

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

The Final Clue (Scene 4 and Ode 4) Study Guide

1. Why is it important to establish the trustworthiness of the long-awaited shepherd? Who attests to his trustworthiness?
2. Why does the shepherd hesitate to honestly answer Oedipus's questions? How does this hesitation on the shepherd's part build suspense or tension?
3. Why didn't the shepherd leave baby Oedipus to die?
4. Explain scene 4 as the *anagnorisis* of the play. (Refer to your introductory notes.)
5. One of Sophocles' themes is the struggle of human beings to uncover their true identity or nature. What terrifying past deeds does Oedipus have to accept as his own?
6. In ode 4, the chorus refers to Oedipus as King for the first time. The ancient Greeks had two words for monarch, depending on how the individual became ruler. If he assumed the throne through heroic deeds, as Oedipus did by destroying the Sphinx, he was called "Tyrannos." The individual who became monarch through birthright was called King. Why is it both appropriate and ironic that the chorus no longer calls Oedipus "Tyrannos," but rather refers to him, for the first time in the play, as King?
7. What major contrast in the predicament of Oedipus does the chorus articulate in ode 4?