

## Ironic Quotes in *Oedipus the King*

- 1) Lines 76-77  
“But when he comes, then, may I prove a villain, if I shall not do all the God commands.” --*Oedipus*

Oedipus is saying that he shall be proved to be the bad guy if he doesn't do something about what the God says must be done to cleanse the city. The irony is that he doesn't know that he is going to be the subject of the God's commands.

- 2) Line 105  
“I know of him by hearsay. I have not seen him.” --*Oedipus*

Oedipus is speaking of the dead king Laius. Ironically, Oedipus has in fact seen him; he saw him when he killed him. He just doesn't know it yet.

- 3) Lines 137-139  
“For when I drive pollution from the land I will not serve a distant friend's advantage, but act in my own interest.” --*Oedipus*

Here, Oedipus is interested in saving his own life by banishing (or killing) a “king-killer”. On the surface, that motive is very much in his interest. But, since the killer happens to be him, he has no idea what he is saying. He eventually acts outside of his own interest.

- 4) Lines 246-249  
“Upon the murderer I invoke this curse- whether he is one man and all unknown, or one of many- may he wear out his life in misery to miserable doom!” --  
*Oedipus*

Here, still unaware that he is the killer, he curses himself.

- 5) Lines 259-268  
“Since I am now the holder of his office, and have his bed and wife that once was his, and had his line not been unfortunate we would have common children- (fortune leaped upon his head)- because of all these things, I fight in his defence as for my father, and I shall try all means to take the murderer of Laius the son of Labdacus the son of Polydorus and before him of Cadmus and before him of Agenor.” --*Oedipus*

This could be interpreted to start as: “Since I have stolen my father’s kingdom, have his wife who is my mother...”

Also, he says that he fights in Laius’ defense, making Oedipus both the plaintiff and the defendant. Too bad he doesn’t know this at this point.

6) Lines 370-372

“It has, but not for you; it has no strength for you because you are blind in mind and ears as well as in your eyes.” --*Oedipus*

Here, Oedipus is accusing Teiresias of the very character traits in himself that are causing the accusations in the first place.

7) Line 437

“What parents? Stop! Who are they of all the world?” --*Oedipus*

Who are they of all the world? They happen to be the whole reason for this story in the first place. Also, he is thinking of his foster parents, not his natural ones.

8) Line 577

“Then hear,- I’ll not be proved a murderer.” --*Oedipus*

Oh, yes he will.

9) Line 974

“You did, but I was misled by my fear.” --*Oedipus*

Fear was only part of it. Oedipus was simply ignorant of the situation in its entirety, and resistant to the truth that he’d been hearing.

10) Lines 936-937

“I come from Corinth and the news I bring will give you pleasure. Perhaps a little pain, too.” --*Messenger*

A little pain? The messenger thought that Oedipus would be happy that he was loved enough to be asked to take reign over another city, but pained a little because it was happening due to his (step) father’s death. Little did he know what would unfold due to his news, and his own personal “news.”