Oedipus Rex Essay, Research Paper

“Oedipus Rex”, was written by Sophocles. This play is a Greek tragedy. Many audiences have admired it for years. What makes the play so popular is that it has the exact ingredients that a prototypical tragedy is supposed to have. Aristotle had certain criteria that made a play qualify as a tragedy. A tragedy is when a protagonist is going toward a significant and noble goal and the antagonist stops him/her from reaching this goal. This could be another person, the environment, or his/her tragic flaw. The tragedy occurs when the protagonist fails to reach his/hr goal. Thus, making the story a catastrophically. Oedipus followed Frietag’s pyramid of how a play comes together. This essay will discuss why this play was so admired, why it was one of the most dramatic plots, and what the outstanding characteristics were. All of these concepts will be discussed in further detail in the following paragraphs.

The reason tragedies were created, and why the audience enjoyed them so much was for emotional purposes. Tragedies are not sad the entire time. There are many humorous and ironic parts throughout the play to keep the audience intrigued. The irony in this play was dramatic meaning that the audience knows what is going to happen way before the protagonist has his/her anagonorisis. This is the moment of understanding in the play where the protagonist, in this case Oedipus, realized that he did not outwit the gods and what the oriole said was going to happen comes true, which is that he killed his father and married his mother. The audience is supposed to feel catharsis at the end of the play because in some sense they are glad that something this bad did not happen to them. Also many people may cry at a play of this manner and in the end they feel better, because crying relieves tension. These things are key because when watching the play the audience has a few laughs, but they know what the outcome will be. Because of this, when the tragic end happens, the audience has an emotional release, which usually makes them feel better. Either because they cried, or because they are happy these things did not happen to them. This is all very important because the audience leaves feeling happy thus thinking about how much they liked the play.

Oedipus follows the prototypical example of tragedy according to Aristotle. There are six points that should be followed to have a tragedy according to Aristotle. The first is the protagonist has to be of high estate, which Oedipus the King was. “O Oedipus, most royal one” (Sophocles 64)! The higher they are, the longer they fall, making the tragedy greater. Oedipus is a noble man, which is married to a very honorable woman, making his fall great. An example of just how noble Oedipus is? “Then let him go. And let me die if I must?” (Sophocles 58). Secondly the protagonist must have a tragic flaw. Oedipus’s flaw is that he thinks that he can go against fate, change the order and defeat the gods. This is because part of his flaw is that he is so full of pride, “I Oedipus who bear the famous name” (Sophocles 50). This does not work and he ends up worse than he would have been if he had just let life take its course. Third the audience is left feeling sad, but glad that this didn’t happen to them. The fourth Aristotle idea is that there is a recognition regarding someone’s true identity. “It was true! All the prophecies!” (Sophocles 64) Oedipus finds out who he really is and what he did. The audience has also found this out, but way ahead of the protagonist. The fifth concept is this is reversal, meaning an action has the opposite effect of what was intended. An example of this would be that Oedipus was trying to be the good man, because he loved his father and mother, and by leaving he thought he could change the order and be the hero. The plan backfired and made things worse for him. The last concept is that the tragic outcome is subject to interpretation. This means the tragedy is how the audience perceives the play.

This play follows Freitag’s principles exactly, making the perfect plot. The events that happen before the play begins are shown. Such as the parents leaving Oedipus and how he grew up with non-biological parents. Then the complication begins, this is when Oedipus finds out his fate and takes off and kills his father, and then later in the play finds out when seeking for the killer of the king finds out that he was the killer. “I act for the murdered king in my own interest” (Sophocles 51). This leads in to the climax where everything is coming together, that he married his mother and killed his father, he tried to change the order, but failed. Oedipus’s tragic flaw is prevailing. Then the resolution occurs Oedipus understands that the gods will always win and that he was too prideful and should have never tried to go against them. He then has his anagonorsis, and realizes that everything came true that the oracle said would, and that he failed to break the order. Then the conclusion comes and Oedipus is waiting to see what will become of him. “Life at his death, a memory without pain” (Sophocles 68).

This play is a very prototypical example of a tragedy written by one of the great authors, Sophocles. The play was humorous, ironic, and sad. This is what makes the play so entertaining. All of the audience is on an emotional roller coaster. They are mostly sad, but the irony and humor prevails enough to not depress the audience. All the reasons stated is why the play is so admired, why it contains the perfect plot and the outstanding characteristics that it contains.

31c