Priestesses were praised for patriotic support of their polis:
• in war
• in peace
• were more efficient than men

Women acted as cult agents within the religious and the political Greek system.
• Lysistrata, personification of historical Lysimache, war-breaker and peace-bringer to the polis (Lysistrata, 586, 1156)
• Iphigenia, metaphorical destroyer of Troy (Iphigenia in Aulis, 1473)
• Theano, intermediary for peace with Greeks and gods (Iliad, 6.350-359)
• The Pythia, seer of new Greek colonies, including Cyrene in Libya (Histories, 4.155-167)
• The Pythia, judge of the Lemnians in favor of Athenians (Histories, 6.139)

They were condemned when they:
• had to act in self-defense
• did not follow the rules
• behaved in a corrupted manner

Women were agents of healing, learning, prophecy, and reconciliation.
• The Pythia, speaker in hexameter, domesticated Orestes’s Furies (Eumenides, 1-30)
• Another Pythia, forecaster in grand style of Charicleia and Theagenes’s happy ending in Meroe (An Ethiopian Romance, 4, 46, 49) and from “the cruel necessity” of human sacrifice in Meroe (271); his royal wife in Ethiopia (277)

Priestesses’ fate was often determined by men.
• Iphigenia forced to participate in preparing victims for human sacrifice by King Thoas and priests of Artemis (Iphigenia among the Taurians, 30-42)
• The Pythia at Delphi selected from local peasantry by priests; if married, she had to leave her husband permanently; often mistreated by brash male petitioners (Portrait of a Priestess, 72-74, 78)
• Charicleia’s evasion of the capital punishment used as a determinant of Delphian Games laws change (An Ethiopian Romance, 90-91)
• Corrupted Pythia, when discovered, outlawed; the wealth from the bribes stayed at the shrine, adding to its splendor (Histories, 6.63-67; Portrait of a Priestess, 75)