

**What sort of character is Oedipus portrayed to be by Sophocles in the 1<sup>st</sup> 600 lines of Oedipus The King?**

There are many sides to Oedipus' character as portrayed by Sophocles. He portrays Oedipus in both negative and positive ways, allowing the audience to see the true Oedipus.

Sophocles often portrays Oedipus as having too much pride, and the first time is in the very beginning of the play in line 8 when he says, "you all know me, the world knows my fame, I am Oedipus." This shows he has much pride in himself and he feels he is very important. Another time he shows too much pride is when he is talking about how he will catch the man who murdered Laius. In line 245 he says, "You pray to the gods? Let me grant your prayers." This is not only starting to show how he thinks of himself compared to the gods. It is also ironic and Sophocles uses it to make the audience think about how Oedipus is not as clever as he thinks.

On the other hand, Oedipus is portrayed as being a sort of "father-figure" to his people, the citizens of Thebes, as he says things like, "Oh my children". He is their king and he shows concern for their well-being by saying "my spirit grieves for the city", as there is a plague on the city, and he tries to help by finding a solution to the problem. "I sent Creon...to Delphi...to learn what I might do or say to save our city."

Sophocles portrays Oedipus as blind to the truth of the situation by using a lot of irony. To the audience watching this means that they know something that Oedipus doesn't and so he looks slightly ridiculous. Sophocles does this by, for example, having Oedipus say that he curses the man that killed Laius and will find him, but he doesn't realise that he is talking about himself.

Oedipus is portrayed as being aware of the need for divine advice, despite his pride, by asking for the help of the Oracle at Delphi, and this was important because it showed him as being humble before the almighty gods. He is also portrayed as being relatively clever as he was the only one who could solve the riddle of the Sphinx.

Sophocles seems to portray Oedipus' more negative traits more and more as the play progresses. He becomes very impatient with Teiresias when he does not get answers quickly, "For the love of god, don't turn away, not if you know something". He is also very suspicious because he suspects Teiresias and

Creon of treachery, "You're bent on betraying us," (line377) and, "You, plotting to kill me". He is portrayed as being very quick to anger when he does not get what he wants from Teiresias, "You scum of the earth, you'd enrage a heart of stone!" He is also very cruel to Teiresias by taunting him about his blindness, "given eyes I'd say you did the killing single-handed!" (Line396). Another negative trait Sophocles portrays is that Oedipus often jumps to the wrong conclusions, based on nothing more than his suspicions. For example he accuses his brother-in-law of trying to betray him, "Creon is this conspiracy his or yours?" He is also very stubborn because he refuses to see what is right in front of him when for example Teiresias tells him straight out, "I say you are the murderer you hunt" and, " you and your loved ones live together in infamy". He chooses to completely ignore these comments and disregard them as lies.

At the beginning of the play we see the good side of Oedipus, as he clearly cares about his people. As the play progresses however and things don't all go his way, we start to see a very different side to Oedipus' character very quickly. It does not take long before we see the real Oedipus.