

Name\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_Period\_\_\_\_\_

# OEDIPUS THE KING: Reading Guide Questions

## Episode I

1. What is the situation in Thebes at the beginning of the play?
2. How do the suppliants view Oedipus?
3. What step has Oedipus already taken to deal with the problems of Thebes?
4. What news does Creon bring to Oedipus? What does he pledge to do?
5. According to Creon what were the circumstances of Laius's death?
6. What is Tiresias' reaction to Oedipus's request for help?
7. How does Oedipus view Tiresias' behavior?
8. What does Tiresias reveal to Oedipus as a result of the king's angry accusation?
9. Note the emphasis on sight and blindness in the dialogue between Oedipus and Tiresias. What irony is implicit in this emphasis?
10. What suspicion does Oedipus begin to harbor about Creon?

11. What does Tiresias predict will happen to Oedipus?

12. What is the Chorus's view of Tiresias' accusations against Oedipus?

## **Episode 2**

13. What motivates Creon's entrance at the beginning of this episode?

14. Why does Oedipus accuse Creon of conspiracy?

15. How does Creon defend himself against Oedipus's accusation?

16. What does Oedipus threaten to do?

17. How does Jocasta try to assure Oedipus that he not guilty of Laius' death?

18. What is Jocasta's view of prophecy?

19. Why is Oedipus frightened by the information given by Jocasta?

20. What happened to the one surviving witness to the killing of Laius?

21. Why did Oedipus go to the Oracle at Delphi and what was he told there?

22. What story does Oedipus tell, of what happens next after he leaves the Oracle?

23. What does Oedipus fear? Does Jocasta share this fear? How does she reassure him?

24. According to the Chorus in Antistrophe 1, what happens to a person who has “drunk mindlessly of wealth and power”? Is Oedipus guilty of *hubris*?

### **Episode 3**

25. What news does the messenger deliver to Jocasta and Oedipus? What is the response of each?

26. What further information does the Messenger give to Oedipus?

27. Why does Jocasta ask Oedipus not to pursue his identity any further? What does she call him?

28. How does Oedipus interpret Jocasta's reaction?

### **Episode 4**

29. What revelation does the Herdsman make?

30. In Strophe 1, what general comment on human life does the Chorus make?

### **Exodus**

31. Describe what has happened in the palace, according to the Second Messenger.

32. What is the symbolic significance of Oedipus' self-blinding? What else does he plan to do?

33. Whom does Oedipus blame for his sorrows?
34. According to Oedipus, why did he blind himself?
35. How does Creon treat Oedipus? How does Oedipus feel about this?
36. What requests does Oedipus make of Creon?
37. What future does Oedipus foresee for his two daughters (Antigone and Ismene)?
38. What does Creon mean by his final words to Oedipus?
39. What is the moral of this story, according to the Chorus at the end?
40. Read about Tragic Plot Structure (p. 1304-1305), and the three main elements of *tragic plot*, according to Aristotle's *Poetics*. In *Oedipus the King*, the **peripeteia**, **anagnorisis**, and **catastrophe (pathos)** all occur at the same moment. When is this moment? Who is most severely affected by it?