

9.2.2 Lesson 9

Introduction

In this lesson, students will read the passage from “[*The palace doors open*]” through “they themselves make known quite easily” (lines 766–873), in which Jocasta voices her opinion of prophecy and gives an account of the events leading up to Laius’s murder.

The scaffolded questions in this lesson build toward an understanding of how Jocasta’s story develops the central idea of the role of fate in the crime of Laius’s murder. Analysis will focus on the influence Jocasta has over Oedipus and her opinion of prophecy. Students will assess their learning through a Quick Write about Jocasta’s dealings with prophecies. This analysis will prepare students to consider the relationship between prophecy and Oedipus’s actions in their Mid-Unit Assessment.

For homework students will reread the passages of text on their Riddle Handout and annotate for connecting ideas and points of comparison between Teiresias’s prophecy and the story Jocasta tells Oedipus. Students will call upon their annotations as they respond briefly in writing to the following question: What key details are present in both Teiresias’s riddle and Jocasta’s story?

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.
W.9-10.9.a	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

	a. Apply <i>grades 9–10 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]”).
L.9-10.4.a	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 9–10 reading and content</i> , choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
L.9-10.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Assessment

Assessment(s)

The learning in this lesson will be captured through a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students will answer the following prompt based on the close reading (citing text evidence and analyzing key words and phrases) completed in the lesson.

- How does Jocasta deal with prophecies of fate?

(This prompt continues to encourage students to consider the nuanced representation of prophecy in the text as they build toward an understanding of the central idea of the role of fate in Oedipus’s guilt.)

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response may include the following:

- Jocasta deals with prophecies of fate by dismissing them. Jocasta uses her story to disprove prophecy in general: “no human being has skill in prophecy. I’ll show you why with this example” (lines 852–853). In her story, Jocasta says she received a prophecy that Laius would be killed by his own son: “It said Laius was fated to be killed by a child conceived by him and me” (lines 857–858). However, this did not end up coming true because after hearing the prophecy Laius “ordered other men to throw [his son] out on a mountain rock where no one ever goes” (lines 864–865). According to Jocasta, this means that there is no way that the prophecy came true. She sums up her story by saying, “And so Apollo’s plan that he’d become the one who killed his father didn’t work” (lines 866–867). The details of Jocasta’s story make it seem like the fate that was prophesized for Laius by Apollo did not come true, and so fate played no part in the crime, and Jocasta can ignore prophecy. Some students may extend this observation to include the idea that Teiresias’s recent prophecy

that Oedipus “killed Laius” (line 846) may also prove false, just as Oedipus believes.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- conspiring (v.) – joining in a secret agreement to do something wrong
- prosper (v.) – to be successful or fortunate
- sake (n.) – cause, account, interest, or benefit
- compassionately (adv.) – having or showing a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another
- unrelenting (adj.) – not slackening or abating; incessant
- conceived (v.) – became pregnant
- fused (v.) – bound or tied together
- oracle (n.) – a person who delivers pronouncements from a god

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

- treason (n.) – the crime of trying to overthrow your country’s government
- accursed (adj.) – under a curse; doomed
- quarrel (n.) – a fight or argument

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, W.9-10.9.a, L.9-10.4.a, L.9-10.5• Text: <i>Oedipus the King</i>, lines 766–873	

Learning Sequence	
1. Introduction to Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 10%
3. Masterful Reading	3. 10%
4. Lines 766–873 Reading and Discussion	4. 55%
5. Quick Write	5. 15%
6. Closing	6. 5%

Materials

- Copies of the Riddle Handout for each student
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (from 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 sharing the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.9-10.2. In this lesson students will continue to explore prophetic voice and its role in the development of a central idea in the text through the perspective of Jocasta.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to discuss in pairs and share out their synthesis of Oedipus and Creon's argument.

- ▶ Student pairs share their synthesis of Oedipus and Creon's argument.

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) also discuss and share how they applied their focus standard to their AIR text from the previous lesson's homework.

Activity 3: Masterful Reading

10%

Introduce the Quick Write assessment (How does Jocasta deal with prophecies of fate?). 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 Quick Write assessment for students to see.

Have students listen to a masterful reading from "[*The palace doors open*]" through "they themselves make known quite easily" (lines 766–873). Instruct students to read along in their text. Provide the following question to focus student reading:

What is Jocasta's opinion of prophets?

- ▶ Students follow along, reading silently and identifying Jocasta's opinion of prophets.

① Consider preparing four students ahead of class to perform a masterful reading of this conversation or listening to the audio version.

Lead a brief class sharing about Jocasta's opinion of prophets. Explain that students will discuss this throughout the class.

Activity 4: Lines 766–873 Reading and Discussion

55%

Instruct students to read aloud in their groups from “[*The palace doors open*]” through “conspiring against my royal authority” (lines 766–781). Then direct students to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ▶ Students read aloud, each selecting a role—Chorus Leader, Jocasta, Creon, and Oedipus. Then students answer the following questions in their groups.

What is Jocasta’s relationship to Oedipus? What is her relationship to Creon?

- 💬 Students should note that Creon calls Jocasta, “Sister” and is therefore her brother (line 776).

How does Jocasta describe Creon, Oedipus, and their argument? What is the cumulative effect of this description?

- 💬 Jocasta describes Creon and Oedipus as “foolish men” and says that they are arguing “in such a silly way” (lines 770–771). The cumulative effect of this description is to emphasize the absurdity of Creon and Oedipus fighting when people are dying of the plague in order to make them feel “ashamed” of their actions (line 772).

Instruct students to continue reading aloud in groups from “Let me not prosper but die a man accursed” through “[*Exit CREON away from the palace, leaving OEDIPUS and JOCASTA and the CHORUS on stage*]” (lines 782–822). Then direct students to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- ▶ Students read aloud in groups, sharing roles, and then answering the questions that follow.

What fate does Creon wish for himself if he is guilty of “treason” (line 780)?

- 💬 Creon states that he should “die a man accursed” (line 782).

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider using the following question to check for understanding in the share out. If necessary, offer students a definition of *prosper* as a verb that means to be successful or fortunate.

How can the word *prosper* help you to make meaning of *accursed* in this context (line 782)?

- 💡 **Differentiation Consideration:** Students should identify Creon’s “let me not...but” construction to understand that *prosper* means the opposite of *accursed*—therefore *accursed* means to not be successful or have very bad luck (line 782).

Oedipus states “Let him go, then, even though it’s clear I must be killed or sent from here in exile, forced out in disgrace. I have been moved... ” (lines 810–812). What “moves” Oedipus? What is he moved to do?

- 💡 Students should identify that Jocasta’s “words” move Oedipus or that he is moved by “compassion”: “I have been moved to act compassionately by what you said.” Students may further specify that Jocasta moves Oedipus by reminding him that Creon is family, as theirs is a “private fight,” and also of the crisis of the plague: “With our land so sick” (lines 771–772). Some students may note that although Jocasta’s presence ends the argument, it does not solve it: “But if he stays here, he will be hateful to me” (lines 814–815). Some students may suggest that Jocasta brings perspective and is a calming presence in the fiery argument between Creon and Oedipus.
- ① Consider engaging students in a brief discussion of the nuanced and multiple meanings of the word *move* (line 812). Remind students of their previous work with standards L.9-10.4.a and L.9-10.5.

Instruct students to continue reading aloud in groups from “By all the gods, my king, let me know” through “they themselves make known quite easily” (lines 839–873). Then direct students to answer the following questions in their groups before sharing out with the class.

- ▶ Students read aloud in groups, sharing roles—either Jocasta or Oedipus. Then students answer these questions in their groups:
- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider asking the following questions:

How can the conversation that just occurred between Oedipus and Creon help you to make meaning of *quarrel* in this context?

- 💡 Students should call upon their understanding of the exchange between Oedipus and Creon as an argument to understand that *quarrel* means a fight or disagreement.

How does Oedipus summarize the *quarrel* between himself and Creon (lines 845–848)?

- 💡 Oedipus tells Jocasta that “Creon claims that I’m the murderer” and that “[Creon] set up that treasonous prophet.” Oedipus summarizes the argument by blaming Creon for setting him up to look guilty.

What does Jocasta claim about prophets? How does her claim build upon Oedipus’s accusations against Teiresias?

- Student responses should indicate an understanding that Jocasta claims that “no human being has skill in prophecy” (line 852). This claim builds off of Oedipus’s accusation that Teiresias is not a prophet. According to Jocasta, the issue is not that Teiresias is a failed prophet as Oedipus claims, but that human prophets do not exist at all.

According to Jocasta, what prophecy did Laius receive (lines 857–858)? Paraphrase the information that Jocasta recounts.

- Laius “received a prophecy” that told him that his own child with Jocasta would kill him.

How did Laius avoid “suffer[ing] what he feared” (lines 862–865)?

- Laius avoids the prophecy by killing his infant son: he “ordered other men to throw him out on a rock where no one ever goes.”

What does Jocasta’s story show about Apollo’s prophecy and Laius’s actions?

- Students should infer that Jocasta’s story suggests Laius must believe wholeheartedly in the prophecy of Apollo to kill his own son.

① This question scaffolds students towards the Mid-Unit Assessment question: What relationship does Sophocles establish between the Oracle’s prophecy and Oedipus’s actions?

Instruct students to return to the text and use the code CI to annotate for evidence of the development of a central idea (the tension between the knowledge of prophets and that of men). Remind students that as they annotate for central idea, they are beginning to identify textual evidence to be used in the lesson assessment as well as the Mid- and End-of-Unit Assessments, which address the development of central ideas in the text. This focused annotation supports students’ engagement with W.9-10.9.a, as they draw evidence from the text to use in their writing.

How does Jocasta use the story of Laius’s murder to demonstrate her beliefs about prophecy?

- Student responses should indicate an understanding that Jocasta is using the “example” of a prophecy that did not come true (i.e., Laius’s murder by his own son) to prove that humans do not have the skill of prophecy. According to Jocasta, Laius took an action (the murder of his own child) that made the fulfillment of the prophecy about his death impossible. Jocasta asserts that when Laius was killed, it could not have been by his own son, and therefore the prophecy was false. For Jocasta, this is proof that humans do not have the skill of prophecy.

What does Jocasta mean when she states “whatever gods intend to bring about they themselves make known quite easily”?

- ☛ Although Jocasta does not believe in human prophets, she is not saying that prophecies don’t exist at all. Jocasta’s statement suggests that messages from the gods should be “easily” understood. This contrasts with Teiresias’s complicated prophecy that is in the form of a complex riddle.

Provide time to come together as a class and for groups to share out answers to the questions to check for understanding.

Activity 5: Quick Write

15%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How does Jocasta deal with prophecies of fate?

Remind students to use the Short Response Checklist and Rubric to guide their written responses.

① Display the Quick Write prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

- ▶ Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- ☛ See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.

Activity 6: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to reread the passages of text on their Riddle Handout and annotate for connecting ideas and points of comparison between Teiresias’s prophecy and the story Jocasta tells Oedipus. Students should briefly respond in writing to the following question: What key details are present in both Teiresias’s riddle and Jocasta’s story? Remind students to use the Short Response Checklist and Rubric to guide their written responses.

- ▶ Students follow along.

Homework

Read the passages of text on your Riddle Handout and annotate for connecting ideas and points of comparison between Teiresias’s prophecy and the story Jocasta tells Oedipus. Briefly respond in writing to the following question: What key details are present in both Teiresias’s riddle and Jocasta’s story?

Riddle Handout

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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TEIRESIAS (lines 543–561)	JOCASTA (lines 852–871)
<p>The man you have been seeking all this time, while proclaiming threats and issuing orders about the one who murdered Laius— that man is here...</p> <p>He will set off for a foreign country, groping the ground before him with a stick. And he will turn out to be the brother of the children in this house—their father, too, both at once, and the husband and the son of the very woman who gave birth to them. He sowed the same womb as his father and murdered him. Go in and think on this. If you discover I have spoken falsely, you can say I lack all skill in prophecy.</p>	<p>No human being has skill in prophecy. I'll show you why with this example. King Laius once received a prophecy I won't say it came straight from Apollo, but it was from those who do assist the god. It said Laius was fated to be killed by a child conceived by him and me. Now, at least according to the story, one day Laius was killed by foreigners, by robbers, at a place where three roads meet. Besides, before our child was three days old, Laius fused his ankles tight together and ordered other men to throw him out on a mountain rock where no one ever goes. And so Apollo's plan that he'd become the one who killed his father didn't work, and Laius never suffered what he feared, that his own son would be his murderer, although that's what the oracle had claimed. So don't concern yourself with prophecies.</p>