

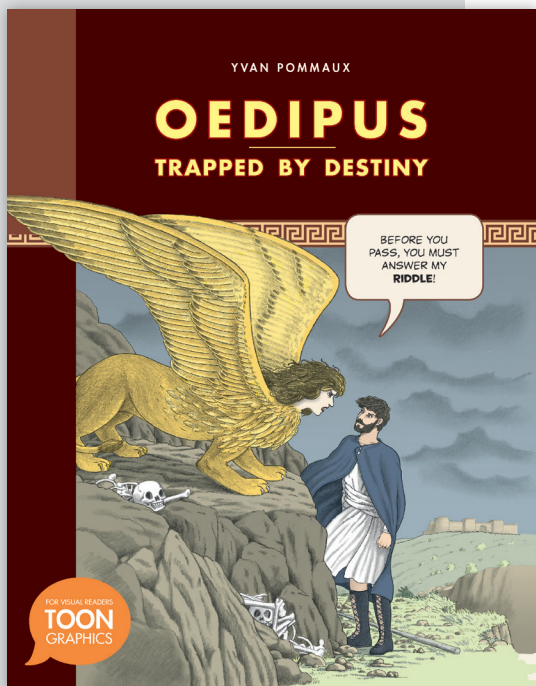


Yvan Pommaux's

Oedipus Trapped By Destiny

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



Oedipus Trapped By Destiny

by Yvan Pommaux

A TOON Graphic

ISBN: 978-1-935179-95-5

© 2016 TOON Books, all rights reserved

www.TOON-BOOKS.com

Please get in touch with your suggestions at
mail@TOON-books.com

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make "mental maps." A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' decisions.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

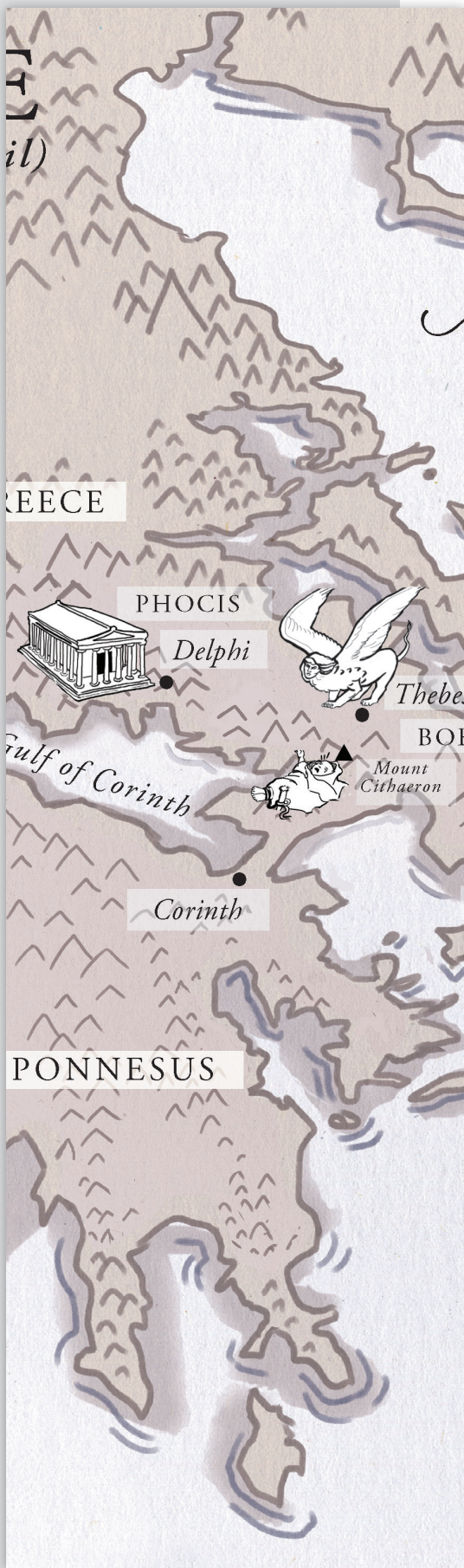
Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.

TEACHER'S GUIDE PREPARED BY
TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH SPECIALIST:

Richard Kutner, a translator of both prose and graphic literature with a thirty-three year background in education. He holds degrees from both New York University and Yale, and was the 2014 recipient of a Hemingway Grant for his work with TOON.





LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expression, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how best to utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. They were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10
Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4-9
Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1
Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

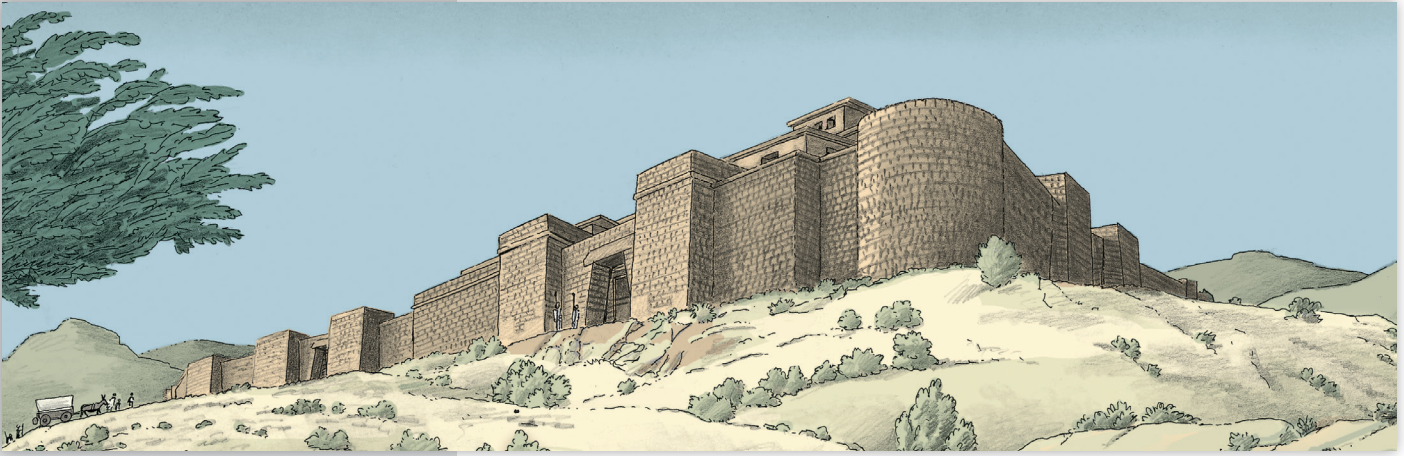
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2
Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4
Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

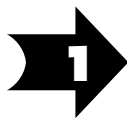
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Theme and Characters

◆ Hubris

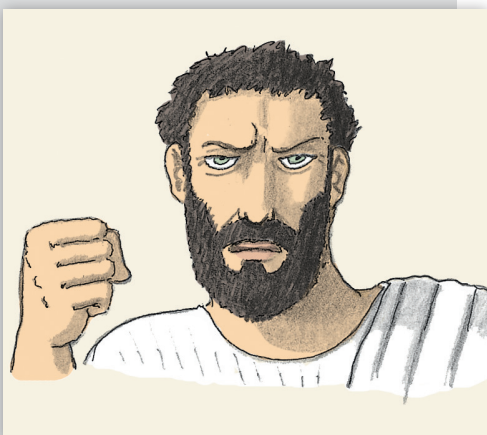
In modern usage, the word “hubris” (from the Greek ὕβρις) means extreme pride or self-confidence. The Ancient Greeks looked at hubris differently. They believed in balance and justice, and for them, hubris meant violent and excessive behavior that exhibited arrogance before the gods. When someone’s actions offended the gods, he or she had to be punished. The Greeks had a goddess named Nemesis, who, among other things, was the spirit of divine retribution against those who committed hubris.

Hubris is usually thought of as a characteristic of an individual rather than of a group, but, as in this book, it can have consequences for a group that the individual is part of.

Laius commits hubris in trying to avoid the Pythia’s prophecy, and Jocasta possibly commits it as well in saying that she doesn’t believe that the prophecy had come true.

Oedipus commits hubris in three ways:

1. by killing Laius
2. in believing so firmly that by fleeing Corinth he has outwitted the gods and escaped the terrible prophecy about himself





CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6
Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.



3. by refusing to believe Tiresias and treating him arrogantly.

It is probably because of Oedipus that the plague comes to Thebes. On page 30, the Pythia says, “Find the man who slew King Laius and punish him. Only then will the gods have mercy and the plague relent.” When he learns the truth, Oedipus punishes himself by gouging his eyes out. This event appears to end the plague in Thebes, returning peace and harmony to the city. Laius and Jocasta both die in this book.

◆ Blindness

The idea of blindness runs through this book. Page 15 begins: “Blinded by unbearable pain and anguish, Oedipus fled.” The soothsayer Tiresias is blind, and on page 31 he says to Oedipus, “Everything you want to know is right before you. For refusing to see, you will be deprived of your sight.” On page 39, Oedipus blinds himself.

What do you think Tiresias means? Did Oedipus refuse to see the truth or was he unable to see it? Why? Have you ever refused to admit the truth to yourself? Tell or write about it. What do you think is meant by “emotional blindness”?

◆ Tragedy Across Generations

There is an old saying that the sins of the father will be visited on the children. This means that if your parent or grandparent did something bad, you may suffer for it or even repeat it. Can you give an example of this? Do you think it's fair? Many people think that Oedipus suffered because of something very bad that his father did to his own protector. This would take away Oedipus's responsibility for his actions. What do you think? Things turned out badly for three of Oedipus's four children. Was this somehow because of their father? What characteristics might they have inherited from him?

◆ Abandonment, Adoption, and the Search For Home

How does Oedipus's abandonment as a baby set the tone for his life? Discuss his adoption by the King and Queen of Corinth. How does his suspicion that he is not their biological son change him? What drives him to leave his home, and what does he hope to discover? When he marries Jocasta and becomes king of Boeotia, one can imagine that Oedipus believes he has finally found his true home. Then, for the second time in his life, sudden knowledge completely changes his relationship to his home and his family. What do you think he hopes to gain by leaving Thebes? Talk about Oedipus's last days. Who takes on the responsibility of caring for him? Do you believe he finally finds a peaceful home in Athens? (For more questions and activities about the role of abandonment in this story, please see the “Further Research” section.)

◆ Oedipus

Make a list of adjectives that describe Oedipus's personality. Think about characters in other books you have read who have these qualities. What influence did these aspects of their personalities have on their actions and destinies?

Oedipus is intelligent (he solves the Riddle of the Sphinx), impulsive (killing Laius), curious (he wants to know the truth from Tiresias), concerned about others (he wants to save the people of Thebes from the plague), responsible (he realizes what he has done and gouges out his eyes), reasonable (as ruler of Boeotia), and courageous (he fights against all of Laius's escorts at once; he faces the Sphinx). He is also egotistical (“Don't you know who I am?”) and quick to anger (he overturns Laius's cart and later threatens Tiresias).



◆ How does Oedipus's personality change from the beginning of the book to the end?

At the beginning of the book, Oedipus is proud, impulsive, and arrogant. As he gets older, he becomes more mature and reasonable and brings peace and prosperity to Boeotia for twenty years. At first he blames what happens on the gods, but Tiresias tells Oedipus that he is responsible for his own fate because he let loose his anger on an old man and took his life. Realizing his responsibility for Laius and Jocasta's deaths, Oedipus gouges out his own eyes, hoping to be able to perceive the true essence of things.

◆ Not much is said about Jocasta in this story. How do you think she felt about having her baby son put out on a mountainside to die? What happens to her in the end?

Women were not citizens in Ancient Greece and had little freedom. On the other hand, Greek goddesses, like Hera, Athena, and Artemis, had a great deal of power. It was Hera who blinded Tiresias (in one version of the myth) and later transformed him into a woman. Why do you think that women were granted less freedom and rights than men in Ancient Greece, although their goddesses were so powerful? Do some research and see what you can find out.

◆ Tiresias lived his life as a man, a woman, and a man again. He was considered to be especially wise because he had experienced life as both man and woman. What knowledge do you think he gained from being each gender?

◆ How is the role of Laius's servant central to this book?

Following Laius's orders, the servant, who is unnamed, tied baby Oedipus to the stake and left him on the mountainside. By the end of the book, he has hidden the truth of this event and of Oedipus's killing Laius for many years (although he didn't know it was Oedipus who killed Laius at the time). His revelations bring about the tragic ending of the myth, leading to Oedipus's blinding himself and Jocasta's suicide. Jocasta does not hear what the servant says but is intelligent and puts two and two together.



Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc., fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

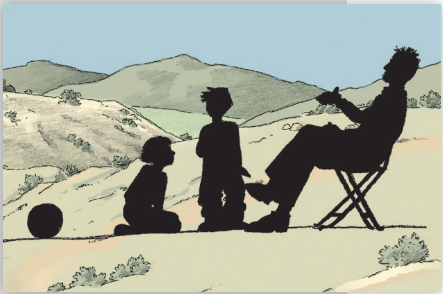
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary.)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Color and Composition



Page 9



Page 9

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2

Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).



Pages 16-17

- ◆ Most of the book is done in soft, calm tones of beige, yellow, blue, brown, and gray. However, there are some sudden and violent changes. Look at the contrast between pages 9 and 10. How does the color change express what is happening, and how does it make you feel?

Things are peaceful and positive on page 9, but on page 10 the Pythia's wild prophecy is reflected in the swirling puffs of blue-gray smoke and the black rocks. There is also a sharp contrast between the white of her robe, the black of Laius's robe, and the rest of the picture. This dramatic color change enhances the disruption of the peaceful mood on the previous page. It takes us off guard and helps us to understand the horror that Laius is feeling. Look also at the Pythia's body language and at her eyes and open mouth. They add to the bizarre, frightening, other-worldly atmosphere. The drama is amplified by the composition of the picture on top of page 14.

- ◆ What effect does the silhouette of the author and his grandchildren have on page 9?

The presence of these figures brings them and us into the world of the story. We almost feel as though we're actually there.

- ◆ The layout of pages 16 and 17 is complicated and adds to the drama of the situation. How? What effect does the use of color have?

This two-page spread begins with Laius at the top left and ends with Oedipus at the bottom right. The sequence of fast-paced short panels enhances the violence of the scene, while the culminating large panel with the red word "CRASH," Laius's blood, the overturned horse, and the tilted, crossing axes of the cart all intensify the drama of the final moment. The muted color palette adds an element of unreality and makes the blood on both pages stand out. Note also the exciting composition of the top central panel and how Oedipus's sword stands out from the rest of the quiet grays and browns.

By placing Laius at the top left and Oedipus at the bottom right, the artist frames the action and uses a subtle diagonal axis to intensify the excitement and add a layer of meaning. He gives the scene a sense of movement and direction but also underscores the biological and psychological links between the two characters. It begins with an angry Laius (who had baby Oedipus abandoned on a mountainside) and ends with Oedipus's sudden realization of what he has done—without knowing that he has actually killed his father. Are they both responsible for their acts or victims of destiny controlled by the gods? In a sense, placing the two characters in this way, with the violent action between them, maps out the fundamental issues of the Oedipus myth.

- ◆ As in *Orpheus in the Underworld* (TOON Graphics, 2015), bright red is used in very few places and in small amounts in this book (pages 16 -17, 33, 36, and 39, and on the lips of the Sphinx and the Pythia). Why do you think this might be, and what do you think it means?

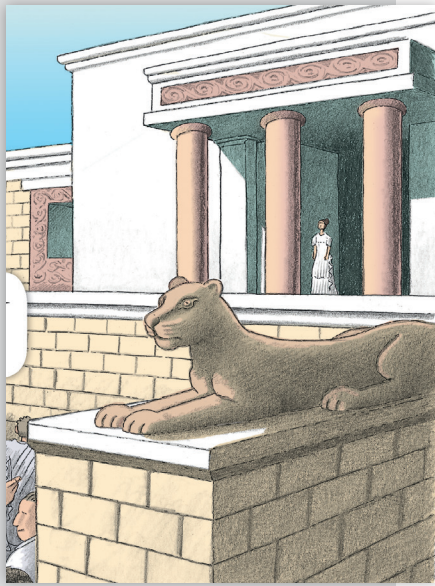
The red stands out in stark contrast to the muted, harmonious color palette of most of the book, making its relationship with blood and violence all the more startling. (Look especially at page 39.) It provides a connection between blood that is actually shed and the violent prophecy of the Pythia. The Sphinx is a fierce and brutal creature, and her red lips are clearly related to the violence of the Oedipus myth.



Pages 18-19

◆ Pages 18-19 seem peaceful at first glance, especially on the left, but take a second look. What makes you sense that something is not right?

The huge, dark trees, with their crossed and curving trunks and branches seen in shadow, dominate this spread and give a menacing and sinister feeling to it. They prepare us and draw us into the drama that begins on the following page, leading up to the confrontation between Oedipus and the Sphinx. The landscape changes from calm, with beautiful, soft colors, to rocky, “busy,” and less flat—another indication of change to a less peaceful situation. Notice how the huge, unrelieved gray area of rock on page 22 makes the encounter feel more sinister.



Page 26

◆ Follow the color change from page 18 to page 25. Why do you think the author did this?

The sky becomes progressively darker and is gray by page 21. The mountains on page 21 lead us physically and psychologically to the Sphinx. Pages 22 to 25 are mostly dark gray, heightening the emotion and meaning of Oedipus’s encounter with the Sphinx. Will he be able to solve her riddle? The bright, unnatural yellow of the Sphinx stands out against the dark background, and the huge spread of her wings adds to the excitement. The whiteness of the skulls and bones of her victims relate to the white of Oedipus’s tunic and perhaps suggest that he may end up like them. The dark color of the rocks underscore the Sphinx’s evil intentions. Sometimes in life, when things are going well, a Sphinx comes along and throws things into chaos.

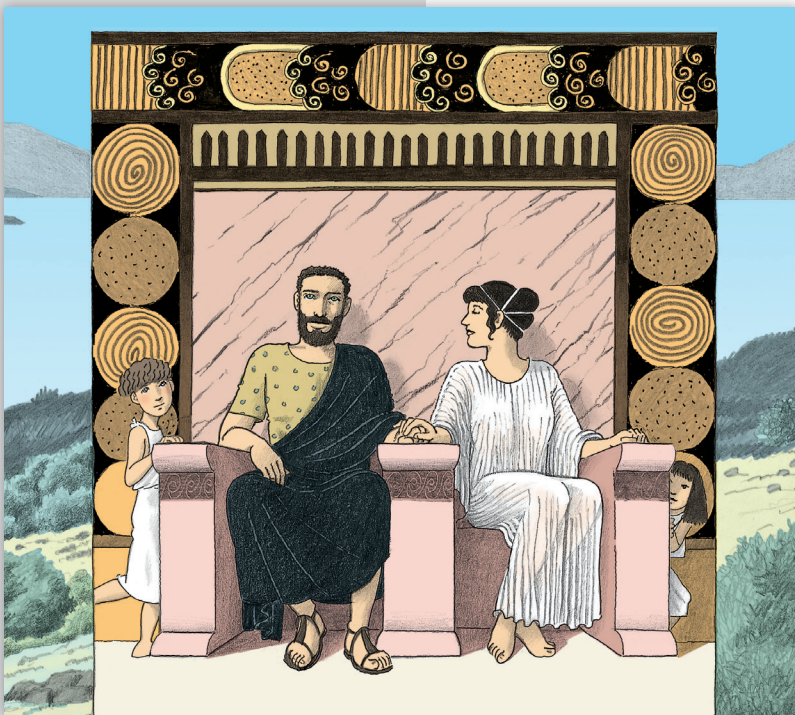
◆ The author went to a great deal of trouble to research Greek art, architecture, use of color, and principles of design. Discuss what some of these are and what they can tell us about Greek culture.

The Greeks liked symmetry and geometry. Look at the temple at the bottom of page 9 or the city walls on pages 8-9. Look carefully at the houses on pages 40 and 41.

Interiors are uncluttered and orderly (page 32, 34) with repeated geometric designs drawn in fine lines (pages 12 and 37). Colors are muted and peaceful. Geometric designs appear on rugs and vases (page 32), and curtains separate rooms. Temples have columns, and the white clothing that Greeks wore almost seem to echo them.

◆ When Oedipus becomes king of Boeotia, it enjoys a period of twenty years of peace and prosperity. How does the illustration on page 27 reflect this time of order?

Much use is made of symmetry on this page, a peaceful and balanced form of design. Oedipus and Jocasta and two of their children are placed symmetrically in a carefully ordered rectangle, with symmetrically placed designs around them. The rectangle is placed in the center of the landscape, and the harmonious colors reflect a time of peace and tranquility. The shepherd and sheep add to the feeling of serenity.



Page 27

◆ How do the colors and composition of

We get a feeling for Oedipus and Antigone’s vulnerability. They are very small beings in a world beyond their control. The landscape is peaceful and uncluttered, reflecting Oedipus’s hope that he may be able to perceive the true nature of things. The foreboding sky may indicate otherwise, might be a representation of Oedipus’s tragic life, or might be a foreshadowing of his death, mentioned in the last sentence.

◆ On page 38, how does the artist make Tiresias look as though he has “appeared from nowhere”?

Tiresias appears in a kind of black cloud and is sharply outlined in thick black lines. It almost looks as if a cutout has been laid on the page. Notice how the “cloud” makes the lines in the floor stand out, in contrast to how they look under Oedipus. This may be related to the conflict between darkness and light in this book or to the contrast between blindness and sight. It may also foreshadow Oedipus’s blinding of himself and suggest that he will be able to see the true essence of things, as he hopes, when he can no longer physically see.



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, and describe how a speaker’s point of view influences the description.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

Abandonment in Oedipus and Hansel and Gretel

◆ Like Oedipus, *Hansel and Gretel* (TOON Books, 2014) are also abandoned by their parents. Compare and contrast the parents’ motivations. Was abandonment the only solution in both cases?

In order to avoid the Pythia’s dire prophecy, baby Oedipus’s father orders that he be placed on a mountainside, where he will surely die. The abandonment of Hansel and Gretel is their mother’s idea. With two less mouths to feed, the parents will have a much greater chance of surviving the famine. Both Laius and Hansel and Gretel’s parents were concerned more with their own survival than with the welfare of their children. Laius and Jocasta could have chosen not to believe the prophecy. In fact, later in the book, Jocasta says that it hasn’t come true. Maybe they could have run away to try to avoid it. Hansel and Gretel’s parents could possibly have found more creative ways of finding food or could have been more generous with the little they had. Perhaps they could have moved somewhere else or given their children temporarily to other relatives.

◆ Why does Hansel and Gretel’s mother say they should “lose” the children, not “kill” them? How does this relate to Laius’s having Oedipus put on the mountainside?

In using this approach, Hansel and Gretel’s mother probably wants to avoid

feelings of guilt. She says, “They will be fine.” No doubt she knows that the children won’t be able to survive in the forest, but she personally won’t be guilty of their deaths. The same is true for Laius. In having his servant place baby Oedipus on the mountainside, he is leaving what happens to him up to fate. In both cases, the parents are avoiding taking responsibility for what happens to their children. In saying the children “will be fine,” Hansel and Gretel’s mother may be trying to convince herself of this more than her husband, in order to justify her decision and her greed.

◆ Both Hansel and Gretel’s mother and Jocasta are dead at the end of the two books. Could this be a form of punishment for their acts? Do they both deserve such punishment?

Hansel and Gretel’s mother acts out of self-interest and clearly plots the abandonment of her children. Perhaps she deserves some kind of punishment. Since she is dead when the children return at the end of the story, she cannot enjoy the riches they bring home. This is a fitting punishment for her greed. Jocasta unknowingly marries her son. For this reason, she may be less guilty. However, she commits hubris (see earlier) in not believing that the Pythia’s prophecy had come true and, according to Greek beliefs, had to be punished.

◆ Ask students if they have ever avoided taking responsibility for something that might put them in a difficult or unpopular position or get them into trouble. Can they name people who DID accept responsibility even if it put them in a challenging or dangerous situation?

You could talk about Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Jackie Robinson, Mother Teresa, Socrates, Nathan Hale. Sometimes, because of peer pressure, children will not stick up for a classmate, even when they know they should. At other times they may not take responsibility for themselves and engage in inappropriate behavior to seem “cool.” Ask them for other examples.

◆ The Ancient Greeks loved mathematics and logic. They were part of their art, architecture, politics, and everyday life and helped them to solve problems. How does Hansel and Gretel’s mother use logic and mathematics to convince her husband to abandon their children? Is she being purely mathematical and logical, or does she have an ulterior motive?

The mother says that with only two mouths to feed rather than four, her husband will have enough food so that he can be strong and continue to work and earn money: “If you do not eat ... then you will not be able to swing an axe. And if you cannot cut down a tree or haul the wood into the town, then we all starve and die. Two dead are better than four dead. That is mathematics, and it is logic.” The father replies, “I care for neither your mathematics nor your logic.” Notice how the mother twists logic and mathematics to her own purposes. It is important for children to know that adults, such as politicians, sometimes do this.

◆ Do Hansel and Gretel react to their abandonment in the same way? How do their ways of reacting and coping compare to Oedipus’s?

Hansel overhears his parents the first time they plot to abandon him and his sister in the woods. When the father leaves them there and goes off, he tells Gretel that their father won’t be coming back. She replies, “He is our father ... You must not say such things about him.” When he takes them into the forest a second time, Gretel finally understands the truth. It is interesting how matter-of-factly the children accept their abandonment. In the end, though,

both children use their wits to deceive the old woman in the gingerbread house, showing that they're not simply going to be victims who don't fight back.

Oedipus has a stronger, bolder, far more emotional reaction. When he hears rumors that he might not be the son of Polybus and Merope, he immediately runs to them to find out the truth. Still doubting, he consults the Pythia. After hearing her prophecy, he is blinded by pain and anguish and flees Corinth so he can be far from his "parents." These emotions turn to anger, and he kills Laius where the three roads meet.

◆ Impersonal outside forces often influence the behavior of characters in myths and stories. What forces beyond their control influence the behavior of Oedipus, Hansel and Gretel, and their parents?

The Pythia's predictions to Laius and Oedipus cause them both to behave as they do. In this sense, they may not be fully responsible for their actions. The war and its resulting famine bring about Hansel and Gretel's parents' hunger. Starvation may make them so desperate that they can't think straight about how to solve their problem or take their children's needs into account. Or it may bring out a darker side of their personalities that was there all along.

◆ Hansel and Gretel outwit their mother and the old woman in the gingerbread house. Oedipus tries to outwit the gods and escape the prophecy about him. Contrast what happens in the two books. What do you think the difference means?

At the end of the story of Hansel and Gretel, they return home with fine clothes, coins, and jewels. They are rewarded for their cleverness and for deceiving the old woman. It would appear that outwitting fate is good in this instance. Oedipus is punished partly for trying to outwit the gods and avoid the prophecy. In Ancient Greek thinking, such punishment for hubris was a necessity and a warning to people to be careful not to exhibit arrogance before the gods.

Activities

◆ Revisit the theme of hubris. Ask student if they see relevance to their everyday lives in their relationships with other children and adults. When they do something they know is wrong, are they committing hubris by putting themselves above the norms of acceptable behavior?

◆ What is arrogance, and what are its consequences on the arrogant person and those around him? Should arrogance be punished? How? Do people who are arrogant receive their punishment in the natural course of their dealings with others?

◆ Blindness is important in this book, both physically and metaphorically. Ask children if they know anyone who is blind and how this person navigates the everyday world and perceives reality.

◆ People often say that blind people make heightened use of their other senses. Have children sit in their seats and close their eyes for five minutes. Do they feel that they are experiencing anything different through their senses of hearing, touch, smell, or even taste? Allow them to express what happened.

◆ Related to blindness is the idea of truth, which runs all through this book. If you hide the truth from someone, you're leaving that person blind

to an aspect of reality. Laius is horrified by the truth spoken by the Pythia. Polybus and Merope never tell Oedipus the truth about how he was found and deny the rumor that he's not their son. Jocasta doesn't believe the truth of the Pythia's oracle (p. 32). When she understands that it has come true, she kills herself. Laius's servant hides the truth about Oedipus for years, and Tiresias doesn't want him to know it. Oedipus is devastated by it and blinds himself, hoping to be able to perceive the true essence of things better.

Discuss with students each of these characters' reasons for concealing, not accepting, or not believing the truth. Ask them if it is ever all right not to tell the truth. Under what circumstances?

People may hide the truth if they think it is too painful for someone else to hear, in order to protect themselves or someone else from danger, because they think they'll get into trouble, because it will make them look foolish or bad, because they think revealing it isn't necessary or won't be helpful in the end, because they think it's too complicated for others to understand, etc. See if you can elicit reasons such as these from your students.

Now ask them if they have ever not told the truth to someone else and how it made them feel. Have them write a paragraph about this withholding of the truth, the reasons behind it, its consequences, and how they felt about it. Have children share what they wrote orally, or post their compositions on the bulletin board.

Students are sometimes tempted to cheat. Cheating may be viewed as a form of lying: untruthfully representing someone else's thinking or work as your own. Discuss with your students if cheating is ever appropriate. What should be its consequences?

◆ The myth of Oedipus could have turned out differently at many points in the story. Sometimes one event or decision can change everything. What would have happened if :

Laius's slave didn't follow his orders and took in Oedipus as his own child or gave him to someone else?

Phorbas took in Oedipus as his child instead of giving him to Polybus and Merope?

Polybus and Merope told Oedipus the truth?

Laius and his escorts didn't pass by the place where three roads meet just when Oedipus was there?

Oedipus didn't lose his temper and kill Laius?

Oedipus couldn't answer the Riddle of the Sphinx?

The plague killed all the inhabitants of Thebes?

The slave didn't tell Oedipus the truth?

Tiresias didn't speak to Oedipus the way he did on page 38?

Oedipus didn't gouge his eyes out?

Have students choose one of these questions and ask them to write their own ending (or entire new version) for the myth of Oedipus. They could also work in groups and do this task in the form of a play that they act out.

◆ As we can see from the artwork in this book, the Ancient Greeks were



very curious about geometry. Have students research Greek mathematicians like Pythagoras, Thales, Euclid, Archimedes, Apollonius, Aristarchus, and Hippocrates. Ask them to report their findings using visuals to help their classmates understand. This will be especially relevant when you are teaching geometry to your class.

◆ On the Oedipus character card on page 44, it says, “The question of whether Oedipus is a victim of fate or a victim of his own actions has been debated for thousands of years.” The Ancient Greeks were curious about this because the gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus were always meddling in the lives of the heroes and heroines of their myths.

Have children divide into groups of two to four to debate this question. Then have them write their point of view about it using specific examples from the text. Remind them that the oracle at Delphi predicted Oedipus’s fate, and she always told the truth. Relate what happens to Oedipus to the story of Orpheus (*Orpheus in the Underworld*, TOON Graphics, 2015). Was Orpheus’s destiny entirely controlled by the Fates, or did something in his character bring about his tragedy?

Related question: Oedipus is described on page 13 as a “proud and impulsive prince.” Does that give any hint about what may have caused his downfall?

◆ Further investigation:
Philosophy (φιλοσοφία in Greek) means “love of wisdom” or “friend of wisdom.” The word was probably coined by Pythagoras. Philosophy is the study of the nature of knowledge. One of its branches is called determinism, in which all things that happen are planned by a higher being, or preordained. This is opposed to the idea that human beings have free will and can choose how they will act. Discuss these ideas with children and ask them what they think. How do they feel about these ideas in their own lives? Then ask them if they think that characters’ actions in Greek myths like those of Oedipus and Orpheus (TOON Graphics, 2015) are preordained or the result of the protagonists’ free will.

Related question:

Do you think that Phorbas, the shepherd, brings baby Oedipus to King Polybus and Queen Merope out of his own free will, or is he acting solely as the agent of the Pythia to carry out her prophecy?

◆ In Greek myths and those of many other ancient cultures, there are lots of part-human part-animal creatures, like the Sphinx. There is a very long list of them at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hybrid_creatures_in_mythology. Have children learn about some of these. Then ask them to work alone or in groups to create their own part-human part-animal creature. They should draw it and tell its characteristics. What can it do? They can even write a myth in which it plays an important role based on these characteristics. Before this, you should discuss the nature of a myth with them.

◆ Readers’ Theater: Have students read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, have each student play multiple roles and be sure that they adjust their performance accordingly. Ask them to try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Remember to refer to the pronunciation keys at the bottom of each page.