Thesis: *Oedipus the King* suggests that fate has no connection to human ideas of justice or fairness, and the appropriate response to that realization is terror.

One of the most positive, progressive but at the same time miserable characters in *Oedipus the King* is doubtless the protagonist Oedipus Rex. He is probably an impressive character, not only in the play but also in the history of the ancient Greek mythological system. It's not just because of his bizarre experience which killed his father and had incest with his mother inadvertently, but the most tragic part is that even though he tried to avoid it, he cannot fight against the foretell. Even more, when he has a rational and appropriate reaction toward fate, it indeed drags him into the abyss of fate and despair. The tragedy suggests that fate has no connection to human ideas of justice or fairness, and the appropriate response to that realization is terror. Its take on the unchangeable fate and taking terror as an appropriate reaction is revealed in the tragedy’s motivation of presenting limits of human agency, the protagonist Oedipus’s unwavering pursuit of justice which leads to his downfall, and the inescapability of fate.

It is easy to infer that the tragedy’s view of fate and its connection to human effort trying to go against it may be indicated by the main character in the play. Oedipus has human ideas of justice and fairness and should be considered as an enlightened ruler, determined to find the truth behind the plague that has shrouded Thebes. However, his relentless pursuit of justice ultimately becomes the catalyst for his tragic demise. As Oedipus uncovers the dark secrets of his past, he unknowingly fulfills the prophecy given by the Oracle, exposing his unwitting guilt out of purpose. The irony lies in his belief that justice will prevail -, it does, but Oedipus, accidentally and unfortunately didn’t get rid of the foretelling, as he proves to be both the “seeker” and “subject” of justice. This symbolizes the paradox of humans when confronted with a predetermined destiny. As shown in the play, Jocasta tries to stop Oedipus’s search, screaming with desperation “Stop - in the name of god, if you love your own life, call off this search! My suffering is enough”, Her panic and pleading laid the groundwork for Oedipus to find himself blinding his eyes after incest with his mother and killing his father. However, Oedipus’s unwavering pursuit of justice is presented by their dialogue, “Courage! Even if my mother turns out to be a slave, and I a slave, three generations back, you would not seem common”. It was this courage that finally dragged Oedipus into the abyss of moral condemnation.

In addition to Oedipus' indelible sense of justice, it is complemented by Oracle's many divine predictions that cannot be avoided, highlighting the inevitability of fate. Divine prophecy highlights the inescapability of fate. Throughout the play, divine prophecy plays a significant role in shaping the events that unfold. The Oracle’s predictions hang over Oedipus’s life like a sword, revealing the inexorable nature of fate. The Oracle of Delphi’s prophetic words, as well as the prophecies received by Jocasta and Laius, foreshadow the tragic outcome with a sense of inevitability. Both Oedipus and his parents tried hard not to follow the prophecy, however, still ended up making the foretelling true. Oedipus’s attempts to defy the prophecy inadvertently lead him to fulfill them, suggesting that fate cannot be averted, no matter how noble or determined one’s efforts to challenge it may be. When Creon was arguing with Oedipus that Oedipus doubted Creon wanted to seize power, Creon said “Do you want proof? Go to Delphi yourself, examine the oracle, and see if I’ve reported the message word-for-word”, This leaks the information to us that they treat Oracle’s prophecy as authoritative and convincing words while Oedipus has been preventing the prophecy from being fulfilled.

Oedipus’s tragic fate which exemplifies the terrifying consequence of fate’s indifference to human ideas of justice reaches a climax in his complete downfall after he realizes that he cannot change his future despite trying his best against it, highlighting the inexorable nature of destiny. Ironically, Oedipus’s determination to avoid his prophesied fate propels him into precisely the circumstances he sought to evade. Despite his noble intentions and earnest effort to solve the riddle of his identity, he remains utterly helpless against the inexorable hand of fate, emphasizing the irony of his situation. In the play, as Oedipus learns the dreadful truth of his actions and their alignment with the prophecy, he laments, “Oh god - all come true, all burst to light!”. This powerful revelation highlights the tragic irony of Oedipus’s situation, as he comprehends that his very actions, driven by a desire to escape the prophecy, have led to its realization. This reinforces the notion that fate’s indifference to human notions of justice leaves even the most noble and resolute individuals helplessly entwined in its intricate web. Thus, Oedipus’s journey serves as a stark warning of the terror that befalls those who dare to challenge the preordained course of destiny.

In conclusion, Oedipus the King, through its portrayal of Oedipus's unwavering pursuit of justice and the tragic revelation of fate's disconnection from human ideas of fairness, presents a chilling realization that human agency holds no power over the predestined course of destiny. Oedipus's journey, marred by futility, highlights the terrifying consequences of confronting a reality where justice and fairness seem irrelevant in the face of an immutable fate. This timeless tragedy prompts us to ponder the limitations of human understanding, the complexities of fate, and the delicate balance between our actions and their consequences. The play's timeless themes continue to beckon further exploration into the enduring human struggle to reconcile our quest for justice with the haunting specter of an unyielding fate.

