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Strongly influenced by Classical drama, Jean Racine (1639-99) broke away from the grandiose theatricality of baroque drama to create works of intense psychological realism, with characters manipulated by cruel and vengeful gods. "Iphigenia" depicts a princess' absolute submission to her father's will, despite his determination to sacrifice her to gain divine favour before going to war. Described by Voltaire as 'the masterpiece of the human mind', "Phaedra" shows a woman's struggle to overcome her overwhelming passion for her stepson - an obsession that brings destruction to a noble family. And "Athaliah" portrays a ruthless pagan queen, who defies Jehovah in her desperate attempt to keep the throne of Jerusalem from its legitimate heir.