

The tragic hero

Business



Heroes are great saviors, while tragic heroes are only great in their misfortune. In *Oedipus The King* by Sophocles, Oedipus is an example of Aristotle's true tragic hero. Oedipus inspires both pity and fear in the audience, along with exhibiting errors of judgment caused by character flaws. These two elements are essential to a tragic hero.

Oedipus moves the audience to pity and fear in many ways. Oedipus is pitied because he is not an evil person, and therefore doesn't deserve a punishment that exceeds his crime (Abrams). Oedipus is sentenced to be "thrust out from every home, ...the very picture of [the] pestilence" brought upon Thebes (15). But Oedipus ruled Thebes for "fifteen years [in]... prosperity" and was by all rights a wonderful king ("Time and Setting"). The people adore Oedipus.

Even though he is mostly responsible for his downfall, "no man could bear so much" (75). Oedipus is a man, and in that lies the inspired fear. If he "whom men call Oedipus The Great" can fall so far from such a great height, then there is no reason the same cannot happen to anyone (5). Oedipus's humanity is the base of his failure and the audience is merely human. Herein also lies the moral of the story: Beware because no one is immune. Anyone is susceptible to a similar fate ("Focusing").

The two emotions invoked by Oedipus prove him to be the perfect example of Aristotle's tragic hero. Oedipus also emulates a tragic hero by demonstrating poor judgment as a result of character flaws. Oedipus has a few character flaws, such as being quick to blame others and quick to anger, but the trait that gets him into the most trouble is his pride. It is what causes

him to think he could outrun “such a damned destiny” and ultimately dooms him (44). This pride also causes Oedipus to object to being pushed off the road by his father's company and in retaliation, he “killed them all” (45).

The fundamental character weakness shows that in some way, Oedipus is responsible for his misfortune. He is not merely a helpless victim of fate (“Focusing”). The fact that Oedipus is at fault is what makes the story so tragic, “the mastery [he] had in [his] own life has been [his] fall” (80). Oedipus definitely has the errors of judgment necessary in a tragic hero. Obviously, Oedipus is a true tragic hero by reasoning of Aristotle because he has the criteria.

Heroes are characterized by their greatness, and Oedipus is undoubtedly great, though it is his tragedy that makes him so.