

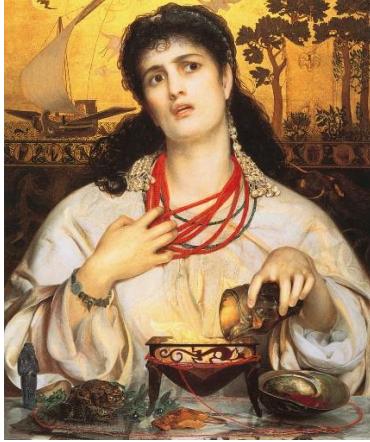
***Medea* by Euripides**

By analysing the characters of *Medea* and some of the central themes, you can easily prepare for any question that might come up on a Leaving Cert paper. Most of the themes and your analysis of them will use the same evidence/quotations you use for your analysis of the central characters.

Central Themes
Man vs Woman: Central to Euripides play is the relationship between men and women, and the assumptions that are made about each gender. The relationship of Jason and Medea is the centre of this conflict, however, there are other conflicts within this relationship that are unrelated to gender; there are other women in the play, who act differently to Medea and show different characteristics; there are different men too, who show better qualities than Jason. As you analyse these characters, there should be plenty of quotes to support any argument or discussion of this theme. Be careful however, some characters are clearly sexist – as is to be expected from Ancient Greece – and are perhaps merely expressing the attitudes of the time, others, such as Jason, are more overtly sexist than even an Ancient Greek. If you are asked to discuss the sexism of the play, that is a different discussion to Jason's sexism. Ask yourself: does the Chorus, Medea, or Creon express any sexist opinions?
Husband vs Wife: Closely related to the above theme is the theme of marriage and the conflict within such unions. Again, Jason and Medea's relationship is central (obviously). Medea talks about the difficulty of married life for a woman, Jason's attitude shows how a husband can misunderstand the nature of his wife and assume too much. There is also an underlining theme that marriage must lead to prosperity and children – think of Aegeus' childlessness or why Medea killed Jason's children, depriving him of the heirs to his legacy.
Foreigner vs Greek: Jason expresses his views that Greece is superior; Medea laments her situation as a foreigner without home or family to support her in her dire situation; the Nurse, Tutor, Aegeus, and the Chorus sympathise with her in this. However, the play itself ends with a foreigner killing the children of a Greek – is perhaps Euripides warning Greeks not to marry foreigners because of the repercussions? Either way, the theme will play an important part in the conflict between Jason and Medea.
Divine vs Human/Old Religion vs New Religion: These themes are less pronounced throughout the main part of the play – however, they play a significant role in the final scene and cannot be ignored. Do the gods side with Jason or Medea? Both claim the sympathies of the Gods, but only one is aided by them and she is aided by an older God and Goddess – Titans – Helios and Hecate. Jason on the other hand is abandoned by his favouring Goddess Hera for breaking his marriage vows.
Hubris: An examination of excessive pride is best seen in the development of Jason's character
Revenge: An examination of excessive revenge (or is it reasonable revenge?) is best seen in the development of Medea's character and the reaction of other characters to it.

Episodes of <i>Medea</i>		
Section:	Lines	Stasimons and Dialogues
Prologue	Lines 1-130	Nurse and Tutor; Medea off-stage.
Episode 1	Lines 130-447	Chorus and Nurse; Medea and Chorus; Creon and Chorus.
Episode 2	Lines 414-629	Chorus Stasimon on role reversal of men and women in poetry; Jason and Medea.
Episode 3	Lines 629-830	Chorus Stasimon on anguish of love and Medea's misfortune as refugee; Medea and Aegeus; Medea and Chorus.
Episode 4	Lines 830-1002	Chorus Stasimon on greatness of Athens and begging Medea not to act; Medea and Jason.
Episode 5	Lines 1002-1082	Chorus Stasimon pitying children, Glauke, Jason, and Medea; Tutor and Medea; Medea and Chorus.
Episode 6	Lines 1082-1252	Chorus Stasimon and argument by women (supposedly unusual) and grief of parenthood; Messenger and Medea.
Episode 7	Lines 125201352	Chorus Stasimon on Medea's murder; children murdered off-stage; Jason enters looking for his sons.
Epilogue	Lines 1352-1433	Medea (on <i>Deus ex Machina</i>); Jason and Medea.

Central Characters

<p>Character: Medea</p> 	<p>Key Quotes:</p> <p>“Poor Medea...” – Nurse/Chorus on several occasions in Prologue and opening episode.</p> <p>“She is a frightening woman; no one who makes and enemy of her will carry off an easy victory” – Nurse, Prologue, to audience about Medea’s nature.</p> <p>“I’ve watched her watching them [her children], her eye like a wild bull’s.” – Nurse, Prologue, to audience about Medea’s nature.</p> <p>“Death take you, with your father, and perish his whole house!” – Medea, Prologue, from behind stage.</p> <p>“Her mood is cruel, her nature dangerous.” – Nurse, Prologue, to audience about Medea’s nature</p> <p>“She glares at us like a mad bull or a lioness guarding her cubs.” – Nurse, Episode 1, to Chorus about Medea’s mood.</p> <p>“Jason was my whole life...” – Medea, Episode 1, to Chorus about her love and dependence on Jason.</p> <p>“...we women are the most wretched.” – Medea, Episode 1, to Chorus about life of women.</p> <p>“I’d rather stand three times in the front line than bear one child.” – Medea, Episode 1, to Chorus about hardship of women compared to men.</p> <p>“I am alone; I have no city; now my husband insults me.” – Medea, Episode 1, to Chorus on her situation as exile.</p> <p>“A woman’s weak and timid in most matters... But touch her right in marriage, and there’s no bloodier spirit.” – Medea, Episode 1, to Chorus about importance of marriage to women.</p> <p>“I fear you” – Creon, Episode 1, to Medea.</p>
<p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Princess of Colchis, Daughter of Aeetes, Granddaughter of Helios (God of Sun & Titan). - Worshipper of Hecate (Goddess of Witchcraft). - Pierced by Cupid’s arrow to fall in love with Jason, helps him in the tasks set for him by Aeetes, and in Recovering the Golden Fleece; kills her own brother and chops his body into pieces and throws them into the ocean so she and Jason can make their escape from Aeetes who slows to gather the parts of his sons body for burial. - Upon returning to Iolcus with Jason, she persuaded/tricked the daughters of Jason’s uncle, Pelias (the usurper king), to chop their father up and put him in a pot, thinking it a spell that would return Pelias to his youth. - Because of this, she is banished to Corinth with Jason for 10 years, having born him two sons. 	
<p>Characteristics/traits (Adjectives):</p> <p>Negative: Wicked, deceitful, vengeful, wrathful, proud, dominant, stubborn, Manipulative, dangerous, jealous, heroic (masculine), mystical/skilled in witchcraft, wild, violent, aggressive</p> <p>Positive: Maternal, loyal, honest (at times), loving (before Jason’s betrayal),</p> <p>Neutral: clever/intelligent, semi-divine, superior</p>	<p>“You’re a clever woman, skilled in many evil arts...” – Creon, Episode 1, to Medea.</p> <p>“I’m in no position – a woman – to wrong a king.” – Medea, Episode 1, to Creon.</p> <p>“Your words are gentle; but my blood runs cold to think what plots you may be nursing within your heart.” – Creon, Episode 1, to Medea.</p>

<p>Summary Medea's Actions in Plot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medea cries in pain at Jason's betrayal, threatening all around her, even her children in her wild, jealous rage. - Persuades/manipulates the Chorus to side with her and keep her secret by appealing to their womanhood and her dire situation as an abandoned foreigner. - Persuades/manipulates Creon to pity her and give her one more day in Corinth to prepare for exile with her two sons; she appeals to his fatherly nature and humbles herself claiming she is weak and not as clever as others claim. - Aggressively confronts Jason claiming he abandoned her after swearing to her oaths of fealty, after she aided him in his quest – betraying her family and country for him – and that he then betrayed her for another family, doing her and their family harm – insulting her. - Persuades/manipulates Aegeus to give her sanctuary in Athens in exile, offering him help in having children, and again humbling herself by grabbing his knees and beard as a suppliant (religious act) and exaggerating Jason's wickedness. - Reveal her full plans to the Chorus: that she will kill her own children. - Persuades/manipulates Jason to beg his new wife for the children to stay in Corinth, playing the "foolish/weak/hysterical" woman. Persuades him to bring the children and poisoned gift to his new bride. - Upon hearing a messenger's account of Glouce (Jason's wife) and Creon's death, Medea persuades herself to kill her own children; she struggles with her conscience and her maternal love for the children, but her pride, wrath, and vengeful spirit overcome ensure her resolve. - She kills her children (off stage). - Medea appears above the stage on the Deus ex Machina, a flying chariot pulled by dragons – her grandfather's chariot – and taunts Jason, insulting him, predicting his ignoble death, and saying 	<p>[to] make provision for my two sons, since their own father is not concerned to help them. Show some pity: you are a father too..." – Medea, Episode 1, to Creon gaining sympathy.</p> <p>"Today three of my enemies I shall strike dead: Father and daughter; and my husband" – Medea, Episode 1, to Chorus about plans.</p> <p>"Yes, I can endure guilt, however horrible; the laughter of my enemies I will not endure." – Medea, Episode 3, to Chorus about her situation.</p> <p>"Women are women; tears come naturally to us." – Medea, Episode 4, to Jason manipulating him.</p> <p>"The Gods and my own evil plots have led to this." – Medea, Episode 5, to Chorus doubting her resolve.</p> <p>"Why should I hurt them to make their father suffer, when I shall suffer twice as much myself? I won't do it." – Medea, Episode 5, to Chorus doubting her resolve</p> <p>"I understand the horror of what I am going to do; but anger, the spring of all life's horror, master's my resolve." – Medea, Episode 5, to Chorus convincing herself to act.</p> <p>"You'll give double pleasure if their death was horrible". – Medea, Episode 6, to messenger showing her bloodlust.</p> <p>"to kill the children and fly from Corinth" – Medea, Episode 6, to Chorus revealing her final plan.</p> <p>"No cowardice, no tender memories, forget that you once loved them." – Medea, Episode 6, to Chorus steeling herself to act.</p> <p>"But my pains a fair price to take away your smile." – Medea, Epilogue, to Jason.</p> <p>"Yes, Jason, to break your heart." – Medea, Epilogue, to Jason</p> <p>"Many matters the Gods bring to surprising ends. The things we thought would happen do not happen; the unexpected God makes possible; and such is the conclusion of this story." – Chorus, Epilogue</p>
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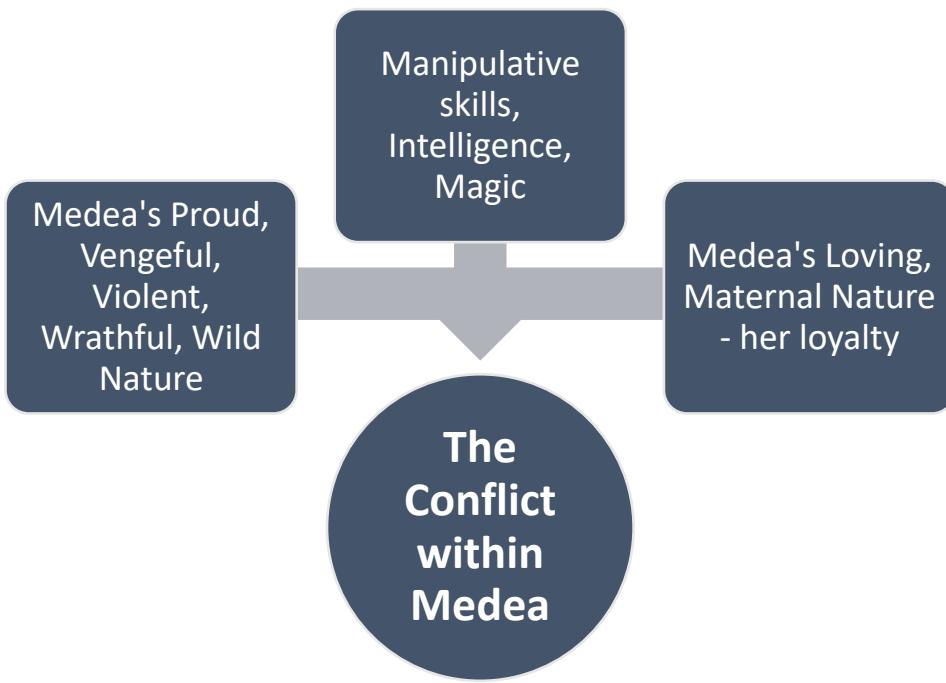
<p>she will not allow him to bury the children, but will do it herself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - She leaves as Jason continues to insult and berate her. 	
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Opinion/Synopsis of Character:

Your opinion of a character should **not be personal** – avoid personal **moral judgements** of her character and action. An opinion ought to be formed by empathising with her position in the play and based on evidence. If you are asked to make an observation about the justice in her actions, concentrate on what other characters say in the play. **Do not make any opinion without evidence – preferably a quote, if not at least an example.**

While Medea is certainly **amoral** from our perspective and that of the Ancient Greeks. However, Euripides explores two sides to her character which are ever in conflict in the play. She has clearly loved and remained loyal (excessively loyal perhaps) to Jason and her sons; however, now betrayed and slighted by Jason, **insulted**, she like any **male hero** in ancient myth acts to take revenge – doing acts which seems excessive to us. But with her pride hurt, she will not back down from her task. Further to this, she is barbaric (often we are reminded of this) and she does not have the same moral code – at least according to Euripides. We can see this by the fact that she **can** kill her children while the Chorus of Corinthian women (**Greeks**) are horrified by the very notion. She also has the support of the gods, being semi-divine herself, and is aided in her escape by Helios. This confuses the moral message of the play: **is Medea justified in the killing of her own children?** That answer is not satisfactorily resolved.

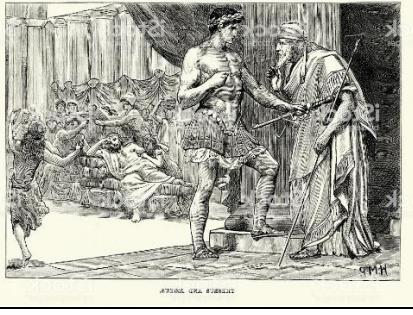
A diagram to help you visualise the conflict within Medea's character throughout the play:



<p>Character: Jason</p> 	<p>Key Quotes:</p> <p>“Jason has betrayed his own sons, and my mistress, for a royal bed, for alliance with the king of Corinth.” – Nurse, Prologue to audience about Jason</p> <p>“Old love is ousted by new love. Jason’s no friend to this house.” – Tutor, Prologue to Nurse about Jason.</p> <p>“...everybody loves himself more than his neighbour. These boys are nothing to their father: he’s in love.” – Tutor, Prologue to the Nurse about Jason.</p>
<p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Son of the ousted King Aeson of Iolcus. - Raised by Chiron (an immortal/ancient centaur). - Returns to Iolcus, where his uncle Pelias commands him to retrieve the Golden Fleece in order to prove himself worthy of the throne (his uncle hopes Jason will die or fail). - Journeys to Colchis – where lay the Golden Fleece – on the Argo (a magical ship built by Hera) with 50 other heroes. - After many adventures arrives in Colchis, where he is commanded by Aeetes to perform three tasks to prove himself worthy of the Golden Fleece. - Medea falls for him and aids him in his tasks; they flee with the other Argonauts (sailor of the Argo). - After many years travelling the Black Sea, Danube, and Mediterranean, he returns to Iolcus. - After Medea tricks the daughters of Pelias into killing their father, Pelias' son persuades the people of Iolcus to exile him to Corinth. - He lives with Medea in Corinth for 10 years and has two children with her. 	<p>“To punish Jason will be just” – Chorus, Episode 1 to Medea about Jason.</p> <p>“You no doubt hate me: but I could never bear ill-will to you.” – Jason, Episode 2 to Medea.</p> <p>“You filthy coward!” – Medea, Episode 2 to Jason.</p> <p>“It is not even audacity; it's a disease... pure shamelessness.” – Medea, Episode 2 to Jason about his shamelessness.</p> <p>“You must know you are guilty of perjury to me.” – Medea, Episode 2 to Jason about his crime.</p> <p>“...you left a barbarous land to become a resident of Hellas.” – Jason, Episode 2 to Medea about the benefits of Greece.</p> <p>“No, keep quiet!” – Jason, Episode 2 to Medea as she attempts to respond.</p> <p>“If you could govern your sex-jealousy.” – Jason, Episode 2 to Medea about her reasons for unhappiness.</p> <p>“If women didn’t exist, human life would be rid of all its miseries.” – Jason, Episode 2 to Medea about women.</p> <p>“Jason, you have set your case forth very plausibly. But to my mind – though you may be surprised at this – you are acting wrongly in thus abandoning your wife.” – Chorus, Episode 2 to Jason, showing their disagreement.</p> <p>“But you’re an aging man and an Asiatic wife was no longer respectable.” – Medea, Episode 2 to Jason about his reasons for betraying her.</p> <p>“Only naturally a woman is angry when her husband marries a second wife... you have recognised the right decision.”</p>
<p>Characteristics/traits (Adjectives):</p> <p>Naïve, Hubristic, ambitious (seeks <i>kleos</i>/glory), disloyal, foolish, pitiable, ignorant, sexist (even by Ancient Greek standards), xenophobic (probably as much as the Ancient Greeks), arrogant, superior/supercilious, proud, condescending, patronising (aka. mansplains), disloyal (betrays wife and family), irresponsible</p>	

<p>Summarise Jason's Actions in Plot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marries the daughter of Creon, King of Corinth, Glauce. - Offers Medea friendship and help in her exile, blames her for her situation – denying his own fault – dismisses her help to him in his quest, claims she is simple wild with “sexual-jealousy”, leaves her and his sons to their fate as exiles. - Returns on Medea’s summons and is manipulated into thinking she has changed her mind; he believes her very easily. Brings his sons to his new wife and petitions her to ask for their stay in Corinth. - Returns at end of play to save his sons from the Corinthian mob; attempts to break into the backstage to see his children’s bodies; accosts and rebukes Medea for her horrendous act; asks her to allow him his sons bodies; curses her as she refuses and flees. 	<p>– Jason, Episode 4 to Medea about “foolish” women.</p> <p>“I’ll provide for them. Cheer up.”</p> <p>– Jason, Episode 4 to Medea about their sons.</p> <p>“If my wife value me at all she will yield to me...”</p> <p>– Jason, Episode 4 to Medea about Glouce.</p> <p>“So sure of destiny, so ignorant”</p> <p>– Chorus, Episode 4 about Jason.</p> <p>“I’ve come to save my sons, before Creon’s family murder them in revenge for this unspeakable crime of their mother’s.”</p> <p>– Jason, Episode 7 to Chorus about the children</p> <p>“Now you have loving words, now kisses for them: then you disowned them, sent them into exile.”</p> <p>– Medea, Epilogue to Jason about his disinterest in his sons.</p> <p>“My children; now, out of mere sexual jealousy, you murder them!”</p> <p>– Jason, Epilogue, to Medea still believing it was all mere jealousy on her part to caused the suffering.</p>
<p>Opinion/Synopsis of Character</p> <p>As with Medea, you must be careful not to make any assumptions about Jason or his actions – you are concerned with what the playwright wished his audience to think, with what the Ancient Greeks might have thought. Leave your own personal moral judgements and biases aside.</p> <p>Jason is ambitious, seeking <i>kleos</i> or fame and glory, not a sin in Ancient Greek heroism – it is the only way a mortal can achieve any sense of immortality. However, his excessive ambition and pride (or Hubris) has led him to make to foolish decision of abandoning and betraying his wife Medea – the foreign, wild, proud woman from a line of kings and gods. He assumed that she would support him, as her husband, no matter what; he assumes all the women, including Glauce, will simply obey him because he is a man. This shows his naivety and sexist/patronising attitude towards women. It is this misunderstanding he has of Medea and women that will lead to his own destruction. He can also be accused of certain xenophobic tendencies – however, this may not be all that different from Euripides opinion, or that of other Ancient Greeks; remember that the play ends with a foreign woman doing horrific things as Ancient Greek women are horrified at the act. We certainly have more sympathy for Jason and his fall into ruin at the end; perhaps because of the excessive, horrific form that Medea’s revenge takes, or perhaps because he is simply so naïve in his actions, that he seems to be unaware of his own faults – even to the end.</p>	

<p>Character: Creon</p> 	<p>Key Quotes:</p> <p>“I have more love for my family than for you.” – Creon, Episode 1</p> <p>“I love my country too – next only to my daughter.” – Creon, Episode 1</p> <p>“I am no tyrant by nature. My soft heart has often betrayed me...” – Creon, Episode 1</p>
<p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - King of Corinth - Father of Glauce - New Father-in-law of Jason 	
<p>Characteristics/traits (Adjectives):</p> <p>Fatherly, a somewhat considerate ruler (his name is <i>literally</i> ruler in Greek), unjust in marrying his daughter to a married man, soft, weak-willed, compromising, not a tyrant, sympathetic</p>	
<p>Summarise Creon's Actions in Plot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marries his daughter to Jason. - Banishes Medea and her children from Corinth. - Recedes his orders slightly to allow Medea to stay one more day (manipulated by an appeal to his fatherhood). - Grabs his daughter's corpse when she collapses in the pain from the poisoned clothes and dies as he cries out in pain and tries to pull away. 	
<p>Opinion/Synopsis of Character:</p> <p>What is most important about Creon is his dealing with Medea – how she manipulates him. To sum up his character in a line, we could say he is a somewhat weak-willed ruler whose concern for his daughter consumes his character, so much so that he feels sympathy for Medea, and commits accidental suicide at his daughter's death.</p>	

<p>Character: Aegeus</p> 	<p>Key Quotes:</p> <p>“All happiness to you, Medea!” – Aegeus, Episode 3, to Medea in friendly greeting.</p> <p>“Childless I am; so some fate has ordained.” – Aegeus, Episode 3, to Medea showing his desperation.</p> <p>“But such a thing is shameful! He has never dared – “ – Aegeus, Episode 3, to Medea condemning Jason’s acts.</p> <p>“Have pity! I am in exile; let me not be friendless. Receive me in Athens... so may the gods grant you fertility... I know certain drugs whose power will put an end to your sterility.” – Medea, Episode 3, to Aegeus.</p> <p>“...the taking of an oath safeguards me...” – Aegeus, Episode 3, to Medea</p>
<p>Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - King of Athens, one of the cities earliest rulers. - Future father of the famous hero Theseus who would kill the Minotaur. - He has failed to father and heirs by the time he arrives in Corinth. - Will give his name to the Aegean Sea. 	
<p>Characteristics/traits (Adjectives):</p> <p>Desperate (for an heir), a good and wise ruler (he puts his people first), clever/intelligent (doesn't allow Medea to put him in a precarious situation), pious, loyal, honest, friendly, good-natured, sympathetic</p>	
<p>Summarise Aegeus' Role in Plot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aegeus arrives in Corinth on his way from Delphi to Troezen (southern Greece). He asked to oracle at Delphi to help him father an heir; he is now journeying to visit his friend Pittheus, King of Troezen, for advice on the oracle. - He is persuaded (manipulated?) by Medea into promising her sanctuary from her enemies after she flees Corinth; he ensures that there is an oath taken and that she makes her own way there, this giving him legitimate excuse. 	
<p>Opinion/Synopsis of Character:</p> <p>Aegeus character is only important in how he deals with Medea and offers her a place of sanctuary after her act of revenge. He is shown in the best light, as the only Athenian in the play. He is friendly, honest, and loyal to Medea as a guest; he is sympathetic to her plight; he is pious in his dealing with her as a suppliant; yet clever/intelligent in his dealing with her – not allowing his own personal desperation to cloud his judgement: thinking of the good of his city before his own needs. However, he is clearly desperate and distraught at his own situation; and it is this which allows Medea to take advantage of his situation and ensure herself a sanctuary.</p>	

Character: Chorus of Corinthian Women



Characteristics/traits (Adjectives):

Sympathetic (even empathetic), judgemental (first of Jason then Medea), feminine (obviously)

Summarise Chorus' Role in the Plot:

- They first appear outside Jason's house and beg to see Medea, feeling sympathy for her plight.
- They condemn Jason and are persuaded by Medea to side with her and keep her secrets.
- They sing of how men will be deceitful and women heroic; signalling how Medea is more like a heroic character, such as Achilles, and Jason more treacherous like the "typical" woman according to Ancient Greek thinking; they also sympathise with Medea as a foreigner and abandoned wife.
- They highlight Medea's rage as a jealous lover and clearly side with her in the argument between Jason and Medea.
- They sing another song lamenting the power of Aphrodite (Goddess of Love) to force one to fall in love, only to be betrayed, or for the marriage to lead into conflict; they also sing a song lamenting to possibility of becoming a refugee. Clearly siding/sympathising with Medea.
- They are shocked at Medea's full plan to kill her children, perhaps in some disbelief.
- They sing a song in praise of Athens and accuse Medea of the ultimate wrong; their sympathies have clearly changed.

Evidence:

"If your husband is won to a new love – the thing is common; why let it anger you?"

– Chorus, Episode 1, to Medea who remains off stage.

"Check this passionate grief..."

– Chorus, Episode 1, to Medea who remains off stage.

"A time comes when the female sex is honoured..."

– Chorus, Episode 2, in stasimon.

"Male poets of past ages, with their ballads of faithless women, shall go out of fashion..."

– Chorus, Episode 2, in their stasimon.

"You are acting wrongly in thus abandoning your wife."

– Chorus, Episode 2, to Jason.

"Stateless refuge"

– Chorus, Episode 3, in their stasimon about Medea.

"...the most pitiful of all griefs, death is better."

– Chorus, Episode 3, in their stasimon about Medea.

"But – to kill your own children! Can you steel your heart?"

– Chorus, Episode 3, pleading with Medea not to kill her sons.

"How will Athens welcome you, the child-killer whose presence is pollution?"

– Chorus, Episode 4, in their stasimon

"Do not slaughter your children!"

– Chorus, Episode 4, in their stasimon pleading with Medea.

"Now I have no more hope; no more hope that the children can live."

– Chorus, Episode 5, in their stasimon.

"And you, unhappy Jason, ill-stared in marriage..."

– Chorus, Episode 5, in their stasimon showing sympathy for Jason at last.

"O wretched Jason! So sure of destiny, and so ignorant!"

– Chorus, Episode 5, in their stasimon.

"Today we see the will of Heaven, blow after blow, bring down on Jason justice and calamity."

– Chorus, Episode 7, after the messenger's speech of Glauce and Creon's deaths.

"Do you hear? The children are calling for help. O cursed, miserable woman!"

– Chorus, Episode 7, as Medea murders her sons.

"Shall we go in? I am sure we ought to save the children's lives."

– Chorus, Episode 7, considering helping but they cannot.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They sing a song sympathising Glouce, Jason, and Medea. - They sing a song declaring that “some” women can make judgement, and that judgment is that being a parent is a burden that brings nothing but grief. - They are witness to the children’s murder; they do not (cannot because of the nature of the stage) interfere; they inform Jason of the crime. - They sing a song reflecting on the unexpected nature of the Fates and decrees of Zeus and the Gods; mirroring the unexpected ending of the play and Medea’s escape by divine aid on the <i>Deus ex Machina</i>. 	<p>“They are both dead” – Chorus, Epilogue, to Jason.</p> <p>“Many matters the Gods bring to surprising ends. The things we thought would happen do not happen; the unexpected God makes possible; and such is the conclusion of this story.” – Chorus, Epilogue</p>
<p>Interpreting the Chorus:</p> <p>The Chorus acts as a kind of bridge between the audience and the characters on the stage. Their Stasimon highlight the central themes within the plot; however, in the case of <i>Medea</i>, they also show us where their sympathies lie at that particular time – perhaps indicating which characters we ought to be sympathising with. The plot of Euripides’ play goes from the extreme view that Jason is entirely in the wrong, to the view that Medea is at fault, to a stalemate at the end where both Medea and Jason cannot fully resolve their grievances with the other. Medea has committed a horrific act in the name of revenge, Jason still does not understand his part in his own downfall and cannot understand his wife’s reasoning, and the Gods remain absent. The Chorus never completely lose their sympathy for Medea, but they do grow to sympathise with Jason too. It seems that Euripides wants us to remain unsure at the end, for the question of who was right and who was wrong to remain open-ended. The Chorus is his tool for doing this.</p>	