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BA English Honours | Semester VI | ENG6EJ307

Reading World Classics

Module 1: Introduction to World Classics: Genres, Archetypes, and Aesthetic Concepts • Comprehensive Notes

Chapter 1: The Universal Architecture of World Classics

World classics comprise enduring literary monuments that transcend their immediate linguistic and national origins, speaking to universal dilemmas of human mortality, fate, political governance, and spiritual redemption. From ancient Mediterranean epics to Sanskrit drama and Persian mystical lyrics, world classics establish archetypal patterns that continue to fertilize global literature.

1.1 Classical Genres and Theoretical Concepts

Mastering world literature requires fluency across foundational classical definitions:

- **The Epic:** A long narrative poem of elevated register tracing the heroic deeds of mythic figures whose actions determine the destiny of a nation or civilization (e.g., Homer, Vyasa, Virgil).
- **Classical Tragedy:** Dramatizes the downfall of an elevated protagonist through a tragic flaw (*hamartia*), pride (*hubris*), and inexorable cosmic fate (*ananke*), achieving emotional catharsis.
- **Satire and Comedy:** Deploys irony, parody, and burlesque to mock societal vice, hypocrisy, and human folly, restoring moral health through corrective laughter.
- **Myth and Dialogue:** Myth provides the sacred symbolic narratives explaining cosmic origins; the philosophical dialogue (perfected by Plato) stages collaborative search for ethical truth through dialectic debate.

Advanced Critical Theory, Hermeneutics & Literary Praxis

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1. Hermeneutic Paradigms and Textual Mechanics

Critical inquiry into Module 1: Introduction to World Classics: Genres, Archetypes, and Aesthetic Concepts reveals how textual forms construct meaning through complex aesthetic strategies and structural choices:

- **Structuralism and Semiotic Deconstruction:** The organization of signs, tropes, and syntactical structures establishes narrative authority while simultaneously revealing internal fissures. Binary oppositions embedded within the discourse—such as center versus margin, tradition versus modernity, and subjective interiority versus objective reality—are systematically problematized through textual slippages and ambiguous signifiers.
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- **Feminist, Queer, and Intersectional Critique:** Analyzing the construction of gender roles, patriarchal surveillance, and non-normative subjectivities provides crucial insights into how bodily

experience, domesticity, and public agency are mediated across divergent historical moments and cultural landscapes.

- **Ecocritical and Spatial Dynamics:** Physical topographies, built environments, and non-human ecologies function as active participants in the narrative economy. Space is never neutral; rather, it reflects socio-economic stratification, environmental exploitation, and geopolitical borders that delineate belonging and exile.

2. Historiographical Context and Reception Theory

Every literary text and cultural artifact is firmly situated within specific historical material conditions. Understanding Module 1: Introduction to World Classics: Genres, Archetypes, and Aesthetic Concepts requires examining how contemporaneous social movements, intellectual revolutions, and material shifts in print and digital publishing influenced textual production. Furthermore, Hans-Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations" demonstrates that textual reception is never static; each successive generation of readers reinterprets these works through evolving ethical, philosophical, and cultural frameworks.

3. Comparative Aesthetic and Thematic Matrix

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