

Oedipus Rex

Oedipus Rex was written during the fifth century. A time when Rome was in power and Athens was the center of the world. In this time people beleived that gods controlled all. Fate and destiny could never be escaped and as is shown in this play, no one can change their own destiny. The fact that this play takes place in less than one day's time means that many desicions are made in a rash and uninformed fashion. After finding out that his destiny has been fulffiled Oedipus blinds himself out of pain and the wish that he would never look upon the misery and horror that he himself has unknowingly created.

The play is set in Thebes, recently a great powerfull city, but has been stuck by sickness and death. Most of the action takes place within the coutyard of the King's palace. This setting represents power and arrogance. The fact that Oedipus does not go to anyone, everyone, including his wife comes to him suggests this arrogance. He still fears the destiny foretold to him, but he beleives that he can change that destiny by staying away from his family. Pg. 59 line 360 tells of this fear and belief. "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. I heard all this, and fled. And from that day Corinth to me was ony in the stars. Descending in that quarter of the sky, as I wandered farther and farther on my way to a land where I should never see the evil sung by the oracle." Most other men in this time would

except their fate, but his arrogance will not let him. His belief that he can cheat fate is ultimately what is destroying the people of Thebes.

Oedipus's family is a complicated tangle of lies made by people who also tried to cheat fate. The family that he believes is his own in fact is not. The fact that he is even alive to receive this family is not supposed to be. He left his adoptive parents never to return once he learned of his destiny thinking that he could prevent this from coming true. He denied to himself the knowledge that these were not his real parents. This is told on Pg. 59 line 345 "At a feast, a drunken man maundering in his cups cries out that I am not my father's son. I contained myself that night, thought I felt anger and a sinking heart." This tells me that in his heart he knew that it was a true statement but could not admit it to himself. His true father was Liaos, King of Thebes. Liaos had been told of his fate by the oracle that he would be killed by his own son. So like father like son, Liaos also tried to cheat fate as told by Iokaste on Pg. 59 line 260 "But his child had not been three days in this world before the King had pierced the baby's ankles and left him to die on a lonely mountainside. "

Oedipus celebrated the death of his father and therefore his successful escape from the prophecies of the oracle. But as he was told this news he was also told again that he was not his father's son. The messenger on Pg 62 line 137 states " Polybos is not your father." This conversation continues on to tell the tale of how he was found as a child by a shepherd with his ankles bound by a skewer. Polybos who had no children took in this baby as his own. This is when Oedipus finally starts to realize that he was Liaos's son but he will not accept it until he confirms this with the shepherd who had found him.

Iokaste, his wife obviously realizes that his destiny has become fulfilled and that she is not only his wife but his mother as well. She is angry and wishes that Oedipus will not know the truth of his parentage. She states on PG. 62 line 217 " You are fatally wrong! May you never learn who you are! " But as oedipus speaks with the shepherd he learns again of his horrible fate. on Pg 64 beginning at line 110 Oedipus finally admits to himself after being told numerous times that he has already unknowingly fulfilled his own destiny. " Shepherd : For if you are what this man says you are, no man living is more wretched and oedipus. Oedipus: Ah God! It is true! All the prophecies! - Now, O light , may I look on you for the last time! I, Oedipus, Oedipus, damned in his birth, in his marriage, damned, damned in the blood he shed with his own hand!"