**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Oedipus the King**

**Reading Comprehension Guide**

**Characters**

Oedipus

A Priest

Creon

Teiresias

Iocaste

Messenger

Shepherd of Laios

Second Messenger

Chorus of Theban Elders

Choragos

**Vocabulary**

**Prologue**

Chaplets –

Defile –

Exile –

Pilgrimage –

Compunction -

**Scene 1**

Edict –

Clairvoyant –

Pestilence -

Contagion –

Temperate –

Insolence –

Infamy -

**Scene 2**

Treason –

Incarnate –

Malice -

**Scene 5**

Malediction –

Execrable –

Parricide -

Directions: Answer all questions in complete sentences.

**Prologue**

1. In what ways is Oedipus a good king?
2. What is Oedipus’ attitude toward the suppliants (citizens begging for help)?
3. What a re the conditions like in Thebes at the beginning of the play?
4. According to Creon, what does the Oracle say must be done in order to cure Thebes?
5. What prevented the citizens of Thebes from investigating Laius’ death?

**Scene 1**

1. Explain the function of Tiresias in the play. In what ways does his presence emphasize Oedipus’ failings?
2. Of what does Oedipus accuse Tiresias?
3. What does Tiresias reveal to Oedipus? Does Oedipus believe him? Why? Why not?
4. What does Tiresias predict will happen to Oedipus?

**Scene 2**

1. How does the Chorus Leader explain Oedipus’ behavior and accusations?
2. Why doesn’t Creon want to be king? Are his arguments justified?
3. Compare and contrast Creon’s and Oedipus’ characteristics and behavior.
4. In what way, so far, is Oedipus heroic? In what ways does he fit the profile of a classic Greek hero?
5. What is Oedipus’ tragic flaw?
6. What does Iocasta think about soothsayers and predictions?
7. What is Oedipus’ story about Corinth? What happened here?

**Scene 3**

1. What news brings the messenger to Thebes?
2. Why are the Thebans so happy about the news?
3. Why doesn’t Oedipus feel relieved?
4. Why does Jocasta start to hesitate about the investigation? What des she say to try and stop it?
5. Why does Oedipus think she is hesitating?

**Scene 4**

1. How does Oedipus know he can trust the shepherd?
2. Why does the shepherd tell the messenger to stop talking? What does the shepherd know that the messenger does not know?
3. Why did the shepherd give the baby away?
4. What is Oedipus’ reaction to the news?

**Exodos**

1. How does Iocasta die?
2. What does Oedipus do following Iocasta’s death?
3. How does Oedipus explain his decision to harm himself?
4. What does Oedipus think will happen to his daughters?
5. In what significant ways does the chorus contribute to the play?
6. Identify the ways in which Sophocles builds tension throughout the play?
7. Ultimately, do you think Oedipus is a victim of the gods; does he contribute to his own horrible fate, or some combination of both?