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Ap Lit and Composition  
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### Oedipus the King Response Paper

Oedipus the King is a play written by Sophocles in 441 B.C. The play was performed and produced in Athens, Greece. Most of the content was relative to the time. Athenians could relate to the problems and trials Sophocles's characters faced, making the play very popular. The play begins amidst a terrible plague in King Oedipus's kingdom of Thebes. King Oedipus sends his brother-in-law, Creon, to the house of Apollo to consult the oracle in search of a cure for the plague. Creon returns and reports that once the killer of the previous king is found (King Laius) the plague will be lifted. Oedipus makes it his mission to find the killer. The people of Thebes, otherwise known as the chorus, suggest their king goes to the blind prophet Teiresias for answers. Teiresias reluctantly tells Oedipus that he is the killer and his marriage is a sinful union. Oedipus has a flashback to when he was young, he remembered an oracle telling him his prophecy. His prophecy stated that he would kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus is uneasy about the situation, he vows to unravel the mystery and learn the truth. He eventually found out the prophecy was true and went insane. Oedipus the King is a striking tragedy with an interesting storyline, intense characters, valuable lessons, an unforgettable tone, and relative themes unlike any other play.

Oedipus the King was performed/written during a time of deathly plague in Athens. It is only appropriate that the play begins with the focus on a plague terrorizing the king and his kingdom. The plague in a way sets off a chain of events that build the story. With the play beginning the way it does the audience can instantly relate to the characters of the story. As the

story progresses the focus shifts from the plague to the ridiculous tragedy of King Oedipus. The audience is presented with a situation they can relate to, that turns into a story that is immensely entertaining attributed to the sheer drama of the situation (the kind of stuff people just eat up). Sophocles used this storytelling technique and captivated his audience.

Sophocles had a plethora of influential characters in Oedipus the King, all written with iconic details and interesting quirks. One of the most memorable characters is King Oedipus himself. Oedipus is a good man and a noble king. He feels for his people when the plague hits his kingdom he restlessly searches to find a cure. He is such a great person until Sophocles introduces his hamartia. We learn that Oedipus killed a man long before the story took place. This character's single flaw or weakness provokes a series of events that lead to Oedipus's downfall. Amidst the story, Oedipus and Jocasta discuss the possibility of the revelations being true,"(Oedipus) I was to slay my father. And he dies, And the grave hides him; and I find myself Handling no sword; unless for love of me He pined away, and so I caused his death. In Hades whelmed, those worthless oracles. (Jocasta) Did I not tell thee this long time ago? (Oedipus)Thou didst, but I was led away by fears. (Jocasta) Dismiss them, then, for ever from thy thoughts! (Oedipus) And yet that "incest"; must I not fear that?" (Sophocles, 211). Sophocles depicts Oedipus this way to give the character depth and the story a purpose.

Oedipus the King presents many valuable lessons people can learn from. The most prevalent being, every action has a consequence. This idea can be found throughout the story. Oedipus lives a great life as king, he killed a man when he was younger and faced the consequences later. If Oedipus would have never murdered he wouldn't have found himself in the tragic position he was in. Towards the end of the story, Oedipus cannot understand how a

decision made so long ago can torture him so far later in life. Oedipus states, "Oedipus Let the storm burst, my fixed resolve still holds, To learn my lineage, be it ne'er so low. It may be she with all a woman's pride Thinks scorn of my base parentage. But I Who rank myself as Fortune's favorite child, The giver of good gifts, shall not be shamed. She is my mother and the changing moons My brethren, and with them I wax and wane. Thus sprung why should I fear to trace my birth? Nothing can make me other than I am." (224, Sophocles). Another example is Oedipus's parents, they abandoned their son when he was young. Oedipus's dad was killed by Oedipus and his mother married him and eventually committed suicide, neither knew it was their son. If they wouldn't have sinned and abandoned their son they would have never died. Throughout the play the idea of action has its consequence is very obvious and present.

A very obvious theme throughout the play is the idea of darkness and light. This idea is bound very tightly with sight and blindness. At the beginning of the play everyone besides Teiresias is blind to the whole family lineage screw up. It is ironic because Teiresias is actually blind but he can see better than anyone. Toward the end of the play after Oedipus has "seen" the tragic problems he created he gouges his eyes out so he doesn't have to see anymore. The characters are in the dark when they are ignorant but when they are exposed to the light they want to escape and retreat back to the dark (i.e. Jocasta committing suicide or Oedipus gouging his eyes out. Later in the play Jocasta laments Oedipus's blindness stating, "My lords, ye look amazed to see your queen With wreaths and gifts of incense in her hands. I had a mind to visit the high shrines, For Oedipus is overwrought, alarmed With terrors manifold. He will not use His past experience, like a man of sense, To judge the present need, but lends an ear To any croaker if he augurs ill. Since then my counsels naught avail, I turn To thee, our present help in time of trouble, Apollo, Lord Lycean, and to thee My prayers and supplications here I

bring. Lighten us, lord, and cleanse us from this curse! For now we all are cowed like mariners  
Who see their helmsman dumbstruck in the storm. (Sophocles,207).

Sophocles was a great play writer for not only his time, but for all time. He paved the way for many writers in the future. He had great characters that inspired or amused the audience. He provoked thought wrenching themes that kept the audience thinking. He presented valuable lessons that provided an element of character to his stories. All in all he he captivated audiences and readers for generations. Oedipus the King exceeded Sophocles reputation and is a great timeless tale.

Connor,

SCORE: MASTERY

Very nice job with the things you focused on, especially the character of Oedipus. Also, nice job using several quotes throughout the entire paper--just make sure you follow the right citations for a play (vs. a book). You have done some nice work this summer, and I am so excited to see you in my class this fall. Nice job!

<b>Mastery</b>	<b>Incomplete</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I show thoughtful commentary and analysis of the novel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I do not show critical analysis of the novel, but present a summary.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I include incorrect information about the novel.</li> <li>· I do too much plot summary, and not enough reflection or analysis.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I use several pieces of direct, clearly integrated, and cited evidence from the novel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I do not use direct, well integrated, or cited evidence from the novel.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I show organization and structure in my paragraphs and overall paper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· My paragraphs/paper are poorly structured.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I show solid grammar and mechanics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I have poor grammar and mechanics.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I complete the required number of pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I do not write the required number of pages; my paper is too short</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· I use 11 point font, double-spaced, and typed.</li><li>· I include a thoughtful title.</li><li>· I use MLA format.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· I do not use the correct paper formatting.</li><li>· I fail to include a title.</li><li>· I fail to use MLA format.</li></ul>
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