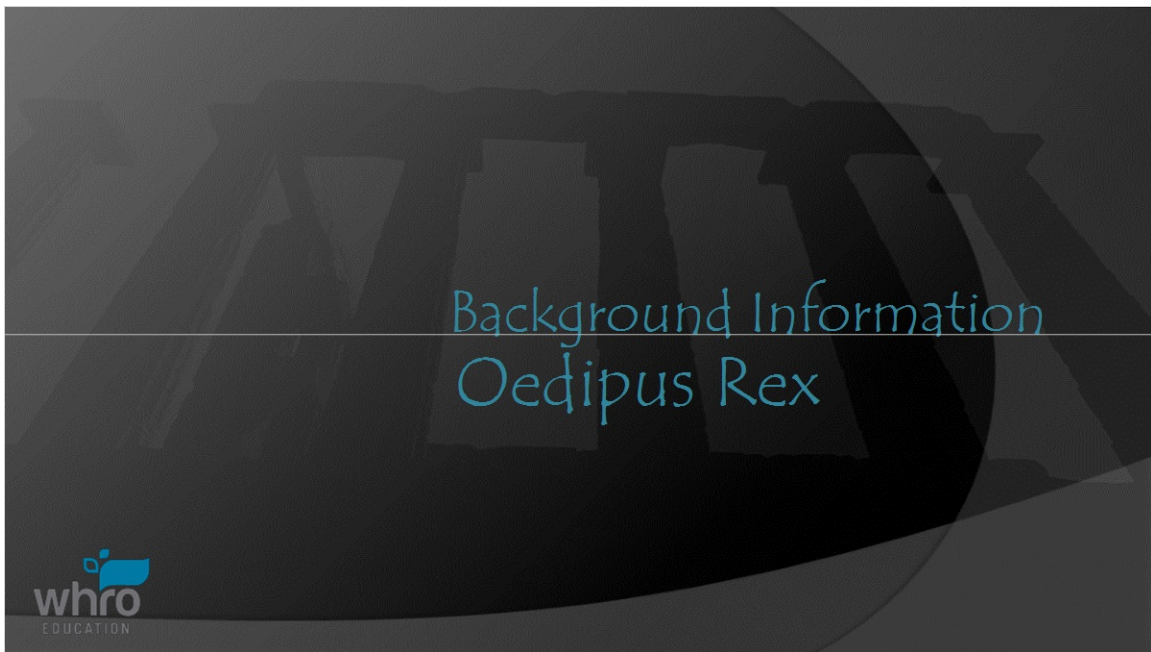


Module 3: Self-Discovery Through Change and Rebirth
Topic 2 Content: *Oedipus Rex* Background Information

Introduction



Background Information: Oedipus Rex

Module 3: Self-Discovery Through Change and Rebirth
Topic 2 Content: *Oedipus Rex* Background Information

Oedipus Rex

Oedipus Rex
"THE ILL-FATED KING OF THEBES"



Oedipus Rex is the first play in the Theban trilogy


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EDUCATION

Do you remember learning about the great oral tradition of the Greeks? Well, one of the stories that would have been familiar to them was the story of Oedipus, "the ill-fated King of Thebes." *Oedipus Rex*, the first play in the trilogy, was actually the second one to be written. Oedipus, the King of Thebes, has a past that is filled with many mysteries, which eventually catch up to him.

Module 3: Self-Discovery Through Change and Rebirth
Topic 2 Content: *Oedipus Rex* Background Information

The Birth of Oedipus

The Birth of Oedipus



- ❖ Parents are Laius and Iocaste
- ❖ Sent to Mt. Cithaeron to die but is saved by a herdsman

Oedipus means "swollen or club foot."

Oedipus was born to the King and Queen of Thebes, Laius (Laios) and Iocaste (Jocasta). Before his birth, the Oracle prophesizes to Laius and Iocaste that their son will kill his father and marry his mother. In hearing this, Laius and Iocaste decide to take their fate into their own hands. Once the baby is born, Laius fastens the baby's ankles together and gives him to a shepherd and tells him to kill the baby. The shepherd takes Oedipus to Mt. Cithaeron to kill him, but realizes that he cannot kill the baby. Instead, the shepherd gives the baby to a herdsman. The herdsman takes the baby, removes the pins fastening the baby's ankles, and gives him to the King and Queen of Corinth (Polybus and Meropé). Meropé treats the baby's ankles and they name him Oedipus. Oedipus means "swollen" or "club foot."


Module 3: Self-Discovery Through Change and Rebirth

Topic 2 Content: *Oedipus Rex* Background Information

Oedipus...from Corinth to Thebes

Oedipus...from Corinth to Thebes

- ❖ Originally from Corinth
- ❖ Oedipus was frightened and fled!




The Oracle at Delphi prophesized that Oedipus would someday murder his father and marry his mother

Now, Oedipus lives a normal, noble life until one dinner in the city of Corinth. How Oedipus comes to the city of Thebes is a very interesting part of the story. While Oedipus was dining at the palace of his parents, Polybus and Merope in Corinth, a drunken guest, “let the cat out of the bag,” so to speak. Before Oedipus was born, there was as divine prophecy from the Oracle at Delphi that Oedipus would someday murder his father and then marry his own mother. Well, the drunk repeated this prophecy at that dinner, and Oedipus, who thought that Polybus and Merope, the king and queen of Corinth were his real parents, was so frightened by the prophecy that he ran away.

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Oedipus Kills His Father

Oedipus kills his father



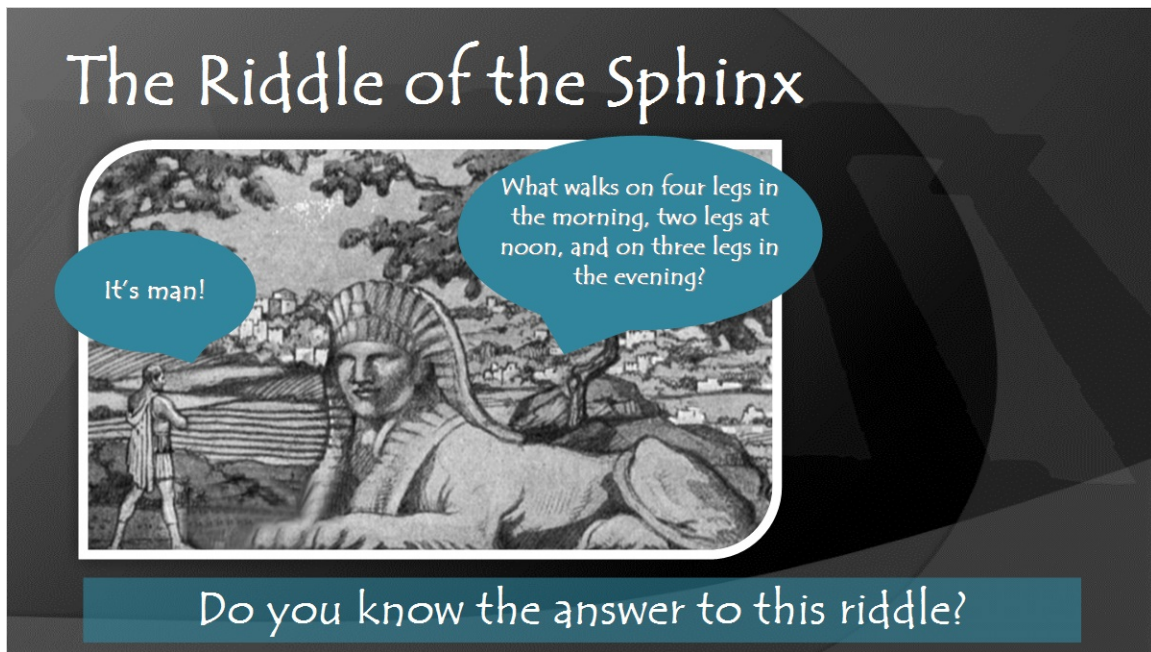
- ❖ On his way to Thebes
- ❖ Hubris
- ❖ Quick to Anger
- ❖ Killed his real father, King Laius

Hubris is Oedipus' tragic flaw. Hubris is excessive pride in oneself and in one's abilities.

He traveled from Corinth to Thebes, and on his way there, he ran into a king and some of his attendants on the road. Oedipus, whose tragic flaw was hubris, was quickly provoked to anger when the travelers refused to make way for him, and he killed King Laius. You guessed it! King Laius was Oedipus's real father! He had now fulfilled one part of the prophecy.

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The Riddle of the Sphinx



The Riddle of the Sphinx

It's man!

What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?

Do you know the answer to this riddle?

After the murder, Oedipus continued on his journey, and found himself at the gates of Thebes, where a Sphinx, a famous mythological animal in the shape of a lion with the wings of an eagle and the head of a woman, had been terrorizing the city. The Sphinx would challenge passersby with this riddle: “What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?” Go ahead and take a guess! Did you get it? Everyone who could not answer the riddle when the Sphinx asked it was killed immediately! No one could answer it, and the city was suffering...until Oedipus came along. Oedipus gave the correct answer to the riddle; man.

Module 3: Self-Discovery Through Change and Rebirth

Topic 2 Content: *Oedipus Rex* Background Information

Oedipus Married Iocaste

Oedipus married Iocaste

- ❖ Iocasta—the widow of Laius
- ❖ Oedipus' own mother!
- ❖ Married for twenty years!
- ❖ Four children!




Oedipus' children are his own brothers and sisters!

The Thebans thought Oedipus was very clever, and he went on to marry, unknowingly, Iocaste who was his mother. Now, the prophecy was fulfilled. Oedipus ruled Thebes with Iocaste for twenty years and had four children with her. Oedipus' children are his own brothers and sisters.

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Happily Ever After?

Happily Ever After?



- ❖ Thebes was suffering the plague
- ❖ Oedipus tried to solve the murder of Laius and solved the mysteries of his own identity

It does not end happily ever after. How could it? As the play began, the city of Thebes was suffering, and was because of a terrible plague. Oedipus tried desperately to solve Laius' murder, and in the process, he solved a more perplexing riddle than even the Sphinx-the whole truth about his identity.