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Human Emotions

Sophocles' play "Oedipus the King", translated by Robert Fagles, does a great job of connecting the reader to the main characters by the use of human emotions that still exist today. As a reader, in order to find interest in a book or play you have to be able to find a connection with one of the characters. It is easy to do this when you share similar emotions and feelings. Sophocles was successful in making these reader to character relationships by giving each character in the play their own individual voice, so to speak. These voices make it possible for the readers to understand how the characters feel or might be reacting to a situation without having to physically see or hear them. With this better understanding by the reader, it allows the writer to later on make changes to a character's mood and emotions which may, in turn, change the reader's relationship with that character. The big picture of this play was that human emotion is one of the most powerful tools in society and leads to every decision and consequence that follows. Sophocles shows how this factor of human emotion comes into play by using the struggle between fate and free will, rash decision making, and fear.

One of the major human emotions displayed throughout the entire play is the characters trusting their decision making as to whether to believe in fate or follow their own free will. The main character that struggled with fate versus free will was Oedipus. Upon hearing his fate, as described by the god Apollo, that he would marry his mother, kill his father, and have children that would also be his siblings, Oedipus chose to believe that this could be his fate. Although it was of his own free will to run away, he only did this because he believed in the prophecy and his fate. Oedipus' fate was told to his father Laius when Oedipus was an infant. Laius also chose to believe in fate by getting rid of Oedipus rather than

choosing free will and raising Oedipus in a loving manner which would have gave Oedipus no reason to kill his father. For these two characters, instead of believing in the prophecy and their fate they could have chose not to believe it and went on with their lives and made their own decisions. They did not have to listen to someone else telling them how to live their lives. Jocasta, the mother and wife of Oedipus, tried to inform Oedipus that he did not need to worry about the prophecy because she claimed that, "No skill in the world, nothing human can penetrate the future" (Sophocles 181-182). She did not believe in the fate at that time. In today's society we also have a similar struggle with fate versus free will. There are many people that believe in different types of religious figures or Gods. They feel that if they perform certain tasks throughout their life or act certain ways then their fate is already determined and they can't change the outcome of their life or when and how they will die. Other's in today's society have chosen to not believe in a religious figure or God. They feel that they have the free will to dictate how they can run their lives and that there is no life after death or place that you go to. It seems that fate versus free will will always be a constant struggle, and the play does a great job at portraying this.

The next human emotion that is expressed many times throughout the play is self-control and making rash decisions. This is expressed constantly throughout the play by Oedipus. He makes many rash decisions beginning with when he hears of the prophecy from Apollo and leaves his kingdom. Had Oedipus showed some self control and thought over the words of the prophecy he may have decided to speak with his parents and would not have come to the decision to leave. Had he not left, he would not have ran into Laius. The second major rash decision that Oedipus made was when he came across Laius and his men on his journey and becomes upset. Oedipus, without a second thought, kills Laius on the spot. This leads to his fate coming one step closer to a reality, without him even acknowledging it. Oedipus makes another thoughtless rash decision when appointing Laius's murderer to banishment. Rather than discussing the matter in private and coming up with a well thought out plan that is evidence based, he chose to show off. This later comes back to bite him when he realizes that he was the one who

had murdered his father and now he himself had to be banished. His rash decision making also led to the death of his mother/wife. When Jocasta realized that the prophecy had come true and that Oedipus was responsible for the death of his father, she tried to warn him not to seek the truth and to leave the matter alone. When she asked him not to speak with the herdsman for answers, he responded without thinking, "Hurry, fetch me the herdsman, now! Leave her to glory in her royal birth" (Sophocles 1174-1175). This led to Jocasta fleeing and taking her own life, as she couldn't stand the truth. All of this rash decision making that Oedipus is making seems to have come from his father, Laius. Once he heard of Oedipus's fate when he was born, Laius had made the decision to have Oedipus sent away. As soon as Laius heard that he would be killed by his son he made the rash decision to get rid of his kid all together so that there was no chance he could be murdered, although this did not work out in his favor. Today's society continues to make rash decisions just as Oedipus and Laius did. Although today it has allot more to do with money. We live in a world of want versus need, and many people today are deep into debt because they take out credit rather than saving to pay for their wants with money they already have.

The last emotion that Sophocles makes prominent in his play is fear. Fear contributes to when the characters made their rash decisions and chose to believe in fate rather than free will. We first see fear in Laius when he hears of the prophecy with his son. He is so fearful of this fate and his demise that he makes the rash decision to send his son away. Oedipus first displays fear when he hears of this same prophecy and also makes a rash decision and flees his home, leaving his family and kingdom behind. His fear heightens when the prophet once again brings up the prophecy. He is scared to find out the truth and makes a rash decision to put the blame on the prophet and his brother-in-law, Creon, for accusing him of the crime of killing Laius. As his fear grows, and he begins to believe he may be responsible for the death of Laius, he begins to ignore and go against those that he always entrusted, such as his wife/mother, Jocasta. This fear again leads to the rash decision to believe the prophecy and to push for answers. Jocasta is also engulfed with fear. When Oedipus questions the shepherd about why Jocasta gave up her

baby to die, the shepherd confirmed, “She was afraid - frightening prophecies” (Sophocles 1296-1297). The same fear of death that is portrayed in the play exists today. An example would be Doomsday Preppers. Many people believed a prophecy out of the Mayan calendar that the end of the world was coming in the year 2012. They took extreme precautions and made rash decisions to spend money to protect themselves from what they felt was their fate. As you can see, both in the play and in today’s existence fear leads to people believing in certain things they are told and they make very rash decisions based on the information they hear.

To conclude, human emotion was the major factor and plot changer in this play. Sophocles made the characters versatile by giving them many emotions that changed their view on fate throughout the play. These different emotions led to them making many different decisions with many different mindsets. At different times throughout the play we see Oedipus making rash decisions based on his current emotion. Anger forced him to kill, fear forced him to flee and go against his better judgment, and arrogance forced him to face regret. Jocasta also made many rash decisions based on her current emotions. She initially had tremendous fear of the prophecy and made the decision to give her child away to be killed, as did Laius. She later had confidence that the prophecy was false and that no one could see into the future. This led her to fall in love with Oedipus when he came to the kingdom. After having his children and being by his side, she felt such great regret when she found out that he was her son and the prophecy had come true, that she made the rash decision to kill herself. These characters have real life reactions to the unusual situations they were faced with. This is what makes it easy for the readers to understand and connect with them, because they feel like they may have the same fears and make the same types of rash decisions based off of their belief in fate or their choices to believe in free will. Overall fear was the main contributing human emotion that ultimately led to the characters rash decisions and belief in fate over free will.

DAKOTA,

SCORE: MASTERY

You did such a fantastic job giving a powerful claim (human emotions) and keeping that discussion clear in every paragraph. You had nice evidence and pushed a lot of real world connections, which is a good skill for AP writing. I also like how you discussed several characters, including Jocasta. You have done some great work here and in your other two summer papers. I look forward to seeing you in a few weeks for our first day of class!

Mastery	Incomplete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I show thoughtful commentary and analysis of the novel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I do not show critical analysis of the novel, but present a summary. · I include incorrect information about the novel. · I do too much plot summary, and not enough reflection or analysis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I use several pieces of direct, clearly integrated, and cited evidence from the novel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · I do not use direct, well integrated, or cited evidence from the novel.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I show organization and structure in my paragraphs and overall paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· My paragraphs/paper are poorly structured.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I show solid grammar and mechanics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I have poor grammar and mechanics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I complete the required number of pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I do not write the required number of pages; my paper is too short
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I use 11 point font, double-spaced, and typed.· I include a thoughtful title.· I use MLA format.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· I do not use the correct paper formatting.· I fail to include a title.· I fail to use MLA format.