



## 1 Drama: the idea of tragedy

Read the following passage and answer the question that follows:

The art of dramatic language is as near to oratory as to ordinary language.

T.S. Eliot: *Selected Essays* (1951)

**Explore critically how ancient tragedians used different forms of language to persuade, to influence and to deceive. In your answer you should consider the passage above and your wider reading of tragedy, as well as the two passages below:**

MESSENGER: Fury was in his voice and soul, his face  
 Blazed with a fire of passion, and those eyes  
 Seemed starting from those sockets of themselves.  
 Mingled in his wild looks were wrath and madness,  
 Rage and determination. With a groan,  
 A terrifying roar, he thrust his fingers  
 Into his eyes; and those wild orbs stared out  
 And seemed to rush to meet the hands they knew  
 And to obey their summons, offering  
 Themselves to their own fate. The fingers bent  
 And groped in haste to find the seeing eyes,  
 Then wrenched them from their roots and tore them out.  
 And still the fingers probed the open holes,  
 The nails scratched in the empty cavities  
 Which now gaped hollow where the eyes had been.

Seneca, *Oedipus* 957–69

MEDEA: When I considered this, I saw my foolishness;  
 I saw how useless anger was. So now I welcome  
 What you have done; I think you are wise to gain for us  
 This new alliance, and the folly was all mine.  
 I should have helped you in your plans, made it my pleasure  
 To get ready your marriage-bed, attend your bride.  
 But we women – I won't say we are bad by nature,  
 But we are what we are.

Euripides, *Medea* 882–90

## 2 Gods and Heroes: the importance of epic

Read the following passage and answer the question that follows:

The Homeric hero's ideal is to be a 'speaker of words and a doer of deeds' ... this is a striking conception of powers honouring sharpness of mind alongside strength of arm, and it was to be of immense importance for later epics in the classical tradition.

R. Jenkyns: *Classical Epic: Homer and Virgil* (1992)

**Explore critically Jenkyns' assessment of the ideal nature of a hero. In your answer you should consider the passage above and your wider reading, as well as the two passages below:**

Then swift-footed Achilles answered him: 'Royal son of Laertes, resourceful Odysseus, what I say I must say outright, and tell you bluntly how I think and what will happen, so that you do not sit here and coo your blandishments at me one after another. I hate like the gates of Hades the man who hides one thing in his mind and speaks another. But I will tell you what seems right to me. I do not think that Agamemnon son of Atreus will win me over, nor the rest of the Danaans, since it now appears that there is no thanks if a man fights the enemy relentlessly on and on. Stay at home or fight your hardest – your share will be the same. Coward and hero are honoured alike. Death does not distinguish do-nothing and do-all. And it has done me no profit to have suffered all that pain with my life at constant risk. Like a bird that brings back to her unfledged chicks every morsel she can find, and has to go without herself, so it has been with me.'

Homer, *Iliad* 9. 310–325

Turnus was thunderstruck, bewildered by the changing shape of his fortune, and stood there dumb and staring. In that one heart of his there seethed a bitter shame, a grief shot through with madness, love driven on by fury, and a consciousness of his own courage. As soon as the shadows lifted from his mind and light returned, he forced his burning eyes round towards the walls, looking back in deep dismay from his chariot at the great city. There, between the storeys of a tower, came a tongue of flame, rolling and billowing to the sky. It was taking hold of the tower, which he had built himself, putting the wheels under it and fitting the long gangways. 'Sister,' he said, 'the time has come at last. The fates are too strong. You must not delay them any longer. Let us go where God and cruel Fortune call me. I am resolved to meet Aeneas in battle. I am resolved to suffer what bitterness there is in death. You will not see me put to shame again. This is madness, but before I die, I beg of you, let me be mad.'

Virgil, *Aeneid* 12. 665–683

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