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Oedipus The King



Synopsis

To Laius, King of Thebes, an oracle foretold that the child born to him by his queen Jocasta would slay his father and wed his mother. So when in time a son was born the infant's feet were riveted together and he was left to die on Mount Cithaeron. But a shepherd found the babe and tended him, and delivered him to another shepherd who took him to his master, the King of Corinth. Polybus being childless adopted the boy, who grew up believing that he was indeed the King's son. Afterwards doubting his parentage he inquired of the Delphic god and heard himself the word declared before to Laius. Wherefore he fled from what he deemed his father's house and in his flight he encountered and unwillingly slew his father Laius. Arriving at Thebes he answered the riddle of the Sphinx and the grateful Thebans made their deliverer king. So he reigned in the room of Laius, and espoused the widowed queen. Children were born to them and Thebes prospered under his rule, but again a grievous plague fell upon the city. Again the oracle was consulted and it bade them purge themselves of blood-guiltiness. Oedipus denounces the crime of which he is unaware, and undertakes to track out the criminal. Step by step it is brought home to him that he is the man. The closing scene reveals Jocasta slain by her own hand and Oedipus blinded by his own act and praying for death or exile. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This Oxford translation of "Oedipus the King" is a collaboration between Stephen Berg, a poet, and Diskin Clay, a classicist. It offers excellent commentary, including an interpretive introduction, notes explaining obscurities, an appendix on Greek drama, and a glossary. The translation itself, however,

is quite different: the dialogue is given in short, clipped sentences, and the choruses in unpunctuated free verse. Here is Berg's version of the choral lyric from "Oedipus" : "just now / from high snowy Parnassus / the god's voice exploded its blazing message / follow his track find the man / no one knows / a bull loose under wild bushes and trees / among caves and gray rocks" (p. 45). Berg's explanation for this style is that he wants to reproduce the effect of "broken song," and indeed this broken syntax looks much like the Greek on the page. This approach, however, sometimes sacrifices definition and intelligibility -- as in this passage, especially if the words are going to be spoken rather than read.

This play truly is a tragedy..It's a bit sick and twisted as well if the reader understands old English. Laius is told by an Oracle that he will be slain by his son. Oedipus, is told some years later, that he will slay his father and marry his mother. Oedipus leaves his parents and travels far to avoid this prophecy from coming true.What I liked best about this play, is that it shows that even when one tries to avoid something, sometimes that thing just can't be avoided. The Fates are twisted and play sick games and this play just makes that all the more clear. It centers around Apollo as the god to look to, since Apollo was known to have the best seers in all of Greece, and it's two of his Oracles that deliver the tragic prophecies.The story is truly sad and it's a bit depressing when the reader thinks of all the things Oedipus endured in his life, just for his wife who seemed to have known all along to withhold the information he sought.I'm a big fan of the Greece myths and plays.. and I definitely want to delve more into the Theban Plays.I give this book 5 of 5 paws

I was looking for a version of Oedipus that was easier to read than the archaic translations that seem to be everywhere. This certainly fit the bill - it was breezy and enjoyable. You can't beat it for a buck.

a gift for college student

100% recommended

Oedipus Rex is an easy-to-read classic tragedy. Anybody who is looking to develop a deeper knowledge of literature from ancient Greece and Rome should certainly check this one out. It is one of the basics.

Its not the book that was bad, it was my english teacher who made us read it who deserves the bad review. If you like old plays, this book is for you.

I was looking for a much easier and more modern translation of this play, and this book definitely exceeded those expectations. I bought this on my Kindle, but just in case, I also had an older translation of the play, which was definitely difficult to understand vs this one. I recommend this one so much, very easy to understand!

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