

Andromache literature review examples

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



The daughter of a King, Andromache was married to Hector of Troy and Achilles slew not only her beloved husband, but her seven brothers shortly after her nuptials. A classic figure in Greek mythology and a key character of any epic of the Trojan War, Andromache is certainly portrayed in various publications, including the Illiad, the Aeneid, The Trojan Women, and Ars Amatoria. Obviously each poet, writer, playwright or screenwriter has all viewed Andromache through their own lens. For the purpose of this paper, however, we will focus on Euripides' perspective in The Trojan Women and Virgil's view in the Aeneid. Both these men cast Andromache in an entirely different light with the only similarity being her devotion to Hector and her son Astyanax. These two widely variant depictions were not by accident but were the result of the culture they were immersed as each man's thoughts, emotions and interpretations were completely divergent.

In Euripides' work, Andromache's speech to Hecuba pertaining to the loss of Polyxena is a powerful passage, as it is insightful, passionate and at the same time utterly morose. Her emotions appear to have far more depth than Hecuba's while both women are suffering immensely after Troy's defeat. Euripides makes it clear people contend with emotional upheaval in different fashions, but in this instance Andromache's inner fortitude leaps off the page. Euripides is renowned as a master of the Greek tragedy, yet his work differs from Sophocles and Aeschylus, who were prized far more for their craft during their lifetimes by the Greek public. His characters were much darker, deeper and his tragedies often put forth viewpoints that were highly unconventional at that time. Euripides often shows the absolute worst elements of his

characters in his work and tends to emphasize extremely negative or horrific events. For instance, the death of Andromache's son Astyanax was gruesome and the main theme of the Trojan Women, how they responded to the loss of their men and former way of life, was presented in a way that suggested Euripides had no pity for the plight.

Therefore, it is only natural Andromache is a tragic figure in this work and it appears Euripides main goal with her character is to show his audience there is no such thing as hope. To have hope is not being in reality when faced with a situation such as Andromache's. With the loss of husband and son and being taken as a slave by her husband's murderer, Andromache should have no hope. Her life is now a barren wasteland and why would she even want to look to the future when that indeed is so very bleak. The light has been taken out of her life never to return. As she says, " In death there is no pain, no awareness of struggle, one that falls from happiness to tragedy is driven with regret and memories of blessedness."

In stark contrast, Virgil represents Andromache as a heroic female figure in the Aeneid. Her devotion and reverence of Hector long after his death is shown by Virgil to be a boon to her character rather than flawed like Euripides. In her conversations with Aeneas, Andromache comes across a beacon of hope and light. Her virtue and steadfast determination to withstand everything she was put through is admirable and inspiring. Virgil actually maintains the rather romanticized version of Andromache that Homer introduced in the Iliad. This was for a number of reasons undoubtedly first and foremost was the Roman value of pietas, which when translated means duty or respect. In Roman culture, this

was the foundation of their value system. Each individual had a duty to each of the responsibilities of life such as service to their family, service to the Empire and to their religious rituals.

It is important to note the Aeneid was produced during a time of great turmoil in Rome. The Republic had ceased to exist and the reign of Augustus Caesar had just commenced. Many Romans were disillusioned with their government and what the future held in store for them until Caesar introduced an era of peace and prosperity. Virgil was a tremendous proponent of Roman civilization. This work was homage to his homeland and to all the things that made Rome what it was. Andromache, like Aeneas symbolized pietas as well as the Roman concept of fate, which was met with great verve and perseverance, she was depicted as the ultimate virtuous woman. This theme was quite popular in Homer's day and Virgil expanded upon Homer's work for his *magnus opus*.

Therefore, Euripides and Virgil's depictions of Andromache are completely opposite. The only true similarity is the factual basis behind her history, such as being married to Hector and being the daughter of a King. The reason Andromache is portrayed so differently by each man is because of the age in which they were born and raised. Euripides is a product of Greece when the tragedy was the ultimate form of this type of entertainment. In order for him to stand apart from his more famous colleagues, he opted to display his own personality and tragedies were very unusual for that time period in that he did not have tragic heroes in his work. His characters were shown at their very worst. Virgil on the other hand, made Andromache a much more heroic figure that epitomized what kind of characteristics Roman culture deemed

admirable. That is why Andromache is illustrated in completely different fashions in this play and poem.

Works Cited

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