# Nearpod Guided questions for Introduction to Oedipus

(pg. 462) King Laius of Thebes learned from an oracle that he was destined to have a son who would kill his own father and marry his mother. When the king’s wife, Jocasta, had a son, Laius pinned the baby’s feet together and ordered a servant to leave him on a mountain to die. Instead, the servant gave the baby to a shepherd, who gave him to the king and queen of Corinth. They named the child Oedipus (“swollen foot”) because of his wounded feet.

1. Why were Oedipus’s feet wounded?

2. Why did Oedipus’s father want to kill his own son?

3. Who raised Oedipus? (Hint: You should recognize the place because a whole book of the Bible is named as letters to its people.)

The Oracle. As a young man, Oedipus learned from the oracle at Delphi that he was fated to kill his father and marry his mother. Horrified, he fled Corinth to avoid fulfilling the prophecy. During his travels, Oedipus encountered a chariot that tried to turn him off the road. Enraged, he killed both the charioteer and the passenger and then continued on his way.

4. What is an oracle?

5. Where is the oracle located?

6. How did Oedipus react to the prophecy?

7. What does his actions reveal about his character?

8. Did the king and queen of Corinth tell Oedipus that he was adopted? How do you know?

9. Why did Oedipus kill two people?

10. Did he know who they were?

11. What does his actions reveal about his character? (Hint: His tragic flaw)

Oedipus arrived outside Thebes, where a monster called the Sphinx was terrorizing the city. The Sphinx had a woman’s head, a lion’s body, a serpent’s tail, and an eagle’s wings. She refused to let travelers enter the city unless they could answer her riddle: “What goes on four legs in the morning, two at midday, and three in the evening?” No one had solved her riddle, and she had eaten all who failed.

When the Thebans learned that King Laius had been killed on his way to Delphi, they had no time to find his murderer. Their priority was to save the city from the Sphinx. Queen Jocasta’s brother offered her hand and the crown to any man who could solve the riddle. When Oedipus encountered the Sphinx, he gave the correct answer: “Man, who crawls in infancy, walks upright in his prime, and leans on a cane in old age.” On hearing his answer, the Sphinx flung herself into the sea and died. In reward for saving the city, Oedipus married Jocasta and became the new king.

12. What does the Sphinx look like?

13. How was the Sphinx terrorizing the city?

14. What would have happened if the Sphinx was not a problem when Oedipus killed the King Laius?

15. Who offered the award for solving the Sphinx’s riddle?

16. What does this show you about gender relationships in the culture of that time period?

17. What does it reveal about Oedipus that he was able to solve the riddle?

Oedipus had ruled Thebes for almost twenty years when the city was struck with a devastating plague. Sophocles begins his tragedy, *Oedipus the King*, when Oedipus consults the oracle and learns that the plague will not end until Laius’ murderer is exiled from Thebes.

18. What can you infer will happen after Oedipus seeks wisdom from the oracle during the plague?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXyek9Ddus4> (11 minutes animated)