

# Theme of blindness in lear and oedipus assignment



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Sometimes the blind can “ see” more than the sighted. During a scary movie or a horrific event, people may cover their eyes, choosing not to see the truth. As human beings, we often become entrenched in the material world, becoming oblivious to and unable to see the most apparent truths. Oedipus, the main character in Sophocles’ play Oedipus Rex, could not see the truth, but the blind man, Teiresias, “ saw” it plainly. Sophocles uses blindness as a motif in the play Oedipus Rex.

Oedipus, known for his intelligence, is ignorant and therefore blind to the truth about himself and his past. Yet, when Teiresias exposes the truth he is shunned. It is left to Oedipus to overcome his “ blindness,” realize the truth, and accept fate. Oedipus, “ who bear the famous name,” fled his home of Corinth in fear of fulfilling the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother. During his flight, he Oedipus kills a caravan of presumed low-class travelers. Oedipus comes into Thebes a stranger and hero who solved the riddle of the sphinx.

Believing that he is blessed with great luck, Oedipus marries the recently widowed Iokaste and becomes King of Thebes. After many years, a plague vexes the city and Kreon, brother of Iokaste, comes to Oedipus with news from the oracle. He states that the plague will be lifted when the murder of Laios is avenged. Oedipus claims that he sees and understands the terrible fate of Thebes and vows to find the murderer. Since the criminal is said to still be in Thebes, Oedipus believes that a man of his intelligence should have no difficulty in finding the perpetrator.

When Oedipus is confronted by Teiresias with truth, perhaps it is Oedipus' own hubris, which blinds him to the unthinkable truth. Unwillingly, Teiresias the blind seer provides Oedipus with the hurtful truth. Although before the truth is announced, Oedipus describes Teiresias as a " seer: student of mysteries. " Oedipus looks to Teiresias for help in finding the murderer of the former king. He is trusted and respected by everyone in the city as evidenced by his introduction as " the holy prophet In whom, alone of all men, truth was born. Yet, when Teiresias speaks, reluctantly but honestly to Oedipus, he is shunned and his credibility and motives are attacked. Oedipus accuses Teiresias of plotting against him and helping Kreon become king. He claims that Kreon " has brought this decrepit fortune-teller, this collector of dirty pennies, this prophet fraud" to him. Sadly, the citizens represented by the chorus, who once trusted Teiresias, will not side with him because there is no proof that his prophecy is true. Within one conversation, the lavish praise of Teiresias crumbles into Oedipus' hatred of him.

Responding to Oedipus' attacks, Teiresias tells him " you with both your eyes you are blind: You can not see the wretchedness of your life, Nor in whose house you live, no, nor with whom. Who are your father and mother? Can you tell me? You don't even know the blind wrongs That you have done them, on earth and in the world below. " Although, Oedipus and the citizens of Thebes do not know the truth, the audience understands that Teiresias represents insight, therefore his wise words should be perceived as prophecies of events to come and morals to learn.

Teiresias though physically blind can see better or more clairvoyant than Oedipus who has perfect vision and yet still blind to the truth. In the same <https://assignbuster.com/theme-of-blindness-in-lear-and-oedipus-assignment/>

dialogue, Teiresias foreshadows " the double lash of your parents curse will whip you. Out of this land someday with only night Upon you precious eyes. " Leaving with the last word, Teiresias exits the stage telling Oedipus the truth once more. It is not till the confession of the Shepherd and the suicide hangin Now with the truth of himself realized, Oedipus is filled with grief and guilt.

He blinds himself, left forever with the knowledge of the destruction and shame he has brought on his family. He says goodbye to daughters because he must live the rest of his life in exile and die where his parents intended, the " wild hills" of Kithairon. Oedipus blinding himself symbolizes his increase of knowledge, his sensitivity, and gives him the ability to finally " see". He is now able to recognize the flaws of his hubris and the consequences of which his pride brought him. The same theme appearing in most Greek stories applies to Oedipus; the will of the gods is ultimate, and one must live humbly.