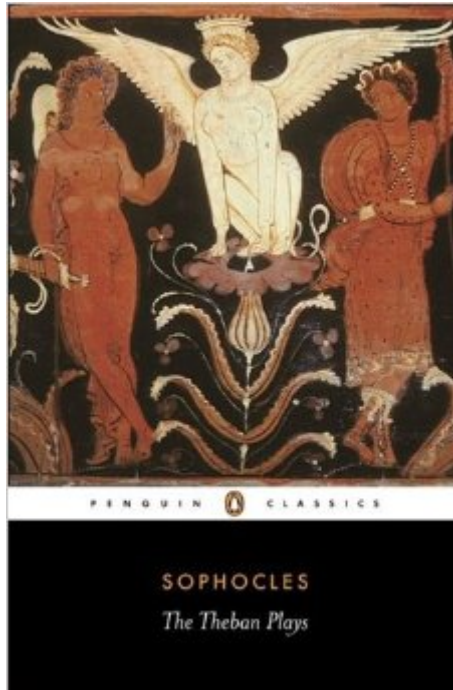


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The Theban Plays: King Oedipus; Oedipus At Colonus; Antigone (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

“O Light! May I never look on you again, Revealed as I am, sinful in my begetting, Sinful in marriage, sinful in shedding of blood!” The legends surrounding the royal house of Thebes inspired Sophocles (496–406 BC) to create a powerful trilogy of mankind’s struggle against fate. King Oedipus tells of a man who brings pestilence to Thebes for crimes he does not realise he has committed, and then inflicts a brutal punishment upon himself. With profound insights into the human condition, it is a devastating portrayal of a ruler brought down by his own oath. Oedipus at Colonus provides a fitting conclusion to the life of the aged and blinded king, while Antigone depicts the fall of the next generation, through the conflict between a young woman ruled by her conscience and a king too confident in his own authority. E. F. Watling’s masterful translation is accompanied by an introduction, which examines the central themes of the plays, the role of the Chorus, and the traditions and staging of Greek tragedy. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

This small book contains three undisputable top masterpieces of world literature (written some 2500 years ago!) in a brilliant translation with an excellent introduction by E.F. Watling. Their author,

Sophocles, draws through the ordeal of the House of Thebes a dark picture of man with Oedipus as a pars pro toto. Oedipus as a pars pro toto (for mankind) The chorus in 'Oedipus King' proclaims: 'Here is Oedipus, here is the reason why I will call no mortal creature happy.' Why? Oedipus: 'I will know who I am. I cannot leave the truth unknown.' And the truth is that Oedipus is innocent: 'if any father was foredoomed by the voice of heaven to die by his own son's hand, how can you justly cast it against me, who was still unborn when that decree was spoken?' (Oedipus in Colonus) But, for man 'so strong is Destiny, no wealth, no armory, no tower, no ship that rides the angry sea her masterly hand can stay.' (Antigone) Man's life The chorus in 'Antigone' proclaims: 'Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these is man; he is master of ageless earth; he is lord of all the things living. O wondrous subtlety of man, that draws to good and evil.' But, man is cursed by Fate; he is a defenseless plaything in the hands of 'Fortune' and 'Time': 'For mortals greatly to live is greatly to suffer.' (Antigone), and. 'Time, time, my friend makes havoc everywhere; he is invincible. The sap of earth dries up, flesh dies.' (Oedipus in Colonus) Only fortune determines man's fate: 'Chance raises a man to the heights, chance casts him down, and none can foretell what will be from what it is.' (Antigone), and, 'yesterday my mourning of light, now my night of endless darkness.

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