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Sample essay 1

Diving into Differences

Many literary works of the past have similarities to the cultural values and ideals of their successors, but there are many more differences to note in each. After being more familiarized with each written work, the reader will have a greater understanding of the respective differences in cultural values emphasized in the following: *Medea*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Being familiar as to why the values and ideals differ between one work and the next is also as crucial as differentiating one from the other. Although the contrasts between the works will be explored in depth, it will only scratch the surface in each. By comparing *Medea* and *Oedipus the King*, both dating from the fifth century b.c.e., and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which dates to the fourteenth century c.e., the differences in these works and their cultural perceptions become evident. The significant cultural value for each is family in *Medea*, divine intervention in *Oedipus the King* and the knight’s code in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which are reflective of each work’s respective era.

*Medea* by Euripides illustrates the cultural values and ideals of family. One of the first instances of these family values is portrayed when Medea in agony says, “Aaaah! / Oh, horrible, horrible, all that I suffer, / my unhappy struggles. I wish I could die” (104-106). Here, Medea is still distraught and grieving after her ex-husband Jason left her for another woman. As the reader progresses into the play, it is apparent how Jason’s actions affect Medea. Jason is everything to Medea and by him leaving her, the reader can truly see how her view of family values is deeply rooted and not just superficial. In another instant, Medea also says, “May a fire-bolt from heaven come shoot me through my skull! / What do I gain by being alive?” (146-147) which implies she has nothing else to live for without her family in Jason.