**Oedipus the King Study Guide**

1.Analyze the reasons for Oedipus’ suspicions of a conspiracy between Creon and Tiresias. *Why is he suspicious? Is he being reasonable?*

2. Analyze Creon’s defense against Oedipus’ charge of treason and conspiracy. What does he say in his own defense? Why doesn’t it convince Oedipus?

3. Analyze Jocasta's attitude toward oracles.

A) Which specific prophesies does she reject?

B) What evidence does she offer to show that these prophesies are

false?

C) At what point does she begin to suspect the truth? Provide direct quotation.

D) What is the significance of the fact that Chorus imagines Oedipus to be the foundling son of a god?

4. Why does Oedipus react with dismay to Jocasta's description of the murder of Laios?

5. Why does Oedipus insist upon summoning the Theban shepherd?

6. Analyze the moment when Oedipus’s recognition of the truth coincides with the reversal of his intentions.

I) How are Oedipus’ intentions reversed?

a)

b)

c)

d)

II) What evidence leads to his recognition?

a)

b)

c)

d)

7. Describe Jocasta’s suicide in glorious detail, as related by the servant.

8. What reasons does the servant suggest for Jocasta’s suicide?

a)

b)

c)

9. What do you think Oedipus intended to do with the sword? Provide evidence.

10. Describe Oedipus’s self-mutilation in glorious detail.

11. What does the servant suggest about Oedipus’ motives for blinding himself?

a)

b)

c)

12. Analyze Oedipus’s attitude about his tragedy.

13. Is Creon fair to Oedipus? Why or why not?

14. Why is Oedipus concerned for his daughters?

A)

B)

C)

D)

15. Reread Aristotle’s description of the way the pity and fear experienced by the audience leads to catharsis.

*“Tragedy is rooted in the fundamental order of the universe; it creates a cause-and-effect chain that clearly reveals what may happen at any time or place because that is the way the world operates. Tragedy therefore arouses not only pity but also fear, because the audience can envision themselves within this cause-and-effect chain.*

*Catharsis means “purging,” and Aristotle seems to be employing a medical metaphor—tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear in order to purge away their excess. Aristotle also talks of the “pleasure” that is proper to tragedy, apparently meaning the aesthetic pleasure one gets from contemplating the pity and fear that are aroused through an intricately constructed work of art.*

A) Why does the audience pity Oedipus and Jocasta?

B) Why might the audience fear the power of fate while watching the play?

C) Explain how the audience is purged of these emotions after witnessing this tragedy.