***Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles

Oedipus** : Oedipus is the king of Thebes, married to Jocasta. He is unaware, at the start of the play, that he has murdered his father and slept with his mother. Soon he learns that it was he that put his kingdom at such terrible risk, and blinds himself using a brooch.

**Jocasta :** Jocasta is the wife and mother of Oedipus and queen of Thebes. Before marrying Oedipus, she was married to Laius. She commits suicide at the end of the play, perhaps in guilt that she left Oedipus to die as a baby, thus precipitating his course towards a tragic end for their whole family.

**Teiresias :** Teiresias is the blind prophet, led by a small boy, who knows the truth about Oedipus's parentage. Oedipus calls on him to find Laius's killer but becomes furious when Teiresias claims that Oedipus himself is the killer. Teiresias's words, however, prove true ultimately, suggesting that he is a mouthpiece for the Gods and an oracle to be trusted far more than the convictions and hopes of man.

**Creon :** Creon is Jocasta's brother, who shares one third of Thebes's riches with Oedipus and Jocasta. He is a devout follower of the oracle of Apollo, and as the play opens, he is returning from the oracle with the news that Laius's killer must be found.

**Messenger from Corinth :** The Messenger from Corinth arrives to tell Oedipus that his father, Polybus, is dead, and that the people of Corinth wish Oedipus to be their new king. He also reveals to Oedipus, however, that Polybus and Meropé are not his real parents.

**Herdsman :** The Herdsman gives Laius' and Jocasta's baby to the messenger upon their orders - and is also the same man who witnessed Laius's death. When he returns to Thebes and sees that the man who killed Laius is the new king, he asks leave to flee from the city.

**Priest :** The Priest's followers make sacrifices to the gods at the beginning of the play, hoping that the gods will lift the plague that has struck the city.

**Second Messenger :** The Second Messenger is a servant of Oedipus and Jocasta who tells Oedipus and the Chorus of Jocasta's suicide.

**Ismene and Antigone :** Ismene and Antigone are Oedipus's young daughters who are led out at the end of the play. Oedipus laments the fact that they will never find husbands with such a cursed lineage and begs Creon to take care of them. Antigone, in the *Oedipus at Colonus*, will become her father's guide.

**Chorus of Theban Elders**

The Chorus of Theban Elders is a group of men who serve as an emotional sounding board and expositional device in the play, reflecting on the plot developments while asking important philosophical questions. The Chorus speaks as one person, but occasionally, single Chorus members would have delivered lines. They might be considered somewhat meta-theatrical - operating within the confines of the play while also having the power to step outside the boundaries of the mundane plot (Gradesaver).