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## The Theban story and its interpretation.

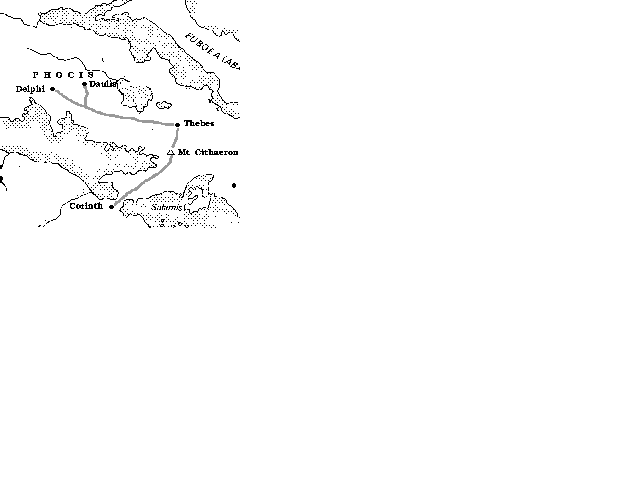
There are a number of versions of the myth, which differ in important details - but the starting point must be the story as told by SOPHOCLES in Oedipus Tyrannus (King Oedipus) performed in Athens for the first time in about 425 BC.

### The First Oracle

**Laius**, ruler of Thebes is told in an oracle that his son will kill him. With agreement of his wife, **Jocasta**, the baby's feet are pinioned and it's given to a slave to be "exposed" on nearby Mt Cithaeron, (haunt of wolves and other wild beasts). The slave, a shepherd of Laius' flocks, takes pity on the baby, and instead of leaving it to die, gives the boy to a fellow-shepherd from Corinth, the other side of the mountain. The Corinthian shepherd presents the baby to the childless King of Corinth, **Polybus**, who brings him up as his own, presumably giving him the name "Oedipus" (Swollen Foot) because of his deformity.

### The Second Oracle

Eighteen years (or so) later, someone at a party calls the young Oedipus a bastard - and the insult rankles. He leaves Corinth for Delphi, to confirm his parentage at the oracle of Apollo. The oracle, however, gives him instead a horrific prediction : he will kill his father and sleep with his mother. In case the oracle could conceivably come true accidentally, he sets off in the opposite direction to Corinth, and heads towards Thebes. As he descends from Parnassus towards the foothills, he meets an old man driving a waggon with a retinue of slaves at a **place where three roads meet**.



The man is rude and aggressive, and orders him off the road. Oedipus refuses to budge and the man lashes out with his goad. Oedipus (an early instance of "road rage"?) sees red, and kills the man and - as he thinks - all the guards. He continues to Thebes.

### The riddle of the Sphinx

Thebes is terrorised by a monster - the **Sphinx** (a hybrid creature, with the body of a lioness. the head of a woman, and wings), who destroys all who cannot solve her riddle. Sophocles doesn't go into any detail about this riddle - other writers tell us it was "Which animal has one voice, but two, three or four feet being slowest on three?". Perhaps Oedipus, as a man with three feet thanks to his disability was uniquely well placed to answer it : "Man". Oedipus' staff will be crutch, murder weapon and blind man's stick before the play is over. Thebes welcomes her saviour and offers him the vacant job of ruler, and the hand of Laius' widow, Jocasta, as an extra reward.



### The Third Oracle

More years pass, during which Oedipus fathers four children by Jocasta. Gradually Thebes succumbs to a vile plague, which kills animals, children and crops alike. Oedipus, the king, promises to save his city. Plagues are caused by pollution which is caused by sin - and only the god can reveal its cause. Thus Oedipus sends his brother-in-law **Creon** to consult the oracle at Delphi once more: the god's answer is that the plague is caused by an unpunished murder - that of the former ruler, Laius. Oedipus places a terrible curse on the killer - whoever he may be, and turns for help to **Teiresias**, the respected prophet. Teiresias tells Oedipus that he is the killer, and hints at even worse crimes. Oedipus is enraged, believing that Teiresias and Creon have concocted this story to dethrone him and seize power for themselves. Teiresias departs with dire threats, while Creon tries to argue his innocence. Oedipus rejects his pleading, and would have had him executed but for the intervention of Jocasta - who has close ties to them both.

### The Place where Three Roads Meet

Hearing that their quarrel was about an oracle, Jocasta reassures her husband by saying that oracles are nonsense - she and her Laius were given one telling them that their son would kill its father. The father **was** killed, by robbers at a place where three roads meet, and the son died an innocent baby. But Oedipus remembers killing a man at such a place - what if he was Laius? He himself would be the cursed polluter of Thebes. No, says Jocasta, the witness - the man who escaped - said it was robbers. One man cannot equal many. Oedipus fears will only be laid to rest if the witness can be found. He's sent for.

### The Corinthian Messenger

But the new arrival isn't the witness - it's a messenger from Corinth, to tell Oedipus that Polybus, his father is dead - he will now be King of Corinth too. Oedipus says he can never go back to Corinth while his mother is alive. "But there's nothing to fear,"says the messenger, hoping to ingratiate himself with his new king, "She wasn't your mother, nor was Polybus your father." He explains how the baby was given to him by a shepherd from Thebes. Jocasta now knows the truth - that Oedipus is her son - and rushes out. Oedipus thinks she's embarrassed because her husband might have been an unwanted child, perhaps a slave's.

### The Old Shepherd - the Truth at last.

At last the Theban shepherd arrives. This turns out to be the same man who had been sent for as the witness to the murder of Laius. He is very reluctant to say anything to Oedipus. Under threat of torture, he reveals that the baby was given to him by Jocasta to be killed - and that he'd passed it on to the Corinthian out of pity. Oedipus now knows the whole truth and rushes off to find Jocasta - but she 's already hanged herself. He takes the shoulder-pins from her dress and blinds himself. And so Creon does become ruler, and after allowing the blinded Oedipus to say goodbye to his daughters, orders him into the house, to await disposal at the god's pleasure. Oedipus goes in, continuing to insist he should be left to die on Cithaeron as the gods originally intended.

## Possible interpretations

Apart from the obviously significant religious message that "you can't escape your fate" it's important to realise :

1. Oedipus wasn't as innocent under Greek law as he might appear under English or Roman : (non est actus reus nisi mens sit rea - there is no guilty act without a guilty mind). To the Greeks the **act** counted, not the motive.
2. The murder of Laius wasn't a crime per se - in fact it was any Greek's duty to harm his enemies (as well as helping his friends). And as far as he knew at the time Laius was an enemy - by insulting Oedipus he had made himself one.
3. Family was everything in Greek culture. (Compare the Godfather films of Francis Ford Coppola to get the flavour of the intensity of family feeling.) Thus the worst conceivable crime was to kill one's father; the second worst was to sleep with one's mother. (More than just an incest taboo is involved here.) No Greek could imagine a worse 'double' than Oedipus'. Mass murder as in Dunblane or a serial killer such as Fred West would have been far less abhorrent. Modern cult use of the word 'motherfucker' could only happen in a culture where the power of the family is waning fast.
4. Oedipus - the greatest of men, the solver of riddles - can only solve the riddle of his own origins by revealing a truth too awful to bear.
5. The power of the curse - Oedipus, having cursed the murderer of Laius - feels he must carry out the sentence on himself.

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

# Structure of the play: Unities of time, place and action

The plot construction of the play is essentially based on the classical norms of the unity of time, place and action. The unity of time means that the play must not cover a course of time not more than a single day: in Oedipus Rex also the whole plot of the play unfolds in the course of just a single day. It is a belief of the classical dramatists that the course of too long a period would seem artificial and hence an obstacle in the life-likeness of a drama. To maintain this classical norm the present play focuses on the last part of Oedipus's life where the whole truth about his life gets credibly exposed in a single day. The unity of place means that the happenings in the plot of a play must be set in places not too far away from each other, so that they will be credible to the audience: the actions of Oedipus Rex happen in front of the palace of the king, Oedipus, except a small bits of actions which are supposed to happen inside the palace. The play is indeed made up of four scenes added with a prologue and an epilogue, but all these scenes take place only within the compound of the palace. The unity of action means that all the actions, incidents or happenings should be strictly related to the central thematic issue, here the problem of Oedipus's birth, fate and past actions. From the very opening, nothing but the impulse and need to discover the murderer drags the play forward.

The design of the plot of this play can be seen in very structural patterns of several kinds. First of all, the plot can be seen as designed according to standard classical norm: a prologue begins the drama by introducing the characters, situation and also revealing the past background; then the body of the drama that follows is a made of episodes (actions) in four scenes; these episodes are interspersed by one ode after each of them; and the drama ends with an exodus, or exit, which is also the resolution or denouement of the play.

#### Prologue

The prologue shows us a group of people lying pleading in front of the palace of the mythical king Oedipus. When the king comes and asks what the matter is, the eldest, who is a priest, replies him. During this dialogue, we learn about the present condition of the Thebans, the past of the glorious king Oedipus, who had solved the riddle of the Sphinx and saved them from misery. This exposition also very well highlights the character of Oedipus as a good and a great king, who is losing his sleep over the problem of the plague in the city. Finally, this preliminary scene also establishes the atmosphere and mood of the tragedy. Like the first act of modern dramas, this scene introduces the basic problem: the inciting event here is the message brought by Kreon that there is the murderer of the old king Laios and that the 'defilement' who should be removed from the country. This gives a decisive push to the action of the drama, a powerful motive to the actions of Oedipus, and a dramatic tension in the minds of the audience.

#### Parodos

The prologue is followed by an ode; but the first ode is called the ‘parodos' or the 'entry' in the manner of a stately marching by the chorus, just like the first scene is called 'prologue' instead of ‘Scene I'. If the first scene (prologue) is the entry of the characters, the first ode (parodos) is the entry of the chorus. This was a ritual formula still common in Sophocles' time. In the first ode, the chorus sings about the misery of the Thebans and the necessity and greatness of the gods. They pray and make us feel the intensity of their grief, as the representative citizens of the city.

#### Episode 1

The first Scene (episode) develops the conflict. No sooner than the king has declared his intentions to punish the culprit, he is faced with the unexpected information that he is himself the evil person that he is seeking! Thinking that the old clairvoyant has been used by Kreon, Oedipus simply dismisses him and accuses Kreon. Thus the conflict branches out and intensifies. But the audience, as well as the chorus, becomes suspicious as to whether Oedipus is -himself the sinner in any way as yet unknown to him. In fact, the Greek audience used to know the story in advance, and they used to explore the theme of the drama in the unique way that the particular dramatist had focused. To this intensified dramatic situation, the chorus adds with yet another emphasis on the importance of the Delphic gods of prophecy. We are shocked. Though the chorus, in their second appearance (first ode) says that "these words (of Teiresias) are lies" for they think they were spoken in anger or out of the conspiracy, they have not lost, and will never lose, their faith in the gods of Delphi.

#### Episode 2

The second episode begins with the previous conflict between Oedipus and Kreon, which has now become public, but it quickly leads us into the second unexpected information from the queen. When the queen gives Oedipus an example of how false the oracles can be, namely the story of her son who was thrown in the forest, she happens to mention that her previous husband was killed at a place named "Phokis", instead of being killed by their own ill-fated child which they threw. This mention of the place of Laios's murder shocks Oedipus, and he begins to believe the blind Teiresias. Now the plot further develops with more rapidity; they send for the shepherd who had seen the murder of Laios. This episode is appropriately followed by second ode in which the chorus again emphasizes the frailty of man before the gods, as well as the inevitability of the rule of fate and the gods. They also add that "the tyrant is the child of Pride... (and) will be caught up in the net of pain", signaling that Oedipus is the son of pride and the fated tyrant!

#### Episode 3

The third scene begins by showing that proud Oedipus has been humbled; but again another piece of unexpected information shocks him. Instead of the shepherd, a messenger from Corinth arrives to tell him that Polybos is dead. But before Oedipus the time to shout in happiness, he is told that Polybos was not his father! This brings still another branch to the plot, at least in the eyes of Oedipus; but we soon find that Oedipus is gathering relevant detail for his investigation about the murderer of Laios! At this point, Oedipus gets the feeling that he has killed Laios, and so he might have to leave his dear Thebes and Thebans; he doesn't know the rest of the story. Irony builds up as in no other drama. The scene is again followed by the chorus lyrically expressing the wish that we knew the future. They would also like Oedipus to be the son of the gods. But alas, this is not so.

#### Episode 4

The fourth act brings about the crisis most dramatically and abruptly. The drama now comes to a close with yet another arrival of the most terrible truth; the information brought by the old shepherd tells Oedipus how he has been running into the very ditch of misery which he has consciously been trying to avoid. The discovery and the reversal of events take place at the same time. The resolution follows in the next scene. Along with the change in the destiny of the main characters and the realization of the inevitable as inevitable, the chorus now chants a song of resignation, an acceptance of man's frailty and the domination of fate.

#### Exodus

In its typical classical pattern, the drama ends with the exodus, or the exit of the characters and the chorus. Oedipus is brought out after his offstage act of blinding himself on seeing the queen's dead body, and then he panics in the most heart-rending manner. He laments for all his past and his ill-fated life, and he also moans for the destiny of his children. But his mind is full of conflicts of several kinds. Kreon takes over and commands that he be taken inside, for the moment, before being driven away from the city. The drama ends with an emphatic thematic speech by the oldest member of the chorus, the choragos, who tells the audience not to presume about life before the moment of death.

In conclusion, the plot of Oedipus Rex is perfect; nothing is left loose or illogical. The unities are maintained and the actions and dialogue are fully convincing. There is poetic justice and there are all reasons for the audience's satisfaction and emotional/ intellectual participation. The process of unfolding the truth of the life and destiny of Oedipus also changes and enlightens the audience to realize their own human condition.

<https://www.bachelorandmaster.com/globaldrama/plot-construction-oedipus-rex.html>

# The oracle at Delphi

An oracle was a response given to individuals or representatives of a state who came to a special place (a fixed geographical location - they were not portable!) to ask a question of a god or hero (hero defined as former mortal promoted to divine status - such as Heracles). Usually the question had to be submitted by - and the answer interpreted by - a priest or priestess. … The favourite for corporate consultation was Apollo's at Delphi. Ancient tales of the priestess being in some way intoxicated by vapour from the earth have gained [some scientific backing](http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/08/15/1060936055066.html) recently.

### The Greek Sphinx

#### Hesiod's tale



The first we hear about her is in Hesiod [6](http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/#hesiod). He says nothing about what she looks like herself, although she is the daughter of a monster, either the Echidna or the Chimaera depending on how you interpret the Greek. Her father was the dog Orthos, and she was the Nemean Lion's sister - presumably she had something of the lion or dog about her, then. I prefer Chimaera, otherwise her mother conceived her by her son, which sounds unlikely as well as rude. Her name is Phix, which is, according to the scholiast, in Hesiod's local Boeotian dialect: elsewhere it would be Sphix. Not Sphinx, which seems to come from a later Greek attempt to connect her with the Greek verb *sphingo*, I bind, constrict or throttle (as in *sphincter*). "The Strangler" sounded a plausible name for a monster - although she seems to have favoured eating her victims raw (according to Aeschylus [7](http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/#aeschylus))

#### Later additions to the myth after Hesiod

Apollodorus [13](http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/#apollod), using very probably the lost work on mythology by Pherecydes of Athens (5th century BC) adds more details. According to him her parents were Echidna (did he misread Hesiod?) and Typhon. Hera sent her to punish the Thebans (what for? - see below). She had the face of a woman, the chest, feet and tail of a lion, and the wings of a bird. She sat on Mount Phikion and asked the Thebans a riddle:

"What has one voice, and is four-footed, two-footed and three-footed?"

Each time the Thebans gave a wrong answer, she ate one of them. Many perished, including eventually Haemon, son of Creon - ruler since the death of Laius, the previous king. [incompatible with Sophocles' *Antigone*, of course]. Creon then announced he'd give the kingship and Laius' widow (his sister Jocasta) to whoever solved the riddle. Oedipus, on his way from Delphi, gave the answer: "Man". The Sphinx threw herself off the acropolis and committed suicide (odd form of suicide for a creature with wings?).

#### Conclusion

Oedipus becomes the detective eager to unlock his own secret, and brave enough not only to condemn himself, but also to award the fit punishment. The blindness! Let Oedipus go on living, but let him be blind now he can see the truth. And that will be the image that, after the genius of Sophocles, all take away with them. Sophocles has to keep the sphinx, because she proves that Oedipus was intelligent - a man who sees the consequences of his actions, and freely decides on the best punishment for them.

# Anagnorisis

For other uses, see [Anagnorisis (disambiguation)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anagnorisis_%28disambiguation%29).

**Anagnorisis** ([Ancient Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek): ἀναγνώρισις), also known as *discovery,* originally meant [recognition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition) in its Greek context, not only of a person but also of what that person stood for, what he or she represented; it was the [hero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero)'s suddenly becoming aware of a real situation and therefore the realization of things as they stood; and finally it was a perception that resulted in an insight the hero had into his relationship with often antagonistic [characters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fictional_character) within [Aristotelian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristoteles) [tragedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anagnorisis#_note-0)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anagnorisis accessed 09h53 01/10/07](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anagnorisis%20accessed%2009h53%2001/10/07)

# Hamartia

**Hamartia**, also called **tragic flaw**, (hamartia from Greek hamartanein, “to err”), [inherent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inherent) defect or shortcoming in the [hero](https://www.britannica.com/art/hero-literary-and-cultural-figure) of a [tragedy](https://www.britannica.com/art/tragedy-literature), who is in other respects a superior being favoured by fortune.

[Aristotle](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aristotelian-criticism) introduced the term casually in the [Poetics](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Poetics) in describing the tragic hero as a man of noble rank and nature whose misfortune is not brought about by villainy but by some “error of judgment” (hamartia). This imperfection later came to be interpreted as a [moral](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moral) flaw, such as [Othello’s jealousy or Hamlet’s irresolution](https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare), although most great tragedies defy such a simple interpretation. Most importantly, the hero’s suffering and its far-reaching reverberations are far out of proportion to his flaw. An element of cosmic collusion among the hero’s flaw, chance, necessity, and other external forces is essential to bring about the tragic [catastrophe](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catastrophe).

In [Greek tragedy](https://www.britannica.com/art/Ancient-Greek-literature) the nature of the hero’s flaw is even more [elusive](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/elusive). Often the tragic deeds are committed unwittingly, as when Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and marries his own mother. If the deeds are committed knowingly, they are not committed by choice: Orestes is under obligation to Apollo to avenge his father’s murder by killing his mother. Also, an apparent weakness is often only an excess of virtue, such as an extreme [probity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/probity) or zeal for perfection. It has been suggested in such cases, since the tragic hero is never passive but struggles to resolve his tragic difficulty with an obsessive dedication, that he is guilty of [hubris](https://www.britannica.com/topic/hubris)—i.e., presumption of being godlike and attempting to overstep his human limitations.

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# Spectacle

Jocasta hangs herself

Oedipus weeps blood after stabbing his eyes

# Dramatic irony

Involves levels of knowledge – esp where audience knows more than characters.

# Tiresias

In Greek Mythology, Tiresias was a well-known prophet for Apollo. He was the son of a shepherd named Everes and a nymph named Chariclo. He resided in Thebes and played an active part in several myths, one of which involved the tragic unfolding of events surrounding the kings of Thebes, including Laius and [Oedipus](https://mythology.net/greek/mortals/oedipus/). He is rumored to have lived for seven generations, finally passing away after the Seven Against Thebes expedition.

In *Oedipus the King*, the new king of Thebes, Oedipus, consults Tiresias regarding the investigation of the previous king’s death. When first summoned, Tiresias refused to give Oedipus a direct answer. Instead, he gave the king hints. He told him that the killer was someone that the king would prefer not to discover. Oedipus angered Tiresias by telling him that his hints were just a way to cover the fact that he couldn’t actually see the future. Oedipus removed Tiresias from his palace but eventually, he discovered the truth and realized that the prophet was right.

<https://mythology.net/greek/mortals/tiresias/>

# The chorus

A group of performers who comment on the main action, typically speaking and moving together. (Oxford Reference). Note their speech: very poetic.

# The old shepherd

Who ever really thinks about the Old Shepherd in this play? But he is absolutely vital to all the actions described in the play:

1. He took the three-day old baby from Jocasta, who had told him to kill it.
2. He claimed he couldn't bear to kill it, and gave it instead to his fellow shepherd from Corinth, from the other side of Mount Cithaeron (with whom he shared three summer seasons - although he had two flocks to the Theban's one)
3. He was one of King Laius' escort when he went on his fateful visit to the oracle at Delphi, and witnessed the killing of his master by Oedipus.
4. He spread the story that King Laius was killed by a gang of thieves (and told Creon and Jocasta this story).
5. He realised that the new king of Thebes was the killer of the previous one and asked Jocasta if he could be sent away from the palace."He was a good slave - he deserved that favour and much more." (Of course he did, she knew how helpful he'd been in disposing of her unwanted child!)
6. When forced to, he confessed to Oedipus that he had failed to kill him as a baby, and given him to the Corinthian instead.

So what sort of character is he? At first it's tempting to feel rather sorry for him - living with his guilty secrets all those years, and seeming never to betray the family he served so loyally. But the more you think about him, the more wretched he seems - a miserable little man too squeamish to carry out the orders to kill the baby (presumably he got as far as pinioning it, to be left for wild animals or birds to dispose of before he decided to get rid of it otherwise) - and telling the parents a lie; and too frightened to tell what he knew about Laius' death - and lying about it, and prepared to lie, too, about his connection with the Corinthian, until he is finally threatened with physical violence by Oedipus himself.

So the fate of the great man, Oedipus, the seeker after truth, solver of the Sphinx's riddle, is settled by a common liar - a man who never told the truth in his life until he was forced to. Oedipus is in no doubt about his feelings for the fellow - he curses the man who saved his life, sincerely wishing he had died that day.

# Jocasta the Pawn … ?

by [Anthony Boyer](mailto:aboyer@kent.edu)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." (James 1:12)

Such is the proclamation in the Holy Bible, and so was the proclamation in ancient Greece. Since the founding of religion, the gods have sought to test those with power. Jocasta was sent by Apollo to do just that: to test Oedipus' - the king of Thebes - faith and conviction.

Throughout the play, Jocasta tested the beliefs of those around her by feigning disbelief in the gods herself. Though she put up this false front, she did keep her faith. At the beginning of the scene wherein a messenger relayed word of Polybus' death and Oedipus' ascension to the throne of Corinth, we see Jocasta praying - not the act of a disbeliever at all! Again, in the same Episode, Jocasta carries garlands and incense to the altar and tries to appeal to Apollo to purify the city of Thebes.

While her faith remains strong, her task from the gods is to test the faiths of others, especially that of Oedipus, which she does. After accusing Creon of conspiracy and treason, Oedipus relates to Jocasta the details of his meeting with Tiresius. Jocasta proceeds to plant doubts of the gods by telling Oedipus the story of the Delphian Oracle and the circumstances surrounding Laius' death. Again, after Polybus' death, she excitedly tells Oedipus that his prophecy was obviously untrue, though it wasn't, and by doing so she attempts to hint that the oracles - and thus the gods - are false. By planting this doubt in Oedipus' mind, the gods are able to test his faith, and his ruling power, through Jocasta - a test which he fails until it is too late.

Why, then, would Jocasta be forced to perform such a dubious task for the gods? It is because she tried to avoid an earlier prophecy. By tying her child's feet together and casting him out, she attempted to defeat the gods, and this of course angered them. Her punishment, then, was to test the beliefs of the very child she cast out.

Oedipus Rex was Sophocles' attempt to show the Greeks that they could not avoid the dealings of the gods, or they may be forced to conspire against the very people they should love most. Jocasta was, in this way, a victim. Though it was by her own doing that this penalty was cast upon her, it was not something she was happy to do, which becomes apparent when she realizes the truth in her earlier prophecy. It is at this moment that she becomes aware of her punishment, and in desperation kills herself. Oedipus Rex is a true tragedy in the sense that fate and Oedipus' own tragic flaw (his hotheadedness) combine to bring about his downfall. What makes it that much more tragic, however, is that the events were, for the most part, out of Oedipus' control. The chain of events was set in motion by his own mother. He was forced to leave Corinth (thus trying to avoid his own prophecy), afraid he may bring harm to the persons whom he loved the most. Scared and angry at the curse he carried upon his back, who can blame him for being hot tempered? It is Jocasta, his own mother and wife, that brings the story full circle by again cursing him, perpetuating a disbelief in the gods.

Jocasta is a victim in Oedipus Rex, but not as much as she is a catalyst for Oedipus' own victimization. She keeps her faith throughout and tries to relieve Oedipus of his. Because of this, readers may in turn pity her and loathe her. But the gods tested the king of Thebes through her - the main goal of the play - and both he and she failed.