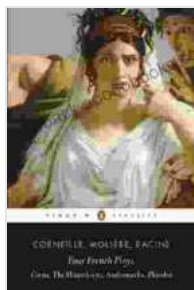


Unleash the Tormented Souls of Greek Tragedy: Cinna, The Misanthrope, Andromache, Phaedra - Penguin Classics



Four French Plays: Cinna, The Misanthrope, Andromache, Phaedra (Penguin Classics) by Jean Racine

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Welcome to the tumultuous and timeless realm of Greek tragedy, where the human soul is laid bare in all its raw vulnerability and indomitable strength. Penguin Classics presents an extraordinary collection that brings together four masterpieces: Cinna, The Misanthrope, Andromache, and Phaedra.

Cinna:

Corneille's gripping political drama plunges us into the heart of ancient Rome, where the fate of an empire hangs in the balance. Cinna, a young conspirator, grapples with the moral complexities of betrayal and the weight of his actions. Amidst the treachery and power struggles, Corneille explores the profound themes of loyalty, ambition, and forgiveness.



The Misanthrope:

Molière's satirical masterpiece skewers the superficiality and hypocrisy of 17th-century Parisian society. Alceste, the titular misanthrope, is a man consumed by his disgust for the world's follies. Through his biting wit and acerbic observations, Molière unveils the absurdities of human behavior and the eternal struggle between idealism and reality.

Le Misanthrope by Molière

The following excerpts are from an instructional packet for schools by Jeffrey B. Mason, Professor of Theatre Arts 2002-04 Robert F. and Evelyn Nelson Wulf Professor of the Humanities on the occasion of the University Theatre production in the Robinson Theatre at the Univ. of Oregon on April 11-26, 2003

Synopsis:

Alceste denounces humanity, declaring that "all are corrupt" and scorning even Philinte, his friend, for his studied duplicity. He offends Oronte, a highly placed courtier, because he refuses to praise his sonnet, but he cannot resist the lovely and witty Célimène, who embodies everything he claims to detest. Her door is always open, and she entertains her guests, including two of Alceste's rivals, Acaste and Clitandre, by performing disparaging impressions of people they know. Competing with her is Arsinoé, who assures Célimène that she has defended her against others' slanderous accusations of immorality but then drags Alceste off to prove to him that his lady love has betrayed him. Alceste is furious with Célimène and utterly rejects her assurance that the "love letter" Arsinoé shows him was actually a letter of friendship written to a woman friend. Philinte tells the innocent Eliante how Alceste lost his suit against Oronte, but just when it seems that Célimène will reveal whom she really loves, Acaste and Clitandre barge in to read letters they have received from the lady that belittles every man who is paying court to her, including Alceste. Oronte, Acaste and Clitandre march out of her house, but when Alceste makes one last attempt to persuade her to run away with him, she dismisses the very idea of leaving society.

The cast of characters:

Alceste builds his entire social role around his denunciation of hypocrisy; he'd even rather lose a lawsuit if his defeat will provide evidence of "the times' injustice." He won't admit any ambiguity in people's behavior: they are always wrong, they vacillate between "flattering praise" and "reckless condemnation." His attitude towards love is adolescent, especially when he insists that Célimène choose between him and the rest of the world. He argues that the lover is obligated to identify and attempt to rectify his beloved's faults; love therefore carries an interventionist duty. Because he begs Eliante to love him in order to wreak his revenge on Célimène, we can argue that he sees love as a battle and affection as a weapon, and we should notice that he finally rejects Célimène only when she suggests that they marry. When he asserts that "reason doesn't rule in love," he's touching on a key issue during an era when philosophers were trying to apply rational thought to all human endeavors. It's important to realize that Alceste is the odd man out, and even near the end of the play, he is perplexed that Oronte responds to his "honesty and candor" by attempting to ruin his reputation. By the standards of his society, Alceste is in the wrong!

Philinte is the *raisonneur*, which translates as "reasoner" or "reasonable man," a character type in Molière's plays who argues that we are better off accepting that the world won't change. He agrees with Alceste that theirs is a "low, dishonest age," where "trickery prospers" and men are "beastly," but he feels that virtue enables us to deal with others' frailties, and that we cannot "abandon the society of men." He is a pragmatist whom some might regard as a cynic, asserting that to seek reform is mere folly. Note that he and Alceste agree that men are knavish, selfish and unjust; the fundamental difference between them is the question of how to act on that knowledge. Mason, instructional packet for *The Misanthrope* (2003), page 1

Some regard Philinte as a shameless sycophant, but we should remember that he lives in a community where it's customary to flatter one moment and gossip the next.

Oronte simply thinks that he's better than everyone else because of his position in society. He probably doesn't know the King personally, but he'd like Alceste and Philinte to think so. He is convinced that his poem (in Act One) is quite marvelous, and he is desperate for someone to

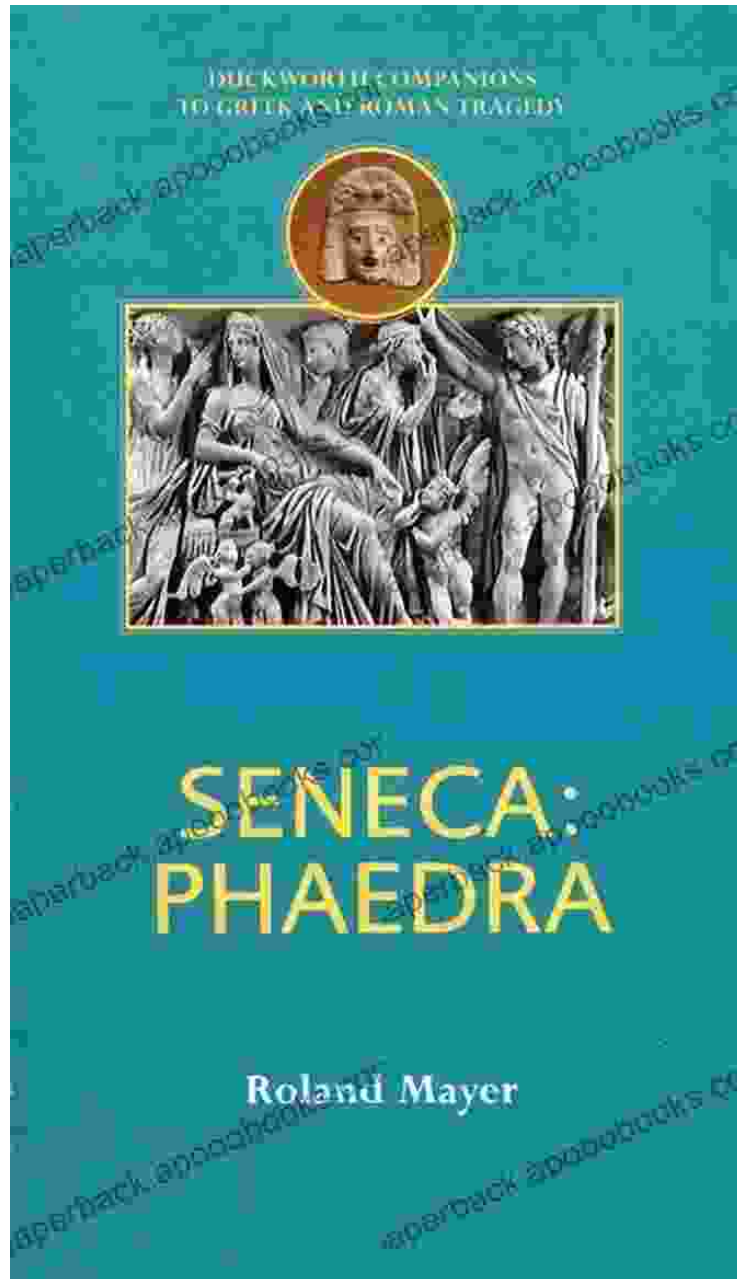
Andromache:

Racine's heart-wrenching tragedy transports us to the aftermath of the Trojan War. Andromache, the captive wife of the slain Hector, is torn between her loyalty to her dead husband and her desire for her new master. Racine's exquisite language and psychological depth explore the complexities of love, duty, and the enduring power of grief.



Phaedra:

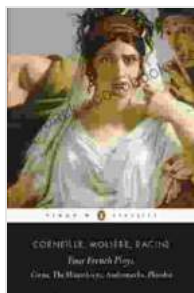
Seneca's haunting rendition of the Phaedra myth is a tale of forbidden love and self-destructive passion. Phaedra, the queen of Athens, is consumed by an illicit desire for her stepson, Hippolytus. Seneca's exploration of the irrationality of human emotions and the devastating consequences of unchecked desire remains as relevant today as it was in ancient Greece.



Through these unforgettable characters and their poignant struggles, Penguin Classics' *Cinna*, *The Misanthrope*, *Andromache*, *Phaedra* offers an invaluable window into the human condition. These works transcend time and continue to resonate with readers today, offering insights into the enduring themes of love, betrayal, revenge, and redemption. Whether you are a seasoned lover of Greek tragedy or a newcomer to its timeless allure,

this collection will transport you to a world where emotions run high and the human soul is laid bare.

Immerse yourself in the depths of human drama and witness the indomitable spirit that triumphs over adversity. Free Download your copy of Cinna, The Misanthrope, Andromache, Phaedra - Penguin Classics today and embark on an unforgettable literary journey.



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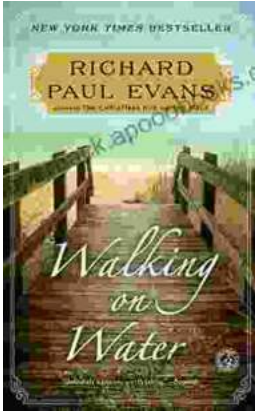
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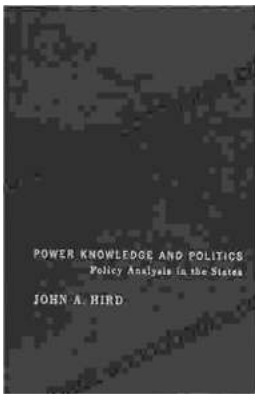
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