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By Euripides

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Four plays by the Greek dramatist who started to interpret human behavior without reference to the wisdom of gods.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Euripides, the youngest of the three great Athenian playwrights, was born around 485 BC of a family of good standing. He first competed in the dramatic festivals in 455 BC, coming only third; his record of success in the tragic competitions is lower than that of either Aeschylus or Sophocles. There is a tradition that he was unpopular, even a recluse; we are told that he composed poetry in a cave by the sea, near Salamis. What is clear from contemporary evidence, however, is that audiences were fascinated by his innovative and often disturbing dramas. His work was controversial already in his lifetime, and he himself was regarded as a ‘clever’ poet, associated with philosophers and other intellectuals. Towards the end of his life he went to live at the court of Archelaus, king of Macedon. It was during his time there that he wrote what many consider his greates work, the **Bacchae**. When news of his death reached Athens in early 406 BC, Sophocles appeared publicly in mourning for him. Euripides is thought to have written about ninety-two plays, of which seventeen tragedies and one satyr-play known to be his survive; the other play which is attributed to him, the **Rhesus**, may in fact be by a later hand.

John Davie is head of classics at St. Paul's School in London.

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