

The Downfall of the King

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In *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, there are several major events that lead to the overall plot of the play. From unknowingly slaying his father, and marrying his mother, the character of Oedipus is developed. The eagerness of Oedipus to uncover the truth ends up being somewhat of a tragedy. His temper led him to say, and do things that could be viewed as a regret of his in the end of the play. He very quickly reacted to things and acted out of anger and hate. His excessive pride played a role as well. As a leader, and the king of the people he should not have displayed these characteristics. It somewhat comes back to determine his fate in many ways which the audience will learn throughout the play. Overall, hubris, temper, and the pursuit of truth causes Oedipus's downfall in many different ways.

Hubris is shown in Oedipus in several ways. It is shown in effectiviology.com that, “they display hubris by [making explicit claims](#) regarding their self-superiority”. This gives a background on the definition of Hubris. When it is fully known what it means, the audience knows how Oedipus displayed it in his life. One example of this is when Oedipus tells Creon “What did the oracle say? Your words are ambiguous.” (pg. 12). What Oedipus is saying is that their words are unclear and somewhat double-sided. He is being relentless to fully acknowledge what they are telling him. He chose to not accept that he just might carry responsibility for the plague, and the killing of Laius. Another example of this is when he goes against the prophecy of the Gods. They told him that he would kill his father and marry his mother, and after this he left. He states, “When did you ever prove that you were a true prophet?” (pg.22). When he questioned the oracle, his arrogance led to the discovery of many shocking things. He ended up ultimately running away from Corinth. He then found that his family would be ripped apart, as well as himself due to the marrying of his mother, and the killing of his father. This goes to show that he

was acting in a Hubris way by defying those who knew more than him, ultimately leading to his downfall.

Temper played a vital role in the downfall of Oedipus. An example of this is when his anger led him to kill two people. One of these people turned out to be his father, which at the time he was unaware of. This is shown when Oedipus says, “Yes, I am angry and I will not be silent!” (pg.20). Teireias then goes on to say, “You are the killer. You bring pollution among the thebes.” (pg.20). Study.com tells us that “Oedipus's pride is exacerbated by his temper.”. This helps further our knowledge behind the reasoning for his temper. This evidence goes to show that Oedipus let his anger get the best of him which ultimately had a part in his downfall. At the time he killed the man, he was unaware that it was his father. He only acted out of hatred and showed impulsiveness. By continuously seeking the truth, he eventually discovers that it was his father. It can be concluded that his anger led to the downfall in a number of ways. Not only from the death of his father, but from the accusations of others. When Teiresias accuses him of murdering Laius, he displays his anger once again. This is shown when Teiresias says “In your anger you turn on me ... You can rage to your heart's content.” (pg. 20). From this we can see that the people viewed him to have a heart that was full of anger. As a king, the people shouldn't have a person that only displays this characteristic towards them. Once again it is proven that Oedipus is showing anger in many different ways. This ultimately adds to the downfall of Oedipus, when the people turn out to be right about him being the murder and causing the pollution among the Thebes.

Oedipus' curiosity within the matter of truth contributes to his downfall. Many questions throughout the play are listed which further shows how Oedipus was on a pursuit for the truth. An example of these many questions would be when he says, “ Perhaps the seer who has no eyes

can see the truth. But tell me, tell me all you know.” (pg. 35). He is seeking answers from anyone he can find. He wants nothing but the truth from those around him. He seems to be a headstrong and stubborn person that will not give up just because something is challenging. Little did he know that the truth wouldn't be something that is very exciting, rather something that leads to his downfall. Psychologiscience.org tells us that, “Curiosity Leads Us to Seek Out Unpleasant, Even Painful, Outcomes”. This furthers our claim that truth can lead to downfall. When Oedipus is becoming aware of his circumstance and discovers that he is the one who killed his father and married his mother, he states “I feel that my own curse now begins to descend on me.” (pg. 35). What this means is that the truth is unraveling, and Oedipus is gaining a sense of awareness around the fact that he is the main cause of all the wrong that is occurring. He let his concerns, and constant questioning to find things out be his only worry, rather than doing what's best for his people, and listening to those around him. This goes to show us that Oedipus' downfall has approached him due to his relentless pursuit of the truth.

In conclusion, many reasons can be put into place to describe the downfall of Oedipus.

Hubris, temper, and the pursuit of truth are some that stand out very strongly. These are very well shown in this play. By letting his curiosity, anger, and self-confidence get the best of him, Oedipus was left defeated. He was quick to learn that some things are better left unknown. By seeking the truth that was caused by himself, his character is built. We learn a lot about the person Oedipus was by the way he acted and carried himself in the play. He continuously displayed a sense of rage towards those around him, and showed his self-confidence entirely too much. Each of these aspects played a part in the final parts of the play. Overall, Oedipus had a hard downfall which was brought about by many negative characteristics that were displayed through him.

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