

## *Greek Drama & Sophocles' Oedipus Rex*

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### Introductory Notes

#### About the Author...

SOPHOCLES (c. \_\_\_\_\_ B.C.)

- His tragedies probe the depth of human \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- He lived a long, comfortable, and happy life despite the \_\_\_\_\_ he displayed in his works.
- He grew up in a well-to-do family in Athens, enjoyed a carefree childhood and education, and eventually became a distinguished public official as well as an outstanding \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Sophocles and the Theatre

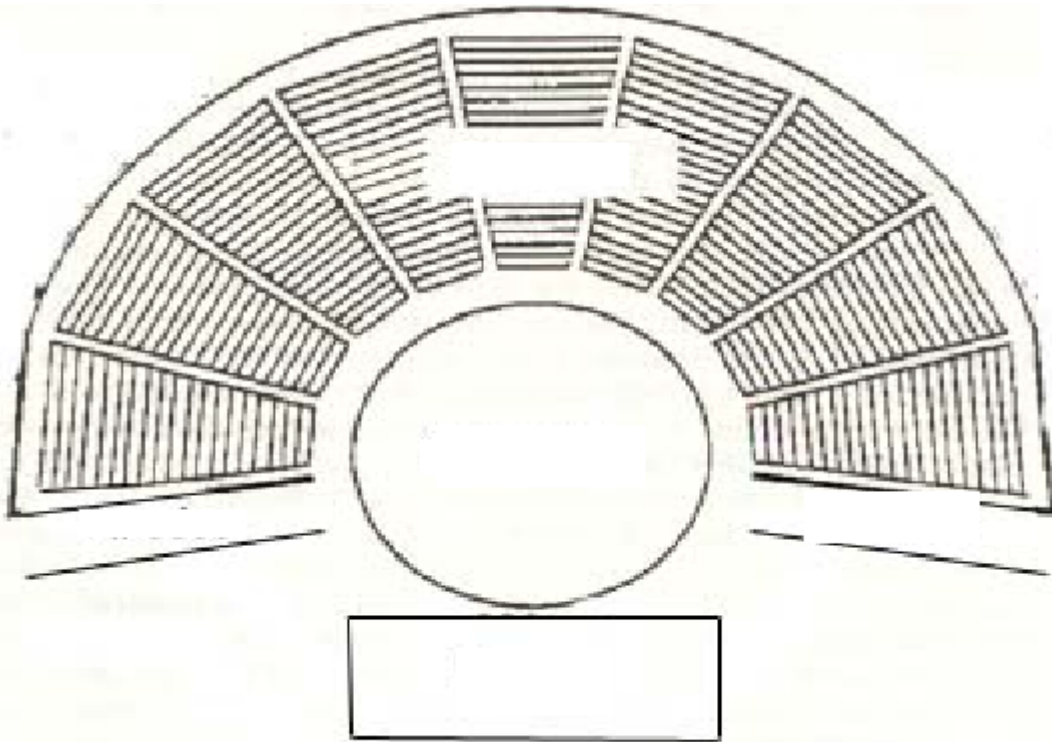
- He first achieved recognition in the theatre at the age of 28, when he defeated \_\_\_\_\_—another great Greek playwright—in an annual \_\_\_\_\_ competition.
- He went on to win 24 first prizes over the next six decades—the best record of any Greek \_\_\_\_\_.
- He produced 123 plays, of which only \_\_\_\_\_ survive today.

#### The Dionysia

- The Dionysia, an annual festival in honor of the god \_\_\_\_\_, was a four-day extravaganza held in March or April.
- At the open-air Theater of Dionysus, some fifteen-thousand spectators witnessed a variety of plays, both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Tragedies were told in \_\_\_\_\_ parts.
- The dramatic festival was so important to civic life that magistrates selected the \_\_\_\_\_ for each annual competition, and wealthy citizens with political ambitions subsidized the production fees; judges ranked the competing playwrights and awarded prizes for the winners.

#### The Theater of Dionysus:

- The theater of Dionysus was carved out of a stone \_\_\_\_\_ and resembled a semicircle with steeply rising tiers of seats.
- The performances began at dawn and lasted the entire \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the sun illuminated performances and audiences alike, uniting them uniquely into the drama.

**The Parts of Greek Theater:**

- **ORCHESTRA:** The orchestra (literally, "\_\_\_\_\_") was normally \_\_\_\_\_. It was a level space where the chorus would dance, sing, and interact with the actors who were on the stage near the \_\_\_\_\_. In the center of the orchestra there was often a \_\_\_\_\_, or altar.
- **THEATRON:** The theatron (literally, "\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_") is where the spectators sat. The theatron was usually part of a hillside overlooking the \_\_\_\_\_, and often wrapped around a large portion of the orchestra.
- **SKENE:** The skene (literally, "\_\_\_\_\_") was the building directly behind the stage. The skene was directly in back of the stage, and was usually decorated as a \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_, depending on the needs of the play. It had at least one set of \_\_\_\_\_, and actors could make entrances and exits through them. There was also access to the roof of the skene from behind, so that actors playing \_\_\_\_\_ and other characters could appear on the roof, if needed.
- **THE PARADOS:** The parodoi (literally, "\_\_\_\_\_") are the paths by which the chorus and some actors (such as those representing \_\_\_\_\_ or people returning from abroad) made their entrances and exits. The \_\_\_\_\_ also used them to enter and exit the theater before and after the performance.

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### Performers in Greek Theater:

- **All roles**, like the familiar \_\_\_\_\_ plays, were performed by \_\_\_\_\_.
- These men wore \_\_\_\_\_ and many played \_\_\_\_\_ or more roles throughout the drama.
  - These masks were often decorated to suggest \_\_\_\_\_ types familiar with the audience (i.e. a king, a messenger, a nurse, etc.).
  - By switching masks, \_\_\_\_\_ actor could play a \_\_\_\_\_ of roles—both male and female—in a single play
- Participating in Greek drama was considered to be a citizen's \_\_\_\_\_; they were expected to \_\_\_\_\_ to perform in the chorus.
- Experienced performers, especially citizens trained in oratory, elevated to the status of \_\_\_\_\_. The Greek actor, who might also be a governmental official or influential businessman, was highly \_\_\_\_\_ in Greek society.

### Tragedy and the Tragic Hero

- *Oedipus* is considered one of the world's greatest tragedies.
  - tragedy- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - The \_\_\_\_\_ of the hero may appear to be brought about by forces beyond his or her control, and the outcome, or fate, seems almost predetermined.
    - The word *tragedy* is derived from the Greek words \_\_\_\_\_ ("goat") and \_\_\_\_\_ ("song"). *Tragedy* may have originally referred to a type of song or pantomime performed in goat costumes at the religious festivals of Dionysus.
    - The main character's downfall is usually brought about by his or her own character flaw or weakness—the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - In spite of defeat and even death, however, the tragic hero is ennobled by his or her newly gained \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Aristotle's Take on Tragedy and the Tragic Hero

- The Greek philosopher \_\_\_\_\_ (384-322B.C.) pays special attention to tragedy in his formal essay entitled, \_\_\_\_\_.
- He explains that drama should be tightly unified based on a single \_\_\_\_\_ and featuring a single \_\_\_\_\_ (main character). Tragedies generally deal with characters who are neither exceptionally \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- In his analysis of tragedy in *The Poetics*, Aristotle cites Sophocles' play, \_\_\_\_\_, several times as a supreme example of tragic drama.

### Terms to Know from Aristotle's *The Poetics*

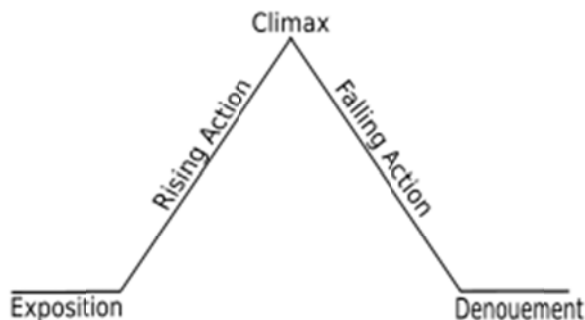
- *ANAGNORISIS*
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- *CATHARSIS*
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- *HAMARTIA*
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- *HUBRIS*
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- *PERIPETEIA*
  - \_\_\_\_\_

### *Oedipus Rex*:

- One of Sophocles' three "\_\_\_\_\_ plays"—three tragedies about King Oedipus of Thebes and his family.
- Sophocles \_\_\_\_\_ write these three plays to be performed at a single festival, as was a common practice in his day.
  - Instead, he composed them over a 36-year period—actually beginning with the tragedy \_\_\_\_\_, the third and last part of the story, which was first performed in 442B.C.

**The Structure of *Oedipus Rex*:**

The structure of most Greek tragedies presents a tight, formal arrangement of parts. These parts include the \_\_\_\_\_ (opening scene), the \_\_\_\_\_ (the first of the Chorus' lyric songs or choral odes), a regular alternation of scenes in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and, finally, the \_\_\_\_\_ (concluding scene).



- The play contains a tight dramatic framework.
  - All of the action takes place in a \_\_\_\_\_ location.
  - All of the action involves a small number of characters interacting with the \_\_\_\_\_ character, Oedipus (who remains \_\_\_\_\_ for nearly the entire play).
  - The \_\_\_\_\_, which serves simply as a nameless onlooker and commentator in other Greek tragedies, is turned by Sophocles into a collective “\_\_\_\_\_” within the drama itself.

**Types of Irony:**

*DRAMATIC IRONY* --

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*VERBAL IRONY*--

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*SITUATIONAL IRONY*--

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**Themes, or underlying messages, of *Oedipus Rex*:**

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