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## Oedipus rex script modern english

Oedipus steps out of the royal palace of Thebes and is greeted by a procession of priests, who are in turn surrounded by the impoverished and sorrowful citizens of Thebes. The citizens carry branches wrapped in wool, which they offer to the gods as gifts. Thebes has been struck by a plague, the citizens are dying, and no one knows how to put an end to it. Oedipus asks a priest why the citizens have gathered around the palace. The priest responds that the city is dying and asks the king to save Thebes. Oedipus replies that he sees and understands the terrible fate of Thebes, and that no one is more sorrowful than he. He has sent Creon, his brother-in-law and fellow ruler, to the Delphic oracle to find out how to stop the plague. Just then, Creon arrives, and Oedipus asks what the oracle has said. Creon asks Oedipus if he wants to hear the news in private, but Oedipus insists that all the citizens hear. Creon then tells what he has learned from the god Apollo, who spoke through the oracle: the murderer of Laius, who ruled Thebes before Oedipus, is in Thebes. He must be driven out in order for the plague to end. Creon goes on to tell the story of Laius's murder. On their way to consult an oracle, Laius and all but one of his fellow travelers were killed by thieves. Oedipus asks why the Thebans made no attempt to find the murderers, and Creon reminds him that Thebes was then more concerned with the curse of the Sphinx. Hearing this, Oedipus resolves to solve the mystery of Laius's murder. The Chorus enters, calling on the gods Apollo, Athena, and Artemis to save Thebes. Apparently, it has not heard Creon's news about Laius's murderer. It bemoans the state of Thebes, and finally invokes Dionysus, whose mother was a Theban. Oedipus returns and tells the Chorus that he will end the plague himself. He asks if anyone knows who killed Laius, promising that the informant will be rewarded and the murderer will receive no harsher punishment than exile. No one responds, and Oedipus furiously curses Laius's murderer and anyone who is protecting him. Oedipus curses himself, proclaiming that should he discover the murderer to be a member of his own family, that person should be struck by the same exile and harsh treatment that he has just wished on the murderer. Oedipus castigates the citizens of Thebes for letting the murderer go unknown so long. The Leader of the Chorus suggests that Oedipus call for Tiresias, a great prophet, and Oedipus responds that he has already done so. Analysis Oedipus is notable for his compassion, his sense of justice, his swiftness of thought and action, and his candor. At this early stage in the play, Oedipus represents all that an Athenian audience—or indeed any audience—could desire in a citizen or a leader. In his first speech, which he delivers to an old priest whose suffering he seeks to alleviate, he continually voices his concern for the health and well-being of his people. He insists upon allowing all his people to hear what the oracle has said, despite Creon's suggestion that Oedipus hear the news in private. When Creon retells the story of Laius's murder, Oedipus is shocked and dismayed that the investigation of the murder of a king was so swiftly dropped (145–147). Oedipus quickly hatches plans to deal with both his people's suffering and Laius's unsolved murder, and he has even anticipated the Chorus's suggestions that he send someone to the oracle and call forth Tiresias. Finally, Oedipus is vehement in his promises of dire punishment for Laius's murderer, even if the murderer turns out to be someone close to Oedipus himself. Sophocles' audience knew the ancient story of Oedipus well, and would therefore interpret the greatness Oedipus exudes in the first scene as a tragic harbinger of his fall. Sophocles seizes every opportunity to exploit this dramatic irony. Oedipus frequently alludes to sight and blindness, creating many moments of dramatic irony, since the audience knows that it is Oedipus's metaphorical blindness to the relationship between his past and his present situation that brings about his ruin. For example, when the old priest tells Oedipus that the people of Thebes are dying of the plague, Oedipus says that he could not fail to see this (68–72). Oedipus eagerly attempts to uncover the truth, acting decisively and scrupulously refusing to shield himself from the truth. Although we are able to see him as a mere puppet of fate, at some points, the irony is so magnified that it seems almost as if Oedipus brings catastrophe upon himself willingly. One such instance of this irony is when Oedipus proclaims proudly—but, for the audience, painfully—that he possesses the bed of the former king, and that marriage might have even created "blood-bonds" between him and Laius had Laius not been murdered (294–300). Although the Chorus's first ode (166–244) piously calls to the gods to save Thebes from the plague, the answer they get to their prayer arrives in human form. Immediately following the ode, Oedipus enters and says that he will answer the Chorus's prayers. For a moment, Oedipus takes upon himself the role of a god—a role the Chorus has been both reluctant and eager to allow him (see 39–43). Oedipus is so competent in the affairs of men that he comes close to dismissing the gods, although he does not actually blaspheme, as Creon does in Antigone. At this early moment, we see Oedipus's dangerous pride, which explains his willful blindness and, to a certain extent, justifies his downfall. Sophocles was the Aaron Spelling of ancient Greek world—his plays had all the makings of a modern soap! But archaic translations of his ancient work make it almost impossible to see any of the Melrose Place-like plots! BookCaps can help readers who have struggled in the past with Sophocles classic plays with this modern retelling.Oedipus the King, also known by the Latin title Oedipus Rex, is an Athenian tragedy by Sophocles that was first performed c. 429 BCE. It was the second of Sophocles's three Theban plays to be produced, but it comes first in the internal chronology, followed by Oedipus at Colonus and then Antigone. Over the centuries, it has come to be regarded by many as the Greek tragedy par excellence.This play is also available as a collection in "The Oedipus Trilogy In Plain and Simple English."The original text is also presented in the book, along with a comparable version of both text. Do you need to understand Oedipus the King and want something more interactive? Try our free app, SwipeBook! Argument To Laius, King of Thebes, an oracle foretold that the child born to him by his queen Jocasta would slay his father and wed his mother. So when in time a son was born the infant's feet were riveted together and he was left to die on Mount Cithaeron. But a shepherd found the babe and tended him, and delivered him to another shepherd who took him to his master, the King of Corinth. Polybus being childless adopted the boy, who grew up believing that he was indeed the King's son. Afterwards doubting his parentage he inquired of the Delphic god and heard himself the weird declared before to Laius. Wherefore he fled from what he deemed his father's house and in his flight he encountered and unwittingly slew his father Laius. Arriving at Thebes he answered the riddle of the Sphinx and the grateful Thebans made their deliverer king. So he reigned in the room of Laius, and espoused the widowed queen. Children were born to them and Thebes prospered under his rule, but again a grievous plague fell upon the city. Again the oracle was consulted and it bade them purge themselves of blood-guiltiness. Oedipus denounces the crime of which he is unaware, and undertakes to track out the criminal. Step by step it is brought home to him that he is the man. The closing scene reveals Jocasta slain by her own hand and Oedipus blinded by his own act and praying for death or exile. Laius, King of Thebes, has been told by an oracle that his child with Queen Jocasta will kill his father and marry his mother. So when the child is born his feet are nailed together and he is left to die on Mount Cithaeron. But a shepherd found the baby and cared for him and gave him to another shepherd who took him to his master, the King of Corinth, Polybus. Being childless he adopted the boy, who grew up thinking he was the King's natural son. Afterwards, doubting his parentage, he asked the Delphic Oracle and heard the same prediction Laius was given. He fled what he thought was his father's house and on his journey met and unknowingly killed his real father, Laius. When he arrived at Thebes he answered the riddle of the Sphinx and the grateful Thebans made him king as reward. So he ruled in Laius' place and married his widow. They had children and Thebes prospered, but then a terrible plague fell on the city. The oracle was consulted again and it told them the city must be cleansed of a blood guilt. Oedipus announces that the murderer will be executed and that he will catch the criminal. Bit by bit it is revealed to him that he is the criminal. In the closing scene Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus, blinded by his own hand, is praying for exile or death. Scene: Thebes. Before the Palace of Oedipus. Suppliants of all ages are seated round the altar at the palace doors, at their head a PRIEST OF ZEUS. To them enter OEDIPUS. OEDIPUS My children, latest born to Cadmus old, Why sit ye here as suppliants, in your hands Branches of olive filleted with wool? What means this reek of incense everywhere, And everywhere laments and litanies? Children, it were not meet that I should learn From others, and am hither come, myself, I Oedipus, your world-renowned king. Ho! aged sire, whose venerable locks Proclaim thee spokesman of this company, Explain your mood and purport. Is it dread Of ill that moves you or a boon ye crave? My zeal in your behalf ye cannot doubt; Ruthless indeed were I and obdurate If such petitioners as you I spurned. My children, the latest of Cadmus' line, Why do you sit here pleading, carrying Olive branches wrapped in wool? Why do I smell incense everywhere, And hear sad prayers? Children, it would not be right to learn About these things from others, so I have come myself, Oedipus, your king, famous throughout the world. Hello! Old gentleman, your gray hairs Show you to be the leader of this group; Explain your mood and purpose. Is it fear Of bad things brings you here, or are you looking for a benefit? You can be assured I'll do my best for you; I'd be really pitiless and hard hearted if I turned away petitioners like you. PRIEST Yes, Oedipus, my sovereign lord and king, Thou seest how both extremes of age besiege Thy palace altars—Fledglings hardly winged, and greybeards bowed with years; priests, as am I of Zeus, and these the flower of our youth. Meanwhile, the common folk, with wreathed boughs Crowd our two market-places, or before Both shrines of Pallas congregate, or where Ismenus gives his oracles by fire. For, as thou seest thyself, our ship of State, Sore buffeted, can no more lift her head, Foundered beneath a weltering surge of blood. A blight is on our harvest in the ear, A blight upon the grazing flocks and herds, A blight on wives in travail; and withal Armed with his blazing torch the god of Plague Hath swooped upon our city emptying The house of Cadmus, and the murky realm Of Pluto is full fed with groans and tears. Therefore, O King, here at thy hearth we sit, I and these children; not as deeming thee A new divinity, but the first of men; First in the common accidents of life, And first in visitations of the gods. Art thou not he who coming to the town of Cadmus freed us from the tax we paid To the fell songstress? Nor hadst thou received Prompts from us or been by others schooled; No, by a god inspired (so all men deem, And testify) didst thou renew our life. And now, O Oedipus, our peerless king, All we thy votaries beseech thee, find Some succor, whether by a voice from heaven Whispered, or haply known by human wit. Tried counselors, methinks, are aptest found To furnish for the future pregnant rede. Upraise, O chief of men, upraise our State! Look to thy laurels! for thy zeal of yore Our country's savior thou art justly hailed: O never may we thus record thy reign!—"He raised us up only to cast us down." Uplift us, build our city on a rock. Thy happy star ascendant brought us luck, O let it not decline! If thou wouldst rule This land, as now thou reignest, better sure To rule a peopled than a desert realm. Nor battlements nor galleys aught avail, If men to man and guards to guard them fail. Oedipus, my supreme lord and king, You see how both the young and the old have come To beg at your palace altars; young ones, hardly more than babies, And ancient greybeards; priests (I am a priest of Zeus) And these, the best of our young. Meanwhile, the common people, with wool wrapped branches, Crowd our two market-places, or gather in Both temples of Pallas, or where Ismenus gives predictions looking at burnt sacrifices. For, as you can see, our ship of State is attacked by storms and can hardly keep her head above water. Sinking beneath a flood of death, Disease has struck our harvest before it's picked, Disease has struck our animals, A curse strikes women in childbirth; and also The god of Plague, armed with his blazing torch, Has swooped down on Thebes and killed Many of its citizens, and the underworld Echoes to the sound of their groans and crying. So, King, we sit here on your doorstep, These children and I, not thinking you're a god But thinking you're the greatest man: Greatest in everyday life, And the first one to be spoken to by gods. Aren't you the one who came to Thebes And freed us from the tax we paid To the horrible Sphinx? And you weren't asked By us or told to by others; No, you were inspired by a god (so all men say And believe) and brought our town back to life. And now, Oedipus, our matchless king, All your followers are begging you to find us Some relief, whether through a god's intervention Or using human intelligence. I think experienced counselors are the best ones To give advice for the future. Oh greatest man, lift up our country! Remember your reputation! For your courage in the past You are rightly saluted as out country's savior; May we never say this about your reign: "He lifted us up then threw us down again." Lift us up, make our city safe. Your good luck rubbed off on us, Don't let it run out! If you want to rule This land as our king, it's surely better To be a king over people than an empty land. Castles and ships will be no use to you If you don't have soldiers and sailors to man them. OEDIPUS Ah! my poor children, known, ah, known too well. The quest that brings you hither and your need. Ye sicken all, well wot I, yet my pain, How great soever yours, outtops it all. Your sorrow touches each man severally, Him and none other, but I grieve at once Both for the general and myself and you. Therefore ye rouse no sluggard from day-dreams. Many, my children, are the tears I've wept, And threaded many a maze of weary thought. Thus pondering one clue of hope I caught, And tracked it up; I have sent Menoeceus son, Creon, my consort's brother, to inquire Of Pythian Phoebus at his Delphic shrine, How I might save the State by act or word. And now I reckon up the tale of days Since he set forth, and marvel how he fares. 'Tis strange, this endless tarrying, passing strange. But when he comes, then I were base indeed, If I perform not all the god declares. Ah, my poor children! I know all too well Why you've come here and what you want. I know you are all in pain, but my pain, Even though yours is great, is greater. Your sorrow touches you individually, Just you and no other, but I'm grieving For everyone, myself and you as well. So you are not waking up some lazy dreamer. I have shed many tears, my children, And racked my brains for hours. I thought of one thing which might work, And acted on it: I have sent Menoeceus' son, Creon, my wife's brother, to ask at the Delphic Oracle How I might save the state with actions or words. And now, counting the days Since he set off, I wonder where he is. This dragging of his feet is very strange, But when he gets here I'd be worthless if I don't do everything the Oracle instructs. PRIEST Thy words are well timed; even as thou speakest That shouting tells me Creon is at hand. Your words are well timed; even as you speak That shouting tells me Creon is coming. OEDIPUS O King Apollo! may his joyous looks Be presage of the joyous news he brings! Oh King Apollo! May the happiness on his face Be a sign of the happy news he brings! PRIEST As I surmise, 'tis welcome; else his head Had scarce been crowned with berry-laden bays. I'm guessing he has good news, otherwise he Would hardly be wearing that laurel wreath. OEDIPUS We soon shall know; he's now in earshot range. [Enter CREON] My royal cousin, say, Menoeceus' child, What message hast thou brought us from the god? We'll soon know, he's within earshot. [Enter Creon] My royal cousin, son of Menoeceus, What message have you brought us from the god? CREON Good news, for e'en intolerable ills, Finding right issue, tend to naught but good. Good news, for even the worst ills, Given the right solution, will turn out for the best. OEDIPUS How runs the oracle? thus far thy words Give me no ground for confidence or fear. What did the Oracle say? So far your words Mean nothing either way to me. CREON If thou wouldst hear my message publicly, I'll tell thee straight, or with thee pass within. If you don't mind hearing the message in public I'll tell you now, or come indoors with you. Orders ship with standard shipping via USPS. A shipping fee of \$3.49 is added at checkout. Please contact us if you need expedited shipping (a higher shipping rate will be applied).





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