

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

Oedipus Meets Teiresias (Scene 1 and Ode 1) Study Guide

1. What does Oedipus' pledge to the people of Thebes?
2. What is ironic about Oedipus's statement that he is a "stranger to the tale" and a "stranger to the crime"?
3. What does Oedipus promise to the citizens who come forward about the murderer? What does he promise to those who know something but won't come forward?
4. What does Oedipus declare will happen to the murderer of Laius? How does Sophocles deepen the irony of Oedipus's curse on "the murderer" by having Oedipus declare, "And as for me, this curse applies no less if it should turn out that the culprit is my guest here, sharing my hearth"?
5. What does Oedipus think is unlucky about Laius' fatherhood?
6. Who were Labdacus and Polydorus?
7. Who is the Choragos, and what is his task in scene 1?
8. What might be suggested by the fact that Oedipus had to send twice for Teiresias?
9. At his entrance, how is Teiresias described by the Choragos? What audience attitude toward Teiresias should this description establish?

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10. What does Teiresias mean when he says, "How dreadful knowledge of the truth can be when there's no help in truth!"

11. To which "speech" is Teiresias referring when he says to Oedipus that his "is neither temperate nor opportune." What does this mean?

12. What does Teiresias really mean by "the nature of your own feelings" in line 324? How does Oedipus interpret the reference to his feelings?

13. How does Oedipus react when Teiresias reveals to him the truth? Why?

14. Whom does Oedipus assume is behind Teiresias' claims? Why?

15. As he mocks Teiresias, Oedipus tries to be deliberately ironic when he says he is a "simple man, who knows nothing." Explain how this line contains another, unintentional level of dramatic irony.

16. When the Choragos intercedes between the argument of Oedipus and Teiresias, of what does he remind Oedipus?

17. What truths does Teiresias present to Oedipus in his speeches following the interruption of the Choragos?

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18. As ode 1 begins, of what does the chorus remind the audience in strophe 1 and antistrophe 1?

19. In strophe 2 and antistrophe 2, the chorus reveals its astonishment at Teiresias' claims. What claim shocks them?

20. When the chorus, in antistrophe 2, debates whether to believe Oedipus or Teiresias, with whom do they side? Why do you suppose Sophocles has the chorus voice this opinion?