OEDIPUS REX

ESSAY PROMPT

DIRECTIONS:

Choose one

of the topics listed below, or develop one of your

own, and write a

well-organized essay analyzing how that topic is ad

dressed in Oedipus Rex

.

Your essay should include analysis of what Sophocle

s says and how he says it, with

specific quotations from the text. Remember that q

uotations must be in quotation marks and

must not be “hanging” (standing alone) without expl

anatory language. Include page number in

parenthesis.

Primarily you will be analyzing how this play refle

cts universal

themes, lessons

applicable in all times and places. You may

wish to compare Sophocles’ times with the present

day, to highlight similarities or differences. If

so, use specific modern examples to illustrate, in

addition to text references.

Be sure to give your essay an original title. Leng

th should be 2-5 pages.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

:

a. Fate—Do we make our own, or are we “playthings o

f the gods?” Does the Greek

view of this question differ

from our “modern” ideas? If so, how?

b. Blindness—“There are none so blind as those who

will not see.”

c. Arrogance—Is too much self-esteem a bad

thing?

d. Temper—Does a “short fuse” blow up in one’s own

face?

e. Crime and Punishment—Did the “punishments” of J

ocasta and Oedipus fit the crimes?

Clearly, most of these topics will mainly involve a

character analysis of Oedipus himself,

though several might be best developed through cont

rasts

with other characters such as Creon (c

& d) or Tiresias (b). Topics a and e would also in

volve analysis of Jocasta’s actions.

Key Organizational Concepts

Introduction—Opening of your essay. Usually uses

a strategy to gain readers’ interest (a

quotation, a definition, an anecdote, questions, st

artling statements), followed by the thesis. In a

literary essay like this one, if you can’t think of

another way to start, begin either with a key

word or with the author’s name. Include title and

author in the intro paragraph.

Thesis statement—Gives your opinion about the topic

, what you are going to prove in

your essay. Usually found at the end of your intro

duction.

Body—The middle part of your essay, where you supp

ort and develop your thesis.

Topic sentence—Gives the main idea of a paragraph i

n the body of your essay.

Concrete details—Quotations, facts, reasons, exampl

es in support of your thesis. Each

body paragraph should contain two or more.

Commentary—Analysis of your concrete details, expla

ining what the details mean and

why they matter. Each body paragraph ought to incl

ude both

concrete details and

commentary.

Conclusion—Sums up your essay in an interesting way

. Does not introduce new

information. May restate main ideas or thesis stat

ement. May link specifics of the essay to the

“wider world.”

Key Style Concepts

Vary your sentence lengths and beginnings. Avoid b

eginning with And

, But

, So

.

Keep pronoun usage consistent. In an analytical es

say it is most appropriate to use third-

person pronouns. Avoid you

.

Keep verb tense consistent, either all present or

all past tense.

Avoid contractions and informal language. Spell o

ut small numbers.

Express similar actions and ideas together using p

arallel structure (same verb form, etc.)