

OEDIPUS REX AS A TRAGIC HERO

The Greek play, Oedipus Rex, written by Sophocles, is clearly a tragedy. Many things can be described as a catastrophe. However, according to the definition of a tragedy by Aristotle, there are five main criteria. First, the play has to have a tragic hero, preferably of noble stature. Second, the tragic hero must have a tragic flaw. Because of that flaw, the hero falls from grace, power, or death. Due to the fall, the tragic hero will discover something and have a moment of remorse. Finally, there must be catharsis in the minds of the audience. Oedipus clearly meets all of these five criteria, therefore, making him a classic tragic hero.

To begin with, Oedipus the King is the ruler of Thebes. He was destined to sleep with his mother and kill his father. Knowing his own fate, his parents had abandoned him when he was a baby and he was raised in a different family. Many years later, in search for the truth about his own heritage, Oedipus brings about his own downfall. He is considered to be a tragic hero because he is a king whose life falls apart when he finds out his life story. Even though he is not aware of it, he fulfills the oracle's prophecy by killing his father, Laius, and then sleeping with his mother, Jocasta. His father was just a tragic mistake and Oedipus thought that the person he killed was just a random person that was harassing him. Using Oedipus as an ideal model for a tragic hero, it is obvious to the readers that he is an important and influential man who makes an error in judgment, who later suffers from the consequences of his own actions.

The main character has a tragic flaw. It is his quickness to take a position and his stubborn faithfulness in spite of his personal hazard. The king makes decision publicly for all to hear, making reconsideration difficult for a proud person such as himself. Oedipus publicly announces the consequences for the person who murdered Laius before having or knowing any evidence. If he had one clue that he could have been the unwitting cause, maybe he would have acted differently. The audience watch as Oedipus Rex and the rest of the characters discover his tragic flaw, where Oedipus killed his own father and married his mother.

Oedipus Rex's nobility deceived him as well as his reflection, since it shows only his perfect, wonderful face and not his inner world, his pains, and his history. When he relies on his status, he is clearly blind, not physically, but emotionally. Blinded in his actions, he does not see that the questioning would bring him only to misery. The fall from grace in the king is when Oedipus, Jocasta, and all the other characters in the story realize that Oedipus actually did murder Laius and that Jocasta is indeed his biological mother as well as his wife. Oedipus's quickness to take position causes him to gouge his own eyes out and to lose his power. *The moment of remorse comes at the end of the play, when Oedipus discovers that he has to do something to recover from his fall from power. The chorus cannot believe that even a great man like Oedipus, was brought low by destiny. Due to his actions, he is the cause for why Jocasta commits suicide and for why no one will probably marry his daughters, since they come from an incestuous marriage. The king abdicates the throne to Creon, and asks him to take care of his children. Almost all of Thebes knows about the murderer of Laius and the king had to keep his word and promises by leaving his own kingdom.

The catharsis of the play comes at the same time as the remorse. The audience suddenly feels sorry for this poor man who has unknowingly killed his father and married his mother, for the people of this land who have been suffering from an awful curse because of it, and for the unfortunate Jocasta who was basically an innocent bystander in the whole confusing situation.

In these five ways, the play Oedipus Rex classifies as a tragedy. Sophocles portrays the protagonist as a good-natured person who has bad judgment and is frail. Oedipus makes a few fatal decisions and is condemned to profound suffering because of his actions. In the end, he learns a lesson about life and how there is more to it than just a person's fate.

