

When Oedipus was born, a prophet announced that the baby would grow up to kill his father and marry his mother, the king and queen of Thebes, Laius and Jocasta. To avoid this, king Laius sorrowfully ordered one of his servants to kill the baby. The servant took Oedipus onto a hilltop, but he could not kill the innocent child. He left Oedipus instead with a shepherd, who brought him across the mountains to the king of Corinth. This king claimed the boy and raised him as his own. When Oedipus grew to manhood, a prophet warned him about his prophecy. Not knowing he had been adopted, and that his real parents were Jocasta and Laius, Oedipus left the country to avoid committing such crimes. While crossing over the mountain, he fought a caravan of men who tried to force him off the road. He killed them all unaware that one of them was king Laius, his father. Oedipus came to the outskirts of his original country Thebes. Thebes was being menaced then by the Sphinx, who would ask its visitors a riddle and kill those who could not answer correctly. Shocked by the mortal's correct answer, the Sphinx fell over dead. As a reward from the Theban people, Oedipus was named new King, for the former king had recently been killed. His bride, the queen Jocasta, they had four children. Several years later, plagues began to destroy Thebes. Oedipus strove to discover the reason. A prophecy hints that the murderer of the former king, Laius, was living unpunished in Thebes. Until this murderer was punished, plagues would sweep the country. Oedipus questioned everyone: old servants, his wife, and the famous seer Teiresias. He slowly put together the facts that pointed to him. Cursing his fate, Oedipus blinded and exiled himself. His mother and wife, Jocasta hanged herself for her part. Oedipus was the unhappiest man who ever was. He lived in suffering to an old age, accompanied by his daughter Antigone, until the gods pitied his pain and whisked him off the face of earth.