



**Medea**  
Eugène Delacroix (after)  
Oil painting  
19<sup>th</sup> century, France

## Furious Medea

Equipped with magical abilities, Medea helped Jason take hold of the Golden Fleece. Then they escaped to Corinth where King Creon ruled. The latter decided to give his daughter Glauce to Jason who therefore left Medea. Being livid with anger and jealousy, she offered a poisoned coat that killed her rival. She then decided to kill her own children in order to leave Jason without descent.

This painting is a copy of the Musée des Beaux-arts' one in Lille, which was painted by Eugène Delacroix in 1838.

Medea seems indifferent to the children she is holding in her arms ; the only allusion to her cold fury are her clenched feet and hands. Are the panic-stricken toddlers looking for help or are they trying to escape ? The contrast between the mother's desire of infanticide and her generous breast is stressed by the fierce light on the bodies. In this way the painter accentuated the dramatic and passionate intensity of the scene.

## A rebellious and romantic painter

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) came from a wealthy family, pursued classical studies in Paris then joined Guérin's workshop, who was a neo-classical painter.

In 1822 he introduced *Dante et Virgil aux Enfers* at the Salon of French artists, creating a scandal. After four months in England, he exhibited *La mort de Sardanapale* in 1827, which was all colour, tumult and movement, unlike fashionable neo-classical paintings. He became the undisputed leader of the French Romantic school alongside Victor Hugo.

The State purchased him *La liberté guidant le peuple* in 1831, Delacroix's absolute masterwork. This painting is the centrepiece for the Louvre-Lens opening. From a trip to North Africa, he brought back many sources of inspiration. He also accepted many official enquiries (Palais Bourbon, Senate...).

He was criticized by the academic world but recognised by his friends as the true master of his time and as an authentic genius.



**Liberty leading the people**  
Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863)  
1830  
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