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Medea and Other Plays

Euripides · *431 BC (Medea)* · *Gilbert Murray (verse)*

Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas to Colchis through the blue Symplegades: so the Nurse begins Medea, in Gilbert Murray's English verse. The hosted file holds Medea, Hippolytus, The Alcestis, and Electra, and also contains The Bacchae. For grades 9–12. Gravity. Quote Murray, not a later prose, and not a film.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What happens when a wronged wife in a strange city is left with no just help, and how should a school read this Murray file honestly—as several plays, including a Medea whose last act is terrible, without making that act a spectacle?

"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"
Medea, the Nurse's opening

The Nurse would to God the Argo had never winged the seas to Colchis. Medea, a stranger and a wife, has been wronged; the play will go to a terrible close. Teach the injustice and the horror together, with gravity, for grades 9–12. No spectacle of the children. This hosted file is Murray's verse of Medea, Hippolytus, The Alcestis, and Electra, and it also contains The Bacchae (which is also hosted in The Bacchae and Other Plays). Label the collection honestly, including the overlap.

KEY CHARACTERS

The Nurse
Who opens Medea with a wish that the Argo had never sailed

Medea
A wronged wife in a strange city; teach the injustice and the terrible close together, without spectacle

Jason
The husband whose new marriage is the injustice the play will not forget

The people of the other plays
Hippolytus, Alcestis, Electra, and, in this file, also The Bacchae

A WISH AGAINST THE ARGO

> *"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"*
> Medea, the Nurse's opening

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Would God no Argo

MEDEA, THE OPENING

The Nurse's first wish undoes the whole voyage: no Argo, no riven pine in Pelion's glen, no first oar-blade. The play begins already in regret, in a strange house, after a famous quest.

- The first lines are exact, including "e'er" and "Symplegades."
- This is Gilbert Murray's verse. Quote it, not another English.
- For grades 9–12.
- The Nurse, not Medea, speaks first.

> *"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"*
> Medea, the Nurse's opening

02

A Wronged Wife, in a Strange City

MEDEA

Jason's new marriage, and Medea's isolation, are the injustice the play will not let a listener forget. Teach that wrong. The close is terrible; teach it as a horror, not as a thrill.

- Gravity. Tact. No spectacle of the children, and no prurience on the map.
- Do not flatten Medea into a later slogan, and do not excuse the last act.
- The play holds both the wrong and the crime.
- 9–12; some schools will keep this for the older end of the band.

> *"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"*
> Medea, the Nurse's opening

03

Hippolytus, Alcestis, Electra

THE OTHER MURRAY PLAYS

Hippolytus, The Alcestis, and Electra are in this file in the same verse. Teach each as itself. Hippolytus and The Bacchae also stand in the companion collection; quote the file you are in.

- Name the plays in the file.
- Murray throughout these.
- Alcestis is a different kind of trial than Medea; say so.
- Do not mix speeches across slugs.

> *"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"*
> Medea, the Nurse's opening

04

The Bacchae, Also Here

AN OVERLAP

"I, Dionysus" is in this file. The Bacchae is also hosted in The Bacchae and Other Plays. Label the overlap honestly. If you assign The Bacchae, know which file you are reading.

- Do not hide the overlap, and do not pretend the catalogue title lists every play in the file.
- The companion file also holds Hippolytus and Women of Troy.
- Quote the opening of the play you are in.
- 9–12; The Bacchae is often kept for older students.

> *"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"*
> Medea, the Nurse's opening

05

This Verse

THE EDITION

Gilbert Murray's rhyming verse is the English of this collection. A school should say so.

- The Nurse's Argo sentence is the right first quotation.
- Not a later film.
- Gravity throughout Medea.
- Complete plays, as this file prints them.

> *"Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades: No shaft of riven pine in Pelion's glen Shaped"*
> Medea, the Nurse's opening

A Wrong in a Strange City | A Terrible Close | A Nurse's Regret | Several Plays, One Verse | Gravity, Not Spectacle

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. Medea opens, in Murray's verse: "Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas To Colchis through the blue Symplegades." Keep "e'er." The Nurse speaks first. Quote this file, not another English or a film.
2. This file holds Medea, Hippolytus, The Alcestis, and Electra, and also contains The Bacchae (also hosted in The Bacchae and Other Plays). Label the collection and the overlap honestly. For grades 9–12.
3. Teach Medea's wrong and the horror of the close together. Gravity. Tact. No spectacle of the children.
4. Do not flatten Medea into a later slogan, and do not excuse the last act.
5. If you assign The Bacchae or Hippolytus, know which hosted file you are quoting.

Quotations are verbatim from the Gilbert Murray (verse), Project Gutenberg #35451/#8418/#10523/#14322, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/medea-and-other-plays/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.