

## 9.2.2

## Lesson 3

### Introduction

In this lesson students will engage in an analysis of the continuing conversation between Oedipus and Creon concerning the death of Laius as they explore the excerpt from “When Laius fell in bloody death, where was he” through “[OEDIPUS and CREON go into the palace]” (lines 131–177) from *Oedipus the King*.

Through a series of scaffolded questions and the related Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool, students will engage with Sophocles’s unique plot structure, as they begin to distinguish between the *story* of Oedipus (the totality of actions and events both as they are related and as they occur) and the *plot* (the actions that occur in the play). Student analysis will focus on how Sophocles manipulates and conflates time through the slow revelation of key details in the crime of Laius’s murder. This exploration will focus on the effect of mystery created by the structural decision to unfold the plot of the play in a non-linear trajectory, and how the process of piecing together these fragments of evidence results in a steadily increasing tension surrounding the question of Oedipus’s guilt.

For homework students will reread the excerpt from this lesson and use evidence from the text to respond to a writing prompt that asks students to reflect on the analysis completed in this lesson and continue their Accountable Independent Reading.

### Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.5	Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
Addressed Standard(s)	
RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over

	the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
--	---

## Assessment

### Assessment(s)

The learning in this lesson will be captured through the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool, including a written response to a focus prompt:

- Sophocles chose to *recall* events of Laius's death rather than *portray* them. What is the effect of this structural decision?

### High Performance Response(s)

See model Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool.

- ① This tool assesses student comprehension of Sophocles's structural manipulation of time in the revelation of the key details of Laius's murder and prompts students to identify and analyze these key details in the text as they are revealed and build upon one another.

## Vocabulary

### Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- confidence (n.) – certainty
- Sphinx (n.) – a monster with the body of a lion, wings, and the head and torso of a woman. After the death of King Laius, the Sphinx tyrannized Thebes by not letting anyone into or out of the city, unless the person could answer the following riddle: "What walks on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?" Those who could not answer were killed and eaten. Oedipus provided the answer (a human being) and thus saved the city. The Sphinx then committed suicide.
- obscure (adj.) – not well known or difficult to understand
- afresh (adv.) – from a fresh beginning
- avenging (v.) – harming or punishing someone who has harmed you or someone or something that you care about
- vengeance (n.) – the act of doing something to hurt someone because that person did something that hurt you or someone else

- common ruin (n.) – the complete loss of health, means, position, hope, or the like belonging equally to an entire community, nation, or culture

#### Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)

- enigmatic (adj.) – full of mystery and difficult to understand

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards: RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.2</li> <li>• Text: <i>Oedipus The King</i>, lines 131–177</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence</b>	
1. Introduction to Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%
3. Masterful Reading	3. 10%
4. Mystery Revealed Jigsaw	4. 30%
5. Lines 131–177 Reading and Discussion	5. 40%
6. Closing	6. 5%

## Materials

- Copies of the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool for each student

## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
	Plain text (no symbol) indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text (no symbol) indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>

	<i>Italicized text (no symbol) indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
▶	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
ⓘ	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

## Activity 1: Introduction to Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and assessed standard for this lesson: RL.9-10.5. In this lesson, students will continue to read closely and consider Sophocles’s structural choices in the revelation of key details through the continuing conversation between Creon and Oedipus. Students will work in groups to complete a structural analysis facilitated by the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool.

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they revised and expanded their notes from the previous lesson. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they selected new evidence and expanded their notes from the previous lesson.

- ▶ Student pairs discuss examples of evidence they selected to expand and revise their notes.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they can apply their focus standard, CCRA.R.6 to their text. Lead a brief share out on the previous lesson’s AIR homework assignment. Select several students (or student pairs) to explain how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text.

- ▶ Students (or student pairs) discuss and share how they applied their focus standard (CCRA.R.6) to their AIR text from the previous lesson’s homework.

## Activity 3: Masterful Reading

10%

Introduce the lesson assessment prompt from the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool (Sophocles chose to *recall* events of Laius’s death rather than *portray* them. What is the effect of this structural decision?). Explain to students that this is the lesson assessment and the focus for today’s reading.

- ▶ Students read the assessment and listen.

① Display the lesson assessment prompt for students to see.

Instruct students to listen to a masterful reading of the text from (previous lesson's) "Before you came, my lord," through "or else it will prove our common ruin" (lines 121–177).

- ▶ Students listen, reading silently and following along in their text.

Instruct students to reread this portion and annotate according to the protocols established in 9.1.1. To refine their annotations, instruct students to write SC in the margin to indicate where they see evidence of Sophocles's structural choices, particularly related to the order of events. Focus student annotation with the following prompt:

**What does Creon say to let us know when the events he is talking about happen?**

- ▶ Students annotate according to the prompt.
- 🗨 Student annotations should isolate portions of the text that indicate that the events Creon relays in this passage happened in the past. Annotations may include:
  - "before you came"
  - "I never saw the man"
  - "this ancient crime"
  - the repeated use of the word "was" and the use of the past tense in Creon's descriptions (e.g., "was killed")

Lead a full class share out of student annotations, then pose the following question for class discussion:

**Visualize what is happening on the stage in this excerpt. What is the relationship between the actions that Creon describes and the actions that take place on stage?**

- 🗨 Creon tells the past events of Laius's murder to Oedipus, but the only action happening on the stage in this passage is the conversation between Oedipus and Creon. Past events are being revealed on stage through this conversation, but the telling of these events is also part of the story.

① The goal of this activity is to continue to build the analytical foundation for the differentiation between the *story* of Oedipus (the totality of actions and events both as they are related and as they occur) and the *plot* (actions that occur in the play). The strategic gaps between plot and story crafted by Sophocles are some of the play's most powerful moments, and identifying these

structural gaps is critical to an analysis of the overarching structural design of Sophocles’s drama. In a reading of Oedipus, *how* the tragic sequence of events unfolds is as important as the events themselves.

## Activity 4: Mystery Revealed Jigsaw

30%

Group students into pre-established heterogeneous groups of four. Begin by distributing and introducing the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool. Explain that students will be using this tool in order to track the details of Laius’s murder, as well as explore how Sophocles structures the revelation of these details. The process of how these details are revealed is as important in understanding the text as the details themselves.

Instruct students that they will be generating observations through a jigsaw activity. Each student group will be responsible for completing an analysis for their assigned section. Students will regroup as a class to share what they found and record the details and observations generated by other groups. After the full class discussion, students will respond independently to a writing prompt located at the bottom of their tool that asks them to synthesize their cumulative understanding of the effect of Sophocles’s structural choices in this passage.

Assign student groups to the following excerpts:

- Jigsaw Group 1: from “I have heard that, but I never saw the man” through “but what is overlooked escapes” (lines 123–130)
- Jigsaw Group 2: from “When Laius fell in bloody death” through “about the things he saw” (lines 131–142)
- Jigsaw Group 3: from “What was that?” through “to look into the urgent problem we now faced” (lines 142–158)

① Multiple student groups may be assigned to the same small section of the excerpt. Establish the expectation that in full class discussion groups should not repeat observations that have already been offered.

Model for students how to fill in the first two columns of the first row on the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool: for “and the one whose fate the god revealed” through “Laius ruled this land” (lines 120–122). Prompt students to offer evidence to complete the rest of the first row collaboratively as a full class, and model how to fill in these observations on the tool (see the model Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool).

- ▶ Student groups complete analysis of their jigsaw excerpt, recording their observations in their Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool.

🗨️ See the model Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool.

Lead full class share out of student observations. Instruct students to record the observations generated by other jigsaw groups in their own Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool.

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the prompt in the Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool:

**Sophocles chose to recall events of Laius’s death rather than portray them. What is the effect of this structural decision?**

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.

🗨️ See the model Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool at the end of this lesson.

## Activity 5: Lines 131–177 Reading and Discussion

40%

Pose the questions below for students to discuss in their groups. Remind students that they should be recording their responses in their class notes.

- ① Depending on the amount of time needed to complete the jigsaw activity, it may be helpful to complete this evidence-based discussion as a full class, rather than have students working in groups.

**Ask students to volunteer an explanation of who “the Sphinx” is.**

🗨️ The Sphinx is a monster with the body of a lion, wings, and the head and torso of a woman.

- ① If students struggle with this reference display the following footnote for students: The Sphinx is a monster with the body of a lion, wings, and the head and torso of a woman. After the death of King Laius, the Sphinx terrorized Thebes by not letting anyone into or out of the city, unless the person could answer the following riddle: "What walks on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?" Those who could not answer were killed and eaten. Oedipus was the first and only person to provide the answer (a human being), and thus saved the city. The Sphinx then committed suicide.

- ① The answer to the riddle refers to a human being crawling, walking unassisted, and walking with a cane.

- ① It may be helpful to display a picture of the Sphinx during this activity: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-ePb0scpRiAg/TZ5rHlspOel/AAAAAAAAAfY/TinRT3nD40M/s400/Greek%252Bfemale%252BSphinx-Boston.jpg>

**What might Oedipus’s victory against the Sphinx suggest about his strengths and skills as a leader?**

- ☛ At this point, students should be expected to make only broad inferences about what Oedipus’s success with the Sphinx reveals about his strengths and skills. Students may point to his success in solving the riddle as an indication that Oedipus is smart or clever, or that he is good at solving mysteries or answering difficult questions that others cannot. Other students might suggest that Oedipus is brave to face the monstrous Sphinx.
- ① This question prompts students to draw upon details revealed in a footnote to Ian Johnson’s translation in order to deepen their analysis of Oedipus’s investigation into Laius’s murder. The story of the riddle of the Sphinx is one that Sophocles’s audience would have been intimately familiar with, and therefore would have informed their understanding of the action unfolding in the drama. This footnote evens the playing field for contemporary readers. If students are unfamiliar with the function of footnotes, consider providing a brief explanation.

**What incident from his past is Oedipus referring to when he declares “Then I will start afresh and once again shed light on darkness” (lines 159–160)?**

- ☛ Oedipus is referring to his success with the Sphinx, and that he will “once again” solve the problem facing the city of Thebes. Some students may recall the Priest’s reference to the “cruel singer” (line 42) and his request for Oedipus to “be that same man today” (line 62) to support their understanding of Oedipus’s declaration that he will repeat his success of the past.

**What do Sophocles’s repeated references to Oedipus’s success in solving the Sphinx’s riddle suggest about how Oedipus will respond to the crisis in Thebes?**

- ☛ Student responses should demonstrate an understanding that the repeated references (both direct “It was the sphinx” and indirect “once again shed light on darkness”) to the Sphinx illuminate Oedipus’s determination to solve the mystery of Laius’s murder, as well as hints at the skills and abilities he possesses to be able to do so. Sophocles’s repetition indicates that this event from Oedipus’s past is both important and relevant to the task at hand. Oedipus views the crime of Laius’s murder as an unsolved riddle, “I will...once again shed light on darkness” (lines 159–160), and Oedipus is good at solving riddles, “for you came here...and freed us from...that

cruel singer” (lines 40–42). Oedipus approaches the crisis of plague like he previously approached the crisis of the Sphinx—to uncover information.

- ① Some students may further this observation to connect the conflation of Oedipus’s past success with the current problem as yet another example of Sophocles’s structural manipulation of time through flashbacks. If students identify this structural choice, remind them to annotate their texts using the code SC to indicate evidence of Sophocles’s manipulation of time.

Because the lesson assessment occurs prior to this question sequence, lead a brief full class discussion to check for understanding.

## Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. Instruct students that for homework they will reread the section of the text from this lesson, then define the course of action Oedipus has vowed to take in *avenging* Laius. Remind students to use evidence from the text to support their response and to use the Short Response Checklist and Rubric to guide their written responses.

## Homework

Reread the section of the text from this lesson, from “When Laius fell in bloody death” through “will prove our common ruin” (lines 131–177). Define the course of action Oedipus has vowed to take in *avenging* Laius. Use evidence from the text to support your response.

Continue reading your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of the assigned focus standard (CCRA.R.6) and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that standard.

## Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Class:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
--------------	--	---------------	--	--------------	--

**Instructions:** Complete the tool for your assigned passage from the text. During full class discussion, record observations made by other student groups. After full class discussion respond briefly to the writing prompt below.

What question is asked?	What detail is revealed?	When does this occur in the <i>story</i> ? <i>(All of the actions and events of the play, both on and off stage)</i>	When does this occur in the <i>plot</i> ? <i>(The actions that occur on stage)</i>

What question is asked?	What detail is revealed?	When does this occur in the <i>story</i> ? (All of the actions and events of the play, both on and off stage)	When does this occur in the <i>plot</i> ? (The actions that occur on stage)

Respond briefly in writing to the following question: Sophocles chose to *recall* events of Laius’s death rather than *portray* them. What is the effect of this structural decision?

## Model Mystery Revealed Jigsaw Tool

**Instructions:** Complete the tool for your assigned passage from the text. During full class discussion, record observations made by other student groups. After a full class discussion respond briefly to the writing prompt below.

What question is asked?	What detail is revealed?	When does this occur in the <i>story</i> ? (All of the actions and events of the play, both on and off stage)	When does this occur in the <i>plot</i> ? (The actions that occur on stage)
“What sort of man is he?” (line 121)	There used to be a different king named Laius. “Laius ruled this land” (line 122)	Before Oedipus was King “Before you came, my lord” (line 121)	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus
n/a	“Laius was killed” (line 124)	Before Oedipus was King “Before you came, my lord” (line 121) “ancient crime” (line 128)	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus
“And where are they? In what country?” (lines 126–127)	The murderers are still at large. “those murderers, he tells us, must be punished, whoever they may be” (lines 125–126) “what is overlooked escapes”	During this conversation between Creon and Oedipus	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus

What question is asked?	What detail is revealed?	When does this occur in the <i>story</i> ? (All of the actions and events of the play, both on and off stage)	When does this occur in the <i>plot</i> ? (The actions that occur on stage)
	(line 130)		
“Where am I to find a trace of this ancient crime?” (lines 127–128)	The murderers are “here in Thebes” (line 129)	During this conversation between Creon and Oedipus	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus
“When Laius fell...where was he—at home...or in another land?” (lines 131–132)	Laius was traveling to Delphi when he was killed. “When Laius fell in bloody death...he was abroad, on his way to Delphi” (lines 131–133)	Before Oedipus was king	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus
“Was there no...companion who...witnessed what took place?” (lines 135–137)	Only one man escaped. “They all died—except for one who was afraid and ran away” (lines 139–140)	Before Oedipus was king	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus
What was the one fact the man	“it was robbers who attacked them...a gang of them” (lines	Before Oedipus was king	The conversation between Creon

What question is asked?	What detail is revealed?	When does this occur in the <i>story</i> ? (All of the actions and events of the play, both on and off stage)	When does this occur in the <i>plot</i> ? (The actions that occur on stage)
saw? “What was that?” (line 142)	146–147)		and Oedipus
“What ... prevent[ed] you from looking into it?” (lines 154–155)	The Sphinx prevented the people of Thebes from solving Laius’s murder.  “The Sphinx—she sang her enigmatic song and thus forced us to put aside something we found obscure” (lines 155–157)	After Laius was killed, before Oedipus was king	The conversation between Creon and Oedipus

Respond briefly in writing to the following question: Sophocles chose to *recall* events of Laius’s death rather than *portray* them. What is the effect of this structural decision?

- ☛ This structural decision builds the effects of mystery and tension because the process of discovery is happening for Oedipus and for the audience simultaneously. The audience has no more or less information than Oedipus does, and so Oedipus’s own confusion and questions about this mysterious crime are reflected in the experience of the audience.

① **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle with this structural analysis, consider prompting a comparison between Sophocles’s dramatic structure and the dramatic structure of other more familiar plays. Students may extend their observations on Sophocles’s

structural decisions by comparing *Oedipus the King* and *Romeo and Juliet* (studied in 9.1.3). In *Romeo and Juliet*, the majority of key actions and events that advance the plot occur on the stage. Additionally, there are several instances where the audience receives information before the characters, or the audience is aware of something that the characters do not yet know. This contrasts with Sophocles text, in which the characters appear to possess information the audience does not.