



Name _____

Ironic Fate

Directions: Read the excerpts from *Oedipus Rex* carefully. Answer the questions that follow, supporting your answers with evidence and interpretation.

Excerpt 1 (Oedipus, early in the play):

"I curse myself as well... if by any chance he proves to be an intimate of our house, here at my hearth, with my full knowledge, may the curse I just called down on him strike me!"

Excerpt 2 (Oedipus, speaking to Tiresias):

"You mock my blindness, do you? But I say that you, with both your eyes, are blind: you cannot see the corruption of your life, nor who shares your house."

Excerpt 3 (Oedipus, before learning the truth):

"I must know the whole truth. Though it be little, I must uncover it all, however dark the secret lurking in the past."

1. Why is dramatic irony especially powerful in a tragedy like *Oedipus Rex*?

2. How does Oedipus's determination to seek the truth make the irony more painful?

3. In what way does the irony shape our understanding of fate vs. free will in the play?

4. Do you think Oedipus's downfall feels more tragic because the audience knows his fate from the beginning? Why or why not?
