

My oedipus complex argumentative essay

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Oedipus the King Sophocles Translated by David Grene CHARACTERS

OEDIPUS, King of Thebes JOCASTA, His Wife CREON, His Brother-in-Law

TEIRESIAS, an Old Blind Prophet PRIEST PART I: Scene: In front of the palace

of Oedipus at Thebes. To the Right of the stage near the altar stands the

PRIEST with a crowd of children. OEDIPUS emerges from the central door.

OEDIPUS: Children, young sons and daughters of old Cadmus, 1 why do you sit here with your suppliant crowns? the town is heavy with a mingled burden of sounds and smells, of groans and hymns and incense; 5 I did not think it fit that I should hear of this from messengers but came myself, -I Oedipus whom all men call the Great. [He returns to the PRIEST.] You're old and they are young; come, speak for them. What do you fear or want, that you sit here 10 suppliant? Indeed I'm willing to give all that you may need; I would be very hard should I not pity suppliants like these.

PRIEST: O ruler of my country, Oedipus, You see our company around the altar; 15 you see our ages; some of us, like these, who cannot yet fly far, and some of us heavy with age; these children are the chosen among the young, and I the priest of Zeus. Within the market place sit others crowned 20 with suppliant garlands³, at the double shrine of Pallas⁴ and the temple where Ismenus gives oracles by fire⁵. King, you yourself have seen our city reeling like a wreck 1

FIRST MESSENGER SECOND MESSENGER A HERDSMAN A CHORUS OF OLD MEN OF THEBES already; it can scarcely lift its prow 25 out of the depths, out of the bloody surf. A blight is on the fruitful plants of the earth. A blight is on the cattle in the fields, a blight is on our women that no children are born to them; a God that carries fire, 30 a deadly pestilence, is on our town, strikes

us and spears us not, and the house of Cadmus is emptied of its people while black Death grows rich in groaning and in lamentation. We have not come as suppliants to this altar 35 because we thought of you as a God, but rather judging you the first of men in all the chances of this life and when we mortals have to do with more than man. You came and by your coming saved our city, 40 freed us from the tribute which we paid of old to the Sphinx, 7 cruel singer. This you did in virtue of no knowledge we could give you, in virtue of no teaching; it was God that aided you, men say, and you are held 45 with God's assistance to have saved our lives. Now Oedipus, Greatest in all men's eyes, here falling at your feet we all entreat you, lend us some strength for rescue. Perhaps you'll hear a wise word from some God. 50 perhaps you will learn something from a man (for I have seen that for the skilled of the practice the outcome of their counsels live the most). Noblest of men, go, and raise up our city, go,-- and give heed. For now this land of ours 55 calls you its savior since you saved it once. So, let us never speak about your reign as of a time when first our feet were set secure on high, but later fell to ruin. Raise up our city, save it and raise it up. 6 7 Cadmus n. mythical founder and first king of Thebes, a city in central Greece where the play takes place 2 suppliant crowns wreaths worn by people who ask favors of the gods. 3 suppliant garlands branches wound in wool, which were placed on the altar and left there until the suppliant's request was granted. 4 double shrine of Pallas the two temples of Athena. 5 temple where Isemenus gives oracles by fire Temple of Apollo, located by Ismenus, the Theban river, where the priests studied patterns in the ashes of sacrificial victims to foretell the future. lamentation n. expression of deep sorrow Sphinx winged female

monster at Thebes that ate men who could not answer her riddle: “ what is it that walks on four legs at dawn, two legs at midday, and three legs in the evening, and has only one voice; when it walks on most feet, is it weakest? ” Creon, appointed ruler of Thebes, offered the kingdom and the hand of his sister, Jocasta, to anyone who could answer the riddle. Oedipus saved Thebes by answering correctly, “ Man, who crawls in infancy, walks upright in his prime, and leans on a cane in old age. ” Outraged, the Sphinx destroyed herself, and Oedipus became King of Thebes 0 Once you have brought us luck with happy omen; be no less now in fortune. If you will rule this land, as now you rule it, better to rule it full of men than empty. For neither tower nor ship is anything 65 when empty, and none live in it together. OEDIPUS: I pity you, children. You have come full of longing, but I have known the story before you told it only too well. I know you are all sick, yet there is not one of you, sick though you are, 70 that is as sick as myself. Your several sorrows each have single scope and touch but one of you. My spirit groans for city and myself and you at once.

You have not roused me like a man from sleep; 75 know that I have given many tears to this, gone many ways wandering in thoughts, but as I thought I found only one remedy and that I took. I sent Menoeceus’ son Creon, Jocasta’s brother, to Apollo, 80 to his Pythian temple, 8 that he might learn there by what act or word I could save this city. As I count the days, it vexes me what ails him; he is gone far longer than he needed for the journey. 85 But when he comes, than may I prove a villain, if I shall not do all the God commands. PRIEST: Thanks for your gracious words.

Your servants here signal that Creon is this moment coming. OEDIPUS: His face is bright. O holy Lord Apollo, 90 grant that his news too may be bright for us and bring us safety. PRIEST: It is happy news, I think, for else his head would not be crowned with sprigs of fruitful laurel. 9 OEDIPUS: We will know soon, 96 he's within hail. Lord Creon, my good brother, what is the word you bring us from the God? [CREON enters.] CREON: A good word, --for things hard to bear themselves if in the final issue all is well 100 I count complete good fortune. OEDIPUS: What do you mean?

What have you said so far 8 leaves me uncertain whether to trust or fear. CREON: If you will hear my news before these others 105 I am ready to speak, or else to go within. OEDIPUS: Speak it to all; the grief I bear, I bear it more for these than for my own hear. CREON: I will tell you, then, 110 what I heard from the God. King Phoebus¹⁰ in plain words commanded us to drive out apollutionfrom our land, pollution grown ingrained within the land; drive it out, said the God, not cherish it, 115 till it's past cure. OEDIPUS: What is the rite of purification?

How shall it be done? CREON: By banishing a man, or expiation¹¹ of blood by blood, since it is murder guilt 120 which holds our city in this destroying storm. OESIPUS: Who is this man whose fate the God pronounces? CREON: My lord, before you piloted the state we had a king called Laius. OEDIPUS: I know of him by hearsay. I have not seen him. CREON: The God commanded clearly: let some one 126 punish with force this dead man's murderers. OEDIPUS: Where are they in the world? Where would a trace of this old crime be found? It would be hard to guess where.

CREON: The clue is in this land; 131 that which is sought is found; the unheeded thing escapes: so said the God. OEDIPUS: Was it at home, or in the country that death came upon him, 135 or in another country travelling? CREON: He went, he said himself, upon an embassy, 12 but never returned when he set out from home. OEDIPUS: Was there no messenger, no fellow traveler who knew what happened? Such a one might tell 10 11 Pythian temple shrine of Apollo at Delphi, below Mount Parnassus in central Greece 9 sprigs of fruitful laurel Laurel symbolized triumph; a crown of laurel signified good news.

King Phoebus Apollo, god of the sun. expiation n. The act of making amends for wrongdoing. 12 embassy n. important mission or errand 140 something of use. CREON: They were all killed save one. He fled in terror and he could tell us nothing in clear terms of what he knew, nothing, but one thing only. OEDIPUS: What was it? 145 If we could even find a slim beginning in which to hope, we might discover much. CREON: This man said the robbers they encountered were many and the hands that did the murder were many; it was no man's single power.

OEDIPUS: How could a robber date a deed like this 151 Were he not helped with money from the city, Money and treachery? CREON: That indeed was thought. But Laius was dead and in our trouble There was none to help. OEDIPUS: What trouble was so great to hinder you 157 inquiring out the murder of your king? CREON: The riddling Sphinx induced us to neglect mysterious crimes and rather seek solution 160 of troubles at our feet. OEDIPUS: I will bring this to light again. King Phoebus fittingly took this care about the dead, and you to fittingly.

And justly you will see in me an ally, 165 a champion of my country and the God. For when I drive pollution from the land I will not serve a distant friend's advantage, but act in my own interest. Whoever he was that killed the king may readily 170 wish to dispatch me with his murderous hand; so helping the dead king I help myself. Come, children, take your suppliant boughs and go; up from the altars now. Call the assembly and let it meet upon the understanding 175 that I'll do everything. God will decide whether we prosper or remain in sorrow.

PRIEST: Rise, children—it was this we came to seek, which of himself the king now offers us. May Phoebus who gave us the oracle 180 come to our rescue and stay the plague. [Exit all but the CHORUS.] CHORUS: Strophe What is the sweet spoken word of God from the shrine of Pytho rich in gold that has come to glorious Thebes? I am stretched on the rack of doubt, and terror and trembling hold my heart, O Delian Healer, 13 and I worship full of fears 185 for what doom you will bring to pass, new or renewed in the revolving years. Speak to me, immortal voice, child of golden Hope.

Antistrophe First I call on you, Athene, deathless daughter of Zeus, and Artemis, Earth Upholder, 190 who sits in the midst of the market place in the throne which men call Fame, and Phoebus, the Far Shooter, three averters of Fate, come to us now, if ever before, when ruin rushed upon the state, you drove destruction's flame away out of our land. Strophe 195 Our sorrows defy number; all the ship's timbers are rotten; taking of thought is no spear for the driving away of the plague There are no growing children in this famous land; there are no women bearing the pangs of childbirth. 00 You may see them one with another, like birds swift on the wing, quicker than

fire unmastered, speeding away to the coast of the Western God. 14
Antistrophe In the unnumbered death of its people the city dies; 205 those
children that are born lie dead on the naked earth unpitied, spreading
contagion of death; and gray-haired mothers and wives everywhere stand at
the altar's edge, suppliant, moaning; the hymn to the healing God¹⁵ rings
out but with it the wailing voices are blended. From these our sufferings
grant us, O golden Daughter of Zeus, 16 210 glad-faced deliverance.

Strophe There is no clash of brazen¹⁷ shields but our fight is with the War
God, 18 13 Delian Healer Born on the island of Delos, Apollo's title was "healer"; he caused and averted plagues. 14 Western God Since the sun sets
in the west, this is the god of night, or Death. 15 healing God Apollo. 16
golden Daughter of Zeus Athena. 17 brazen adj. of brass or like brass in color
18 War God Ares a War God ringed with the cries of men, a savage God who
burns us; grant that he turn in racing course backwards out of our country's
bounds to the great palace of Amphitrite¹⁹ or where the waves of the
Thracian sea 215 deny the stranger safe anchorage.

Whatsoever escapes the night at last the light of day revisits; so smite the
War God, Father Zeus, beneath your thunderbolt, 220 for you are the Lord of
the lightning, the lightning that carries fire. Antistrophe And your
unconquered arrow shafts, winged by the golden corded bow, Lycean
King²⁰, I beg to be at our side for help; and the gleaming torches of Artemis
with which she scours the Lycean hills, and I call on the God with the turban
of gold²¹, who gave his name to this country of ours. 25 the Bacchic God
with the wind flushed face²², Evian One, 23 who travel with the Maenad
company, 24 combat the God that burns us with your torch of pine; 230 for

the God that is our enemy is a God unhonored among the Gods [OEDIPUS returns.] OEDIPUS: For what you ask me—if you will hear my words, and hearing welcome them and fight the plague, you will find strength and lightening of your load. Hark to me; what I say to you, I say 235 as one that is a stranger to the story as stranger to the deed.

For I would not be far upon the track if I alone were tracing it without a clue. But now, since after all was finished, I became 240 a citizen among you, citizens— now I proclaim to all the men of Thebes: 19 who so among you knows the murderer by whose hand Laius, son of Labdacus, died—I command him to tell everything 245 to me,-- yes, though he fears himself to take the blame on his own head; for bitter punishment he shall have none, but leave this land unharmed.

Or if he knows the murderer, another, a foreigner, still let him speak the truth. 250 For I will pay him and be grateful, too. But if you shall keep silence, if perhaps some one of you, to shield a guilty friend, some one of you, to shield reject my words – hear what I shall do then: 255 I forbid that man, whoever he be, my land, my land where I hold sovereignty²⁵and throne; and I forbid any to welcome him or cry him greeting or make him a sharer in sacrifice or offering to the Gods, 260 or give him water for his hands to wash.

I command all to drive him from their homes, since he is our pollution, as the oracle of Pytho's God²⁶ proclaimed him now to me. So I stand forth a champion of the God 265 and of the man who died. Upon the murderer I invoke this curse— whether he is one man and all unknown, or one of many —may he wear out his life in misery to miserable doom! 270 If with my

knowledge he lives at my hearth I pray that I myself may feel my curse. On you I lay my charge to fulfill all this for me, for the God, and for this land of ours destroyed and blighted, by the God forsaken. 75 Even were this no matter of God's ordinance it would not fit you so to leave it lie, unpurified, since a good man is dead and one that was a king. Search it out. Since I am now the holder of his office, 280 And have his bed and wife that once was his, and had his line not been unfortunate we would have common children—(fortune leaped upon his head)—because of all these things, I fight in his defense as for my father, 285 and I shall try all means to take the murderer of Laius the son of Labdacus the son of Polydorus and before him of Cadmus and before him of Agenor.

Those who do not obey me, may the Gods 290 grant no crops springing from the ground they plow nor children to their women! May a fate like this, or one still worse than this consume them! For you whom these words please, the other Thebans, 25 26 Amphitrite sea goddess who was the wife of Poseidon, god of the sea. 20 Lycean King Apollo, whose title Lykios means “god of light.” 21 God with turban of gold Dionysus, god of wine, who was born of Zeus and a woman of Thebes, the first Greek city to honor him. He wears an oriental turban because he has come from the East. 2 Bacchic God with the wind flushed face refers to Dionysus, who had a youthful, rosy complexion; Bacchus means “riotous god” 23 Evian One Dionysus, called Evios because his followers addressed him with the ritual cry “evoi” 24 Maenad company female followers of Dionysus. sovereignty n. supreme authority Pytho's God Apollo may Justice as your ally and all the Gods 295 live with you, blessing you now and for ever! CHORUS: As you have held me

to my oath, I speak: I neither killed the king nor can declare the killer; but since Phoebus set the quest it is his part to tell who the man is.

OEDIPUS: Right; but to put compulsion²⁷ on the Gods ³⁰¹ against their will—no man can do that CHORUS: May I then say what I think second best?

OEDIPUS: If there's a third best, too, spare not to tell it CHORUS: I know that what the Lord Teiresias ³⁰⁵ sees, is most often what the Lord Apollo sees. If you should inquire of this from him you might find out most clearly.

OEDIPUS: Even in this my actions have not been sluggard²⁸ On Creon's word I have sent two messengers ³¹⁰ and why the prophet is not here already I have been wondering.

CHORUS: His skill apart there is besides only an old faint story. OEDIPUS:

What is it? ³¹⁵ I look at every story. CHORUS: It was said that he was killed by certain wayfarers. OEDIPUS: I heard that, too, but no one saw the killer.

CHORUS: Yet if he has a share of fear at all, ³²⁰ his courage will not stand firm, hearing your curse. OEDIPUS: The man who in the doing did not shrink

will fear no word. CHORUS: Here comes his prosecutor: led by your men the godly prophet comes ³²⁵ in whom alone of mankind truth is native. Enter TEIRESIAS, led by a little boy]

OEDIPUS: Teiresias, you are versed in everything, things teachable and things not to be spoken, things of the heaven and earth-creeping things. You have no eyes but in your mind you know ³³⁰ with what a plague our city is afflicted. My lord, in you alone we find a champion, ^{27 28} in you alone on that can rescue us. Perhaps you have not heard the messengers, but Phoebus sent in answer to our sending ³³⁵ an oracle declaring that our freedom from this disease would only come

when we should learn the names of those who killed King Laius, and kill them or expel them from our country.

Do not begrudge us oracle from birds, 340 or any other way of prophecy within your skill; save yourself and the city, save me; redeem the debt of our pollution that lies on us because of this dead man. We are in your hands; pains are most nobly taken³⁴⁵ to help another when you have means and power. TEIRESIAS: Alas, how terrible is wisdom when it brings no profit to the man that's wise! This I knew well, but had forgotten it, else I would not have come here. OEDIPUS: What is this? 351 How sad you are now you have come!

TEIRESIAS: Let me go home, It will be easiest for us both to bear our several destinies to the end 355 if you will follow my advice. OEDIPUS: You'd rob us of this your gift of prophecy? You talk as one who had no care for law nor love for Thebes who reared you. TEIRESIAS: Yes, but I see that even your own words 361 miss the mark; therefore I must fear for mine. OEDIPUS: For God's sake if you know of anything, do not turn from us; all of us kneel to you, all of us here, your suppliants. TEIRESIAS: All of you here know nothing. I will not 366 bring to light of day my troubles, mine— rather than call them yours.

OEDIPUS: What do you mean? You know of something but refuse to speak. Would you betray us and destroy the city? TEIRESIAS: I will not bring this pain upon us both, 371 neither on you nor on myself. Why is it you question me and waste your labor? I will tell you nothing. OEDIPUS: You would provoke a stone! Tell us, you villain, 375 tell us, and do not stand there quietly compulsion n. driving force; coercion. sluggard adj. lazy or idle unmoved and balking²⁹ at the issue. TEIRESIAS: You blame my temper but

you do not see your own that lives within you; it is me you chide. 0 OEDIPUS: Who would not feel this temper rise 381 at words like these with which you shame our city? TEIRESIAS: Of themselves things will come, although I hide them and breathe no word of them. OEDIPUS: Since they will come 386 tell them to me. TEIRESIAS: I will say nothing further. Against this answer let your temper rage as wildly as you will. OEDIPUS: Indeed I am 391 so angry I shall not hold back a jot of what I think. For I would have you know I think you were complotter³¹ of the deed and doer of the deed save in so far 395 as for the actual killing.

Had you had eyes I would have said alone you murdered him. TEIRESIAS: Yes? Then I warn you faithfully to keep the letter of your proclamation and from this day forth to speak no word of greeting 400 to these nor me; you are the land's pollution. OEDIPUS: How shamelessly you started up this taunt! How do you think you will escape? TEIRESIAS: I have. I have escaped; the truth is what I cherish 405 and that's my strength. OEDIPUS: And who has taught you truth? Not your profession surely! TEIRESIAS: You have taught me, for you have made me speak against my will. OEDIPUS: Speak what?

Tell me again that I may learn it better. TEIRESIAS: Did you not understand before or would you 412 provoke me into speaking? OEDIPUS: I did not grasp it. 32 29 30 not so to call it known. Say it again. TEIRESIAS: I say you are the murderer of the king 416 whose murderer you seek. OEDIPUS: Not twice you shall say calumnies³² like this and stay unpunished. TEIRESIAS: Shall I say more to tempt your anger more? OEDIPUS: As much as you desire; it will be said 21 in vain TEIRESIAS: I say with those you love best you live in foulest

shame unconsciously and do not see where you are in calamity. 3 OEDIPUS: Do you imagine you can always talk 426 like this, and live to laugh at it hereafter? TEIRESIAS: Yes, if the truth has anything of strength. OEDIPUS: It has, but not for you; it has no strength for you because you are blind in mind and ears 430 as well as in your eyes. TEIRESIAS: You are a poor wretch to taunt me with the very insults which every one soon will heap upon yourself. OEDIPUS: Your life is one long night so that you cannot 435 hurt me or any other who sees the light. TEIRESIAS: It is not fate that I should be your ruin, Apollo is enough; it is his care to work this out.

OEDIPUS: Was this your own design 440 or Creon's? TEIRESIAS: Creon is no hurt to you, but you are yourself. OEDIPUS: Wealth, sovereignty and skill outmatching skill for the contrivance³⁴ of an envied life! 445 Great store of jealousy fill your treasury chests, if my friend Creon, friend from this and loyal, thus secretly attacks me, secretly desires to drive me out and secretly suborns³⁵ this juggling trick devising quack, 450 this wily beggar who has only eyes balking v. obstinately refusing to act. chide v. scold. 31 comploter n. person who plots against another person. calumnies n. false and malicious statements; slander. calamity n. extreme misfortune that leads to disaster. 34 contrivance n. act of devising or scheming. 35 suborns v. instigates a person to commit perjury. 33 for his own gains, but blindness in his skill. For, tell me, where have you seen clear, Teiresias, with your prophetic eyes? When the dark singer, the sphinx, was in your country, did you speak 455 word of deliverance to its citizens? And yet the riddle's answer was not the province of a chance comer.

It was a prophet's task and plainly you had no such gift of prophecy from birds nor otherwise from any God 460 to glean a word of knowledge. But I came, Oedipus, who knew nothing, and I stopped her. I solved the riddle by my own wit alone. Mine was no knowledge got from birds. And now you would expel me, 465 because you think that you will find a place by Creon's throne. I think you will be sorry, both you and your accomplice, for your plot to drive me out. And did I not regard you as an old man, some suffering would have taught you 470 that what was in your heart was treason.

CHORUS: We look at this man's words and yours, my king, and we find both have spoken them in anger. We need no angry words but only thought how we may best hit the God's meaning for us. TEIRESIAS: If you are king, at least I have the right 476 no less to speak in my defense against you. Of that much I am master. I am no slave of yours, but Loxias', and so I shall not enroll myself with Creon for my patron. 480 Since you have taunted me with being blind, here is my word for you. You have your eyes but see not where you are in sin, nor where you live, nor whom you live with.

Do you know who your parents are? Unknowing 485 you are an enemy to kith and kin in death, beneath the earth, and in this life. A deadly footed, double striking curse, from father and mother both, shall drive you forth out of this land, with darkness on your eyes, 490 that now have such straight vision. Shall there be a place will not be harbor to your cries, 36 a corner of Cithaeron³⁷ will not ring in echo to your cries, soon, soon,-when you shall learn the secret of your marriage, 495 which steered you to a haven in this house,-haven no haven, after lucky voyage?

And of the multitude of other evils establishing a grimequalitybetween you and your children, you know nothing. 500 So, muddy with contempt my words and Creon's! Misery shall grind no man as it will you. 36 OEDIPUS: Is it endurable that I should hear such words from him? Go and a curse go with you! Quick, home with you! Out of my house at once! TEIRESIAS: I would not have come either had you not call me. OEDIPUS: I did not know then you would talk like a fool— 507 or it would have been long before I called you. TEIRESIAS: I am a fool then, as it seems to you— but to the parents who have bred you, wise.

OEDIPUS: What parents? Stop! Who are they of all the world? TEIRESIAS: This day will show your birth and will destroy you. OEDIPUS: How needlessly your riddles darken everything. TEIRESIAS: But it's in riddle answering you are strongest. OEDIPUS: Yes. Taunt me where you will find me great. TEIRESIAS: It is this very luck that has destroyed you. OEDIPUS: I do not care, if it has saved this city. TEIRESIAS: Well, I will go. Come, boy, lead me away. OEDIPUS: Yes, lead him off. So long as you are here, you'll be a stumbling block and a vexation; 520 once gone, you will not trouble me again.

TEIRESIAS: I have said what I came here to say not fearing your countenance; there is no way you can hurt me. I tell you, king, this man, this murderer 525 (whom you have long declared you are in search of, indicting him in threatening proclamation as murderer of Laius)—he is here. In name he is a stranger among citizens But soon he will be shown to be a citizen 530 true native Theban, and he'll have no joy. of the discovery: blindness for sight and beggary for riches his exchange, he shall go journeying to a foreign country tapping his way before him with a stick. 35 He shall be proved father

and brother both to his own children in his own house; to her that gave him birth, a son and husband both; a fellow sower in his father's bed Shall. . . . cries is there any place that won't be full of your cries? 37 Cithaeron n. mountain near Thebes on which Oedipus was abandoned as an infant. with that same father that he murdered. 540 Go within, reckon that out, and if you find me mistaken, say I have no skill in prophecy [exit separately TEIRESIAS and OEDIPUS] CHORUS: Strophe who is the man proclaimed by Delphi's prophetic rock as the bloody handed murderer, 545 the doer of deeds that none dare name?

Now is the time for him to run with a stronger foot than Pegasus³⁸ for the child of Zeus leaps in arms upon him 550 with fire and the lightning bolt, and terribly close on his heels are the Fates that never miss. Antistrophe Lately from snowy Parnassus clearly the voice flashed forth, 555 bidding each Theban track him down, the unknown murderer. In the savage forests he lurks and in the caverns like the mountain bull 560 He is sad and lonely, his feet that carry him far from the navel of earth; 39 but its prophecies, ever living, flutter around his head.

Strophe The augur⁴⁰ has spread confusion, 565 terrible confusion; I do not approve what was said nor can I deny it. I do not know what to say; I am in a flutter of foreboding; 570 I never heard in the present nor past of a quarrel between the sons of Labdacus and Polybus, that I might bring as proof in attacking the popular fame 575 of Oedipus, seeking to take vengeance for undiscovered death in the line of Labdacus. Antistrophe Truly Zeus and Apollo are wise and in human things all knowing; 38 39 580 but amongst

men there is no distinct judgment, between the prophet and me—which of us is right.

One man may pass another in wisdom but I would never agree 585 with those that find fault with the king till I should see the word proved right beyond doubt. For once in visible form the Sphinx came on him and all of us 590 saw his wisdom and in that test he saved the city. So he will not be condemned by my mind. [Enter CREON.] CREON: Citizens, I have come because I heard deadly words spread about me, that the king accuses me. I cannot take that from him. 595 If he believes that in these present troubles he has been wronged by me in word or deed I do not want to live on with the burden of such a scandal on me.

The report injures me doubly and most vitally— 600 for I'll be called a traitor to my city and traitor also to my friends and you. CHORUS: Perhaps it was a sudden gust of anger that forced that insult from him, and no judgment. CREON: But did he say that it was a compliance 605 with schemes of mine that the seer told him lies? CHORUS: Yes, he said that, but why, I do not know. CREON: Were his eyes straight in his head? Was his mind right when he accused me in this fashion? CHORUS: I do not know; I have no eyes to see 610 what princes do. Here comes the king himself. [Enter OEDIPUS] OEDIPUS: You, sir, how is it you come here?

Have you so much brazen faced daring that you venture in my house although you are proved manifestly 615 the murderer of that man, and though you tried, 615 openly, highway robbery of my crown? For God's sake, tell me what you saw in me, what cowardice or what stupidity, that made you lay a plot like this against me? Did you imagine I should not observe 620 the

crafty scheme that stole upon me or seeing it, take no means to counter it?
41 Pegasus mythical winged horse. navel of earth fissure, or crack, on Mount Parnassus from which mysterious vapors arose to inspire Pythia, priestess of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. 0 augur n. fortuneteller or prophet; refers here to Teiresias proved manifestly clearly proved with evidence. Was it not stupid of you to make the attempt, to try to hunt down royal power without the people at your back or friends? For only 625 with the people at your back or money can the hunt end in the capture of a crown. CREON: Do you know what you're doing? Will you listen to words to answer yours, and then pass judgment? OEDIPUS: You're quick to speak, but I am slow to grasp you, 630 for I have found you dangerous,---and my foe. CREON: First of all hear what I shall say to that.

OEDIPUS: At least don't tell me that you are not guilty. CREON: If you think obstinacy⁴² without wisdom a valuable possession, you are wrong. OEDIPUS: And you are wrong if you believe that one, 636 a criminal, will not be punished only because he is my kinsman. CREON: This is but just – but tell me, then, of what offense I'm guilty? OEDIPUS: Did you or did you not urge me to send 641 to this prophetic mumblor? CREON: I did indeed, and I shall stand by what I told you. OEDIPUS: How long ago is it since Laius. . . . CREON: What about Laius? I don't understand. OEDIPUS: Vanished—died—was murdered?

CREON: It is long, 648 a long, long time to reckon. OEDIPUS: Was this prophet 650 in the profession then? CREON: He was, and honored as highly as he is today. OEDIPUS: At that time did he say a word about me? CREON: Never, at least not when I was near him. 42 OEDIPUS: You never made a

search for the dead man? CREON: We searched, indeed, but never learned of anything. OEDIPUS: Why did our wise old friend not say this then? CREON: I don't know; and when I know nothing, I 659 usually hold my tongue. OEDIPUS: You know this much, 661 and can declare this much if you are loyal.

CREON: What is it? If I know, I'll not deny it. OEDIPUS: That he would not have said that I killed Laius had he not met you first. CREON: You know yourself 666 whether he said this, but I demand that I should hear as much from you as you from me. OEDIPUS: Then hear, — I'll not be proved a murderer. CREON: Well, then. You're married to my sister. OEDIPUS: Yes, 671 that I am not disposed to deny. CREON: You rule this country giving her an equal share in the government? OEDIPUS: Yes, everything she wants 676 she has from me. CREON: And I, as thirdsman to you, am rated as the equal of you two?

OEDIPUS: Yes, and it's there you've proved yourself false friend. CREON: Not if you will reflect on it as I do. 681 Consider, first, if you think any one would choose to rule and fear rather than rule and sleep untroubled by a feat if power were equal in both cases. I, at least, 685 I was not born with such a frantic yearning to be a king—but to do what kings do. And so it is with every one who has learned wisdom and self-control. As it stands now, the prizes are all mine—and without fear. 690 But if I were the king myself, I must obstinacy n. stubbornness; state of being unyielding to reason.

Creon means that Oedipus cannot see—or refuses to see—the facts do much that went against the grain. How should despotic⁴³ rule seem sweeter to me than painless power and an assured authority? I am not so besotted⁴⁴ yet

that I 695 want other honors than those that come with profit. Now every man's my pleasure; every man greets me; now those who are your suitors fawn on me, — success for them depends upon my favor. Why should I let all this go to win that? 700 My mind would not be traitor if it's wise; I am no treason lover, of my nature, nor would I ever dare to join a plot. Prove what I say.

Go to the oracle at Pytho and inquire about the answers, 705 if they are as I told you. For the rest, if you discover that I laid any plot together with the seer, kill me, I say, not only by your vote but by my own. But do not charge me on obscure opinion 710 without some proof to back it. It's not just lightly to count your knaves as honest men, nor with honest men as knaves. To throw away an honest friend is, as it were, to throw your life away, which a man loves the best. 715 In the time you will know all with certainty; time is the only test of honest men, one day is space enough to know a rogue.

CHORUS: His words are wise, king, if one fears to fall. Those who are quick of temper are not safe. OEDIPUS: When he that plots against me secretly 721 moves quickly, I must quickly counterplot. If I wait taking no decisive measure his business will be done, and mine be spoiled. CREON: What do you want to do then? Banish me? OEDIPUS: O, city, city! CREON: I too have some share 737 in the city; it is not yours alone. CHORUS: Stop, my lords! Here—and in the nick of time I see Jocasta coming from the house; 740 with her help lay the quarrel that now stirs you. [Enter JOCASTA.] JOCASTA: For shame!

Why have you raised this foolish squabbling brawl? Are you not ashamed to air your private griefs when the country's sick? Go in, you, Oedipus, and you,

too, Creon, into the house. Don't magnify 745 your nothing troubles. CREON: Sister, Oedipus, your husband, thinks he has the right to do terrible wrongs—he has but to choose between two terrors: banishing or killing me. OEDIPUS: He's right, Jocasta; for I find him plotting 751 with knavish⁴⁵ tricks against my person. CREON: That God may never bless me! May I die accursed, if I have been guilty of one tittle⁴⁶ of the charge you bring against me!

JOCASTA: I beg you, Oedipus, trust him in this, 756 spare him for the sake of this his oath to God, for my sake, and the sake of those who stand here.

CHORUS: Be gracious, be merciful, we beg you. OEDIPUS: In what would you have me yield? OEDIPUS: No, certainly; kill you, not banish you. CREON: I do not think you've your wits about you. OEDIPUS: For my own interests, yes. CREON: But for mine, too, 729 you should think equally. OEDIPUS: You are a rogue. OEDIPUS: Tell me then. CREON: Suppose you do not understand? OEDIPUS: But yet I must be ruler.

CREON: Not if you rule badly. 43 44 CHORUS: He has been no silly child in the past. 762 he is strong in his oath now. Spare him. OEDIPUS: Do you know what you ask? CHORUS: Yes. CHORUS: He has been your friend before all men's eyes; do not cast him away dishonored on an obscure conjecture. despotic adj. absolute; unlimited; tyrannical. besotted v. stupefied; foolish. 45 46 knavish adj. deceitful. tittle n. a very small particle. OEDIPUS: I would have you know that this request of yours really requests my death or banishment. CHORUS: May the Sun God, 47 king of Gods, forbid!

May I die 772 without God's blessing, without friends' help, if I had any such thought. But my spirit is broken by my unhappiness for my wasting country; and this would but add troubles 775 amongst ourselves to the other troubles.

OEDIPUS: Well, let him go then—if I must die ten times for it, or be sent out dishonored into exile. It is your lips that prayed for him pitied, not his; wherever he is, I shall hate him. CREON: I see you sulk in yielding and you're dangerous 781 when you are out of temper; natures like yours are justly heaviest for themselves to bear. OEDIPUS: Leave me alone!

Take yourself off, I tell you. CREON: I'll go you have not known me, but they have, 785 and they have known my innocence. [Exit.] CHORUS: Won't you take him inside, lady? JOCASTA: Yes, when I've found out what was the matter. CHORUS: There was some misconceived suspicion of a story, and on the other side the sting of injustice. JOCASTA: So, on both sides? CHORUS: Yes. JOCASTA: What was the story? CHORUS: I think it best, in the interests of the country, to leave it 794 where it ended. OEDIPUS: You see where you have ended, straight of judgment 796 although you are, by softening my anger.

CHORUS: Sir, I have said before and I say again— be sure that I 47 would have been proved a madman, bankrupt in sane council, if I should put you away, you who steered the country I love safely 800 when she was crazed with troubles. God grant that now, too, you may prove a fortunate guide for us. JOCASTA: Tell me, my lord, I beg of you, what was it that roused your anger so? OEDIPUS: Yes, I will tell you. 805 I honor you more than I honor them. It was Creon and the plots he laid against me. JOCASTA: Tell me—if you can clearly tell the quarrel— OEDIPUS: Creon says that I'm the murder of Laius.

JOCASTA: Of his own knowledge or on information? OEDIPUS: He sent this rascal prophet to me, since he keeps his own mouth clean of any guilt.

JOCASTA: Do not concern yourself about this matter; listen to me and learn that human beings 815 have no part in the craft of prophecy. Of that I'll show you a short proof. There was an oracle once that came to Laius, — I will not say that it was Phoebus' own, but it was from his servants— and it told him 820 that it was fate that he should die a victim at the hands of his own son, a son to be born of Laius and me.

But, see now, he, the king, was killed by foreign highway robbers at a place where three roads meet—so goes the story; 825 and for the son—before three days were out after his birth King Laius pierced his ankles and by the hands of others cast him forth upon a pathless hillside. So Apollo failed to fulfill his oracle to the son, 830 that he should kill his father, and to Laius also proved false in that the thing he feared, death at his son's hands, never came to pass. So clear in this case were the oracles, so clear and false. Give them no heed, I say; 835 what God discovers need of, easily he shows to us himself.

OEDIPUS: O dear Jocasta, as I hear this from you, there comes upon me a wandering of the soul—I could run mad. JOCASTA: What trouble is it, that you turn again 841 and speak like this? Sun God Apollo OEDIPUS: I thought I heard you say that Laius was killed at a crossroads. JOCASTA: Yes, that was how the story went and still 845 that word goes round. OEDIPUS: Where is this place, Jocasta, where he was murdered? JOCASTA: Phocis is the country and the road splits there, one of two roads from Delphi, 850 another comes from Daulia. OEDIPUS: How long ago is this?

JOCASTA: The news came to the city just before you became king and all men's eyes looked to you. 854 What is it, Oedipus, that's in your mind?

OEDIPUS: What have you designed, O Zeus, to do with me? JOCASTA: What is the thought that troubles your heart? OEDIPUS: Don't ask me yet—tell me of Laius— How did he look? How old or young was he? JOCASTA: He was a tall man and his hair was grizzled 860 already—nearly white—and in his form not unlike you. OEDIPUS: O God, I think I have called curses upon myself in ignorance. JOCASTA: What do you mean? I am terrified 865 when I look at you.

OEDIPUS: I have a deadly fear that the old seer had eyes. You'll show me more if you can tell me one more thing. JOCASTA: I will. 870 I'm frightened, —but if I can understand, I'll tell you all you ask. OEDIPUS: How was his company? Had he few with him when he went this journey, or many servants, as would suit a prince? JOCASTA: In all there were but five, and among them 876 a herald; 48 and one carriage for the king. OEDIPUS: It's plain—it's plain—who was it told you this? 48 JOCASTA: The only servant that escaped safe home. OEDIPUS: Is he at home now?

JOCASTA: No, when he came home again 881 and saw you king and Laius was dead, he came to me and touched my hand and begged that I should send him to the fields to be my shepherd and so he might see the city 885 as far off as he might. So I sent him away. He was an honest man, as slaves go, and was worthy of far more than what he asked of me. OEDIPUS: O, how I wish that he could come back quickly! JOCASTA: He can. Why is your heart so set on this? OEDIPUS: O dear Jocasta, I am full of fears 892 that I have spoken far too much; and therefore I wish to see this shepherd. JOCASTA: He will come; 895 but, Oedipus, I think I'm worthy too to know what it is that disquiets you. OEDIPUS: It shall not be kept from you, since my mind has

gone so far with its forebodings. Whom should I confide in rather than you, who is there 900 of more importance to me who have passed through such a fortune? Polybus was my father, king of Corinth, 49 and Merope, the Dorian, 50 my mother. I was held greatest of the citizens 905 in Corinth till a curious chance befell me as I shall tell you—curious, indeed, but hardly worth the store set upon it. There was a dinner and at it a man, a drunken man, accused me in his drink 910 of being bastard.

I was furious but held my temper under for that day. Next day I went and taxed⁵¹ my parents with it; they took the insult very ill from him, the drunken fellow who had uttered it. 915 So I was comforted for their part, but still this thing rankled⁵² always, for the story crept about widely. And I went at last to Pytho, though my parents did not know. But Phoebus sent me home again unhonored 49 herald n. person who makes proclamations and carries messages. Corinth city at the western end of the isthmus (Greece) that joins the Peloponnesus to Boeotia 50 Dorian n. one of the main branches of the Hellenes; the Dorians invaded the Peloponnesus. 1 taxed v. imposed a burden on; put a strain on. 52 rankled v. caused to have long-lasting anger and resentment. 920 in what I came to learn, but he foretold other and desperate horrors to befall me, that I was fated to lie with my mother, and show to daylight an accursed breed which men would not endure, and I was doomed 925 to be murdered of the father that begot me. When I heard this I fled, and in the days that followed I would measure from the stars the whereabouts of Corinth—yes, I fled to somewhere where I should not see fulfilled 930 the infamies⁵³ told in that dreadful oracle.

And as I journeyed I came to the place where, as you say, this king met with his death. Jocasta, I will tell you the whole truth. When I was near the branching of the crossroads, 935 going on foot, I was encountered by a herald and a carriage with a man in it, just as you tell me. He that led the way and the old man himself wanted to thrust me out of the road by force. I became angry 940 and struck the coachman who was pushing me. When the old man saw this he watched his moment, and as I passed he struck me from his carriage, full on the head with his two pointed goad. 4 But he was pain in full and presently 945 my stick had struck him backwards from the car and he rolled out of it. And then I killed them all. If it happened there was any tie of kinship twixt this man and Laius, who is then now more miserable than I, 950 what man on earth so hated by the Gods, since neither citizen nor foreigner may welcome me at home or even greet me, but drive me out of doors? And it is I, I and no other have so cursed myself. 955 And I pollute the bed of him I killed by the hands that killed him. Was I not born evil? Am I not utterly unclean?

I had to fly and in my banishment not even see my kindred not set foot in my own country, 960 or otherwise my fate was to be yoked in marriage with my mother and kill my father, Polybus who begot me and had reared me. Would not one rightly judge and say that on me these things were sent by some malignant God? 965 O no, no , no—O holy majesty of God on high, may I not see that day! May I be gone out of men's sight before I see the deadly taint of this disaster come upon me. CHORUS: Sir, we too fear these things. But until you see this man 971 face to face and hear his story, hope. 3 54 OEDIPUS: Yes, I have just this much hope—to wait until the herdsman comes.

JOCASTA: And when he comes, what do you want with him? OEDIPUS: I'll tell you; if I find that his story is the same as yours, I 975 at least will be clear of this guilt. JOCASTA: Why what so particularly did you learn from my story? OEDIPUS: You said that he spoke of highway robbers who killed Laius. Now if he uses the same number, it was not I who killed him. One man cannot 980 be the same as many. But if he speaks of a man travelling alone, then clearly the burden of the guilt inclines toward me.

JOCASTA: Be sure, at least, that this was how he told the story. He cannot unsay it now, for every 985 one in the city heard it—not I alone. But, Oedipus, even if he diverges from what he said then, he shall never prove that the murder of Laius squares rightly with the prophecy—for Loxias declared that the king should be killed by his own 990 son. And that poor creature did not kill him surely, —for he died himself first. So as far as prophecy goes, henceforward I shall not look to the right hand or the left.

OEDIPUS: Right. But yet, send some one for the peasant to bring 995 him here; do not neglect it.

JOCASTA: I will send quickly. Now let me go indoors. I will do nothing except what pleases you. [Exit.] CHORUS: Strophe May destiny ever find me pious in word and deed 995 prescribed by the laws that live on high: laws begotten in the clear air of heaven, whose only father is Olympus; no mortal nature brought them to birth, no forgetfulness shall lull them to sleep; 1000 for God is great in them and grows not old. Antistrophe Insolence⁵⁵ breeds the tyrant, insolence 55 infamies n. items of notorious disgrace and dishonor. goad n. sharp, pointed stick used to drive animals. nsolence n. arrogance; bold disrespectfulness. if it is glutted with a surfeit, 56 unseasonable,

unprofitable, climbs to the roof-top and plunges sheer down to the ruin that must be, 1005 and there its feet are no service. But I pray that the God may never abolish the eager ambition that profits the state. For I shall never cease to hold the God as our protector. Strophe If a man walks with haughtiness 1010 of hand or word and gives no heed to Justice and the shrines of Gods despises—may an evil doom smite him for his ill-starred pride of heart! if he reaps gains without justice 1015 and will not hold from impiety and his fingers itch for untouchable things. When such things are done, what man shall contrive to shield his soul from the shafts of the God? When such deeds are held in honor, 1020 why should I honor the Gods in the dance? Antistrophe No longer to the holy place, to the navel of earth I'll go to worship, not to Abae not to Olympia, 1025 unless the oracles are proved to fit, for all men's hands to point at. O Zeus, if you are rightly called the sovereign lord, all mastering, let this not escape you nor your ever-living power! 030 The oracles concerning Laius are old and dim and men regard them not. Apollo is nowhere clear in honor; God's service perishes. PART II: JOCASTA: Princes of the land, I have had the thought to go to the Gods' temples, bringing in my hand 1035 garlands and gifts of incense, as you see. For Oedipus excites himself too much at every sort of trouble, not conjecturing, 57 like a man of sense, what will be from what was, but he is always at speaker's mercy, 1040 when he speaks terrors. I can do no good by my advice, and so I came as suppliant to you, Lycaean Apollo, who are nearest.

These are the symbols of my prayer and this 56 57 my prayer: grant us escape free of the curse. 1045 Now when we look to him we are all afraid;

he's pilot of our ship and he is frightened. [Enter MESSENGER.] MESSENGER: Might I learn from you, sirs, where is the house of Oedipus? Or best of all, if you know, where is the king himself? CHORUS: This is his house and he is within doors. This lady is his wife and mother 1050 of his children. MESSENGER: God bless you, lady, and God bless your household! God bless Oedipus' noble wife! JOCASTA: God bless you, sir, for your kind greeting!

What do you want of us that you have come here? What have you to tell us? MESSENGER: Good news, lady. Good for your house and for your 1056 husband. JOCASTA: What is your news? Who sent you to us? MESSENGER: I come from Corinth and the news I bring will give you pleasure. Perhaps a little pain too. JOCASTA: What is this news of double meaning? MESSENGER: The people of the Isthmus will choose Oedipus to be 1062 their king. That is the rumor there. JOCASTA: Nut isn't their king still old Polybus? MESSENGER: No. He is in his grave. Death has got him. JOCASTA: Is that the truth? Is Oedipus' father dead?

MESSENGER: May I die myself if it be otherwise! JOCASTA: [to a SERVANT]: Be quick and run to the King with the news! O oracles of the Gods, where are you now? It was from this man Oedipus fled, lest he should be his murderer! And 1070 now he is dead, in the course of nature, and not killed by Oedipus. [Enter OEDIPUS.] surfeit n. excessive supply conjecturing v. inferring or prediction from incomplete evidence. OEDIPUS: Dearest Jocasta, why have you sent for me? JOCASTA: Listen to this man and when you hear reflect what is the outcome of the holy oracles of the Gods. OEDIPUS: Who is he? What is his message for me?

JOCASTA: He is from Corinth and he tells us that 1076 your father Polybus is dead and gone. OEDIPUS: What's this you say, sir? Tell me yourself. MESSENGER: Since this is the first matter you want clearly told: Polybus has gone down to death. You may be sure of it. OEDIPUS: By treachery or sickness? MESSENGER: A small thing will put old bodies asleep. OEDIPUS: So he died of sickness, it seems, —poor old man! MESSENGER: Yes, and of age —the long years he had 1085 measured. OEDIPUS: Ha! Ha! O dear Jocasta, why should one look to the Pythian hearth? 58 Why should one look to the birds screaming overhead?

They prophesied that I should kill my father! But he's dead, 1090 and hidden deep in earth, and I stand here who never laid a hand on a spear against him,— unless perhaps he died of longing for me, and thus I am his murderer. But they, the oracles, as they stand—he's taken them 1095 away with him, they're dead as he himself is, and worthless. JOCASTA: That I told you before now. OEDIPUS: You did, but I was misled by my fear. JOCASTA: But surely I must fear my mother's bed? OEDIPUS: Why should man fear since chance is all in all 1101 for him, and he can clearly foreknow nothing?

Best to live lightly, as one can, unthinkingly. As to your mother's marriage bed, —don't fear it. 1105 Before this, in dream too, as well as oracles, many a man has lain with his own mother. But he to whom such things are nothing bears his life most easily. 58 OEDIPUS: All that you say would be said perfectly 1110 if she were dead; but since she lives I must still fear, although you talk so well, Jocasta: JOCASTA: Still in your father's death there's light of comfort? OEDIPUS: Great light of comfort; but I fear the living. MESSENGER: Who is the woman that makes you afraid?

OEDIPUS: Merope, old man, Polybus' wife. MESSENGER: What about her frightens the queen and you? OEDIPUS: A terrible oracle, stranger, from the Gods. MESSENGER: Can it be told? Or does the sacred law 1120 forbid another to have knowledge of it? OEDIPUS: O no! Once on a time Loxias said that I should lie with my own mother and take on my hands the blood of my own father. And so for these long years I've lived away 1125 from Corinth; it has been to my greathappiness; but yet it's sweet to see the face of parents. MESSENGER: This was the fear which drove you out of Corinth?

OEDIPUS: Old man, I did not wish to kill my father. MESSENGER: Why should I not free you from this fear, sir. 1130 since I have come to you in all goodwill? OEDIPUS: You would not find me thankless if you did. MESSENGER: Why, it was just for this I brought the news, — to earn your thanks when you had come safe home. OEDIPUS: No, I will never come near my parents. MESSENGER: Son, 1136 it's very plain you don't know what you're doing. OEDIPUS: What do you mean, old man? For God's sake, tell me. MESSENGER: If your homecoming is checked by fears like these. OEDIPUS: Yes, I'm afraid that Phoebus may prove right.

Pythian hearth n. the Delphic oracle that prophesied Oedipus' crime. MESSENGER: The murder and the incest? OEDIPUS: Why do you speak of that old pain? OEDIPUS: Yes, old man; 1142 that is my constant terror. MESSENGER: Do you know that all your fears are empty? OEDIPUS: How is that, 1146 if they are father and mother and I their son? MESSENGER: Because Polybus was no kin to you in blood. OEDIPUS: What, was not Polybus my father? MESSENGER: No more than I but just so much. OEDIPUS: How can

1151 my father be my father as much as one that's nothing to me?

MESSENGER: Neither he nor I begat you.

MESSENGER: Yes, from another shepherd. OEDIPUS: Why then did he call me

son? MESSENGER: A gift he took you from these hands of mine. OEDIPUS:

Did he love so much what he took from another's hand? MESSENGER: His

childlessness before persuaded him. MESSENGER: Yes, he was that man's

shepherd. OEDIPUS: Was I a child you bought or found when I 1159 was

given to him? MESSENGER: On Cithaeron's slopes in the twisting thickets you

were found. OEDIPUS: And why were you a traveler in those parts?

MESSENGER: I was in charge of mountain flocks. OEDIPUS: You were a

shepherd? 1167 a hireling vagrant? 9 MESSENGER: Yes, but at least at that

time the man that saved your life, son. OEDIPUS: What ailed me when you

took me in your arms? MESSENGER: In that your ankles should be witnesses.

60 59 MESSENGER: I loosed you; 1175 the tendons of your feet were pierced

and fettered, — OEDIPUS: My swaddling60 clothes brought me a rare

disgrace. MESSENGER: So that from this you're called your present name. 61

OEDIPUS: Was this my father's doing or my mother's? For God's sake, tell

me. MESSENGER: I don't know, but he 1181 who gave you to me has more

knowledge than I. OEDIPUS: You yourself did not find me then?

You took me from someone else? OEDIPUS: Who was he? Do you know him

well enough to tell? MESSENGER: He was called Laius' man. OEDIPUS: You

mean the king who reigned here in the old days? OEDIPUS: Is he alive 1190

still, so that I could see him? MESSENGER: You who live here would know

best. OEDIPUS: Do any of you here know of this shepherd whom he speaks

about 1195 in town or in the fields? Tell me. It's time that this was found out

once for all. CHORUS: I think he is none other than the peasant whom you have sought to see already; but Jocasta here can tell us best of that.

OEDIPUS: Jocasta, do you know about this man 1201 whom we have sent for? Is he the man he mentions? hireling vagrant person who wanders from place to place and works at odd jobs. swaddling clothes long, narrow bands of cloth wrapped around infants in ancient times. 61 your present name Oedipus means “swollen foot” JOCASTA: Why ask of whom he spoke? Don’t give it heed; nor try to keep in mind what has been said. It will be wasted labor. OEDIPUS: With such clues 1206 I could not fail to bring my birth to light. JOCASTA: I beg you—do not hunt this out—I beg you, if you have any care for your own life.

What I am suffering is enough. OEDIPUS: Keep up 1211 your heart, Jocasta. Though I’m proved a slave, thrice slave, and though my mother is thrice slave, you’ll not be shown to be of lowly lineage. JOCASTA: O be persuaded by me, I entreat you; 1215 do not do this. OEDIPUS: I will not be persuaded to let be the chance of finding out the whole thing clearly. JOCASTA: It is because I wish you well that I give you this counsel—and it’s the best counsel. OEDIPUS: Then the best counsel vexes me, and has 1221 for some while since. JOCASTA: O Oedipus, God help you! God keep you from the knowledge of who you are!

OEDIPUS: Here, some one, go and fetch the shepherd for me; 1225 and let her find her joy in her richfamily! JOCASTA: O Oedipus, unhappy Oedipus! that is all I can call you, and the last thing that I shall ever call you. [Exit.] CHORUS: Why has the queen gone, Oedipus, in wild 1230 grief rushing from us? I am afraid that trouble will break out of this silence. OEDIPUS: Break out

what will! I at least shall be willing to see my ancestry, though humble. Perhaps she is ashamed of my low birth, 1235 for she has all a woman's high-flown pride. But I account myself a child of Fortune, 62 beneficent Fortune, and I shall not be dishonored.

She's the mother from whom I spring; the months, my brothers, marked me, now as small 62 1240 and now again as mighty. Such is my breeding, and I shall never prove so false to it, as not to find the secret of my birth. CHORUS: Strophe If I am a prophet and wise of heart you shall not fail, Cithaeron, 1245 by the limitless sky, you shall not! — to know at tomorrow's full moon that Oedipus honors you, as native to him and mother and nurse at once; and that you are honored in dancing by us, as finding favor in sight of our king. 1250 Apollo, to whom we cry, find these things pleasing!

Antistrophe Who was it bore you, child? One of the long-lived nymphs⁶³ who lay with Pan⁶⁴— the father who treads the hills? Or was she a bride of Loxias, your mother? The grassy slopes 1255 are all of them dear to him. Or perhaps Cyllene's king⁶⁵ or the Bacchaants' God that lives on the tops of the hills received you a gift from some one of the Helicon Nymphs, with whom he mostly plays? {Enter an OLD MAN, lead by OEDIPUS' SERVANTS. } OEDIPUS: If some one like myself who never met him 1260 may make a guess, —I think this is the herdsman, whom we were seeking. His old age is consonant with the other.

And besides, the men who bring him I recognize as my own servants. You perhaps may better me in knowledge since 1265 you've seen the man before. CHORUS: You can be sure I recognize him. For if Laius had ever an honest shepherd, this was he. OEDIPUS: You, sir, from Corinth, I must ask

you first, 1270 is this the man you spoke of? MESSENGER: This is he before your eyes. OEDIPUS: Old man, look here at me and tell me what I ask you. Were you ever 63 child of Fortune Since Fortune, or good luck, saved him from death, Oedipus refuses to feel shame at being illegitimate or of humble origins. nymphs n. inor female divinities with youthful, beautiful, and amorous qualities; “ nymph” means young woman. 64 Pan Arcadian shepherd god who lived in the mountains, danced and sang with the nymphs, and played his pipes. 65 Cyllene’s King Hermes, the messenger god. 1275 a servant of King Laius? HERDSMAN: I was, — no slave he bought but reared in his own house. OEDIPUS: What did you do as work? How did you live? HERDSMAN: Most of my life was spent among the flocks. OEDIPUS: In what part of the country did you live? HERDSMAN: Cithaeron and the places near to it. OEDIPUS: And somewhere there perhaps you knew this man?

HERDSMAN: What was his occupation? Who? OEDIPUS: This man here, 1285 have you had any dealings with him? HERDSMAN: No— not such that I can quickly call to mind. MESSENGER: That is no wonder, master. But I’ll make him remember what he does not know. For I know, that he well knows the country of 1290 Cithaeron, how he with two flocks, I with one kept company for three years—each year half a year—from spring till autumn time and then when winter came I drove my flocks to our fold home again and he to Laius’ steadings. Well—am I right or not in what I said we did? HERDSMAN: You’re right—although it’s a long time ago.

MESSENGER: Do you remember giving me a child 1296 to bring up as my foster child? HERDSMAN: What’s this? Why do you ask the question?

MESSENGER: Look old man, 1300 here he is—here's the man who was that child! HERDSMAN: Death take you! Won't you hold your tongue? OEDIPUS: No, no, do not find fault with him, old man. Your words are more at fault than his. HERDSMAN: O best of masters, 1306 how do I give offense? OEDIPUS [to the SERVANTS]: Here, one of you, 1315 twist his hands behind him. HERDSMAN: Why, God help me, why? What do you want to know? OEDIPUS: You gave a child to him, —the child he asked you of?

HERDSMAN: I did. 1321 I wish I'd died the day I did. OEDIPUS: You will unless you tell me truly. HERDSMAN: And I'll die 1325 far worse if I should tell you. ODEPIPUS: This fellow is bent on more delays, as it would seem. HERDSMAN: O no, no! I have told you that I gave it. OEDIPUS: Where did you get this child fro