Is Oedipus a tragic hero? According to Laurence Perrine's six criteria, he is. Perrine says first that "the tragic hero is a man of noble stature" (1016). Oedipus is that, if nothing else. Not only is he called the "powerful king of Thebes," but he is also described by the Priest as "surest in mortal ways/ and wisest in the ways of God" (1023). Perrine offers a second criteria: "Though the tragic hero is preeminently great, he is not perfect" (1016). Oedipus' perfection is blemished by his pride and curiosity. Though Oedipus asks Creon to send for Teiresias to answer his questions, he grows angry with the seer's responses:

        What savage envy is stored up against these
    If Creon, whom I trusted, Creon my friend,
        For this great office which the city once put
    in my hands unsought--if for this power
    Creon desires in secret to destroy me!
        He has brought this decrepit fortune-teller, this
    Collector of dirty pennies, this prophet fraud--
    Why he is no more clairvoyant than I am. (Perrine 1032)

With the death of Jocasta and the blinding of Oedipus, the tragic fall is complete, but not futile. Oedipus has gained sight beyond mere physical sight. This gain in the face of loss is another attribute of the tragic hero. Laurence Perrine says:

        Yet the tragic fall is not pure loss. Though it may result in the protagonist's death,
it involves, before his death, some increase in awareness, some gain in self-
knowledge -- as Aristotle puts it, some "discovery" -- a change from ignorance to
knowledge. (1017)