

MÉDÉE



LEARN MORE...

A co-production with Glasgow Citizens Theatre and Watford Palace Theatre.

In association with Warwick Arts Centre.

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HOW TO USE THIS PACK

Both the research information and the activities in this pack have been inspired by Headlong's production of Mike Bartlett's startlingly modern version of Euripides' classic tragedy *Medea*. They are designed to be used either in conjunction with a visit to see the production or as stand alone activities to explore the play *Medea*, the world of ancient Greek theatre and the process of adapting tragedy for a contemporary audience.

These materials are primarily designed for use with students studying drama at KS4 and KS5. They can, of course, be adapted and used with other age groups.

More materials will be available at www.medeaheadlong.com from the end of September.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

*"If there's a God, which at the moment I DOUBT, I want you to curse him.
If there's any justice, I want them - both of them - in a car crash."*

Her husband's gone and her future isn't bright. Imprisoned in her marital home, Medea can't work, can't sleep, and increasingly, can't cope. While her child plays, she plots her revenge.

This startlingly modern version of Euripides' classic tragedy explores the private fury bubbling under public behaviour and asks how a mother, fuelled by anger at her husband's infidelity, might be driven to commit the worst imaginable crime.

The production will be directed by one of the UK's most exciting and prolific young writers, Mike Bartlett, who has received critical acclaim for his plays, which include *Earthquakes in London* (Headlong/National Theatre), *Cock* (Royal Court/Off-Broadway - Olivier Award), a new stage version of *Chariots of Fire* and *Love, Love, Love*.

CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR	Mike Bartlett
DESIGNER	Ruari Murchison
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Johanna Town
COMPOSER AND SOUND DESIGNER	Tom Mills
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR	Kate Hewitt

CAST

WORKMAN	Paul Brendan
SARAH	Lu Corfield
CARTER	Christopher Ettridge
JASON	Adam Levy
PAM	Amelia Lowdell
ANDREW	Paul Shelley
MEDEA	Rachael Stirling
TOM	Different at each venue

TOUR DATES

Citizens Theatre, Glasgow

27th Sep - 13th Oct 2012

<http://www.citz.co.uk>

Telephone : 0141 429 0022

Watford Palace Theatre

16th - 27th Oct 2012

<http://www.watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk>

Telephone : 01923 225671

Northern Stage, Newcastle

30th Oct - 3rd Nov 2012

<http://www.northernstage.co.uk>

Telephone : 0191 230 5151

Sherman Cymru, Cardiff

6th - 10th Nov 2012

<http://www.shermancymru.co.uk>

Telephone : 029 2064 6900

Warwick Arts Centre

13th - 17th Nov 2012

<http://www.warwickartscentre.co.uk>

Telephone : 024 7652 4524

Richmond Theatre

20th - 24th Nov 2012

<http://www.atgtickets.com/richmond-theatre>

Telephone : 0870 060 6651

Northcott Theatre, Exeter

26th Nov - 1st Dec 2012

<http://www.exeternorthcott.co.uk>

Telephone : 01392 493 493

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

MEDEA - female, newly divorced from Jason, mother of Tom

JASON - male, divorced Medea after having an affair, father of Tom

PAM - female, colleagues with Medea

SARAH - next door neighbour to Medea

WORKMAN - a man doing maintenance on the street

CARTER - landlord of the house Medea lives in

ANDREW - neighbour to Medea

TOM - (non-speaking) son of Medea & Jason

KATE - (not seen but spoken of) new, young fiancée/wife to Jason and daughter to Carter

THE STORY OF MEDEA



Rachael Stirling and Adam Levy in Mike Bartlett's version of *Medea*

Medea is one of the most fascinating and complex characters in the whole of Greek mythology. She is the ultimate heroine, villain and victim, all rolled into one.

Medea was a high priestess, skilled in the art of witchcraft. Her father, King Aeetes, ruled over the land of Colchis. To the Greeks, the land of Colchis was a strange far away place at the end of the world.

The Greek god of war, Aries had placed a golden fleece in a grove in Colchis and charged Aeetes with protecting it. The fleece was guarded by a fearsome dragon. Aries had decreed that as long as the fleece stayed in Colchis, the land would prosper and its people would have good fortune.

One day, a Greek ship landed on the shores of Colchis. Aboard this ship, the Argo, was a Greek prince called Jason. On seeing Jason for the first time, Medea fell head over heels in love with him.

When Jason arrived at the palace he asked Aeetes to give him the golden fleece. Aeetes had no intention of giving up the fleece, so he set Jason an impossible task. Jason could take the fleece away with him if he could yoke two fire breathing bulls to a plough, plough a field and sow it with the magical teeth of a serpent that had been slain long ago by another Greek hero called Cadmus.

Medea knew that Jason would not be able to complete these tasks on his own. She offered him a bargain. If he agreed to marry her, she would help him win the fleece. Jason agreed. Medea gave Jason a lotion to rub on his skin that would protect him from the fiery breath of the bulls. With Medea's help, Jason managed to yoke the ferocious bulls to the plough and planted the serpent's teeth. The teeth instantly grew into an army of men who fought each other until every one of them was dead. When King Aeetes saw that Jason had successfully completed the task, he was furious. He broke his promise and refused to give up the golden fleece. He threatened to burn the Jason's ship and massacre her crew.

Medea quickly led Jason and his men to the grove where the golden fleece hung. She soothed the fearsome dragon with her spells and potions. Jason unfastened the fleece from the tree in which it hung. He ran back to his ship with Medea and her younger brother Apsyrtus. Together they all set sail at top speed for Greece.

Aeetes, however, was not prepared to let the fleece go so easily. He sent his ships after Jason and Medea. Aeetes' ships were faster than Jason's and he soon caught up with the couple. Medea knew she had to do something drastic to stop her father and save her beloved Jason. She took hold of her brother Apsyrtus and cut him up into pieces. She then dropped the bloody pieces of his corpse into the sea, knowing that her father, stricken with grief, would have to stop to fish them out.

Medea and Jason were married on Corcyra with huge celebrations and over their wedding bed they spread the golden fleece. Together they sailed home to Greece.

When they arrived in Jason's home town of Iolcus, Jason discovered that the king, Pelias, had murdered his parents and his brother. Furious with grief, Jason wanted to launch an immediate armed assault on the city. Medea, however, had a better idea. She told Jason that she could take the city single-handed. She instructed Jason's crew to hide their boat, while she went to the city alone. When Jason and his crew saw a torch waved on the palace roof, they would know she had succeeded and the town would be theirs for the taking.

As Medea approached the city gates, she transformed herself into an old woman. She carried a statue of the goddess of the hunt, Artemis, with her. When she reached the gates, she announced that the goddess Artemis had come to reward Pelias for his piety. Pelias was a very old man and had no children. Artemis, Medea told him, had taken pity on him and would make him young again so that he could have more sons.

Pelias was a suspicious man. He didn't believe Medea. So Medea said that she would prove the truth of the goddess's promise to him. She transformed herself back into a young woman, right before Pelias's very eyes. Next, she took an old ram and cut it up into thirteen pieces. She threw the pieces of ram into a boiling cauldron. Then, she plunged her hand into the boiling cauldron and drew out a live lamb.

Pelias was convinced. He lay down on a couch and Medea charmed him to sleep. She gave his three daughters knives and commanded them to cut him up into thirteen pieces like the ram. Then, she told the three girls to take torches up onto the palace roof and invoke

the power of the moon to help the cauldron boil. When Jason and his men saw the torches, they rushed into Iolcus and took the town for their own.

Medea's father had once been king of Corinth and it was to Corinth that Jason and Medea went next. Medea claimed the throne for herself and the people of Corinth eagerly welcomed Jason as their king. Medea and Jason decided to settle there. Medea bore Jason seven sons and seven daughters, and they all should have lived happily ever after.

Ten years passed, and Jason's eye began to wander. He fell in love with Glauce, the young and beautiful daughter of king Creon of Thebes. He decided to divorce Medea and marry Glauce instead. Medea was furious. She still loved Jason deeply. She reminded Jason that the throne of Corinth was rightfully hers, not his. Jason laughed at her saying that the people of Corinth had more respect for him than for her, so he should be king still. Medea pretended to give in to Jason and agreed to leave the town without causing any trouble, but she had other plans.

On their wedding day, Medea sent Jason's bride a gift of a poison dress and a poison crown. When Glauce put them on, they burnt into her skin. Her father Creon attempted to rip the dress and crown off Glauce in order to save her, but he too became tangled up in the poisoned dress and they died together in each other's arms. As a second form of revenge on Jason, Medea murdered all their children. Jason was furious and pursued Medea. Medea's grandfather Helios, the god of the sun, saved her. Medea climbed into his winged chariot and escaped. Jason was left behind, brideless and childless.

Medea fled to Athens. The king of Athens, Aegeus, agreed to give her shelter and in return Medea offered to give him a son. Aegeus and Medea were married and they had a son called Medus. One day, however, Medea discovered that Aegeus had already had a son, Theseus, with another woman. Medea wanted her son Medus to be Aegeus's only rightful heir. She invited Theseus to a banquet and put a deadly poison in his cup of wine. Aegeus discovered Medea's plan and when Theseus raised his cup to make a toast, Aegeus dashed the poisoned wine from his hands.

Medea fled the city of Athens and sailed home to Colchis. Her father's throne had been taken from him by his brother Perses. Medea won her father's throne back for him and they were reconciled. Some people say that Jason then arrived in Colchis and was reunited with Medea, however, the truth is that Jason was punished by the gods for breaking his promise to Medea. He was doomed to wander homeless from city to city, hated by everyone. One day, he came across his old ship, the Argo. He sat down in its shadow to remember his past glories and mourn all the disasters that had befallen him. He was so upset, he decided to hang himself from the ship's prow, but instead the ship's prow suddenly fell off and killed him. Medea never died. She was made immortal and went to live forever in the happiness of the Elysian fields.

ACTIVITY

1) Individually or in small groups:

Euripides, the Greek playwright only uses sections of Medea's story in his play. The modern playwright, Mike Bartlett has adapted Euripides' play. He has taken Euripides' version of the Medea story, written in 431BC, and changed it so that it is relevant to a modern audience and to the modern world. As a result of this, *Medea*, the play is both very similar to the original story of Medea and very different.

Read through the story of Medea.

Thinking about the performance that you saw:

How much of the story of Medea seems familiar?

Which specific parts of the story and does the play use in its story?

In what ways, is the story of the play different from the story of Medea?

ANCIENT GREEK THEATRE

Euripides' *Medea* was first performed in at the City Dionysia Festival in Athens in 431BC, nearly 2,500 years ago.

What would it have been like to have attended the original production? It's difficult to know for sure. There is not enough historical evidence to present a definitive picture and scholars argue over the exact details. There is, however, one thing we can know for sure. The experience of watching a play in the theatre in ancient Greece was very different from watching a play in a theatre today.

Today you can go to the theatre almost any night of the week. In ancient Athens, plays were only performed during late winter and early spring. This may have been because of the hot Greek climate. The theatres were outdoors and the plays were performed in daylight. The actors wore heavy costumes and masks, and performing in the Greek theatre required strenuous physical and vocal exertion, which would have been impractical in hot weather. Each play was usually only ever performed once.

Greek theatres were huge. The theatre of Dionysus in Athens could hold 15,000 spectators. The audience sat on seats carved out of a hillside. These seats encircled a round playing area called the orchestra where the chorus performed. At the back of the orchestra was the *skene*. This was a stone building, a hut or tent that acted as a dressing room and was where the actors made their entrances from and their exits to. The actors performed in front of the *skene*, perhaps on a raised platform. On either side of the orchestra were the *parados*, two stone passage ways through which the chorus made its entrance and exit. There was some form of stage machinery that facilitated special effects - such as the entrance of a god or Medea's escape in Helius' chariot - but we are unsure as to exactly what this machinery was or how it worked.

Plays were performed as part of religious festivals, such as the City Dionysia. Priests sat on the front row of the theatre in throne-like seats. The festival lasted seven days and celebrated the beginning of spring. Alongside the performances of the plays, there were grand processions, animal sacrifices, good citizens were honoured and slaves were freed. The event may have been a religious one, but the atmosphere was far from solemn. Greek audiences were talkative and unruly. If they disliked a play, they would drum their heels on their benches, jeer loudly and throw fruit.

At the City Dionysia Festival, the plays were presented in competition with each other. There were prizes for the best comedy and the best tragedy. In the tragedy competition, three playwrights would each present a trilogy of plays. When Euripides presented *Medea* in 431BC he came last in the competition, beaten into third place by the playwrights Euphorion and Sophocles.

The plays were funded by a wealthy citizen, who gave his financial support in return for being let off paying his taxes. The plays were directed by the playwright. Some of the earlier playwrights performed in their plays as well. Aeschylus frequently played leading roles in his productions.

The chorus plays a very important role in Greek tragedy. The play does not officially begin until they enter and ends when they leave. The chorus acts as characters within the drama, it provides the audience with vital information and it locates the story of the play within the context of wider Greek mythology. The chorus sang and danced during the

performance. Their movements were elaborately choreographed. The chorus acts as a bridge between the action and the audience. The chorus physically stood on the orchestra between the actors and the audience. It could talk to the actors on one side and the audience on the other. It was made up of members of the Athenian community, just like the audience. The chorus for each play was selected from the citizens of Athens, who took on this responsibility unpaid as part of their civic duty.

The actors in Greek theatre were semi-professionals. They were paid for their performances, but acting was not their full time occupation. There were no actresses on the Greek stage. All the female roles were played by men. The maximum number of actors required for any Greek tragedy is three. If you look at the plays, you will see that there are never more than three speaking characters onstage at any one time. Each actor could quickly and easily change characters by simply changing his mask and costume.

Little is known about acting styles in Greek theatre. There was no fourth wall in the Greek theatre. Like the chorus, the actors could see the audience, and would have acknowledged their presence and spoken directly to them. Visibility and audibility was probably an issue in the huge Greek theatres. The actors' masks had megaphones built into the mouths to amplify their voices. In the dialogue of Greek plays, the characters often describe what they are feeling and doing in detail. For example, they might tell us that they are crying or that another character is scowling at them. Through the language of the play they are able to convey the action of the scene to even the most distant spectator.

Although the word scenery is derived from the word *skene*, there were no sets as such on the Greek stage. The back wall of the *skene* may have been painted, but its decoration would have been unchanging. Again, the language of the dialogue had to paint the scene for the audience and they filled in the rest with their imagination. The actors' costumes helped the audience to identify their characters, indicating their gender and social status through their decoration. You could say that, the elaborate costumes and masks were the characters and that the actor simply spoke through them.

There were many Greek playwrights, but sadly only the work of three of them has survived: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. All three wrote plays for the City Dionysia, but they were very different from each other.

The plays of Aeschylus explore the dangers of arrogance, the misuse of power and the bloody consequences of revenge. His trilogy, the *Oresteia*, explores the chain of revenge set into motion by king Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter in return for a fair wind to take his ships to Troy.

Sophocles is interested in the redemptive power of suffering. A good example of this is the character of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*. Sophocles portrays Oedipus as a good-hearted but headstrong young man who kills his own father without knowing that he is his father, and marries his mother without realising that she is his mother. When he discovers what he has done, he blinds himself in remorse.

Euripides, the last of the three, belongs to a somewhat later generation of Greek thought, and is a far more troubled, questioning and unsatisfied spirit. Euripides is the most direct of the three in his questioning of Athenian society and its established beliefs.

ACTIVITY - ANCIENT GREEK THEATRE

1) Individually or in small groups:

Going to the theatre in ancient Greece is a very different experience from going to the theatre now.

Make a table like the one below and write down as many differences as you can think of:

Contemporary Theatre	Ancient Greek Theatre

Remember to consider how the following elements of production might be different:

- Acting
- Staging
- Design
- Lighting and sound
- Producing
- The audience's experience
- The purpose of the performance

2) Individually:

Imagine that you are going to see or are involved in the first production of Euripides' *Medea* as part of City Dionysia Festival. Write a short story describing your experience of seeing or taking part in the plays at the festival that day.

WHAT IS TRAGEDY?

What do we mean when we say that something is tragic or a tragedy? Take a moment and think about the last time you used the word.

Was it to describe something that had happened to someone that was sad, shocking or unfair? The disappearance of Madeline McCann or the death of Princess Diana might both be thought of as tragedies. Was it to describe a film or television programme, in which things end unhappily for the characters? Ronnie Mitchell on *Eastenders* might be thought of as a tragic character because everything always seemed to go so terribly wrong for her. Or perhaps, it was just to say that something was really bad? The footballer Stewart Downing's performance last season might be thought of as tragic because he failed to score a single goal.

We might describe all these things as tragic in everyday life, but technically none of them are.

Tragedy is a specific theatrical genre. Its rules were first and most famously outlined by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in the *Poetics*, which was written sometime around 330BC.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle outlines the features of a well written tragedy. He mentions that tragedy has six component parts: plot, character, diction, reasoning, spectacle and lyric poetry. The most important of these are plot and then character.

Plot

Plot is the most important part of tragedy. It is more important than character. Tragedy, Aristotle says, is an imitation of life and of actions, not of people. Aristotle divides the dramatic narrative into two parts, story and plot. Story is the raw material from which a plot is made. Greek tragedies draw their plots from much longer Greek myths. As we have seen with Medea, rather than telling the whole of Medea's story, Euripides chooses only to tell the plot of how Jason and Medea split up.

The plot is the smaller part of the larger story that the tragic playwright decides to tell. When making a plot, Aristotle says, the playwright must select a set of events from the larger story and organise them into a logical order, a unified action.

A unified action is a sequence of events that tells a single and clear narrative. Each event in the plot must cause the event that comes next. To say that the king died and then the queen died is not a unified action. The king's death does not necessarily cause the queen's death. To say that the king died and then the queen died of grief is a unified action, because the king's death is clearly identified as the cause of the queen's death. To do this produces a unity of action.

In the plot of a well written tragedy, there should be a moment of reversal. This is a moment in which the tragic hero or heroine has a drastic change of fortune. They move from good fortune to bad fortune. For example, in Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex*, this

happens when Oedipus, who is searching for his father's murderer, realises that he is the murderer himself.

Many people say that Aristotle invented three unities: the unity of action, the unity of time and the unity of place. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle only explicitly refers to the unity of action, as we have already seen. The unities of time and place were invented much later on, in the Renaissance. They are used primarily in the work of French neo-classical playwrights, such as Racine, who also wrote tragedies based on classical mythology. The unity of time states that the action of a play must not last longer than a single day. The unity of place states that the action of play must all take place in the same location. There cannot be any set changes.

Character

Character is the second most important part of tragedy. Aristotle outlines four rules about characterisation.

- Tragic characters must be good. This means that they have the ability to make good choices about their actions.
- Tragic characters must be portrayed appropriately. For example, if they are a king they must behave as you would expect a king to behave.
- Tragic characters should be like us in some way, but better. They are like portraits of people. They reflect the person as they are, but they accentuate the person's best qualities.
- Tragic characters should be consistent in their behaviour. If they begin behaving in one way, they can't suddenly start behaving in a completely different way.

Aristotle says one other very important thing about tragic heroes and heroines. He says that they must have a fatal flaw, a *hamartia*. This flaw doesn't make them a bad person, but it is the thing that will cause their fall from good fortune to bad fortune.

Catharsis

Aristotle states that a well written tragedy produces catharsis. It produces a feeling of pity and fear in the audience watching it. The audience should feel pity for the tragic hero or heroine, a good person who falls from good fortune to bad fortune through no fault of their own. The audience should also feel fear, as they recognise that the tragic hero or heroine is a person like them, so therefore they too could suffer the same terrible fate.

Aristotle sees catharsis as having a positive effect on the audience. It helps the audience to purge themselves of dangerous flaws. They recognise the hero or heroine's fatal flaw in themselves and through this moment of recognition, they can purge themselves of this flaw, so becoming better people.

More recent theatre practitioners, such as the Argentinian theatre director Augusto Boal, have argued that Aristotle's catharsis has a negative effect on the audience. Boal says that catharsis is a tool that governments use to suppress their citizens. Through making people afraid of the consequences of committing certain actions, a government can effectively control people's behaviour.

ACTIVITY - WHAT IS TRAGEDY?

1) Individually or in small groups:

Euripides was an innovative and daring playwright. The first production of *Medea* was shocking for its audience in many ways. Euripides' work is seen as ground breaking because he creates heroes and heroines who behave more like ordinary people, than the heroes and heroines of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

Aristotle disliked Euripides' plays because he felt that Euripides broke the rules of good tragedy. Euripides couldn't have possibly known about the rules of good tragedy as his plays were written a hundred years before Aristotle wrote the *Poetics*. Aristotle accused Euripides of breaking the rules by not using the chorus enough, by creating illogical plots, by having his characters knowingly commit terrible deeds and by making his characters behave inconsistently.

Think Aristotle's description of how good tragedy works. In what ways does *Medea* fit Aristotle's description of a good tragedy and in what ways does it not?

- Does *Medea*'s plot fit Aristotle's rules about plots?
- Is *Medea* a tragic heroine, according to Aristotle?
- Do any of the other characters better fit Aristotle's idea of a tragic hero?
- Did watching the performance of *Medea* make you feel pity and fear?

2) In small groups:

Read the story of *Medea*.

Choose a section of the story that is not acted out in Euripides' play.

Using Aristotle's advice about how a good tragedy, devise a short scene showing the climatic moment of the section of the story that you have chosen.

This should be the scene in which good fortune changes to bad fortune for the hero.

Think about:

- How will you tell the story through action and dialogue?
- Who is your tragic hero? It might not be *Medea*. For example, it could be *Aeetes* or one of *Pelias*'s daughters instead.
- What is your hero's or heroine's tragic flaw?
- How does the reversal from good fortune to bad fortune happen?
- How will you make your audience feel pity and fear?

Q&A WITH MIKE BARTLETT - WRITER AND DIRECTOR

1. Tell us the challenges of adapting *Medea*?

Having seen different Greek tragedies in the theatre one of the things which struck me was that there's sometimes a lot of crying on stage but not much actually in the audience. I think this can be because the play's status as an important classical play gets in the way of the audience feeling close to the story and the characters. Therefore with this version I wanted to both update and translate not just the language but the context and dramatic language. It's very important to me that the audience should be able to engage with the production regardless of their knowledge of theatre or "the classics".

2. The process - how do you do it?

It started with reading the play so I could get a sense of the overall story and feel. From this I started to look in more detail, going from moment to moment in the play. I knew that I wanted my version to be faithful but also radical. I had to also decide where to place *Medea*, geographically and also socially - I could have done a version with dealing, as the original does, with high status figures - royalty and gentry, but I wanted to explore tragic events that can happen to any of us. To look at what goes on "behind the curtains" of normal people, in real life, when things go wrong.

3. Why do you choose *Medea*?

As soon as I read *Medea* I knew that I wanted to do it. It was so shocking and also felt contemporary in its imagery, themes and story. The view of a family separation as a battleground, a child being used by one parent to exert power over another, the exploration of gender politics, it is all in the original. There are so many families going through situations like this - the play, of course, takes it to a tragic extreme.



Writer and Director Mike Bartlett in rehearsals

Q&A WITH RUARI MURCHISON - DESIGNER

1. What originally attracted you to the play?

I had previously designed *Medea* at West Yorkshire Playhouse and was really excited by the prospect of working on a new version by Mike Bartlett, who's someone that I was keen to collaborate with.

2. Where did you get the idea for your design from?

Mike had wanted the design to be a new build so discussions were based around how you would furnish a new build house on a limited theatre budget! Ikea seemed like a good starting point and then we started looking at the architecture of those designs. The phrase *Ikea Medea* was coined!

3. How did you work with the director to come up with the set design?

We developed the design through about 12 rough model stages. The changes made were to ensure that we had exactly the aesthetic, site lines, detail and colour that we wanted. And that it fit within our budget.

4. Describe the role of a set and costume designer

The designer is an integral part of the creative team. They create a visual aesthetic to support the actors and the direction. Sometimes you are making a conscious comment on the text and the team's interpretation of it.

5. What do you enjoy about your job?

Everything! I love the fact that a production is transient. No day is the same and you are constantly creative and collaborative.



Model box image of Ruari's design for *Medea*

ACTIVITY - UPDATING MEDEA AND CREON

1) In small groups or as a whole class:

On your feet, read through the first Medea and Creon scene, translated from Euripides' original by David Kovacs. Explore the scene:

- How does it feel to say the lines?
- What kind of acting style does it seem to demand?
- How would you stage it?

Once you have fully explored the first scene, repeat this process with Mike Bartlett's version.

How has Mike Bartlett updated this scene? What has been cut? What has been kept? What has been altered or changed?

You might want to consider the changes that have been made to:

- The action of the scene
- The details of the situation
- The language
- The use of the chorus
- The style, form and tone of the scene

Which version of the scene do you prefer? Give specific reasons for your preference?

2) Individually or in small groups:

In his version of *Medea*, the writer and director Mike Bartlett has chosen to update the story for a contemporary audience. Instead of setting the action of the play in ancient Greece, he relocates it to a new build housing estate in contemporary Britain. In order to do this he has updated both the language, the story and the style of the play.

Read the interview with Mike Bartlett.

- Why has he chosen to update the play?
- What are the advantages of updating a classic play for a contemporary audience?
- Are there any disadvantages?

Enter Creon by Eisodos B. □

Chorus-Leader □

But I see Creon coming, ruler of this land. He will have some new deliberation to report.

Creon □

You, Medea, scowling with rage against your husband, I order you to leave this land and go into exile, taking your two children with you, and instantly. I am the executor of this decree, and I will not return home again until I expel you from this land.

Medea □

Oh, I am undone, wholly lost! My enemies are making full sail against me, and there is no haven from disaster that I can reach. Still, though I am ill-treated, I will ask you: Why are you exiling me, Creon?

Creon □

I am afraid, no need to dissemble, that you will do some deadly harm to my daughter. Many indications of this combine: you are a clever woman and skilled in many evil arts, and you are smarting with the loss of your husband's love. And I hear that you are threatening—such is the report people bring—to harm the bride, her father, and her husband. So I shall take precautions before the event. It is better for me to incur your hatred now, woman, than to be soft now and regret it later.

Medea □

Ah me! This is not the first time, Creon, but often before now my reputation has done me great harm. No man who is sensible ought ever to have his children educated beyond the common run. For apart from the charge of idleness they incur, they earn hostility and ill-will from their fellow-citizens. If you bring novel wisdom to fools, you will be regarded as useless, not wise; and if the city regards you as greater than those with a reputation for cleverness, you will be thought vexatious. I myself am a sharer in this lot, for since I am clever, in the eyes of some I am an object of ill-will, others find me retiring, others the opposite, others an obstacle, yet I am not so very wise, while you on the other hand fear me. What harm are you afraid of? Have no fear, Creon, I am not the kind of person to commit crimes against my rulers.

Medea (cont.)

What injustice have you done me? You married your daughter to the man your heart bade you to. It is my husband I hate, while you, I think, acted with perfect good sense in this. And now I do not begrudge you prosperity. Make your marriage, all of you, and may good fortune attend you. But let me stay in this land. For although I have been wronged, I will hold my peace, yielding to my superiors.

Creon

Your words are soothing to listen to, but I am afraid that in your heart you are plotting some harm. I trust you that much the less than before. A hot-tempered woman—and a hot-tempered man likewise – is easier to guard against than a clever woman who keeps her own counsel. No, go into exile at once—speak me no speeches—since my resolve is fixed and there is no way you can remain in our midst since you are hostile to me.

Quoted from *Medea* by Euripides, translated by David Kovacs, published by Loeb Classical Library. ISBN 0674995600 <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=HwcjAQAAAJ>

We're on the front step – and we find Carter, who has rung the doorbell and stepped back. The women come outside.

Medea Oh no. Sarah shut the door behind you, I've got the key don't let him in.

To Carter You can't come in Nick go away go on piss off leave me alone.

Carter It's my house.

Medea My home.

Carter Not anymore.

Medea For *years*.

Carter No, not according to anyone except you.

Anyway I don't want to come in, I dread to think what you're getting up to in there. Are you alright?

Medea What?

Carter Your eyes.

Medea I don't know what you mean.

Carter Your skin. You should call someone.

Pam There's nothing wrong -

Carter I'm serious, red skin like that doesn't mean good things you're drinking too much probably blotches like that

Sarah Make sense if she was.

Carter Are you her friends?

Pam Technically a colleague but recently -

Carter You should look after her

Sarah Sorry who are you?

Carter Take her out for a walk sometimes.

Pam Nick Carter, he owns the house.

Sarah Oh.

Medea What do you want?

Beat.

Carter Okay. I don't like this situation of course I don't, but it is what it is and we have to move on now, alright? As you well know, you're supposed to be out.

Medea I am, look, I'm out, outside for a change. Fresh air. Hmm. See? This is progress.

Carter I served fair notice, you had the letter the man gave it to you, you signed for it. I know you've read it, the tenancy expired a months ago and has not been renewed.

Sarah You can't just kick her out.

Carter No. You're absolutely right whoever you are –

Sarah I live next door –

Carter I can't *just* do anything, she's got to have a substantial period of notice to find somewhere else and I've given her that, and more. She's had two months before the expiration, it's another month since that date passed and yet she's still here. All the paperwork's in Jason's name anyway. I could send round the police –

Sarah Like to see you try –

Carter - but I thought we could come to an agreement, it was rented furnished so most of it's mine anyway, it's just a case of packing a bag.

Medea I've been here ten years.

Carter Things have changed.

Medea My home.

Carter I arranged the lease on this house with Jason. And now he's with Kate, and we...we want it back so you need to go.

Medea They're not going to move in here?

Carter Well probably not, no but –

Medea Don't think your daughter would want that.

Carter No you're right she wouldn't but that's not the point, it's the principal, yes? It's nothing against you personally – I don't understand what the problem is, there's nothing special about this place -

Sarah They're all the same, all the houses, identical.

Pam It depends what you do with them.

Medea Right - The floor, the kitchen, the door handles, he says he helped choose everything and that true he helped, he helped *me*, it was my decisions in the end, not his, my home, I've lived longer here than anywhere before I don't want to go, he's throwing his own son out –

Carter I'm surprised you don't want to leave.

Medea

Carter

Medea I like it.

Carter This isn't Jason's decision it's mine. Pack a bag, I'll come back in an hour and you'll be gone.

Medea Why?

Carter What?

Medea You've got other houses in town, better ones, I'm managing the rent just about, Jason and your daughter they'll get a much better house than this, if you've got anything to do with it, we could both live in our different houses, so why make me go?

Carter Because...

A pause.

Because you scare the shit out of me.

And my daughter. You shouted at her in the street.

Medea

Pam Shouted?

Sarah What happened?

Carter This must've been when you were still venturing outside. It was a few weeks ago when Kate was with her friends. She told me, and she's a strong person and very responsible adult but also, she's *sensitive*.

Pam What did you say?

Carter She's become frightened to go out, by herself, because of you. The threats you made.

Medea I was angry.

Pam What? What did she say?

Carter You don't want to know.

Pam Okay but I do.

Sarah Maybe it's none of our business.

Pam Oh come on – What happened? Medea, we're friends -

Medea It doesn't matter.

Beat

Carter The sad thing is you're educated, funny, exactly the sort of woman I'd employ, and would do well. You used to have a job, a good job, you're better than most people in this town, you run rings round all of them.

Medea That's why I'm a threat.

Carter Exactly. And that's the reason I don't want you just out of this house, I want you a long way away.



Medea cast and Mike Bartlett in rehearsals

Quoted from *Medea* by Euripides, adapted by Mike Bartlett, produced by Headlong, Autumn 2012 www.medeaheadlong.com

ACTIVITY - UPDATING TRAGEDY

1) Individually or in small groups:

Mike Bartlett argues that the stories of Greek tragedy are still very relevant to our lives today. They engage with issues and concerns that continue to affect us. People still betray each other, relationships still breakdown and children still often find themselves caught up in the middle of their parent's arguments.

Read the summary of the story of Antigone below:

Antigone's brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, decide to share the throne of Thebes between them. Each of them would rule for a year at a time, and then hand the throne over to his brother. Eteocles take the first turn, but when the time comes for him to hand the throne over to Polyneices, he refuses to step down. Polyneices is furious. He puts together an army and attacks Thebes. Polyneices and Eteocles kill each other during the battle. Antigone's uncle Creon now becomes king. He declares that Eteocles will be given a grand state funeral. Polyneices, however, will be punished for attacking the city and his body left to rot outside the city gates. Anyone who is caught attempting to bury the body will be put to death. Antigone cannot bear the thought of leaving one of her brothers unburied. She sneaks out of the city and buries Polyneices' body. She is soon caught and arrested. Even though Creon loves his niece, he feels that it is more important to obey the laws of the city. He sentences Antigone to death. Antigone is walled up in a cave and left to die. Creon's son Haemon is in love with Antigone. He begs Creon to save her, but Creon refuses. Haemon sets out to rescue Antigone, but when he gets to the cave, she is already dead. Haemon killed himself in despair. Realising that he has made a terrible mistake, Creon sets out after his son, but by the time he reaches the cave it is too late. Before Creon can get back to Thebes, his wife, Eurydice hears that her son is dead. She is so distraught with grief that she decides to kill herself. When he returns to Thebes, Creon discovers that his wife is now also dead.

How would you update the story of Antigone for a contemporary audience?

- Where would you set your version of the story? Why?
- Who would your characters be?
- Which details of the story would you need to change in your updated version?
- What would its main themes be?
- How would you stage it?
- What kind of a set would you design for it? Why?
- How would the ideas in your new version of the play be expressed through the production's lighting and sound?
- How would you play the main character? What kind of acting style would you use?
- How would the characters' personalities and the play's themes be expressed through the costumes?

Use the written and video interviews with the cast and creative of *Medea* to help you think about your choices and your reasons for them.

FURTHER RESOURCES

BOOKS ON GREEK THEATRE

The Poetics by Aristotle.

Translated by Malcolm Heath. Published by Penguin Books. ISBN 0140446362

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=FECr16HHxW4C>

Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre by Peter Arnott.

Published by Routledge. ISBN 04150662993

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=t3MjGHFM2fAC>

Theatre of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal.

Published by Pluto Press. ISBN 0745328385

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=2hvpPwAACAAJ>

The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy edited by P. E. Easterling.

Published by Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521423511

http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=_kx9eeSJyeoC

The Greek Myths by Robert Graves.

Published by Penguin. ISBN 0241952743

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=MqdlYgEACAAJ>

A Short Introduction to Ancient Greek Theatre by Graham Ley.

Published by University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0226477614

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=fg45mxkcz2wC>

The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre edited by Macdonald and Walton.

Published by Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521542340

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=VUur-8XW2Z0C>

Greek Tragedy in Action by Oliver Taplin.

Published by Routledge. ISBN 041530251X

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=H04DhAthIsEC>

USEFUL WEBSITES

Bacchic Stage

Contains translation of Greek tragedies and comedies, alongside other information about ancient Greek plays and playwrights.

<http://bacchicstage.wordpress.com/>

Perseus Project

Contains copies of Greek texts in the original Greek and translated into English.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection=Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman>

WORKSHOPS

MEDEA WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Duration: 1.5 -2 hours (this can be negotiated)

Date: Please contact Headlong directly if you are interested in this workshop

Group Size: Maximum 25 participants

Price: £200

Workshop Leader: Kate Hewitt (Associate Director)

Participants will actively explore the processes used in the Medea rehearsal room that led to the production, under the guidance of the Associate Director Kate Hewitt.

The workshop will explore the world and themes of Medea, looking at the play's journey from the ancient Greeks to this modern retelling. The workshop will be practical and physical and will include working in groups on performing scenes from the play. To conclude the workshop there will be an informal Q & A session.

This workshop will be a brilliant, practical insight into Greek tragedy in a modern setting and into some of the techniques used in the rehearsal room of this production.

All young people with an interest are welcome. It would be particularly beneficial to young people who have seen the production (although not essential), are studying any of the Greek tragedies and to those studying drama.

MIKE BARTLETT BIOGRAPHY

Writer and Director - Mike Bartlett

Productions for Headlong: *Decade*, *Earthquakes in London*.

Directing credits include: *Honest* (Northampton Royal and Derngate); *Thrown* (Rough Cut - Royal Court Theatre); *Class* (Tristan Bates Theatre).

Other writing credits include: *Chariots of Fire* (Hampstead Theatre and West End); *13* (National Theatre); *Love, Love, Love* (Royal Court / Paines Plough); *Cock* (Royal Court - Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Affiliate Theatre); *Artefacts* (Bush) and *My Child* (Royal Court).

Mike was writer-in-residence at the National Theatre in 2011, and the Royal Court in 2007. He has written seven plays for BBC Radio, winning the Writer's Guild Tinniswood and Imison prizes for *Not Talking* and his three-part television series, *The Town*, will broadcast later in the year on ITV1.

RUARI MURCHISON BIOGRAPHY

Designer - Ruari Murchison

Recent design credits include: *Mappa Mundi*, *Frozen*, *The Waiting Room*, *The Red Balloon* (National Theatre); *Titus Andronicus* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Othello* (Trafalgar Studios); *The Solid Gold Cadillac* (Garrick); *A Busy Day* (Lyric Theatre); *Peggy Sue Got Married* (Shaftsbury Theatre); *The Snowman* (Peacock Theatre), *Toyer*, *Bette and Joan*, (Arts); *The Three Sisters on Hope Street*, *The Glass Room*, *Gone to L.A.* (Hampstead Theatre); *The Critic*, *Pravda*, *Oleanna*, *Educating Rita* (Chichester).

Opera credits include: *Der Freischutz* (Finnish National Opera); *Peter Grimes*, *Così fan Tutte* (Luzerner Opera); *La Cenerentola*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Garsington); *L'Italiana in Algeri* (Buxton); *Les Pelerins de la Mecque*, *ZaZa* (Wexford);

Ballet credits include: *Bruise Blood* (Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company), *Landschaft und Erinnerung* (Stuttgart Ballet, Germany); *The Protecting Veil* (Birmingham Royal Ballet), *The Snowman* (Seoul, London, Birmingham Rep, National Touring).

Other credits include: Designed productions in Helsinki (Finland). Washington DC, The Stratford Festival (Canada), Stuttgart (Germany), Luzern (Switzerland), Haarlem (Holland), Elsinore (Denmark) and many regional theatres in the United Kingdom including Birmingham Rep, West Yorkshire Playhouse and Theatr Clwyd. TMA Best Design Nomination 2003 for the The David Hare Trilogy- (*Racing Demon*, *Absence of War*, *Murmuring Judges*) at Birmingham Rep.