

# OEDIPUS REX

## Part 1

Sophocles

translated by

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*The action of Oedipus Rex may be described as a search for the truth. As you read, pay attention to the role each character plays in either fulfilling or further complicating this search.*

### CHARACTERS

**Oedipus** (ed'i-pəs, ē'di-), King of Thebes

**A Priest**

**Creon** (krē'än'), brother of Jocasta

**Teiresias** (tī-rē'sē-əs), a blind seer

**Jocasta** (jō-kas'tə), wife of Oedipus and widow of Laius (lā'yəs), former King of Thebes

**Messenger**, from Corinth

**Shepherd of Laius**

**Second Messenger**, from the palace

**Chorus of Theban Elders**

**Choragos** (kə-rā'gəs), the leader of the Chorus

**Antigone** (an-tig'ə-nē) and **Ismene** (is-mē'nē), daughters of Oedipus and Jocasta

**Suppliants**

**Page**

**Servants and Attendants**

### SCENE

*Before the palace of OEDIPUS, King of Thebes. A central door and two lateral doors open onto a platform which runs the length of the facade. On the platform, right and left, are altars; and three steps lead down into the "orchestra," or chorus-ground. At the beginning of the action these steps are crowded by suppliants who have brought branches and chaplets of olive leaves and who lie in various attitudes of despair. OEDIPUS enters.*



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## PROLOGUE

### Oedipus.

My children, generations of the living  
In the line of Cadmus,<sup>o</sup> nursed at his ancient hearth:  
Why have you strewn yourselves before these altars  
In supplication, with your boughs and garlands?

5 The breath of incense rises from the city  
With a sound of prayer and lamentation.

Children,

I would not have you speak through messengers,  
And therefore I have come myself to hear you—  
I, Oedipus, who bear the famous name.

10 (to a PRIEST) You, there, since you are eldest in the  
company,

Speak for them all, tell me what preys upon you,  
Whether you come in dread, or crave some blessing:  
Tell me, and never doubt that I will help you  
In every way I can; I should be heartless

2. **Cadmus** (kad'məs): in Greek mythology, a prince who killed a dragon and sowed its teeth, which turned into an army of men who fought one another; with the five survivors of the battle, Cadmus founded Thebes.

6 ? Try to visualize the despairing postures of the suppliants as Oedipus addresses the people. Together with the details of the incense and the sounds of lamentation, what mood does the scene suggest at the opening of the play?

9 ? Do you think Oedipus is boasting here? Or is he merely being objective about his own status as the King of Thebes?



15 Were I not moved to find you suppliant here.

**Priest.**

Great Oedipus, O powerful King of Thebes!  
You see how all the ages of our people  
Cling to your altar steps: here are boys  
Who can barely stand alone, and here are priests  
20 By weight of age, as I am a priest of God,  
And young men chosen from those yet unmarried;  
As for the others, all that multitude,  
They wait with olive chaplets in the squares,  
At the two shrines of Pallas, and where Apollo  
25 Speaks in the glowing embers.

Your own eyes  
Must tell you: Thebes is tossed on a murdering sea  
And cannot lift her head from the death surge.  
A rust consumes the buds and fruits of the earth;  
The herds are sick; children die unborn,  
30 And labor is vain. The god of plague and pyre  
Raids like detestable lightning through the city,  
And all the house of Cadmus is laid waste,  
All emptied, and all darkened: Death alone  
Battens upon the misery of Thebes.

35 You are not one of the immortal gods, we know;  
Yet we have come to you to make our prayer  
As to the man surest in mortal ways  
And wisest in the ways of God. You saved us  
From the Sphinx, that flinty singer,<sup>o</sup> and the tribute  
40 We paid to her so long; yet you were never  
Better informed than we, nor could we teach you:  
It was some god breathed in you to set us free.

Therefore, O mighty King, we turn to you:  
Find us our safety, find us a remedy,  
45 Whether by counsel of the gods or men.  
A king of wisdom tested in the past  
Can act in a time of troubles, and act well.  
Noblest of men, restore  
Life to your city! Think how all men call you  
50 Liberator for your triumph long ago;  
Ah, when your years of kingship are remembered,  
Let them not say *We rose, but later fell*—  
Keep the State from going down in the storm!  
Once, years ago, with happy augury,

22 ? What gestures might the Priest make as he says these lines?

39. **Sphinx . . . singer:** The Sphinx was a winged monster that killed anyone who could not answer her riddle: "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?" Oedipus gave the correct answer: "A man crawls as an infant, walks erect as a man, and uses a staff in old age." The Sphinx then killed herself.

42 ? What qualities or personality traits in Oedipus does the Priest single out as the ruler's special virtues?

53 ? What familiar metaphor for a state or kingdom is suggested by this line? How does the Priest refer again to this metaphor in line 58?

- 55 You brought us fortune; be the same again!  
 No man questions your power to rule the land:  
 But rule over men, not over a dead city!  
 Ships are only hulls, citadels are nothing,  
 When no life moves in the empty passageways.

**Oedipus.**

- 60 Poor children! You may be sure I know  
 All that you longed for in your coming here.  
 I know that you are deathly sick; and yet,  
 Sick as you are, not one is as sick as I.  
 Each of you suffers in himself alone  
 65 His anguish, not another's; but my spirit  
 Groans for the city, for myself, for you.

I was not sleeping, you are not waking me.  
 No, I have been in tears for a long while  
 And in my restless thought walked many ways.

- 70 In all my search, I found one helpful course,  
 And that I have taken: I have sent Creon,  
 Son of Menoeceus,<sup>o</sup> brother of the Queen,  
 To Delphi, Apollo's place of revelation,<sup>o</sup>  
 To learn there, if he can,

- 75 What act or pledge of mine may save the city.  
 I have counted the days, and now, this very day,  
 I am troubled, for he has overstayed his time.  
 What is he doing? He has been gone too long.  
 Yet whenever he comes back, I should do ill  
 80 To scant whatever duty God reveals.

**Priest.**

It is a timely promise. At this instant  
 They tell me Creon is here.

**Oedipus.**

O Lord Apollo!

May his news be fair as his face is radiant!

**Priest.**

- It could not be otherwise: he is crowned with bay,  
 85 The chaplet is thick with berries.

**Oedipus.**

We shall soon know;

He is near enough to hear us now.

[Enter CREON.]

O Prince:

Brother: son of Menoeceus:

What answer do you bring us from the god?

60 ? Notice how Oedipus repeatedly refers to the Thebans as "children." What does this suggest about the way he regards them?

72. Menoeceus (me-nē'sus)

73. Delphi (del'fī) . . . revelation: Delphi was the seat of the most famous oracle of the god Apollo.



**Creon.**

90 A strong one. I can tell you, great afflictions  
Will turn out well, if they are taken well.

**Oedipus.**

What was the oracle? These vague words  
Leave me still hanging between hope and fear.

**Creon.**

95 Is it your pleasure to hear me with all these  
Gathered around us? I am prepared to speak,  
But should we not go in?

**Oedipus.**

Let them all hear it.

It is for them I suffer, more than for myself.

**Creon.**

100 Then I will tell you what I heard at Delphi.  
In plain words  
The god commands us to expel from the land of Thebes  
An old defilement we are sheltering.  
It is a deathly thing, beyond cure;  
We must not let it feed upon us longer.

**Oedipus.**

What defilement? How shall we rid ourselves of it?

**Creon.**

105 By exile or death, blood for blood. It was  
Murder that brought the plague-wind on the city.

**Oedipus.**

Murder of whom? Surely the god has named him?

**Creon.**

My lord: long ago Laius was our king,  
Before you came to govern us.

**Oedipus.**

I know;

I learned of him from others; I never saw him.

**Creon.**

110 He was murdered; and Apollo commands us now  
To take revenge upon whoever killed him.

**Oedipus.**

Upon whom? Where are they? Where shall we  
find a clue

To solve that crime, after so many years?

**Creon.**

Here in this land, he said.

If we make enquiry,

90 ? In what different ways could the actor playing Creon deliver these lines?

95 ? These two short speeches about where to hold their discussion suggest a contrast between Oedipus's and Creon's attitudes toward the people. What is this contrast?

109 ? What is dramatically ironic about Oedipus's line here?

115 We may touch things that otherwise escape us.

**Oedipus.**

Tell me: Was Laius murdered in his house,  
Or in the fields, or in some foreign country?

**Creon.**

He said he planned to make a pilgrimage.  
He did not come home again.

**Oedipus.**

120 And was there no one,  
No witness, no companion, to tell what happened?

**Creon.**

They were all killed but one, and he got away  
So frightened that he could remember one thing only.

**Oedipus.**

What was that one thing? One may be the key  
To everything, if we resolve to use it.

**Creon.**

125 He said that a band of highwaymen attacked them,  
Outnumbered them, and overwhelmed the King.

**Oedipus.**

Strange, that a highwayman should be so daring—  
Unless some faction here bribed him to do it.

**Creon.**

130 We thought of that. But after Laius' death  
New troubles arose and we had no avenger.

**Oedipus.**

What troubles could prevent your hunting down  
the killers?

**Creon.**

The riddling Sphinx's song  
Made us deaf to all mysteries but her own.

**Oedipus.**

135 Then once more I must bring what is dark to light.  
It is most fitting that Apollo shows,  
As you do, this compunction for the dead.  
You shall see how I stand by you, as I should,  
To avenge the city and the city's god,  
And not as though it were for some distant friend,  
140 But for my own sake, to be rid of evil.  
Whoever killed King Laius might—who knows?—  
Decide at any moment to kill me as well.  
By avenging the murdered king I protect myself.

127 ? Notice how Oedipus refers to a single "highwayman" in this line, whereas Creon had just mentioned a "band of highwaymen" in the plural in line 125. Do you think this is just a casual change from the plural to the singular? What might this slip on Oedipus's part (if it is a slip) suggest? Explain.

143 ? These lines are dramatically ironic, since the audience knows that Oedipus himself is the murderer. In addition to the dramatic irony, what does Oedipus's speculation about his own danger suggest about the nature of ancient Greek kingship?

145 Come, then, my children: leave the altar steps,  
Lift up your olive boughs!

One of you go  
And summon the people of Cadmus to gather here.  
I will do all that I can; you may tell them that.

[Exit a PAGE.]

So, with the help of God,  
We shall be saved—or else indeed we are lost.

**Priest.**

150 Let us rise, children. It was for this we came,  
And now the King has promised it himself.  
Phoebus° has sent us an oracle; may he descend  
Himself to save us and drive out the plague.

[Exeunt OEDIPUS and CREON into the palace by  
the central door. The PRIEST and the SUPPLIANTS  
disperse right and left. After a short pause the CHO-  
RUS enters the orchestra.]

152. **Phoebus** (fē'bas): a name for Apollo as sun god; here, alluding to him as the god of prophecy.

## PARADOS°

### Strophe 1

**Chorus.**

155 What is God singing in his profound  
Delphi of gold and shadow?  
What oracle for Thebes, the sunwhipped city?  
Fear unjoints me, the roots of my heart tremble.  
Now I remember, O Healer,° your power, and wonder:  
Will you send doom like a sudden cloud, or  
weave it  
160 Like nightfall of the past?  
Speak, speak to us, issue of holy sound:  
Dearest to our expectancy: be tender!

### Antistrophe 1

165 Let me pray to Athena, the immortal daughter of Zeus,  
And to Artemis her sister  
Who keeps her famous throne in the market ring,  
And to Apollo, bowman at the far butts of heaven—

**Parados** (par'ə-dōs'): the entrance song of the Chorus. Song and speech alternate throughout the play. In this choral song, the *strophe* (strō'fē) was sung as the Chorus turned from one side of the orchestra to the other. The *antistrophe* (an-tis'trə-fē) was sung while the Chorus moved in a direction opposite from that of the strophe.

158. **Healer**: Apollo, the god of medicine.



O gods, descend! Like three streams leap against  
The fires of our grief, the fires of darkness;  
Be swift to bring us rest!

- 170 As in the old time from the brilliant house  
Of air you stepped to save us, come again!

### Strophe 2

Now our afflictions have no end,  
Now all our stricken host lies down  
And no man fights off death with his mind;

- 175 The noble plowland bears no grain,  
And groaning mothers cannot bear—  
See, how our lives like birds take wing,  
Like sparks that fly when a fire soars,  
To the shore of the god of evening.

### Antistrophe 2

- 180 The plague burns on, it is pitiless,  
Though pallid children laden with death  
Lie unwept in the stony ways,

And old gray women by every path  
Flock to the strand about the altars

- 185 There to strike their breasts and cry  
Worship of Phoebus in wailing prayers:  
Be kind, God's golden child!

### Strophe 3

There are no swords in this attack by fire,  
No shields, but we are ringed with cries.

- 190 Send the besieger plunging from our homes  
Into the vast sea room of the Atlantic  
Or into the waves that foam eastward of Thrace°—

For the day ravages what the night spares—

Destroy our enemy, lord of the thunder!

- 195 Let him be riven by lightning from heaven!

### Antistrophe 3

Phoebus Apollo, stretch the sun's bowstring,  
That golden cord, until it sing for us,

- 170 ? The Chorus says that Apollo saved the city of Thebes once before. To what previous crisis do you think they are alluding?

- 187 ? How does the mood of Strophe 2 and Antistrophe 2 contrast with the mood of the first strophe and antistrophe? What images in the second pair of stanzas focus on death and decay?

192. **Thrace** (thrās): a region lying between the Aegean Sea, the Danube River, and the Black Sea.

- 196 ? What physical activity does the Chorus associate with Apollo? In the Chorus's imagination, is Apollo primarily a healer or a destroyer? Or is he both at once? Explain.



Flashing arrows in heaven!

Artemis, Huntress,  
Race with flaring lights upon our mountains!

200

O scarlet god, O golden-banded brow,  
O Theban Bacchus in a storm of Maenads,°

[Enter OEDIPUS, center.]

Whirl upon Death, that all the Undying hate!  
Come with blinding torches, come in joy!

201. **Theban Bacchus** (bak'əs): Bacchus, also known as Dionysus, was the god of revelry and of brutality. He came to Thebes accompanied by women who sang and danced wildly. When Pentheus, the king of Thebes, mocked the god and his followers, he was punished by being torn limb from limb. **Maenads** (mē'nadz): priestesses of Bacchus.



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## SCENE 1

Oedipus.

205 Is this your prayer? It may be answered. Come,  
Listen to me, act as the crisis demands,  
And you shall have relief from all these evils.

Until now I was a stranger to this tale,  
As I had been a stranger to the crime.  
Could I track down the murderer without a clue?  
210 But now, friends,

As one who became a citizen after the murder,  
I make this proclamation to all Thebans:  
If any man knows by whose hand Laius, son  
of Labdacus,  
Met his death, I direct that man to tell me everything.  
215 No matter what he fears for having so long withheld it.  
Let it stand as promised that no further trouble  
Will come to him, but he may leave the land  
in safety.

Moreover: If anyone knows the murderer to  
be foreign,  
Let him not keep silent: he shall have his  
reward from me.  
220 However, if he does conceal it; if any man  
Fearing for his friend or for himself disobeys this edict,  
Hear what I propose to do:

I solemnly forbid the people of this country,  
Where power and throne are mine, ever to  
receive that man  
225 Or speak to him, no matter who he is, or let him  
Join in sacrifice, lustration,<sup>o</sup> or in prayer.  
I decree that he be driven from every house,  
Being, as he is, corruption itself to us: the Delphic  
Voice of Zeus has pronounced this revelation.  
230 Thus I associate myself with the oracle  
And take the side of the murdered king.

As for the criminal, I pray to God—  
Whether it be a lurking thief, or one of a number—  
I pray that that man's life be consumed in evil  
and wretchedness.  
235 And as for me, this curse applies no less

207 ? What is unintentionally  
ironic about Oedipus's  
statement here?

226. **lustration** (lus-trā'shən): pu-  
rification through ritual.

235 ? How does Sophocles  
deepen the irony of  
Oedipus's curse in these  
lines?



If it should turn out that the culprit is my guest here,  
Sharing my hearth.

You have heard the penalty.

I lay it on you now to attend to this  
For my sake, for Apollo's, for the sick  
Sterile city that heaven has abandoned.  
240 Suppose the oracle had given you no command:  
Should this defilement go uncleansed forever?  
You should have found the murderer: your king,  
A noble king, had been destroyed!

Now I,

245 Having the power that he held before me,  
Having his bed, begetting children there  
Upon his wife, as he would have, had he lived—  
Their son would have been my children's brother,  
If Laius had had luck in fatherhood!

250 (But surely ill luck rushed upon his reign)—  
I say I take the son's part, just as though  
I were his son, to press the fight for him  
And see it won! I'll find the hand that brought  
Death to Labdacus' and Polydorus' child,<sup>o</sup>

255 Heir of Cadmus' and Agenor's line.<sup>o</sup>  
And as for those who fail me,  
May the gods deny them the fruit of the earth,  
Fruit of the womb, and may they rot utterly!  
Let them be wretched as we are wretched, and  
worse!

260 For you, for loyal Thebans, and for all  
Who find my actions right, I pray the favor  
Of justice, and of all the immortal gods.

**Choragos.**

Since I am under oath, my lord, I swear  
I did not do the murder, I cannot name  
265 The murderer. Might not the oracle  
That has ordained the search tell where to find him?

**Oedipus.**

An honest question. But no man in the world  
Can make the gods do more than the gods will.

**Choragos.**

There is one last expedient—

**Oedipus.**

Tell me what it is.

270 Though it seem slight, you must not hold it back.

251 ? The irony in this long speech now reaches an almost unbearable intensity. What tone of voice might an actor playing Oedipus use for these lines?

254. **Labdacus** (lab'də-kəs): king of Thebes and father of Laius. **Polydorus' child**: Polydorus (pāl-i-dō'rəs) was the grandfather of Laius.

255. **Agenor's** (ə-jē'nôr) **line**: Agenor, father of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes.

**Choragos.**

A lord clairvoyant<sup>o</sup> to the lord Apollo,  
As we all know, is the skilled Teiresias.  
One might learn much about this from him, Oedipus.

**Oedipus.**

I am not wasting time:  
275 Creon spoke of this, and I have sent for him—  
Twice, in fact; it is strange that he is not here.

**Choragos.**

The other matter—that old report—seems useless.

**Oedipus.**

Tell me. I am interested in all reports.

**Choragos.**

The King was said to have been killed by highwaymen.

**Oedipus.**

280 I know. But we have no witnesses to that.

**Choragos.**

If the killer can feel a particle of dread,  
Your curse will bring him out of hiding!

**Oedipus.**

No.

The man who dared that act will fear no curse.

[Enter the blind seer TEIRESIAS, led by a PAGE.]

**Choragos.**

285 But there is one man who may detect the criminal.  
This is Teiresias, this is the holy prophet  
In whom, alone of all men, truth was born.

**Oedipus.**

Teiresias: seer: student of mysteries,  
Of all that's taught and all that no man tells,  
Secrets of Heaven and secrets of the earth:  
290 Blind though you are, you know the city lies  
Sick with plague; and from this plague, my lord,  
We find that you alone can guard or save us.

Possibly you did not hear the messengers?

Apollo, when we sent to him,

295 Sent us back word that this great pestilence  
Would lift, but only if we established clearly  
The identity of those who murdered Laius.  
They must be killed or exiled.

Can you use

Birdflight or any art of divination<sup>o</sup>

271. **clairvoyant** (kler-voi'ənt):  
capable of perceiving  
through intuition things that  
cannot be seen.

276. ? Compare Oedipus's  
statement here with lines  
76-80. How does this passage  
resemble his earlier speech?

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299. **Birdflight . . . divination:**  
The flight of birds was ob-  
served by prophets and used  
in interpreting the future.



300 To purify yourself, and Thebes, and me  
From this contagion? We are in your hands.  
There is no fairer duty  
Than that of helping others in distress.

**Teiresias.**

How dreadful knowledge of the truth can be  
305 When there's no help in truth! I knew this well,  
But made myself forget. I should not have come.

**Oedipus.**

What is troubling you? Why are your eyes so cold?

**Teiresias.**

Let me go home. Bear your own fate, and I'll  
Bear mine. It is better so: trust what I say.

**Oedipus.**

310 What you say is ungracious and unhelpful  
To your native country. Do not refuse to speak.

**Teiresias.**

When it comes to speech, your own is neither  
temperate  
Nor opportune. I wish to be more prudent.

**Oedipus.**

In God's name, we all beg you—

**Teiresias.**

315 You are all ignorant.  
No; I will never tell you what I know.  
Now it is my misery; then, it would be yours.

**Oedipus.**

What! You do know something, and will not tell us?  
You would betray us all and wreck the State?

**Teiresias.**

320 I do not intend to torture myself, or you.  
Why persist in asking? You will not persuade me.

**Oedipus.**

What a wicked old man you are! You'd try a stone's  
Patience! Out with it! Have you no feeling at all?

**Teiresias.**

You call me unfeeling. If you could only see  
The nature of your own feelings . . .

**Oedipus.**

325 Why,  
Who would not feel as I do? Who could endure  
Your arrogance toward the city?

**Teiresias.**

What does it matter!

321 ? Is Oedipus's annoyed reaction here understandable, in your opinion? Or is Oedipus prematurely angry with Teiresias?

Whether I speak or not, it is bound to come.

**Oedipus.**

Then, if "it" is bound to come, you are bound to tell me.

**Teiresias.**

No, I will not go on. Rage as you please.

**Oedipus.**

330 Rage? Why not!

And I'll tell you what I think:

You planned it, you had it done, you all but  
Killed him with your own hands: if you had eyes,  
I'd say the crime was yours, and yours alone.

**Teiresias.**

335 So? I charge you, then,  
Abide by the proclamation you have made:  
From this day forth  
Never speak again to these men or to me;  
You yourself are the pollution of this country.

**Oedipus.**

340 You dare say that! Can you possibly think you have  
Some way of going free, after such insolence?

**Teiresias.**

I have gone free. It is the truth sustains me.

**Oedipus.**

Who taught you shamelessness? It was not your craft.

**Teiresias.**

You did. You made me speak. I did not want to.

**Oedipus.**

Speak what? Let me hear it again more clearly.

**Teiresias.**

345 Was it not clear before? Are you tempting me?

**Oedipus.**

I did not understand it. Say it again.

**Teiresias.**

I say that you are the murderer whom you seek.

**Oedipus.**

Now twice you have spat out infamy. You'll pay  
for it!

**Teiresias.**

Would you care for more? Do you wish to be  
really angry?

331 ? How do you react to Oedipus's accusation in these lines?



Greek vase showing preparations for a play.



**Oedipus.**

350 Say what you will. Whatever you say is worthless.

**Teiresias.**

I say you live in hideous shame with those  
Most dear to you. You cannot see the evil.

**Oedipus.**

It seems you can go on mouthing like this forever.

**Teiresias.**

I can, if there is power in truth.

**Oedipus.**

There is:

355 But not for you, not for you,  
You sightless, witless, senseless, mad old man!

**Teiresias.**

You are the madman. There is no one here  
Who will not curse you soon, as you curse me.

**Oedipus.**

360 You child of endless night! You cannot hurt me  
Or any other man who sees the sun.

**Teiresias.**

True: it is not from me your fate will come.  
That lies within Apollo's competence,  
As it is his concern.

**Oedipus.**

Tell me:

Are you speaking for Creon, or for yourself?

**Teiresias.**

365 Creon is no threat. You weave your own doom.

**Oedipus.**

370 Wealth, power, craft of statesmanship!  
Kingly position, everywhere admired!  
What savage envy is stored up against these,  
If Creon, whom I trusted, Creon my friend,  
For this great office which the city once  
Put in my hands unsought—if for this power  
Creon desires in secret to destroy me!

375 He has bought this decrepit fortuneteller, this  
Collector of dirty pennies, this prophet fraud—  
Why, he is no more clairvoyant than I am!

Tell us:

Has your mystic mummer<sup>o</sup> ever approached the  
truth?  
When that hellcat the Sphinx was performing here,

364 ? Why should Oedipus suddenly connect Creon with Teiresias here? Look back to see if line 275 gives you a clue.

376. **mummary**: pretentious or hypocritical rites.

What help were you to these people?  
 Her magic was not for the first man who came along;  
 380 It demanded a real exorcist. Your birds—  
 What good were they? or the gods, for the matter of that?  
 But I came by,  
 Oedipus, the simple man, who knows nothing—  
 I thought it out for myself, no birds helped me!  
 385 And this is the man you think you can destroy,  
 That you may be close to Creon when he's king!  
 Well, you and your friend Creon, it seems to me,  
 Will suffer most. If you were not an old man,  
 You would have paid already for your plot.

383 ? This line furnishes a complex illustration of Sophoclean irony. As he mocks Teiresias, Oedipus tries deliberately to be ironic when he says he is a "simple man, who knows nothing." Explain how this line contains another, unintentional level of dramatic irony.

### Choragos.

390 We cannot see that his words or yours  
 Have been spoken except in anger, Oedipus,  
 And of anger we have no need. How can God's will  
 Be accomplished best? That is what most  
 concerns us.

391 ? Choragos speaks for the entire Chorus. Do you agree with the Chorus's reaction to Oedipus here?

### Teiresias.

395 You are a king. But where argument's concerned  
 I am your man, as much a king as you.  
 I am not your servant, but Apollo's.  
 I have no need of Creon to speak for me.  
  
 Listen to me. You mock my blindness, do you?  
 But I say that you, with both your eyes, are blind:  
 400 You cannot see the wretchedness of your life,  
 Nor in whose house you live, no, nor with whom.  
 Who are your father and mother? Can you tell me?  
 You do not even know the blind wrongs  
 That you have done them, on earth and in the  
 world below.  
 405 But the double lash of your parents' curse will whip you  
 Out of this land some day, with only night  
 Upon your precious eyes.  
 Your cries then—where will they not be heard?  
 What fastness of Cithaeron° will not echo them?  
 410 And that bridal-descant° of yours—you'll know it  
 then,  
 The song they sang when you came here to Thebes  
 And found your misguided berthing.  
 All this, and more, that you cannot guess at now,  
 Will bring you to yourself among your children.

409. **Cithaeron** (si-thē'răn): a mountain in Boeotia (bē-ō'shə), where Oedipus as an infant was left to die.  
 410. **descant** (des'kant'): melody.



415 Be angry, then. Curse Creon. Curse my words.  
I tell you, no man that walks upon the earth  
Shall be rooted out more horribly than you.

**Oedipus.**

Am I to bear this from him?—Damnation  
Take you! Out of this place! Out of my sight!

**Teiresias.**

420 I would not have come at all if you had not asked me.

**Oedipus.**

Could I have told that you'd talk nonsense, that  
You'd come here to make a fool of yourself, and of me?

**Teiresias.**

A fool? Your parents thought me sane enough.

**Oedipus.**

My parents again!—Wait: who were my parents?

**Teiresias.**

425 This day will give you a father, and break your heart.

**Oedipus.**

Your infantile riddles! Your damned abracadabra!

**Teiresias.**

You were a great man once at solving riddles.

**Oedipus.**

Mock me with that if you like; you will find it true.

**Teiresias.**

It was true enough. It brought about your ruin.

**Oedipus.**

430 But if it saved this town?

**Teiresias (to the PAGE).** Boy, give me your hand.

**Oedipus.**

Yes, boy; lead him away.

—While you are here

We can do nothing. Go; leave us in peace.

**Teiresias.**

I will go when I have said what I have to say.

How can you hurt me? And I tell you again:

435 The man you have been looking for all this time,

The damned man, the murderer of Laius,

That man is in Thebes. To your mind he is foreign-born,

But it will soon be shown that he is a Theban,

A revelation that will fail to please.

A blind man,

427 ? Explain Teiresias' mocking irony in this line. To what achievement of Oedipus does the prophet refer?

440 Who has his eyes now; a penniless man, who is  
rich now;  
And he will go tapping the strange earth with his staff  
To the children with whom he lives now he will be  
Brother and father—the very same; to her  
Who bore him, son and husband—the very same  
445 Who came to his father's bed, wet with his father's  
blood.

Enough. Go think that over.  
If later you find error in what I have said,  
You may say that I have no skill in prophecy.

[Exit TEIRESIAS, led by his PAGE. OEDIPUS  
goes into the palace.]

446 ? What gestures might  
Teiresias make as he says  
these lines?

## ODE° 1

### Strophe 1

#### Chorus.

The Delphic stone of prophecies  
450 Remembers ancient regicide  
And a still bloody hand.  
That killer's hour of flight has come.  
He must be stronger than riderless  
Coursers of untiring wind,  
455 For the son of Zeus armed with his father's thunder  
Leaps in lightning after him;  
And the Furies° follow him, the sad Furies.

### Antistrophe 1

Holy Parnassus'° peak of snow  
Flashes and blinds that secret man,  
460 That all shall hunt him down:  
Though he may roam the forest shade  
Like a bull gone wild from pasture  
To rage through glooms of stone.  
Doom comes down on him; flight will not avail him;  
465 For the world's heart calls him desolate,  
And the immortal Furies follow, forever follow.

### Strophe 2

But now a wilder thing is heard

Ode: a song chanted by the  
Chorus. An ode separates  
one scene from the next.

455 ? To whom does the Chorus  
allude when they mention  
"the son of Zeus"? (The  
"Delphic stone" in line 449  
and "Holy Parnassus' peak of  
snow" in line 458 are clues.)

457. **Furies:** avenging spirits.

458. **Parnassus** (pär-nas'əs): the  
mountain where Apollo's  
oracle was located.

467 ? What does the Chorus  
mean by a "wilder thing"  
in this line? Who is the "old  
man skilled at hearing Fate"  
who has appeared in the  
previous scene?





Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

From the old man skilled at hearing Fate in the  
 wingbeat of a bird.  
 Bewildered as a blown bird, my soul hovers and  
 cannot find  
 470 Foothold in this debate, or any reason or rest of mind.  
 But no man ever brought—none can bring  
 Proof of strife between Thebes' royal house,  
 Labdacus' line, and the son of Polybus;  
 And never until now has any man brought word  
 475 Of Laius' dark death staining Oedipus the King.

### Antistrophe 2

Divine Zeus and Apollo hold  
 Perfect intelligence alone of all tales ever told;  
 And well though this diviner works, he works in  
 his own sight;  
 No man can judge that rough unknown or trust in  
 second sight,

480 For wisdom changes hands among the wise.  
 Shall I believe my great lord criminal  
 At a raging word that a blind old man let fall?  
 I saw him, when the carrion woman<sup>o</sup> faced him of  
 old,  
 Prove his heroic mind! These evil words are lies.

483. **carrion woman:** the Sphinx.

484 ? Why does the Chorus  
 refuse to believe Teiresias'  
 accusations against Oedipus?

## SCENE 2

**Creon.**

485 Men of Thebes:  
 I am told that heavy accusations  
 Have been brought against me by King Oedipus.  
 I am not the kind of man to bear this tamely.  
 If in these present difficulties  
 490 He holds me accountable for any harm to him  
 Through anything I have said or done—why, then,  
 I do not value life in this dishonor.  
 It is not as though this rumor touched upon  
 Some private indiscretion. The matter is grave.  
 495 The fact is that I am being called disloyal  
 To the State, to my fellow citizens, to my friends.

486 ? What are the accusations  
 to which Creon refers  
 here?

**Choragos.**

He may have spoken in anger, not from his mind.

**Creon.**

But did you not hear him say I was the one  
 Who seduced the old prophet into lying?

**Choragos.**

500 The thing was said; I do not know how seriously.

**Creon.**

But you were watching him! Were his eyes steady?  
 Did he look like a man in his right mind?

**Choragos.**

I do not know,  
 I cannot judge the behavior of great men.  
 But here is the King himself.

[Enter OEDIPUS.]

**Oedipus.**

505 So you dared come back.  
 Why? How brazen of you to come to my house,

503 ? Is the Chorus noncommittal here because they want to play the peacemaker, or are they "passing the buck," in your opinion?



You murderer!

Do you think I do not know  
That you plotted to kill me, plotted to steal my throne?  
Tell me, in God's name: am I a coward, a fool,  
That you should dream you could accomplish this?  
510 A fool who could not see your slippery game?  
A coward, not to fight back when I saw it?  
You are the fool, Creon, are you not? hoping  
Without support or friends to get a throne?  
Thrones may be won or bought: you could do neither.

**Creon.**

515 Now listen to me. You have talked; let me talk, too.  
You cannot judge unless you know the facts.

**Oedipus.**

You speak well: there is one fact; but I find it hard  
To learn from the deadliest enemy I have.

**Creon.**

That above all I must dispute with you.

**Oedipus.**

520 That above all I will not hear you deny.

**Creon.**

If you think there is anything good in being stubborn  
Against all reason, then I say you are wrong.

**Oedipus.**

If you think a man can sin against his own kind  
And not be punished for it, I say you are mad.

**Creon.**

525 I agree. But tell me: what have I done to you?

**Oedipus.**

You advised me to send for that wizard, did you not?

**Creon.**

I did. I should do it again.

**Oedipus.**

Very well. Now tell me:

How long has it been since Laius—

**Creon.**

What of Laius?

**Oedipus.**

Since he vanished in that onset by the road?

**Creon.**

530 It was long ago, a long time.

**Oedipus.**

And this prophet,

Was he practicing here then?

This is ima

**Creon.** He was; and with honor, as now.

**Oedipus.**

Did he speak of me at that time?

**Creon.**

He never did;

At least, not when I was present.

**Oedipus.**

But . . . the inquiry?

I suppose you held one?

**Creon.**

We did, but we learned nothing.

**Oedipus.**

535 Why did the prophet not speak against me then?

**Creon.**

I do not know; and I am the kind of man

Who holds his tongue when he has no facts to go on.

**Oedipus.**

There's one fact that you know, and you could tell it.

**Creon.**

What fact is that? If I know it, you shall have it.

**Oedipus.**

540 If he were not involved with you, he could not say  
That it was I who murdered Laius.

**Creon.**

If he says that, you are the one that knows it!—

But now it is my turn to question you.

**Oedipus.**

Put your questions. I am no murderer.

**Creon.**

545 First, then: You married my sister?

**Oedipus.**

I married your sister.

**Creon.**

And you rule the kingdom equally with her?

**Oedipus.**

Everything that she wants she has from me.

**Creon.**

And I am the third, equal to both of you?

**Oedipus.**

That is why I call you a bad friend.

**Creon.**

550 No. Reason it out, as I have done.

Think of this first: Would any sane man prefer

Power, with all a king's anxieties,

537 ? What tone of voice might the actor playing Creon use for this line?



To that same power and the grace of sleep?  
Certainly not I.

555 I have never longed for the king's power—only his rights.  
Would any wise man differ from me in this?  
As matters stand, I have my way in everything  
With your consent, and no responsibilities.  
If I were king, I should be a slave to policy.

560 How could I desire a scepter more  
Than what is now mine—untroubled influence?  
No, I have not gone mad; I need no honors,  
Except those with the perquisites I have now.  
I am welcome everywhere; every man salutes me.  
565 And those who want your favor seek my ear,  
Since I know how to manage what they ask.  
Should I exchange this ease for that anxiety?  
Besides, no sober mind is treasonable.  
I hate anarchy  
570 And never would deal with any man who likes it.

Test what I have said. Go to the priestess  
At Delphi, ask if I quoted her correctly.  
And as for this other thing; if I am found  
Guilty of treason with Teiresias,  
575 Then sentence me to death! You have my word  
It is a sentence I should cast my vote for—  
But not without evidence!

You do wrong

When you take good men for bad, bad men for good.  
A true friend thrown aside—why, life itself  
580 Is not more precious!

In time you will know this well:

For time, and time alone, will show the just man,  
Though scoundrels are discovered in a day.

**Choragos.**

This is well said, and a prudent man would ponder it.  
Judgments too quickly formed are dangerous.

**Oedipus.**

585 But is he not quick in his duplicity?  
And shall I not be quick to parry him?  
Would you have me stand still, hold my peace,  
and let  
This man win everything, through my inaction?

560 ? What do you think of Creon's reasoning in these lines? Is his argument convincing, or is it sophistic—that is, fair-seeming, but logically faulty?

582 ? Explain the contrast that Creon draws between just men and scoundrels in these lines.

587 ? Whom does Oedipus address in these lines?

**Creon.**

And you want—what is it, then? To banish me?

**Oedipus.**

590 No, not exile. It is your death I want,  
So that all the world may see what treason means.

**Creon.**

You will persist, then? You will not believe me?

**Oedipus.**

How can I believe you?

**Creon.**

Then you are a fool.

**Oedipus.**

To save myself?

**Creon.**

In justice, think of me.

**Oedipus.**

595 You are evil incarnate.

**Creon.**

But suppose that you are wrong?

**Oedipus.**

Still I must rule.

**Creon.**

But not if you rule badly.

**Oedipus.**

O city, city!

**Creon.**

It is my city, too!

**Choragos.**

Now my lords, be still. I see the Queen,

Jocasta, coming from her palace chambers;

600 And it is time she came, for the sake of you both.

This dreadful quarrel can be resolved through her.

[Enter JOCASTA.]

**Jocasta.**

Poor foolish men, what wicked din is this?

With Thebes sick to death, is it not shameful

That you should rake some private quarrel up?

605 (to OEDIPUS) Come into the house.

—And you, Creon, go now:

Let us have no more of this tumult over nothing.

**Creon.**

Nothing? No, sister: what your husband plans for me

Is one of two great evils: exile or death.

**Oedipus.**

He is right.

596 ? Why do you think Oedipus says that he *must* rule? Is it the tyrant in him, or a belief in fate?





It is your unhappiness, and not his talk,  
That touches me.

As for him—

Wherever he goes, hatred will follow him.

**Creon.**

635 Ugly in yielding, as you were ugly in rage!  
Natures like yours chiefly torment themselves.

**Oedipus.**

Can you not go? Can you not leave me?

**Creon.**

I can.

You do not know me; but the city knows me,  
And in its eyes I am just, if not in yours.

[Exit CREON.]

### Antistrophe 1

**Choragos.**

640 Lady Jocasta, did you not ask the King to go to  
his chambers?

**Jocasta.**

First tell me what has happened.

**Choragos.**

There was suspicion without evidence; yet it rankled  
As even false charges will.

**Jocasta.**

On both sides?

**Choragos.**

On both.

**Jocasta.**

But what was said?

**Choragos.**

Oh let it rest, let it be done with!

645 Have we not suffered enough?

**Oedipus.**

You see to what your decency has brought you:  
You have made difficulties where my heart saw none.

### Antistrophe 2

**Choragos.**

Oedipus, it is not once only I have told you—

You must know I should count myself unwise

650 To the point of madness, should I now forsake you—

You, under whose hand,

In the storm of another time,

632 ? Why does Oedipus yield to the Chorus's request not to punish Creon?





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Our dear land sailed out free.  
But now stand fast at the helm!

**Jocasta.**

655 In God's name, Oedipus, inform your wife as well:  
Why are you so set in this hard anger?

**Oedipus.**

I will tell you, for none of these men deserves  
My confidence as you do. It is Creon's work,  
His treachery, his plotting against me.

**Jocasta.**

660 Go on, if you can make this clear to me.

**Oedipus.**

He charges me with the murder of Laius.

661 ? Think carefully: Has Creon  
in fact charged Oedipus  
with the murder of Laius?

**Jocasta.**

Has he some knowledge? Or does he speak from  
hearsay?

**Oedipus.**

He would not commit himself to such a charge,  
But he has brought in that damnable soothsayer  
665 To tell his story.

**Jocasta.** Set your mind at rest.

If it is a question of soothsayers, I tell you  
That you will find no man whose craft gives knowledge  
Of the unknowable.

Here is my proof:

An oracle was reported to Laius once  
670 (I will not say from Phoebus himself, but from  
His appointed ministers, at any rate)  
That his doom would be death at the hands of his  
own son—

His son, born of his flesh and of mine!

Now, you remember the story: Laius was killed  
675 By marauding strangers where three highways meet;  
But his child had not been three days in this world  
Before the King had pierced the baby's ankles  
And left him to die on a lonely mountainside.

Thus, Apollo never caused that child  
680 To kill his father, and it was not Laius' fate  
To die at the hands of his son, as he had feared.  
This is what prophets and prophecies are worth!  
Have no dread of them.

It is God himself

Who can show us what he wills, in his own way.

**Oedipus.**

685 How strange a shadowy memory crossed my mind,  
Just now while you were speaking; it chilled my heart.

**Jocasta.**

What do you mean? What memory do you speak of?

**Oedipus.**

If I understand you, Laius was killed  
At a place where three roads meet.

**Jocasta.**

690 So it was said;  
We have no later story.



**Oedipus.** Where did it happen?

**Jocasta.**

Phocis,<sup>o</sup> it is called: at a place where the Theban Way  
Divides into the roads toward Delphi and Daulis.<sup>o</sup>

**Oedipus.**

When?

**Jocasta.** We had the news not long before you  
came

And proved the right to your succession here.

**Oedipus.**

Ah, what net has God been weaving for me?

**Jocasta.**

Oedipus! Why does this trouble you?

**Oedipus.** Do not ask me yet.

First, tell me how Laius looked, and tell me  
How old he was.

**Jocasta.** He was tall, his hair just touched  
With white, his form was not unlike your own.

**Oedipus.**

I think that I myself may be accursed  
By my own ignorant edict.

**Jocasta.** You speak strangely.

It makes me tremble to look at you, my King.

**Oedipus.**

I am not sure that the blind man cannot see.  
But I should know better if you were to tell me—

**Jocasta.**

Anything—though I dread to hear you ask it.

**Oedipus.**

Was the King lightly escorted, or did he ride  
With a large company, as a ruler should?

**Jocasta.**

There were five men with him in all: one was a herald,  
And a single chariot, which he was driving.

**Oedipus.**

Alas, that makes it plain enough!

But who—

Who told you how it happened?

**Jocasta.**

A household servant,  
The only one to escape.

**Oedipus.**

And is he still

691. **Phocis** (fō'sis): country in which Mount Parnassus was located.

692. **Daulis** (dō'lis): in Phocis, east of Delphi.

692. ? Try to visualize the place where the "three roads" meet, and then draw a diagram.

695. ? What sudden change of tone might Oedipus use in this line?

703. ? As Oedipus starts to question Jocasta more carefully, what might he begin to suspect?

A servant of ours?

**Jocasta.** No; for when he came back at last  
And found you enthroned in the place of the dead king,  
715 He came to me, touched my hand with his, and begged  
That I would send him away to the frontier district  
Where only the shepherds go—  
As far away from the city as I could send him.  
I granted his prayer; for although the man was a  
slave,  
720 He had earned more than this favor at my hands.

**Oedipus.**  
Can he be called back quickly?

**Jocasta.** Easily.  
But why?

**Oedipus.** I have taken too much upon myself  
Without inquiry; therefore I wish to consult him.

**Jocasta.**  
Then he shall come.

But am I not one also  
725 To whom you might confide these fears of yours?

**Oedipus.**  
That is your right; it will not be denied you,  
Now least of all; for I have reached a pitch  
Of wild foreboding. Is there anyone  
To whom I should sooner speak?

730 Polybus° of Corinth is my father.  
My mother is a Dorian: Merope.°  
I grew up chief among the men of Corinth  
Until a strange thing happened—  
Not worth my passion, it may be, but strange.

735 At a feast, a drunken man maundering in his cups°  
Cries out that I am not my father's son!

I contained myself that night, though I felt anger  
And a sinking heart. The next day I visited  
My father and mother, and questioned them.

They stormed,  
740 Calling it all the slanderous rant of a fool;  
And this relieved me. Yet the suspicion  
Remained always aching in my mind;  
I knew there was talk; I could not rest;  
And finally, saying nothing to my parents,

720 ? How did Jocasta behave  
toward the lone witness to  
the attack on her husband?

729 ? How would you describe  
Oedipus's feelings toward  
Jocasta?

730. **Polybus** (pāl'i-bēs): king of  
Corinth.

731. **Merope** (mer'ə-pē): The Do-  
rians were descended from  
Dorus, a son of Apollo.

735. **maundering** (mōn'dər-ing) in  
**his cups**: talking aimlessly  
while under the influence of  
wine.



745 I went to the shrine at Delphi.  
The god dismissed my question without reply;  
He spoke of other things.

Some were clear,  
Full of wretchedness, dreadful, unbearable:  
As, that I should lie with my own mother, breed  
750 Children from whom all men would turn their eyes;  
And that I should be my father's murderer.

I heard all this, and fled. And from that day  
Corinth to me was only in the stars  
Descending in that quarter of the sky,  
755 As I wandered farther and farther on my way  
To a land where I should never see the evil  
Sung by the oracle. And I came to this country  
Where, so you say, King Laius was killed.

I will tell you all that happened there, my lady.

760 There were three highways  
Coming together at a place I passed;  
And there a herald came towards me, and a chariot  
Drawn by horses, with a man such as you describe

Seated in it. The groom leading the horses  
765 Forced me off the road at his lord's command;  
But as this charioteer lurched over towards me  
I struck him in my rage. The old man saw me  
And brought his double goad down upon my head  
As I came abreast.

He was paid back, and more!  
770 Swinging my club in this right hand I knocked him  
Out of his car, and he rolled on the ground.  
I killed him.

I killed them all.  
Now if that stranger and Laius were—kin,  
Where is a man more miserable than I?  
775 More hated by the gods? Citizen and alien alike  
Must never shelter me or speak to me—  
I must be shunned by all.

And I myself  
Pronounced this malediction upon myself!  
Think of it: I have touched you with these hands,  
780 These hands that killed your husband. What defilement!



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773 ? Why do you think Oedipus  
hesitates before the word  
*kin* in this line?

Am I all evil, then? It must be so,  
Since I must flee from Thebes, yet never again  
See my own countrymen, my own country,  
For fear of joining my mother in marriage  
And killing Polybus, my father.

785

Ah,

If I was created so, born to this fate,  
Who could deny the savagery of God?

Oh holy majesty of heavenly powers!  
May I never see that day! Never!

790

Rather let me vanish from the race of men  
Than know the abomination destined me!

**Choragos.**

We too, my lord, have felt dismay at this.  
But there is hope: you have yet to hear the shepherd.

**Oedipus.**

Indeed, I fear no other hope is left me.

**Jocasta.**

795

What do you hope from him when he comes?

**Oedipus.**

This much:

If his account of the murder tallies with yours,  
Then I am cleared.

**Jocasta.**

What was it that I said

Of such importance?

**Oedipus.**

Why, "marauders," you said,

Killed the King, according to this man's story.

800

If he maintains that still, if there were several,

Clearly the guilt is not mine: I was alone.

But if he says one man, single-handed, did it,

Then the evidence all points to me.

**Jocasta.**

You may be sure that he said there were several;

805

And can he call back that story now? He cannot.

The whole city heard it as plainly as I.

But suppose he alters some detail of it:

He cannot ever show that Laius' death

Fulfilled the oracle: for Apollo said

810

My child was doomed to kill him; and my child—

Poor baby!—it was my child that died first.

No. From now on, where oracles are concerned,  
I would not waste a second thought on any.

785



Oedipus now suspects that he has unwittingly cursed himself as the true murderer of Laius. However, given the fact that he still calls Polybus of Corinth his father in this line, what dreadful truth does he *not* yet suspect?

803



Jocasta referred to "marauding strangers" in the plural at line 675, and Oedipus now distinguishes between plural and singular. Where was the issue of plural vs. singular assailants hinted at earlier in the play?



**Oedipus.**

You may be right.

But come: let someone go

315 For the shepherd at once. This matter must be settled.

**Jocasta.**

I will send for him.

I would not wish to cross you in anything.

And surely not in this.—Let us go in.

817 ? What does the word *cross* mean in this line?

[*Exeunt into the palace.*]

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## ODE 2

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### Strophe 1

**Chorus.**

Let me be reverent in the ways of right,

820 Lowly the paths I journey on;

Let all my words and actions keep

The laws of the pure universe

From highest Heaven handed down.

For Heaven is their bright nurse,

825 Those generations of the realms of light;

Ah, never of mortal kind were they begot,

Nor are they slaves of memory, lost in sleep:

Their Father is greater than Time, and ages not.

### Antistrophe 1

The tyrant is a child of Pride

830 Who drinks from his great sickening cup

Recklessness and vanity,

Until from his high crest headlong

He plummets to the dust of hope.

That strong man is not strong.

835 But let no fair ambition be denied;

May God protect the wrestler for the State

In government, in comely policy,

Who will fear God, and on His ordinance<sup>o</sup> wait.

838. **ordinance** (ôrd''n-ens): decree or command.

### Strophe 2

Haughtiness and the high hand of disdain

840 Tempt and outrage God's holy law;

And any mortal who dares hold





No immortal Power in awe  
 Will be caught up in a net of pain:  
 The price for which his levity is sold.  
 845 Let each man take due earnings, then,  
 And keep his hands from holy things,  
 And from blasphemy stand apart—  
 Else the crackling blast of heaven  
 Blows on his head, and on his desperate heart:  
 850 Though fools will honor impious men,  
 In their cities no tragic poet sings.

844 ? What fate does the Chorus predict for the haughty man?

### Antistrophe 2

Shall we lose faith in Delphi's obscurities,  
 We who have heard the world's core  
 Discredited, and the sacred wood  
 855 Of Zeus at Elis° praised no more?  
 The deeds and the strange prophecies  
 Must make a pattern yet to be understood.  
 Zeus, if indeed you are lord of all,  
 Throned in light over night and day,  
 860 Mirror this in your endless mind:  
 Our masters call the oracle  
 Words on the wind, and the Delphic vision blind!  
 Their hearts no longer know Apollo,  
 And reverence for the gods has died away.

855. Elis (ē'lis): city in the Peloponnese.

856 ? What does the Chorus insist will happen?