The Œdipus Myth

Laius and Jocasta, the King and Queen of Thebes, are warned by the Oracle at Delphi that their newborn son is destined to kill his father and marry his mother.

Horrified by the prophecy, they devise a plan which they think will circumvent it.

Laius pierces the baby's feet to prevent him from crawling and secretly gives him to a shepherd, with orders to abandon the child on a mountain where it will die from exposure.

When the shepherd gets to the mountain, he gives the infant to a friend, a herdsman from the city-state of Corinth, without revealing the child's true identity.

When the herdsman returns to Corinth, he gives the boy to the childless King Polybus and Queen Merope.

They adopt the infant and name him Œdipus ("swollen-foot") because of the wound.

When Œdipus becomes a young man he hears vague rumors that Polybus is not his real father.

This troubles Œdipus, and when his friends call him names, he goes to Delphi to learn the truth from the Oracle.

The Oracle tells Œdipus that it is his fate to kill his father and marry his mother.

He believes Polybus and Merope are his real parents and he does not want to hurt them.

He leaves home and journeys through Greece, eventually coming to the vicinity of Thebes.

At the crossroads Œdipus encounters an old man in a chariot; Laius, on his way to Delphi to find out how to rid Thebes of a monster, the Sphinx.

During a confrontation between Laius and Œdipus about who should yield to whom, Œdipus defends himself by slaying the King and his servants.

He then continues on his way to Thebes.

Outside the city Œdipus meets the Sphinx, answers her riddle, and kills her.

The people of Thebes hail him as a great hero, and he becomes the new King of Thebes.

He marries Jocasta, and in time has children by her.

Œdipus rules for the next few years, and Thebes prospers until suddenly a plague strikes the city.

Œdipus soon learns that the reason for the plague and pestilence is the unrevenged murder of Laius.

Œdipus resolves to discover the murderer of the former king.

## THE ASSIGNMENT

Print the story and cut it into strips. Distribute the strips at random to pairs or groups of students. Their job is to get themselves in order so that reading aloud they will reconstruct the story.