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SELF – LEARNING MATERIAL
B.A. / B.Com.
SEMESTER-VI

SUBJECT : ENGLISH LITERATURE | **UNIT I TO V**
COURSE NO.: EL-601 | **LESSON NO. 1 TO 16**

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ENGLISH LITERATURE

SEMESTER-VI

Syllabus for the Examination to be held in May 2023, 2024 & 2025

Course No. EL 601 (Theory) **Title – English Literature**

Duration of Exam : 3 hrs. **Total Marks : 100**

Semester End Examination : 80

Internal Assessment : 20

Objectives : The aim of this paper is to acquaint the learners with the major literary developments of this period ranging from Victorian age, Georgian age, Edwardian age to the modern age. They will be required to have an indepth knowledge of the development of various genres during the period under study. The learners will also have an exposure to the genre of short fiction written extensively during this period. Some corresponding authors and their works have also been prescribed for better understanding of this age. The teachers are required to involve students in extra-readings of other works & authors falling in this age in co-curricular /classroom activities.

Unit I : Literary Terms

Elegy, Rhetoric, Stream of Consciousness, Poetic Drama, Absurd Drama, Magic Realism, Naturalism, Point of View, Short Story, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Oxford Movement, Bloomsbury Group, Modernism .

Unit II : History of English Literature : 1830-2000

- Development of Poetry from Victorian to Modern age.
- Development of Novel from Victorian to Modern age.
- Development of Drama from Victorian to Modern age.
- Development of English Short Story from Victorian to Modern age.

Unit III : Short Story

William Somerset Maugham :	The Force of Circumstance
H.H. Munro :	A Matter of Sentiment
D.H Lawrence :	The Prussian Officer
Ruskin Bond :	The Kitemaker

Unit IV : Drama

Oscar Wilde :	The Importance of Being Earnest

Unit V : Poetry

Robert Browning	:	Prospice
Thomas Hardy	:	The Darkling Thrush
Matthew Arnold	:	Dover Beach
W.B Yeats	:	Adam's Curse

Mode of Examination :

- Internal Examination : 20 Marks

Two Long Answer Questions with internal choice : **10x2=20**

- Semester End Examination: 80 Marks

Section A

Q.No 1 shall comprise of 15 multiple choice questions from all units. Students will be required to attempt any 12 by re-writing them in their answer sheets.

Marks: 1x 12 = 12

Section B

Q.No 2 shall cover short answer questions from Unit –I . Four out of five questions of five marks each shall be attempted. The examiner shall test in depth understanding of the examinees who will be required to answer with two illustrations each in 80-100 words. The division of marks shall be: Definition= 2 marks, two illustrations = 1.5 marks each.

Marks: 4x5 = 20

Section C

Q.No 3, 4, 5 & 6 shall be long answer questions with internal choice from Units-II, III, IV & V. The candidate will attempt all the four questions. The word limit for each answer is 300-350 words.

Marks: 12x4 = 48

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Course Code : EL-601 (Theory)

STRUCTURE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of literary terms is a prime requisite for a student of English Literature. Literary terms embody the technical aspects in which a writer communicates through his or her texts. It involves the literary style, formatting style, editing, embellishments that writers employ in their works. Literary terms refer to the basic writing style quotient of a writer. These techniques comprises of words that are necessary for the understanding and critical analysis of literature. The knowledge of literary terms will enrich the student's knowledge of the major developments in English literature. Literary terms will enable the learner to be exposed to the literary, socio- cultural, economic and political basis of texts. In this lesson, the distance learners will be introduced to a small but diverse range of literary terms. Literary terms are an important part of one's engagement with literature. Literary terms involve the study of definitions of various significant terms, styles and forms in all genres of literature.

These literary terms also consist of literary movements, phrases and words. In essence, it resembles a dictionary and a glossary for literary works.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The knowledge of literary terms would enable the distance learner to have a good exposure to literary concepts as stated above. The lesson would also facilitate you in gaining a good exposure to English language and literature. By knowing the origin and evolution of the literary movements that form the background of the novels, poems and other works of art, the learner becomes deeply familiar with the author and the meanings coded in the narrative. The distance learner will henceforth be better able to gauge and learn from the narratives and develop a fine critical understanding and good analytical skill. The primary objective of the lesson is to impart the learner with knowledge of the literary terms ranging from Elegy, Rhetoric to Magic Realism. It will provide the learner with a basic and comprehensive exposure to the following literary terms .

1.2 ELEGY

It is a lament for the dead. A poem usually sung for the dead. The term elegy is derived from the Greek word *elegus*, which means a song of mourning usually sung on a flute. Elegies as a poetic genre were introduced in the 16th century. Elegy or elegiac couplets are usually written in honour of a deceased soul commemorating the memories of the lost soul. An elegy begins with the poet paying homage to the deceased or in most cases, it begins with the invocation of a muse, in this case being the person who has died. Elegies are composed in a song format and are sung at funerals. The content of an elegy involves a praise and rememberance of the deeds of the lost loved one. The poet often raises questions pertaining to destiny, karma and fate. In an elegy, the poet may also compare his/her own life with that of the deceased.

An Elegy is a lament that usually focuses on themes of love, war and death. Elegies have sprung from epic laments of Anglo-Saxon literature, for instance: *The Sea Farer* and *The Wanderer*. Elegiac couplets are beautifully evoked in John Milton's *Lycidas*(1638), and P.B. Shelley's *Adonais*(1821). There are different kinds of elegies. John Donne's elegies mostly were centered on the theme of love and loss. Pastoral elegies surfaced during the Renaissance period which mourned the shepherd or the poet. A famous English pastoral is Edmund Spenser's *Astrophel* written on the death of Sir Philip Sidney. Pastoral elegies are defined by a set of conventions which are listed below:

a) The speaker begins the poem by invoking the muses and referring to other classical mythological figures.

b) All elements of nature pay their homage to the departed soul, in this case the shepherd.

c) The poet questions the justice of faith, and of providence.

d) The lyric ends with a consolation where death is seen as the entry to a higher place, thereby transforming emotions of grief and sorrow to joy.

A Dirge is another variance of an elegy which also connotes grief, but is composed in an informal manner often in a form of a song. The most common type of elegy remains a lament written in formal verse to honour a dead person which ends in a consolation. Famous elegies are Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* and Walt Whitman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* .

1.3 RHETORIC

Rhetoric means the art of using language to influence, persuade, inform and at the same time motivate a group of listeners through verbal speech or through the medium of writing. The ultimate goal of rhetoric usually is to move the listener to action through effective arguments. Rhetoric is derived from the Greek word *rhetorikos* , which translates to oratorical or oratory. Aristotle defines rhetorical discourse as the art of ' discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case'. This definition of rhetoric remains true till date. A speaker uses rhetoric to rouse the intellectual and emotional calibre of the audience and tries to persuade and align the audience to accede and agree to the speaker's perspective. Rhetoricians list three main characteristics of a rhetorical discourse and exchange: 1) Deliberative: This technique involves the most common usage of rhetoric where the orator persuades the audience to respond to an issue and act accordingly . A good example of this is the speech of a public representative in a state's legislative assembly. 2) Forensic : A forensic display of rhetorics is seen in court proceedings or a judicial trial. 3) Epideictic: In this technique, the speaker gives arguments that praise or criticise a view or a party, in doing so the speaker shows of his/her own skills by exposing the other's merits or demerits. Another understanding of rhetorics is given by famous rhetorician Quintilian, who defines rhetoric as the art ' of a good man skilled in speaking' . He gave this definition in the first century, lending a moral basis and quality to the understanding of rhetorical discourse.

Rhetoric is generally used in political and literary discourses. In the field of literature, rhetoric has been widely employed by writers in their works. Writers are of the view that almost every writer uses rhetoric to influence the reader to believe in the reality that they weave through their works. The fictional reality prevalent in the texts, therefore is a clear example of the use of rhetoric as it tries to convince the

reader to give credence to the words in the text. In other words, each writer makes use of rhetoric to influence the reader by the text's content.

Rhetorical literature paved the way for rhetorical criticism. Horace was one of the first writers to highlight the role of rhetorical criticism. In his famous treatise, *Art of Poetry* (First century B.C), he asserted that the chief aim of poetry is to both instruct and delight. It established a close relationship between the author and the reader. The author in many ways, as Wayne Booth said tried to influence the reader by imposing his/her fictional world upon the reader. The reader would be influenced by the rhetorics employed by the author thereby establishing the power of rhetorical literature.

1.4 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

It is a technique that was widely used by writers in the twentieth century. Stream of consciousness technique is a method of narration that describes the events and incidents in a work through the thought processes of the character. The flow of thoughts that a character has involves the happenings that occur in the narration. The technique developed in response to the psycholanalytic theories propounded by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Carl Jung. In this technique, the character's mind becomes the seat of incidents and happenings in the work. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, the lead character, Clarissa Dalloway experiences a trail of thoughts while on her daily walk. The flow of thoughts that Clarissa experiences pertains to her past and present life incidents and situations. A great emphasis on the self and the workings of the self was inculcated by psychoanalysts and this is effectively embodied by Clarissa Dalloway. Dorothy Richardson in her novel *Pilgrimage*, solely focuses her attention on her heroine's mind and her perception.

Many critics employ the term 'stream of consciousness' with the term 'interior monologue'. Often these two terms are used interchangeably. Interior monologue per se is simply a speech, a chain of thoughts that a character experiences in his/her mind. It also refers to the fluid process of consciousness within the character. The interior monologue may also embody varied forms like mental images, mental reflections, feelings that a person recollects and retrospects. The author may not

intervene to express these varied thought processes, in essence they appear to be fragmented thought processes.

Stream of consciousness was a term that was first coined by William James in his book *Principles of Psychology*(1890) . He used the term to describe the uncharted flow of emotions, memories, thoughts and perceptions in a person's mind.

1.5 POETIC DRAMA

The term poetic drama was popularised by T.S Eliot in the twentieth century. Eliot was of the view that poetry and drama are inseparable from each other. In poetic drama, the dialogue is composed in the form of verses. A poetic drama combines both the elements of poetry as well as drama. The verse is usually composed in the form of blank verse. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral , The Cocktail Party, Elder Statesman* are good instances of poetic drama. Poetic Drama rose as a reaction against the plays of Shaw, and other nineteenth century dramatists whose plays couldn't bring out the complexes and nuances of contemporary existence. It only triggered the mind and not the heart as was the phrase. The 'verse play' or poetic drama apart from T.S. Eliot was revived by Irish dramatists like W.B Yeats, Sean O'Casey, J.M Synge.

1.6 ABSURD DRAMA

Absurd Drama or the Theatre of the Absurd is a technique that became hugely popular in the twentieth century. The term was first used by Martin Esslin in his essay *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Esslin employed the phrase in relation to the Samuel Beckett's famous absurdist play, *Waiting for Godot*. Absurd Drama is grounded in the fact that human behaviour is inherently absurd and strange. The content of absurdist plays or absurd drama explore this fact through the characters, incidents and the narration. The playwrights of absurd plays do away with a coherant plot structure and traditional stage designs. Absurdist plays delve more into the psychological realm of characters. The characters display grotesque/incongruent elements. Closely tied to the absurd drama is the philosophy of existentialism that rests on the fact that there is no meaning in our existence, human beings live simply because they exist. Martin Esslin's *Theatre of the Absurd* explores the paradoxes

that human beings are subjected to on a daily basis. A great example of an absurd play is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The play has no stage props but opens up on a bare setting where the two lead characters do nothing but contemplate about their miserable existence. The dialogues have no coherent meaning in themselves, the action is almost absent. The epic lines by the lead character Estragon sums up the general feeling conveyed through an absurd drama. 'Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, its awful'. The utter meaningless of life is expressed through absurdist dramas. The Absurd dramas are an experimental theatrical style that was a reaction against the second world war. This style was popularised by writers like Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Franz Kafka, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Jenet.

1.7 MAGIC REALISM

Magic realism is a narrative technique that evolved in the twentieth century. This narrative style is seen in the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie. Magic realism, as the term suggests uses elements that are beyond the physical dimension and lend itself to the magical realm, to expose an alternate view of the realistic world at large. The term 'magic realism' was first coined by Franz Roh, who was a German art critic. Roh interpreted magic realism through the medium of painting. He interpreted reality through the art of pictorial representation. Magic realism first lay its roots in Latin America. In Latin America, magic realism was first used to denote a more realistic American mindset, to create a more distinct and autonomous style of literature.

Magic realism is a separate literary genre and style that is characterized by two conflicting views. The first view is based on a more rational and logical view of reality while the other view supports an acceptance of a supernatural reality. It differs from fantasy as elements of magic realism are found in a real world with real-life characters who may experience a supernatural experience. In simple terms, it is a fusion of magical elements and reality. Magic realism rests on the fact that fiction is not separate from reality. Major characteristic features of magic realism include the coming together of polar opposites for instance urban and rural, rich and poor. The author maintains a good distance from the actions and views of the characters and the situations so as not to compromise the realism expressed in the text. A general

theme of ‘terror’ surfaces in most texts of magic realism. In Latin American novels, elements of magic realism come to the fore in the terror of political turmoil, unrest and revolutions.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson, the distance learner was introduced to a variety of new literary terms comprising of elegy, short story, magic realism, stream of consciousness to name a few. This knowledge will help in understanding the basic concepts of literature. Literature comprises of myriad technical terms. These technical terms are known as literary terms that have been employed by writers in their works.

1.9 GLOSSARY

1. Homage: paying respect or tribute.
2. Rouse : to move someone to doing an action.
3. Embody : to contain something.
4. Contemplate : to think deeply.
5. Chastity: to abstain from sex.
6. Liturgy: the prescribed format through which Christian worship is conducted.
7. Expressionism: it was an artistic movement in painting and literature that flourished during the twentieth century.
8. Surrealism: an artistic, literary movement of the twentieth century that grew out from the unconscious, which presented irrational opposing images together.
9. Degeneration: to rot, decay and become worse.
10. Ideology: beliefs, ideas of a person or an institution
11. Nuance: a subtle difference in the interpretation of meaning.
12. Grotesque: Incongruent, not aligned.

1.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

1. An Elegy is a tribute to the_____.
2. A rhetorician is someone who is skilled in the art of_____.
3. In the stream of consciousness technique the author focuses on the inner of the character_____.
4. A poetic drama involves both use of poetry and_____.
5. The absurd drama draws a lot from the philosophy of existentialism. State True or False_____.
6. Magic realism involves the use of both and reality_____.

1.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS)

Q1. What is an elegy.

Q2. Define magic realism.

Q3. Write a short note on the absurd theatre.

1.12 ANSWER KEY: (CYP), (SAQS)

(CYP) :

1. Dead
2. Speech
3. Self
4. Drama
5. True
6. Fiction

(SAQs) :

1. An elegy is a lament to honour the deceased.

2. It is a literary style that fuses both magical and realistic elements.

3. The absurd theatre was a theatre that evolved in the twentieth century. The sheer futility of the world wars intertwined with the futility of daily existence was underlined in the absurdist plays.

1.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Mention some of the popular elegies.

Q2. Write a short note on rhetorics.

Q3. What is a poetic drama?

Q4. Write a note on magic realism and also mention some of the works embodying magic realism.

Q5. Mention a few modernist writers and their works.

Q6. What is a pastoral elegy?

Q7. Magic realism is a modernist technique. Comment.

Q8. Write a detailed note on the stream of consciousness used in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*.

Q9. What were the main literary trends during modernism?

Q10. Discuss the evolution of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Q11. Write a brief note on the broad characteristics of magic realism.

Q12. What comprises an elegy?

1.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*.Oxford University Press,2015.Print.

Cuddon, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory: Fifth Edition.* Penguin Books,2015.Print.

Turco, Lewis. *The Book of Literary Terms: The Genres of Fiction, Drama, Nonfiction, Literary Criticism, and Scholarship*.UPNE, 1999.Print.

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STRUCTURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of literary terms is a prime requisite for a student of English Literature. Literary terms embody the technical aspects in which a writer communicates through his or her texts. It involves the literary style, formatting style, editing, embellishments etc that writers employ in their works. Literary terms refer to the basic writing style quotient of a writer. The knowledge of literary terms will enrich the student's knowledge of the major developments in English literature. Literary terms will enable the learner to be exposed to the literary, socio- cultural, economic and political basis of texts. In this lesson the distance learners will be introduced to the knowledge of literary terms. Literary terms are an important part of one's engagement with literature. Literary terms involve the study of definitions of various significant terms, styles and forms in all genres of literature.

These literary terms also consist of literary movements, phrases and words. In essence, it resembles a dictionary and a glossary for literary works.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the lesson is to impart the distance learner with knowledge of the literary terms ranging from Naturalism, the Oxford Movement to Modernism. It will provide the learner with a basic and comprehensive understanding of the following literary terms . The knowledge of literary terms would enable you to have a good exposure to literary concepts as stated above. The lesson would also facilitate you in gaining good exposure to the subject of English literature. By knowing the origin and evolution of the literary movements that form the background of the novels, poems and other works of art, the learner becomes deeply familiar with the author and the meanings coded in the narrative. The distance learner will henceforth be better able to gauge and learn from the narratives and develop a fine critical understanding and good analytical skill.

2.2 NATURALISM

In literature, naturalism is a literary movement and philosophy that used scientific observations and reality to understand a fictional portrayal of reality. In

other words, the novels bearing the naturalist technique viewed the actions in the narrative to be characteristic of the workings of the natural forces i.e. nature, heredity and environment. Emile Zola, a French novelist popularized this technique in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Naturalists believed that it gave a more accurate presentation of reality than realists. Naturalists believe that a human being exists entirely in relation to nature and forgoes the existence of a soul or any such religious or spiritual beliefs. The naturalists underline that every individual is born with certain desires, hunger to possess material possessions, he/she is later exposed to one's social economic class milieu that ultimately shapes one's personality. Emile Zola and other naturalists like Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser depict their characters with a precise scientific objectivity where the character's bodily functions embody the conditions that he/she faces in the story. Popular naturalist works include Emile Zola's *Germinal*, Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* etc.

2.3 POINT OF VIEW

As the term suggests, point of view is a mode of narration in which the writer or the narrator enables the reader to see or observe the events in a particular manner. There are normally three kinds of view or narrative : The first person point of view where the emphasis is on the letter 'I', the second person point of view employs the pronoun 'you', whereas the third person point of view uses the pronouns, 'they', 'us', 'them' etc. Point of view narration differs from the role of a narrator. Point of view refers to the position of the narrator in relation to the narrative. First person point of view creates a greater bond and intimacy between the reader and the story, while the second and third person point of views add complexity and nuance in the story. A writer may opt for any point of view narration and sometimes may even combine them together to underscore more complexity in the narrative or the story. A good example of the first person point of view narration is Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. Here the protagonist Jane Eyre herself tells the reader her own story. In the second person point of view narration the narrator involves the audience also as a character constantly addressing the reader as 'you', it is seldom used by writers owing to its complex underpinnings. While in the third person point of view narration, the character's story is told by an omniscient narrator.

2.4 SHORT STORY

Short story is a genre that is part of the prose fictional narrative. A short story differs from an anecdote and a novel. A short story is a kind of narrative fiction that tends to evoke a sustained singular mood or effect in the story. Short stories have no designated set length but they often are characterised as brief fictional narratives. A short story differs from an anecdote, and a novel. A short story involves a **exposition**(the introduction of characters, situations), **complication**(an event that creates a conflict), **crisis** (an event that propels the characters into action), **climax**, (the point where the conflict and crisis reaches its highest point), and finally **resolution**(where a final solution is offered and the conflict is resolved). The tradition of writing short stories emerged during the seventeenth century, since then it has undergone great many changes and presently has been adapted in various other forms. These include television serials, film scripts, documentaries, radio dramas, sketches etc.

2.5 PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (better known as the Pre-Raphaelites) were a group of English painters, poets, critics that were active in the nineteenth century. The founding members of this group included William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The group believed that art needed to be reimagined with literature. A picture could utter a thousand emotions. The fact that paintings weren't considered to be at par with written literature was another reason pre-raphaelites began this movement. The Pre-Raphaelites attempted to re-energize subject painting, a medium which was considered to be of a superficial value. The Pre-Raphaelites argued that each picture has the ability to tell a story which paved towards the unification of painting and literature at large.

2.6 OXFORD MOVEMENT

The Oxford movement was a religious movement that began in the Church of England. It sought to establish 'Anglicanism' in the English Church. An Anglican religious order meant allegiance to a religious communion who pledged allegiance to upholding the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. These virtues are similar to the old Christian values. The Oxford movement firmly established Anglican

religious orders which resulted in changes within the English Church. It primarily incorporated practices and ceremonies pertaining to liturgy . The basic intention of the English Church was to build symbolism within the English Church.

2.7 BLOOMSBURY GROUP

The Bloomsbury was a group of English intellectuals formed in England in the twentieth century. It was an informal group of English writers who lived in Bloomsbury, a district in central London. The Bloomsbury group began as a group that met occasionally to discuss upon issues related broadly to arts and philosophy. Their discussions grew from the happenings in the field of arts, literature and philosophy. It consisted of intellectuals from diverse professions from painters, artists, writers, poets to critics. The group opposed the hypocritical and narrow post Victorian assumptions in the arts. The Bloomsbury group had a lasting impact on the literary, artistic and intellectual scene of England. It comprised of many names like Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf, E. M Forster, Duncan Grant , Vanessa Bell, Clive Bell, Roger Frye, Lytton Strachey , John Maynard Keynes to many others.

2.8 MODERNISM

Modernism marked the beginning of a new era and a new period known as the twentieth century. It marked the new developments in the field of literature and the arts. It also ushered in a radical break from the old ways prevalent during the Victorian period. It also suggested radical breaks in the field of religion, social and political as well. In other words, modernists questioned traditional modes of religion, morality and societal ways. Nietszsche' s famous lines 'God is dead' captured the radical structuring of modernist thought in the field of philosophy. The period of modernism was heavily influenced by the two world wars. Famous modernist works like *The Wasteland*, Virginia Woolf's works and James Joyce's Ulysses represented the loss of faith in western civilizations which captured a fractured essence ruptured due to the catastrophe and destruction of the wars. Another important work that captured the essence of the age was Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The sheer absurdity of life's situations and circumstances is the central theme of the play. The modernists expressed doubts about the effectiveness of traditional modes to represent the harsh and often fractured and dissonant realities of the post war world. Modern

writers constructed new forms of representation through literary styles of expressionism, abstract modes and surrealism. *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka is another important work that underscores the absurdity of human life and the degeneration of the human self. Major modern novelists of the modern period include the likes of Thomas Mann, Andre Gide, Dorothy Richardson, Marcel Proust , William Butler Yeats , Rainer Maria Rilke, Bertolt Brecht and many others.

An important feature of modernism is the avant-garde movement in the arts, a group of writers and painters set out to create new modes of artistic expression by experimenting with new styles. They set out to revolt against set conventions and supported the 'new', as Ezra Pound put it, 'to make it new'. The modernist movement marked a sea change in the thought process of the twentieth century by underlining radical rupture from old ways.

2.9 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson, the distance learner was introduced to a variety of new literary terms comprising of naturalism, short story, Bloomsbury group, modernism, to name a few. This knowledge will help in understanding the basic concepts of literature. Literature comprises of myriad technical terms. These technical terms are known as literary terms that have been employed by writers in their works.

2.10 GLOSSARY

1. Milieu: Enivironment.
2. Communion: religious gathering and community
3. Radical: break from tradition, extreme step.
4. Dissonant: not in harmony.
5. Chastity: to abstain from sex.
6. Liturgy : the prescribed format through which Christian worship is conducted.

7. Expressionism: it was an artistic movement in the twentieth century.

8. Surrealism : an artistic, literary movement of the twentieth century that grew out from the unconscious which presented irrational opposing images together.

9. Degeneration: to rot, decay and become worse.

10. Ideology: beliefs, ideas of a person or an institution.

11. Nuance: a subtle difference in the interpretation of meaning.

12. Anecdote: a very short interesting/amusing story.

13. Omniscient: present everywhere.

2.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

1. Modernism is a _____ century movement.

2. Naturalism is a literary technique given by writer Ezra Pound. (True/False)

3. The Oxford movement was first centered at the university of Oxford. (True/False)

4. Name the members of the pre-raphaelites brotherhood.

5. The Bloomsbury group only was limited to London. (True/False)

6. Short stories as a literary genre is defined by its_____.

2.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q1. Define the naturalist literary technique.

Q2. Define the pre-raphaelite brotherhood.

Q3. Write a short note on the Bloomsbury group.

2.13 ANSWER KEY (CYP) (SAQs)

1. Twentieth century movement

2. False

3. True

4. William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

5. False

6. Length

(SAQs)

1. A technique where writers created characters that were the result of nature, heredity and their environment.

2. It is a literary style and movement which sought to reimagine the unification of painting and literature.

3. This literary group opposed the narrow and rigid assumptions of Victorians and supported newer art forms.

2.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. What is naturalism and how was it showcased through literature?

Q2. The motto of the Bloomsbury group was.

Q3. Mention the members of the bloomsbury group.

Q4. Why was the Bloomsbury group formed.

Q5. What was the ideology of the pre-rephaelites brotherhood.

Q6. Write a short note on the oxford movement.

Q7. What were the main characteristics of modernism.

Q8. Name some famous modernist pieces of literature.

Q9.Write a brief note on the ‘point of view’ narration.

Q10. What comprises a short story.

Q11. Name two modernist writers.

Q12. *Waiting for Godot* is an absurd as well as modernist play: Discuss.

2.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*.Oxford University Press,2015.Print.

Cuddon, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory: Fifth Edition.* Penguin Books,2015.Print.

Turco, Lewis. *The Book of Literary Terms: The Genres of Fiction, Drama, Nonfiction, Literary Criticism, and Scholarship*.UPNE, 1999.Print.

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English Literature **Semester-VI**

Lesson No. 3 DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY AND NOVEL FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN AGE **Unit II**

STRUCTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Victorian age is one of the most significant ages in the history of English literature, not only in terms of literary output but in terms of quality of literature also. The age saw the rise of novel as it became the most important genre. Poetry also existed side by side and the age is known for producing some of the best poets in English literature. Similarly, the Modern Age is also remarkable for a great literary output which includes some of the most famous novelists and poets of English literature.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are;

- to familiarize the learner with the socio-political background of the two ages, i.e. the Victorian age and the Modern age,
- to give an account of the development of poetry from the Victorian to the Modern age, and
- to give an account of the development of novel from the Victorian to the Modern age, and
- to highlight the literary trends and important writers of the two ages.

3.3 SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE VICTORIAN AND MODERN AGE

3.3.1 THE VICTORIAN AGE- SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The period of the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), which is usually called "The Victorian Age", was an age full of contradictions, of industrialization and technological progress, of extreme poverty and the exploitation of factory workers, of social reforms, of scientific discoveries and religious unrest. In short, the Victorian age was the age of industrialization, empire and reform.

The Victorian age in literature is roughly taken to be between 1830 and 1890, approximately coinciding with the long reign of Queen Victoria. A history of the Victorian age records a period of economic expansion and rapid change.

Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, at a time when the monarchy as an institution was not particularly popular. But as the success of the nation reached its peak and began to decline, the monarch assumed a greater and greater symbolic power. Victoria, by her death in 1901 had come to represent the nation in a way which only Queen Elizabeth I had done in the past.

A history of the Victorian age records a period of economic expansion and rapid change. The Victorian age saw rapid development in industry and technology. Railways also developed during this period and the the application of steam-power to machines and textile industry coupled with the cutting of new canals and the building of new roads and railways (which made transport easier and cheaper), transformed Great Britain from an agricultural country to an industrial one. The people traditionally associated with land and agriculture in the countryside lost their employment and a large number of these people migrated to the cities in search of employment. Majority of this migrations was from the villages to the city of London. This mass movement of people from the country to London changed its demographics drastically. When Queen Victoria came to the throne, the population of London was about two million inhabitants; at her death in 1901, the population had increased to 6.5 million. So, the growth of London and of other major cities in Britain marked a

final stage in the change from a way of life based on the land to a modern urban economy based on manufacturing, international trade, and financial institutions.

The modernization came with its own set of problems. As a result of large-scale migration from villages to cities, poverty and exploitation increased. Family life was significantly altered and slums sprang up in and around London and pollution made its appearance. Urbanisation created an intolerable overcrowding: houses were mainly built back to back and side by side. They had no piped water, no sanitarians. The living conditions in the slums were very poor. As a consequence, typhus and cholera were very common.

However, industrialization and urbanisation led to some other serious concerns as well. The foremost among them was the exploitation of the workers. As a result of the mass migrations, the number of people available as workers was considerably high than the number of workers actually required in the factories. So, the people who somehow got jobs in the factories were not willing to leave them at any cost. This resulted in the massive exploitation of the factory workers. For much of this period, industrialization meant the exploitation of factory workers. Men, women and children worked in factories sometimes up to 14-16 hours a day while factory owners paid very low wages and closed down factories during periods of economic slump. The gulf separating the rich from the poor was so deep that a Tory Prime Minister wrote of two nations, and several contemporary novelists like Charles Dickens criticized the desperate situation of the working class in their novels.

With time, however, awareness regarding the pathetic condition of the factory workers came to light and discontent began to grow among the common people. This discontent led to protests and demonstrations. Of the most significant among these movements was the Chartist Movement, a working class movement for political reform in Britain that existed from 1838 to 1848. The Chartism called for six reforms to make the political system more democratic. The major demand was the right to vote for every man who was twenty-one years of age. The other demands included voting by secret ballot, no property qualification to become Members of Parliament, payment for MPs, electoral districts of equal size, and annual Parliamentary elections.

Various reforms in the social and political life were also carried out during this period as increasing social unrest raised fears of a revolution similar to the recent one in France. After much parliamentary debate, the act to abolish slavery was passed in 1833. The Factory Act of the same year took account of worker's demands. Workhouses for the poor and the unemployed were regulated after the Poor Law of 1834. All through the century, there were debates about the condition of both the urban and the rural poor.

Along with politics, a lot of changes were taking place in the society. Middle class tried to retain an old world morality in times when moral codes were too lax. Part of the moral debate surrounded sexual codes, marriage, religious beliefs and family life. Debates around faith were invariably driven by developments in science that questioned and broke down established ideas. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) altered the prevailing views of life, divinity, humanity and creation in the latter decades of the century. Many writers of the age were involved in what eventually came to be known as the 'condition of England' debates. The Victorian age produced some of the best known poets and novelists in the English language.

There was a large reading public created during this period, with circulating libraries, newspapers, and cheap novels. Theatres remained popular and places like Covent Gardens and Drury Lane saw a change in their audiences as more members of the middle class began to acquire high cultural tastes.

A term that is often used to describe Victorian attitudes is 'Victorian Temper'. Victorian temper refers to the multiple strands of ideology and thinking that prevailed during the period. Political and social thought was divided between the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservatives favoured social hierarchy and had a taste for older (classical) art and thinking while the Liberals believed in a utilitarian philosophy of individual and collective action.

The Victorian temper is also marked by a great divide between the believers and the agnostics. Among the believers are Cardinal Newman and the early John Ruskin. The agnostics included figures like George Eliot, Charles Darwin, Thomas Hardy and the Pre-Raphaelites. Others like G.M Hopkins swerved between faith and non-belief.

The Victorian temper was marked by social hypocrisy about sexuality (it is commonly referred to as 'Victorian prudishness' even today). The clash between faith and science was prominent in the intellectual debates of the age. The Victorian temper was marked by a fascination for technology and scientific developments. In terms of the arts, the 'Victorian temper' was caught between ideas of the moral function of art and the drive towards a pure aestheticism.

The influences on the Victorian writers were many: from medievalism to the industrial revolution and from Darwinian theories to the expanding British Empire and all this got reflected in the literature of the age.

3.3.2 THE MODERN AGE- SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND

While the political and social history of the 19th century can be summed up in two key-words, Democracy and Reform, the 20th century is merely an extension of these two principles. Where *modern* was a keyword for the first part of the twentieth century, the term *post-modern* has been used to describe the attitudes, and creative production which followed the Second World War.

The modern age in literature was grounded in achievements that are amazing in their potential for both emancipation and destruction: atomic energy, space exploration, genetic and biomedical engineering and telecommunications. Technological advances in these areas could either save millions of human beings and the planet or destroy tem several times over. They can free people from the 'bondage' of disease, poverty and oppression or mire them in worse conditions. The literature of the 20th century has consistently addressed these extreme situations of freedom and oppression, fear and freedom from fear, ruins and achievements.

The increasing role of, and dependence on, electrical and mechanical devices, from everyday life and housework to gigantic industries, marks the 20th century. The technologization of the world and life has also resulted in massive environmental problems, some of which have attracted socio-political and legal attention and activism across the world. Right from the first decades of the 20th century, North American and European continents underwent rapid urbanization, as rural populations fled to cities for jobs. Science became the most significant discipline perhaps at the

cost of the humanities and social sciences. The race to colonize space began. Medical science crossed unbelievable distances and provided treatment for assorted illnesses. It cracked open the secret of life – the discovery of DNA stands on par with the discoveries of the radio waves, the theory of relativity, the steam engine and other such achievements of the industrialized age.

The economic depression of the 1930s proved to be a huge blow to the already suffering poor. The lack of jobs and the decrease in the value of money made life exceptionally tough. Interestingly, many large business houses also suffered and numerous businessmen went bankrupt with the stock exchange crashes. This phenomenon was to repeat in the dot com crash of the late 1990s when the information technology- led software markets slowed down and large companies had to impose lay-offs.

Wars significantly altered political, geographical, financial, and social relations. If World War I (1914-1918) reiterated the issue of territorial conquest, World War II (1939-1945) underscored the ease of destruction, the extent of human suffering and the power of mindless technology. The wars brought home several truths to the 20th century: that man was perfectly capable of destroying what he had built, that cruelty is an integral feature of human psychology, that all war is about suffering no matter what the justification of war may be, and that war may be about heroism but it is also about the ability to be indifferent to the consequences of heroism. The literature of the two World Wars was an attempt to negotiate the trauma of such extensive suffering and the theme of power and cruelty. The war also revealed the fragile nature of human existence. When T.S. Eliot wrote his famous lines “these fragments I have shored against my ruins” (*The Wasteland)*, he was referring not only to the very limited knowledge mankind possesses, but also to the fragmented nature of memory, identity, desire and existence itself. The entire literature of the 20th century can, in fact, be read as an attempt to deal with the discovery of the hopelessness of courage and the fallibility of mankind in the face of war. It is also possible to argue that literary techniques like the ‘stream of consciousness’ in James Joyce and Virginia Woolf were responses to the brutal nature of the realities of war. Poets and artists sought to escape the harsh reality of suffering, destruction and cruelty by retreating into the mind. Rather than exploring the real world (as the 19th

century realist novel did), they preferred to explore the mind. The literature of the post-World Wars was often, therefore, a literature of escape, though certain genres like apocalyptic/disaster novels addressed the theme of human/earth destruction directly.

Governments in North America and Europe expanded mechanisms for the welfare of the poor. The entertainment industry – television, radio and cinema – became a huge profit-making and popular aspect of modern life. Towards the latter half of the 20th century, American mass culture, specifically Hollywood and television entered the 'Third World' countries (taken to mean countries in Asia and Africa) and became a major player in their cultural scene. The publishing industry sought to capture the market – more literacy meant more reading publics – with lower priced editions and pocket-sized, easy-to-carry paperbacks.

In addition to the popularization of literature and the extensive mass cultural forms of the 20th century, there was also a flourishing of artistic rebellion against established forms. This resulted in radical experimentation in artistic form, technique and themes, especially in painting. Cubism, Vorticism, and Futurism were artistic movements directly influence by the mechanical and technological developments of the age.

Ideological conflicts, especially after World War II, divided the world along capitalist/communist lines. Escalating tensions between these two camps in Europe and America changed global geopolitics and resulted in what came to be known as the Cold War. A significant effect of this was the excessive militarization of the world, with both camps looking for military bases all over the world to deter the other.

From the last decades of the 19th century, numerous countries in Asia and Africa began to fight the domination of their cultures and identities by the white race. These nationalist movements resulted in political independence for many countries, including India. The process of decolonization also saw a revival of new non-English cultural forms and new writings by formerly colonized people in English (a discipline now known as Commonwealth or Postcolonial Literature). Newly

independent countries began, in the wake of the World Wars and the Cold War later, to join the capitalist or communist camps.

Large-scale refugee movement across the world during the course of the 20th century saw people migrating across borders, despite stricter border controls, in search of a safer and better life. Genocidal wars and ethnic cleansing became a part of the 20th century – starting with the Jews in Nazi Germany, through the conflicts in Africa and Europe in the last decades of the 20th century. No other century saw so many millions suffer from racism, poverty, unemployment, or disease.

The civil rights movement in the USA, saw a marked change in the conditions of blacks and the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and others generated new cultural icons. Across the world today, the work of civil rights movements, the United Nations and institutions like Amnesty International and Red Cross has expanded and parallels – some might argue, exceeds – the role of the governments. The feminist and gay rights movements have been influential in politics and have had a marked impact on literary and cultural studies. Environmental activism, such as that by Greenpeace, has attained a significant degree of political presence in many countries.

However, with the increasing role of agencies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the economic control of 'First World' (a term used to describe nations in Europe and North America as well as others like Australia and Japan) over the 'Third World' has increased resulting in a phenomenon called neo-colonialism. Protests against First World economic and cultural imperialism has increased substantially, especially in the 1980 and 1990s. Meanwhile, religious, cultural, racial, and linguistic tensions, driven by economic crisis have escalated political problems in numerous parts of the world. Ethnic conflicts, separatist movements and religious fundamentalisms have increased in Third World nations.

3.4 DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN AGE

3.4.1 DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY DURING THE VICTORIAN AGE

The Victorian poetry had been refreshed as well as muddied by two generations of Romantic innovation. The legacy which the Romantics handed on to the Victorians did not prove to be Wordsworth's simplicity or his autobiographical self-examination in quietly probing blank verse, nor was it in any conspicuous degree. Shelley's mythopoeic excitement or Byron's alternation of dashing histrionics are a verse satire both colloquial and formal. But Keats' rich colours and the languid movement of his nightingale ode were taken over, as were eighteenth-century Gothic sensationalism and the desire to get behind the eighteenth century to Elizabethan and Jacobean models. Further, the Victorian poetry is generally considered to be in the shadow of the popular genre of the novel: a reversal of the situation in the Romantic age, and largely due to the success of the novels of Walter Scott, who transferred his energies from poetry to the novel in 1814. Victorian poetry is, however, of major importance, and the most popular poet of the age, Alfred Tennyson, is as much a representative figure as Dickens.

The most significant poet of the Victorian age in terms of output and influences surely Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892). Tennyson's career spanned most of the Victorian age and the 19th century and extended over more than sixty years. Tennyson was influenced by the English Romantics, who held sway during his college days at Cambridge. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) demonstrates this influence. Sections of *Recollections of Arabian Nights* and *Mariana* also show Romantic touches. Tennyson was also an extremely well-educated poet, with a wide breath of classical learning. In the year 1847, *The Princess* was published and *In Memoriam*, a philosophic elegy inspired by the death of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam came out in 1850. This elegy, steeped in spirituality and emotional turmoil, is a good example of the meditative poem, of which Tennyson is undoubtedly one of the masters. *In Memoriam,* is also an important because it stands as a good instance of the Victorian crisis of faith: caught between traditional belief and the new science. *Maud: A Monodrama* (1854) was an interesting experiment in what is known

as ‘monodrama’, where the entire poem is a series of episodes presented through soliloquies. It quivers with the patriotic passion of the time of the Crimean War and with the general ferment by which this was accompanied. Emotional and fragmented, these poems came to be associated with what is derogatorily termed the ‘spasmodic school’. The poems were used to reveal the condition of the speaker’s mind- with all its emotional upheavals, madness and passions. Tennyson’s greatest project was the poetic equivalent of the historical novel. In the time of uncertainty over tradition, he turned to the medieval ages and the result was *Idylls of the King* (1859). Incorporating the Arthurian legend of the Holy Grail myth, *Idylls* presents the most sustained Victorian attempt at allegory. The poem has some powerful passages, especially those dealing with the battle scenes and the death of Arthur in the section titled ‘The Passing of Arthur’. Tennyson’s ‘Tithonus’, ‘The Lotos Eaters’ and ‘Ulysses’ returned to Greek and Roman legends. *Locksley Hall* of 1842 is full of the restless spirit of ‘young England’ and of its faith in science, commerce, and the progress of mankind; while its sequel, *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1866) shows the revulsion of feeling which had occurred in many minds when the rapid development of science seemed to threaten the very foundations of religion, and commerce was filling the world with the sordid greed of gain. Tennyson’s other important poems include ‘Mariana’, ‘Tears, Idle Tears’, ‘The Lady of Shalott’, etc. His later writings included, along with many very different things, the remarkable philosophical poems, *The Ancient Sage*, *Vastness,* and *Akbar’s Dream,* and the superb lyric (now always printed, in accordance with his directions, as the last poem in any complete edition of his works) *Crossing the Bar.*

Tennyson is perhaps the most conscientious and accomplished poetic artist in English literature after Milton and is noteworthy for the even perfection of his style, his wonderful mastery of language at once simple and ornate, and the exquisite and varied music of his verse. From the strictly historical point of view, he is particularly interesting as the most thoroughly representative poet of the age. The extraordinary diversity of his work is itself typical of the strongly marked diversity of his age. He wrote on classical,

romantic, and modern subjects; on subjects taken (like Wordsworth's) from humble and rustic life; on English history and Celtic legend; on the deepest problems of philosophy and religion; and the range of his method and style is scarcely less remarkable than that of his matter.

Robert Browning (1812-1889), whose career paralleled Tennyson's, was also influenced by the classical poets as well as the English Romantics. His first major work *Paracelsus* appeared in 1835. This work is full of classical allusions and obscure imagery, a tone that solidifies with *Sordello* (1840). In his later works, Browning discovered his favourite style, the dramatic monologue, as seen in poems like 'My Last Duchess' and 'Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister'. His collection of poems *Dramatis Personae* (1864) showed influences of contemporary scientific theories. Between 1868 and 1869, he published *The Ring and the Book*, which established his reputation as the greatest poet of the Victorian age after Tennyson. The monologues here thematize questions that are characteristics of the age: knowledge, truth, evidence and faith.

Browning's most famous poems are fine portraits as well. 'Fra Lippo Lippi' has the brash, irreverent and naughty bishop, exposing the hypocrisy of monasteries and religion. 'Andrea del Sarto' is a monologue by a painter whose career is going downhill. These poems, like most of the Browning works, also showcase Victorian concerns like the limits of human knowledge and ambition, fate and destiny, loveless relationships and faith. In 'My Last Duchess', Browning's conversational style explores the Duke's cool, ironic look at his life and love. The woman subject in the poem does not speak at all and is spoken for. This was a common theme in Browning, where the male speaker speaks on behalf of the woman, even describing her emotional states. 'Porphyria's Lover' is another famous example.

Browning's lyrics are concerned with love and faith- two themes that figure in almost all his works. The theme is explored in his poem 'Two in the Campagna'. His characterization- of lovers, husbands and others- is powerful and the use of the dramatic monologue enables him to engage with the mental

and emotional state of his characters. His *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* (1855) returned to medieval themes of heroism, quest, and romance. Highly figurative, dramatic and experimental, with a brooding, nightmarish landscape, this poem about a knight's quest and suffering is surreal in parts and recalls the romance of an earlier era. The poem concludes with the image of heroism. The poem is often treated as an allegory of Victorian heroism in the face of spiritual uncertainty.

In contrast with Tennyson, Browning was bold, rugged, and altogether unconventional in matter and style. As a moralist and religious teacher Browning held a very distinct place among the writers of the Victorian age. Browning was an optimist and he never lost hope. 'Hope hard in the subtle thing that's spirit,' was the note of his message to his generation. To the many about him who were asking dreadfully whether after all life was really worth the living, he gave answer in the words of his Pippa- 'God's in His heaven- all's right with the world.'

After Tennyson and Browning, the third place among Victorian poets may perhaps be assigned to Matthew Arnold. Matthew Arnold exhibits remarkable control over diction in his mature poetry. Deeply philosophical and reflective, Arnold's major works are his shorter poems. His famous 'Dover Beach' is a frightening vision of humanity and culture as it captures the uncertainty of Arnold's age. In another famous poem 'The Scholar-Gipsy', Arnold captures the tensions between modernity and the rapidly disappearing agrarian (pastoral) ideal. His most ambitious poems- *Sohrab and Rustum, Tristram and Iseult, Balder Dead* and *Empedocles on Etna* were written in accordance with his theory that all great poetry is impersonal or objective.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) holds her position as the most considerable and vigorous, if not the greatest, of all the women-writers of verse. Her poetry is frequently marked by over-wrought emotionalism, which often becomes hysterical. But at her best she exhibits the redeeming qualities of noble sincerity, genuine passion, and undeniable power over language. Her most ambitious poem *Aurora Leigh* (1857), though rather

loosely structured, is full of intense moments. It is a long poem in blank verse, which save for its form, might really be classed as a novel. Suffering and poverty as well as exploitation and courage mark this work. Her finest work, however, is to be sought in the series of sonnets entitled *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, in which she enshrined her love. Her other poems include *Casa Guidi Windows* and *Cry of the Children.*

In terms of style and form, the most innovative of the Victorian poets is Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889). Hopkins' stylistic experiments eventually created a new mode: the sprung rhythm. Hopkins embodies the central dilemma of modern times: how to have faith given the present context. His 'The Wreck of the Deutschland', dealing with the death of nuns in a sea disaster, is symptomatic of this dilemma of faith. 'God's Grandeur', 'Thou art indeed just, Lord', 'The Windhover' all explore questions of faith.

Among the minor poets of the Victorian age, mention must be made of A.C.Swinburne, Edward Fitzgerald, who is famous for his translation of Omar Khaiyyam's Persian *Rubaiyat* (1859), James Thomson who painted a searing portrait of modernity in *The City of Dreadful Night,* which anticipates the dystopic visions of Eliot and other modernists.

The middle of the century is marked by a new Romantic impulse, the Pre"Raphaelite Movement, which begins with Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). Rossetti along with the painters William Holman Hunt and John E. Millais, formed the Pre"Raphaelite Brotherhood with the purpose to restore to painting and literature the qualities which the three enthusiasts found in the fifteenth century Italian painters, those who just preceded Raphael. Rossetti and his friends felt that in trying to follow Raphael's grand style, the art of their own time had become too abstract and conventional. They wished to renew emphasis on serious emotion, imagination, individuality, and fidelity to truth; and in doing so they gave special attention to elaboration of details in a fashion distinctly reminiscent of medievalism. Their work had much, also, of medieval mysticism and symbolism. They were often criticized for being too concerned with the body.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote poems such as *The Blessed Damozel* (his best known), *World's Worth,* and *Awe.* As a ballad writer he was very successful, especially in dealing with situations of tragic intensity, as in *The White Ship, Sister Helen,* and *Eden Bower,* as a sonnet writer, as in the fine series, *The House of Life,* he ranks with the greatest.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), D.G. Rossetti's sister also belongs to the Pre-Raphaelite school of poetry. Her fame as a poet rests mainly upon *Goblin Market* (1862). This long narrative poem carries several traits of the 'fleshy school' (a term associated with the Pre-Raphaelite group).

After Tennyson's death, there were poets in the land, however, between 1892 and 1913, though it was not until the later date that new poetry began to be read by large numbers of people. These twenty years may therefore be treated as a transition period.

There were, first the poets who took patriotism and imperialism as their keywords. W.E. Henley's (1849-1903) services in verse to the patriotic ideal in its cruder form are represented chiefly by the anthology, *Lyra Heroica,* and by a volume of his own poems, *For England's Sake.* He is at his best in the free-verse stanzas, *A late lark twitters from the quiet skies,* though more widely admired for *Invictus,* a piece of spectacular fist-shaking against heaven which satisfies the raw sentiments of immature heterodoxy. Sir William Watson's (1858-1935) best poetry echoes the stately accents of the past- as in the elegies, *Wordsworth's Grave* and *Lachrymae Musarum* (on the death of Tennyson).

Three poets of this transition period stand apart from the rest: Francis Thompson, A.E. Houseman, and Robert Bridges. Francis Thompson (1859-1907) published three collections of verse between 1893 and 1897- including *The Hound of Heaven,* an *Ode to the Setting Sun,* and a group of *Poems on Children*- which ensure for Thompson a place among the English poets.

A.E. Houseman (1859-1936) published only two small books of verse, *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems.* The perfection of his technique, his

achievement of beauty without ornament, and the adamantine fortitude of his philosophical pessimism, made him much admired by younger poets who could praise where they could not follow.

Robert Bridges (1844-1930) between 1885 and 1905 wrote a series of verse dramas and masques, and slowly became known to a widening circle by many beautiful lyrics and several equally beautiful longer poems, including *The Growth of Love* and *Eros and Psyche. The Testament of Beauty,* a lengthy philosophical poem published at the end of 1929, was received with general admiration, though it is much more difficult than the earlier neglected poems.

Of the later Victorians, Thomas Hardy is the most remarkable. Thomas Hardy, known more for his fiction, wrote some war poetry, of which 'Drummer Hodge', 'Channel Firing', 'The Going of the Battery' and 'The Man He Killed' are the most accomplished. There is a sense that war is an exercise in both brutality and stupidity. Hardy meditated not only on the soldiers going out to die, but also on the families and beloveds left behind, awaiting their return. In 'The Man He Killed', as the soldier discovers that there is no real reason for killing his 'enemy', Hardy looks forward to Yeats' celebrated 'An Irish Airman foresees His Death'. In 'Drummer Hodge', likewise, the soldiers wonder if the world be any saner and what they are supposedly doing out there. Other meditative lyrics from Hardy include the 'She to Him' poems and the celebrated 'Darkling Thrush'.

Robert Bridges' succession to the laureateship in 1913 coincided with an effort by several young poets to popularize contemporary poetry and the period also saw the revival of poetry. Largely through the enterprise of Rupert Brook (1887-1915), though under the enterprise of Sir Edward Marsh, an anthology of new verse was issued in the autumn of 1913 with the title *Georgian Poetry.* Immensely successful, this volume started a boom in poetry which was still developing when the First World War gave it a further impetus. Men in unusually stressful circumstances then found in poetry an outlet for unusually insistent emotions and thoughts. A flood of war poetry began, and lasted until the peace. Rupert Brook himself was a real poet, though not a

great one. His collected poems include some remarkable and memorable pieces: the *1914* sonnets, *The Great Lover, The Old Vicarage, Grantchester.* From the multitude of war poets, Julian Grenfell and Siegfried Sassoon may be singled out: the first as giving in *Into Battle* the most sincere expression to courageous idealism; the other as beginning in *Counter Attack* that war of the fountain pen against the machine gun which continued for years after the war ended.

Among the Georgian poets, those poets who did not write on war, and dealt with other themes in their poems may be included John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, W.H. Davies, Ralph Hodgson, etc.

3.4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF POETRY DURING THE MODERN AGE

The most striking fact in twentieth-century English literary history is the revolution in poetic taste and practice which resulted in the rejection of the view of poetry represented by Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (first published in 1864 and used as a school textbook in Britain well into the 1930's) in favour of one which saw poetry as at the same time more symbolist and more cerebral. This revolution was an Anglo-American achievement.

The poet was no longer the sweet singer whose function was to render in mellifluous verse and an imagery drawn with great selectivity from the world of Nature a self-indulged and personal emotion; he was the explorer of experience who used language in order to build up rich patterns of meaning which, however impressive their immediate impact, required repeated close examination before they communicated themselves fully to the reader. A core of burning paradox was preferred to a gloss of surface beauty. It was not the function of poetry to pander to the languid dreams of a pampered sensibility, or display the poet's emotional problems in artfully cadenced vowel sounds.

There were many changes in this period to the language of poetry. Throughout the Victorian and Georgian periods the language of poetry was felt to have a special decorum and to be different from everyday language. It

was seen to consists of a special diction which gave a unity to the poem and which was appropriate for the expression of elevated feelings and ideas. In the Modern period, there is a movement from poetic diction to a new poetic language. Modern poetry contains language that is closer to the idioms of everyday speech and to a more diverse range of subject matter. Instead of a single unified poetic diction, different styles coexist frequently.

Modernist poetry in England was also influenced by French symbolism, the American imagists, and the writings of Ezra Pound. Ezra Pound (1885-1972) has the reputation of being one of the most difficult poets of the 20th century. Pound's *Cantos*, running into 120 sections, is a multicultural epic. There are Chinese characters, quotations in European languages and references from the history of Africa, the United States and Europe.

The first important development in the twentieth century poetry is the Irish Revival/ Celtic Revival. For roughly ten years, up to 1899, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), strove to bring into existence an Irish National Theatre, which led to the revival of Irish poetry and drama. When at length he succeeded, there began a brilliant period of Irish drama, to which Yeats himself contributed several notable poetic plays. His genius, however, was more poetic than dramatic, and his early lyrics, then admired equally by the people and the other poets, set him in the forefront of contemporary poetry, and he is surely Ireland's greatest modern poet. Yeats was particularly influenced by the French symbolists and adapted from Celtic mythology and various mystic traditions. Yeats was also a deeply political poet and his engagement with Ireland's struggles with England produced some exceptionally fine poems like 'Easter 1916'. However, Yeats also tried to escape the dilemmas and anxieties of his time by turning to mysticism in plays and works such as *Michael Robartes and the Dancer,* 'Solomon to Sheba', 'Leda and the Swan' and others. Yeats' vision of civilization and destruction appears in poems like 'The Second Coming', while it informs much of his better poems like 'Lapis Lazuli', 'The Tower', the two Byzantine poems. In 'Adam's Curse', Yeats describes the difficulty of creating something beautiful.

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is often taken to be the most complex poet of the 20th century. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Gerontion', 'Hollow Men', and 'Ash Wednesday' are some of the important poems composed by him. However, Eliot's most ambitious poem was *The Wasteland* (1922). Borrowing from a range of sources in Christian mythology and anthropology, incorporating ancient symbols, history and love stories from Ovid to the present, *The Wasteland* is an unparalleled work in modernist poetry. The poem is in the form of fragments and is meant to indicate how human knowledge will always be limited and incomplete.

Of the poets of the 1930s, writing in the wake of Eliot and Pound's high modernist mode, the work of W.H. Auden (1907-1973) is perhaps the most significant. Auden was a member of a group of writers at Oxford: Stephen Spender, Louis MacNiece, Christopher Isherwood and Cecil Day-Lewis. The Auden generation was influenced by socialist thought until it was disillusioned with versions of socialism because of the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin. Auden wrote about war, culture, morality, workers and humanity. His best poems include 'September 1, 1939', 'In Memory of WB Yeats', 'The Unknown Citizen', 'The Fall of Rome', and 'The Shield of Achilles'.

Stephen Spender (1901-1995), like Auden, Isherwood and others, was influenced by socialism. As a consequence of his politics, he wrote what is called the poetry of social protest in *Poems (1933) and* Vienna (1934).

John Betjeman (1906-1984) is notable for his casual tone and dry wit. A well-known example of his tone is 'Slough' in which he asks bombs to destroy the wealthier classes and spare the poor clerks.

Of the more anthologized poets from the 1930s is the Welsh Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) whose impoverished and chaotic life often made more news than his poetry. Among his notable works are 'Poem in October', with its extraordinary evocation of space, mobility and nature, 'Fern Hill' and the visionary 'Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night'.

George Barker (1913-1991) gained notice in the twenties. His early poetry was experimental, though he was to turn to the ballad and sonnet later on. His main themes range from war to economics, the nature of reality to love.

David Gascoyne (1916-2001) burst on the scene with a poetry collection at the age of sixteen. Influenced by surrealism much of Gascyone's poetry is a mixture of myth, harsh images from contemporary life and technology and a certain pessimistic note. His poem 'Slvador Dali' is an exercise in surreal imagery.

By the time we enter the 1950s, the Auden generation of poets is on its way out. We have some refreshing new voices, the most notable among which is that of Philip Larkin (1922-1985). Larkin, one of the group known as 'the movement poets' , is a popular poet for the choice of his subject matter (everyday life), style (plain) and tone (ironic, witty). Larkin's famous 'Aubade' is a good example of his style. His other important poems are 'Church Going', 'Kick Up the Fire', 'This Be the Verse', etc.

Edith Sitwell (1887-1964), influenced by Eliot and the high modernists and marked by a feminist sensibility, is not well known as a poet today. Her poetry, particularly her nature poetry, is often abstract and is an effort to deliver a whole new perception of the world. Her collection *Façade* (1922) is a good example of the modernist influence. There is a touch of surreal in poems like 'Heart and Mind.'

Rejecting both the modernist' abstract philosophizing and experimentation with form and the deliberate commonness of the Larkin kind, contemporary poetry, from the 1970s has moved along various lines. There is an anxiety that poetry has exhausted all possible forms. Cyberculture has enabled new experimentation with hypertexts, thus providing a new form.

A raw, violent primitivism is visible in Ted Hughes (1930-1998). Turning away from the urbanism of the moderns, Hughes' early work is rooted in nature. However, Hughes did not have Wordsworthian view of nature.

The nature found in *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), *Crow* (1970) and other early poems, is a violent, barbaric and blood-ridden one. Dismemberment, blood and violent mutilation mark Hughes' work. His other important poems are 'Snowdrop', 'Hawk Roosting', and '*Birthday Letters'* (1998), which was meant to be an explanation of his troubled relationship with Sylvia Plath, the American poet who eventually committed suicide.

Donald Davie (1922-1995) poet and distinguished critic, is often treated as a part of the movement poets. He writes a more philosophical and abstract poetry. He chose rural landscapes more than anything else, and perhaps wrote more semi-urban and rural poetry than most 20th century British or Irish poets. He is also more Romantic than most poets of his generation. Nostalgia, memory and longing mark Davie's work.

Roy Fisher (1930-2017) wrote some of the best landscape poetry in the 20th century. His most important volume is *City* (1961), a prose-poetry collection. The images are simple and direct, there is very little abstraction, unlike the modernists or attempts to convert every image into a loaded metaphor or symbol. Fisher attempts, to keep urban dirt and corruption out of his poetry. Fisher has stated his preference for poetry that is about sense-perceptions, and this is clearly seen in poems like 'Matrix' or even in the earlier 'Seven Attempted Moves'.

Tom Raworth (1938-2017) is a prolific writer with over 40 volumes of poetry and prose. He was first influenced by Surrealism and American poets like Robert Creeley. Raworth has experimented with many forms of poetry- from 'found poems' to long, didactic narratives and poems that work alongside visual materials or music. There are some word-games and a greater degree of allusion- especially to other poets' work in Raworth. There is also a tendency, especially in his experimental work, to present short aphoristic poems that are drawn from everyday life. 'Taking (notes)' is a good example.

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) from Ireland won the Noble Prize for Literature in 1995. An avowed supporter of Irish nationalism, Heaney's work is set in Derry, the town of his childhood. His later works which have won

him wide acclaim, are often meditations on language and meaning. The strife that haunts Irish towns even today, as Ireland seeks an identity separate from England, permeated many 'Heaney poems such as 'Requiem for the Croppies'. He eventually declared: "the end of art is peace" ('The Harvest Brow'). A sense of the religious is also visible in much of his work. Some extraordinary juxtaposition of images make Heaney's poetry both startling and refreshing. A good example would be his famous 'Digging', from his celebrated collection *Death of a Naturalist* (1966).

Geoffrey Hill (1932-2016), an experimenter with form and theme, is richly allusive and elliptical in his work, the result has been that he is often ignored for being difficult. He may best be described as 'postmodernist' for the way in which he renders common things strange. His fragmented syntax and poem structure in volumes like *Canaan* (1996) also serve to make the reader aware of the poem's form- a feature of most self-reflexive and self-conscious postmodern writing. Hill uses multiple registers- traditional poetic styles, the language of advertisements, myth, religious images (especially on works like *Mercian Hymns)* and political themes. Hill is also concerned with the victims of war and genocide in poems like the early 'Two Formal Elegies for the Jews in Europe' and has often addressed this theme in his essays and lectures. History can be a recurring theme in his works as can be seen in 'Of Commerce and Society. An elegiac tone informs much of Hill's poetry, especially when he is dealing with myth or history ('Requiem for the Plantagenet Kings'). In 'Drake's Drum', he links history with myth-making and poetry itself.

Carol Ann Duffy (b.1955) is indisputably one of the most exciting new voices in English poetry. Her collection *The World's Wife* (1999) is a reworking of myths and legends where the wife's role and identity is redefined by Duffy in tones of both satire and sadness. She followed this up with *Feminine Gospels* (2002) which shares concerns with her earlier work. Like most postmodern poets, Duffy is concerned with the limits of language. Her new volume, *Rupture,* is a series of love poems, cast in neo-romantic and deeply sensual tone, but tinged with sadness and a sense of incompleteness in relationships.

Another writer is Craige Raine (b.1944). Raine acquired the attention of the literary world with an extraordinary poem 'A Martian Sends a Postcard Home' (1979) and the collection *The Onion, Memory* (1978), which inaugurates a movement, labelled the 'Martian School' of poetry. Raine's achievement here was to 'de-familiarize' everyday objects and rename them 'objects/in the museum of ordinary art'.

Increasingly, from the 1970s hybrid voices of diasporic Asian and African immigrants in Britain have added to the richness and variety of contemporary poetry. 'Dub poetry' (essentially performance poetry) of Kwesi Johnson and Zephanaiah during the 1970s proved to be a major inspiration for youngsters growing up in racist London. This poetry, which was essentially a social poetry addressing issues of race, nationality, sexuality, identity and suffering may be seen as the opening moments of what is now a strong multicultural poetry scene in England. This brings the richness of their cultural backgrounds, poetic forms and music to the new poetry. Grace Nichols (1950-), one of the finest poets of the immigrant experience, captures the hybrid identity in her poems 'We New World Blacks' and 'Epilogue'. Jean 'Binta' Breeze (1957-) also writes in the same tradition. Patience Agbabi (1965-) is a poet and performance artist of Nigerian origins. Her *R.A.W. (*1995) brought her instant acclaim. Agbabi is conscious of the fact that identity has to be performed repeatedly for it to be accepted.

3.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-I

3.5.1 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. In which year did Queen Victoria ascend the British throne?_____.

   (a) 1830 (b) 1835

   (c) 1837 (d) 1839

2. Which of the following was a working class movement for political reform in Britain that existed from 1838 to 1848? _____.

(a) The Workers' Movement (b) The Chartist Movement

(c) The Peasant's Revolt (d) None of the above

3. Which of the following poems was not composed by Alfred Tennyson?_____.

(a) The Lotus-Eater (b) Ulysses

(c) My Last Duchess (d) Idylls of the King

4. Which of the following poems deal with medieval themes?_____.

(a) *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*

(b) The Wreck of the Deutschland'

(c) God's Grandeur (d) Cry of the Children

5. Which of the following poets is credited with the translation of Omar Khaiyyam's *Rubaiyat* from Persian?_____.

(a) A.C.Swinburne (b) Dante Gabriel Rossetti

(c) Elizabeth Barrett Browning (d) Edward Fitzgerald

6. Who among the following does not belong to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood?_____.

(a)William Holman Hunt (b) John E. Millais

(c) Dante Gabriel Rossetti (d) Gerard Manley Hopkins

7. Which of the following poems is not composed by Robert Bridges?_____.

(a) *The Growth of Love* (b) *Eros and Psyche*

(c) *The Testament of Beauty* (d) *The Waste Land*

8. Modernist poetry in England was influenced by_____.

(a) French symbolism (b) The American imagists

(c) Both (a) and (b) (d) Neither (a) nor (b)

9. Which of the following poems is fragmented in structure and borrows from a range of sources in Christian mythology and anthropology, incorporating ancient symbols, history and love stories from Ovid to the present?_____.

(a) *The Wasteland* (b) *Cantos*

(c) 'Adam's Curse' (d) 'Hollow Men'

10. Philip Larkin belongs to which group of poets?_____.

(a) The Oxford Movement (b) The Pre-Raphaelite Poets

(c) The Movement Poets (d) The Imagist Poets

11. Which of the following writers was not influenced by the socialist thought?_____.

(a) Stephen Spender (b) W.H. Auden

(c) T.S. Eliot (d) Christopher Isherwood

12. Seamus Heaney won the Nobel Prize in Literature in which year?____.

(a) 1992 (b) 1993

(c) 1995 (d) 1996

13. "Do Not Go Gentle Into that Good Night" is a poem by_____.

(a) Dylan Thomas (b) Roy Fisher

(c) Seamus Heaney (d) W.H. Auden

14. Which of the following poets was primarily responsible for the Celtic revival?_____.

(a) Robert Browning (b) T.S. Eliot

(c) Ezra Pound (d) W.B. Yeats

15. The poem 'Darkling Thrush' is composed by_____.

(a) Robert Bridges (b) Thomas Hardy

(c) Edith Sitwell (d) Elizabeth Barrett Browning

3.5.2 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the social conditions prevailing in England during the Victorian age.

2. The Victorian age is as much an age of discontent as it is of reform. Comment.

3. Describe the term Victorian Temper.

4. What is Alfred Tennyson's contribution to the growth of poetry in the Victorian age?

5. How did Celtic Revival help in the development of poetry in the Modern age?

6. What changes have taken place since the 1970s in the Modern poetry?

7. Compare and contrast the poetry of the Victorian age with the poetry of the Modern age.

8. What are the contributions made by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to the Victorian poetry?

9. Give an account of the various poetic movements during the Twentieth Century.

10. Victorian poetry in spite of innovation relies heavily on the models set by the preceding ages. Comment.

3.6 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. (c) 1837
2. (b) The Chartist Movement
3. (c) My Last Duchess
4. (a) *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*
5. (d) Edward Fitzgerald
6. (d) Gerard Manley Hopkins
7. (d) *The Waste Land*
8. (c) Both (a) and (b)
9. (a) *The Wasteland*
10. (c) The Movement Poets
11. (c) T.S. Eliot
12. (c) 1995
13. (a) Dylan Thomas
14. (d) W.B. Yeats
15. (b) Thomas Hardy

3.7 DEVELOPMENT OF NOVEL FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN AGE

3.7.1 DEVELOPMENT OF NOVEL DURING THE VICTORIAN AGE

The eighteenth century saw the rise and growth of the English novel. Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Eliza Heywood, Fanny Burney and others laid the foundation for a variety of genres and forms even as they created an audience for longer prose narratives in an age of increasing literacy. The Victorian age was marked by a massive expansion of the novel in terms of the kinds of writing as well as readership. The mere fact that it was soon recognised as incomparably the most popular form of literature with the great and ever-increasing general reading, public will itself go far to explain, on the well-known principle of supply and demand, its attractiveness to innumerable writers of the most varied powers and aims; but its breadth and elasticity, and the freedom it gave to each new practitioner to do his own work in his own way, must also be taken into account. Many kinds of genres were being published and consumed: utopian fiction, school tales, mystery and sensation novels, historical novels, industrial novels, social problem novels, adventure tales and moral stories, among others. Readership boomed, especially with an increasing demand for fiction from the middle classes. The style ranged from realism to fantasy. The spread of science made it realistic and analytical; the spread of democracy made it social and humanitarian; the spirit of religious and moral unrest, of inquiry and criticism, was often uppermost in it; often, too, it revealed the powerful influences of the romantic revival. In its very variety of matter and treatment, therefore, the Victorian novel is the index of the many-sided interests and conflicting elements of the Victorian age. Writers of different schools of thought employed it to embody their general criticism of life, while it was found to lend itself equally well to the purposes of those who, having some special thesis to expound, desired to reach the largest possible body of readers. It was inevitable that it should thus come to reflect all the forces which were shaping the complex modern world. Facilitated by cheaper formats such as the penny novel and serial publication and availability through circulating libraries, the English novel established itself as a key genre. Absorbing into itself a very large part of the creative energy of the time, the novel thus became a

vehicle of ideas as well as a means of amusement. Publishing fiction turned out to be quiet a lucrative business and the role of audience/readership is increasingly acknowledged as having played a major role in the evolution of the Victorian novel.

The Nineteenth Century was the great age of the English novel. This was partly because this essentially middle-class form of literary art was bound to flourish increasingly as the middle classes rose in power and importance, partly because of the steady increase of the reading public with the growth of lending libraries, the development of publishing in the modern sense, and other phenomena which accompanied this increase, and partly because the novel was the vehicle best equipped to present a picture of life lived in a given society against a stable background of social and moral values by people who were recognizably like the people encountered by readers, and this was the kind of picture of life the middle class reader wanted to read about. The novel, like the medieval *fabliau*, is what Northrop Frye calls a "low mimetic" literary form. The purely escapist impulse to read about a high aristocratic world of ideal gallantry and beauty is as lacking in the typical Victorian novel reader as the desire to see the fundamental problems of human experience projected imaginatively and symbolically through the presentation of "great" figures acting out their destiny on the grand scale. The Victorian novel reader did want to be entertained, and in a sense he wanted to escape. But he wanted to be entertained with a minimum of literary convention, a minimum "aesthetic distance." He wanted to be close to what he was reading about, to have as little suspension of disbelief as possible, to pretend, indeed, that literature was journalism, that fiction was history. Of course, the novelists fooled them – at least the great ones did. The ordinary reader may have had the illusion that what he was reading was a kind of journalism, a transcript of life as it was happening around him without the modifying effect of literary form and imagination. In fact, the great Victorian novelists often created complexes of symbolic meaning that reached far deeper than the superficial pattern of social action suggested to the casual reader; the novels of Dickens, for example, are full of symbolic images and situations suggesting such

notions as the desperate isolation of the individual (the grotesque and the eccentric in Dickens' characters become almost the norm, suggesting that life is atomistic and irrational and that patterns of communication can never be real). But it has been left for modern criticism to investigate this aspect of Victorian fiction. The great majority of borrowers from Mudie's libraries and readers of serialized novels in magazines wanted to read about life as they thought they knew it. The impulse that makes modern television viewers so devoted to plays of ordinary life, dealing with people like themselves with whom they can identify themselves, but liberated by plot from the dullness of life as they actually live in – this impulse helped to create the English novel and to sustain it during its brilliant nineteenth century career. That this indicates a gap between the demands of art and the expectations of its audience need not surprise us; such a gap is a commonplace in literary history. The best Victorian novels transcended the requirements of its audience and can be read by later generations for different and perhaps profounder reasons. But the same can be said of the best Elizabethan drama. The requirements and expectations of a given audience can help to explain the rise and flourishing of a given literary form, but cannot explain its true nature or value, except with reference to ephemeral works produced by hack writers merely to satisfy the contemporary demand.

The first popular writers of the period were G.P.R. James and William Harrison Ainsworth. James specialised in historical romances, and his fiction is full of meticulous detail. Ainsworth's fiction inaugurated the intrigue novel and was extremely lurid and violent, such as *Rookwood* (1834) and *Old St Paul's* (1841). Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister of Britain was also a prolific writer. His novel *Sybil* (1845) calls for mention apart because, as a powerful exposure of abuses connected with the relations of capital and labour, it belongs to the humanitarian movement in contemporary fiction. In Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), we reach one of the most vigorous of the humanitarian novelists of the mid-Victorian age. His *Alton Locke*, *Yeast*, and *Two Years Ago*, are full of the cause of the masses; but his finest work as literature was done in his two historical novels, *Westward Ho* and *Hypatia*. Lewis Carroll

was the pen name of mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodson. His real-life attempts to entertain children took the form of story-telling. *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) and other equally brilliant works have remained popular among both children and adults for long. Elizabeth Gaskell may also be included among the humanitarian novelists as her novel *Mary Barton* depicts the pathetic story of factory life. For most readers now she lives as the author of the quaint and charming village idyll, *Cranford.*

One of the masters of the language and a writer who became a celebrity during his lifetime was Charles Dickens (1812-1870). A tireless chronicler of the flaws of the age and a sharp-eyed critic of England's social systems, Dickens sprang suddenly into fame with the *Pickwick Papers* (1837), which takes the reader on a tour of industrial England, and which inaugurates Dickens' lifelong theme: the travails of a good man. Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) is the tale of a boy's growing up in inimical circumstances, battling poverty, class, the indifference of society and assorted criminals. *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39) combined images of great benevolence with images of gullibility, wickedness, and questionable morals. *Hard Times* (1854), an industrial novel, portrayed the conditions of education, exploitation and industry. *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1834-44), is about flawed moral values, in this case, greed and hypocrisy, embodied in Pecksniff. *David Cooperfield* (1849-50) is a kind of bildungsroman, as it traces the growth of David into a young man through various trials and tribulations. Marriage and morals are central to the plot and the novel contains all the recognizable Dickensean characters: the gullible, the courageous, the crooked, with Uriah Heep being one of his most unforgettable villains. The novel is also remarkably different from the rest of Dickens in that it is less about social issues and the community. *Great Expectations* (1860-61), which is a tale of the mistreatment of children, provided one of Dickens' most unforgettable characters in Pip. *Great Expectations* is another tale of the mistreatment of children – Estella is also as much a victim as Pip. The novel is notable for Dickens' sensitivity and characterization. Once again, criminals and innocents constitute the main

cast in this novel. *Little Dorrit* (1855-57) focused on prison conditions. Dickens' only attempt at a historical novel was *A Tale of Tale Cities* (1859), set in the French Revolution period and with one of the most famous opening lines in English literary history: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…." He did not live to finish his only thriller *The Mystery of Edwin Drood.*

Dickens' qualities are obvious to all who read, and in particular, his overflowing irresistible humour, his unsurpassed descriptive power, and the astonishing vitality of his characterisation. His novels belong entirely to the humanitarian movement of the Victorian era, of which they are indeed, in the domain of fiction, by far the most important product and expression. A man of buoyant temper and unflagging energy, he put his unwavering optimism into everything he wrote, and his contagious high spirits were undoubtedly a factor in his success. The realism of his description enables Dickens to generate a great deal of affect in the readers, even as his caricature and social comedy facilitate sharp commentaries on the 'condition of England.' His characters, in order to facilitate his social commentary, are less of individuals than types.

The three Bronte sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, growing up in relative isolation in Yorkshire, produced a body of work that forms the heart of mid-Victorian fiction. Their fiction invariably focuses on the wrongs perpetrated by a class-conscious society, especially on women. Governesses, wives and daughters are trapped in claustrophobic families and relationships. In her first and most successful book, *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Bronte put an intensity of passion and a frankness of description into the novel which were quite new to the women's fiction of the time, and shocked not a few old-fashioned people. Her sister Emily also ranks highly; her chief work, *Wuthering Heights,* is considered a masterpiece. The third sister Anne is less important; her chief novels are *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.*

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was the first major experimenter with form during the Victorian age. *Vanity Fair* serialised in

twenty episodes in 1847-48, established Thackeray's reputation. *Vanity Fair* portrayed English society as crass, godless, immoral, and given to material pleasures. His other important works are *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852) and *The Newcomes* (1853-55).

In the hands of Mary Ann, or Marian Evans, also known by her pen-name of George Eliot (1819-1880), fiction became moral and philosophical. Her interest in Renaissance Europe becomes visible in the early historical novel *Romola* (1863). Her more canonized works came later: *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), the voluminous *Middlemarch* (1871-72), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). *Middlemarch*, as in much of her other fiction, draws a distinction between mere pedantry and a more practical knowledge. This classic novel is also a satire on English provincialism. Eliot's powers of description, her concern for the poor of rural England and her moral vision are exemplified best in *Adam Bede* (1859), notable for its heavily religious theme, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), an exceptionally fine picture of English childhood, and *Silas Marner* (1861) of rural England.

During the late Victorian period, the novelists retained the realist mode, though the adventure/fantasy and mystery formats also came into their own during the 1880s. Social satire also continued to be a popular genre.

One of the major writes of the late Victorian age was George Gissing (1857-1903). Much of his fiction is a documentation of the suffering in urban England. *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) and *The Nether World* (1889) dealt with working-class problems and have been called 'slum fiction'. *New Grub Street* (1891), undoubtedly Gissing's most polished work, centres around marriage, class, financial stability and social conditions, subsuming love and affection under the weight of practical difficulties.

George Moore (1852-1933) attracted controversy with his novels of deep sensuality. Deeply concerned with a character's feelings and sentiments, Moore's *A Modern Lover* (1883), *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) and *Esther Waters* (1894) portrayed married women attracted

(sexually) to other men, a theme that was immediately controversial. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), is the author of popular works like *Treasure Island* (1881), *Kidnapped* (1886), *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) etc.

One of the most enduring novelists in the English language is Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). Driven by a famously tragic vision in *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1886-87), *The Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Hardy is a writer of rather gloomy, tragic novels. His central themes include social and human callousness to the fate and sufferings of other humans, a cruel nature, an irrelevant set of social codes, hypocrisy, fate, flawed characters/ personalities and an indifferent god. Of Hardy's early work, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) stand out as explorations of life in rural England, with its small intrigues and social relationships. *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) appeared anonymously and was his major success. This was quickly followed by *The Return of the Native* (1878), one of his enduring texts and one which provides the first glimmers of his tragic vision.

One of Hardy's important contemporaries was a Polish immigrant to England, Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). A master of the narrative technique with a fine sense of place/setting, Conrad's fiction also embodies a strong moral vision. *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the most enduring of his works and one of the primary source texts for postcolonial studies today is set in colonial Africa. *Lord Jim* (1900) embodies Conrad's finest moral vision. This tale of betrayal- Jim abandons his ship and then states that it sank beneath his feet- argues forcefully that a man's actions are a clear index of his character.

John Galsworthy (1867-1933) situated his fiction in the class he knew best: the upper-class bourgeoisie. Galsworthy's preoccupation in works like *The Forsyte Saga (1922)* is with the decadence of the upper classes. Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), known mainly as the author of *Anna of the Fine Towns*

(1902) and *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908) ranks as a regionalist. Bennett's focus was the everyday life in small towns and villages.

Among the most controversial writers of the time was Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Celebrated for his plays and his homosexuality- for which he was imprisoned- Wilde's claim to novelistic fame rests on a particular fine exploration of narcissism, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). This short piece depicts the corruption at the heart of English bourgeois society and the inability of art to capture the core of wickedness.

The most significant novelist of the sensation genre from this period was Bram Stoker (1847-1912). His *Dracula* (1897) was based on a mixture of science, history, and myth-legends. The novel shocked the world with its eroticism and curious notions of religion.

3.7.2 DEVELOPMENT OF NOVEL DURING THE MODERN AGE

The 'modern' as a literary period is heralded in much of the writings of the last decade of the 19th century. The fiction of Thomas Hardy and H.G. Wells embody a 'modern' consciousness. Experiments with form, language and style in the works of the early 20th century-Woolf, Joyce, Forster- and a new sensibility developed in the aftermath and contexts of war, high imperialism and new ideas in philosophy and human psychology (especially in the work of Sigmund Freud and William James). Radical departures in views about god, religious doctrine and sexuality are embodied in most of these works.

The turn of the nineteenth century fiction threw up many celebrated authors: Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, H.G. Wells, A.C. Doyle, G.K. Chesterton and Thomas Hardy. Many of these authors looked forward to the modernist movement of the 1920s and 30s. The 20th century could very well be the age of the English novel: the wide variety of forms, the radical experimentation with language and style and the political agenda of particular writers, all contributed to the novel being, perhaps at the expense of poetry and drama, the most dominant form of literary expression in the modern age.

For many critics, the years 1900-1945 are the high point in the development of the English novel, a time when not only the greatest twentieth-century novels but the greatest novels in the English language were written. Many commentators stress, in particular, the technical and aesthetic advances which occurred during this period and it was indeed a time of extensive formal innovation and experimentation. In this respect, developments in the novel parallel developments in poetry.

The novels of this era contrasts markedly with most nineteenth-century novels. The English fiction of the early nineteenth century was written at a time of great confidence in the basic structure of society and the place of individual within it. Toward the end of the century, however, novelists realised that there was no longer a shared and agreed community of values; a general background of belief which united them with their readers no longer existed after Darwin; and the certainties that lay behind the progress and prosperity of the Victorian age were collapsing. Hence the challenging, questioning nature of many late Victorian novelists, who brought in the outsiders' more critical viewpoint.

Since the Second World War, i.e. 1945, there is a considerable increase in the number of novels published and in the variety of themes and subjects they cover. Yet at the same time there has been no shortage of critics who have been quick to pronounce 'the death of the novel.' This is related to the intellectualisation of literature which began in the 1920s, when some writers – for example, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf – consciously distanced themselves from 'popular' taste; and it was helped by the industry which has continued to grow around the academic study of literature in universities and schools. It is noticeable that several writers, such as Graham Greene, made a distinction in their writing between their popular novels – 'shockers' or thrillers – and their more 'serious' books. This distinction would have been far less likely to occur to a writer in any previous century.

Among the voices which can be more clearly heard in the novel in recent years are those of the young and the lower classes, the voice of the

new educated middle class, the voices of women, racial minorities, gays, and outsiders of many other types. Various sub-genres of novels have become bestsellers while retaining intellectual acceptability – for example, the working-class novel, the Hampstead novel, the academic novel, the Scottish novel, the women's novel, the magic realism novel.

At the same time there have been numerous bestsellers which have never reached intellectual acceptability – for example, romances, thrillers, and historical novels. Some genres, like the detective story and the spy story, have, however, begun to receive critical acclaim, and to be recognised as major contributions to literature. The growth in cultural studies has meant that many previously unconsidered areas of written expression have come under scrutiny.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), known, and often hated, as an apologist for the British Empire, wrote some of the most popular children's and young adults' fiction of the 20th century. His first novel was *The Light that Failed* (1891) and with *The Jungle Book* (1894), the story of a boy brought up in the jungle, proved hugely successful and has remained so since then. Kipling's most celebrated novel is, of course, *Kim* (1901) which explored the life of a young Irish boy who is almost Indian. The novel sketches in loving detail life on the Grand Trunk Road (which functions as a microcosm of India itself). The novel became a study of British India itself.

H.G. Wells is surely the originator of 20th century science fiction. His first work is also his most enduring: *The Time Machine* (1895).After this, novels appeared in quick succession: *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901).

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) created the immortal detective, Sherlock Holmes. He also wrote some science and adventure fiction. The Holmes stories, especially *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Sign of Four*, have remained extremely popular.

E.M. Forster (1879-1970) produced a work that has set postcolonial and other critics hard at work with its politics, mystic elements and humanism with his *A Passage to India* (1922). His other novels such as *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *A Room with a View* (1908), and *Howards End* (1910) dealt with the theme of class. *Maurice*, his autobiographical novel with homosexual themes, was published only posthumously.

The 20th century could very well be the age of the English novel: the wide variety of forms, the radical experimentation with language and style and the political agenda of particular writers, all contributed to the novel being, perhaps at the expense of poetry and drama, the most dominant literary form of literary expression in the modern age.

George Orwell (1903-50), the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair, wrote two of the most significant political allegories in 20th century fiction. Orwell's political ideology was essentially a humanism that rejected any form of domination and coercive power structures. In 1945, he published *Animal Farm*, an allegory on socialism. The criticism of socialism that *Animal Farm* encodes suggestion that equality is utopian. Exploitation is always the key in any social structure. A far bleaker picture of society was *1984* (1949). 1984 reflects on the ease with which a totalitarian society can work. Individuality is destroyed and political ideology is a convenience. This dystopian novel is a humanist vision of politics in general and a denunciation of totalitarian regimes in particular.

In sharp contrast to Orwell's biting indictment of politics and social order are Evelyn Waugh's (1903-1966) gentle comedies, full of irony and mild satire. Recalling the novel of manners from an earlier age, Waugh's fiction maps the contours of a class-conscious society. *Decline and Fall* (1928) starts Waugh's chronicling of English class snobbery. In *Vile Bodies* (1930), he explores the hollow ambitions of the English youth, who, it turns out, are as snobbish as the upper classes they criticize and mock. *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), a novel about politics and war, is perhaps Waugh's most successful tale. His other novels are *A Handful of Dust* (1934) and *The Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-61).

The Irish, James Joyce (1882-1941) is surely the most daring user of the English language in the 20th century and a practitioner of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Joyce is known for three main works: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans* Wake(1939). *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a kind of bildungsroman of the consciousness. It deals with the growth of Stephen Dedalus, a bright and frivolous boy, into a serious intellect. The interior monologue makes its first appearance here. Joyce also developed the 'epiphany' i.e. a sudden awareness of the soul, as a literary mode. *Ulysses,* Joyce's most celebrated work, traces one day in the life of Leopold Bloom and deals with his wanderings around Dublin. Biographically, it celebrates an event in Joyce's life– his walk through Dublin with Nora Barnacle. It is structured around the events of Homer's epic *Odyssey. Finnegans Wake* is almost entirely word play, with multilingual puns and fractured sentences. It is a dream sequence.

Virginia Woolf, one of the finest practitioners of the stream-of-consciousness mode in the 20th century, is like Joyce, less concerned with the external world than with the workings of the characters minds. Woolf's narratives are rarely sequential. Fragmented, moving between reality and dreams, mixing past, present and future, her fiction is highly experimental and is the prose equivalent of modernist poetry. Her novels *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) are written in the same vein. Woolf's later novel *Orlando* (1928) is set in Elizabethan England. It is the story of Orlando, who wishes to live for ever as a young man. Eventually, he discovers he has become a woman. The novel was controversial for its experiments with not just narrative but also trans-gendering. This is Wolf's most extensive discussion of gender and identity and look forward to the works of later-day feminist writers.

Rebecca West (1892-1983) was one of the early writers to support the women's suffragette movement. Of her fiction, *The Return of the Soldier* (1915), *The Thinking Reed* (1936) and *The Birds Fall Down* (1966) are popular. To this early generation of writers belongs Radclyffe Hall (1883-1943), the first major homosexual writers of the modern age. Hall's *The Well*

of Loneliness (1928), which portrayed a lesbian relationship with a great deal of sensitivity was banned on publication and Hall was put on trial for obscenity.

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) attained notoriety with *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* a novel banned on grounds of obscenity. Lawrence was influenced by the work of Freud and believed that civilization is built on the denial of the instinct. His other important works *The White Peacock* (1911), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), *The Plumed Serpent, Kangaroo, Aaron's Rod* and *The Prussian Officer.*

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is known for his *Brave New World* (1932), a dystopian novel look in at the future along the lines of Orwell's fiction. Often read under the category of fantasy or science fiction, *Brave New World,* set in the 26th century, suggests that technology would evolve such that people would be brainwashed into enjoying their own slavery and oppression. In *Island* (1962), Huxley tried to suggest a different form of social ordering. Children grow up not in families but in groups. Drug use is acceptable not for pleasure but for knowledge. Science and technology are at man's service and not the other way round. Religion- in this case a mix of Christianity, Buddhism, and Eastern mysticism- is acceptable.

Anglo-Irish C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) in his fiction offered a fantasy created out of a more religious vision. He created *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56). The Narnia tales are in seven books and deal with the adventures of a group of children who visit a magical island, Narnia. Though Christian in theme and intention, there are influences from Celtic and Greco-Roman mythologies.

J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) was influenced by Greek and Finnish mythologies created the most enduring fantasy work produced in 20th century literature i.e., *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55). Tolkien's work is set in a fictional universe, Middle-earth, governed by different rules and conditions.

The quiet realism of Graham Greene (1904-1991) in works like *Brighton Rock* (1938), *The Quiet American* (1955) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) stands as a sharp contrast to the high fantasy of his contemporaries. *Brighton Rock* is an unusual Greene novel in the format of a murder mystery. Greene's concern with morality and sin govern much of his fiction, and is best explored in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), a novel about adultery and suicide. In *The Quiet American*, Greene seems to draw parallels between the American Pyle's conduct and that of his government in Vietnam. *A Burnt-Out Case* explores the theme of duty, selfless service, moral certainty and death in a *Congo* setting. His 1940 novel *The Power and the Glory* remains a classic of the age.

The 20th century satire novel achieves its peak in a slim tale set in academic surroundings. *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis (1922-1995) is a campus novel set in the academic surroundings. The novels' main theme- the culture wars of 1950s-60s England-struck a chord with people from both the elite and mass readership. The messy negotiation of culture- where the protagonist Jim Dixon stood against the pretensions of a pure, traditional high culture- is what *Lucky Jim* is all about.

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993) is best known for *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and his first work, the Malayan trilogy, *Time for A Tiger* (1956), *The Enemy in the Blanket* (1958) and *Beds in the East* (1959). *A Clockwork Orange* is an extension of Orwell's *1984*. He also attracted controversy for his themes; a syphilitic Shakespeare in *Nothing Like the Sun* (1964), homosexuality and cannibalism in *The Wanting Seed* (1962) and Satanism in *Earthly Powers* (1980).

A popular, if controversial, Irish author of the mid-20th century, Edna O'Brien (1930-) wrote fiction that dealt with women's sexuality and relationships, which resulted in her work being banned in Ireland. Her trilogy, *The Country Girls* (1960), *The Lonely Girl* (1962) and *Girls in their Married Bliss* (1964), made her reputation.

William Golding (1911-1993) achieved celebrity status with *Lord of the Flies* (1954), a novel published after 21 rejections is rooted in a dark, misanthropic vision of humanity and civilization. An even more frightening vision informs *The Inheritors* (1955). Here Neanderthal man meets his descendent, Cromagnon man, who quickly destroys the more gentle Neanderthal. *The Spire* (1964) showcased human pride, which seeks gratification even at the cost of others' lives.

A significant quartet of the 20th century is Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* (1966-74). The individual volumes are *The Jewel in the Crown*, *The Day of the Scorpion*, *The Towers of Silence* and *A Division of the Spoils*. Mapping the last days of the British Empire in India, Paul Scott (1920-78) situated human relationships between Britons and Indians in terms of the racialized power equations. His later work *Staying On* (1977) dealt with the life of an old English couple who had stayed on in India after India's independence.

The Anglo-Irish Iris Murdoch (1919-99) was an extremely erudite philosopher and thinker. Her *A Severed Head* (1961) is an extraordinary satire on the hypocrisies of upper-class English society. *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), perhaps Murdoch's best novel, deals with the delusions and visions of a playwright-director who has set out to record his memories in the form of an autobiography.

3.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II

3.8.1 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Who among the following is not a precursor of the nineteenth century novel?_____.

   (a) Henry Fielding (b) George Orwell

   (c) Fanny Burney (d) Laurence Sterne

2. Which of the following novels was not composed by Charles Dickens?_____.

(a) *Martin Chuzzlewit* (b) *Sybil*

(c) *David Cooperfield* (d) *Great Expectations*

3. Which of the following novels by Dickens is a historical novel?

(a) *A Tale of Two Cities* (b) *Hard Times*

(c) *Nicholas Nickleby* (d) *Oliver Twist*

4. The three Bronte sisters occupy a prominent place among the Victorian novelists. Who among the following does not belong to them?_____.

(a) Charlotte (b) Mary Ann

(c) Emily (d) Anne

5. Which of the following pairs is not correctly matched?_____.

(a) Charlotte Bronte- *Jane Eyre*

(b) Emily Bronte- *Wuthering Heights*

(c) Anne Bronte- *Silas Marner*

(d) George Eliot- *Middlemarch*

6. Which of the following novels was not composed by Thomas Hardy?_____.

(a) *Far from the Madding Crowd* (b) *Heart of Darkness*

(c) *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (d) *Jude the Obscure*

7. Which of the following writers composed the novel *Dracula?*_____.

(a) Bram Stoker (b) Evelyn Waugh

(c) Thomas Hardy (d) George Eliot

8. Who among the following is credited as the originator of the genre science fiction?_____.

(a) George Orwell (b) Evelyn Waugh

(c) Bram Stoker (d) H.G. Wells

9. Who among the following writer is/are the practitioner/s of the stream-of-consciousness technique?_____.

(a) James Joyce (b) Virginia Woolf

(c) Both (a) and (b) (d) Neither (a) nor (b)

10. Which of the following writers composed the two most significant political allegories during the twentieth century i.e., *Animal Farm* and *1984*?_____.

(a) Thomas Hardy (b) Joseph Conrad

(c) George Orwell (d) James Joyce

11. Which of the following is a dystopian novel by Aldous Huxley?_____.

(a) *1984* (b) *Animal Farm*

(c) *The Time Machine* (d) *Brave New World*

12. Which of the following is correctly matched?_____.

(a) J.R.R. Tolkien- *Lord of the Flies*

(b) C.S. Lewis - *The Chronicles of Narnia*

(c) William Golding- *Alice in Wonderland*

(d) Lewis Carroll- *The Lord of the Rings*

13. Who among the following was a practitioner of the genre campus novel?_____.

(a) Kingsley Amis (b) Graham Greene

(c) Anthony Burgess (d) Paul Scott

14. Which of the following novels is not composed by William Golding?

(a) *A Clockwork Orange* (b) *The Spire*

(c) *The Inheritors* (d) *Lord of the Flies*

15. Which of the following novels is an extension of George Orwell's *1984?*_____.

(a) *Brave New World* (b) *A Clockwork Orange*

(c) *Lord of the Flies* (d) *Staying On*

3.8.2 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Account for the rise of novel during the Victorian age.

2. Give an estimate of Charles Dickens as a writer of Victorian fiction.

3. Evaluate the contribution made by the women novelists in the Victorian age.

4. Victorian society gets reflected in its fiction. Comment.

5. Thomas Hardy is the most enduring of the later Victorian novelists. Give an assessment of his work.

6. How is the nineteenth century novel different from the twentieth century novel?

7. Analyse the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf in the light of the stream-of-consciousness technique.

8. Comment briefly on the dystopian novels written during the twentieth century.

9. Comment on the element of fantasy employed by the twentieth century novelists in their works with special emphasis on C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

10. The modern novelists employed a wide variety of genres in their writings. Comment.

3.9 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. (b) George Orwell

2. (b) *Sybil*

3. (a) *A Tale of Two Cities*

4. (b) Mary Ann

5. (c) Anne Bronte- *Silas Marner*

6. (b) *Heart of Darkness*

7. (a) Bram Stoker

8. (d) H.G. Wells

9. (c) Both (a) and (b)

10. (c) George Orwell

11. (d) *Brave New World*

12. (b) C.S. Lewis- *The Chronicles of Narnia*

13. (a) Kingsley Amis

14. (a) *A Clockwork Orange*

15. (b) *A Clockwork Orange*

3.10 LET US SUM UP

The victorian poetry had been refreshed as well as muddled by two generations of romantic innovation. The poet was no longer the sweet singer whose function was to render in mellifluous verse and an imagery drawn with great selectivity from the world of Nature a self indulged and personal emotion; he was the explorer of experience who used language in order to build up rich patterns of required repeated love. Modern poetry contains language that is closer to the idioms of everyday speech & to a more diverse range of subject matter. Throughout the Victorian & Georgian period the language of poetry was felt to be different from everyday language.

Radical departures in views about God, religious doctrine and sexuality are embodied in most of these works. The 20th century could very well be the age of English Novel; wide variety of forms, the radical experimentation with language & style of the political agenda of particular writers, all contributed to the novel being, perhaps at the expense of poetry & drama, the most dominant literary form of literary expressions in the modern age.

3.11 REFERENCES

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Carter, Ronald, and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English.* Routledge, 2001.

Hudson, William Henry.*An Outline History of English Literature.* Rupa Publications, 2015.

3.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

A Short History of English Literature by Pramod K. Nayar

The Routledge History of Literature in English by Ronald Carter and John McRae

A Critical History of English Literature Volume IIby David Daiches

History of English Literature by Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian

An Outline History of English Literature by William Henry Hudson

A Compendious History of English Literature by R.D. Trivedi

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Lesson No. 4 DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA AND ENGLISH SHORT STORY FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN AGE **Unit II**

STRUCTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Victorian age remarkable for the quality and quantity of its fiction and poetry also saw some development in drama. The dramatic output during the age was not high, especially compared to novel and poetry, but it still forms an important component of the Victorian age. The Modern age saw the revival of drama in England and a lot of writers composed drama of merit. The short story, in comparison saw a steady growth from the Victorian to Modern age and became a well-defined genre.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are:

- to give an account of the development of drama from the Victorian to Modern age,
- to give an account of the development of short story from the Victorian to Modern age, and
- to highlight the literary trends and important writers of the two ages.

4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN AGE

4.3.1 DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA DURING THE VICTORIAN AGE

The Victorian era is not widely recognized for its plays, even though some of its most famous writers-Thackeray, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Bulwer-Lytton and Trollope for instance-wrote drama. In addition, plays from the Romantic writers like Coleridge, Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth were staged during this period. Four playwrights – Douglas Jerrold, Tom Taylor, Thomas William Robertson and Henry Arthur Jones- produced 255 plays between

them. Tennyson, Poet Laureate of England, wrote two huge spectacles, *Queen Mary* and *Becket.* A measure of the popularity of the drama as a genre can be gauged from the fact that the two patent theatres, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, had been expanded in the 1790s to accommodate 3500 people each, while other theatres like the Adelphi and Sadler's Wells were also extremely popular. It also provided sensationally successful actors like Mrs Siddons and Edmund Kean.

What kept the theatre going were melodrama and farce, the former (in the earlier part of the nineteenth century) often with Gothic trimmings and atmosphere. The manipulation of the action so as to expose and punish the villain, often with the revelation of a concealed crime, and to bring hero and heroine together, all done in a standardized rhetorical speech, became a regular formula for melodrama, which soon moved from the Gothic to the domestic. Early nineteenth century farce is crude stuff, of no literary interest. Burlesque and extravaganza sometimes had rather more to offer; the latter, as developed by J.R. Planche, Robert Brough, and H.J. Byron, constituted the tradition taken over by W.S. Gilbert in the comic operas he wrote with Arthur Sullivan as composer. The tradition was to combine the supernatural, the gorgeous, and the satirical, to include burlesque and parody on the one hand and light fantasy on the other, while making lavish use of spectacle.

One of the important features of the Victorian drama is that it used everyday language. Spectacles were guaranteed to bring in the audiences. The increasing influx of middle-class audience from London's immediate suburbs may have contributed to the rise of the popular drama of the age. Concomitant with the interest in sensation novels was a taste for sensation drama. Dion Boucicault, who popularized the genre, created successful plays in *The Colleen Bawn* (1860), *The Flying Scud* (1866) and *After Dark* (1868). Historical plays remained popular with Douglas Jerrold's *Thomas a Becket* (1829), Tom Taylor's *Jeanne d' Arc* (1871) and Henry Arthur Jones' *The Tempter* (1893). Tragedies included Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (which, though written in 1795, was produced only in 1842), Coleridge's *Remorse* (1813), Browning's *Stafford* (1837) and Shelley's *The Cenci* (which appeared

on stage only in 1886). Comedies and farces, often dealing with troubled marriages and with exaggerated characters, remained popular with Arthur Wing Pinero's *Dandy Dick* (1887), Douglas Jerrold and William Thomas Moncrieff's *Nell Gwynne* (1883), Jerrold's *Retired from Business* (1851) and Tom Taylor's *Still Waters Run Deep* (1855). The farces of Stirling Coyne and John Madison Morton were extremely successful, especially their *Did You Ever Send Your Wife to Camberwell* (1846), *Box and Cox* (1847) and *My Wife's Bonnet* (1864). Pantomimes were another popular genre, with the staging of *Mother Goose* (1880), *Aladdin* (1885), *Humpty-Dumpty* (1891) and *Dick Whittington* (1894).

In the comedies of T.W. Robertson (*Society,* 1865, *Caste,* 1867, and others) there is somewhat faint attempt to escape from the mechanical formulations and standardized sentimentalities of earlier nineteenth-century drama and cast an ironic eye on the social life of the time. But Robertson never really escaped from the conventions of his day; his ironies never cut deep, and they are compatible with an acceptance of all the Victorian moral and social problems that other Victorian dramatists had wholly ignored. Robertson's plays represent an advance toward a more responsible and serious comedy. He had mixed success as a playwright during the early part of his career. By the end of the 1860s, however, he was extremely popular. Among his early plays, *David Garrick* (1864) was perhaps the most successful. His first major success came with *Society* (1865), which dealt with a cross section of England- from the aristocratic Ptarmigant to the middle-class Sidney Daryl. *Ours* (1866) also tried a similar pattern- portraying the landscape of English society. Wealth, love, appropriate marriages and social status continue to be Robertson's main themes in *Ours*. *Caste* (1867) used a historically troubling event: the Indian 'mutiny' of 1857 as a context to look at English domestic life.

With Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929) and Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934), Victorian drama becomes more sophisticated, more technically accomplished, and concerned with moral problems more delicate and more

contemporary than those dealt with in nineteenth century melodrama. Both began in the old style, and worked their way out of it. Jones' *The Silver King* (1882) is in the sentimental melodramatic manner, brilliantly done in its way, almost the apotheosis of its kind; but *Breaking a Butterfly* (an adoption of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*), *Saints and Sinners* (both produced in 1884), *The Crusaders* (1893), and *The Case of the Rebellious Susan* (1894) are "problem plays" dealing with some of the moral dilemmas of middle class life. *The Case of the Rebellious Susan* was prefaced by an admonitory letter to Mrs. Grundy. Neatly constructed, with brisk dialog and an air of knowingness, Jones' plays did not wholly escape from conventions of the melodramatic tradition, which are intermittently recognizable. Pinero's later plays concentrated on problems arising from the relations between the sexes in modern society. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) is his most serious effort, and the most "modern" ; it deals with the emerging dilemma of a "woman with a past," and forces the implications of attitudes to women's behaviour in a man's world to a disturbing conclusion. But neither Jones nor Pinero were more than skilful theatrical practitioners who grew impatient with the mechanical patterns of drama as they found it and tried to provide novelty and depth by discussing problems of contemporary morality. They had the wit neither of Wilde nor of Shaw, nor did they have the literary imagination or the depth of moral and psychological understanding to be able to present a social problem as a tragic one.

The satirical wit, verbal dexterity, and keen eye for what was vulnerable in contemporary literary fashion, gave the comic operas of W.S. Gilbert (1836-1911) a brilliance and a vitality like nothing else on the Victorian stage. *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1880), *Patience* (1881), *The Mikado* (1885) and others are often thought of as delightful musical fantasies suitable for children, but in fact there is a comprehensiveness and a cruelty in Gilbert's destruction of the conventional romantic world by artful ridicule that strike at the heart of Victorian civilization. This may sound like a pretentious remark to make about a writer who was after all essentially an entertainer and who is generally regarded only as such; but a close look at

his work reveals that behind the playfulness, the comic exaggeration, the absurd overemphasis on popular convention, there lies an almost nihilistic sense of the ridiculousness of human emotions and human dignity. It is unlikely that he was really aware of the implications he allowed into his own work, and there can be no doubt that Arthur Sullivan thought of his colleague's plays as no more than gay and amusing parodies with moments of lyrical feeling to be set in appropriate tuneful music.

The plays of Oscar Wilde have more surface brilliance and less genuine satiric undertone. Wilde belonged to the *fin de siècle* aesthetic movement which believed in art less as an escape from than as a substitute for life: he acted out his aestheticsm in his own career, even to the extent of allowing his life to fall into a tragic pattern which he might easily have escaped, because he wanted to be hero in trial scene and felt impelled to carry the play of his own life to its melodramatic conclusion. Wilde's aestheticism was not essentially in conflict with Victorian melodrama; he wanted to subtilize it, just as he wanted to make sensationalism witty.

Wilde's plays were not the direct product of those views of art and life which he expressed in his symbolic story *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) or in his carefully wrought fairy tales. In his comedies he wrote for the theatre and for success. He thus took formulas from Victorian farce and melodrama, but treated the dialogue with a polished wit which really removed the whole action into a never-never land of ultrasophisticated stylization. The stylization is the very *raison d'etre* of Wilde's plays. The plots are ridiculous, sometimes degenerating into cheap farce. But the dialogue imposes the order of an ideal wit on the society it portrays. He achieved this most perfectly in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), a play wrought entirely out of the studded wit of the dialogue, which projects the society of upper-class leisure as an English world so emptied of earthiness and genuine emotional, moral, or physical reality, that it is pure style, a world where action exists in order to make possible the appropriate conversation and where the appropriate conversation is a ballet-like exchange of epigrams. The tradition

of wit which Wilde bequeathed to the modern comedy of manners proved too tenuous as well as too self-sufficient to be usable by others.

Douglas Jerrold (1803-57) was a prolific playwright and a successful one. Starting off as a journalist and short story writer, Jerrold began with melodrama: *The Mutiny at the Nore, Martha Willis, The Factory Girl* and others. These were not so successful. Jerrold, unhappy with the way theatre managers ruled the stage, founded the Dramatic Authors' Society in 1833 to protect the interests of the playwrights. During his early years, he tried his hand at social problem plays with works like *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life* (which showed the degeneration into alcoholism and crime of Vernon, a wealthy young man). *Black-Eyed Susan* dealt with the uncertain lives of seamen and their families. The play was a huge success. In *The Golden Calf* (1832), Jerrold looked at the propertied classes, represented by the Mountneys, who also need money to keep up their social status. One significant historical play from his early period is *Thomas a Becket*. From the 1830s, Jerrold turned increasingly to comedies, and attained success with *Beau Nash, The Housekeeper, The Wedding Gown* and *Doves in a Cage.* Among his later works, is *The Prisoner of War,* set in the Napoleonic wars and dealing with English prisoners in Verdun. Patriotism and love interests mark his plays.

W.E. Henley collaborated with Robert Louis Stevenson on four plays: *Deacon Brodie* (1880), *Beau Austin* (1884), *Admiral Guinea* (1884), and *Macaire* (1885). These melodramas were not successful, despite the collaborative work of two fine artists.

Tom Taylor (1817-1880), who served as the editor of *Punch* and wrote art criticism for the *Times* and *Graphic*, is another successful playwright from this period. His first foray into drama began with farces. *A Trip to Kissingen* (1844) dealt with schoolboy pranks and escapades. *Our Clerks* (1852) was a comedy dealing with the lives, loves and poverty of a lawyer named Hazard and his clerks. His most successful play from this period is *To Oblige Benson* (1854). This comedy about Mrs Benson's innocent flirtations with young men like John Meredith, the repercussions of mis-directed letters

and the intrigues to safeguard 'reputations' became hugely popular. Taylor's more successful comedies belong to his middle period. *Masks and Faces* (1852) is about theatre personalities, where the central character is Peg Woffington, the historical actress. The courtship and multiple love interests involving Peg constitute the play. *Our American Cousin*, where Asa Trenchard, an American rustic, inherits an English fortune, was first staged in New York in 1858. The play was a gentle satire on aristocracy. *New Men and Old Acres* (1869) again dealt with the financial situation of the English gentry, this time represented by the Vavasours. Taylor also wrote some domestic plays with an overdose of sentimentality and melodramatic situations revolving around marriage and morals. *Still Waters Run Deep* (1855) is a good example of this genre. Some of his historical and verse dramas were also successful, especially *Plot and Passion* (1853) and *The Fool's Revenge* (1859).

4.3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA DURING THE MODERN AGE

Modern drama owes a great deal to the efforts of the Irish playwrights of the first decades of the 20th century. The Independent Theatre opened in London in 1891 and provided a valuable forum for the dramatic circles of the city. The first major playwright was George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). Shaw, influenced by Henrik Ibsen (Norwegian dramatist) and socialism, published his *Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1891 and popularized Ibsen in England.

In 1894, Shaw had his major theatre success with *Arms and the Man.* The comedy also set the tone for most of Shaw's work. The satire on human follies and the portrait of social arms seen in this play were to be the twin axes of his work throughout. *Arm and the Man* focused on war as a theme. Set in the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885, the play shows how Raina discovers the value of soldier Bluntschli's agenda: he is a soldier who carries chocolates instead of arms. *Candida* looked at marriage love. Caught between a man who loves her (the poet Marchbanks) and her socialist preacher husband (Morell), Candida is briefly swayed by the kind of life the former offers her.

However, she finally opts for her husband. *Major Barbara* (1905) is an exploration of ethics in Christianity. Shaw's *Pygmalion* (first staged in 1914) is the story of the English language itself as Shaw was worried about the deterioration in the general use of the language. *The Apple Cart* (1929) is a play that surveys the multiple political philosophies of the time.

All in all, Shaw remained an entertainer and a master of all the tricks of the entertainment trade, and his wit and intellectual brilliance were never fully absorbed into a dramatic form of appropriate depth and scope. This is not to say that Shaw a great writer, whose plays do not fit into any accepted category, but rather that he was a dramatist of immense talent and prodigious wit whose limited view of the nature of literary art prevented him from seeking a dramatic form which could contain all he had to say about man absorbed wholly into the dramatic texture. This is perhaps as much to say that the greatest drama must be poetic, for it needs the extra dimension of expression if it is to achieve its complex pattern of meaning without expository or discursive glosses by the author.

Shaw's stature is most easily seen if we set his plays beside those by his contemporaries. St. John E.C. Hankin (1860-1909) attempted to deal seriously with the problems of contemporary society, but his plays lack both wit and the sense of life. A more accomplished dramatist was Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946), whose sensitive and perceptive work as critic and producer would seem to promise the subtlest kind of art in his own plays; but though a careful intelligence and a fine artistic sense are at work in *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905) and *The Madras House* (1910), they are too obviously contrived and lack the air of dramatic spontaneity.

How far technical theatrical skill could combine with a truly cunning exploitation of the sentimental tradition to achieve popularity in the age of Shaw is shown by James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937). Barrie was quiet out of touch with the new literary movements of his time, but exploited with determination and professional assurance the emotions, whimsies, and sentimentalities implicit in the Scottish kailyard tradition and in so much

Victorian and Edwardian middle-class feeling. *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), *Dear Brutus* (1917), and *Mary Rose* (1920) are masterpieces of theatrical journalism. They are quite different in intention from John Galsworthy's (1867-1933) humanitarian fables of social and moral worry; such plays as *Justice* (1910), *The Skin Game* (1920), and *Loyalties* (1922) command respect and sympathy for their technical competence and humane feeling, but these two qualities are not enough to make a great dramatist.

For the most part, the mixture of drawing-room comedy and morality play has continued to provide the ordinary fare of the British theatre-goer. After Wilde and Shaw some degree of wit and some degree of serious concern with the problems of modern social life have become de rigueur, except, of course, for pure knockabout farce or detective plays. Intelligent and skilful dramatists who artfully tailor their stories to the requirements of the theatre have not been lacking in the twentieth century: the tone can vary from sardonic irony to moral concern, the technique from straightforward use of realistically set scenes proceeding in chronological order to the use of flash backs, single symbolic settings, or even a bare stage. Formulas once accepted are repeated again and again with minor variations.

Noel Coward (1899-1973), playwright and actor, had his first controversial success with *The Vortex* (1924), which dealt with drug use and homosexuality. *Bitter Sweet* (operetta, 1929) and *Cavalcade* (1931) were spectacular successes. His later comedies and musicals were *Private Lives* (1930), the play-cycle, *Tonight at 8.30* (1936) and *This Happy Breed* (1942).

By far the most interesting development in dramatic literature in the first half of the twentieth century was the revival of poetic drama in the plays of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. T.S. Eliot popularized the verse drama and his *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) is an outstanding verse drama or poetic play/drama. This play invokes the past to comment on the present. Thomas Becket's martyrdom is the ostensible theme. *The Family Reunion* (1939),

The Cocktail Party (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) are some of his famous works.

The playwright Christopher Fry (1907-2005) has often been compared with Eliot in his taste for poetic drama. His early work, now practically unknown, included a comedy *A Phoenix Too Frequent* (1946), based on the Latin writer Petronius. The period piece *The Lady's Not For Burning* (1949) is perhaps his best known work.

John Millington Synge (1871-1909) was a key figure in the revival of Irish theatre. His *Playboy of the Western World* created a riot on its opening night in Dublin in 1907. He adopted stories from the areas he lived in (the Aran Islands) and created two major realist works of modern drama: *Riders to the Sea* and *In the Shadow of the Glen. The Playboy of the Western World* is Synge's most complex play. Christy Mahon announces to a small fishing community that he has murdered his father. The community accepts him, initially, as a hero, a 'playboy'. His growing attachment to Pegeen Flaherty, however, alters his relationship with the village. The theme of morality, especially Catholic morality, and its subversion, provoked strong protests from the Irish.

Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) was interested in and influenced by Irish nationalism. His first play, *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), showcases the unionism and nationalism that was to be his enduring theme. *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) are also built on these themes. Unfortunately the later plays was seen as anti-national because of its criticism of war. O'Casey also wrote a play glorifying socialism, *The Star Turns Red* (1940).

British drama turned an entire chapter with the advent of the 1950s which saw the arrival of the 'angry young men' on the stage. 'Angry young men' is a term used to describe a group of writers (mainly dramatists and novelists) in the 1950s. These writers who came from the working classes were unhappy at the cultural and class-bound elitism of England, the social

inequalities, and what they perceived as the injustice of the state. Among the playwrights the foremost representative of the group is John Osborne. A later addition would be Harold Pinter. Their writings invariably described social marginalization and alienation, with dour, unhappy protagonists with a clear inability to form stable relationships.

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) epitomizes the 'angry young men' school of writing. Jimmy Porter, the protagonist represents a generation with no heroic cause left. He rants and raves and directs his anger at his wife Alison. The play also shows a certain idealization of working-class virtues like poverty and a contempt for those who come from the other side of the class barrier. Jimmy's recourse to fantasy at the conclusion of the play suggests an escapism from mind-numbing modernity. Jimmy's principal problem is that he has no role to play in this modernity, that despite his education, he is ignored by the establishment. Sexual morality, education, and work ethics are Jimmy's targets in the play and enabled Osborne to speak with a large section of disillusioned English youth. *A Patriot for Me* (1965) was a brilliant study of homosexuality.

Sir Arnold Wesker (1932-2016) is best remembered for, what is known as the Wesker trilogy, which consisted of *Chicken Soup with Barley, Roots*, and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* (1958-60). The trilogy deals with the life of an East End (London) Jewish family, the Kahns. His plays are categorised as 'kitchen-sink drama', where the main protagonist spends considerable time in the kitchen.

Terence Rattigan (1911-1977) made his debut with the comedy *French Without Tears* (1936). *After the Dance* (1939) mocked the educated and intellectual youth of England for their failure to prevent war. *The Winslow Boy* (1946) is his most famous play. Based on a real incident, the play dealt with a family' s attempts to clear their son's name – who has been accused of stealing the postal order- and the resultant events alter their lives forever. *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952) dealt with homosexuality in the character of Dr Miller.

Women playwrights of the period wrote realist drama. Many of these plays dealt with the woman's condition and thematized contemporary debates about women's rights. G.B. Sterne's *The Matriarch,* produced in 1929, dealt with issues of matrilinearity, economic independence and power for women, femininity and women's social roles. Clemence Dane's *Bill of Divorcement,* looked at the new divorce laws to question issues of moral and social responsibility within the family, especially between generations. Gertrude Jennings was an extremely popular playwright during the 1930s and dealt with issues of domesticity and marriage in her plays such as *A Woman's Influence, the Young Person in Pink, Family Affairs,* and *Our Own Lives.*

When the 'angry young men' theatre emerged in the 1950s, a version, or rather a feminist model of the same, emerged alongside, even though there were only a few women playwrights who did that kind of work such as Ann Jellicoe, Shelagh Delaney, Leslie Storm.

Samuel Beckett stands as the benchmark of many genres within drama: expressionist, absurd, experimental. His *Waiting for Godot* (English translation in 1955) depicts two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, waiting for Godot. Who or what Godot might be, we never know. Existential philosophy which agonizes over the purposelessness of life has often been used as a framework to interpret the play. The play ends with the same sense of meaninglessness. In his later plays, Beckett reduces his theatre to its essentials: from two acts in *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* (1961) to one, starting with *Endgame* (1957); from five characters to four, then two, then one, and no characters at all. Beckett takes drama to new extremes, and pushes his characters to the limits of solitude, non-communication and hopelessness.

Of the 20th century British dramatists, Harold Pinter (1930-2008) stands out as the most complex, daring and often elusive of all. Pinter has thus far 29 plays, numerous screenplays and theatre productions to his credit. Originally influenced by the Theatre of the Absurd, Pinter's plays are often taken as symbols of anti-traditional protest and emancipation. Pinter's plays

have many superficial resemblances to Beckett's plays. In his plays, Pinter is more concerned with the dangers inherent in the silences between characters, the menace in the meaning of what is said and not said. His characters do not have the capacity to fill their time with memories, chat, tortured reflections. They are much less self-sufficient and more dependent on the unstable ties that bind them to each other. *The Caretaker* (1960) and *The Homecoming* (1965) are full length plays of menace, ambiguity and unfulfilled ambitions. Like Beckett, Pinter has developed one-act play into a major theatrical form. *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), about two characters, Gus and Ben, whose situation is more and more threatened by the machinery of the title, was one of the plays which established Pinter's name. The year 1969 saw the first production of *Silence*, arguably his most fully realised and innovative work, in which three characters rehearse their interlinked memories without even relating directly to each other. Their words resemble a kind of musical figure, in which silence becomes – even more clearly – the dominant presence.

Since *Old Times* (1971), *No Man's Land* (1975), and *Betrayal* (1978), Pinter has himself moved closer to silence. His more recent work, such as *Mountain Language* (1988), is a powerful examination of language, power, and freedom, which brings a directly political dimension to his writing – introducing a new focus of concern, not obviously present in early Pinter. *Ashes to Ashes* (1996) explores similar territory to *Old Times.* Harold Pinter continues to write and explore new themes. *Celebration* (2000) is a social comedy about the new rich of the present day. It was staged together with his very first play *The Room* (1957), showing the similarities and differences between his early and later plays. He continues to use a small group of characters in an enclosed space, and explore the tensions and conflicts between them.

The strength and variety of the dramatic renaissance of the 1940s and 1960s is seen by putting beside the work of Osborne and Pinter a third dramatist, very different from either. John Arden (1930-2012) startled and puzzled the audience of the Royal Court Theatre in 1959 with his play *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance.*

Edward Bond (b.1934) contributed to the abolition of theatre censorship in the UK with his play *Saved* (1965). This controversial play about working class youth who take to violence and sexual promiscuity as a result of their extremely harsh conditions of existence under the brutal system has some frightening naturalist scenes. One particular scene where a baby is stoned to death attracted the attention of the censors. Bond refused to delete any scenes. The English Stage Society which produced the play was prosecuted. His *Bingo* (1973) actually puts the character of Shakespeare on stage, in an examination of the clash between artistic and capitalist values. The play shows Shakespeare in his retirement in Stratford, as a property owner rather than the cultural colossus history has made him. His other plays include *Early Morning* (1968) and *Black Mass* (1970). He later rewrote Shakespeare's classic in *Lear* (1971).

Tom Stoppard (b.1937) is best known for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967) which depicts two minor characters from *Hamlet* on the stage in a comedy of identity, and lack of it, with Hamlet as a very minor character. The play has been taken to be thematizing existentialism and the issue of human free will.

With the feminist movement gathering strength in the 1970s, the work of playwrights like Caryl Churchill (b.1938) acquired a great social relevance and audience. With socialist leanings in terms of political ideology, she achieved instant attention with *Top Girls* (1982), even though her earlier work, *Cloud 9* (1979)- a play that combined themes of European imperialism and sexuality and the 'woman's question' – did receive some critical attention. This extraordinary play underlines the efforts women make to succeed in a world of men.

Late in the 1990s, a new genre known as the 'in-yer-face' theatre emerged with the plays of Sarh Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Anthony Nielson, and others. The 'in-yer-face' plays are intended to shock the audiences with their graphic violence, sexuality, language, and emotional trauma. Often

dealing with extreme events like cannibalism, rape, beatings, and murder, these plays seek to capture the violence of contemporary life.

The 1990s also brought a number of strong masculine voices into the theatre. Patrick Marber is one of the most significant of these voices. His *Dealer's Choice* (1995) is set in the masculine world of card games, and *Closer* (1997) is the first play to bring Internet sexual relations to the stage.

In the recent political theatre in Britain two plays stand out. Hanif Kureishi's *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) maps the slow transformation of a British Muslim boy into a fundamentalist. The debates between father and son, and the role of a Muslim preacher-priest become especially relevant in the wake of 9/11. David Hare (b.1947) has commented on the Iraq invasion with *Stuff Happens* (2004). Hare uses actual lines from speeches and the debates on the invasion.

4.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - I

4.4.1 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following T.W. Robertson's dramas used a historically troubling event: the Indian 'mutiny' of 1857 as a context to look at English domestic life?_____.

(a) *Caste* (b) *David Garrick*

(c) *Society* (d) *Ours*

2. Which of the following dramatists was associated with the aesthetic movement of the 1890s?_____.

(a) T.W. Robertson (b) G. B. Shaw

(c) W.S. Gilbert (d) Oscar Wilde

3. Which of the following dramatists influenced 20th century drama in general and G.B. Shaw in particular?_____.

(a) Oscar Wilde (b) Henrik Ibsen

(c) Henry Arthur Jones (d) Arthur Wing Pinero

4. Which of the following dramatists does not belong to the Victorian age?_____.

(a) John Osborne (b) Oscar Wilde

(c) T.W. Robertson (d) Arthur Wing Pinero

5. Which of the following plays is not composed by G.B. Shaw?_____.

(a) *Arms and the Man* (b) *Look Back in Anger*

(c) *Candida* (d) *The Apple Cart*

6. Which of the following writers is credited with the revival of poetic drama/ verse drama?_____.

(a) G.B. Shaw (b) John Millington Synge

(c) T.S. Eliot (d) Sean O'Casey

7. Which of the plays epitomizes the 'angry young men' school of writing? _____.

(a) *Look Back in Anger* (b) *Murder in the Cathedral*

(c) *The Lady's Not for Burning* (d) *The Shadow of a Gunman*

8. Which of the following playwright's plays are categorised as 'kitchen-sink drama'?_____.

(a) John Osborne (b) T.S. Eliot

(c) Harold Pinter (d) Arnold Wesker

9. Which of the following plays is not written by Samuel Beckett? _____.

(a) *Endgame* (b) *Waiting for Godot*

(c) *Silence* (d) *Happy Days*

10. Silence as an aspect of dramatic representation is best illustrated in the plays of ?_____.

(a) Samuel Beckett (b) Harold Pinter

(c) Edward Bond (d) Tom Stoppard

11. Which of the following plays, produced in 1965 contributed to the abolition of theatre censorship in the UK?_____.

(a) *Saved* (b) *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*

(c) *Early Morning* (d) *Black Mass*

12. Which of the following plays actually puts the character of Shakespeare on stage and shows him in his retirement in Stratford?_____.

(a) *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (b) *Bingo*

(c) *Early Morning* (d) None of the above

13. Which of the following plays depicts two minor characters from *Hamlet* on the stage with Hamlet as a very minor character?_____.

(a) *Bingo* (b) *Saved*

(c) *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (d) *Endgame*

14. Which of the following plays maps the slow transformation of a British Muslim boy into a fundamentalist?_____.

(a) *Stuff Happens* (b) *My Son the Fanatic*

(c) *Dealer's Choice* (d) *Saved*

15. Which category of plays is intended to shock the audiences with their graphic violence, sexuality, language, and emotional trauma? _____.

(a) angry-young men (b) kitchen sink drama

(c) existential drama (d) in-yer-face

4.4.2 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What are the characteristics of Victorian drama?

2. Give in brief the contribution made by Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero to the development of the Victorian drama.

3. Oscar Wilde is among the most important dramatists of the Victorian age. Give an account of his dramatic works.

4. Give an estimate of George Bernard Shaw as a dramatist. What was his contribution in the development of the English drama during the twentieth century?

5. Discuss the characteristics of modern British drama by contrasting it with the Victorian drama.

6. Discus the term 'angry young men'. Discuss John Osborn as a representative of the group.

7. Briefly discuss the verse drama/poetic drama during the twentieth century.

8. Compare the dramatic production of Samuel Beckett with that of Harold Pinter. Is there any similarity to be found between the two writers?

9. Discuss the English drama of the 1990s. What literary trends are evident during the era?

10. As his career progressed, Harold Pinter became preoccupied with silence. Comment.

4.5 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. (a) *Caste*

2. (d) Oscar Wilde

3. (b) Henrik Ibsen

4. (a) John Osborne

5. (b) *Look Back in Anger*

6. (c) T.S. Eliot

7. (a) *Look Back in Anger*

8. (d) Arnold Wesker

9. (c) *Silence*

10. (b) Harold Pinter

11. (a) *Saved*

12. (b) *Bingo*

13. (c) *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

14. (b) *My Son the Fanatic*

15. (d) in-yer-face

4.6 DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH SHORT STORY FROM VICTORIAN TO MODERN AGE

Before the 19th century the short story was not generally regarded as a distinct literary form. But although in this sense it may seem to be a uniquely modern genre, the fact is that short prose fiction is nearly as old as language itself. Throughout history humankind has enjoyed various types of brief narratives: jests, anecdotes, digressions, short allegorical romances, moralizing fairy tales, short myths, and

abbreviated historical legends. None of these constitutes a short story as it has been defined since the 19th century, but they do make up a large part of the milieu from which the modern short story emerged.

4.6.1 DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH SHORT STORY DURING THE VICTORIAN AGE

The leading nineteenth-century British practitioners of what is now usually regarded as an American genre were William Carleton, Sheridan Le Fanu, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, R. L. Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Arthur Conan Doyle, and H. G. Wells, although writers as distinguished as Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, W. M. Thackeray, and George Eliot wrote compelling works of short fiction. H. E. Bates in *The Modern Short Story, A Critical Survey* (1942), however, feels that until the last quarter of the nineteenth century the genre languished in Great Britain, even while it flourished in America, because "no single writer applied to it a technique different from that of the novel" (23).

Charles Dickens who is recognised more for his novels, is also credited with producing some literature in the manner of the short story. *Sketches by "Boz," Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* is a collection of short pieces by Charles Dickens. These short pieces were originally published in various newspapers and periodicals between 1833 and 1836.Charles Dickens's short story "The Signalman" (1866) is a horror story where a railway signal-man of the title tells the narrator of an apparition that has been haunting him.

George Eliot is another writer who is known more for her novels. Her short story "The Lifted Veil" (1859) is an interesting example of what happens when a novelist in the realist tradition turns her hand to the short fiction form. "The Lifted Veil" is not a realistic fiction for which Eliot is best

known. It explores the theme of extrasensory perception, the essence of physical life, possible life after death, and the power of fate.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's early short story "Hand and Soul" (1849) has been called the first story in the line of "aesthetic fiction" that finally comes to full flower in the nineties. It tells the tale of a fictional early Renaissance painter, who, depressed by the failure of his art to improve the world, has a vision in which his soul comes to him in the form of a beautiful woman. She instructs him that he should paint her, his own soul. Such a pronouncement, which provides the program for all Rossetti's later paintings of women, embodies the attenuated romanticism that is the essence of the aesthetic movement, for it holds that the artist's only duty is to cultivate his own emotions and imagination and then express them.

Walter Pater created a virtually new genre of evocative, impressionistic, biographical fiction- "imaginary portraits," the name he would apply to his 1887 collection – which shaped the short story genre that would rise in popularity enormously towards the end of the century. His "The Child in the House: An Imaginary Portrait" (1878), has been selected by scholars as being culturally important, and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it.

Robert Louis Stevenson is the first British writer to be recognized as a specialist in the short story and he is also the champion of the romance form in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He was one of the first British short fiction writers to focus, as did Henry James, on technique and form rather than on content alone. Many critics suggest that it is with his work that the true modern short story began in England.

What Stevenson has done in "A Lodging for the Night" (1877), is to create a story about the artist who transforms reality into art stuff, even as Stevenson himself transforms the details of the story into art stuff. The story is an exercise in just this seeming paradox, indicating that reality must be dealt with both in terms of practical existence and the ambiguous mixture of

amusement and horror, for life and death must be mocked in order to transform them into art.

In "The Sire de Maletroit's Door" (1877), Stevenson gives us the very essence of poetry, for it focuses on the conventional romance situation even as it comments on the nature of the romantic tale as a genre. "Markheim" (1884), radically foregrounds the dichotomy inherent in fiction between character and event. Rather than focusing on form because he had little content of value to communicate, as some critics have claimed, Stevenson, like Henry James, is primarily concerned with the structure and essential nature of fiction itself.

"Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1885) is perhaps the purest example in English literature of the use of the doppelganger convention to represent the duality of human nature. However, more interesting than this external projection of the double self is the method by which the story itself is constructed.

Arthur Machen's most famous tale, "The Great God Pan" (1890) is based on the assumption that beneath external reality lies another realm that man intrudes upon at his peril. The imagination is manifested as a mysterious suppressed absence which must be discovered.

Thomas Hardy published a collection of short stories titled *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891). The stories in the collection are contained by a frame narrative in which ten members of a club each tell one story about a noble dame of the 17th or 18th century. The best known story in the collection is "Barbara of the House of Grebe," which is told by the old surgeon and focuses on the confusion of the lines between the actual and the fictional—a confusion that allows characters to project inner desires and aesthetic states outward and then respond to them as if they were real.

Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892) is a paradigm of the classic formula of the detective story, the key to which is

the attention one must pay to the details of the text itself, which are meaningful because they are symbols of what is now absent but is nonetheless significant.

Ernest Dowson's "The Dying of Francis Donne" (1896) is an embodiment of the transformation of the dry bones of science into an elegant literary pattern. It presents death as the fulfilment of the aesthetic–the ultimate transformation of life into the art work that is the story itself.

George Gissing's best-known story, "The House of Cobwebs" (l900) identifies the man of letters as one who can enter into another's mind. "The House of Cobwebs" is a house of fiction spun out to suggest the dual process of both the human and the intellectual out of which fiction is made.

W. W. Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw" (1902) provides a helpful structural transition between the stories of Blackwood and Machen and those of Dunsany, De Le Mare, and Saki; for although it communicates the sense of horror of the earlier writers, it makes use of the well-made short story structure and the ironic tone of later ones.

H. G. Wells's "The Country of the Blind" (1904) reverses the conventional story motif of a man entering a world of the strange and the unusual, for in this case, the legendary world is foregrounded as a world that ironically perceives the "real" world to be mythical.

In Arthur Symonds' "Christian Trevalga" (1905), a story of the development of an artist, the plight of the pianist Trevalga is a parable of the ultimate implication of the aesthetic view in that Trevalga cuts himself off from external reality altogether.

Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows" (1907) is a story that seems typical of Blackwood's thematic structure of having an average man, through a "flash of terror or beauty," experience something beyond the sensory reality of the everyday.

In G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown story, "The Blue Cross" (1910), the aesthetic solution is the true solution. Father Brown plays the roles both

of the criminal, leaving clues to his actions, and the detective who has solved the crime before it has been committed.

"Casting the Runes" (1911) Montague Rhodes James's most anthologized tale, is a typical short story for its time; its content consists of late nineteenth-century occultism, and its structure is a variant of a combination of demonism and detective work.

Max Beerbohm's "A. V. Laider" (1919) is a typical example of the early twentieth-century British short story's central self-reflexive technique, for it plays with the reader's credulity and asserts the primacy of imagination over external reality.

Walter de la Mare has been called the most distinguished of the writers who made the Edwardian age a "haunted period" in English literature. For de la Mare, only the imagination makes reality significant, and what we call external reality itself is like a dream—a characteristics of the short story genre itself that can be seen most readily in de la Mare's two best-known and most anthologized stories, "The Creatures" and "The Riddle" (1923).

Hector Hugh Munro (1870-1916), better known by his pen name Saki marks a shift in Edwardian short fiction to the trick ending story that dominates popular short stories both in England and America at the turn of the century. He was considered to be a master of short stories. In 1904, his short stories titled *Reginald* were published. This was followed by a series of short stories that were published from 1904-1911 that included 'Reginald' in Russia, in 1901, and 'The Chronicles of Clovis' in 1911. His most anthologized story, "The Open Window" (1914), is a clear example of a fiction that depends for its impact on the means by which story itself works. "Sredni Vashtar" is the quintessential Saki story about the romancer who makes his imagination become real; however, the tone of this story is more serious than that of "The Open Window," for more is at stake. In 1926-1927, 8 volumes of 'The Works of Saki' were published. In 1930 the *Complete Short Stories of Saki* were published. His short stories include "The Interlopers", "Gabriel-Ernest", "The

Schartz-Metterklume Method", "The Toys of Peace", "The Storyteller", "The Open Window", "The Unrest-Cure", "The East Wing", etc.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was perhaps the first English writer to embrace the characteristics of the short story form whole-heartedly as he placed the short stories at the centre of his creative practice. Thus his stories are perfect representations of the transition point between the old-fashioned tale of the nineteenth century and the modern short story.

It is little wonder that "The Man Who Would be King" (1888), has a comic tone, for truly what Kipling is playing with here is not the nature of empires, but the nature of story itself.The tenuous world of fable is also the subject of Kipling's other well-known India tale, "Without Benefit of Clergy" (1899). The fantasy world can exist only as the participants of the fable can maintain their separation in a world of their own making.

"Mary Postgate" (1915), is a tacit story of Mary's hidden life in which she lives only in her imaginative relationship with others. What the story provides is the ironic single opportunity for Mary to act, by not acting. The fantasy world becomes momentarily real and thus Mary finds a release for her previously unexpressed desires.

Kipling's most famous story, "The Gardener" (1925), depends on concealment of an inner life for its effect, for it depends on the notion of a double life, a split between external reality and a tenuous inner reality.

4.6.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH SHORT STORY DURING THE MODERN AGE

In the first half of the 20th century the appeal of the short story continued to grow. Literally hundreds of writers—including, as it seems, nearly every major dramatist, poet, and novelist—published thousands of excellent stories. As the familiarity with it increased, the short story form itself became more varied and complex. The fundamental means of structuring a story underwent a significant change. The overwhelming or unique event that usually informed the 19th-century story fell out of favour with the storywriter of the early 20th century, who grew more interested in subtle actions and unspectacular events. In several of D.H. Lawrence, Katherine

Mansfield, and others' stories, physical action and event are unimportant except insofar as the actions reveal the psychological underpinnings of the story. Stories came to be structured, also, in accordance with an underlying archetypal model: the specific plot and characters are important insofar as they allude to a traditional plot or figure, or to patterns that have recurred with wide implications in the history of mankind. Katherine Anne Porter's "Flowering Judas" (1930), for example, echoes and ironically inverts the traditional Christian legend. Still other stories are formed by means of motif, usually a thematic repetition of an image or detail that represents the dominant idea of the story. "The Dead," the final story in James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), builds from a casual mention of death and snow early in the story to a culminating paragraph that links them in a profound vision. Seldom, of course, is the specific structure of one story appropriate for a different story.

No single form provided the 20th-century writer with the answer to structural problems. As the primary structuring agent, spectacular and suspenseful action was rather universally rejected around mid-century since motion pictures and television could present it much more vividly. As the periodicals that had supplied escapist stories to mass audiences declined, the short story became the favoured form of a smaller but intellectually more demanding readership. The short story also lent itself to the rhetoric of student protest in the 1960s and was found in a bewildering variety of mixed-media forms in the "underground" press that publicized this life style throughout the world. In his deep concern with such a fundamental matter as form, the 20th-century writer unwittingly affirmed the maturation and popularity of the genre; only a secure and valued (not to mention flexible) genre could withstand and, moreover, encourage such experimentation.

The quantity of short fiction published in this way is insurmountable. Between 1890 and the First World War, there were at least 34 magazines publishing short fiction in Britain alone. Some of them, such as the *Strand*, had huge circulations; others, such as the *Yellow Book*, have immense literary importance. Journals such as these have been looked at by scholars, if not always by the general reader. Others languish in the darkness of library stacks. *The Daily Mail* published a large quantity of short fiction in its first decades.

The inescapable impression, over the course of decades, was the importance of this literary form. Investigation revealed that, before the First World War, journals were happy to pay generously for stories – for a popular writer. No wonder there was eager competition among writers; no wonder the best writers of the day, including Rudyard Kipling, D.H. Lawrence, Arnold Bennett, Joseph Conrad and H.G. Wells, placed the form at the very centre of their creative practice.

The culture of experimentation and fantasy continued well into the 20th century, and one can always find a story about a collision between supernatural powers and public transport, about the events that take place between a man falling out of a fifth-floor window and being killed by the impact, about unreal worlds, and about the inner life of a heroin addict etc.

The marginal and experimental stories, however, are only one way in which the short story reached out beyond its safe, central territory. For almost the entire history of the short story, writers who found themselves disadvantaged in society by birth or nature could interest an editor in a piece of short fiction. Again, nothing much would be lost if it didn't work. Female writers found that they could be indulged with a short commission, and they took full advantage of the opportunity.

In the twentieth century, various writers contributed to the development of short story in Britain. Among them Doris Lessing, George Mackay Brown, E.A. Markham, W. Somerset Maugham, Ian McEwan, John McGahern, Michael Moorcock, Alan Sillitoe, Muriel Spark, etc. deserve mention. The literary record of William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) as writer requires no one to rise to its defense. Maugham may not be deserving of a position within the highest ranks of English literature, but few can effectively question the success and popularity of his fiction, drama, and short story when set in comparison with his contemporaries from the English literary transitional period (1880-1920).Through his novels, short fiction, and plays he remains today as a worthy representative of a successful and popular writer who, more often than not, knew his craft and understood the

demands of his audiences. His work is characterised by a clear unadorned style, cosmopolitan settings, and a shrewd understanding of human nature. While he is remembered today for composing some fine novels, and his plays, mainly Edwardian social comedies which soon became out-dated, his short stories have increased in popularity. Many portray the conflict of Europeans in alien surroundings that provoke strong emotions, and Maugham's skill in handling plot is distinguished by economy and suspense. His short stories were published in the collections *The Casuarina Tree* (1926), *Ashenden* (1928), *Ah King* (1933), *The Mixture as Before* (1940), and *Creature of Circumstance* (1947).

D.H Lawrence (1885-1930) although acknowledged more for his novels also composed some short stories of merit. One of the most original writers of the twentieth century, Lawrence has been praised for his short stories that explore human nature through frank discussions of sex, psychology, and religion. Critics note that his short fiction was often based on experiences from his working-class youth in England's industrial midlands. Several of his stories are considered masterly and innovative examples of the short fiction genre and are crucial to Lawrence's development as a novelist. Many critics consider Lawrence's short stories his most artistically accomplished writings and have attributed much of their success to the constraints of the form that forced Lawrence to deny himself the elaborations, diversions, and repetitions that characterize his longer works. In comparison with his novels, Lawrence's short fiction is economical in style and structure. His best-known short stories include "The Captain's Doll", "The Fox", "The Ladybird", "Odour of Chrysanthemums", "The Princess", "The Rocking-Horse Winner", "St Mawr", "The Virgin and the Gypsy" and "The Woman who Rode Away". Among his most praised collections is *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, published in 1914. His collection *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, published in 1928, develops the theme of leadership that Lawrence also explored in novels such as *Kangaroo, The Plumed Serpent* and *Fanny and Annie*.

Doris Lessing (1919-2013) was a British writer whose novels and short stories are largely concerned with people involved in the social and political upheavals of the 20th century. A master of the short story, Lessing has published several collections, including *The Story of a Non-Marrying Man* (1972) and *Stories* (1978); her African stories are collected in *This Was the Old Chief's Country* (1951) and *The Sun Between Their Feet* (1973).

Ian Russell McEwan (born 1948) is an English novelist and short story writer. McEwan began his career writing sparse, gothic short stories. *The Cement Garden* (1978) and *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), his first two novels, earned him the nickname "Ian Macabre." These were followed by three novels of some success in the 1980s and early 1990s. His novel *Enduring Love* (1997) was adapted into an eponymous film. His short stories have been published in collections such as *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), *In Between the Sheets* (1978), and *The Short Stories* (1995).

Michael John Moorcock (born 1939) is an English writer, primarily of science fiction and fantasy, who has also published literary novels and short stories. He is best known for his novels about the character Elric of Melniboné, a seminal influence on the field of fantasy in the 1960s and 1970s. His short story collection *London Bone* (2001) won him wide critical acclaim.

Alan Sillitoe (1928 –2010) was an English writer and one of the so-called "angry young men" of the 1950s. He is best known for his debut novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and early short story *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959). He contributed extensively to the genre of short story and his short story collections are *The Ragman's Daughter and Other Stories* (1963), *Guzman, Go Home, and Other Stories* (1979), *Men, Women and Children* (1973), *Down to the Bone* (1976), *The Second Chance and Other Stories* (1981), *The Far Side of the Street: Fifteen Short Stories* (1988), *Alligator Playground: A Collection of Short Stories* (1997), *New and Collected Stories* (2005).

Muriel Spark (1918 –2006) was a Scottish novelist, short story writer, poet and essayist who contributed immensely to the genre of short story. Her short story collections include *The Go-away Bird* (1958), *Voices at Play* (short stories and plays, 1961), *Bang-bang You're Dead* (short stories, 1982), and *Complete Short Stories* (2001).

Ruskin Bond (born 1934) is a well-known Indian writer in English of British descent. He has written more than hundred short stories, besides his other work which includes novels and poetry. Ruskin Bond has published many casual short stories for children in magazines and newspapers in India and abroad. His book for children, *The Hidden Pool*, is a collection of short stories. *The Hidden Pool*, is the story of three friends, Laurie, Anil, and Kamal. Laurie is the son of a British engineer in India and Anil and Kamal are his Indian friends, who introduce him to the festivals, foods, and traditions of India. Laurie finds out a hidden pool in the mountains which varnishes their friendship. Hidden Pool, is the place where they swim, wrestle, and make plans of a trip to a glacier at 12,000 feet above sea level. Ruskin Bond's another children's book, *Grandfather's Private Zoo*, is a collection of ten short stories that had been published at an earlier time in various magazines and newspapers. Some of these stories are written in the early 1960s in Delhi. The collection of the stories refers the happy times which Ruskin Bond had spent at his grandmother's house in Dehra, in these stories he takes the theme from the statements, heard through the people of village about his Grandfather, Clerk's fondness for unusual house pets. Ruskin Bond presents the book in first person narration as an autobiography, only to make it authentic. "When Darkness Falls", "A Flight of Pigeons", "The Blue Umbrella", "The Room on the Roof", "Delhi is not Far", "The Tiger in the Tunnel", etc. are some of his famous short stories.

4.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II

4.7.1 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. *Sketches by "Boz," Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People* is a collection of short pieces by _____.

(a) Rudyard Kipling (b) Charles Dickens

(c) Thomas Hardy (d) W.M. Thackeray

2. Which of the following is a horror story by Charles Dickens?_____.

(a) *Sketches by "Boz"* (b) "The Lifted Veil

(c) "The Signalman" (d) "The House of Cobwebs"

3. Which of the following short stories can be called the first story in the line of "aesthetic fiction"? _____.

(a) "Hand and Soul" (b) "The Lifted Veil"

(c) Both (a) and (b) (d) Neither (a) nor (b)

4. *A Group of Noble Dames* is a collection of short stories by_____.

(a) R.L. Stevenson (b) Rudyard Kipling

(c) Hector Hugh Munro (d) Thomas Hardy

5. Which of the following writers is better known by his pen name 'Saki'?_____.

(a) Rudyard Kipling (b) Hector Hugh Munro

(c) H.G. Wells (d) George Gissing

6. Which of the following wrote the short stories : "The Interlopers", "The Schartz-Metterklume Method", "The Toys of Peace", "The Open Window", "The East Wing"_____.

(a) Hector Hugh Munro (b) Somerset Maugham

(c) George Gissing (d) D.H. Lawrence

7. Who is the writer of the short story collection *Dubliners*?_____.

(a) Muriel Spark (b) Ruskin Bond

(c) James Joyce (d) None of the above

8. Which of the following is not a short story collection by Somerset Maugham?_____.

(a) *The Casuarina Tree* (b) *Ashenden*

(c) *Ah King* (d) *The Go-away Bird*

9. *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is a short story by_____.

(a)Alan Sillitoe (b) Doris Lessing

(c) Muriel Spark (d) Ian Russell McEwan

10. Children's book, *Grandfather's Private Zoo,* is a collection of ten short stories by_____.

(a) D.H. Lawrence (b) Somerset Maugham

(c) Ruskin Bond (d) H.H. Munro

4.7.2 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Comment on Victorian short story.

2. Sum up the contribution made by Robert Louis Stevenson to the development of short story.

3. Analyse H.H. Munro as a writer of short story.

4. Discuss the growth and development of short story during the modern age.

5. Discuss Somerset Maugham as a writer of short story.

6. Analyse the contribution made by Ruskin Bond to the genre of short story.

4.8 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. (b) Charles Dickens

2. (c) "The Signalman"

3. (a) “Hand and Soul”

4. (d) Thomas Hardy

5. (b) Hector Hugh Munro

6. (a) Hector Hugh Munro

7. (c) James Joyce

8. (d) *The Go-away Bird*

9. (a) Alan Sillitoe

10. (c) Ruskin Bond

4.9 LET US SUM UP

The Victorian age is remarkable for the quality and quantity of its fiction and poetry saw some development in drama also.

Throughout history human kind has enjoyed various types of brief narratives: jests, anecdotes, digressions, short allegorical romances, moralizing fairy tales, short myths and historical legends.

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4.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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The Routledge History of Literature in English by Ronald Carter and John McRae

A Critical History of English Literature Volume IIby David Daiches

History of English Literature by Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian

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English Literature **Semester-VI**

Lesson No. 5 **THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCE** **Unit III**

(William Somerset Maugham)

STRUCTURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

"The Force of Circumstance" is a short story published in the collection *The Casuarina Tree* by W. Somerset Maugham in the year 1926.

5.1.1 About the Author

William Somerset Maugham was born in the British Embassy in Paris on 25th January, 1874. William's father, Robert Ormond Maugham, a wealthy solicitor, worked for the Embassy in France. By the time he was ten, both William's parents were dead and he was sent to live with his uncle, the Rev. Henry Maugham, in Whitstable, Kent.

After an education at King's School, Canterbury, and Heildelberg University in Germany, Maugham became a medical student at St. Thomas Hospital, London. While training to be a doctor Maugham worked as an obstetric clerk in the slums of Lambeth. He used these experiences to write his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897).

The book sold well and he decided to abandon medicine and become a full-time writer. Maugham achieved fame with his play *Lady Frederick* (1907), a comedy about money and marriage. By 1908 Maugham had four plays running simultaneously in London.

On the outbreak of the First World War, in 1914, Maugham joined a Red Cross ambulance unit in France. During the war Maugham was invited by Sir John Wallinger, head of Britain's Military Intelligence (MI6) in France, to act as a secret service agent. Maugham agreed and over the next few years acted as a link between MI6 in London and its agents working in Europe.

Maugham's masterpiece is generally agreed to be *Of Human Bondage* (1915), a semi-autobiographical novel that deals with the life of the main character Philip Carey, who, like Maugham, was orphaned, and brought up by his pious uncle. This was followed by another successful book, *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919). Maugham also developed a reputation as a fine short-story writer. His story, "Rain," which appeared in *The Trembling of a Leaf*

(1921), was also adapted into a successful feature film. Popular plays written by Maugham include *The Circle* (1921), *East of Suez* (1922), *The Constant Wife* (1926) and the anti-war play, *For Services Rendered* (1932).

In his later years Maugham wrote his autobiography, *Summing Up* (1938) and works of fiction such as *The Razor's Edge* (1945), *Catalina* (1948) and *Quartet* (1949). William Somerset Maugham died in 1965.

5.1.2 *The Casuarina Tree*

The Casuarina Tree is a collection of short stories set in the Federated Malay States during the 1920s by W. Somerset Maugham. The stories are loosely based on Maugham's experiences traveling with his companion Gerald Haxton in the region for six months in 1921 and four months in 1925. He published a second set of short stories based on these travels, *Ah King*, in 1933. The title of the book comes from a tree native to Australasia and Southeast Asia, often used to stabilize soils. In the foreword to the book, Maugham says that the title is a metaphor for "the English people who live in the Malay Peninsula and in Borneo because they came along after the adventurous pioneers who opened the country to Western civilization." The major themes of the stories are class division, racial difference, adultery, personal competitiveness, and human nature in reaction to fate.

The strong thread which connects the stories is the theme of alienation and contrast – between people and cultures. For most of the characters, after a crisis in their circumstances, life seems to take up where it left off and closes over the revelations that brought on the drama.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this lesson is to familiarize the learners with the impact of colonialism on both the colonizer as well as the colonized. It also acquaints the learner with the genre of short stories and helps them appreciate Maugham's art of narration.

5.3 SUMMARY

The story opens with woman who is waiting for her husband to come home. The place is most probably, the Malay Peninsula, because a servant, “The Malay boy” (157) appears. The woman is not familiar with the place, because of her gesture of raising the blinds. There is nothing to see and the Malay boy has already drawn them so as to keep out the heat.

From the raised blind we have a glimpse of the outside. The setting is ominous: “breathless sun,” “the white pallor of death,” “the colours of the day were ashy and wan” (157). The scene is grey and filled with monotony, not only the colour, but also the evocation of sound for the comparison with the heat: “(It was like an Eastern melody, in the minor key, which exacerbates the nerves by its ambiguous monotony...)” (157).

From the tones of the heat, compared to the sound of Eastern music, the narration shifts seamlessly into the description of real sound: “The cicadas sang their grating song with a frenzied energy; it was as continual and monotonous as the rustling of a brook over the stones” (157).

Then, the readers get to know that the woman is from England and she misses her homeland, England. [...] but on a sudden it was drowned by the loud singing of a bird, mellifluous and rich; and for an instant, with a catch at her heart, she thought of the English blackbird. (157)

Doris remembers the day she arrived in the new land. When the little coasting steamer set them down at the mouth of the river, where a large boat, manned by a dozen Dyaks, was waiting to take them to the station, her breath was taken away by the beauty, friendly rather than awe-inspiring, of the scene. It had a gaiety, like the joyful singing of birds in the trees, which she had never expected. On each bank of the river were mangroves and nipah palms, and behind them the dense green of the forest. In the distance stretched blue mountains, range upon range, as far as the eye could see. She had no sense of confinement nor of gloom, but rather of openness and wide spaces where the exultant fancy could wander with delight. The green glittered in the sunshine and the sky was blithe and cheerful. The gracious land seemed to offer her a smiling welcome.

Before coming to this country, that lady had conceived a mental picture about the new land from what she read in books: “[...] she had formed an impression of a sombre land with great ominous rivers and a silent, impenetrable jungle.” (166)They rowed on, hugging a bank, and high overhead flew a pair of doves. “A flash of colour, like a living jewel, dashed across their path. It was a kingfisher. Two monkeys, with their dangling tails, sat side by side on a branch. On the horizon, over there on the other side of the broad and turbid river, beyond the jungle, was a row of little white clouds, the only clouds in the sky, and they looked like a row of ballet-girls, dressed in white, waiting at the back of the stage, alert and merry, for the curtain to go up.” (166–7) The setting, which is described in the beginning of the novel, hints at the impending disaster.

The initial colourful impressions are all gone after four months. The mysterious, incomprehensible, and threatening landscape dominates the rest of the story, which can be noticed in the following lines from the story.

“The river stretched widely before them and on the further bank the jungle was wrapped in the mystery of the approaching night.” (171)

“At their feet, with a mighty, formidable sluggishness, silent, mysterious and fatal, flowed the river. It had the terrible deliberation and the relentlessness of destiny.” (177)

“The darkness thinned away and the river was ghostly.” (199)

“The dawn now was creeping along the river mistily, but the night lurked still in the dark trees of the jungle.” (199)

Soon the woman’s husband arrives. Immediately when she hears his footsteps, she rushes to meet him, while he hurries up the steps and is delighted to see her. A brief introduction of the characters appear. The woman’s name is Doris and her husband is Guy. Guy is lovingly described, adorable actually; though he may not be a dashing character, he possesses all the redeeming features. He was twenty-nine, but he -was still a school-boy; he would never grow up. That was the reason why she had fallen in love with him. He was a little round man, with a red face like the fall moon, and blue eyes. He was rather pimply. She wasn’t attracted towards his looks

infact she had told him often that he wasn't her type at all. But he had a charming smile and made her laugh too. Doris had met him at a small place by the seaside, where she was spending a month's holiday with her mother. Doris was a secretary to a member of parliament, while Guy was home on leave. They were staying in the same hotel. He asked her to marry him at the end of the month's holiday. She had known he was going to propose to her and had decided to refuse him. She was her widowed mother's only child and she could not go so far away from her, but when the moment came she did not quite know what happened to her, she was carried off her feet by an unexpected emotion, and she accepted him.

Doris, trapped in this strange land, which she is to call home, seems to be happy. Everything between the two appears to be normal. But still a sense of foreboding (impending danger) looms large. After returning from the office, Guy goes to take a bath. Doris hears him talking to a Malay woman in the local dialect. The only words she could understand were "Get out." The presence of that woman near her house disturbed Doris.

Guy asks Doris how she spent her day. Doris gives an account of the walk she took through the Kampong. She tells him that she was surprised to see two children, watching a monkey show, having their skin colour much whiter than others. Guy explains to her that there were two three half caste children in the town. Their mother is one of the native girls and their father, he further tells after hesitation that most of his fellow Englishmen have native wives and when they go back home, the send them back to their village with some money.

A dramatic tension is created when Doris declares that she would have hated if Guy were to be like the other fellows, having a Malay wife. Guy tries to offer some kind of justification. He tells her that it is awfully lonely on an outstation. One doesn't see another white man for six months on end. A fellow comes out here when he's only a boy. "He gave her that charming smile of his which transfigured his round, plain face- there are excuses, you know." Though Doris do sympathize with them, but she tells Guy that "it would upset me dreadfully if I were told that you had lived like that."

Before coming to Malay, she had read novels about Malay Archipelago, and formed an impression of the land "with great ominous rivers and a silent, impenetrable jungle." On reaching their, she felt that the entire land welcomed her. She rearranged her husband's bachelor house and made it a habitable British home.

We are then introduced to their routine. After having an afternoon nap, they strolled down to the tennis court. The ominous presence of the Malay woman and children refuse to leave them alone, like the river in the background, silent and impenetrable but ever watchful. The presence of the native woman disturbed Guy, as a result Doris easily defeated him in the match.

The next day turns out to be a cheerful one, as they receive the mail which included letters, English papers and papers from Singapore, magazines and books.

The story takes a leap of one week. Doris, who was busy reading a book of Malay grammar, gets disturbed by a sound of scuffle between the boy and the native woman. She tries to stop the boy who refuses to listen, saying that Guy has ordered him that this woman should not be seen near the house.

When Guy returns home, Doris tells him about the boy's brutal treatment of the Native woman. Guy admits that he "gave instructions that if she showed herself again she was to be turned out." The storm which was going on inside the hearts of Doris and Guy, was reflected in the outside environment. It was raining heavily, so they couldn't go to the tennis court.

Finally Guy decides to disclose the past events of his life to Doris. He tells her that he was only eighteen when was sent to a station up the Sembulu river. He felt very lonely, especially at nights as had no one to talk to. Then one day his boy Abdul suggested that a girl can come and live with him, if he wants to. She will not charge much, only two hundred Straits dollars, as people were very poor in that country. He confesses that he has three children with her, even though he never loved her. She always knew it was only a temporary arrangement, but now she was blackmailing him.

All the excuses offered by Guy fail to convince Doris. Instead of quarreling with Guy, Doris remained calm. She was pale next day and he could see that she had

not slept. There was no bitterness in her manner, she talked as usual but without ease; she spoke of this and that as though she were making conversation with a stranger. After Guy reveals his past, the reader loses Doris's consciousness. Her thoughts are blocked from the reader and we only have her pretence to contend with. She asks Guy for a six months time, to come to terms with the situation.

On one hand, it keeps us in suspense about Doris's final decision; on the other, it illustrates the impossibility of penetrating into the human mind. Swiftly, Maugham moves on to Guy instead. Like Doris, he is attentive to the sound of her activities, but now forever blocked from his view. It is after Doris explains her decision that we go back to her. She gives her final decision that she wants to go back home as she cannot endure it any more. She feels sorry for him and doesn't blame him, but she feels that he belongs to the native woman and her three children.

Finally, Guy makes arrangement for her journey; she packs everything that belonged to her, leaving behind only her mother's photograph.

Once Doris is gone, her influence goes with her. Her furniture is removed and Guy once again goes back to his loose native jacket and sarong. Immediately after her departure, Guy allows his black family to move back in with him.

5.4 GLOSSARY

Archipelago : an extensive group of islands.

Luncheon : formal lunch

Ambiguous : not clear or decided.

Monotony : sameness of pitch or tone

Exacerbate : make worse

Frenzied : wild

Cicadas : a large homopterous insect with long transparent wings, found chiefly in warm countries.

Grating : sounding harsh and unpleasant

Brook : a small stream.

Mellifluous : Sweet sounding

Ravenous : extremely hungry

Waylaying : stop or interrupt

Prowling : move about restlessly and stealthily

Half-caste : a person whose parents are of different races

5.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The title of Maugham's autobiography is_____.

a) *Summing*

b) *The Razor's Edge*

c) *Catalina*

d) *Quartet*

2. *The Casuarina Tree* is a collection of _____.

a) Poems

b) Memoirs

c) Short stories

d) Letters

3. The title of the book comes from _____.

a) A bird

b) A flower

c) A popular dish

d) A tree

4. *The Casuarina Tree* was published in_____.

a) 1926

b) 1936

c) 1886

d) 1836

5. The setting of the story is_____.

a) America

b) Malay Peninsula

c) India

d) Madeira Islands

6. Which one of the following is a theme of the story?_____.

a) True love

b) Corruption

c) Adultery

d) Friendship

7. The singing of a bird reminds Doris of_____.

a) Green Woodpecker

b) English Blackbird

c) Nightingale

d) Grey Partridge

8. How many children Guy had with the Malay woman_____.

a) One

b) Two

c) Three

d) Four

9. How much time Doris asks from Guy to come to terms with the situation?_____.

a) One month

b) Six months

c) One year

d) Two year

10. What does Doris leave behind?_____.

a) A letter

b) A gift

c) A photograph

d) A note

5.6 CHARACTERS

Guy

Guy is a fun-loving, cheerful, ugly and noisy sort of person. He has a naturally optimistic nature and likes to laugh a lot. Doris cannot resist his charm. Appearance wise, he is a little round man, with a red face like the fall moon, and blue eyes. He has lot of pimples on his face.

Having lived all his life in the tropics and coming from a family tradition of colonial service, he seems to be the perfect type of colonial agent: he speaks the native language fluently and moves easily between two cultures.

From his point of view there is nothing wrong with his 'going native'. He regards the native woman as an inferior person who fulfils his physical needs and helps him overcome his loneliness, only to be pensioned off when she is no longer needed. Moreover, he feels no affection for his children.

Doris

Doris is a pretty, honest person. Before marriage she held a post of secretary to an MP and took care of her widowed mother. She feels that Guy had not a single feature which she could praise. She often tells him that he isn't her type at all. Yet she loves him so much, that his only presence makes her happy. Despite of all the love that she has for Guy, she couldn't forgive him for having another woman in his life. She is truly a British woman and often misses her own country. Her problem is that she fails to assimilate in the Native culture. She even decorates her house in the British fashion.

The Malay Woman

She is never called anything else but 'the Malay woman' or 'the woman from the kampong' and she never speaks, but her physical presence is strongly felt through her persistent gaze and the way she intrudes on Guy's life.

She is a powerful figure, determining the course of action to her advantage, finally taking over the role of the female in Guy's home. Unlike Doris, she is not humiliated by the existence of another woman and proudly claims her position as wife and mother.

5.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the setting of the story.

The story is set in the part of Borneo controlled by the British. Maugham uses this exotic setting to show the interaction between European and indigenous

people and cultures.The newly arrived European woman views the surroundings with a mixture of fascination with the exotic and fear of the unknown.

The tropical scenery is described in a way (esp. through colours and sounds) that reveals the mood of the characters. The impending disaster is reflected in the first few lines of the story, “Under the breathless sun of midday it had the -white pallor of death.” Sounds as well as colours gain an immediate presence, esp. the croak of the chik-chak, which appears at crucial moments in the story; the disclosure is made under an open sky (“the night was starry”); the dramatic climax of Guy’s disclosure is accompanied by a heavy storm, reinforcing the rising tension.

2. Discuss the theme of “going native” in the story.

White men who were stationed at British colonies had a fear of ‘going native’ which means adapting to the native way of life. To avoid that, many white men in the colonies insisted on wearing European clothes and tried to retain their typical European lifestyle. They were afraid to lose their own identity in having too much contact with the natives, which would threaten their authority and power. In the story also, Doris tried to remain as close to her British identity as she could. She decorated her house in a British fashion; in glass vases were lovely orchids and in great bowl huge masses of flowering shrubs. She felt an inordinate pride because it was her house.

According to imperialist ideology, they considered themselves to be superior and an intermingling of the races had to be avoided. But the fact was that it was very difficult for the white men in the colonies to resist the temptation of the native women because they were the only females around and their exoticism was very attractive. Isolation and loneliness often made the white men forget the standards of behaviour and their fear of ‘going native.’ In the story, Guy explains to Doris that “It’s awfully lonely on an outstation.” One often doesn’t see another white man for six months on end. A white man is stationed there when he’s only a boy and finds it difficult to survive alone in the native land amidst hostile climate and people. Native woman are hired as temporary arrangement.

3. What is the function of this colourful and sensuous picture of tropical scenery at the beginning of the story?

Besides serving as an exposition, e.g. establishing the mood and the atmosphere, this picture also raises some doubts as to the lasting effect of the harmony. The land has been described as having the "white pallor of death" or "sombre land with great ominous rivers." Even the colours of the day have been described as "ashy and wan". The songs of cicadas are grating or harsh. The sound is as "continual and monotonous as the rustling of a brook over the stones."All these melancholy and harsh sounds got suppressed with the loud singing of a bird, melodious and rich; and reminded her of the English blackbird. This also hints to the fact that the lady who is listening to these sounds doesn't appreciate anything native, instead the sound of a bird like English blackbird makes her nostalgic.

4. Do you think Guy and Doris enjoyed a happy married life? Give justification for your answer.

5. List the various arguments by which Guy tries to explain living with a native woman.

6. Discuss Guy's behaviour towards Doris and towards the native woman.

7. What was Doris's decision after listening to Guy's story?

8. Discuss the significance of the title "The Force of Circumstances."

5.8 LET US SUM UP

Guy, an administrator of a small British colonial outpost, has lived there for ten years.

When he was on holiday in England he met Doris. They married and she returned to the station with him. At first they are very happy but then Doris notices a young Malay woman with three half-caste children hanging around the bungalow and annoying Guy very much.

Finally, Guy confesses that he had a relationship with the woman and that the children are his.

Doris needs time to consider this shattering news, in the meantime they continue to live as before but Doris refuses to share her bedroom with her husband and the atmosphere is strained.

Eventually, Doris returns to England although she knows that Guy loves her and understands that he acted out of loneliness. But she cannot overcome her prejudices and cannot accept the idea that her white husband has had an intimate relationship with a native.

Guy, unhappy and lonely, allows the Malay woman and their children to come back.

5.9 ANSWER KEY

1. (a)
2. (c)
3. (d)
4. (a)
5. (b)
6. (c)
7. (b)
8. (c)
9. (b)
10. (c)

5.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

Burgess, Anthony (ed.) Maugham's Malaysian Stories (Hong Kong: Heinemann, 1969). Selected and introduced by Anthony Burgess.

Maugham, W. Somerset Collected Stories (London: Everyman's Library, 2004)

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STRUCTURE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Hector Hugh Munro (Dec 18, 1870 - Nov 14, 1916) was a witty British author who published under the pen name SAKI or H.H. Munro. The inspiration for the pen name "Saki" is unknown; it may be based upon a character in a poem or on a South American monkey. Given Munro's intellect, wit, and mischievous nature it's possible it was based on both simultaneously. As a writer, Munro (Saki) was a master of the short story form and is often compared to O. Henry and Dorothy Parker. Hector Hugh Munro better known by the pen name Saki and also frequently as H. H. Munro, was a British writer whose witty, mischievous and sometimes macabre stories satirize Edwardian society and culture. He is considered a master of the short story. Besides his short stories (which were first published in newspapers, as was customary at the time, and then collected into several volumes), he wrote a full-length play.

Munro was born in Akyab, Burma (now known as Myanmar) in 1870. In 1872 while he was on a trip to England, his mother Mary was charged by a cow. She suffered a miscarriage, never recovered, and died in 1872 when Munro was only two years old. After her death, the Munro children were sent from Burma back to England where they lived with their grandmother and aunts in a strict puritanical household. In his early career, Munro became a police officer in India and was posted to Burma where he contracted malaria before returning to England in 1895.

Munro died in France during World War I, on November 13, 1916, by German sniper fire during the Battle of Ancre. Though he was too old to enlist at 43, he had managed to gain a post in the 22nd Battalion of the Royal Fusilliers, where he was a lance-sergeant.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

1. To acquaint the learners about H.H. Munro

2. To have an insight into the analysis of the short story.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT STORIES OF H.H. MUNRO

Saki writes humorously; but he does not write humour, like P. G. Wodehouse whom he influenced. Bizarre would be a more fitting word. In this, he is akin to Roald Dahl, as his stories move from the funny to the bizarre to the uncanny to the truly horrific. Saki could be classified as a writer of black comedy, but he would not have recognised himself as such, because the term was coined almost twenty years after his death. With a collection of clever parodies and three books of short stories that displayed his wit and verbal adroitness, Munro had demonstrated by 1911 that he was a master of the brief literary narrative. Then, like many another short story writer before and since, he was pressured into writing a novel. The result was The Unbearable Bassington (1912), which Langguth calls only a "half-success." At least Munro showed in it that he was more than a mere comic writer. In addition to social institutions, Munro also targeted for send-ups such topics as the empire, the fiscal question, the Boer War, religion, and peace poems. A good number of these topics are rather obscure to the modern reader, but Reginald's commentary is still fresh because it pokes fun at such human traits as vanity, snobbishness, and hypocrisy. Beasts and Super-Beasts was the last collection of Saki's short fiction published in his lifetime. According to some critics, it is his best. It contains the most representative of his later short stories. The book includes the stories for which Saki is now remembered. A number of the stories feature Clovis Sangrail, Saki's later version of Reginald. There are also a number of ghost or fantasy tales that provide an eerie, unworldly atmosphere. There are some tales that explore the demoniac side of childhood. Most of these short stories have ironic, surprise endings.

Many of his stories are indeed humour, though of a satirical nature. As is the case with most Englishmen, Saki revelled in ridiculing the hypocrisies of his fellow countrymen – notably those of the well-heeled, aristocratic lot. Two of his creations, Reginald and Clovis Sangrail, are young-men-about-town who do not do anything other than flit about from one country house to another, getting into scrapes and helping others to get into scrapes. They are the prototypes of the "drones" popularised by Wodehouse. However, his humour frequently slips into satire and a darker kind of fantasy, which never happened with Wodehouse.

This volume comprises six collections: *Reginald, Reginald in Russia, The Chronicles of Clovis, Beasts and Super-beasts, The Toys of Peace* and *The Square Egg* – more than a hundred stories. They can be divided into the following categories:

1. Humorous pieces which cannot be called stories – they consist of a character (usually Reginald or Clovis) soliloquizing or in conversation with somebody (mostly an aristocratic member of the opposite sex), expounding unusual views on English life in a matter-of-fact way. They are classic examples of underplayed British humour.

2. Stories of footloose young men and women, out to wreak havoc in straitlaced English society. I think these escapades are the ones which mostly influenced Wodehouse.

3. Strange tales bordering on the fantastical which walk the fine tightrope between horror and humour: the kind of stories at which we have to laugh to prevent ourselves from shivering.

4. Out and out fantasies. These may be satirical, darkly comical, or outright terrifying.

5. Bizarre stories which are frightening without any supernatural element.

One common thread that runs through all stories is a child's delight at cocking his snook at authority. Many of them actually feature children getting their own back at unfeeling grownups. Even if the children are not there, the author's tone is one of the delighted rebellion of a naughty child at an orderly universe. Saki had been raised by a number of aunts, rather like Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster, and the rancour of a restricted childhood shows – because whatever be the case, like Bertie says: "Aunt's Aren't Gentlemen!"

Conclusion

Saki is often depicted as a minor satirist of the Edwardian period, and his writing is usually described, disparagingly, as being in the same vein as Wodehouse's: witty, airy, and tame. On closer inspection it is possible to detect in the darker nature

of his prose a growing alienation from modern life that surfaced more fully in literature of the 1920's. There is a bite, an edge, and a dislocation of reality in the best of his work that should place him among the forerunners of the generation of British writers who produced the modernist literary movements.

6.4 TEXT OF "A MATTER OF SENTIMENT"

It was the eve of the great race, and scarcely a member of Lady Susan's house-party had as yet a single bet on. It was one of those unsatisfactory years when one horse held a commanding market position, not by reason of any general belief in its crushing superiority, but because it was extremely difficult to pitch on any other candidate to whom to pin ones faith. Peradventure II was the favourite, not in the sense of being a popular fancy, but by virtue of a lack of confidence in any one of his rather undistinguished rivals. The brains of clubland were much exercised in seeking out possible merit where none was very obvious to the naked intelligence, and the house-party at Lady Susan's was possessed by the same uncertainty and irresolution that infected wider circles.

"It is just the time for bringing off a good coup," said Bertie van Tahn.

"Undoubtedly. But with what?" demanded Clovis for the twentieth time.

The women of the party were just as keenly interested in the matter, and just as helplessly perplexed; even the mother of Clovis, who usually got good racing information from her dressmaker, confessed herself fancy free on this occasion. Colonel Drake, who was professor of military history at a minor cramming establishment, was the only person who had a definite selection for the event, but as his choice varied every three hours he was worse than useless as an inspired guide. The crowning difficulty of the problem was that it could only be fitfully and furtively discussed. Lady Susan disapproved of racing. She disapproved of many things; some people went as far as to say that she disapproved of most things. Disapproval was to her what neuralgia and fancy needlework are to many other women. She disapproved of early morning tea and auction bridge, of skiing and the two-step, of the Russian ballet and the Chelsea Arts Club ball, of the French policy in Morocco and the British policy everywhere. It was not that she was particularly strict or narrow in her views

of life, but she had been the eldest sister of a large family of self-indulgent children, and her particular form of indulgence had consisted in openly disapproving of the foibles of the others. Unfortunately the hobby had grown up with her. As she was rich, influential, and very, very kind, most people were content to count their early tea as well lost on her behalf. Still, the necessity for hurriedly dropping the discussion of an enthralling topic, and suppressing all mention of it during her presence on the scene, was an affliction at a moment like the present, when time was slipping away and indecision was the prevailing note.

After a lunch-time of rather strangled and uneasy conversation, Clovis managed to get most of the party together at the further end of the kitchen gardens, on the pretext of admiring the Himalayan pheasants. He had made an important discovery. Motkin, the butler, who (as Clovis expressed it) had grown prematurely grey in Lady Susan's service, added to his other excellent qualities an intelligent interest in matters connected with the Turf. On the subject of the forthcoming race he was not illuminating, except in so far that he shared the prevailing unwillingness to see a winner in Peradventure II. But where he outshone all the members of the house-party was in the fact that he had a second cousin who was head stable-lad at a neighbouring racing establishment, and usually gifted with much inside information as to private form and possibilities. Only the fact of her ladyship having taken it into her head to invite a house-party for the last week of May had prevented Mr. Motkin from paying a visit of consultation to his relative with respect to the big race; there was still time to cycle over if he could get leave of absence for the afternoon on some specious excuse.

"Let's jolly well hope he does," said Bertie van Tahn; "under the circumstances a second cousin is almost as useful as second sight."

"That stable ought to know something, if knowledge is to be found anywhere," said Mrs. Packletide hopefully.

"I expect you'll find he'll echo my fancy for Motorboat," said Colonel Drake.

At this moment the subject had to be hastily dropped. Lady Susan bore down upon them, leaning on the arm of Clovis's mother, to whom she was confiding the fact that she disapproved of the craze for Pekingese spaniels. It was the third thing she had found time to disapprove of since lunch, without counting her silent and permanent disapproval of the way, Clovis's mother did her hair.

"We have been admiring the Himalayan pheasants," said Mrs. Packletide suavely.

"They went off to a bird-show at Nottingham early this morning," said Lady Susan, with the air of one who disapproves of hasty and ill-considered lying.

"Their house, I mean; such perfect roosting arrangements, and all so clean," resumed Mrs. Packletide, with an increased glow of enthusiasm. The odious Bertie van Tahn was murmuring audible prayers for Mrs. Packletide's ultimate estrangement from the paths of falsehood.

"I hope you don't mind dinner being a quarter of an hour late to-night," said Lady Susan; "Motkin has had an urgent summons to go and see a sick relative this afternoon. He wanted to bicycle there, but I am sending him in the motor."

"How very kind of you! Of course we don't mind dinner being put off." The assurances came with unanimous and hearty sincerity.

At the dinner-table that night an undercurrent of furtive curiosity directed itself towards Motkin's impassive countenance. One or two of the guests almost expected to find a slip of paper concealed in their napkins, bearing the name of the second cousin's selection. They had not long to wait. As the butler went round with the murmured question, "Sherry?" he added in an even lower tone the cryptic words, "Better not." Mrs. Packletide gave a start of alarm, and refused the sherry; there seemed some sinister suggestion in the butler's warning, as though her hostess had suddenly become addicted to the Borgia habit. A moment later the explanation flashed on her that "Better Not" was the name of one of the runners in the big race. Clovis was already pencilling it on his cuff, and Colonel Drake, in his turn, was signalling

to every one in hoarse whispers and dumb-show the fact that he had all along fancied "B.N."

Early next morning a sheaf of telegrams went Townward, representing the market commands of the house-party and servants' hall.

It was a wet afternoon, and most of Lady Susan's guests hung about the hall, waiting apparently for the appearance of tea, though it was scarcely yet due. The advent of a telegram quickened every one into a flutter of expectancy; the page who brought the telegram to Clovis waited with unusual alertness to know if there might be an answer.

Clovis read the message and gave an exclamation of annoyance.

"No bad news, I hope," said Lady Susan. Every one else knew that the news was not good.

"It's only the result of the Derby," he blurted out; "Sadowa won; an utter outsider."

"Sadowa!" exclaimed Lady Susan; "you don't say so! How remarkable! It's the first time I've ever backed a horse; in fact I disapprove of horse-racing, but just for once in a way I put money on this horse, and it's gone and won."

"May I ask," said Mrs. Packletide, amid the general silence, "why you put your money on this particular horse. None of the sporting prophets mentioned it as having an outside chance."

"Well," said Lady Susan, "you may laugh at me, but it was the name that attracted me. You see, I was always mixed up with the Franco–German war; I was married on the day that the war was declared, and my eldest child was born the day that peace was signed, so anything connected with the war has always interested me. And when I saw there was a horse running in the Derby called after one of the battles in the Franco–German war, I said I MUST put some money on it, for once in a way, though I disapprove of racing. And it's actually won."

There was a general groan. No one groaned more deeply than the professor of military history.

6.5 SUMMARY

It was the eve of the great race. Hardly a member of the lady susan house party had put a single bet yet. Only one horse held a commanding market position. The reason for that was the difficulty to pitch on any other horse. Peradvnture II was the favourite, because his rivals were just too ordinary to have faith in as in the wider circle, everybody at the house party of lady Susan was feeling uncertain about which horse to have faith in. Clovis wanted to know for the 20th time with what they could bring off a good coup. There was no one inspired enough to guide about which horse to bet on in the race.

After lunch time of uneasy conversation, cloves managed to get the mist members of the party together at the further end of the kitchen gardens, on the pretext of admiring the Himalayan pheasants. Motkin, the butler, shared the prevailing unwillingness to see a winner in peradventure II, he had a second cousin who was head stable-lad at the neighbouring racing establishment. He usually had information about private form and possibilities. They expected Mr. Motkin to cycle over to his second cousin to get some information.

At the dinner table that night, every guest showed some furtive curiosity on seeing Motkin's impassive countenance. But they had not to wait long. As he went round with the murmured questions, "sherry?" he added in an even lower tone, "better not". A moment later the explanation came "Better Not" was the name of the one of the runner in the big race.

Early next morning a sheaf of telegram went town ward, representing the market command of the house part and servant's hall.

It was a wet afternoon. a page brought a telegram and gave it to Clovis. He waited to know if there might be an answer. Clovis read the message and gave an utterance of the displeasure. When everyone thought the news was not good. Clovis said that Sadowa won the Derby race. Lady Susan exclaimed joyfully that she had backs a horse for the first time and it had won. Everybody wondered why the lady

susan had put money on that horse which had hardly any chance of winning. She explained the name attracted her. It was all a matter of sentiment.There was a general groan all around no one groaned more deeply than Colonel Drake, the professor of Military History.

6.6 WRITING STYLE AND CHARACTERIZATION IN THE SHORT STORIES OF H.H. MUNRO

What a strange bird Saki is. His stories, written between 1900 and his death at the Somme in 1916, bear the hallmarks of Oscar Wilde and Henry James, are as funny as Wilde, Wodehouse and Waugh, possess plotting exquisite enough to bear significant elaboration but rarely last longer than three pages, and are brought off with a wonderfully light touch, while presenting a disturbingly chilling portrait of humankind. Saki's stories form a connective tissue between Oscar Wilde's 1890s and Evelyn Waugh's 1920s. His settings – garden parties, country house weekends and gentlemen's clubs – are typically Edwardian, but their wit, polished to a stunning brilliance, is underpinned by a satirical urge that is pitiless, and at times seemingly malicious.

Indeed, if Saki's talents for humour and plotting weren't so pronounced his fiction's procession of vapid hostesses, venal politicians, sour endings, macabre incidents and the blithely murderous could potentially make for a dismal repast. Instead, the world he renders is at once horrific, recognisably our own and yet for the most part a thoroughly enjoyable – or at least stimulating – one in which to linger.

What both appeals and repels in Saki's writing is his utter and absolute lack of sentiment, which makes his skewering of society thrillingly acerbic. But the feeling one has when reading the stories is that his characters are as nothing to him. If they do receive some sort of esteem from the author it's primarily because they prove themselves adept at exploiting the weaknesses of others. There are many arch and satirical writers in English letters, but few of them are as relentlessly cold as Saki. After a short time spent as a policeman in Burma (footsteps in which George Orwell would later follow) and the publication of a history of Russia that no one read, Saki turned to fiction in 1900 with a series lampooning Westminster politicians (a habit he happily never grew out of). While his stories cover a wide range of subjects and

styles, the two characters to whom he most often returns are Reginald, a controversy-loving, foppish libertine, and Clovis, a slightly more fleshed out variation on the theme.

These two characters and their companions, particularly Bertie van Tahn, whom you could easily imagine having just come from lunch with Bertie Wooster whenever he crosses the path of Clovis, operate in the Wodehousian mode. Through boredom they generate scrapes, or help others escape scrapes, and in the process some element of polite society or public morality is shown to be ludicrous.

It should be noted that Jeeves and Wooster didn't make their debut until 1917, the year after a sniper's bullet put an end to Munro in a shell crater, but to call Wodehouse's creations "Sakian" would, for reasons of reputation and literary fame, be perverse. There's every reason for Saki devotees to believe this might change, however. Firstly, because anyone who loves Wodehouse and hasn't read Saki is missing a trick, and secondly because, as Will Self noted in a 2007 documentary, "Saki's stories are highly relevant to any society in which convention is confused with morality, and all societies confuse convention with morality, so he'll always be relevant."

Another thing that recommends Saki to the modern reader and perhaps explains why he remains somewhat obscure is his ability to shock. Nestling in the gloomier crevices of his work are macabre pieces the horror of which the century since their composition has done nothing to dilute. Some take straightforward domestic shape, such as The Reticence of Lady Anne, in which a put-upon husband tries to patch up an argument with his wife, not realising that she is sitting in stony silence because she is dead. Others, including the pagan-themed The Music on the Hill, appear to take their cues from Munro's near contemporary MR James.

Even when Saki is not writing explicitly "horrific" stories, however, the unease is present. His stories are more subtle variations on what William Burroughs, writing of Naked Lunch, described as the "frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork". Or as VS Pritchett put it, "Saki writes like an enemy. Society

has bored him to the point of murder. Our laughter is only a note or two short of a scream of fear."

6.7 THE STYLISTIC PECULIARITIES OF H.H. MUNRO'S SHORT STORIES

H.H. Munro (Saki) is one of the most outstanding writers of the Edwardian epoch. In his works he gains a deep insight both into human nature and the immediate social issues of his time. Saki's short stories reveal his ironical attitude towards various aspects of Edwardian social life and, at the same time, convey the sense of imminent danger threatening Britain on the verge of a world crisis. Although Saki was successful in different genres, to the Russian reader he is mainly familiar as a short story writer (among his collections of short stories are "Beasts and Superbeasts", "The Toys of Peace", "Reginald", "Reginald in Russia", "The Chronicles of Clovis" and "The Square Egg"). Unfortunately, the existing Russian translations of Saki's short stories leave much to be desired, as they seldom reflect the dazzling irony and stylistic intricacy of the originals. And this is one of the reasons why the texts by this author should be studied more extensively. Philologists can benefit greatly from reading and analyzing Saki's work – it contains a wealth of linguistic peculiarities that can be admired, savoured and appreciated by the more experienced reader. Saki's short stories are extremely interesting from the stylistic point of view. While reading them one has the feeling that in some way the style of these texts resembles Oscar Wilde's novels, Saki obviously belonged to this artistic generation and he developed a recognizable voice of his own. The writer had a very specific way of applying stylistic devices in his texts: there is a wide variety of modes in which he uses the marked elements in different types of content. H.H. Munro's short stories have mainly been studied with respect to his biography. Unlike Oscar Wilde, with whom H.H. Munro had a lot in common, Saki tried to keep as much of his personal life as possible in secret, and this has lead many investigators to look for information about "the other Saki" and looking for a reflection of his character in his artistic texts. Saki's short stories.

There is a number of expressive means that are used Meta semiotically in the texts in question. Among the stylistic devices that can be singled out are formal lexis used in describing trivial plots and situations, the juxtaposition of different varieties of inherently connotative lexical units, the violation of collocations and idioms proper, the contextual use of quotations, allusions, proper names, words denoting regalia.

The writer also relies on adherently connotative lexis, metaphors and personifications. Other expressive means used by the author are oxymoron, simile, syntactic parallelism, synonymic condensation, string compounds. Depending on the general mode of using these units, the stories can be classified into five groups: the short stories where the ornamental role of linguistic elements comes to the fore; the group where inherently connotative lexis organises other expressive means in an intricate picture combining the humorous, the banal and the absurd; the kind of stories that is less intricate from the linguistic point of view, yet in which the absurdity of the plot itself is self-sufficient; the group which contains the type of content that calls for a metaphorical kind of contemplation; the type that includes macabre and Gothic motifs and elements of animal lore.

6.8 THE SATIRIC ART OF HECTOR H. MUNRO (SAKI)

Satire is an ephemeral term because of its dependence on temporary or local conditions. For the purpose of the study satire is considered as the holding up to public ridicule the private vices and foibles of mankind in a distinctly literary manner. The relation of wit and humor to emotional expression, to the fine arts, and to the particular literary form in which it may appear, is well worth study. But the very conditions that would make such study interesting, would demand an enormous accumulation of material and the strongest possible basis of scholarship and intellectual insight. The study of the satiric aspects of one author's art is a more modest task. satire shall be generally considered as the holding up to public ridicule in a distinctly literary manner the private vices and foibles of mankind for the purpose of correction and as a gesture of defiance.

The Short Stories of "Saki" - H.H. Munro- is partially correct in saying that "Saki" should be read and enjoyed rather than dissected and analyzed. But to dismiss "Saki" as a mere entertainer and deprecate any critical analysis of his works is to

bypass want only one of the most efficacious and mordant artists the world has ever seen. To be sure, the elusiveness of “Saki’s” satiric humour may discourage analysis, but to appreciate fully and savor at leisure his trenchant irony and dry mockery is to experience at times the aesthetic ‘shock of recognition’ that one gets in poring over the works of such “classics” as Juvenal, Chaucer, Cervantes, Johnson, Moliere, La Fontaine, Wycherley, Dryden, Pope, Congreve, Swift, Gay, Voltaire, Sterne, Byron, Dickens, Thackeray, Twain, and Sinclair Lewis, Aldous Huxley, Ring Lardner, and James Thurber in this century. H.H. Munro’s world puts one in mind of Restoration Comedy and Oscar Wilde. It is a sophisticated world, marvellously attuned to and acquainted with the mockery of well-bred malice. “Saki’s” wit is at once baroque, electric and disarming.

Just as it is by convention that the love-lyrist treats of love, the elegist of grief, and the tragic dramatists of the most serious issues of life, so by convention the satirist concerns himself with vice and folly. Availing himself of the satiric spectrum (wit, ridicule, irony, sarcasm, cynicism, the sardonic, and invective), the satirist seeks to effect reform and correction by tilting at the windmills of human follies and foibles. Whether his mode of criticism be Horatian (the genial, laughing, urbane satire of Horace) or Juvenalian (the caustic, corrosive satire of Juvenal), his intent is ever one and the same: to expose and flay the vices, inanities, affectations, hypocrisies, and stupidities of man and his society. Even laughing satire is laughing-at, not merely irresponsible laughing. It invites us not to let down our hair and relax, but to lift up our eyebrows and mock. The satirist is always aggressively on the offensive. He exposes pretension and strips away false fronts. His laughter is always spiced with something of malice. It is in the main a scornful amusement at the failings and shortcomings of an individual or of human nature and human institutions in general.

One thing is clear: the satiric vein is in conspicuous prominence in the writings of our time. Modern satirists like Sinclair Lewis, W.H. Auden, Ezra Pound, Kenneth Fearing, S. Sassoon, and Edith Sitwell call attention to contemporary confusion of thought and impress upon us a new the need for shaping order out of chaos. One of the most remarkable features of modern literature is the union of caricature with literature when it does not sink to mimicry. The present day satirist analyzes keenly

the fatuity of the social pattern and the personal neuroses developing therefrom. Much of the poetry of Roy Campbell, for example, puts us in mind of Swift, just as the satire of Kenneth Fearing against the middle class reminds us of Dickens and Thackeray. It is not at all too far-fetched, in fact, to claim that if we ever become truly civilized and rid ourselves of our inveterate homicidal maniac, satire will be found to have been a very efficacious agent in bringing about our return to sanity.

6.9 SATIRE IN SHORT STORIES OF H.H. MUNRO

Hector Hugh Munro (Saki) can be appreciated! Although one of the most popular of popular short story writers, Munro has hitherto never served as the subject of a serious study. It has been claimed that the elusive flavor of "Saki's" satire resists analysis^ and that the exquisite lightness of his work offers no grasp for the solemnities of earnest criticism. But this is patently a begging of the question as well as being beside the point. T Saki" was not merely intent upon entertaining his readers; rather, like Swift, he desired to vex them into an awareness of their follies. His adeptness in the mockery of well-bred malice, his lively eye for human frailties and the jibes of circumstance, his genius in compressing into a short story an amazingly full and unsolemn comment upon English Society — all'these demand as well as merit the scrutiny and analysis of a scholarly study. Few short story writers have wielded with more adroit mastery satire to most effective weapon — irony. With the disarming nonchalance and charm of an Oscar Wilde, "Saki" is forever exposing and castigating the obtuseness, moral depravity, and barbarism that festered underneath the surface polish and glitter of his **own** orchidaceous milieu. In fact, there are few aspects of fatuity, of aesthetic philistinism, of social snobbery, of intellectual pretension, which are not sorely brought to task by "Saki's" satiric barbs and poisoned darts. "Saki's" range was narrow and he lacked variety, but in his own field he was supreme and unique. The flavor of his wit cannot be tasted vicariously. To convey any sense of its quality it will be necessary to quote in detail the dazzling, malicious epigrams, the wry, surprising twists of phrase, the cynical barbs of the social satirist, which he tossed off so effortlessly and prolifically. It is not the plots of his short stories that merit scrutiny — although "Saki" is, when he chooses, a master of trick endings, as in "Dusk" and "The Reticence of Lady Anne" — but rather the manner of his telling, the inimitable sang-froid that simultaneously disarms and pierces home. His mockery

is urbane but at the same time ruthless. His satiric artillery is light but his aim is deadly and humbug, hypocrisy, greed, envy, uncharitableness, dullness, and fatuity easily fall in the face of his withering barrage. Few other writers, in fact, demonstrate so forcibly that there is no just impediment to the marriage of wit and serious thought. Like Dickens, "Saki" invented a world wholly his own. Except for an occasional peasant or shopkeeper with engaging oddities of character, the proletariat has no place in Saki's world. It is populated chiefly by elegant, impish young men with a fine taste for pranks and exotic food, by baroque baronesses and eccentric dukes, by flustered hostesses with unmanageable children, and by trouble makers of all breeds. And the settings of his stories are always the same: London parties and country weekends. Certain types of characters and situations repeat themselves with paradoxically unwearyingly regularity. One is always, for example, met with unscrupulous and suave liars like the Reginalds and Clovises, who feed on plovers eggs and aspic and who rid themselves of bores and disconcert the equanimity of prudes by devising all manner of ingenious pranks and hoaxes. Other prigs and Sir Fopling Flutters fall victim to the malevolent machinations and diablerie of those precociously shrewd and incorrigible children who appear to have been their inventor's pride and joy. Invariably we find a six-year-old boy or a self-possessed young lady of nine inflicting a mortal blow against the "amour proper" of an adult. The truth is that "Saki" himself has something of the inhuman heartlessness of childhood.

Saki's works are no less incisive in their criticism of society because they are urbanely ironic and humorous. In the end, horror and laughter are one — when horror and laughter become as horrible and laughable as they can be. This is a lesson "Saki" teaches us time and again. The weird and the horrible aspects of life held a strange fascination for him, and almost invariably he exploited them for a savage, primitive humor that often verges on nihilism.

6.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Give a character sketch of Lady Susan.

Ans: Lady Susan is the very heart of the story titled "A Matter Of Sentiment" written by H.H. Munro. The story revolves around her. Undoubtedly, she is

the protagonist of the story. Lady Susan, as we are told at the beginning, disapproved of racing. As a matter of fact, she was a fussy woman who habitually disapproved of several things. Many people went as far as to say that she did not desist from disapproving most things.

Disapproval was the lady Susan what neuralgia (pain felt along a nerve, especially in the head) and fancy needlework are to many other women. She disapproved of easily morning tea and auction bridge, of ski-ing and the two steps of the Russians ballets and the Chelsea arts club ball, of the French policy in morocco and the British policy everywhere.

Lady Susan was particularly strict or narrow in her wise of life? No, she wasn't. She had been the eldest sister of a large family of self-indulgent children. Her particular form of indulgence had consisted in openly disapproving of the foibles and follies of the other people . Unfortunately, this has grown up with her as a hobby.

Lady Susan was rich and very kind as well as quite influential most people were very content to count their early tea as well lost on her behalf. Her habit of disapproving of everything, however, had become a hobby with her. She told Clovis mother that she disapproved of the craze for Pekingese spaniels. Susan, despite disapproving of horse racing , put money on the horse named "better not", it was the horse which not many lovers of horse racing had thought of as one among the possible winners. But it won to Lady Susan's great delight and to everyone else's annoyance and shock.

To sum up, Lady Susan was swayed by sentiments. She put money on the horse which was an outsider, because it was its name " Sadowa" that had attracted her. She was always mixed up with the Franco- German war. She was arrived on the day the war was declared and her eldest son was born the day the peace was signed, hence everything connected with the war had always interested her. As the horse she put bet on was called after one of the battles in the France-German war. She decided to put money on it. It was all a matter of sentiment.

Q 2. Justify the title of the story " A Matter Of Sentiment".

Ans: A matter of sentiment is a story written by H.H. Munro (Saki). Here we find how a sentiment becomes something that baffles all the logic and reasoning. The protagonist is a rich, kind and influential lady hardly interested in the Derby racing. As a matter of fact, she indulges in disapproving most of the things. Her guests at the house party are all interested in racing and wonder which horses to put bet on, but lady Susan is an exception. She is not one among those with interest in betting on races. This is something unthinkable that she should be thinking of putting a bet on a horse.

When lady Susan butler, Morkin goes to his second cousin who was a head stable-lad at the neighbouring establishment, the guest are eager to hear the some information that he bring. As Motkin comes, all the look at his impassive countenance. He asks every guest whether she/he wants sherry, he adds in his cryptic words, "netter not". A telegram comes, and Clovis reads the message. He says "Sadowa" won an utter outside. Lady Susan joy knows no bounds. She had for the first time her great delight the horse had won. None of the sporting prophets had mentioned "Sadowa" has an outside chance. They had thought of it as an utter outsider. But lady Susan went by a sentiment looking for the horse name. She was always mixed up with the Franco – German war. She was married on the day the war was declared, and her eldest child born on the day the peace was signed. So anything connected with the war had always interested and attracted her. Hence she thought she must put money on the horse named "Sadowa", while all groaned, lady Susan was quite expected excited and happy because "Sadowa" had won. It was all a matter of sentiment., no logic and reason had urged lady Susan to bet on the horse named " Sadowa". The trick ending that Saki has given to the story makes the title apt and appropriate.

To sum up, the title "A matter of sentiment" is, therefore undoubtedly significant as well as suitable and appropriate. It is suggestive too. We can't think of another title as an alternative to the one the writer has given to the story.

6.11 SELF- CHECK EXERCISE

1. What were Saki's specific charges against British foreign policy at the time of the Boer War?

2. How did Saki's experiences as a foreign correspondent alter his writings?

3. Trace the development of Saki's character called Reginald, then Clovis, over a series of his works.

4. Is Saki's humour characteristically satirical or is it more broadly based?

5. In what respects was Saki a writer ahead of his time?

6.12 LET US SUM UP

Saki is often depicted as a minor satirist of Edwardian period and his writing is usually described as being in the same vein as woole house's " witty, airy, tame". Here we find how a sentiment becomes something that baffles all the logic and reasoning. Saki belonged to artistic generation & developed a recognizable voice of his own.

6.13 SUGGESTED READINGS

Legouis and Cazamian History of English Literature (MacMillan India Ltd)

Long, William J. English Literature. (Kalyani Publishers)

Abrams, M H. A Glossary of Literary Terms.

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STRUCTURE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Dear learners, Welcome! In this lesson you will learn about the novelist D.H.Lawrence and also about his famous works. Look for the difficult words in the glossary and also consult the dictionary. After learning about the novelist and his works solve Check your Progress.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are:

a) To know about D.H. Lawrence as a writer.

b) To know about the theme of intensity and erotic sensuality in the works of D.H. Lawrence.

c) To think about the inner conflicts a person goes through and the psychological suppression he/she feels.

d) To know about the consequences that erupt once the inner conflicts take their toll.

7.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVELIST

David Herbert Lawrence is regarded as one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. Best known for his novels, Lawrence was also an accomplished poet, short story writer, essayist, critic, and travel writer. The controversial themes for which he is remembered - namely, the celebration of sensuality in an over-intellectualized world - and his relationship with censors sometimes overshadow the work of a master craftsman and profound thinker. He published many novels and poetry volumes during his lifetime, including *Sons and Lovers*, the novel about industrialism, and the battle between the intellectual mind and the sensual body, drawing from Lawrence's experiences and influences and *Women in Love*, but is best known for his infamous *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, another novel heavily censored for its erotic subject matter, approached the fame and reputation of his acclaimed earlier novels. The highly sexual novel was published in Italy in 1928, but was banned in the United States until 1959 and in England until 1960. Garnering fame for his

novels and short stories early on in his career, Lawrence later received acclaim for his personal letters, in which he detailed a range of emotions, from exhilaration to depression to prophetic brooding. He died in France in 1930.

Lawrence's opinions earned him many enemies and he endured official persecution, censorship, and misrepresentation of his creative work throughout the second half of his life, much of which he spent in a voluntary exile he called his "savage pilgrimage." At the time of his death, his public reputation was that of a pornographer who had wasted his considerable talents. E.M. Forster, in an obituary notice, challenged this widely held view, describing him as, "The greatest imaginative novelist of our generation." Later, the influential Cambridge critic F.R. Leavis championed both his artistic integrity and his moral seriousness, placing much of Lawrence's fiction within the canonical "great tradition" of the English novel.

He was born on September 11, 1885, in the small mining town of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England. His father, Arthur John Lawrence, was a coal miner, and his mother, Lydia Lawrence, worked in the lace-making industry to supplement the family income. Lawrence's mother was from a middle-class family that had fallen into financial ruin, but not before she had become well-educated and a great lover of literature. She instilled in young D.H. a love of books and a strong desire to rise above his blue-collar beginnings. As a child, he was physically frail and frequently susceptible to illness, due to the dirty air of the town surrounded by coal pits. This made it difficult for him, to fit in with other boys. Though he was poor at sports, he was an excellent student, and in 1897, at the age of 12, he became the first boy in Eastwood's history to win a scholarship to Nottingham High School. He often fell ill and grew depressed and lethargic in his studies, graduating in 1901 having made little academic impression. Reflecting back on his childhood, Lawrence said, "If I think of my childhood it is always as if there was a sort of inner darkness, like the gloss of coal in which we moved and had our being."

In the summer of 1901, Lawrence took a job as a factory clerk for a Nottingham surgical appliances manufacturer called Haywoods. However, that autumn, his older brother William suddenly fell ill and died, and in his grief, Lawrence also came down with a bad case of pneumonia. After recovering, he began working

as a student teacher at the British School in Eastwood, where he met a young woman named Jessie Chambers, who became his close friend and intellectual companion. At her encouragement, he began writing poetry and also started drafting his first novel, which would eventually become *The White Peacock.*

Following various bouts of illnesses, Lawrence died of tuberculosis on March 2, 1930, in Venice, France.

7.4 ABOUT THE PRUSSIAN OFFICER

"*Prussian Officer and Other Stories*" is a collection of short stories written by the famous writer of English Literature, D.H. Lawrence. It was published by Duckworth in London on 26 November 1914, and in America by B. W. Huebsch in 1916.

The stories collected in this volume are:

- "The Prussian Officer"
- "The Thorn in the Flesh"
- "Daughters of the Vicar"
- "A Fragment of Stained Glass"
- "The Shades of Spring"
- "Second Best"
- "The Shadow in the Rose Garden"
- "Goose Fair"
- "The White Stocking"
- "A Sick Collier"
- "The Christening"
- "Odour of Chrysanthemums"

In the story, the writer focuses on the psychological conflicts, a person goes through. The author focuses on the inhuman behavior. Lawrence hyperbolizes two main characters: the Prussian officer and an ordinary soldier in order to show the genuine difference of their nature. The aim of the author is to transfer a certain idea to the readers' minds.

D. H. Lawrence worked on "The Prussian Officer"? between May and June 1913 under the title "Honor and Arms." This was his selected title till he completed his revision process that lasted into October of that year. The story would be published in English Review in August 1914 under the present title it is known by against the will of its author. In fact, the title was changed during the publication process at the behest of Edward Garnett acting upon his initiative as mentor to Lawrence.

The story which Lawrence deemed to be about honor more than rank is a classic psychological examination of the inevitable and violent eruption of repressed emotions when those emotions succeed in finally rising through the obstructive wall constructed by the conscious mind. Lawrence here presents a portrait of a character driven almost to the point of madness by anxiety he cannot fully understand.

The homosexuality that is drive which has been repressed and then unleashed is thematically examined not just from a sexual perspective, but also as it relates to the issues of dominance and the need for submission to authority within a military system and what happens when that submission is undermined.

The story was later republished using the same title that Lawrence opposed, although apparently he had reconsidered somewhat since the title of the collection of his story in which it appeared in November 1914 was *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*.

D.H. Lawrence's *The Prussian Officer* is a story of military background dealing with the topic of sexual repression. It is set during World War 1 in a lush Bavarian Valley. It is a story of a Captain named Hauptmann and his orderly, Schooner and their tense relationship which escalates into their deaths. The Captain is born in a wealthy family, gambles all of his money away and is left with no other choice than to pursue a mediocre career in military. He does not get married, and even

though he takes a mistress from time to time, it does not help him to get rid of the tension and irritability that he so often seems to experience. On the other hand, his orderly, Schooner, is a young handsome man, full of life, who is involved in a loving relationship.

The captain takes deep interest in his orderly. He regularly harasses and abuses him, all the wild, filled with a deep passion for man. The Captain feels sexual tension towards the young soldier and tries to keep him occupied, in order to prevent him from meeting with his 'sweetheart'. He also relieves himself of this tension physically, by beating the orderly up. The beatings the young man has to take lead to various painful injuries. Eventually, the abuse and ridicule build up resentment in the orderly who knows not what sense to make of it after the Captain has done his best to strip the orderly of choice, freedom, and self-respect. For the first time, the orderly became conscious of the captain's homosexual attraction towards himself. This epiphany completely shattered his emotional equilibrium and sets him onto the path of violence and self-destruction.

When left alone with the officer, he seizes an opportunity to attack the Captain and break his neck over a tree stump. Being blinded by pain, the physical and psychological torture, the orderly decides he cannot take it anymore, and murders the Captain in a violent manner. He leaves the body and escapes into the woods where he wanders and grapples with what he has done. Afterwards, due to lack of liquid and the enormous pain, exertion and sickness take over him. The young man collapses and dies in a hospital. He is eventually found by the soldiers and taken in but dies within hours wherein his body is laid next to that of the Captain's corpse. Ultimately, "the bodies of the two men lay together, side by side, in the mortuary."

The orderly can be categorized as the protagonist, who only wants to be a good servant and to lead a free-spirited, unself-conscious life. He lives a peaceful existence and merely wants to get through his days without incidents. On the other hand, the captain is the antagonist. He is secretly attracted the orderly. As a result of this fatal attraction, the captain suffers considerable emotional disturbance and unleashes his anger upon the orderly through a series of violent physical and verbal abuses.

The major conflict in the story is that the captain wants to lead the life of an emotionally repressed disciplinarian. However, his mind is becoming increasingly susceptible towards the charms of his orderly.

7.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- I

1. D.H. Lawerence belongs to the _____ century.

2. _____ novel, was censored for his erotic subject matter.

3. D. H. Lawrence worked on _____between May and June 1913 under the title _____.

4. _____ was acting as mentor to Lawrence.

5. The theme of this short story is _____.

Answers : 1. Twentieth, 2. Lady Chatterley's Lover, 3. Prussian Officer, Honors and Arms, 4. Edward Garnett, 5. Psychological conflict.

7.6 CHARACTERIZATION

1. The Captain- Hauptmann:

The officer is undoubtedly the main character of the narration. From the very beginning we understand that he is the man of power – he has it and he enjoys it. He's strong-willed, harsh and even cruel. Even his appearance reflects his inner self: *"Perhaps the man was the more handsome for the deep lines in his face, the irritable tension of his brow, which gave him the look of a man who fights with life. His fair eyebrows stood bushy over light blue eyes that were always flashing with cold fire."* Being such a strong man he is unable to control his own emotions, he is a victim of his passion and desires. He is a tall Prussian aristocrat about Forty years old with short red hair and blue eyes. He is haughty, sexually irritated by nature and is the one who has always suppressed his emotions. The Captain joined the military after squandering his wealth. He is greatly affected by the warm spirit of his orderly and starts to feel sexual tension towards the young man. He tries to repress these feelings which results into greater hate and irritability directed towards Schooner.

Eventually, the Captain violently attacks the inferior soldier, leaving him with painful injuries. He manages to break the young man, which ultimately results into the death of both of the characters. As for the Prussian officer, he is very aggressive and that aggression brings him satisfaction. He spends his time torturing his orderly and it is clear that the author does not respect this character at all.

2. The Orderly- Schooner:

Schooner serves in military as an Orderly to the Captain, Hauptmann. He is twenty-two years old, dark haired and well built. He is an attentive worker. And always obeys the orders of his master. Schooner is a young, peasant man of a warm spirit. After some time of physical and psychological torture coming from the Captain, the young man grows to detest his superior. One day, while practicing maneuvers, something inside of Schooner breaks, and he violently murders the oppressor. Afterwards, due to thirst and unbearable pain caused by the beatings he previously had to take from the captain, the soldier collapses and dies in a hospital.

7.7 GLOSSARY

Scraggy : lean, thin

Knapsack : bag for food, cloths, and supplies which is carried by soldiers

Scabbard : a sheath for sword

Swarthy : of dark skin colour

To perturb : to agitate

To exasperate : to provoke to a high degree

Acrid : sharp to smell or taste, irritating to eye, nose

Rugged : Rough

Infantry : soldiers marching or fighting on foot

Sullen : bad-tempered and sulky.

Agony : extreme physical or mental suffering.

Stupor : a state of near-unconsciousness or insensibility.

Slumber : sleep

Parched : dry

Bewildered : confused and indecisive

Swarthy : dark-complexioned

Smock : a dress or top for a woman or girl, gathered at the chest and having a loosely fitting lower part.

Huddle : crowd together

Strode : Past tense of *Stride*

Cantered : to move or cause to move at a **canter**

Delirium : an acutely disturbed state of mind characterized by restlessness, illusions, and incoherence, occurring in intoxication, fever, and other disorders.

Paroxysm : a sudden attack or outburst of a particular emotion or activity

7.8 LITERARY FORMS

1. Situational Irony

The type of irony used in the Prussian Officer is Situational Irony because at the end of the story, the doctor places the dead bodies of the officer and the orderly side by side, despite their social rank and differences. This shows that all people are equal after death and all the debacles are forgotten.

2. Allusions

The orderly's transformation alludes to the fall of man in biblical tales. The orderly's life is transformed from a state of innocence into a state of self-awareness. Before the orderly's transformation, he was like Adam in the Garden of Eden. His behavior was innocent, instinctive and devoid of self-consciousness. After his repeated physical encounters with the captain, he gains a profound sense of self-awareness, similar to Adam's newly acquired insight. This new knowledge shattered his equilibrium and led to his fall of grace.

3. Imagery

There is a vivid description of the orderly's body. His body merits a careful dissection because it will soon become the captain's obsession and the cause of the story's tragedy.

4. Parallelism

The officer and the orderly can be seen as parallel characters. Both of them have an acute sense of class consciousness. Both of them are disciplinarian who shrink from physical and emotional interactions. Both of them nursed a latent homosexual feeling. When the two men are laid to rest side by side, the parallelism of their characters is made even clearer.

5. Paradox

As the captain's physical attraction towards the orderly increases, so is his resentment towards him.

7.9 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Lawrence uses a gloomy and mysterious tone, throughout the story which is evident from the diction he uses in this short story. The story is little difficult to understand and read because it was originally written in Russian but the message remains the same that all men are equal to death. Throughout the story, the tone is grim. The behavior of the Captain towards his orderly is difficult to interpret. His

cruel attitude towards him further intensifies the environment. And the way the climax of the story comes with the death of the characters, The Captain as well as the orderly, justifies Lawrence's aim of writing in a gloomy tone.\

7.10 HERO OF THE STORY

"The Prussian Officer", as discussed earlier, is centered on the relationships between an aristocratic officer of the Prussian army and his orderly. These two characters are antagonists, which is also typical of short stories. The author concentrates his narration on the confrontation of the two men and on the psychological aspect as well – descriptions of moral tortures and sufferings make the story strong and impressive in spite of its relatively small size. Lawrence wrote a wide variety of short stories. His story "The Prussian Officer" is a psychological study of the hatred of the officer for his young orderly, which breeds an answering hatred in the lad, resulting in his murdering the officer with his bare hands in the wood. This was not a sudden flash of hatred and savageness. The orderly was suppressed and dispirited, humiliated and molested. Throughout the story he faces permanent oppression and beating. The officer feels a kind of perverted sadistic pleasure torturing and humbling the orderly, because he has sexual attraction towards him and is also jealous, because the orderly is in love with a young woman. As a result all these humiliation lead to a tragic end – the orderly strangles the officer and dies of thirst and pain.

It goes without saying that the officer is mentally unstable and even sick but every kind of behavior often has its own ground. The officer has never had true and sincere relationships with a woman. That's why he is alone and the only thing that strokes his ego is his military career. Although he is aristocratic and arrogant in the back of his mind he is more likely not proud of himself. Moreover, nothing can entirely substitute love and family for a human being. This life misfortune causes a kind of disturbance of the officer's mind – he becomes aggressive, malicious and abnormally sadistic. His sexual orientation is also on the hook – he feels sympathy toward the orderly, but at the same time beats and humiliates him. He spends his evenings torturing the poor soldier and glorying in his own power and cruelty. The main reason for such behavior of the officer is his dissatisfaction with life, his loneliness and

meaninglessness. It is small wonder that these circumstances finally lead him to a sorrowful end. Lawrence suggests his own attitude toward the characters and the situation from the start, and supports it throughout the whole of the story. The fact that the captain is described as cold and the orderly is “like a warm flame” is characteristic enough. When the captain is bulling the orderly the author is clearly on the latter’s side.

The officer is the author’s collective image of everything evil and inhuman that can exist not only in the war and in the army, but in the mind of human being in general. The orderly is on the other hand the author ideal – he’s an example of patience and bearing, he is a man of a kind heart and a clean conscience but at the same time his power is like a sleeping bear. Arousing this inner monster from his sleep, the officer invites death for both of the protagonists. But while the officers dying is deserved and justified in the eyes of the author, the death of the orderly is a bitter loss, a sacrifice which was offered up in order to stop the endless humiliating treatment and madness. The orderly is a hero in this story and it unfortunately happens that real heroes sometimes end up in a bad way.

Lawrence focuses only on two characters showing his attitudes towards both of men. It’s obvious that the author stands for the orderly and opposes the captain. Throughout the story he shows how harassing the actions of the captain are and how abused the orderly is. He feels a kind of compassion for the orderly, and he is certainly interested in the justice to be established. This is how, slowly, step by step he leads the orderly to the murder of his captain. He includes the element of homosexualism in order to show the captain from the most disgusting side. His intentions are clear – violence of the captain is the main reason why the author and his readers as well disapprove of this character.

7.11 THEMES

The themes that can be seen throughout the story are as follows:

1. **Psychological suppression/Inner Conflict and the inabilities to control one’s emotions**

The Prussian officer faces a kind of inner conflict. He starts feeling passion to his orderly. On the one hand that's typical for the army of those times. But on the other hand, this contradicts his inner manhood. Besides this we know that the officer is very jealous and overbearing. All these facts influence the behavior of the officer. So he begins torturing and humiliating his servant. He becomes cruel. His behavior is based on his lust. This way of abuse is the only possible way for him to express his feelings and appetency. And the orderly understands this. The Prussian officer falls prisoner. And his jail is his own lust and uncontrolled passion. The conflict leads to a terrible murder. The orderly kills his master. And just in some hours he himself dies. And at the end of the story we see the body of the Prussian officer lying near the body of his servant.

2. People are all equal once they are dead:

The Prussian Officer and the Orderly are differentiated on the basis of rank. It is due to the high position of the officer that he behaves badly with the orderly and it is because of the orderly's lowest rank that he submits in front of the officer. But after the climax, once both the characters die, they are kept next to each other irrespective of their ranks and positions.

7.12 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS-II

a. Write a short note on Lawrence's style of writing.

b. Name the major works of D.H. Lawrence.

c. Give the full name of D.H. Lawrence.

d. Prussian Officer and other short stories earlier title was _____.

e. The protagonist of the story is _____ and the antagonist is _____.

f. What is Situational Irony?

7.13 LET US SUM UP

Prussian Officer is a short story written by D.H. Lawrence, England in 1914. It is a story about a Prussian Officer and his orderly, who are in a sexual relationship. As the story moves forward, their sexual relationship creates several disputes, due to the officer's sexual frustrations. The debacle between the two increases and turns brutal leading to their untimely deaths. The two main protagonists of the story are The Prussian Officer and the Orderly, Schooner.

"The Prussian Officer" is centered on hidden subconscious desires often suppressed and resulting in strong reactions to the outer world. The story was not designed to be a snapshot of real state of events but a thorough contemplation and investigation of human nature and affections. The author puts a strong emphasis on the interrelations of the main characters – an officer and his orderly which led to a tragedy both of bodies and souls.

7.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1 Discuss in detail D.H. Lawrence's style of writing in Prussian Officer.

Q.2 The story revolves around the two characters, the captain and his orderly, throw light on both the characters.

Q.3 "All men are equal in the eyes of god and after death". This is the dominant theme in Prussian Officer. Discuss.

Q.4 Elaborately discuss various themes in Lawrence's Prussian Officer.

7.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

The Prussian Officer and Other Stories- D.H. Lawrence.

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THE KITE MAKER
RUSKIN BOND

STRUCTURE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.1 LIFE OF RUSKIN BOND

Author of the short story, Ruskin Bond, is a famous Indo-British writer. He is a famous short story writer and a journalist. He was born in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh, on May 19, 1934 to Anglo-Indian parents Aurbey Alexander Bond (father) and Edith Dorothy Clerke (mother). Ruskin Owen Bond was named after John Ruskin, the famous Victorian essayist, for whom his father had great respect and admiration. From a tender age he witnessed astrained and volatile relationship between his parents. His mother was only eighteen when she married Aubrey Alexander Bond, her senior by fifteen years. A fun loving extrovert, she loved parties and outdoor life. Her husband, a sedate introvert, enjoyed domesticity and was most comfortable when engaged in domestic chores at home. With such diametrically opposing temperaments, their marriage was doomed from the beginning. Their enormous age difference only heightened their incompatibility. Ruskin was only eight when his childhood was marred by his parent'sacrimonious separation. His mother walked out of their house, one day, never to return. She deserted her children in pursuit of her own personal happiness. She was by then already involved with a Punjabi gentleman whom she later married. This domestic upheaval left a deep scar on young Ruskin's sensitive mind. It gave birth to a feeling of insecurity and helplessness in him. Ruskin held his mother singularly responsible for breaking up his home and disrupting his childhood. He could not share his frustrations with his siblings as Ellen, his younger sister was mentally retarded and William, his brother was only a baby.

His father set up a schoolroom for the palace children. He used to attend his father's classes more as an observer than as a scholar. He spent his childhood in various cities of India like Shimla, Jamnagar, Dehradun, Mussoorie etc. He spent first ten years of his life with the prince and princess of Gujarat. At the outbreak of the Second World War, his father left Jamnagar and joined the Royal Air Force in 1941. He was then over forty years old. He was posted in the cipher section of the Air Headquarters in Delhi. Weighed down both by the failure of his marriage and by his work, Aubrey Bond found it difficult to look after the needs of his growing son. So, Ruskin had to be sent to aboarding school at Mussoorie. Panic-stricken at the

thought of separation from his only emotional anchorin life, Ruskin tried to persuade his father not to send him away. Though still very young, he realized his father's emotional dependence on him and was reluctant to leave him alone. This loneliness later became an integral part of his own life. It recurs again and again in different forms in almost all his works. But Ruskin had to attend school any way. Separated from his father for the first time in his life, he took an aversion for the school and suffered from bouts of homesickness. The discipline and the monotonous routine of the convent made him feel stifled and he longed to escape from this terrible existence. The letters and postcards which he regularly received from his father, were his only relief holding the promise of books, toys and stamps awaiting his return home. He came back from the boarding school and his father got him admitted in a school in Delhi.

Pulled down by recurrent attacks of malaria and his frequent transfers,Aubrey Bond found it difficult to provide stability and companionship to his growing son. So Ruskin had to leave for a boarding school for the second time inhis life. This time he was admitted to the Bishop Cotton Prep School in Shimla. Thusbegan another uncertain phase in the young boy's turbulent life.In school, Ruskin became an instant celebrity as word spread that his father was a pilot who flew bombers and fighter planes. The awe and admiration his father's profession evoked among the school boys, enhanced Ruskin's selfconfidence and made him very proud of his father. He basked in the reflected glory and did nothing to dispel the rumours. He could not bear to see his father crashfrom the pedestal in which he had been placed. So he refrained from divulging the truth. In 1944 Aubrey Bond was transferred to Calcutta. He was happy to have finally got the opportunity to look after his aging mother and his retarded daughter.But little did he then realize that Calcutta was to be his final destination. Weakened by previous bouts of malaria, he succumbed to a severe attack of cerebral malaria that very year. He was then only forty-six. His father's death was a crushing blow to young Ruskin. His world crumbled around him and he felt orphaned and lost.

Suffering and pain are an integral part of life and growth. By the time Bond was sixteen, the adversities of life had transformed him from a docile youngster into a rebellious teenager. His last year in school was spent in perpetual revoltagainst

everything, that is traditions, conventions, authority and rules. His rebellion stemmed from his frustration at the mindless monotony of school life. He felt he was wasting his precious time in school. Catapulted by circumstances resulting in pre-mature adulthood, he was impatient to begin life afresh. Now his only ambition was to become a writer for which he felt he required no formal education.Fortunately, he was put in charge of Anderson Library. In December 1950 Bond passed out of Bishop Cotton School. But he didnot get himself enrolled in any educational institution for higher studies. He had no further plans of pursuing formal education. From then on his education was wholly derived not from classroom lectures, but from libraries and second handbook stores. Bond never allowed himself to be led into marital shackles of life. His disenchantment with the institution of marriage stemmed from his parents' disastrous union and their acrimonious separation.

8.1.2 RUSKIN BOND'S LITERARY CAREER

Ruskin Bond's works are distinguished by their immense variety and their alluring simplicity. They project a lively image of India coupled with an abiding love for the underdogs of our society. Bond began writing very early in life. His journey from a struggling amateur to a highly acclaimed author was fraught with great hardships and disappointments. His stories, poems and articles were repeatedly rejected by editors, some of whom even "scribbled little notes of encouragement on the rejection slips". These early rebuffs had a catalytic effect on his literary genius. They whetted his creative appetite and strengthened his resolve to pursue his self chosen vocation. Like all great writers. Bond drew inspiration from his own life, which was not a run of the mill one.

By the time Bond was seventeen he had written a large number of articles, stories, essays and poems. He sent his works to different publishing houses, but they were all rejected when the publishers discovered how young their author was. In desperation he began writing as an old man, recalling the experiences of youth. Ironically, the ploy worked and his writings were published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Sunday Statesman.* Despite this early success, Bond could not rid himself of a strong feeling of restlessness. England, the hub of literary world seemed to beckon him. He felt it was the right place for a young writer like him. He visualized establishing personal contacts with renowned writers in England. He dreamt of great

opportunities coming his way. He aspired to have his works published and acclaimed by the greatest literary critics of the world.Thus exuberantly the young lad sailed for England. Little did he then foresee the disappointments that awaited him.He found England very different from the Utopia of his dreams. Here he hardly met anyone who had time or sympathy for a struggling writer. To make both ends meet, he was compelled to take up one mundane job after another. Thus he drifted aimlessly for more than a year, working for three months as a junior clerk in a solicitor's office, then as an assistant in a travel agency and finally as a junior clerk in the Public Health Department. By then frustration had begun to overpower his psyche. He realized the utter futility of his stay in Jersey. He felt to be a writer he had to move to London. On a cold March morning in1955, he bade adieu to the land of his forefathers and started back for India.

In India began the most productive phase in the young writer's life. Though he received a pittance for his literary works, and lived in great penury, he did not despair or abandon writing. However, in the Seventies the wheel of fortune turned when *The Christian Science Monitor* in Boston, *The Blackwoods* in Edinburgh and *The Asia Magazine* in Hongkong began publishing his articles and stories. Hischildren's stories too were published and received worldwide acclaim. In 1986, the Penguin Books published his first novel. He wrote his first novel *The Room on the Roof,* at the age of seventeen for which he won John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957. He has written over 500 short stories and articles that have appeared in number of magazines which includes *Vagrnats in the Valley, A Flight of Pigeons* and *Delhi is not Far*. In 1996, this publishing company published a special Omnibus edition of his *Complete ShortStories And Novels,* thereby placing him among the ten great Indo-Anglian writers. But the crowning glory of his literary career came in 1999 when he was awarded the *Padma Shri*—a high civilian honour of India for his outstanding writings in English. A twenty-six episode serial based on his short stories was also televised and aired by the Doordarshan throughout India. His novel *A Flight Of Pigeons* was made into a highly acclaimed Hindi film *Junoon* by the reputed director Shyam Senegal. Thus came to fruition Bond's dreams of becoming a writer. Some of his popular works are as follows *Life with Father, My Father's Last Letter, Untouchable, The Photograph, The Boy who Broke the Bank, The Fight, Love is a*

Sad Song, Time stops at Shamli, The Kitemaker, The Tunnel, A Face in the Dark, He said it with Arsenic and *The Last Time I saw Delhi*. He won many prestigious awards for his outstanding literary career like Padma Shri (1999), Sahitya Academy Award (1992) and Padma Bhushan (2014).

8.1.3 RUSKIN BOND AS A CHILDERN'S STORY WRITER

He writes to ease his soul. He believes that writing is an art, it needs as much devotion and love as an artisan does have for his creation. Bond's sensitive treatment of children and projection of their dreamy world, full of fun and frolic make him one of the favourite children's writers. Bond's child protagonists Binya, Sita, Arun, Romi, Teju, Rakesh, Mani and Ali attract us by their lovely moods and passionate nature, lively and pleasing activities, playfulness and their never ending pranks. The child protagonists of Bond spring up from the Himalayan soil, especially from the neighbouring villages and towns of Dehradun and hill stations of Mussoorie. Bond recreates the everyday experiences of the life and the problems that the children face for survival. Adventure, discovery, love for animals, variegated phenomena of nature, portrayal of their indomitable spirit in difficult circumstances around which Bond weaves the yarn of his children stories. The best part of Bond's portrayal of children is his involvement, his coming down to their level and his association with their erratic life. His oneness with children has infused life force to his works. He does not merely describe a child but becomes a child for the time being. The result is that his short-stories are full of the charm of the countryside and the rustic atmosphere. There is a lot of philosophical description and depiction of social environment. He thought very deeply about life and expressed his ideas very forcefully. Ruskin Bond's *Complete Stories and Novels* were published by Penguin India in 1996 in the *Omnibus* volume during their 10th anniversary celebrations. The publication covers almost thirty books of Ruskin Bond including essays, articles, Ghost stories, reminiscences, documentaries and lyrics along with fifteen other Bond titles for children. The short stories of Ruskin Bond dealing with children exploit the relationship involving children with the same intensity of child's playful and philosophical level. Ruskin Bond's creative world is absolutely very exciting, because he has created a world of innocence and eccentricity of children. Most of his characters – men, women and children of various age and class — belong to the high hills and valleys of Garhwal.

There are farmers, traders, vendors, teachers, rickshaw-pullers, chowkidars, students, vagrants and old men and women. Bond has been inspired by many Dostoevsky, Gorky, Tolstoy, Charles Dickens, William Saroyan and A G Bates. The novels of Charles Dickens had great fascination for him. The book that shaped his life was *David Copperfield*. It has been the book of his choice. It inspired him to write and think about children. In his "Introduction" to *The Night Train at Deoli and Other Stories*, Bond writes about the qualities a writer for children should possess: In writing for children one has to adopt a less subjective approach; things

8.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learners with Ruskin Bond as a short-story writer. In this lesson, we will also read and analyze short story, The Kite Maker by Ruskin Bond. We will also have an insight into the philosophy of Ruskin bond through various measures of theme, imagery and symbolism used in the short story.

8.3 READING THE TEXT

There was but one tree in the street known as Gali Ram Nath – an ancient banyan that had grown through the cracks of an abandoned mosque- and little Ali's Kite was caught in its branches. The boy, bare foot and clad only in a torn shirt, ran along the cobbled stones of the narrow street to where his grandfather sat nodding dreamingly in the sunshine of their back courtyard.

'Grandfather,' shouted the boy. 'The Kite has gone!'

The old man woke up from his day dream with a start and, raising his head, displayed a beard that would have been white had it not been dyed red with mehendi leaves.

'Did the twine break?' he asked. 'I know that kite twine is not what it used to be.'

'No, Grandfather, the kite is stuck in the banyan tree.'

The old man chuckled. 'You have yet to learn how to fly a kite properly, my child, And I am too old to teach you, that's the pity of it. But you shall have another.'

He had just finished making a new kite from bamboo, paper and thin silk, and it lay in the sun, firming up. It was a pale pink kite, with a small green tail. The old man handed it to Ali, and the boy raised himself on his toes and kissed his grandfather's hollowed-out cheek.'I will not lose this one,' he said. 'This kite will fly like a bird.' And he turned on his heels and skipped out of courtyard.

The old man remained dreaming in the sun. His kite shop was gone, the premises long since sold to a junk dealer; but he still made kites, for his own amusement and for the benefit of his grandson, Ali. Not many people bought kites these days. Adults disdained them, and children preferred to spend their money at the cinema. Moreover, there were not many open spaces left for the flying of kites. The city had swallowed up the open grassland that had stretched from the old fort's walls to the river bank.

But the old man remembered a time when grown men flew kites, and great bathes were fought, the kites swerving and swooping in the sky, tangling with each other until the string of one was severed. Then the defeated but liberated kite would float away into the blue unknown. There was a good deal of betting, and money frequently changed hands.

Kite flying was then the sport of kings, and the old man remembered how the nawab himself would come down to the riverside with his retinue to participate in this noble pastime. There was time, then, to spend an idle hour with a gay, dancing strip of paper. Now everyone hurried, in a heat of hope, and delicate things like kites and daydreams were trampled underfoot.

He, Mehmood the kitemaker, had in the prime of his life been well known throughout the city. Some of his more elaborate kites once sold for as much as three or four rupees each. At the request of the nawab he had once made a very special kind of kite, unlike any that had been seen in the district. It consisted of a series of small, very light paper disks trailing on a thin bamboo frame. To the end of each disk he fixed a spring of grass, forming a balance on both sides. The surface of the foremost disk was slightly convex, and a fantastic face was painted on it, having two eyes made of small mirrors. The disks, decreasing in size from head to tail, assumed an undulatory form and gave the kite the appearance of a crawling serpent. It required

great skill to raise this cumbersome device from the ground, and only Mehmood could manage it.

Everyone had heard of the ‘Dragon kite’ that Mehmood had built, and word went round that it possessed supernatural powers. A large crowd assembled in the open to watch its first public launching in the presence of the nawab. At the first attempt it refused to leave the ground. The disks made a plaintive, protesting sound, and the sun was trapped in the little mirrors, making the kite a living, complaining creature. Then the wind came from the right direction, and the Dragon kite soared into the sky, wriggling its way higher and higher, the sun still glinting in its devil eyes. And when it went very high, it pulled fiercely at the twine, and Mehmood’s young sons had to help him with the reel. Still the kite pulled, determined to be free, to break lose, to live a life of its own. And eventually it did so.

The twine snapped, the kite leaped away towards the sun, sailing on heavenward until it was lost to view. It was never found again, and Mehmood wondered afterwards if he had made too vivid, too living a thing of the great kite. He did not make another like it. Instead he presented to the nawab a musical kite, one that made a sound like a violin when it rose into the air.

Those were more leisurely, more spacious days. But the nawab had died years ago, and his descendants were almost as poor as Mehmood himself. Kitemakers, like poets, once had their patrons; but now no one knew Mehmood, simply because there were too many people in the Gali, and they could not be bothered with their neighbours.

When Mehmood was younger and had fallen sick, everyone in the neighbourhood had come to ask after his health; but now, when his days were drawing to a close, no one visited him. Most of his friends were dead and his sons had grown up: one was working in a local garage and the other, who was in Pakistan at the time of the partition, had not been able to rejoin his relatives.

The children who had bought kites from him ten years ago were now grown men, struggling for a living; they did not have time for the old man and his memories.

They had grown up in a swiftly changing and competitive world, and they looked at the old kitemaker and banyan tree with the same indifference.

Both were taken for granted- permanent fixtures that were of no concern to the raucous, sweating mass of humanity that surrounded them. No longer did people gather under the banyan tree to discuss their problems and their plans; only in the summer months did a few seek shelter from the fierce sun.

But there was the boy, his grandson. It was good that Mehmood's son worked close by, for it gladdened the old man's heart to watch the small boy at play in the winter sunshine, growing under his eyes like a young and well-nourished sapling putting forth new leaves each day. There is a great affinity between trees and men. We grow at much the same pace, if we are not hurt or starved or cut down. In our youth we are resplendent creatures, and in our declining years we stoop a little, we remember, we stretch our bright limbs in the sun, and then, with a sigh, we shed our last leaves.

Mehmood was like the banyan, his hands gnarled and twisted like the root of the ancient tree. Ali was llike the young mimosa planted at the end of the courtyard. In two years, both he and the tree would acquire the strength and confidence of their early youth.

The voices in the street grew fainter, and Mehmood wondered if he was going to fall asleep and dream, as he often did, of a kite so beautiful and powerful that it would resemble the great white bird of the Hindus- Garuda, God Vishnu's famous steed. He would like to make a wonderful new kite for little Ali. He had nothing else to leave the boy.

He heard Ali's voice in the distance, but did not realize that the boy was calling him. The voice seemed to come from very far away. Ali was at courtyard door, asking if his mother had as yet returned from the bazaar. When Mehmmod did not answer, the boy came forward repeating his question. The sunlight was slanting across the old man's head, and a small white butterfly rested on his flowing beard. Mehmood was silent; and when Ali put his small brown hand on the old man's

shoulder, he met with no response. The boy heard a faint sound, like the rubbing of marbles in his pocket.

Suddenly afraid, Ali turned and moved to the door, and then ran down the street shouting for his mother. The butterfly left the old man's beard and flew to the mimosa tree, and a sudden gust of wind caught the torn kite and lifted it in the air, carrying it far above the struggling city into the blind blue sky.

8.4 SUMMARY

This short story is one of the best examples of Ruskin Bond's excellence as a short story writer. It is taken from his collected short story collection. It is narrated in third person narrative by an unnamed author. In this lesson, he describes the simple and easy life of earlier days when even a kite maker had a social prestige and the people had concern and affection for each other. The protagonist, Mehmood, of the story remembers the good old days when he was young and honoured for his art of kite making. In those old days kite playing was a royal hobby of nawabs and people were not in hurry. But in his old age, people lost interest in kite flying and they did not care about the old kite maker. The story ends with the death of the kite maker which signifies the death of the values and life style of the days gone by.

It is the story about an old man in rural India, Mehmood. He rests under an old Banyan tree, the only tree in the street where Ali, his young grandson plays. His kite gets caught in the tree's branches, and he asks his grandfather for help. He is too old to retrieve the kite or teach Ali to fly it properly, but he makes him another kite. He promises his grandfather to not to lose it and starts playing again.

The old man again sits under the tree and thinks of his former profession as a kitemaker. He remembers that grown up men happily flew kites. There used to be more open space during that time and very less hustle and bustle of the present city life. People used to bet on the kites and enjoy it a lot. This game is played by the every strata of the society and it is even played by the nawab of the village. Mehmood is a famous kitemaker and so is asked by the nawab to make a special kite for him. Mehmood makes a 'dragon kite' for him. People are amazed to see this kite. It is one

of its own kinds but is very difficult to fly in the air. So Mehmood makes a prettier and easy to fly kite for him.

Mehmood laments how everything changed since then. The nawab of old days is dead now and his descendants are not royal people. He is no longer a patron and is not known by his neighbours at present. The life has changed a lot since then and the people are busy in their lives. Mehmood's one son is stuck in Pakistan during partition and remained there only for the rest of his life. He is satisfied that at least his other son lives with him and he is able to enjoy the innocence of his grandson. He compares Ali with a mimosa sapling which is grown at the edge of the courtyard. Both the mimosa sapling and Ali are young and assure that they will grow tall and strong. Mehmood is compared to the Banyan tree under whose shed he is lying beneath. Both the Banyan tree and Mehmood are old, stooped, their bones and branches twisted.

He was on his death bed and starts feeling tired and wonders if he will dream of the kite he wants to make which looks like a giant white bird. He wants to give something to Ali as a token of remembrance. He wants to make a kite for him but his body is not coping up with him. He faintly hears the cries of his grandson Ali, calling him. Ali returns after playing with kite and sees his grandfather lying in the state of total rest. His eyes are closed and a little butterfly is resting on his beard. He tries to wake Mehmood but the old man is dead. He is frightened to see his grandfather in the state of stillness and runs away to call his mother. The story ends with butterfly flying from Mehmood's beard to mimosa tree and Ali's stuck kite also takes a flight and flies high into the sky to disappear.

8.5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

In this story there is rich use of nature as a symbol. Author uses the symbol of Banyan tree which symbolizes the old man. He also uses the symbol of young mimosa sapling which represents the vitality of the grandson. This short story also uses the theme of tradition, mortality, loneliness, happiness, independence, kindness, pride and change. This story explores the theme of loneliness. A new generation has come to the city and Mehmood does not really know anyone and no one knows him either. Mehmood feels very lonely and is only known to the people of his family.

Author suggests that with old age comes loneliness. He remembers his youth when he is popular among all. Even the nawab of the village knows him and is fond of his kite-making. He tells Mehmood to make a special kite for him which earns him more popularity. But at present in his old age, his days are spent either resting or making kites for Ali. It further explores the theme of kindness. Ali and Mehmood share an exceptionally kind relationship with each other. Ali always gets a support from his grandson and is never scorned by him. He never gets angry over him for getting his kite stuck in the twines instead he makes a new kite for him every time. In his old age, Mehmood is left with only one thing that is making Ali happy. This story is also a story of pride which Mehmood takes in his ability to make kites. He has had the ability to adapt when he has encountered difficulties with some of the kites he has made, which may leave some readers to suggest that Mehmood has also been able to adapt any changes that have occurred in his life.

This story also throws light on the sense of independence. Though Mehmood lives with her son but he has nobody to rely on. He lives an independent life but yearns for the company of others. He lives an independent life by kite-making in his youth. He is self-made man and is satisfied with his life. It also celebrates the theme of happiness as Mehmood is enjoying his retirement quite peacefully. He is content with his life even though he is forgotten by the people because of the changes that have occurred around him. He happily accepts his old age and compares himself to the old Banyan tree and Ali to the mimosa sapling. He knows that he has reached the end stage of the life cycle and Ali has just begun with it.

It also throws light on the theme of peace. When Mehmood dies it makes the reader realize the peace with which he has embraced the death. He has not been a burden on anyone and he always brought joy to people, particularly to his grandson Ali. This story also explores the theme of tradition which Mehmood preserves with making kites even in his old age. Though he is not able to get any customers, he used to make it for his own muse and for his grandson Ali. He has lived a full life and seen the city change before his eyes. Villages became towns and towns became cities. Yet the traditions that Mehmood had carried through from previous generations seemed to have gotten lost as people prospered. There is nobody left after Mehmood to

make kites for Ali or for anybody else. With Mehmood's death comes not only the loss of life but the loss of tradition too.

8.6 GLOSSARY

1. Abandoned – forsaken by owner or inhabitants, free from constraint
2. Cobbled – put together hastily
3. Chuckled – a soft partly suppressed laugh
4. Amusement – a feeling of delight at being entertained or an activity that is diverting and that holds the attention
5. Premises – land and buildings on it
6. Disdain – lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike
7. Tangled – in a confused mass
8. Swerving – the act of turning aside suddenly
9. Swoop – rapid sliding up or down the musical scale or a swift descent through the air
10. Severed – detached by cutting
11. Retinue – the group following and attending to some important person
12. Trample – the sound of heavy treading or stomping
13. Trailing – the pursuit of a person or an animal by following tracks or marks they left behind
14. Undulatory – resembling waves in form or outline or motion
15. Cumbersome – difficult to handle or use especially because of size or weight
16. Plaintive – expressing sorrow

17. Wriggling–moving in a twisting or snake-like or worm like fashion

18. Glinting – having brief brilliant points or flashes of light

19. Leisurely–in an unhurried way or at one's convenience

20. Raucous – unpleasantly loud or harsh or disturbing the public peace

21. Resplendent – having great beauty and splendor

22. Gnarled – used of old persons or old trees; covered with knobs or knots

8.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1.What was the name of the special kite which Ali made for nawab?_____ .

a) Fish-kite

b) Dragon-kite

c) Umbrella-kite

d) Eagle-kite

2. Mehmood used to take rest under the _____ tree.

a) Peepal

b) Banana

c) Banyan

d) Neem

3. What is the name of the street where Mehmood lives?_____ .

a) Ram-Nath gali

b) Ram Prashad gali

c) Prem-Nath gali

d) Prem- prashad gali

4. Which of the following thing is not used by Mehmood to make the kite?_____.

a) Bamboo

b) Paper

c) Thin silk

d) Wool

5. What is the highest amount of money Mehmood use to charge for his kites?_____ .

a) One rupee

b) Four rupees

c) Three rupees

d) Two rupees

6. Which musical instrument is heard in another kite made for nawab in replacement to the Dragon-kite?_____ .

a) Table

b) Guitar

c) Violin

d) Harmonium

7. Author has compared the Kite-maker to the _____ .

a) Poets

b) Musicians

c) Painters

d) None of these

8. Mehmood gets happy by seeing _____ in his old age.

a) Busy young generation

b) The city life

c) No customers

d) Ali

9. Mehmood is likened to the old banyan tree because of _____ on both of them

a) Paleness

b) Twisted bones and branches

c) Strength in

d) Their youth

10. Mehmood wants to make kite which resembles the big white bird named_____ .

a) Pigeon

b) Eagle

c) Garud

d) Sparrow

8.8 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have discussed the biography of Ruskin Bond with special reference to Ruskin Bond as a children's story writer. Further, in the lesson we have given the detailed summary and critical analysis along with the text of the short story. Remember the seven themes discussed in the lesson that is of loneliness, kindness, pride, independence, happiness, peace and tradition. The multiple choice questions at the end of the lesson are for self-evaluation.

8.9 ANSWER KEY [MCQ's]

1. (b)
2. (c)
3. (a)
4. (d)
5. (b)
6. (c)
7. (a)
8. (d)
9. (b)
10. (c)

8.10 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. **What complaints did Ali make to his grandfather in the lesson "The kite maker'?**

Ans. Ali complained his grandfather that he had lost his kite as his kite got stuck in the branches of an ancient banyan tree.

2. **Why did the old man continue to make kites even when his shop was no longer there?**

Ans. Mehmood had much interest in kite-making. So he continued to make kites for his own amusement and as playthings for his grandson even when his shop was no longer there.

3. **Describe the characteristic features of 'Dragon kite' which Mehmood made for nawab.**

Ans. At the request of the nawab, Mehmood had made a very special kind of kite. It considered of a series of small, very light paper discs trailing on a thin bamboo frame. To the extremity of each disc he tied a spring of grass for balance.

4. **How does Ali lose his kite?**

Ans. Ali was flying a kite. His kite was struck in the banyan tree. In this way he lost his kite.

5. **Name the tree and its location in whose branches little Ali's kite was stuck.**

Ans. It was an ancient banyan tree which was grown through the cracks of an abandoned mosque.

6. **What happened to the dragon kite finally?**

Ans. Finally the dragon kite pulled fiercely in the twine. It could not be handled. It became free when the twine snapped. So it vanished into the sky.

7. **Why did many people not buy kites?**

Ans. Many people did not buy kites as they had to work hard for earning their daily bread and had no time for kite-flying. Thus the people were busy and did not get time to fly kites.

8. What had given Mehmood popularity throughout the city?

Ans. Mehmood was an expert in making kites. His art of kite-making gave him popularity throughout the city. Once when he fell sick, everyone in the neighborhood came to ask about his health.

9. How were the great battles fought in kite- flying?

Ans. The kites swerved, swopped in the sky and tangled with each other, until the string of one was cut. Then the beaten but liberated kite would float away into the blue unknown.

8.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Justify the title of the story “The Kite Maker”.
2. Draw the comparison between the character of Mehmood and Ali.
3. Give the character sketch of Mehmood.
4. Give the summary of the story “The Kite Maker”.
5. What is the underlying theme of the story “The Kite Maker”?.
6. Draw the character of Ali in your own words.

8.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

Friends In Small Places - Bond Ruskin

The Complete Short Stories And Novels – RuskinBond

Bond With The Best – Swati Ghosh

Treasury Of Stories For Children - Ruskin Bond

The Name Is Bond, Ruskin Bond- R. Atteth

Mystery Stories In The Best Tradition Of Old Ruskin - Urmi A Goswami

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STRUCTURE

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde, the Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and critic, was born in Dublin on October 16th, 1854. At that time Ireland belonged to, and was ruled by Britain. Wilde's parents were part of the Protestant ruling class in Ireland, rather than the mostly Catholic 'native' Irish people. Oscar's father was an important doctor in Dublin and his mother was a well-known literary hostess—she was famous for giving parties for the writers and artists of the city.

Oscar—his full name was Oscar FingalO'Flahertie Wills Wilde- was educated at Portora Royal School, Eniskillen, then at Trinity College, Dublin, and finally at Oxford University. At Oxford he studied 'classics' the languages and literature of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. Oscar started writing poetry at Oxford, and soon he started to write plays, though his first two plays, *Vera* and *The Duchess of Padua*, were not very successful. But at the same time Oscar also began writing and lecturing about 'taste'—what people should wear and how they should decorate their houses. Many people wanted to listen to his thoughts about fashion, and he gave lectures in the USA as well as in Britain.

In 1884, Oscar married a rich Irish woman called Constance Lloyd, and the couple had two sons. After this, Oscar edited a popular magazine called *Women's World* for two years. But he gradually lost interest in being a professional adviser on fashion. After 1888, he spent nearly all his time writing the works for which we now remember him. He wrote two books of fairy stories for his children, *The Happy Prince* and *A House of Pomegranates*, and then a book of short stories—-*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime.* He also wrote a famous novel called *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*

The Picture of Dorian Gray is about a wicked man whose face remains young and beautiful while the face of his portrait, hidden in his house, gets older and uglier with each wicked thing he does. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first serialised in a popular magazine. When it was later published as a book, in 1891, Oscar had added some new chapters and a new revenge subplot. Though he probably did this simply to extend the book's length to that of a normal novel, some critics believed that these extra chapters had weakened the story. Most readers, however, preferred to argue over the book's morality. Suddenly, many people wanted to believe that Oscar was a wicked as his character.

Between 1892 and 1895, Oscar returned to writing plays. One of these, *Salome*, from the Old Testament story of St. John the Baptist, was written in French and was intended for the famous actress, Sarah Bernhardt. The other four plays, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance, An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, are comedies. They are very witty plays, full of short, memorable sentences. All these plays were very successful in London, but in the

year that *The Importance of Being Earnest* was first produced, Oscar suddenly fell from public favour.

Today, Oscar is probably best remembered as a social commentator. His novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray,*is still read and admired. Many of his stories and plays are also still greatly enjoyed. But of all his works, it is his last play, *The Importance of Being Earnest,* which remains a masterpiece of nineteenth century theatre. Like his earlier plays, *The Importance of Being Earnest,*this remains a masterpiece of nineteenth century. This play is full of witty and clever sayings, but everything in the middle class society it describes is mocked. It is wonderfully funny and touchingly close to the real life-story of this brilliant, but tragic, writer.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with the life and works of Oscar Wilde and to provide them with little knowledge of the other notable works of Oscar Wilde.

9.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde, celebrated playwright and literary provocateur, was born in Dublin on October 16, 1854. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford before settling in London. During his days Oscar Wilde, celebrated at Dublin and Oxford, he developed a set of attitudes and postures for which he would eventually become famous. Chief among these were his flamboyant style of dress, his contempt for conventional values, and his belief in aestheticism. After a stunning performance in college, Wilde settled in London in 1878, where he moved in circles that included Lillie Langtry, the novelists Henry James and George Moore, and the young William Butler Yeats.

During the late 1880s, Wilde wrote reviews, edited a women's magazine, and published a volume of poetry and one of children's stories. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was an artistic breakthrough for Wilde, something between self-parody and a deceptively flippant on the dramatic genre in which Wilde had already so much success. Wilde's genre of choice was the Victorian melodrama. *The Importance*

of Being Earnest was an early experiment in Victorian melodrama. Part of satire, part of comedy of manners, part of intellectual farce, and this play seems to have nothing at stake because the world it presents is so blatantly and ostentatiously artificial. Below the surface of the light, brittle comedy, however, is a serious subtext that takes aim at self-righteous moralism, and hypocrisy, the very aspects of Victorian society that would, in part, bring about Wilde's downfall.

For sixty or seventy years after Wilde's death, critics and audiences regarded *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a delightful but utterly frivolous and superficial comedy, a view that partly reflects the mind-set of a period in which homosexuality remained a guarded topic. The decriminalization of homosexuality in England in 1967 and the emergence in American's interest in gay culture, and particularly in the covert homosexual literature of the past, has made it possible to view the play in a different light. The play's danger and subversion are easier to see from a twenty-first century perspective. In the ambiguity over exactly what people refer to when they speak of "wicked" or immoral behaviour, we can detect a system of coded references to homosexuality, just as we can infer a more general comment on the hypocrisy of late Victorian society.

9.4 ACT WISE SUMMARY

Act I : The play begins in the flat of Algernon Moncrieff, an upperclass English bachelor. He is visited by his friend Jack Worthing — though Algernon and everyone else in London know Jack as "Ernest." Jack says that he has come to town to propose to Gwendolen Fairfax, the daughter of Lady Bracknell and first cousin of Algernon. Algernon tells Jack that, as first cousin, he refuses to give his consent for Jack to marry Gwendolen until Jack can explain why the name Cecily is inscribed in Jack's cigarette case. After making up a story about an elderly aunt, Jack finally admits to Algernon that Cecily is his ward who lives in the country. Jack also admits that his name is not Ernest but rather Jack, which is what everyone at his country Manor House calls him. Algernon jokingly accuses Jack of "Bunburying," his own fanciful term for removing himself from an unpleasant situation in the city, and embarking on a much more pleasurable occupation in the country. Algernon then determines to meet Jack's attractive young ward by posing as Jack's fictitious brother,

Ernest. Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell arrive at Algernon's flat for tea. Algernon tells Lady Bracknell that, due to the illness of his friend Bunbury, he must leave London, and as a result will not be able to attend her dinner that night. He distracts her in a different room for a while so that Jack can propose to Gwendolen. Jack tells Gwendolen that he loves her, and she replies that she loves him too, particularly because he is named Ernest, a name that "seems to inspire absolute confidence." Jack, knowing that his name is not really Ernest, gets worried, and privately resolves to get baptized and change his name. Gwendolen, meanwhile, accepts his proposal just as Lady Bracknell returns; Lady Bracknell announces that Gwendolen may not marry Jack until she gives her approval. Algernon and Gwendolen exit while Lady Bracknell interrogates Jack to determine how suitable a husband he is. She is pleased with his answers until she asks him about his parents. When Jack admits that he was abandoned by his parents and found in a handbag by Mr Thomas Cardew in Victoria Station, Lady Bracknell is horrified. She refuses to let her daughter marry a man with no knowledge of his own parentage, and suggests to Jack that he "acquire some relations as soon as possible." Gwendolen returns, having heard of Lady Bracknell's disapproval, and agrees to meet Jack at his country estate to figure out what to do. He gives her the address, which is overheard and copied down by Algernon.

Act II : At Jack's country estate, Cecily, his ward is learning German and geography at the hands of Miss Prism, a tutor who once wrote a long novel that mysteriously disappeared. Miss Prism, in between teaching Cecily, likes to flirt with the neighbourhood Rector, Dr Chasuble. While she is taking a walk with him, Algernon, pretending to be Jack's brother Ernest, arrives to meet Cecily. The two show an immediate romantic interest in one another, and go into the house to get some food. As they leave, Prism and Chasuble return from their work and meet Jack as he arrives back home from the city. He is dressed in mourning in order to keep up the ruse that his brother, who does not actually exist, has died. While speaking with Chasuble and Prism, Cecily comes out of the house and sees Jack, and quickly informs him that his brother has returned. Jack is shocked and angered when his "brother" Algernon comes out of the house. After the others exit to allow the two reunited brother's time to resolve their differences, Jack tells Algernon that he must leave the house at once. Algernon replies that he will leave only if Jack changes out of his

morbid mourning clothes. As Jack exits to do so, Cecily returns. Algernon proposes to her, and she agrees, although she tells him that she particularly loves him because he is named Ernest, a name that "seems to inspire absolute confidence." Cecily, in fact, has been pretending in her journal to be engaged to "Ernest" ever since she first found out that her guardian had a brother. Algernon grows secretly worried about the fact that he is not named Ernest; he resolves to get rechristened. After Algernon exits, Gwendolen arrives to see Jack, but in the meantime she chats with Cecily, whom she has never met before. Gwendolen is surprised to hear that "Ernest" has a ward but has never told her about it. Cecily is confused when Gwendolen says that she is engaged to Ernest, and things become heated as, in the confusion, they believe they may be engaged to the same man. Both try to refute the engagement claims of the other, and when that fails, they sit in silent hostility until Algernon and Jack re-enter. The two men confess that they lied about their names and that neither of them is named Ernest. The two women are shocked, and because both are engaged to someone named Ernest, they retreat together into the house to await the appearance of this brother named Ernest. Meanwhile, Jack begins to panic while Algernon sits back and stuffs himself full of muffins.

Act III : moves inside the Manor House. Algernon and Jack enter shortly after the act begins. Algernon tells Cecily that he lied to her about having a brother so that he could spend more time in the city with her. The women are satisfied, although they still cannot accept marrying the men because neither one is named Ernest. When the men reply that they are scheduled to be christened that afternoon, all seems well, until suddenly Lady Bracknell arrives. She again refuses to give her consent to the engagement of Gwendolen and Jack. Algernon tells her that he is engaged to Cecily, and when Lady Bracknell learns that Cecily is extremely wealthy thanks to her father's estate, she gives her consent. However, as Cecily's legal guardian, Jack will not give his consent to the marriage unless Lady Bracknell approves of his engagement to Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell again refuses and prepares to leave with Gwendolen. Dr Chasuble enters and learns that a christening will no longer be necessary, so he resolves to return to Miss Prism. Lady Bracknell, suddenly realizing that she once employed a Miss Prism to take care of her sister's baby, asks to see Miss Prism, who readily appears. Lady Bracknell demands to know what

happened to the baby, which we soon find out disappeared twenty-eight years previously when Miss Prism was supposed to be taking it for a stroll in the perambulator. Miss Prism confesses that she accidentally put her three-volume novel in the perambulator and the baby in her handbag, which she mistakenly left in the cloakroom at Victoria Station. Jack, suddenly realizing that he was that baby, fetches the handbag in which he was found, which Miss Prism confirms as being hers. Lady Bracknell tells Jack that he is the son of her sister and the elder brother of Algernon. A search through the military periodicals of the time reveals that their father's first name was Ernest, and because first sons are always named after the father, they realize that Jack's name has, indeed, all along been Ernest. Overjoyed, Jack realizes that he has been telling the truth his whole life even though he thought he was lying. In the end, he gets together with Gwendolen, Algernon gets together with Cecily, and although Lady Bracknell accuses Jack of triviality, he retorts that he has only just discovered "the vital Importance of Being Earnest".

9.5 GLOSSARY

Mistress : A woman, specifically one with great control, authority or ownership.

Flamboyant : Showy, bold or audacious in behaviour.

Aesthetics : A movement that embraced the principle of art for the sake of beauty.

Masterpiece : A piece of work that has been given much critical praise.

Blatantly : Bellowing or the sound produced.

Ostentatiously : Ambitious display.

9.6 LET US SUM UP

- Oscar Wilde was born on October 16, 1854, in Dublin, Ireland.
- He married Constance Lloyd in 1884.
- In the literary world of Victorian London, Wilde fell in with an artistic crowd that included W.B. Yeats.

- *The Importance of Being Earnest* is regarded as Oscar Wilde's masterpiece.
- He died in Paris in 1900.

9.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Write a short biographical note on Oscar Wilde?
2. Enumerate the themes of Wilde's plays?
3. Why *The Importance of Being Earnest* is a masterpiece work of Wilde?
4. How the culture of Victorian society reflected in *The Importance of Being Earnest?*
5. Wilde's play has two settings the city of London and the country. How does he create difference between the two settings?
6. What attitudes towards marriage do Wilde's characters explore?

9.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER KEY

1. What is the name of Algernon's permanent invalid friend?_____ .

   a) Earnest

   b) Jack

   c) Queensbury

   d) Bunbury

Answer: D

2. Where was Jack found as a baby?_____ .

   a) In a restroom

   b) In a handbag

   c) In a car

   d) In a carriage

Answer: B

3. Who is Jack's ward?_____ .

    a) Cecily

    b) Miss Prism

    c) Ernest

    d) Bunbury

Answer: A

4. Whom does Algernon pretend to be when he shows up at Jack's house?_____ .

    a) Jack

    b) Chasuble

    c) Ernest

    d) Bunbury

Answer: C

5. Who is Cecily's governess?_____ .

    a) Lady Bracknell

    b) Gwendolen

    c) Miss Prism

    d) Jack

Answer: C

6. On what railway line was Jack found as a baby?_____ .

    a) Brighton

    b) Albany

    c) Earl's Court

    d) Southampton

Answer: A

7. Whom does Jack ask to marry him?_____ .

   a) Lady Bracknell

   b) Miss Prism

   c) Gwendolen

   d) Cecily

Answer: C

9.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Bloom, Harold. *Oscar Wilde.* New York:Chelsea House, 1985.

Ellmann, Richard. *Oscar Wilde.* New York:knopf, 1987.

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STRUCTURE

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Being Earnest is a play by Oscar Wilde. First performed in 14th February, 1895 at the St. James's Theatre in London, it is a farcical comedy in which the protagonists maintain fictitious personae to escape burdensome social obligations. Working within the social conventions of late Victorian London, the play's major themes are the triviality with which it treats institutions as serious as marriage, and the resulting satire of Victorian ways.

10.2 OBJECTIVE

The Objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learners with the plot summary and character analysis of the play.

10.3 PLOT OVERVIEW

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde centres upon two men who manipulate their identities to escape the constraints of society. Jack Worthing, upon whom the play centres, is viewed by the Victorian community as a respectable and responsible individual; as such, he maintains the persona of Ernest, a fake relative who represents the apparent moral opposite of Jack. Jack finds companionship in the Wilde-like character of Algernon Moncrieff, who also leads false life as Bunbury. Romantic involvement between both men and their relatives leads to multiple scenes in which both the integrity of the characters and the society in which they live come into question. Lady Bracknell, mother of Jack's love interest Gwendolyn, disapproves of their relationship after having discovered Jack's questionable origins; Gwendolyn herself is satisfied only when involved with the name Ernest. Algernon's situation is somewhat similar. The unravelling of identities leads to the final acknowledgement of "the vital importance of being Earnest," concluding the social commentary which unites Wilde's characters and plot. Wilde's writing is marked in large part by wit and satire. Many of his comments seem paradoxical or completely contrary to what we, or society, perceives as right, yet nonetheless make perfect sense. Remarks like "the truth is rarely pure and never simple," though brief in nature and comedic in context, make an effective statement about society - as does the play as a whole. Wilde's witty, epigrammatic style and often wild, if not intentional, lack of concern for predictability is representative of Earnest as a whole. Wilde uses the prospect of the death of Bunbury, for example, as a device to highlight Lady Bracknell's frivolous absurdity. Meticulous syntax and diction are Wilde's literary weapons; with them he attacks Victorian convention, challenging issues from marriage to morality. An example that demonstrates the style: "I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect

whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square." The aristocratic Lady Bracknell ought to represent an educated and noble level of human civility, yet is representative of virtually the opposite.

Memorable Quotes

I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit;touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever." - Lady Bracknell

"Well, I must say,Algernon,that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd." - Lady Bracknell

"I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much." - Cecily Cardew

Ï% "The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!" - Algernon Moncrieff

The Importance of Being Earnest takes place in late-19th century England. Jack specifically mentions the cities of London and Hertfordshire, where his city and country homes are located, respectively. Algernon's flat is located on Half-Moon Street. The setting plays significantly into Jack's behaviour; in the city, he finds himself immersed in a society he represents yet is disillusioned with, and so creates an alternate identity which resides in the countryside. The countryside, then, is a form of escape, where societal influence is less powerful and, as a result, where his freedom is more possible. At the same time, the setting doesn't modify the key components of each character; Jack's questionable morals and Algernon's outright disregard for them, for example, continue between locations, and contribute to the development of themes across the story.

The story begins with a scene in Algernon's London flat. Algernon is accompanied by Lane, and a brief discussion of marriage follows. Jack enters, and

reveals that his purpose in London is to propose to Gwendolen. Algernon notes that he will not allow Jack to marry Gwendolen unless he identifies who Cecily is, at which point Jack's alter ego of Ernest Worthing is revealed. Algernon himself likens it to his "Bunburying" in the countryside. The opening scene immediately addresses the premise of the story: it's absolutely absurd. Algernon and Jack are manifestations of wit and morality, and small items of food are representative of societal issues. The opening scene extends Wilde's style over the entire story, establishing the importance of a reading beyond the literal. At the same time, Wilde establishes the premise for the plot itself, introducing both the main characters and their fake counterparts. Wilde already calls into question the behaviour and mannerisms of his mock Victorians. Duplicity, food, and literary fiction itself within the story serve as the most notable symbols. Duplicity is clear in Algernon and Jack's characters, who respectively lead alternate lives as Bunbury and Ernest. The use of duplicity through another individual symbolizes the desire, if not necessity, of escape from Victorian society, and thus stands in (especially in Jack's case) for the hypocrisy of Victorian society itself. Food, from cucumber sandwiches to bread and butter to sugar and cakes, is generally a comedic element; that it can be so profound, barring some communion-like scene (which does not take place in Earnest), seems absurd, especially in the context of a greater social commentary. Nevertheless, food is at times symbolic of sex; Algernon criticizes Jack for consuming bread and butter with great appetite prior to being married, for example. Finally, writing and fiction within the fiction itself, practiced explicitly by almost all characters either in the form of novels, letters, or personal diaries, reveals some degree of duplicity in almost every character; it serves as a device to escape from a situation, especially in the case of a diary. The ending scene is marked by the revealing of identities. Jack, Algernon, Lady Bracknell, and Ms. Prism all meet some form of resolution, no matter how ridiculous or contrived some of the solutions may seem. Aside from concluding the story, the ending scene ties together Wilde's social commentary. Jack is representative of Victorian hypocrisy, having led a double life; his conclusory remark that it is "a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth" is characteristic of his imperfect morality. As a representative of Victorian society as a whole, Jack ends the story with the words "I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital importance of being Earnest," indicating that his

morality until that point has been flawed. Possible themes - Topics of discussion Marriage figures haavily into the plot, and is explicitly discussed in both the beginning and end of the story. Aside from being yet another tool with which Algernon exercises his wit, marriage also factors into social and economic classes in Earnest. how this perception of class influences Jack's (hopeful) union with Gwendolen, as well as Algernon's union with Cecily, is a theme open to questioning. The issue of poor health and death is addressed multiple times in the play, and generally in a comedic manner. It's possible that, for the six times it is mentioned (and not always literally, as on occasion characters experience an emotion "to death"), death represents something larger, especially given its use with Jack and Algernon are, presumably, relatively older men. Lady Bracknell is perhaps the oldest of the major characters. This totem pole of seniority plays significantly into the story, as each temporal class must effectively submit to the next. Had the ages been less distributed, the outcome and resulting commentary of the story could have been altered as well.

10.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Wilde's play has two setting- the city of London and the country. How does he create differences between the two settings?

2. What attitudes to ward marriage do Wide's characters explore?

3. How does Wilde create and comment on the differences between the social classes in England as represented by Lady Bracknell and the servants in both settings?

4. What attitudes of the aristocracy can be seen in Lady Bracknell's dialogue?

5. How is conflict developed in the play?

6. How does Wilde turn around well-known proverbs to comment on Victorian attitudes?

10.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER KEY

1. Whom does Algernon ask to marry him? _____ .

a) Cecily

b) Miss Prism

c) Gwendolen

d) Lady Bracknell

Answer: A

2. Who is Algernon’s butler?_____ .

a) Ernest

b) Jack

c) Lane

d) Merriman

Answer: C

3. What is Jack’s father’s first name?_____ .

a) Peter

b) John

c) Ernest

d) He doesn’t know

Answer: C

4. How does Algernon learn about Cecily?_____ .

a) He reads Jack’s diary

b) He finds Jack’s cigarette case

c) He spies on her

d) He reads Jack’s mail

Answer: B

5. Why does Cecily say she and Algernon have been engaged for three months?_____ .

    a) She is delusional

    b) She is confusing herself with Gwendolen

    c) She has been writing letters between them

    d) He met her three months ago

Answer: C

6. What do Algernon and Jack want Chasuble to do?_____ .

    a) Liver

    b) Caviar

    c) Cheese sandwiches

    d) Cucumber sandwiches

Answer: D

10.6 GLOSSARY

Aristocracy : The nobility or the hereditary ruling class.

Antithesis : A proposition that is the diametric opposite of some other proposition.

Spurn : To reject

Hypocrisy : The contrivance of a false appearance of virtue or goodness.

Wit : Sanity

10.7 LET US SUM UP

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde centres upon two men who manipulate their identities to escape the constraints of society.

Jack Worthing, upon whom the play centres, is viewed by the Victorian community as a respectable and responsible individual; as such, he maintains the persona of Ernest, a fake relative who represents the apparent moral opposite of Jack.

Lady Bracknell is mother to Gwendolen Fairfax and unites most of the other characters to create the romantic conflict in the story, set in the context of her own Victorian aristocracy.

Cecily Cardew, Jack Worthing's ward, is the love interest of Algernon Moncrieff.

10.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Ericksen, Donald H. *Oscar Wilde.* Boston: Twaynw Publishers, 1977.

Freedman, Jonathan, *Oscar Wilde: A Collection of Critical Essays.* Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996.

Gagnier, Regenia. *Idylls of the Marketplace, Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public.*Palo Alto Califorian: Stanford University Press, 1986.

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STRUCTURE

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The character analysis of *The Importance of Being Earnest* helps in better understanding of the play.

11.2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lesson is to make the learners well acquainted with the characters of the play *The Importance of Being Earnest.*

11.3 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Jack Worthing (Ernest): The play's protagonist Jack Worthing is a seemingly responsible and respectable young man who leads a double life. In Hertfordshire, where he has a country estate, Jack is known as Jack whereas in London he is known as Ernest. As a baby, Jack was discovered in a handbag in the cloakroom of Victoria Station by an old man who adopted him and subsequently made Jack guardian to his granddaughter, Cecily Cardew. Jack is in love with his friend Algernon's cousin, Gwendolen Fairfax. This initial after his name indicate that he is a justice of the peace.

Algernon Moncrieff: The play's secondary. Algernon is a charming, idle, decorative bachelor, nephew of Lady Bracknell, cousin of Gwendolen Fairfax, and best friend of Jack Worthing, whom he has known for years as Ernest. Algernon is brilliant, witty, selfish, amoral, and given to making delightful paradoxical and epigrammatic pronouncements. He has invented a fictional friend, "Bunbury", an invalid whose frequent sudden relapses allow Algernon to wriggle out of unpleasant or dull social obligations.

Gwendolen Fairfax: Algernon's cousin and Lady Bracknell's daughter. Gwendolen is in love with Jack, whom she knows as Ernest. A model and arbiter if high fashion and society, Gwendolen speaks with unassailable authority on matters and taste and morality. She is sophisticated, intellectual, cosmopolitan, and utterly pretentious. Gwendolen is fixated on the name Ernest and says she will not marry a man without that name.

Cecily Cardew: Jack's ward, the granddaughter of the old gentleman who found and adopted Jack was a baby. Cecily is probably the most realistically drawn character in the play. Like Gwendolen, she is obsessed with name Ernest, but she is even more intrigued by the idea of wickedness. This idea, rather than the virtuous-sounding name, has prompted her to fall in love with Jack's brother Ernest in her imagination and to invent an elaborate romance and courtship between them.

Lady Bracknell: Algernon's snobbish, mercenary, and domineering aunt and Gwendolen's mother. Lady Bracknell married well, and her primary goal in life

is to see her daughter do the same. She has a list of “eligible young men” and a prepared interview she gives to potential suitors. Like her nephew, Lady Bracknell is given to making she gives to potential suitors. Like her nephew, Lady Bracknell is given to making hilarious pronouncements, but where Algernon means to be witty, the humour in Lady Bracknell’s speeches is unintentional. Through the figure of Lady Bracknell, Wilde manages to satirize the hypocrisy and stupidity of the British aristocracy. Lady Bracknell values ignorance, which she sees as “a delicate exotic fruit”. When she gives a dinner party, she prefers her husband to eat downstairs with the servants. She is cunning, narrow minded, authoritarian, and possibly the most quotable character in the play.

Miss Prism: Cecily’s governess. Miss Prism is an endless source of pedantic bromides and clichés. She highly approves of Jack’s presumed respectability and harshly criticizes his “unfortunate” brother. Puritan though she is, Miss Prism’s severe pronouncements have a way of going so far over the top that they inspire laughter. Despite her rigidity, Miss Prism seems to have a softer side. She speaks of having once written a novel whose manuscript was “lost” or “abandoned”. Also, she entertains romantic feelings for Dr. Chasuble.

Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D: Like Miss Prism, he is the source of Victorian moral judgments, but under the surface he appears to be an old lecher. His sermons are interchangeable, mocking religious conventions. Like the servants, he does what Jack (the landowner) wants: performing weddings, christenings, sermons, funerals, and so on. However, beneath the religious exterior, his heart beats for Miss Prism.

Lane and Merriman: Servants of Algernon and Jack. Lane says soothing and comforting things to his employer but stays within the neutral guidelines of a servant. He is leading a double life, eating sandwiches and drinking champagne when his master is not present. He aids and abets the lies of Algernon. Merriman keeps the structure of the plot working. He announces people and happenings. Like Lane, he does not comment on his “betters,” but solemnly watches their folly. His neutral facial expressions during crisis and chaos undoubtedly made the upper-class audience laugh.

11.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER KEY

1. What food does Cecily serve to Gwendolen?_____.

    a) Nothing

    b) Cake

    c) Bread and Butter

    d) Crackers

Answer: B

2. What does Jack send for when Algernon arrives at his house?_____.

    a) Extra bedding

    b) The dogcart

    c) Clothing

    d) Refreshment

Answer: B

3. What, according to Wilde, should strive to be “useless”?_____.

    a) Morality

    b) Life

    c) Marriage

    d) Art

Answer: D

4. What was the nick name of Wilde’s famous lover?_____.

    a) Josie

    b) Marquess of Queensbury

    c) Rosie

    d) Bosie

Answer: D

5. What do Gwendolen and Cecily require of their husbands?_____.

    a) They must be witty

    b) They must be wicked

    c) They must be rich

    d) They must be named Ernest

Answer: D

6. At what age does Cecily become independent from Jack?_____.

    a) 35

    b) 21

    c) 18

    d) 42

Answer: A

11.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What attitudes of the aristocracy can be seen in Lady Bracknell's dialogue?
2. How is conflict developed in the play?
3. How does Wilde turn around well-known proverbs or epigrams to comment on Victorian attitudes?
4. How does Wilde create and comment on the differences between the social classes in England as represented by Lady Bracknell and the servants in both settings?

5. What attitudes of the aristocracy can be seen in Lady Bracknell's dialogue?

11.6 GLOSSARY

Protagonist : The main character in any story

Guardian : Someone who guards or protects

Cloakroom : A room intended for holding guest's cloaks and other heavy outerwear

Epigrammatic : Having the characteristics of an epigram

Obligations : The act of binding oneself by a social, legal or moral tie to someone

Relapse : To fall back

Hilarious : Very funny

Chaos : A vast chasm

Satirize : To mock

Cliché' : Something most often a phrase or expression

Bromides : A binary compound of bromine

Cosmopolitan : Composed of people from all over the world

Pretentious : Intended to impress others

Unassailable : Secure against attack

Paradoxical : having self-contradictory properties

11.7 LET US SUM UP

The play's protagonist Jack Worthing is a seemingly responsible and respectable young man who leads a double life. In Hertfordshire, where he has a country estate, Jack is known as Jack whereas in London he is known as Ernest.

The play's secondary. Algernon is a charming, idle, decorative bachelor, nephew of Lady Bracknell, cousin of Gwendolen Fairfax, and best friend of Jack Worthing, whom he has known for years as Ernest.

Fairfax is Algernon's cousin and Lady Bracknell's daughter. Gwendolen is in love with Jack, whom she knows as Ernest.

Cecily's governess Miss Prism is an endless source of pedantic bromides and clichés.

11.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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STRUCTURE

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

12.2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lesson is to make readers well acquainted with the various themes involved in the play.

12.3 THEMES

Death : Jokes about death appear frequently in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Lady Bracknell comes onstage talking about death, and in one of the play's many inversions, she says her friend Lady Harbury looks twenty years younger since the death of her husband. With respect to Bunbury, she suggests that death is an inconvenience for others—she says Bunbury is "shilly-shallying" over whether "to live or to die." On being told in Act III that Bunbury has died suddenly in accordance with his physicians' predictions, Lady Bracknell commends Bunbury for acting "under proper medical advice." Miss Prism speaks as though death were something from which one could learn a moral lesson and piously says she hopes Ernest will profit from having died. Jack and Algernon have several conversations about how to "kill" Jack's imaginary brother. Besides giving the play a layer of dark humour, the death jokes also connect to the idea of life being a work of art. Most of the characters discuss death as something over which a person actually has control, as though death is a final decision one can make about how to shape and colour one's life.

The Dandy : In Wilde's works, the dandy is a witty, overdressed, self-styled philosopher who speaks in epigrams and paradoxes and ridicules the cant and hypocrisy of society's moral arbiters. To a very large extent, this figure was a self-portrait, a stand-in for Wilde himself. The dandy isn't always a comic figure in Wilde's work. In *A Woman of No Importance* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* he takes the form of the villains Lord Illingworth and Lord Henry Wootton, respectively. But in works such as *Lady Windermere's Fan, An Ideal Husband,* and *The Importance of Being Earnest,* Wilde seems to be evolving a more positive and clearly defined moral position on the figure of the dandy. The dandy pretends to be all about surface, which makes him, seem trivial, shallow, and ineffectual. Lord Darlington and Lord Goring (in Lady Windermere's Fan and An Ideal Husband) both present themselves this way. In fact, the dandy in both plays turns out to be something very close to the real hero. He proves to be deeply moral and essential to the happy resolution of the plot. In The Importance of Being Earnest, Algernon has many characteristics of the dandy, but he remains morally neutral throughout the play. Many other characters also express dandiacal sentiments and views. Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell are

being dandiacal when they assert the importance of surfaces, style, or "profile," and even Jack echoes the philosophy of the dandy when he comes onstage asserting that "pleasure" is the only thing that should "bring one anywhere." For the most part, these utterances seem to be part of Wilde's general lampooning of the superficiality of the upper classes. The point is that it's the wrong sort of superficiality because it doesn't recognize and applaud its own triviality. In fact, Cecily, with her impatience with self-improvement and conventional morality and her curiosity about "wickedness," is arguably the character who, after Algernon, most closely resembles the dandy. Her dandiacal qualities make her a perfect match for him

The Nature of Marriage : Marriage is of paramount importance in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, both as a primary force motivating the plot and as a subject for philosophical speculation and debate. The question of the nature of marriage appears for the first time in the opening dialogue between Algernon and his butler, Lane, and from this point on the subject never disappears for very long. Algernon and Jack discuss the nature of marriage when they dispute briefly about whether a marriage proposal is a matter of "business" or "pleasure," and Lady Bracknell touches on the issue when she states, "An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be." Even Lady Bracknell's list of bachelors and the prepared interview to which she subjects Jack are based on a set of assumptions about the nature and purpose of marriage. In general, these assumptions reflect the conventional preoccupations of Victorian respectability—social position, income, and character. The play is actually an on-going debate about the nature of marriage and whether it is "pleasant or unpleasant." Lane remarks casually that he believes it to be "a very pleasant state," before admitting that his own marriage, now presumably ended, was the result of "a misunderstanding between me and a young person." Algernon regards Lane's views on marriage as "somewhat lax." His own views are relentlessly cynical until he meets and falls in love with Cecily. Jack, by contrast, speaks in the voice of the true romantic. He tells Algernon, however, that the truth "isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl." At the end of the play, Jack apologizes to Gwendolen when he realizes he had been telling the truth all his life. She forgives him, she says, on the

grounds that she thinks he's sure to change, which suggests Gwendolen's own rather cynical view of the nature of men and marriage.

The Constraints of Morality : Morality and the constraints it imposes on society is a favourite topic of conversation in *The Importance of Being Earnest.* Algernon thinks the servant class has a responsibility to set a moral standard for the upper classes. Jack thinks reading a private cigarette case is "ungentlemanly." "More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read," Algernon points out. These restrictions and assumptions suggest a strict code of morals that exists in Victorian society, but Wilde isn't concerned with questions of what is and isn't moral. Instead, he makes fun of the whole Victorian idea of morality as a rigid body of rules about what people should and shouldn't do. The very title of the play is a double-edged comment on the phenomenon. The play's central plot—the man who is and isn't Ernest/earnest—presents a moral paradox. Earnestness, which refers to both the quality of being serious and the quality of being sincere, is the play's primary object of satire. Characters such as Jack, Gwendolen, Miss Prism, and Dr. Chasuble, who put a premium on sobriety and honesty, are either hypocrite or else have the rug pulled out from under them. What Wilde wants us to see as truly moral is really the opposite of earnestness: irreverence.

Hypocrisy vs. Inventiveness : Algernon and Jack may create similar deceptions, but they are not morally equivalent characters. When Jack fabricates his brother Ernest's death, he imposes that fantasy on his loved ones, and though we are aware of the deception, they, of course, are not. He rounds out the deception with costumes and props, and he does his best to convince the family he's in mourning. He is acting hypocritically. In contrast, Algernon and Cecily make up elaborate stories that don't really assault the truth in any serious way or try to alter anyone else's perception of reality. In a sense, Algernon and Cecily are characters after Wilde's own heart, since in a way they invent life for themselves as though life is a work of art. In some ways, Algernon, not Jack, is the play's real hero. Not only is Algernon like Wilde in his dandified, exquisite wit, tastes, and priorities, but he also resembles Wilde to the extent that his fictions and inventions resemble those of an artist.

The Double Life : The double life is the central metaphor in the play, epitomized in the notion of "Bunbury" or "Bunburying." As defined by Algernon, Bunburying is the practice of creating an elaborate deception that allows one to misbehave while seeming to uphold the very highest standards of duty and responsibility. Jack's imaginary, wayward brother Ernest is a device not only for escaping social and moral obligations but also one that allows Jack to appear far more moral and responsible than he actually is. Similarly, Algernon's imaginary invalid friend Bunbury allows Algernon to escape to the country, where he presumably imposes on people who don't know him in much the same way he imposes on Cecily in the play, all the while seeming to demonstrate Christian charity. The practice of visiting the poor and the sick was a staple activity among the Victorian upper and upper-middle classes and considered a public duty. The difference between what Jack does and what Algernon does, however, is that Jack not only pretends to be something he is not, that is, completely virtuous, but also routinely pretends to be someone he is not, which is very different. This sort of deception suggests a far more serious and profound degree of hypocrisy. Through these various enactments of double lives, Wilde suggests the general hypocrisy of the Victorian mindset.

The Importance of Not Being "Earnest" Earnestness, which implies seriousness or sincerity, is the great enemy of morality in The Importance of Being Earnest. Earnestness can take many forms, including boringness, solemnity, pomposity, complacency, smugness, self-righteousness, and sense of duty, all of which Wilde saw as hallmarks of the Victorian character. When characters in the play use the word serious, they tend to mean "trivial," and vice versa. For example, Algernon thinks it "shallow" for people not to be "serious" about meals, and Gwendolen believes, "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing." For Wilde, the word earnest comprised two different but related ideas: the notion of false truth and the notion of false morality, or moralism. The moralism of Victorian society—its smugness and pomposity—impels Algernon and Jack to invent fictitious alter egos so as to be able to escape the strictures of propriety and decency. However, what one member of society considers decent or indecent doesn't always reflect what decency really is. One of the play's paradoxes is the impossibility of actually being either earnest (meaning "serious" or "sincere") or moral while claiming to be

so. The characters who embrace triviality and wickedness are the ones who may have the greatest chance of attaining seriousness and virtue.

12.4 DIFFERENT APPROACHES

The Importance of Being Earnest is most obviously a comic critique of late Victorian values. Some sixty years ago, Eric Bentley wrote that the play "is about earnestness, that is, Victorian solemnity, that kind of false seriousness which means priggishness, hypocrisy, and lack of irony". As a work of art, Wilde's last play has been recognized from its first performance on 14 February 1895 as a masterpiece of comedy, one of the supreme examples in English of the genre, and consequently it has been interpreted from a variety of critical points of view.

Social Criticism:*The Importance of Being Earnest* is Oscar Wilde's most well-known and best loved play, as well as being an enormous success in his lifetime. For many people it is the apogee of the playwright's work. Like Wilde, the play is the very embodiment of fin de sieclé British dandyism. However, this seemingly frivolous play has a much darker side. Its critique of Victorian society—though delivered in a velvet glove—is every inch a clunking-iron fist. The play is a satire both of the hypocrisies of the society in which Wilde lived, and the damaging effect that these hypocrisies can have on the souls of those live under their rule. It is a criticism of an elaborate mask worn by the ruling elites, behind which each is engaged in precisely the opposite modes of behaviour. In short the principle characters will go to any lengths to avoid their responsibilities and place self-interest at the top of their own agendas. Through the literary techniques of dramatic irony, parody and reversals Wilde reveals the moral hypocrisy at the heart of the Victorian establishment. Wilde was to become one of those souls shortly after the first performance of the play when he initiated a libel trial that was to lead to his imprisonment for being a homosexual.

The Gay Code : At the 1895 opening of Oscar Wilde's most famous play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*,the audience was liberally sprinkled with well-dressed young men wearing green carnations, Wilde's approved symbol for his gay followers. These patrons knew the play, an essay in appearances and secrets, was

also written in code for gay men, starting with the title itself. By common consent, then and after, “The Importance of Being Earnest” is Wilde’s masterpiece. Its title is meant as a double-entendre. The protagonist, called Jack in the country and Ernest in town, is chasing a young lady who will only marry a man named Ernest because she desires the quality of being earnest above all others in her future husband. The play’s second half revolves around attempts by not one but two characters to be christened officially with that same name as part of their frenzied skirt-chasing. The boys in green carnations knew that “earnest” was also gay code for homosexual. If you were lunching at the Savoy Grill and wanted to nail someone’s sexual identity, you quietly asked, “Is he earnest?” This converts a double-entendre to a triple one, and decoding the play further will open up delicious new meanings.

Two books enable us to do this decoding. Richard Ellmann’s 1987 biography “Oscar Wilde” (Vintage paperback) is not only definitive; all Wilde studies coming after were based squarely on it. Another book approaches from a sleazier angle: Theo Aronson’s “Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld” (Barnes & Noble Books, 1994) chronicles the play culture of London’s gay men of that time with its elaborate system of protected spaces and passwords. Chapter Eight of Karl Beckson’s “London in the 1890s: A Cultural History” (Norton, 1992) adds still more detail. All of this was dramatized effectively in the 1997 film “Wilde.”

The silver cigarette case: Algernon has come to return Jack’s silver cigarette case. This is how well-off gay men paid their male prostitutes to avoid prosecution; favourites even got their names engraved inside. The cases, of course, could be pawned for far more than the cash value of the services. But despite this precaution, the customer could still be blackmailed, and Wilde flirted with blackmailers regularly.
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Bunbury : Whenever his Aunt Augusta required Algernon to perform some dull social service, Algie’s imaginary friend Bunbury became ill or disconsolate in ways that required Algie’s urgent attention. Bunbury, of course, was the English equivalent of bone-smuggling, and Algie certainly preferred bun-burying to dining with his aunt. Wilde also had a classmate by that name.

Cecily : The name of Jack Worthing's young ward, cloistered carefully in his country house, protected by her governess Miss Prism from the corrupting influence of guys like Algernon, who of course spends most of the play chasing her. Cecily is also gay slang for a kept boy, especially one kept away from the prying eyes of other gay men.

Deceit : Both Algernon and Jack use their fictitious friend or brother, Bunbury and Ernest, to wander from the city to the country and vice versa. Algernon, for instance, declares he has "Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions". And, of course, he, among the several tricksters in the play, is the one with the unquenchable appetite. None of the major characters is governed by conventional morality. Indeed, part of the humour—the play, as it were—of Earnest is the inversion of conventional morality. "Divorces are made in Heaven," says Algy. Both he and Jack are ready to be christened, not on grounds of faith but on their perceived need to change their names to Ernest. One of the chief reasons Cecily is enamoured with Algernon/Ernest is that she thinks he is leading an evil life: "I hope you have not been leading a double life," she says to him, "pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy". And Lady Bracknell, who views christening as a "luxury", also views Cecily as a suitable bride for Algernon only after she learns how much money Cecily has. More so than he does in The Picture of Dorian Gray or Salomé, Wilde keeps sex implicit in Earnest. His characters are too child-like for readers or audiences to imagine them actually having sex. And it should be said that the child-like playfulness is part of the action appealing to the reader/viewer's inner child.

The role of the women : Gwendolen and Cecily are hopelessly in love, at least by Victorian standards, with their male counterparts. Cecily is described as "a sweet simple, innocent girl." Gwendolen is depicted as "a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced lady." (These claims come from Jack and Algernon respectively). Despite these supposed contrasts, it seems that the women in Oscar Wilde's play possess more similarities than differences. Both women are: Intent on marrying a man named Ernest, eager to embrace one another as sisters and quick to become rivals pitted against each other. **Gwendolen Fairfax: Aristocratic Socialite:** Gwendolen is the daughter of the pompous Lady Bracknell. She is also the cousin of the whimsical

bachelor Algernon. Most importantly, she is the love of Jack Worthing's life. The only problem: Gwendolen believes that Jack's real name is Ernest . ("Ernest" is the name Jack has been using whenever he sneaks away from his country estate). As a member of high society, Gwendolen exhibits fashion and a working knowledge of the latest trends in magazines. During her first lines during Act One, she exhibits self-confidence. Her dialogue: First line: I am always smart! Second line: I intend to develop in many directions. Sixth line: In fact, I am never wrong. Her inflated self-appraisal makes her seem foolish at times, especially when she reveals her devotion to the name Ernest. Even before meeting Jack, she claims that the name Ernest "inspires absolute confidence." The audience might chuckle at this, in part because Gwendolen is quite wrong about her beloved. Her fallible judgments are humorously displayed in Act Two when she meets Cecily for the first time. First she declares: "Cecily Cardew? What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong". Moments later, when she suspects that Cecily is trying to steal her fiancé, Gwen changes her tune: "From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right". Gwendolen's strengths include her ability to forgive. It does not take long for Gwendolen to reconcile with Cecily, nor does much time pass before she forgives Jack's deceptive ways. She may be quick to anger, but she also rushes to absolve. In the end, she makes Jack a very happy man.

Cecily Cardew: Hopeless Romantic? When the audience first meets Cecily she is watering the flower garden, even though she should be studying German grammar. This signifies Cecily's love of nature and her disdain for the tedious socio-academic expectations of society. (Or maybe she just likes to water flowers.) Cecily delights in bringing people together. She senses that the matronly Miss Prism and the pious Dr.Chausuble are fond of each other, so Cecily plays the role of matchmaker, urging them to take walks together. Also, she hopes to "cure" Jack's brother of wickedness so that there will be harmony between the siblings. Similar to Gwendolen, Miss Cecily has a "girlish dream" of marrying a man named Ernest. So, when Algernon poses as Ernest, Jack's fictional brother, Cecily happily records his words of adoration in her diary. She confesses that she has imagined that they are engaged, years before they even met. Some critics have suggested that Cecily is the most realistic of all

characters, in part because she does not speak in epigrams as frequently as the others. However, it could be argued that Cecily is just another outrageous romantic, prone to flights of fancy, just as all of the other wonderfully silly characters in Oscar Wilde's play.

12.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER KEY

1. What food do Algernon and Jack fight over at the end of Act II?_____.

   a) Cucumber Sandwiches

   b) Muffins

   c) Cake

   d) Bread and Butter

Answer: B

2. Who left Jack in the handbag when he was a baby?_____.

   a) Jack's father

   b) Algernon

   c) Miss Prism

   d) Lady Bracknell

Answer: C

3. Who is Jack's aunt?_____.

   a) Gwendolen

   b) Miss Prism

   c) Lady Bracknell

   d) He has none

Answer: C

4. Who is Jack's brother?_____.

   a) Ernest

   b) Bunbury

   c) He has none

   d) Algernon

Answer: D

5. When does Lady Bracknell start liking Cecily?_____.

   a) She never likes her

   b) When she finds out Cecily loves Algernon

   c) When she meets her

   d) When she learns Cecily is rich

Answer: D

12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are the gender roles in the play reversed?
2. In the end, why doesn't Cecily care that Algernon's name isn't Ernest?
3. What is the girl's fascination with the name "Ernest"? What does it have to do with their romantic idealizations?
4. How are Miss Prism and Dr. Chasuble products of society? What does this reveal about Victorian attitudes toward education?
5. What is the importance of the city/country split? What qualities do city-dwellers usually have? What about country folks? Do these stereotypes work in *The Importance of Being Earnest?*

12.7 GLOSSARY

Inversion: The action of inverting

Ridicule: To criticize

Philosopher: A lover of wisdom

Arbiters: A person appointed by parties to determine a controversy between them

Conventional: Pertaining to convention

Speculation: The process of thinking

Cynical: Relating to the belief that human actions are motivated

Solemnity: The quality of being deeply serious

Pomposity: The quality of being pompous

Smugness: The state or quality of being smug

12.8 LET US SUM UP

The Importance of Being Earnest is most obviously a comic critique of late Victorian values.

The Importance of Being Earnest is Oscar Wilde's most well-known and best loved play, as well as being an enormous success in his lifetime.

At the 1895 opening of Oscar Wilde's most famous play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the audience was liberally sprinkled with well-dressed young men wearing green carnations, Wilde's approved symbol for his gay followers.

12.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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STRUCTURE

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Robert Browning, (born May 7, 1812, London—died Dec. 12, 1889, Venice), major English poet of the Victorian age is noted for his mastery of dramatic monologue and psychological portraiture. His most noted work was *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), the story of a Roman murder trial in 12 books.

Life.

The son of a clerk in the Bank of England in London, Browning received only a slight formal education, although his father gave him a grounding in Greek and Latin. In 1828 he attended classes at the University of London but left after half a session. Apart from a journey to St. Petersburg in 1834 with George de Benkhausen, the Russian consul general, and two short visits to Italy in 1838 and 1844, he lived with his parents in London until 1846, first at Camberwell and after 1840 at Hatcham. During this period (1832–46), he wrote his early long poems and most of his plays.

Browning's first published work, *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession* (1833, anonymous), although formally a dramatic monologue, embodied many of his own adolescent passions and anxieties. Although it received some favourable comment, it was attacked by John Stuart Mill, who condemned the poet's exposure and exploitation of his own emotions and his "intense and morbid self-consciousness." It was perhaps Mill's critique that determined Browning never to confess his own emotions again in his poetry but to write objectively. In 1835 he published *Paracelsus* and in 1840 *Sordello,* both poems dealing with men of great ability striving to reconcile the demands of their own personalities with those of the world. *Paracelsus* was well received, but *Sordello,* which made exacting demands on its reader's knowledge, was almost universally declared incomprehensible.

Encouraged by the actor Charles Macready, Browning devoted his main energies for some years to verse drama, a form that he had already adopted for *Strafford*(1837). Between 1841 and 1846, in a series of pamphlets under the general title of *Bells and Pomegranates,* he published seven more plays in verse, including *Pippa Passes* (1841), *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (produced in 1843), and *Luria* (1846). These, and all his earlier works except *Strafford,* were printed at his family's expense. Although Browning enjoyed writing for the stage, he was not successful in the theatre, since his strength lay in depicting, as he had himself observed of *Strafford,* "Action in Character, rather than Character in Action."

By 1845 the first phase of Browning's life was near its end. In that year he met Elizabeth Barrett. In her *Poems* (1844) Barrett had included lines praising Browning, who wrote to thank her (January 1845). In May they met and soon

discovered their love for each other. Barrett had, however, been for many years an invalid, confined to her room and thought incurable. Her father, moreover, was a dominant and selfish man, jealously fond of his daughter, who in turn had come to depend on his love. When her doctors ordered her to Italy for her health and her father refused to allow her to go, the lovers, who had been corresponding and meeting regularly, were forced to act. They were married secretly in September 1846; a week later they left for Pisa.

Throughout their married life, although they spent holidays in France and England, their home was in Italy, mainly at Florence, where they had a flat in Casa Guidi. Their income was small, although after the birth of their son, Robert, in 1849 Mrs. Browning's cousin John Kenyon made them an allowance of £100 a year, and on his death in 1856, he left them £11,000.

Browning produced comparatively little poetry during his married life. Apart from a collected edition in 1849, he published only *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day* (1850), an examination of different attitudes toward Christianity, perhaps having its immediate origin in the death of his mother in 1849; an introductory essay (1852) to some spurious letters of Shelley, Browning's only considerable work in prose and his only piece of critical writing; and *Men and Women* (1855). This was a collection of 51 poems—dramatic lyrics such as "Memorabilia," "Love Among the Ruins," and "A Toccata of Galuppi's"; the great monologues such as "Fra Lippo Lippi," "How It Strikes a Contemporary," and "Bishop Blougram's Apology"; and a very few poems in which implicitly ("By the Fireside") or explicitly ("One Word More") he broke his rule and spoke of himself and of his love for his wife. *Men and Women,* however, had no great sale, and many of the reviews were unfavourable and unhelpful. Disappointed for the first time by the reception of his work, Browning in the following years wrote little, sketching and modeling in clay by day and enjoying the society of his friends at night. At last Mrs. Browning's health, which had been remarkably restored by her life in Italy, began to fail. On June 29, 1861, she died in her husband's arms. In the autumn he returned slowly to London with his young son.

His first task on his return was to prepare his wife's *Last Poems* for the press. At first he avoided company, but gradually he accepted invitations more freely and

began to move in society. Another collected edition of his poems was called for in 1863, but *Pauline* was not included. When his next book of poems, *Dramatis Personae* (1864)—including "Abt Vogler," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "Caliban upon Setebos," and "Mr. Sludge, 'The Medium' "—reached two editions, it was clear that Browning had at last won a measure of popular recognition.

In 1868–69 he published his greatest work, *The Ring and the Book*, based on the proceedings in a murder trial in Rome in 1698. Grand alike in plan and execution, it was at once received with enthusiasm, and Browning was established as one of the most important literary figures of the day. For the rest of his life he was much in demand in London society. He spent his summers with friends in France, Scotland, or Switzerland or, after 1878, in Italy.

The most important works of his last years, when he wrote with great fluency, were the long narrative or dramatic poems, often dealing with contemporary themes, such as *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* (1871), *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873), *The Inn Album* (1875), and the two series of *Dramatic Idyls* (1879 and 1880). He wrote a number of poems on classical subjects, including *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871) and *Aristophanes' Apology*(1875). In addition to many collections of shorter poems—*Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper* (1876), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), and *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* (1889)—Browning published toward the end of his life two books of unusually personal origin—*La Saisiaz* (1878), at once an elegy for his friend Anne Egerton-Smith and a meditation on mortality, and *Parleyingswith Certain People of Importance in Their Day* (1887), in which he discussed books and ideas that had influenced him since his youth.

While staying in Venice in 1889, Browning caught cold, became seriously ill, and died on December 12. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Legacy

Few poets have suffered more than Browning from hostile incomprehension or misplaced admiration, both arising very often from a failure to recognize the predominantly dramatic nature of his work. The bulk of his writing before 1846 was

for the theatre; thereafter his major poems showed his increasing mastery of the dramatic monologue. This consists essentially of a narrative spoken by a single character and amplified by his comments on his story and the circumstances in which he is speaking. From his own knowledge of the historical or other events described, or else by inference from the poem itself, the reader is eventually enabled to assess the intelligence and honesty of the narrator and the value of the views he expresses. This type of dramatic monologue, since it depends on the unconscious provision by the speaker of the evidence by which the reader is to judge him, is eminently suitable for the ironist. Browning's fondness for this form has, however, encouraged the two most common misconceptions of the nature of his poetry—that it is deliberately obscure and that its basic "message" is a facile optimism. Neither of these criticisms is groundless; both are incomplete.

Browning is not always difficult. In many poems, especially short lyrics, he achieves effects of obvious felicity. Nevertheless, his superficial difficulties, which prevent an easy understanding of the sense of a passage, are evident enough: his attempts to convey the broken and irregular rhythms of speech make it almost impossible to read the verse quickly; his elliptical syntax sometimes disconcerts and confuses the reader but can be mastered with little effort; certain poems, such as *Sordello* or "Old Pictures in Florence," require a considerable acquaintance with their subjects in order to be understood; and his fondness for putting his monologues into the mouths of charlatans and sophists, such as Mr. Sludge or Napoleon III, obliges the reader to follow a chain of subtle or paradoxical arguments. All these characteristics stand in the way of easy reading.

But even when individual problems of style and technique have been resolved, the poems' interest is seldom exhausted. First, Browning often chooses an unexpected point of view, especially in his monologues, thus forcing the reader to accept an unfamiliar perspective. Second, he is capable of startling changes of focus within a poem. For example, he chooses subjects in themselves insignificant, as in "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha," and treats through them the eternal themes of poetry. This transition from particular observation to transcendental truth presents much the same challenge to the reader as do the metaphysical poets of the 17th century and much the same excitement. Third, because Browning seldom

presents a speaker without irony, there is a constant demand on the reader to appreciate exactly the direction of satiric force in the poem. Even in a melodious poem such as "A Toccata of Galuppi's," the valid position must be distinguished from the false at every turn of the argument, while in the major casuistic monologues, such as "Bishop Blougram's Apology," the shifts of sympathy are subtler still.

It has also been objected that Browning uses his poetry as a vehicle for his philosophy, which is not of itself profound or interesting, being limited to an easy optimism. But Browning's dramatic monologues must, as he himself insisted, be recognized as the utterances of fictitious persons drawing their strength from their appropriateness in characterizing the speaker, and not as expressions of Browning's own sentiments. Thus his great gallery of imagined characters is to be regarded as an exhaustive catalog of human motives, not as a series of self-portraits. Nevertheless, certain fundamental assumptions are made so regularly that they may be taken to represent Browning's personal beliefs, such as his Christian faith. In matters of human conduct his sympathies are with those who show loving hearts, honest natures, and warmth of feeling; certainly these qualities are never satirized. He is in general on the side of those who commit themselves wholeheartedly to an ideal, even if they fail. By itself this might suggest rather a naive system of values, yet he also, sometimes even in the same poem, shows his understanding of those who have been forced to lower their standards and accept a compromise. Thus, although Browning is far from taking a cynical or pessimistic view of man's nature or destiny, his hopes for the world are not simple and unreasoning.

In *The Ring and the Book* Browning displays all his distinctive qualities. He allows a dramatic monologue to each character he portrays—to the man on trial for murder, to his young wife, whom he has mortally wounded, to her protector, to various Roman citizens, to the opposing lawyers, and to the pope, who ultimately decides the accused's fate. Each monologue deals with substantially the same occurrences, but each, of course, describes and interprets them differently. By permitting the true facts to emerge gradually by inference from these conflicting accounts, Browning reveals with increasing subtlety the true natures of his characters. As each great monologue illuminates the moral being of the speaker, it becomes clear that nothing less than the whole ethical basis of human actions is in question. For

over 20,000 lines Browning explores his theme, employing an unfaltering blank verse, rising often to passages of moving poetry, realizing in extraordinary detail the life of 17th-century Rome, and creating a series of characters as diverse and fully realized as those in any novel.

During Browning's lifetime, critical recognition came rapidly after 1864; and, although his books never sold as well as his wife's or Tennyson's, he thereafter acquired a considerable and enthusiastic public. In the 20th century his reputation, along with those of the other great Victorians, declined, and his work did not enjoy a wide reading public, perhaps in part because of increasing skepticism of the values implied in his poetry. He has, however, influenced many modern poets, such as Robert Frost and Ezra Pound, partly through his development of the dramatic monologue, with its emphasis on the psychology of the individual and his stream of consciousness, but even more through his success in writing about the variety of modern life in language that owed nothing to convention. As long as technical accomplishment, richness of texture, sustained imaginative power, and a warm interest in humanity are counted virtues, Browning will be numbered among the great English poets.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson are:

a) To acquaint the learners about Robert Browning

b) To understand the poem in detail.

c) To appreciate the poem critically.

d) To have an insight into the philosophy of Robert Browning.

13.3 SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The speaker asks himself what it is like to "fear death" in this poem. He begins by describing the oppressive imagery of it – "fog in my throat," "the press of the storm, [and] the post of the foe."

Despite the deterrents, “the strong man must go” and he insists he will push forward on his journey no matter the end. As he has always been a “fighter,” he refuses to “creep past” death, and is instead committed to following those who died before by facing it head-on. The second half of the poem stresses his resolve to confront death fully, until he reveals his true motivation: to reunite with a beloved who has died before him.

13.4 TEXT OF THE POEM

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,

The mist in my face,

When the snows begin, and the blasts denote

I am nearing the place,

The power of the night, the press of the storm,

The post of the foe;

Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,

Yet the strong man must go:

For the journey is done and the summit attained,

And the barriers fall,

Though a battle’s to fight ere the guerdon be gained,

The reward of it all.

I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,

The best and the last!

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore,

And bade me creep past.

No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers

The heroes of old,

Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears

Of pain, darkness and cold.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,

The black minute's at end,

And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,

Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,

Then a light, then thy breast,

O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,

And with God be the rest!

13.5 ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

Written soon after his wife Elizabeth's passing in 1861, "Prospice" can easily be viewed as one of Browning's most naked declarations. Its basic message is that he (in this case perhaps not a character, but the poet himself) will not falter before death even though its imminence perverts the journey of life, but instead will march forward heroically and face it head-on. In other words, both because he considers himself a "fighter" and because his beloved awaits him, the speaker refuses to consider taking a coward's route to death and approaching it with anything less than full confidence.

However, one can certainly take license in interpreting the poem more freely. The basic question that opens the poem – "Fear death?" – works not only as an impulse for the speaker, but as a challenge to the reader. He makes no pretense of hiding the darkness of death; the imagery in the first 10 lines is quite grotesque.

Further, he does not pretend that death brings nobility to life. Instead, he suggests that the imminence of death makes life into a “battle” and that life leads to “pain, darkness and cold.” The coward’s path – to “creep past” death – would be for the poet to have prettied death up, to write of it as something wonderful and thereby to rob it of its terror. However, by confronting its true darkness, Browning displays with language the truth of his resolve to face death with full honesty and strength.

It is perhaps most interesting to read this poem in the context of “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.” The latter poem, significantly more obtuse and mystical, nevertheless sketches the same shape. A soldier has committed himself to a journey with full awareness that not only is death likely on the journey, but also that the goal itself might be death. He is not excited or pleased to be on the journey, but rather considers death to be a fitting reward, especially because of those who traveled before him and found death on the path. “Prospice” even suggests the goal in similarly heroic terms – “for the journey is done and the summit attained/And the barriers fall/though a battle’s to fight ere the guerdon be gained.” Both poems trace a journey through difficult terrain for a reward that on the surface seems one to avoid rather than pursue.

While “Childe Roland” is suffused with pessimism, this poem tells the same story with optimism. The longer poem’s message seems to be that we struggle onwards through life’s grotesquerie from simple resolve, even though it contains no redeeming qualities to justify the struggle. “Prospice” gives two indications that there is honor in life, both of which come from relationship to others. The speaker’s reference to persisting in the face of death so he can “fare like [his] peers/The heroes of old” carries a positive tone of camaraderie, as opposed to Roland of “Childe Roland,” who is haunted by the legacy of those who went before. Where Roland fears shaming himself before them, the speaker of “Prospice” is intent on earning their respect. And lastly, the final motivation in the poem – to reunite with the beloved – ends this otherwise dark poem with a suggestion that death itself is but a barrier, beyond which true happiness can be regained. Whereas Roland could go no further than the Dark Tower, the poet of “Prospice” braves the Dark Tower with full confidence that there is light beyond it.

13.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. How far is the poet Robert Browning considered as the Victorian poet?

Ans: Robert Browning is naturally considered a Victorian poet, considering that he wrote during the time period of Victorian England. And yet Browning's work is simultaneously a revolt against some of the most well-defined aspects of that time, and a reflection of its characteristics.

Victorian England, named after Queen Victoria who was crowned in 1837, is marked by several social qualities: repressed sexuality, strict morality, an expansion of English imperialism, a focus on human inventiveness, and nascent doubt over man's place in the universe. With the world changing so quickly over the roughly 70 year-period, artists, scholars and scientists created and wrote from a place of unrest. Where perhaps most of them came down strong on one side of the period's many questions, Browning embraced the uncertainty of his time as a facet of human nature and psychology, and his poetry reflects not strong opinions but rather our tendency to waver between opposing views.

Perhaps the most well-known aspect of Victorian England was its 'prudish' attitudes on sex. Operating under the belief that women were not to be consumed with sexual lust, laws and social strictures forced men and women into entirely separate spheres. The hope was that secure, happy families could be created and by default a moral society. Browning's work takes great issue with such repression. Though he is by not means a libertine, he reflects in many poems the cost of such repression as an equally vicious reaction. Poems like "Porphyria's Lover" or "Evelyn Hope" show the grotesque side of such assumptions. Further, the class element of this Victorian idea (that women should prepare a nice home for a man's success) is shown to be equally vicious in poems like "My Last Duchess" and "The Laboratory."

Though Browning was not explicitly a political poet, his work does reflect doubts in the supremacy of England as Victorianism saw it. Consider poems like "Caliban upon Sebatos," which proffer the thesis that we are all of us

flawed creatures who know nothing of anyone save ourselves. The argument implicitly counters the Social Darwinist ideas that justified England's extreme imperialism.

Browning's time also saw great advances in human knowledge, but ones that came at the cost of a long-held Christian faith in the divinity of man. The Industrial Revolution opened up man's ability to exploit nature for his own gain, while new opportunities for education created new readers and thinkers, and new scientific discoveries - primarily Darwin's theory of evolution - led many to doubt that man was in fact a reflection of a supreme deity. While these advancements certainly improved quality of life, they also brought with them an age of doubt. Many writers embraced such a worldview and sought to express new ideas in the possibilities, but Browning explored both sides, questioning the value of a life without faith while also celebrating the possibilities of a man less tied to God. Poems like "Caliban upon Setebos" or "Rabbi Ben Ezra" confront these questions directly, but many others - like "Andrea del Sarto" - reflect a sophisticated concept of human psychology, one that suggests we are limited to our perceptions and entirely conditioned by the circumstances of our lives. These days not a radical idea, in Victorian England it was far more groundbreaking to suggest that there is nothing about us that is *a priori* divine and perfect, but instead that we each of us develop our own moral sense, and moreover have the ability to rationalize our moral sense as acceptable. Browning's love of drama was fed by such a worldview, since he was able to empathize with the perspectives of characters who otherwise preach attitudes we might find abhorrent. Browning was much enamored of the complications and potentials of human beings, and found great conflict in the way these elements tried to fit in with a bigger world.

The Victorian period followed directly what is known as the "Romantic period," during which poets explored the concepts of individuality as a key to transcendence. Browning, as a great admirer of the movement's best writers – Shelley and Coleridge amongst them - certainly never went full-fledged into Romanticism, but did recognize the power of hope and beauty that comes from self-knowledge and self-exploration. As such, he did not entirely accept

that these doubts led to pessimism, though he did empathize with such pessimism, as seen in “Caliban upon Setebos.”

All in all, Browning was a man of his time, both in the way he reflected the new Victorian learning and questioned some its assumptions on morality and behavior.

Q2. What are the various Themes in the poems of Robert Browning?

Death

Ans: Much of Browning’s work contemplates death and the way that it frames our life choices. Many poems consider the impending nature of death as a melancholy context to balance the joy of life. Examples are “Love Among the Ruins” and “A Toccata of Galuppi’s.” Other poems find strength in the acceptance of death, like “Prospice,” “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came,” and “Rabbi Ben Ezra.” Some poems – like “My Last Duchess,” “Porphyria’s Lover,” “Caliban upon Setebos,” or “The Laboratory” – simply consider death as an ever-present punishment.

Truth/Subjectivity

If any prevailing philosophy can be found throughout all of Browning’s poetry, it is that humans are not composed of fixed perspective, but instead are full of contradiction and are always changing. Therefore, a wise man acknowledges that every person sees the world differently not only from other people but even from himself as his life changes. Many of the dramatic monologues make this implicit argument, by suggesting the remarkable human facility to rationalize our behavior and attitudes. Consider “My Last Duchess” or “Porphyria’s Lover.” Even those who believe that there is a truth to be discovered, like Rabbi Ben Ezra or St. John, acknowledge that each man must get to it in his own way and through his own journey.

Delusion

Perhaps Browning's most effectively used literary device is dramatic irony, in which the audience or reader is aware of something of which the speaker is not aware. Most often, what this dramatic irony reveals is that the speaker is deluded or does not quite realize the truth of something. Some poems feature a demented character who is not aware of the extent of his or her depravity or insanity. Examples are "My Last Duchess," "Porphyria's Lover," "Caliban upon Setebos" and "The Laboratory." Other poems feature a character whose reasons for behavior are not as clear-cut as he or she believes. Consider "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" or "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church." Finally, one can observe manifestations of this in less obvious ways through poems like "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Andrea del Sarto," "A Death in the Desert" and "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." In these cases, the narrators are not clearly insane or demented, but are so fixed in their own perspectives that they are unable to appreciate why they are being punished or oppressed.

Beauty

Though Browning's work typically eschews the Romantic poetry that was once his greatest influence, he does continue to contemplate the nature and limits of beauty through his poetry. Some of his poems take beauty or love as their primary subject: "Meeting at Night," "My Star," "Two in the Campagna," or "Life in a Love." Of course, even these poems always contemplate the theme through the lens of an individual's unique perspective. Others see absent beauty as a cause for melancholy. Consider "Home-Thoughts, From Abroad," "Love Among the Ruins," and "Evelyn Hope." Even some of the more sophisticated monologues consider beauty and the pursuit of it as something that can torment us. Examples are "Fra Lippo Lippi," "A Toccata of Galuppi's," and "A Death in the Desert."

The quest

A theme that runs through much of Browning's poetry is that life is composed of a quest that the brave man commits to, even when the goal is unclear or victory unlikely. In some poems, this quest is literal, particularly in "Childe Roland to Dark

Tower Came." This is a useful poem for considering the use of the quest in other poems. Some of them use the metaphor to suggest the difficulties of living in the face of inevitable death: "Prospice," "Two in the Campagna," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," and "Life in a Love." Others have less intense quests than that which Roland undertakes, but nevertheless show Browning's interest in the theme: "Meeting at Night," "How They Brought the Good News From Ghent to Aix," and "A Grammarian's Funeral." Overall, the theme serves as a metaphor for life and most poems can be understood through the lens of "Childe Roland" in this way.

Religion

Through Browning never proposes a fixed religious perspective or subscribes to any organized religion, much of his poetry contemplates the nature or limits of religion. Most often, he casts doubt on the structure and hypocrisy of organized religion. Consider "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," and "Fra Lippo Lippi." However, Browning often creates characters whose religious sense is a strong part of their personality. In all of these cases, of course, each individual has his own unique take on religion. Examples are "A Death in the Desert," "Caliban Upon Setebos," and "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Finally, much of Browning's poetry can be interpreted through its lack of a religious sense, a world that has death and an afterlife but eschews any relation to a God. This happens in some of the grander poems like "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" or in the more personal ones like "Prospice."

The grotesque

One of the elements in Browning's poetry that made him unique in his time and continues to resonate is his embrace of the grotesque as a subject worthy of poetic explanation. Most often, he explores the grotesque nature of human behavior and depravity. Consider "Porphyria's Lover," "Evelyn Hope," and "The Laboratory." Then there are examples like "Caliban upon Setebos," where the character is easy to sympathize with while being objectively a grotesque creature. And then there is "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," which plunges head-first into a grotesque landscape.

13.7 MULTIPLE TYPE QUESTIONS

1. When was Robert Browning born ?_____ .

    1. 7 th may 1812
    2. 7th may 1821
    3. 8th may 1834
    4. 9th may 1835

2. What is the rhyme scheme of “Porphyria’s Lover?” _____ .

    1. Triplets
    2. Sonnet
    3. Blank Verse
    4. Iambic Tetrameter

3. Who is the speaker of “My Last Duchess?”_____ .

    1. Duchess of Ferrara
    2. An envoy
    3. Duke of Ferrara
    4. A narrator

4. What is the primary effect of the dramatic monologue form?_____ .

    1. Colorful settings
    2. Emotional hyperbole
    3. Dramatic irony
    4. Unconventional rhymes

5. What action precedes the opening of “My Last Duchess?”_____ .

    1. A marriage proposal
    2. A heated argument
    3. A murder
    4. The unveiling of a curtain

6. What action precedes the opening of “Porphyria’s Lover?”_____ .

    1. A murder
    2. A marriage proposal
    3. A heated argument
    4. A break-up

7. Whom did Robert Browning marry?_____ .

1. Elizabeth Barrett
2. George Eliot
3. Queen Victoria
4. Elizabeth Boyle

13.8 LET US SUM UP

Robert Browning is considered as Victorian poet. Much of Browning's work contemplated death and the way that it frames our life choices.

Many poems consider the impending nature of death as a melancholy context to balance the joy of life.

13.9 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

Q1) Give the sum and substance of the poem " Prospice" by Robert Browning.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q2) Critically evaluate the poem "Prospice".

_____
_____
_____
_____

Q3 What is the theme of the poem "Prospice"?

_____
_____
_____
_____

13.10 SUGGESTED READING

Armstrong, Isobel. Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, and Politics. Routledge, London, 1993.

Browning, Robert. Selected Poetry and Prose. Routledge, London, 1991.

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STRUCTURE

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy, the most renowned poet and novelist in English literary history, was born in 1840 in the English village of Higher Bockhampton in the county of Dorset. He died in 1928 at Max Gate, a house he built for himself and his first wife, Emma Lavinia Gifford, in Dorchester, a few miles from his birthplace. Hardy's youth was influenced by his father, a stonemason and fiddler, and his mother, Jemima Hand Hardy, often described as the real guiding star of Hardy's early life. Dorset provided Hardy with material for his fiction and poetry. One of the poorest and most backward of the counties, rural life in Dorset had changed little in hundreds of years, which Hardy explored through the rustic characters in many of his novels. Strongly identifying himself and his work with Dorset, Hardy saw himself as a successor to the Dorset dialect poet William Barnes, who had been a friend and mentor. Moreover, Hardy called his novels the Wessex Novels, after one of the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Britain. He provided a map of the area, with the names of the villages and towns he coined to represent actual places.

The features of southern England influenced Hardy, especially as a poet. Stonehenge was only the most famous of the many remains of the past scattered throughout the English south. There Hardy could explore and contemplate Druid and Roman, ancient and medieval ruins, a fascination which also found expression in later poems like "The Shadow on the Stone." Hardy's interest in history also extended to the Napoleonic Wars, which he considered one of the great events of the historical past; Dorset tradition told of the fear of Bonaparte's invasion of England. Hardy's epic, poetical drama "*The Dynasts*" (1908) reflects a lifetime of involvement with this historical material, including interviews he conducted with elderly soldiers who had fought in the Napoleonic campaigns. Hardy also visited the field of the battle of Waterloo, where Napoleon's forces were defeated.

Alive to the past, as a writer Hardy was also sensitive to the future; scores of younger authors, including William Butler Yeats, Siegfried Sassoon, and Virginia Woolf, visited him, and he discussed poetry with Ezra Pound. Furthermore, Hardy's well-known war poems spoke eloquently against some of the horrors of his present, notably the Boer War and World War I. In such works as "Drummer Hodge" and "In Time of "The Breaking of Nations?", Hardy addressed the conflicts in visceral imagery, often using colloquial speech and the viewpoint of ordinary soldiers. His work had a profound influence on other war poets such as Rupert Brooke and Sassoon.

Hardy's long career spanned the Victorian and the modern eras. He described himself in "In Tenebris II" as a poet "who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst" and during his nearly 88 years he lived through too many upheavals—including World War I—to have become optimistic with age. Nor did he seem by nature to be cheerful: much of the criticism around his work concerns its existentially bleak outlook, and, especially during Hardy's own time, sexual themes. Incredibly prolific, Hardy wrote fourteen novels, three volumes of short stories, and several poems between the years 1871 and 1897. Hardy's great novels, including *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), were all published during this period. They both received negative reviews, which may have led Hardy to abandoning fiction to write poetry.

From 1898 until his death in 1928 Hardy published eight volumes of poetry; about one thousand poems were published in his lifetime. Moreover, between 1903 and 1908 Hardy published "*The Dynasts"*—a huge poetic drama in 3 parts, 19 acts, and 130 scenes. Using the Napoleonic wars to dramatize his evolving philosophy, Hardy also pioneered a new kind of verse. According to John Wain's Introduction to the 1965 St. Martin's Press edition of the dramatic poem, in composing "*The Dynasts*" Hardy took "one of those sudden jumps which characterize the man of genius….He wrote his huge work in accordance with conventions of an art that had not yet been invented: the art of cinema." *"The Dynasts"*, following this view, is "neither a poem, nor a play, nor a story. It is a shooting-script." Though little read today, *"The Dynasts"* presents Hardy's idea of "evolutionary meliorism," the hope that human action could make life better. The length and scope of "*The Dynasts"*, which was published in three parts over five years, engendered varied,

and sometimes bewildered, responses. But by 1908, with the publication of the third part, most reviewers were enthusiastic.

However, Hardy's lyric poetry is by far his best known, and most widely read. Incredibly influential for poets such as Robert Frost, W.H. Auden, Philip Larkin, and Donald Hall, Hardy forged a modern style that nonetheless hewed closely to poetic convention and tradition. Innovative in his use of stanza and voice, Hardy's poetry, like his fiction, is characterized by a pervasive fatalism. In the words of biographer Claire Tomalin, the poems illuminate "the contradictions always present in Hardy, between the vulnerable, doomstruck man and the serene inhabitant of the natural world." Hardy's lyrics are intimately and directly connected to his life: the great poems of 1912 to 1913 were written after the death of Emma on November 27, 1912. Some of these works are dated as early as December 1912, a month after her death, and others were composed in March of the following year, after Hardy had visited St. Juliot, Cornwall, where he first met Emma. Tomalin described Emma's death as "the moment when Thomas Hardy became a great poet," a view shared by other recent critics. Hardy's Emma poems, Tomalin goes on to point out, are some the "finest and strangest celebrations of the dead in English poetry." Hardy was notorious for his relationships with younger women throughout his life, and he married Florence Dugdale, a woman almost 40 years his junior, shortly after Emma's death. Hardy's Emma poems, then, according to Thomas Mallon in the *New York Times,* are "racked with guilt and wonder." They are poems in which he attempts to come to terms with the loss of both his wife and his love for her.

Though frequently described as gloomy and bitter, Hardy's poems pay attention to the transcendent possibilities of sound, line, and breath—the musical aspects of language. As Irving Howe noted in *Thomas Hardy,* any "critic can, and often does, see all that is wrong with Hardy's poetry but whatever it was that makes for his strange greatness is hard to describe." Hardy's poetry, perhaps even more so than his novels, has found new audiences and appreciation as contemporary scholars and critics attempt to understand his work in the context of Modernism. But Hardy has always presented scholars and critics with a contradictory body of work; as Jean Brooks suggests in *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure,* because Hardy's "place in literature has always been controversial, constant reassessment is essential to keep

the balance between modern and historical perspective." Virginia Woolf, a visitor to Max Gate, noted some of Hardy's enduring power as a writer: "Thus it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul."

When Hardy died in 1928, his ashes were deposited in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey and his heart, having been removed before cremation, was interred in the graveyard at Stinsford Church where his parents, grandparents, and his first wife were buried.

14.2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lesson is to introduce the learners to the poet, his life, his works, the times in which he lived and the various subjects and themes on which he wrote. The lesson offers the detailed summary and critical analysis and themes in the poem "The Darkling Thrush".

14.3 TEXT OF THE POEM "THE DARKLING THRUSH"

I leant upon a coppice gate

When Frost was spectre-grey,

And Winter's dregs made desolate

The weakening eye of day.

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky

Like strings of broken lyres,

And all mankind that haunted nigh

Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be

The Century's corpse outleant,

His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through

His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

And I was unaware.

14.4 GLOSSARY

Afar or nigh : in the distance or nearby

Air : tune

Arose : burst out

Beruffle : disordered

Bine : a long, flexible stem of a climbing plant, especially the hop

Blast : very strong gust of wind

Canopy : an ornamental cloth, here the cloudy sky hanging over the scene

Caroling : singing

Coppice : an area of woodland

Crypt : vault, burial place

Darkling : in the darkness or darkening

Desolate : deserted

Dregs : remains

Eye of day : sun

Fervourless : passionless

Frail : weak

Gaunt : thin

Germ : the reproductive part of cereal grain

Growing gloom : deepening twilight as night approaches

Illimited : limited but ill

Leant : slant

Lyre : musical instrument

Nigh : near

Outleant : stretched out

Plume : feather

Tangle : twisted

Terrestrial : to do with the earth, the landscape

Twig : branch

14.5 PARAPHRASE AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM "THE DARKLING THRUSH"

"The Darkling Thrush" is written by Thomas Hardy on New Year's Eve, 1900, at the dawn of a new century. It commences in the personal, subjective mode, but the poet's feelings and mood are suggested by his observations of nature, rather than by direct statements.

The poem, "*The Darkling Thrush"*, is written in the form of an ode, conventionally a lyric poem in the form of an address to a particular subject, often written in a lofty, elevated style giving it a formal tone. However, odes can be written in a more private, personal vein, as in the reflective way that Thomas Hardy writes this one.

14.5.1 Title of *"The Darkling Thrush"*

The title of a poem speaks volumes about it because through it the poem conveys the mood and tone of the poem in a very precise way.

For "*The Darkling Thrush"*, Thomas Hardy chose a word with tremendous history in poetry. 'Darkling' means in darkness, or becoming dark, for Hardy can still see the landscape, and the sun is 'weakening' but not completely set. The word itself goes back to the mid fifteenth century. Milton, in Paradise Lost Book III describes the nightingale: 'the wakeful Bird / Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal Note …' Keats famously uses the word in his 'Ode to a Nightingale': 'Darkling, I listen …'. Matthew Arnold, in 'Dover Beach' writes about the 'darkling plain'.

In other words, this title gives the poem a resonance of past poets and their thoughts and feelings on a similar subject; it makes specific allusions to these poets and poems; their echoes become a part of its tradition.

14.5.2 *"The Darkling Thrush"* Analysis and Paraphrase

Stanza 1

In the first stanza, we are introduced to the poet, in the first person, 'I'. He is leaning on a gate in a little wood – it's traditionally a thinking pose, and the poem conveys his thoughts and feelings. The bitter hopelessness of a cold winter's evening are stressed by the imagery: 'Frost', 'spectre-gray', 'dregs', desolate', 'weakening', 'broken' and 'haunted' are unified and strengthened by their suggestions of cold, weakness, and death or ghostliness.

There are plenty of heavy, gloomy 'g' sounds: 'gate', 'gray', 'dregs', and equally heavy 'd' sounds: 'dregs', 'desolate' and 'day'. Even day, which might be cheering, is described as 'desolate' and having a 'weakening eye'. The only colour left in the 'darkling' daylight is gray. There is a tiny whisper of sound in the repeated slight 's' sounds of coppice, spectre, dregs and desolate. 'Frost' and 'Winter' have capital letters, as if their presence is the most important.

The 'strings of broken lyres' is a classic image of disharmony, and perhaps points to a lack of joy in the poet's vision of life. Even the people who have gone home to the warmth of their fires seem to have assumed a ghostly quality, 'all mankind that haunted nigh'.

gloomy end of the day. There is no vibrancy in life or color.

The poet paints a somber picture of the world. The mood feels lonely and meditative, the speaker watching as a silent bystander leaning upon the coppice gate — a gate that opens onto the woods. In his loneliness, the poet has **personified** Winter and Frost. Frost is described as '*specter–grey'* or ghost-like grey. The Winter's dregs — the fallen snow and heavy fog — are making the twilight/ dusk (*the weakening eye of day)* look desolate. So the Winter and the Frost are bleak company — they cannot arouse any sense of cheerfulness.

Stanza 2

The second stanza continues the model of the former in stronger terms. The whole past century is a 'corpse', the cloudy sky its tomb and the winter wind like the century's death song. The personification of the century intensifies one's feeling that it is a real presence.

The imagery in this stanza continues and enlarges on the motif of death contained in the first. Despite the personal, subjective start of the poem, by the end of the second stanza Hardy has made his mood an emblem for all life upon earth, and he even suggests that the very life force is 'shrunken hard and dry', that life itself is near to exhaustion and death. This is achieved with no drama, in almost quiet manner with a slow build-up to a terrifying vision of death, driven largely by natural images.

The alliteration in this stanza intensifies the atmosphere of gloom and death. Repeated "cs" link 'century's corpse', 'crypt' and 'cloudy canopy'. The rhymes of 'birth' and 'earth' are negated by 'dry' and 'I'. Everything is seen in terms of death: 'sharp features' (of a dead body), 'century's corpse', 'crypt', 'death-lament', 'shrunken hard and dry', 'fervourless'. It seems that it is not just the death of the old century that Hardy is describing, but the death of the pulse of life that vitalizes and energizes him and other people, that is the death of hope.

Climbing plants, dead for winter, have left behind only their climbing stems or *bine stems*. They add to the gloominess as the poem compares them to the of strings of broken lyres (a musical instrument) notching the sky. This comparison is also important in suggesting the lack of music or happiness for that matter.

Even people seem listless and haunting, instead of living their lives. Then people going home and seeking their household fires add to the image of the gloomy end of the day. There is no vibrancy in life or color.

In winter, Nature is generally at a standstill. Life's vibrancy (*ancient pulse of germ and birth*) seems to have stopped (*shrunken hard and dry*). The dormant environment feeds the poet's brooding frame of mind. The scale of his pessimism increases. Dull observations escalate to a despairing mindset and the poet only sees a world without promise or future.

Stanza 3

In the third stanza, at the nadir of the poem, the sudden hurling out of its song by a thrush might be seen as the injection of a rather fatuous optimism into the poem. The 'full-hearted evensong/Of joy illimited' is certainly a cause for hope.

The choice of bird here is what makes Hardy one of the finest poets. He chooses an old, frail, thin, scruffy-looking thrush, not the nightingale of Miltonic and Romantic tradition. It is an ordinary indigenous song-thrush, but one that is 'blast-beruffled': it has survived the strong winter winds that the poet had hitherto painted as brutal and uncooperative. The 'aged' and 'frail' thrush is, perhaps facing its own imminent end, and yet it flings it soul ecstatically upon the darkening evening. The resultant picture of an ordinary, weather-beaten, thrush rising from the depths of the winter winds with their 'death lament' singing a beautiful song is one of hope.

Three run-on lines take us at full tilt to its message: 'joy illimited' (unlimited). The very words with which Hardy introduces the song are lyrical, rhythmic, and repetitive, like the thrush's song: 'At once a voice arose among/The bleak twigs overhead.' In perfect iambics, each prefaced by the vowel 'a', Hardy echoes the sound of the thrush's song: 'at once a voice arose among…'

Suddenly, like the proverbial silver lining to dark clouds, a joyful song breaks into the poet's despairing outlook from among the frosty twigs overhead. The poet calls the thrush's melody a *'full-hearted evensong'* — prayers sung at the end of the

day, in the evening. The song was coming out of boundless joy. Look at the use of word ‘illimited’, suggesting something uncommon.

Stanza 4

In the final stanza, the idea of religious faith is conveyed through the thrush’s ‘carolings’, reminiscent of Christmas carols, and the ‘blessed Hope’ – hope being one of the three great Christian virtues—faith, hope and charity (love).

Hardy is careful not to be sentimental about the thrush. Hardy can see no cause for joy, but he can hope, that the thrush can see something he himself is unable to perceive. ”*The Darkling Thrush”* is thus finely balanced. It suggests there may be hope, and the very sound of the thrush and its defiance of the prevailing moods shows at the very least the existence of a tragic hope; life may be threatened, its physical existence at risk, but its spirit is indomitable and cannot be crushed.

But who was it singing? It was an old thrush bird — feeble, lean and small, with its feathers disarranged by the wind (*blast-beruffled*). Though the thrush’s appearance does not arouse any hope, heedless of the oppressive environment and the growing darkness — the mark of struggling to survive in winter — the thrush sings. The bird puts his soul into his voice as he belts out a happy tune to no one but the Eternal Listener.

Though the title of the poem suggested that it was all about a thrush, it took two and a half stanzas to get to the first mention of the bird. But still, the thrush and its song seem to overcome the initial melancholy that the atmosphere brought even to the readers.

The thrush’s song is an enigma, and the poet marvels at the blessed hope or knowledge the bird has. There are no straight answers. Does the thrush sing a song of farewell — a hymn of gratitude for the good things that have been? Or does he sing a song of hope — a reassurance of good things that are to come? Like the poet, we can only wonder, keep our hearts open and just be glad that there is a reason to be happy at all.

14.5.3 Poetic Form

The overall rhythm of the poem is regular iambic tetrameter alternated with iambic trimeter (8 syllables in a line, with the second line in each case having just 6 syllables); it is a ballad stanza rhythm. This regular rhythm, seems to have a slow, joyless effect and makes the pace slow. The tight rhyming gives strength and authority to the poem, but the meter is more relaxed, giving a natural and free-flowing feeling to the lines.

14.6 A BRIEF SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THOMAS HARDY'S POEM "THE DARKLING THRUSH"

Thomas Hardy's novels often overshadow his poetry, although a handful of poems from his vast poetic output remain popular in verse anthologies. One such case is "The Darkling Thrush", a great winter poem which was first published on 29 December 1900. Poised on the cusp of a new year (and even, depending on your view of the matter, a new century), Hardy reflects in this poem on the events of the nineteenth century, his own feelings about the future, and his attitude to nature. Here is "The Darkling Thrush", followed by a close analysis of its features.

"The Darkling Thrush" opens with endings: the end of the year, the end of the day (the 'weakening eye of day' sets the poem at dusk), even the end of the century (the original title of the poem was 'The Century's End, 1900': for many, including Hardy, the twentieth century only really began in 1901, not 1900). But every ending is also a beginning of some sort, a limit marking the end of one thing and the start of another. Hardy seems to subject the Victorian age to sharp scrutiny, analyzing its developments and discoveries in an indirect but suggestive way. The 'darkling thrush' will intrude upon Hardy's gloomy reflections.

The poem's speaker leans upon a woodland gate and views the land around him as a symbol of the events of the nineteenth century, the 'Century's corpse outleant'; the speaker is made a part of the scene, not just a detached observer, as 'outleant' echoes the speaker's own action at the start of the poem ('I leant upon a coppice gate'). The century is dying ('crypt', 'death-lament') because it is at its end, but also because something has died as a result of the events of that century: religious

faith. Thomas Hardy lost his own faith in Christianity early in life, partly as a result of his reading of Auguste Comte and Charles Darwin (whose *On the Origin of Species* Hardy had read as a young man), though he retained a fondness for the trappings of Christianity, such as church architecture and the language of the King James Bible. Because of such scientific and philosophical developments and discoveries in the nineteenth century, religious faith had declined among the overall population (Interestingly, church numbers continued to increase but this was because the overall population skyrocketed between 1800 and 1900; fewer people were going to church by 1900). A writer like Hardy could no longer take solace from Christianity, or have unequivocal confidence in the future of the world. Too much had been learnt, too much lost.

This religious dimension to the poem is borne out by Hardy's personal beliefs but also by his other poems, such as "The Oxen" (which sees him unable to share a belief in the truth of Christianity, though he wishes he could believe). "The Darkling Thrush" gives clues that religion is on the speaker's mind. In the third stanza, when the thrush of the title appears ('darkling' is an old poetic word for 'in darkness' – it also, incidentally, echoes Matthew Arnold's use of the word in his famous poem about declining faith, 'Dover Beach', published in 1867), its song is described as 'evensong', suggesting the church service, while the use of the word 'soul' also suggests the spiritual (Such religiously inflected analysis of Hardy's poem is reinforced by 'carolings' in the next stanza). The fact that the thrush, despite being 'aged' and 'small', can still sing a song filled with 'joy illimited' is contrasted with the speaker's lack of hope and joy (if we take the speaker of the poem to be Hardy himself, he, too, is aged: Hardy was sixty in 1900). The word 'illimited' is typical Hardy: not 'unlimited' (suggesting excess) but '*il*limited', describing a joy that is unaffected by knowledge of such things as the end of the year or the end of the century, the very limits or endings which prey upon the speaker's mind.

The poem ends on an ambiguous note: is the speaker inspired by the 'blessed Hope' of the thrush's song, or does he continue to lack optimism for the future? He is 'unaware' of the thrush's reasons for being cheerful, but he seems to believe that such a cause for hope exists *somewhere*, and he simply hasn't discovered (or rediscovered) it yet. This ambivalence is partly what helps to make "The Darkling

Thrush" not only a great Thomas Hardy's poem to read, but also a great piece of poetry to analyse. Unlike the thrush's carolings, Hardy's poem does not sound an unconditionally positive note.

14.7 THEME OF THE POEM "THE DARKLING THRUSH"

The primary theme of "The Darkling Thrush" is the despair of the modern temperament. Hardy describes in lyrical, descriptive detail the dying of the old world, but he cannot positively replace the dying with the new. Something is over, all is changed, civilization has decayed, and he does not know what will replace it. In "The Darkling Thrush," Hardy poses one of the central questions of the modern age and reveals himself as a significant voice of the early twentieth century.

Hardy, the modern poet is an isolated man. He has lost his connection with those nineteenth century people who are inside by their household fires. They are connected with one another, and with the natural cycle of death and rebirth, but Hardy, the twentieth century persona, is alone in the cold, surrounded by images of death. He may yearn for that simpler, truer world, and he may seek to recapture something that is lost by using the form of folk themes, but that old century is dead, and the outlook for the new century is bleak indeed.

Hardy saw traditional agricultural society decaying, the earth destroyed by industrialization, and in "The Darkling Thrush" he clearly reveals that he cannot believe in a note of hope. He finds "so little cause for carolings" that he cannot picture the new century or describe it for the reader. Hardy is "unaware" of any hope for the future.

With his tale of the "darkling thrush," a thrush of evening rather than morning, Hardy rejects the Romantic themes of the nineteenth century. While the song of the thrush is the force that crystallizes his fervorless spirit, Hardy's thrush is aged, "frail, gaunt and small," not symbolizing new life but belonging to that dying old century. Even after hearing the thrush's "full-hearted evensong/ Of joy illimited," Hardy's depression is lifted only as far as a state of puzzlement. He comes into the new century unable to believe that even the thrush, that representative of nature, can have a reason to hope.

14.8 THEME OF ISOLATION AND HOPE

Isolation

Loneliness and isolation is abound is “The Darkling Thrush”. The poet’s word choice creates an atmosphere of separation from the rest of the world: desolate, weakening, haunted, and dregs.

The first narrator walks in the countryside on a very cold evening. He leans upon a gate that is made by bushes. It is the end of the day, the year, and the century. The sun is setting. No one else is about and the narrator feels this aloneness. As he walks in nature, he stops and looks up at the sky and sees the bare branches of the trees intertwined. The narrator compares these branches to the strings on a musical instrument. He is alone because everyone else is at home before his fire.

The narrator looks out at the wintry landscape which appears to him to be the corpse of the century’s end. The land’s sharp features seemed to be leaning out toward the new century. The clouds provide a cover for the corpse with the wind crying out its requiem. The winter land is barren, shrunken, and dry. Everything on earth appears without energy or passion just as the speaker feels. The narrator finds a place with no connection to anyone or anything.

Hope

The third stanza offers a new theme not only for the narrator but for the reader as well. Life is nothing without expectation that the future will provide more opportunities.

In the middle of the narrator’s emptiness, the speaker hears a sound. He looks up through the barren branches and sees a singular bird, appearing thin and small with the wind ruffling his feathers, singing joyfully as though he is baring his soul to the wintry night and the gloomy end of an era:

That I could think there trembled through

His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

And I was unaware.

This seemingly lonely bird has chosen not to give into the chill and miserable night. His efforts bring a change to the narrator and the atmosphere. There appears to be little about which to sing, yet this thrush's song breaks the mood of unhappiness.

Despite the pessimistic attitude of the narrator, he is satisfied and appreciative to know that something in the natural world can still find joy in life. To the narrator, it is miracle that he could share this moment of unheralded pleasure.

14.9 NATURE IN THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DARKLING THRUSH"

"The Darkling Thrush" is a nature poem by Thomas Hardy, and its subject is the titular bird which raises the narrator's spirits through its singing. The narrator speaks of a frost-bitten landscape, gray and lifeless, and how it makes him feel miserable and depressed:

The ancient pulse of germ and birth

Was shrunken hard and dry,

And every spirit upon earth

Seemed fervourless as I.

The narrator, despite knowing that seasons pass and that this cold weather is only temporary, is depressed about the dead foliage and the lack of movement and life. Animals and people alike are hiding in their burrows and homes, the first hibernating and the second using its control over nature to keep from freezing to death. The narrator, being outside, is overcome with the extreme stillness of the world and the lack of reasons to strive and move.

The theme changes from this depression as a single bird sings to greet the dusk:

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,

In blast-beruffled plume,

Had chosen thus to fling his soul

Upon the growing gloom.

The thrush is the only thing moving and making noise in the world, and the narrator is overjoyed to see it, his spirits lifted by a seeming reason to hope and to strive. The narrator is taken by this bird and what he sees as an instinctual drive to enjoy life while it lasts; he correlates the bird's singing not with a deliberate push against the cold and dark, but with an inner joy that it feels compelled to spread regardless of circumstance:

That I could think there trembled through

His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

And I was unaware.

The themes therefore change from acceptance of the harder aspects and times in life to embrace of what joys exist; the narrator does not see the reason for that joy but is inspired to continue searching for it. Seeing the thrush and its ability to find and create beauty in a joyless landscape allows the narrator to embrace what hope he can find in his own heart, and through example spread it to others both in action and through the poem itself.

14.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Thomas Hardy was born in _____.

   i. 1840

   ii. 1740

   iii. 1640

   iv. 1540

2. Thomas Hardy was _____ poet and novelist.

   i. Renaissance

   ii. Romantic

   iii. Victorian

   iv. Augustan

3. Thomas Hardy has written_____.

   i. The Mill on the Floss

   ii. The Tempest

   iii. Tess of the d'Urbervilles

   iv. Emma

4. "The Darkling Thrush" is a poem by Thomas Hardy. Originally titled_____.

   i. "By the Century's Deathbed, 1900"

   ii. "By the Century's Risebed, 1900"

   iii. "By the Century's Deathbed, 1800"

   iv. "By the Decade's Deathbed. 1900"

5. "The Darkling Thrush" was published on_____ in _____.

   i. 30 December 1900, The Desire

   ii. 29 December 1900, The Desire

   iii. 30 December 1900, The Graphic

   iv. 29 December 1900, The Graphic

6. Thomas Hardy was born in the English village of _____Higher Bockhampton in the county of _____Dorset.

   i. Higher Bockhampton, Dorset

   ii. Higher Bockhampton, Wessex

   iii. Higher Wessex, Dorset

   iv. Higher Dorset, Wessex

7. Thomas Hardy's works also referred as _____.

   i. Pessimistic

   ii. Optimistic

   iii. Revolutionary

   iv. Romantic

8. Thomas Hardy set all of his major novels in the south and southwest of England. He named the area_____ after the medieval Anglo-Saxon kingdom.

   i. Dorset

   ii. Caribbean

   iii. Wessex

   iv. India

14.11 ANSWER KEY

1. (i); 2. (iii); 3. (iii); 4. (i); 5. (iv);
6. (i); 7. (i); 8. (iii)

14.12 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Give the detailed summary of the poem "The Darkling Thrush".

Q2. Analyze the title "The Darkling Thrush".

Q3. Discuss nature in the poem "The Darkling Thrush".

Q4. Evaluate the theme of Isolation and Hope in "The Darkling Thrush".

Q5. Discuss various themes in the poem "The Darkling Thrush".

Q6. Critically analyze the theme of despair in the poem "The Darkling Thrush".

Q7. The poem "The Darkling Thrush" is the note of pessimism and sadness. Discuss.

Q8. Give the critical appreciation of the poem "The Darkling Thrush".

Q9. Discuss the poetic technique used in the poem “The Darkling Thrush”.

Q10. Discuss the imagery used in the poem “The Darkling Thrush”.

14.13 LET US SUM UP

“The Darkling Thrush” is typical of Hardy’s work. In the poem, he shows life on Earth, human as well as animal, existing under the iron grip of an unsympathetic force, in this case, Nature. In praising defiance and the unconquerable spirit, it is also typical, and in its firm unwillingness to state a clear conclusion, balancing hope and pessimism. The musing tone, use of natural imagery to create and represent human moods and feelings and the simple rhyme scheme are unobtrusive and powerful.

14.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

Gossin, Pamela. *Thomas Hardy’s Novel Universe*. UK: Routledge, 2017. Print.

Hardy, Thomas. *Poems of Thomas Hardy: A New Selection*. UK: Pan Macmillan, 2017. Print.

Hardy, Thomas. *Wessec Poems and Other Verses*. Floating Press, 1898. Ebooks.

Patil, Mallikarjun. *Thomas Hardy: The Poet (A Critical Study)*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1997. Print.

Wenborn, Neil. *Reading Thomas Hardy: Selected Poems*. Humanities, ebooks, 2012.

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STRUCTURE

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The poem “Dover Beach” is composed by Victorian English poet Matthew Arnold. He was a poet, literary and social critic famous, especially for his attacks on the Victorian ways of life and manners of the aristocracy and the commercial middle class in his literary works like *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).

15.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint learner with the life history and literary works of Matthew Arnold to enable him/her to critically analyse the poem “Dover Beach”.

15.3 BIOGRAPHY OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was born on December 24, 1822 at Laleham, on the Thames River. Son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, famous Head Master of Rugby School and educational reformer, Arnold became exposed at an early age to the combined influences of liberal studies and contemporary society. As a boy, Arnold spent many of his school holidays at Fox how, near Grasmere, where Nature exercised a profound influence on him. In 1841 Arnold began his studies as a scholar at Balliol College, Oxford. For Oxford Arnold retained an impassioned affection. During his residence at Oxford, his friendship became stronger with Arthur Hugh Clough, another Rugby old boy who had been one of his father’s favorites. Arnold attended John Henry Newman’s sermons at St. Mary’s but did not join the Oxford Movement. His father died suddenly of heart disease in 1842. He won the Newdigate Prize with his poem “Cromwell” (1843) and graduated with second-class honours degree in Literae Humaniores in 1844. In 1845, after a short interlude of teaching at Rugby, he was elected Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. In 1847, he became Private Secretary to Lord Lansdowne, Lord President of the council. In 1851 he was appointed Inspector of Schools, a position he maintained for 35 years. Two months after his appointment as an Inspector of Schools, he married Frances Lucy, daughter of Sir Willaim Wightman, Justice of the Queen’s Bench. The Arnolds had six children: Thomas (1852-1868); Trevenen William (1853-1872); Richard Penrose (1855-1908), an inspector of factories; Lucy Charlotte (1858-1934) who married Frederick W.

Whitridge of New York, whom she had met during Arnold's American lecture tour; Eleanore Mary Caroline (1861-1936); Basil Francis (1866).

Matthew Arnold, as an Inspector of schools was engaged in incessant travelling throughout the British provinces. Besides, he was several times sent by the government to inquire into the state of education in France, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. Two of his reports on schools abroad were reprinted as books, and his annual reports on schools at home attracted wide attention, written, as they were, in Arnold's own urbane and civilized prose.

15.4 MATTHEW ARNOLD'S LITERARY WORKS

Poetry

A Matthew Arnold Birthday Book (1883)

Alaric at Rome: A Prize Poem (1840)

Cromwell: A Prize Poem (1843)

Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems (1852)

Empedocles on Etna: A Dramatic Poem (1900)

Merope: A Tragedy (1858)

New Poems (1867)

Poems: A New Edition (1853)

Poems: Second Series (1855)

The Poems of Matthew Arnold (1965)

The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold (1950)

The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems (1849)

The Works of Matthew Arnold (1903)

Prose

Essays, Letters, and Reviews by Matthew Arnold Essays, Letters, and Reviews by Matthew Arnold (1960)

Friendship's Garland (1883)

"Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve," in Encyclopedia Britannica, ninth edition, IX: 162-165 (1886)

"Isaiah of Jerusalem" in the Authorized English Version, with an Introduction, Corrections and Notes (1883)

"Schools," in The Reign of Queen Victoria (1887)

A Bible-Reading for Schools: The Great Prophecy of Israel's Restoration (1872)

A French Eton; or, Middle Class Education and the State(1864)

Arnold as Dramatic Critic (1903)

Civilization in the United States: First and Last Impressions of America (1888)

Complete Prose Works (1960)

Culture and Anarchy (1883)

Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism (1869)

Culture and the State (1965)

Discourses in America (1885)

Education Department (1886)

England and the Italian Question (1859)

England and the Italian Question, (1953)

Essays in Criticism (1865)

Essays in Criticism: Second Series (1888)

Essays in Criticism: Third Series (1910)

Five Uncollected Essays of Matthew Arnold (1953)

General Grant, with a Rejoinder by Mark Twain (1966)

General Grant: An Estimate (1887)

God and the Bible: A Review of Objections to "Literature and Dogma" (1875)

Heinrich Heine (1863)

Higher Schools and Universities in Germany (1874)

Irish Essays, and Others (1882)

Isaiah XLLXVI; with the Shorter Prophecies Allied to It(1875)

Last Essays on Church and Religion (1877)

Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888 (1895)

Letters of an Old Playgoer (1919)

Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs by Edmund Burke (1881)

Literature and Dogma: An Essay towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible (1873)

Matthew Arnold's Letters: A Descriptive Checklist (1968)

Matthew Arnold's Notebooks (1902)

Mixed Essays (1879)

On Home Rule for Ireland: Two Letters to "The Times"(1891)

On Translating Homer: Last Words: A Lecture Given at Oxford (1862)

On Translating Homer: Three Lectures Given at Oxford(1861)

On the Modern Element in Literature (1869)

On the Study of Celtic Literature (1883)

Poems of Wordsworth (1879)

Poetry of Byron (1881)

Reports on Elementary Schools 1852-1882 (1889)

Schools and Universities on the Continent (1867)

St. Paul and Protestantism; with an Introduction on Puritanism and the Church of England (1883)

The Hundred Greatest Men: Portraits of the One Hundred Greatest Men of History (1879)

The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough(1932)

The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold (1952)

The Popular Education of France, with Notices of That of Holland and Switzerland (1861)

The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," with Macaulay's "Life of Johnson," (1878)

The Study of Poetry (1880)

Thoughts on Education Chosen From the Writings of Matthew Arnold (1912)

Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold (1923)

15.5 INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM "DOVER BEACH"

"Dover Beach" is a lyric poem and dramatic monolgue written by Matthew Arnold. It was first published in 1867 in the collection *New Poems* but its composition date is not sure. Surviving notes indicate its composition may have begun as early

as 1849. In *The Guardian*, a magazine, it is documented that "Dover Beach" is a honeymoon poem written in 1851, shortly after Matthew Arnold's marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman. The title, setting and subject of the poem is declared in the opening lines of the poem. It is the shore of the English ferry port of Dover, in Kent, facing Calais, in France, at the Strait of Dover, the narrowest part of the English Channel, where Arnold went for honeymoon in 1851. Many of the beaches in this part of England are made up of pebbles rather than sand, and Arnold describes the sea ebbing over the stones as a "grating roar".

15.6 TEXT OF THE POEM "DOVER BEACH"

The sea is calm tonight.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits; on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray

Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,

With tremulous cadence slow, and bring

The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought,

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dreams,

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

15.7 GLOSSARY

Aegeon — The *Aegean Sea* is an elongated embayment of the Mediterranean Sea located between the Greek and Anatolian peninsulas, that is between the mainland of Greece and Turkey.

Bay — a broad inlet of the sea where the land curves inwards

Blanch — pale

Cadence — a modulation or inflection of the voice

Cliff — is a high area of land with a very steep side, especially one next to the sea

Darkling — growing dark or characterized by darkness

Ebb — the movement of the tide out to sea.

Fling — Throw

FrenchCoast — the shore of the English ferry port of Dover, in Kent, facing Calais, in France, at the Strait of Dover, the narrowest part of the English Channel, where Arnold honeymooned in 1851.

Furl — roll or fold up (something) neatly and securely.

Girdle — belt

Gleam — shine brightly

Glimmer — to shine with a weak light or a light that is not continuous

Grating — sounding harsh and unpleasant

NorthernSea—The North Sea is a marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean located between the United Kingdom, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France

Plain — area

Shingle — pebbles, small rounded stones

Sophocles — Sophocles is one of three ancient Greek tragedians. His notable works are *Ajax, Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex.*

Spray — foam

Straits — a narrow passage of water connecting two seas or two other large areas of water

Tranquil — calm

Tremulous — shaky

Turbid — cloudy, opaque, or thick with suspended matter

15.8 DETAILED SUMMARY

In "Dover Beach" Matthew Arnold describes the slow and solemn rumbling sound made by the sea waves as they swing backward and forward on the pebbly shore. The poem evokes the "sweetness and light" which Arnold famously found in the classical world. The public values are privatized. "Dover Beach" fundamentally seems to be about a withdrawal into personal values. Historical pessimism moves in swiftly as a tide.

"Dover Beach" expresses the lack of faith and certitude which was the principal disease of the Victorian age. The first stanza opens with a calm, bright moonlit sea which reflects the serene, peaceful, receptive mood of the poet. He calls upon his companion to share the sweetness and tranquility of the night-air and even as he does so, he is conscious of "the grating roar" a harsh sound which disturbs the

peace, the calm and the sweet music. The stanza ends on a “note of eternal sadness”, that “still sad music of humanity” disturbs the calmness of mind and spirit as much as the calm bay. The sea waves as they swing backward and forward on the pebbly shore produce a low tremulous sound swinging backward and forward all the time. The poet implies that this sound suggests the note of sadness in human life: “eternal note of sadness.”

In the second stanza the poet effectively uses a metaphor where the ebb and flow of human misery is compared to the tides of the sea. The fortunes are like the ebb and flow of the sea sand and the retreating tide is a symbol of the loss of faith.

The poet explains the gradual loss of man’s faith in a grand and suggestive simile. He compares faith in religion to a sea that surrounds the world. The sea has its full tide, and then it ebbs away with the mournful music over the pebbles and the grating of the pebbles brings the “eternal note of sadness in”. Similarly, the past was full of faith and men believed in religion. However, this faith is gradually passing away and men’s minds are like pebbles on the shore. The passing of faith causes the minds to be isolated in the border between belief and disbelief. It is a sad melancholy state. When the poet hears the grating roar of pebbles of the sea, he is reminded of the “melancholy, long, withdrawing roar” of faith as it retreats from men’s minds. It is a chilly prospect, like the breath of the night wind, and it brings into the mind a dreary feeling of helplessness, as though the mind is left stripped and bare on the vast and dreary edges of an unknown land. Arnold points out that in ancient times Sophocles heard the same sound of the pebbles on the shore Aegean, and it reminded him of the ebb and flow of human misery which Sophocles expressed in his work, *Antigone*. In the present, Matthew Arnold hears the sound of the pebbles at Dover Beach and he finds in it the same sadness.

“Dover Beach” gives bitter expression of Arnold’s loss of faith and his growing pessimism. The world seemed to be strangely unreal, without anything real to cling. It has variety, beauty and freshness but in it he finds neither love nor joy nor light nor peace. There is uncertainty. Therefore, he compares men struggling in the

world with armies struggling on a plain at night. There is a sound of confused alarms and struggles, but the soldiers are ignorant as to what they are fighting for and why.

Arnold through “Dover Beach” describes the effects of industrialization of the nineteenth century England. Victorian world was changing rapidly with the growth of science and technology. This poem condemns the loss of faith, religion and the meaning of life resulting from the industrialization and advancement in science and technology.

Although, this poem describes the loss of faith, religion and love of nineteenth century it is similar in the context of the twenty-first century as well. People have lost their faith. They are engaged in money minting. They have become materialistic which has decreased their satisfaction in life. They are more isolated and lonely. They toil hard only to fulfill their selfish ends but not for the betterment of humanity. The poet wants to make his reader conscious of the disaster created by the sufferings, sorrows and melancholy. The only way out of this ruin according to Arnold is to love and to have faith in one another and live in reality.

15.9 PARAPHRASE OF THE POEM

Stanza 1

The sea is calm tonight.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits; on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray

Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,

Listen! you hear the grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,

With tremulous cadence slow, and bring

The eternal note of sadness in.

The poem begins with a simple statement: “the sea is calm tonight”. The statement brings out the significance of the image of ‘the sea’ in the poem. The first part of the stanza reflects on the sea’s calmness. There is no emotion or thought. There is quietness. But in the fourth line, there is *volta*. The temporariness is contrasted to the timeless sea, that is paradox: “on the French coast the light *gleams and is gone*.” The image of the loneliness builds: the “cliffs… glimmering and vast”, the “tranquil bay.” The ninth line starts as “Listen!”, and goes on to add to the still, silent imagery a movement, that is movement of waves which until now have not been described as moving. Out and in, returning ever, a cycle unending. This imagery will appear again and again in the whole poem. The last two lines of the stanzas start to add the feeling more sharply. The waves have a “tremulous cadence slow,” that brings “the eternal note of sadness in.”

Stanza 2

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought,

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

In the next stanza, the sound imagery continues: “Sophocles long ago heard [the eternal note of sadness] on the Aegean [sea]” and it brought to his mind human misery. Here the comparison is between human misery, ebbing and flowing, and the sea, ebbing and flowing.

Stanza 3

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Arnold continues the comparison by adding another note: not only is human misery like the sea, so too is human faith, which “was once, too, at the full,” and simile continues: “like the folds of a bright girdle” a personification of the earth, because a girdle is something humans wear. But the person now hears only its “melancholy, long, withdrawing roar.” The tide is going out, leaving the “naked shingles” of the world. The image of the naked pebbles that collect on beaches brings to mind a lonely house.

Stanza 4

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dreams,

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The last stanza goes back to the beginning, to those beautiful calm images, and says, “the world, which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams, so various, so beautiful, so new, “ isn’t any of that”. The world “hath neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor help for pain.” The speaker and the listener, perched at the window are like the light that gleams and is gone from the edge of the land (the French coast). The poem ends with its strongest lonely image of “a darkling plain… where ignorant armies clash by night.” The speaker and the listener’s loneliness which they are trying to fend off with their mutual love extend to all of humanity. All humanity is suffering from the misery of loneliness as they have lost faith in one another and they are fighting the fight which has no meaning, that is why they are “ignorant armies.”

15.10 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF “DOVER BEACH”

Besides, being a well-known poet, Arnold was also a critic and scholar. In the Victorian era, England was passing through a major industrialization period at the time he was writing “Dover Beach” which had the prime influence on the entire poem. The rapid industrialization in many ways destroyed the way of life that had been stable for centuries. As conflicts arose in England concerning the transition, internal conflicts were upcoming in Arnold as well, as he was now torn between his sense of comfort in the old world and the inevitable force of the modern era. “Dover Beach” captures how isolated the life can become in the modern world. Matthew Arnold vividly explains the common obstacles and fears of life allowing him to connect personally with his audience.

“Dover Beach” is a dramatic monologue by Matthew Arnold. He calls upon his companion to share the sweetness and tranquility of the night-air. In “Dover Beach,” poet Matthew Arnold writes about the effect science has had on religion. Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 in which he documented his studies on evolution. Arnold’s poem “Dover Beach” published in 1867 is read as a record of the clash between science and religion. The poem opens on a naturalistic scene. The speaker stands on the cliffs of Dover Beach, gazing out at the majesty of nature. Sadness creeps in, and the speaker is reminded of how recent scientific discoveries (like that of evolution) have forever changed how the people think about nature and, thus, their place in it. This brings science and faith into conflict. The poem ends on a dark note, stating that there is no joy or love or light. Nothing is certain. Even the facts and theories which one believed can be shattered are disapproved.

The same uncertainty is also reflected in the form and structure of the poem. Arnold chose to use first, second and third person point of view in order to fully engage with the reader. This adds uncertainty. There is varied line length, 37 in total, split into 4 stanzas, the first of which is a mixed up sonnet with a rhyme scheme abacebecdfcgfg, a sure signal of a break with convention. The second stanza of 6 lines also has end rhymes, as does the third stanza, and the fourth stanza of 9 lines concludes with a repeat of the initial end rhymes. When the rhyme is varied, as in “Dover Beach”, more interest is generated for the reader and listener. Line length, enjambment and internal rhyme also help to make reader curious.

Enjambment is very important in this poem as it reinforces the action of the tidal sea, coming in, relaxing and then moving out again.

Assonance plays its role:

once/too/round/shore

like/bright/girdle

melancholy/long/roar

Two examples of simile can be found in lines 23 and 31.

Anaphora, repeated words, are used in lines 32 and 34.

Combinations such as “bright girdle furled” and “naked shingles of the world” add to the feel of the scene.

Alliteration can be found in the last stanza:

To lie before us like a land of dreams,

And the final two lines are packed with an irresistible spread of vowels:

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Arnold sees life ahead as a continual battle against the darkness. Only the beacon of interpersonal love can light the way. Wars may rage on, the evolutionary struggle continues but only the foundation of truth within love can guarantee solace.

15.11 THEME OF THE POEM “DOVER BEACH”

Theme of Faith

“Dover Beach” describes Arnold’s battle with love, life and faith in his religion. He narrates a story, through this poem, trying to talk to his wife about their relationship and what he thinks love should be, using the sea and the waves to support his argument. Throughout this poem, there is a sense of series of metaphors merging together. It is noticeable from the first line, “The Sea of Faith,” which refers to the faith and appreciation that people put in nature and themselves. When Arnold writes that the sea of faith too, was once at the full, he means to say that people had a lot of devotion in themselves and in nature but now they do not have. The second stanza, again, is an indication to the past, connecting to the idea of first stanza, that is sense of past. Arnold uses “Sophocles”, an ancient Greek philosopher, to illustrate the melancholy of life. The third stanza is where Arnold points out a contrast between the tide of the sea and his own personal faith using imagery of the tide of the sea which symbolizes the unsympathetic world.

The fourth stanza is where the poem discovers both, a considerate as well as a hasty mood. Arnold speaks to his wife in the lines, “Ah, love, let us be true to one another!” Through these lines he exemplifies his profound love for her and requests her to be faithful to him, saying that for the sake of their marriage they need to be faithful to the other.

Theme of Moral and Social Issues

“Dover Beach” is a representation of the Victorian period. It depicts the tone and mood of Victorian society and how people have felt at that time. When Arnold was contemplating on this poem (1851-1857), London had just undergone “a rapid population growth, going from 2 million to 6.5 million inhabitants” (Norton qtd. in Culmer). At the same time, during this period “London became the first country to move towards an industrialized society, making many feel useless and no longer necessary with such technological advancements taking over so quickly. Many people suffered from this fast-paced expansion in the early part of the Victorian era, making it known as the Times of Trouble, taking a large toll on happiness” (Norton qtd. in Culmer). Many writers expressed this anxiety and confusion in their works and Arnold was one of them. Many of his works like *Culture and Anarchy*, the poem “The Scholar Gypsy”, especially the poem “Dover Beach” represent the Victorian era. Victorians “suffered from an anxious sense of loss, a sense too of being displaced persons in a world made alien by technological changes that had been exploited too quickly for the adaptive powers of the human psyche” (Norton qtd. in Clamer). This was the reason behind Arnold’s somber tone in the poem his attempt to come to terms with the changes, feeling depressed and lost, as if everything he had come to know prior, was all a lie, or false reality.

Subject of Nature in “Dover Beach”

Prior to the Victorian era, Wordsworth and his fellow Romantic poets perceived nature a benevolent supernatural power that not only included man but was also sympathetic to him. To the Romantics, man’s anxiety was the consequence of turning his eye from nature and thus alienation from the cure to his discontent. The evolutionary theory proved that man himself was “the product of evolution, an opportunistic and successful animal, and his presence on earth was secured only

because he had survived the battle for the "survival of the fittest". This concept was totally in contrast to the Bible which promised a "special place" to the man in the world. Science established that "the cosmos was not only oblivious to his presence; it had sewn into its fabric the certitude that man was only an accidental blip doomed to eternal extinction in the vast silence of time" (*A Study*). The anxiety that no one protects us and no one can bring justice to the victim, the loss of hope and faith in nature is reflected in "Dover Beach". People turned to the fulfillment of their pity selfish ends and lost the concept of community.

15.12 SYMBOLS AND IMAGERY IN "DOVER BEACH"

In "Dover Beach", Matthew Arnold describes the seaside view of the English Channel at night time through his window. He uses the waves on the pebbled beach as a metaphor for human sadness and the uncertainty that he felt when he realized that the world was moving away from religion. In the face of such an uncertain world, Arnold concludes that the best thing for people to do is "be true to one another." The image of the ocean becomes the central metaphor that ties the entire poem, full of allusions and emotional distress.

The beginning of the poem sets a scene of peace and melancholy. Arnold's word choice in the first stanza alerts the reader to the overall tone of the poem before he even mentions the "eternal note of sadness" at the end. The line, "On the French coast, the light gleams and is gone," predicts the later stanzas' fixation on the loss of faith. The lights of France are going out the same way that the light of religion is going out, in a far less gradual way than it is in the dominate ocean image.

Arnold describes a "Sea of Faith," which once covered the Earth, but is now receding away from the shores of human life. This is probably a reference to how the people of his time were beginning to put more stock in science to define the world than they were in religion. Though he mourns the age of religion's passing, he is not criticizing science. He is not regretting the loss of belief but the loss of the security that belief once brought him. The world was moving from a time when everything was simple, absolute, and miracles were possible, to a time of complexity, uncertainty, and agnosticism.

He calls this new world a “darkling plain…where ignorant armies clash by night” and only human connection can keep one from accidentally destroying oneself. It seems, at first, like Arnold is breaking away from the ocean metaphor. However, his plain could be the dried sea bed that is left behind when the ocean recedes. The dried remains of the sea floor can seem like a desolate, bleak place, as Arnold describes the world in the last stanza, but he also leaves room for hope. Many places that were once ocean have been reborn into thriving land ecosystems. Thus, the final stanza is drawn between the false potential of the world as seen by mainstream Victorian society, the true absence as seen by Arnold, and the flutter of hope for the world’s rebirth that Arnold finds in human love.

Arnold’s entire poem is tied up in the image of ‘Dover Beach’, a panorama that must have had some influence on him. He combines his sorrow and confusion with the inherent peace and tranquility of the scene in a way that keeps the poem from being too distressing for the reader. “Dover Beach” adopts the tone of sweet melancholy that Arnold always aimed to achieve. This melancholy scene of nature serves to ground the reader in a particular locale and specific feeling.

The Sea

The sea is everywhere in “Dover Beach”. It shows up in different places and in different forms like the English Channel or the Aegean Sea, and sometimes it morphs into a metaphor for the fate of humanity. The real sea of the English Channel is re-imagined as a “Sea of Faith”.

The Tide

The image of the tide shows up repeatedly in this poem. The slow, steady, endless movement of water—in and out—becomes a symbol of eternity. It also represents change and loss.

The Moon

The moon is one of the crucial features of the opening of the lines of the poem “Dover Beach”. It helps to establish a feeling of calm that will later be

completely shattered. The land being “moon-blanched” suggests unnaturally pale, even deathlike world.

Night

The night is a flexible image. At first, it connects with the feelings of comfort and calm that dominate the opening scenes of the poem. By the end, though, it is part of a much more sinister set of ideas, connected metaphorically with all the pain and suffering of humanity.

Naked Shingles

Shingles means the rocks that lie on the shore. Arnold has used the imagery of the coastline to describe the desolation in human lives.

Darkling Plain

The image of the “darkling plain” opens up the epic simile that ends the poem. The basic idea here is that the speaker is comparing human existence to a dark battlefield, where friends and enemies clash together and fight each other in total confusion.

15.13 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q1. Is “Dover Beach” a dramatic monologue? How?

Ans. A Dramatic monologue is a persona poem, is a type of poetry written in the form of speech of an individual character. In it the speaker describes a particular situation. Yes, Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach” is a dramatic monologue because the poet is addressing a silent audience. The effect is of one person directly addressing another, while the reader listens. Arnold composed “Dover Beach” during his honeymoon, and that the silent audience is his bride.

Q2. “Dover Beach” is a reflection of which era and how?

Ans. “Dover Beach” is a representation of the Victorian period. It depicts the tone and mood of Victorian society and how people have felt at that time. The time was

the tussle between tradition and modernity; religion, theories of evolution and scientific theories of evolution. The consequence of scientific discoveries was that the people lost faith in any power above their heads. The time was the time of confusion as it was the era of transition from tradition to modernity. People turned to the fulfillment of their pity selfish ends and lost the concept of community. They had started fighting among themselves in utter confusion.

Q3. Write on the background setting of "Dover Beach".

Ans. It is the shore of the English ferry port of Dover, in Kent, facing Calais, in France, at the Strait of Dover, the narrowest part of the English Channel. The time is Victorian period.

Q4. Who is Sophocles?

Ans. Sophocles is one of three ancient Greek tragedians. His first plays were written later than or contemporary with those of Aeschylus, and earlier than or contemporary with those of Euripides.

Q5. In the poem, what is Aegean?

Ans. Aegean is a sea. The Aegean Sea is an elongated embayment of the Mediterranean Sea located between the Greek and Anatolian peninsulas, that is between the mainland of Greece and Turkey.

15.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss Matthew Arnold as a poet with special reference to "Dover Beach".

Q2. Write a descriptive note on symbols and imagery used in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach".

Q3. Explain the concept of Nature as in "Dover Beach".

Q4. Discuss "Dover Beach" as a reflection of Victorian era.

Q5. Explore the theme of faith or religion in "Dover Beach" with illustrations.

Q6. Write a note on the elements of melancholy in "Dover Beach".

Q7. Describe Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" as a dramatic monologue.

15.15 LET US SUM UP

Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" is a masterpiece in aspects of image, tone and messages. The image and messages are all in typical Victorian style. The influence of industrial revolution is clearly reflected in "Dover Beach".

15.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

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English Literature	“ADAM’S CURSE”	Semester-VI
Lesson No. 16	William Butler Yeats	Unit V

STRUCTURE

16.1 INTRODUCTION

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was born in Dublin. He was an Irish dramatist, folklorist and theatre manager. His father was a lawyer and well-known portrait painter. Yeats was educated in London and in Dublin, but he spent his summers in the west of Ireland in the family's summer house at Connaught. The young Yeats was active in societies that attempted an Irish literary revival. His first volume of verse appeared in 1887, but in his earlier period his dramatic production outweighed his poetry. Together with Lady Gregory he founded the Irish Theatre, which was to become the Abbey Theatre. His plays usually used Irish legends. They also reflect his fascination with mysticism and spiritualism. *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), *The King's Threshold* (1904), and *Deirdre* (1907) are among the best known.

In 1885, Yeats saw his first publication, in the *Dublin University Review,* of his poetry and the beginning of his important interest in occultism. It was also the year that he met John O'Leary, a famous patriot who had returned to Ireland after twenty years of imprisonment and exile for revolutionary nationalistic activities. O'Leary had a keen enthusiasm for Irish books, music, and ballads, and he encouraged young writers to adopt Irish subjects. Yeats, who had preferred more romantic settings and themes, soon took O'Leary's advice, producing many poems based on Irish legends, Irish folklore, and Irish ballads and songs.

As Yeats began concentrating his poetry on Irish subjects, he was compelled to accompany his family in moving to London at the end of 1886. There he continued to devote himself to Irish subjects, writing poems, plays, novels, and short stories. He also produced book reviews generally on Irish topics. The most important event in Yeats's life was his association with Maud Gonne, a tall, beautiful, prominent young woman passionately devoted to Irish nationalism. Yeats soon fell in love with Gonne, and courted her for nearly three decades. Yeats intensify his dedication to Irish nationalism under Gonne's encouragement and produced nationalistic plays as *The Countess Kathleen* (1892), which he dedicated to her, and *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902).

Gonne also shared Yeats's interest in occultism and spiritualism. Yeats had been a theosophist, but in 1890 he turned from its sweeping mystical insights and joined the Golden Dawn, a secret society that practiced ritual magic. Yeats was fascinated by the possibility of becoming a magus, and he became convinced that the mind was capable of perceiving past the limits of materialistic rationalism. Yeats remained an active member of the Golden Dawn for thirty two years, becoming involved in its direction at the turn of the century and achieving the coveted sixth grade of membership in 1914, the same year that his future wife, Georgiana Hyde-Lees, also joined the society.

Although Yeats's occult ambitions were a powerful force in his private thoughts, the Golden Dawn's emphasis on the supernatural clashed with his own need. In his public role he preferred to follow the example of John Keats, a Romantic poet. Yeats avoided what he considered the obscurity of Blake, whose poetic images came from mystical visions rather than from the familiar physical world. Even so, Yeats's visionary and idealist interests were more closely aligned with those of Blake and Shelley than with those of Keats, and in the 1899 collection *The Wind among the Reeds* he featured several poems employing occult symbolism.

Most of Yeats's poetry used symbols from ordinary life and from familiar traditions, and much of his poetry in the 1890s continued to reflect his interest in Irish subjects. During this decade he also became increasingly interested in poetic techniques. He befriended English decadent poet Lionel Johnson, and in 1890 they helped found the Rhymers' Club, a group of London poets who met to read and discuss their poems. The Rhymers' placed a very high value on subjectivity and craftsmanship and preferred sophisticated aestheticism to nationalism. The club's influence is reflected in the lush density of Yeats's poetry of the times, culminating in *The Wind among the Reeds* (1899).

The turn of the century marked Yeats's increased interest in theatre, an interest influenced by his father, a famed artist and orator whose love of highly dramatic moments in literature certainly contributed to Yeats's lifelong interest in drama. In the summer of 1897, the author enjoyed his first stay at Coole Park, the County Galway estate of Lady Augusta Gregory. There he devised, with Lady Gregory and

her neighbour Edward Martyn, plans for promoting an innovative, native Irish drama. In 1899, they staged the first of three annual productions in Dublin, including Yeats's *The Countess Kathleen,* and in 1902 they supported a company of amateur Irish actors in staging both George Russell's Irish legend "Deirdre" and Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan.* The success of these productions led to the founding of the Irish National Theatre Society with Yeats as president. With a wealthy sponsor volunteering to pay for the renovation of Dublin's Abbey Theatre as a permanent home for the company, the theatre opened on December 27, 1904, and included plays by the company's three directors: Lady Gregory, John M. Synge and Yeats, who was represented that night with *On Baile's Strand,* the first of his several plays featuring heroic ancient Irish warrior Cuchulain.

During the entire first decade of the 20th century Yeats was extremely active in the management of the Abbey Theatre company, choosing plays, hiring and firing actors and managers, and arranging tours for the company. At this time he also wrote ten plays, and the simple, direct style of dialogue required for the stage became an important consideration in his poems as well. He abandoned the heavily elaborated style of *The Wind among the Reeds* in favor of conversational rhythms and radically simpler diction. This transformation in his poetic style can be traced in his first three collections of the 20th century: *In the Seven Woods* (1903), *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), and *Responsibilities* (1914).

In 1961, Yeats began experimenting as a playwright. He adopted a deliberately esoteric, non-realistic dramatic style based on Japanese Noh plays, a theatrical form to which he had been introduced by poet Ezra Pound. These plays were described by Yeats as "plays for dancers."

While Yeats fulfilled his duties as president of the Abbey Theatre group for the first fifteen years of the 20th century, his nationalistic fervor, however, was less evident. Maud Gonne, with whom he had shared his Irish enthusiasms, had moved to Paris with her husband, exiled Irish revolutionary John MacBride, and the author was left without her important encouragement. But in 1916 he once again became a staunch exponent of the nationalist cause, inspired by the Easter Rising, an unsuccessful, six-day armed rebellion of Irish republicans against the British in

Dublin. MacBride, who was now separated from Gonne, participated in the rebellion and was executed afterward. Yeats reacted by writing "Easter, 1916," an eloquent expression of his complex feelings of shock, romantic admiration, and a more realistic appraisal.

Yeats also continued to explore mysticism. Only four days after the wedding, his bride began what would be a lengthy experiment with the psychic phenomenon called automatic writing, in which her hand and pen presumably served as unconscious instruments for the spirit world to send information. Yeats and his wife held more than four hundred sessions of automatic writing, producing nearly four thousand pages that Yeats avidly and patiently studied and organized. From these sessions Yeats formulated theories about life and history. He believed that certain patterns existed, the most important being what he called *gyres,* interpenetrating cones representing mixtures of opposites of both a personal and historical nature. He contended that gyres were initiated by the divine impregnation of a mortal woman—first, the rape of Leda by Zeus; later, the immaculate conception of Mary. Yeats found that within each 2000 year era, emblematic moments occurred at the midpoints of the 1000 year halves. At these moments of balance, he believed, a civilization could achieve special excellence, and Yeats cited as examples the splendor of Athens at 500 B.C., Byzantium at A.D. 500, and the Italian Renaissance at A.D. 1500.

Yeats's poems and plays produced during his senate term are local and general, personal and public, Irish and universal. At night the poet could "sweat with terror" because of the surrounding violence, but he could also generalize those terrifying realities by linking them with events in the rest of the world and with all of history. The energy of the poems written in response to these disturbing times gave astonishing power to his collection *The Tower* (1928), which is often considered his best single book, though *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917; enlarged edition, 1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower, The Winding Stair* (1929); enlarged edition, 1933), and *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (1932), also possess considerable merit.

As Yeats aged, he saw Ireland change in ways that angered him. The Anglo-Irish Protestant minority no longer controlled Irish society and culture, and with

Lady Gregory's death in 1932 and the consequent abandonment of the Coole Park estate, Yeats felt detached from the brilliant achievements of the 18th Anglo-Irish tradition. According to Yeats's antidemocratic view, the greatness of Anglo-Irishmen such as Jonathan Swift, philosopher George Berkeley, and statesman Edmund Burke, contrasted sharply with the undistinguished commonness of contemporary Irish society, which seemed preoccupied with the interests of merchants and peasants. He stated his unpopular opinions in late plays such as *Purgatory* (1938) and the essays of *On the Boiler* (1939).

Throughout his last years, Yeats's creative imagination remained very much his own, isolated to a remarkable degree from the successive fashions of modern poetry despite his extensive contacts with other poets. Literary modernism held no inherent attraction for him except perhaps in its general association with youthful vigor. He admired a wide range of traditional English poetry and drama, and he simply was unconcerned that, during the last two decades of his life, his preference for using rhyme and strict stanza forms would set him apart from the vogue of modern poetry. Yeats wanted poetry to engage the full complexity of life, but only insofar as the individual poet's imagination had direct access to experience or thought and only insofar as those materials were transformed by the energy of artistic articulation. He was, from first to last, a poet who tried to transform the local concerns of his own life by embodying them in the resonantly universal language of his poems. His brilliant rhetorical accomplishments, strengthened by his considerable powers of rhythm and poetic phrase, have earned wide praise from readers and, especially, from fellow poets, including W. H. Auden (who praised Yeats as the savior of English lyric poetry), Stephen Spender, Theodore Roethke, and Philip Larkin. It is not likely that time will diminish his achievements.

16.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with W.B Yeats's poem "Adam's Curse". It helps the learner in analyzing W.B Yeats as a poet through his poem "Adam's Curse". W.B. Yeats is widely considered to be one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. He belonged to the Protestant, Anglo-Irish minority that had controlled the economic, political, social, and cultural life of Ireland at the end

of the 17th century. Most members of this minority considered themselves English people who happened to have been born in Ireland, but Yeats was staunch in affirming his Irish nationality. Though he lived in London for fourteen years of his childhood yet Yeats maintained his cultural roots by displaying Irish legends and heroes in many of his poems and plays. Moreover, the learner is given a summary of the poem to explain the theme and substance of the poem. It also acquaints the learner with the format of examination oriented questions.

16.3 TEXT OF THE POEM "ADAM'S CURSE"

We sat together at one summer's end,

That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,

And you and I, and talked of poetry.

I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;

Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,

Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

Better go down upon your marrow-bones

And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones

Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;

For to articulate sweet sounds together

Is to work harder than all these, and yet

Be thought an idler by the noisy set

Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen

The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon

That beautiful mild woman for whose sake

There's many a one shall find out all heartache

On finding that her voice is sweet and low

Replied, 'To be born woman is to know—

Although they do not talk of it at school—

That we must labour to be beautiful.'

I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing

Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.

There have been lovers who thought love should be

So much compounded of high courtesy

That they would sigh and quote with learned looks

Precedents out of beautiful old books;

Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;

We saw the last embers of daylight die,

And in the trembling blue-green of the sky

A moon, worn as if it had been a shell

Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell

About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:

That you were beautiful, and that I strove

To love you in the old high way of love;

That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown

As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

16.4 SUMMARY OF THE POEM "ADAM'S CURSE"

The poem "Adam's Curse" was first published in the *Monthly Review* of December, 1902, and first collected in *In the Seven Woods* (1903). The poem is an important example of Yeats's mature style of composition. William Butler Yeats's poem "*Adam's Curse"* is about the difficulty experienced by the author in creating a beautiful work due to society's lack of understanding. The subject matter of Yeats's early poetry tended to deal with abstractions, such as love, truth, and beauty. In this poem the poet deals with actual experiences of the actual world. First, the poem draws on Yeats's own direct experience. The three people mentioned in the poem are real. Yeats being identical with the speaker sits together with two other persons on a day in late summer. One of the persons is a "mild woman" who is probably Maud Gonne as the poem was published in 1902 and Yeats was trying to win her heart in the years 1899 to 1901. The other person (whose sex is not defined though) could be Lady Gregory whom he first met in 1898. This group would make sense as these two women were very important to him and had a great influence on him. Maud Gonne was the woman who could reach his heart and Lady Gregory was the woman who could reach his mind. In this case, it is not of importance whether Yeats had ever sat together with both of these women at the same time. It can rather be seen as a unification of his heart and his mind.

The basis for the poem is a conversation that Yeats had with "that beautiful mild woman" and is addressed to a third person who was also present at the time. William Butler Yeats's "Adam's Curse," written in six uneven stanzas of iambic pentameter rhymed couplets, recounts one of the poet's meetings with Maud Gonne, a free-spirited Irish patriot. While "Adam's Curse" draws on elements of Yeats's

life, the poet had not lost interest in the Irish mythological figures that featured so prominently in his early work. At the same time, however, the presence of intimate acquaintances in a private setting and the reconstruction of their after-dinner conversation represent a breakthrough in candor and immediacy for Yeats. Second, "Adam's Curse" is significant because of the manner in which the poet uses his new materials. His altered attitude to romance is expressed in his critical treatment of the subject.

After setting the scene of three friends at twilight on a late summer evening, the poem turns to a conversation that take place between the poet and his beloved's beautiful young woman friend. He remembers observing that although the writing of poetry is more difficult than physical work but the product of a poet's labours appear effortless. The friend, gentle of voice, with the kind of mild, seemingly natural attractiveness destined to break men's hearts, responded that the beauty of women is also the product of studied effort. That observation leads the poet to remark that all human accomplishments since the biblical fall of Adam have entailed hard labour. Even love was once regarded as an exalted experience that required the gathering of precedents from the old poetic world of chivalry. It was treated as a profound matter, to be studied and approached reverently. Now, like the writing of poetry, it is considered idle.

Maud remains silent and the word "love" silences the speakers. The three watch the vestiges of daylight fade. The moon, apparently hollowed out by time's tide breaking in waves of days and years over the earth, drew the poet's special attention. In that silence, he later confesses, he thought "you" as beautiful. He wants to love Maud chivalrously. Once, loving her had seemed joyous and fortunate, but now, like the hollow moon, she and he are exhausted by love.

16.5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The title of the poem already implies and supports the themes of the poem. The main theme is that it is extremely difficult to create and to maintain something beautiful. This could be seen in two ways when we look at the title *Adam's Curse*. First of all, the title could refer to the curse that was put on Adam. Adam and Eve

having been created by God were given the opportunity to live a life without pain and full of divine joy in the Garden of Eden. But when they ate the forbidden fruit, they were banned from this place and had to live a life full of hardship. On the other hand, *Adam's Curse* could also refer to God's creation of man. God intended to create a perfect, beautiful being, but his attempt failed. The human beings created by God were not able to deal with perfection and beauty and acted in an indifferent and destructive way. This way of interpreting the title supports the image of an indifferent, narrow-minded society not appreciating the beauty of poetry and of Yeats and Maud Gonne not being able to deal with their mutual love.

The poem is composed of three stanzas of heroic couplets (19 couplets total). Some of the rhymes are full (years/ears) and some are only partial (clergymen/thereupon). Ostensibly collaborating with one another, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd stanzas are linked by an informal slant-rhyme scheme (e.g., "summer's end | clergymen | thereupon;" "trade enough | name of love;" "yet we'd grown | hollow moon"). The poem has an interesting structure concerning rhyme and metre as these structures additionally support the theme of the poem. It is striking that all verses consist of exactly ten syllables (the verses 14 and 15 include 10 syllables together), which could indicate a pentametric form, but not all verses are pentameters. Still, the verses that are pentameters are "perfect" iambic pentameters (V. 2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 28, 30, 34, 38). Probably, Yeats would have been able to use iambic pentameters throughout the whole text, but through this inclusion of "imperfect" verses he supports the idea of the difficulty of creating something beautiful and perfect. On the other hand, it could also be seen as an attempt to break through the classic structure of iambic pentameters. As Yeats describes in the third stanza, the expressions of love should be sincere and not "precedents out of beautiful old books" (V. 27). In this case the metric structure would express that it is not necessary to stick to a certain meter rhyme scheme, when you are trying to express love and other feelings. Furthermore, Yeats also includes "imperfect" rhymes (clergyman – world [V. 13-14], school – beautiful [20-21], grown – moon [38-39]). Interestingly, these "imperfect" rhymes always occur at the end of a stanza, which again implies the idea of breaking through old, "idle" (V. 28) rules that we should have left behind us and coming to a sincere and inartificial expression of love.

The 2nd stanza shares its first line with the last of the 1st stanza and maintains a similar form of non-repeating couplets. Its final line lies roughly coupled with the first line of the 3rd stanza (i.e. the slant rhyme between “enough” and “love”). The 3rd and final stanza differs from its predecessors in its length. Constructed from eleven lines (five heroic couplets), the 3rd is significantly shorter than the others.

In form, style, content, and meaning, “Adam’s Curse” is about the end of a certain set of values and the need for another. In the poem the conclusion of summer and the close of the day, mark the waning of poet’s chivalric love of “you” (Maud) that remains unspecified until the last stanza. Almost twenty years before the disillusionment of World War I set in, Yeats was disillusioned. Love, which the high Victorian poet Mathew Arnold in “Dover Beach” (1867) thought a safe harbor for those troubled by religious doubt and disillusionment with what were once seen as promising industrial and political revolutions, strikes Yeats as empty, as hollow as the rest.

For a dozen years, Yeats had been cherishing an unrequited romantic love of Maud, who steadfastly rejected his proposals, but as the twentieth century dawned he was growing more realistic. His poetry, originally characterized by dreamy ideals, mysticism, and a heroic Celtic past, replete with great kings, legendary leaders, deep loves, tragic events, and fairies, was becoming specific in its references and more earthy in its vision. Though he went on proposing marriage to Maud and even her daughter in the years that followed, in “Adam’s Curse” Yeats reveals an awareness that what he dreamt of would not materialize.

16.6 REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

i) *We sat together at one summer’s end,*

That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,

And you and I, and talked of poetry.

Explanation: The speaker of the poem sits with two women, one of whom he is addressing. They are just chilling, enjoying the evening, doing some chit-chatting about poetry. The other woman is a beautiful friend of the woman he is speaking to,

and they all seem to have an informal, comfortable relationship. The poet creates a pleasant moment by using the words like “mild,” “beautiful,” and “summer’s end” .

ii) *I said, ‘A line will take us hours maybe;*

Yet if it does not seem a moment’s thought,

Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

Explanation: As the three chat about poems, the speaker says that some lines of poetry can take hours to write, but when you read them, they should appear to have been written with just a “moment’s thought.” He uses a metaphor for writing poetry by comparing it to “stitching and unstitching.” He says that poetry is like sewing, and sometimes you have to undo your “stitches” to get them just right, just like you have to re-write your lines. In any case, his *own* lines might seem to have been written quickly, but if you analyze the form and meter section, you will see that there is a lot of hard work require, including the rhyming of the last words in each couplet (like “thought” and “naught” in lines 5-6).

iii) *Better go down upon your marrow-bones*

And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones

Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;

Explanation: In these lines the speaker says that it is better to work hard by doing physical labour. The “marrow-bones” imagery emphasizes the hard work; marrow is *inside* the bones, here the speaker highlights that one has to work so hard to reach the marrow. “Paupers” are impoverished people who do menial labour in all types of weather. It is pretty much the opposite of sitting at a nice desk and composing a poem. There, all the work is done in the mind.

iv) *For to articulate sweet sounds together*

Is to work harder than all these, and yet

Be thought an idler by the noisy set

Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen

The martyrs call the world.'

Explanation : The speaker says that to "articulate sweet sounds together" is to compose lines of poetry; after all, a sentence is just a bunch of sounds put together. Moreover, the speaker highlights that writing these lines is *harder* than the manual labour he described in lines 7-9. But most of the people would not agree with speaker. He says that writing is considered an "idle" type of work by society. Though it might seem easy but *actually it is* pretty tough. The "noisy set" refers to people who like to make their opinions known. It sounds like he does not like these types of people. They are the ones that think writing poetry is not *real* work. And who are these "noisy" people who do not think writing poetry is real work? Well, they are bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen—all members of professions that deal with everyday tasks. Not every banker, schoolmaster, or clergyman thinks writing is useless. It is just that all those professions are considered "useful" by most of the world, whereas writing is not always thought of in that way. And he calls the people who think this way "martyrs."

v) *And thereupon*

That beautiful mild woman for whose sake

There's many a one shall find out all heartache

Explanation: In these lines the beautiful friend is going to speak. The speaker again calls her mild because she is calm, unlike those "noisy" people whom he referred earlier. He says that she is so beautiful that she causes heartbreak for many people.

vi) *On finding that her voice is sweet and low*

Replied, 'To be born woman is to know—

Although they do not talk of it at school—

That we must labour to be beautiful.'

Explanation: The speaker says that her sweet voice which is very pleasant breaks many hearts. In fact, by describing her voice as "sweet," Yeats is highlighting her personality, not just her looks. He wants us to know that she is not just a pretty face. The woman speaks with her awesome voice, saying that there is something that all women know, and it is not taught in schools. So, what is this special knowledge? She says that every kind of work require hard labour to become beautiful. She compares poet's labour which he does within each line with the woman's labour to look beautiful. Both these works are considered effortless.

vi) *I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing*

Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.

Explanation : The speaker agrees there has not been anything "fine" since the beginning of time that has not required work. The Adam whom the speaker refers is the first man ever created, according to the Bible. In the story of Adam, he and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, which was a place of peace and beauty. They were expelled for disobeying God. So, maybe having to work to have anything "fine" is part of their (and mankind's) punishment. The speaker's also says that poetry is a "fine" and beautiful thing, and thus it takes a lot of work, too.

vii) *There have been lovers who thought love should be*

So much compounded of high courtesy

That they would sigh and quote with learned looks

Precedents out of beautiful old books;

Explanation: In these lines the speaker says that people who are in love spent a lot of time reading and reciting quotes from different books. Most probably, they do this in order to persuade the object of their desire. Even love is one of the "fine" things worth plenty of work. These lovers show it respect ("high courtesy") by working so hard and becoming educated ("learned") about love. They worked at it.

viii) *Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'*

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;

We saw the last embers of daylight die,

Explanation: But now, love is something that people consider to be an "idle trade," the same way they consider poetry to be an idle trade. Man, it sounds like chivalry really *is* dead. The mention of "love" seems to have shut them up. Perhaps each of them has their own heartache to consider. As they sit and think, the sun finally goes down. Yeats uses a simile here to compare the sunset to the "last embers" of a fire burning out. Yeats uses words like "last" and "die" to turn the poem from its milder, peaceful tone to one that gets a little more serious, a little heavier.

ix) *And in the trembling blue-green of the sky*

A moon, worn as if it had been a shell

Explanation: The speaker describes the sky as "trembling blue-green." It sounds pretty, but how can a sky tremble? Perhaps a bit of personification is used. They seem to be feeling a little shaky as they consider the state of their love lives. When you are sad and heartbroken, even neutral things like the moon seem to be sad, too? The speaker's sadness carries over into the way he sees the moon. Here's another simile: the moon is compared to a shell, worn by the waves of the sea.

x) *Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell*

About the stars and broke in days and years.

Explanation: The speaker continues this moon imagery in these next lines. Instead of the sea washing over the shells to make them smooth, though, it is time that has washed over the moon to smooth it out. The mention of love made our speaker consider time, and how it passes. The moon imagery is a way to make us consider the physical marks of time.

xi) *I had a thought for no one's but your ears:*

That you were beautiful, and that I strove

To love you in the old high way of love;

Explanation: Ah, so this is why he got so quiet when they mentioned love. Our speaker is in love with the woman to whom he is addressing this very poem. How does that revelation change your reading? He's thinking about how beautiful she is as she sits right next to him. We hope her friend does not feel too awkward. The speaker wants to love her the old-fashioned way that lovers used to, by studying books and learning quotes about love. He calls this way the "high" way because he considers it to be classier than the way lovers are in his time.

xii) *That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown*

As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

Explanation: We guess time has not been too kind to these two lovers. It had seemed happy at the beginning, but now, they are "weary-hearted." The speaker uses the moon as a metaphor for how time changes our hearts, making them too tired to be chivalrous. Is the moon also a metaphor here for the art of love and poetry, which have also grown old? Maybe after all, the poem keeps reminding us that nobody thinks poetry or love are worthwhile endeavors anymore.

16.7 LET US SUM UP

To sum up we can say that Yeats's "Adam's Curse" deals with his love for his beloved. Yeats's experience with love was rich and fulfilling as well as frustrating and devastating. He fell deeply in love with Maud Gonne and would propose to her in 1891, 1899, 1900, 1901, and 1916. Gonne did not respond to Yeats's proposals. Gonne would use Yeats for his ability as an orator. Maud Gonne, dragging him at her heels on nationalist agitations, soon found that he was a natural orator and could easily dominate committees. Maud Gonne would continue to turn Yeats proposals down, yet she continued to be the catalyst for the finest love poetry Yeats would ever create. Yeats really loved Maud Gonne. She was the love of his life, and still, she would never really react to, let alone return his love.

16.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss W.B Yeats as an Irish poet.

Q2. Discuss theme and substance of W.B Yeats's poem "Adam's Curse".

Q3. Critically analyze W.B Yeats's poem "Adam's Curse".

Q4. Discuss the concept of love in "Adam's Curse".

16.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (CYP)

Q1. The speaker says a single line of poetry can take_____.

a. A decade

b. A few moments

c. Weeks

d. Hours

Q2. The "stitching and unstitching" of a poem refers to_____.

a. Editing

b. Making it into a dress

c. Crumpling it up and throwing it away

d. Coming up with lines off the top of your head

Q3. What else does the speaker says takes a lot of work but is considered "idle," just like poetry?_____.

a. Banking

b. Scrubbing floors

c. Beauty

d. Collecting seashells

Q4. Lovers used to do what to display their love, says the speaker?

a. Quote from old books

b. Run through the streets screaming

c. Bring their significant others pizza

d. Get tattooed

Q5. The "beautiful, mild" woman says that women learn that ____ takes work, too, just like poetry.

a. Beauty

b. Marriage

c. Raising small birds

d. Art

Q6. What is the name of the foot that Yeats uses in the poem?

a. Iamb

b. Trochee

c. Smelly

d. Couplet

Q7. The poem is made up of _____ couplets.

a. Boring

b. Cowardly

c. Un-rhymed

d. Heroic

Q8. An iamb is made up of one _____ syllable and one _____ syllable.

a. Stressed/Unstressed

b. Loud/Quiet

c. Alliterative/Non-Alliterative

d. Unstressed/Stressed

Q9. The last words in each couplet_____.

a. Are opposites

b. Mirror each other

c. Rhyme

d. Are used as the first word in the next

16.10 ANSWER KEY

1. D; 2. A; 3. C; 4. A; 5. A; 6. A; 7. D; 8. D; 9. C;

16.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

Gordon, D. J., ed. *W. B. Yeats: Images of a Poet*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1961.

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