

Student Drafting Checklist

Oedipus Rex Literary Analysis Paper

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use this checklist as you draft and revise your essay. Check each box before submitting.

◆ Structure

- ☐ My paper is **5 paragraphs**
- ☐ I have an **introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion**
- ☐ Each body paragraph follows **Topic → Evidence → Commentary → Clincher**

◆ Thesis & Focus

- ☐ My thesis **makes a claim**, not a summary
- ☐ My thesis clearly names **one literary element**
- ☐ My thesis explains **what Sophocles shows through that element**

◆ Literary Element

- ☐ I **defined** my chosen literary element
- ☐ I explained **how Sophocles uses it in Oedipus Rex**
- ☐ I connected it to **another work of literature**
- ☐ I connected it to **a moment in history**
- ☐ I explained **why this element matters**

◆ Evidence & Analysis

- ☐ I used **at least two direct quotes from the play**
- ☐ Every quote has **context before it**
- ☐ Every quote has **commentary after it**
- ☐ I explained **why each quote matters**

◆ Writing Quality

- ☐ I used **strong verbs**
- ☐ I used **quality adjectives**
- ☐ I varied my sentence openers
- ☐ My transitions are clear
- ☐ My conclusion is **reflective, not repetitive**

◆ Final Check

- ☐ I reread my paper out loud
- ☐ I corrected grammar and punctuation
- ☐ My paper is about **1000 words**

Peer Review Feedback Form

Oedipus Rex Literary Analysis

Reviewer Name: _____

Writer Name: _____

Read your partner's **thesis** aloud. Then answer each question below.

1. THESIS CHECK

- ☐ Is this a claim and not a summary of the plot?
- ☐ Can someone reasonably disagree with it?
- ☐ Does it state a truth about the text, not just what happens?

2. STRUCTURE CHECK

- ☐ Does it name the author and the work?
- ☐ Does it clearly name one literary element or theme?
- ☐ Does it explain the effect or meaning of that element?
- ☐ Is it one complete, strong sentence?

3. PROOF CHECK

- ☐ Can this thesis be proven with quotes from the play?
- ☐ Does it guide what the body paragraphs will argue?

One suggestion to make it clearer or stronger:

Final Verdict (Circle One):

Strong as is Needs revision

Strengths

What is the strongest insight or idea in this paper so far?

Evidence & Commentary

Does the evidence clearly support the claim?

☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ Needs stronger explanation

Copy one sentence that is strong:

Copy one sentence that could be clearer or stronger:

Literary Element Use

Is the literary element correctly defined and applied?

☐ Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ Needs correction

What part best shows the literary element at work?

Connections

Does the paper connect to:

- Another work of literature? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- A historical moment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, are those connections explained clearly?

Final Encouragement

Write one encouraging sentence to the writer:

EXAMPLE:

INTRODUCTION + DEFINITION + THESIS

Throughout *Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles uses dramatic irony to heighten tension, deepen the tragedy, and reveal the painful limits of human knowledge. **[THESIS STATEMENT]**

Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something the character does not, and Sophocles builds his entire plot around this gap in understanding. **[DEFINITION OF LITERARY ELEMENT]**

In *Oedipus Rex*, the audience knows from the opening scenes that Oedipus himself is the murderer he is trying to find. **[GENERAL CONTEXT]**

By allowing the audience to see what Oedipus cannot, Sophocles shows how a noble and intelligent ruler can still be blind to the truth. This theme appears not only in Greek tragedy but also throughout history and literature, demonstrating how human beings often walk toward their downfall without realizing it.

Dramatic irony becomes the key that unlocks the full tragic power of the play. **[TRANSITION TO BODY PARAGRAPHS]**

BODY PARAGRAPH 1 – HOW SOPHOCLES USES DRAMATIC IRONY (TEXTUAL EVIDENCE + ANALYSIS)

Sophocles uses dramatic irony most forcefully by allowing Oedipus to curse himself without knowing it. **[TOPIC SENTENCE]**

Early in the play, Oedipus declares, “I curse myself as well... if by any chance he proves to be an intimate of our house.” **[TEXTUAL EVIDENCE / DIRECT QUOTE]**

To the audience, this line rings with horror, because we know the truth Oedipus does not: he is the guilty man. **[COMMENTARY / EXPLANATION]**

This single statement sets the entire tragedy in motion because it shows Oedipus's determination to uphold justice while simultaneously signaling that his search for truth will lead to destruction. **[ANALYTICAL COMMENTARY]**

Sophocles intensifies this irony when Oedipus boasts about solving the riddle of the Sphinx. **[SECOND EXAMPLE]**

His pride in his intellect blinds him to the more important truth about his own identity. **[COMMENTARY]**

The audience watches helplessly as Oedipus's confidence becomes the very flaw that prevents him from seeing the evidence gathering around him. **[ANALYSIS]**

These layers of irony create a tragic structure where every step Oedipus takes toward truth leads him deeper into ruin. **[CLINCHER SENTENCE]**

BODY PARAGRAPH 2 – CONNECTION TO ANOTHER WORK OF LITERATURE

Sophocles' use of dramatic irony reflects a universal pattern found elsewhere in literature. **[TOPIC SENTENCE]**

A powerful parallel exists in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

[INTRODUCTION OF COMPARISON TEXT]

Like Oedipus, Caesar is a respected leader who is warned repeatedly about danger.

The audience knows he will be assassinated, yet Caesar walks into the Senate believing he is safe. **[DRAMATIC IRONY IN COMPARISON TEXT]**

The dramatic irony of the Ides of March mirrors the irony in *Oedipus Rex*: both leaders are blind to their own downfall while the audience watches with dread. **[COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS]**

In both texts, irony reveals the limits of human wisdom, especially in those who believe they see clearly.

This parallel shows that dramatic irony is not just a literary device; it is a way authors explore human pride, blindness, and the tragic cost of ignoring warnings that appear obvious to everyone else.

[CLINCHER]

BODY PARAGRAPH 3 – HISTORICAL CONNECTION

This theme also reflects the experience of real historical leaders whose confidence prevented them from seeing danger. **[TOPIC SENTENCE]**

One striking example is Julius Caesar himself. **[HISTORICAL EXAMPLE]**

Historically, Caesar received signs, warnings, and even direct messages about the plot against him, yet he chose to ignore them. Like Oedipus, he believed too strongly in his own security and judgment. **[COMPARATIVE COMMENTARY]**

Both men were admired, intelligent, and confident, yet both walked directly toward their destruction.

The audience of history—like the Greek chorus—watches their final decisions with tragic awareness. **[ANALOGY + ANALYSIS]**

These examples show that dramatic irony is not merely a tool for storytelling; it reveals something deep about human nature: we often do not see the truth until it is too late. **[CLINCHER]**

CONCLUSION – MEANING, EFFECT, AND UNIVERSAL TRUTH

Ultimately, Sophocles uses dramatic irony to reveal Oedipus as a tragic hero whose downfall comes not from wickedness but from human limitation. **[RESTATED THESIS IN NEW WORDS]**

Though he seeks truth with sincerity, he cannot escape the consequences of actions he does not remember committing.

The audience feels pity for Oedipus because he suffers for crimes he tried to avoid, and fear because his situation reflects the

vulnerability of all human beings. **[CATHARSIS: PITY AND FEAR]**

When Oedipus blinds himself, the irony of the entire play reaches its conclusion: only when he loses physical sight does he finally see the truth. **[FINAL IRONIC REVELATION]**

Through dramatic irony, Sophocles teaches that even the greatest wisdom cannot prevent suffering, and that truth—once revealed—can destroy as well as free.

This ancient tragedy continues to resonate because the gap between what humans know and what they think they know is still the source of great sorrow in literature, history, and life.

[UNIVERSAL INSIGHT / FINAL REFLECTION]