

Subject	English
Course/ Paper Code/Title	ENGH-H-CC-T-2/ European Classical Literature (1 <sup>st</sup> Semester)
Title of the Module	“Oedipus Rex” by Sophocles
Module Id	
Objective(s)	To evaluate “Oedipus Rex” as a tragedy and Oedipus as a tragic hero
Key Words	Tragedy, tragic hero, catharsis, hamartia, tragic fall
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**“Oedipus Rex” as a Tragedy:** Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" is one of the greatest tragedies in Western literature. The play is a perfect example of a tragedy in terms of its structure, themes, and the Aristotelian definition of tragedy.

The tragic hero in "Oedipus Rex" is Oedipus himself, the king of Thebes. He is a man of high standing who possesses noble qualities, but also has a fatal flaw that ultimately leads to his downfall. In Oedipus's case, his tragic flaw is his excessive pride, or hubris, which leads him to ignore the warnings of others and seek the truth at any cost. This flaw causes him to unknowingly fulfil the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother.

The structure of "Oedipus Rex" follows the classic structure of a tragedy, consisting of an exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The exposition establishes the setting and the characters, introducing the audience to the protagonist, Oedipus. The rising action begins with the discovery of a plague in Thebes and Oedipus's decision to solve the mystery of who is responsible for it. This leads to the climax of the play, the revelation that Oedipus is the cause of the plague and that he has unknowingly fulfilled the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother.

The falling action is the aftermath of the climax, with Oedipus realizing the truth and the consequences of his actions. Finally, the resolution is the cathartic ending of the play, with Oedipus blinding himself and being exiled from Thebes. The play's structure creates a sense of tension and anticipation, leading to the climactic revelation that shocks both the characters and the audience.

The themes of "Oedipus Rex" also fit the definition of tragedy. The play explores the themes of fate, free will, and the consequences of one's actions. The concept of fate is central to the play, with the prophecy that Oedipus will kill his father and marry his mother being the driving force behind the plot. The play also raises questions about free will, as Oedipus believes that he has control over his own destiny but is ultimately powerless to change the course of his life.

The consequences of one's actions are another important theme of the play. Oedipus's tragic fate is the result of his own actions, including killing his father and marrying his mother. This shows the idea of hubris, or excessive pride, which leads to a downfall. Oedipus's pride in his intelligence and his ability to solve the mystery causes him to overlook the possibility that he himself may be the murderer. The play illustrates the idea that one's actions have consequences and that no one is above the natural order of things.

The Aristotelian definition of tragedy is also evident in "Oedipus Rex." According to Aristotle, a tragedy must have a tragic hero, a tragic flaw, and a cathartic resolution. Oedipus is the tragic hero of the play, a man of high standing who possesses noble qualities, but also has a fatal flaw that ultimately leads to his downfall. In Oedipus's case, his tragic flaw is his excessive pride, or hubris, which causes him to ignore the warnings of others and seek the truth at any cost.

The tragic plot of the play follows Oedipus's descent from a position of high status and power to one of misery and shame. As he learns the truth about his past and his own guilt, he becomes increasingly tormented and isolated. The cathartic resolution of the play occurs when Oedipus blinds himself and begs to be banished from Thebes. This resolution brings a sense of closure to the tragic story and allows the audience to experience a release of emotions that have built up throughout the play. The play demonstrates the Aristotelian definition of tragedy and provides the audience with a sense of catharsis.

Finally, the play ends with a sense of resolution and catharsis. Oedipus, having discovered the truth and realized the enormity of his actions, blinds himself and begs to be banished from Thebes. This resolution brings a sense of closure to the tragic story and allows the audience to experience a release of emotions that have built up throughout the play.

"Oedipus Rex" remains relevant today because it explores universal themes that are still relevant in modern society. The idea of fate versus free will is still a popular topic of debate, as people question whether they have control over their own destinies. The consequences of one's actions are also a relevant theme, as people are increasingly aware of the impact of their actions on the environment and society.

In conclusion, "Oedipus Rex" is a tragedy that explores the themes of fate, free will, and the consequences of one's actions. Through the tragic hero Oedipus and his fatal flaw of excessive pride, the play demonstrates the Aristotelian definition of tragedy and provides the audience with a sense of catharsis. It is a timeless work that continues to resonate with audiences today, demonstrating the enduring power of tragedy as a literary genre.

**Oedipus as a Tragic Hero:** Oedipus, the protagonist of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex," is considered to be one of the greatest tragic heroes in Western literature. His tragic flaw and downfall make him a classic example of a tragic hero. This paper will examine Oedipus as a tragic hero and explore his characteristics that make him an archetypal figure in tragedy.

A tragic hero is a character of noble birth who possesses a tragic flaw or hamartia, which leads to his downfall. Oedipus is the epitome of a tragic hero, possessing all the necessary characteristics. He is a king and a hero who has saved his people from the Sphinx's curse. He is also intelligent, brave, and confident in his ability to solve the mystery of who killed Laius, the former king of Thebes.

However, Oedipus's tragic flaw is his excessive pride, or hubris. He believes that he can solve the mystery of Laius's death and rid Thebes of the plague by himself, without the help of the gods or anyone else. Oedipus's hubris leads him to ignore the warnings of the prophet Tiresias and to pursue the truth at any cost.

The tragic flaw of hubris is evident throughout the play, as Oedipus's pride blinds him to the truth. He is so convinced of his own innocence that he fails to see the irony in his own words when he says, "I curse myself as well... if by any chance he proves to be an intimate of our house, here at my hearth, with my full knowledge, may the curse I just called down on him strike me" (Sophocles 448-453). Oedipus is unknowingly cursing himself, as he is the one who killed Laius and is now married to his own mother, Jocasta.

Oedipus's downfall is also a result of his inability to accept responsibility for his actions. When he first hears the prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother, he believes that he can change his fate by leaving Corinth, the city where he grew up. However, his fate catches up with him, and he unknowingly fulfills the prophecy.

Oedipus's tragic downfall is complete when he realizes the truth about his identity and his actions. He blinds himself with Jocasta's brooches, symbolizing his own blindness to the truth, and begs to be banished from Thebes. He is no longer the confident, intelligent hero he once was, but a broken, humbled man.

Oedipus's tragic journey is a classic example of the tragic hero's journey. He begins as a noble hero, possessing all the necessary qualities of a hero. He then experiences a reversal of fortune, as his tragic flaw leads to his downfall. This leads to a moment of recognition, or anagnorisis, when Oedipus realizes the truth about his identity and his actions. This recognition is followed by a moment of reversal, or peripeteia, when Oedipus's downfall is complete. The play ends with a cathartic resolution, with Oedipus blinding himself and being banished from Thebes.

In conclusion, Oedipus is a classic example of a tragic hero, possessing all the necessary characteristics of the archetype. His noble birth, tragic flaw of hubris, and downfall make him an archetypal figure in tragedy. The play explores the consequences of one's actions and the idea that no one is above the natural order of things. Oedipus's tragic journey continues to be relevant today, as people continue to question the role of fate versus free will in their lives.

### Probable Questions

1. Discuss "Oedipus Rex" as an ideal tragedy.
2. Do you think that Oedipus is a tragic hero? Justify your answer.
3. What role does the fate play in "Oedipus Rex" ?

### Suggested Readings:

1. "Oedipus: A Tragedy of Interpretation" by George Devereux
2. "Oedipus Tyrannus: Tragic Heroism and the Limits of Knowledge" by Charles Segal
3. "Oedipus Rex: A Mirror for Greek Drama" by Gerald F. Else

