

# My oedipus complex research paper essay sample

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According to Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, the phrase "Oedipus complex" is defined as: "the positive libidinal feelings that a child develops toward the parent of the opposite sex and that when unresolved are conceived as a source of adult personality disorder." The title of this story is said to have received its name based on two things - primarily on the Greek Oedipus, who was a renowned character in Greek mythology.

Secondly, it is based on the bizarre and interesting theory of Oedipus complex established by psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud. This title also relates to past experiences familiar to O'Connor himself. Often times, authors associate their ideas and narratives with certain situations and experiences they have encountered in their lifetimes. Frank O'Connor is certainly one of those authors. This strategy helps to shape characters and enhance plot, therefore creating a theme that captures the reader's attention. In the short story "My Oedipus Complex," O'Connor uses the character Larry to represent his experiences as a young boy and relay the main theme and story's title to the reader.

Frank O'Connor was born as Michael O'Donovan in Cork, Ireland in 1903. His family was poor and consistently faced problems with exceeding their credit limit. O'Connor's father, Michael, was a cruel drunk who mistreated O'Connor's mother, Minnie. Michael could not stand the fact that O'Connor would rather sit at home and read a book instead of playfully fight with the boys on the street. As a result, Michael criticized his son, calling him a sissy and wimp. These degrading comments weakened O'Connor's self esteem, which often led him to seek comfort from his mother. Eventually, O'Connor became a stereotypical "mamma's boy" and began to idolize his mother.

Throughout his life, O'Connor struggled through many tough times, always arguing with his father. This theme of father-son rivalry also appears in "My Oedipus Complex."

As the reader becomes familiar with the character of Larry, one soon discovers the similarities between he and O'Connor. O'Connor's characters tend to reach conclusions about themselves that share a universal meaning, therefore making these characters appealing to the reader. Critic Michael Neary reinforces this idea in his article "Studies in Short Fiction, The Inside-out World in Frank O'Connor's Stories." Neary's article discusses a variety of O'Connor's short stories and analyzes the traits and qualities of several characters in the different stories. He explains:

O'Connor's characters straddle the line between inward self and the questions of humanity, giving his stories their significance and appeal...Frank O'Connor's short stories portray psychological journeys into the self, stressing the simultaneousness of community and the individual (Neary 1).

In his article, Neary does not only describe O'Connor's characters, but he also explores O'Connor's use of language and how it reflects themes throughout the story. Neary emphasizes the importance of language use when he notes, "the blending of mythic and individual smallness he uses in language and scene reflects the main theme" (Neary 1). Neary continues on in his article, giving examples of characters from many of O'Connor's other

short stories for which he is famous. Through all of these examples, it is evident that O'Connor is constantly successful in making his characters have universal meaning.

Not only are O'Connor's background and personal happenings incorporated into his literature, but also, he repeatedly includes his political beliefs and hobbies. Similar to most Irish literary men, O'Connor got caught up in the excitements of Irish politics. He was an active citizen, who fought for immediate independence for a united Ireland. Robert Davis writes, " he... made brilliant descriptive studies of Ireland and Irish social conditions and... wrote two volumes of autobiography" (Davis 399). Here, Davis explains O'Connor's writing style, specifically how he integrates politics and social conditions into his literature. Once again, the reader is also informed about how O'Connor was an author who often wrote about his past experiences.

Veronica C. Kobus, writing an analysis of " My Oedipus Complex" enlightens her readers about the title's meaning and persistent theme that the title represents throughout the story. In Greek mythology, Oedipus was known as a hero. In his myth, Oedipus follows the requests of the Delphic oracle - murdering his father, King Laertes out of pure rage and jealousy. We see this theme in a similar light in O'Connor's story. Larry is upset and seems almost jealous when his father returns home from WWI. Here, the father-son rivalry develops and a small-scale competition begins as to who can gain the most attention from Minnie, Larry's mother. This is how Larry's jealousy develops. As Oedipus' myth evolves, he unknowingly marries his own mother, Queen Jocasta and creates a family with her (Freeman and Streaun 13). The Oedipus

complex theory was originally created by Sigmund Freud. Freud argued that all young males experience a sexual desire towards their mother and fear castration from their father because of this desire. Kobus connects the epic and theory to O'Connor's story when she writes:

He [O'Connor] seemed to portray the Oedipus complex as a humorous innuendo to his readers...a true Oedipus Complex was only meant to apply to children in their toddler years, and eventually they grow out of it. However, Larry was a five year-old boy who never attached himself to his mother in a romantic or sexual way. He certainly did mention that he wanted to marry his mother and make babies with her only to spite his father (<http://www.wiu.edu/users/muvck/GH101pg1.htm>). Kobus' analysis serves as a clear explanation as to how the story was named — both through myth and theory.

Frank O' Connor was an author who always incorporated his past life experiences into his writing. In his story " My Oedipus Complex," O' Connor represents his past through the character of Larry. Through Larry, the reader also learns of the story's main theme and the significance of the story's title.

## WORKS CITED

### Books

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