

## Medea- Euripides

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### Definition of “Tragedy”/Context of “Medea”

Any series of events that occur, often unintentionally, causing great unhappiness to one or more parties involved in the said events. Tragedies tend to elicit sympathy for the characters involved. Other definitions: An event that causes great suffering, distress and destruction. Events that cause physical or psychological damage. Mistakes or errors might be present in a tragedy as a stimulus for the events, and these wrongdoings are usually irresolvable. Blame, guilt and disappointment are central recurring themes in tragedies. Words associated with tragedies: Calamity, disaster, catastrophe, cataclysm, devastation, misfortune, adversity, tribulation, misadventure.

Powerpoint definition: A tragedy is a form of drama- it is based on human suffering and evokes an emotional response (catharsis or pleasure/relief) in audiences. Tragedies, which are often a specific genre/tradition of drama, have played a unique and important role historically in the self definition of Western civilisation (cultural identity and historical continuity).

Greek Tragedies: Vengeance is a recurrent theme in Greek myth and tragedy. Revenge is just in Medea- but the way in which it is exacted, the viciousness of the avenger, must shock and disturb the spectator. Many avengers are women- in mythical drama, the “weaker” sex assert their power and often gain the upper hand over their supposed masters. Tragedies try to evoke strong emotions from their audiences- particularly fear and pity. There should ultimately be some catharsis (purification, a release of these emotions). *Hamartia*: A fatal flaw leading to the downfall of a tragic hero or heroine/erroneous judgements. *Hubris*: Excessive pride and self confidence which often leads to disaster.

Euripides (480BC-406BC): The most tragic of the Greek poets- according to Aristotle. Euripides uses the myth of Jason and the Argonauts (Golden Fleece) in order to engage in an intellectual debate. The characters of Medea and Jason can be seen as representations of two different responses to life. Jason has icy pragmatism untempered by human emotion (excess reason), and Medea has emotion unmoderated by the veneer (covering, layer) of civilisation (excess passion). Euripides was a serious questioner of the values of his day. He treated myths sensibly and expected men to use their logical powers. All of his existing plays are concerned with three basic themes: war, women and religion.

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### First Episode- Reading Questions

*Evaluate the strategies (actions) Medea employs to coerce Creon to concede a one day reprieve:* When Medea's initial pleas for mercy were ignored by Creon, who is cautious towards “words (that) are soothing to the ear”, she ostensibly became even more submissive, sinking to her knees and grabbing his hands. She then appealed to Creon's pathos, likening her own relationship with her children with that of the king's (to his daughter). This conjured an illusion for Creon, that he is obligated to be as kind to Medea as possible, if not, he will undermine the universal parents' love for their own children. However, Medea was only doing so as a ploy, and she loathed at how she has to “stoop to flattery of this man” for her scheme to succeed. She regrets not tackling her enemies head on and resorting to manipulations.

*What hamartia (flaw/weakness) does Creon's decision reveal:* Creon allowed himself to be persuaded by Medea to give her one more day of grace, who manipulates Creon's fatherly love towards his daughter: “Show them some pity...my little ones should stir some kind thoughts in you”.

Even though Medea later reveals that she couldn't bear the thought of begging for sympathy from Creon and being shown pity/mercy by anyone, she hypocritically implored Creon to unwittingly give her some time for her "schemes" to succeed. Creon's weakness may have resulted from "hubris", for he is overly confident about his powers to keep Medea under control.

*Consider Medea's monologue once Creon leaves. What are her objectives and true motivations:* Medea's objectives and motivations were identified by herself as vengeance, revenge against Jason, his bride and Creon. She felt bitter about Jason leaving her for Glauce and she wants Creon dead for sending her away purely on the basis of her emotional outbursts: "...I will make corpses of three of my enemies: father, daughter and husband". Although Medea initially wanted to murder Jason but not her children, she later changed her mind and decided to kill her children (offscreen) but deliberately leave Jason alive so that he can bear the pains of losing his own children (arguably a fate worse than death). Medea also values having the final laugh over her enemies above everything else, considering letting her enemies "boast of vexing my heart" worse than having her killed.

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## Key Themes of Medea

**Reason and Passion:** Creon represents the rational whereas Medea represents passion, specifically the impulse to have revenge on people who personally wronged her. She believes that her own passion is justified because her motive (vengeance) requires such passion, however, she sees passion in everyone else, for example, the passion Jason had for Glauce, as "...a boundless source of woe!". In the context of the story, hot-blooded people such as Medea (initially) were seen as more genuine, trustworthy and sincere, as they are being honest to everyone else about their own emotions: "A woman who is hot-tempered...is easier to guard...than one who...controls her tongue". However, as Medea started to devise a mass-murder in cold calculation, she loses some of her sympathy from the audience. For Creon, he initially was calm and calculating ("I fear you, there is no prevarication here"), but his passion soon proved to be a weakness in a role-reversal with Medea as she manipulated him by appealing to his fatherly side (demonstrated towards his subjects, as he was the King of Corinth, the father of his people): "...my little ones should stir some kind thoughts into you."

**Justice and Revenge:** A prominent question present in "Medea" was "does Jason deserve the vengeance of Medea?". From what he did to Medea, a nuptial betrayal ("breaker of oaths, deceiver of hosts"), he certainly deserved to be killed or hurt badly by Medea. The play was divided into two halves with the audience's sympathy shifting away from Medea to Jason in the second half. Medea initially had more sympathy because she is about to go homeless after all she's done for Jason, and her desperate measures can be justified. However, as Medea escalated the situation by murdering the royal family and her own children in quick succession, the sympathy shifts to Jason because he has lost all for which he strived for. It is worth noting that revenge is the most genuine emotion experienced by Medea, a character who is known to put on emotional facades: "...a woman is a soft creature, made for crying"

**Worst Crime- Breaking a Promise:** Jason had broken a promise with Medea when he decided to leave her so that he can marry Glauce. Had Jason not decided to leave Medea, Medea would never have conceived of murdering Creon, Glauce and her own children. In effect, Jason was the "boundless source of woe" of the story, rendering his oath-breaking "one crime to rule them all" that caused all of the other seemingly more heinous crimes by stimulating Medea's murderous thoughts. Marriage was an oath sworn in the gods' presence and no good consequences can come out of it if it's broken. Although today we make and break promises like it's nothing, Ancient Greek values dictate otherwise. In accordance with contemporary values of Euripides, breaking a promise

was an act that incurred the wraths of the gods. Medea saw Jason as “the foulest of traitors, my own husband” and summons the gods to send a “flaming bolt...to pierce my (Medea's) head”, sparing her from perceiving Jason's blatant betrayal. The chorus, however, believes that “Zeus will aid you in seeing justice done”, that Medea shouldn't take matters into her own hands. Medea warns that “wrong a woman in love...(will make her) murderous”, foreshadowing her punishment of Jason for the violation of their nuptial oath.

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## Second Episode Reading Questions

Who won the debate between Jason and Medea: Although Jason presented valid arguments, Medea won the audience's sympathy, because Jason was portrayed as an ungrateful person. Medea pointed out how she saved Jason's life on multiple occasions: “you all owe your lives to me...yet you have betrayed me, you unfeeling monster”, but Jason just palms her arguments as being merely a ploy to disguise what she has to gain from the marriage: “you gained more than you gave”. Jason's own arguments, however, are still not justified as all he did was pull an ad hominem attack on Medea. He still attempts to make a flimsy excuse, calling Medea out for being ungrateful towards his actions which supposedly “...joining our two families into one, to ensure my prosperity”.

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## Third Episode Reading Questions

The Role of Aegeus: He offers shelter and security to Medea so that she can proceed with her revenge with impunity. Represents another aspect of family dynastic concerns as he is a ruler without heirs (destroying of Jason's children). He also represents Athens (the Attic state) which is seen as the epitome of rational life and civilisation in the minds of the original audience.

Why does Euripides change the rhythm of this scene: Euripides used stichomythia to create a sense that Aegeus was consulting an oracle regarding his infertility. Just like an oracle, Medea posed ambiguous questions towards Aegeus and answered him directly. She manipulated him into giving her an oath to keep herself safe from the persecution of other city states in the presence of the gods. The implication is that Medea was seen as the vessel of the gods and possessed godly powers. Anyone wronging her would incur the wrath of the gods. Stichomythia adds dramatic effect and equality of voice, as well as making the story progress faster.

Is Euripides attempting to flatter or unsettle his audience by having Medea take refuge in Athens: Although Athens was depicted as an open and progressive city state, the epitome of Classical Greek civilisation, its leaders were depicted as incompetent. Aegeus was easily swayed by a woman he barely met when she promised him heirs. Euripides included many subtle political commentaries to Athens of his day in “Medea”, and allowing a psycho murderer to take refuge draws further attention to the foolishness of its leaders. As Athens was democratic, Euripides may be reminding his contemporary audience to elect wise and competent leaders.

How is Aegeus representative of Athens: As Athens' king in the pre-democratic era, he is supposed to be frowned upon by Euripides' contemporary audience. By depicting Aegeus as sterile, Euripides foreshadows on how Athens as a city is devoid of vitriol, easily conquered by its neighbours in the Peloponnesian Wars (which happened in Euripides' lifetime). Although Athens was seen as a friendly melting pot of cultures in the ancient Mediterranean, Euripides may be cautioning his fellow citizens on who they allow into the city. Aegeus may also represent the rational thinking endorsed by Athenian society.

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## Setting and Theme Analysis of “Medea”

A Patriarchal Society: There were patriarchal hypocrisies (rationalised by men)- Medea's exchanges with various males sees her challenging the state institutions. Medea utilises patriarchal weapons like “clever speaking” and violence along with her great intelligence (cunning). Creon and Aegeus: political leadership, Jason: heroic figure/husband, Tutor: education, Messenger: bureaucracy. Democracy, Justice, Oaths, Family and Religion were seen as pillars of the patriarchal Athenian Society. The breaking of oaths (“shamelessness”) was considered the malady (illness) that plagued mankind. Athens saw itself as an exemplary democracy, that prided itself on moral integrity, justice and hospitality.

Reason vs Passion: (Reason) Order, self control, civilised royal, prudent, rational, epitome of reason (logos), Jason appears to personify the quality of “sophrosyne” which was admired in Greek society. (Passion) Chaos, emotional expression, lawless barbarian, excess, irrational, epitome of emotion (pathos), Medea personifies the threat from within- the internal struggle with irrational forces of love and anger. One of the aims of Greek tragedy was to educate citizens in the practice of good citizenship. The ideal to be achieved in personal life was moderation- “Nothing in excess”. If we accept the notion of “moderation”, then both Medea and Jason stand equally condemned in this play. Medea is to be condemned for that excess of emotion- wounded pride, hatred, jealousy. Jason is to be condemned for an excess of reason- ruthless pragmatism and rationality. The interplay between irrational/angry Medea and clinically cold/controlled Jason defines the underlying dialectic within the play.

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## Fourth Episode Reading Questions

Who won the second round of debates between Jason and Medea: Although Jason appeared to be dominant over Medea in the debate, Medea succeeded overall because she managed to take advantage of Jason's excessive pride (hubris). Right before her conversation with Jason, she revealed to the chorus her disgust of being perceived as “a weak and feeble woman”, although she kept up the pretence as “...a soft creature, made for weeping”. This allowed Jason to play the role of the hero while Medea. She also revealed how she was motivated by the desire to hurt, not kill, Jason: “...it is by doing this that I shall hurt my husband most”. Although consumed by pride, Jason maintained some part of his cynical rationality (“why all these sighs for the children now?”), but he refused to see through Medea's disguise. He believes that Medea no longer poses any threat to his new family or himself, as she is about to get expelled from Corinth, and he haughtily states Medea has adapted to the “...superior way of thinking”. **Class discussion-** Medea: Played on Jason's hubristic desires, use of “honeyed words”, planned revenge effectively, manipulation of Jason's emotions for his children, used Jason's ego against him. Jason: appears superior, values family above material possessions

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## Fifth Episode Reading Questions

Why is the messenger's speech the longest uninterrupted speech in the play: The intense graphical details offered by the messenger were included by Euripides in order to shock his contemporary audience at Medea's audacity. She expresses an unsettling amount of glee on the demise of her enemies, quite the contrary depiction of a stereotypically meek and non-violent Athenian woman. She relished how her foes “died in agony” in a disturbing manner, gloating about their deaths.

How does Medea feel about the murder of her children: Although Medea believes that the murder of her children is a necessary evil, she still feels tremendous guilt in executing her plans. She started an argument with herself, but decided to go ahead with her murder anyway because her reason was overwhelmed with her thirst of "...causing you (Jason) pain". She can no longer make rational decisions. It was almost certain that her children would be killed by the Corinthians after her murder plan succeeded, Medea rationalised her decision, explaining how she won't "...deliver them to other hands to spill their blood more eagerly" in killing her sons.

3 Quotes on Reason/Passion, Revenge and Parenthood: **Reason/Passion-** "...my passion is master of my reason", "This is what the gods and I devised, I and my foolish heart", "Come on my heart, put on your armour" **Revenge-** "You would make me twice as happy if they died in agony", "I have no choice old man, none at all", "Do I want to become a laughing stock by letting my enemies off scot-free?" **Parenthood-** "My heart dissolves, ladies, when I see the shining faces of my children!", "Give me your hands children, give your mother your hands to kiss", "I cannot look at you anymore, my sorrows overwhelm me."

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## Exodus Reading Questions

What rhetoric devices does Jason employ: Being emotionally distraught, Jason's arguments aren't as valid as they could be. Jason attempted to plead with the Olympian gods to help him have his children back. He labelled Medea as a "...contemptible creature, killer of children" and filled in the audience about Medea's violent backstory, but Medea won the final debate by stating how Jason had everything coming as he broke a promise: "What god...listens to you...breaker of oaths". She called Jason out on his "weakness" with a condescending/sarcastic tone and predicted Jason's "coward's end" (Medea's dominance over Jason). Being elevated above the stage, Medea is associated with the gods, giving everything she says more substance over the mere mortal.

What is Euripides suggesting about emotion and logic: Although in Ancient Greek values emotion is supposed to be restrained by reason, passion had triumphed over logic in "Medea", just like how "...my passion is master of my reason". He is advocating for the way of "moderation in all things" in terms of balancing reason and passion. Role reversal- Jason becomes hectic whereas Medea becomes calm and measured.

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## Character Analysis Task- Medea

### Comprehension Questions

What are some of the key plot events surrounding the character: Pretty much the whole play revolved around Medea's vendetta against people who have wronged her personally such as Jason and the royal family of Corinth: "I will make corpses of three of my enemies- father, daughter and husband". She formulated a murder scheme to kill off Jason and the royal family once she heard about her impending eviction from Corinth: "...some scheme in mind?". Medea executed her plan, but a plot turn had her murdering her own children in lieu of Jason. She left Jason alive purposely so that he can suffer a fate worse than death, grieving over the loss of his bride and children: "...you...a coward at heart, shall meet a coward's end".

Is there something significant about Medea's backstory or the historical, social and cultural setting relevant to "Medea": Medea was abandoned by Jason in cold utilitarianism, typical of the "patriarchal" society that existed in Ancient Greece. Women were treated as possessions that could be discarded at the husband's discretion and "Medea" may have been intended as a warning against

misogynistic behaviour by Euripides: "...wrong a woman in love and nothing could be more murderous". Medea has shown how she hates being identified as a woman, when she regrets having to resort to role play a "soft creature, made for weeping" in order to have her way. At the exodus of the play, Jason briefed the audience on Medea's dark and violent backstory, where she was revealed to have committed many terrible deeds in order to win over Jason.

Core relationships and changes: Although Medea was initially married to Jason, he ungratefully left her to marry Glauce. This caused all of the story's unfortunate events from the royal family's death to the murder of Medea's own children. Her most profound relationship was with her children, even though she murdered them in order to punish Jason. She showed genuine love towards them, murdering them to protect them from the Corinthians. Medea's relationship with the chorus was reasonably close. They were in cahoots with each other, formulating a plan to punish Jason for his unfaithfulness, but they grew more distant once the chorus leader attempted to dissuade Medea from murdering her own children.

What does Medea's interaction with others reveal about her: Medea is a very cunning person, using her "weakness" associated with femininity to garner sympathy from Creon, even though she expressed utter disgust at receiving sympathy from others. She also used "honeyed words" and Jason's own hubris to her advantage so that he thinks she has changed for the better, building herself a facade/persona. Medea never had any direct interactions with Jason's bride-to-be, Glauce, but it is clear that she can only feel one emotion towards her- jealousy. Despite her manipulative and dishonest personality, Medea's demonstration of genuine emotions came not only in her anger-fuelled outbursts, but the motherly love she bestows upon her children. In universe, she rationalised her decision to commit infanticide as protecting them from people who "...spill their blood more eagerly". It is worth noting that in some interpretations of the play, she murdered them to prevent her children from being sold into slavery. Towards the chorus, Medea is a friend, and she trusts them enough that she enlists their help in keeping her plans a secret.

What are Medea's traits and flaws: Medea allows herself to be controlled by her passion rather than considering her options rationally. As the villainess of the story, one would expect that she has no regrets of her actions, although she can still feel regret for the vile deeds she's done. However, Medea voluntarily suppresses her conscience because she believes that it's a weakness, a "...cowardly thought", and she cannot afford to be weak while executing her schemes. She also demonstrates symptoms of schizophrenia, arguing with herself about whether or not to murder her children. Technically this is a virtue as she possesses a sense of judgement, but her passion subjugated her kindness.

### **Interpretation Questions**

Is Medea static or dynamic in the text: Medea's role was very dynamic throughout the play as she personifies the turbulent notion of emotion. She is very bipolar and she could be considered as an emotional shapeshifter, morphing into a pleading, subordinate woman when faced with Creon when merely moments before she was having an even more emotional anger outburst. She then became an expert orator, debating (and winning against) with Jason. This was an art associated with men in Athens. Under the influence of her arguments' rationality, she briefly turned into a more rational person, however this is the cliché calm before the storm. Her rationality was just a ploy to play on Jason's hubris, making him believe that he has reformed Medea by himself. She then let her passion run free, murdering the royal family with poison and her own children with a sword, all in a fit of uncontrollable rage and vengeance. It is clear that Medea has the ability to switch between her rational facade and her rabid anima in a moment's notice.

What purpose did Medea serve in depicting a value system: “Medea” was centred around two poles of the Rationality-Passion axis, depicting Jason as being coldly pragmatic and Medea as being boisterously impulsive. “Moderation in all things” was an ideal heavily endorsed by Classical Athenian society, the contemporary audience of Euripides. Being at the centre of civilisation in the Mediterranean, the Athenians believed that rationality is the direct cause for their high degree of civilisation. They also possess the belief that they must balance everything by providing some kind of antithesis to rationality just like how a good piece of art needs equal high amounts of skill and passion. Consequences for disobeying other core “pillar values” such as keeping promises were also illustrated in “Medea”, they were extremely dire to dissuade any members of Euripides' contemporary audience from wronging the values system.

Can Medea be an archetype in her own right: Euripides created Medea as a caricature of the dark side of female psychology, not to be taken very seriously by the audience. The female psyche was presented by Euripides as indecisive, jealous and highly grudge-bearing through Medea. As a villain, she is more competent than average, succeeding in her undertakings of emotionally torturing Jason by “retiring” those he love. She even elicited sympathy from the gods, who provided her with a Deus ex Machina to ensure she gets away scot-free after executing a serial homicide. Medea is also expected to not show any remorse about her actions (being the typical psycho serial murderer), however she has a human side, openly stating how she will establish a feast in the memory of her children in Athens. She also escaped Corinth without any repercussions, barring her guilty conscience of doing the deed that has to be done (murdering her own children), proving how even evil people can have virtues.

How does the setting/time period affect Medea's choices and decisions: Medea behaved very audaciously for a woman in Ancient Greece. She boldly went into public space, when she's supposed to be confined within the home of the husband. She then revealed her formulated plan of a triple murder to the chorus without holding back whatsoever. It is worth noting that all of the onscreen action took place in the said area, in front of Jason's house, demonstrating how Medea has a say on her own future even within her husband's dominion. Aegeus, personifying the pre-democratic Athenian society, had no heirs, and was therefore branded as incompetent. Medea's choice to seek refuge in Athens, a progressive but poorly-led city state, was intended by Euripides as an insult to the audience as well as his contemporary political system. Medea probably thought that the Athenians were naive to dupe, and she could take advantage of their kind hospitality in some way. Therefore, “Medea” probably has a typical “Hidden Aesop” to the Athenians to be more cautious on who they accept as a part of their community.

What purpose did Medea serve in the narrative: Being the eponymous and central character of the play, Medea served as a personified force of destruction. She represents everything irrational about Greek society. Euripides is building on the clichés of “don't judge a book by its cover” and “appearances can be deceiving”, because Medea uses many personality disguises to have her way with her foes. She demonstrated her chess master streak by playing with Creon's emotions, taking whatever facade that was necessary. At the start of the play, Medea was grieving in sadness and in anger, because to her, her husband Jason is dead for he doesn't value her anymore. In every conceivable way Medea acted as the antithesis to Jason. She won't take anyone's happiness into account when making her plans, save for her own children, but she also has an unhealthy possessive attitude towards them. She wants them to be hers and hers alone. At the end, Medea forsake her children's happiness just so she can emotionally traumatise Jason for ignoring her. She couldn't stand the thought of her children being killed by Corinthians, or staying with Jason.

What was Euripides' purpose for creating the character of Medea: Stated before, Euripides created Medea to warn his contemporaries about the dangers of violating the core societal values (Faithfulness, loyalty, nature, moderation, dignity, connection with feelings). He also created her as an exaggerated but comical portrayal of the female mindset, full of the thirst for revenge. Medea exerted physical, mental and psychological abuse on all her enemies, but she reserved psychological mutilation for "that arch-criminal Jason", her greatest enemy. Medea's lust of vengeance was shown as Jason was the only person to hurt Medea emotionally, and she considered her treatment of Jason as payback. They conducted a role reversal at the exodus of the play, with Jason referring to Medea as "arch-criminal", demonstrating Euripides' desire for them to be polar opposites. Medea fears being mocked by her enemies more than being killed by her enemies: "Not one of them will live to boast of vexing my heart".

### **Drawing Conclusions**

What assertions can be made about Medea: Medea was definitely the villain, but the story is a tale of grey-grey morality. The side countering Medea isn't much better off than her morally. This means that Medea, vile as she was, may be one of multiple villains in the play. One can also say that she was forced into villainy, her unfortunate circumstances contributing heavily to her loss of reason and sanity. Therefore, Medea could be defined as an anti-villain. Jason was also one of the most morally ambiguous characters of the play, breaking many core Ancient Greek values in betraying Medea in marriage. He showed off his hubris onstage towards Medea with no restraints, who is about to get exiled and separated permanently from her children, decreasing the audience's sympathy towards him. He got what he deserved in textbook morality play fashion after Medea's revenge was carried out, and Medea predicted how he will die a "coward's death" in due time. In a nutshell: Medea was the ticking time bomb of the story, her countdown being triggered by Jason's betrayal and news of her impending exile.

What was Euripides suggesting through Medea: Euripides is heavily suggesting that Medea is not be how she appears/presents herself due to her complicated character. An example is that she appears nice to Jason in the scene where she is using "honeyed words" to fool him of her change of opinion, however she has a dark side that only the audience is aware of. This behaviour of fake kindness and friendliness towards the other characters manages to trick them into letting Medea stay a final day before exile, and given an offer of safety in Athens. This is all while hiding her true intentions of killing her children.

**10 Quotes:** 1. "...my passion is master of my reason" (Line 1080), 2. "My heart dissolves, ladies, when I see the shining faces of my children!" (Line 1040), 3. "Good bye to those plans I made!" (Line 1040), 4. "Give me your hands children, give your mother your hands to kiss" (Line 1070), 5. "I cannot look at you any more, my sorrows overwhelm me." (Line 1080), 6. "Do I want to become a laughing stock by letting my enemies off scot-free?" (Line 1050), 7. "...he (the messenger) has a tale of strange suffering to tell." (Line 1120), 8. "I have no choice, old man, none at all." (Line 1010), 9. "A woman is a soft creature, made for weeping." (Line 930) 10. "...my tongue can utter no worse abuse against your spinelessness" (Line 470) \*\*\* **Additional quotes can be found in the answer paragraphs**

**Kahoot Questions:** 1. Why did Medea change her murder plan to leave Jason alive, but her children dead? (A. Out of pity for Jason B. She hates her children C. She has no time to murder Jason D. To make Jason suffer (Correct Answer)) 2. How did Medea portray herself in order to manipulate people? (A. As a "lioness", being very menacing B. As an emotionally unstable person, appearing harmless C. As a bystander to Jason's marriage, showing neutrality D. As a "soft creature made for weeping", gaining sympathy (Correct Answer)) 3. What society was Medea's behaviour



defying? (A. A society ruled by men (Correct Answer) B. A society ruled by incompetent leaders C. A society that lets people's passions run free D. A society ruled by the wealthy) 4. What was the most genuine and profound relationship Medea had with another character? (A. Jason B. Her children (Correct Answer) C. The chorus D. Glauce) 5. When did Medea drop her facade and demonstrate genuine emotion? (A. Angry outbursts and motherly love towards her children (Correct Answer) B. Sending gifts of goodwill to Glauce C. Informing Jason of her reformation D. Pleading desperately with Creon to give her a day's grace) 6. What was the most intense emotion experienced by Medea? (A. Love B. Anger C. Jealousy D. Vengeance (Correct Answer)) 7. Which characters was the emotion to the above question directed? (A. Jason, Creon and Glauce (Correct Answer) B. Jason Creon, Glauce and her children C. Jason and Glauce only D. Everyone in the play) 8. Does Medea show regret? (A. Yes (Correct Answer) B. No C. Pick an answer, any answer D. Maybe, maybe not) 9. How does she demonstrate regret? (A. By sparing Jason's life B. By confessing to the chorus C. By arguing with herself about her infanticide (Correct Answer) D. By briefly rethinking her plans) 10. When does Medea put on her rational facade? (A. When she reveals her plans to the chorus B. When she plans the murders C. When she talks with Creon D. When she has to persuade Jason of her reformation (Correct Answer)) 11. When does Medea swing into the irrational? (A. When she informs the chorus about the murder B. When she gloats about vengeance to Jason C. When she begs Creon for a day's grace D. When she murders her children (Correct Answer)) 12. Which one of the Greek values is Euripides advocating? (A. Advanced cultural activities B. Moderation (Correct Answer) C. Secularity D. Competent leadership) 13. How does Medea (the character) best paint the archetypal female mind? (A. Loving and emotional B. Grudge-bearing, but indecisive (Correct Answer) C. Violent and disturbed D. Meek and ordinary) 14. We know that Medea was striving against the male-dominated society. How does she defy the period's customs? (A. By entering a public space and speaking boldly to the chorus (Correct Answer) B. By manipulating the males in the story C. By being extremely violent D. By being assertive) 15. Aegeus' presence is poking fun at something. What is it? (A. Leaders who make poor decisions (Correct Answer) B. Leaders who are accepting of foreigners C. Leaders who are old and weak D. Infertile people) 16. Select the best niche for Medea. (A. Caring mother B. Grieving wife (for Jason's betrayal) C. Vengeful psychopath (Correct Answer) D. Pleading woman) 17. Which popular culture villain does Medea most resemble? (A. Norman Bates (Correct Answer) B. Darth Vader C. Mr Burns D. Don Corleone) 18. What was Medea's primary means of attack against Jason? (A. Physical B. Emotional (Correct Answer) C. Psychological D. All of the above) 19. Select the number of villain(s) in the story. (A. 1 B. 2 (Correct Answer) C. 4 D. Pick a number, any number) 20. What was Euripides suggesting through Medea? (A. Gain help at any costs B. All women are not trustworthy C. You can judge a book by its cover D. People may not be the way they first present themselves (Correct Answer))

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## “Medea” Exam Essay Planning

**Possible Exam Topics** Emotion and Reason, hubris (pride), sympathy, gender roles. **Practice Topic 1** Medea's revenge makes her far more guilty than Jason **Contention** Although Medea committed many atrocious acts intended by Euripides to shock his Athenian audience, it was a reaction, not an initial action, to Jason's excessive rationalisation and hubris. (Sample contention: While Medea is the perpetrator of gross and injustice and revenge in Euripides' play, the blame for the tragedy can be equally attributed to Jason's misguided views on justice and the exclusive nature of the patriarchal society). **“Accept” Paragraph:** Medea is guilty of revenge that causes much harm and destruction to those she loves and Corinthian society. **“Challenge” Paragraph:** Jason and Creon both harm Medea through their faulty reasoning and patriarchal views of justice, prompting her

excess of passion and inflaming her hubristic nature. **“Message” Paragraph:** Euripides elucidates to his audience that there are individuals who are guilty and others who are responsible for ensuing tragedy and chaos. \*\*\*for each body paragraph it is necessary to identify and analyse a secondary character, a theatrical convention as well as a key Athenian value.

**Practice Topic 2** Medea is motivated more by pride than by revenge. **Contention** Although it is commonly perceived by the modern audience that Medea was driven by a vendetta to bring suffering upon Jason and the royal house of Corinth, the true source of her vengeance lies in her hubristic nature, in her obsessive desire to be dignified while facing her nemeses. (Sample contention: Medea is motivated equally by pride and revenge as she is determined to defeat her enemies and restore her reputation as a strong woman who should not be underestimated) **“Accept” Paragraph:** Medea detests being ostracised and excluded by the patriarchal society, which she perceives has damaged dignity and undermined her accomplishment. **“Challenge” Paragraph:** Medea seeks revenge for the wrongdoing of Jason which has left her family in an undesirable position. It is because of the hurt and suffering inflicted by others that she wants to retaliate and in doing so restore her agency over her life. **“Messages” Paragraph:** Euripides warns his original male audience that if they continue to disregard the interests of others, they will be subjected to mutiny/misfortune on a personal and societal level.

**Practice Topic 3** It is very difficult for the audience to sympathise with any of the characters **Contention** Although ultimately all characters in Euripides' tragic play “Medea” were intended to be voided of all sympathy due to their vile behaviour, initially audience sympathy was rather evenly spread. It was the shift of sympathy away from Medea and towards Jason that divided the play in halves in form. However, Jason's sympathy at the exodus of the play was diminished in value given that it was clear to the audience his moral transgressions, therefore Medea would still possess audience sympathy due to the fact that she was forced to commit deplorable deeds. (Sample contention: Although there are characters who commit atrocities in the play, each of these individuals has flaws that make them more relatable and contribute to our understanding of their actions and their motives). **“Accept” Paragraph:** Euripides illustrates that violating the great Athenian values of the time due to extremes in human emotion and reason can reduce audience sympathy for characters who contribute to the demise of the revered civilisations of Greece. **“Challenge” Paragraph:** Euripides however encourages the audience to sympathise with the obvious “pain and sorrow” of archetypal characters who face pitiful situations, and understand their motives leading to tragedy. **“Messages” Paragraph:** From the outset, Euripides challenges the Athenian audience to consider whether their practices, institutions and guiding ethos are fundamentally flawed and corrupt, due to the abundance of misfortune of both the innocent and guilty, creating a state of commiseration for all.

**Practice Topic 4** Euripides' characters are admirable yet it is their character weaknesses which ultimately bring about their demise. **Contention** Euripides' 431 BCE play “Medea” is widely interpreted as a tragic play. In order to elicit the maximal emotion swing and to maximise the catharsis in his contemporary male audience, he depicted all characters relatable and sympathetic, with redeeming qualities despite their personality flaws. **“Accept” Paragraph:** Jason, Medea and the Royal House of Corinth all have many qualities to their characters' merit, as evident in their past as a protagonist and deuteragonist of the Argonautic Expedition, as well as kind and wise rulers for the Corinthian royal family (eg Jason offering Medea gift, Creon allowing Medea one day's grace, Medea showing motherly love towards her children) **“Challenge” Paragraph:** However, in order to be classified as a tragic play, all characters in “Medea” also have a *hamartia* exploited by each other that caused all the “misfortunes” of the plot. (Jason's hubris, Medea's vengefulness, royal family's idiocy for angering Medea) **“Messages” Paragraph:** To his contemporary Athenian

audience, Euripides is simultaneously complimenting them for the attainment of a high level of civilisation, symbolised by the characters' virtues, and warning them to keep the inherent flaws of their society in check, symbolised by the characters' harmatia. ("Moderation is best in practice", the wave metaphor (Athenians should be more open to change), Medea escaping to the Attic State).