

HIPPOLYTUS: Summary

Prologue

Aphrodite declares her identity and speaks of her power; she will punish those who refuse to honour her. She tells how Hippolytus, Theseus' son, ignores her, honouring Artemis and spending his days hunting. She will punish him this very day.

She tells how, two years ago, she made Theseus' wife, Phaedra, fall in love with Hippolytus when she saw him in Athens. She has erected a temple to him here in Trozen, where she and Theseus are living for a year; he is in exile to cleanse himself of guilt for murder. Phaedra is suffering deeply, because of her passion, but is keeping silent about the reason.

Aphrodite will reveal the truth to Theseus who will use the curses given him by his father, Poseidon, to kill his son. Phaedra will also die.

Aphrodite withdraws when she sees Hippolytus, saying he will die today.

Hippolytus enters with his huntsmen and his old Servant.

H. and the huntsmen sing a short song in praise of Artemis and H offers a garland "from a virgin meadow" to Artemis. The Servant advises him to honour Aphrodite too, but H. refuses and goes in to feast with his friends. (Statues of the goddesses are on each side of the stage).

Parodos: sung by main Chorus of women of Trozen as they enter.

1. While washing clothes at the spring, they heard the news about Phaedra.
2. She is indoors fasting and longing for death.
3. They wonder if the gods are responsible in some way for her distress ...
4. ...or if Theseus has been unfaithful, or she has had bad news from Crete.
5. They decide her anxiety must be caused by pregnancy.

(There is irony in all the Chorus' suggestions; they all have some link with the truth, but the Chorus have no idea of the real reason.).

First episode

The Nurse enters with Phaedra, saying that her mistress is hard to please. Looking after a sick person is one of the many troubles of life, but we cling to life, because the after life may be worse.

Phaedra asks to be supported and have her cap removed, then wishes she could be by a fountain, in a meadow, hunting in the woods or out riding. The Nurse is baffled. Phaedra then regrets what she has said and asks for her veil again.

The Nurse says it is better not to get too fond of anyone or we suffer, as she does because of Phaedra's suffering.

Hippolytus makes a passionate speech attacking women. He asks why Zeus ever put them in the world. It would be better if men could have sons by buying embryos in temples.

Women are an evil pest: fathers have to find dowries for them, husbands have to spend a lot on clothes for them. Clever women are worst of all, and have a stronger sexual urge. He also attacks servants who, like the Nurse, try to arrange shameful sexual liaisons for their mistresses. He feels polluted by the nurse's words, but since she has trapped him into swearing an oath, he will leave before his father returns and say nothing.

He ends with a curse on all women.

Phaedra laments her fate: no god or man can save her. She curses the Nurse, because she fears that Hippolytus will denounce her to Theseus. The Nurse tries to explain that she only wanted to help Phaedra and admits that she acted unwisely. Phaedra angrily tells her to go and asks the Chorus to remain silent about what they have heard. They agree and she explains that she has found a way to save the honour of her sons and of her family: she will die and cause the death of another person.

Chorus: second stasimon

1. The Chorus wish they fly away to escape...
2. .. to the land of the Hesperides where the magic apples grow.
3. They recall the ship which brought Phaedra to Greece as a bride.
4. Now Aphrodite has destroyed her and she will hang herself.

Third episode

A voice inside announces that she has done so. Theseus enters and the Chorus tells him what has happened. He tears off his garland and the doors of the palace are opened to reveal the queen's body (on the ekkyklema). The Chorus and Phaedra lament their loss.

Theseus finds a letter attached to Phaedra's wrist. He is appalled to read Phaedra's accusation that Hippolytus raped her and uses two of the curses promised him by his father, Poseidon to pray that Hippolytus should die that day – or go into lifelong exile.

Hippolytus enters and is amazed to find Phaedra dead. His father does not answer his questions, but speaks of the brutish nature of human beings and their deceitfulness.

Theseus attacks Hippolytus in a passionate speech. He speaks of the unlimited wickedness in the world. He declares H. is proved guilty by the evidence of the dead Phaedra and refuses to believe his boasts about the purity of his life. He rejects three arguments which Hippolytus could use: that Phaedra is dead (and so nothing can be proved); that she must have acted out of hatred for H. because he was a bastard, that women are keener on sex than men. Theseus thinks the fact that Phaedra is dead is sure proof of H's guilt and orders him out of the land for ever.

Hippolytus defends himself: his nature is pure and he does revere the gods; he is a virgin with no interest in sex; and he does not want to take Theseus' position – his aim is to come first in

She reproaches Theseus for using his father's curse against his son, without waiting for proof, or asking questions. However, he may yet be pardoned, because Aphrodite planned what happened (Artemis could not interfere, because the gods do not oppose each other); he was ignorant of the facts and Phaedra's death prevented him from questioning her.

Hippolytus is brought in, in great pain. He laments that he is dying from injuries caused by his own horses, that he who has always revered the gods should die in such agony, and that his father's curse has punished him, although he has done no wrong.

He realises Artemis is there when she addresses him, expressing her pity and explaining that Aphrodite planned the day's events. Theseus expresses his grief.

Artemis tells him she will avenge him by killing the man Artemis loves most dearly. She will also see to it that in the future the young girls of Trozen will cut their hair in his honour before their weddings and retell in song his story and Phaedra's.

Hippolytus bids her farewell and absolves his father of any responsibility for his death. Theseus praises his son's nobility and Hippolytus dies.

HIPPOLYTUS

Prologue

1. Where is the play set? 131
2. Who is (a) Aphrodite (b) Artemis?
3. What is Hippolytus' attitude to each goddess?
4. What does Aphrodite plan to do?
5. How has she already set her plan in motion? 131-2
6. Why has Theseus moved to Troezen? 132
7. What will Aphrodite do next?
8. What will happen to (a) Hippolytus (b) Phaedra?
9. Who make up the Chorus which enters with Hippolytus?
10. What is the theme running through Hippolytus' first speech? 132-3
11. What advice from the servant does Hippolytus reject? 133

Parodos

12. What have the Chorus heard about Phaedra? 134

First episode

13. What does the Nurse complain of? 135
14. Where does Phaedra want to be? Why? 136
15. Why is the Nurse's "life's rule" to "know when to stop"? 137
16. Why does the Nurse mention Hippolytus? 138
17. Who were Phaedra's other and sister? What was the result of her mother's passion? 139
18. What does the Nurse finally discover? 140
19. What is her first reaction?

- 20 What two courses of action has Phaedra tried and failed to carry out? 141
- 21 What reasons does she give for deciding to die? " " "
- 22 What does the Nurse now advise Phaedra to do? 142
23. What are the Nurse's three main arguments?
24. What does Phaedra tell the Nurse not to do? 143
- 25 What does the Nurse say she will do instead? 144

First stasimon

26. What is the theme of this choral ode? 144-5

Second episode

27. Who is alone on stage? Whose conversation inside the palace does she hear? 145
28. Why is she so horrified?
29. What does she decide to do?
30. Why does the Nurse touch Hippolytus? 146
31. What oath do you think the Nurse had made him swear?
32. What does he say about the oath now?
33. Who does Hippolytus address in (a) the first section of his speech? 146-7
(b) the second section?
34. Who is actually listening?
35. In the second section of the speech how does he think (a) fathers (b) husbands suffer?
35. Who does he address in the last section of the speech? Why is he angry with her?
36. Why is he going to say nothing to his father? 147
37. What reason does the Nurse give Phaedra for speaking to Hippolytus? 148?

Second stasimon

38. What happens during this ode? 149-150

HIPPOLYTUS questions (3)

39. What stage device would have been used to display Phaedra's body? 151
40. "Never fear, my poor lady .." What does Thes think the message says? 152
41. What does the message actually say?
42. What does Theseus ask Poseidon to do? (2 points) 152-3
43. Why do you think Theseus does not speak directly to Hippolytus? 153
44. What does Theseus think is sure proof of Hippolytus' guilt? 154
45. "What oaths could clear you from this charge?" What is ironic here?
46. With what command does Theseus end his speech?
47. In the second paragraph of his speech, what two reasons does H. give why he would not have raped Phaedra? 155
48. In the third paragraph what does he say his greatest ambition is?
49. How convinced are (a) the Chorus (b) Theseus by Hippolytus' speech? 156
50. "Oh, why do I not unseal my lips....?" What does Hippolytus mean? 156-7
51. "Oh, my unhappy Mother!" Who was she? Why does Hipp. mention her? 157
52. Who sing the next Chorus? 158-9
53. What news does the Messenger give? (before he starts his speech) 159
54. Summarise the messenger's speech in not more than 10 lines. , 159-61
55. What is Theseus' first reaction to the speech? 161
56. What is the main point on which Artemis criticises Theseus? 162-3
57. Why did Artemis not stop Aphrodite scheming against Hippolytus? , 163
58. Why does Artemis not remain with Hippolytus until he dies? 165
59. "What a noble spirit you show to your father!" Why does Thes say this? 166
60. In what way did (a) Aphrodite (b) Hippolytus himself (c) the Nurse (d) Phaedra (e) Theseus contribute to Hippolytus' death? Write a paragraph or two on each or you can simply list the points.

HIPPOLYTUS revision

1. What were the names of Hippolytus' parents?
2. Where is the play set?
3. Why was Aphrodite angry with Hippolytus?
4. Who form the secondary chorus who accompany Hippolytus on his first entry?
Who are the main chorus?
5. What good advice from the old servant does Hippolytus ignore?
6. "How I long to be there,
shouting to the pack,
lifting a lance to my hair bright in the wind, gripping a barbed spear!"
Who says this? Why?
7. What does the Nurse persuade Phaedra to tell her? What is her first reaction to the answer? What is her view after she has had time to think about it?
8. Nurse: Do stop! I kneel, I beg you by your strong right hand
Hippolytus: How dare you touch me? Away! Keep your hands off my clothes.
Why is the nurse kneeling? Why is Hippolytus so horrified?
9. Why does Hippolytus think it would be better if men could buy babies at a temple?
10. Why does Phaedra curse the Nurse?
11. What does Phaedra's letter say?
12. Why and how does Theseus curse his son?
13. What, according to Theseus, is the strongest evidence that Hippolytus is guilty?
14. Give one of the arguments Hippolytus uses to defend himself.
15. "Hippolytus' death is due to a series of four human errors: the Nurses' foolishness, Hippolytus' fanatical cruelty, Phaedra's indignant revenge and Theseus' impatient yielding to irritation and jealousy". (Vellacott in the Introduction to the Penguin translation) What are the four actions he refers to?
16. What is ironic about the way in which Hippolytus is fatally injured?
17. From whom does Theseus learn the truth? For what two faults does she criticise him? What does she think is a reason for him to be pardoned?
18. Give one way in which Artemis cheers Hippolytus and one in which she disappoints him.
- 19,20 Theseus: O dearest son, how noble a heart you show your father!
Hippolytus: Pray that your true-born sons show you such nobleness.
Explain why each of them says what he does.

WHAT IS THE MORAL OF THE PLAY?

That it is wrong to scorn sexual love? In the prologue Aphrodite says that Hipp "scorns the bed of love", but what makes her most angry is that he insults her and does not revere her.

"Gods must have their worship" (Servant – p.132) This applies to Hipp and his fate but

- does not apply to Phaedra or Theseus
- Hipp did worship Artemis and she could not save him

The gods do not care about mortals? Aph says Phaedra will die "for I will not let the thought of her suffering rob me of the satisfaction of seeing my enemies punished"

- Art tells Theseus that mortals cannot avoid error "when the gods inspire it".

So 3 innocent mortals (Phaedra, Nurse, Theseus) suffer because Aph wants to punish Hipp.

Importance of PARDON/FORGIVENESS?

The play can be seen as a cycle of anger, angry reaction, suffering, anger ... :

Hipp is angry with the Nurse > Hipp's harsh speech > Phaedra's anger with Hipp > Phaedra writes the false accusation and kills herself > Theseus angry with Hipp > Theseus uses his curses > death of Hipp > Artemis angry with Aphrodite > Artemis will kill Adonis

Aphrodite will not forgive Hippolytus (although the Servant asks her to)

Phaedra will not forgive the Nurse (curses her and tells her to get out)

Hipp cannot forgive the Nurse (who begs him to and Phaedra (he curses all women)

Phaedra will not forgive Hipp: she will "teach him not to triumph over my downfall" (149)

Artemis tells Theseus he has "done a terrible thing, but ... may yet win pardon" (165)

Hippolytus forgives Theseus, but only when Artemis tells him to (165-6)

NOBILITY / VIRTUE

PHAEDRA Euripides had written an earlier version of this play, in which Phaedra had been a bold and immoral woman who had approached Hipp herself with the proposal that they should sleep together. So this Phaedra is quite different, a highly moral woman who is concerned above all to keep her good name and avoid disgrace for her husband and children. She tries hard to keep her love secret or to fight it. She decides on suicide because "it will allow my sons to live with heads held high" and she will not have to look Theseus in the eye.

However in order to get her revenge on Hipp. she makes a false accusation, which seems to be a shameful action. Strangely neither Hipp or Theseus or Artemis criticise her for this.

HIPPOLYTUS strives to honour Artemis and to be chaste and pure (but does he show pride in the number of times he mentions it?). He keeps his oath because he feels it is the right thing to do (but he does say he does not think he would convince Theseus anyway).

At the end he forgives his father, but Artemis told him to, and his (almost) last words "Pray for such love from your legitimate sons" suggests both pride and bitterness towards Theseus.

HIPPOLYTUS: The gods and goddesses

Aphrodite and Artemis There is a statue of each goddess on stage during the play. The two goddesses frame the play: Aph. speaks the prologue, setting out what will happen in the play; Artemis appears at the end as the deus ex machina (character who brings the play to an end)

APHRODITE Appears only at the start of the play.

1. Punishes those who insult her:
 - Hipp has called her "the foulest of divinities"
 - "for his crimes against me I'll have my revenge on Hippolytus this day"
2. Does not care if the innocent suffer:
 - Phaedra must die: "for I will not let the thought of her suffering rob me of the satisfaction of seeing my enemies punished".

Does not appear again, but is frequently mentioned in the first half of the play: Phaedra, the Nurse and the Chorus all realise that "the Cyprian" is responsible for Phaedra's passion.

- Nurse tells Ph. she cannot resist Aphrodite; her power is too great (142)
- Phaedra speaks of "the Cyprian, my destroyer" (p.149)

Ode sung by Chorus while Nurse speaks to Hipp. is about the power of love.

ARTEMIS Appears only at the end. She tells Theseus what he did wrong, gives reasons why he is not totally to blame, comforts Hippolytus and urges father and son to forgive each other.

1. She has a special relationship with Hipp:
 - Aphrodite says "He never leaves her side" (131)
 - Hipp enters singing her praises and his first action is to put a garland on her statue. He says that he is the only mortal who talks to Artemis and hears her voice in answer (133)
 - In the last scene Artemis calls him "the man I love best among mortals".
 - She tells Hipp she will strike down Aphrodite's lover in revenge for Hipp's death.
 - She will set up a ritual in Troezen: before their wedding girls will cut their hair in Hipp's honour and they will sing songs about him.

2. But she is not as devoted to Hipp as he is to her:
 - She did nothing to stop Aphrodite. She explains this by saying that the gods have a law: they cannot oppose each other's purposes (163)
 - She cannot shed tears for him (164)
 - She cannot stay until he dies or she would be defiled (165)

These are all reasonable points, but they make us feel the goddess is less caring than she should be. Hipp says "How easily you leave your companion of so many hunts". (165).

POSEIDON God of the sea, father of Theseus. He had given his son three curses and when Theseus uses two of them against Hipp, Poseidon fulfils them.

ZEUS never appears, but is often mentioned as the highest authority, the source of justice.

- Oaths and appeals are directed to him.
- Artemis did not oppose Aphrodite because of her "dread of Zeus" (163)
- Hipp protests to him about the unfairness of his fate: "Zeus, Zeus, do you see this? I, the man of piety seeing my death ahead". (163)

Though Hippolytus' death may have been contrived at long range by Aphrodite, the subsequent action shows it as due to a series of four human errors. Vellacott.

Which four characters made them?

What were they?

HIPPOLYTUS

Illegitimate son of Theseus and the Amazon, Hippolyta. This causes him pain

...My unhappy mother! What hatred shrouded my birth! I hope no friend of mine is ever born a bastard. (Is this why he hates women?)

Pious Devoted to Artemis. In his first scene he addresses her as "guardian maid" and "dear mistress" and he places on her statue the garland he has reverently picked for her. He claims to have an exclusive relationship with her "I alone among mortals enjoy this honour" (83-4) i.e. speaking with her. When she appears at the end of the play he greets the "breath of heavenly fragrance", but soon realises that the goddess has limited affection for him.

He offers the garland "with devoted hand" (83), keeps to his oath, because he fears the gods (656, 1061, 1309). As he lies dying he speaks of himself as "I the man of piety, I who revered the gods" and Artemis tells Hippolytus that she will punish Aphrodite as she owes this to his "piety and righteous heart" (1418).

Chaste Linked with his desire to be pious, morally pure, is his concern to be physically pure, chaste. He tells Theseus that he has no experience of sex (1002-4) and Aphrodite says

Calls me the foulest of the heavenly powers.
He scorns the bed of love (12).

His ideal is to both spiritually and physically pure (see his first speech 76-87). When he says goodbye to his friends he says

You'll never see another man more pure of heart (1100-01)

And as he lies dying he describes himself as

I who surpassed all others in not yielding to passion (1361-62)

Hatred of sex and women His desire for chastity goes beyond normal limits (see especially his speech to the nurse (p146-7). He dislikes the idea of the sexual act. He wishes that the human race could be reproduced by non-physical means, and speaks angrily of women as extravagant and lustful. (His disgust at the nurse's proposal may be at least partly because she is his stepmother).

Enthusiastic for athletic purposes he loves hunting (enters at start with his fellow huntsmen) and driving his chariot e.g. chorus lament that Hippolytus in exile will no

longer be riding along the shore (1130ff). He's an accomplished driver (his skill is shown when the bull attacks) and greatest wish (1015-16) is to come first in the Greek Games.

Is this a "case of prolonged adolescence" (Lawall) or the enthusiasm for sport typical in a young Athenian (Segal. See his article "Sex v Sport" in Hippolytus in Omnibus 3 and omnibus omnibus)?

Noble He keeps to his oath (656), although it leads to unjust punishment. At the end of the play he forgives his father who describes him as noble and innocent (1452, 1454)

His behaviour is not always so noble In the heat of the moment he tells the nurse "It was my tongue that swore, not my heart (612) (although he does in fact keep his oath). He speaks very harshly of women to the nurse, knowing that Phaedra is listening and hints that he'll tell his father (669-70) of her love. He never admits that he has in any way contributed to Phaedra's tragedy.

Shows **hubris** in refusing to honour Aphrodite when the old servant advises him to do so.

Priggish? See above his references to his own purity and blindness to his faults. See also his speech of defence to Theseus, where he speaks like a skilled orator (despite his disclaimer) and deals with each point in turn. The contemptuous word he uses for crowd implies that he usually associates with a select circle.

PHAEDRA

Under a hereditary curse? She comes from a family with a history of excess. She refers to her mother Pasiphae who loved a bull and her sister. Ariadne, married by Dionysus (337, 338 and of 371-2).

Her passion Aphrodite says she has afflicted Phaedra with a 'terrible longing' (27). When brought in first Phaedra speaks wildly; she wants to be in the woods etc i.e. with Hippolytus. Eur. vividly depicts her suffering.

Shame She's ashamed of her passion. She wants no one to know, and only tells the nurse when she thinks she has guessed. Her face grows hot with shame (244-6) when she has come near to mentioning Hippolytus.

Nobility She tells the chorus and nurse (in the speech p140-1) that she has thought long and painfully about her situation, has tried to keep her love silent and to control the "madness". Since this has proved impossible she has resolved to die.

Concern with honour and reputation This is why she is resolved to die (413-6) and she wants to avoid bringing dishonour on her husband and children (418-24). In 489 she asks the nurse what "will keep my honour safe". In 682ff she speaks furiously to the nurse because by telling Hippolytus of her mistress' passion she is preventing Phaedra from dying with her honourable reputation intact.

On hearing of the attack by the bull from the sea Theseus' reaction is only

This tale of woe neither pleases nor distresses me (1259).

In the final scene he shows genuine affection for his son and appreciation of his good qualities

O my beloved boy, what a noble spirit you show to your father! (1454)

NURSE

Affection for Phaedra She says she is suffering because Phaedra is suffering (203-7) she tries to help Phaedra in her anguish e.g. 203-7 "Don't fret, my girl" She tells the chorus that she's tried every way she can to find out what the trouble is and she speaks gently and tactfully to her mistress (288-300).

Down to earth approach to life (254ff) she says it is better to set limits to emotion to avoid pain. She explains this kind of attitude by saying 'A long life has taught me a great deal'. When she first hears of Phaedra's passion she is appalled (353ff) this may be partly because she will suffer if Phaedra's reputation is ruined (361) but she soon has second thoughts (432ff read the whole speech carefully). She reminds Phaedra that many people are smitten by love, they can't all die! And love is a universal power, which can't be resisted; many people turn a blind eye to infidelity and if it's hidden it doesn't matter; and mortals can't be perfect!

For these reasons she speaks to Hippolytus, but later admits she was wrong (694ff) yet tells Phaedra (701) that her idea might well have worked!

Cunning She puts pressure on Phaedra to tell her the trouble by supplicating her, on her knees (333); she makes sure that Hippolytus swears an oath of silence before she tells him about Phaedra and in the previous scene (p98-9) she uses ambiguous language and may succeed in getting Phaedra to think of yielding to her passion (see class notes).

A convincing character? Yes and no. Convincing as the concerned old servant with plenty of common sense but look at the speech when she tries to persuade Phaedra to yield; she shows all the rhetorical skill of a sophist!

For 2 views of the nurse see Vellacott p27

1. (Mentioned in footnote) "No moral scruples" Phaedra thinks this after she's spoken to H & Ph curses her calling her "vile old witch and destroyer of your friends" (692)
2. Understanding an important truth about Aphrodite.

Is she more concerned with her reputation for honour than with honour itself? In the conversation with the nurse who bids her satisfy her love, is she wavering (see class notes)

Vengeful She is ready to ruin Hippolytus' reputation and bring punishment on him by making a false accusation (although she is driven to this because the nurse has told Hippolytus of her mistress' feelings and Hippolytus has spoken insultingly of women and of her, knowing she was listening).

A suffering woman She speaks of the suffering of women in general e.g. 1 407 "a woman, something hated by all men" and in her final lament (after Hippolytus' tirade) she says "how wretched is the fate of womankind!"

Virtue more apparent than real G & S Lawall compare Phaedra who is more concerned with the appearance of virtue and Hippolytus who is truly virtuous (although without enough sensitivity to use it well). Do you agree?

THESEUS

Reputation as a hero who defeated notorious evildoers. He refers to two of them, Sinis and Sciron (177-80)

Clear-cut view of right and wrong Seen in his reaction to the tablet e.g. 916-20 the difference between the right mind and the brutish nature (925-30) honesty and lies.

Quick to anger Curses Hippolytus, praying for his death or banishment, as soon as he reads the tablet. See the whole of his angry speech (p154), which ends in the order to exile. He ignores Hippolytus' pleas to hear his case (1051-2, 1055-6). Artemis reproves him for this (1321-4) and only then does he recognise that he was wrong.

Affection for Phaedra Speaks in tones of deep grief when he hears of her death (p108-9 esp 1844-45).

Relationship with Hippolytus No sign of affection for his son until end of play. We should remember we hear nothing from Theseus about Hippolytus until after he has read the tablet, which leads him to believe that Hippolytus has seduced Phaedra, but his readiness to believe what he reads suggests that his relationship with his son was not a close one. This was perhaps partly because Hippolytus was illegitimate and partly because of his excessive devotion to Artemis and his concern for purity. Theseus mocks this (946-7) and accuses him of being a hypocrite and a fanatical follower of Orpheus (112) and later of being a "born magician, dealer in spells" (1030).

The NURSE is horrified to learn Phaedra's secret, showing the same high moral standards as her mistress, but she soon changes her mind. When she tries to persuade Phaedra to give in to her passion, she produces some immoral arguments, eg husbands often turn a blind eye to their wives' affairs. She wants to save her mistress' life, so she is concerned about the most practical course of action, not the most honourable one.

SPEECH and SILENCE

Aphrodite says Phaedra is dying in silence (132)

Phaedra will not answer the Nurse's questions to start with.(136-7)

Asks the Nurse to say no more about her love for Hippolytus (143)

Nurse does speak to Hippolytus

Soon she is terrified that he will not keep silent about what she has told him.(146)

Hippolytus speaks about how evil married women are, but does not address Phaedra directly (146-7)

Chorus swear to Phaedra that they will say nothing (148).

The tablet speaks for Phaedra: "the letter – it cries out horrors!" (152)

Phaedra's silent body is on stage throughout the second half of the play..

Theseus utters the curse which will kill his son and the Chorus beg him to take back his words (152).

When Hippolytus returns, Theseus remains silent, then will not address his son directly. (153)

Hippolytus remains silent because of his oath (156-7)

Hippolytus' final words produce reconciliation (166)

Of the three main characters only Hippolytus and Theseus have a scene together – and there's not much communication then!. True communication is only achieved between them – too late – in the final scene.

IGNORANCE

Aphrodite in the prologue outlines what is going to happen, so that the audience know most of what will happen, while the characters do not.

Neither the Chorus nor the Nurse know what is wrong with Phaedra.

Hippolytus does not know what he is swearing to.

Phaedra does not know that Hipp will in fact keep his oath.

Artemis tells Theseus that his ignorance partly excuses his rash actions.

So lack of knowledge contributes to the tragic events of the play.