

# Free essay about uncertainty of life as a theme in oedipus rex

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Oedipus, Sophocles' Greek Tragic hero is a king who in fulfilling the Oracle's prophecies unknowingly kills his own father and marries his own mother. Born to the King Laois and ordered to be killed because of the prophecy, Oedipus is raised by Polybus of Corinth and eventually becomes king. Oedipus' life follows the trajectory of a Greek tragic hero, but it isn't fate alone that is at play but his faults too that contribute to his downfall. The play traces the ascension of Oedipus as a king, his despair and sorrow when he realizes the truth and the final inner peace that he attains. Oedipus' life is filled with uncertainties and this one of the themes central to the play Oedipus Rex.

Oedipus in the beginning of the play is looking for the man who killed Laios and Tereisias tells him that he is indeed looking for himself as he is the murderer. " I say that you are the murderer whom you seek (page 20)." This confuses and saddens Oedipus who then tells his queen about the prophecy and goes on a search for the truth. Oedipus' tells locaste, the queen and his mother, that the oracle has foretold his life through a prophecy. " As, that I should lie with my own mother, breed Children from whom all men would turn their eyes; and that I should be my father's murderer (Page 42)." But this does not make his life certain. Not wanting the prophecy to come true, he tells her that he fled Corinth. He tries to defeat fate by fighting against a certainty not knowing that he is indeed fulfilling the oracles prophecy by doing so. Oedipus' certainties about his life and the prophecy fall apart when he learns about the killing of Laois. He realizes that he is the murderer and this leads to a series of truth seeking exercises. After meeting with Tereisias, Oedipus looks for the shepherd much to the charging of the locaste. locaste

realizing the truth says, " You are fatally wrong! May you never learn who you are! (Page 57)." When Oedipus refuses to listen to her she exclaims, " Ah, miserable! That is the only word I have for you now. That is the only word I can ever have (57)." But Oedipus must know the truth of his birth and gets hold of the shepherd.

He calls for the shepherd and asks him if he had indeed given away Laios' son. After much wailing and refusal the shepherd says it is indeed true. " If you must be told, then They said it was Laios' child (page 63)." Oedipus' life falls apart; he was certain that he had escaped the prophecy, but he had unwittingly run into it himself. The Queen Iocaste kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself using her ornaments. What Oedipus believed to be certain about his life is taken apart one after another and from a king one moment he becomes a blind vagabond. The following lines in the play sum up the theme of the entire play and Oedipus's existence.

Oedipus' life is filled with uncertainties. He is saved from being killed as an infant when he should have been dead; he flees Corinth when staying there would have kept everyone safe. His position as the king of Thebes and life as he knew it all crumble when he knows the truth. Whatever he took to be certain all falls apart clearly showing that life is uncertain and throws things at you that you seldom expect.

## **Works Cited**

Fitts, Dudley & Fitzgerald Robert. " Oedipus Rex: An English version."

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