

# The dramatic irony in oedipus the king assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Dramatic Irony in Oedipus the King Before taking a closer look on the identity of the protagonist and murderer, and having in mind that Oedipus the King is a very spacious and difficult to analyze play, including opportunities for discussion on quite a few topics, I have chosen to briefly focus on the dramatic irony used by Sophocles to disclose the characters' identity throughout the play.

In general, irony is a very common technique used in every drama work and it is usually used by the author at times when something dramatic is about to happen the existence of which is cleverly suggested through ironic behavior of the main characters and often includes symbols, comparisons and contrasts pointing to the main idea of the author. In this sense, Sophocles is really famous for his well-known techniques of using irony and skillfully combining it with intricate relations and symbols such as light, dark, morning and night in order to convey his idea.

In addition, a dramatic irony could be present when the audience is aware of critical information that the characters are unaware of. In this play, the readers already know the real relations between Oedipus, Jocasta and Laius. A general symbol of the irony used in the play is the exultation of both Oedipus and Jocasta over the failures of the oracles prophecies, however in both cases these prophecies come true ??? Oedipus leaves Corinth only to find out after that he has actually found his real parents and Jocasta kills her son in order to find him later married to her and more alive than ever.

In other words, each time a character tries to neglect and push away the predictions of the oracles, the audience already knows what? that their

attempts are futile and in vain. This creates a clear sense of the irony used by Sophocles. An interesting thing to note is the very manner in which Jocasta expresses her disbelief in oracles, which is quite ironic by itself. She describes the oracles as powerless in an attempt to comfort Oedipus, but immediately after that she prays to the very same gods whose powers she has just mocked. However, if Oedipus doesn't trust the power of oracles, he definitely values the power of truth and equality.

He firmly believes in his own ability to seek out the truth as a riddle-solver. This is direct contrast between Oedipus's trust in prophecy and trust in intelligence. Having in mind that those two are complete distinct terms like science and religion, it is quite ironic that they both lead to the same conclusions and outcome. The truth revealed by Oedipus actually fulfills the oracles' prophecy. Ironically it is Oedipus's rejection of the oracles that discloses their power. The best example of dramatic irony however, is the frequent use of references to eyes, sight, light, and perception throughout the play.

The dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias reveals it: " have you eyes, / And do not see your own damnation? Eyes, / And cannot see what company you keep? " Those words by Tiresias prove the blind man's prophetic powers, for he already knows that Oedipus will blind himself. Moreover, he continues: " those now clear-seeing eyes / Shall then be darkened". Where do you think the irony here is? Sophocles actually suggests two different things. Firstly, Oedipus is blessed with the gift of perception for he was the only one able to answer the Sphinx's riddle. Yet he cannot see what is right before his own eyes.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-dramatic-irony-in-oedipus-the-king-assignment/>

He is blind to the truth, and the truth is all he seeks. Secondly, Tiresias's presence as a blind man amplifies the irony in Oedipus's mocking his blindness. He is a man who does not need eye sight to see the truth and Oedipus is just the opposite ??? he who can see with his eyes is blind to the truth standing before him. Interestingly enough, however, is that Oedipus switches his role with Tiresias, thus becoming a man who sees the truth and loses his sense of sight. This outlines the drama in the play. In addition, the sight theme is further carried on to another level when the Chorus is disgusted and refuses to even see Oedipus.

He has polluted his own sight and body but at the same time he has done the same with others' sights by his very existence. That is why when he enters blinded the Chorus shouts: " I dare no to see, I am hiding / My eyes, I cannot bear / What must I long to see...Unspeakable to mortal ear, / Too terrible for eyes to see". Ironically, Oedipus has become the same disease that he wishes to remove from Thebes and has turned himself into a sight that is more horrible than the wasted farmlands and the childless Theban women. It is dramatic that when he becomes such a monster, he is already blinded.

To finish with, I have thought about the influence that this irony has on the reader and the way it touches the reader's own perception of Oedipus and his actions. How do you correlate the dramatic irony to the character of Oedipus? Does it change your initial emotion toward him or it further bolsters it? It is important what you generally think of Oedipus: Oedipus as incapable of doing anything to change his destiny and as a mere puppet of fate or Oedipus as a flawed character who is guilty of his own actions and as an

<https://assignbuster.com/the-dramatic-irony-in-oedipus-the-king-assignment/>

instigator of all tragic events. I personally think that in this story you cannot escape fate no matter what you do.

In an attempt to do so, both Jocasta and Oedipus change the whole structure of their families and threatening to ruin them. They have set the course of the story into action. His tragic end is not his fault for he is powerless against fate. Works cited Cameron Alister, "The Identity of Oedipus the King: Five Essays on the Oedipus Tyrannus," New York University Press, 1968 Great Books of the Western World, "Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes", Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc, 1952 <http://www.ripon.edu/academics/Theatre/THE231/PlachinskiR/oedipus/dramaticirony.html>