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BA English Honours | Semester VI | ENG6EJ307

Reading World Classics

Module 3: Classical Drama: Sophocles, Kalidasa, and Shakespeare • Comprehensive Notes

Chapter 3: Tragic Fate and Dramatic Harmony in World Theater

World dramatic masterpieces explore the catastrophic friction between individual will, divine decree, and political power.

3.1 Sophocles's Oedipus Rex: Tragic Irony and Anagnorisis

Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* stands as Aristotle's ideal tragedy. King Oedipus of Thebes vows to banish the murderer of King Laius to cure the city of plague, discovering through inexorable dramatic irony and recognition (*anagnorisis*) that he himself is the patricidal son and incestuous husband of Queen Jocasta, blinding himself in tragic agony.

3.2 Kalidasa's Abhijnanasakuntalam: The Ring of Recognition

Kalidasa's Sanskrit masterpiece dramatizes King Dushyanta's love for the forest-dwelling Sakuntala. When Sage Durvasa's curse causes Dushyanta to forget Sakuntala after she loses his signet ring, the drama explores separation (*vipralambha*), moral penance, and eventual joyful reunion, embodying classical Sanskrit dramatic harmony where all plays must conclude in auspicious reconciliation.

Advanced Critical Theory, Hermeneutics & Literary Praxis

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Critical inquiry into Module 3: Classical Drama: Sophocles, Kalidasa, and Shakespeare 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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experience, domesticity, and public agency are mediated across divergent historical moments and cultural landscapes.

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2. Historiographical Context and Reception Theory

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3. Comparative Aesthetic and Thematic Matrix

The following analytical matrix summarizes key comparative dimensions across traditional interpretive paradigms and modern critical frameworks relevant to Module 3:

Critical Dimension	Traditional / Formalist Reading	Contemporary Critical Synthesis	Pedagogic & Interpretive Significance
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