

Oedipus Rex – Review Questions

1. *The background story.* Briefly describe the events leading up to when the play begins (Oedipus's origins, interactions with oracle, murder of Laius, riddle of sphinx, etc.). How long has Oedipus been king of Thebes before the play begins?
2. Why do the people of Thebes go to Oedipus? Why does Oedipus summon Tiresias? Whom does he send to the Oracle at Delphi?
3. What does Tiresias tell Oedipus? How does Oedipus react to this? What is Oedipus's conclusion about the information given him by Tiresias?
4. What does Oedipus say to Creon? What argument does Creon use with Oedipus? How would you describe Oedipus during this interaction? How would you describe Creon during?
5. Who is Jocasta and what is her relationship to Oedipus and Creon? What is her attitude towards prophecies? Why does she try to defend Creon? What information does she give Oedipus that frightens him? To what fact does she cling to keep him calm?
6. How are the details of Laius's death revealed to the people of Thebes? Why wasn't it acted on before?
7. How is Oedipus involved with the investigation of Laius's murder? Include Oedipus's proclamation, curse, discussion with Tiresias, and fight with Creon.
8. Who attempts to quiet Oedipus' guilty feeling and fears? How? What "good" news does the messenger from Corinth bring? Why is Oedipus still troubled after hearing this news?

9. What is Jocasta's reaction to the news from the Messenger? What is Oedipus's reaction?
10. What was the messenger's former profession? Had he met Oedipus before? What story does he tell?
11. What is Oedipus's reaction to the additional information from the Corinthian messenger. Whom does Oedipus now want to see and why?
12. What is Jocasta trying to persuade Oedipus to do? Why? How does Jocasta know Oedipus's identity before he does? Why doesn't Oedipus realize the truth when Jocasta does?
13. What was the shepherd's former "profession"? What information does the shepherd give Oedipus? Does he give it willingly? Why?
14. Describe the conversation between the two shepherds. What do they finally admit to? What does Oedipus realize?
15. What is the information given by the attendant?
16. Why does Oedipus blind himself? What is the significance of his blindness?
17. What becomes of Oedipus at the end of the play? Who does he want to speak to before he leaves? What does he ask Creon to do? Who is left in charge?
18. What do you think will happen to Thebes after the play ends? What will happen to Oedipus? What will happen to Oedipus's children?
19. Did Oedipus have a role in his downfall? Was it the gods will or was it his fatal flaw that caused his downfall?
20. Did Oedipus deserve his fate? Is he willing to accept it? What is the value of his blindness? How might the audience have reacted to the ending of the play?