

Oedipus the King

an introduction

Backstory

It all begins with a curse...

Laius caused the death of a king's son -- a clear violation of hospitality laws (what the what?!). His house was then cursed.

Backstory

Years pass... Laius inherits the throne of Thebes, weds Jocasta and tries to produce an heir. No luck there.

What to do next?

Backstory

Consult the oracle, of course!
(What's that?)

He is told he will have a son, but that he would die at his son's hands.

(BAM! Can you say curse? How do you suppose he reacted to this?)

Backstory

Jocasta wasn't good with that, so she took matters into her own hands.

Result? She gives birth to a boy.

What do they do with this boy that is supposed to one day cause his father's death?

Backstory

Baby is left to die with feet bound.

Servant takes pity.

Shepherd takes baby (now named Oedipus) to Corinth, where he is raised by King Polybus and Queen Merope.

Backstory

Fast forward:

- One night, someone calls Oedipus out for being adopted.
- Oedipus consults oracle who tells him:
 - You are fated to kill your father and marry your mother.
- How do you suppose he reacted?

Backstory

He has to leave to avoid his “fate.”

So distraught he ends up killing a man on his way out of town.

Ends up in (you guessed it) THEBES

Backstory

The Sphinx

- plague
- riddle
- hero
- Jocasta

Yeah. So that happened.

Irony -- What do you know?

- verbal
- situational
- dramatic

Conventions of Greek Theater

1. Unity of time
2. Unity of place
3. Unity of subject

Conventions of Greek Theater

A Chorus was used to present exposition and to provide commentary on the action and characters:

- 15 to 20 men represented the citizens.
- They were always on stage, and they frequently sang and danced.
- They always had a leader who carried on a dialogue with the main characters or with the rest of the chorus.

More on the Chorus...

The function of the chorus was to:

- set the tone, indicating changing moods, shifting fortune
- give background information
- recall events of the past
- interpret and summarize events
- ask questions
- offer opinions
- give advice, if asked

More on the Chorus

- focused attention by supporting/denouncing
- act like a jury of elders or wise men who listened to the evidence in the play and reached a moralistic conclusion at the end.

The Chorus was the social barometer!

Greek Tragedy

Greek tragedy focuses on the reversal of fortune (*peripeteia* - *pear eh pet eye uh*) and downfall of the tragic hero and the events leading to that downfall.

What do you know about “tragic heroes?”

Greek Tragedy

The tragic condition was often the result of the tragic hero's **hamartia (ha mar tea uh)**, an error in judgment or perception, the hero's inability to see his flaw or to accurately foresee the consequences of his decisions or actions. Common trait associated with hamartia is **HUBRIS.**

Greek Tragedy

Hamartia

- He believes he can dodge the prophecy
- His ignorance in revelation

Caused by Hubris

- Excessive pride.
- Could any other flaw have caused those errors in judgment?