

9.2.2

Lesson 5

Introduction

In this lesson, students will begin their exploration of Oedipus’s confrontation with the blind prophet Teiresias in *Oedipus the King*. Students will read from “Teiresias, you who understand all things” through “He will be enough” (lines 355–453).

Students will analyze textual details relating to both literal and figurative blindness through the figure of the blind prophet Teiresias and his conversation with Oedipus, as they shape and refine their understanding of the multifaceted relationship between human and divine knowledge. This analytical lens is integral to the unit-long engagement with the central idea of the role of fate in Oedipus’s guilt. After participating in a Round Robin discussion, students will briefly reflect in writing upon how Teiresias’s assertion that Oedipus is blind to the truth refines their emerging understanding of the central idea of the text.

Students will continue to build upon speaking and listening skills introduced in 9.2.1 as they engage with norms and expectations for collaborative discussion, in preparation for the self-assessment of SL.9-10.1 in Lesson 6. For homework students will continue their Accountable Independent Reading (AIR).

Standards

Assessed 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.
Addressed 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.

SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
L.9-10.5.a	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g. euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.

Assessment

Assessment(s)

The learning in this lesson will be captured through an independent response following a Round Robin discussion activity at the end of the lesson. Students will answer the following prompt based on the reading (citing text evidence and analyzing key words and phrases) completed in the lesson:

- According to Teiresias, what can Oedipus see? What can’t he see? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response may include the following:

- Students should identify Teiresias’s statement “Truth is not in you— for your ears, your mind, your eyes are blind” as an indication that Teiresias believes that Oedipus cannot hear, see, or know the truth (lines 445–446). Since Teiresias (a blind man) claims that he himself can “glimpse daylight” while Oedipus cannot, students should infer that Teiresias is not suggesting that Oedipus literally cannot see, but rather that Oedipus chooses to remain “ignorant” (line 391) of the “troubling things” (line 392) Teiresias speaks of. Some students may extend this observation to Teiresias’s accusation of Oedipus, and assert that Teiresias believes that Oedipus cannot see the truth of his own guilt in the crime of Laius’s murder: “I say that you yourself are the very man you’re looking for” (lines 433–434).

(This question prompts students to continue to refine their analysis of how key details in the text develop the central idea of this unit. Teiresias’s assertion that Oedipus is willfully blind to his role in Laius’s murder is an integral detail in the development of the essential understanding of the role of fate in Oedipus’s guilt.)

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- expel (v.) – to drive out or force away
- customary (adj.) – done according to a long continued practice, but not a law
- fume (v.) – to show fretful irritation or anger
- conspired (v.) – acted or worked together to plan something evil
- ignorant (adj.) – lacking knowledge or awareness

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

- alas (interjection) – exclamation of sorrow, grief or suspicion of evil
- seer (n.) – another name for a prophet, someone who predicts the future
- exiles (n.) – people who have been forced to leave their country of origin

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.1, L.9-10.5.a • Text: <i>Oedipus the King</i>, lines 355–453 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction to Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Masterful Reading 4. Lines 355–453 Pair Reading and Discussion 5. Full Class Discussion 6. Round Robin Discussion Activity 7. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 10% 3. 5% 4. 20% 5. 25% 6. 30% 7. 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist (refer to 9.2.1 Lesson 1)

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.
	Bold text (no symbol) indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<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 introducing the agenda and assessed standard for this lesson: RL.9-10.2. In this lesson students will analyze textual details in the conversation between the blind prophet Teiresias and Oedipus, as they continue to develop their understanding of the complex relationship between humans and the gods.

Explain to students that in this lesson, they will continue the work of collaborative discussion outlined in SL.9-10.1. Because students have been introduced to all of the sub-standards for SL.9-10.1, future references to the standard will not include sub-standards unless a sub-standard is specifically assessed or referenced in instruction. Also explain to students that these discussion skills scaffold toward a self-assessment in the next lesson, as well as the discussion-based End-of-Unit Assessment in Unit 3.

- ⓘ Display the Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist. Read through the rubric with students, pausing to allow opportunity for students to pose any questions they may have. Ask students to read through the checklist independently, and allow students to pose clarifying questions.
- ⓘ It may be helpful to leave norms and protocols for collaborative discussion displayed for the duration of the class.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Lead a class discussion of student responses to the reflective writing prompt: If “no man has the power to force the gods to speak against their will” (lines 328–329), how do men receive messages from the gods? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

- ▶ Students share their written responses with the class.
- 🗣 Student responses should call upon their understanding of what a prophet is: a "god-like" (line 354) person that communicates with the gods, to infer that men receive messages from the gods through prophets.

Instruct students to talk in pairs about how they can apply their focus standard 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 to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

5%

Introduce the Quick Write assessment prompt (According to Teiresias, what can Oedipus see? What can't he see? Use evidence from the text to support your response.). Explain to students that this is the lesson assessment and the focus for today's reading.

- ▶ Students read the assessment and listen.

📄 Display the Quick Write lesson assessment prompt for students to see.

Have students listen to a masterful reading from "Teiresias, you who understand all things" through "He will be enough" (lines 355–453).

- ▶ Students follow along in their text, reading silently.

Activity 4: Lines 355–453 Pair Reading and Discussion

20%

Group students into pairs according to established protocols. Instruct students that for their initial encounter with the text they will be working in pairs to discuss and analyze the text. Remind students to capture their observations in their class notes.

Read aloud from "Teiresias: "you who understand all things" through "with all his power other human beings" (lines 356–373).

- ▶ Students follow along in their texts. Then they discuss the following questions in pairs.

According to Oedipus, what can Teiresias see? What can't he see? How does this shape your understanding of what it means to be a "seer" (line 360)?

- Student responses should infer that according to Oedipus, Teiresias "cannot see how sick" Thebes is, but he "knows" how sick it is. Students should deduce that Teiresias is blind, he cannot literally "see" anything (if students struggle with this insight, direct them to the information presented in the Dramatis Personae). Oedipus also states that Teiresias can "understand all things...what goes on in heaven and here on earth," therefore Teiresias can "see" the movements of both humans and gods (lines 356–358). Through their exploration of what Teiresias can and can't see, students should deduce that to be a "seer" has to do with knowledge rather than physical sight. *Seer* is another word for prophet—someone who possesses extraordinary knowledge (often passed down by the gods) that other humans do not have. Some students may connect this to the Chorus's statement that "Teiresias...can see into things, like lord Apollo" from their close reading in Lesson 4.

Circulate the room and check for understanding.

- ① Consider drawing students' attention to the figurative use of *see* in this passage. Remind students of their work with L.9-10.5 in Unit 1 and in Lesson 2 of this unit.

Reread Oedipus's vow from "but now I possess the ruling power" through "the man who spilled his blood" (lines 301–312). How does Oedipus's tone in this oath compare to his tone when speaking to Teiresias? What might this suggest about how Oedipus understands his relationship to Teiresias? Use evidence from both passages to support your response.

- Students should observe that before Teiresias arrives, Oedipus's oath to avenge Laius's death has a tone of authority: "but now I possess the ruling power" and assuredness: "now I will fight on his behalf ... do everything I can" (lines 301–311). However, when speaking to Teiresias, Oedipus's tone changes to one of desperation and supplication, he showers Teiresias with compliments: "great seer, our shield and saviour" (lines 360–361), and begs Teiresias to help him: "Save this city and yourself. Rescue me" (line 369). Students may infer from this switch in tone that Oedipus believes Teiresias is more powerful or knowledgeable than he is.

- ① Consider drawing students' attention to the phrase "the man who spilled his blood" as a figure of speech. Again, remind students of their work with L.9-10.5.a, which began in Unit 1.

Read aloud from "Alas, alas!" through "I would not have journeyed here" (line 374–378).

- ▶ Students follow along in their texts.

What words and phrases in Teiresias’s speech can help you to make meaning of his exclamation “Alas, alas!”

- Student responses may include “dreadful,” “no benefit,” and “would not have journeyed” as clues that indicate “Alas, alas!” is a negative exclamation expressing sorrow or dread.

Ask student pairs to share their observations.

Activity 5: Full Class Discussion

25%

Inform students that they will now be engaging with the text in a teacher-led discussion. Pose or display the following questions one at a time, allowing students sufficient time to look back through their texts before leading full class discussion:

- ① Consider taking time to review students’ responses to previous questions, to ensure a shared understanding before moving forward with analysis.

How does Teiresias feel about his knowledge regarding who killed Laius? How does this compare to the attitude Oedipus expresses about this knowledge when he greets the seer? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

- Teiresias understands his knowledge as “dreadful,” bringing “no benefit to the man possessing it,” and as a “burden,” (Lines 374–380) while Oedipus thinks that Teiresias’s knowledge is a great and powerful gift that can save him and the city if only Teiresias will “not withhold from [Thebes his] prophecies” (line 367).

Read aloud from Oedipus’s “What you are saying” through the end of the day’s passage, “He will be enough” (lines 382–453). Focus student listening with the following question:

What act does Oedipus accuse Teiresias of playing a part in? What evidence does Oedipus call upon to support his accusation?

- Oedipus accuses Teiresias of “play[ing] [a] part” in the murder of Laius (line 414). He doesn’t appear to have any evidence to support this accusation; it’s just a “feeling” that Oedipus has (line 413). Some students might suggest that Oedipus’s accusation is made in “anger” and emotional rather than rational.

What does Teiresias accuse Oedipus of? What evidence does Teiresias call upon to support his accusation?

- Teiresias accuses Oedipus twice by saying that “the accursed polluter of this land is you” and “you yourself are the very man you’re looking for” (lines 421, 433–434). While Teiresias does not offer any specific evidence to support his accusation, he does have the status of “prophet” who possesses the knowledge of “heaven and earth.” Some students might infer that because of his unique status, Teiresias’s accusation may hold more weight than the unsubstantiated claim made by Oedipus.

Activity 6: Round Robin Discussion Activity

30%

Display the following excerpt and focusing question. Explain that students will do a Round Robin activity in which they will have a discussion in pairs, and then connect with another pair to have a small group discussion. Remind students to refer to their Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist as they engage in the discussion.

Instruct students to read from “Yes, I can, if the truth has any strength” through “He will be enough” (lines 444–453).

- If there is not sufficient time for students to engage with this activity, consider asking students to record their response to the prompt for homework, and begin the following day with a share out instead of the AIR share out.

TEIRESIAS: Yes, I can, if the truth has any strength.

OEDIPUS: It does, but not for you. Truth is not in you—
for your ears, your mind, your eyes are blind!

TEIRESIAS: You are a wretched fool to use harsh words
which all men soon enough will use to curse you.

OEDIPUS: You live in endless darkness of the night,
so you can never injure me or any man
who can glimpse daylight.

TEIRESIAS: It is not your fate
to fall because of me. It’s up to Apollo
to make that happen. He will be enough.

Focusing Question: Where is truth found according to Oedipus? Where is truth found according to

Teiresias?

- ▶ Students independently read the displayed passage and question.

Ask students to answer this question individually, and then share their response in small groups to check for understanding:

Where is truth found according to Oedipus? Where is truth found according to Teiresias?

Circulate and observe student discussions, taking note of how students apply the norms and expectations established through the displayed Speaking and Listening Rubric and Checklist. Observation should focus primarily on student proficiency with SL.9-10.1 skills, as student comprehension of the prompt will be captured through a written closing statement at the end of the activity.

① The purpose of this exercise is for students to practice building on others' ideas and expressing their own in one-on-one discussions in pairs with diverse perspectives. This exercise also has the added benefit of preparing students to write their brief written response through brainstorming and oral processing.

- ▶ Students pairs engage in discussions in response to the focusing prompt, and then do a small group discussion in a group with another pair.
- ☞ Students conversations should engage with some of the following details:
 - For Oedipus, truth is found in men, and in the senses. Teiresias does not have truth because his “ears, mind and eyes are blind” (line 446). Oedipus is referring to both Teiresias' literal blindness, but also implying that this blindness extend to Teiresias's ability to be a “seer” or trustworthy “prophet.” According to Oedipus “truth” is something you find out with your senses. Oedipus is searching for truth through questions.
 - For Teiresias, truth is found in the words of the god Apollo, and what is true is fated to happen, no matter what men do or know. Even though, according to Teiresias, Oedipus has “no idea how bad things are” he will still “fall” because Apollo will take care of it. According to Teiresias, “truth” is something you find out from the gods, and is something that is not influenced by human action.

Instruct students to independently write a closing statement using their observations and discussion from the Round Robin activity to inform their brief written response to the following prompt:

According to Teiresias, what can Oedipus see? What can't he see? What might this suggest about how Teiresias understands Oedipus's authority as king?

- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Activity 7: Closing

5%

Display and distribute homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to continue their Accountable Independent Reading through the lens of the focus standard they have chosen and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of their text based on that standard.

- Students follow along.

Homework

Continue to read your Accountable Independent Reading text through the lens of a focus standard of your choice and prepare for a 3–5 minute discussion of your text based on that standard.