

Evaluation of the thebans' high regard towards oedipus

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



I believe that the Thebans have such a high opinion of Oedipus for several reasons that are revealed throughout Sophocles' Oedipus The King. The first of these things is Oedipus' strength of character and clear devotion to the city of Thebes and its people. Oedipus also saved the city from the Sphinx. We see the Thebans' high opinion of Oedipus in several key scenes, firstly when the gathering of citizens comes to Oedipus for help in the beginning of the play, then when the Chorus' representative deems him "first of men". Next we see this when there is confusion over the identity of Oedipus' parents, and the Chorus of Thebans immediately jumps to positive conclusions.

Oedipus' strength of character is seen in his first appearance on stage at the beginning of the play. We see that the people of Thebes are being affected by a terrible plague that nobody knows how to solve, but Oedipus is already taking steps to solve it from the moment the play begins. He has sent Creon to ask the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi for help. This initiative immediately gladdens the Priest who represents the people, and as Creon arrives with apparently good news we can see why Oedipus has the respect of the Thebans. The fact that the citizens choose to immediately follow the lead of Oedipus and allow him to solve the mystery of the death of Laius as they die in the city shows their trust of him, and their high opinion of him. His decisive nature could easily save hundreds of lives. We also see that the Thebans have such a high opinion of Oedipus when they name him as possibly being the son of a god, due to simply how amazing he is. There was also no doubt of their king in the minds of the Thebans when Oedipus' birth was in question that he must have come from greatness in his past.

Another reason as to why the Thebans have such a high opinion of Oedipus is that he has previously come through for them in the past. The Priest gives the example of when Oedipus bravely defeated the Sphinx that was threatening their town, and killing anyone who tried to answer its riddle. Oedipus, an outsider at the time, won the trust of the town by volunteering to save the town by answering the riddle of the Sphinx in residence in the town's temple. Oedipus was able to answer the riddle and banish the Sphinx, thus the people showed their now absolute trust in his abilities by naming him King of Thebes. As far as we can tell, the people have retained that high opinion of Oedipus thus far, as once again, he is the person they trust to rid them of Apollo's plague. And even at the end, the people are reluctant to abandon Oedipus, and accept his downfall, such is their opinion of the now fallen man.

To conclude, by metaphor of the ship, Oedipus is described by the Priest as the guiding hand, carefully bringing the sinking ship that is Thebes through the storm of the plague, and out the other side, we can see by this metaphor that the people of Thebes have an extremely high opinion of Oedipus, which was earned by his actions with the Sphinx, and with his decisive and action oriented personality.

I would completely agree that it was because of Oedipus' great qualities, that his downfall was inevitable. We see this in several ways, firstly because his great honour and allegiance to the wellbeing of Thebes and to his duty as king would never allow him to not pursue the mystery of Laius to the bitter end, whatever the consequences. I would also argue that if Oedipus had

been a less honourable man, it would be extremely unlikely that he would have been so horrified his actions as to gouge out his own eyes in retribution. It is also his great intelligence and bravery that allowed him to kick-start all of these events.

Oedipus is portrayed as being extremely loyal to the people of Thebes in the play. We see this by his first action to defeat the Sphinx to gain their trust, and he manages to keep their trust as their king. This loyalty has resulted in the total trust by the people of Thebes that Oedipus can solve the enormous problem of the plague. I would argue that because Oedipus is so loyal to his people, that it would be impossible for him not to follow through to the end of the mystery, and find the murderer of Laius. His honour in following through on punishing his own actions by banishing himself from the city show this to be true. He creates a curse meant to punish the murderer of Laius, and once he realises that the murderer is himself, he accepts the punishment laid down in the curse. If he had not been so worried for the safety of his people that he would put such a curse on a murderer, he would not have been forced to comply with it himself, leading to his own ultimate downfall.

Oedipus' dedication to solving the murder that affects his people shows his honour. He is perfectly willing to dedicate himself entirely to guiding the sinking ship of Thebes through the storm with no thought of self-preservation. In my opinion, Oedipus showed that he is a truly honourable man when he did follow that curse, only asking for the touch of his daughters as comfort. If he had not been so honourable as to create such a curse, he

would not have been so affected by the actions he had taken before the Play's events. His utter regret and horror at having married his own mother is reflected when he tries to kill her at the end of the play, and gouge out his own eyes in response to her suicide, this shows that he is honourable, as he has committed a horrific crime by doing so, and can only hurt himself to try and make up for it. His own honour leads to his blindness, and his eventual exile.

Oedipus is also an extremely intelligent, if brash individual. We see his intelligence when we are told that he solved the riddle of the sphinx that no other man could solve in the city, however in this same instance we see his brashness, his self-confidence. He goes in to a city he has little relation to, and immediately offers to risk his life to save it. This same quick decisive action, and intelligence combined is seen in his summoning of the prophet Tiresias, and his quick analysis of the situation once Tiresias begins accusing him of being a murderer. Though Oedipus draws the incorrect conclusion, it is clearly not just through paranoia, the prophet does not seem to have any love for Oedipus, and if Creon did indeed want to take the throne, this would be a prime opportunity for him to do so. His intelligence is what kick-starts the events of the play, without it he would be long gone from Thebes, and the plague may have destroyed it if Oedipus had not been found by whomever went to solve the murder of Laius. Oedipus own intelligence made him King of Thebes, after his brashness allowed him to kill the previous king in a bout of road rage. These two qualities are good qualities in a decisive king, however both lead to his ultimate downfall, and exile.

To conclude, the events in Oedipus The King by Sophocles follow a timeline of events that began with the great qualities of Oedipus, his intelligence in solving the riddle of the sphinx, his fierceness in battle which led to him being able to murder Laius and a retinue of guards, and his honour which forces him to follow the mystery to its ultimate conclusion. Without all of these great qualities, Oedipus' downfall would have been far from inevitable.