



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN TEACHER PACK™

for

Oedipus Rex

based on the play by

Sophocles

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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR: SOPHOCLES

Sophocles was born in Colonus, a small town outside of Athens, Greece in 495 B.C. He was the son of an armor manufacturer who became schooled in poetry, music, and dancing. He was prized for his exceptional physique and abilities in the arts. When he was fifteen years old, Sophocles earned his reputation as a performer when he was selected to lead a chorus of boys in the paeon (a hymn of victory and thanksgiving to the gods) after the battle of Salamis. He went on to become an established playwright in Athens, authoring more than 120 plays.

Sophocles first public recognition as a playwright came when he won first prize at the festival of Dionysus (called the *Dionysia*) in 468 B.C. At these festivals, playwrights were to complete three tragedies and one satyr-play (collectively, this was called a *tetralogy*; “tetra” means “four”). This particular festival’s outcome was significant for his career because the twenty-eight year old Sophocles won the coveted prize over Athens’ established playwright, Aeschylus. As the years continued, Sophocles went on to win first prize a total of twenty-four times (since each tetralogy consisted of four plays, he wrote ninety-six first place award winning plays), and seven second place awards out of the thirty-one competitions he entered. Sadly, out of over one hundred twenty plays written by Sophocles, only seven still exist in their entirety. These are:

<i>Ajax</i>	445 B.C.
<i>Antigone</i>	440 B.C.
<i>Electra</i>	440 B.C.
<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	430 B.C.
<i>The Trachiniae</i>	413 B.C.
<i>Philoctetes</i>	410 B.C.
<i>Oedipus at Colonus</i>	401 B.C. (date of first performance; five years after the death of Sophocles)

Although the Oedipus plays (*Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*) are commonly thought of as a trilogy, they were not written as such (see above dates). Also, since there are inconsistencies in characterizations and events between them, the plays are best studied as individual works rather than part of a trilogy.

Sophocles was also involved in the technical aspect of the Greek theatre as well. He introduced the idea of painted scenery, variations in the types of music sung by the chorus, as well as increasing the size of the cast: the chorus went from twelve members to fifteen, and the number of actors in a production increased from two to three. The elaborate costumes (especially the masks) allowed the actors to portray numerous characters throughout the production. With the addition of a third actor on the stage, plot development and distinguishing between characters became more comprehensive to the audiences.

Although most of Sophocles' life centered on theatre and writing (he also wrote poetry), he was also involved at a civic level. He served as a general under Pericles in the army and was a key negotiator in the Peloponnesian War. In his role as a priest, Sophocles was concerned with the individual's need to find his/her own place in the moral and cosmic order of the universe. His plays contain moral lessons that usually pertain to man's duty to the gods and the avoidance of excessive pride. Late in life, Sophocles acted as a statesman who helped organize the recovery of Athens after it was defeated at Syracuse.

Sophocles was said to have been especially blessed by the gods, and he was highly revered in his society. His physical beauty, strength, sense of fairness, and talent earned him the admiration of those around him, and upon his death in 406 B.C., Athens mourned. A shrine, called *Dexion* (The Entertainer) was established in his honor, and annual sacrifices were offered in his memory.

INTRODUCTION

This LitPlan has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Oedipus Rex*. It includes 19 lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** introduces students to Greek Theatre and the Oedipus Myth involving the Riddle of the Sphinx. This mythological tale actually takes place years before the plague that Thebes is suffering at the opening of *Oedipus Rex*. Following the introductory activity, students are given a transition to explain how the activity relates to the play they are about to read. Following the transition, students are given the materials they will be using during the unit. At the end of the lesson, students begin the pre-reading work for the first reading assignment.

The **reading assignments** are approximately fifteen to twenty pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for 10 vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the play. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for 10 vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have an understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

After students complete reading the work, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

Following the vocabulary review, a lesson is devoted to the **extra discussion questions/writing assignments**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the play.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. In the first writing assignment, students will research Aristotle's elements of tragedy and relate them to *Oedipus Rex*. In the second writing assignment students will decide who is most at fault for the tragedy of Oedipus (fate/the gods, Iocaste, or Oedipus himself) and, using textual support, write a persuasive essay defending their position. Finally, students will create their own odes after examining/analyzing the four odes in *Oedipus Rex*.

There is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students must read nonfiction articles, books, etc. to gather information about the playwright, Sophocles.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given several choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the play, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

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UNIT OBJECTIVES
Oedipus Rex

1. Through reading Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, students will learn about the history of Greek Theatre and the structure of a Greek Tragedy, as well as the life of the playwright, Sophocles.
2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the text on four levels: factual, interpretive, critical, and personal.
3. Students will explore the themes of *fear of the future*, *illusion vs. reality*, and *fate vs. free will*.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to practice reading both aloud and silently to improve their skills in each area.
5. Students will answer questions to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the main events and characters in *Oedipus Rex* as they relate to the playwright's theme development.
6. Students will enrich their vocabularies and improve their understanding of the play through the vocabulary lessons prepared for use in conjunction with the play.
7. The writing assignments in this unit are geared to several purposes:
 - a. To have students demonstrate their abilities to inform, to persuade, or to express their own personal ideas
Note: Students will demonstrate ability to write effectively to inform by developing and organizing facts to convey information. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to persuade by selecting and organizing relevant information, establishing an argumentative purpose, and by designing an appropriate strategy for an identified audience. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively to express personal ideas by selecting a form and its appropriate elements.
 - b. To check the students' reading comprehension
 - c. To make students think about the ideas presented by the play
 - d. To encourage logical thinking
 - e. To provide an opportunity to practice good grammar and improve students' use of the English language.
8. Students will read aloud, report, and participate in large and small group discussions to improve their public speaking and personal interaction skills.

READING ASSIGNMENT SHEET
Oedipus Rex

Date Assigned	Scenes Assigned	Date Completed
	Prologue and Parodos	
	Scene 1 and Ode 1	
	Scene 2 and Ode 2	
	Scene 3 and Ode 3	
	Scene 4 and Ode 4	
	Exodos	

UNIT OUTLINE
Oedipus Rex

1 Greek Mythology: Background of the Oedipus Myth (The Riddle of the Sphinx) Intro to Greek Theatre PVR Prologue and Parodos	2 Study ? Prologue and Parodos PVR Scene 1/ Ode 1 Media center visit: non-fiction assignment: the life of Sophocles	3 Study ?s Scene 1/Ode 1 Read aloud/ perform Prologue-Ode 1 PVR Scene/Ode 2	4 Study ?s Scene 2/Ode 2 Quiz: Prologue-Ode 1 Define ode and read Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” PVR Scene3/Ode 3	5 Study ?s Scene 3/Ode 3 Read aloud/perform Scene 2-Ode 3 PVR Scene/Ode 4
6 Study ?s Scene 4/Ode 4 Quiz: Scene/Odes 2 and 3 Characterization posters PVR Exodos	7 Study ?s Exodos Media center visit: Writing Assignment #1 Aristotle’s Elements of Tragedy	8 Read aloud/ perform Scene 4- Exodos	9 Quiz: Scene 4- Exodos Dramatic Irony Exercise	10 Odes - examine Odes 1-4 for figurative language Writing Assignment #2
11 Mask Making Continue work on odes	12 Vocabulary Review	13 Group Work: Extra Discussion Questions	14 Writing Assignment#3 Persuasion Piece: Who is to Blame?	15 Peer Editing: Persuasion Piece: Who is to Blame?
16 Presentation of Odes	17 Presentation of Odes	18 Review Materials	19 Unit Test	20

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R= Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

1. To become familiar with the Greek myth surrounding Oedipus and The Sphinx and its connection to Sophocles' tragedy
2. To create riddles much like those of the Sphinx
3. To introduce to Sophocles's tragedy, *Oedipus Rex* and the structure of a Greek Tragedy
4. To distribute books, study questions, and other related materials
5. To preview the vocabulary worksheet and study guide questions for the Prologue and Parodos
6. To read the Prologue and Parodos

Activity #1

Read the story of Oedipus and the Sphinx (easily downloaded from the Internet). Ask students what character traits Oedipus demonstrated through his interaction with the Sphinx. Write these traits on the front board and ask students to support them with details from the story. Next, ask students to compose their own riddles, using the Riddle of the Sphinx as a model (you might also use examples of riddles from chapter 5 of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* if you happen to have a copy). My students love this activity and actually do a good job with creating a rhyme scheme. Give bonus points to those students who can stump their peers with a solid riddle, as well as bonus points for those who are able to solve the riddles of their peers. Some examples of student riddles are below:

It can hold things

Yet it can let them slip away

It is an entrance

But it is an exit, some say

You cannot see in one

Yet sometimes see through it you may

(answer: a hole) by Heather M.

I have feet, but I cannot walk;

I have chords but can never talk;

You can play me and never win;

I was once living but never had skin.

(answer: a piano) by Kevin K.

I broaden your mind every night

I don't give up without a fight

Without me, the mornings aren't very funny

I am like your energizer bunny

(answer: sleep) by Alex G.

What is, oh, so bright

And turns on when day becomes night?

It is also a decoration

That helps with your notations.

(answer: a lamp) by Stephanie R.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1

Oedipus Rex

Informational Writing: Aristotle's *Poetics* and the six elements of tragedy

PROMPT

You are reading the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, and the class has been exploring Sophocles's influence in the Greek Theatre. However, Greek philosopher Aristotle also had an impact on Greek Theatre. Research Aristotle's *Poetics* and his six elements of a tragedy and then write a paper that connects Aristotle's elements of tragedy to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

PREWRITING

Research the required information at the library/media center. List Aristotle's 6 elements of a tragedy. Under each make notes about how they are demonstrated in *Oedipus Rex*. Use specific references to the text when possible. Jot down quotes and/or page numbers as quick reference points for when you write.

DRAFTING

Introduce your topic in the first paragraph, being sure to end with a thesis statement. Then write 6 body paragraphs, each describing one of Aristotle's elements of a tragedy and how it is a part of the structure of *Oedipus Rex*. Be sure to include embedded quotations from your research as support. Also, incorporate at least four vocabulary words from the unit into your essay.

PEER CONFERENCE/REVISING

When you finish the draft, ask another student to look at it. You may want to give the student your worksheets and articles so he/she can double check to see if you have included all the information you intended to include. After reading, he/she should tell you what is best about your essay, which parts were difficult to understand or follow, and ways in which your essay could be improved. Reread your essay considering your critic's comments and make the corrections you think are necessary.

PROOFREADING/EDITING

Do a final proofreading of your essay, double-checking your grammar, spelling, organization, and the clarity of your ideas.