

MEDEA: NO NAME IN LITERATURE IS SO CLOSELY LINKED WITH A PARTICULAR crime, and no literary crime is so reviled as the one committed by this sorceress of ancient Greece. Scorned by her lover, abandoned in a foreign country, and seething with resentment, Medea murders her own children as a form of cold-blooded revenge. Yet behind the filicidal rage lies one of the most complex and fascinating characters ever conceived. Since she first appeared on the Athenian stage some 2,500 years ago, Medea has been depicted and reimagined countless times. Dozens of opera composers have crafted music to accompany her blood-soaked exploits, yet Medea has never graced the stage of the Metropolitan Opera—until now.

The 2022–23 Met season opens with Luigi Cherubini’s *Medea*, a Revolution-era classic of French opera, presented in its more commonly performed Italian version. Brought to life by powerhouse soprano Sondra Radvanovsky, the titular antiheroine becomes a woman both mighty and vulnerable. “She is a very fatal woman, but she is also very tragic,” Radvanovsky says. “Her whole life, she has been driven by desperation and hopelessness—but think, too, this is a woman who is powerful, who knows no limits.” David McVicar’s production, which unfurls in the crumbling ruins of once-gilded Corinth, draws on both digital technologies (such as video projection) and analog stagecraft (including a giant mirror suspended over the back wall of the stage) to offer a layered take on the murderous mother, exploring the way her choices reflect the collapse of her own familial infrastructure as the man she loves rejects her, and the children she loves become her only outlet for revenge. The result is a searing psychological portrait of one of drama’s legendary figures—and an unforgettable portrayal of one of literature’s most horrifying crimes.

This guide approaches *Medea* as an opportunity to excavate the past while exploring the present. The materials on the following pages include an introduction to Euripides’s play and ancient Greek tragedy more broadly, a thorough analysis of Medea and Jason’s complex love story (and how it has been depicted across the ages), and classroom activities that will bring the opera’s music and story to life. By delving into *Medea*’s music, drama, and design, this guide will forge interdisciplinary classroom connections, inspire critical thinking, and challenge students to look past Medea’s bloody exploits to the multifaceted woman who lies beneath.



RADVANSKY



BRUGGER



GUBANOVA



POLENZANI



PERTUSI

THE WORK

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian

Music by Luigi Cherubini

Libretto by François-Benoît Hoffman

Based on the play *Medea*
by Euripides

Original French version
first performed March 13, 1797,
at the Théâtre Feydeau, Paris

Italian translation by Carlo Zangarini
first performed December 30, 1909,
at Teatro alla Scala, Milan

PRODUCTION

David McVicar Production

David McVicar Set Designer

Doey Lüthi Costume Designer

Paule Constable Lighting Designer

S. Katy Tucker Projection Designer

Jo Meredith Movement Director

PERFORMANCE

The Met: Live in HD

October 22, 2022

Sondra Radvanovsky Medea

Janai Brugger Glauce

Ekaterina Gubanova Neris

Matthew Polenzani Giasone

Michele Pertusi Creonte

Carlo Rizzi Conductor

A co-production of the Metropolitan Opera,
Greek National Opera, Canadian Opera Company,
and Lyric Opera of Chicago

Production a gift of Daisy M. Soros and
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and Oscar Tang Endowment Fund, and Barbara
Tober, in memory of Donald Tober

Medea Educator Guide
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The Metropolitan Opera Educator Guides offer a creative, interdisciplinary introduction to opera. Designed to complement existing classroom curricula in music, the humanities, STEM fields, and the arts, these guides will help young viewers confidently engage with opera regardless of their prior experience with the art form.

On the following pages, you'll find an array of materials designed to encourage critical thinking, deepen background knowledge, and empower students to engage with the opera. These materials can be used in classrooms and/or via remote-learning platforms, and they can be mixed and matched to suit your students' individual academic needs.

Above all, this guide is intended to help students explore *Medea* through their own experiences and ideas. The diverse perspectives that your students bring to opera make the art form infinitely richer, and we hope that they will experience opera as a space where their confidence can grow and their curiosity can flourish.

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Musical Snapshot: A short introduction to an iconic operatic moment

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OPERA IN THE CLASSROOM

Active Exploration: Hands-on activities connecting the opera to topics in music, the humanities, STEM, and the arts

Critical Inquiries: Questions and thought experiments designed to foster careful thinking

Reproducibles: Classroom-ready worksheets that support the activities in this guide

You will also need the audio selections from *Medea*, available online at metopera.org/medeaguide.

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Medea A sorceress, formerly a princess of Colchis	Meh-DAY-ah	soprano	Medea first fell in love with Jason when he came to her homeland to steal the Golden Fleece. Since then, she has stood by his side, using her cunning and sorcery to help him escape sticky situations. But when Jason leaves her for the princess of Corinth, Medea concocts a terrible revenge.
Giasone (Jason)* Leader of the Argonauts, husband of Medea, and father of her children	jah-ZO-neh	tenor	The hero Jason made his name by stealing the Golden Fleece from Medea's father. Now, having sought asylum in the city-state of Corinth, he is prepared to wed Glauce to ensure his family's connection to the throne.
Glauce** Creon's daughter, betrothed to Jason	GLAHOH-cheh (first syllable rhymes with "wow")	soprano	Glauce, princess of Corinth, is set to marry Jason, which makes her the unwitting victim of Medea's wrath. Although she never appears onstage in Euripides's play, her premonition that something bad will happen when she marries Jason is the centerpiece of Act I of Cherubini's opera.
Creonte (Creon)* King of Corinth	Kreh-OHN-teh	bass	Creon looks upon his daughter's forthcoming marriage to the great hero Jason with joy and optimism—and no inkling of the awful plan Medea has in store.
Neris Medea's friend and confidante	NEH-rees	mezzo-soprano	A paragon of unconditional friendship, Neris will always be loyal to Medea—even when that loyalty means helping Medea kill her own sons.
Two Sons of Medea and Jason		silent	Medea knows that the ultimate way to wound Jason is to kill his children.

*Throughout this guide, Jason and Creon are referred to by their English names (in parentheses), which will likely already be familiar to students of Greek mythology. The preceding name is the Italian version used in Cherubini's opera; the pronunciation guide refers to the Italian name.

**Note that in the French version of this opera, Glauce is named Dircé (deer-SEH). In English, she is often called Creusa (kreh-OO-sah), while in Euripides's play she has no name at all.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *Outside Creon's palace, the day before Glauce's wedding.* Glauce, princess of Corinth, is preparing for her wedding to the hero Jason. Yet on a day when she should be filled with joy, her overarching emotion is that of fear: For years, Jason has been in a relationship with the sorceress Medea, the mother of his children. Glauce knows that Medea and Jason have a long and complicated history—the sorceress used her magic to help him steal the treasure known as the Golden Fleece, murdered her own brother and Jason's uncle in her efforts to help him regain his throne, and ultimately accompanied him into exile in Corinth. Aware of this past, Glauce worries that Medea, who is still in love with Jason, may do something to stop the wedding. Jason promises Glauce that he no longer has any interest in Medea, and preparations for the wedding feast begin.

The celebrations are interrupted when Medea appears and demands that Jason return to her. Jason rejects Medea's pleas, saying that he has chosen Glauce. Medea, hurt and enraged, curses Jason, calling on the gods of Olympus to help her take revenge.



ACT II: *A wing of Creon's palace.* Medea is still burning with fury over Jason's betrayal. Concerned by Medea's obvious distress, Neris suggests that she leave Corinth. King Creon arrives, and he, too, asks Medea to leave the city. Medea pleads with Creon to be allowed just one more day with her children. When Creon agrees, she seems to calm down, and she even orders Neris to deliver a gown and crown as presents to the bride-to-be. As the wedding procession passes by, however, Medea expresses cruel wishes for the newlyweds.

ACT III: *Between Creon's palace and the temple.* Medea greets her two children as a dark storm appears in the sky. Suddenly, cries of lamentation are heard from the palace: Medea's presents were soaked in poison, and Glauce has died as a result. As an outraged crowd assembles, Medea, her children, and Neris escape and hide in a nearby temple. Yet Medea has something even worse in store.

When Medea and Neris finally emerge from the temple, the sorceress is holding a bloody knife. Thinking only of hurting Jason as much as possible, she has murdered her own sons. Jason, realizing what has happened, collapses in grief. Medea delivers a final curse, sets the temple on fire, and vanishes into thin air. Thunder roars and lightning flashes through the sky as the terrified crowd flees the blazing temple.



THE PLAY *MEDEA* BY EURIPIDES

The playwright Euripides was born around 485 BCE, some 20 years after the establishment of a democracy in Athens (507 BCE) and just in time for the heyday of ancient Greek theater. The earliest extant Greek tragedy—Aeschylus’s *Persians*—was written in 472, and by the time Euripides was a young man, the annual drama competition held in conjunction with the festival of Dionysus was one of the main events in Athens’s cultural calendar. Euripides competed in the event in 455, and although he won three times, it is an entertaining quirk of history that the year he submitted *Medea*, he placed third (and last).

To ancient Greek audiences, the most noticeable thing about Euripides’s plays was the colloquial quality of his writing. The language of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the two other leading tragedians of the age, was consistently elevated and poetic, but Euripides’s characters spoke like everyday people (while still observing the conventions of Greek scansion and poetry). Today, the notion of colloquial speech coming from the mouths of mythological characters may seem strange, but Greek viewers believed that these plays depicted real people and events. The events depicted in *Medea*, for instance, were thought to have taken place 600–700 years before the play was performed—the distant past, to be sure, but realistic, nevertheless.

Indeed, 21st-century audiences may be surprised by how non-mythological *Medea*’s story really is. While the events that precede the drama include a dragon (or giant snake), the pelt of a flying sheep, and teeth that turn into soldiers when planted, the events depicted in Euripides’s play are remarkably—and recognizably—human. Medea’s actions are defined by jealousy and rage, while Jason’s decisions reflect his lust for a new woman and a mercenary form of logic: When he marries the princess of Corinth, his children will attain royal status, which will offer them social standing and financial stability throughout their lives. Only two magical elements remain. One is the poison that Medea uses to kill Glauce, which causes the princess to burst into flame—although other versions of the story involve much less pyrotechnic forms of poison. The other is Medea’s final departure from Corinth, when Euripides depicts the sorceress flying away from the city. Today, it is up to directors of both Euripides’s play and Cherubini’s opera whether or not they feature this “*deus ex machina*” moment, or if they let Medea flee Corinth in a more mundane fashion.



Germán Hernández Amores, “*Medea on her golden chariot*”
(1887, oil on canvas, 88.5 x 65.3)
MUSEO DEL PRADO

THE COMPOSITION OF *MEDEA*

507 BCE A democracy is established in Athens, the capital of the Attic Empire. Over the following century, Athens will become a major intellectual center, and its annual drama competition will produce all of the ancient Greek tragedies we know today.

431 BCE Euripides submits his tragedy *Medea* to the drama competition. He comes in third (and last) place, after the playwrights Euphorion (son of the playwright Aeschylus) and Sophocles.

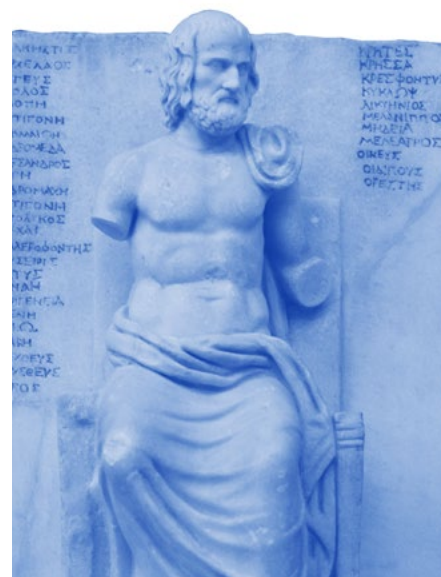
1760 Luigi Cherubini is born in Florence. The tenth of 12 children, he receives his first music lessons at age six from his father, an assistant music director at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence.

1778 Cherubini begins a three-year apprenticeship with the opera composer Giuseppe Sarti. His various tasks include writing arias for minor characters in Sarti's operas.

1784 Italian opera has long been a staple of musical life in London, and talented Italian composers are a valuable commodity in England's capital. George Nassau Clavering-Cowper, an English nobleman in Florence, helps Cherubini secure a post at London's King's Theatre, launching the young composer's international career.

1785 Cherubini spends the summer in Paris, where he meets a number of writers and musicians and even makes the acquaintance of Marie Antoinette. He will relocate to Paris the following year.

1789 With the financial backing of Louis XVI's brother, the Count of Provence (later Louis XVIII), a group of French and Italian musicians found the Théâtre de Monsieur, dedicated to presenting Italian opera in Paris. ("Monsieur," the title given to the king's oldest brother, reflects the Count's patronage.) Cherubini is hired as musical director.



Statuette of Euripides
LOUVRE MUSEUM



Luigi Cherubini,
lithograph by Marie Alexandre
Alophe (circa 1850)

1791 Following the arrest of the French royal family, the Théâtre de Monsieur changes its name to the Théâtre Feydeau. Cherubini signs a contract with the company for two French-language operas per year.

This same year, Cherubini has his first international hit with *Lodoïska*, a satirical opera marketed as a “heroic comedy.” Audiences particularly enjoy the stage spectacle of the final scene, which features the conflagration of a castle where the evil Dourlinski has kept the hero, a young woman named Lodoïska, prisoner.

1792 The Théâtre Feydeau falls on hard times. The theatre’s administrators disband the French-language troupe following poor reviews, and the Italian singers leave the country to escape the French Revolution. Cherubini, too, soon leaves Paris for Rouen.

1794 Cherubini returns to Paris. The following year he is offered a job at the newly formed Conservatoire.

1797 Cherubini’s opera *Médée*, based on the ancient Greek myth, premieres at the Théâtre Feydeau.

1805 Cherubini travels to Vienna to conduct his own operas at the Habsburg court. A great admirer of Austria’s musicians, Cherubini brings an honorary medal from the Conservatoire for Franz Josef Haydn and attends the premiere of Ludwig van Beethoven’s *Fidelio*. (Beethoven, a great admirer of Cherubini’s, will later describe him as the world’s greatest living composer.)

Cherubini’s work also catches the attention of Napoleon Bonaparte, who hires him to organize and conduct a series of concerts at his residence in Vienna.

1806 Cherubini returns to Paris, but a severe depression hampers his ability to write music. Instead, he spends his time studying botany and painting.

1809 After a three-year hiatus, Cherubini is coaxed back into composition by a series of commissions from Napoleon: an opera for the French emperor’s private entertainment (1809), music for his marriage (1810), and celebratory music for the birth of his son (1811).

1815 Napoleon abdicates, and Cherubini composes two works for festivities marking the return of Louis XVIII to the French throne.

1816 Cherubini is appointed head of the royal chapel and turns his attention to composing primarily religious music for the next several years. In 1822, he is appointed director of the Paris Conservatoire, a post that he holds until the end of his life, where he met a young Hector Berlioz, who was rather unfriendly toward the old Cherubini.

1842 After more than half a century as a musical star in Paris, Cherubini dies on March 15.

1953 Maria Callas, one of the 20th century's most thrilling sopranos, sings the title role of *Medea* (in Italian translation) in Florence. After languishing in relative obscurity for a century and a half, the opera is suddenly back on the radar. Today, it remains an awe-inspiring vehicle for sopranos like Sondra Radvanovsky, who champion both Cherubini's opera and the unforgettable antiheroine at its heart.



Title page of the first edition of the score



Title page to a vocal score of the 1909 hybrid version of *Médée*

MEDEA AND JASON: THE BACKSTORY

By the time Euripides's play (and Cherubini's opera) begins, Jason and Medea already have a long and dramatic history together. Since many of the elements of this Greek myth are incorporated into the opera's libretto, it's worth reviewing their story—including how they met, how they fell in love, and how they ultimately arrived in Corinth.

A Fateful Prophecy

Aeson was the rightful king of Iolcus, but his half-brother, Pelias, had usurped the throne. So when Aeson's son Jason was born, he sent the boy to be raised by a centaur (a mythical creature with the upper body of a human and the four legs and body of a horse). Pelias, meanwhile, was a cruel and paranoid king, and when an oracle told him that he would one day be deposed by a man wearing a single sandal, he resolved to find and eliminate the man who would be his downfall.

Many years later, Pelias announced that he would host a sports tournament, and Jason, now grown, decided to join the games. He left his mountain home and headed for Iolcus. On the way, he helped an old woman cross a stream. In fact, this old woman was none other than Hera, queen of the gods, and Jason thereby earned her gratitude and protection.

While crossing the stream with Hera, however, Jason lost one of his sandals. Thus he arrived in Iolcos wearing only a single shoe, and Pelias—who had never forgotten the oracle's prophecy—instantly recognized the grave threat to his throne. He slyly asked Jason what he would do if someone were looking to kill him. Jason replied that he'd send the would-be assassin to collect the Golden Fleece (the pelt of a flying sheep, made entirely of gold), which belonged to King Aëtes of Colchis and was famously guarded by a dragon. All previous attempts to steal the fleece were fatally unsuccessful. Pelias listened to Jason's excellent suggestion, and then he promptly ordered Jason to retrieve the Fleece.



Pelias, king of Iolcos, stops on the steps of a temple as he recognises young Jason by his missing sandal (1st century CE, fresco)

NAPLES NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The Golden Fleece

Jason set sail on his boat, the Argo, with his sailors, the Argonauts. When he arrived in Colchis, Aeëtes said that he would hand over the fleece only if Jason could perform a pair of impossible tasks: First, he must yoke a team of fire-breathing bulls. Second, he must plant a row of dragon's teeth.

This was where Hera's gratitude came in handy. Knowing that these tasks would be fatal for a mere mortal, she convinced her son, Eros, the god of love, to make Aeëtes's daughter Medea fall in love with Jason. Medea, a talented herbalist, concocted an ointment to protect Jason from the bulls' fiery breath. Next, she warned Jason that the dragon's teeth, once planted, would instantly sprout into soldiers. Duly warned, Jason tricked the soldiers into attacking each other. Finally, Medea dosed the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece with a sleeping potion, allowing Jason to steal the treasure while the dragon slept.

The Return Journey

Aeëtes was not happy to discover that the Fleece was stolen. He set sail after the Argo, and his ships seemed poised to overtake Jason—until Medea offered to help. She grabbed her little brother (who had left Colchis with her), killed him, chopped his body into pieces, and threw the pieces overboard. Aeëtes ordered his soldiers to collect the corpse's various bits from the water, which gave Jason ample time to escape.

Medea also cooked up a plan to vanquish Pelias. Arriving in Iolcus, she called the courtiers together and told them that, with her magic, she could make old people young again. As proof of her powers, she slaughtered an old sheep, chopped the meat into pieces, and boiled the pieces for hours in a pot of water and herbs. Then she released a young lamb that she had hidden under her cloak. To the assembled onlookers, it seemed as though the old sheep had been reborn as its youthful self. Medea then offered to perform the same trick on the old and ailing king. She instructed him to have his daughters chop him into pieces and deliver them to her; she would then boil him in the same herbal broth she had used in the trick with the sheep. Pelias and his daughters agreed. Of course, when his daughters chopped the king into pieces, he simply ended up dead.

Once again, Medea and Jason had to flee. Creon, king of Corinth, offered them safe harbor. Medea gladly accepted this haven for her family—until she realized that Jason's eyes had strayed to Creon's daughter... and that's where the story of Cherubini's opera begins.



John William Waterhouse, "Jason and Medea"
(1907, oil on canvas)
J.W. WATERHOUSE

ANCIENT GREEK THEATER

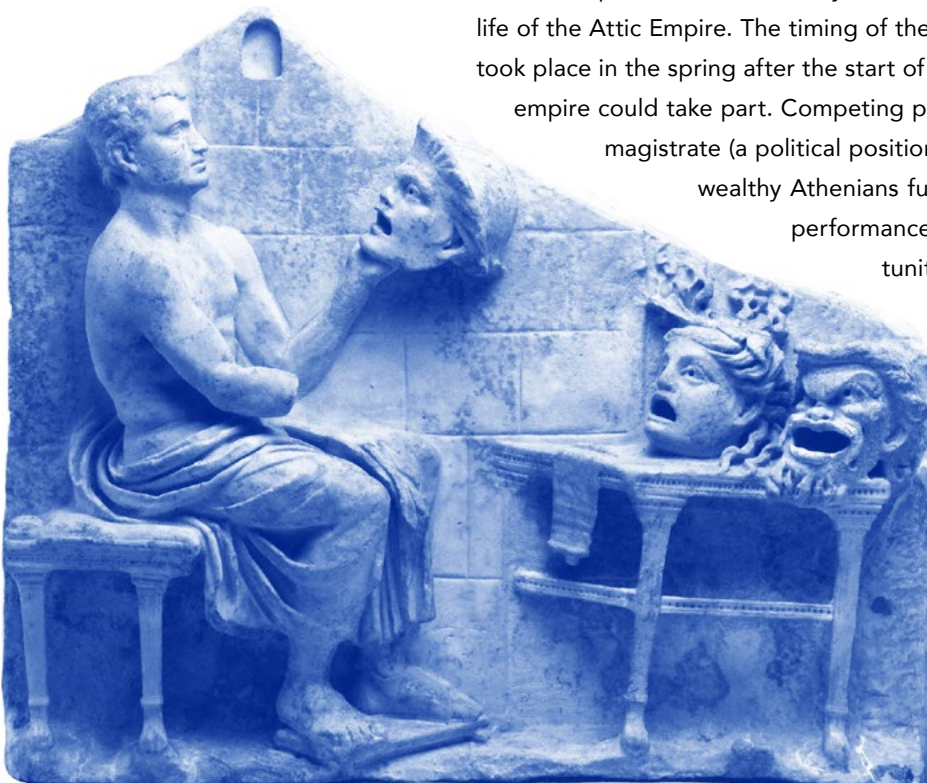
CRITICAL INQUIRY

The classicist Edith Hall has described the event as being like a mixture of the Olympics, the Super Bowl, and a religious festival. How might you describe it?

Theater in ancient Greece was a major civic event. Each spring, inhabitants of the sprawling Attic empire gathered in Athens, the empire's capital city, for a festival in honor of Dionysus, the god of dancing, theater, and wine. One of the festival's highlights was a competition between the most important playwrights of the day, and it was for this competition that all of the Greek tragedies we know today were written.

Each year, three playwrights took part in the competition, and each competitor was required to submit four plays: three tragedies and one "satyr play" (a more comically inclined story). All four works were performed in the space of a single day in a sprawling amphitheater on the south-western slope of the Acropolis. The actors, all of whom were men, performed on a stage called a "skēnē," the source of our word "scene," while a chorus sang, danced, and offered commentary on the play's events from an area known as the "orquestra." The sheer size of the amphitheater demanded that the actors wear masks and perform with broad gestures that would be legible from even the farthest seats. While little is known about ancient Greek stagecraft or scenery, we do know that they had a mechanical crane to facilitate the appearance of a god in the final moments of a play, an effect now referred to as "deus ex machina," or "god from the machine." In the case of *Medea*, this crane would have helped the sorceress fly away after lighting the temple on fire—a truly grand finale to a truly tragic play.

Although today we read these tragedies as great works of literature, at the time, the drama competition was intricately linked to the social, political, and even diplomatic life of the Attic Empire. The timing of the annual competition was crucial: It always took place in the spring after the start of sailing season, so people from across the empire could take part. Competing playwrights were chosen by the senior city magistrate (a political position), the judges were Athenian citizens, and wealthy Athenians funded costumes and other necessities for performance. The performances were thus an opportunity for Athenians to show off their wealth and cultural prowess to citizens and allies alike.



Relief of a seated poet with masks of New Comedy (1st century BCE – early 1st century CE, white marble, probably Italian)

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

MEDEA IN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

For thousands of years, artists in a variety of media have depicted Medea, her skills in magic, and the murder with which her name is now synonymous. Below are three such works of art.



Medea Sarcophagus, Altes Museum in Berlin, Germany (140–150 CE, 25 x 89, marble)

PHOTO: MONT ALLEN

This is a fragment from an early sarcophagus—a stone container that holds a coffin—carved at a time when the Roman society started to shift from cremation to burials. Glauce is wearing the garments gifted to her by Medea, which start to burn as soon as she puts them on. Her face looks desperate, and her hand is reaching up as if begging for help. The carving in the marble is so deep that her arm is completely detached from the background. Devastated by his daughter's tragedy, King Creon is pulling his hair out—he, too, will burn. Wrenching her dagger (once held in her lost right hand) from its sheath, Medea looks down at the grisly scene—as her ill-fated children scamper around her feet.



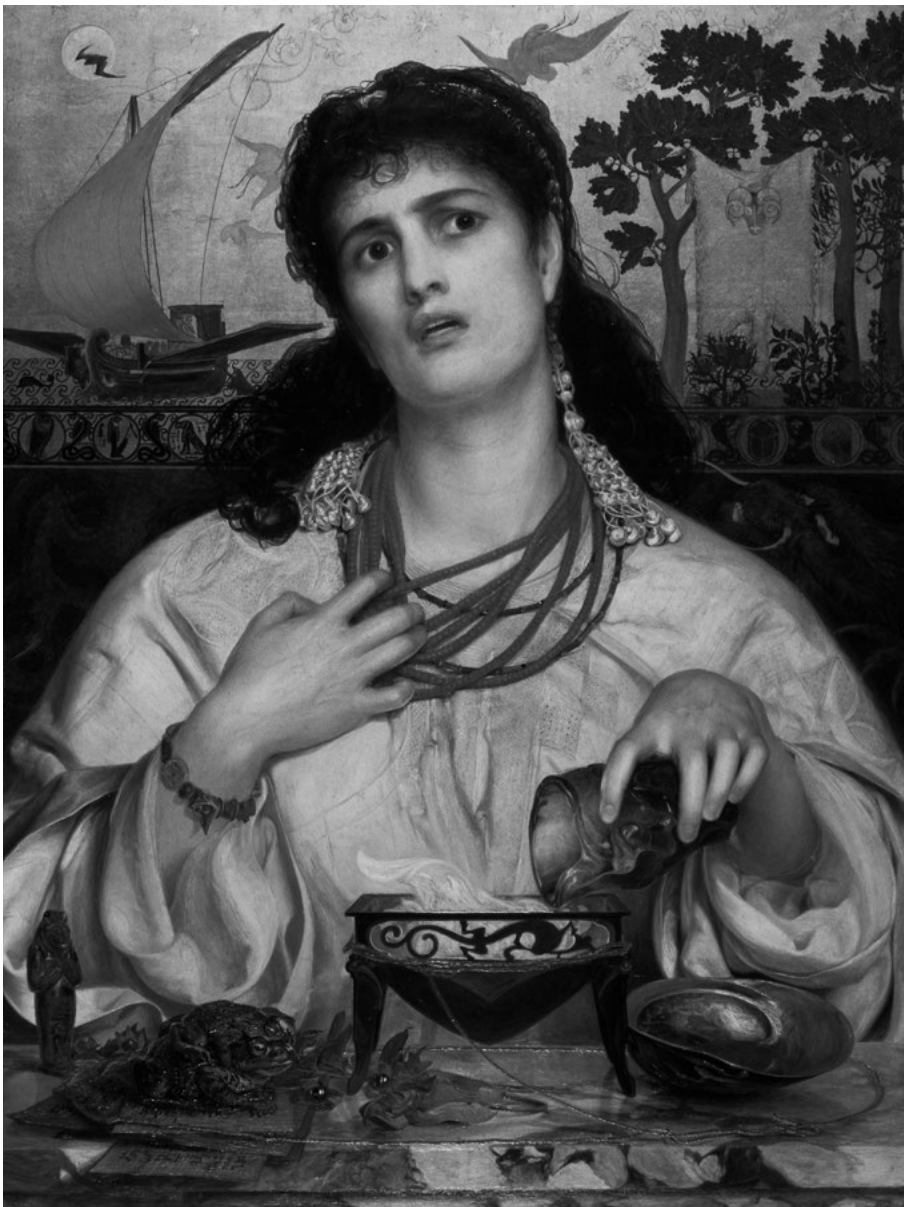
Charles-André van Loo, "Miss Clairon in Medea," New Palace in Potsdam, Germany (1760, oil on canvas, 31 x 23)

NEUES PALAIS

La Clairon was a French actress. As the daughter of an army sergeant, she faced numerous obstacles on her way to the famous stage of the Comédie-Française, but her debut role at the theater—that of Medea—earned her instant and wide-reaching fame. Charles-André van Loo was a French painter of Dutch origin. After studying in Italy, he returned to Paris, where he joined the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture and enjoyed the patronage of the French court.

Van Loo's painting depicts the final scene of Euripides's play (and Cherubini's opera), in which Medea, having killed her children and set the temple ablaze, flies away—in this case, on a chariot drawn by dragons. Jason, depicted with a sword, is unable to help his children, who lie dead at his feet.

At first glance, it may seem that English painter Anthony Frederick Sandys has chosen to focus on Medea's powers as a sorceress rather than the infanticide that made her famous. In his painting, Medea casts a spell and mixes a deadly potion. Yet the painting also contains a subtle reference to her children's murder: With her right hand, she pulls off her necklace of coral beads—a gemstone that was believed to protect children from evil. The model for Medea was Keomi Gray, a Romani woman whom Sandys featured in many of his paintings.



Anthony Frederick Sandys, "Medea," Birmingham City Art Gallery, United Kingdom (1868, oil on canvas, 24 x 18)

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

THE WITCHING HOUR: "NUMI, VENITE A ME," FROM ACT III OF MEDEA

An elaborate orchestral introduction sets up Medea's appearance in Act III, after which a lengthy recitative and aria render the conflicted emotions the sorceress experiences as she considers taking her children's life. In the recitative, as Medea vacillates between decisiveness and denial, Cherubini depicts her tormented feelings by transforming the orchestral and vocal parts to match her psychological state.

One of the most ingenious orchestral features in the recitative is Cherubini's use of short, recurring musical motifs that symbolize characters or emotions in the drama. This compositional technique was common among opera composers of the 18th century, but in the 19th century, composers like Richard Wagner developed the process further into a more complex system of "leitmotifs," which became a cornerstone of his compositional approach. Although Cherubini does not saturate the entire opera with an intricate motivic web, the way Wagner would have, he nonetheless employs a short, memorable theme that gives "voice" to the otherwise silent children. The children's motif (reproduced here) is stated three times, each time climbing to a higher pitch, as though becoming more and more frightened.

(carezzando a figli)
(caressing her sons)

Medea

Guarda ei pur co - sì! co - i Gia - so - ne falso ha lo
This was the look in his eyes! Jason had just this false

(the third statement of the children's leitmotif)

Orchestra

(afferra i bambini levando il pugnale, questo le cade; ella abbraccia i figli lagriamando)
(she grasps the children and raises the dagger)

M.

sguar - do! A morte, or - sù! No, ca - ri fi - gli, no!
glance! Come now, death awaits! No, dear child-ren, no!

O.

f *ff*

Before Neris appears with the children, Medea, alone onstage, is determined to sacrifice them; her melodic lines are mostly stepwise and feature moderate leaps. But when she sees her sons, her motherly instinct sparks both doubt and fury: After the third statement of the children's leitmotif, as Medea screams, "No, dear children, no!", her voice performs one of the most dramatic ascending leaps in the opera, spanning more than an octave. At this moment, the orchestra features a tremolo on a diminished seventh chord—the most dissonant harmony in the compositional palette of the time, which composers and audiences associated with the devil due to its harsh and unstable sonority.

When Neris confronts Medea ("Can you really raise your hand against your own blood?"), the sorceress seems to come to her senses. This transformation is accompanied by a change in the orchestral texture: Instead of playing the abrupt instrumental interjections characteristic of recitatives, the orchestra repeats a series of steady chords, conveying Medea's temporary feeling of calm. The aria that follows, however, reverses the emotional trajectory of the recitative. As she thinks about Jason, Medea's momentary sanity evaporates, and she is left with fury, anguish, and an unrelenting desire for revenge.



FUN FACT

In 2013, scholars at Stanford University and the University of Manchester used advanced X-Ray technology to recover Medea's long final aria, which Cherubini blacked out in the manuscript. The team included Dr. Roy Wogelius, a geochemist from Manchester, who typically uses the same equipment to examine 150-million-year-old fossils. "We talk about unlocking the secrets of chemical ghosts," he told BBC News about the discovery. "That's what we do with fossils, and this is the same thing. This is the ghost of Cherubini—we have resurrected his pen strokes."

Antonio Tempesta, "Medea Destroying Jason's Family and Home" (1606, etching)
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

PHILOSOPHICAL CHAIRS

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Materials

Philosophical Chairs
Reproducible Sheet

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6–12.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7–12.1e

Seek to understand other perspectives and cultures and communicate effectively with audiences or individuals from varied backgrounds.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11–12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Philosophical Chairs is an activity designed to foster critical thinking, active inquiry, and respectful dialogue among students. To play, participants agree or disagree with a series of statements, but the game doesn't end there. The most crucial element is what happens next: Participants discuss their points of view and can switch sides if their opinions change during the discussion.

Each topic statement is deliberately open-ended yet ties into a number of the themes present in *Medea*—including the importance of loyalty, the potential conflict between different kinds of love, and the cycles of violence engendered by a thirst for revenge. Set the stage for this conversation mindfully. Offer students a brief overview of the opera's plot, setting, and context, and remind them how to build a safe space for productive conversation. Some of the topics might be confusing or hard—that's okay! As you and your students explore and learn about *Medea*, you can return to these statements: What do they have to do with the opera's story? How might these questions help us explore the opera's story, history, and themes?

THE STATEMENTS

- Nothing is more powerful than love.
- Promises must always be kept.
- Love can blind you to the consequences of your actions.
- Logic will always lead to the right decision.
- Ties between family members can never be broken.
- Revenge is a good way to resolve conflicts.
- Parents have a moral obligation to protect their children.
- Presentiments come in many different forms.
- You should always listen to your intuition.
- Ancient mythology has no relevance to the modern world.
- Your past will always follow you.
- Every story has a moral.
- Greek gods always demonstrate good behavior.
- The end always justifies the means.

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Between statements, provide some clarity as to why that particular statement was chosen. Explain to students where and how each particular theme shows up in the opera, or invite students to offer their own explanations.

STEP 1. INQUIRE

Invite students to read one of the statements—out loud as a class, to themselves, or in small groups. As they read, they should ask themselves:

- Do I understand the statement?
 - If not, what questions might clarify it for me?
- What immediately comes to mind when I read the statement?
 - What is my initial reaction: Do I agree or disagree?
- What led me to that decision?
 - What opinions do I hold with regards to this statement?
 - What life experiences may have led me to believe this way?

STEP 2. RESPOND

Ask students to commit to one side. They can agree or disagree, but there is no middle ground. (Many will not be completely comfortable committing to one side over the other—that's part of the game. It will help foster conversation and debate.)

STEP 3. DISCUSS

Share out! Use the following questions to guide discussion:

- Does anyone feel very strongly either way? Why or why not?
- Does anyone feel conflicted? Why or why not?
- Give voice to what you thought about in the first step:
 - What led me to make my decision?
 - What opinions do I hold with regards to this statement?
 - What life experience may have led me to believe this way?
- What might you have not considered that others are now bringing up in the discussion?
- Did any new questions arise during the discussion?

As the conversation continues, students are free to change their mind about whether or not they agree with the statement—or develop a more nuanced perspective.

Repeat steps 1 through 3 for each statement.

FUN FACT

French audiences loved spectacular scenery, and many of Cherubini's French operas offered ample opportunity for special effects. For instance, his early French opera *Lodoïska* ended with the burning of a castle, while his later opera *Eliza* featured an onstage avalanche.

TONE-COLOR COMMENTARY

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Critical Thinking, Musical/Dramatic analysis, Listening skills, Music Vocabulary acquisition.

Materials

- The reproducible handouts for this activity
- The musical excerpts for this activity (available online)
- A colored pencil or highlighter

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

In *Medea*, Cherubini uses the orchestra much as Euripides used the chorus in his Greek tragedy—to describe and comment on the situation at hand. Here is an opportunity for students to explore ways that musical instruments contribute to the drama of *Medea* beyond their typical function as accompaniment. In this activity, students will listen to three excerpts, paying close attention to the orchestration and how unusual instrumentation brings attention to certain parts of the text.

STEP 1. INQUIRE

Distribute the reproducible with *Medea*'s entrance aria. Play the aria once, simply asking students to note any lines that particularly stand out, any instruments they notice, etc. Anything and everything they notice is good—encourage all answers!

Now play the aria again, asking students to pay special attention to any time the word “*Medea*” is uttered in the text—do they hear anything special or specific? If they need some help, draw their attention to the strings.

STEP 2. DEFINE

Whenever the text has the word “*Medea*,” the strings have a shivering or trembling effect. Offer students a definition for this special timbre: “tremolo” (the word is related to the English word “tremble”). Invite the students to consider:

- How do you think the strings achieve this trembling effect? (It's created with rapid back-and-forth motion by the bow on a single note.)
- What could the tremolo effect represent?
- What could the timpani at the end of the excerpt represent?
- How does the steady yet uneven rhythm behind *Medea*'s announcement enhance the moment?

As an optional conclusion for your discussion about this excerpt, introduce the idea of “text painting,” when the music represents the literal meaning of a text. (For instance, in the song “*Jack and Jill*,” the melody goes up when they climb the hill and then comes back down when the young protagonists tumble down the hill.) How might the tremolo strings be an example of text painting?

You might also invite students to notice the smoother lines in Creon's music as a contrast to the agitato (or, “agitated”) quality of *Medea*'s accompaniment. What is the dramatic reason for this musical choice?

STEP 3. EXPAND

Play the introduction to Act II. Ask students to pay attention to both the tremolo strings and the general mood of this excerpt.

- What is the mood of this excerpt?
- How does the string tremolo help to set this mood?
- What might the mood of this excerpt portend for the second act.
What can we expect?

Repeat Steps 1 through 3 with the two other excerpts for this activity, drawing attention to the musical elements discussed below.

GLAUCE'S ARIA

In this aria, invite students to pay close attention to the flute: At certain moments in the aria, it is unusually prominent.

Offer students a definition. The flute in Glauce's aria is an example of an "obbligato": A prominent melody in the accompaniment performed by a solo instrument. (Ask students if the word "obbligato" sounds like an English word they know; they will likely reply that it sounds like "obligation" or "obligatory." For more on this term, see the "10 Essential Opera Terms.")

Have students listen again and highlight the places in the text where the flute appears. Explain that the flute functions just like the highlighter, drawing attention to certain moments in the text.

Now ask them to think carefully about the obbligato flute and how it impacts this scene:

- What words or phrases are highlighted by the flute? Why might these words be important?
- How does the flute contribute to the drama? Does the unusual sound affect the emotion of the scene?
- What might the flute symbolize?

Finally, think about how this moment would change if there were no obbligato. How would use of a different obbligato instrument change the character of the moment?



FUN FACT

The legendary opera singer Maria Callas appeared in one cinematic film in her life, in the title role of Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Medea* (1970).

NERIS'S ARIA

In this case, the obbligato instrument is a bassoon. Repeat the same process you used for Glauce's aria.

Finally, invite students to consider how Glauce's and Neris's arias compare to Medea's entrance music: Based on their respective accompaniments, how might they describe these three characters?



Medea sculpture by William Wetmore Story
(1865, marble)
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

DIVING DEEPER

- Expand this activity to the rest of *Medea*: As students watch the opera, they can listen for other examples of featured accompaniments, tremolo strings, and uneven rhythms.
- Choose a non-musical story or play and invite students to suggest instances where an obbligato instrument would help to enhance a long speech or exchange. What passage/instrument(s) would you choose? What would your obbligato add to the moment?
- Ask students to find examples of obligato and highlighted words in popular music.

GREEK CERAMICS: SEEING RED

The 5th century BCE—the heyday of ancient Greek theater—was also an important era for ancient Athenian ceramics. Practical objects such as drinking cups (calyxes) and large jars (amphoras) were decorated with exquisite red, black, and white paintings, many of which depict scenes from Greek mythology. In this activity, students will study ancient Greek ceramics as an example of “material cultures,” considering how these ceramics were used and studying the decorations that adorn them. Finally, students will create and design their own artifact depicting scenes from the story of Medea and Jason.

NOTE TO TEACHERS: Three possible projects are suggested below, each following the same basic steps for preparation, but differing significantly in terms of process and materials needed. Read these instructions before beginning the project with your class and decide which of the projects you’ll make available to them.

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Visual arts, material cultures, art history, Greek mythology

Materials

For flat painting:

- Heavy art paper or card stock

For calyx (drinking cup):

- Large, shallow paper bowls
- Smaller paper bowls
- Pipe cleaners (optional)

For amphora (large jar):

- Balloons
- Strips of newspaper and glue (for papier-mâché)
- Paper bowls (one per student)

For all projects:

- Black, white, and orange/red paint
- An index card or similarly sized piece of paper



From left to right:
Terracotta amphora (jar) ca. 490 BCE
Attributed to the Berlin Painter
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Terracotta Panathenaic prize amphora (jar)
ca. 510 BCE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

STEP 1. INQUIRE

Start by inviting your students to research “red figure painting,” a style of decorating ceramics popular in Athens around the time Euripides wrote *Medea*. Using online resources, such as glossaries available from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, look up the following terms.

- red figure painting
- black figure painting
- amphora
- calyx

As they do their research, students should spend some time looking at examples of Greek ceramics and write down some observations. Below are some questions they may wish to consider, along with possible answers to which you may wish to draw their attention.

- How many different images or scenes are there on a single amphora or calyx?
 - Vases typically have two scenes, one on the front, one on the back.
 - Drinking cups have a central scene in the bottom of the cup, and some additional designs around the edge.
- What kinds of people are presented in these scenes? Heroes? Gods? Mortals?
- If there is more than one scene, do these different scenes relate to each other?
 - For instance, you might depict Medea on one side, and Jason on the other. Or Medea on one side, and another witch from ancient Greek mythology on the other.
- How was this object used? Does the intended use relate to the images that decorate it?
 - Decorations often reflect—or take advantage of—the object’s intended use. For instance, there is a silver drinking cup in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that has a sea monster on the bottom. The cup would be served to a guest filled with wine, so the bottom was invisible. As the drinker slowly drained the cup, the monster would seem to “appear” from beneath the liquid!

STEP 2. READ

Introduce your students to the myth of Medea and Jason. Start by having them read (individually, in small groups, or as a class) the sidebar “Medea and Jason: The Backstory,” and then move on to the opera synopsis, which continues the story where the sidebar leaves off.

As students read, they should think about how the various scenes in this myth might be depicted on an amphora or calyx.

STEP 3. CREATE

Now it’s time for students to create their own red-figure painting inspired by the story of Medea and Jason. The first step is to decide what shape this ceramic artifact will have. There are three options:

- Paint it on paper.
- Use two paper bowls to make a **calyx** (instructions below).
- Use balloons and papier-mâché to make a full-size **Greek amphora** (instructions on the following page).

Making a paper-bowl drinking vessel:

1. Glue together a large, shallow paper bowl and a smaller paper bowl, with their bottoms touching. The larger bowl will be the cup, the smaller bowl will be the base.
2. Paint your calyx.
3. If you’d like to add handles to your calyx, attach a loop of pipe cleaner to each side.



COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6

Create a presentation, art work, or text in response to a literary work with a commentary that identifies connections and explains divergences from the original.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

From left to right:
Terracotta neck-amphora (jar) ca. 520 BCE
Attributed to the Medea Group

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Terracotta column-krater (bowl for mixing wine and water) ca. 470–460 BCE
Attributed to the Orchard Painter

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Making a papier-mâché Greek amphora:

1. Blow up a balloon.
2. Hold the balloon so the knot is at the top. Place papier-mâché about two-thirds to three-quarters of the way up the balloon, starting at the non-knotted side. Make sure you have a smooth edge at the top. Wait for it to dry.
3. Paint your scene on the papier-mâché; it'll be easier if the balloon is still intact.
4. Once it's dry, pop the balloon. You'll be left with your own version of a Greek amphora!

Hint: To make a stand for your balloon, cut the bottom out of a paper bowl. Flip the bowl upside down and balance the amphora on the new base.

STEP 4. BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now it's time to decorate the ceramic. Distribute black, white, and red/orange paint to students. They should start by painting the entire "ceramic" black. Once that's dry, they will use red/orange paint for the figures, with white paint to bring out details.

Invite students to make their art projects as detailed as they'd like. Remind them that Greek ceramics often included beautiful designs around the edges and along the sides, in addition to the central figures.



Terracotta kylix (drinking cup)
ca. 540 BCE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

DIVING DEEPER

- Host an "antiquities gallery," where students can stroll around and admire each other's work.
- Have students write a museum label to accompany their work of art. Distribute index cards (or other small piece of paper, approximately 4 x 6-inches in size), and ask students to explain to a lay viewer what their object is and what the images depict. Assume that your viewer is unfamiliar with this project! (For an excellent series of pointers on writing museum labels, check out the Metropolitan Museum of Art's guide to "Online Object Labels.")

THE GODS OF SMALL THINGS

Ancient Greek mythology featured a huge array of gods. Some of them—especially the “Olympians,” who lived on Mount Olympus—were in charge of big things, like Apollo (the god of the sun), Aphrodite (the goddess of love), Artemis (the goddess of the hunt), and Zeus and Hera, the king and queen of the gods. Other gods oversaw “smaller” things, like Hermes, the messenger god. But each and every one of these gods took an interest in humans and helped people like Medea, Jason, and Creon navigate forces beyond their control.

In this activity, your students will learn about some of the most recognizable figures from Greek mythology. Then, they’ll create their own “designer deities” to meet their modern-day needs.

STEP 1. REFLECT

Begin by explaining that the culture that produced the original *Medea*, ancient Greece, worshiped a large number of gods. Each god in the Greek pantheon had a specialty, and people often prayed to these gods for happy outcomes in situations beyond their control.

Ask students if they are already familiar with any ancient Greek gods. If so, do they know what these gods did? Can they think of any particular attributes associated with these gods? They might mention Zeus and his thunderbolts, Poseidon and his trident, or Artemis and her hunting bow. (They might also know some mythological figures that are not, strictly speaking, gods—like the three-headed dog Cerberus who guards the gates of Hades. Encourage these answers, too.)



Hercules and Nessus, before 1584,
Annibale Fontana
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Illustration of the Otricoli head of Zeus

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Social Studies, Literature,
Classics and Mythology, ELA,
Creative Writing, Critical/Creative
Thinking, Visual Art

Materials

- The reproducible handouts for this activity
- Art supplies

COMMON CORE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-8.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.7

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.5

Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.



Dionysos and sileni. Attic red-figured cup interior, ca. 480 BCE

BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

STEP 2. RESEARCH

Invite students to use the internet or other resources to research some of the most famous Greek gods. The “Greek Mythology Crossword” will be a good place for them to start.

As they research, ask students to take note of some of the following for each god:

- The name of the deity
- What they were in charge of
- Their appearance
- Their personality traits
- Their special powers
- How people could invoke their blessings (or their wrath)
- Ritual objects (or places) associated with this god
- Their origin or background story

For younger students, you may wish to simply introduce a few Greek gods.

As students research, they will likely discover some “minor” deities, too, like Nike (the god of victory) or Morpheus (the god of dreams). Ask them to note which of these deities strike them as most intriguing or interesting.

STEP 3. MAKE IT PERSONAL

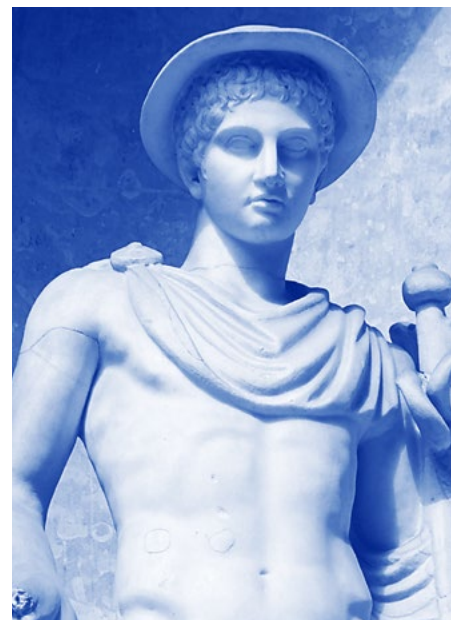
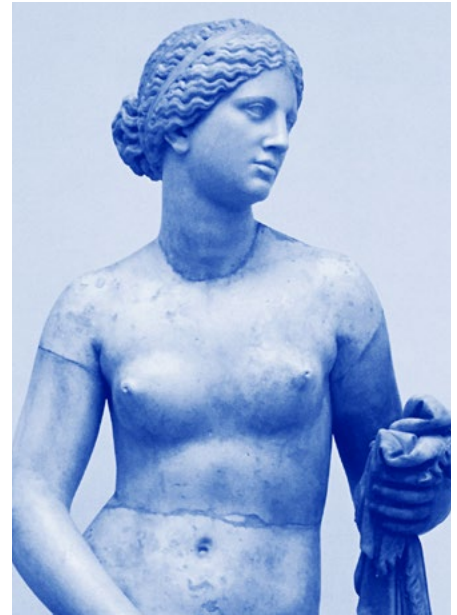
Even though we live in a modern age, we are still subject to forces beyond our control. Wouldn't it be nice if we had super-beings such as these to help us with our daily obstacles? In this step, students will get to imagine and create their own minor deities.

Distribute the "Designer Deity" reproducible. You may model completion of the form, with either a historical example (such as Athena) or a made-up example that pertains to your own life (such as Asphalta, "the god of finding a good parking space").

Guide students through the process of creating their own gods, using the reproducible sheet as a guide. Note that these deities can help with anything!

STEP 4. SHARE OUT

Once students have finished creating their deities, invite them to share. Some ideas for doing so are included in the "diving deeper" section, below.



DIVING DEEPER

- Distribute art materials and invite students to draw or construct a temple or shrine to their deities, like the Parthenon in Athens (dedicated to Athena). Then create an annotated tourist map featuring the "temple sites" (i.e., the desks) of all the deities in your classroom.
- Help your students write a Greek-style play—complete with chorus and masks—featuring their designer deities. They can do this individually, in small groups, or as a class.
- Invite students to research the deities and myths of other world cultures.
- For a STEM connection to this activity, students can research the real scientific or mathematical factors that control the phenomena under their deity's purview. For instance, if a deity is "the god of getting all the answers right on a test," they could research the probability of randomly choosing every correct answer on a multiple-choice test.

From top to bottom:
Aphrodite of Knidos. Marble, Roman copy after
a Greek original of the 4th century, restorer:
Ippolito Buzzi

MUSEO NAZIONALE ROMANO DI PALAZZO ALTEMPI

"Hermes Ingenui." Marble, Roman copy of the
2nd century BCE after a Greek original of the 5th
century BCE

VATICAN MUSEUMS

Aria

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. In opera, arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting on his or her emotions. Most arias are lyrical, with a tune that can be hummed, and many arias include musical repetition. For example, the earliest arias in opera consist of music sung with different stanzas of text (strophic arias). Another type of aria, the da capo aria, became common by the 18th century and features the return of the opening music and text after a contrasting middle section. 19th-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from the lyrical first section (the cavatina) to the showier second section (the cabaletta).

Chorus

A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Most choruses include at least four different vocal lines, in registers from low to high, with multiple singers per part. The singers are typically from a particular group of people who play a certain role on stage—soldiers, peasants, prisoners, and so on. Choruses may offer a moral, comment on the plot, or participate in the dramatic action.

Deus ex machina

Literally “god from the machine,” a term describing a denouement in an opera or play when a god appears and helps solve any remaining conflicts. In ancient Athens, the appearance of the god was affected through the use of a mechanical crane. In Baroque opera, a king or nobleman would often appear in the role of the god, implying both their own ability to solve problems affecting their populace and referencing their supposedly divine position.

Motif

A short, recurring musical phrase that, in opera, can be paired with a specific person, place, idea, or emotion, and then used to wordlessly express those ideas. In many cases, motifs are melodic, like the “Children’s Theme” from Medea’s Act III aria, but they can also be harmonic or rhythmic. More complex and strict systems of motifs include the German leitmotif, associated with Wagner, and the French idée fixe, associated with Hector Berlioz, both of which were popular in the 19th century.

Obbligato

A solo instrumental line, often featuring a distinctive timbre, that is part of the accompaniment in a vocal work. Obbligato (“obligatory”) lines appear only when there is at least one other instrument providing the basic accompaniment, and although subsidiary to the vocal line, it clearly stands out against the rest of the accompaniment. Although the notion of an obligatory musical line might surprise us today, it offers a level of insight into accompaniment practices in the Baroque and early Classical periods, when recitatives could be accompanied by a variety of instruments, depending on availability and performer preference.

Tremolo

An effect in the strings produced by playing the bow rapidly back and forth on a single note. The result is a trembling sound that is often used to evoke anxiety or fear. For example, Cherubini makes extensive use of tremolo strings when Medea first enters, and again in her Act III aria right before she screams, “No, dear children, no!”

Diminished chord

A chord consisting of stacked minor thirds. A profoundly dissonant chord, the diminished chord has long been associated with a somber or frightening mood in music—especially since it always contains a tritone (the “devil’s interval”).

Recitative

A type of singing that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to move rapidly through a large amount of text. Recitative was initially developed at the end of the 16th century in Italy (when it was called "monody") and was a crucial component of the very first operas. Recitative may be accompanied by a single instrument (such as a harpsichord), a small ensemble, or the whole orchestra. The term is derived from an Italian verb meaning "to recite."

Text Painting

A compositional technique in which music imitates the literal meaning of a text. For instance, if a text references going up, the melody might rise; if a text references a loud noise, the music might suddenly get very loud. A good example is Jack and Jill, who went up a hill (on a rising melody) to fetch a pail of water. But when they come tumbling back down the hill, the melody descends with them. Text painting can affect both the vocal line and the instrumental accompaniment.

Timbre

A French word that means "sound color," timbre (pronounced TAM-ber) refers to the complex combination of acoustic characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. Just as we can recognize each other by the differences in our speaking voices, operatic singing voices are distinguishable by their unique timbres. Listeners can also identify orchestral instruments by their timbre without being able to see them. The creative combination of different instrumental timbres is one of the artistic aspects of orchestration.



"Medea About to Kill her Children," painted by Eugène Ferdinand Victor Delacroix in 1862

LOUVRE MUSEUM

PHILOSOPHICAL CHAIRS

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue are learned skills: Everyone can acquire them, and no one can perfect them without practice. Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about opera.

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone whose views differ from your own. That’s the point! Take your time with each statement, embrace uncertainty, and know that changing your mind as you learn new information is a sign of strength. Before you begin your discussion, take some time to review the rules of engagement:

Be sure you understand the statement. If something is unclear, ask!

Face each other. Body language helps show that you’re listening.

Only one speaker at a time. Everyone will get their turn to speak.

Think before you speak. Be sure that what you’re going to say is what you really mean, and remember that we can disagree while still being kind.

Summarize the previous person’s comments before adding your own. This will show that you have heard their thoughts and are responding thoughtfully to what they said. It will also help avoid misunderstandings and faulty assumptions.

Address ideas, not the person. Challenging ideas or statements is great—but only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.

Three before me. After you’ve spoken, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

THE STATEMENTS

- Nothing is more powerful than love.
- Promises must always be kept.
- Love can blind you to the consequences of your actions.
- Logic will always lead to the right decision.
- Ties between family members can never be broken.
- Revenge is a good way to resolve conflicts.
- Parents have a moral obligation to protect their children.
- Presentiments come in many different forms.
- You should always listen to your intuition.
- Ancient mythology has no relevance to the modern world.
- Your past will always follow you.
- Every story has a moral.
- Greek gods always demonstrate good behavior.
- The end always justifies the means.

WORD SCRAMBLE

Unscramble the list of *Medea*-inspired words below.

Then unscramble the circled letters to find out what first brought Jason and Medea together.

AEDEM	- () - - -
NSJAO	- - - () -
SIREN	() - - - -
CNEOR	() - () - -
LAGUEC	() () - - - -
ERCNIBHUI	- () () - - - - -
DEEUPIRSI	() - - - - - - -
SHATNE	- () - () - -
LFEIVAST OF YUONSSDI	() - - - - - () - - () - - - - -
ANSWER	- - - - - - - - - - -

DESIGNER DEITY

The Ancient Greeks believed in a wide array of gods and mythological beings, many of whom had the power to grant good (or bad) fortune in situations beyond human control. Wouldn't it be nice to have a super-being who could help you negotiate daily obstacles in your own life? In this activity, you'll get to create one!

Your super-being does not need to be in charge of big, important issues. Instead imagine a deity who could guide you in everyday tasks, such as filling in the correct bubble on a multiple-choice test or choosing your favorite flavor from a box of chocolates.

NAME OF DEITY _____

IN CHARGE OF _____

APPEARANCE _____

PERSONALITY TRAITS _____

SPECIAL POWERS _____

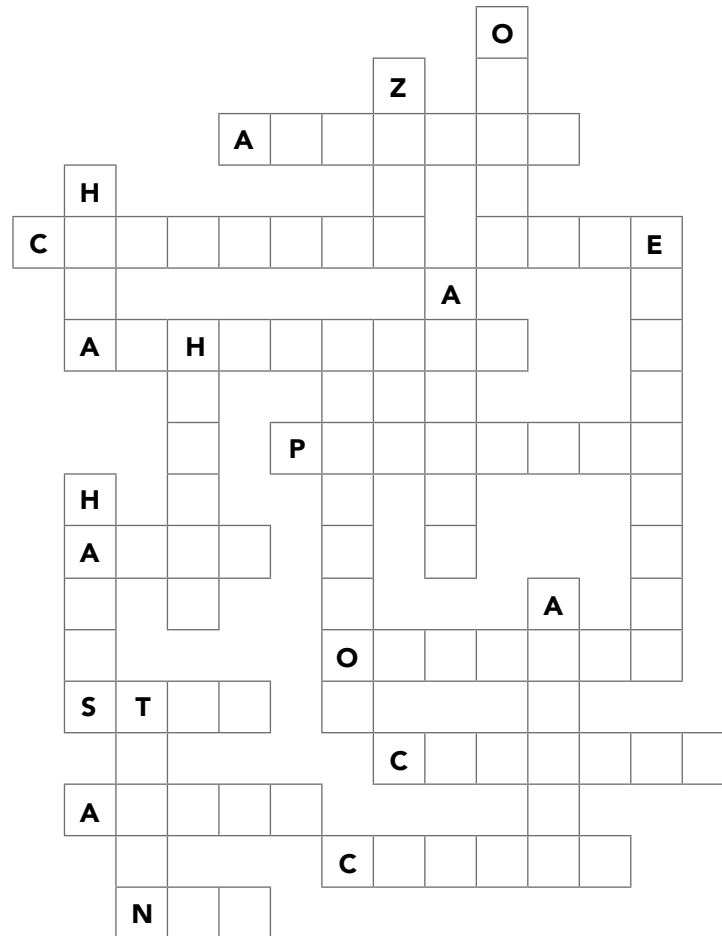
HOW TO INVOKE THEIR BLESSINGS OR WRATH _____

OBJECTS OR PLACES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM _____

THEIR ORIGIN OR BACKGROUND STORY _____

• *On a separate page, write a myth that features your deity.* •

DESIGNER DEITY | GREEK MYTHOLOGY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- The goddess of hunting
- The three-headed dog that guards the underworld
- The goddess of victory
- The goddess of love
- The god of the sea
- The god of war
- A mountain where many of the gods live
- The river between the land of the living and Hades
- One of a group of one-eyed giants
- A god condemned to hold the sky on his back
- The ferryman of the boat across the river Styx
- The goddess of night

DOWN

- A hunter, placed by the gods among the stars
- The king of the gods
- The queen of the gods
- The gods of vengeance
- The goddess of war
- The messenger god
- The god of the underworld
- The god of the sun
- One of a group of twelve giant gods

TONE-COLOR COMMENTARY

MEDEA'S ENTRANCE ARIA

Medea appears. She has a thick veil over her face.
She stops at the back of the stage and looks around with a serious expression on her face.

MEDEA

È forse qui che il vil sicuro sta?	Is this where the villain is now?
È qui che amor dà gioie ai traditor?	Is this where that traitor finds joy in love?

GIASONE

Ah, quale voce!	Ah, that voice!
-----------------	-----------------

CREONTE

Chi sei tu?	Who are you?
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MEDEA

<i>She steps forward and throws back the veil.</i>	
Io? Medea.	Who am I? Medea.

ONLOOKERS

Ah, Medea!	Ah, Medea!
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MEDEA

<i>To the crowd</i>	
Popolo, no! Non devi tu tremar! Ti fida in me!	Dear people, no—you need not fear me!
<i>Indicating Jason and Glauce</i>	
Per essi io sono qui!	I'm here for them.

THE ARGONAUTS

La rea scacciam!	Let's destroy this reprehensible woman!
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ONLOOKERS

Ah! No! Fuggiam,	Ah! No! Let's flee!
Ché qui restar è sciagura!	To stay here is to invite disaster.

TONE-COLOR COMMENTARY

GLAUCE'S ARIA

Io cedo alla buona preghiera:
Cara amistà, tu conforti il mio cor!
E tu, che a me divin prometti il destin.
O Amore, sii fido a me,
Sii fido a un cor che spera

O amore, vieni a me fa cessar questo duol:
Si confida in te sol la tua Glauce fedele:
Vien! Penetra i sensi miei:
Vien; vien accendi il mio cor
Del tuo divino ardore:
Amor, tua fiamma accendi, in me discendi,
Amore! È per te, sol beata sarò!
Scendi in me, sì,
Per te sol lieta un dì io sarò!
Deh, bel foco d'amor, i sensi miei ravviva:
Al tuo calor il reo dubbiar dileguar io vedrò.
Scendi in me, vieni, amor.

I yield to your kind prayers:
Your friendship comforts my heart!
And you, oh Eros, who promised me a divine destiny,
Have faith in me,
Have faith in a hopeful heart.

Oh Eros, come to me! Make this pain cease;
Your faithful Glauce confides only in you.
Come! Fill my senses;
Come, come! Warm my heart
With your divine flame!
Eros, light your fire, come down to me!
Through you alone will I be blessed!
Come down to me,
Only through you will I one day be happy!
Come, beautiful fire of love, revive my senses:
Let your warmth blot out this wicked doubt.
Come down to me, come, Eros.

NERIS'S ARIA

Solo un pianto con te versare;
Ogni lutto, ogni duol divider vo' con te!
Sì, sì!
Fedel mi trovò la sciagura,
In morte a te fedel sarò!
Fin che vivrò.
Principessa cara e infelice,
Chi potria rifiutar, il pianto al tuo destin.
Infelice!
Ben fu la sorte a te crudele!
Vicina a te ognor sarò,
Io piangerò; con te sarò,
Ti seguirò ognor fedel.
In morte a te fedel sarò!
A te sarò sempre fedel!

All I can do is weep with you,
Share every struggle, every pain!
Yes, yes!
Misfortune found me faithful,
I'll be faithful to you in death,
And for as long as I live.
Dear, unhappy princess,
Who could refrain from weeping at your fate?
Unhappy woman!
Your destiny has been truly cruel!
But I'll stay by you every hour,
I'll weep, I'll be with you,
I'll follow you, always faithful.
I'll be faithful to you in death!
I'll always be faithful to you!

MUSICAL SNAPSHOT | TEXT & TRANSLATION

“NUMI, VENITE A ME”

*A mountainous area; a temple rises in the background.
Neris and two young boys enter.*

MEDEA

Numi, venite a me, inferni Dei!
Voi tutti che aiutaste il mio voler,
La vostra forza ancor m'assisti;
Voi l'opra mia compier dovete!
Distenda in ciel la nera morte il velo,
E popol strugga
E re in sua rovina orrenda!
O cari figli, strazio mio supremo,
Ch'io sacro qui
De l'odio a l'atre dive,
Non debba io mai il sangue vostro espiar!
Sì! Vostro padre fu che v'uccise!
Reietto in terra il vil,
Lo sperda il ciel!
S'appressan! Ahimè! Quale tormento!
Il cuor di madre batte nel mio petto.!
Natura, or tu invano parli a me!
Morir dovran, negata è lor la vita!
Votati son dell'alta Erinni al nume!
Il suo volere sol comanda in me!

Come to me, gods of heaven and hell!
All those who have helped me in the past!
Your power still aids me,
You must complete this task.
Spread the death-black veil in the sky
That the people may struggle
And the king may be horrified by his ruin.
Oh dear children, it causes me such pain,
That I must now sacrifice you
To appease my hatred.
It should not be your blood that atones this sin!
It was your father that killed you!
The villain, so proud here on earth—
May heaven strike him down.
They are coming. Alas! Such torment!
A mother's heart beats in my chest.
But nature, you speak to me in vain.
They must die, their life is over!
They have been chosen by the goddess of death!
Solely her desire commands me!

Neris emerges from the palace leading Medea's children by the hand.

(The children's motif appears for the first time in the orchestra.)

NERIS

Compiuto fu, Medea, il tuo voler;
Il peplo già ed il diadema ha Glauce.
Ti rende grazie ...
Ma perchè taci tu?
Guarda: sono i figli tuoi!

Your will has been done, Medea;
Glaucé now has the robe and crown
She sends you her thanks ...
But why are you silent?
Look, here are your children!

MEDEA

I figli? Ah!

My children? Ah!

The children run to their mother.

(The children's motif appears for the second time in the orchestra.)

Lontan! Lontan! Serpenti, via da me!
Dal collo mio lontan! Mi soffocate!

Get back! Get back! Serpents, away from me!
Do not embrace me! It's suffocating!

NERIS

Che dici?

But what are you saying?

(The children's motif appears for the third time in the orchestra.)

MEDEA

Guarda ei pur così! Così Giasone
Falso ha lo sguardo!
A morte, orsù!

This was the look in his eyes!
Jason had just this false glance!
Come now, death awaits!

She reaches for her children and raises the dagger—then lets it fall. She hugs the children to her.

No, cari figli, no!

No, dear children, no!

NERIS

Oh dei del cielo! Che vuoi fare?
Levar la mano tu puoi
Sul sangue tuo?
Ritorna in te, Medea, torna in te!
Pel reo soffrirà chi è senza colpa?

Oh, gods of heaven! What are you doing?
Can you really raise your hand
Against your own blood?
Come back to yourself, Medea, come back!
For the sake of a villain should the innocent suffer?

MEDEA

Son vinta già!
Cessò del cor la guerra;
Sul ciglio mio il pianto alfin tornò.
Li vedo ancor;
Ancor li stringo a me;
Non penso più al duol
Che m'arde in seno;
Ritorna ai lieti
Dì il cor sereno.

I am overcome!
The war in my heart has ceased.
Anguish has once again returned to my brow.
I see them still;
Still I press them to my chest;
I no longer think of the pain
That burns in my heart.
You can still find the joy,
That a serene heart offers.

ARIA

Del fiero duol che il cor mi frange,
Nulla mai vincerà l'orror! No!
O figli miei, io v'amo tanto!
Ah! Miei tesori!
E pensai di passar vi il cor!
O Dei del ciel! Santa Giustizia!
Fu per voi se mia man
Dal colpìr è ristò;
Se al furor disuman si frenò l'ardor!
Fate, o Dei, ch'io non voglia mai
Questo folle orror!
Non permettete questo feroce lor tormento:
Lungi ognor sia da me questo folle orror!
Spegnete in cor le furie orrende, Giusti Dei!
A morte l'esecrato autor del mio tormento!

Nothing shall stop this fury,
The pride and pain that break my heart! No!
Oh, my children, I love you so much!
Ah! My treasures!
And I thought I could kill you!
Oh gods of heaven! Holy justice!
It was for your sake that my hand
refrained from striking,
That the fire of this inhuman fury was extinguished.
Oh gods, never again let me feel
This horrible insanity!
Never allow this rage to hurt them:
Take this horrible madness away from me forever!
Extinguish, just gods, this fire of rage in my heart!
But that detestable man, caused of my torments
must die!

ARIA

Dee penar, dee soffrir: ciò basta al mio contento!
Spergiuro!
Ah, il pensier di Giason raccende il mio furor!
Questo sol raccende il mio furor!
Del fiero duol che il cor mi frange,
Nulla mai vincerà l'orror!
O miei tesor io v'amo tanto!
Figli miei, miei tesor,
Io v'amo tanto!
E pure in me io sento ancora
A voi guardando, ahimè, rinato il mio furor!

Must hurt, must suffer; that would be enough
To satisfy me—I swear!
Ah, just the thought of Jason reignites my fury!
That is enough to reignite it!
Nothing shall stop this fury,
The pride and pain that break my heart!
Oh, my treasures, how I love you!
My children, my treasures,
Oh, how I love you.
And yet I still feel in me
When I look at you—oh!—that my fury is reborn.

OPERA REVIEW *Medea*

Performance date: _____

Reviewed by: _____

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *Medea*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what might you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design, and rate each of the star singers. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about the opera and this performance at the Met!

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Glauce is worried. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Jason tries to calm her fears. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
The wedding celebrations begin. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Medea arrives, and she is not happy. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Medea's curse MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Neris suggests Medea leave Corinth. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Creon also asks Medea to leave the city. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Medea sends a crown and a gown to Glauce. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Medea and her children MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Glauce's gifts are poisoned! MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Medea's ultimate revenge MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Medea flies away as the temple and palace burn. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

Use this space to write a short review of the opera as a whole:

[illegible]