

Tragedy in oedipus rex assignment

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Tragedy in Oedipus Rex The Greek drama Oedipus Rex is clearly a tragedy. It definitely meets the five main criteria for a tragedy: a tragic hero of noble birth, a tragic flaw, a fall from grace, a moment of remorse, and catharsis. Oedipus Rex clearly meets the first of these five criteria. Oedipus is the son of Laius, who was king of Thebes. Even at the beginning of the story, when we are told that Oedipus is the son of Polybus, he is still of noble birth; Polybus is king of Corinth.

The tragic flaw, or mistake that a character makes, in Oedipus Rex does not actually take place during the story. We only watch as Oedipus and the rest of the characters discover this mistake that was actually made long, long ago and cannot be reversed. This tragic flaw is of course Oedipus killing his father Laius, and then marrying Jocasta, his mother. We realize that these actions have taken place much earlier in the story than the characters do.

However, both of these events actually took many years ago. The fall from grace in Oedipus Rex is when Oedipus, Jocasta, and all the other characters in the story realize that Oedipus actually did murder Laius and that Jocasta is indeed his mother as well as his wife. This occurs rather quickly, very close to the end of the play. The audience sees this coming long before it actually does, however. In one of the passages of Oedipus speaking with Jocasta, just about everything is spelled out for us.

Jocasta speaks of Laius leaving the castle with just a few servants and his being killed where three roads meet. Oedipus claims that he killed somebody where three roads met, who had a few servants with him. As though this isn't enough, Jocasta describes Laius to Oedipus by saying " his figure was

not much unlike your own” (p. 27). Oedipus, after hearing all this, says “ O, it is plain already! ” (p. 27) indicating that he was the killer of his father. He goes on to make absolutely sure, even though it is obvious that he was Laius’s killer.

The moment of remorse comes at the end of the story, when one of the servants who had accompanied Laius on his final journey came to speak to Oedipus. He was the only one who survived the attack, and told that contrary to rumor, Laius was killed by one man, not robbers. He then pointed out this one man, Oedipus. We are told soon after that Jocasta hanged herself upon hearing this. When this news reaches Oedipus, he takes the pins from her dress and stabs his eyes out. The catharsis, or emotional cleansing of the audience, comes at the same time as the remorse.

The audience suddenly feels sorry for this poor man who has unknowingly killed his father and married his mother, for the people of this land who have been suffering from an awful curse because of it, and for the unfortunate Jocasta, who was basically an innocent bystander in the whole confusing disaster. In these five ways, the story Oedipus Rex classifies as a tragedy. However, in my opinion at least, you don’t really need a standard checklist to see if Oedipus Rex is a tragedy or not. Any story which ends in the death of one major character and a lifetime of misery, shame, and self-exile for the other major character is clearly a tragedy.