

Characters

PRIAM	King of troy
HECUBA	Queen of troy Mother to Cassandra, Polyxena, Paris and Hector.
PARIS	Son of Priam and Hecuba. He abducted/seduced Helen after Aphrodite promised Helen to him.
TALTHYBIUS	Greek messenger. Takes Astyanax to be killed.
CASSANDRA	Daughter of Hecuba, a prophetess chosen by Agamemnon as his concubine.
ANDROMACHE	Hectors wife. Mother of Astyanax. Given to Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. Curses Helen as the cause of her misfortune.
MENELAUS	A Greek King and Helen's 1 st husband.
HELEN	Beautiful. Said to be the daughter of Zeus. Married to Menelaus of Greece (Sparta) then Paris of Troy

Gods

Zeus	Chief of the Gods and ruler of the sky. Weapons include thunderbolts.
Poseidon	Brother of Zeus and Hades. Lord of the sea
Hades	Brother of Zeus and Poseidon. Ruler of the dead and underworld.
Hera	Sister to ALL the above and wife to Zeus.
Pallas-Athene	Virgin Goddess of war and wisdom. Patron of Athens. Said to have been torn from Zeus' forehead.
Apollo	Born out of sea foam. God of sun, music and prophesy.
Artemis	God of the moon and hunting.
Aphrodite	Goddess of love.

Greek Theatre:

An open air structure used to honour the God Dionysus through festivals. In these festivals called Dionysia, the Greeks danced and sang hymns called dithyrambs that sometimes told stories. One day, Thespis, a choral director in Athens used spoken words, or dialogue, to accompany the singing and dancing in imitation of poets who had done so before. Soon the dialogues of Thespis became plays, and he began staging them in a theatre.

Orchestra	Translates as “dancing place” for the chorus – but basically where the actors performed
Parados	The 1 st song performed by the chorus after entering from the wings.
Skene	A building behind the playing area that was originally a wooden hut for the changing of masks and costumes but eventually became the background for the drama.
Theatron	A tiered, horse shoe shaped seating area. Faced the east to allow the audience to view plays – usually staged later in the day – without squinting. Now known as the amphitheatre.
Proscenium	The stage in front of the skene – it faced the west to allow the midday sun to illuminate the faces of the actors.
Paraskenia	Extensions or annexes on the sides on the skene.
Thymele	Altar in the centre of the orchestra used to make sacrifices to Dionysus. It is suggested that the leader of the chorus used the thymele as a platform during dialogues between the chorus leader (<i>koryphaos</i>) and the chorus/
deus ex machina (or just ‘machine’)	Crane used in Greek theatre to represent flight; machine used to lift actors (usually portraying gods)
Ekklyklema	a large wheeled platform that could be rolled out to display scenes that had taken place beyond the view of the spectators (usually the results of violent acts since those never took place on stage).

Context: Other plays in similar style

429BC Oedipus Rex by Sophocles

485BC The Oresteia by Aeschylus

430BC Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus

431BC Medea by Euripides

Euripides

Born 485 BC

Died 406 BC aged 79

Euripides lived the latter part of his life in a time of war. The Peloponnesian War of 431 between Athens and Sparta, which eventually resulted in the downfall of Athens. He would have had traumatic childhood memories of being evacuated as the Persian army sought to conquer Athens, the most important and wealthy state in Greece. The island of Melos refused to send men to join the Athenian army, wanting to stay 'neutral'. In reprisal, Athens sacked Melos, putting all its men to death and enslaving the women and children. This event took place in 416, only a year before Euripides wrote Trojan Women.

Euripides spend the latter part of his life in voluntary exile in Macedonia. He died in 406 BC and wrote numerous plays, at least 80, although only 19 survive today.

Plot

The play focusses on the group of women who are to be taken into slavery by the departing Greeks, after the fall of Troy. Chief amongst them is Hecuba, queen of Troy. With her is Andromache her daughter in law and grandson Astyanax. Hecuba's other daughter, Cassandra, the prophetess is also present, along with Helen, the widow of Hecuba's son Paris. Helen is hated for her good looks and is thought to be the reason for the war. There are 4 episodes to the play:

1. Cassandra and Agamemnon
2. Andromache and son Astyanax. Also Talthybius
3. Helen and Menelaus
4. Burial of Astyanax

Grief and women are then led off to become slaves to the Greeks.

Key Themes/Issues

THE HORROR OF WAR

Troy is in ruins. Corpses lie about the battlefield. Trojan women young and old huddle together as they lament the loss of husbands and children and shudder at the thought of becoming slaves in a land across the sea (Sparta). Hecuba, once a great queen is to become the servant of Odysseus. Cassandra, a prophetess is to become the property of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek armies.

HOPE

Andromache says she would be better off dead. However Hecuba says that where there is life there is hope for a better tomorrow. Having lived long enough to know that situations change she says: "Fortune, like a madman in her moods,. Springs towards this man, then towards that; and none ever experiences the same unchanging luck."

DREAD

The Trojan women dread the future. They know that ships will carry them across the sea to a strange country, a different culture, unfamiliar faces and a degrading way of life. There will be no family to comfort them and no pay for the work they do.

REVENGE

Athena turns against the Greeks after Aias the Less rapes Cassandra in Athena's temple. To gain revenge, Athena persuades Poseidon to help sabotage the Greek ships. Cassandra later speaks of retribution when she says: "I will slay (Agamemnon) and lay waste his home to avenge my fathers and my brethren's death." Meanwhile, the Greek King Menelaus plans to kill Helen, his wife for having run off before the war with Paris, a Prince of Troy. "MY purpose is...to carry her to Hellas in my seaborne ship, and then surrender her to death, a recompense to all whose friends were slain in Ilium." The Trojan women agree with his decision to kill her, for they regard her as the source of all their troubles.

Staging & Adaptations

Helen of Troy 2003 film
The Trojan Women 1971 film
The Trojan Women 2018 by Paolo Coruzzi
Trojan Women stage production by Katie Mitchell 2008
The Trojan Women 2018 by Rob Berls (North Carolina)

(see also:
https://suzanne whitby.com/full-length-versions-of-euripides-senecas-trojan-women/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=full-length-versions-of-euripides-senecas-trojan-women?)