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UG Sem 2

Unit 2

Topic- Introduction of Sophocles

SOPHOCLES

BORN: c. 496 bce, near Athens, Greece

DIED: c. 406 bce, Athens, Greece

NATIONALITY: Greek

GENRE: Poetry, drama

MAJOR WORKS:

Antigone (442 bce)

Oedipus Rex (c. 425 bce)

Electra (c. 425–410 bce)

Philoctetes (409 bce)

## Oedipus at Colonus (401 bce)

Perhaps the greatest of Athens's playwrights Sophocles is known to have written at least 123 dramas, of which only 7 survive. His best-known work is Oedipus Rex. His works embrace the orthodoxy of the day by accepting the existence of a powerful divine force that is ultimately unknowable to man. This force, which runs the universe, has established a body of divine law that humans must follow if they are to avoid calamity. Through his characters, Sophocles explored serious questions about the nature of good and evil in the world and the role of free will.

His plays involved themes such as the relation between man and the God and how man reacts in certain problematic situations and the Heroes of his plays had to overcome various obstacles. He changed the style of having a trilogy and instead made three plays; each with a different plot. This however has produced some inconsistencies in his work. His play 'Electra' (418-414 B.C.E), the character Electra is waiting for her brother, Orestes. His play 'Philoctetus' (409 B.C.E) shows the conflict between man and the society and the cruelties of the society when it no longer need the man. His play 'Oedipus at Colonus' (401 B.C.E.) was produced posthumously and it was the longest play written by him. Sophocles was inspired by human nature and its welfare as we can see from his line in 'Antigone':

'Many are the wonders of the world,'" says Sophocles, 'but none is more wonderful than man.'

Sophocles died at the age of ninety one in 406 B.C. He saw in his life many great times and events including the Greek victory in the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War. A eulogy written by a poet in a play called 'The Muses':