Euripides' Electra's terminus ante quem is 415:

**Dioscuri (dei ex machina)** p. 237:

"I am Castor and this is my brother, Polydeuces [= Pollux]. We have just put an end to a storm at sea which was a terror to ships [= Athenian fleet in Sicilian waters in 415 BCE]; and we came to Argos when we saw the killing of this our sister, your mother."

Sophocles' Electra: no dating evidence. Only two of the seven extant Sophoclean plays are datable:

*Philoctetes* 409; *Oedipus at Colonus* 401 (posthumous).

Sophocles born 495/4?; died 406.

Aeschylus' *Oresteia* 458. Aeschylus born 525/4?; died 456/5.

Three Electras (source: *OCD* s.v. 'Electra'):

Aeschylus:

First mentioned in Stesichorus' *Oresteia*, Electra has a prominent place in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi = Libation Bearers*. But she disappears from view once the revenge begins.

Sophocles:

Steadfast, enduring, passionate. Rescued child Orestes from his father's murderers (12, 296-7, 1132-3 in Greek text). Despair. Lament. Joy. Strength. Determined to revenge unaided by Orestes, whom she believes dead for most of the play. When moment comes, she urges Orestes on: "Strike a second blow, if you have courage."

Euripides:

She is even more active in the murder. By contrast, Orestes is weak and indecisive. She drives Orestes to killing Clytemnestra. After the deed, she is so full of remorse as she was full of lust for revenge. Dioscuri have her marry Pylades. In Euripides' *Orestes* she helps her mad brother.

Modern adaptations: Richard Strauss' (1864-1949) *Elektra*, on libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (Kenyon library owns CD and music score)
Some questions to ponder:

Sophocles' *Electra*:
What is exactly Electra's argument against Clytemnestra? If spilt blood must be atoned through blood, why should queen Clytemnestra not be granted her sanguinary retribution for the sacrifice of Iphigenia?

Orestes' feigned death at the chariot race:
1. Why does Orestes choose that way to die, tangled up in the reins of his race steeds? And furthermore, why at the Pythian games?
2. Who in Orestes' lineage affirmed his status in a chariot race? Why is this question important? (See Apollod. pp. 143-6 with endnotes at pp. 245-6.)


1. **Olympian** games: at Olympia in honor of Zeus; said to commemorate victory of Pelops (Pindar, *Olympian* 1); list of winners begins in 776: constitutes ancient dating system for entire Hellas
2. **Pythian** games (every 8 years): at Delphi in honor of Apollo; reckoned from 582 BCE (see *Hom. h. Apollo*)
3. **Nemean** games: sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea, said to have been founded by Adrastus' of Argos (Theban wars, see Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*; Apollod. 107-14 and s.v. Adrastus)
4. **Isthmian** games: held near Corinth (isthmus) in honor of Poseidon, said to be founded to commemorate death of Melicertes (or Palaemon), Ino's son, or (according to Athens) by Theseus after he had killed the robber Sinis. Reorganized as Panhellenic festival in 582. See Apollod. s.v. Melicertes, Palaemon, Ino, etc.

*For all names and places, as well as momentous historical events, please make sure you take the time to consult the OED and the OCD online. These online sources are listed as textbooks in the syllabus and are both part of the Oxford reference to which Kenyon subscribes. Consultation, download and printing is free of charge on the campus network.*