

Candidate 3 evidence

Classical Studies Higher Resource Sheet	
Candidate Name	Scottish Candidate Number
To what extent does Oedipus reflect the view that individuals cannot escape their fate?	
<p>Theme, context - God's fate, summary - with oracles, argument.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Laius': killed "any to the two" but "bound ankles" abandoned "trackless mountain", shepherd Polybus, Merope, but Corinth. Trapped: didn't change oracle, but decisions. Parents Xescape fate. 3 fates, 'free-decisions' also fate. Ishiguro: born to die, Oedipus. Both Trapped . Overall, acts fate.</p> <p>Determinism - actions pre-determined, Islam: everything Allah, Jewish: simultaneously.</p> <p>Oedipus': father & "defile my mother's bed", flees Corinth, kills "where the two roads meet" sphinx = king, marries Jocasta. Fulfils prophecy, gods manipulating sphinx, secret about marriage to jocasta, free: PM didn't tell adopted, killed laius willingly, however, "cursed in my birth", determinism, Jocasta punished to defying fate by marriage, HY also punished, refusing Aphrodite = rape accusations, exile, death curse. Overall...</p> <p>Men more crimes than women - Oedipus fate, but white-collar free will.</p> <p>Creon's: to cure plague, find Laius' killer, tiresius helps = Oedipus rude, tiresius says Oedipus' oracle happened, story then true. Jocasta suicide, Oedipus blinded "light may last time look at you". Earlier: Tiresius "now see clearly, then see darkness" he knows fate. Oedipus chose to search for truth, but gods manipulating. Antigone: tiresuis warns, Creon ignores, fate.</p> <p>Karma (tiresius)</p> <p>ATQ cursed in every decision, Greek context, oracle despite efforts, some free decitions, but gods manipulating, impossible to evade, so cannot individuals escape.</p> <p>Sophocles, S. "Oedipus the King". Sophocles, S. "Antigone". https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hippolytus-Greek-mythology Ishiguro, K. (2017). "Never Let Me Go". Euripides. "Hippolytus"</p>	

To what extent does 'Oedipus' reflect the view that individuals cannot escape their fate?

Sophocles' 'Oedipus' strongly follows the theme of fate vs free will, however, before we consider the plot we should consider the context in which Oedipus was written. In classical Greece, it was widely believed that the course of one's life was determined by the gods. although everyday decisions were made out of free will, ultimately, it was the gods that decided your fate. With this setting, Sophocles, writes of Oedipus desperately trying to escape the oracle's predictions that he would kill his father, and marry and produce children with his mother. In doing so, he only stumbles closer towards his fate, falling into the god's traps and eventually fulfilling his oracle. The first oracle of the play, however, is given to Laius after his first-born son, Oedipus, is born. This prophecy says that any child of his and Jocasta his wife, would kill him and the final oracle, given to Creon, states that to rid the city of Thebes of plague, Laius' killer must be found. It is clear all of these oracles were curated by the gods to push Oedipus towards his fate and, therefore, to a large extent the characters in Oedipus cannot escape their fate.

The first fate the oracle gives is to Laius. When speaking to Oedipus, her husband at the time, Jocasta reveals that an oracle was once given to Laius that said he would be killed by "any child of the two of us". However, she then went on to say that with this news they ordered a slave to take the baby and "bound his ankles tightly together" and expose him to the "trackless mountain". Although, they never confirmed his death. After this, a wandering shepherd found baby Oedipus and gave him to a barren couple named Polybus and Merope and instructed them to take the baby far away. However they did not, and settled in Corinth just outside Thebes where Jocasta and Laius ruled. This shows that Jocasta and Laius do not have free will as all their attempts to interrupt the oracle and change their fate were unsuccessful, and Oedipus lived on as they could not change the course of the prophecy clearly demonstrating their free will being stopped by the fate they are trapped in. However, it could be argued that free will did exist in this part of the play as the Shepherd was not prophesised to save Oedipus, and neither were Polybus and Merope. Although, this does not take into consideration the fact that the gods could have easily placed the shepherd there knowing he would save him, and likewise with the couple. This is reminiscent of the Greek mythological belief that the three fates decide the length of your life before you were born, cutting it with scissors, this follows the story of Oedipus as his life was not decided to end before he fulfilled the oracle, and so it wasn't, and no decision could change this. This blatantly proves that Oedipus' has to follow a set path and he has no free will to change this, clearly showing he cannot escape his fate. Similarly, modern literature today also talks of fate. Kazuo Ishiguro's novel "Never Let Me Go" shares the story of a young girl who, like her schoolmates, was given the fate of sacrificing her life for others before they were born. Although she and others try to escape this, they eventually cannot, and they have to give in. This relates to Oedipus' struggle as he desperately tries to escape his fate also, but he cannot, as it is the gods who decide his destiny, not him. Overall, it is clear that every act that the characters in this play try to achieve whether it is Jocasta and Laius ending their

child's life, Oedipus evading his fate, or the Shepard trying to send Oedipus far away, it does not work, and this is because, to a large extent, the characters in Oedipus cannot escape their fate.

Jocasta and Laius' genuine fear of the oracle shows the strength of the belief in fate in classical Greece, however, in modern atheist life today, most believe that your own decisions are what decide the sum of your life, not a higher power. However, the belief in pre-determinism is still largely present, especially in religious circles. Islam supports the belief that Allah creates everything, and therefore everything is pre-determined before you are born, although, Judaism supports the idea that both free will and fate exist simultaneously.

The second oracle is given to Oedipus. After a drunken confession leads Oedipus questioning whether his parents are truly related to him, he turns to an oracle for answers. This oracle then gives him a different unrelated answer saying he is destined to kill his father and "defile my mother's bed". This horrifies Oedipus and he flees to Thebes away from his parents. Along his way, he encounters a carriage "where the two roads meet", and here after an altercation, he kills a man and continues on his journey. At this point, not knowing it was his father, Laius who was king of Thebes. Once in Thebes, he completes the riddle of the sphinx, giving him the crown from the late Laius. As a part of this he marries Jocasta and they become the new rulers of Thebes. Fate proves itself here as the prophecy fulfils itself despite all efforts to avoid this. Oedipus finds himself married to his mother, although unknowingly, and Laius has suffered the fate he feared all along. This shows the characters do not have free will as not only does fate become reality, but also the gods have been manipulating them towards it the whole time. Apollo, the god of this oracle, knew that telling Oedipus his oracle without telling him who his real parents were would make him flee Corinth and end up in his position, similarly, if the gods had told Jocasta of her fate to marry Oedipus in Laius' oracle, she may not have married someone young enough to be her son, however they did not showing that the characters do not get a chance to escape their fate because of the gods manipulation. On the other hand, it could be argued that Polybus and Merope experienced no manipulation in their decision not to tell Oedipus his true identity and they chose this out of free will, and if they had done, he may not have ever gone to Thebes. Again, Oedipus chose to kill Laius in the heat of the moment and was not forced to out of self-defence and this was his own decision. Although, once Oedipus does find out what he has done, he admits he was "cursed in his birth." This shows that even Oedipus himself believes that his decisions were not his own but the god's clearly showing he cannot escape his fate. Just as Jocasta is punished here for trying to go against the god's wishes for Oedipus to live, and is punished for doing so by marrying Oedipus, Euripides' Hippolytus is also punished for his choice to not have Aphrodite take his virginity. After his refusal of his fate, Aphrodite has him set up to be accused of rape and with this he is exiled and sentenced to death. This further shows that across many ancient Greek tragedies, free will is not present. Altogether, the characters in Oedipus do not have free will as all their decisions only lead them closer to their fate showing that they do not have free will.

Criminologists today still argue between whether perpetrators commit crimes out of free will as one example between men and women would debate otherwise. Men commit exponentially more crimes than women and this can partly be attributed to their increased levels of the hormone testosterone. This is not up their own decisions and therefore fate can still exist in life today, however, to differentiate from Oedipus, free will is more important here as this is not the sole reason for crime as, for instance, white collar crime occurs often. This is where those in wealthy lifestyles still commit crime and this clearly shows free will as this is not forced upon them in any way.

The final oracle is given to Creon. When a plague is spreading across Thebes, Oedipus sends Creon to the oracle for answers. Once he returns, he returns with the information that to rid Thebes of the plague, Laius' killer must be found. To aid with this the blind prophet Tiresius is called upon and while helping, Oedipus lashes out at him. In response to this Tiresius decides to tell Oedipus that his original oracle has already been fulfilled. After much initial denial, the pieces start to fall into place and it becomes clear that Tiresius is being truthful. With this news, Jocasta commits suicide and Oedipus is left inconsolable and distraught. As punishment for his own actions, Oedipus blinds himself saying "Light, may this be the last time I look at you." not just referencing his physical blindness, but his desire to never see the truth. This, however, was already foreshadowed by Tiresius who earlier said to Oedipus, "Now you see clearly, but then you will see darkness." This clearly shows that Tiresius knew what Oedipus was fated to do, clearly showing Oedipus had very little ability – or any at all – to influence the matter, directly demonstrating his inherent disability to change his fate. Albeit, it could be argued that Oedipus was given many chances to change his fate, instead he simply decided to keep searching for Laius' killer. Tiresius and Jocasta desperately tried to end Oedipus wanting to continue the search, but he persisted. However, this again can also be attributed to the god's manipulations. The gods knew that once they told Oedipus to search for Laius' killer, he would not stop, therefore he was not acting out of free will but the god's manipulation. Similarly to Oedipus, Sophocles sequel to this play, 'Antigone' also find Tiresius warning of fate, yet not being able to change it. In this tale, Creon has now inherited the throne after Oedipus and is adamant on punishing his niece, Antigone, Tiresius tells him of he does he will suffer a cruel fate, yet he ignores this and suffers anyway. This again shows the inability to escape fate and the lack of influence free will has on it. Overall, it is clear that the characters in Oedipus, to a large extent, cannot escape their fate. Even when Tiresius warns Oedipus he still persists to find Laius' killer, and when he does, he realises he had fulfilled his fate this whole time, unable to escape.

The idea of fate also exists in the spiritual world today. Many believe in the idea of Karma – the notion that if one commits good acts they will be rewarded, however, if one commits immoral acts, they will be punished. This relates to Oedipus as when he commits murder on his journey to Thebes he is punished and when Jocasta tries to murder her son, she is also later punished.

In conclusion, to a large extent individuals in 'Oedipus' cannot escape their fate. This is seen as Oedipus is cursed in every decision, relating to how the Greeks saw the world as pre-determined by the gods. On the one hand, Oedipus make many seemingly free decisions throughout the play, and so do other characters like the Shepard, Polybus and Merope, and Jocasta, however, these decisions are clearly influenced by the gods as they characters in the play are treated like chess pieces and cannot escape their fate despite many efforts. So, on the other hand, it is much more realistic to conclude that the characters in this play do not have free will as any attempt to throw the curse of course was unsuccessful, and eventually, no one evaded their fate. therefore, altogether, the characters in 'Oedipus' cannot escape their fate.