

□Medea: Looking for Revenge □□ Medea, a play by the Greek playwright Euripides, explores the □Greek-barbarian dichotomy through the character of Medea, a princess □from the "barbarian"; or non-Greek, land of Colchis. Throughout the □play, it becomes evident to the reader that Medea is no ordinary woman □by Greek standards. Central to the whole plot is Medea's barbarian □origins and how they are related to her actions. In this paper, I am □attempting to answer questions such as how Medea behaves like a female, □how she acts heroically from a male point of view, why she killed her □children, if she could have achieved her goal without killing them, if □the murder was motivated by her barbarian origins, and how she deals □with the pain of killing her children. □ As an introduction to the play, the status of women in Greek society □should be briefly discussed. In general, women had very few rights. In □the eyes of men, the main purposes of women in Greek society were to do □housework such as cooking and cleaning, and bear children. They could □not vote, own property, or choose a husband, and had to be represented □by men in all legal proceedings. In some ways, these Greek women were □almost like slaves. There is a definite relationship between this □subordination of women and what transpires in the play. Jason decides □that he wants to divorce Medea and marry the princess of Corinth, □casting Medea aside as if they had never been married. This sort of □activity was acceptable by Greek standards, and shows the subordinate □status of the woman, who had no say in any matter like this. □ Even though some of Medea's actions were not typical of the average □Greek woman, she still had attitudes and emotions common among women. □For instance, Medea speaks out against women's status in society, □proclaiming that they have no choice of whom to marry, and that a man □can rid themselves of a woman to get another whenever he wants, but a □woman always has to "keep [her] eyes on one alone." (231-247) Though it □is improbable that women went around openly saying things of this □nature, it is likely that this attitude was shared by most or all Greek □women. Later in the play, Medea debates with herself over whether or □not to kill her children: "Poor heart, let them go, have pity upon the □children." (1057). This shows Medea's motherly instincts in that she □cares about her children. She struggles to decide if she can accomplish □her goal of revenge against Jason without killing her children because □she cares for them and knows they had no part in what their father did. □Unfortunately, Medea's desire to exact revenge on Jason is greater than □her love for her children, and at the end of the play she kills them. □Medea was also a faithful wife to Jason. She talks about how she helped □Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece, then helped him escape, even □killing her own brother. (476-483). The fact that she was willing to □betray her own family to be with Jason shows her loyalty to him. □Therefore, her anger at Jason over him divorcing her is understandable. □ On the other hand, Medea shows some heroic qualities that were not □common among Greek women. For example, Medea is willing to kill her own □brother to be with Jason. In classical Greece, women and killing were □probably not commonly linked. When she kills her brother, she shows □that she is willing to do what is necessary to "get the job done"; in □this case, to be with Jason. Secondly, she shows the courage to stand □up to Jason. She believes that she has been cheated and betrayed by □him. By planning ways to get back at him for cheating on her, she is □standing up for what she believes, which in this case is that she was □wronged by Jason, but in a larger sense, she is speaking out against the □inferior status of women, which effectively allows Jason to discard □Medea at will. Third, she shows that she is clever and resourceful. □Rather than use physical force to accomplish her plans, she uses her □mind instead: "it is best to...make away with them by poison." □(384-385) While physical strength can be considered a heroic quality, □cleverness can be as well. She does in fact poison the princess and the □king of Corinth; interestingly, however, she does not poison them □directly. "I will send the children with gifts...to the bride...and if □she wears them upon her skin...she will die." (784-788) This shows her □cleverness because she is trying to keep from being linked to the crime, □though everyone is able to figure out that she was responsible anyway. □In a way, though, she is almost anti-heroic because she is not doing the □"dirty work" herself, which makes her appear somewhat cowardly. □Finally, there is the revenge factor. Many times heroes were out for □revenge against someone who did them or a friend wrong, and in this case □Medea is no exception, since she wants to have revenge against Jason for □divorcing her without just cause. □ There are two main reasons why Medea decides to kill her children. The □first, and more obvious one, is that she feels that it is a perfect way □to complement the death of the princess in getting revenge on Jason. □When she tells the chorus of the plans to kill the children, they wonder □if she has the heart to kill her children, to which she replies, "[y]es, □for this is the best way to wound my husband." (817). This shows that □she believes that by killing her children, she will basically ruin □Jason's life, effectively getting her revenge. The second reason for □ □-----medea looking revenge

medea play greek playwright euripides explores greek barbarian dichotomy through character medea princess from quot barbarian quot greek land colchis throughout play becomes evident reader that ordinary woman standards central whole plot barbarian origins they related actions this paper attempting answer questions such behaves like female acts heroically from male point view killed children could have achieved goal without killing them murder motivated origins deals with pain killing children in introduction play status women society should briefly discussed general women very rights eyes main purposes women society were housework such cooking cleaning bear children they could vote property choose husband represented legal proceedings some ways these were almost like slaves there definite relationship between this subordination what transpires jason decides that wants divorce marry princess corinth casting aside they never been married this sort activity acceptable standards shows subordinate status woman matter like even though some actions were typical average woman still attitudes emotions common among instance speaks against status society proclaiming that have choice whom marry themselves another whenever wants always quot keep eyes alone though improbable went around openly saying things nature likely attitude shared most later debates with herself over whether kill poor heart

rt them have pity upon shows motherly instincts cares about struggles decide accomplish goal revenge against jason without killing because cares them knows part what their father unfortunately desire exact revenge jason greater than love kills also faithful wife talks about helped quest golden fleec e then helped escape even brother fact willing betray family with shows loyalty therefore anger over divorcing understandable other hand some heroic qualities common among example willing kill brother classical greece probably commonly linked when kills brother willing what necessary done case secondly courage stand believes been cheated betrayed planning ways back cheating standing believes which case wronged larger sense speaking against inferior which effectively allows discard will third clever resourceful rather than physical force accomplish plans uses mind instead best make away poison while physical strength considered heroic quality cleverness well does fact poison princess king corinth interestingly however does poison directly will send gifts bride wears upon skin will cleverness because trying keep from being linked crime though everyone able figure responsible anyway almost anti heroic because doing dirty work herself which makes appear somewhat cowardly finally there fact or many times heroes someone friend wrong case exception since wants divorcing without just cause there main reasons decides kill first more obvious feels perfect complement death getting when tells chorus plans wonder heart replies best wound husband believes basically ruin life effectively getting second reason

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