

Oedipus the king



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Oedipus the King Among the many dramatic devices, epiphany is a key device, which can be found or featured in many works, particularly tragedies. The one tragedy, in which epiphany was prominently featured was Oedipus, written by Sophocles. An epiphany can be explained as a moment that can take place in anyone's life, during which they will discover truths that will enlighten or reveal an individual's character. Thus, a person can be said to undergo epiphany, when he/she discovers some truth and becomes self-realized. This epiphany can be clearly seen in Oedipus, when the title character Oedipus undergoes epiphany after finding out about his parentage.

Oedipus was originally the son of King Laius of Thebes and Queen Jocasta, but King Laius fearing that the prophecy (that he would be killed by his own son) would come true orders him to be killed. However, he survives and was cared for by King Polybus of Corinth and his wife Merope, who raise him as their own. After hearing rumors that Polybus and Merope are not his biological parents, he asks the Delphic Oracle, who sidestepping his question on parentage gives a different prophecy that Oedipus will kill his own father and marry his own mother. Thinking that Polybus and Merope are his real parents and fearing that the prophecy would come true, Oedipus leaves Corinth. On the way, he meets his real father King Laius, and a quarrel ensues between them, leading to Oedipus killing Laius, thus fulfilling a part of the prophecy. Shortly after, he solves the Sphinx riddle and frees the kingdom of Thebes from the Sphinx's curse. For that effort, he was made the king of Thebes and thus got married to Jocasta, his biological mother. Although, the prophecy came true, Oedipus did not realize it or undergo epiphany until Thebes faced the threat of plague.

To prevent the onslaught of plague, Oedipus needs to find Laius' killers, although he is the actual killer. He looks to Teiresias, a blind seer, to help him find the king's murderers. It is Teiresias who reveals the truth to him about the prophecy and his real parents and initiates the onset of epiphany. But, Oedipus does not accept it and even threatens Teiresias in the initial stages. When he got the confirmation of both these crimes that he killed his own father and has married his own mother, Oedipus undergoes full epiphany and goes into a state of shock. " I, Oedipus, damned in his birth, in his marriage damned, Damned in the blood he shed with his own hand" (Sophocles 123). He was fully repentant of his misdemeanors when he undergoes full epiphany, " Thou horror of darkness overspread, Thou shadow of unutterable dread Not be stemmed or stayed, fallen on my head..... Strings of these wounds and memoirs of woe!" (Sophocles, 47). After fully undergoing epiphany and accepting the truth, Oedipus blinds himself with the golden brooches found on his mother's dress. " For the King ripped from her gown the golden brooches. That were her ornament, and raised them, and plunged them down/ Straight into his own eyeballs, crying, No more, No more shall you look on the misery about me." (Sophocles 126-7). He takes this step, which is the extreme form of epiphany, because he does not want to witness the miseries that have already unfolded and also might unfold because of his actions.

Works Cited

Sophocles. *Four Greek Plays: The Oedipus Rex of Sophocles*. Translated by Dudley

Fitts. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2002