

#9325

OEDIPUS THE KING

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES & SCIENCES

1999

Grade Levels: 11-13+

120 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Oedipus, king of Thebes, seeks to save the city from destruction. The solution has unexpected repercussions for him and his family. A modern British stage production of the first of the Theban plays by Sophocles. NOTE: Gory ending.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Language Arts

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
 - Benchmark: Understands how themes are used across literary works and genres
- Standard: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media
 - Benchmark: Understands how literary forms can be represented in visual narratives

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To dramatize a well-known Greek tragedy.
2. To depict universal human emotions.
3. To motivate the reading of other Greek tragedies.

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Aeschylus | 7. exodos |
| 2. Apollo | 8. ode |
| 3. chorus | 9. Oracle at Delphi |
| 4. Dionysus | 10. parodos |
| 5. episode | 11. prologue |
| 6. Euripides | 12. tragedy/tragedian |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Introduce Sophocles as one of the great playwrights of the golden age. Of his more than 120 plays, only 7 have survived in their entirety. Of these, "Oedipus" is generally considered his greatest work.
2. Explain why this work is often called a "perfectly structured" play, a masterful work of plot and suspense.
3. Review the idea of *predestination* and discuss why ancient Greeks might believe in it. What is the relationship between fate and free will?

4. Explain that twenty-five hundred years ago, two thousand years before Shakespeare, Western theater was born in Athens, Greece. There have been only two other periods which have approached this greatness—Elizabethan England and the Twentieth Century.
5. Discuss the classical Greek Theatre of Dionysus at Athens and:
 - a. Explain the elements of the acting area. (Plays were performed outdoors. The theatre seated 25,000 people.)
 - b. Describe how the play was part of a religious celebration to the god Dionysus. (This explains the many references to gods in the play.)
 - c. Why were all of the parts played by male actors and why did they wear large masks?
 - d. What is the role of the Greek chorus in the play?
 - e. Describe the five divisions found in a written version of a Greek tragedy.
 - i. Prologue: provides information about prior events
 - ii. Parodos: entrance of the chorus
 - iii. Episodes: acting and dialogue part of the play
 - iv. Ode: chorus part of the play
 - v. Exodos: departure of all characters and the chorus

DURING SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Pause to point out the use of modern dress costumes as opposed to traditional Greek masks and robes.
2. What is the "Riddle of the Sphinx"? Explain that how we associate riddles with children, in primitive cultures, riddle solvers were highly respected for their intelligence.
3. Identify the characters and the chorus.
4. Pause as necessary to explain or clarify scenes.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Create character webs of main characters. Identify protagonistic relationship between Oedipus, Creon and Tiresias.
2. Discuss the themes of light and darkness used by Sophocles.
 - a. The use of Apollo as the main pray god (Apollo was the god of light and wisdom, something that Oedipus did not possess)
 - b. The use of the "blind" prophet Tiresias (he can "see" the future)
 - c. Oedipus blinds himself at the end of the play
3. Summarize the events leading to the climax. Discuss the following:
 - a. Oedipus' reaction to the first news from Creon
 - b. Oedipus' reaction to Tiresias
 - c. Oedipus confrontation with Creon the second time
 - d. How the traveler brings news to Oedipus
 - e. Oedipus learns he is the killer of Laius.
4. Analyze the use of the chorus throughout the work.
5. Identify how the 5 parts of the tragedy work together.
6. Discuss how the light/darkness theme of the play could be viewed in a modern framework.

7. Aristotle believed this was the finest tragedy because the protagonist's recognition of truth coincides with his reversal of fortune. Where, exactly, does this occur in the play?
8. The "Oedipus complex" has been called one of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis. Why? What is it?

Applications and Activities

1. Discuss climax, plot twists and causes of conflict as they relate to human nature.
2. Discuss foreshadowing in the tragedy and create a list of examples.
3. Perform scenes from the play.
4. Prepare and present a report on the Greek theatre.
5. Rewrite Oedipus the King as a modern movie. Who would play Oedipus?
6. Post the following on the bulletin board: "Greek tragedies include some characters who commit suicide. It is a bad idea. Studies show that among young people who made serious attempts and failed, 99% said a year later that they are glad they failed."

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Greece: Land of Temples & Ruins #7730
- Greece: Playground of the Gods #7953
- Mythology in Literary Culture #9315



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **INTRODUCTION TO GREEK TRAGEDY**

<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/classics/dunkle/studyguide/tragedy.htm>

Step by step of how the Greek tragedy works. Includes information on the theater, actors, chorus and structure.

- **MYTHWEB**

<http://www.mythweb.com/>

Site devoted to the gods and heroes of Greek mythology. Contains a section designed to assist teachers in the teaching of Greek mythology.

- **OEDIPUS TYRANNUS**

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/oedipus/oedipusindex.htm>

You've read the play; now play the game!