

Example Argument Planner

--shows primary and secondary sources included as support

Essay Question: Was Oedipus a character to condemn or to pity and excuse?

Claim/Thesis: Because of what led up to Oedipus's tragedy, he is not a character to condemn, but one to pity and excuse.

Reason #1: Oedipus should be pitied and excused because he had the best intentions for Thebes.

Evidence#1--He really wanted to get to the bottom of what was causing Thebes pain "After a painful search I found one cure: / I acted at once. I sent Creon, / my wife's own brother, to Delphi-- / Apollo the Prophets oracle—to learn/ what I might do or say to save our city."(80-84)

Connecting statement/How does this quote work as evidence to support your claim?: Oedipus has been truly searching for a cure to the plague, he really wants to restore Thebes to its original state.

Evidence#2--He cares about his citizens more than his own life "Speak out, / speak to us all. I grieve for these, my people, / far more than I fear for my own life (104-106)

Connecting statement: Oedipus really wants the best for his people and cares enough to put their lives before his.

Evidence#3--Again, his good intentions are shown to us when he curses the murderer: "Now my curse on the murderer. Whoever he is. / a lone man unknown in his crime/ or one among many, let that man drag out/ his life in agony, step by painful step-- / I curse myself as well . . . if by any chance/ he proves to be an intimate of our house,/ here at my hearth, with my full knowledge,/ may the curse I just called down on him strike me!".

Connecting statement: We can see how Oedipus truly wants to find the culprit of the murder when he goes as far to curse the murderer and even himself if it results that he knows the killer

Reason #2: In addition, Oedipus should be pitied and excused, because he had no clue that he married his mother and killed his father.

Evidence#1--He had no idea King Lauis was his father "So I will fight for him as if he were my father, / stop at nothing, search the world." (301-302)

Connecting statement: Here we see how Oedipus really has no clue the king was his father, if he did know he would not have said it like this.



Evidence#2--He has no clue about what he did when Tiresias says he is the one cursing Thebes: "You, shameless— / aren't you appalled to start up such a story? / You think you can get away with this?" (402-404)

Connecting statement: We can see that Oedipus has no idea of what Tiresias is talking about, he even believes Tiresias is just out to get him.

Evidence#3-- In *The Life and Work of Sophocles*, by Jelena O. Krstovic, Krstovic explains that Oedipus couldn't have known that he killed his father: "when anyone has had his head almost split open he can hardly be expected to weigh the possibilities of the assailant proving his unknown father, especially if he had already left home to avoid the mischance of killing the very man he believed had begotten him."

Connecting Statement: Through Krstovic's statement we can reflect that since Oedipus thought he had already left his real parents to escape his fate, he couldn't have known that it was his father that he killed.

Reason #3: Lastly, Oedipus should be pitied and excused, because neither his real nor adoptive parents told him about his origins.

Evidence#1--Oedipus himself went to consult the oracle. "Apollo's message was graver this time. Oedipus would marry his mother and kill his father. Determined to escape such a horrendous fate, Oedipus headed away from Corinth, never to return." (Walton)

Connecting statement: If Oedipus adoptive parents had told him about his origins then he would have never left Corinth, he may have even stayed there to avoid his demise.

Evidence#2--Oedipus at one time questioned his adoptive parents about his origins, they still declined to tell him the truth: "I barely restrained myself that day / but early the next I went to mother and father, / questioned them closely, and they were enraged / at the accusations and the fool who let it fly. / So as for my parents I was satisfied".)

Connecting statement: We can see that Oedipus truly believed that his adoptive parents, Polybus and Merope were his real parents. When given the chance to tell Oedipus the truth of his origins, his adoptive parents deceived him

Evidence#3--Later, when the messenger tells Oedipus that Polybus was not his father, we see that Oedipus is still left clueless: "What are you saying—Polybus was not my father?" (1114).

Connecting statement: . We can now see that since Oedipus truly never knew about his origins, he cannot be held responsible and condemned.



Counter Argument (Reason against claim):

(See Countering Guide: <http://www.lirvin.net/WGuides/countering.html>)

Evidence supporting counter claim--Others will argue that Oedipus is responsible for his downfall, like stated in Robert Fagles's intro to Oedipus the King, in The Three Theban Plays, Fagles says, "Oedipus in the play is a free agent, and he is responsible for the catastrophe" (Pg.149).

Connecting statement: Here Fagles is trying to say that no one else is responsible for Oedipus's downfall but himself

Evidence#1 refuting counterargument--Oedipus was not in control of his actions "No one can be held fully responsible for actions committed under some kind of external constraint, and in early Greek belief such constraint might be exerted by a host of nonhuman powers" pg.144

Connecting statement: Oedipus's fate was already pre-determined, therefore he cannot be held for responsible for his actions and condemned.

Evidence#2 refuting counterargument--Again, we see that Oedipus could not be fully responsible for the catastrophe in Michael J Walton's, previously cited Oedipus the King: Overview, Walton asserts: "Part of the play's tragic power resides in human failing, hamartia, constantly underpinning any sense of the inevitable. Laius flaunts Apollo by fathering a child. The man who is meant to expose the child takes pity on it. The king and queen of Corinth decline to tell Oedipus of his origins."

Connecting statement: With this knowledge, we can conclude that Oedipus cannot be entirely blamed for the plays catastrophe because there are many external factors that contributed to it.

