

English Assignment

A necessary part of drama is not only to present conflict in a play but also to create conflicts within each member and audience. Compare and contrast two or three plays you have studied in the light of this comment.

The most decorated of the Greek tragic writers was Sophocles, who won the prize at the drama festival about 20 times. His *Oedipus Tyrannous* is generally considered the greatest Greek tragedy. Its limited number of characters, concentration of action within a brief period of time, gradual unveiling of past events, and tone of high seriousness has provided a model for many later dramatists.

Sophocles, introduced several important advances into Greek theater during the 5th century BC. His richly developed characters often exhibit tragic flaws that ironically support their unwelcome destinies. In *Oedipus Rex* (*Oedipus the King*), Sophocles dramatized the famous story of Oedipus, the Greek mythological figure who killed his father, the king, and married his own mother. The blind prophet Teiresias speaks the words in this excerpt “How dreadful the knowledge of the truth can be When there is no help in truth” at the point in the play when he is asked to divine who has offended the gods by killing the former king.

When irony is used structurally in a novel or a play, it is sometimes called "tragic" or "dramatic" irony. In *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus attempts to find the murderer of Laius, king of Thebes, unaware that he himself is the culprit. The audience, which knows the truth, perceives the dimension of his tragedy early in the play and anticipates consequences that Oedipus does not expect. His statements become unconsciously ironic—when, for example, he prays that the murderer's life "be consumed in evil and wretchedness". Here we can see the conflict that has been created in the characters mind this conflict is the main reason why the hero of the play is his own destroyer.

One of the major conflicts that this play creates in each member of the play and the audience is the question of destiny. The oracle in the play brings about the conflicts in the mind of the characters and the audience. It was the oracle that warned Laius that his own son would kill him. Determined to avert his fate, Laius pierced and bound together the feet of his newborn child and left him to die on a lonely mountain. The infant was rescued by a shepherd, however, and given to Polybus, king of Corinth, who named the child Oedipus (swollen foot) and raised him as his own son. The boy did not know that he was adopted, and when an oracle proclaimed that he

would kill his father, he left Corinth. In the course of his wanderings he met and killed Laius, believing that the king and his followers were a band of robbers, and thus unwittingly fulfilled the prophecy. The conflict in this play as I believe could only come from the question of destiny and that if your destiny is told to you is it avoidable or not?

Similarly Soyinka, Wole, Nigerian playwright, poet, novelist, and lecturer, whose writings draw on African tradition and mythology while employing Western literary forms. In 1986 Soyinka became the first African writer and the first black writer to win the Nobel Prize for literature. His book *Death and the king's horsemen* draws its seed from a real event that happened in Nigeria in 1945. The book is based on a societies tradition and how respect and social statue was based on the fulfillment of the ritual. The ritual creates the main conflict in the play as it addresses both moral and religious issues at that time under the influence of the British rule.

The play *Death and the kings horsemen* tells us how important traditions are to certain people and how these traditions create the conflicts in the minds of the characters. The tradition relates to a myth of the journey of life after death and how the Elesin the kings horsemen has to follow in line after the kings death so that he may protect the king through his journey between the world of the living and that of his ancestors.

One of the main themes of the play creates the conflicts in the audience of the whites as the whites have no understanding of others cultural values. The main theme, which I believe creates the conflicts between both, is Honor. Honor is the reason Elesins son kills him self in order to make his father understand the importance of culture in their society, to push his father to complete the ritual and save family Honor.

I believe that these plays both create a sense of conflict in both and it is this conflict that creates the main themes on what these plays are based on.