

Q. Short note on Oedipus.

Ans: The Oracle of Delphi tells King Laius of Thebes that he'll have a child who's destined to kill him and sleep with Laius's wife, Jocasta, the boy's own mother. When a baby comes along, the king pierces his ankles and leaves him on a mountainside to die. A shepherd finds the baby, though, and takes him to King Polybus and Queen Merope of Corinth, who name him Oedipus and raise him as their own.

One day, Oedipus goes to the Oracle of Delphi to find out who his real parents are. The Oracle doesn't see fit to tell him this, but she does tell him that he's destined to kill his father and sleep with his mother. Oedipus tries to run from this fate, but ends up running right into it. He kills Laius in a scuffle at a crossroads, not knowing he's his real dad. Later, he wins the throne of Thebes and unknowingly marries his mother, Jocasta, after answering the riddle of the Sphinx.

Several years (and several children) later Oedipus and Jocasta figure out the truth of everything with the unwilling help of Tiresius, the seer. Jocasta hangs herself, and Oedipus stabs out his own eyes. The blind king then goes into exile with only his daughter, Antigone, to guide him, and eventually dies in the town of Colonus.

Oedipus demonstrates how the quest for truth is a necessary part of the human condition, and in the process how its suffering causes inevitable hardship and emotional turmoil. Another significant element in the drama is the idea of human freedom vs. fated destiny. The moral of Oedipus story is that one cannot control one's own destiny and that pride leads to downfall.