Oedipus Rex Socratic Seminar Questions

**Question 1: Several characters have visited the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi in an effort to obtain guidance. Was the advice given to each harmful or helpful? Is it wise to seek insight into your fate/future?**

Helpful Hint: These are the basic requirements for all parts of the question to be answered: **1.** Be able to explain what the oracle is. **2.** Identify all the characters who have visited the oracle (it may have happened “before the play began”) and describe each of these situations to include the advice they were given. (this is where three references should be incorporated) **3.** Be able to use these situations as support for your stance on the question.

**Question 2**

***Consider his last day and let none***

***Presume on his good fortune until he find***

***Life, at his death, a memory without pain.***

**These are the final lines of the play. What lesson do they contain? How does Oedipus's life exemplify that lesson?**

Helpful Hint: These are the basic requirements for all parts of the question to be answered. 1.  Paraphrase the lines. 2. Explain how these lines relate to Oedipus’s life (this is where three references should be incorporated). 3. Explain the lesson that they teach the audience.

**Question 3**

**In scene I, Teiresias speaks as if fate will force out the truth, but in Scene 4 Oedipus blames himself for much of what has happened. Does Sophocles portray Oedipus as a puppet of fate or as a man with free will?**

Helpful Hint: These are the basic requirements for all parts of the question to be answered: **1.** Summarize the main points of Teiresias’ argument **2.** Find three examples of Oedipus’s actions to support your argument (this is where three references should be incorporated)

**Question 4**

**Teiresias is blind, but sees. Oedipus has eyes, but is blind. In the play, how is this paradox defined and why is Oedipus, the man who solved the riddle of the Sphinx, so slow to solve the riddle of his own identity?**

Helpful Hint: These are the basic requirements for all parts of the question to be answered: **1.** Explain the symbolism of sight and blindness in this play. **2.** Find at least three examples in the text to explain each character’s condition (this is where three references should be incorporated). **3.** Explain the meaning of “Teiresias is blind, but sees. Oedipus has eyes, but is blind.” **4.** Explain why Oedipus is so slow to “see.”

**Question 5**

**Over the entrance to the temple at Delphi are inscribed these words: *Know Thyself*. Defend the statement that Oedipus is the classic example of the man whose *hamartia* is that he does not know himself.**

Helpful Hint: These are the basic requirements for all parts of the question to be answered: **1.** Define hamartia and explain the meaning of the phrase “Know Thyself”. **2.** Explain how Oedipus does not know himself and why (this is where three references should be incorporated). **3.** Explain how Oedipus’s lack of self-knowledge caused his downfall.

**Question 6**

**Defend the claim that *hubris* was Oedipus’s *harmartia*.**

Helpful Hint: These are the basic requirements for all parts of the question to be answered: **1.** Define **hubris** and **nemesis**. **2.** Choose three situations in the play, and explain how they are affected by hubris (this is where three references should be incorporated). **3.** Explain how Oedipus’s **hubris** caused his downfall.