Oedipus The King Essay, Research Paper

Even though Oedipus the King didn?t detail all of Oedipus? adventures, I thought it

was a good book. I think it was smart of Sophocles to pick out the most

significant, life altering phase in Oedipus? life to bring to the stage. I also really

respect how Sophocles took the myth of Oedipus and put all of the details of the

story into it. I think it?s somewhat amazing how he took something that

supposedly happened and gave the people exact dialogue and specific feelings. I

realize that Oedipus the King is only a myth and that all Sophocles needed was a

creative mind, but I still respect him.

Being as Oedipus the King?s storyline was already laid out, I can?t blame

Sophocles for some of the events I didn?t agree with or ridiculed. First of all, I

know I shouldn?t laugh at this myth because the ancient Greeks actually believed

it, but I did. The Sphinx was a monster with the head and breasts of a woman, the

body of a lion, and the wings of a bird. I just think it?s absurd that someone would

actually make up a story with something like the Sphinx in it. It sounds like

something out of a science fiction story, and I just don?t like science fiction. Next,

why did Oedipus gouge his eyes out? I understand why Oedipus would do

something so drastic in the instant he learned the foul deeds he committed, but I

thought he would?ve killed himself as Jocasta did. That is, until I realized in a

way he wanted to suffer because he believed he deserved it. Honestly, I feel bad

for the guy.

Finally, there was one part of Oedipus the King that I didn?t like and can

blame on Sophocles. That was the part where the chorus seems to go on and on

about the gods and how Apollo and Zeus should save them. They chanted on

about how they would never go to Delphi or another temple if Oedipus? story

wouldn?t come true. I did not like reading that part at all and consider it a waste of

Sophocles? talent.

In Oedipus the King I thought Oedipus was the central character because

the whole play was about him. It focused on Oedipus? life and I believe that is a

key component for being the central character.

Oedipus was just trying to find himself. He grew up thinking that his

parents were Polybus and Merope, the king and queen of Corinth, until some guy

who had a few too many at a banquet told him they weren?t. This sparked

Oedipus? curiosity and he went to the oracle of Apollo to find out the truth.

However, the oracle only told him he?d kill his dad and marry his mom. Upon

hearing this, he surely wasn?t going home in the hope of preventing this from

happening. So he decided to start anew and on his way he ran into an old man and

his servants who tried to run him off the road. He killed them in self-defense,

except for one. Little did Oedipus know he had just killed his real father who had

abandoned him at birth.

Oedipus continued his journey and came to Thebes, where he defeated the

Sphinx, winning the new position of king and husband to Jocasta, his real mother.

The prophecy of Apollo had come true, without anyone knowing. Poor Oedipus

had no idea what he was doing. He was just trying to live his life. He had no

control over the situation, and if he had known who his biological parents were,

I?m sure he never would?ve killed and/or married them.

I pictured Oedipus as tall and muscular with curly brown hair, always

dressed in a stereotypical toga, reminiscent of the times.

Oedipus was a round character because he was just, innocent, and

good-hearted, yet he was extremely stubborn and headstrong. He was also a

developing character because he changed throughout the course of the story. In

the beginning and middle, he adamantly refused to believe he could possibly be

the terrible man he?s accused of. Yet, in the end he finally does come to realize

the truth about his past.

The central theme in Oedipus the King was, ?Don?t try to control your

fate.? This theme not only applied to Oedipus, but also to Laius. When Laius

heard of his son?s disgraceful future and the costly effect it had on him, he tried to

alter his own fate. As a result of Laius? meddling, Jocasta and himself were

unhappy because they had no son and in the end, the prophecy came true.

When applied to Oedipus this theme is more apparent. After he went to the

oracle of Apollo at Delphi, he learned of what shameful thing he was to do. When

he tried to dodge it, he only made it really come true. There is the possibility that

had Oedipus controlled his curiosity of his biological parents, none of this never

would?ve happened. He never would?ve even went to Delphi and then fled from

Corinth. He never would?ve met up with his real father and killed him. He never

would?ve married his mother and father her other children.

On the other hand, had he never done this, I think the gods would?ve found

a way to make it happen. They needed this to happen because Oedipus defeated

the horrible Sphinx and saved Thebes from its terrible reign. Oedipus also helped

to restore Thebes.

Another theme present in Oedipus the King was, ?don?t torture yourself or

your loved ones over something you had no control of.? This theme applies to

Laius, Jocasta, and Oedipus. First, Laius and Jocasta hurt themselves by

abandoning Oedipus early in his life, to avoid the inevitable. Secondly, and more

relevant to the play, is a) Jocasta killing herself and b) Oedipus spearing his pupils.

They not only painfully hurt themselves, but they didn?t really think of their

children. No matter how terrible what they did was, their children still needed

them and ultimately, the children are also the ones who are going to suffer.

I found a literary criticism of Oedipus the King in the book Greek Drama

for Everyman by F. L. Lucas. Lucas thought that Oedipus the King was a ghastly,

horrifically plotted story with an unbelievable plot written two thousand years ago.

Yet, it still fascinates readers today. He ponders why.

Lucas said the answer is the common reader wants to know what a

respectable, honorable man such as Oedipus would do in such a situation. Lucas

said that if something is meant to be, then it is meant to be.

Sophocles had an arduous task in convincing his audience to overlook the

flaws in Oedipus the King. For instance, Oedipus? rationality. He intimates that

perhaps Oedipus let his curiosity get the better of him, and he was the main cause

of his fate. If Oedipus would?ve trusted the oracle at Delphi more completely, he

wouldn?t have rushed into changing his destiny. Maybe Oedipus went looking for

his future.

In Lucas? opinion, Sophocles? Oedipus the King is a great play because of

how it moves, due to the scenes. The play is dramatic, but to Lucas, not the

highest possible. He says it was the first detective thriller in Europe?s history.

However, Lucas only liked the admirable play, he didn?t admire it.