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| **Generic Plot Structure** | **Dramatic Structure of**  **Greek Tragedy** | **Action of Scene** | **Message of Choral Ode** | **Placement of Choral Ode** |
| Exposition | Prologue, Parados | People plead to Oedipus to end the plague. Oedipus curses the murderer. The people plead to the gods for mercy. | We people of Thebes suffer from a hor­rible plague, and we fear our future. What is the oracle at Delphi? May Apollo take pity upon us and save us from this doom. | The entrance song of the chorus reaf­firms the exposition and heightens the emotional impact of the priest's supplication to Oedipus in the Prolo­gue. Furthermore, the entrance of the chorus allows the actor playing the priest to exit, change masks and robes, and return as another character in scene 1. |
| Conflict | Scene 1, Ode 1 | Teiresias identifies Oedipus as murderer. Oedi­pus rejects accusation. The people are con­fused; should they believe Oedipus or Teire­sias? | The killer of Laios will be found and punished, to be sure. However, we doubt Teiresias' accusation of Oedi­pus, for we have known Oedipus to save us from plague, such as that of the Sphinx, not cause one. | The chorus voices the doubt which should exist in the mind of rational man, but also expresses the reverence for the order of the Universe. Again the choral response allows actors to leave the stage, change costumes, and re­turn as different characters. |
| Rising Action | Scene 2, Ode 2 | Oedipus discovers that Laios was killed where three roads meet and that the servant who witnessed the death left the house of Laios when Oedipus became King. The people warn against rejecting oracles. | The tyrant who ignores the laws of the Universe falls from pride. Further­more, the mortal who disdains the power of the gods exhibits hubris and is doomed to fall. When our political leaders disdain the gods, what then do we believe? | The chorus reiterates for the audience a moral dilemma of the play: Is man's destiny ruled by man or the gods? Again actors exit before ode 2 to re­turn in scene 2 as different charac­ters. |
| Scene 3, Ode 3 | Oedipus discovers he was adopted by Polybos; that he was found as an infant on Mount Kithairon. | Who brought Oedipus to Kithairon? Was Oedipus found by Dionysus him­self, roamer of mountains? What is the truth of Oedipus' identity? | The chorus heightens the mystery of the disclosure of Oedipus' foundling story, and reminds the audience of the importance of Dionysus and Mt. Kithairon. Again, the passage covers actors' exits and entrances. |
| Climax | Scene 4 | Oedipus discovers that he was Laios' son left on the mountain as an infant to die. |  |  |
| Falling Action | Ode 4, Exodos | The people bemoan Oedipus' fate, devastated that one so great could fall so far. Jocasta hangs herself; Oedipus blinds himself. | No one was ever greater than Oedi­pus, yet even the great Oedipus has fallen. No plight is more pitiable than that of Oedipus. Though Oedipus did not intend to commit his crimes, he is at last punished for them. We weep for the outcast of the world. All un­derstood too late. | Many references to blindness fore­shadow Oedipus' self-mutilation, to be described in the Exodus. The cho­rus prepares the audience for the final lesson. The practical accommodation for actors' changes of costume is pres­ent here again. |
| Resolution | Exodos | Oedipus exiles himself from Thebes after reflecting on the curse he brings upon his children. The people caution that no one should take the comfort of their lives for granted. | Do not presume yourself to be fortu­nate and happy until you are at the end of your life and may look back on it. You envied Oedipus, so regard what happened to him. | The last words the audience hears are the warnings to them about how they should regard their own lives. The exit of the chorus brings the play full circle, ending it as it began, with the parade of the chorus. |

**Structure of *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles**