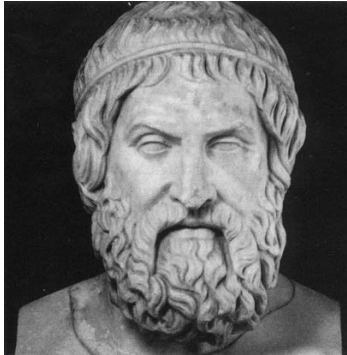


# OEDIPUS REX

by Sophocles



## THE AUTHOR

Athens in the fifth century B.C. boasted three great tragic playwrights, Aeschylus (c.525-c.455 B.C.), Sophocles (c.496-406 B.C.), and Euripides (480-406 B.C.), along with the comic playwright and satirist Aristophanes (446-c.386 B.C.). Sophocles was the son of a military man, but showed little interest in following in his father's footsteps. He at first sought to imitate Aeschylus, and his earliest plays, performed in 468 B.C., actually won the coveted Dionysian prize over those of his mentor. He wrote more than 120 plays, many of which won first place in Athenian dramatic competitions, but only seven of these have survived. One of his greatest contributions to the development of the Greek theater was the introduction of a third character on the stage; prior to his writing, no more than two characters ever appeared on the stage at the same time. He was a friend of the great Pericles, and despite his lack of interest in politics, he was twice elected to high office, several times led armies into battle, and was for many years in charge of the Athenian treasury. He lived a full and active life for nine decades and was honored by the citizens of Athens after his death. Aristotle considered him the greatest of all Greek tragedians.

*Oedipus Rex* (429 B.C.) was the second of three surviving plays Sophocles wrote about Oedipus, though chronologically it is the first; the others were *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, the last written in the year of his death when he was ninety years old. The historical context of the greatest of Sophocles' tragedies was the Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, which caused a great deal of suffering in Athens, along with a plague in 428 B.C. that took the life of Pericles. The play deals with themes of Fate, the power of the gods, man's free will, and the power of prophecy. This study guide is based on a 1949 verse translation by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Oedipus - The king of Thebes, he is a noble man who gained the throne by killing his wicked predecessor and subsequently marrying the widow, then solving the riddle of the Sphinx in order to deliver the city from its curse. He did not realize that the man he killed and supplanted was his father, who had consigned him to death as an infant decades earlier. When he realizes that he has killed his father and married his mother, he puts his own eyes out.

- Creon - The brother of Queen Jocasta, and thus Oedipus' uncle, he is sent by the king to the oracle at Delphi to find what must be done to lift the curse on the city. When Tiresias appears with his baneful prophecy, Oedipus accuses Creon of bribing the old prophet so he can seize the throne for himself. After the fall of Oedipus, Creon becomes king.
- Tiresias - A blind prophet who tells Oedipus that he is the cause of the plague under which Thebes suffers.
- Jocasta - The mother of Oedipus, and subsequently his wife, she hangs herself when she realizes that she is guilty of incest.
- Messenger - He was the shepherd who gave the infant Oedipus to Polybos and Merope of Corinth. He later brought news to Thebes of the death of Polybos, and in the process made Oedipus aware that Polybos was not his father.
- Shepherd - He was the servant of Laius who was ordered to expose Oedipus on a mountaintop. He took pity on the baby and gave him to a shepherd friend of his, who later took him to Corinth. When Oedipus demanded the truth of him, he revealed his true parentage.
- Chorus - The chorus consists of the elders of Thebes.

### NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Thebes is in her extremity  
And cannot lift her head from the surge of death.” (Priest, Prologue, 1.26-27)

“The god commands us to expel from the land of Thebes  
An old defilement that it seems we shelter.  
It is a deathly thing, beyond expiation.  
We must not let it feed upon us longer.” (Creon, Prologue, 1.99-102)

“Then once more I must bring what is dark to light.  
It is most fitting that Apollo shows,  
As you do, this compunction for the dead.  
You shall see how I stand by you, as I should,  
To avenge the city and the city's god,  
And not as though it were for some distant friend,  
But for my own sake, to be rid of evil.  
Whoever killed King Laius might - who knows? -  
Decide at any moment to kill me as well.  
By avenging the murdered king I protect myself.” (Oedipus, Prologue, 1.134-143)

“As for the criminal, I pray to God -  
Whether it be a lurking thief, or one of a number -

I pray that that man's life be consumed in evil and wretchedness." (Oedipus, Scene 1, 1.232-234)

"Listen to me. You mock my blindness, do you?  
But I say that you, with both your eyes, are blind:  
You can not see the wretchedness of your life,  
Nor in whose house you live, no, nor with whom.  
Who are your father and mother? Can you tell me?" (Tiresias, Scene 1, 1.398-402)

"A blind man,  
Who has his eyes now; a penniless man, who is rich now;  
And he will go tapping the strange earth with his staff.  
To the children with whom he lives now he will be  
Brother and father - the very same; to her  
Who bore him, son and husband - the very same  
Who came to his father's bed, wet with his father's blood." (Tiresias, Scene 1, 1.439-445)

"You do wrong  
When you take good men for bad, bad men for good." (Creon, Scene 2, 1.577-578)

"Haughtiness and the high hand of disdain  
Tempt and outrage God's holy law;  
And any mortal who dares hold  
No immortal Power in awe  
Will be caught up in a net of pain:  
The price for which his levity is sold." (Chorus, Ode 2, 1.841-846)

"Why should anyone in this world be afraid,  
Since Fate rules us and nothing can be foreseen?  
A man should live only for the present day." (Jocasta, Scene 3, 1.930-932)

"Oedipus, damned in his birth, in his marriage damned,  
Damned in the blood he shed with his own hand!" (Oedipus, Scene 4, 1.1124-1125)

"Is there a sorrow greater?  
Where shall I find harbor in this world?  
My voice is hurled far on a dark wind.  
What has God done to me?" (Oedipus, Exodos, 1.1262-1265)

"Men of Thebes: look upon Oedipus.  
This is the king who solved the famous riddle  
And towered up, most powerful of men.  
No mortal eyes but looked on him with envy,  
Yet in the end ruin swept over him.  
Let every man in mankind's frailty  
Consider his last day; and let none

Presume on his good fortune until he find  
Life, at his death, a memory without pain.” (Chorus, Exodos, 1.1469-1477)

## NOTES

**Backstory** - Laius, the tyrannical king of Thebes, bears a son, but is horrified when a prophecy states that the boy will kill his father. He determines to prevent the fulfillment of the prophecy by killing the boy, so he orders one of his servants to take the child into the wilderness and destroy him. The servant, having no desire to kill the infant, leaves him on a mountaintop instead, where he is found by a kindly shepherd, who, unaware of his identity, takes him home and later gives him to the childless Polybos, the king of Corinth, and his wife Merope. When the boy, whose name is Oedipus, consults an oracle concerning his destiny, he is told that he will kill his father and marry his mother, so he leaves home to avoid this horror and travels to faraway Thebes. When he arrives at a crossroads, he meets a man who insists that he give way and allow him to pass first. Oedipus refuses, the two fight, and the young man is victorious, not realizing that he has killed the king. On the way into Thebes, he encounters the Sphinx, who has kept the city in bondage by killing any traveler who could not answer its riddle (“What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?”). Oedipus does so (the answer is “man”), thus delivering the town, and when he enters Thebes, the people joyfully make him king and give him the queen as his bride. The gods, however, are not pleased that Oedipus has polluted the city by killing his father and marrying his mother, so they send a plague upon the people of Thebes. This is where the play begins.

**Prologue** - The play begins with Oedipus, the king of Thebes, surrounded by his people, who are coming to him in despair because of the pitiful condition of the kingdom. Oedipus asks a priest to voice the people’s complaints. He tells the king that the city is weighted down with suffering because of a plague from which many have died. While Oedipus is not a god, he is the closest the people have to a deity because he delivered the city from the power of the Sphinx, who had killed many of the city’s youth. Oedipus assures them that he suffers along with them, and informs the people that he has sent the queen’s brother, Creon, to the oracle at Delphi to discover if anything might be done to lift the curse on the city. At that very moment Creon arrives and reports that the oracle revealed that the previous king, Laius, had been murdered, and that the curse will not be lifted until his death is avenged with blood. Oedipus swears to discover the murderer and avenge the old king’s death.

**Parodos** - The Chorus pleads with the gods to deliver them from the plague.

**Scene 1** - Oedipus issues a decree in which he demands that anyone who has any information about the death of Laius should come forward and need fear no reprisals. Furthermore, anyone who conceals information will be cut off from the community. He also pronounces a curse on the perpetrator and vows to take the dead king’s part as if he were Laius’ son. The members of the Chorus claim to know nothing about the murder apart from the rumor that the king was killed by highwaymen, but propose that Oedipus consult the blind sage Tiresias. When the ancient prophet arrives, he at first refuses to speak, but after Oedipus accuses him of contributing to the destruction of the city, he reveals that Oedipus himself is the cause of the plague. When the king flies into a rage, Tiresias further tells him that he is also guilty of the grossest sort of incest. Oedipus then

accuses Creon of hiring the sage to bring down the king so he can seize the throne. Oedipus claims that Tiresias is not a prophet at all because he was unable to stop the predations of the Sphinx, while Oedipus, unaided by divine knowledge, was able to do so. The king orders Tiresias to leave, but on his way out, he tells Oedipus that the murderer is at that time in Thebes, and that he is not a stranger, but a Theban born, both brother and father to his children and son and husband to his wife.

**Ode 1** - The Chorus is convinced that Apollo himself and the Furies will pursue the killer to his doom, but simply are unable to believe that Oedipus, the savior of Thebes, is guilty. They thus discount the prophecy of Tiresias.

**Scene 2** - Creon returns and is distraught that Oedipus has accused him of bribing Tiresias to lie. Oedipus confronts him and claims that he wants to take the throne for himself by bringing about the death of the rightful king. Why, he wonders, did Tiresias say nothing when the inquest into the death of Laius was being carried out? Creon denies the charge against him, arguing that no sane man would want the burdens of kingship when he can enjoy the pleasures of aristocracy without them. He goes so far as to say that, if he can be proved guilty of the accusation Oedipus is making, he would willingly submit to the death penalty. Oedipus demands his death, but the quarrel is broken up by Jocasta, who tells Oedipus to come into the palace and sends Creon away. The Chorus begs Oedipus to listen to his wife.

When Jocasta asks what the quarrel was about, Oedipus tells her that Creon is plotting against his life and throne, aided and abetted by the blind soothsayer. Jocasta assures him that such prophets are not to be trusted. After all, when Laius was king, a sage had told him that he would be killed by his own son, and to prevent this he has ordered his infant boy exposed on a mountaintop. Laius was indeed killed, but by marauding strangers at a crossroads near the city just before Oedipus' arrival in Thebes. Oedipus is startled by this news because he remembers well the crossroads in question. He then asks Jocasta to describe Laius, and recognizes in the description a man with whom he had fought. He then asks if any witnesses to the encounter remain, and Jocasta tells him that only one survived, but that he had begged leave to live among shepherds in the mountains when he found that Oedipus was on the throne. The king asks that the man be summoned. Meanwhile, he tells Jocasta that he is the son of Polybos, the king of Corinth. One night, a drunken reveler claimed that he was not the true son of his parents. Despite their denials, he consulted the oracle at Delphi, who told him that he was doomed to murder his father and marry his mother, bearing children with her. In order to avoid this doom, he fled Corinth and came to Thebes. On the way to Thebes, he had met a man in a chariot at the very crossroads earlier described and had killed him when he had tried to force him off the road. Fearing that he is the murderer he seeks, he realizes that he will have to leave Thebes forever unless the testimony of the shepherd proves that more than one man was involved in the altercation, but he is at least consoled by the fact that Laius was not his father. Jocasta assures him that her only son by Laius died in infancy so that he need not worry about the ancient prophecy.

**Ode 2** - The Chorus is disturbed at the cavalier way in which Jocasta is willing to dismiss prophetic oracles; after all, if the gods are powerless, what hope do mere men have?

**Scene 3** - Jocasta is troubled by Oedipus' disturbed mental state and seeks an answer from Apollo. As she does so, a messenger from Corinth arrives, reporting that Polybos is dead of sickness and old age and the people of Corinth want Oedipus to return and be their king. Oedipus and Jocasta are overjoyed at the news because it proves the falseness of the prophecy that Oedipus would kill his

father. He still is concerned about sleeping with his mother, however, and Jocasta tells him that many boys have dreamed of such a thing, but he need not fear actually doing it. He is not reassured, and the messenger asks him why he is so troubled. Oedipus tells him of the prophecy, and the messenger says he has nothing to fear with regard to returning to Corinth because Polybos and Merope are not his real parents. The messenger knows this because he was the shepherd who gave the infant Oedipus to the childless couple. He received him from another shepherd in the employ of Laius, king of Thebes. Oedipus, desperate now to know the truth of his parentage, asks that the shepherd in question be summoned. Jocasta, upon whom the horrible truth is beginning to dawn, begs Oedipus to pursue the matter no further.

**Ode 3** - The chorus ponders the solution of the mystery now before them.

**Scene 4** - The shepherd previously employed by Laius arrives, and the messenger from Corinth identifies him as the one who gave the baby to him many years before. The old man is reluctant to tell Oedipus what he wishes to know, but finally, under the threat of death, reveals that the baby that he rescued long ago was none other than the son of Laius and Jocasta.

**Ode 4** - The Chorus mourns the fall of the great and noble Oedipus.

**Exodos** - At this point another messenger arrives and informed the Chorus that Jocasta has hanged herself. When Oedipus found her hanging in her bedroom, he tore the pins from her gown and plunged them into his own eyeballs. He then demanded that a servant lead him from the city into perpetual exile so that the curse on Thebes might be lifted. When Oedipus appears, blood runs from his eyes; he blames Apollo for his fate and wishes that he had died on the mountaintop so many years before - a sentiment shared by the Chorus. Creon, who is now in charge of the city, appears, and Oedipus begs to be cast out, asking only that the new king care for his two daughters. Creon sends for them so that Oedipus can touch them on last time. He grieves that they will forever be outcasts, unable to find husbands, because of the scandal caused by their father. All leave the stage, and the Chorus summarizes the moral of the story.

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. The great Greek philosopher Socrates is said to have advised his students, "Know thyself." Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is a story of self-discovery in which the protagonist gradually becomes aware of his true identity. Was the advice of Socrates something that Oedipus would have been better off not following? What would have been the consequences had he listened to those around him and refused to pursue the murderer of Laius?
2. The question of identity is an important one in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. The protagonist clearly does not know who he is; this is true even with regard to his name, which means "swollen feet" - has he never considered why he was given such a strange moniker? Trace the path by which he discovers his true identity. Is this pursuit ultimately harmful or beneficial?

3. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* pictures Fate as something unavoidable, no matter how hard one might try to do so. In the end, Oedipus blames Apollo for his tragic plight. Contrast the concept of Fate in the play with the biblical teaching concerning the sovereignty of God. From a biblical perspective, does the existence of a sovereign deity mean that man may legitimately blame Him for the tragedies that befall him in life? Why or why not?
4. Aristotle, a century after the time of Sophocles, defined tragedy as the fall of a noble man because of a flaw in his character. On the basis of that definition, what would you describe as the title character's tragic flaw in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*? Support your analysis with specifics from the play.
5. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the playwright makes extensive use of irony. On many occasions, information that is intended to comfort the protagonist winds up revealing his guilt to an even larger extent. Why do you think Sophocles chose to use this literary technique? How does it cohere with the major themes of the story?
6. The irony that is such a significant part of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is enhanced by the fact that the audience would have been completely familiar with the story prior to attending the play. They would have known both the backstory and the ending before the play began. How does this fact contribute to the power of the irony used by the playwright?
7. Trace the role of the theme of blindness in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Consider both its use as a symbol and its actual appearance in both Tiresias and Oedipus. What does the playwright's use of this theme suggest about his view of mankind in general?
8. In scene 2 of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Creon accuses Oedipus of "taking good men for bad, bad men for good." To what extent is this an accurate assessment of the king? What does this tell you about the protagonist's ability to judge the characters of others and to know his own as well?
9. In scene 3 of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Jocasta says, "Why should anyone in this world be afraid, since Fate rules us and nothing can be foreseen? A man should live only for the present day." Is she right? If all are ruled by Fate, should we not then live for today, since we can do nothing about the future anyway? Incorporate biblical teachings into your response to the Queen's words.
10. At the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the Chorus instructs the audience, "Let every man in mankind's frailty consider his last day; and let none presume on his good fortune until he find life, at his death, a memory without pain." This, in essence, is the moral of the story. What is Sophocles trying to say? Why does he argue that no man can judge the quality of his life until it is over? Evaluate this moral in the light of the teaching of Scripture.
11. One of the purposes of tragedy is that the audience identify with the tragic hero. How did the playwright in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* intend his audience to learn by identifying with his tragic hero? After reading the play, do you feel sorry for the protagonist or do you think he got what he deserved?

12. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* depends in many ways on prophecies, most of which were uttered before the story begins. When Laius and Oedipus are given dire predictions, they do everything possible to circumvent them, only contributing to their fulfillment in the process. When Oedipus and Jocasta later deny the validity of prophecies, they are in a sense sealing their own doom. What do these events say about the worldview of the playwright? Analyze that worldview in the light of what the Bible teaches about prophecy and the certainty of its fulfillment.
13. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, both Oedipus and Jocasta, in order to protect themselves, deny the validity of prophecy and in effect seek to undermine the people's faith in the gods. Consequently, the fact that the prophecies prove true at the end of the play serves to reinforce that faith. Choose a passage from Scripture where the subject of a prophecy scoffs at it, seeking to undermine faith in God, but is later brought down when that prophecy indeed comes to pass. Then compare and contrast the two stories in a way that illustrates the folly of idolatry and the value of faith in the true and living God.
14. Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* does much to contrast human reason with the unknown purposes of the gods. In the contest between the two, human reason clearly comes out on the losing side. To what extent is Sophocles right in his assessment of the powers of human reason? In what way is the lesson he seeks to teach about reason an important one for the people of our own day to learn?
15. Discuss the character of the gods as they are portrayed in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Are we to understand that the gods are cruel and arbitrary, or are they sovereign and just? Support your analysis with specifics from the play.
16. Among the ancient Greeks, the greatest of sins was *hubris*, or excessive pride that offends the gods, thus bringing down their wrath upon the prideful person. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, is the protagonist guilty of *hubris*? Why or why not? Use specifics from the play to support your analysis.
17. Both Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* portray brilliant protagonists who are brought down by *hubris*. Compare and contrast the king and the scientist in terms of the sources of their pride, the ways in which that pride is manifested, and the ways in which it ultimately destroys them.
18. Both Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* involve protagonists who are determined seekers after truth and whose search for truth ultimately leads to their downfall. Compare and contrast the two tragic heroes in terms of their characters, the reasons they seek truth, the ways in which they go about their searches, and the consequences for themselves and for others.



19. Both Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and William Shakespeare's *King Lear* deal with the efforts of an individual to do battle against the power of Fate. Both, of course, ultimately fail, yet the playwrights want us to admire them for the effort. Compare and contrast the two plays in terms of their views of Fate, the ways in which the protagonists challenge it, and the consequences, both for themselves and others, of their determination.
20. The role of Fate in human experience was a major theme addressed often in the writings of Classical Greece. Compare and contrast how Fate determines the destinies of the protagonists in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Homer's *Odyssey*. Are the gods who direct man's fate cruel, benevolent, or simply arbitrary? How do these two classic works reflect the worldview of the ancient Greeks?
21. At the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the protagonist blames the gods for his fate. If what has happened to him is the fault of the gods, why does he blind himself? How can he hold himself responsible for something that he tried with all his power to avoid? Discuss this seeming inconsistency in the treatment of responsibility in the play.
22. Tragedy is only possible when the victim of the tragedy is an admirable character. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, what are the most admirable traits of the protagonist? What makes him a good king? What underlying weaknesses threaten to undermine all the good that he has done?
23. Sigmund Freud believed that Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* contained great psychological insights into human character. In particular, he believed that boys from infancy had an innate desire to sleep with their mothers, and therefore murder their fathers. Is this a fair generalization of the playwright's understanding of human nature, or is Freud simply using the play as a metaphor for his own view of mankind? What aspects of Freud's worldview set him apart from that of the ancient Greek playwright?
24. In John 9:41, Jesus says to the Pharisees, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." What did he mean by this? In what sense may these same words be applied to the protagonist in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*? Ought one to conclude that, as long as he has his sight, he is blind, but once he becomes blind, only then is he able to see? Support your analysis with specifics from the play.
25. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the protagonist is portrayed as a brilliant man whose sharp mind enables him to solve the riddle of the Sphinx and thus save Thebes. One would think, however, that, given the prophecy to which he had been subject, such an intelligent person would be smart enough to avoid fights with older men and marriages with older women. What character traits, by undermining his reason, cause him unwittingly to fulfill the dire prophecy against him? Does this therefore mean that he, rather than the gods, is responsible for his fate?

26. Critics have often pointed out certain improbabilities in the plot of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. For instance, how likely is it that, in twenty years of marriage, Oedipus and Jocasta have never told one another about the oracles they received, or that Oedipus has never mentioned to her that he happened to kill an old man on his way into Thebes? In your opinion, do these holes in the plot detract from the impact of the play on the reader or audience? In particular, do they undermine the power of the irony upon which the playwright so frequently depends?
27. Critics often compare Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* with the biblical book of Job as tales in which the gods visit horrible disasters on good and innocent human beings for no discernible reason. Is this an accurate comparison? In what ways? What are such critics missing, particularly with regard to Job, that would minimize any surface similarities between the stories?
28. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, different characters have varying ideas as to the causes of the major events of human experience. Jocasta, for example, argues that all is merely a matter of chance, while others insist that Fate or the gods are responsible. Analyze these three different explanations for human events - that they follow no plan, that they are determined by an impersonal force of some sort, or that they are the result of a personal being or beings. Which of these does Sophocles himself favor? How do all three fall short of the picture presented in the Bible of a sovereign, personal, and benevolent God?
29. *The Appointment in Samarra* is an old Middle Eastern tale in which a servant meets Death in the Baghdad marketplace. Convinced his doom is imminent, he seeks to avoid it by fleeing to Samarra. When his master goes to the market to confront Death, the specter replies that he was surprised to find the servant in Baghdad because he had an appointment with him that night in Samarra. To what extent does Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* follow the basic outline of this ancient tale? Discuss how the determination of key characters to avoid their fates instead brings about the very things they are trying to avoid.
30. The two strongest characters in the Oedipus plays of Sophocles are Oedipus and his daughter Antigone. Using the two plays that feature them, *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, evaluate their respective strengths and weaknesses. Is Antigone really a "chip off the old block," more like her father than she is willing to admit?
31. Compare the roles played by the blind seer Tiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*. Consider the prophecies he utters and the ways that Oedipus and Creon respond to them. Why is he an important part of the plot in both plays?
32. Historians have often argued that revolutionaries all too often wind up wearing the robes of those they have dethroned. Is this the case in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*? Compare and contrast Oedipus in the former play with Creon in the latter one. Consider the ways in which they rule, the extent to which they become tyrants, and their unwillingness to listen to the advice of others. Be sure to use details from both plays to support your arguments.

33. Discuss the role played by the Chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*. How do they contribute to the progress of the two plays? To what extent do they help the audience interpret the action? Are they reliable interpreters? Why or why not?
34. Near the end of Sophocles' *Antigone*, the First Senator says, "There is no respite to mortals from the ills of destiny." Discuss the role played by fate, both in this play and in the same playwright's *Oedipus Rex*. Does Sophocles believe that humans have free will, or are they inevitably victims of predetermined destiny? Evaluate his handling of this familiar paradox in the light of what the Bible has to say about divine sovereignty and human responsibility.
35. In John 9:41, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees about their unwillingness to admit their blindness by saying, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." Blindness and sight are frequent metaphors in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*. How do these metaphors give insight into the characters of Oedipus, Creon, and Tiresias? Who is really blind and who really is able to see, and why? Is the metaphorical blindness of Oedipus and Creon similar to that of the Pharisees? To what extent?
36. In both Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the title characters are noble and courageous young men who are unaware of their true parentage. Both eventually discover who their parents are, but in the first case, the discovery makes his fortune, while in the second it ruins his life. Discuss the differences in worldview that lead to these contrasting denouements.