

Assessment of the part of oedipus as depicted in william shakespeare's play, oedi...

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



Oedipus is a self-confident, intelligent, strong willed man and a great king. Ironically these are the very traits that bring about his tragic discovery.

There are many themes in the play that add to his character, which ultimately instigates his own undoing. Going through the play the audience recognises the reasons why Oedipus ends up the way he does, blind yet seeing the truth. The audience learns how his character develops, through viewing his behaviour and interaction with the other characters in the play. The chorus also plays a major part of his characterization, as do the many references to light, darkness and sight in the play

King Oedipus is portrayed as a great and respected king. He is ready and willing to do all he can to help his people rid Thebes of the polluter of their land. “ I would willingly do anything to help you, indeed I should be heartless were I to stop my ears, to general petition such as this”. The priest is the first character the audience is introduced to in the play besides Oedipus. The priest speaks highly of Oedipus, he asks for his help and gives the audience their first impressions of the main character “ Now Oedipus great and glorious”. The dialogue between the priest and Oedipus helps the viewer to understand the character and how he develops through out the play. The next main speech given in the play is from Oedipus to the people of Thebes. He is extremely confident in warning the citizens of Thebes about their fate if they do not cooperate with his investigation. He promises banishment and shame for any found guilty; the tragic irony is that he is the polluter of Thebes and he in fact cursing himself. The audience then realizes that Oedipus is the blind fool whose confidence and arrogance will bring him to his demise.

The third main dialogue that reveals even more of the tragic king's character is that of Teiresias and Oedipus. Teiresias is a blind prophet that Oedipus has summoned to his palace to tell him who the polluter is. Firstly Teiresias refuses to speak because he knows, as does the audience that Oedipus is the one responsible for the former king Laius' murder which is causing the plague of bad luck. The first example of Oedipus' ignorance is when Teiresias is constantly dropping hints " you are all deluded. I refuse to utter the heavy secrets of my soul - and yours". He says this to Oedipus and the ignorant king doesn't see how this would have anything to do with him " I know as you do not, that you are living in sinful union with the one you love, living in ignorance of your own undoing". It is frustrating to the audience that Oedipus still cannot see his sins, this adds to his character arrogance, ignorance and egotistical behaviour. The fourth main speech is between Oedipus and his trusted brother in law Creon. This comes after Oedipus has just been confronted and somewhat accused Teiresias of being the polluter of Thebes. Oedipus lets his insecurity get the better of him and jumps to the conclusion that Creon set the whole thing up. " Have you the face to stand before my door proved plotter against my life, thief of my crown". He is so sure of himself that he is turning on his most trusted relative, this just proves that arrogance and ignorance have once again come through in Oedipus' character. By the end of page 43 the audience has seen the confident well respected king turn into an ignorant, narrow-minded victim of his own tragic destiny.

The use of the chorus is also a huge part of the play that helps us to learn more about Oedipus. The first appearance of the chorus in the play takes the audience through the problems Thebes is facing “ beyond all telling the city reeks with the death in her streets, death bringing. None weeps, and her children die”. In this instance it tells the audience in great detail the problems that are going on in Thebes and what Oedipus has to fix. The chorus also gives advice “ To the lord Phoebus is the lord Teiresias stands nearest, I would say in divination. He is the one who could help us most in our search”. The chorus serves the king and gives information and excellent advice. It shows the audience that whatever the chorus says Oedipus follows. He has great faith in the advice of the chorus “ He swore his friendship; is it right to cast away a friend, condemned unheard. Upon and idle word?” after the chorus says this to Oedipus he changes his mind slightly of Creon being guilty and starts to consider the fact that he may be he cursed polluter of Thebes.

There are many references to light and darkness in this play. Oedipus sees but is blind to the truth, Teiresias is blind but sees the truth. This is a common theme running through the play “ You are pleased to mock my blindness, have you eyes and do not see your own damnation?” these are wise words of Teiresias. The audience then realises the tragic flaw of Oedipus character, he sees but is sightless to the truth. Oedipus is living in darkness; he lacks understanding and loses sight of fact. He is so sure of himself that even when all the facts come together he refuses to believe them until he has concrete proof, even though every event in his life fits in

like a jigsaw puzzle. " In Thebes the city of light" it is ironic that light is used to describe Thebes when the cities king is the one keeping it in darkness and pollution. " He that came seeing blind shall he go" this is a key quote in the play, Oedipus came to Thebes with confidence and aspirations of ruling as king, his sights were set and aims were clear. When he leaves Thebes he is nothing but a blind victim of his own fate. The common use of light, darkness, sight and blindness makes up the whole play. A clever ending quote by Teiresias is " when you can prove me wrong then call me blind" Oedipus will never prove Teiresias wrong because he speaks the truth and even though he is blind he sees things Oedipus cant imagine.

Ultimately the main contributing factors to developing Oedipus' character are his interaction with other characters, the chorus and the strong reference to light, darkness, sight and blindness. All these issues are relevant and important to the audiences understanding of the character and the play. It becomes clear to the audience what Oedipus' flaws are, and how he instigated is own demise. Eager to learn more about the truth Oedipus could not control his fate but he could definitely control his knowledge of the past.