

Euripides: Medea

Sophocles: Antigone

Aeschylus: Agamemnon

Aeschylus: Eumenides

Aeschylus: The Choephoroi

**ANCIENT GREEK
TRAGEDIES. CLASSIC
COLLECTION**

Euripides. Medea
Sophocles. Antigone
Aeschylus. The Oresteia
Illustrated

Euripides
Medea

Characters of the play

MEDEA, daughter of Aietes, King of Colchis.

JASON, chief of the Argonauts; nephew of Pelias, King of Iolcos in Thessaly.

CREON, ruler of Corinth.

AEGEUS, King of Athens.

NURSE of Medea.

TWO CHILDREN of Jason and Medea.

ATTENDANT on the children.

A MESSENGER.

CHORUS of Corinthian Women, with their LEADER.

Soldiers and Attendants.



The scene is laid in Corinth. The play was first acted when Pythodorus was Archon, Olympiad 87, year 1 (B.C. 431). Euphorion was first, Sophocles second, Euripides third, with Medea,

Philoctetes, Dictys, and the Harvesters, a Satyr-play.

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The Scene represents the front of MEDEA'S House in Corinth. A road to the right leads towards the royal castle, one on the left to the harbour. The NURSE is discovered alone.

NURSE

Would God no Argo e'er had winged
the seas
To Colchis through the blue
Symplegades:

No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen
Shaped that first oar-blade in the
hands of men
Valiant, who won, to save King Pelias'
vow,

The fleece All-golden! Never then, I
trow,
Mine own princess, her spirit
wounded sore
With love of Jason, to the encastled
shore
Had sailed of old Iolcos: never
wrought
The daughters of King Pelias, knowing
not,
To spill their father's life: nor fled in
fear,
Hunted for that fierce sin, to Corinth
here
With Jason and her babes. This folk at
need
Stood friend to her, and she in word
and deed
Served alway Jason. Surely this doth
bind,

Through all ill days, the hurts of
humankind,

When man and woman in one music
move.

But now, the world is angry, and true
love

Sick as with poison. Jason doth forsake
My mistress and his own two sons, to
make

His couch in a king's chamber. He must
wed:

Wed with this Creon's child, who now
is head

And chief of Corinth. Wherefore sore
betrayed

Medea calleth up the oath they made,
They two, and wakes the clasped
hands again,

The troth surpassing speech, and cries
amain

On God in heaven to mark the end, and
how

Jason hath paid his debt.
All fasting now
And cold, her body yielded up to pain,
Her days a waste of weeping, she hath
lain,

Since first she knew that he was false.
Her eyes
Are lifted not; and all her visage lies
In the dust. If friends will speak, she
hears no more
Than some dead rock or wave that
beats the shore:
Only the white throat in a sudden
shame

May writhe, and all alone she moans
the name
Of father, and land, and home, forsook
that day

For this man's sake, who casteth her
away.

Not to be quite shut out from home...
alas,

She knoweth now how rare a thing
that was!

Methinks she hath a dread, not joy, to
see

Her children near. 'Tis this that
maketh me

Most tremble, lest she do I know not
what.

Her heart is no light thing, and useth
not

To brook much wrong. I know that
woman, aye,

And dread her! Will she creep alone to
die

Bleeding in that old room, where still
is laid

Lord Jason's bed? She hath for that a
blade

Made keen. Or slay the bridegroom
and the king,
And win herself God knows what direr
thing?

'Tis a fell spirit. Few, I ween, shall stir
Her hate unscathed, or lightly humble
her.

Ha! 'Tis the children from their games
again,

Rested and gay; and all their mother's
pain

Forgotten! Young lives ever turn from
gloom!

The CHILDREN and their
ATTENDANT come in.

ATTENDANT