

Oedipus the king essay

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



This is an Athenian tragedy by Sophocles. The main character Oedipus is the King of Thebes. Oedipus' own fault brings him down and in an embarrassing way. The literature work presents a perfect example of tragedy. King Oedipus is the protagonist in the play. His tragic error is linked to a natural curse on his biological father.

The chronology of events begins when a young man learns about a rumor that King Polybus and Queen Merope are not his biological parents.

Innocently, Oedipus sets out on a journey with the intention of permanently moving away to thwart the Oracle, which is unknown to him. Oedipus feels that if he is far away then he may not harm his foster parents whom he now believes are his biological parents. The first part of his tragic error occurs during this journey. Oedipus meets a stranger, who unknown to him is his biological father, Laius.

A quarrel ensues which eventually leads to a fight. By the end of the war, Oedipus kills everybody except one person in the stranger's entourage (Storr, 2008)). The cause of disagreement was a very simple argument between them over who had the right-of-way. All This takes place while the two, King Laius and his Son Oedipus are unaware of their identities. Oedipus did not even know that the stranger he was fighting was a King.

The second part of King Oedipus tragic error, ironically occurs after Oedipus uses his wisdom to free the Kingdom of Thebes. It is interesting to see how wisdom and the wish to rescue Thebes drive Oedipus into a classic tragedy. Oedipus answers the riddle from Sphinx to deliver the Kingdom of Thebes from a curse."

What is the creature that walks on four in the morning walks on two at noon and walks on three in the evening?" The Sphinx asked, "Man," Oedipus responded. The reward for this work was for Oedipus to be made the King of Thebes. He was then given the Queen of Thebes, Jocasta, to marry. The Queen incidentally was his biological mother. This opens both ends of the tragic error. The Oracle he ran away from was then fulfilled.

Oedipus is a victim of fate, killing his father and his mother. The order of events is guided by his brilliance in which Oedipus attempt to unravel the truth. This is in addition to control his destiny . This however, climaxes into the tragedy that leads to his embarrassing downfall.

When he discovers that he has a curse following him, just like ant other human being and King for that matter, sends Creon his brother-in-law to seek advice from Apollo. " King Apollo! May his joyous looks be presage of the joyous news he brings!" He says. The news from Apollo seems to bring the expected joy and hope. Creon, " Good news, for even intolerable ills. Finding right issue, tend to naught but good."

Creon explains that evasion will only come after the murderer of Laius; the former King is found and prosecuted. With determination to avert his curse, Oedipus commits himself to apprehend the murderer and make sure justice is done. Ironically, Oedipus is the killer himself.

Further complications arise when Jocasta disapproves the blind prophet's prophesy that King Oedipus killed the former King Laius. The news from the prophet is in fact true but a mystery to understand. Jocasta advises Oedipus

not to be bothered by looking for the murderer. She says who the man is. Let it be. Twere wastes of thought to weigh such idle words.” However, Oedipus is not convinced and insists to pursue the matter.

However, an obscurity in itself regenerates in Oedipus memory regarding a babyhood story of him being an adopted youngster. Jocasta’s flow of the story looked very similar to the one the old man told him in his childhood. Members of his Kingdom through the song continue to persuade him further but he resists (Storr, 2008) He continues his probe to know the murderer of Laius, the former King.

The fatal chronology of events fulfills the prophesy of the tragic error when Jocasta discovers that her second husband is actually her son and a child whom together her first husband King Laius dumped in the forest to avert a curse. To her surprise the child was a live, a King and worst of all her husband whom they had four children together. With glaring in her face and because the situation then was an abomination, Queen Jocasta kills herself by committing suicide.

This happens shortly before King Oedipus also discovers the truth. Oedipus realizes that he in deed killed King Laius, his biological father that he was married to his biological mother, and together they have four children (Greene, 2010). The events of the situation become unbearable. Oedipus, in accepting his mistake requests for punishment. He ends up being a beggar who wanders all over.

Athenians learnt a lot from the tragic error by their King, Oedipus. Among the lessons, the Athenians learnt that destiny could never be thwarted. Oedipus in quest to know the truth and his wish to control his destiny ended disastrously. His father, Laius and his mother Jocasta conspired to kill their son in an attempt to evade destiny.

This never worked as Oedipus was eventually rescued and he lived to fulfill what fate dictated. The curse that turned to be fate for the generations was brought by Laius' moral decadence. In his youth, he raped a young woman he was teaching. Rape is a vice that is not condoned by the society. This was the source of the curse. The two Kings, Laius, and Oedipus, tried to thwart it but never succeeded.

The Athenians learnt that destiny has its mechanisms of ensuring that it is never avoided. Their King had sort advice from Apollo in trying to avoid a terrible curse that had befallen him. The response circumvented things back to King without his knowledge. Oedipus, then on following up the matter destroyed himself (Berg, 2011). It was clear to them that if something were predestined to happen, it will happen no matter what takes place.

Athenians believed in the fulfillment of prophesy. The tragic events of their King, Oedipus simply reinforced their belief. Their two Kings should have believed in fate. To the Athenians it would never have come in such a torturous way. King Laius and Queen Jocasta would not have conspired to kill their son.

This means that King Polybus and Queen Merope would never have brought up Oedipus. This would have reorganized the way fate would have happened. Most important being that Oedipus would never have bothered to unravel the mystery of his birth.

When the Athenians analyzed the order of events through the tragic error by King Oedipus, it was clear that the cause was an immoral behavior. Laius had been offered an opportunity to tutor a young woman. Laius forgot the good reception he had been given, he instead of concentrating on his job became immoral.

The society and especially in Athena upheld morals. The whole tragedy would have been avoided at the tiptop. It would be easy for Laius to uphold simple but important ethics than letting the entire generation go through pain and embarrassment.

In comparison with the modern world, there is great difference in the beliefs and a change between that generation and the current one. In the modern world, leadership is learnt and the leaders do not run their countries alone. Decisions are never unilateral, to an extent that even the foreign nations influence internal affairs of other countries. Forms of leadership have also changed. Analysis of those seeking leadership including their history are done.

Religion also plays a great role in the difference. Though religion existed in the Athena, the difference is in the faith. The judicial system takes the opportunity to rehabilitate those with moral decadence. Laius would have

been jailed for rape. He would never have had a chance to rule since his behavior would never allow him. In the modern society, Hitler, the former Chancellor of Germany represents a leader with a tragic error. He started the Second World War and died a painful and embarrassing death.

Berg, S. (2011). *Oedipus the King*. New York: Oxford University press.

Greene, D. (2010). *Oedipus the King by Sophocles*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Storr, S (2008). *Oedipus the King: Original play*. New York: Internet classic commentary.