

**Unit – Oedipus the King**  
**Ms. Kamrass, English 10**

**Essential Questions:**

**Is pride a positive or negative human attribute?**

**What does irony add to a story?**

**Does a higher power, or fate, control human destiny?**

**Why is it important to study work and history from Ancient Greece?**

- **Why do you think that it is mandatory for all sophomores to read Oedipus the King at New Paltz High School? Do you agree with this decision?**

**You will learn:**

About the significance of Greek tragedy

The influence this drama has on Western thought (Freud)

How to cite sources MLA style for your research paper and compile a Works Cited page

**Research:** Greek playwright project.

**Literary terms:**

**foils (dramatic foils)** –characters who highlight the character or temperament of a protagonist through sharp differences in personality, actions, motivation etc.

**\*hamartia** – From the Greek for “error,” an error in judgment made by a tragic hero, whether resulting from a lack of knowledge, or a moral flaw, that brings about the suffering, downfall, and often death of that hero. Hamartia is not a character flaw, but may result from the protagonist’s ignorance of some crucial facts, or an accident.

**\*hubris** – Greek for “insolence,” excessive pride that leads to the protagonist’s downfall. This overwhelming pride usually causes the protagonist to ignore a wise warning from a god, or another important figure.

**in medias res** – in the middle of things. *Oedipus begins after he has been king in Thebes for many years.*

**paradox** - a statement that seems to contradict itself, or not make sense, but highlights an essential truth

**peripety** - a reversal of fortune for the protagonist after a significant discovery. In a tragedy, it leads to his downfall.

**tragic hero** – a character of noble stature who is flawed, and experiences a downfall that is not wholly his fault. In the end, this hero learns from defeat.

**types of irony**

**dramatic** – when audience knows something that a literary character does not

**verbal** – when the meaning of a statement is different than what is said (most often it’s the opposite of what was said. Sarcasm is verbal irony).

**situational** – an occurrence that is contrary to what is expected

**types of conflict**

**man vs. man** – between two characters, mainly the protagonist and antagonist

**man vs. himself** – also known as “internal conflict” a character has to battle his/her own problems, conscious etc.

**man vs. environment** – when other forces in the world provide problems for the protagonists, can be natural or supernatural (also known as “man vs. nature”) (cont.)

*unit sheet (continued)*

REVIEW from terms that you should already know: protagonist, antagonist, theme

\*Murfin, Ross and Supryia M. Ray.”Hamartia.” and “Hubris.” The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms: Second Edition. Boston: Bedford /St. Martin’s: 2003.

## **I. Vocabulary**

**Directions:** Find the definitions for “fate” and write **them** below; write in all that the dictionary gives:

**Directions:** For each word below a) write the sentence from the play b) write your own sentence using the word. The page numbers have changed with newer editions. *Extra credit for the one who first gives me the new page numbers.*

supplication (1, or 5) – the act of petitioning in earnest; an entreaty; a desperate request

atone (7,) – to make amends

oracle (11) – a priest or priestess at a shrine consecrated to a prophetic deity

revere (11) – to regard with deference and devotion

atonement (11) – reparation made for an injury, wrong or sin

impunity (25) – exemption from punishment or penalty

destiny (26) – one’s inevitable fate; a predetermined course of events

deprived (36) – to have taken something away from; to have kept from possessing or enjoying

foretold (56) – to have told/indicated beforehand

calamitous (56) – causing or involving disaster

defilement (62) – the act of making dirty/filthy; polluting – can be physically or morally

## II. Questions and Tasks

**Directions:** Answer all in complete sentences, use specific details and/or quotes from the play.

1. Why are the citizens burning incense?
2. What do you think of Oedipus when he calls himself “world-famous Oedipus”?
3. Describe at least two horrible situations in Thebes.
4. Creon tells Oedipus what must be done to rid Thebes of its plague – what is it?
5. Who/what does Tiresias say he will “never reveal”?
6. What does Tiresias predict for Oedipus’s future (three things)?
7. What does Oedipus accuse Creon of plotting?
8. Why does Creon say that he does not want to be king?

9. Jocasta tells of a prophecy she and her first husband, Laius, received. Describe that prophecy.
10. Who murdered Laius?
11. Describe Oedipus's and Jocasta's complex relationship.
12. What is Oedipus's final action in the play? Why is it significant in relation to a main theme of the drama?
13. Go back to the first half of the drama. Write down at least five quotes containing dramatic irony.

### III. Extra Questions

Directions – at times during this drama I will have you ask questions after a reading, or will add one myself. This is the place to write them.

[illegible]

## IV. Themes

Directions: There are themes involving fate vs. free will, identity and self-knowledge, etc. We will write them here, and add quotations that support them.

[illegible]

[illegible]