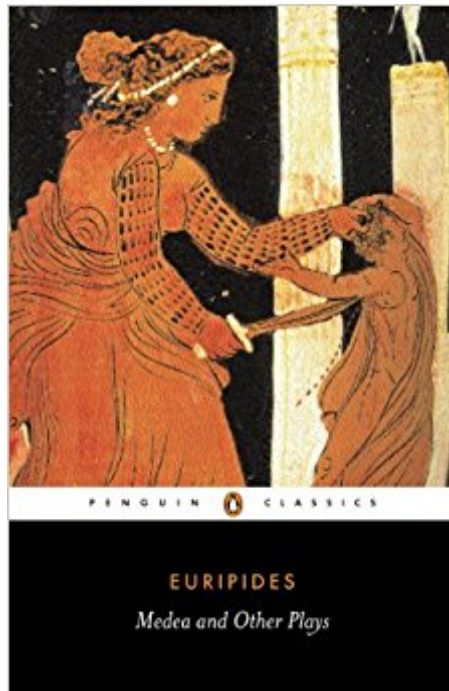




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# Medea And Other Plays (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Four plays which exemplify his interest in flawed, characters who defy the expectations of Greek society The four tragedies collected in this volume all focus on a central character, once powerful, brought down by betrayal, jealousy, guilt and hatred. The first playwright to depict suffering without reference to the gods, Euripides made his characters speak in human terms and face the consequences of their actions. In *Medea*, a woman rejected by her lover takes hideous revenge by murdering the children they both love, and *Hecabe* depicts the former queen of Troy, driven mad by the prospect of her daughter's sacrifice to Achilles. *Electra* portrays a young woman planning to avenge the brutal death of her father at the hands of her mother, while in *Heracles* the hero seeks vengeance against the evil king who has caused bloodshed in his family. Philip Vellacott's lucid translation is accompanied by an introduction, which discusses the literary background of Classical Athens and examines the distinction between instinctive and civilized behaviour. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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## Customer Reviews

Euripides was an Athenian born in 484BC. A member of a family of considerable rank, he disliked performing the public duties expected of him, preferring a life of introspection. He was not a popular figure, and at some point (and for a reason unknown) he went into voluntary exile at the court of Archelaus, King of Macedon. He died c.407BC and is thought to have written around ninety-two plays, of which seventeen survive.

The book was awesome to read and also very easy to understand. I really enjoyed this book. If your looking to read great book on Greek tragedies then this is the book for you.

Good quality, good price...just a lil hard to read and follow...also unfortunately a few glitches in grammar but it was useful for the need...happy for the quick shipping!!

Great Book, would recommend especially for students or if you just want a Shakespeare classic.

I was pleasantly surprised when I was reading "Medea". About halfway through the play, I realized that the themes of revenge, depression, and female empowerment are still relevant. Infidelity and vengeance are things witnessed everyday: in movies, in the news, maybe even in our own lives. This string of themes proves further that human kind hasn't changed too much. Though I did have some problems with the plot and some of the overdramatics. Medea revealed to the audience a vulnerable, passionate woman who has a bit of a drama problem and needs just a little too much attention. I think any reader can appreciate the pain she suffered and the disgusting way people in power dealt with her. But is there a line being far over-stepped by killing one's own children just to make a man feel guilty? Though there is some undeniable hyperbole, it is a story a reader or audience member can empathize, and is totally plausible in a modern setting.

Vellacott has provided excellent translations and commentaries on four of the plays of Euripides, including his classic "Medea." They should be required reading of any college student. "Medea" is a study in how unbridled passion can overcome reason and lead to tragedy. This may be particularly pertinent with respect to the ongoing war between Athens and Sparta at the time the play was first presented. Medea, who had helped Jason in his quest, become his wife, and given him two sons, feels betrayed since he is marrying the daughter of the ruler of Corinth. With horrible vengeance, she kills the bride and the king and then her two sons. "Hecabe" is a play about the wife of Priam, King of Troy, and the mother of Hector, Paris, Cassandra, and others. At the start of this play, the war

between the Greeks and Troy is over and Hecabe is now a slave of Agamemnon. The ghost of Achilles had appeared and demanded a sacrifice over his tomb before the Greeks can set sail for home. They vote to sacrifice Polyxena, Hecabe's young daughter, despite the tears and entreaties of Hecabe. After Polyxena's noble death, Hecabe learns that her last child Polydorus had been murdered by the King of Thrace, Polymestor, to whom Polydorus had been sent for safekeeping. This finally drives Hecabe mad and she seeks vengeance for Polydorus's death. Euripides shows in this play the effects of war and vengeance on innocent lives and how cruel men at war can be. "Electra" is another retelling of the vengeance story of Electra and Orestes. In this version, they are less heroic and more realistic than the way they are portrayed by Aeschylus and Sophocles. Interestingly, the one true noble and honest character in the play is the peasant husband of Electra, who refuses to touch her because he is beneath her station. Was Euripides making a social comment about the upper classes of Athens of his time? The final play is "Heracles." In this play, the wife of Heracles, his three young sons, and Heracles' father Amphitryon are in danger of being killed by the usurping king of Thebes, Lycus. Lycus wishes them dead since he had killed Megara's father, King Creon, and taken his throne and Lycus doesn't want the three sons to grow up to avenge the death of their grandfather. Heracles is believed by many to be dead. But, he returns in time to thwart and kill Lycus. Unfortunately, the goddess Hera, who has always had a hatred of Heracles, sends the minor goddess Madness down to drive Heracles temporarily insane. In his fits, he kills his wife and sons. When sanity returns to him, he realizes what he has done and how immoral the gods are. The Greek gods are not an acceptable standard for moral behavior. Man can serve as a standard, and this is exemplified in the play by Theseus, ruler of Athens.

Euripides is the dramatist of the irrational. His greatest work, *The Bacchae*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, depicts a world in which irrational passions are a powerful and destructive force. In contrast to Aeschylus, whose greatest work - *The House of Atreus* trilogy - describes the harnessing of irrational forces into civic fabric of the polis and rationalistic worship of the Olympian pantheon, Euripides sees the passions as uncontrollable. Some of the gods, such as Dionysius in *The Bacchae* and Aphrodite in *Hippolytus*, appear as the personification of destructive passions. Many of the human figures in Euripides plays appear unable not only to face the force of these passions, but also unable to recognize the danger represented by the passions. Euripides' view is dark but powerful and his works are compelling but dispiriting. The Penguin series of his plays includes translations by Phillip Vellacott. Though most of these translations were produced decades ago, they retain their freshness and immediacy. This set of inexpensive books is an excellent way to

experience Euripides.

Euripides' Medea is a story about a woman's heartbreak and the revenge she consequently seeks on her husband. After her spouse takes another wife Medea is torn apart, unable to distinguish right from wrong. She plots to kill the new wife and eventually Medea murders her own children, all in order to spite her former lover. Euripides expresses the power of passion without reason especially when it comes to love. Medea is willing to kill her own children out of despair, although they are the only people she really has. She has feelings of trepidation before killing the children, revealing her humanity, but appears triumphant after completing the murders. She appears at the top of a building at the end of the show which is usually reserved for divine appearances (intro), which is a metaphor for Medea's strength and even her unyielding brutality, qualities that many deities were believed to possess. I really enjoyed this play because of Euripides' representation of the woman. Although tragic, Medea's dramatic actions express her passion, stubbornness, power, as well as her godliness and simultaneous humanity.

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