**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**2018-2019**

**Mr. Neden’s Helpful Guide to:**

***Oedipus the King***

**English 10**

**Essential Questions:**

**Is pride a positive or negative human attribute?**

**What controls destiny: fate or free will?**

**Why is it important to study work and history from Ancient Greece?**

**In this unit, you will learn:**

* About the significance of Greek tragedy
* The effect of dramatic irony
* The influence this drama has on Western thought (Freud) that is with us today

**Literary terms:**

**foils** (dramatic foils) –characters who highlight the character or temperament of a protagonist through sharp differences in personality, actions, motivation etc.

\***hamartia** – From the Greek for “error,” an error in judgment made by a tragic hero, whether resulting from a lack of knowledge, or a moral flaw, that brings about the suffering, downfall, and often death of that hero. Sometimes known as “tragic flaw.”

\***hubris** – Greek for “insolence,” it is excessive pride that leads to the protagonist’s downfall. This overwhelming pride usually causes the protagonist to ignore a wise warning from a god, or another important figure.

**in medias res** – literally means “in the middle of things.” (Oedipus begins after he has been king in Thebes for many years.)

**paradox** - a statement that seems to contradict itself, or not make sense, but highlights an essential truth

**peripety** - a reversal of fortune for the protagonist after a significant discovery.

**tragic hero** – a character of noble stature who is flawed, and experiences a downfall that is not wholly his fault. In the end, this hero learns something from this defeat.

**Types of Irony**

**dramatic** **irony** – when audience knows something that a literary character does not

**verbal irony** – when the meaning of a statement is different than what is said (most often it’s the opposite of what was said. Sarcasm is verbal irony).

**situational** – an occurrence that is contrary to what is expected

**Types of Conflict**

internal conflict: man vs. himself – a character has to battle his/her own problems, or conscious

external conflict:

man vs. man – between two characters, mainly the protagonist and antagonist

man vs. environment – when other forces in the world provide problems for the protagonists, can be natural or supernatural (also known as “man vs. nature”)

\*Murfin, Ross and Supryia M. Ray.”Hamartia.” and “Hubris.” The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms: Second Edition. Boston: Bedford /St. Martin’s: 2003.

**I. Beginning Exercises**

**I. Prior Knowledge**

**Procedure** – Write your answers in the space below.

**Task** – Write three facts or ideas about ancient Greece and/or the golden age of Athens. Be sure to write complete statements, not just words.

Notes from beginning Oedipus PowerPoint about it and Athenian drama:

**II. Solve a Riddle**

**Procedure** - Annotate poem individually and write a line that you think is the answer. In groups, you will discuss your answers and decide conclusively.

**Task** - The following is a poem by Sylvia Plath that uses a metaphor to create a riddle: mark your confusion, important words, and restatements.

Can you solve the riddle?

# “Metaphors”

by **Sylvia Plath**

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,

An elephant, a ponderous house,

A melon strolling on two tendrils.

O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!

This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.

Money's new-minted in this fat purse.

I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.

I've eaten a bag of green apples,

Boarded the train there's no getting off.

**III. Related Journal**

**Procedure –** Write the date and prompt on a sheet of paper in the journal section of your notebook. Take ten minutes to write this one-page journal.

**Task** -Oedipus is having a bad day. In fact, he is having the worst day of his life. For your journal entry, write a page about your worst day.

If you would like to focus on the positive, you may write about your best day ever. After all, we *are* learning about opposites, irony, and paradox with this unit.

**IV. Questions and Tasks**

Directions: Answer questions in complete sentences, use specific details and/or quotes from the play. A “**Q”** near the number means that you need to add a quote from the text.

1. Why are the citizens burning incense?

2. What do you think of Oedipus when he calls himself “world-famous Oedipus”? How might this characterize him, indirectly?

3. What is the state of Thebes at the very beginning? Give three specifics that support your answer.

**Q** 4. Creon tells Oedipus that there is something that must be done in order to rid Thebes of its plague. What is it?

5. Who is Tiresias?

**Q** 6. Tiresias did not want to announce Laius’s murderer, but he does. Who does he say is Laius’s murderer? What drove Tiresias to name him (**Q**)?

**Q** 7. What does Tiresias predict for Oedipus’s future (at least three things)?

8. What does Oedipus accuse Creon of plotting? What does he say is Creon’s proof of guilt?

**Q** 9. Why does Creon say that he does not want to be king? Do you agree with him?

10. Jocasta tells of a prophecy she and her first husband, Laius, received. Describe that prophecy.

11. Why did Jocasta think that this prophecy would not come true?

12. Who gives the information that, finally, helps Oedipus realize that he is Laius’s murderer? What is this specific information?

13. Explain why it takes time for Oedipus to realize the truth about himself and his role in Laius’s death. There are several reasons, be sure to explain them all here.

14. What was Jocasta’s final action (even though it occurs off stage)?

15. Name Oedipus’s biological *and* adoptive parents.

16. What does Oedipus do after he finds Jocasta? How might it relate to a theme of the drama?

17. In this drama, which power rules: fate or free will? How do you know?

18. Should Oedipus be punished? Answer two ways: in the view of the Theban public and your opinion.

**V. Applying Literary Terms: Dramatic Irony and Tragic Hero**

As we progress through this drama, you will notice a plethora of lines containing dramatic irony. Write at least three lines the lines in the space below: include the speakers’ names, and the page numbers. After each, describe the irony.

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Describe why Oedipus is a tragic hero (remember to address what he learns):

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