full-berries
* Prayers
* Lamentations
* Garlanded branch and incense
* Cithaeron
* Chorus shrink from his groping hand.
* Sphinx
* Dramatic irony
* Message from Pythian house of Apollo seeking the unclean thing in Themes.
* Oedipus seeking the killer of Laius.
* Oedipus severely cursing the killer of Laius.
* Teiresias coming to disclose the killer of Laius.
* Oedipus thinking that Teiresias and Creon are conniving to have his power.
* Oedipus running away from Corinth thinking Polybus and Merope are his parents.
* Oedipus bearing children where he was born.
* Prophecies
* Riddles
* Coincidences
* Suspense
* Flashback
* Reminiscing
* Stage direction and description
* With smiling face
* Enter Teiresias, led by an attendant