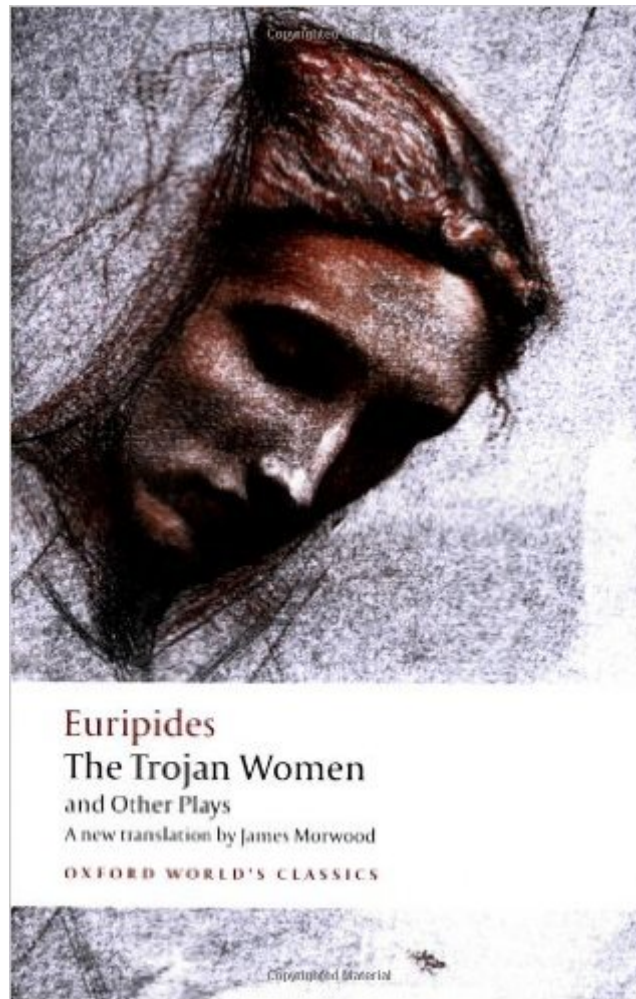


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# The Trojan Women And Other Plays (Oxford World's Classics)



## Synopsis

This volume of Euripides' plays offers new translations of the three great war plays *Trojan Women*, *Hecuba*, and *Andromache*, in which the sufferings of Troy's survivors are harrowingly depicted. With unparalleled intensity, Euripides--whom Aristotle called the most tragic of poets--describes the horrific brutality that both women and children undergo during war. Yet, in the war's aftermath, this brutality is challenged and a new battleground is revealed where the women of Troy evince an overwhelming greatness of spirit. We weep for the aged Hecuba in her name play and in *Trojan Women*, while at the same time we admire her resilience amid unrelieved suffering. Andromache, the slave-concubine of her husband's killer, endures her existence in the victor's country with a stoic nobility. Of their time yet timeless, these plays insist on the victory of the female spirit amid the horrors visited on them by the gods and men during war. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This Oxford World's Classic volume brings together three extant tragedies by Euripides dealing with

the aftermath of the Trojan War: "Hecuba," "The Trojan Women," and "Andromache." After the fall of Troy, its queen, Hecuba, had become the slave of Odysseus and her daughter Polyxena is taken away to be slain on the grave of Achilles. However, in the Euripides play "Hecuba" it is the earlier death of another child, Polydorus that provides the motivation for what comes to pass. This was a child who had been sent for safety to the Thracian Chersonese. But now, after Hecuba hears of the death of Polyxena, the body of Polydorus washes up on shore. Apparently Hecuba's son-in-law Polymnestor murdered the boy for the gold, which King Priam had sent to pay for his education. Agamemnon hears Hecuba's pleas, and Polymnestor is allowed to visit the queen before she is taken away into captivity. The most fascinating aspect of "Hecuba" is that it gives us an opportunity to contrast the character of the queen of fallen Troy in this play by Euripides with that in "Trojan Women." This play was performed ten years earlier and its events take place right before the other play as well, although there is some overlap when Talthybius informs Hecuba of the death of Polyxena. In both dramas Hecuba is a woman driven by a brutal and remorseless desire for vengeance; however she proves much more successful in this drama than she does in "Trojan Women." Hecuba has harsh words for Helen, as in the other play, but her son Paris receives his fair share of approbation as well. This play also makes reference to the myth that Hecuba would meet her own hideous death, which reinforces the idea that there is much more of a moral degradation of her character in this play. "The Trojan Women" is the most famous of the anti-war plays of Euripides. About 416 B.C. the island of Melos refused to aid Athens in the war against Sparta. The Athenians then slaughtered the men and enslaved the women and children, an atrocity never before inflicted on one Greek city-state by another. As preparations were made for the ruinous expedition against Syracuse, Euripides wrote "The Trojan Women," as a plea for peace. Consequently there is a strong rhetorical dimension to the play, which prophesies that a Greek force would sail across the sea after violating victims and meet with disaster. However, there the play also has a strong literary consideration in that the four Trojan Women--Hecuba, Queen of Troy; Cassandra, daughter of Hecuba and Priestess of Apollo; Andromache, widow of Hector; and Helen--all appear in the final chapter of Homer's epic poem the "Iliad," mourning over the corpse of Hector, retrieved by his father Priam from the camp of the Achaeans. This tragedy clearly reflects the cynicism of Euripides. Of all the Achaean leaders in Homer only Menelaus, husband of Helen, appears. He appears, ready to slay Helen for having abandoned him to run off to Troy with Paris, but we see his anger melt before her beauty and soothing tones. In this play the Greeks do more than enslave women: they slaughter children. Even the herald of the Greeks, Talthybius, cannot stomach the policies of his people, but is powerless to do anything other than offer hollow words of sympathy. The tragedy also reminds us

that while we think of Helen as "the face that launched a thousand ships," she was a despised figure amongst the ancient Greeks and there is no satisfaction in her saving her life. The idea that all of these men died just so that she could be returned to the side of her husband is an utter mockery of the dead. "The Trojan Women" has the honor of being the first great anti-war play in Western civilization. "Andromache," about the widow of Hector, is one of the weakest of the extant plays of Euripides. The work is better considered as anti-Spartan propaganda, written circa 426 B.C. near the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. The scenes are much more episodic than we usually find in Euripides; the first part of the tragedy is essentially a supplicant play, but then it changes dramatically. The play has one of Euripides' strongest beginnings, with its strong attacks on Sparta, represented by Menelaus. But even as propaganda Euripides elevates his subject for what he sees is not merely a war between two cities, but rather a clash between two completely different ways of life. Once again, Euripides uses the Trojan War as a context for his political argument. Andromache, the widow of Hector, is the slave of Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, who is married to Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus and Helen. The setting is the Temple of Thetis, the mother of Achilles, somewhere between Pithia and Pharasalia in Thessaly. Andromache has born Neoptolemus a son, and the barren Hermione accuses the Trojan woman of having used witchcraft and seeks her death. Andromache has taken refuge at this temple where Hermione and Menelaus try to get her to come out by threatening to kill her son. However, the title character disappears from the play and everybody from Peleus, the father of Achilles, to Orestes, the cousin of Hermione, shows up, mainly to talk about Neoptolemus, who is at Delphi. Thetis shows up as the deus-ex-machina and the play ends rather abruptly. The play works more as anti-Spartan propaganda than as a tragedy since there is little here beyond a progression of characters talking about doing things they end up not doing. This is the weakest of the extant plays of Euripides, but with all three works collected in a single volume this makes an excellent complementary text for those studying Homer's "Iliad," especially since Euripides was apparently the only ancient playwright who was willing to take on the characters of Homer's epic poem.

My rating and review reflect the Kindle edition, not Euripides' plays, nor the translations and commentaries of these works. THE TROJAN WOMEN AND OTHER PLAYS is a horrible Kindle edition. The text of the plays does not act as text, but like a picture. The reader cannot change the text size (which is small), nor does the dictionary function work. Nor are there links to the notes. The reader must put in the location number of the notes in order to go there. (It would be much more helpful if for these Kindle editions editors would do footnotes instead of endnotes.) I read the sample

before I bought the edition, but it was deceiving since it only covered the Introduction, which behaves like normal Kindle text. Were this one of the relatively inexpensive editions, I would not be bothered by the poor Kindle features. But since this book was almost at full Kindle price, I expected much, much better.

The condition of this book was excellent. It was a great addition to my Mythology collection. This is a great book for those who want a more closer look at the Trojan War and the women involved.

Required for school. Kept my attention while in class.

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