

Fate vs. free will (oedipus rex)

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



Sophocles creates a world that makes the reader think about the complex and mysterious battle between fate and free will in his play Oedipus The King. To the characters, fate is real and that's what they believe in. The audience sees that Oedipus is the one making the divisions and ultimately it is himself that leads to his downfall. Apollo, the Greek god of prophecy, intellectual pursuits and pelage, told Oedipus about his tragic future. When we first encounter Oedipus we don't see any way that he could escape such a tragic down fall.

Oedipus is in search of the truth, he does everything in his power, even when everyone warns him to stop searching. When he refuses to listen he shows that he does have some sense of free will. There is no oracle that says that Oedipus had to find out about the truth of what has happened. Sadly his stubborn temper lead him to make the bad decisions. When Oedipus goes to Thebes, he is presented with a choice, to become the king or to continue to move on. Oedipus' choice to stay puts him one step closer to fulfilling the prophecy.

Oedipus is not forced into marrying Jocasta, this is simply his decision. By the end of the play Oedipus admits to himself and the people of Thebes that it was his choices that lead to his fate. " Now loathed by the gods, son of the mother I defiled coupling in my fathers bed, spawning lives in the loins that spawned my wretched life. What grief can crown this grief? It's mine alone, my destiny-I am Oedipus! " (Sophocles) Oedipus clearly says that he married his mother, that he was the one who had children with her, and the grief is all his.

Even though he may believe that this was his destiny, he takes responsibility for fulfilling it. Oedipus has no trouble seeing the error of his ways. Although Oedipus takes responsibility, he is not the only person to blame. Overall, the blame could ultimately fall on Jocasta and Laius. They were warned that their child was going to have such a future when Oedipus was very little, but instead of having Oedipus killed and actually seeing the proof, they carelessly had the baby pinned on a mountain. Jocasta and Laius never actually made sure that Oedipus was killed.

Oedipus references this at the end of the play: " If I'd died then, I'd never have dragged myself, my loved ones through such hell" (Sophocles) If this play is only about fate that takes control of Oedipus' life, then Sophocles' theme was that no man really has free choice, no one can make, then learn from their mistakes. That life is governed by something other than himself. Instead, Sophocles leaves the argument of fate versus free will open for more interpretations. The truth is that Oedipus' choices are what led him to fulfill the prophecy.

While Sophocles never directly says, what happens to Oedipus is a result of his own choices, it's the end of the play that makes you realize that he was responsible for his own actions. Oedipus is responsible for his own downfall. Fate and free will are two completely different ideas that Sophocles is somehow able to put into one in this play. As a writer he leaves it up to the reader to interpret the difference between free will and fate. Oedipus is given many chances to make choices, but due to his stubbornness, he is the one who leads to his own downfall.