

B.A | B.Sc.

Time: 60 minutes

Max. Marks: 30

**I A Read these excerpts from The Guardian and the Independent:**

Nobody liked to fiddle with Greek myths more than the Greeks did. Over the next half-century, playwrights teased out the implications of the story's irresistibly schematic pairings and oppositions: between justice and vengeance, male and female, parents and children, free will and fate, the claims of family feeling and the exigencies of state policy. That's why the Greek myths have contemporary relevance and such potential for retellings. Here are two recent such attempts at contemporising Greek myth and Greek tragedy.

**Queens of Syria: Exploring a modern retelling of Euripides's *The Trojan Women* by female victims of the Syrian civil war**

Almost four million people have fled Syria since the civil war began, and more than 600,000 of them have settled in Jordan. But despite such vast numbers, it can be a lonely, isolating experience – and for many who took part in the seven-week project, it was an invaluable way to meet others. Around 60 women initially showed up though only 25 saw the project through to the final weeks. For them, "there was definitely [a growing] camaraderie and friendship," says Fedda, as they shared their stories and realised they were not alone in what they'd experienced.

As well as being an Arabic translation, their version of *The Trojan Women* (by Euripides) wove in the performers' accounts of their own experiences of war, which they spoke simply, sitting at a microphone under a spotlight. The women's encounters with the Assad regime or with violent militias are harrowing, and Fedda's film features the moments when women first share them in workshops – often breaking down at the memory.

**Colm Tóibín: how I rewrote a Greek tragedy**

This story (Iphigenia) haunts us because of the way in which violence begets further acts of violence. Once I began to read and reimagine the story of how Clytemnestra was fooled by Agamemnon, who told her that their daughter Iphigenia was to be married when in fact she was to be sacrificed, it was not hard to imagine her rage. I could also sense Agamemnon's need, his weakness and then his resolve. And then I could conjure up Clytemnestra's decision to murder her husband when the time was right. And I could also imagine Electra, their other daughter, and her fury directed against her mother and her mother's lover, her determination that they too should be murdered.

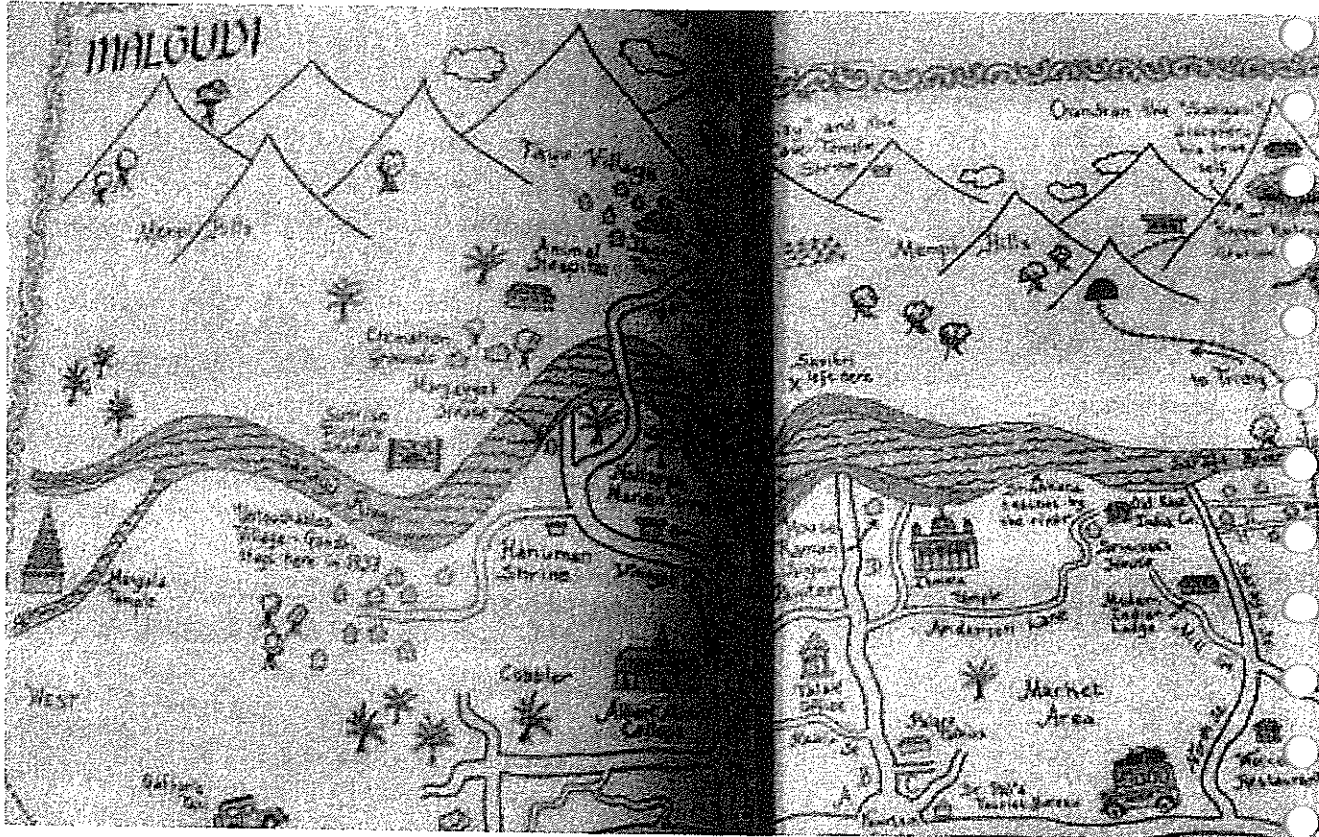
I was writing, after all, in the time of Islamic State, a time when images of violence and hatred seemed to appear natural or at least prevalent, when the craving for cruelty was part of each day's news, much as it had been in Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

Clytemnestra was the leader, the one who set the agenda. In the modern world she would announce there was no such thing as society, or issue savage memos from the corner office. She would start the war, incite the hatred. But she would also suffer from intense loneliness and uncertainty. The clash between the two parts of her personality would make her vulnerable, but ruthless and vicious too.

**I B Answer the questions that follow in about 120-150 words: [10x2=20]**

1. "Although the over subject matter of these dramas comes from myth, they are informed by historical conditions in which they were produced". Do you agree with this opinion? Substantiate while drawing from your reading and discussion.
2. "...playwrights teased out the implications of the story's irresistibly schematic pairings and oppositions: between justice and vengeance, male and female, parents and children, free will and fate, the claims of family feeling and the exigencies of state policy." What are some of the paradoxes and oppositions that contribute to irony in Greek tragedy? How are these oppositions resolved in *Medea* and *Alcectis*?

**II A Examine the map of Malgudi given below:**



**II B** How does this map of Malgudi help you understand the setting of both the R K Narayan novels on your syllabus? Do you think there are advantages to setting stories in fictitious towns? What insights do you gain into Swami and Raman after encountering the map? Respond in 20-150 words. [10 marks]