1. Who relates the background of the play to the audience? What important information is provided?

2. What has Creon, King of Corinth, done that causes Medea a great deal of pain and anguish?

3. How does the Nurse feel about what has happened?

4. Toward the end of her first speech, what does the Nurse tell us she fears? Why does she have this fear?

5. In what sense can the Nurse’s comment be a foreshadowing of trouble? What in Medea’s background would lead to this conclusion?

6. What message does the Tutor bring to the nurse?

7. When the Nurse asks if Jason will allow this to happen, what is his response?

8. What concern does the Nurse reveal when she tells the children to “go inside”? Can this be foreshadowing?

9. The Nurse concludes her speech with:
It is clear that she will soon light with greater spirit the cloud of lamentation now rising in its beginning. Whatever will her heart, bitten by troubles, high-spirited, hard to check, do?

Does it seem to you that Medea’s rage is justified by what has happened to her or is she overdoing it?

10. In the following comment, the Nurse articulates a prominent belief of the ancient Greeks. Put this belief into your own words.

It is better to live always among equals; for myself, at any rate, I hope to grow old securely in modest circumstances. First of all, the very idea of moderation wins first prize in speaking, and in action, is by far the best way for mortals, but excessive power can produce no proper return for human beings, instead giving back greater madness whenever God is angry at the house.

11. The Chorus in this play is made up of male actors, and in this play, they represent the women of Corinth. What does the Chorus overhear Medea saying?
12. The Chorus says that Medea should not pray for death —

If your husband gives himself to a new bed, do not be angry at him for this; Zeus will be your advocate in it. Do not pine excessively, mourning your husband. What is Euripides implying by having the Chorus speak these lines?

13. The Chorus asks the Nurse to see if Medea will come out and speak with them. The Nurse agrees to try, but says that in her grief and rage, Medea will probably not listen to anyone. Medea, however, does come out and speak. What is the main point of Medea’s speech to the Chorus?

14. What promise and what request does Medea make at the end of her speech?

15. What decree does Creon deliver to Medea, and for what reason does he tell her that he is doing this?

16. What is it about Medea that Creon fears? What do you suppose the phrase “skilled in evil” means?

17. To what does Medea get Creon to agree, and why does he agree?

18. What is Medea’s real reason for begging for one more day in Corinth?

19. In her next speech to the Chorus, what does this quote reveal about Medea? “Do you think I would flatter that man if I had no plan or profit in it?”

20. Speaking of herself in the third person, Medea concludes the speech:

Come on, Medea, spare nothing of what you know, planning and craft. Go into the horror; it’s a question of endurance. Do you see what you suffer? You must not incur mockery through these Corinthian marriages of Jason’s, you who are born from a good father and from the Sun. You know how to do this. In addition, you were born a woman, unable to do anything noble, but so clever at everything evil. She tells us she is resolute, and she will use her skills of witchcraft in a well-devised plan. What is she really indicating?
21. How does Jason view the banishment of Medea?

22. Why has Jason come to see Medea, and how does Medea react to his offer?

23. How does Jason respond to her accusations?

24. Does Medea accept Jason’s explanation? Do you suppose most readers accept his explanation?

25. What two points that we have heard before in the play does the Chorus repeat?

26. Who is Aegeus, and where has he been?

27. What does Medea offer Aegeus, and what does she ask of him?

28. What is Medea’s object in keeping Aegeus unaware of her plans for vengeance?

29. What realization has Aegeus quite accidentally given to Medea?

30. What is Medea’s plan?

31. What are Medea’s plans for her own children?

32. She concludes this decision by saying

   Let no one think me weak or helpless or calm, but the other sort, hard on enemies and kind to friends.
   What is your reaction to her comment?

33. What is the reaction of the Chorus to Medea’s statement?
34. In the interchange that follows this question, Medea appears resolute; and it seems that her major reason for killing her children is to hurt Jason. To do this, she is willing to cause herself great pain. What is your opinion of her decision; when discussing your answer, make sure to point out her possible other choices that she might make instead.

Medea: It cannot be otherwise. I understand why you speak this way—you’ve not suffered like me.
Chorus: Do you dare to kill your children, woman?
Medea: Because it will hurt my husband most of all.
Chorus: Bu you would become the most wretched of women!
Medea: So be it. Everything else is details.

35. What questions does Medea’s plan raise that the Chorus mentions?

36. What does Medea ask Jason concerning her children? Since we know she plans to do otherwise, why does she make such a big deal of asking this of Jason?

37. How does Jason react to Medea’s offer?

38. Jason notices that Medea’s eyes are wet with tears when he talks of the children, and he wonders why she grieves for the children. Despite this, however, he does not seem to become suspicious of Medea’s motives. Why not?

39. After Medea sends the children to the princess with the poisoned robe and diadem, what does the Chorus say about the children?

40. What news does the Tutor bring to Medea? Why does the tutor become confused by her reaction?
41. What divides Medea’s soul? Which emotion finally reigns?

42. Medea concludes her next long speech by saying:

I am learning what evils I am about to commit, but my heart is greater than my mind, the cause of the greatest griefs for mortals. How does this reinforce the main theme of the play? Explain the meaning of these three lines.

43. What opinion of the Chorus of Corinthian Women is expressed in the following lines?

One thing I denounce as the worst evil of all for humanity: even after you’ve found means enough and the children grow into youth and become noble, if God wills, Death goes off to Hades carrying the bodies of your children.

44. What does the Corus say about people with no children?

45. When the Messenger tells Medea the news of the death of Creon and his daughter, what does Medea say? What is the Messenger’s reaction to her words?

46. What does she next say that can appear to confirm the Messenger’s suspicions of her?

47. The Messenger gives a vivid picture with graphic descriptions of the deaths of Creon and his daughter. Euripides also use some literary devices in this speech. Identify each one listed:

A. “but the gold / chain held her tightly in its clutch”
B. “her flesh flowing off the bone like pine sap”
C. “Humanity is...a shadow”
D. “those who seem wise pay the greatest penalty for stupidity”
48. After this speech, why does Medea rush into the house? How does the Chorus feel about this action?

49. The Chorus then mentions a popular idea in Greek literature—the idea of Fate controlling human lives and says, “O unlucky woman!” What at the end of the play might fit in with this theme?

50. After the screams of the children, what is it that the Chorus blames for all this horror?

51. After the death of Creon and his daughter, why does Jason rush to Medea’s house?

52. In what fashion does Medea appear to Jason? What Greek literary device is employed here?

53. What does Medea say that suggests she may be filled with too much pride?

54. What is the main point of Jason’s speech to Medea?

55. How does Medea respond to Jason’s request?