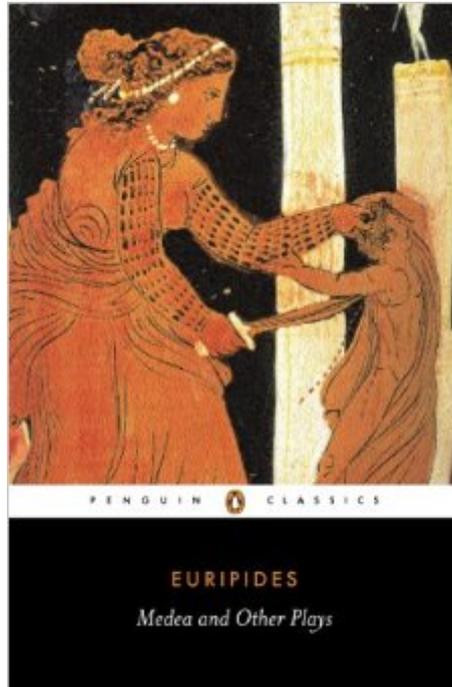


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# Medea And Other Plays (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Four plays which exemplify his interest in flawed, characters who defy the expectations of Greek society, Euripides' *Medea and Other Plays* is translated with an introduction by Philip Vellacott in Penguin Classics. 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. Euripides (c.485-07 BC) was an Athenian born into a family of considerable rank. Disdaining the public duties expected of him, Euripides spent a life of quiet introspection, spending much of his life in a cave on Salamis. Late in life he voluntarily exiled himself to the court of Archelaus, King of Macedon, where he wrote *The Bacchae*, regarded by many as his greatest work. Euripides is thought to have written 92 plays, only 18 of which survive. If you enjoyed *Medea and Other Plays*, you might like Aeschylus' *The Oresteian Trilogy*, also available in Penguin Classics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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.

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