

# Death of a salesman and oedipus the king

Literature



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## I. Introduction

Tragedy is a play dealing with serious events, in which the leading character suffers because of his actions. It ends unhappily, usually with the hero's death. Although no exact, detailed definition of tragedy has been agreed upon by critics, the term is commonly used to describe nonmusical dramatic works, not operas. The issues in tragedy are significant, and the characters and action are basically realistic (See "Aristotle and Tragedy" 564). Tragedy thus differs from melodrama, which may be sad or horrible but is unrealistic and superficial.

It is also to be distinguished from tragicomedy, in which elements of both tragedy and comedy are combined, and which ends happily (Belsey 878). Tragedy is further restricted to a form of drama that developed in the Western world. Serious plays with some tragic elements were produced in China and Japan during certain periods. With few exceptions, however, these plays had stereotyped characters and melodramatic and ritualized plots. Drama that conformed in many ways to the tragic pattern began to appear in Japan in the late 19th century, but it was directly influenced by European literary tradition (See Aristotle and Tragedy 564).

Just like the works of Aristotle and Arthur Millers. Aristotle and Millers discussed tragedy in their Poetics. For many years these statements were used as standards for judging tragedy. Even in modern times, at least part, on Aristotle's views. For Aristotle, he analyzed the plays of ancient Greek writers of tragedy and concluded that this form of drama deals with important and probable events that follow a single line of action. He also

thought tragedy invariably arouses pity and terror and provides an outlet for these emotions.

In order to produce what he considered the right emotional effect, he concluded, tragedy must be in dramatic form. Thesis Statement: This paper scrutinizes the two plays which are Oedipus the King and Death of a Salesman as tragedies.

## II. Discussion

### A. Similarities and differences of Oedipus the King and Death of a Salesman

Oedipus the King and Death of a Salesman are two of the plays that represent what tragedy is. Oedipus the King is Greek legend which is told by an oracle that king Laus own son would kill him, Laus had his newborn son's feet pierced by a nail to fasten them together and had him placed on a mountain to die.

A Corinthian shepherd found the child and took him to the court of King Polybus of Corinth. Polybus adopted the boy and called him Oedipus (Swollen foot). Grown to manhood, Oedipus was told by the oracle at Delphi that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Horrified, and thinking the Corinthian king and queen were his parents, Oedipus did not return to Corinth but started to Thebes. As he walked through a narrow pass, he was ordered to step aside by a man in a chariot. Enraged, Oedipus killed the man, not knowing that he was Laus or that Laus was his father (See "Oedipus the King" 233).

Oedipus went on to Thebes, which was being terrorized by a monster called the Sphinx. By solving a riddle asked by the Sphinx, Oedipus destroyed the

monster. As a reward, the hero was made king of Thebes and given Jacosta as his wife. The gods then sent a plague that would disappear only when Lauis' murderer was found and banished from Thebes. In his efforts to discover the murderer, Oedipus learned the man was himself, and that he had married his own mother. In despair, Jacosta killed herself and Oedipus blinded himself with one of her ornamental pins.

Attended by his daughter Antigone, Oedipus wandered to Colonus, where he later died (See "Oedipus the King" 233). On the other hand, Death of a Salesman was written by an American writer named Arthur Miller and it has been considered as one of the greatest plays in the American literature because it dealt on reality happened during the great depression. The play revolved on the character of Willy Loman. Willy Loman was an old salesman and is not able to supply his own needs because he just received a small amount of money as his earning.

Because of this, he was disturbed and cannot cope up circumstance that led him to be insane and even tried to kill himself through the inhalation of gas. He was even so dogged with the American Dream which is to make a lot of money and soar as much as possible. At first, he wanted to labor with his own hand, however, when he saw that others were so successful with their endeavors, he decided to venture in sales business (Miller 1282-1283). Each character of the Oedipus the King and the Death of a Salesman show outstanding representation of different individuals on how they may react in times of difficulties.

These play give us better understanding that half of this world struggles a lot in order to live and may do anything in order survive. As the saying goes "

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survival of the fittest. " During the great depression, many people are crying out because of starvation. During this time, the economy was shaky and the prices were all going up. Many individuals, especially the commoners, have the hardship in how to cope up this circumstance (Miller 1282-1283).

III. Conclusion In conclusion, the play tells us the reality of life.

That life is full of struggle and everyone should do his part to overcome it. Oedipus the King and the Death of a Salesman are two different plays however showed reality about life. If we scrutinize the Oedipus, we can say that it is somewhat fictional however it sometimes happen in the rarest occasions unlike with The Death of a Salesman, this scenario is happening in day to day life and an evidence that life is full of struggle and others do not know how to play it skillfully that is why they go insane and unfulfilled.