**“A Day in the Life of an Ancient Athenian”**

1. Based on the video, what do you think were some of the values of Ancient Athens?

Ancient Athens had a democratic political system. The values in Athens are surprisingly modern since they have a democratic system and every citizen has the right to participate in politics and demonstrate their thoughts. At the same time, the decisions are made simply - by just raising their hands and then following the opinion that most people agree with. However, in Ancient Athens, the democratic system was based on slavery, most of the population in Athens, which were women and slaves, did not own any political rights. Despite the “discrimination”, it’s still much more modern than most ancient countries and civilizations such as Sparda and Ancient China, which were basically under the rule of centralization and aristocratic rule.

1. What is special about Athens as a community that makes it seem appropriate as the site of the Festival of Dionysus (particularly the theater competition)? (Think about the kinds of things its political system would have required…)

Holding the Festival of Dionysus encourages Athens citizens to get political education and cultural edification so that they can be involved in more political decision-making. In particular, the political system which is a democracy needs citizens to join in the discussion and decision-making, requiring correct values. These values can be influenced positively by watching theater performances.

1. Do you think Athens’ direct democracy makes sense as a political system?

Athens’ direct democratic political system does not make sense for most cultures. The reason why Athens’ political system developed to be a direct democracy is mostly due to population and geometric conditions. First, Ancient Greek Civilization started its culture around the Mediterranean Sea, with a variety of small islands. The geometry condition made Ancient Greek Civilization established mainly in the form of a polis (also called a city-state). The polis includes a main city and several villages, thus having a small size and population. Among the total population, the male population is about 5000 in each polis, which is much smaller than other civilizations, such as Ancient Egypt and Ancient China, therefore they can make decisions by direct democracy. Also, civilizations such as Ancient Athens are more open and democratic since it’s established around the ocean, the main income is from the marine fishing industry and contact with other poleis, requiring “contact skills” which is related to democracy.

Therefore, the direct democracy of Athens does not make sense for a normal civilization, but a coincidence coming from geometric conditions.

**“Thespis, Athens, and The Origins of Greek Drama: Crash Course Theater #2”**

1. Consider the primitive origins of Greek theater in Dionysian ritual and its subsequent development. What do these origins of Greek theater reflect about the roles of emotion and reason, chaos and order in the classical world (and in the classical view of the world’s composition)? (You might call to mind, in comparison, the idea of the Apollonian v. Dionysian tradition, and the contrasting visions, in the Roman world, of Virgil’s Aeneid and Ovid’s Metamorphoses.)

The origin of Greek theater in Dionysian ritual is that to celebrate the popular god Dionysius, people held a procession from Eleuthera to Athens, lifting a giant phallus and singing songs called dithyrambs in praise of Dionysius. Then dithyrambs evolved into theater. Peisistratus, who ruled the pre-democracy Athens, tried to unite and strengthen the city by mind-controlling, particularly getting everyone on board by joining in the festivals in praise of Dionysus. The plays actively questioned the values and structures of the state, trying to explore what it means to be a part of a family and a nation and what to do when divided loyalties create conflict. The plays are brought with the motivation of letting them be better people and better citizens. Thus the roles and emotions are negative, trying to create a tragic topic so that it can give proper purgation for Athens citizens. The emotions are mainly pity and fear.

Also, the chaos and order in the classical world can be presented by Apollonian and Dionysian traditions.

In particular, Dionysius promotes the chaotic culture of the Ancient Athens. He is the god of wine and the way people celebrate him is by tearing animals into pieces and lifting giant phalluses while having a procession, which seems to have little order.

In contrast, Apollo should be a sign of order. The god Apollo had power over many aspects of life, he was the god of music and the arts and an accomplished player of the lyre. He is the son of Zeus and Leto, worshiped as the god of light and the sun. Apollo meets the stereotype of a person who behaves well and is ordered. Also, Apollo owns the city of Delphi and the foretelling given by Oracles in Delphi is undefying and unquestionable, which means Apollo is a label of authority.

1. Where do we see chaos and order or emotion and reason presented in Oedipus the King? How might we bear these contrasting forces in mind to make sense of some of the play’s themes?

**Chaos and Order**: The play portrays the chaos caused by the plague in Thebes, which disrupts the order of the city. Oedipus, as the king, attempts to restore order by solving the mystery of the plague's origin, ultimately leading to the revelation of his own tragic fate.

**Emotion and Reason**: Oedipus exemplifies the clash between emotion and reason. His emotional pursuit of the truth and determination to save Thebes contrast with the rational skepticism of characters like Tiresias and Jocasta, who warn against uncovering painful truths. Oedipus's emotional journey eventually leads to his tragic downfall.

The play explores the consequences of unchecked emotion, the limits of human reason in the face of fate, and the idea that attempting to impose order on chaos can sometimes lead to unintended chaos. "Oedipus the King" prompts us to reflect on the unpredictability of life and the consequences of our actions, highlighting the eternal struggle between chaos and order and emotion and reason in the human experience.

1. The video refers to the fact that, though much of the Festival of Dionysus consisted of displays unambiguously affirming the power and values of Athens (e.g. piles of treasure from parts of their empire, formal recognition of those who had benefitted the city), the plays performed the more sophisticated role of critically exploring its values and power structures. In light of that, let’s imagine that Socrates’ Theban Trilogy did not win him that year’s top prize only because of its aesthetic excellence. What might be one or two other possible reasons the jury selected it? (Think about the kinds of movies that win Oscars…)

1. The host introduces Aristotle’s theory of catharsis and gives his interpretation of it. Briefly, explain that interpretation and why it does or does not make sense. “Tragedy through pity and fear affects the proper purgation of these emotions.”

The interpretation makes sense. First, when normal people are watching tragedies, they feel pity about the experience of the protagonists and also fear because they do not expect themselves to suffer this. These emotions, do not help in making rational decisions for political issues because these emotions should be considered irrational ones.

**“A Day in the Life of the Oracle of Delphi”**

1. What did Heraclitus (nicknamed “the Obscure”, who also said “you can’t step in the same river twice”) say about the Oracle? (Hint: It opens this video.) What might that mean from a metaphysical perspective? Based on what we see in the video, how does it relate to the practicalities of being the Oracle?

(Lmao hopefully I reopened the video and saw the quote.) Heraclitus said, “The Oracle neither conceals, nor reveals, but indicates.”

1. What two phrases are inscribed on the walls of the temple? (These phrases are very emblematic of the wisdom of the Ancient Greek world, with the first resembling Socrates’ famous exhortation to humankind, and the second reflecting the idea of the “golden mean”.) How might these be connected to the kinds of prophecies the Oracle gives? (Again, consider the specifics detailed in the video.)

The two phrases inscribed on the walls of the temples are “know yourself” and “nothing in excess”.

***“Know Yourself”***

It encourages self-awareness and introspection, suggesting that understanding oneself is a crucial step toward wisdom and personal growth.

***“Nothing in Excess”***

It advises against excessive behavior and urges individuals to avoid extremes. It was intended to guide people toward a harmonious and well-rounded life.

This drops a hint for the Oracle that she should keep an open mind may be more important than finding a single answer. To be specific, the foretelling Oracle gives is mainly ambiguous and it needs to be interpreted by the people who give the question. People's psychology makes them interpret those foretells in the direction they want. Therefore, this kind of foretelling, rather than giving a clear direction, persuades people to follow their original minds.

1. Does Oedipus follow the advice of these phrases? To what effect does he follow or not follow them?

***Know Yourself***

Oedipus's failure to heed the advice to "Know Yourself" is a central aspect of the play's tragic unfolding. Despite his determination to uncover the truth about the murder of King Laius and the cause of the plague, Oedipus remains blind to his own identity and the truth of his past. He is not aware that he is the murderer he seeks and that he has unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy.

Oedipus's lack of self-awareness contributes to the dramatic irony of the play. The audience knows his true identity while he remains ignorant, and this ignorance drives his actions and decisions. His relentless pursuit of knowledge ironically leads him away from self-awareness, ultimately resulting in his tragic downfall.

***Nothing in Excess***

Oedipus's excessive pursuit of the truth and his desire to avoid his fate exemplify the opposite of the principle of "Nothing in Excess." He demonstrates hubris in his belief that he can manipulate his destiny and outwit the prophecy. His determination to go to extreme lengths to uncover the truth, including confronting the blind prophet Tiresias and defying divine warnings, ultimately leads to his ruin.

Oedipus's tragic flaw of hubris—excessive pride and arrogance—causes him to disregard the principle of moderation. Instead of accepting the limits of human knowledge and embracing a more measured approach, he pushes himself beyond reasonable boundaries, inadvertently fulfilling the prophecy he seeks to avoid.

In summary, Oedipus's journey in the play reflects his failure to adhere to the advice encapsulated in the phrases "Know Yourself" and "Nothing in Excess." His lack of self-awareness and his excessive pursuit of the truth are pivotal factors in his tragic downfall. These failures emphasize the themes of fate, human limitations, and the consequences of unchecked pride in the face of divine forces.

**List 5 study questions you would ask students about Oedipus the King.**

* The motifs of blindness and sight are prevalent throughout the play. (For example, the blind Terasies and his words accuse Oedipus of having sight, but cannot see the truth.) How do these motifs relate to Oedipus's journey of self-discovery and the broader themes of truth and knowledge? Consider instances of both literal and metaphorical blindness and their effects on characters.

* Analyze the play's treatment of the interplay between fate and free will. How do Oedipus's attempts to defy his predicted fate paradoxically lead him to fulfill it? Discuss how other characters, such as Jocasta and Tiresias, contribute to the exploration of this theme.

* Oedipus is often regarded as a tragic hero. Evaluate his character traits, strengths, and flaws in light of Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero. How does Oedipus's downfall evoke feelings of catharsis in the audience, and how does his fate serve as a cautionary tale?

* Explore the roles and perspectives of women in the play, primarily focusing on Jocasta and her interactions with Oedipus. How does Jocasta's character contribute to the themes of fate, truth, and the limitations of human understanding? Does her action foreshadow the ending of the play?

* The connection between the City of Thebes and Oedipus seems to be undemonstrable but fantastical. Analyze the role of Thebes as a representation of Oedipus's life, his search for truth, and the broader human condition. How does the city's suffering mirror the characters' internal struggles?

***Oedipus the King* Question 1**

1. Dramatic irony is heavily in play throughout Oedipus the King, given that the details of this myth would have been well known to the audience. Choose a particular moment, from the play’s first half, where the irony is striking, and explain why. How do you think the audience would feel at that moment? (Perhaps a complex mix of feelings?)

One particularly striking moment of dramatic irony in the first half of "Oedipus the King" occurs when Oedipus interacts with Tiresias, the blind prophet. Tiresias has been summoned by Oedipus to help uncover the cause of the plague that has struck Thebes. Tiresias is reluctant to reveal what he knows, but Oedipus presses him to share his insights.

Tiresias, using his prophetic abilities, cryptically hints at the truth about Oedipus's own identity, saying:

"I say you are the murderer you hunt."

"You have your eyes but see not where you live."

Here, the audience knows the truth that Oedipus himself is the one who unknowingly killed his father, King Laius, and married his mother, Queen Jocasta. The irony lies in the fact that while Tiresias accuses Oedipus of being the murderer, it is Oedipus himself who is guilty of the crimes he seeks to solve.

The audience's reaction would likely be a complex mix of emotions. First, they will be surprised by the fact revealed by the prophet, since in common sense, a murderer will not consist of finding the truth. Then, there might be a sense of suspense and anticipation as they wait to see how Oedipus will react to Tiresias's accusations. As the audience witnesses Oedipus's growing frustration and disbelief, there might also be a feeling of sympathy for him, as he is completely unaware of his true identity and the gravity of his actions. Additionally, the audience might experience a sense of dramatic irony-induced tension, as they are aware of the truth while Oedipus remains in the dark. This tension could lead to a feeling of unease or even discomfort, knowing that Oedipus's determination to uncover the truth will eventually lead to his downfall.

1. Leaving aside the specific actions that led to the curse upon Athens, what would you say are Oedipus’ best and worst qualities? (Be prepared to support your answer with specific reference to the text.)

**Best Qualities**

1. **Determination and Leadership**: Oedipus demonstrates strong determination and leadership qualities from the very beginning of the play. He takes the initiative to uncover the cause of the plague that has befallen Thebes and is committed to resolving the crisis. He tells the citizens, "I will fight for him as if he were my father, and win him a name for all time."

2. **Concern for his People**: Oedipus's primary motivation is to alleviate the suffering of his people. He cares deeply about the well-being of Thebes and shows his commitment by sending Creon to Delphi to seek guidance from the oracle and take decisive actions to solve the city's problems.

**Worst Qualities**

1. **Hubris and Arrogance**: Oedipus's tragic flaw is his excessive pride and arrogance. He believes that he can outwit fate and solve the riddle of his own identity. He dismisses Teiresias's warnings and accuses him of conspiring against him, displaying a lack of humility. This hubris ultimately blinds him to the reality of his situation.

2. **Quick Temper and Impulsiveness**: Oedipus has a quick temper and is prone to impulsive actions. When confronted with the possibility that he might be the cause of the plague, he reacts with anger and accuses Creon and Teiresias of plotting against him. His impulsive reactions contribute to his downfall as he uncovers the truth about his past.

3. **Lack of Self-Knowledge**: Despite his intelligence and determination, Oedipus is ironically blind to his own identity and history. He is unaware that he killed his father and married his mother. His pursuit of truth and his efforts to avoid his predicted fate ironically lead him closer to fulfilling that very fate. (Also, this is emphasized when considering Oedipus’s connection to “Know Yourself”)

1. Consider one of these other characters: Jocasta, Creon, Tiresias, and the Shepherd. Are they essential to the play? What does their role contribute? (Think not just about the essential elements of the myth, e.g. there could have been no curse without Jocasta, but rather the play’s dramatic construction and the audience’s response.)

**Creon.**

Creon, Jocasta's brother and Oedipus's brother-in-law, serves as a stabilizing force in the play. His role is pivotal in mediating between Oedipus and the city's concerns. Creon's character contributes to the tension by becoming entangled in Oedipus's accusations and by being accused by Oedipus himself. His rationality and loyalty to Thebes create a contrast with Oedipus's impulsive behavior, emphasizing Oedipus's tragic flaw of hubris. Creon also represents a sense of order amidst the chaos, and his interactions with Oedipus help to underscore the play's themes.

1. In his Poetics, Aristotle famously analyzes the nature of tragedy, often referring to Sophocles’ Oedipus as an example. He asserts that plot (the representation of the actions of the characters) is the most important, character (the representation of the personalities of the characters) follows second and thought (the representation of the intellectual processes of the characters, as well as the values and beliefs articulated in the play) is third. (These are followed by diction, song, and spectacle.) Do you agree that this is true in Oedipus? In general? If you disagree, how might you rearrange these elements? Please explain your answer.

Aristotle's analysis of tragedy in his "Poetics" provides a framework for understanding the essential elements of a dramatic work, including plot, character, and thought. This framework can be applied to "Oedipus the King" to assess the importance of these elements in the play and tragedies in general.

1. Plot

The plot is indeed a crucial element in "Oedipus the King." The play is driven by the unfolding of events and the unraveling of Oedipus's identity and fate. The progression of the plot—from Oedipus's investigation of the plague to the eventual revelation of his tragic past—creates tension, suspense, and emotional engagement. The Carefplot's careful construction of the tragic events has such a powerful impact on the audience.

2. Character

Characterization is also significant in the play. Oedipus's personality, actions, and internal struggles are central to the narrative. His tragic flaws, strengths, and transformation contribute to the play's depth and complexity. Characters like Jocasta, Creon, Tiresias, and the Shepherd add layers to the story and interact with Oedipus in ways that reveal different facets of his character.

3. Thought

In "Oedipus the King," thought encompasses the intellectual processes of the characters and the philosophical themes explored in the play. The conflict between fate and free will, the limits of human knowledge, and the consequences of one's actions are all profound themes that contribute to the thought element. The play's exploration of these ideas prompts the audience to reflect on broader philosophical and moral questions.

While Aristotle's hierarchy of plot, character, and thought provides a useful framework, it's important to note that these elements are interconnected and interdependent. They work in tandem to create a well-rounded and impactful dramatic work. In some cases, the emphasis on these elements might shift depending on the specific play or context.

For example, in some tragedies, character might take precedence over plot, particularly in plays where the focus is on the internal struggles and growth of the characters. In others, thought might be emphasized more strongly, especially if the play is intended to provoke intellectual reflection and philosophical contemplation.

In summary, while Aristotle's analysis holds for "Oedipus the King," it's important to recognize that the effectiveness of a tragedy often arises from the seamless interplay of plot, character, and thought, each contributing to the overall impact and meaning of the work.

1. How does this play seem to represent fate? Do you think it’s useful to think about fate in this way?

"Oedipus the King" is a prime example of how ancient Greek drama often explored the concept of fate. The play presents a strong representation of fate through the central character of Oedipus, who unknowingly fulfills a prophecy despite his efforts to evade it. The play raises questions about the extent to which individuals can alter their destinies and the role of fate in shaping their lives.

The concept of fate is depicted in several ways within the play:

1. Oracle's Prophecy: The prophecy that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother sets the foundation for the tragic events. Despite attempts to prevent the prophecy from coming true, Oedipus's actions inadvertently lead to its fulfillment.

2. Irony: The dramatic irony in the play lies in the fact that while Oedipus and the audience are unaware of his true identity, the audience is well aware of the prophecy's fulfillment. This highlights the inescapable nature of fate, as Oedipus's actions align with the prophecy despite his lack of knowledge.

3. Foreshadowing: Throughout the play, there are instances of foreshadowing that hint at the tragic events to come. These elements contribute to a sense of inevitability, reinforcing the idea that fate is a powerful force that cannot be avoided.

4. Resolution: The final revelation of Oedipus's true identity and the fulfillment of the prophecy serve as the culmination of the play's exploration of fate. Oedipus's blindness and exile are both consequences of his efforts to change his fate, emphasizing the tragic nature of his situation.

Whether it's useful to think about fate in this way depends on one's perspective and interpretation. The play's depiction of fate raises complex philosophical questions about determinism, free will, and the role of external forces in shaping human lives.

Some may find it useful to consider fate as a literary device that adds depth to characters and their struggles. It can also prompt contemplation about the limitations of human agency and the ethical implications of actions that are beyond an individual's control.

Others might view fate as a reflection of cultural beliefs and mythological traditions, allowing for exploration of the tension between human aspirations and the cosmic order. This can be a valuable lens for understanding the mindset of the ancient Greeks and their views on the relationship between mortals and the divine.

Ultimately, the representation of fate in "Oedipus the King" invites audiences to engage with timeless questions about destiny, choice, and the human condition, making it a thought-provoking and enduring work of literature.

1. What’s one thing you take away from (learn or get some kind of lasting impression of) from this play? Are you able to see some kind of moral in this play that makes sense to you? Or one that seems to be there that you can’t quite understand?

From "Oedipus the King," one enduring takeaway is the exploration of the limits of human knowledge and the unintended consequences of one's actions. The play underscores the idea that even the most determined and intelligent individuals can be blind to certain truths, and their efforts to avoid a particular fate can paradoxically lead them straight into it. This serves as a cautionary reminder that the human quest for knowledge and control can sometimes result in tragic outcomes.

In terms of moral lessons, one prominent theme in the play is the idea that attempts to defy or manipulate fate are ultimately futile. Oedipus's relentless pursuit of the truth, despite his ignorance of his own identity, contributes to his downfall. The play seems to caution against the arrogance of assuming that one can outwit or challenge the predetermined course of events. This moral lesson aligns with the broader mythological tradition that emphasizes the power of destiny and the hubris of those who challenge it.

On a more nuanced level, the play also raises questions about responsibility and accountability. Oedipus's actions are a result of ignorance rather than malice, yet he still suffers the consequences. This leads to a contemplation of the complexities of moral culpability in a world where individuals are subject to both internal motivations and external forces.

As for a moral that may be present but not fully understood, the play's exploration of the family dynamic, particularly the Oedipus complex (a psychological concept named after the character), introduces complex themes related to the relationships between parents and children, fate, and the subconscious. While these themes offer rich material for interpretation, they may be challenging to distill into a single, straightforward moral.

In summary, "Oedipus the King" prompts reflection on themes related to fate, knowledge, human hubris, and responsibility. Its moral lessons are only sometimes neatly packaged, but the play encourages audiences to grapple with the complexities of human nature, destiny, and the consequences of one's choices.