

2015
Nicely done!
Cruelty

diction/syntax
will be
difference for
an 8

Hannah
Selling 8th



nice -
hinting at prompt
answer but
not totally about
w/ cruelty
functions to
(about what)

Cruelty can be described as deriving pleasure from deliberately inflicting suffering on others. In the play, Oedipus Rex, by Sophocles, the theme of cruelty is portrayed through the antagonistic intentions of the Gods upon the people of Thebes, including the tragic hero, Oedipus, his parents: Jocasta and Laios, and other innocent citizens unaware of any wrongdoings that proved to be valuable of the amount of misfortune they were forced to endure.

A parent losing their child is one thing, but being forced to try and kill him or her purposefully is on a completely new level of tragedy. Oedipus's parents, Jocasta and Laios, are faced with the decision to either abandon their son and attempt to end his life, or face harm upon themselves. They didn't desire to have to make this choice, and for no reason at all they become a victim of cruelty; a victim of the Gods. In this play, the lives of the characters are represented by a game, such as chess. The players are the Gods, and the pawns are the people of Thebes. No matter how much the pawns want to escape their tragic fate, or live a good life, the players control their destiny and their fate. By the Gods pushing Jocasta and Laios to try and kill their son, it reveals how much they simply enjoy wrecking people's lives and causing misfortune. The parents, in this case the victims, are simply vulnerable, and did not plan on sending their son to the mountains with placed ankles to die. Overall, the Gods are not only intending to cause cruelty but they are allowing it to occur to good people. The fate is already decided, and bad things happen to good people who are not in control.

Throughout the play, the endurance of cruelty trickles down to Jocasta and Laios's son, Oedipus. He ended up surviving from his abandonment, and grew up not only unaware of who his real parents were, but unaware of the cruelty that was bound to wreck his good intentions and ignorance about the truth of his life. In the meantime, fate was determined, and the Gods simply waited for Oedipus to fulfill the drastic prophecy they had planned. Oedipus



eventually found out about his fate, and tried to escape. In his attempt to escape and avoid killing his parents, the Gods place Laios, his father, as the person for him to murder. As a pun, Oedipus was truly not in control. He tried to prove his freewill and selflessness by avoiding the prophecy, but the deed was already done.

★ Once again the players of the game moved the pun where they wanted it to go. They moved it in a negative direction, causing an even further effect of destruction and tragedy. The last thing Oedipus ever wanted to do was kill his father, and his father did the same to die. Both characters only desired for themselves and their families to be at peace, and in return they suffered through cruelty having no mercy upon their ignorance and naivety. As a whole, the Gods causing detrimental occurrences with the entire family only further reveal their cold hearted mindset that is fueled by the idea of power. In addition, after allowing Oedipus to kill his father, they simply set him up on a quest to fail, since he was the murderer himself. Oedipus was ~~one~~ trying to save Thebes, and track down the man that sparked the plague, but above and beyond his good intentions lay a cruel room ~~pun~~ full of players, causing the pun, Oedipus, to run in circles, only to later find out he is the start of the misfortune of Thebes.

★ Lastly, the town of Thebes was a victim of circumstance, and proved to be innocent victims of the cruelty placed upon their lives and town as well. The Gods not only found pleasure in causing cruelty in Oedipus's family's life, but an entire town. Each citizen was innocent, and unaware of why they must endure famine and sorrow. Each cruel act they went through reveals how even bad things occur to those with sincere intentions, or even a lack of involvement as a whole. They were not attempting to be a hero like Oedipus, but they were not causing trouble either.

The town of Thebes was simply a victim of the Gods dark, cruel mindset, and their vulnerability was enough for the Gods to get upon and control with the small movement of a pun.

8/9

yes - totally
on the fence
WOW!even though the "9"
did this - don't waste
time w/ a title. AP
won't care about
that & some get
cranky about it.

Cleansing Cruelty

On the road to redemption, purging impurities is often a painful process. In Sophocles' play Oedipus Rex, cruelty is an act of cleansing. The cruel acts the play's characters inflict upon themselves depict their overwhelming guilt and their worthiness of compassion. Moreover, the use of cruelty as a means of atonement attests to the play's most poignant message: one must reap the repercussions of wrongdoing to restore righteousness.

Due to dramatic irony, the audience is aware of Oedipus's atrocious acts of patricide and incest before the titular character experiences the horrid revelation of the truth, so the repulsive reality of Oedipus's circumstances is no surprise. Yet, Sophocles manages to shock the reader with Oedipus's violently graphic response to the news. What is most striking about Oedipus's act of cruelty is that he reacts to the news of his transgressions and he decimates his wife and mother Jocaste with self-inflicted trauma. Cruelty toward the self goes against every basic human instinct, so Oedipus's decision to poke black night across his own eyes becomes the most revealing aspect of his character development. By blinding himself, Oedipus establishes that he is conscience-stricken by his reprehensible behavior; the fact that he would endure excruciating pain to avoid physically seeing the wreckage that has become his life elicits intense feelings of sympathy. In committing such a vicious act, Oedipus has physically reflected his emotional torment with the agony of his gouged-out sockets. Though the immediate effect of the cruelty is the establishment that Oedipus is contrite and so overwhelmed with guilt that even the sunniest heart feels the tug of sympathy, Oedipus's blinding himself makes a second revelation: it shows he is cleansed. As blood pours

from his sockets like red hail, Oedipus is baptized in his own blood. After blindly ignoring his crimes for much of the play, Oedipus has finally come to terms with what he's done, and in cruelly punishing himself, purifies his stained soul.

New

The fact that Oedipus is now forgiven is evidenced by the sensitivity with which he is treated after blinding himself. Neither Chorus nor the messengers are repulsed by him; they pity his tragic circumstances. Even Creon, whom Oedipus accused of plotting against him, shows compassion by bringing him Oedipus's daughters for a final farewell.

Similarly, Jocaste's self-directed cruelty reveals that she is both overwrought with guilt and punished at her depravity. The mournful wife returns to the scene of her crime, the bedroom where she conceived children by her child, making a father of her son. Jocaste wearily curses the double fruit of her marriage before stringing herself up by a noose. In hanging herself, Jocaste finds forgiveness and peace. The guards speak of how her tragic story is moving even to those with hearts of stone. The significance of her cruelty as a means of redress is shown in Oedipus's shift from raging resentment to wounded sorrow. After demanding a weapon from Jocaste's guards to attack the woman who blinded his children and himself, Oedipus sees Jocaste hanging and immediately extinguishes his flaming vehemence to mourn her, lowering her softly to the ground. This sharp attitude shift and respectful treatment of her corpse shows Jocaste has been forgiven for the poisonous fruit she bore.

In Oedipus Rex, the heartwrenching acts of cruelty that the royal couple of Thebes commit against themselves reveals that they are truly regretful and contrite about their wrongdoing and that the king and queen have earned compassion from others through cruelty to themselves. Thus, the tragic cruelty asserts the duteful theme of Oedipus: one must face the fallout of one's transgressions to achieve peace and atonement.