

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Per: \_\_\_\_\_

**Medea Prereading And Prologos (p. 302-304)**

Answer in complete sentences.

1. Before the play begins, what are your impressions of Jason and Medea?
2. Explain the Nurse's attitude toward Jason. Include at least one direct quote to support your answer.
3. Why were Jason and Medea forced to leave Iolchus?
4. We do not see Medea in the Prologos; we merely hear her voice. What is your first impression of her based on these words?
5. The children have no speaking lines here. Nevertheless, they are an integral part of the Prologos and an important topic of conversation. Examine the Nurse's and Medea's references to the. What is being foreshadowed, and how can you tell?

## **Medea Themes Cheat Sheet**

### **Theme of Women and Femininity**

*Medea* sharply criticizes the male-dominated society of its time. Its protagonist is a radical anti-heroine who continues to inspire both admiration and fear. We sympathize with Medea's downtrodden state and applaud her strength and intelligence. However, her bloody and vengeful rebellion shocks and unsettles audiences even to this day. The play can be seen as a cautionary tale to oppressors as well as the oppressed.

### **Theme of Revenge**

Medea's relentless pursuit of vengeance is legendary. She is driven by a passionate desire to right the wrongs done to her and sacrifices even her own children in the pursuit of satisfaction. *Medea* shows audiences the horror that can come when a person lets desire for revenge rule her life. Euripides's play helped pave the way for many later revenge tragedies, from the numerous Spanish revenge dramas to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

### **Theme of Betrayal**

All the violence and terror in *Medea* is caused by Jason's betrayal of his wife Medea. Her sheer rage at his unfaithfulness drives her to commit horrific acts of bloody revenge. Ironically, Medea's fury at her husband's betrayal drives her to the use of trickery and manipulation, which are really just another form of betrayal. *Medea* shows how, when one person betrays another, all may be corrupted.

### **Theme of Exile**

*Medea* is laced throughout with the theme of exile. All the characters relate to the motif. Some, like Medea, have been banished from their homes; some are the ones doing the banishing. The theme of exile would have resonated strongly with Euripides's audience of ancient Athenians. Their city-state was their lives. The thought of being cut off from it and cast out into the wilderness would have been terrifying.

### **Theme of Foreignness and 'The Other'**

Ancient Greeks had a deep suspicion of foreigners, thinking of them all as "barbarians." With *Medea*, Euripides seems to confront this prejudice by choosing to honor a foreigner with the role of tragic heroine and by making her the most intelligent character in the play. However, the playwright also confirms many Greek stereotypes of foreigners by making Medea wild, overly passionate, and vengeful.

### **Theme of Marriage**

*Medea* is an extreme depiction of just how bad a marriage can go. It really doesn't get much worse than the marriage seen in this play. When Jason takes a new wife, Medea, his former wife takes revenge by killing four people, including their two sons. Indeed, the play doesn't exactly have a bright outlook on matrimony. In *Medea* the severing of a marriage releases the same destructive force as the sundered atom of a nuclear bomb.

### **Theme of Cunning and Cleverness**

Medea is symbolic of the clever woman imprisoned in a world of men. Her intelligence inspires both suspicion and cautious admiration. In the end, her cunning becomes her supreme weapon in her quest for revenge. None of her enemies stand a chance against her supreme intellect. *Medea* shows that, without a doubt, the greatest power lies in knowledge.

### **Theme of Love**

Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, is not very well appreciated in Euripides's *Medea*. Everywhere her hand is seen, destruction swiftly follows. Whether the love be romantic, paternal, or maternal, it always leads to death and despair. Quite often the characters even go so far as to beg the goddess to spare them the pains that love can bring. Overall, *Medea* seems to present a rather cynical view of the tenderest of emotions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Per: \_\_\_\_\_

### Conflict: Medea vs. Jason, the Debate

Fill in the chart below with Jason's relevant responses to Medea's argument. Cite each response with page numbers.

Medea	Jason
"I saved your life; every Greek who sailed with you on the Argo knows I saved you, When you were sent to tame the fire-breathing bulls and to yoke them, and to sow the deadly fields..."	
"Had you not been a coward, Jason, you would have spoken frankly to me first, and not concealed your wedding plans from the one who loved you."	
"... you thought it might not be altogether proper, as you grew older, to have a foreign wife."	
"You at least have a home to turn to. But I am going into exile, and alone."	
"How so? By marrying and deserting you?"	
"I'll accept nothing from you...."	

Who has the most convincing arguments? Why?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Per: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Medea: The Tragic Flaw**

Give one example that demonstrates each flaw. These may be Medea's statements or actions or facts learned about her from other characters. You must cite the page number where you found the example, but you can put the example in your own words.

<b>Flaw</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Hubris (excessive pride)		
Self-will		
Rashness		
Excessively passionate nature		
Need for revenge		

A *tragic flaw*, or *harmartia*, brings out the character's humanity and enables the audience or reader to view him or her with compassion. Given this information, which of the above weaknesses qualifies as a tragic flaw? Explain.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Per: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Medea Postreading**

Answer in complete sentences

1. Medea dramatically changes her attitude toward Jason when she begs his forgiveness. Why does Jason believe her? Cite passages to support your answer.
2. How does Euripides introduce suspense in the scene where Medea sends the children off to the royal palace with their father?
3. When the tutor reports the success of the children at the royal palace, why does Medea exhibit such anguish?
4. After the news from the tutor, Medea's resolve to continue with her plan is momentarily weakened. What powerful aspect in Medea's character restrains her from abandoning her plans? Cite passages to support your answer.
5. Directors often set Greek tragedies in another place and time other than Ancient Greece. If you were directing, where and when would you choose? Why?

## **Medea Theme Questions**

Choose **ONE** question about each theme to respond to in a brief paragraph. Type your responses in MLA format and include cited textual support for your answers. You should have 8 responses total. You will need to clearly label the Theme as well as the number you are responding to. Also, your document must be uploaded to Turnitin.com for credit.

### **Questions About Women and Femininity**

1. How can Medea be seen as symbol of feminine revolt?
2. What are the major complaints Medea raises about the treatment of women?
3. What hierarchy exists among the women in *Medea*?
4. Is *Medea* still pertinent to the issues facing women today?
5. In what ways does a play like *Medea* help the cause of women? How might it hurt it?
6. Compare the plight of women Euripides day to today's society. Similarities? Differences?

### **Questions About Revenge**

1. Why does Medea think it's necessary to kill her sons to get revenge on Jason?
2. How do you interpret the fact that Medea suffers no consequences for her revenge?
3. What steps must Medea take in order to achieve her revenge?
4. What's the difference between revenge and justice?

### **Questions About Betrayal**

1. In what ways can Medea's manipulations be seen as betrayal?
2. Does Jason's betrayal justify Medea's revenge?
3. Is Jason's second marriage really a betrayal at all? Why or why not?
4. Could Medea's murder of her children be interpreted as a betrayal?

### **Questions About Exile**

1. In what ways does Medea bring her banishment on herself?
2. How is Medea in some ways responsible for Jason's exile from his home town of Iolcus?
3. Is it wrong of Creon to banish Medea? Why or why not?
4. How does Medea's exile from her homeland heighten the stakes surrounding her banishment?

### **Questions About Foreignness and 'The Other'**

1. Does *Medea* confirm or refute Greek prejudices toward foreigners?
2. In what ways is Medea prejudiced against Greeks?
3. How do Medea's foreign origins affect her social status?
4. How can Medea be seen as a "typical Asian" in the eyes of the Greeks?

### **Questions About Marriage**

1. How were ancient Greek ideas of marriage different from modern concepts? How are they similar?
2. What overall view of marriage does the play seem to take?
3. Was Jason's second marriage truly a betrayal? Why or why not?
4. What power dynamic was present in ancient Greek marriages?

### **Questions About Cunning and Cleverness**

1. What tactics does Medea use to manipulate those around her?
2. How does Medea's intelligence make her dangerous?
3. In what ways does Medea's superior intelligence ostracize her?
4. How does Medea put her cunning to use in the play?

### **Questions About Love**

1. How does romantic love affect the action of the play?
2. Do you think Jason ever loved Medea? Why or why not?
3. What overall view of love does the play seem to take?
4. In what ways does each character express paternal or maternal love?

