Oedipus the King
Study Guide Questions

Prologue Pages 3-14:

1. Why have the priests come to the altar at Thebes?

2. How did Oedipus once liberate Thebes?

3. Why is Creon away from Thebes when the story opens?

4. According to Creon, what does Apollo want done?

5. How was Laius killed?
6. Why wasn't the death of the king fully investigated?

7. Who are the members of the chorus supposed to be?

8. Briefly summarize the prayer made by the first chorus. (pg. 12-14)

**First Episode Pages 14-26:**

9. What "reward" does Oedipus offer for information about the murderer?

10. What punishment does Oedipus threaten for withholding information about the murderer?

11. Why has Oedipus sent for Tiresias?

12. Why didn't Tiresias come immediately when Oedipus sent for him?
13. Why does Oedipus first grow angry with Tiresias?

14. Why does Tiresias grow angry with Oedipus?

15. What accusation does Tiresias make against Oedipus?

16. Why does Oedipus grow angry with Creon?

17. What prediction does Tiresias make?

Second Episode Pages 27-46:

18. How do the people feel about the accusations Tiresias and Oedipus are making (the chorus)?

19. What does Oedipus think that Creon is plotting?
20. Why does Creon share Oedipus's power?

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21. According to Creon, why wouldn't he want to be king?

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22. What does Creon tell Oedipus to go to Delphi?

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23. What advice does Jocasta give to her quarreling husband and brother?

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24. Why does Oedipus release Creon?

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25. What is Jocasta's "proof" that humans cannot prophesy the future?

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26. Why is Oedipus so disturbed by Jocasta's description of the prophecy about her child and her account of Laius' death?

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27. What favor did Jocasta grant the slave who witnessed the murder?

28. Who were Polybus and Merope?

29. Why did the drunken man’s story bother Oedipus?

30. Why did Oedipus go to Delphi when he was a young man?

31. Why did Oedipus run away from home?

32. Why did Oedipus kill the travelers?

33. Why is Jocasta sure that Apollo’s prophecy—that her child would kill her husband—turned out to be wrong?

34. Why does Oedipus send for the shepard?
Third Episode Pages 47-60:

35. Do the members of the chorus side more with the divine prophecy—or with Oedipus?

36. What offerings does Jocasta bear to the temples of the gods?

37. What news does the messenger bring?

38. Why does Jocasta say that the death of Polybus is "a blessing"?

39. How does the messenger know that Polybus was not Oedipus's father?

40. How did Oedipus get his name?

41. What advice does Jocasta give Oedipus about trying to solve the mystery of his birth?
Fourth Episode Pages 60-67:

42. Which character in the story is a slave?

43. How do the messenger and the shepherd know each other?

44. Why does Oedipus threaten to torture the old shepherd?

45. What “awful truth” does the shepherd reveal?

46. Why did Jocasta give her child to the shepherd?

47. Why didn’t the shepherd kill the child?

Epilogue Pages 68-81:

48. Briefly summarize how the chorus reacts to the truth about Oedipus?
49. How does Jocasta die?

50. How does Oedipus blind himself?

51. Why does Oedipus blind himself instead of killing himself?

52. Who replaces Oedipus as ruler of Thebes?

53. Why does Creon order that Oedipus be taken to the palace?

54. What does Oedipus ask Creon to do with him?

55. What does Oedipus ask Creon to do for his children?

56. What wish did Creon grant Oedipus?

57. Briefly summarize the chorus's final speech?