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M.A. ENGLISH

Course No. ENG - 122

Unit – I, II, III, IV, V, VI

Lesson Nos. 1-28

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M. A. ENGLISH - 122

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WELCOME

Centre for Distance and Online Education extends a hearty welcome to you all. PG English is a prestigious course; you are required to put in hard work: read the texts in detail, along with the self-learning material and also consult books in the library.

Good percentage of marks would open a variety of job opportunities for you.

This course on poetry introduces you to the literary background of poetry upto the Age of Pope poets, along with the works of famous poets - Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Donne and Pope. Study the poets in depth from the examination perspective. Besides, their reading might also sharpen and bring out your hidden talent of writing poetry. Work hard and success will be yours.

Prof. Anupama Vohra
P.G. English Coordinator

DETAILED SYLLABUS OF M.A. ENGLISH

SEMESTER-FIRST

Course Code: ENG-122 **Duration of Examination: 3 hrs.**

Title of the Course: Poetry I **Total Marks: 100**

Credits: 6 **(a) Semester Examination - 70**

(b) Sessional Assessment - 30

Detailed Syllabus for the examination to be held in Dec. 2025, 2026 & 2027.

Objective: The students will study the ripening of the Middle Ages and the gradual manifestations of the Renaissance and Reformation. Chaucer, the late Elizabethan, seventeenth and eighteenth century poetry and the Puritan Revolution will be studied. The students will be required to identify the common and the distinctive features of the poets as well as of the period.

Unit-I

Literary and Intellectual background of poetry up to the Age of Pope.

Unit II

Geoffrey Chaucer: Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

Unit-III

Edmund Spenser: *Amoretti*
"Sonnets 65" and "Sonnets 86"
Epithalamion

William Shakespeare: The following Sonnets:-
"When I consider everything that grows"
"Tired with all these, for restful death I cry"
"Let me not to the marriage of true minds"
"No more be grieved at that which thou has done"
"Thou blind fool, what dost thou to mine eyes"

Unit-IV

John Milton: *Paradise Lost Book I:* Exposition
Speeches of Satan

Unit-V

John Donne: "A Valediction: Forbidden Mourning"
"Lovers' Infiniteness"
"The Canonization"
"Batter my Heart, Three person'd God"
"Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness"

Unit-VI

Alexander Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*

SEM I

Course No. ENG-122 **Title of the Course: Poetry-I**

Syllabus for the examination to be held in Dec. 2025, 2026 & 2027

Internal Assessment Assignments carry 30% marks in each course. The format of the Internal Assessment Assignments is given below:

ASSIGNMENT 1: Long Answer Questions **Credit-06**

Two questions: one each from Unit I and Unit II shall be given. And the learner has to attempt any one question in 450-500 words. (10 marks)

ASSIGNMENT 2: Short Answer Questions

Four questions: two each from Unit III and Unit IV shall be given. And the learner has to attempt any two questions in 100-150 words. (5×2=10)

ASSIGNMENT 3: Very Short Answer Questions

Four questions: two each from Unit V and Unit VI shall be given. And the learner has to attempt all the four questions in 40-50 words. (2.5×4=10)

The term end examination shall carry 70% marks in each course. The format of the question paper is given below:

MODE OF EXAMINATION

The paper will be divided into Sections A, B, and C. **M.M.=70**

Section A — Multiple Choice Questions

Q. No. 1 will be an objective type question covering the entire syllabus. Twelve objectives, two from each unit, with four options each will be set, and the learner will be required to write the correct option and not specify by putting a tick mark (✓). Any ten out of twelve are to be attempted.

Each objective will be for one mark. (10×1=10)

Section B — Short Answer Questions

Q. No. 2 comprises short answer type questions covering the entire syllabus. Four questions will be set and the learner will be required to attempt any two questions in about 80-100 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 5 marks. (5×2=10)

Section C — Long Answer Questions

Q. No. 3 comprises long answer type questions from the entire syllabus. Six questions, one from each unit, will be set and the learner will be required to attempt any five questions in about 400-450 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 10 marks. (5×10=50)

Suggested Reading:

1. Bernard, John, editor, *Alexander Pope: The Critical Heritage,* Routledge, 2009.
2. Bennett, John, *Five Metaphysical Poets: Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Marvell*. Cambridge UP, 1999
3. Brower, Reuben A, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion:* OUP, 2007.
4. *Collette, Carolyn P.: Species, Phantasms and Images: Vision on Medieval Psychology in the Canterbury Tales,* Michigan UP, 2001.
5. Edmund Spenser: *www: poetryfoundation.org/poets/edmund-spenser*
6. Ford, Boris, editor, *The Age of Chaucer, A 290:* Penguin Books, 2006.

   ....., editor, *The Age of Shakespere, A 291,* Penguin Books, 2007, *The Pelican Guide to English Literature.*

   ....., editor, *From Donne to Marwell, A 325,* Penguin Books, 1995, *The Pelican Guide to English Literature.*
7. Grierson, Herbert J.C. And J.C. Smith, *A Critical History of English Poetry,* Bloombury Academic, 2013.
8. Greer, Germaine, *Shakespere's Wife,* Bloomsbury, 2007.
9. John Donne, *Poetry Foundation,* www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/John-donne
10. John Milton Poems, *My Poetic Side,* mypoeticside.com/poets/john-milton-poems
11. Keastm William R. *Seventeenth-Century English Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism,* OUP, 2019.
12. Mark Joshua J. *Geoffrey Chaucer, Ancient History Encycloprdia*, 29 April 2019.
13. Smith Hallett D, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning and Expression,* Harvard UP, 2007.
14. *The Rape of the Lock, Encyclopedia Britannica,* 08 February 2017. www.britannica.com/topic/The-Rape-of-the-Lock
15. Thompson, NS, Chaucer, *Boccaccio, and the Debate of Love: A Comarative Study of the Decameron and the Canterbury Tales,* OUP, 2011.
16. Tuve, Rosemond, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: *Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics,* Chicago UP, 2003.
17. William Shakespeare, *Poety Foundation,* www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-Shakespeare

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TITLE OF THE COURSE: POETRY-I

COURSE CODE:ENG-122 **POETRY-I** **LESSON No. 1**

M.A. ENGLISH **UNIT - I**

LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF POETRY UPTO THE AGE OF POPE

THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO CHAUCER (1066-1350)

STRUCTURE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Anglo-Norman literature is literature composed in the Anglo-Norman language developed during the period 1066–1204 when the Duchy of Normandy and England were united in the Anglo-Norman realm.

The Norman language came to England with William the Conqueror. Following the Norman conquest, the Norman language became the language of England's nobility. During the whole of the 12th century Anglo-Norman (the variety of Norman used in England) shared with Latin the distinction of being the literary language of England, and it was in use at the court until the 14th century. During the reign of Henry VII English became the native tongue of the kings of England. The language had undergone certain changes which distinguished it from the Old Norman spoken in Normandy. An Anglo-Norman variety of French continued to exist into the early 15th century, though it was in decline at least from the 1360s, when it was deemed insufficiently well-known to be used for pleading in court. The French language continued to enjoy great prestige in the late 14th century.

The most flourishing period of Anglo-Norman literature was from the beginning of the 12th century to the end of the first quarter of the 13th. The end of this period is generally said to coincide with the loss

of the French provinces to Philip Augustus, but literary and political history do not correspond quite so precisely.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Examine the historical and cultural significance of the Norman Conquest and its impact on English society and language.
2. Discuss the evolution of literary forms from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, including epic and romance, lyric poetry, and secular poetry.
3. Analyze the linguistic and literary changes in Middle English, focusing on the blending of Anglo-Saxon and Norman influences.

After going through this lession,

1. Learners will be able to describe the cultural and linguistic impact of the Norman Conquest, including the incorporation of Norman-French elements into English.
2. Learners will be able to identify and differentiate between the major literary forms of the period, such as epics, romances, lyric poetry, and secular poetry.
3. Learners will be able to analyze how the changes in language and literary forms reflect the societal transitions from feudalism to the early stirrings of the Renaissance.

1.3 FRENCH INFLUENCE

The literary ideal changed at the Norman conquest of 1066. The conquerors had forgotten their paganism and the language and traditions of the country of their origin. They imported the French literary ideal into Great Britain. Anglo-Saxon literature seemed to disappear entirely. The literature of France became the first of European literatures in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and spread its glory and influence far beyond the confines of France. The English took both matter and manner from French works. Hence we need to be acquainted with French medieval poetry if we wish to understand Chaucer's literary origins.

It is generally recognized that the old French authors wrote with ample clarity. Needless to say their clarity was not purely abstract. For example, the English poets adopted the word clere (clear) anew and used it as their French predecessors. Chaucer begins his most lyrical song with the line:

Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere.

Besides, the authors had taste for well lit pictures, which was an outcome of their joy in life, their pleasure in blue sky and sunlight. They grabbed every opportunity to shed light upon a picture. Roland, a song of disaster, is a series of brilliant touches. The portrait of Roland is quite luminous. The French love of fighting had no gloomy shades. It was rather a love of movement, noise, colour and glory. Unlike Anglo- Saxon heroes, they leave their mourning and make another beginning. At Hastings, movement, gaiety and light enter English literature. Half the gifts and aptitudes of English poetry have then their beginning. Every verse form, every arrangement of rhymes and every stanza afterwards used in English poetry can be found in French poetry in seed or in flowers. Henceforth English poetry, like French, had a variety of forms in proportion to its subjects.

The whole of French medieval literature was known and loved by the Normans and much of it was translated or imitated by the English. Its aesthetic character reappeared in Chaucer's English works three centuries after the conquest. The Normans had already severed every tie with the language and poetry of Scandia from where they had emanated. Their conversion to Christianity brought them closer to French swiftly and fundamentally. For more than a century the language of the Normans showed no essential difference from French.

1.4 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

The Anglo-Norman verse was found to be prosaic in character. It lacked sensibility and search for beauty. It is made up of versified chronicles and didactic treatises. The Anglo-Normans were dominated by intellectual curiosity or utilitarianism. The poems attempt to bring together the legends scattered throughout the land of Great Britain, and thus to facilitate the fusion of its conflicting races. Their authors united Britons, Angles and Normans in the praises of the country. The great island had never received such homage as was tendered to it in the *Brut*. The brighter aspect of the country was discovered, which Anglo Saxon poetry had painted in a vague manner. Thus Anglo-Norman literature had weakened aesthetic character because its primary purpose was to instruct and unify the enemy races.

The native purity of the French language was adulterated by contact with speech which differed from it profoundly. So the more intelligent of Anglo—Norman writers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries turned to Latin. The Latin poets provided the vernacular poets with modes of versification. The Latin verses exercised a considerable influence on English poetry from the time the Anglo Saxon line was finally abandoned and new paths were explored. From this time Latin rhymed verse was allied with French verse to undermine and overthrow the Anglo Saxon form.

1.4.1 Changes in the Language

English writers made repeated efforts to translate the works of French poets. The English vocabulary lost a number of words and in exchange received French words. English came to borrow the words which denoted the customs ideas imported from Normandy – the terms of warfare, hunting, chivalry, courtly speech, art, luxury etc. The modern English language had more numerous words of French origin or words based on Latin and Greek than Germanic words. Besides there was a modification of the form and the pronunciation of Anglo Saxon words. There was an increase of the monosyllables which are so numerous in modern English. Anglo Saxon was gradually simplified to modern English. The poetic language lost closeness, freedom and some element of the picturesque but the language as a whole gained lucidity and precision. The final result of the transformations was not felt until the sixteenth century. The language of this long period of transition was called Middle English.

Let us have a glimpse of this slow and deep rooted evolution. At first, French and English naturally kept separate. The conquerors spoke French while the ruled spoke Anglo Saxon, which lost the dignity of an official and of a literary language. After the loss of Normandy by John Lackland in 1204, the conquerors began to pay attention to the native language. The simplification of English was a sort of compromise between the two languages. Now it was possible for the two races to understand each other better. The words which the Normans found most difficult were gradually dropped and replaced by their own words. The whole of the thirteenth century was filled with these changes, which became customary by the fourteenth century. By this time the Normans had abandoned French to a large extent and the native people brought their language closer to

theirs. Henceforth English reigned alone: in 1350 it took the place of French as the language of the schools; in 1362 it became that of the law courts; and in 1399 it was used in Parliament for the first time by Henry IV. During this period prosody attained to perfect balance with Chaucer, who was the first great metrical writer of his country.

1.4.2 Epic and Romance

The French epic came over to England at an early date. It is believed that the Chanson de Roland was sung at the battle of Hastings, and some Anglo-Norman manuscripts of *Chansons de geste* have survived to this day. *The Pélérinage de Charlemagne* was, for instance, only preserved in an Anglo-Norman manuscript of the British Museum (now lost), although the author was certainly a Parisian. The oldest manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland* that we possess is also a manuscript written in England, and amongst the others of less importance we may mention *La Chançun de Willame*, the MS. of which has (June 1903) been published in facsimile at Chiswick.

Although the diffusion of epic poetry in England did not actually inspire any new *chansons de geste*, it developed the taste for this class of literature, and the epic style in which the tales of the *Romance of Horn, of Bovon de Hampton*, of *Guy of Warwick* (still unpublished), of *Waldef* (still unpublished), and of *Fulk Fitz* Warine are treated, is certainly partly due to this circumstance. Although the last of these works has come down to us only in a prose version, it contains unmistakable signs of a previous poetic form, and what we possess is really only a rendering into prose similar to the transformations undergone by many of the *chansons de geste*.

The inter influence of French and English literature can be studied in the Breton romances and the romans d'aventure even better than in the epic poetry of the period. The *Lay of Orpheus* is known to us only through an English imitation, *Sir Orfeo*; the *Lai du cor* was composed by Robert Biket (fr), an Anglo-Norman poet of the 12th century (Wulff, Lund, 1888). *The Lais of Marie de France* were written in England, and the greater number of the romances composing the *matière* de *Bretagne seems* to have passed from England to France through the medium of Anglo-Norman.

The legends of Merlin and Arthur, collected in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (died c. 1154), passed into French literature, bearing the character which the bishop of St Asaph had stamped upon them. Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceva*l (c. 1175) is doubtless based on an Anglo-Norman poem. Robert de Boron (c. 1215) took the subject of his Merlin from Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Finally, the most celebrated love-legend of the Middle Ages, and one of the most beautiful inventions of world-literature, the story of Tristan and Iseult, tempted two authors, Béroul and Thomas, the first of whom is probably, and the second certainly, Anglo-Norman. One *Folie Tristan* was composed in England in the last years of the 12th century.

Less fascinating than the story of Tristan and Iseult, but nevertheless of considerable interest, are the two *romans d'aventure* of Hugh of Rutland, *Ipomedon* (published by Eugen Kölbing and Koschwitz, Breslau, 1889) and Protesilaus (still unpublished) written about 1185. The first relates the adventures of a knight who married the young duchess of Calabria, niece of King Meleager of Sicily, but was loved by Medea, the king's wife.

The second poem is the sequel to Ipomedon, and deals with the wars and subsequent reconciliation between Ipomedon's sons, Daunus, the elder, lord of Apulia, and Protesilaus, the younger, lord of Calabria. Protesilaus defeats Daunus, who had expelled him from Calabria. He

saves his brother's life, is reinvested with the dukedom of Calabria, and, after the death of Daunus, succeeds to Apulia. He subsequently marries Medea, King Meleager's widow, who had helped him to seize Apulia, having transferred her affection for Ipomedon to his younger son.

To these two romances by an Anglo-Norman author, *Amadas et Idoine*, of which we only possess a continental version, is to be added. Gaston Paris has proved indeed that the original was composed in England in the 12th century.

The Anglo-Norman poem on the *Life of Richard Coeur de Lion* is lost, and an English version only has been preserved. About 1250 Eustace of Kent introduced into England the *roman d'Alexandre* in his *Roman de toute chevalerie*, many passages of which have been imitated in one of the oldest English poems on Alexander, namely, *King Alisaunder* .

1.4.3 The Lyric Poetry

The only extant songs of any importance are the seventy-one *Ballads of* Gower. The remaining songs are mostly of a religious character. Most of them have been discovered and published by Paul Meyer. Although so few have come down to us such songs must have been numerous at one time, owing to the constant intercourse between English, French and Provençals of all classes. An interesting passage in *Piers Plowman* furnishes us with a proof of the extent to which these songs penetrated into England. We read of:

"... dykers and deluers that doth here dedes ille,

And dryuen forth the longe day with 'Deu, vous saue,

Dame Emme!'" (Prologue, 223 f.)

One of the finest productions of Anglo-Norman lyric poetry written in the end of the 13th century is the *Plainte d'amour,* and we may mention, merely as literary curiosities, various works of a lyrical character written in two languages, Latin and French, or English and French, or even in three languages, Latin, English and French. In *Early English Lyrics* (Oxford, 1907) we have a poem in which a lover sends to his mistress a love-greeting composed in three languages, and his learned friend replies in the same style.

Check Your Progress

1. The Norman Conquest introduced significant French vocabulary into the English language. (True/False)
2. Epic poetry during Chaucer's time was mainly inspired by Anglo-Saxon traditions like *Beowulf*. (True/False)
3. Romance literature often focused on chivalry, courtly love, and heroic quests. (True/False)
4. Lyric poetry in the medieval period was primarily concerned with religious themes. (True/False)
5. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote exclusively in Latin. (True/False)

Answers -1 True, 2 False, 3 True, 4 False, 5 False

1.4.4 Religious Poetry

Works of piety reappeared towards the end of the twelfth century. Their only local element is language. Their matter is mainly transcriptions, often literal, from Latin or French. The problem was to gain the ear of an oppressed poor and ignorant people. It was therefore necessary to use a very simple language and to multiply explanations and concrete details. Again and again, an author excuses himself for using a language so much despised as English. He knows that his style is bad, that his rhymes are weak but he believes himself justified by his aim. The earliest in date of this religious poem is *Poema Morale*. The novelty of this poem is not doctrinal but formal. In style and versification, these four hundred lines of seven accents, in sections of four and three, are an innovation, and the form had a high density, for it was adopted by most of the popular ballads. Since the rhythm is iambic, the line is roughly syllabic. Almost every one of these lines, which are rhymed in couplets, contains a maxim. The sententious style contrasts with the epical manner of the Anglo-Saxons. The old phraseology is gone, and has been replaced by a simple language, without images and bare and precise, but animated by some homely comparisons. It is like a first essay in blank verse.

There is more poetry in some of the contemporary prayers. *The Prayer to Our Lady* contains the first truly artistic and poetic stanzas in the new language. *The Life of Saint Brandan* is a translation from the French. It introduced the English to the enchantments and marvels and the optimism of the beautiful Celtic legend. *The Life of Saint Dunstan* by Robert Gloucester is full of homely touches and cordial light heartedness. *Cursor Mundi* (1320) is a collection of twenty four thousand lines of verse. Its aim is to interest the people in the Bible stories. *The Pricke of Conscience* by anonymous author is wordy and mediocre but its wide popularity makes it worthy of study. His aim is to give an impulse to devoutness, by first showing for the miseries and vicissitudes of this world and then depicting the afterlife, of which his presentment is as concrete and grossly material as was usual among the preachers of the day. The ten thousand octosyllabic lines versify his visions and display the childishness of his matter. He lacks the rough good sense of Langland and Chaucer's art. *The Pricke of Conscience* marks the decline of religious poetry in the first half of the fourteenth century.

1.4.5 Secular Poetry from 1200 to 1350

A secular literature that developed during this period was founded exclusively on French works. It was predominantly chivalrous and was inspired by French romantic poems. Large portions of these poems of chivalry were turned into English so that minstrels might tell them to the people. The British stories were most valued and gave the native poets matter for their most popular and their most original songs.

In the last quarters of the twelfth century Layamon put Wace's *Brut* into English verse. Wace had glorified Britons at the expense of their Saxon adversaries. Layamon, as a faithful translator, repeated this story although he was a pure German by race and tongue. He deserves honour for first revealing some of the most poetic touches in the story. Yet he was not mere translator. He is the first writer to weave about King Arthur a fairy lore of which there is hardly a word in Geoffrey of Monmouth or in Wace. Although he was awkward and blunt yet he was not unpleasing.

The works which came after his were principally rhymed chronicles. They are interesting because they have a national character. There is originality of plot, manner and spirit in the romances

of *Havelok* and *Horn*, which were inspired by Scandinavian legends. These works by unknown English poets are independent, attractive and superior to their French versions. *Havelok* is a narrative of octosyllabic couplets. *Horn*, with its very short lines, has the form of a lay intended to be sung. Love, which is hardly mentioned in *Havelock*, is dominant in *Horn*. Thus *Horn* is particularly interesting as being transitional between the romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the romantic ballads of the later period. *Havelok* and *Horn* show how much borrowing from French chivalrous poetry went on at this time and how English poetry was beginning to be even when it borrowed. The poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* is older than *Havelok* and *Horn* by half a century. It is the first work in English which is written correctly and under French influence. In the poem the native words are fitted pleasantly and exactly to the foreign form. With the fourteenth century the satirical spirit entered English in adaptations of the fabliaux. Some of them are so lively that they herald Chaucer. Such is the fable of *Dame Siriz, or the Weeping Bitch.*

Some songs of the period are highly lyrical, and their inspiration and form are entirely French. They have the French way of evoking pictures of spring and flowering gardens. '*Alison*' and '*Springtime*' are examples of graceful songs. There is a more marked feeling for nature than is seen in most of the French contemporary songs. In the *Springtime*, the misery of passion is portrayed. Here is a glimpse of a spontaneous note:

Sumer is icumen in.	Summer is come in.
Lhude sing cuccu.	Loudly sing cuckoo.
Groweth sed and bloweth med,	Groweth seed and bloweth mead,
And springth the wde nu.	And springeth the wood new.
Sing cuccu.	Sing cuckoo.

Folk songs of this type reappear only at the end of the sixteenth century. However the numerous and exact descriptive touches show a more marked feeling for nature than was seen in most of the contemporary French songs.

The political songs were inspired by events within the country. They express aspirations, anger, love, hatred. The minstrels composed them in English for the people. The tones of the social satire are harsh and coarse. They denounced the vices of the nobles, the state and the clergy. The *Song of the Husbandman* complains of the burden of the taxes and the oppression of the bailiff. Songs were written even against the king when he was tyrannous. The poetry anticipated Langland in its denunciation of all the vices of society. The entire national poetry became patriotic. However the songs lack the narrative element. They simply chant the praises of the victors and cover the vanquished with insults. Yet they are interesting as they reflect the national unity and the high self esteem which the English nation had acquired. They are a prelude to the rich literature of the next generation. The great victories of Edward III were being sung in London and Minot's poems were popular in the countryside when Chaucer was born. The number, the originality and the worth of the works in the latter half of the fourteenth century make it a flowering season in English literature. This English was acquiring the qualities of courtliness and art. It was ready to become the language of the court and that of the countryman.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, before moving to the next section, take a look at these important literary terms and their meaning:

Chanson de Geste: A type of epic poem in Old French literature, celebrating heroic deeds.

Romance: A medieval narrative genre involving knights, chivalry, love, and adventure.

Prosody: The study of meter, rhythm, and intonation in poetry.

Octosyllabic: A line of verse with eight syllables; common in medieval narrative and romance poetry.

Lay (Lai): A short lyrical or narrative poem, often dealing with romantic or mythological themes.

Ballad: A narrative poem, often meant to be sung, usually telling stories of love, tragedy, or heroism.

Try to find some other litrerary terms from the previous sections and write their meaning:

1. _____.

2. _____.

3. _____.

1.5 ALLITERATIVE VERSE (14TH CENTURY)

Although the various classes of society were drawing closer during this age yet there was a diversity of the dialects of England. Alliterative verse reappeared, abundant and flourishing in the west of England about the middle of the fourteenth century. The old verse form came back to life at the moment when the spirit of the nation was reborn. The poetry of the west regained an epic swing, resumed the use of the epithets and synonyms necessary to alliteration. There were as many French and Latin words in the alliterative poems as in Chaucer. However these words were more Anglicized because the Alliterative poets, being less literate, used English spellings and used words not as they read them but as they hear them. The four alliterative poems contained in a single manuscript and entitled *Pearl, Purity, Patience* and *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght* were written around 1360-70. They have different subject and form but the similarity in the language and feeling lead us to believe that they were written by the same poet. The author is unknown but he proves himself an experienced artist. *Sir Gawayn and the Grene Knyght*, a well written poem, is remarkable for the liveliness and variety of its scenes. The story has many similarities with the tale of the second book of the *Faerie Queene*, but both in human and in dramatic interest, it is superior to Spencer. William Langland's *Piers Plowman* was the most popular poem of the fourteenth century. Although the language is more difficult than Chaucer's, it is less outlandish than that of Gawain. It was indeed a national poem and quite different in spirit from the French poems. William Langland was born in 1330, ten years before Chaucer. He knew the law courts and the legal language. His work is that of a man of profoundly religious mind, who is indignant at the vices of the society. He gives first a satirical picture of the actual world and then a vision of the world as it would be if the teaching of the Gospel were

truly practiced. He was convinced of the need for a reform of the secular and regular clergy. The boldness and novelty of his thought are, in this century, really astonishing. However he lacks the art of construction or arrangement. He loses himself in the confused allegories and pictures. His picture of the crowd is a contrast to Chaucer's peaceful picture of the pilgrims. This work can be praised for its ideas only. The lively satire is accompanied and directed by an intense religious fervor, which is hardly found in Chaucer. He was a rebel against the aristocratic system and social inequalities. However owing to lack of art and music, his work is not worthy of literary merit. This is the reason why in spite of the immediate popularity of his poem, he had almost no descendants. He is the last noteworthy writer of the alliterative verse. English verse acquired fixed forms within his lifetime but from Chaucer.

1.6 KING'S ENGLISH

London was becoming the social and political centre; the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge were the intellectual centers of the nation and the king had his residence here. So the speech of the east Midlands and the district of London has been called King's English. Its preeminence was established in the end of the fourteenth century. However since Anglo-Saxon times, almost all English poetry had been produced apart from it. It was due to the fact that English was always subordinate either to Latin or to French or rather Anglo-Norman. The common language of English was used only for practical purposes. It was considered too mean for literary purposes.

John Gower, a contemporary of Chaucer, wrote in Latin and French but quite later he started writing in English under the influence of Chaucer's success. He is remembered primarily for three major works, the *Mirour de l'Omme, Vox Clamantis,* and *Confessio Amantis*, three long poems written in French, Latin, and English respectively, which are united by common moral and political themes. The stories in *Confessio Amantis* are chiefly adapted from classical and medieval sources and are told with a tenderness and the restrained narrative art that constitute Gower's main appeal today. Gower is the last in date of the Anglo-Norman poets. He was a typical average poet of his century.

With the Norman conquest of England, beginning in 1111 the Anglo-Saxon language rapidly diminished as a written literary language. The new aristocracy spoke predominantly Norman, and this became the standard language of courts, parliament, and polite society. As the invaders integrated, their language and literature mingled with that of the natives: the Oïl dialect of the upper classes became Anglo-Norman, and Anglo-Saxon underwent a gradual transition into Middle English.

While Anglo-Norman or Latin was preferred for high culture, English literature by no means died out, and a number of important works illustrate the development of the language. Around the turn of the 13th century, Layamon wrote his *Brut*, based on Wace's 12th century Anglo-Norman epic of the same name; Layamon's language is recognizably Middle English, though his prosody shows a strong Anglo-Saxon influence remaining. Other transitional works were preserved as popular entertainment, including a variety of romances and lyrics. With time, the English language regained prestige, and in 1362 it replaced French and Latin in Parliament and courts of law.

It was with the 14th century that major works of English literature began once again to appear; these include the so-called Pearl Poet's *Pearl, Patience, Cleanness*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Langland's political and religious allegory *Piers Plowman*; Gower's *Confessio Amantis*; and the works of Chaucer, the most highly regarded English poet of the Middle Ages, who was seen by his contemporaries as a successor to the great tradition of Virgil and Dante.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

Thus the poetry in this period developed greatly from the stylistic point of view. It is clear from the comparison between Layamon's *Brut* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. From artless the poet becomes the conscious artist. When faced with more difficult material, the poets tend to become obscure. Their arduous and obscure task was gradually to merge the so disparate elements of the new language into a harmonious whole. Whoever listens to the poetry attentively at once perceives discords and then becomes aware of the progress realized. Some poets have been able to tell their tales fluently or to sing with some grace or warmth of feeling in short lined verse. This English was still deficient in courtliness and art but it was ready to become the language of the court as well as that of the countryman.

1.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Who is credited with bringing the Norman language to England?

Ans. William the Conquerer.

2. What was the most flourishing period of Anglo-Norman literature?

Ans. From the beginning of the twelfth century to the end of the first quarter of the thirteenth century.

3. What was the consequence of the Normans' conversion to Christianity?

Ans. It brought them closer to French swiftly and fundamentally.

4. What was the cause of the weakened aesthetic character of Anglo-Norman literature?

Ans. Its primary purpose was to instruct and unify the enemy races of Britons, Angels and Normans.

5. What was the contribution of the Latin poets to the Anglo-Norman writers?

Ans. They provided them with modes of versification.

6. When did English replace French:

   (i) as the language of the schools?

   (ii) as the language of the courts?

   (iii) as the language of the Parliament?

Ans. (i) 1350

(ii) 1362

(iii) 1399

7. What was the most celebrated love legend of the Middle Ages?

Ans. The story of Triston and Iseult.

8. Which author, German by race and tongue, put Wace's *Brut* into English verse?

Ans. Layamon.

9. Name the two rhymed English chronicles (romances) by unknown authors inspired by Scandinavian legends.

Ans. *Havelok* and *Horn*.

10. Name Langland's most popular poem of the fourteenth century.

Ans. *Piers Plowman*.

11. Name the first work in English written correctly and under French influence.

Ans. *The Owl and the Nightingale*.

12. Who was the last in date of the Anglo-Norman poets?

Ans. John Gower.

13. What does Anglo Norman literature refer to?

14. What do you understand by the term Middle English?

15. What was the significance of the romances of *Havelok* and *Horn*?

16. Despite immediate popularity of Langland, he had almost no descendants. Give reasons.

17. What do you understand by King's English?

1.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Schofield, William Henry. *English Literature, from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer.* FB&C Limited, 2015.
- Alexander, Michael. *A History of Old English Literature*. Broadview Press, 2002.
- The English Nook. "Middle English: The Norman Conquest to Chaucer (1150 1500 AD)." The English Nook, 2 Apr. 2024, www.the english nook.com/2024/04/02/middle english the norman conquest to chaucer 1150 1500 ad/

LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF POETRY UPTO THE AGE OF POPE

CHAUCER TO RENAISSANCE

STRUCTURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The late fourteenth century English poetry has been demarcated as the 'first age' and Chaucer is described as "Father of English poetry'. There remain indisputable grounds for regarding the contribution of Chaucer and certain of his contemporaries as foundational in the history of English poetry. Hence the late fourteenth century is a distinctive and crucial literary period. Late fourteenth century England produced the first English poetry that has continued to be read and responded to throughout subsequent periods.

Geoffrey Chaucer, known as the Father of English literature, is widely considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages and was the first poet to be buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. Chaucer was a crucial figure in developing the legitimacy of the vernacular, Middle English, at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were French and Latin.

He was born in London about 1340. He had an active life with diverse engagements. He was page, squire, diplomat and official in turns. His great patron was John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and son of Edward III. From the age of about thirty he was charged with diplomatic missions to France, Flanders and Italy in succession.

2.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Discuss how Chaucer influenced English literature and language development after his time.
2. Examine key poets and works that emerged after Chaucer, including their thematic and stylistic innovations.
3. Highlight the role of the Scottish period in shaping a distinctive literary tradition and its connection to Chaucer's legacy.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Identify key developments in English literature from Chaucer to the Renaissance, including historical and cultural influences.
2. Analyze major literary works and figures of the period, including Chaucer and early Tudor poets.
3. Understand literary movements such as medieval literature and early Renaissance, and their influence on the rise of humanism.

2.3 CHAUCER'S INFLUENCE

2.3.1 Linguistic

Chaucer wrote in continental accentual-syllabic meter, a style which had developed since around the 12th century as an alternative to the alliterative Anglo-Saxon meter. Chaucer is known for metrical innovation, inventing the rhyme royal, and he was one of the first English poets to use the five-stress line, a decasyllabic cousin to the iambic pentameter, in his work, with only a few anonymous short works using before him. He imported the decasyllabic line from France and under Italian influence made it pliable. The arrangement of these five-stress lines into rhyming couplets, first seen in his *The Legend of Good Women*, was used in much of his later work and became one of the standard poetic forms in English. His early influence as a satirist is also important, with the common humorous device, the funny accent of a regional dialect, apparently making its first appearance in "The Reeve's Tale."

The poetry of Chaucer, along with other writers of the era, is credited with helping to standardize the London dialect of the Middle English language from a combination of the Kentish and Midland dialects. Modern English is somewhat distanced from the language of Chaucer's poems owing to the effect of the Great Vowel Shift some time after his death. This change in the pronunciation of English, still not fully understood, makes the reading of Chaucer difficult for the modern audience. The status of the final –e in Chaucer's verse is uncertain: it seems likely that during the period of Chaucer's writing the final –e was dropping out of colloquial English and that its use was somewhat irregular. Chaucer's versification suggests that the final –e sometimes to be vocalized, and sometimes to be silent; however, this remains a point on which there is disagreement. When it is vocalized, most scholars pronounce it as a schwa (the vowel sound in the 'a' of the word 'about'). Apart from the irregular spelling, much of the vocabulary is recognizable to the modern reader. Chaucer is also recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as the first author to use many common English words in his writings. These words were probably frequently used in the language

at the time but Chaucer, with his ear for common speech, is the earliest manuscript source. Acceptable, alkali, altercation, amble, angrily, annex, annoyance, approaching, arbitration, armless, army, arrogant, arsenic, arc, artillery and aspect are some of the many English words attested in Chaucer.

2.3.2 Literary

Widespread knowledge of Chaucer's works is attested by the many poets who imitated or responded to his writing. John Lydgate was one of the earliest poets to write continuations of Chaucer's unfinished *Tales* while Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid completes the story of Cressida left unfinished in his *Troilus and Criseyde*. Many of the manuscripts of Chaucer's works contain material from these poets and later appreciations by the romantic era poets were shaped by their failure to distinguish the later 'additions' from original Chaucer. Writers of the 17th and 18th centuries, such as John Dryden, admired Chaucer for his stories, but not for his rhythm or rhyme, as few critics could then read Middle English. It was not until the late 19th century that the official Chaucerian canon, accepted today, was decided upon, largely as a result of Walter William Skeats's work. Roughly seventy five years after Chaucer's death, *The Canterbury Tales* was selected by William Caxton to be one of the first books to be printed in England. The idea of *The Canterbury Tales* was a novel idea. It was a turning point in European thought. It was more than a literary innovation. It was a change of mental attitude. Poetry turned to the study of man and manners. By his grouping of representatives of the different callings, he has painted with minute exactness the body and soul of the society of his times. The persons he has painted are discovered by their own actions and words.

2.3.3 English

Unlike Gower, Chaucer was not tempted either by Latin or by French. His immediate choice was London English, King's English. Although the language was in a poor state, Chaucer had great faith in this living language. He disregarded and debased artificial and prosaic Anglo-Norman and expressed in English all the graces and refinements he found in the poetry of France. His later poems, written after his journey to Italy in 1372, show traces of the influence of the Italian poetry. From Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, he learnt to enrich his line with glowing images and impassioned themes. In his *Troylus*, he was half Italian and half English. In his masterpiece he was to be all English.

Chaucer is sometimes considered the source of the English vernacular tradition. His achievement for the language can be seen as part of a general historical trend towards the creation of a vernacular literature, after the example of Dante, in many parts of Europe. Although Chaucer's language is much closer to Modern English than the text of *Beowulf*, such that (unlike that of *Beowulf*) a modern English speaker with a large vocabulary of archaic words may understand it, it differs enough that most publications modernize his idiom. Following is a sample from the prologue of 'The Summoner's Tale' that compares Chaucer's text to a modern translation:

Original Text	***Modern Translation***
This frere bosteth that he knoweth helle,	*This friar boasts that he knows hell,*
And God it woot, that it is litel wonder;	*And God knows that it is little wonder;*

Freres and feendes been but. lyte asonder	*Friars and fiends are seldom far apart.*
For, pardee, ye han ofte tyme herd telle	*For, by God, you have ofttimes heard tell*
How that a frere ravyshed was to helle	*How a friar was taken to hell*
In spirit ones by a visioun;	*In spirit, once by a vision;*
And as an angel ladde hym up and doun	*And as an angel led him up and down,*
To shewen hym the peynes that the were,	*To show him the pains that were there,*
In al the place saugh he nat a frere;	*In all the place he saw not a friar;*
Of oother folk he saugh ynowe in wo.	*Of other folk he saw enough in woe.*
Unto this angel spak the frere tho:	*Unto this angel spoke the friar thus:*
Now, sire, quod he, han freres swich a grace	*"Now sir", said he, "Have friars such a grace*
That noon of hem shal come to this place?	*That none of them come to this place?"*
Yis, quod this aungel, many a millioun!	*"Yes", said the angel, "many a million!"*
And unto sathanas he ladde hym doun.	*And unto Satan the angel led him down.*
--And now hath sathanas,--seith he, --a tayl	*"And now Satan has", he said, "a tail,*
Brodder than of a carryk is the sayl.	*Broader than a galleon's sail.*
Hold up thy tayl, thou sathanas! quod he;	*Hold up your tail, Satan!" said he.*
--shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se	*"Show forth your arse, and let the friar see*
Where is the nest of freres in this place!--	*Where the nest of friars is in this place!"*
And er that half a furlong wey of space,	*And before half a furlong of space,*
Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve,	*Just as bees swarm out from a hive,*
Out of the develes ers theirgonne dryve	*Out of the devil's arse there were driven*
Twenty thousand freres on a route,	*Twenty thousand friars on a rout,*
And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute,	*And throughout hell swarmed all about,*
And comen agayn as faste as they may gon,	*And came again as fast as they could go,*
And in his ers they crepten everychon.	*And every one crept into his arse.*
He clapte his tayl agayn and lay ful stille	*He shut his tail again and lay very still*

Thus, Chaucer comes before us as a painter of life. He writes in a dialect still new, uses words which he was the first to put to real literary use. Chaucer begins English poetry and ends Middle Ages. He inherited all the literature of France and breathed new language into it. In *The Canterbury Tales*, the element of the poet's personality has been subdued, superseded by pleasure in observing and understanding. Chaucer sees what is and paints it as he sees it. He is a pioneer of the group of spectators who efface themselves in order to look at the society better.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

1. Geoffrey Chaucer is often called the "_____ of English Literature" because of his pivotal role in shaping Middle English as a literary language.
2. Chaucer's most famous work, *The Canterbury Tales*, is a collection of stories told by a group of _____ traveling to Canterbury.
3. After Chaucer, poets like _____ continued to develop Middle English poetry, inspired by his themes and style.
4. The Scottish poet _____ was heavily influenced by Chaucer and is known for his work *The Kingis Quair*.
5. The transition to the Renaissance in English literature saw a renewed interest in _____ traditions and the human experience.

Answers: Father, pilgrims, John Lydgate, James I of Scotland, classical

2.4 FROM DEATH OF CHAUCER TO RENAISSANCE (1400 TO 1516)

2.4.1 Poetry in England

Gower, after Chaucer's success, made up his mind to write in English. But his work in English *Confessio Amantis* is a tiresome poem of some 40,000 verses which is in the allegory-dream framework tradition. Unfortunately the Chaucer whose followers noticed and liked more was the Chaucer of the *Roman de la Rose* tradition and not that of the *Canterbury Tales* tradition. Chaucer's best followers were Lydgate and Occleve but they lack genius.

England was going through the end of the Middle Ages and the corruption of the Medieval system is somewhat illustrated in the work of these minor poets through the decadence of the courts and of the nobility. With the Norman Conquest, French lords substituted for Anglo-Saxon lords. Later Henry II and the Hundred Years War refreshed the great French influence on England. The French courtly love tradition which influenced Dante and Petrarch brought about in England a *Roman de la Rose* tradition with works about knight and King Arthur and Sir Gawain and Lancelot. All this tradition found in England is best represented in Geoffrey Chaucer who is the great achievement of the English Middle Ages. But the Hundred Years War and the War of the Roses left a disastrous situation in England. The last of the French territories diminished the French influence and the destruction of many noble families created a situation which the Tudors would exploit very

well. The great wars of the Middle Ages, which are on one side the golden years of nobility's influence, chivalric myth and courtly love, mark, on the other side, the end, in England, of nobility's power and culture of the Middle Ages themselves. And with the rise of a new social and political order, a new philosophy and art came into being.

The English literary scene after Chaucer is not much inspiring. England took two centuries to produce a poet worthy to rank with Chaucer. No writer of genius was born during these long years. The English verse form was thrown off its balance and recovered a sure rhythm only with Spenser. John Lydgate (1373-1450) was the most voluminous poet of the fourteenth century and even of the Middle Ages of England. About 1,40,00 lines of his verse are extant. He was principally an indefatigable translator and compiler. His longest poems are *The Storie of Thebes* and *Troye-Book*, which retell the famous romances, *The Fall of Princes*, adapted from the Latin of Boccaccio. However he delved himself so deep in books that it is certainly from books that he seems to have taken most of his verses which speak of nature.

Alexander Barclay (1474-1552) was the first to introduce the eclogue to his fellow countrymen. An eclogue is a poem in a classical style on a pastoral subject. Poems in this genre are sometimes also called bucolic. In his youth he had written five eclogues, which he published in 1514. They have nothing of the idyll but are moral satires, discussions between a townsman and a countryman, between a poor poet and a rich miser, an exposition of a courtier's life. Barclay has the merits of sincerity of speech and realism but his language is rude and his verse suffers from the general lack of rhythm.

The fashionable school of courtly allegory, first introduced into England by the translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, reached its extremity in Stephen Hawes's *Passetyme of Pleasure,* printed by Caxton's successor, Wynkyn de Worde in 1517. This was a dreary and pedantic poem, in which it is told how Graunde Amoure, after a long series of adventures and instructions finally won the love of La Belle Pucel. Hawes was a mediocre poet. His style, entangled by awkward constructions, is among the worst known to English poetry. Barclay and Skelton, the last two writers of verse who are in the medieval tradition, at least show some novelty of subject or manner.

John Skelton (1460-1529), who was the tutor of the future Henry VIII, won praise from Erasmus as a learned humanist. He was very well acquainted with ancient poets and was mindful of the mythology of antiquity. His poetry represents the last stirrings of the dying Middle Ages. He mingled the old fashions with the new classical learning. In his *Bowge of Courte* and in other of his earlier pieces, he used, like Hawes, Chaucer's seven-line stanza but his later poems were mostly written in a verse of his own invention, called after him Skeltonical. This was a sort of glorified doggerel, in short, swift, ragged lines, with occasional intermixture of French and Latin.

Her beautye to augment,
Dame Nature hath her lent
A warte upon her cheke,
Who so lyst to seke
In her visage a skar
That semyth from afar
Lyke to the radiant star,
All with favour fret,

So properly it is set.
She is the violet,
The daysy delectable,
The columbine commendable,
The jelofer amiable;
For this most godly floure,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succor,
She flouryshethnew and new
In beaute and vertew;
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa femina, etc.

Skelton was a rude railing rhymer, a singular mixture of a true and original poet with a buffoon; whimsical, obscure but always vivacious. In this age of repetitions, Skelton pleases because he is brutal and coarse. He was the rector of Diss in Norfolk but his profane and scurrilous wit seems rather out of keeping with his clerical character. In *Spake, Parrot* and *Why Come ye not to Courte?* he assailed the powerful Cardinal Wolsey with the most ferocious satire and was, in consequence, obliged to take sanctuary at Westminster, where he died in 1529.

2.4.2 Scottish Poetry of the Period

It is the most glorious period of all old Scottish poetry. King James I (1394-1436) was the first of the poets of Scotland who were influenced by Chaucer. In his *The Kingis Quair,* he expresses in verse a romantic incident of his life. At eleven years of age he was taken captive by the English and was kept prisoner for nineteen years in France. During this captivity he fell in love with Lady Jane Beaufort, niece to Henry IV, whom he married in 1424. James's poem is inspired by Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, his translation of the *Roman de la Rose* and *Troylus and Criseyde*. However there is freshness in his imitations which is quite personal.

Gavin Douglas (1474-1522) was a Scottish bishop, poet and translator. His principal pioneering achievement was the *Eneados*, a full and faithful vernacular translation of the *Aeneid* of Virgil and the first successful example of its kind in any Anglic language.

William Dunbar (1460-1520) was a poet of striking undisciplined power and one of the great names in Scottish literature. He is the Burns of the fifteenth century, with something of the poet's passion for beauty, native humor and force of expression. He excels in every verse form. He uses Langland's alliterative line with as much success as the Chaucerian meter. Some scholars regard Dunbar as the greatest British poet between Chaucer and Spenser. He wrote allegorical poems and satirical ballads. Dunbar's poems praise and sometimes imitate his great English predecessors – Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate- and it is accurate to say that his poetry represents the culmination of medieval poetic practice. At the same time, it is also appropriate to point out that some of his poems seem to anticipate the poetry of such sixteenth and seventeenth century poets as Wyatt and Donne, Herbert and Milton and in Scottish literary tradition, the poetry of Robert Burns.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here are some important keywords from the sections that you have just read:

Allegory: A narrative in which characters, events, and details stand for abstract ideas, moral qualities, or political/social concepts.

Eclogue: A short pastoral poem, often in the form of a dialogue between shepherds, focusing on rural life and nature.

Alliterative Line: A poetic line that features repetition of initial consonant sounds, a common feature in Old and Middle English verse.

Chaucerian Meter: A poetic rhythm and structure characteristic of Geoffrey Chaucer's writing, especially iambic pentameter and rhyme royal.

Doggerel: Poorly written verse with irregular rhythm and rhyme, often used deliberately for comic or satirical effect.

Try to find the meanings of the following words and write them in the space provided:

Dream Vision: _____.

Pastoral: _____.

Courtly Love: _____.

The Old Ballads

A ballad is a form of verse, often a narrative set to music. Ballads derive from the medieval French ballads, which were originally 'dancing songs'. The Scottish ballads had become increasingly popular after Chaucer's death. They were a refreshing contrast with the artificial court poetry of the 15th and first three quarters of the 16th century. The English and Scot ballads were narrative songs, written in a variety of meters but chiefly in what is known as the ballad stanza. It is not possible to assign a definite date to these ballads. They lived on the lips of the people, and were seldom reduced to writing till many years after they were first composed and sung. Meanwhile they underwent repeated changes, so that we have numerous versions of the same story. They belonged to no particular author but, like all folk lore, were handled freely by the unknown poets, minstrels and ballad reciters, who modernized their language, added to them or corrupted them and passed them along. Coming out of an uncertain past, based on some dark legend of heart break or bloodshed, they bear no poet's name. In the form in which they are preserved, few of them are older than the 17th or the latter part of the16th century, though many, in their original shape are doubtless much older. A very few of the Robin Hood ballads go back to the 15th century, and to the same period is assigned the charming ballad of the *Nut Brown Maid* and the famous border ballad of *Chevy Chase*, which describes a battle between the retainers of the two great houses of Douglas and Percy. It was this song of which Sir Philip Sidney wrote, "I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas but I found myself more moved than by a trumpet." The style of the ballads was not always rude. In their compressed energy of expression, in the impassioned way in which they tell their tale of grief and horror, there reside often a tragic power and art superior to anything in English poetry between Chaucer and Spenser. The true home of the ballad literature was especially the Scotch

border where constant military activities supplied many traditions of heroism, like those celebrated in the old poem of the *Battle of Otterbourne* and in the *Hunting of the Cheviot or Chevy Chase*. Some of these are Scotch and others English; the dialect of Lowland Scotland did not differ much from that of Northumberland and Yorkshire, both descended alike from the old Northumbrian of Anglo-Saxon times. Other ballads were shortened, popular versions of the chivalry romances, which were passing out of fashion among educated readers in the 16th century and now fell into the hands of the ballad makers. Others preserved the memory of local countryside tales, family feuds and tragic incidents, partly historical and partly legendary, associated often with particular spots. Such are, for example, *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow, Fair Helen of Kirkconnell, The Forsaken Bride* and *The Twa Corbies*. Others have a coloring of popular superstition, like the beautiful ballad concerning Thomas of Ersyldoune, who goes in at Eildon Hill with an elf queen and spends seven years in a fairy land.

However the most popular of all the ballads were those which cluster about the name of that good outlaw, Robin Hood, with his merry men, hunted the forest of Sherwood, where he killed the king's deer and waylaid rich travelers but was kind to poor knights and honest workmen. Robin Hood is the true ballad hero, the darling of the common people as Arthur was of the nobles. The names of his confessor, Friar Tuck; his mistress Maid Marian; his companions, Little John, Scathelock and Much, the miller's son were as familiar as household words. Langland in the 14th century mentions 'rimes of Robin Hood' and efforts have been made to identify him with some actual personage but there seems to be nothing historical about Robin Hood. He was a creation of the popular fancy. The game laws under the Norman kings were very oppressive and there were dim memories among the Saxon masses of Herward and Edric the Wild, who had defied the power of the Conqueror, as well as of later freebooters, who had taken to the woods and lived by plunder. Robin Hood was a thoroughly national character. He had the English love of fair play, the English readiness to shake hands and make up and keep no malice when defeated in a square fight. He beat and plundered the fat bishops and abbots, who had more than their share of wealth but he was generous and hospitable to the distressed and lived a free and careless life in the good green wood. He was a mighty archer with those national weapons, the long bow and the cloth yard shaft. He tricked and baffled legal authority in the person of the proud sheriff of Nottingham, thereby appealing to the secret sympathy of the yeomanry of England.

Addison too praised ballad in his *Spectator*. He realized the ballad's Homeric qualities and used it as a text to preach that the beautiful is the simple. *Chevy Chase* was one of the medieval poems which induced Romanticism. The very irregularity of its verses was found to have a special charm and this rudeness inspired Coleridge to give a new harmony to his *Ancient Mariner* and to his *Christabel. The Nut-brown Maid* has thirty six-lined stanzas with their alternating refrains. It is an artistic composition with simplicity of style and sincerity of tone.

2.5 LET US SUM UP

With the Norman Conquest of England, beginning in 1111, the Anglo-Saxon language rapidly diminished as a written literary language. The new aristocracy spoke predominantly Norman and this became the standard language of courts, parliament and polite society. As the invaders integrated, their language and literature mingled with that of the natives: the dialect of the upper classes became Anglo-Norman and Anglo-Saxon underwent a gradual transition into Middle English.

While Anglo-Norman or Latin was preferred for high culture, English literature not by any means died out, and a number of important works illustrate the development of the language. Around the turn of the 13th century, Layamon wrote his *Brut* based on Wace's 12th century Anglo-Norman epic of the same name. Layamon's language is recognizably English, though his prosody shows a strong Anglo-Saxon influence remaining. Other transitional works were preserved as popular entertainment, including a variety of romances and lyrics. With time the English language regained prestige, and in 1362 it replaced French and Latin in Parliament and courts of law.

It was with the 14th century that major works of English literature began once again to appear. These include the so called Pearl Poet's *Pearl, Patience, Cleanness* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Langland's political and religious allegory *Piers Plowman;* Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the works of Chaucer, the most highly regarded English poet of the Middle Ages, who was seen by his contemporaries as a successor to the great tradition of Virgil and Dante.

The reputation of Chaucer's successors in the 15th century has suffered in comparison with him, though Lydgate and Skelton are widely studied. A group of Scottish writers were influenced by Chaucer. The rise of Scottish poetry began with the writing of *The Kingis Quair* by James I of Scotland. The main poets of this Scottish group were Robert Henryson, William Dunbar and Gavin Douglas. Henryson and Douglas introduced a note of almost savage satire, which may have owed something to the Gaelic bards, while Douglas' *Eneados*, a translation into Middle Scots of Virgil's *Aeneid*, was the first complete translation of any major work of classical antiquity into English or the Anglic language.

2.6 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What invention in poetic meter is Chaucer credited with?

Ans. Geoffrey Chaucer introduced Rhyme royal, a rhyming stanza form into English poetry. It consists of seven lines, usually in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is ababbcc. In practice, the stanza can be constructed either as a tercet and two couplets (aba, bb, cc) or a quartrain and a tercet (abab, bcc). Along with the couplet, it was the standard narrative meter in late Middle Ages. Chaucer may have adopted the form from a French ballad stanza or from the Italian Ottava rima, with the omission of the fifth line.

2. What is Great Vowel Shift?

Ans. The Great Vowel Shift was a major change in the pronunciation of the English language that took place in England between 1350 and 1700. Because English spelling was becoming standardized in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Great Vowel Shift is responsible for many of the peculiarities of English spelling. For example, the vowel in the English word same was in Middle English pronounced similar to modern *psalm*; the vowel in feet was similar to modern *fate*; the vowel in *wipe* was similar to modern *weep*, the vowel in *boot* was similar to modern *boat* and the vowel in *mouse* was similar to modern *moose*.

3. What is a Schwa?

Ans. A schwa refers to the mid central vowel sound (rounded or unrounded) in the middle of the vowel chart, denoted by the IPA symbol / / or another vowel sound closer to that position. An example in English is the vowel sound in the 'a' of the word 'about'.

4. What is an eclogue?

Ans. An eclogue is a poem in a classical style on pastoral subject. Poems in the genre are sometimes also called bucolic.

5. What is Skeltonical verse?

Ans. This was a sort of glorified doggerel, in short, swift, ragged lines with occasional intermixture of French and Latin.

6. What is King James I's poem *Kingis Quair* inspired by?

Ans. James's poem is inspired by Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, his translation of the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Troylus and Criseyde*.

2.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on Chaucer's influence through his works.
2. *The Canterbury Tales* is a turning point in European thought. Discuss.
3. Chaucer is sometimes considered the source of the English vernacular tradition. Elaborate.
4. Write a note on English literary scene after Chaucer.
5. What do you know about the ballad tradition?

2.8 SUGGESTED READING

- Fulk, Robert D. *A History of Old English Literature*. Wiley, 2013.
- Arora, Sangeeta, et al. *Classical Literature and History of English Literature.* Thakur Publication Private Limited, 2023. ebook.
- Greenfield, Stanley B., et al. A New Critical History of Old English Literature. NYU Press, 1986. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qghr4

LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF POETRY UPTO THE AGE OF POPE

RENAISSANCE TO THE AGE OF POPE

STRUCTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Renaissance is a period from the 14th to the 17th century, considered the bridge between the Middle Ages and Modern history. It started as a cultural movement in Italy in the late Medieval period and later spread to the rest of Europe. It began in Florence, Italy, in the 14th century.

The word Renaissance, literally meaning "Rebirth" in French, first appears in English in the 1830s. The Renaissance was a cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. Beginning in Italy, and spreading to the rest of Europe by the 16th century, its influence was felt in literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art.

3.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

In this lesson, learner shall study the literary and intellectual background of poetry during the Renaissance period up to the Age of Pope.

After going through this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how the Renaissance movement influenced English literature, particularly poetry.
2. Recognize the contributions of major poets of the English Renaissance, such as Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, and William Shakespeare.

3. Distinguish between the themes and styles of early Renaissance poetry and the later developments leading to metaphysical poetry.

4. Describe how metaphysical poets like John Donne and George Herbert differed from their Renaissance predecessors in style, themes, and techniques.

3.3 THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

The Renaissance was slow in coming to England, with the generally accepted start date being around 1509. It is also generally accepted that the English Renaissance extended until the Restoration in 1660. However, a number of factors had prepared the way for the introduction of the new learning long before this start date. A number of medieval poets had shown an interest in the ideas of Aristotle and the writings of European Renaissance precursors such as Dante.

The introduction of movable-block printing by Caxton in 1474 provided the means for the more rapid dissemination of new or recently rediscovered writers and thinkers. Caxton also printed the works of Chaucer and Gower and these books helped establish the idea of a native poetic tradition that was linked to its European counterparts. In addition, the writings of English humanists like Thomas More and Thomas Elyot helped bring the ideas and attitudes associated with the new learning to an English audience.

Three other factors in the establishment of the English Renaissance were the Reformation, Counter Reformation, and the opening of the era of English naval power and overseas exploration and expansion. The establishment of the Church of England in 1535 accelerated the process of questioning the Catholic world-view that had previously dominated intellectual and artistic life. At the same time, long-distance sea voyages helped provide the stimulus and information that underpinned a new understanding of the nature of the universe which resulted in the theories of Nicolaus Copernicus and Johannes Kepler.

On the other hand, although the spread of Protestantism all over England caused her to break with the Middle ages more decidedly than France and Italy, her literature remained more nearly medieval than that of either of the two countries. Literature in the preceding centuries had been almost all imported from France and had mainly consisted of translations and adaptations. It had not assumed a truly national shape. The greatest poet Chaucer had been essentially French. While in France the Renaissance was eminently aristocratic, in England it was always regardful of the masses. It preserved and increased the vogue of the ballads.

3.4 EARLY RENAISSANCE POETRY

With a small number of exceptions, the early years of the 16th century are not particularly notable. The Douglas Aeneid was completed in 1513 and John Skelton wrote poems that were transitional between the late Medieval and Renaissance styles. The new king, Henry VIII, was something of a poet himself. Two poets of the court, Wyatt and Surrey, brought about renewal of poetry and it was in Italy that they found both models and stimulus.

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42), admired lyrical poetry which he found in France and Italy. He had a desire to fashion English verse on the model of the Italians. Wyatt's first professed object was to experiment with the English tongue, to civilise it, to raise its powers to those of its neighbours. He borrowed from the Italians poetic forms which were unknown to his fellow countrymen, like Dante’s terza rima and Petrarchan sonnet. The sonnet was then the principal vehicle for the direct expression or personal feeling, without recourse to fiction or allegory. It was by the sonnet that lyricism again entered English poetry. The brevity of the form necessitated the use of the rare word, the metaphor, subtlety and condensation.

A significant amount of his literary output consists of translations and imitations of sonnets by the Italian poet Petrarch; he also wrote sonnets of his own. He took subject matter from Petrarch's sonnets, but his rhyme schemes make a significant departure. Petrarch's sonnets consist of an "octave", rhyming *abba abba,* followed, after a turn (volta) in the sense, by a "sestet" with various rhyme schemes. Wyatt employs the Petrarchan octave, but his most common sestet scheme is *cddc ee*. This marks the beginnings of an exclusively "English" contribution to sonnet structure, that is, three quatrains and a closing couplet.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516 –1547), was an English aristocrat, and one of the founders of English Renaissance poetry. He and his friend Sir Thomas Wyatt were the first English poets to write in the sonnet form. Surrey was less directly influenced by the Italians than Wyatt and had a perfectly just sense of what befitted the poetry of the nation. He substituted the less elaborate and easier English form which Shakespeare later adopted, three quatrains with different rhymes followed by a couplet. However, chiefly he was the first English poet to publish blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) in his translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Owing to him, English poetry acquired a magnificent instrument, which once perfected, became the meter of the drama and of the epic. Thus together, Wyatt and Surrey, due to their excellent translations of Petrarch's sonnets, are known as "Fathers of the English Sonnet". While Wyatt introduced the sonnet into English, it was Surrey who gave them the rhyming meter and the division into quatrains that now characterizes the sonnets variously named English, Elizabethan or Shakespearean sonnets.

Thomas Sackville (1536-1608) was the only poet after Wyatt and Surrey and before Spenser who left memorable verses behind him. He reverted to the medieval tradition. His only contribution to poetry, other than drama, was the *Induction*, which was followed by *The Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham*, written in 1563 for the *Mirror of Magistrates*. This *Mirror* was a series of stories concerning the misfortunes of the great figures in English history and was written by several poets. Sackville conceived the idea of the collection, and its verses constitute its only merit. His *Induction*, written in the seven line stanza (*ababbcc*) beloved of Chaucer, takes us back to the vision and allegories of the *Roman de la Rose*. He used an English which had contracted its grammar and dropped its terminations, and he reconstituted alternating accents more regularly than even Wyatt and Surrey.

The men of the Renaissance who reestablished rhythm were preoccupied by ancient meters. It was they who first used the words iambus, trochee and spondee to denote the combinations of accentuated and unaccentuated syllables in their lines. Versification wavered for sometime between anarchy and excessive regularity before it reached equilibrium. Sackville had undeniable artistic sense and Spenser was inspired by him when he painted the gloomiest pictures in *The Faerie Queene*. Thus Sackville deserves to be called the connecting link between Chaucer and Spenser. He deserves the glory of having helped to renew English poetry.

The Pioneers: Lyly, Sidney and Spenser

Lyly, Sidney, and Spenser were the three men who, about 1578, simultaneously, were initiators of the literature dedicated to beauty. Hence the three are being presented here side by side.

John Lyly (1554-1606), is the first of the writers who consciously and persistently used an artistic style and whose chief aspiration was to say a thing well. He was the father of euphuism and was born of a family of grammarians. He has been justifiably called the first English novelist or the first story teller who painted society romantically. His prose is almost as regulated and measured as verse. Although it suffers from excesses yet the innovation it represented served to cast the formless in a mould, to impart art to the inartistic.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-86) revealed in his *Apologie for Poetrie* his ideal of noble and classical beauty in writing. His *Arcadia*, published in 1590, inculcated in a whole generation a taste for literary jewellery, both genuine and false. Sidney lends life, feeling and will to the inanimate and the abstract. Working at language often by bold and new combinations of words, Sidney reaches close and vigorous expression. He is the first Englishman who was conscious of all the resources his language held for the impassioned style. His metaphors are sudden and elliptical. All the energy as well as the preciousness of the Shakespearian style exists in germ in the *Arcadia*. But Sidney's real innovation was due to senses sharpened by the contemplation of plastic works of art. He shows a sense of line and colour and of effects of light and shade hitherto unknown to English. It was especially the poets whom he influenced. A whole century of writers, including Shakespeare and the so called metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, were full of the refinements and the strange subtleties of which Sidney had brought the dangerous and dazzling model from Italy and to which he had given the strength of his youthful ardour.

To express feelings which had some analogy with Petrarch's, Sidney took recourse to the sonnet, which had been neglected in England since Surrey's day. In his *Astrophel and Stella*, he enshrined each movement of his heart, each incident of his love within the narrow bounds of the fourteen lines. She is Stella, his star; he Astrophel, enamored of the star. In Sidney's verses there are many figures and metaphors. There are even antitheses and ingenious verbal elaboration. A whole allegory is sometimes condensed into a single line or even a single word. Nothing else in the lyricism of the English Renaissance is at once so ardent, so true, so direct and so noble.

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) –Since Sidney's works did not appear until after his death, it was Spenser who first revealed poetic beauty to his generation. Spenser was the master of the language and seemed able to tune English verse to the natural tones of his voice. He modeled himself on Chaucer. His intention was not to break with the past but to sink his roots deep into it.

In his *The Shepherd's Calendar,* he nationalizes his eclogues by pungent words borrowed from the old poets of his country and from provincial vocabulary. The merits of the poem are properly those of style and are astonishing, in view of their date. Never yet had English poetry held a poem in which the combinations of lines and rhymes were both as variously rich and as novel. In the *Calendar*, there are as many as five different forms of stanzas in heroic or ten syllabled line. For the first time an English poet seemed to triumphed over his European rivals, and in the very genre which was generally attractive in the sixteenth century, in pastoral poetry. From the moment of its publication Spenser was the acknowledged national poet.

Spenser addressed to Elizabeth Boyle the *Amoretti* sonnets and the superb *Epithalamion* which concludes them. These poems have a place to themselves among the works of Spenser. He voices his feelings in them without recourse to allegory. The innovation illustrates the importance of the part played by the sonnet in this period. It was almost the sole medium of direct effusion and personal expression. Spenser's sonnets come between those of Sidney and Shakespeare, from which they are distinct in form as in sentiment. His three quatrains, linked by an artistic arrangement of rhymes and followed by a couplet, make a harmonious whole. His *Epithalamion* has no equal. The fine classical structure of the whole poem- simple, luminous and inevitable- make this ode Spenser's perfect production and the lyrical triumph of the English Renaissance.

The Faerie Queene was his masterpiece. It was his supreme ambition and the supreme pride of England, which confidently pitted this poem against the most famous epics of ancient and modern times. His poem was one of the world's most magnificent picture books. He borrows the idea or subject of his pictures from everywhere, from books as from paintings and pageants and the scenes on the stage of his time. He rejects no poetic source. We find in him reminiscences of Homer, Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid,

Chaucer, Langland, Lydgate, Malory, Sackville et al. Spenser occupies a transitional place in the history of the masque, a theatrical entertainment including poetry singing and dancing which was performed in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially at the royal court. His poem was inspired by the masques he had seen, but itself supplied one of the richest models and one of the strongest imaginative stimulants to the magnificent masques which came after him. *The Faerie Queene* may be said to have fixed the masques of the English Renaissance. His stanza, nine iambic lines – the first eight of them five footed and the ninth a hexameter, was the mould natural to his syntax and to his thought. Although it was used by many poets after him like Thomson, Byron, Shelley, Keats, it never seems to adapt itself as well to their tones as to his. No single stanza read separately can give an idea of the immense part which the stanza plays in the poem, in which each one inherits the cumulative force of all its predecessors.

Check Your Progress: Fill in the Blanks

1. The English Renaissance began in the late _____ century, influenced by the Italian Renaissance's focus on humanism and classical learning.
2. _____ is often referred to as the "Poet's Poet" for his intricate use of allegory and myth, especially in *The Faerie Queene*.
3. Renaissance poets often drew inspiration from _____ and Roman literature, incorporating themes of heroism and individualism.
4. _____, a courtier and poet, is celebrated for his sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella*.
5. The sonnet form, popularized by Petrarch, was adapted into English poetry by _____, who introduced the Shakespearean sonnet form.

Answers: 15th, Spenser, Greek, Sidney, Shakespeare

3.5 ELIZABETHAN POETRY FROM 1590 TO THE AGE OF POPE

Almost all the poetry down to the Metaphysical poets derived from Sidney and Spenser. Pastorals imitated from Spenser or Sidney abounded. *Astrophel and Stella* provoked a whole flowering season of sonnets. The successive appearance of Sidney's sonnets and *Arcadia* and of the first books of *The Faerie Queene* was the signal for an intense literary activity. The majority of the writers wrote verses in the fashionable poetic genres.

Samuel Daniel (1562-1619) and Michael Drayton (1563-1631) are the two poets who express, more directly than Spenser, their patriotic feeling, which is less troubled than his by the dream of a golden age or by hostility to the present. They survive only in a few pages of verse and a few short poems but their figures are distinct. Daniel had a vision of an English literature which should be read over the whole world. He told in narrative the story which was at this moment being dramatized, which Shakespeare was taking for the subject of plays. The eight cantos of Daniel's *Civil Wars*, published from 1595 to 1609, treat of misfortunes of England from the reign of Richard II until the break between Warwick and Edward IV. It corresponds to the Shakespearian histories, *Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V* and the first two parts of *Henry*

VI. Daniel's exposition is more accurate, cool and dignified than the plays. Unfortunately he poetizes too little. He keeps pace with the facts, adding fictions only very rarely. Yet the purity of his poetic style was admired and was called 'well languaged'. This purity, then so rare, won him favor in the nineteenth century. Writers like Wordsworth and Coleridge, who were working for the simplification of the language, praised Daniel for having banished eccentricities and arbitrary inventions from his style.

Christopher Marlowe wrote *Hero and Leander,* a poem that retells the Greek myth of Hero and Leander. After Marlowe's untimely death it was completed by George Chapman. The minor poet Henry Petowe published an alternative completion to the poem. The poem was first published posthumously, five years after Marlowe's demise.

The poem may be called an epyllion, that is, a "little epic": it is longer than a lyric or elegy, but concerned with love rather than with traditional epic subjects, and it has a lengthy digression — in this case, Marlowe's invented story of how scholars became poor. Marlowe certainly knew the story as told by both Ovid and by the Byzantine poet Musæus Grammaticus; Musaeus appears to have been his chief source.

Yet if Musaeus and Ovid gave it impetus, the poem is marked by Marlowe's unique style of extravagant fancy and violent emotion. Perhaps the most famous instance of these qualities in the poem is the opening description of Hero's costume, which includes a blue skirt stained with the blood of "wretched lovers slain" and a veil woven with flowers so realistic that she is continually forced to swat away bees. The final encounter of the two lovers is even more frenzied, with the two at times appearing closer to blows than to embraces.

Shakespeare published two narrative poems on erotic themes, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. *Venus and Adonis* is a poem written in 1592–1593, with a plot based on passages from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is a complex, kaleidoscopic work, using constantly shifting tone and perspective to present contrasting views of the nature of love.

Ovid told of how Venus took the beautiful Adonis as her first mortal lover. They were long-time companions, with the goddess hunting alongside her lover. She warns him of the tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes to dissuade him from hunting dangerous animals; he disregards the warning, and is killed by a boar.

Shakespeare developed this basic narrative into a poem of 1,194 lines. His chief innovation was to make Adonis refuse Venus's offer of herself.

The Rape of Lucrece (1594) is a narrative poem by William Shakespeare about the legendary Lucretia. In his previous narrative poem, *Venus* and *Adonis* (1593), Shakespeare had included a dedicatory letter to his patron, the Earl of Southampton, in which he promised to write a "graver work". Accordingly, *The Rape of Lucrece* lacks the humorous tone of the earlier poem.

Shakespeare retains the essence of the classic story, incorporating Livy's account that Tarquin's lust for Lucrece sprang from her husband's own praise of her.

Ben Jonson's poetry, like his drama, is informed by his classical learning. Some of his better-known poems are close translations of Greek or Roman models; all display the careful attention to form and style that often came naturally to those trained in classics in the humanist manner. Accepting both rhyme and stress, Jonson used them to mimic the classical qualities of simplicity, restraint, and precision.

"Epigrams" (published in the 1616 folio) is an entry in a genre that was popular among late-Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, although Jonson was perhaps the only poet of his time to work in its full classical range. The epigrams explore various attitudes, most from the satiric stock of the day:

complaints against women, courtiers, and spies abound. Jonson's epigrams of praise, including a famous poem to Camden and lines to Lucy Harington, are longer and are mostly addressed to specific individuals. Although it is included among the epigrams, "On My First Sonne" is neither satirical nor very short; the poem, intensely personal and deeply felt, typifies a genre that would come to be called "lyric poetry." It is possible that the spelling of 'son' as 'Sonne' is meant to allude to the sonnet form, with which it shares some features. A few other so-called epigrams share this quality. Jonson's poems of "The Forest" also appeared in the first folio. Most of the fifteen poems are addressed to Jonson's aristocratic supporters, but the most famous are his country-house poem "To Penshurst" and the poem "To Celia" ("Come, my Celia, let us prove") that appears also in *Volpone*.

Underwood, published in the expanded folio of 1640, is a larger and more heterogeneous group of poems. It contains *A Celebration of Charis*, Jonson's most extended effort at love poetry; various religious pieces; encomiastic poems including the poem to Shakespeare and a sonnet on Mary Wroth; the Execration against Vulcan and others. The 1640 volume also contains three elegies which have often been ascribed to Donne (one of them appeared in Donne's posthumous collected poems).

Jonson has been called 'the first poet laureate'. In his time Jonson was at least as influential as Donne. In 1623, historian Edmund Bolton named him the best and most polished English poet. That this judgment was widely shared is indicated by the admitted influence he had on younger poets. The grounds for describing Jonson as the "father" of cavalier poets are clear: many of the cavalier poets described themselves as his "sons" or his "tribe". All of them, including those like Herrick whose accomplishments in verse are generally regarded as superior to Jonson's, took inspiration from Jonson's revival of classical forms and themes, his subtle melodies, and his disciplined use of wit. In these respects Jonson may be regarded as among the most important figures in the prehistory of English neoclassicism.

The metaphysical poets is a term coined by the poet and critic Samuel Johnson to describe a loose group of English lyric poets of the 17th century, whose work was characterized by the inventive use of conceits, and by speculation about topics such as love or religion. These poets were not formally affiliated; most of them did not even know each other or read each other's work.

John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and Richard Crashaw are described as the 'central figures' of metaphysical poetry.

John Donne's poetry had considerable influence on subsequent poets, who emulated his style. And there are several instances in which seventeenth-century poets used the word 'metaphysical' in their work, meaning that Samuel Johnson's description has some foundation in the poetry of the previous century.

Their style was characterized by wit and metaphysical conceits—far-fetched or unusual similes or metaphors, such as in Andrew Marvell's comparison of the soul with a drop of dew; in an expanded epigram format, with the use of simple verse forms, octosyllabic couplets, quatrains or stanzas in which length of line and rhyme scheme enforce the sense. Their poetry diverged from the style of their times, containing neither images of nature nor allusions to classical mythology, as were common. Several metaphysical poets, especially John Donne, were influenced by Neo-Platonism. One of the primary Platonic concepts found in metaphysical poetry is the idea that the perfection of beauty in the beloved acted as a remembrance of perfect beauty in the eternal realm. Their work relies on images and references to the contemporary scientific or geographical discoveries. These were used to examine religious and moral questions, often employing an element of casuistry.

Metaphysical Poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which, like that of the *Divina Commedia*, the *De Natura Rerum,* perhaps Goethe's *Faust*, has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence.

Cowley's bright and alert, if not profound mind, is attracted by the achievements of science and the systematic materialism of Hobbes. Donne, moreover, is metaphysical not only in virtue of his scholasticism, but by his deep reflective interest in the experiences of which his poetry is the expression, the new psychological curiosity with which he writes of love and religion. The divine poets who follow Donne have each the inherited metaphysic of the Church to which he is attached, Catholic or Anglican. But none of the poets has for his main theme a metaphysic like that of Epicurus or St. Thomas passionately apprehended and imaginatively expounded. Donne, the most thoughtful and imaginative of them all, is more aware of disintegration than of comprehensive harmony, of the clash between the older physics and metaphysics on the one hand and the new science of Copernicus and Galileo and Vesalius and Bacon on the other.

Age of Pope

The Augustan Age in English literature refers to a period of literary achievement and cultural flourishing that occurred during the early to mid-eighteenth century. The term "Augustan" is derived from the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus, who is often considered the epitome of a wise and just ruler. The writers of the Augustan Age sought to emulate the values and achievements of Augustus and his era, and their literature reflected a number of distinctive features.

Generally, the period between 1680 and 1750 is called the Augustan age in English literature, for frequent comparisons were made between the literary activity of the England of this period and that of the Rome of Emperor Augustus which produced such poetic geniuses as Virgil, Horace, Ovid and many others. Dr. Johnson in his characteristic way said that Dryden did for English poetry what Augustus had done for the city of Rome— "he found it brick and left it marble." Dryden and Pope were the greatest poets of the Augustan age. They conscientiously looked to the writers of Greek and Roman antiquity for guidance and inspiration. However, most of all, they were influenced by the Roman poets of the age of Augustus. They discredited the tradition of the decadent metaphysical poets and established a new school of poetry which has since come to be known as the Neo-classical school of English poetry. Though something had already been done before Dryden by Denham and Waller yet much was left to be done by Dryden himself and, still later, by Pope.

The neo-classicism of Dryden and Pope was representative of the spirit of the age. The Restoration age marked the close of the genuine "romanticism" of the Elizabethan period and also the decadent romanticism of the Jacobean and Caroline periods. The creative imagination, exuberant fancy, and extravagance of the past had no appeal for an age which saw the establishment of the Royal Society and the inauguration of a new era of experimental science. A critical spirit was abroad, and men stopped taking things for granted. The spirit of the age was analytic and inquisitive, not synthetic and naively credulous. It put a greater stress on reason and intellect than on passion and imagination. The neo-classical poetry of Dryden, Pope and their compatriots was a manifestation of this new spirit.

Respect for the Ancients

The neo-classicists were champions of common sense and reason and were in favour of normal generalities against the whims and eccentricities of individual genius. These normal generalities went under the term "Nature". Pope's advice to budding writers was to "follow nature". Curiously enough the slogan of Rousseau and the English romantic poets who reacted against the school of Pope, was also the same. But "nature" for the romantics meant something entirely different- primitive simplicity and the world of forest, flowers, birds, streams, etc. Dryden and Pope laid special stress on the imitation of the ancients and the observance of the rules formulated or adhered to by them. For the rules of the ancients were, in the words of Pope "nature still, but nature methodised". Neo-classical poets abundantly translated and

adapted classical words. Thus, Dryden gave a verse translation of Virgil and Pope of Homer. This translation did not literally adhere to their originals. Thus, Bentley observed that Pope's translation of Homer was a good poem but it was "not Homer". What is more important than literal fidelity, however, is the attempt at capturing the spirit of the original. And this Dryden and Pope did pretty well. Even the original works of the English neo-classicists have echoes of classical writers.

Neoclassicism and its Influence

The Augustan Age was marked by a revival of classical values and a renewed interest in the ancient Greek and Roman literary traditions. The writers of this period were influenced by the ideas of the French Renaissance, which emphasized the importance of reason, order, and clarity in literature. They sought to emulate the style and subject matter of classical literature, and their works were characterized by an emphasis on clarity, simplicity, and restraint.

The neo-classical school of Dryden and Pope was much influenced by the Neo-classical French school of the age of Louis XIV which goes down in history as the "golden" of "Augustan" age of French literature. One of the important tenets of the French neo-classical criticism was a theory of kinds or genres. Traditional criticism in the age of Dryden and Pope also worked through a reverent attention to these genres which the French critics had derived from the classics. Aristotle, the godhead of all criticism for the Neo-classicists had dealt with only two genres- Epic and Tragedy. But by the middle of the seventeenth century many more genres came to be recognised and fit styles for them came to be fixed. The appropriateness of the style of genre- the principle of decorum- came to be exalted to a veritable shibboleth. A hierarchy of genres found its establishment. The English poets adopted this important genre from the French neo-classicists.

Satire and Moral Instruction

The writers of the Augustan Age were preoccupied with social and moral issues, and their literature often served as a vehicle for satirical commentary and moral instruction. Satire was a popular form of writing during this period, and writers used it to criticize the social and political structures of their time. They also sought to promote ethical behaviour and moral values through their literature, and their works often contained explicit moral messages.

Much of romantic poetry is marked by an egregious lack of realism amounting at times to sheer escapism. Classicism, on the other hand, puts special emphasis on concrete reality and aims pre-eminently at edification and improvement of the reader. That is why much of the classical poetry is realistic, didactic and satiric. Almost all classical poets were men of action, very much in the thick of life and its pressing affairs. They wrote with a very clear and concrete purpose, not just for the fun of it or for fulfilling a pressing necessity of self-revelation. Political, religious, and even personal satire became in the Augustan era the vogue of the day. If the neo-classical poet was not satiric, he was, at least sure to be didactic. It is very rarely that we come across in this age such a poem as Pope's "Eloisa to Aberlard", which is a poem without a purpose aiming neither at instruction not at ridicule not chastisement through satire.

Rationalism and Enlightenment

The Augustan Age was also marked by a growing interest in rationalism and Enlightenment ideas. The writers of this period were interested in the scientific and philosophical advances of their time, and they sought to apply rationalist principles to their literary works. They believed that reason and rationality could help to solve social and moral problems, and their works reflected this belief.

Urbanization and the Emergence of the Middle Class

The Augustan Age coincided with a period of urbanization and the emergence of the middle class. The writers of this period were often members of the urban middle class, and their literature reflected the concerns and values of this social group. They were interested in issues such as commerce, trade, and urban life, and their works often reflected a fascination with the city and its culture.

Prose Fiction

The Augustan Age saw the emergence of the novel as a popular literary form. The writers of this period were interested in exploring human behavior and psychology, and the novel provided them with a new medium for doing so. Novels were often written in a realistic style, and they explored issues such as love, marriage, and social mobility. The novel became an important form of literature during the Augustan Age, and it has continued to be a popular literary form ever since.

The Augustan Age in English literature was marked by a number of distinctive features, including a revival of classical values, a preoccupation with social and moral issues, a growing interest in rationalism and Enlightenment ideas, the emergence of the middle class, and the popularity of the novel as a literary form. The writers of this period sought to create literature that reflected the values and concerns of their time, and their works continue to be studied and appreciated today.

The Augustan Age in English literature saw the emergence of several prominent writers, who produced a range of influential works.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here is a list of important words from the previous sections. Give these words a good look before moving to the next section:

Epyllion: A “little epic”—a short narrative poem that tells a romantic or mythological story, longer than a lyric but shorter than a traditional epic.

Narrative Poem: A poem that tells a story with a beginning, middle, and end, often involving characters and a plot.

Epigram: A short, witty, and often satirical poem or statement, usually with a clever or ironic twist.

Lyric Poetry: A type of emotional, personal poetry that expresses the speaker's thoughts or feelings, often in first-person voice.

Conceit (Metaphysical Conceit): An elaborate, often startling metaphor that links two very different ideas or objects, a hallmark of metaphysical poetry.

Neo-Platonism: A philosophical influence in literature that connects beauty and love in the physical world with a higher, divine reality.

Casuistry: The use of complex moral reasoning to resolve ethical dilemmas; in poetry, often used to explore religious or philosophical questions.

Now write the meaning of these words:

Patoral: _____.

Sonnet: _____.

Elegy: _____.

The Age of Pope (1700-1744)

It was poet Oliver Goldsmith who first designated the early 18th century, as the Augustan Age. The age has also been called the Age of Pope. The Augustan age includes the age of Dryden and Pope. The restoration of Stuart monarchy in 1660 marked the beginning of the Augustan age.

Eighteenth century in England was an age equal to the age of Augustus Caesar, when the Roman society had reached the peak of its glory. The name Augustan Age was chosen by writers who saw in Pope, Addison, Swift, Johnson and Burke the modern parallels to Horace, Virgil and Cicero, and all that brilliant company who made Roman literature famous in the day of Augustus. Past ages of England were looked upon as barbarous, and the classics of Greece and Rome were regarded as models which men of taste were to follow.

This period, in the first place, is called the classical age, because reason dominated emotion; social conventions became more important than individual convictions; form became more important than content. The term "classic" is applied to designate writing of the finest quality. According to Goethe, "Everything that is good in literature is classical." Every national literature has at least one period in which an unusual number of exceptional writers produce books of outstanding quality, and this is called the classical period of a nation's literature. The age of Queen Anne is often called the classical age of England. Addison, Swift, Richardson, Fielding, Goldsmith, Dr Johnson, Burke, Gibbon and Pope are the great luminaries of the age.

The writers of this age were governed by set rules and principles. And, in this crazy adherence to rules the writers were deeply influenced by Boileau and Rapin, who insisted on precise methods of writing poetry and who professed to have discovered their rules in the works of Aristotle and Horace.

The period is also called the age of reason and good sense, because it was based on the good – sense ideal of the French critic Boileau. It was an age of enlightenment when a literature which had become pellucid and clear began to diffuse knowledge among a growing public. The supremacy of reason was scarcely challenged. There reigned a common belief in the advancement of human mind.

The Augustans believed in respectability and designed conformity. They had no regard for boundless imagination and overflowing enthusiasm of the Elizabethan age. Their outlook was rational. The poets of this age strove to repress all emotion and enthusiasm. Good sense became the ideal of the time, and good sense meant a love of the reasonable and the hatred of the extravagant and mystical. Wit took precedence over imagination; inspiration was lost in technical skill. The whole literature of the age was marked by coldness and want of feeling.

The 18th century literature was indebted to the growing influence of French literature. One notable feature of French influence may be seen in the tragedies in rhyme that were for a time in vogue, of which plots were borrowed from French romances. Boileau held supreme sway over the minds of the literary artists. He was almost a literary dictator.

An important characteristic of the age was the belief that literature must follow nature. Pope exhorted his contemporaries to follow nature. However, the nature of the Augustan period was not the nature of Wordsworth. The Augustans were drawn towards human nature rather than the nature we have in forests. Their sole aim was to copy man and manners of society. Alexander Pope said: "*The proper study of mankind is man*".

The literature of the age was concerned with the follies and foibles of the times. Literature became an interpretation of life, the kind of life that was led in the social and political circles of the times. Poetry

became the poetry of the town, the coffee – house and artificial society; Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is a classic example. The literature of the age lost all touch with the country life and became the literature of the town.

Satire is the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it attitudes of amusement, scorn, or indignation. Satire is usually justified by those who practice it as a corrective of human vice and folly.

Satire became the prominent form of literature during the Augustan age. The satires of Dryden are well known to us. In the age of Pope, the love for satire came to the upper surface and the cold worldliness of Augustan life found its expression in polished wit and satire.

The language of poetry became gaudy and inane and the ordinary language was kept out from poetic literature. The result was that the literature of the age became artificial, stilted, rational and intellectual, losing all inspiration, enthusiasm and romantic fervour which were the hall-marks of the literature of the Elizabethan age. The Augustans were superior in other ways, notable in satire and journalism, in the technical language of philosophy and science and in the great branch of modern literature, the novel, of which they were among the English pioneers.

In heroic couplet lines of iambic pentameter rhyme in pairs: *aa, bb, cc* and so on. The adjective "heroic" is applied because of the frequent use of such couplets in heroic poems (epic) and plays. This verse form was introduced into English poetry by Geoffrey Chaucer.

During the Augustan age the heroic couplet was recognised as the only medium of poetic expression. It was no longer possible to write one's thoughts as the pen could move. The fastidiousness of the public ear did not appreciate "the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease." In the heroic couplet the poets put all their skill and wrote with an unimaginable correctness and precision.

Jonathan Swift

Jonathan Swift was an Irish-born writer who is best known for his satirical works, including *A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver's Travels*. *A Modest Proposal* is a satirical essay that proposes a solution to the problem of poverty in Ireland by suggesting that the Irish sell their children as food to the wealthy. *Gulliver's Travels* is a novel that satirizes human nature and the political and social institutions of Swift's time.

Samuel Johnson

Samuel Johnson was a writer, lexicographer, and critic who is best known for his dictionary of the English language, *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Johnson was also a prominent literary critic, and his critical essays and biographical sketches are still highly regarded today. He wrote a number of other works as well, including *Rasselas* and *The Lives of the Poets*.

Daniel Defoe: Daniel Defoe was a writer and journalist who is best known for his novel *Robinson Crusoe*. The novel tells the story of a man who is shipwrecked on a desert island, and it explores themes of survival, isolation, and individualism. Defoe also wrote a number of other works, including *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *Moll Flander*s.

John Dryden: John Dryden was a poet, playwright, and critic who is often considered one of the most important writers of the Restoration period, which preceded the Augustan Age. He wrote a number of influential works, including *The Conquest of Granada*, *All for Love*, and *Absalom and Achitophel*. Dryden was also a literary critic, and his critical essays helped to establish the norms and conventions of English literary criticism.

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele were the co-founders of *The Spectator*, a periodical that played a significant role in shaping the literary and cultural values of the Augustan Age. *The Spectator* was a collection of essays, poems, and short fiction that addressed a wide range of social and cultural issues. It was immensely popular during its time, and it helped to establish the norms and values of English literature in the eighteenth century.

In conclusion, the Augustan Age in English literature was marked by the emergence of several prominent writers, who produced a range of influential works. These writers included Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe, John Dryden, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Their works helped to define the literary and cultural values of the Augustan Age, and they continue to be studied and appreciated today.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

The Italian influence which Wyatt and Surrey brought into English poetry at the Renaissance gave it a more serious, a more thoughtful color. They caught, especially Wyatt in some of the finest of his sonnets and songs, that spirit of 'high seriousness' which Chaucer with all his admiration of Italian poetry had failed to apprehend. English medieval poetry is often gravely pious, haunted by the fear of death and the judgement; it is never serious and thoughtful in the introspective, reflective, dignified manner which it became in Wyatt and Sackville, and our 'sage and serious' Spenser, and in the songs of the first group of Elizabethan courtly poets, Sidney and Raleigh and Dyer. One has but to recall 'My lute, awake! perform the last', 'Forget not yet the tried intent', 'My mind to me a kingdom is', and to contrast them in mind with the songs which Henry VIII and Cornish were still composing and singing when Wyatt began to write, in order to realize what Italy and the Renaissance did to deepen the strain of English lyric poetry as that had flowed under French influence from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. But French influence, the influence of Ronsard and his fellows, renewed itself in the seventies, and the great body of Elizabethan song is as gay and careless and impersonal as the earlier lyric had been, though richer in colour and more varied in rhythm. Then came Donne and Jonson and new qualities of spirit and form were given to lyrical poetry, and not to lyrical poetry alone.

3.7 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. By whom and when was movable block printing introduced into England?

Ans. By Caxton in 1474.

2. Name the two English humanists that helped bring ideas and attitudes associated with the new learning to an English audience?

Ans. Thomas More and Thomas Elyot.

3. Name the first English poets to write in the sonnet form.

Ans. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt.

4. What do you understand by trochee?

Ans. A trochee is a metrical foot used in formal poetry consisting of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one.

5. What is euphuism?

Ans. It consists of a preciously ornate and sophisticated style, employing in deliberate excess a wide range of literary devices such as antitheses, alliterations, repetitions and rhetorical questions.

6. How did *Arcadia* influence the writers of the times?

Ans. Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, published in 1590, inculcated in a whole generation a taste for literary jewellery, both genuine and false.

7. How did Sidney influence Shakespeare and the metaphysical poets?

Ans. A whole century of writers, including Shakespeare and the metaphysical poets, were full of the refinements and the strange subtleties of which Sidney had brought the dangerous and dazzling model from Italy and to which he had given the strength of his youthful ardour.

8. What is masque?

Ans. The masque is a theatrical entertainment including poetry singing and dancing which was performed in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially at the royal court.

9. For which of his attribute did Daniel win favor in the nineteenth century?

Ans. The purity of his poetic style, then so rare, won him favor in the nineteenth century. Writers like Wordsworth and Coleridge, who were working for the simplification of the language, praised Daniel for having banished eccentricities and arbitrary inventions from his style.

10. What is epyllion?

Ans. An epyllion is a "little epic". It is longer than a lyric or elegy, but concerned with love rather than with traditional epic subjects, and it has a lengthy digression.

11. What do you understand by metaphysical conceits?

Ans. A conceit is an extended metaphor with a complex logic that governs a poetic passage or entire poem. By juxtaposing, usurping and manipulating images and ideas in surprising ways, a conceit invites the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of an object of comparison. The term metaphysical conceit is generally associated with the 17th century metaphysical poets. The metaphysical conceit differs from an extended analogy in the sense that it does not have a clear-cut relationship between the things being compared.

3.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Enumerate the factors that helped introduce Renaissance in England.
2. Comment on the influence of the Italian literature on Wyatt and Surrey.
3. Establish Sackville as a connecting link between Chaucer and Spenser.
4. Comment on Lyly, Sidney and Spencer as initiators of the literature dedicated to beauty.
5. Discuss Daniel and Drayton as patriotic poets.
6. Write a note on the classical influence on the poetry of Chaucer and Shakespeare.

7. Is it justified to call Jonson as the father of the Cavalier poets? Discuss.

8. Several metaphysical poets were influenced by Neo-Platonism. Discuss.

3.9 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 Who is often considered the "father of English poetry" and wrote *The Canterbury Tales* during the 14th century?

A) Edmund Spenser

B) John Milton

C) Geoffrey Chaucer

D) William Shakespeare

Q.2 Which monarch's reign is associated with the English Renaissance, characterized by flourishing arts, culture, and literature?

A) King James I

B) Queen Elizabeth I

C) King Charles I

D) King Henry VIII

Q.3 Who authored the pastoral poem *The Shepherd's Calendar* and is known for using intricate language and allegory?

A) Christopher Marlowe

B) Ben Jonson

C) John Donne

D) Edmund Spenser

Q.4 Which play by William Shakespeare is often considered a quintessential example of Renaissance drama, focusing on the human experience and tragic flaws?

A) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

B) *Hamlet*

C) *Romeo and Juliet*

D) *Macbeth*

Q.5 John Donne is associated with what poetic movement that emerged in the 17th century, characterized by intellectual and philosophical exploration?

A) Romanticism

B) Metaphysical poetry

C) Neoclassicism

D) Realism

Q.6 Which of the following poets is known for his *Holy Sonnets* and exploring complex metaphysical themes in his poetry?

A) William Wordsworth

B) John Milton

C) Christopher Marlowe

D) John Donne

Q.7 In John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, who is the main antagonist and tempts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?

A) Beelzebub

B) Lucifer

C) Gabriel

D) Michael

Q.8 Which Renaissance playwright and poet wrote the tragedy *Doctor Faustus*, depicting the downfall of a scholar who makes a pact with the devil?

A) Ben Jonson

B) Thomas More

C) Christopher Marlowe

D) Francis Bacon

Q.9 Which English philosopher's writings, such as *Leviathan*, had a significant influence on the development of political thought during the Renaissance?

A) John Locke

B) Thomas Hobbes

C) Francis Bacon

D) René Descartes

Q.10 What literary form became popular during the Renaissance, presenting functional stories through a frame narrative, as seen in *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio?

A) Sonnets

B) Satires

C) Epistles

D) Short stories

Answers: 1C, 2B, 3D, 4B, 5B, 6D, 7B, 8C, 9B, 10D

3.10 SUGGESTED READING

- Bloom, Harold. ed. *John Donne and the Metaphysical Poets*. Infobase Holdings, Incorporated, 2010.
- Blamires, Harry. *A Short History of English Literature*. Taylor & Francis, 2013

THE AGE OF CHAUCER

STRUCTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Age of Geoffrey Chaucer, spanning the late 14th century, was a time of significant social, political, and cultural transformation in England. This period witnessed the decline of feudalism, the rise of a burgeoning middle class, and the impacts of the Black Death, all of which influenced the literary landscape. Geoffrey Chaucer, often referred to as the Father of English literature, emerged as a seminal figure during this era, shaping the development of English poetry and prose.

4.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

In this lesson the learner is exposed to the social background of the period, the political senario of the times, Geoffrey Chaucer's works and his place in Literature to enable the learner to make a general assessment of Chaucer.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the historical backdrop of the Age of Chaucer, including the Hundred Years' War and religious and social unrest.
2. Identify key features of the period, such as feudal decline, the rise of the middle class, and shifts in religious authority.
3. Analyze the literary significance of Chaucer's works within their historical context.

4.3 THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

During the reign of Edward III, in England the Hundred Years' War with France broke out. It was to prove the longest war ever fought by England, and when it was over, many deep changes had been brought about in the institutions of the country and in the national consciousness.

Edward's mother, Isabella, the daughter of king Philip IV of France, was also called Philippe le Bel. When the king died, his three sons succeeded to the throne one after the other, but all soon died childless. There being no direct heir to the French Crown, a nephew of Philip IV became king with the name of Philip VI.

Edward III claimed the crown for his mother Isabella whom the French had not chosen because, according to the French Salic Law, no woman was allowed to ascend the throne. Edward's claims were ignored and he declared war on France.

The English won a naval victory near Sluys, in Flanders (1340), and a battle at Grecy (1346). About a year later, Edward took Calais after a famous siege that had lasted almost twelve months. After that, a truce was concluded, thanks to the mediation of Pope Clement VI.

In 1348, a dreadful pestilence, known in England as the 'Black Death', spread all over the world from China to the Atlantic Ocean. It was one of the direst calamities in the history of the world, and in England, the population was decimated.

In 1355, the war was resumed under the leadership of Edward III's eldest son, Prince Edward, called the 'Black Prince', one of the most romantic figures in English history. In a battle fought at Poitiers (1356), against overwhelming odds, he defeated John of Valois, King of France, and took him prisoner together with his son. By the treaty of Bretigny (1366) more than half of France went to Edward.

Then he began to extort money from his new French subjects to defray the expenses of an expedition to Spain intended to help Pedro, the Cruel, in quelling a revolt of the Spaniards who had risen against him. Being unwilling to pay the new taxes, Edward's subjects applied for help to the King of France. The war was renewed and the Black Prince avenged himself most cruelly on the town of Limoges whose population was massacred in cold blood. But this time the English were no longer successful and Prince Edward was compelled to return to England in broken health. He died there in 1376. His father, Edward III, died a year later and by this time the English had lost all their possessions in France except Calais. The war was interrupted, to be resumed later on by Henry V.

Though Edward III had four sons besides the Black Prince, Parliament acknowledged as his rightful heir, Richard of Bordeaux, the Black Prince's son. He ascended the throne as Richard II, in 1377. As he was then only a boy of ten, first John of Gaunt, the son of Edward III, and then the Duke of Gloucester, acted as regents.

4.4 RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL UNREST

During the reign of Edward III, John Wycliffe (1320-1384), preached his doctrine of the poverty of the clergy and maintained that, all authority being founded on grace, wicked kings, popes and priests should have no power. A new sect arose whose members were called the Lollards or 'mumblers'. They adopted Wycliffe's views and declared themselves in favour of common ownership of goods.

In 1381, an insurrection broke out on account of a tax called the poll-tax. The occasion for it was the refusal of a tiller in Kent to pay his dues. He struck the tax-collector dead with his hammer, and became the leader of the revolt. He was known as Wat, (the) Tyler.

Under his leadership 1,00,000 men marched towards London to demand justice from the King, and Richard promised to grant their demands. His promises were never kept, but partly as a result of the shortage of labour caused by the Black Death, the conditions of the people after the Peasants' Revolt gradually improved, the remains of serfdom soon disappeared, and labourers became free to work for wages.

In 1388, the Parliament known as the 'Merciless' met and, at the instigation of the Duke of Gloucester, banished the King's friends under a charge of mismanagement. But in 1389, Richard came of age, dismissed the Duke of Gloucester, and took over the government himself.

4.5 DISPOSITION OF RICHARD II

The reign of Richard II came to a tragic end in 1399, when Henry Boling defeated Duke of Lancaster, son of John of Gaunt, and landed in Yorkshire while Richard was in Ireland. He seized the crown and compelled Richard to sign his own deposition. Richard died the next year, probably starved to death or murdered.

4.6 GENERAL FEATURES OF LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF CHAUCER

The political and social conditions of the period strongly affected literature. The sudden burst of military glory obtained at Crecy and Poitiers promoted the growth of a new English national spirit in opposition to everything that came from France. French itself ceased to be the official language, and English was introduced into Court and Parliament.

The revolt of Wat Tyler and the success of Wycliffe's teaching are clear signs that deep changes had been wrought in the mentality of the people and that a new need for social justice was beginning to be felt by the humbler classes. The towns of England were gradually winning power and privilege from their feudal lords and, little by little, craftsmen and merchants were rising in power and wealth. Craft-guilds and merchant-guilds were coming into being, while trade was increasing enormously.

The spirit of national independence and commercial prosperity, a new consciousness of the rights of man, the socialist-type of the Lollards and the new moral earnestness of Wycliffe's preaching were forces by which the crust of feudalism was eventually broken and the beginning of a modern national literature was made possible. The greatest representative of the period and the first modern poet was Geoffrey Chaucer. His best known contemporaries were William Langland, John Gower, and John Wycliff.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

1. The decline of _____ weakened the feudal system during Chaucer's time.
2. The _____ Years' War significantly shaped the political and economic climate of the period.
3. The Black Death led to widespread _____ shortages, increasing wages and shifting power to the middle class.
4. The Church faced criticism for corruption, sparking movements like the _____ Rebellion.
5. Chaucer's works reflect the growing influence of the _____ class in society.

Answers: Feudalism, Hundred, Labour, Peasants', Middle

4.7 GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340–1400)

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London in 1340, in the family of a wine merchant in Thames Street. We know very little about his early life. It is doubtful whether he studied at Oxford or Cambridge, the two leading universities of the time, but there is some reason to believe that he received his education at both.

The first well established fact about his life is that in 1357 he became page to the wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, one of the sons of Edward III. In 1359, Edward III renewed his attack upon France and Chaucer bore arms and fought for the King. In the course of the campaign he was taken prisoner, but was ransomed before the Treaty of Bretigny in 1365. We then know nothing of his life for the next six years. Probably he spent much of his time reading French poetry, which was very popular in those days.

From 1366 to 1372, he was again connected with the Court. Pensions, gifts and lucrative situations were given to him by John of Gaunt (another son of Edward III), who later on became Chaucer's brother-in-law, having married the sister of the poet's wife. In the following years he was sent on several diplomatic missions abroad, three of which were to Italy, in 1372, 1374, and 1378. Italian literature, which was already in full bloom at that time, opened to Chaucer a new world. He certainly read much of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. He may even have met Petrarch and Boccaccio, for they died in 1374 and 1375.

On his return to England, he was appointed as Comptroller of the Customs, a brilliant position which freed him from every financial anxiety.

All went well with him during the reign of Edward III and Richard II. In 1386, he sat in Parliament as one of the knights for the Shire of Kent. But when Gloucester took the lead against the king, the poet fell on evil days and lost his office. He was even compelled to borrow money for his immediate needs. However, when Richard triumphed over his adversaries, he obtained a grant of £ 20 a year for life. But until his death, he seems to have been in dire straits for money, and, when Henry IV succeeded to the throne, he sent him a humorous *Compleyente to his Empty Purse,* and the new king doubled his pension. Chaucer died in London in 1400 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

4.8 HIS WORKS

The Three Phases of His Literary Production

Chaucer's literary production is generally divided by scholars into three periods or phases: the Period of French imitation (1359–72); the Period of Italian influence (1372–86); and the independent or English period of his full artistic maturity (1386–1400).

4.9 CHAUCER'S FRENCH PERIOD

When Chaucer first began to write, translations from the French were still popular, and he was only following the prevalent fashion when he set himself to translate the *Roman de la Rose*. This was a long allegorical love poem, consisting of about 20,000 lines of which the first 4,000 were written by Guillaume de Lorris, and was taken up and finished forty years after his death, by Jean de Meung about the end of the century.

During the first period, he wrote mainly allegorical poetry after the manner of the French and used the octosyllabic couplet. To this period belongs *The Book of the Duchess* (1369). John of Gaunt's first wife, Blanche of Lancaster, died in November, 1369, and it is the first original poem of any length by Chaucer which has come down to us. He wrote this poem in her honour. In the prologue, he feigns that in default of sleep, of which a sickness he has 'suffered this eight yere' has bereft him, he reads Ovid's story on how King Coyx appeared after his death to his faithful wife Alcione, and then dreams of a May Morning and

a hunt, amid which he meets a knight, clothed all in black, lamenting under an oak. The knight tells him how he had loved and won the fairest of all ladies, 'the goode, faire white', as he calls her, and dwells on her beauty and goodness. Now she is dead. The poet dreams that he stammers out a word of sympathy, and then amid the sound of the returning hunt he wakes, and the graceful poem comes to an end.

The suggestion of a hopeless love which had robbed him of health and happiness, made in the Prologue to *Blaunche*, is continued in the beautiful little poem, the *Complaint of the Death of Pity.* Joined on to the *Pity* in two manuscripts, is another poem of 128 lines, notable as containing several metrical experiments among them, being the first example of Dante's *terza rima* in the English language. This *Complaint to his Lady,* as it has been called, would seem, from its experimental character, to be purely playful.

Another poem may belong to this period, the *Compleynt of Mars,* founded on the old myth told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* of the love of god Mars for the goddess Venus, and its discovery by Phoebus Apollo. This story, Chaucer here works out, according to the astronomy of his day, of a conjunction of the planet Mars with the planet Venus in the sign of Taurus, or The Bull–one of the astrological houses of Venus into which Phoebus or the Sun enters every April. Gossip said that the poem also had reference to an intrigue between the Lady Isabella of York and the Duke of Exeter, but the theory is superfluous, and the poem is humorous and ingenious enough to stand by itself.

4.10 CHAUCER'S ITALIAN PERIOD

In the second period, he fell under the influence of the great Italian poets of the age. From Dante he first learned the full power and range of poetry; from Petrarch he got the taste for a perfect form; from Boccaccio he derived the art of telling a story delightfully. In this period, he mainly used the heroic verse of seven lines, each of five iambic feet rhyming *ababbcc*, and began to use the heroic couplet of five iambic feet rhyming in pairs, *aa bb cc*. In the seventeenth century, this verse was regarded by Dryden as the true form for tragic or heroic drama and therefore called 'heroic.'

From his visit to Italy, Chaucer brought back three books, the *Divina Commedia* of Dante and the *Teseide* and *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. With the *Filostrato,* Chaucer was more inimediately successful, for between 1380 and 1383 he transmuted it into his longest and very beautiful poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*. Written in the seven line stanza over which he had obtained a complete mastery, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is full of human interest and pathos, vivid in colour and the sense of the beauty and fleetingness of life and if he had written nothing else, by itself it would entitle him to be ranked among the greatest English poets. He takes the story as Boccaccio told it, and humanises and enriches it at every point.

While *Troilus* was in progress, Chaucer took up two other subjects. The first of these, which leaves its trace on the *Troilus* and on many of his later works, was a prose translation of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius, a Roman statesman and a man of letters, who was first imprisoned and afterwards murdered by order of Theodoric in A.D. 525.

The other subject which interrupted *Troilus* was Richard II's wedding with Anne of Bohemia. *The House of Fame* describes in octosyllabic couplets, a dream, on a certain December 10. On December 12, 1380, an English ambassador was appointed to entreat for the marriage, and Dr. Aage Brusendorft suggests that the decision had been taken on the 10th and inspired Chaucer to write a poem on the lines of *Le Temple d' Honneur,* in which Froissart had guardedly forecast an unidentified marriage.

The next separate poem preserved after *Troilus* is that known as *The Legend of Good Women.* It consists of nine stories of women noted for constancy and fidelity, and the poet wrote it to make up for the bad light he had thrown upon the female sex in his *Troilus and Criseyde.* It is considered by some a preparatory experiment for the *Canterbury Tales.*

Chaucer's 'Independent' Period

The independent period of the poet's artistic maturity goes from 1386 to 1400 and includes The *Canterbury Tales,* written in 1387. They are the best pieces in Middle English and his first truly original work of poetry. They were first printed by Caxton in 1475.

Later Minor Poems: *The Canterbury Tales* was Chaucer's last important work, and the composition of those specially written for the cycle certainly spread over several years. But Chaucer, though he was probably but little over sixty at the time of his death, seems to have felt old age press heavily on him and it is quite possible that he did not continue his story-telling upto the last. He wrote, however, a few short poems during his later years. *The Former Age, Fortune, Truth, Gentilesse, Lak of Steadfastness* are linked together by their obvious reminiscences of the poet's translation of the *De Consolatione.* The *Compleynt of Chaucer to his Purse,* despite its humour closes rather pitifully, the long list of his poems.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, before you proceed, take a look at the important words from the sections that you have read:

Octosyllabic Couplets: A poetic form consisting of rhymed pairs of lines with eight syllables each.

Heroic Couplets: A pair of rhymed lines in iambic pentameter, often used for epic or narrative verse.

Terza Rima: A verse form of three-line stanzas with an interlocking rhyme scheme (aba bcb cdc...).

Elegy: A mournful or reflective poem, often lamenting the dead.

Dream Vision: A literary device in which a character falls asleep and experiences a dream that reveals truths or explores complex ideas.

Allusion: An indirect reference to another text, person, or event.

Personification: Giving human traits to non-human objects or abstract ideas.

Frame Narrative: A literary technique where a main story contains one or more embedded stories.

Can you give one example each of these terms from the text:

- Frame Narrative: _____
- Elegy: _____
- Allegory: _____
- Satire: _____

4.11 CHAUCER'S PLACE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

In estimating the work of any poet, we have to consider it under two different aspects– in its relation to the time during which it was produced, and in its positive results. Looked at from either of these points of view, Chaucer's achievements were very great. When he began to write, the ideals of the thirteenth century had lost their power. While the memory of Richard Coeur de Lion was fresh in men's minds, the adventures of knights and their ladies formed a natural subject for poetry. By the reign of Richard II, they had lost any semblance of reality. Dead also was the fervour of mystical faith which gave to the Arthurian romances, their unique atmosphere. The first, and not the least, of the achievements of Chaucer was that he gave English poetry new subjects, drawn partly from Italian literature, partly from Latin, partly from the popular tales of his day, partly, and this is the most important of all, from the English life which he saw around him. That he, who was essentially a poet of the Court, brought into English Court poetry such a series of descriptions as we have in the *Prologue To Canterbury Tales,* which are the most striking instances of originality that the history of English literature can offer us.

4.12 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the social and political background of the age of Chaucer.
2. Discuss the three phases of Chaucer's literary.
3. Describe Chaucer's place in English Literature.

4.13 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 Which literary work is considered Geoffrey Chaucer's magnum opus, showcasing a diverse group of characters on a pilgrimage to Canterbury?

A) *The Divine Comedy*

B) *The Canterbury Tales*

C) *Le Morted'Arthur*

D) *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Q.2 What important position did Chaucer hold in the 14th century, which allowed him to travel and engage with a wide range of people, influencing his writing?

A) Court jester

B) Knight

C) Merchant

D) Civil servant

Q.3 Which language did Chaucer use to write *The Canterbury Tales*, making it one of the first major works of English literature in this language?

A) Latin

B) French

C) Italian

D) Middle English

Q.4 What literary form did Chaucer employ in *The Canterbury Tales*, with each pilgrim telling a story on their way to the shrine of Thomas Becket?

A) Ballad

B) Epic

C) Frame narrative

D) Lyric poem

Q.5 Which character from *The Canterbury Tales* is known for his humorous tales and is a cunning fox in one of them?

A) The Knight

B) The Pardoner

C) The Squire

D) The Nun's Priest

Q.6 Chaucer is often referred to as the "father of English poetry" mainly because he was the first English poet to:

A) Write in blank verse

B) Write heroic couplets

C) Publish a novel

D) Be widely translated

Q.7 In *The Canterbury Tales*, the pilgrims are journeying to the shrine of which saint?

A) Saint George

B) Saint Michael

C) Saint Thomas Becket

D) Saint Augustine

Q.8 Which pilgrimage site is the ultimate destination of the characters in *The Canterbury Tales*?

A) Canterbury Cathedral

B) Westminster Abbey

C) St. Paul's Cathedral

D) Durham Cathedral

Q.9 Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is a tragic narrative poem that is a retelling of which ancient work?

A) *The Aeneid*

B) *The Iliad*

C) *The Odyssey*

D) *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Q. 10 Which of Chaucer's works, known for its allegorical portrayal of the battle between Virtue and Vice, is considered an important precursor to *The Canterbury Tales*?

A) *The Book of the Duchess*

B) *The Parliament of Fowls*

C) *The Legend of Good Women*

D) *The House of Fame*

Answers: 1B, 2D, 3D, 4C, 5D, 6B, 7C, 8A, 9B, 10A

4.14 SUGGESTED READING

- Hadow, Grace E. *Chaucer and His Times*. Outlook Verlag, 2020.
- Mehl, Dieter. *English Literature in the Age of Chaucer*. Taylor & Francis, 2014.
- "The Age of Chaucer & His Works — A Critical Analysis." Literature and Criticism, www.literatureandcriticism.com/the-age-of-chaucer/

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CHARACTERS IN *THE PROLOGUE*

STRUCTURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer's *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* presents a social group of thirty persons, larger and more diversified than the ten gentlefolk of the *Decameron.* Chaucer's group of pilgrims is not coherently representative of English society, but covers well enough the main social elements. The nobility and the lowest class labourers are excluded as unlikely to travel in the fashion of this group; but the knights, the learned professions, the landed gentry, medieval manor (through its miller and reeve), and the free agricultural labourers are all represented. The rising middle classes are well exhibited by the London merchant, preoccupied with foreign commerce, the five tradesmen with aldermanic ambitions, Harry Bailey, innkeeper of Southwark, and by the London Cook and Manciple. From the provinces, come the expert cloth weaver, Alisan of Bath and the daring sea-captain of Dartmouth. The portraits of the clergy (nearly one-third of the company) are significant for the tolerance with which Chaucer points out the foibles of the monastic orders in describing the Monk and Prioress. He is severe in satirizing the worldliness of the Friar; and is open in attack on the corrupt Summoner and the fradulent Pardoner. His ideal portraits of Clerk of Oxford and the Parish Priest, alongwith his equally favourable descriptions of the Knight and the Ploughman, perhaps reflect his own admiration at a time of changing standards of the basic ideals of earlier medieval society, as they had found expression in its fundamental classes – the men of prayer, the men of war, and the men of labour.

5.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The lesson's objective is to introduce the learner to all the characters in the *Prologue*.

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the key characters in *The Canterbury Tales*.
2. Analyze the social and moral roles of the characters as reflections of 14th-century English society.
3. Explain how Chaucer uses satire and characterization to critique social norms and institutions.
4. Differentiate between the characters' personalities, professions, and moral standings as presented in the *General Prologue*.

5.3 THE KNIGHT

The Knight was a worthy man. He loved truth, honour, freedom and courtesy. He was chivalrous and had been to far off countries, both Christian and Heathen, in the wars of his King. He had also fought fifteen mortal battles for the sake of his religion. No man had travelled farther than he, and he had been respected at all places. Place of honour was always awarded to him for his worthiness. Though he was so brave, yet he was as modest as a maid. He had never spoken rudely to any person in all his life. In fact, "he was a very perfect gentle knight."

As far as his dress and equipment is concerned, his horses were good, but he was not dressed modestly. He wore a jerkin or short vest of coarse woollen cloth soiled by his armour, for he had just returned from his travels and had directly come for his pilgrimage.

5.4 THE SQUIRE

The young Squire, accompanied his father, the Knight, for pilgrimage. He is a young man of about twenty years, of medium height and with curly hair. He is healthy and active and has great strength. He has fought a number of battles in different lands, but he does not fight for his religion or his king. He goes

to the wars only because he hopes, in this way, to win the favour of his lady-love. He is fond of the good things in life. All the day he would sing songs, dance, or play on the flute. He loved so passionately that at night he slept no more than a Nightingale. He likes to dress up fashionably and well. His gown is short with long sleeves. It is embroidered all over:

Embroidered was he, as it were a mead
All full of fresh flowers, white and red

He was also courteous and humble, and served his father at the time of meals.

5.5 THE YEOMAN

The Knight had a Yeoman and no other servant at that time, because it pleased him to ride in that manner. This Yeoman was wearing a green coat and hood, and in his hand he carried a mighty bow and under his belt a set of arrows with peacock feather, bright and sharp, and a bow. His head was closely shaved and his face was brown. He was well-versed in wood-craft. He seemed to be a forester, on his breast he wore the figure of St. Christopher. He also bore over his shoulder a horn, hung by a green belt. A dagger hung on one side and a sword on the other.

5.6 THE PRIORESS

There was also a nun called Madam Eglentyne. She was a Prioress or head of her convent. She was very simple and quiet in her smiling. She sang God's prayer fully well, with a charming nasal tone. She did not know the French of Paris, but could speak French of the school of Stratford At le Bowe very well. She was fully trained in the art of eating.

She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle.
No wett hir fingers in hir sauce depe:
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and well kepe
That no drope ne fille upon hir brest.

Her greatest pleasure lay in courtesy. In her manners she is pleasant and tries her best to imitate the behaviour of the court. She is stately and dignified. As regards her kindness, she was so sympathetic and kind-hearted that she would weep if she saw a mouse entrapped, or if it were dead or bleeding. She has small hounds whom she feeds well, and weeps if one of them dies, or someone strikes them sharply, and with her,

And al was conscience and tendre herte.

Her mouth is small and soft, and her forehead nearly a span wide. She is certainly not undergrown i.e. she is rather fat. She is fashionably dressed. She wears coral beads studded with green and from it hangs a beautiful golden brooch with the inscription "Love conquers all". She has a Nun and three Priests as her attendants.

5.7 THE MONK

A Monk, fat and flourishing, like a Lord, is also one of the company. He is fond of hunting and has a number of good horses in his stable. He does not care at all for the text of the Bible which says that hunters are not good men, or that a Monk should better stay within his monastery. He does not study or labour with his hands, for he considers such things useless. All his time is devoted to hunting, eating and merry-making. He dresses fashionably in the finest manner. He wears fur-lined sleeves, gold pins, and love-

knots. His bald head is as shining as a glass; his face was also equally bright, as if it had been anointed. He was a fat Lord in good condition. His eyes were bright and rolled in his head. His boots were made of soft leather; his horse was in an excellent condition. He was not lean and thin. Of all roasted meats, he loved most a fat swan. His horse was as brown as a berry.

5.8 THE FRIAR

The Friar is a wanton and merry fellow, and in all the four orders of Friars, there is none to equal him in gossip and flattery. He is a noble pillar of his order. He is very well acquainted with rich franklins, rich women and barmaids. As to lepers and beggar women, he considers it below his dignity to have acquaintance with them. It is not profitable to have dealings with people who can give no money. Chaucer ironically remarks that he is a very good beggar and accepts even a penny from a widow who has nothing else to give. He leads a life of pleasure to the disregard of his religious duties. He has married many a young woman at his own cost. He carries a bag full of knives and pins, which he gave as gifts to beautiful women. And surely, he sings in a sweet voice, he can play upon the fiddle excellently, in singing ballads he has no equals. His neck is white as lily, and he is familiar with taverns in every town.

He has greater power to hear confessions and grant forgiveness than a curate, and he does so for the sake of money. He is like a master or a Pope, and not at all like a poor threadbare scholar. His short cloak is of double worsted and stands round like a bell, when newly pressed. He whimsically lisps a little, so that his English may sound sweet, and when he recites a song and plays a harp:

His eyen twinkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here are some keywords from the sections that you have just read. Take a thorough look at these words as they will help enrich your vocabulary:

Chivalrous: Showing the qualities of a true knight—such as bravery, courtesy, honor, and gallantry toward others, especially women.

Jerkin: A short, close-fitting jacket (often sleeveless), worn by men during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Forester: A person skilled in managing or living in the forest; in medieval context, often a hunter or woodsman.

Wanton: Playfully or maliciously unrestrained; often implies immoral or inappropriate behavior.

Lepers: People suffering from leprosy—a disease feared in the Middle Ages, often causing the sick to be isolated due to religious and social stigma.

Worsteds: A type of fine wool fabric made from long-staple wool.

Now, try to find the meaning of these words yourself and write it in the space provided below:

Embroidered: _____.

Courtesy: _____.

Lisp: _____.

5.9 THE MERCHANT

There is also a Merchant with a forked beard. He wore a colourful dress. He sat high upon his horse with a beaver-hat of Flanders on his head. His boots were fastened very neatly. He expressed his views pompously, always keeping in view the increase of his own profit. He desired that, at any cost, the sea-route between Middleburg and Orwell must be kept open. He was clever in business transactions at the exchange. He was a shrewd man, nobody ever knew that he was in debt, so dignified was he in his dealings, in his bargains and money lending. He was a worthy man.

5.10 THE OXFORD CLERK

The Clerk of Oxford is the most remarkable of all, who had long devoted himself to the study of logic. He was not fat and looked lean and serious. His cloak was threadbare, because he lacked prudence and cunningness to secure a job and so far he had got no Church job. He does not care for money or any worldly office. He would prefer to keep near his bed twenty volumes of Aristotle and his philosophy, than rich robes or a fiddle or a gay harp. Although he was a philosopher, he had little gold in his money-box. Whatever he could get from his friends, he spent on books and ardently prayed for the souls of those who provided him with the means to pursue his studies. He was extremely careful about his studies:

Of studie took he moost care and moost heede,
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede.

Whatever little he spoke was courteous, brief and to the point and full of matter. He loved most to learn and to teach.

5.11 THE SERGEANT OF LAW

There was also a Sergeant of Law, who was prudent and wise, an excellent person, who often visited the porch of St. Paul's Church, London. He was discreet and worthy of great reverence or at least he appeared to be so, his words were very wise. He had been a judge at the session of the law courts, by patent and full authority from the King. With his learning and great fame, he had earned much money and also robes. There was never such a great purchaser of lands as he. For him all objects of purchase were virtually estates. In fees he charged and nobody could find fault in the legal documents prepared by him. Nowhere could be found a more busy man, yet he appeared busier than he was. He knew accurately every law case and judgement since the time of King William, the Conqueror, and he knew by heart every statute, word by word, and nobody could find any defect in his writing. He was dressed in a coat of mixed stuff or colour and had a girdle of silk with small ornaments.

5.12 THE FRANKLIN

The Sergeant had a Franklin with him. He had a beard as white as a daisy, a red face, and sanguine temperament. He was fond of having a sop in wine every morning. He lived a life of pleasure, for he was the very son of Epicurus. He was of the view that perfect bliss lies in pleasure only. He always kept an open house, and was thus like St. Jullian in his own part of the country. His bread and his wine were always of the best quality, never did a man's cellars contain better wine. His house never lacked fish or fresh meat, which he had in abundance, as if it snowed meat and drink and every dainty dish that can be imagined by a person. He changed his meats and his supper according to the changes in the seasons of

the year. His cage contained many fat patridges and his fish-pond was full of breams and pikes. His cook never dared to make the sauce pungent and kept his kitchen equipment ever in good order. Throughout the day, a great table ready laid, stood in his hall. He was a grand Lord, when he acted as a judge at the sessions, and had served several times in Parliament as a Knight from his shire. A knife hung from his girdle and a pouch of "silk, white like morning milk. He had served as a sheriff and an auditor and, *"Was ...wasour" such a worthy vavasour."*

The Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer and Tapicer

There was also a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer and a Tapicer, all dressed in the dress of a great and grand guild. Their equipment was fresh and new. Their knives were tipped not with brass, but with fine wrought silver. This was also the case with their girdles and pouches. Each of them appeared to be a fair burgess worthy for sitting on a dais in a guild hall. Everyone of them was wise enough to be an Alderman, and each of them also possessed enough goods and income. Their wives must agree with this view; else they are to blame. When they went to Vigils they had their mantles carried royally before them.

5.13 THE COOK

They had a Cook with them, who could in case of need, boil chickens with the marrowbones and tart powder and delicious cyprus root during the pilgrimage. He well knew the taste of London ale. He could roast, boil, fry, make dainty soup and bake a pie. But it was a great pity that he had a sore on his chin. He could prepare "copon in cream" comparable with that prepared by the best of cooks.

5.14 THE SHIPMAN

There was also a Shipman who lived at Dartmouth in the west. He had a fine ship called Maudelayne. He was clad in a gown of coarse cloth, and he carried a dagger hanging by a lace. He was an experienced sailor, the sun had made his face brown and his beard had been shaken by many a storm. In other words, he had sailed far and wide and faced many storms. He was an expert navigator and was well familiar with all the currents, dangers, harbours and weathers. He was not very honest, and did not hesitate to steal wine from the casks of the merchants, his customers, when they were asleep. If he won a battle, and captured some prisoners on the sea, he would not hesitate to throw them overboard.

5.15 THE DOCTOR OF PHYSIC

The Doctor of Physic was matchless for his skill in medicine and surgery. He watched keenly for favourable hours and an auspicious ascendence of the stars for the treatment of his patients, because he was well-versed in astrology. He understood the cause of each disease, its humour whether it was hot, cold, dry or moist, and its source whence it had sprung. He was a skilful and consummate doctor of medicine. Having diagnosed the cause and the nature of the disease, he gave the sickman his prescription. He had his chemists ready to send him ointments and drugs, for each helped the other to make profit. Their friendship was not recent. He took a moderate diet, without anything in excess, but nourishing and really digestible. His study of Bible was negligible. He was dressed in a red and blue gown, lined with tafetta and thin silk. Yet he spent on dress moderately, and preserved what he earned during the pestilence:

For Gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.

Check Your Progress: Match the Characters

Match the description with the character from *The Canterbury Tale*s.

1. A lover of books, who spends all his money on learning.
2. A noble and chivalrous figure, admired for his virtues.
3. A corrupt churchman who sells indulgences.
4. A bawdy storyteller with a gap in her teeth and multiple marriages.
5. A modest and devout clergyman who lives by example.

A. Clerk

B. Parson

C. Wife of Bath

D. Knight

E. Parson

Answers: 1 Clerk, 2 Knight, 3 Pardoner, 4 Wife of Bath, 5 Parson

5.16 THE WIFE OF BATH

There was a good wife from near Bath, but she was a little deaf and that was sad. She was so skilful in making cloth that she excelled the clothmakers of Ypres and Ghent. There was no woman in her Parish who dared go before her to make offerings at the Church. If any woman had the boldness to do so, she would be angry with her, and be out of all charity. Her handkerchiefs were of excellent texture and the handkerchiefs upon her head on a Sunday weighed as much as ten pounds. Her hose was of a fine scarlet colour and was tightly fastened and her shoes were soft and new. Her face was bold, fair and red in colour. Throughout her life she had been an honourable woman and had married five husbands, in addition to other company in her youth.

This was not her first pilgrimage. She had been three times to Jerusalem, and had also been to a number of other pilgrimages in distant lands. The wide travel had taught her many things. Infact, she was gap-toothed, she sat comfortably on an ambling horse, wearing a fine wimple with a hat as broad as a buckler or a target on her head. She wore a short riding skirt on her feet. She could laugh and talk in company very well. She was fully conversant with love and its remedies, because she had herself played the old game of love-making.

5.17 THE POOR PARSON

There was also a good man of religion, a poor Parson, who was rich in pious thought and action. He was a scholar, a clerk. He would sincerely teach Christ's gospel and instruct his parishioners with devotion. He had often shown himself humane, hardworking, and patient in misfortune. He was never harsh in the collection of tithe; rather he gave it to those of his parishoners who were in need. His parish was wide, but he would visit the farthest corner, even in rain and thunder if any of his parishioners were in trouble or happened to be sick. He went on foot with a staff in his hand. He presented to his followers a good example. First he practised, and afterwards he preached; these words he had learned from the Bible and added this simile, "that if gold rust, what will iron do?" In other words, what he meant was that if

a priest upon whom we rely, is corrupt, it is no wonder that an ignorant layman should also be degenerate; it is disgraceful that a shepherd should be corrupt and the sheep virtuous. A priest should set a noble example by his purity and thus, teach his followers, how they should lead their lives.

The Parson did not rent out his post as a parson, nor desert his sheep and run to London to St. Paul's to get the comfortable and profitable office of a charity-priest, or to be engaged by some guild, lest some wolf should misguide them. He was not a mercenary, but a genuine shepherd to his flock. Though he was pious and virtuous, he was not cruel to sinners, nor rude in his speech. He was both wise and sympathetic in his preaching. He wanted to attract people to God by his noble life as an ideal example, but if a man was obstinate, whether of a high or low status, he would rebuke him sternly. There was nowhere a better priest than he. He aspired neither for show nor for reverence. He did not suffer from an over-nice conscience. But he preached the sermons of Christ and his apostles, and first he practiced them himself.

5.18 THE PLOUGHMAN

Parson's brother, the Ploughman, the humblest of the company was equally virtuous. His humility is seen in the fact that he rode upon a mare. He was a good man and a true labourer. He loved God with all his heart, and his neighbour like himself. He lived in perfect peace and charity. He always "payed his tithes" regularly. After working on his own allotment, and on the field of his Lord, he was ready to work for any needy man without any hire – for the sake of Christ.

5.19 THE MILLER

The Miller was strongly built for any occasion. He had big bones and muscles. He displayed them excellently. Whenever he participated in a wrestling match, he always carried the prize. He was short-shouldered, broad, a thick and muscular fellow. There was no door which he could not take off its hinges, or break with his head at a running. His beard was red like that of a sow or fox and also broad like a spade. He had a wart on the tip of his nose and on it there was a tuft of hair, as red as are the bristles on a sow's ears. His nostrils were black and wide. On his side, he bore a sword and buckler. His mouth was as wide as a furnace. He was very talkative and he was a ribald jester. His talk was mostly of sin and ribaldry. He was an expert in stealing corn and in taking his toil three times over and yet he had a golden thumb. He wore a white coat and a blue hood. He could play upon the bagpipe excellently, and with its music, he brought us out of town.

5.20 THE MANCIPLE

The Maunciple was a very clever man of business. He purchased provisions for a group of more than thirty lawyers. Some of them were shrewd enough to have been the stewards of some Lord, and in that capacity to have managed his estate well. But this Maunciple, though he was illiterate could over-reach them all. There was no one to match him in cunningness.

5.21 THE REEVE

The Reeve was a slender and choleric fellow. His beard was shaven as closely as could be, his hair was closely cropped and cut short in front like that of a Priest. His legs were long and thin, like a stick, he had no calf. He could well keep a granary and a big, strong box; there was no government inspector, who could get better of him. In dry or rainy season he could well predict the yield of his seed and grain. His Lord's sheep, cattle, dairy, swine, horses, sow and poultry were wholly under his control and he had been submitting the accounts according to the agreement since his Lord was twenty years of age; and nobody could ever detect him in arrears. There was no bailiff, no herdsman nor any other servant whose

cunning practices were unknown to him. They were afraid of him as of death. His residence was a pleasant one upon a heath and it was shaded with green trees. He knew how to purchase land better than his master. He had hoarded riches stealthily and knew how to please his Lord by craftily lending out to him what was his own legally, and gain thanks in return and also a coat and hood. In his youth, he had learnt a good trade; he was a skilful carpenter. He rode an excellent horse, which was dappled gray and was named Scot. He was putting on a long upper coat of blue cloth. He bore on his side an old sword. He came from Norfolk, from near a town called Baldeswell. His coat was tucked up around him like a Friar's, and he ever rode last of all the pilgrims.

5.22 THE SUMMONER

The Summoner was also one of the pilgrims. His face was fire-red like that of an angel, it was pimpled all over, and his beard was thin and ragged. He had narrow eyes. He was as hot and lustful as a sparrow. Children were afraid of his appearance. No quicksilver, lead, brimestone, oil of tartar, ointment that could clean and burn, could cure his white blotches or the knobs on his cheeks. He was fond of garlic, onions and also of leeks. He also liked to drink strong and blood-red wine and then he would talk and rave like a mad man. When he was drunk, he could utter no word, but Latin, of which he knew a few terms, two or three, picked up from some legal document. There was nothing surprising in it because he heard it all day long. But if anybody tested his knowledge in any point, his learning was found to be spent. He was a gentle and a kind rogue. For a quart of wine, he would permit a good fellow to carry on his wicked sins for as long as a year, and completely connive at it; and secretly he practised the same sins himself. And if anywhere he came across a jolly fellow, he would assure him to have no fear of the ex-communication, unless a person's soul was in his purse. In his own way, he had under his power all the young men and women of his district, and had full knowledge of their guilty secrets and was their chief confidante. He had a garland on his head as large as an ale-house sign. He also bore a loaf of bread as if it were a buckler.

5.23 THE PARDONER

The Pardoner was accompanying his friend, the Summoner. He came directly from the court of Rome. He sang love songs in a loud voice. He had hair as yellow as wax which hung smoothly, like a bank of flax. His locks were spread over his shoulders in thin shreds. To be in fashion, he did not put on his hood, which was trussed up in his wallet. He rode with his hair dishevelled. He was bare-headed but for his cap. His glaring eyes resembled those of a hare. His wallet lay in front of him in his saddle. He had a goat-like shrill voice. He was without beard, he was unlikely ever to have it, for his face was as smooth as if freshly shaven. But so far as his trade was concerned, there was no other Pardoner like him anywhere. His bag contained a pillowcase, which according to him was a lady's veil and a small bit of cloth, which he said was a piece of the sail used by St. Peter when he walked upon the sea, till Jesus Christ caught hold of him. He also carried a cross of salin, studded with stones, and pig's bones in a glass. With these relics, when he met a poor person living in the country, he received from him more money in one day than that person got in two months. And thus with flattery, deception and cunningness, he was a noble dignitary of the Church. He could read a lesson or a tale well. For he was well aware that after singing a song, he must preach and smoothen his tongue to get as much silver as he could. Therefore, he sang in a jolly and loud voice.

5.24 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have discussed the characters in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. These characters give us glimpses into the social life and culture of that period.

5.25 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 In the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, what is the setting where the characters gather to begin their pilgrimage?

A) A castle

B) A tavern

C) A cathedral

D) An inn

Q.2 What time of year does the pilgrimage take place in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*?

A) Spring

B) Summer

C) Fall

D) Winter

Q.3 Chaucer describes the people on the pilgrimage as a diverse group representing different:

A) Social classes and occupations

B) Religious orders

C) Nationalities

D) Age groups

Q.4 Which character in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* is known for being a scholar with a love for books?

A) The Reeve

B) The Pardoner

C) The Clerk

D) The Friar

Q.5 What does the Knight's appearance and demeanor reflect in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*?

A) Humility and simplicity

B) Pride and arrogance

C) Arrogance and deceit

D) Modesty and quietness

Q.6 Which character is known for wearing a brooch inscribed with "Amor vincit omnia" ("Love conquers all") in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*?

A) The Wife of Bath

B) The Prioress

C) The Nun's Priest

D) The Squire

Q.7 What is the occupation of the character who is a religious figure but is criticized for neglecting his spiritual duties in favor of worldly pleasures in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*?

A) The Monk

B) The Parson

C) The Friar

D) The Prioress

Q.8 Which character is known for being an excellent judge of the value of goods and for his effective bargaining skills in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*?

A) The Reeve

B) The Pardoner

C) The Merchant

D) The Miller

Q.9 What is the profession of the character who is a man of law, highly knowledgeable, and well-spoken in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*?

A) The Squire

B) The Clerk

C) The Knight

D) The Man of Law

Q.10 Which character in the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* is known for having a sweet singing voice and wears a brooch with the motto "Love conquers all"?

A) The Nun's Priest

B) The Pardoner

C) The Prioress

D) The Wife of Bath

Answers: 1D, 2A, 3A, 4C, 5A, 6A, 7C, 8C, 9D, 10C

5.26 SUGGESTED READING

- Minnis, Alastair. *Historians on Chaucer: The 'General Prologue' to the Canterbury Tales*. OUP Oxford, 2014.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Oxford Student Texts: Chaucer: The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*. OUP Oxford, 2008.
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PICTURE OF FOURTEENTH CENTURY CULTURE AND SOCIETY AS REFLECTED IN *THE PROLOGUE*

STRUCTURE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales,* Chaucer has presented a true picture of fourteenth century England with the exactitude, exactness, honesty, fidelity and finesse. The characters are portrayed alongwith the minute details– of their dress, their chivalry, bravery, physical features, behaviour, shortcomings, temperaments and tastes. He unites the characteristics of a profession and the personal features of his subject to make life-like portrait. Chaucer, thus acts as the mouthpiece of his age. He discards conventions of dream and fantasy and realistically, without any exaggeration, mirrors the social, economic and religious conditions of his age. The very framework of his *Canterbury Tales* is realistic. Pilgrimages were very popular in the fourteenth century and were often undertaken in groups, partly for the sake of company and partly because of the danger of the roads. Chaucer's group of pilgrims constitute a picture of the society of his times, which has no parallel in any country.

6.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with the picture of 14th century society as reflected in the *Cantebury Tales.*

After going through this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain how *The Canterbury Tales* reflects the social, religious, and economic structures of 14th-century England.
2. Identify Chaucer's critique of various societal roles, including the clergy, nobility, and commoners.
3. Analyze how the tales highlight the diversity of medieval life through their characters and themes.
4. Discuss Chaucer's use of satire and storytelling to expose societal flaws and virtues.

6.3 14TH CENTURY SOCIETY

The portraits of the Knight and the Squire have a particular interest. The relationship between these two portraits are governed by, and arise out of the natural relationship of father and son. Consanguinity proves the base for a dramatic relationship and at the same time is the groundwork for a modestly generalized metaphor of age and youth. Each portrait is enhanced and defined by the presence of the other – the long roll of the Knight's campaigns and the little opportunity, a few raids enumerated in one line; a series of past tenses, a history for the Knight and for the Squire, a present breaking forth in active participles. The Squire accompanying the Knight shows the effect of bending all the youth, energy, colour and high spirit of the Squire to the service of his father, the Knight, with perhaps a suggestion of the present submitting to the serious and respected values served and communicated by the past, the natural and the imposed submitting of the son to his natural father, and beyond him to the supernatural goal, the shrine to which the father directs his pilgrimage.

In the late fourteenth country the Church had grown terribly corrupt. They heaped up wealth and lived in a Godless and worldly way; the rank and file of the Clergy were ignorant and careless; the mendicant Friars were notorious for their greed and profligacy. The result was widespread discontent among the people. Chaucer too, could not remain indifferent to the abuses of the Church. His ironical portraits of the different ecclesiastical characters reveal that Chaucer is impartial and realistic and paints both sides of the picture. While, through the portraits of the Monk, the Friar, the Pardoner etc., he ridicules the unscrupulous activities of the Church, he also gives the portrait of the Parson who was totally devoted to his job, and people like him were becoming rarer in that age. He was like ''a shepherd, who protects his flock from the wolf and is not a hireling.'' He preaches sincerely and correctly and tries to practise what he preaches. He takes good care of his flock and visits the sick and the suffering at the farthest corner of the parish. He leads a simple, virtuous life of devotion and service. He is the instrument of divine mercy and love.

In contrast to him, all the other ecclesiastical characters typify the various aspects of the Church life of the day. The Friar, for example, is corrupt and greedy. He does not care for religion or for his duties. He is fond of merry-making and drinking. He is very charitable and his charitable spirit is highlighted by the fact that he has married off many a young woman at his own expense. He is so greedy that he accepts farthings, even from those who find it hard to earn their living. He avoids the poor and the needy and likes to make friends with rich persons and worthy women. Similarly, the Monk is a pleasure-loving individual. He has grown fat like a Lord, for he leads an easy life and passes his time in eating, drinking and merry-making. He is entirely unsuited to his vocation. He is fond of fine dresses. He wears fur-lined sleeves, gold pins and love knots. He likes hunting and has fine horses and hounds in his stable. Another ecclesiastical character, the Pardoner is a cheat. His bag is full of relics, which he sells to housewives. He earns a lot of money. He is a cunning rogue and he deceives people. He sings merrily and sweetly. In a similar vein, the Summoner is a hypocrite, who would permit people to continue in their sins and would grant them absolution for a small consideration. He would know the secrets of young men and women, and then exploit them to his own advantage. Even the Prioress, though a nun, is not at all self-sacrificing. She is a mincing creature with fine courtly manners. She smiles pleasantly and sings the divine service beautifully through her nose. She is used to society and knows how to carry a morsel to her mouth, so that not even a single drop falls on her fine dress and her fingers are also not spoiled. She is of such a charitable and kind nature that she would weep if she saw a mouse caught in trap or a wounded hare. She wears a fine fashionable dress with a gold brooch on which are engraved the words, ''Love wins everything.''

Thus, Chaucer's attitude towards religion is realistic. He is keenly alive to the evils and abuses of the day. He combines caustic observations of the weaknesses and hypocrisies of man, with innate reverence for all that is pure and noble. The fourteenth century witnessed the rise of a rich and prosperous merchant class. English trade was flourishing, merchants were earning huge profits, and consequently rising in importance in the life of the nation. For example, Chaucer's Merchant, Carpenter, Dyer, Tapicer, Weaver etc., represent the new power, these commoners were getting in those days and their wives too, were conscious of their growing importance in the life of the nation.

Check Your Progress

Match the following characters to the societal groups they represent in 14th-century England.

1. Knight
2. Pardoner
3. Miller
4. Wife of Bath
5. Monk

Groups:

A. Corrupt clergy
B. Chivalric nobility
C. Rising middle class
D. Common laborers
E. Independent women

Answers: 1B, 2A, 3D, 4E, 5A

Through the portrait of the 'Doctor of Physic', Chaucer gives a realistic picture of the medicine man of his times. The science was primitive and was based on astrology. Chaucer's doctor is also well grounded in astrology and prescribes only when the stars are in the ascendancy.

Chaucer was a shrewd man of the world and he has also presented women in a realistic manner. Both the Host's and the Merchant's wives quarrel with them on the slightest pretext and make their lives a hell. In the Clerk's Tale, Chaucer warns husbands not to look for patient wives. He gives satiric advice to wives to stand no nonsense from their husbands, and that all would be well if only their husbands allowed them mastery. Many of The *Canterbury Tales* deal with the tricks by which faithless wives deceive their credulous husbands. The Shipman protests with brutal frankness that wives cost more than they are worth and the Merchant's tale conveys the bitter advice that servants are more valuable than wives. The Prioress is refined, delicate, conventional and sentimental. The Wife of Bath is coarse, but not ill-natured. She enjoys heartily all good food and other good things of life. She does not believe in the ideals of chastity. She had five husbands besides other good company in youth. She is a domineering woman who could easily achieve mastery over her successive husbands. She is all for matrimony, and intends to marry again if and when her present husband dies. She has much practical commonsense and has full confidence in the correctness of her own opinion.

A brief consideration of Chaucer's female characters reveals that his attitude towards women is based on his wide experience of man and life. In the Franklin's tale, we are told that mutual understanding and patience are necessary for a happy married life. This is the sane and balanced advice of a shrewd man of the world. Thus, Chaucer's realism is nowhere seen to better advantage than in his treatment of womankind.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here are some keywords provided with their synonyms for your better comprehension of the text:

Consanguinity: A close relation or connection by blood or family, especially between a parent and child.

Profligacy: Extreme extravagance or moral corruption, especially in terms of wastefulness or indulgent behavior.

Mendicant: A beggar, especially a member of a religious order that has taken a vow of poverty and lives by begging.

Caustic: Bitterly sarcastic or cutting; able to burn or corrode.

Absolution: Formal forgiveness of sins, especially by a priest or religious figure.

Ascendancy: A position of dominance or rising influence.

Credulous: Too ready to believe things; gullible.

6.4 LET US SUM UP

To conclude, Chaucer is fully committed to realism in the *Prologue*. He is fully conscious of the social realism and the above given survey shows that he has executed it with a lot of accuracy and creative finesse. Non-intervention by Chaucer in the *Prologue* is the surest instrument by which he is able to put forth an honest and true picture. He maintains aloofness from the pilgrims and acts as a subtle observer and at no stage does he expose them. They expose themselves on their own. He only presents them truly and has painted a realistic picture of his times. He has, in fact, presented a multidimensional or kaleidoscopic portraiture of human nature. Thus, the *Prologue* is prismatic in nature as like a prism through which, the true nature or the colours of Chaucer's age can be viewed. Chaucer's sole objective in painting the true picture of society of his times is that, he was a classicist by temperament and a perfectionist at heart. His main objective was to act as a reformer. He wanted to remove the mental or moral ugliness in human character. He hated this and wanted the deformities and ill-practices prevalent in his age to be abolished. He wanted a highly religious moral character. All the thirty pilgrims in the *Prologue* present a kaleidoscopic society which is hypocritical and mammon-worshipper. They lust for money – and this one single trait dominates all their deeds, action, thoughts, sentiments and it is now more prominent because of the demonic society. Erosion of human values and lust for wealth is the single, strongest and most potent universal factor in the *Prologue*.

6.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q.1. Central spokesman of *Prologue* is Man himself. Discuss and illustrate from the text.

Q.2. The *Prologue* reflects "a cross-section of English life in the fourteenth century." Discuss.

Q.3. What are the distinctive poetic characteristics of Chaucer's *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales?* Enumerate in your own words.

Q.4. Discuss Chaucer's art of characterization with reference to *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales.*

Q.5. Discuss Chaucer's narrative technique with reference to *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*.

Q.6. Chaucer represents national portrait gallery of 14th century? Give an illustrative answer.

6.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 In the prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*, what does Chaucer's portrayal of various social classes and occupations reveal about the 14th-century English society?

A) The society had a rigid class structure with limited mobility.

B) The society was characterized by equality and shared wealth.

C) The society had a strong emphasis on religious unity.

D) The society was predominantly agrarian and lacked urbanization.

Q.2 Which character in the *Prologue* represents the chivalric ideals and values of the knightly class in 14th-century England?

A) The Monk

B) The Squire

C) The Pardoner

D) The Wife of Bath

Q. 3 How does Chaucer's description of the Prioress's table manners reflect the cultural expectations and norms of 14th-century England?

A) It demonstrates her modesty and humility, which were highly valued virtues.

B) It highlights her extravagance and disregard for social conventions.

C) It showcases her love for animals, which was uncommon during that time.

D) It signifies her knowledge of foreign languages, a rarity in 14th-century society.

Q.4 What does the Merchant's portrayal in the *Prologue* reveal about the economic concerns and values of 14th-century England?

A) The Merchant's wealth indicates a booming economy and widespread affluence.

B) The Merchant's debts suggest economic instability and financial struggles.

C) The Merchant's generosity highlights a culture of sharing and communal living.

D) The Merchant's frugality reflects a strong emphasis on individual accumulation of wealth.

Q.5 What does Chaucer's depiction of the Summoner's appearance and behavior convey about the moral and religious attitudes of 14th-century England?

A) The Summoner's devoutness and piety were highly esteemed during that time.

B) The Summoner's disregard for personal hygiene reflects a common attitude towards cleanliness.

C) The Summoner's corrupt and dishonest nature represents concerns about religious hypocrisy.

D) The Summoner's commitment to charitable acts symbolizes the prevailing spirit of generosity.

Q.6 How does Chaucer's characterization of the Wife of Bath challenge or reflect the traditional gender roles of 14th-century England?

A) Her independence and assertiveness align with the submissive role expected of women.

B) Her experience and dominance in marriage contradict the submissive role expected of women.

C) Her lack of knowledge and dependence on male characters reinforce gender norms.

D) Her religious devotion and humility exemplify the ideal behavior for women of that era.

Q.7 Which character's physical appearance and personality traits reflect the idealized image of a clergyman in 14th-century England?

A) The Pardoner

B) The Monk

C) The Parson

D) The Friar

Q.8 Chaucer's representation of the Reeve in the *Prologue* sheds light on the 14th-century attitudes towards what occupation?

A) Farming and rural labor

B) Clergy and religious institutions

C) Merchants and trade

D) Knights and chivalry

Q.9 How does Chaucer's portrayal of the Clerk reflect the 14th-century emphasis on education and learning?

A) The Clerk's lack of education highlights the prevailing illiteracy of the time.

B) The Clerk's eloquence and knowledge of books reflect the value placed on learning.

C) The Clerk's disregard for scholarly pursuits contrasts with the high regard for education.

D) The Clerk's focus on material wealth contradicts the importance of intellectual pursuits.

Q.10 What cultural aspect is depicted through the various characters' diverse occupations, which mirrors the occupational diversity in 14th-century England?

A) The prevalence of only agricultural labor

B) The lack of skilled trades and crafts

C) The decline of urban centers

D) The existence of a varied workforce

Answers: 1A, 2B, 3A, 4B, 5C, 6B, 7C, 8A, 9B, 10D

6.7 SUGGESTED READING

- Lee Patterson. Ed. *Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales: A Casebook*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
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PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES

STRUCTURE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chaucer's most comprehensive work, *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of over 20 stories written in middle English is without doubt largely the production of his later years. The tales mostly written in verse although some are in prose are presented as part of a story-telling contest by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey from Southwark to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The prize of this contest is a free meal at the Tabard Inn at Southwark on their return. (Pilgrims would journey to cathedrals that preserved relics of saints, believing that such relics held miraculous powers. Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, had been murdered in Canterbury cathedral by the knights of Henry II during a disagreement between Church and Crown. Miracle stories connected to his remains sprang up soon after his death, and the cathedral became a popular pilgrimage destination).

"There has been much speculation as to what suggested to Chaucer the idea of a pilgrimage for his tale. He may have been describing an actual experience or more than one. In the general device of a frame-story, or series of tales within an enclosing narrative, it has often been thought that he imitated Boccaccio's *Decameron*. But the *Canterbury Tales* are unlike other collection of frame stories in the fact that the enclosing narrative is not formal or mechanical or merely introductory, but provides and keeps in action, a social group engaged naturally in mutual entertainment." (F.N. Robbins). The device of the pilgrimage afforded Chaucer an opportunity to bring together a representative group of various classes of society, united by a common religious purpose, yet not so dominated by that purpose as to be unable to give themselves over to enjoyment. There is essentially poetic truth in the portrayal of the characters, in their sentiments and personal relations, and no less, in the representation of the pilgrimage as a social assemblage. Chaucer uses the tales and the description of the characters to paint an ironic and critical portrait of English society at the time and particularly of the church and its corrupt clergy.

"The plan of collecting tales and uniting them by a central idea is one of the stock methods of the world. *The Arabian Nights* and *The Decameron* are two of the most famous examples. The more compact collection known as the seven Sages had been known to Englishmen long before Chaucer's time. It is unnecessary, therefore, to seek for either a special or a general original of *The Canterbury Tales*. The thing was in the air or the time, when tales had to be told and pilgrimages were many. Chaucer's work is incomplete, both as a whole and in parts. It is sketched out but not filled in. The only clear string of connection from first to last is the pervading personality of the Host, who gives a unity of character to the whole work, inviting, criticizing, admiring, denouncing, but always keeping himself in evidence."(George Sampson)

The plan of the *Canterbury Tales* was never brought anywhere near to completion. It is provided in the *Prologue* that each pilgrim shall tell four tales, two on the outward and two on the homeward journey. But the company never reaches Canterbury, and only twenty three of the thirty pilgrims get their turn. While the structure of the tales is largely linear with one story following another, it is also much more than that. In the *Prologue*, Chaucer describes, not the Tales to be told, but the people who will tell them, making it clear that structure would depend on the characters rather than a general theme or moral.

The *Prologue* represents a gallery of portraits-weird and personal - a tribute to Chaucer's creative genius. Most critics believe that his characters were in some measure drawn from life. Harry Bailly, the host, known to have been the inn-keeper for example has the same name as Henrious Bailly an inn-keeper in Southwark and a member of Parliament from that borough.

7.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to familiarize the learner with the critical comments on *Prolouge* to the *Canterbury Tales*.

After going through this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the structure and purpose of the *General Prologue* as an introduction to *The Canterbury Tales*.
2. Analyze Chaucer's use of the frame narrative to unify diverse stories and characters.
3. Evaluate Chaucer's commentary on social hierarchies, professions, and morality in 14th-century England.
4. Discuss the narrative techniques and satirical elements in the *General Prologue.*

7.3 CRITICAL COMMENTS

"Individual as the pilgrims are, they are also representative. Many of them exhibit type of character or of professional conduct- the gentle Knight, the venal Friar, the hypocrite in the person of the Pardoner- such as were familiar in the literature of the age. And taken together, they cover nearly the whole range of life in Chaucer's England. The circle of the royalty and the higher nobility, to be sure, is not directly represented. Men of such rank and station could hardly have been included in the company. But the mind and manners of courtly society are well expressed by the Knight, who had seen honourable service at home and abroad; by his son, the Squire, the typical courtly lover; again, from a different angle, by the Prioress, who "peyned hire to countrefatechere of court"; and, best of all, by Chaucer himself, the accomplished courtier and man of the world, who as author creates the atmosphere and medium of the whole narrative. The clergy, regular and secular, are included in liberal number, and there are also represented the learned professions of law and medicine, the merchants and the craftsmen of the guild, officials of the manor, the sailor, and the common peasant farmer. Possibly Chaucer did not set out deliberately to make the group so inclusive and well distributed. But whatever chance or purpose governed his choice, it would be hard to find such a description of English society between the *Beowulf*, with its picture of the heroic age, and the broader canvas of the Elizabethan drama.

In keeping with the miscellaneous character of the company is the wide range of tastes and interest represented by the stories they relate. The romance of chivalry, the courtly lay, the coarse realistic fabliau, the beast-epic, the legend or saint's life, the mock sermon with its illustrative examples all are included, along with the normal allegory and ethical treatise, which only by a stretch of terminology can be called

a tale at all. Nearly every type of medieval fiction appears, and appears at its best. Just as Milton, in the seventeenth century, took up one literary form after another – the masque, the pastoral elegy, the epic, the Greek drama- and gave us a supreme example of each, so Chaucer used every important narrative type of his age, and in each was unsurpassed" (F.N. Robbins).

"There is an open-air atmosphere about it all. His people are always on the move. Never do they become shadowy or lifeless. They shout and swear, and laugh and weep, interrupt the story-teller, pass compliments and in general behave themselves as we might expect them to in the dramatic circumstances of the narrative. It is never possible to confuse the story-teller; each is distinct and inimitable, whether it be the sermonizing Pardoner, the hot-tempered Miller, or the exuberantly vivacious Wife of Bath, who has had five husbands, but experience teaching her that husbands are transient blessings, she has fixed her mind on a sixth!!

There are tragedies as well as comedies in the Tales; some are grave and subdued, others ablaze with colour and merriment; but the thread of honest and kindly laughter runs through them all, serious and gay alike" (Arthur Compton Rickett).

"The ever present humour of the work cannot be missed; and the exquisite and unlabored pathos which accompanies it has been acknowledged even by those who have failed to appreciate Chaucer as a whole. The stories cover nearly the whole ground of medieval poetry. The King's Tale is high romance on a full scale, told in heroic couplets. The tales of the Reeve and Miller are examples of the fabliau, the story of ordinary life with a farcical tendency. The Man of Law's Tale returns to romance, but it is pathetic romance, told in rhyme royal. The Prioress's beautiful story is an excursion into hagiology- romance with a difference; and its neighbor, Chaucer's own tale of Sir Thopas, is a burlesque of all the weakness of the romances put into the weakest of the romance verse forms. The Tale of Melibeus illustrates the extraordinary appetite of medieval hearers for long, serious and (to our minds) boring and un -remunerative prose narrative. Chaucer, in some respects as modern as Dickens, is here medieval. The pilgrims, it should be observed are neither bored by Melibius nor shocked by the Wife of Bath. The Monk's Tale, objected to by the Knight on the score of its lugubriousness, may be intended as a set-off to the frivolous description of that ecclesiastic in the *Prologue*. After the admirable fabliau of the Cock and the Fox told by the Friar's tale, and the story of Griselda told by the Clerk, romance comes back in the "Half-told" tale of the Squire, the "story of Cambuscan bold". The romantic tone is kept up in The Franklin's Tale, one of the most poetical of all, and especially interesting in its portrayal-side by side with an undoubted belief in actual magic-of the extent of medieval conjuring. With *The Canterbury Tales* we reach, for the first in this story, the literature of everyman, that is to say, that kind of work that belongs to the same world as the work of Shakespeare and Dickens. It is idle to suppose that such expressions of the medieval mind as *Cursor Mundi* or even *Confessio Amantis* will ever be widely enjoyed. The best of *The Canterbury Tales* can be enjoyed by the people who enjoy *Pickwick Papers* and *The Tempest*" (Arthur Compton Rickett).

"His humour, like Shakespeare's, is kindly and never cruel. It is broad and unashamed; but it never sides with evil or mocks at good. The charity of Chaucer is immense. He is, further, a great artist in verse. Earlier poets tended to stumble between English syllabic freedom (spaced by accent) and French syllabic rigidity (spaced by caesura). Chaucer took an unfaltering way between both. He made in English dialect into a first-rate literary medium. The old charge against him of Frenchifying English has been disproved, and he is so far modern, that though he wrote over five centuries ago, his language presents few difficulties to intelligent readers of to-day. His power to communicate poetic grace, and charm, and that large comprehension of humanity which we may call a criticism of life is clear beyond any controversy. And he really understood people and their place in the world, and so could bring his crowd of pilgrims together

with complete success. To the development of English as the means and matter of creative art he rendered true service, and he has fully earned his traditional title of father of our literature" (Arthur Compton Rickett).

In almost every case Chaucer assigned to a pilgrim a tale suited to his character and vocation. He represented the party as engaged in free and nature social intercourse, and oftener than not the tales are evoked by the talks along the way. Sometimes they are told to illustrate a point or enforce an argument; sometimes they grow out of an altercation, as when the Friar and the Summoner abuse each other's callings. Sometimes they are given simply in response to the Host, who is chosen at the outset to be toastmaster, or "lord and governour."

The Canterbury Tales were written during a turbulent time in English history. The Catholic Church was the subject of heavy controversy. After the Black Death many began to question the authority of the established church. Some turned to Lollardy, an early religious movement led by John Wycliffe, which is mentioned in the *Tales*, as a specific incident involving pardoners who gathered money in exchange for absolution from sin. The incident also exposes church corruption in the behavior of the clergy, false church relics or abuse of indulgences.

Two characters - the Pardoner and the Summoner are both portrayed as deeply corrupt, greedy and abusive. A pardoner in Chaucer's day was a person from whom one bought church indulgences for forgiveness of sin, but pardoners were often thought guilty of abusing their office for their own gain. Chaucer's pardoner openly admits the corruption of his practice while hawking his wares. The summoner was a church officer who brought sinners to the church for possible excommunication and other penalties. Corrupt summoners would write false citations and frighten people into bribing them to protect their interests. These clergy also indulged themselves sensually and gastronomically while ignoring the poor famished peasants.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks on Frame Narrative

Complete the sentences below about the frame narrative in *The Canterbury Tales*:

1. The frame narrative begins with a group of _____ meeting at the Tabard Inn.
2. The purpose of their journey is to visit the shrine of _____ in Canterbury.
3. The _____ proposes a storytelling contest to entertain the group during the pilgrimage.
4. Each character is supposed to tell _____ stories on the way to Canterbury and back.
5. The frame narrative allows Chaucer to present a _____ of medieval society through his characters.

Answers: 1 Pilgrims, 2 Saint Thomas Becket, 3 Host, 4 Four, 5 Cross-section

The pardoners or quaestors were sellers of papal indulgences. The Pardoner in the Prologue is a wicked character- one of the most memorable on the pilgrimage to Canterbury and in the whole of English literature. After the character of the disgusting summoner, Chaucer describes a still more iniquitous character,

the Pardoner of Rouncivalle, (the hospital of the Blessed many of Rouncivalle, near Charing Cross in London). Chaucer satirizes the Pardoner by using the word 'gentle'. He professes to give gullible people pardons for their sins in exchange for gold, silver and money as well as a view of his false holy relics supposed to bring benison to the viewer. He professes to have come straight from Rome but Chaucer implies that he probably had not been anywhere near Rome; claiming so was simply part of his pitch to the gullible. He is physically repulsive with yellow hair hanging in clumps on his shoulders." He wore no hood and rode bare-headed. His eyes glared like those of a hare. He wore a vernicle on his cap. (vernicle- a badge or a small copy of handkerchief/ veil of St. veronicawhish she is said to have sent to Christ to wipe his face as he was bearing his cross to Calvary). His bag was full of bits of paper or parchment purporting to be pardons come 'hot' from Rome. He had a small goatee otherwise he was all recently shaved. From Berwick unto Ware there was not another Pardoner like him so well-versed as he in his trade. He carried with him a pillowcase claiming it to be the veil of Virgin Mary as also a piece of the Sail of St. Peters boat as he sailed across the sea. He also carried false relics, actually pig's bones and tricked poor people into giving him money for pardons thus earning more money in one day than would the parson in a whole month. With artificial flattery and trickery he duped the common people. He was skilled in reading from the Bible and preaching and he sang the offertory the best (a point in the Mass when people make their offerings to the priest or the pardoner). Because he knew that he should embellish his sermon by singing well to win silver from the congregation, he sang merrily and loudly.

The portrait of the Pardoner shows him as deficient in body, absurdly vain, depraved in soul. His physical attributes are a metaphor for his sterile spiritual state.

He is a supreme con artist manipulating people's religious gullibility, their shame, their greed, fear and superstitions. He uses his oratorical skills and rhetorical gift of the gab to 'stir' the people to devotion so that they will give their pennies and' namely unto me' as he says.

The Prologue to the Pardoner's Tale

The Pardoner begins the prologue thus "Ladies and gentleman" says he "Whenever I give a sermon in church I take pains to speak in a loud and impressive voice that resonates like a bell. I know all my sermons by heart and they are all on one theme- Radix malorumestcupiditas' – Greed and the love of money is the root of all evils" (From the Epistle of St. Paul).

He then says that he lets the congregation know where he comes from as well as all the official letters authorizing him to preach and issue church pardons (Bull – Latin bulla – a seal- is the name commonly given to official letters from the pope). These letters, say he, have been issued and signed by the Pope himself and his official seal guarantees that neither priests nor officials can question him. After that he tells his stories, shows all the letters signed by the Pope, cardinals and bishops and then sprinkles his sermons with a few Latin sayings to flavor them and to stir the worshipers to devotion.

He then says that he pulls out all his boxes full of crystals, old cloth and bones assumed to be holy relics- he has a piece of bone from the shoulder of a Jew's sheep that he keeps in a brass box and if that bone is dipped in a well it gets miraculous healing properties and that water can heal their cows, sheep or ox when they are infested with worms or bitten by a snake. Furthermore, any sheep that has the pox or scabies that drinks that water from the well would be cured. And if the farmer who owns the animals fasts and drinks some of the water before sunrise as a holy Jew had taught their ancestor to do, his farm animals would multiply. If a man is suspicious of his wife and falls into a jealous rage let his soup be made with this water and he will never mistrust his wife even if he knew about her infidelity, and even if she

has had two or three priests as her lover. He also shows them a glove claiming that if anyone wore that glove it would increase their harvest whether it was wheat or oats provided they would offer him pennies or silver.

He then warns the ladies and the men that if in that church there are any person who had committed a heinous sin or crime or any woman young or old who had cheated her husband, then the relics will not bless them or bring them grace and the others, whose sins are not so grave might come upto him and make him an offering in God's name and he would use the power vested in him by the Pope to pardon them and they would be absolved of their sins.

The Pardoner then boasts of his skill and astuteness in preaching that bring him profit, pride and pleasure. He says, "With this trick I have earned year after year about a hundred gold coins per year. I stand like a priest in a pulpit and tell the ignorant congregation a hundred lies like the one mentioned before and they soak up every word I preach. I make a good show of it, craning my neck to look at the people to the right and left of me just like a dove does setting in a barn. I am happy to see how my wild gestures and my glib tongue so work and preach of avarice and other sins, that the congregation is moved and they happily give away their pennies- namely to me. I am in this sermonizing to make money and not to purify the people of their sins. I don't care if after death their souls rot or go picking berries."

He then continues that he is not the first person to preach with an ulterior motive. Some priests flatter and please people so they may advance in the hierarchy through their hypocrisy, others preach to gain glory and still others to inflame hate.

He preaches, said he, to make money and to sometime to take revenge using his caustic tongue to lash out at fellow pardoners who have reviled or slandered him. He could harangue against a person in the audience and ruin his name without spelling it out; he would give such signs and innuendoes that everyone would know who he was talking about. This is how he repays his enemies by spitting out his venom under the guise of being holy and virtuous.

He then tells that he would tell them his intention very soon and that is that he preaches out of sheer covetousness. And that is why his sermons are about how avarice is the root of all evils. He continues to the pilgrims "Thus I preach about the same sin that I practice. But even when I am guilty of the sin of avarice I can make other folks turn away from greed and repent for it but that is not my purpose, I preach only to make money and that ought to be enough for you."

He say he tells the people all the old familiar examples and stories because these ignorant foolish people love to hear them over and over again as they are easy to remember, "And do you think that since I help cure the people of their greed by talking away all their gold and silver though my preaching would I ever live in poverty? I am not a simpleton who would labor with his hands and earn his livelihood by weaving baskets. I would rather be a peripatetic preacher making money in different places. I don't intend to beg in vain, I want none of the counterfeit of the apostles who live in holiness. No, I want wine and a cheerful woman in every town."

The Pardoner then says that since all the pilgrims want to listen to a tale from him and he has already had his ale he would tell them a story that he hoped they would like because even though he is a vicious, wicked man he would still tell them a moral tale which he is accustomed to tell to make money. He then tells them to relax and he begins his tale.

7.4 LET US SUM UP

The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer's magnum opus, is a collection of stories told by a diverse group of pilgrims journeying to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. Through its vivid characterizations and varied tales, the work provides a rich tapestry of medieval society, blending humor, pathos, and moral reflection, and stands as a cornerstone of English literary tradition.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, take a look at the important words from the sections that you have read:

Frame-story: A story within a story — a narrative structure where one main story serves as the framework for one or more inner stories.

Venal: Corrupt; willing to behave dishonestly in exchange for money or rewards.

Hagiology: The study of saints or stories about the lives of saints.

Burlesque: A mocking imitation, often comically exaggerating or ridiculing a subject.

Iniquitous: Wicked or morally wrong; deeply sinful.

Covetousness: Greedy desire for wealth or possessions, especially what belongs to someone else.

7.5 SUGGESTED READING

- Wu, Hsiang-mei. *Chaucer and Prejudices: A Critical Study of 'The Canterbury Tales.'* University of Sussex, 2015.
- Jill Mann, Piero Boitani. Eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer.* Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Raphel, Adrienne. "The Canterbury Tales." *LitCharts*, LitCharts LLC, 8 Nov. 2013, www.litcharts.com/lit/the-canterbury-tales

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AGE OF SPENSER

STRUCTURE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This lesson based on Spenser's sonnets, has been written with an aim to provide to the learner, the knowledge of certain aspects of the writings of the poet who was a leading exponent of his time. The scholars of English Literature rejoice in knowing about the author and his age because there is a lot of intellectual, religious, political and social significance attached to the author and his age. An attempt has been made to analyze Edmund Spenser as a writer and a comparison with his contemporaries has been incorporated to ascertain the actual position of the writer during his own time.

The text dealt with here, is the famous sonnet sequence *Amoretti*. The historical and analytical aspect of this work has been attempted to draw the attention of the reader to certain facts, hitherto unknown and unrecognized. Critical notes have been provided for the sake of reference to enable the learners to comprehend the background to this work, its historical significance and its current impact on the readers. Questions have been framed for the learners to review their comprehension of the subject matter and a consolidated relevant bibliography along with the reference books has been provided.

8.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Describe the historical, cultural, and literary context of Edmund Spenser’s era, including the Elizabethan Age and its influence on his works.
2. Explore Spenser’s literary contributions, particularly his innovations in poetic form and themes, such as in *The Faerie Queene*.
3. Identify Spenser’s contemporaries and their roles in shaping the literary landscape of the Renaissance.

After going through this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the relationship between Spenser's poetry and the Elizabethan worldview, including themes of nationalism, virtue, and allegory.
2. Analyze Spenser's stylistic innovations, such as the Spenserian stanza, and their impact on English poetry.
3. Compare Spenser's work to that of his contemporaries, such as Sidney, Marlowe, and Shakespeare.

8.3 THE AGE OF SPENSER

It was in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign that England found herself as a nation, and became conscious of her destiny as a world empire. A very important aspect was the patriotic enthusiasm of the age. Nearly two centuries of trouble and danger had passed since Chaucer died, and no national poet had appeared in England. The Renaissance came, and then the Reformation, but they brought no great writers with them. During the first thirty years of Elizabeth's reign not a single important literary work was produced; then suddenly appeared the poetry of Spenser and Chapman, the prose of Hooker, Sidney and Bacon, the dramas of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and a scores of others, all voicing the national feeling after the defeat of the Armada, and growing silent as soon as the enthusiasm began to wane.

The Elizabethan age showed distinct literary characteristics. Next to the patriotic spirit of Elizabethan literature, its most remarkable qualities are its youthful freshness and vigor, its romantic spirit, its absorption in the theme of love, its extravagance of speech, its lively sense of the wonder of heaven and earth. The ideal beauty of Spenser's poetry, the bombast of Marlowe, the boundless zest of Shakespeare's historical plays, the romantic love celebrated in unnumbered lyrics, all these speak of youth, of springtime, of the joy and the heroic adventure of human living, which added a lot of flavor to life, thereby enriching the literacy creations of the age.

This romantic zeal of Elizabethan poetry and prose may be explained by the facts that, besides the national impulse three other inspiring influences were at work. The first and foremost was the rediscovery of the classics of Greece and Rome, beautiful old poems, which were as new to the Elizabethans as to Keats when he wrote his immortal sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"-'Much Have I Travell'd in the Realms of gold'. The second awakening factor was the widespread interest in nature and the physical sciences, which spurred many other Elizabethans besides Bacon to "take all knowledge for his province." This new interest was generally romantic rather than scientific, was more concerned with marvels, like the philosopher's stone that would transmute all things to gold, than the simple facts of nature. Bacon's chemical changes, which follow the "instincts" of metals, are almost at par with those other changes described by Shakespeare in his dramas. The third factor which stimulated the Elizabethan imagination was the discovery of the world beyond the Atlantic, a world of wealth, of beauty, of unmeasured opportunity for brave spirits, in regions long supposed to be possessed of demons, monsters, Othello's impossible cannibals that each other eat, The anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.

Another significant addition to the scene was when Drake returned from his voyage around the world. He brought to England two things: a tale of vast regions just over the world's rim that awaited English explorers and a ship loaded to the hatches with gold and jewels. The queen and her favourites shared the treasure with Drake's buccaneers, and the New World seemed to them a place of barbaric splendor, where the savage's rattled hut was roofed with silver, his garments beaded with all precious jewels. Before the American settlements opened England's eyes to the stern reality of things, it was the

romance of the New World that appealed most powerfully to the imagination, and influenced Elizabethan literature to an extent which we have not yet begun to measure.

There was a prominent role of foreign influence on all the developments of this age. It is possible to comprehend the imitative quality of early Elizabethan poetry if we go through it in the light of these facts: that in the sixteenth century, England was far behind other European nations in culture; that the Renaissance had influenced Italy and Holland for a century before it crossed the Channel; that, at a time when every Dutch peasant read his Bible, the masses of English people remained in dense ignorance, and the majority of the official classes could neither read nor write. So, when the new national sprit began to express itself in literature, Englishmen turned to the more cultured nations and began to imitate them in poetry, as in dress and manners.

8.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE CONTEMPORARIES

A lot has been focused on the contemporary writers of Edmund Spenser in the passages above, dealing with the life history and Age of Spenser. According to the common literary notion, the life and works of Spenser are usually seen with reference to his great predecessor Chaucer. He was a contemporary of one of the greatest writers in English i.e., William Shakespeare. If we compare them, we find many similarities as well as dissimilarities. The birth year of each poet is determined by inference. The circumstances in which each died are a matter of controversy.

It is quite interesting to compare Spenser with his predecessor Chaucer. What sure information we have of the intervening events of the life of each one is scanty and interrupted. So far as our knowledge goes, it shows some slight positive resemblance between their lives. They were both connected with the highest society of their times; both enjoyed court favour, and enjoyed it in the substantial shape of pensions. They were both men of remarkable learning. They were both natives of London. They both died in the close vicinity of Westminster Abbey, and lie buried near each other in that splendid cemetery. Their geniuses were eminently different: that of Chaucer was the active type, Spenser's of the contemplative; Chaucer was dramatic, Spenser philosophical; Chaucer objective, Spenser subjective; but in the external circumstances, so far as we know them, amidst which these great poets moved, and in the mist which for the most part enfolds those circumstances, there is considerable likeness. Spenser is frequently alluded to by his contemporaries; they most ardently recognized in him, as we shall see, a great poet, and one that might justly be associated with the one supreme poet whom this country had then produced, with Chaucer, and they paid him constant tributes of respect and admiration.

Although born to parents of modest income, Edmund Spenser was still able to receive an impressive education at the Merchant Taylors' School, and Pembroke College at Cambridge. He learned enough Latin to read and understand poets such as Ariosto and Virgil, both of whom his works are frequently compared to. Latin literature reached its peak with the publication of the *Aeneid* shortly after Virgil's death. His epic heavily influenced succeeding poets throughout Western literature. Ever since people have compared *The Shepheardes Calender*, one of Spenser's early works, to Virgil's *Eclogues*, "Critics have judged Spenser's poetry by its fidelity to Virgilian models" according to Watkins. Spenser, who was referred to as the "English Virgil" by his contemporaries, was certainly influenced by Virgil's success says Kennedy. The idea of modeling one's career after Virgil's is known as the rota Virgilli or cursus Virgilli, meaning "the Virgilian wheel or course".

It was also assumed by his friends and contemporaries that he wrote the famous poem *The Faerie Queene* in hopes that Queen Elizabeth would be impressed by his work and bring him back to England

from Ireland, reversing his exile. From what is known today, he has been known to despise the natives who live there. The Irish were highly discriminated against since they were considered the scum of England by a very large part of the population. *The Faerie Queene* has moral value, conveys important meanings, and pleases the reader. However, his storylines, characters, and ideas severely lack both creativity and originality. Some scholars believe Spenser did not have sufficient education to compose a work with as much complexity as *The Faerie Queene*, while others are still "extolling him as one of the most learned men of his time". Scholar Douglas Bush agrees "Scholars now speak less certainly than they once did of his familiarity with ancient literature". In contrast, Meritt Hughes "finds no evidence that Spenser derived any element of his poetry from any Greek romance."

Spenser was known to his contemporaries as 'the prince of poets', as great in English as Virgil in Latin. He left behind him masterful essays in every genre of poetry, from pastoral and elegy to epithalamion and epic. Although his prose treatise on the reformation of Ireland was not published until 1633, it showed even then a shrewd comprehension of the problems facing English government in Ireland, and a capacity for political office as thorough as his literary ability. Milton was later to claim Spenser as ' a better teacher than Aquinas', and generations of readers, students, and scholars have admired him for his subtle use of language, his unbounded imagination, his immense classical and religious learning, his keen understanding of moral and political philosophy, and his unerring ability to synthesize and, ultimately, to delight. He was criticized by the likes of Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson and Daniel but at the same time poets like Charles Lamb called him, "the poet's poet" and Milton called him, "our sage and serious poet".

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here are some keywords provided with their synonyms for your better comprehension of the text:

Contemplative: reflective, meditative, thoughtful

Extravagance: excess, luxury, overindulgence

Bombast: pompous speech, grandiloquence, rhetoric

Anthropophagi: cannibals, flesh-eaters (archaic/mythological)

Buccaneers: pirates, corsairs, privateers

Zeal: fervor, passion, enthusiasm

Now try to find the synonyms of these words and write that in the space provided:

Subjective: _____.

Imitative: _____.

Synthesize: _____.

8.5 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

The text here deals with the sonnets of Edmund Spenser which have been selected from his famous sonnet sequence *Amoretti*. This work is famous for its autobiographical note as well as its technical perfection which brought appreciation to the author in his own time and is rated by scholars of the present day as a work of great eminence. In order to understand it to its depth, the scholars ought to dig deep into the historical and analytical aspects of *Amoretti*.

8.5.1 Historical Aspect

The literary period of great writers like Spenser and Shakespeare, or the English Renaissance period is roughly termed between 1485-1660. In 1557, the year before Elizabeth became Queen of England, Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, were both inspired by the Italian humanist and poet Francis Petrarch, and were thus responsible for introducing Petrarch into England. The Petrarchan vogue illustrates how conscious the poets of Renaissance England were of their predecessors. Renaissance poets wrote with one eye on their subject and the other on what previous poets had said about the subject. They aimed at making new poems that used the themes and forms of older poems. Therefore, in other words, they were not known to be too creative in the themes. A kind of writing known as pastoral enabled poets and storytellers to portray leisured and educated people as though they were shepherds or other country dwellers. English poets also drew on their personal experiences, but they depended on traditional ways of expressing those experiences. During the Renaissance, all the poems were always in meter and rhyme.

Edmund Spenser is known as "the poet's poet" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because so many young writers learned the art and craft of poetry by studying him. He graduated from Merchant Taylor's school and then went to Cambridge University where he received the B.A. and M. A. degrees. His first book was *The Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579. In 1580, Spenser and his new wife went to Ireland. The locals did not like him because he was given an Irish castle and huge estate.

Spenser eventually met Walter Raleigh and the two met to discuss their current projects. Impressed by Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*, Raleigh persuaded Spenser to join him on a trip to London in 1589, and while there, Books I-III of *The Faerie Queen* were published. In 1591, he returned to Ireland. After his first wife died, Spenser courted and married Elizabeth Boyle, an Anglo-Irish lady. His sonnet sequence *Amoretti* and his marriage hymn *Epithalamion* have often been read autobiographically as records of his devotion to Elizabeth. During a raid in Ireland, Spenser's castle was burned and his infant son killed. Spenser then travelled to London and died in 1599. Along with Chaucer and Milton, Spenser has long been regarded as England's greatest nondramatic poet.

The *Amoretti* is a sonnet cycle or sequence composed of 89 sonnets. By Spenser's time, the collection of sonnets loosely organized around a poet's love for a lady was becoming a commonplace achievement. Sidney's example, *Astrophel and Stella*, was published in 1591, five years after the poet's death, and even before that time it had been circulating unofficially among the poet's friends and relatives in manuscript form. Other sonnet cycle poets were Samuel Daniel (*Delia*, 1592), Michael Drayton (*Idea*, 1594 and 1619), Fulke Greville (*Caelica*, 1633), and William Shakespeare (*Sonnets*, 1609).

The *Epithalamion* is a wedding song derived from Latin originals which, in the earliest days of the empire, actually were sung by choirs of young men and women who accompanied the bride and groom from her parents' house to her future husband's family's house where they would spend the wedding night. The name, a Greek loan word incorporated into Latin, means "at the bridal chamber", from "thalamus" or bridal chamber.

8.6 ANALYTICAL ASPECT

Spenser wrote in a sonnet which varied interestingly from Sidney's in its rhyme scheme. Sidney, striking away from Wyatt's and Surrey's closer adherence to the Petrarchan octave and sestet, usually

produced sonnets in the three-quatrain-and-couplet pattern, though he delighted in deceiving his readers by occasionally delaying the stanza break. The rhyme scheme, which usually plays in harmony with the stanza structure, followed a wide variety of patterns other than the typical English scheme of abab cdcd efef gg or Wyatt's more traditional, concatenated Petrarchan octave and sestet scheme of abba abba cdc cdc. The "aa" rhyme in the middle of the octave and the "cc "in the middle of the sestet form two internal links in a "chain" of rhyme.

Spenser, looking back over these alternatives, decided that concatenation offered the best rhyme scheme, but also that the quatrain-couplet strategy gave him the most flexibility to tell a complex poetic "story" within each poem. So most of the *Amoretti* sonnets rhyme in this stanza form: abab bcbc cdcd ee. The chained linkage of his quatrains allowed them either to evolve logically from one another, or to suddenly wheel logically against the previous quatrain while turning on the "axle" of the concatenated rhyme. For an example of the cumulative logical development strategy, see the first sonnet in the sequence, especially its couplet's opposition of "subdew" (with its outrageously spelled pun on the waters that submerged the poets beach combing words) and "renew" (with its implied linkage of the lovers' souls via the wedding sacrament to their resurrection at the last judgment).

The *Epithalamion* is composed in 24 immensely complex 18-line stanzas whose rthyme schemes vary but use Spenser's typical concatenation strategy to link each stage of the stanza together. A. Kent Hieatt's *Short time's Endless Monument* (1960) demonstrated that each of the 24 stanzas corresponds to an hour of Midsummer's Day, very nearly the day on which Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle on 6/11/1594. Thus, the wedding poem is a compressed version of the larger cyclic view of the love we see in *Amoretti*. Each stanza but the last ends with some form of the phrase "your/our/theyre Ecco ring " and "Ne….nor your/our/theyre Ecco ring." At the poem's "midnight," in stanza 24, the speaker apologizes for "ornaments" that should have arrived but that this poem substitutes for making "for short time an endless monument". The poet's persona in these poems is very closely linked to Edmund Spenser himself and the poet's beloved very closely linked to Elizabeth Boyle, who married Spenser in 1594, the year before these poems were published.

8.7 ANNOTATIONS OF SONNETS

According to literacy historians, sonnets originated during the Renaissance period of European history. The word sonnet means "a little song", and given the general literacy rate of Europe at the time, they probably were originally sung or spoken, rather than read. There are three main varieties of sonnets, named after the poets that popularized them; these varieties are Petrarchan, Spenserian, and Shakespearean. Regardless of variety, all sonnets share certain characteristics that make them sonnets.

All sonnets have these characteristics in common:

1. Fourteen lines.
2. A regular rhyme scheme.
3. Metrical composition, usually iambic pentameter.

It is clear that a sonnet is a poem of 14 lines, usually in iambic pentameter, and with a structural balance between the first 8 lines called the octave and the last 6 called the sestet. The arrangement of the fourteen lines, and the rhyme scheme, depends on the particular variety of sonnet. Introduced in 13th Century Italy, the sonnet was established by Petrarch as a major form of love poetry, and was adapted in French and English vernacular literature in the late 16th century. Sydney, Spenser, and Shakespeare wrote

outstanding sonnets, a tradition that was continued by Donne, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, and Mallarme. The sonnet has remained one of the most popular and adaptable of all poetic forms. Among recent distinguished poets who have composed sonnets are Dylan Thomas, Robert Lowell, and Seamus Heaney. The conventions associated with the sonnet have changed during its history. The English poets usually use iambic pentameter when writing sonnets.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

Complete the sentences about Spenser, his age, and his contemporaries:

1. Edmund Spenser is best known for his allegorical epic poem *The* _____ _____.
2. The Spenserian stanza consists of _____ lines followed by a final Alexandrine.
3. Spenser lived during the reign of Queen _____, a time of flourishing arts and culture.
4. Sir Philip _____ was a notable contemporary of Spenser, known for his work *Astrophel and Stella*.
5. Spenser's poetry reflects the ideals of the _____, a movement emphasizing classical learning and humanism.

Answers: 1 *Faerie Queene*, 2 Eight, 3 Elizabeth, 4 Sidney, 5 Renaissance

The Italian Sonnet or Petrarchan Sonnet

The Italian sonnet or Petrarchan, named after Petrarch, the Italian poet, was probably invented by Giacomo da Lentini, head of the Sicilian School under Frederick II. He wrote almost 300 sonnets between 1250-1300, but the most famous early sonneteer was Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). The Italian sonnet was divided into an octave, which stated a proposition or a problem, followed by a sestet, which provided a resolution, or a solution to the problem posed in the octave with a clear break between the two sections. Even in sonnets that don't strictly follow the problem/resolution structure, the ninth line still often marks a "turn" by signaling a change in the tone, mood, or stance of the poem. In the sonnets of Giacomo da Lentini, the octave rhymed a-b-a-b, a-b-a-b; later, the a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a pattern became the standard for Italian Sonnets.

The first known sonnets in English, written by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, used this Italian scheme, as did sonnets by later English poets including John Milton, Thomas Gray, William Wordsworth, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In addition to the rhyme scheme, English poets usually use iambic pentameter to structure their sonnets as Milton has done. This is a rough equivalent to the hendecasyllable or Alexandrines usually used for Petrarchan sonnets in romance languages such as Italian, French and Spanish.

Spenserian Sonnet

Soon after the introduction of the Italian sonnet, English poets began to develop a fully native form of the sonnet. A variant of the English form is the Spenserian sonnet, named after Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) in which the rhyme scheme is a-b-a-b, b-c-b-c, c-d-c-d, e-e. Williams describes the Spenserian

sonnet, a sonnet variation developed in the sixteenth century by English poet Edmund Spenser. While few poets have used this form, it serves as a bridge between the Italian sonnet and the form used by Shakespeare. In Spenserian sonnet, there does not appear to be a requirement that the initial octave sets up a problem which the closing sestet answers, as it happens in the Petrarchan form. Instead, the form is treated as three quatrains that are linked by the connected rhyme scheme described above, followed by a couplet. Again, iambic pentameter is used.

Shakespearean Sonnet

The English sonnet is a form, which Williams says was "developed by Shakespeare himself to accommodate the Italian sonnet to relatively rhyme-poor English, avoiding the requirement for triple rhymes in the sestet." Williams goes on to say that "the rhetorical pattern of the poem changes slightly as the situation or problem presented in the octave is now dealt with tentatively in the next four lines and summarily in the terminal couplet. Some English sonnets develop through a series of three examples in three quatrains with a conclusion in the couplet." So the content of an English sonnet is not coupled as closely to the form as it is in the Italian sonnet.

The rhyme scheme of the English sonnet is abab cdcd efef gg. As noted, Shakespeare has eliminated close linking, by the use of rhymes, of the individual quatrains, presumably to allow more flexibility in English, which does not provide as many rhyming possibilities as Italian. One of the interesting elements of Shakespeare's sonnets is the "enjambment" of "phrases" with "sonnet lines." In an "enjambed" line, the textual phrases extend beyond the end of the sonnet lines, and a textual phrase begins or ends in the middle of a line of iambic pentameter.

The Modern Sonnet

As mentioned earlier, many English poets have used the sonnet form to a great effect. The sonnet so became popular in French poetry, with even such avant-garde figures as Arthur Rimbaud and Stephane Mallarme writing sonnets. With the advent of free verse, the sonnet came to be seen as somewhat old-fashioned and fell out of use for a time among some schools of poets. The 21st century has seen a strong resurgence of the sonnet form, as there are many sonnets now appearing in print and on the Internet. Richard Vallance publishes the Canadian quarterly journal *Sonnetto Poesia* which is dedicated to the sonnet, villanelle, and quatrain forms, as well as the monthly *Vallance Review* on historical and contemporary sonneteers. Burch publishes *The Hyper Texts* and there are sonnets from well-known poets on his site. William Baer has also recently published 150 *Contemporary Sonnets*. Vikram Seth's 1986 novel *The Golden Gate* is written in 690 12-line stanzas, similar to sonnets, but in reality as adaptation of the stanza invented by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin for his poem *Eugene Onegin*. Hence we see, the sonnet has undergone a long journey, with many zigzag phases as well as writers who acknowledged the significance of this poetic form, yet it continues to exist even today and we can hope a better future for it.

Spenser's *Amoretti*

Spenser bestowed on his sequence of eighty-nine sonnets the Italian name of *Amoretti*. His heroine, his "sweet warrior" as he calls her in sonnet 57, is the child of Petrarch's dolce guerriera. His imagery is, at times, assimilated with little change from the sonnets of his contemporary Tasso, while Ronsard and Desportes give him numerous suggestions, although he rarely stoops to mere verbal translation of foreign verse. Spenser's *Amoretti* was addressed to Lady Elizabeth Boyle, whom he wooed and who finally became

his wife. A strand of autobiography was woven into the borrowed threads. Yet it is very occasionally that he escaped altogether from the fetters of current convention, and gave free play in his sonnets to his poetic genius.

In this sonnet sequence, Spenser's sentiment professedly ranges itself with continental and classical idealism. In two sonnets he identifies his heroine with the Petrarchan or Neo-Platonic character of beauty, which had lately played a prominent part in numberless French sonnets by Du Bellay, Desportes, Pontus de Tyard, Claude de Pontoux and others. Many Elizabethan sonneteers marched under the same banner. Drayton, in conferring on his sonnets the title *Idea*, claimed to rank with the Italian and French Platonists. But Spenser sounds the idealistic note far more clearly than any contemporary. A very good example to this effect is sonnet 45. Like the French writers, Spenser ultimately disclaims any mortal object of adoration in ecstatic recognition of the superior fascination of the character as in sonnet 87:

Through contemplation of my purest part,

With light there of I do myself sustain,

And thereon feed my love affamish'd heart.

Analysis of Sonnet 15

Ye tradeful merchants, that with weary toil

Rhyme: a b a b; b c b c; c d c d; e e

It's an Elizabethan sonnet. It's a dramatic sonnet because it's dialogue with a merchant. The rhyme scheme is linked (concatenate) quatrains are self-contained.

It's a typical Petrarchan sonnet. It's similar to "My mistress eyes", but Shakespeare is more original and personal.

Ye: you

Tradeful: busy

Weary toil: great effort

Do seek: look for the….

Make your gain: gave money

Indian: America

What needeth: why do you need?

For: because

ween: pura

locks: strands

Contents

In the first quatrain the speaker feels that the merchants are wasting their time, looking for treasures so far away.

In the second quatrain there is an explanation to the above question. The poet feels so because his love has all these treasures.

In the third quatrain he describes the beauty of his beloved.

In the couplet comes the "turning point". He insists that his beloved is the fairest and she has not only a beautiful exterior but also a beautiful mind.

Devices

Line 2: "most make"= alliteration

Line 6: "far found" = alliteration

Line 13: "fairest …few" = alliteration

3rd quatrain: anaphora of "if"

Series of metaphors like rubies, gold ivory, silver etc.

Explanation of Sonnet 75

Line 3: Second hand= handwriting

Line 5: assay=try

Line 8: eek=also

Line 9: quoth=said

Spenser's poem is different from earlier poetry in the sense that it is personal in note. This becomes a striking feature. The poet places himself in the centre of the poem, telling us about his personal situation, emotions and convictions. Such poetry, which expresses the poet's emotions, is called lyric. Lyric poetry became very popular in Spenser's time, the Renaissance, because people began to be interested in the individual. As a literary fashion, in the Middle Ages man was seen as a part of a community but in the sixteenth century he came to be seen as an individual, unlike every other man. This individualism is reflected in Elizabethan poetry, of which Edmund Spenser is one of the greatest representatives.

In this sonnet, addressed to his wife, Spenser claims to give her immortality in his verse. He does so by starting from a very ordinary, very charming incident that may occur any day in summer by the seaside. The situation is therefore a general one, but Spenser handles it in such a way as to make it intimately personal. Spenser was well-skilled in making optimum use of his imagination, which creates a picture of tender young love through the conversation between his lady and himself, absorbed in each other, against the background of the eternal sea. He would like to preserve this experience for ever, but the waves wipe out her name just as cruel time destroys every man-made thing. He is reluctant to accept this situation. He feels confident that he will be able to immortalize his love by a different kind of writing, his poetry, no matter how short life on earth may be. At the same time the writing of the lady's name, which is the central image of the poem, is transferred from earth to heaven. Love, poetry and religious belief are closely associated, which make his sonnets richer to read.

If we make an analysis on the technical front, Spenser's poetry is at a very high level. He uses simple words so skillfully that they create a complete, harmonious picture. After the action of the first quatrain he switches to the dialogue in the second and third, to conclude with the couplet which summarizes the theme of the sonnet. Spenser's perfect handling of vowels and the wavelike rhythm of his poem can only be appreciated when the sonnet is read aloud so as to bring out its melody. His frequent use of alliteration binds the poem together. Hence he keeps up his level of perfection for which he is famous.

8.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Mention in detail, the analytical aspect of *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*.
2. Write a note on the subject matter of *Amoretti* in general. How many sonnets does it contain? Who is the inspiration behind this remarkable composition?
3. Compare Spenser as a writer with his predecessor Geoffrey Chaucer.
4. Write a brief note on the historical background of Spenser's sonnet sequence, *Amoretti*.
5. Write a brief note on the achievements of Spenser.
6. What is a sonnet? Write a detailed essay on the origin of this poetic form and how it became a favourite genre of the English poets like Spenser and Shakespeare?
7. What are the literary characteristics of the Age of Spenser?
8. Give a comprehensive analysis of sonnet 15 of *Amoretti*.
9. Critically evaluate sonnet 30 of the sonnet sequence *Amoretti*.
10. How does Spenser show in sonnet 30 that love defies all sense and logic?
11. Throw light on the content of sonnet 75 of *Amoretti*.
12. What are the other famous works of Edmund Spenser? Mention a few in brief.
13. How would you characterize Spenser's style? It is music of modulation and lulling harmonies, or is it thin and function?
14. What is the overall effect of Spenser's poetry on the reader?

8.9 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 In Spenser's *Amoretti*, what does the speaker's beloved represent metaphorically?

A) A fleeting moment

B) A celestial being

C) A treacherous journey

D) An unattainable ideal

Q.2 In Sonnet 65, what does the speaker assert about the enduring power of poetry?

A) It can delay the passage of time

B) It can make life eternal

C) It can preserve memories forever

D) It can challenge the laws of nature

Q.3 In Sonnet 86, what is the central theme of the poem?

A) The impermanence of love

B) The power of beauty

C) The inevitability of aging

D) The struggle of unrequited love

Q.4 Which of Spenser's works celebrates a wedding and portrays the journey of a bride from her chamber to the wedding feast?

A) *Amoretti*

B) Sonnet 65

C) Sonnet 86

D) *Epithalamion*

Q.5 What is the tone of Spenser's *Epithalamion*?

A) Melancholic

B) Joyful and celebratory

C) Angry and resentful

D) Reflective and contemplative

Q.6 In *Amoretti*, how does the speaker describe the process of falling in love?

A) A calm and serene journey

B) A tempestuous and chaotic experience

C) A gradual and steady transition

D) A fleeting and ephemeral moment

Q.7 What natural imagery does Spenser use in Sonnet 65 to convey the theme of the power of poetry?

A) Stars and celestial bodies

B) Ocean waves and tides

C) Blooming flowers

D) Endless deserts

Q.8 In Sonnet 86, what is the speaker's response to the ravages of time on physical appearance?

A) Resignation and acceptance

B) Anger and defiance

C) Despair and hopelessness

D) Determination to resist aging

Q.9 In *Epithalamion*, what natural event does the speaker compare the bride's beauty to?

A) Sunrise

B) Thunderstorm

C) Eclipse

D) Earthquake

Q.10 What does Spenser's *Amoretti* primarily revolve around?

A) A knight's heroic deeds

B) A romantic journey

C) The theme of unrequited love

D) A political allegory

Answers: 1B, 2C, 3C, 4D, 5B, 6B, 7A, 8A, 9A, 10B

8.10 SUGGESTED READING

- Waller, Gary F. *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*. Taylor & Francis, 2014.
- Hadfield, Andrew. *Edmund Spenser: A Life*. OUP Oxford, 2012. ebook.
- "The English Renaissance: An Introduction to the Cultural Revival That Inspired an Era of Poetic Evolution." Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/154826/an introduction to the english renaissance.
- Spenser, Edmund. "Edmund Spenser." Poets.org, Academy of American Poets, www.poets.org/poet/edmund-spenser

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AMORETTI (SONNET 65 AND 86)

STRUCTURE

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Amoretti is a sonnet sequence consisting of eighty nine sonnets. The sonnet sequence is composed by the great Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser. The sonnet sequence traces the development in Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle whom he eventually married.

9.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to make the learner familiar with Edmund Spenser's sonnet sequence *Amoretti*. Spenser is regarded as one of the greatest poets of the Elizabethan age. The lesson will deal with the two sonnets (Sonnet 65 and Sonnet 86) from Spenser's sonnet sequence *Amoretti.*

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze the themes of love, beauty, and the passage of time as presented in Spenser's Sonnet 65 and Sonnet 86 from *Amoretti*.

2. Identify the symbols and imagery used by Spenser to convey emotional depth and philosophical reflections in both sonnets.

3. Compare the tone and perspective of Sonnet 65 and Sonnet 86 and highlight their relationship to the larger narrative of *Amoretti*.

9.3 ELIZABETHAN SONNET TRADITION

The sonnet as a literary form originated in Italy during the thirteenth century and Petrarch and Dante were the pioneers. Petrarch is credited with originating the love sonnets whom he addressed to Laura. Dante, similarly addressed his love sonnets to Beatrice. The Italian sonnet made its way to England during the early sixteenth century through the works of Wyatt and Surrey. Wyatt also introduced the Petrarchan model and his example was followed by many of his imitators. He introduced the vogue of writing love sonnets and left behind thirty one sonnets of rare excellence and beauty all written in the imitation of Petrarch. Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, carried further the vogue of sonnets writing and gave a new turn to the sonnet. Instead of adopting the Petrarchan form accepted by Wyatt, he perfected the new form which Shakespeare later on used with ease and grace. Surrey's sonnets were love sonnets written to Geraldine or lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald. They embodied in their structure the love-lorn crisis of the poet's heart.

After Wyatt and Surrey the sonnet form was taken up by a number of Elizabethan poets and the sonnet form became the most common form used by the poets. Sir Philip Sidney composed one hundred and eight sonnets and eleven songs all put in *Astrophel and Stella.* These poems are addressed to Penelope Devereux, afterwards Lady Rich, and express the intensity of the poet's heart for a lady who broke off with him to marry Lord Rich. These sonnets which owe much to Petrarch in tone and style, place Sidney as one of the greatest Elizabethan soneteers.

After the publication of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* there was a rich harvest of sonnets procured by a host of writers of whom Spenser and Shakespeare are the most important. Edmund Spenser is known for his sonnet sequence *Amoretti* which consists of eighty nine sonnets of love and are addressed to Elizabeth Boyle.

Shakespeare's sonnets, one hundred and fifty four in number, were published in 1609. The first series i.e. 1-126 is addressed to a young man and the second series, i.e. 127-154 consists of sonnets to or about a certain 'dark' mistress whom the poet in some sense loves, or has loved, but whom he also despises, and despises himself for loving. Speculations have been made regarding the identity of the young man and the dark lady but no certainty has been achieved.

Another poet who wrote in the same tradition of sonnets was Samuel Daniel. He depended on foreign inspiration in his *Delia,* a collection of love sonnets, addressed to an imaginary mistress without conviction and faith.

Michael Drayton was another Elizabethan sonnet writer of prominence. Drayton reached the highest level of poetic feeling and expression. His well known sonnet sequence was *Idea.* However, Drayton's sonnets do not give the impression of true passion and we do not know if his *Idea* represents one woman or several or none.

So the Elizabeth poets developed a rich tradition of sonnet writing borrowing from the Italian models. The original source of inspiration of all these sonnet sequences was, of course, Petrarch whose love sonnets to Laura had started the fashion in Italy and then in France. The English poets imitated,

borrowed, sometimes simply translated from their Italian or French masters. Because of this, some critics have condemned the whole lot as artificial and only Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare had sincere motives and originality.

9.4 *AMORETTI*-INTRODUCTION

Amoretti is a sonnet sequence consisting of eighty nine sonnets. It is a remarkable example of Spenser's handling of a convention of his time, that is, love sonnets in the Petrarchan mode so dear to the Elizabethans. Spenser began his suit to Elizabeth Boyle, to whom are addressed the *Amoretti* and the superb *Epithalamion* soon after his return to Ireland in 1591. To what extent these sonnets celebrate his love for Elizabeth Boyle, his marriage to whom he celebrated in his *Epithalamion* is an unprofitable question: they tell the story of the poet's wooing of a mistress who at first rebuffed him, then relented and returned his love, and finally, as a result of some unhappy incident, turned against him again. If the *Epithalamion* represents the true end of his story, then we must suppose that the lady changed her mind yet again, and permanently this time.

Amoretti traces Edmund Spenser's long courtship and eventual wooing of his beloved Elizabeth Boyle. The sonnet-sequence can be divided into three parts depending upon the changing nature of Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle. In the first two sonnets, the poet addresses his own poetry and hopes to win his lady love with the power of words. These two sonnets form a group of their own and can be excluded from the tripartite division of the sonnet sequence. These two sonnets work as a sort of exposition introducing the reader to the poem. The first group, therefore, comprises of sonnets from three to sixty two. In this group, the poet dwells upon the beauty of his beloved describing both her outer and inner beauty. In this section, however, the poet is emotionally frustrated as his beloved refuses to respond positively/ favourably to his efforts.

The next division comprising the sonnets from 63 to 85 abruptly changes the tone of the poem with Elizabeth Boyle responding favourably to Spenser's wooing. Until now, the beloved had been ignoring the poet's efforts at courtship, but now she gives in and accepts the courtship. The poet's long and laborious efforts at wooing his beloved have been rewarded and she accepts him as her fiancée.

In the third division of the poem, that is, from Sonnet 86 to Sonnet 89, the poet enters into a relationship with his beloved. The tone again changes in this set of sonnets and the poet undergoes a brief separation from his beloved. The poet again becomes miserable but there is an indication that this separation will not last long and ultimately they will be united.

9.5 SONNET 65- TEXT

The doubt which ye misdeeme, fayre love, is vaine,
That fondly feare to loose your liberty;
when loosing one, two liberties ye gayne,
and make him bond that bondage earstdyd fly.
Sweet be the bands, the which true love doth tye,
without constraynt or dread of any ill:
the gentle birdefeeles no captivity
within her cage, but singes and feeds her fill.

There pride dare not approch, nor discord spill

the league twixt them, that loyal love hath bound:

but simple truth and mutuall good will

seekes with sweet peace to salve each others wound.

There fayth doth fearlesse dwell in brasen towre,

and spotlesse pleasure builds her sacred bowre.

9.5.1 SONNET 65 - SUMMARY

Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 65 is part of his collection of sonnets called *Amoretti*. The sonnet is a reflection on the passage of time and how it affects love.

The sonnet is a deliberation over the age-old sexist tradition of men exercising control over women. This sonnet expresses the feelings of fear and anxiety that the beloved feels about losing her sovereignty in marriage. For a sixteenth century woman, this was a relevant and justified fear. However, if she remained unmarried, she would be under the control of her father. An important aspect of gender politics is men controlling women, and this poem sidesteps the issue by arguing that by losing one liberty, you gain two – your own and your spouse's, who also used to fear bondage. The allegiances undertaken without any coercion and constraint do not feel like bonds because you are happy like caged birds who eat and sing.

The traditional Petrarchan poem is construed as an argument where the male speaker or the wooer provides an argument to ensnare the passive and coy female. Here the argument revolves around the male speaker's attempt to allay the fears of his love about losing her freedom post marriage, a genuine fear that almost every sixteenth century woman had. Married women had to give up their personal, financial freedoms to their husbands. That the speaker needs to address this issue says much about the woman whom he is addressing. If the woman feels that she will lose her independence, she definitely seems independent minded.

The speaker, who acknowledges her independence, wants to make some sort of arrangement with her nonetheless. There are many images of bonds, bounds, bands, and cages which are repeated to demonstrate that he considers marriage to be a bond and an agreement that must be entered into. He argues that her bondage will not be one which stifles her sense of self. If she enters into it willingly and gently: As he writes, "the gentle birde feeles no captivity/within her cage, but singes and feeds her fill" (7-8). Edmund Spenser employs an anagram of 'birde' is scrambled becomes bride to convey the idea that he is addressing his future wife.

After these initial arguments to woo his lady love, we are presented with an ideal description of marriage.Melissa Femino argues that "the first two quatrains play with the word bond from the phrase bonds of marriage- punning on bonds as "bondage" and then moving to the word bands in the next four lines.These lines are both an affirmation and a contradiction of common Petrarchan conceit" (Sauer, 20). A traditional feature of Petrarchan love poetry is the captive lover. The argument itself is a paradox, as the poet argues that if the lady gets married, she will inevitably gain more independence than if she remains unfettered by the bonds of love and marriage. However, Spenser's use of the conceit is different: he places this idea within the context of marriage rather than an affair or a platonic relationship. Most Petrarchan lovers sing to women who are unattainable: those of higher social classes or those who are already married.

In reference to Christianity, Femino makes an interesting observation. She argues:

The placement of the poem within the structure of the sonnet sequence adds yet another caveat to Spenser's use of Petrarchan conceits. The poem takes place on March 28, the Thursday before Easter (Maundy Thursday). This day celebrated the institution of the new covenant, sealed by Resurrection. The day was associated with marriage in Spenser' s time through the common reading of the Psalm 128 which was often read at evening prayers on that day; it was also read during the marriage service. Spenser's application of post-Reformation covenantal thought to a Petrarchan poem about marriage is a clear departure from the traditional use of the form by the 16th century English poets (Sauer 20).

9.5.2 Sonnet 65 - Analysis

Amoretti was published in 1595 along with *Epithalamion,* Spenser's wedding poem to his second wife, the Englishwoman Elizabeth Boyle. In this sonnet sequence, Spenser lays bare the pleasures and the miseries of wooing his wife-to-be and (among other things) persuading her to come to Kilcolman to live with him. She married him in 1594 in Munster and settled with the poet at Kilcolman, until they lost their home to rebellion in 1598. This sonnet can be understood in the context of the sonnet sequence and what comes before and after sonnet 65.

Sonnet 65 occurs in the sequence just after (in #64) the speaker catalogues the many endearing and majestic features of his beloved. He compares her visage to colorful and sweet-smelling flowers. Sonnet 65 comes soon before #67, wherein his bride is finally "goodly wonne with her owne will beguiled" like a chased and tamed deer. Then, in #68, the speaker celebrates Easter (including the sacrifice of Jesus Christ). In #69, he celebrates the success of his "loves conquest… gotten at last with labour and long toyle". His "labour" in wooing Elizabeth Boyle has finally concluded in her "purchase," or his attainment of her (the word has strong financial overtones). Just like in Shakespeare's sonnets, the speaker and the beloved are thereby made eternal as subjects and their name will be etched in eternity because they have been immortalised as the subjects of this poem. (the theme of poetic immortality is also explored in Sonnet 75).

Check Your Progress: Match the Symbol to its Meaning

Symbol	**Meaning:**
1. Pearls	A. The binding and liberating power of love
2. Chains of gold	B. Wealth and material beauty
3. Love's fire	C. The transformative power of passion
4. Servile bands	D. Restrictive societal norms
5. Freedom	E. Purity and spiritual beauty

Answers: 1 E, 2 B, 3 D, 4 A

In Sonnet 65, however, the speaker is trying his best to persuade the beloved to accept his proposal and the "bond" of marriage, which is alluded to in the word "bands" (like a wedding *band*, or ring; note also the echo of the word *banns*, or an announcement of betrothal). With these bonds, and ring, he tries

to capture her and bind her to him. Nonetheless, the meaning of line four is ambiguous: is she or is he the person who is fleeing the "bondage" of marriage? Apparently, Elizabeth still "doubts" whether he should be her husband.

9.5.3 Sonnet 65 - Glossary

misdeeme = "misjudge"

earst = "first"

salue = to "heal" or "cure"

brasen = "strong", "bold", and/or "brassy"

9.6 SONNET 86-TEXT

Since I did leave the presense of my love,

Many long weary days I have outworn;

And many nights, that slowly seemed to move

Their sad protract from evening until morn.

For, when as day the heaven doth adorn,

I wish that night the noyous day would end:

And, when as night hath us of light forlorn,

I wish that day would shortly reascend.

Thus I the time with expectation spend,

And fain my grief with changes to beguile,

That further seems his term still to extend,

And maketh every minute seem a mile.

So sorrow still doth seem too long to last;

But joyous hours do fly away too fast.

9.6.1 Sonnet 86 - Summary

The poet says that ever since he has become estranged from his beloved, he has endured many sad and tiresome days which last longer than the usual days. The poet's nights are as wearisome as his days and they also progress slowly. His nights linger on and do not seem to end, beginning with evening and entering well into the morning.

The poet again describes his sad plight at the break of day and says that when the heavens adorn the day and the day rises, the poet gets exhausted with the day and wishes that the annoying day would come to an end. And again when the night falls and abandons the day off light, the poet wishes that the situation again comes up to its former position and the day rise again. The poet wants the quick day/night shift as he wants that the time during which he is separated from his beloved soon passes and he reunites with his beloved.

The poet says that he spends his days and nights in expectation that his 'griefe' will 'faine' or happily lead him to consider 'chaunges to beguile'. His grief is trying to convince and trick

Spenser into thinking that his beloved's affections may alter while they are separate. The result of this mischievous thinking is that he is tricked into believing that the absence 'seemes his terme still to extend' and thus his worries make the deprivation seem to endure even longer. 'Every minute seem[s] a myle' reaffirms this impact.

The poet concludes the poem with a couplet and laments about the irony of time's moments of pleasure and misery. The poet says that the sorrowful days last longer than the usual days, and joyful and happy days fly away too quickly, i.e. they end very quickly.

9.6.2 Sonnet 86 - Analysis

Amoretti, as it consists of eighty nine sonnets depicting Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle, deals with the different phases in his courtship. Sonnets 86 to 89 depict the change which occurred in Spenser's relationship with Elizabeth Boyle after his engagement with her. Their relationship takes another turn and now again, Spenser's relationship with Elizabeth Boyle becomes a bit distressed. The poem is written in a very straight forward manner addressing the particular issue of his beloved's estrangement from him and its impact upon him. Spenser very unequivocally says that since his beloved has become estranged from her, he is spending his days and nights in great misery.

This poem is also written in the form of Spenserian sonnet consisting of three quatrains and a concluding couplet with the rhyme scheme *ababbcbccdcdee.* In the first quatrain, the poet laments that ever since he has become estranged from him beloved, he is spending his days and nights in great misery. His days also seem to be longer than usual because of his despair. In the next quatrain, the poet further develops this thought and says that he wishes that the days and nights should pass quickly, thereby lessening the time for which he has to stay away from his beloved. In the third quatrain, the poet introduces a new idea and says that he fears that the brief separation will distance him more from his beloved as theirs is a new love. In the concluding couplet, the poet says that the happy times move fast and the sad days linger on and last longer than the usual days.

9.6.3 Sonnet 86 - Glossary

protract – prolong

adorne – wear

noyous – annoying or irritating

forlorne – abandoned, deserted

faine – happily

beguile – to deceive with charm

ioyous – presumably just a variant spelling of joyous

9.7 THEMES

The first important theme in *Amoretti* is, of course, love. The sonnet sequence is, in a way, a celebration of Spenser's courtship of his lady love Elizabeth Boyle. *Amoretti* depicts the love which Spenser had for his beloved. His love for her remains the same throughout the sonnet-sequence. However, Elizabeth Boyle's love undergoes a change as the sonnets progress. In a considerable large part of the poem, i.e. up to the sonnet 62, she remains aloof and does not return Spenser's favours. But then comes

a sudden shift with sonnet 63 when she accepts Spenser's love and responds in a favourable manner. This journey of love takes a final turn in the third part of the sonnet sequence and Elizabeth Boyle again becomes indifferent to Spenser. However, this indifference is rather short lived as the sonnet-sequence ends with the hope that the lovers will be reunited and this becomes true as Spenser later composed *Epithalamion* in the celebration of his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle.

Another important theme is that of courtship. The entire sonnet cycle of the *Amoretti* is about courtship. The poems chart the different dimensions of Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle. *Amoretti* is about courtship and it depicts the poet's efforts at courtship. It also describes the beloved's reaction to this courtship, ranging from indifference to acceptance to a brief separation. Spenser's efforts at courtship yielded the desired result and Elizabeth Boyle accepted his suit. The sonnets, therefore depict the journ ey of Spenser's courtship and its conclusion.

Another important theme in *Amoretti* is that of journey. On one level, Spenser's whole effort at wooing his mistress can be seen as a long journey, a journey full of hardships and perils. Sonnet 63 describes this journey of the poet by comparing it to a tumultuous sea journey. In this sonnet, the poet compares his journey of wooing his mistress to a sea journey which is full of tempest, storms, and the fear of death. The poet describes the hardships which he faced during the course of his wooing of his mistress, and the eventual ecstasy which he got when she accepted his wooing. This ecstasy he compares with safely reaching the shore which holds the promise of a happy life. Another important theme is that of perseverance in love. Spenser persists in his courtship of Elizabeth Boyle even after she responds unfavourably to him for a long time. This indifference of Elizabeth Boyle Spenser records from sonnet 3 to sonnet 65. So, he has devoted a large portion of his sonnet sequence in depicting the indifference of his beloved. However, Spenser perseveres in spite of all the odds and this perseverance leads to the eventual acceptance by Elizabeth Boyle of his love which he records in the sonnet 63 onwards.

Sonnet 65 is about the fear the beloved expressed about losing her liberty in marriage – and indeed, that was a justified fear for a 16th-century young woman, except that being unmarried, she remained in power of her father. The poet glosses over the gender politics anyway, arguing that by losing one liberty, you gain two – your own and your spouse's, who also used to fear bondage. The bonds assumed freely and without constraint are really no bonds, and you are as happy as a caged bird, who sings and eats.

Time and the conception of time is another important theme in *Amoretti*. This theme is delineated in Sonnet 86 which deals with the concept of time. The sonnet describes Spenser's brief estrangement from Elizabeth Boyle after she had accepted his courtship. This brief separation leads Spenser to ponder over the conception of time. In the sonnet, Spenser hopes that the time flies quickly so that he can again be united with his beloved. He also makes an ironic reference to time and says that time flies during the happy times and it drags when one is sad. Separation is another important theme delineated in *Amoretti*. Sonnet 86 records the brief separation of Spenser from Elizabeth Boyle after their engagement. This brief separation, however, leaves Spenser in a sorry state and he becomes wretched during that brief separation. Spenser wishes that the days and nights pass in quick succession and this brief period of separation comes to an end. He even doubts that this brief separation will lead to more differences between the two as theirs is a new love.

9.8 SYMBOLS AND IMAGERY

The first important symbol is that of a journey. In sonnet 65, repeated images of bonds, bounds, bands, and cages demonstrate that her bondage will not be an unpleasant one. If she enters into it

willingly and gently: As he writes, "the gentle birdefeeles no captivity/within her cage, but singes and feeds her fill" (7-8). The anagram implicit in Edmund Spenser's spelling of "birde" as bride, if scrambled correctly, seems to strengthen the idea that he is addressing his future wife.

In sonnet 86, he brings about the ironic nature of time. Time means different things for the poet in different situations. For example, time seems to move fast when we are in a happy and joyous mood and it seems to move slowly when we are in a sad and depressed state. For the poet also, time seems to drag when he is estranged from his beloved, so he wishes that the time passes quickly so that he can be reunited with his beloved.

9.9 AN ASSESSMENT OF *AMORETTI*

Soon after his return to Ireland in 1591, Spenser began his suit to Elizabeth Boyle, to whom are addressed the *Amoretti* sonnets. These are sonnets of love and have been given the Italian name of *Amoretti*, which means little love poems. In them the poet gives expression to the feeling of his heart in a sincere and unaffected manner without any recourse to allegory. There is not here the unquiet of Sidney's love for Lord Rich's wife nor the complaining tone of Shakespeare whose mistress deceived him, Spenser's sonnets are unique for their purity. They tell a story of love without sin or remorse and there is the purity of tone in them.

The *Amoretti* sonnets are written with an easy and familiar grace, at once clear and melodious, capable of touching into beauty the ordinary changes and chances of the lover's fortune or of voicing the ecstasy so typically Spenserian of the sonnet. As a series they are incomplete, for when the lover seems already to have reached the goal, venomous tongues cause misunderstanding and separation and the last four sonnets are in the minor key. The consummation is to be found in the *Epithalamion* which concludes them. The style ranges from utter simplicity to highly wrought and coloured imagery, and draws alike upon the resources of medieval superstition and classic myth. The intricate stanza was suggested by Petrarch.

Modern criticism which has made so damaging an assault upon the sincerity of Elizabethan sonnets could hardly be expected to leave Spenser's beautiful sonnet sequence unassailed, and the view has lately been advanced that *Amoretti* sonnets are addressed for the most part to lady Carey than to Elizabeth Boyle. Spenser's passion was verbal painting for which the sonnets did not afford any scope. Naturally in these sonnets one will feel the lack of passion. The heroine is just the embodiment of the Petrarchan idea of beauty rather than a woman of flesh and blood. Lack of earthly passion is a defect in some of them. But inspite of the absence of general passion, we cannot fail to admire them, for they represent the best traditions of the Elizabethan sonnet.

9.10 LET US SUM UP

The two sonnets Sonnet 65 and Sonnet 86 depict the two different phases in Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle. Sonnet 65 marks the beginning of a new phase in Spenser's relationship with his beloved Elizabeth Boyle as she begins to respond positively to his wooing. The poet tries to alleviate her fears regarding losing freedom post marriage and loving describes a marital relationship. He further asserts that paradoxically the lady will gain more liberty once she is captured by bonds of marriage than if she remains unfettered by these bonds.

Sonnet 86 depicts the brief estrangement in their relationship after Elizabeth Boyle has accepted his suit. In this sonnet, the poet describes his turbulent and tumultuous feelings during this period of separation.

9.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. The sonnet sequence *Amoretti* is a record of Spenser's wooing of his mistress. Discuss.
2. Discuss the different phases of Spenser's courtship of Elizabeth Boyle.
3. *Amoretti* depicts the poet's efforts at courtship of his lady love. Was the poet successful in this courtship? Discuss with reference to the sonnets in the collection.
4. Some critics might read the bride here as a metaphor for Ireland itself, that is, the country Spenser (and his bride to be) is currently colonizing. If so, how might that change our understanding of the Sonnet 65?
5. Sum up the central idea of Sonnet 65 from *Amoretti*.
6. Based on your reading of Sonnet 65, what do you make out of Spencer's relationship with Elizabeth Boyle?
7. Sum up the central idea of Sonnet 86 from *Amoretti*.
8. How does Spenser respond to his separation from his beloved in Sonnet 86?
9. In Sonnet 86, Spenser brings out the ironical nature of time. Comment.
10. Discuss the various symbols and images employed by Spenser in his sonnet sequence *Amoretti* with special reference to the sonnets prescribed in your syllabus.
11. Love and courtship is an important theme of the sonnet sequence *Amoretti*. Discuss.
12. Discuss separation as a theme delineated by Spenser in *Amoretti*.
13. Discuss *Amoretti* as a sonnet sequence placing it in the Elizabethan tradition of love sonnets.
14. What is a sonnet? What are its types? Which form was employed by Spenser in his *Amoretti*?

9.12 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 In Spenser's *Amoretti*, what is the overall theme of the sonnets?

A) Political revolution

B) Nature's beauty

C) Love and courtship

D) Religious devotion

Q2. What is the rhyme scheme commonly used in the *Amoretti* sonnets?

A) ABAB

B) ABBA

C) ABCC

D) AABB

Q.3 In *Amoretti*, what poetic form is primarily used for the sonnets?

A) Blank verse

B) Petrarchan sonnet

C) Spenserian stanza

D) Villanelle

Q.4 How many sonnets are there in Spenser's *Amoretti* sequence?

A) 18

B) 56

C) 89

D) 154

Q.5 What is the central narrative thread in *Amoretti*?

A) A knight's quest for honor

B) A journey through the countryside

C) A lover's pursuit of his beloved

D) An allegorical depiction of nature

Q.6 What is the role of the speaker in the *Amoretti* sonnets?

A) A critical observer

B) A divine being

C) A wandering minstrel

D) A passionate lover

Q.7 What is the significance of the title *Amoretti*?

A) It means "eternal love" in Italian

B) It refers to a collection of romantic poems

C) It symbolizes courtly intrigue and deception

D) It represents the poet's pseudonym

Q.8 What literary tradition heavily influenced Spenser's *Amoretti* sonnets?

A) Greek epic poetry

B) Elizabethan drama

C) Medieval ballads

D) Petrarchan love poetry

Q.9 In *Amoretti*, what natural imagery is often used to describe the passage of time?

A) Storms and lightning

B) Blooming flowers

C) Celestial bodies

D) Flowing rivers

Q.10 How does the speaker portray the progression of his relationship with the beloved in *Amoretti*?

A) From indifference to passionate love

B) From courtship to separation

C) From devotion to betrayal

D) From friendship to rivalry

Answers: 1C, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5C, 6D, 7B, 8D, 9C, 10B

9.13 SUGGESTED READING

- Johnson, William Clarence. *Spencer's Amoretti: Analogies of Love*. Bloomsbury Academic, 1990.
- Bell, Ilona. *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Martin, Catherine Gimelli. "*Amoretti* by Edmund Spenser." *EBSCO Research Starters*, EBSCO, 2022. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/literature-and-writing/amoretti-edmund-spenser.

EPITHALAMION

STRUCTURE

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Epithalamion, or in the Latin form "epithalamium", is a poem written to celebrate a marriage. Among its classical practitioners were the Greeks Sappho and Theocritus and the Romans Ovid and Catullus. The term in Greek means "at the bridal chamber," since the verses were originally written to be sung outside the bedroom of a newly married couple. The form flourished among the Neo-Latin poets of the Renaissance, who established the model that was followed by writers in the European vernacular languages, Sir Philip Sidney wrote the first English instance in about 1580, and fifteen years later Edmund Spenser wrote his great lyric *Epithalamion*, a celebration of his own marriage that he composed as a wedding gift to his bride. Spenser's poem follows, in elaborately contrived numbers of stanzas and lines, the sequence of the hours during his wedding day and night and combines, with unfailing ease and dignity, Christian ritual and beliefs, pagan topics and mythology, and the local Irish setting. John Donne, Ben Jonson, Robert Herrick, and many other Renaissance poets composed wedding poems that were solemn or ribald, according to the intended audience and the poet's own temperament.

10.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Analyze *Epithalamion* as an example of Spenser’s use of classical and Renaissance poetic traditions.
2. Explore the themes of love, marriage, and spirituality within the context of the poem.
3. Understand the structure, imagery, and symbolism used in *Epithalamion* to convey its celebratory tone.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the significance of *Epithalamion* as a Renaissance poem that blends classical allusions with personal emotion.

2. Identify and interpret key images and symbols in the poem's first half, such as nature, light, and time.
3. Discuss how Spenser incorporates elements of Christian spirituality alongside pagan references in the poem.

10.3 DETAILED SUMMARY AND CRITICAL COMMENTS

The *Amoretti* and the *Epithalamion* - Soon after his return to Ireland in 1591, Spenser began his suit to Elizabeth Boyle, to whom are addressed the *Amoretti* sonnets and the superb *Epithalamion* which concludes them; these poems have a place to themselves among the works of Spenser. Only in them does he voice his feelings without recourse to allegory. Spenser's sonnets are unique by their purity. They tell a story of love without sin or remorse, its varying fortunes, the lover's sighs until the day on which he is accepted, and his final joy. In default of ardent passion, the *Amoretti* sonnets have the charm of a harmonious and pure atmosphere; they are bathed by a white light. They show better than anything else the quality in Spenser which Coleridge excellently named 'maidenliness', his love of the virginal in woman.

Charming though they be, the *Amoretti* sonnets are equaled, if not surpassed, by others of the illustrious sonnet series of the Renascence, but the *Epithalamion* which is their conclusion has no equal. In amplitude and splendor it excels all other compositions of the same kind. Even antiquity produced no such poem, none which was unswelled by legends and yet carried so much sail. Its twenty-three stanzas, of from seventeen to nineteen lines, merely describe enthusiastically the whole of the poet's wedding-day, from the dawn of the sun which lits its glorious hours to the night which left the bride in her husband's arms. Each stanza frames a rite of the festival, and beneath the rich, ennobling mythological decoration simple, homely circumstances are revealed of this wedding celebrated in a small Irish town on the 11th of June 1594. This song of joy finds matter in abundant and melodious realism. The poet's genius does not need the rare and the subtle in order to reach beauty, for he knows that beauty has an inexhaustible spring in the common incidents which seem vulgar to other eyes. Never did his genius show its sovereign power as in the *Epithalamion*. The breath which fills each ample strophe and passes unabated through them all to the end, the clear light which floods each successive picture, and the fine classical structure of the whole poem, simple, luminous, and inevitable, make this ode Spenser's most perfect production and the lyrical triumph of the English Renascence. All his gifts are united in it and seem to be raised by happiness to a higher power.

The *Epithalamion* is an altogether more remarkable piece of work, and one of Spenser's highest achievements. This celebration of his own wedding (which took place in Ireland, probably in 1594) roused all Spenser's genius for enriching and transfiguring bare fact by poetic imagination and by the appropriate use of imagery and of rhythms. Convention and personal feeling here find their perfect meeting, and it is testimony to the way in which the whole tradition of European poetry had become part of Spenser's very personality that he should exploit that tradition most fully, most happily, and most originally when he came to express one of the supreme moments of his own life. The elaborate verse paragraph derives from the Italian canzone, but the handling of the melody, the use of refrain, the adaptation of a lyrical poem to a narrative structure, the blending of descriptive details with the celebratory mood, the mingling of elements from Catullus, from Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, from Irish setting, English folklore, and from classical tradition, shows original poetic genius in control of its richly diversified materials to a degree that English poetry had not yet seen. The architectonic quality both of the individual stanza and of the poem as a whole is remarkable and the chiming refrain subtly varied yet sufficiently the same to bind the poem together with

its incantatory repetition is something to marvel at. Here is the New Poetry reaching to height of complex lyrical expression that were not before possible in English.

The narrative basis is simply the story of the wedding day: first the poet's announcement of his subject, then an account of the preparation for the wedding and the bidding of the guests, then a summons to the nymphs of the local woods, streams and mountains to bring garlands for the bride and sing her praise, then dawn and the awakening of the bride. With the bride's appearance the verse takes on a new richness and a new excitement: her progress is described in language that echoes the Psalms.

The bride's beauty, both physical and spiritual, is now praised and by this time the wedding procession has reached the church, and the bride enters to the sound of the organ:

Open the temple gates unto my love,

Open them wide that she may enter in…..

There follow the ceremony, the homecoming, the poet longing for the end of days-

Ah! When will this long weary day have end,

And lend my leave to come unto my love?

How slowly do the hours their numbers spend!

How slowly does sad time his feathers move!

Haste thee, O fairest planet, to thy home,

Within the Western foam…

The bride's attendants are dismissed, night descends, and the poet invokes peace and blessing on his bride. The moon rises and looks in at the window, and she too is invoked to bless the marriage; Juno and Genius are asked to grant the blessing of fruitfulness, and the poem ends on a note of calm yet eloquent benediction, with a seven-line coda in which the poet commends his song to his love.

This is poetic celebration carried as far as it can go: it is Spenser at the very height of its genius. Only quotation of the whole poem could demonstrate to those who are not familiar with its extraordinary artistry, for each part gains immensely by contributing to the total movement. Not quite so rich, but equally brilliant in imagery and movement, is the *Prothalamion*. A wedding poem written for the double wedding of Lady Elizabeth and Lady Catherine Somerset, daughters of the Earl of Worcester, to Henry Guilford and William Petre in 1596. Here again we have the massive and musical stanza with its concluding refrain ("Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song"), the adroitly varied line lengths, the movement from a hushed picture of early morning by the Thames to the ceremonious entry of the two swan; it has a tapestry quality, an almost heraldic tone; yet the personal note is effectively blended with this, and the poet himself is the vividly presented observer of the ceremonious scene. The benediction pronounced on the swans by one of the nymphs has a grave stateliness unsurpassed in English poetry.

Epithalamion is an ode written by Edmund Spenser as a wedding gift to his bride Elizabeth Boyle on their wedding day. Spenser had also celebrated his love for Boyle in his sonnets l'amour in the *Amoretti*. The poem describes the couples' wedding day from the grooms impatient hours before dawn to the late hours of night.

1. The ode begins with an invocation to the Muses, as in most classical works, to aid the groom not in his poetic endeavour but to awaken the bride.

The supplication is that the poet calls upon the learned Muses who have often helped him in his work and who have embellished the works of other poets worthy of their blessing to come to his aid. Even the greatest of poets had turned to the Muses and taken pride in the praises showered on them. The Muses could also inspire the woods and water to sing the sad, mournful songs of death or unrequited love or lament their sad misfortunes. The poet then asks the Muses to leave their lamentations and with their garlanded head help him sing the praises of his beloved, unenvied. Just as Orpheus sang for his bride Eurydice he would sing these praises unto himself and the forests shall reverberate with his praises.

2. He tells the Muses to go to the bower of his beloved and wake his innocent bride-to-be before the sun would rise to disperse the gloom of the night. The god of marriage Hymen is already awake to bless them. Many young unmarried men want Hymen to bless them. He tells the Muses that the most awaited day has come when all the pains and sorrows of his beloved would come to an end. And he supplicates the Muses to sing songs of joy and peace to his beloved and let the woods reverberate with those joyful songs.

3. He then tells the Muses to bring along with them the nymphs-divine maidens- who inhabited the rivers and the forest and they, bedecked with garlands, should bring his beloved a garland of lilies and roses bound by a blue silk ribbon of everlasting true love and also make posies for the bridal and decorate her bridal chamber with flowers. They should also strew her path with fragrant flowers so that her delicate feet don't get hurt and then awaken his beloved with his song of love which the woods would echo.

4 . Addressing the various nymphs of the other natural locales, the poet asks that they tend to their specific tasks to make the wedding day perfect. The nymphs of the pond and lakes near Mulla, a small hill in Ireland, should ensure that the water is unsullied and undisturbed by fish like the silver trout's or pikes, so that they could see their own clear reflection in the water and prepare themselves to be seen by the bride. The nymphs of the mountains and woods should with their steel darts keep the greedy ravenous wolves away from the deer and decorate the bride and sing the festal songs which the woods would echo. Spenser here wants all the nymphs and spirits of the forest to keep away any misfortunes from befalling him and his bride.

5. The poet now addresses his bride directly asking her to awaken as Aurora, the Goddess of Dawn has already left the bed of Tithonus, her beloved, and is on her way to awaken the world with her clarion call. Phoebus, the Sun-god, has risen with his glorious, majestic head and the blithe birds are singing their songs of love. The lark, the thrush are singing the morning prayers, the mavis, the ouzel land the blackbird all are chirping away joyously in celebration of this merry day. The poet then admonishes his beloved asking her why she has slept so long when she should have been up early to listen to the love songs of the birds among the morning dew who sing of pleasant cheerful songs and the woods answer those songs.

6. The poet rejoices now that his beloved is awake and her eyes, lately dim because of the darkness of sleep are now shining more resplendently than Hesperus the evening star (the planet Venus). The groom then urges the young daughters of happiness (delight) to attend to the bride and also summons the hours of day and night, the seasons, and the three handmaidens (attendants) of

Venus, the three sisters called the Graces - who adorn her beauty, to adorn his bride as well. And as they adorn her, they should bestow her with graces and charm as they do on the Cyprian Queen (Venus) which the woods will echo in their song.

7 . The bride is now ready with her attendant bridesmaid (virgins) and it is time for the groom and his groomsmen to get ready and dress themselves in accordance with the joyful day. The groom then implores the sun to shine brightly but not let his intense rays burn his bride's beautiful skin. He then prays to Phoebus, who is both sun-god and the creator of the nine Muses (goddesses of different arts) that he should give this one day of the year to the groom, if he thinks the groom has always honoured him he should not keep this one boon away from him, while he may keep the rest of the days with himself. He would sing the praises of the sun and the all nature will join in those praises.

8. The wedding party and guests now celebrate the joyous day. The minstrels sing and play their instrument and the damsels play then tombourines and dance. Young boys run up and down the street singing the wedding song in one voice- Hymen! O Hymen! they shout till their voices reach the skies and those hearing them applaud them and join in the song-singing the praises of the god of marriage.

9. The groom beholds his bride approaching slowly like Phoebe (another name for Artemis-goddess of the Moon and twin of Phoebus) rising from the rest dressed in her wedding white. The virgin white bridal dress so becomes her that she looks like an angel. Her golden hair, decked with pearls and flowers, is flowing and looks like a golden mantle over her dress. Crowned with a green wreath she keeps her modest eyes fixed on the ground because so many eyes are on her and blushes to hear her praises being sung by the assembly.

10. The groom then eulogises about the perfect physical beauty of his bride. In an almost rhetorical tone, he asks the assemblage there if they had seen such a beautiful maiden in their cities. He then launches into a list of her beauty, grace and virtues. Her eyes are brilliant like sapphires, she has an irony white forehead, her cheeks are like ripe red apples matured by the sun, her lips like cherries waiting to be kissed, her breasts are like an uncurdled bowl of cream, her nipples like the bud of lilies, her snow-white neck like a marble tower and her whole body a wondrous palace where honour and chastity occupy a stately place. The bride's overwhelming beauty causes the maidens to forget their songs and stare at her.

11. The groom moves from describing the wonderous beauty of the bride to sing a paean to her internal virtues which he claims to see better than anyone else. He praises her lively spirit embellished with other graces bestowed upon her by heaven itself - such virtues that would astonish people more than Medusa's head did (People would turn to stone when they looked at her). Her sweet, pure love, her purity, her faith, her honour, her mild modesty-these virtues ruled her as comeliness does a queen and these rule over her baser instincts so her mind is not tempted towards ill of any sort. The groom sang that if the onlookers could see her inner beauty, they would be for more awestruck by her outward appearance.

Spencer in this stanza moves away from the emphases on outward beauty - manifest in ode and pagan marriage ceremonies - to other classical mode - Platonism. He describes the ideal woman- unsullied by fleshly weakness or stray thoughts. The attendants would be astonished and become petrified by her true beauty.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks (*Epithalamion*)

Complete the sentences based on the first half of *Epithalamion*:

1. *Epithalamion* is a celebration of Spenser's _____ day.
2. The poem begins at _____, invoking the Muses to bless the day.
3. Spenser uses imagery of _____ and birdsong to depict the awakening of nature.
4. The repetition of "Wake now, my _____!" emphasizes the joyous and urgent tone of the poem.
5. Spenser prays for the day to be free from _____ or ominous interruptions.

Answers: 1 Wedding, 2 Dawn, 3 Nature, 4 Love, 5 Evil

12. The groom calls for the temple doors to be thrown wide open so his bride may enter and approach the altar with reverence while the attendants and postilions may receive her with due honour. A good Christian, his bride is an epitome of virtue for the observing maidens to emulate so their proudfaces learn humility when they would approach the altar in future. He then urges them to bring her to partake of the wedding ceremony and the choristers would sing the praises of the Lord to the accompaniment of the organ.

    Spenser shifts the image from that of a pagan wedding ceremony to a Christian one taking place in a church. Instead of Hymen the bride approaches the Almighty and the minstrels have now become choristers or choir singers in a church.

13. The bride stands before the altar as the priest blesses her with happy hands. Her cheeks blush a fiery red causing the angels surrounding the godly altar forget their duties and fly around here looking wondrously on her fair face. Her downcast eyes are sad and serious with modesty; she never once casts them in any direction lest any unwanted thought should come in her mind. The groom wonders why making a pledge to marry him should make her eyes sad and her cheeks blush while he urges the angels to sing the paeans to god.

14. The wedding ceremony being over the groom asks the bride to be brought home again and for their victory and joy-to be celebrated. He calls for feasting and drinking since heaven has showered them with an abundance of blessings. There should be no restraint in drinking or merry-making. He urges all to crown God Bacchus, god of wine and revelry with a coronet and Hymen with a wreathe and let the Graces dance.

Spencer slips easily away from a Christian wedding to the pagan revelries by invoking Bacchus, Hymen and the Graces.

15. The groom urges the young men to leave behind their labours on this pious day and participate in the joyous celebration. He tells them to exult in their joy because it is the summer solistce, the longest day in the year when the sun is bright & beautiful and then the sun will slowly decline by degrees among forwards acetum and it will leave behind the zodiac of cancer but suddenly the groom's tone has a note of regret because this make the day reel faster by ringing in the night and make bonfires to celebrate and dance at his nuptials.

16. The groom reiterates his frustrations when he complains that the day is too long and tiresome since the hours are moving away slowly and melancholy time is flapping his feather slowly instead of flying away quickly. He grows hopeful when the sun moves towards the west with its tired horses and the evening star in the east heralds the coming of night.

    This evening star Venus is the offspring of beauty and signifies love and leads all the other stars guiding lovers though gloomy night shining cheerfully from the night skies and participates in the joys of the newlyweds in by twinkling merrily and leads them to their marriage bed.

17. The groom now exhorts the damsels to leave their revels and take the bride to her bridal chamber as night was approaching fast. He wants the brides-maidens to make the bride lie down on her nuptial bed, cover her with fragrant flowers and surround her with curtains and fragrant sheets and he imagines how she lie there in proud humility waiting for her beloved like Maia - the mountain goddess who lay with Zeus in Tempe (A valley in Thessaly) on the grass after bathing in the Acidalian stream (A rivulet near Orchomenas in Boeotia where Venus bathed with the Graces) and conceived Hermes.

    The comparison of the bride and groom to Maia and Zeus is symbolic of the desire of the groom for procreation. Besides being eager to make love to his new bride, he also hopes that the consummation of their marriage would result in a child. According to legend and tradition, a child conceived on the summer solstice grows into prosperity and wisdom..

18. The much awaited nuptial night has come and has dispelled the sadness of cruel love and the groom requests night to cover his bride and him in its sable mantle and protect them so no danger or horror or disturbance make them fret. He prays that the night be tranquil without any tempestuous storm just as it was when Jove lay with Almena and she conceived Hercules. (Almena was a daughter of Pleiades and through Zeus, gave birth to Hercules). Or begot Majesty through his union with the Night. He now wants the bridesmaid and the young men to stop their singing so the woods also are now silent and he can consummate his marriage.

19. In this stanza the groom prays that no evil spirits or cries of lamentation should upset the newlyweds. No rumours or fears should disturb their sleep with doubts; no bad dreams should wait them; nor fires or lightning harm them or witches, goblins or other evil spirits put them under their spells. Night birds like the owl or storks or raven may not shriek with their inauspicious cries or frogs croak or sing in mournful accents.

This litany of superstitions, fears and dreads and night terrors are part of the Irish folklore which Spenser seems to have alluded to.

20. The groom wants silence to prevail and pious peace to shower its blessing; he implores sleep to come when its time arrives, in the meanwhile he desires hundred little winged loves (cupids) to flutter about the bridal bed showering the couple with love. He wants them to work subtly and pilfer for them bouts of delights throughout the night. He encourages these sons of Venus, the goddess of love to play away throughout the night for 'greedy pleasure' and make the bridal chamber a paradise i.e. he wants to make love to his bride as long as the cupids help him.

21. The groom notices Cynthia - the Moon goddess and supplicates her not to envy his love for she too had passionately loved the Latmion shepherd- Endymion who lived on Mount Latmos and their pleasurable union had produced fifty daughters - the phases of the moon. He asks her that she make his brides chaste womb fertile that night with his seed so it could lead to procreation.

    Spenser specifically calls a successful conception ‘our comfort’ because the fruit of the union is more important than the act of union itself.

23. Invoking Juno, wife of Jupiter, patron goddess of the laws of marriage, the groom implores her to bind their love for eternity with her blessing and asks that his marriage remain pure and their sweet union of the night be made fruitful through procreation. So too, he asks of Hebe, the goddess of youth and Hymen (god of marriage) that their wedding bliss be full of sacred love and also of fortunate conception.

23. The groom then utters an all-encompassing prayer to all the gods in the heavens who watch upon the mortals on earth to bear witness to their love and shower their blessings on the couple. He asks them to give him large posterity - many children that he may nurture generations who after asking happiness on earth may ascend to the heavens as a reward of their goodness and when on earth these saintly generations would sing the praises of the gods. He then tells his bride to rest.

    The groom ends his song which he feels is a goodly ornament for his bride who he feels deserves many physical adornments as well. Time being too short for him to procure these for his beloved, he gives an everlasting monument to her - an altogether greater adornment for her, his pure love in his *Epithalamion*.

10.4 *EPITHALAMION* - GLOSSARY

1. Lays - songs
2. Tenor - the highest adult male singing voice
3. Doleful dreriment - sad misfortunes
4. Orpheus - a legendary Greek poet, son of Calliope, one of the Muses, said to play on the lyre so that all who heard were spellbound. He went down to Hades and with his music he induced Persephone and Pluto to restore him his wife Euridyce
5. Lampe - the sun

6. Hymen - In Greek mythology the God of marriage
7. dight - dress
8. nymphs - a spirit or any of the minor divinities of nature (in classical mythology) in the shape of a woman who live in the mountains, forests, meadows and water
9. Blew- blue
10. Eeke- also
11. mead- meadow, grasslands
12. Mulla - a hill in Ireland
13. pike- a fish
14. chrestall - crystals, semi- precious stones
15. mayds- maids, nymphs young women
16. hoary - very old
17. darts - small arrows
18. chace - keep away
19. Rosy morne - Aurora- Goddess of dawn
20. Tithones - In Greek mythology, a Trojan by birth, the son of king Laomedon of Troy by a water nymph Strymo and was a lover of Aurora
21. clyme - climb
22. coche - coach or chariot
23. Phoebus - sun god
24. matins - morning prayer or matins
25. Hesperes - planet Venus as its appears in the skies as the evening star
26. Jove- Jupiter - King of the gods and the god of sky and thunder in Roman mythology
27. Cyprian Queen - Venus
28. Muses - Greek goddesses of music, song and dance and the source of inspiration to poets. They were also goddesses of knowledge
29. soverayne- sovereign- one who rules supreme
30. minstrels - troubadours, singers or musical entertainers in the Middle Ages
31. tymbrels - a tombourne
32. smite - strike
33. firmament - sky
34. Phoebe - Moon goddess, sister of Phoebus
35. perling - small pearls

36. sapphires - sapphire, blue coloured precious stone
37. uncruldded - not curdled, pure
38. Garnisht - decorated
39. Medusa - in Greek mythology a monster or a Gorgon with a hideous female face- the head covered with living venomous snakes instead of hair. Gazing directly into her eyes would turn the onlookers to stone
40. Saynt - saint, a good Christain
41. choristers- choir singers in a church
42. vermille- vermillion, a bright orange colour
43. crimsin - crimson a deep purpulish- red colour
44. Alleluya - hallelujah, an expression used to express joy, praise or thanks to God
45. Bacchus - God of wine and revelry in Greek mythology
46. Graces- three sister goddesses known in Greek mythology as Aglaia, Euphrosyne and Thalia who dispense charm and beauty
47. Barmaby - Sun
48. Crab - the zodiac of Cancer
49. Fayrest planet - Sun
50. western fome- western ocean
51. Arras - a tapestry of Flemish origin, specially for curtains and wall hanging
52. Maia- daughter of Atlas and Pleione- is one of the seven Pleiades (a mountain nymph). According to Homer, Zeus in the dead of night secretly begot Hermes upon Maia in a cave of Cyliene
53. Tempe- a valley in Thessaly
54. Acidalianbrooke- a stream near Orchomens in Boeotia where Venus bathed with the Graces
55. Sable mantle- fur covering
56. Alemena-The mother of Herclues who she conceived of Zeus
57. Tirynthian- Hercules-famous for his strength and adventures
58. Majesty- another name for Maia
59. Without- Outside, opposite of within
60. Pouke- Puck- a mischievous spirit
61. Sprights- spirit -a small creature that has magical powers like a fairy or an elf
62. Goblins- a grotesque spirit that is malicious and causes trouble

63. Owl, stork and raven- all birds of ill-omen

64. Spels- magic charms

65. Sonnes of Venus- cupids

66. Cinthia- Artemis or Moon goddess

67. Latmion Shepherd- Endymion, a shepherd on Mount Latmos when first seen and loved by the Moon

68. Sith- since

69. Juno- in Roman mythology wife of Jupiter; Hera in Greek

70. Hebe- the goddess of youth in Greek mythology equivalent to Roman Juventus; daughter of Zeus and Hera she was the cup bearer for the gods and goddesses on Mt. Olympus serving them nectar and ambrosia

71. Succour- help

72. Guerdon - reward

73. Tabernacle - a place of worship; a box in which holy bread and wine are kept in a Catholic church

74. Benedect- a newly married man

75. Monument- monument-a building or a statue that is made in honour of a person

10.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The work that contains Spenser's love sonnet is:

   a. *Shepherds' Calendar* b. *Amoretti*

   c. *Arcadia* d. *The Faiere Queen*

2. 'Epithalamion' means _____

   a. A Song celebrating marriage c. A lament

   b. A war cry d. A nature song

3. The Cyprian Queen is?

   a. Medusa c. Venus

   b. Moon d. Hera

4. Who is the Godden of dawn?

   a. Hesperus c. Venus

   b. Phoebus d. Aurora

5. The God of marriage is _____

a. Hymen
b. Phoebus
c. Tithonus
d. Hera

Answers: 1b, 2a, 3c, 4d, d5a

10.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the invocation of the Muses in the classical tradition?

_____

_____

_____

2. What does the groom ask the nymphs to do?

_____

_____

_____

3. Describe the festivities that the wedding party enjoys.

_____

_____

_____

4. Describe the physical beauty of the bride as described in stanza ten.

_____

_____

_____

5. How does the groom eulogise the internal virtues of his bride?

_____

_____

_____

6. What is the groom's desire when he compares himself and his bride to Zeus and Maia.

_____

_____

_____

7. Explain the following lines with reference to the context

'dylce as when love with fayre Alemena lay'

When he begot the great Tirynthiongroome'.

_____

_____

_____

8. Explain the mythological and allegorical references in the poem.

_____

_____

_____

10.7 LET US SUM UP

Epithalamion by Spenser is a radiant wedding song, celebrating the union of two lovers. Through vivid descriptions of nature's beauty and the joyous ceremony, the poem captures the blissful harmony of love. As dawn breaks, the poem exudes a sense of triumph, portraying the culmination of love's journey and the hope for a bright future together. Spenser's lyrical prowess paints a vivid tapestry of love's triumph, evoking both the earthly and the divine in a joyous symphony of verse.

10.8 SUGGESTED READING

- Larsen, Kenneth J. Ed. *Edmund Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion: A Critical Edition.* Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997.
- Hadfield, Andrew. Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser.* Cambridge University Press, 2001.
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SHAKESPEARE AND THE HISTORY OF SONNET

STRUCTURE

11.1 INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare, born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, is often hailed as one of the greatest playwrights and poets in the English language. His work, spanning 39 plays, 154 sonnets, and various other poems, reflects the depth of his understanding of human nature. Shakespeare's career flourished in London, where he became a prominent figure in the theatre world, both as an actor and a playwright, before his death in 1616.

11.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Acquaint you with the life and cultural context of William Shakespeare and how they influenced his literary works.
2. Trace the historical development of the sonnet form, including its origins, evolution, and adoption in English literature.
3. Analyze the themes, structure, and stylistic features of Shakespeare's sonnets.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Summarize key events in Shakespeare's life and their impact on his poetry and plays.
2. Identify the characteristics of the sonnet form and explain how Shakespeare innovated within the tradition.
3. Interpret the themes of love, time, and mortality as explored in Shakespeare's sonnets.

11.3 SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

William Shakespeare was born on 23rd of April, 1564 at Stratford-on- Avon, Warwickshire. His father was a farmer with many business connections. His mother came from a rich family and inherited some small landed property. William was their third child. Till the age of thirteen, William lived in prosperous conditions. But business losses in the next few years obliged his father to remove him from school, and put him into his business.

At the young age of eighteen years, William Shakespeare was forced to marry Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years his senior. She was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer of a nearby village. This marriage was hasty and ill-advised, and brought unhappiness. In the following year a daughter was born, whom they named Sussana. Twins followed in the year 1569 and were named Janet and Judith.

It is said that William fell into bad company, and his act of deer-stealing drove him from home to escape the police. There is another story which says that he lived the life of a school master in a village near Stratford. He had been married for four years when he decided to leave his native town and try his luck in the great city of London. He had seen the players at Stratford, and he searched for them in London.

In London, Shakespeare made his way through difficulties. He began as a horseboy attached to a stable outside a theatre. From there he found his access to the stage inside. It took him about six years to become a member of the best acting company. This was the time when drama was becoming very popular. From acting, Shakespeare turned to writing.

His success story started. He began to produce an average of two plays a year. His fame and wealth grew with the passage of time. He became a share-holder in two of the leading theatres of the time, the Globe and the Black Friars. He purchased property in Stratford and London. Then came a period of domestic sorrows. His only son, his father, his brother and his mother died. In 1610, he returned to Stratford and brought the biggest house there. At the age of fifty-two, his health broke down and he died on 23rd April, 1616, which was also his birthday.

11.4 BRIEF HISTORY OF SONNET

A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem having a fixed rhyme-scheme. It is a short lyric poem, complete in itself. Like many other literary genres, the sonnet in England was imported from abroad. It most probably originated in Italy with Dante who wrote a number of sonnets to his beloved named Beatrice. But the flowering of the sonnet came with Petrarch (1304-74), a generation later. It was Wyatt who introduced the sonnet in England. Though he wrote much earlier, it was in 1557, a year before Elizabeth was coronated (and some fifteen years after his death), that his sonnets were published in Tottle's *Miscellany*. Wyatt's lead was accepted by Surrey whose sonnets were likewise published after his death, in the *Miscellany*. Wyatt was much under the spell of his model Petrarch, and out of his thirty-two sonnets, seventeen are but adaptations of Petrarch's. Moreover, most of them follow the Petrarchan pattern, that is, each has two parts—an octave (eight lines) followed by sestet (six lines). In between the octave and the sestet, there is a marked pause indicated on paper by some blank space. With the ninth line, comes the volta or the turn of thought. The thought in a Petrarchan sonnet may be compared to a wave which goes on rising and reaches its highest altitude with the eighth line and then starts petering out till it dies at the end. The octave in a Petrarchan sonnet always has the rhyme-scheme abba abba, though the sestet may have one of the various patterns such as cdcd cd or cddcee. Whereas Wyatt mostly adhered to the Petrarchan pattern, Surrey invented a new one for his sonnets, which later was to be adopted by most Elizabethan sonneteers,

the most prominent of whom was Shakespeare. This pattern came to be termed as the Shakespearean pattern. The feature of the Surrayesque pattern is the division of the fourteen lines into four units-three quatrains (four lines) and the ending couplet (two lines). The rhyme-scheme followed is ab ab, ab ab, ab ab, cc.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

Complete the sentences about Shakespeare's life, the history of the sonnet, and Shakespeare's sonnets:

1. The sonnet form originated in _____ and was popularized by Petrarch.
2. Shakespeare's sonnets follow the _____ sonnet structure, consisting of three quatrains and a rhymed couplet.
3. Shakespeare dedicated his sonnets to two mysterious figures, the _____ Youth and the Dark Lady.
4. The theme of _____ is central to many of Shakespeare's sonnets, reflecting on its inevitable effects.
5. Shakespeare was born in _____, a town in England.

Answers: Italy, Shakespearean, Fair, Time, Stratford

In England, Milton and Shakespeare put their own stamp on the sonnet, Milton followed the Petrarchan style. He divided his sonnet into octave and sestet.

But Shakespeare gave up the Italian style of rhyme-scheme and thought division. He wrote his sonnets consisting of three quatrains (or stanzas) followed by a couplet. The rhyme-scheme in his sonnets is:

ab ab, cdcd, ef ef, gg,

In the first three stanzas, he gives an idea and in the couplet, he rounds off the whole poem with an epigram.

11.5 SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's sonnets are a miscellaneous collection of poems, written at different times, for different purposes, and with very different degrees of poetic intensity. They vary from the most trivial of occasional verses to poems in which a whole range of important emotions is involved and in the latter we find, in embryonic form, many of the themes of the later plays. Shakespeare's sonnets are famous for his dramatically expressive way of writing. The subject matter and the rhetoric may be that of the Petrarchan tradition. The effect may sometimes seem metaphysical, but the uniquely Shakesperean quality of the sequence is not to be explained by either of these labels. We have here what we might expect – a dramatist describes a series of emotional situations between persons (real or fictitious) in a series of separate short poems. The Petrarchan instruments turn the great human emotions, desires, jealousy, fear, hope and despair, the dramatic reactions of pity and terror, by his implication, in the lives and into fates of the persons depicted.

Shakespeare's sonnets have proved an attractive bone for generation after generation of critics to gnaw at. The sonnets are beautiful expressions of various feelings and emotions—love, joy, jealousy, hope, hatred, despair etc. The feelings expressed in the sonnets are based on real experiences of life.

The sonnets of Shakespeare have been held in great esteem by poets as well as critics. These sonnets, some one hundred and fifty four in number, were first published in a body in 1609; though there is clear evidence that they were in circulation as early as 1598 and were written most probably in 1595-96. The first one hundred and twenty-six sonnets are addressed to a young and handsome man, who has been variously interpreted as the Earl of Southampton and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. The next twenty-six sonnets are addressed to a ‘‘dark’’ and wanton lady who betrays the poet for the young man. Last two Elizabethan sonnets may be a termed as sort of an epilogue. Albert Baugh in *Literary History of England* observes, ‘‘of all the Elizabethan sonnet sequences Shakespeare's is the least typical. It celebrates, not the idealized love of an idealized mistress, but the affection of an older man for a gilded and wayword youth." Like his dramas, the sonnets of Shakespeare are very popular. His genius lies in his ability to make universal statements concerning the complex issues of life and death. In his sonnets, Shakespeare frequently bewails his anguish and misfortunes. He feels like an outcast, the young patron starts liking a rival poet, and the poet's mistress deserts him for the young man. In expressing his anguish, Shakespeare lends his verses, a rare glow of lyrical melody and meditative energy which strikes one as coming from a heart which really feels what it articulates. Shakespeare is very exasperatingly impersonal in his dramatic works, but in the sonnets, to use the words of Wordsworth, he "unlocked his heart.’’ There seems to be more of genuinesness and less of convention in his sonnets. Even then, we cannot accept Wordsworth's sweeping statement. Some of the sonnets are, to quote Albert C. Baugh, "obstinately private and elusive’’ and some are conceits, exercises in reaching old conclusions by new ways. But the happiest of them reach the old conclusions through series of metaphors of incomparable suggestive power. The style is largely free from the ingenuities of the early plays and from the dense figurativeness of the later.’’ In spite of the agonised tone and the rather lugubrious atmosphere of the sonnets, they end on an optimistic note, for there is the triumphant affirmation of the transcendence of love (the poet's love for his patron). Thus, ever in the sonnets, as elsewhere, we are convinced of Shakespeare's insistent sanity of outlook.

These sonnets are the overflow of the life and mind of Shakespeare as Petrarch's were the outflow of his life and mind. In an English modification of Petrarch's form, Shakespeare created a series of poems comparable only to those of Petrarch. All that goes between fades with insignificance. F.T. Prince writes," These two writers transfused their inner life into the sonnet. It is only by means of such a comparison, that we can see how much the sonnet form needed a new imaginative impulse, and how Shakespeare was able to give it.’’

These sonnets are characterized by boundless fertility and laboured condensation of thought, with perfection of sweetness in rhythm and metre. It is sufficient to point out that they deal with love, and express the lover's mood in many different aspects, and that for perfection of form, for choiceness of expression, and for the harmony of their cadences, they rank with the best of his work.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here is a list of some important words:

Prosperous: Having success or wealth; financially well-off.

Miscellaneous: Made up of various kinds or types; mixed and diverse.

Wayward: Difficult to control or predict; disobedient or unpredictable in behavior.

Elusive: Difficult to find, catch, or understand.

Transcendence: The state of being beyond normal or physical human experience; surpassing ordinary limits.

Cadences: Rhythmic flow of a sequence of sounds or words; the natural rise and fall in speech or poetry.

Exasperatingly: In a way that causes intense irritation or frustration.

Lugubrious: Looking or sounding sad and dismal; mournful.

Condensation (of thought): The process of expressing complex ideas in a very brief, compact, or concentrated form.

Try to use these words to form sentences:

Lugubrious: _____.

Elusive: _____.

Wayward:_____.

Exasperatingly: _____.

11.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Shakespeare as a poet.
2. Give the history of sonnet writing.

11.7 LET US SUM UP

Shakespeare's sonnets encompass a diverse range of themes, emotions, and reflections on love, time, beauty, and mortality. Through 154 sonnets, he explores the intensity of romantic love, the passage of time's effects on beauty and youth, and the complexities of desire. The poems reveal a profound interplay of emotion, often expressing both ecstasy and agony. As a whole, the sonnets form a rich tapestry of human experience, inviting readers to contemplate the transient nature of life, the enduring power of art, and the timeless allure of love.

11.8 SUGGESTED READING

- Matz, Robert. *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Introduction*. McFarland, Incorporated, Publishers, 2014. ebook.
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- Shakespeare, William. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles, Folger Shakespeare Library. https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/shakespeares-sonnets/.

IMAGERY, SYMBOLISM AND METAPHORS IN SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS

STRUCTURE

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The works of Shakespeare have an eternal freshness about them. Though three hundred years have passed since his works were written, yet their freshness and their appeal is permanent in literature. Age cannot wither him, nor custom stale his infinite variety. Though we may read the poetry or sonnets for the hundredth time, yet not a jot or little of their beauty is abated. In Dr. Johnson's words, ‘‘The stream of time, which is continually washing dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamantine of Shakespeare.” Poetic reputations blaze up and dwindle and the fire which heartened one generation will be cold ashes to the next. Yet for four centuries, Shakespeare's fame has glowed so steadily that he has come to be looked upon as the supreme expression not only of the English race but of the whole world.

Others abide our questions,
thou art free
Our topping knowledge

12.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Identify and interpret the use of imagery, symbolism, and metaphors in Shakespeare’s sonnets.

2. Analyze how these literary devices enhance the themes of love, time, beauty, and mortality.
3. Evaluate the emotional and philosophical depth conveyed through Shakespeare's figurative language.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the significance of imagery, symbolism, and metaphors in shaping the meaning and tone of Shakespeare's sonnets.
2. Illustrate how Shakespeare uses nature, celestial objects, and other symbols to convey complex ideas.
3. Demonstrate the ability to interpret specific examples of figurative language in Shakespeare's sonnets.

12.3 IMAGERY

Shakespeare's imagery is a fascinating subject of study and it throws valuable light on the various aspects of his art and of his personality. The imagery in his poetry has been studied in depth by noted scholars. They have shown that many of Shakespeare's images are conventional and literary, drawn from a host of contemporary and ancient writers. As Sidney Lee says, "The typical collection of Elizabethan sonnets was a mosaic of plagiarism, a medley of imitative or assimilative studies. Echoes of the French or the Italian sonneteers are distinctly heard." His imagery is increasingly drawn from his own close observation of the world around, from the every day scenes and sights of nature and the facts of everyday life. It becomes more vivid, more pictorial and throws more valuable light on the mind and art of the poet. The imagery gives immediacy and precision and it demands and fosters an alert attention. But the range of emotions liberated by any one image is narrower, though not always less intense.

Flower Imagery

A number of images cluster round flowers. The use of flower imagery was a fashion of the times, but Shakespeare's flower images are startling and even though conventional, show the hand of the master. In Sonnet 94 we get:

The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,

Though to itself it only live and die.

Here, the poet talks of people who can hold their passions in check, who can be seen loving yet keep a cool heart, who move passion in others, yet are cold and unmoved themselves—they rightly inherit from heaven large gifts, for they husband them; whereas passionate, intemperate natures squander their endowments. These self contained persons may seem to lack generosity; but then, without making voluntary gifts, they give inevitably, even as the summer's flower is sweet to the summer, though it live and die only to itself.

Shakespeare was extremely sensitive to fragrance**.** He loved ''the sweet smell of different flowers." Rose and lily occur frequently. In Sonnet 54, he pays homage to the "rose," the symbol of youth and beauty and says that unlike other flowers, roses, even when faded, never give an offensive smell:

Of the sweet deaths are sweetest odours made.'

The poet hates flowers, which are so beauitful and fragrant while alive and give out foul smell like that of weeds when dead. In Sonnet 69, he says. "To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds."

Again in Sonnet 94, Shakespeare compares the Dark Lady to a festering lily :

For sweetest things sourest by their deeds,

Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds.

Images Drawn from the World of Music

Shakespeare was also very sensitive to sound. In Sonnet 102, he refers to the "wild music" that "burthens every bough". The songs of the birds, like the skylark and the nightingale, appeal to him. In sonnet 29 and 102, he writes of, "the lark at break of day arising" and the nightingale who in summer's from doth sing,

And stops her pipe in growth of riper days.

At the advent of the winter, he gives a picture of desolation "the bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang''. Sensitive to the charms of music, Shakespeare's love of music is seen in the *Sonnets*:

Mark how one string, sweet husband in another,

Strikes each by mutual ordering:

Resembling sire and child and happy mother,

who all, in one pleasing note do sing.

Like a gardener, poet knows in Sonnet 18, how a storm or frost can spoil the flowers:

"Rough winds do shake the darkling buds of May."

A number of metaphors and images are concerned with fire, furnace, a blast and lightning.

"It has become a common place," says L.C. Knight "that one of the most consistently developed themes of Shakespeare's sonnets is time.'' There is a sharpness and urgency of phrase and however fast we hold to the thread of sense and argument, the imagery involves us in a world where Everything that grows:

Holds in perfection but a little moment...

Where in short, nothing stands

but for time's scythe to mow.

The word time appears for as many as seventy-eight times in sonnets 1-126, although strangely enough, there is no reference to 'Time' in the sonnets which follow. Time is the old fleet-footed gipsy man, who is always moving fast; and Time is the grim and destructive force, who is a devourer, a spoiler and a thief, at whose touch cities, buildings and empires crumble down like a pack of cards. Time ''Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,'' It devours youth, bloom and beauty.

"And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow."

12.4 SYMBOLISM

The various natural and cosmic symbolisms of the sonnets grow from a soil of normal Shakespearean imagery: flowers, crops, and seasons; moon and stars; effects of winter, cloud, storm and tempests, inundation and wrecks. According to G. Wilson Knight, the use of symbols by Shakespeare in his sonnets, makes the

sonnets throb and vibrate with a greater vitality, and imparts to them greater vigour and appeal. The use of symbols in these sonnets deepens our sense-perception, and enables us to enjoy a rich physical apprehension, the flush and bloom of a young life, with all the perfumes of spring in company. G. Wilson Knight identifies five principal symbols which occur in the course of the sonnets most frequently. These are the rose, the king, the sun, gold and jewels. The first, namely the rose, which represents the other flowers as well, occurs on the natural plane. Kingship and gold belong to the human plane; the sun is universal in its significance and implications; and the jewels, ironically enough, have been used for spiritual purpose.

12.4.1 The Rose as a Symbol

Sonnet 109 closes with the following couplet :

For nothing this wide universe I call,

Save thou my rose, in it thou art my all.

Here, the rose symbolizes truth and is contrasted with the shames and the vices which prevail in this world. If there are any faults in Shakespeare's friend, then justification for those faults has been provided much earlier where Shakespeare says that roses have thorns and silver fountains have mud. The beauty of Shakespeare's friend encloses his sins as the rose may hide a canker.

12.4.2 The Lily and Some Other Flowers as Symbols

The lily, being also one of the prettiest flowers, may be bracketed with the rose in this context. “Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds", says Shakespeare. Shakespeare's friend is the pattern of both the lily's white colour and the rose's deep vermillion. In Sonnet 99, Shakespeare has related, point by point, the violet, the lily, the marjoram and the rose (red and white) together with the ‘‘vengeful canker’’ of destruction, to separate the excellences of the beauty of his friend.

12.4.3 Kingship as a Symbol and the Association of Gold with Kingship

As for the symbol of Kingship, Shakespeare has addressed his friend as ‘‘Lord of my love’’, and describes him as his sovereign who radiates worth. The friend is crowned with various gifts of nature and fortune especially “all those beauties whereof now he's king.’’

Kingship is always associated with gold, and golden images occur repeatedly. There is "gilded honour shamefully misplaced’’. Poets flatter Shakespeare's friend with a ‘‘golden quill’’. The hair of Shakespeare's friend is contrasted with false ‘‘golden tresses’’. Shakespeare's poetry can make his friend live longer than ‘‘a gilded tomb’’. More important is the eye of Shakespeare's friend ‘‘gilding the object’’ on which it gazes.

12.4.4 Earthly Kingship, Related to the Sun (the King of Nature)

The sun is Nature's king, and also pre-eminently golden. Throughout the sonnets, the king and the sun are compared and brought into a relationship with each other.

12.4.5 King, Gold and Sun Figures

There are sonnets in which groupings of king, gold and sun appear together. King and gold are mentioned together in ‘‘the gilded’’ monuments of princes. Sun and gold come together, when the sun's ‘‘gold complexion’’ is dimmed. All three i.e. king, sun and gold figure together where great princes, favourites are compared to the marigold opening to the sun's eye and the sun making his ‘‘golden pilgrimage’’ till finally he sets.

Check Your Progress: Match the Metaphor to Its Meaning

Match the metaphor from Shakespeare's sonnets to its symbolic meaning:

1. "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"
2. "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun."
3. "Time's scythe"
4. "A gilded tomb"
5. "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang"

Meanings:

A. The passage of time and its impact on beauty

B. The superficial nature of outward appearances

C. The enduring power of love compared to fleeting beauty

D. Satirical critique of unrealistic comparisons

E. The inevitability of death and aging

Answers: 1c, 2d, 3e, 4b, 5a

12.4.6 The Gems and the Pearls as Symbols

The rich gems of earth and sea are regarded as a natural love comparison. Though cruel, the dark lady is ''the fairest and most precious jewel and the image of Shakespeare's friend's hangs ''like a jewel" before Shakespeare's soul. The friend's tears are as pearls. One of the sonnets is full of suggestions of "rich", "treasure," "Stones of worth," "chest", and "robe," and contains the splendid line ''captain jewels in the carcanet."

12.5 USE OF METAPHORS AND SIMILES

In simile, Shakespeare's bias is towards expressiveness. A majority of Shakespeare's similes are drawn from the familiar experience of simple humanity and, therefore, they impart to the particular sonnets, a sense of immediate emotional contact. In one of the sonnets, Shakespeare compares himself to a baby crying for his mother when the mother is running to catch one of her chickens, which has broken loose from her grip. In this sonnet, the emotional relationship between a mother and a child is defined and made immediate by the simile. In sonnet 52, Shakespeare compares himself to a rich miser whose "blessed key" enables him to open his sweet treasure box. Here, it is the human emotion implicit in the comparison which produces the chief effect.

In Sonnet 1, the poet tells his friend that according to Nature's law, all beautiful things should procreate themselves. It is the law of Nature and he should also act according to this law. He should marry and have children. The friend is represented as a "rose", a metpahor drawn from the world of nature where the rose is the most beautiful of all in the world of vegetation. The rose metaphor is deftly humanized in the phrase, "darling buds of May."

The immense use of metaphors, similes and symbols and images makes the sonnets a feast to the eyes, ears and minds of readers. A paradigm of eternal music, rhyme and verse, gets amalgamated in the form of the sonnets.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here is a list of keywords from the sections you have just read:

- Imagery: Meaning: Visually descriptive or figurative language used in literature to create pictures in the reader's mind.
- Festering: Decaying or rotting and emitting a foul smell; also used metaphorically to describe something becoming worse or more intense over time.
- Scythe: A tool with a long curved blade used for cutting crops or grass; metaphorically, it symbolizes death or the passage of time.
- Gilded: Covered with a thin layer of gold or golden appearance; metaphorically, it means something that looks attractive on the surface but may be deceptive.
- Carcanet: A richly jeweled necklace or ornamental collar, especially worn in the past.

Try to find the meaning of these words:

Amalgamated, Apprehension, Plagiarism.

12.6 LET US SUM UP

Shakespeare's writing is renowned for its vivid imagery and masterful use of metaphor, which bring his characters and their emotions to life. His ability to paint pictures with words is evident in his descriptions of natural beauty, the intricacies of human emotion, and the grandeur of historical events. From the hauntingly beautiful descriptions of a moonlit night to the raw portrayal of jealousy and ambition, Shakespeare's imagery continues to captivate audiences.

12.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q. 1. What are the themes of Shakespearean sonnets? Discuss with illustrations from the prescribed sonnets.

Q. 2. What is the nature of love as depicted by Shakespeare in the sonnets addressed to the Dark Lady?

Q. 3. Consider Shakespeare's sonnets as a ''criticism of life''.

Q. 4. How far is it true that Shakespeare's sonnets are autobiographical? Analyse critically.

Q. 5. Explain the metaphors, similies and satire in the sonnets of Shakespeare.

Q. 6. Explain the structure of Shakespearean sonnets.

12.8 SUGGESTED READING

- Schoenfeldt, Michael Carl and Michael Schoenfeldt. Eds. *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Wiley, 2010.
- Cousins, A. D. *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Narrative Poems*. Taylor & Francis, 2014. ebook.
- Royal Shakespeare Company. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Royal Shakespeare Company, https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeares-sonnets.

SONNET-15 AND SONNET-66

STRUCTURE

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Sonnet word is derived from the Italian word *Sonetto*, which means a 'little sound' or 'song'. Sonnet consists of fourteen lines (except for Curtail sonnets) usually in iambic pentameter with considerable variations in rhyme scheme.

Petrarchan or Italian sonnet originated in Italy in the 13th century and was perfected by Petrarch (1304-74). It is a fourteen lines poem divided into two parts: the first eight lines comprises 'octave' or 'octet' rhyming abba, abba; the second part is formed of six lines or 'sestet' usually rhyming cde, cde and other times with variations. As a rule the octave presents the theme or problem of the poem: the thesis, and then there is a turn or 'volta' followed by six lines (sestet), resolving it.

The Spenserian sonnet is quite different from that of the Petrarchan sonnet. It is divided into four parts: three quatrains (three paragraphs of four stanzas each) and a concluding couplet rhyming abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee. The Spenserian sonnet is also called 'linked sonnet' because of its peculiar rhyme-scheme where the three quatrains are linked together: the last line of the first quatrain rhymes with the first line of the second quatrain; and similarly, the last line of second quatrain rhymes with the first line of the third quatrain. The last concluding couplet sums up the idea which had been developed in the preceding three quatrains.

The Shakespearean or the English sonnet is very similar to the Spenserian sonnet having only few difference i.e. the three quatrains in the Shakespearean sonnet are not linked together, whereas in the Spenserian sonnet they are linked together. The other difference relates to rhyme scheme, the Shakespearean rhyme-scheme forms: abab, cdcd, efef, gg. Though Shakespeare and Spenser did not follow the Petrarchan mode of sonnets into the octave and the sestet, yet there is an invisible division of Shakespearean and the Spenserian sonnets into octaves and sestets, because the arguments in a great number of sonnets of both have silent pauses at the eighth line.

Three Types of Sonnets:

a. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet: This comprises an Octave (eight stanzas), rhyming 'abbaabba' and a sestet (six stanzas), rhyming 'cdecde' or 'cdcdcd' or in any combination except a rhyming couplet.

b. The Spenserian sonnet: This comprises three quatrains (four stanzas) and couplet (two stanzas) rhyming abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee.

c. The Shakespearean or English sonnet: Formed of three quatrains (four stanzas) and a couplet, rhyming abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

13.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are:

a) To acquaint the learner with sonnets.

b) To explore sonnets, its types, and trace its history.

c) To familiarise the learner with the structure of Shakespearean sonnet.

d) To acquaint the learner with the thematic concerns of Sonnet 15 and Sonnet 66.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze the themes of time, mortality, and human frailty in Shakespeare's Sonnet 15 and Sonnet 66.
2. Discuss the tone and emotional depth of each sonnet, highlighting Shakespeare's critique of societal flaws.
3. Interpret the use of imagery and rhetorical devices to convey the poet's reflections on life and existence.

13.3 SONNET AND ITS HISTORY

The sonnet originated in Italy in the 13th century, and developed when the spirit of the *dolce stil novo* (sweet new style) in poetry was raging the country. It is generally accepted that it was Giacomo da Lentino or Jacopo da Lentini who flourished in the early part of 13th century, invented the sonnet form. The sonnet arrived in England in the first half of the 16th century. It is generally accepted that Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey (1517-47) and Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42) were the pioneers of sonnet. The Elizabethan England became the heyday of the sonnet, and most of the poets of that period tried their hands in sonnet, and many of them composed some beautiful-sequence.

The first major English sonnet cycle was *Astrophel and Stella,* written by Sir Philip Sidney (1580-83) and printed in 1591. There followed in rapid succession Daniel's *Delia* (1592), Thomas Lodge's *Phillis* (1593), Henry Constable's *Diana* (1594), Michael Drayton's *Idea's Mirror* (1594) and Edmund Spencer's *Amoretti* (1595). The greatest sequence of all was Shakespeare's *Sonnets* not printed until 1609, but some have circulated for at least eleven years before. He wrote 154 sonnets and are generally divided into two broad groups: Sonnets 1-126 are devoted to a Fair Youth who is supposedly the poet's friend, and therefore are called the 'Fair Youth Sonnets'; and Sonnets 127-154 are devoted to a 'Black Mistress' to whom the poet was spiritually and, perhaps, carnally, attracted, and so these sonnets are called the 'Dark Lady Sonnets'.

13.4 SONNET 15- WHEN I CONSIDER EVERYTHING THAT GROWS

Discussion and Analysis

In Sonnet 15's first eight lines, the poet surveys how objects mutate — decay — over time: ". . . everything that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment." In other words, life is transitory and ever-changing. Even the youth's beauty will fade over time, but because the poet knows that this metamorphosis is inevitable, he gains an even stronger appreciation of the young man's beautiful appearance in the present time — at least in the present time within the sonnet. Ironically, then, the youth's beauty is both transitory and permanent — transitory because all things in nature mutate and decay over time, and permanent because the inevitable aging process, which the poet is wholly aware of as inevitable, intensifies the young man's present beauty: Generally, the more momentary an object lasts, the more vibrant and intense is its short life span.

Sonnet 15 also introduces another major theme that will be more greatly developed in later sonnets: the power of the poet's verse to memorialize forever the young man's beauty. "I ingraft you new," the poet says at the end of the sonnet, by which the poet means that, however steady is the charge of decay, his verses about the young man will keep the youth's beauty always fresh, always new; the sonnets immortalize this beauty. Ironically, the poet's sonnets serve the same purpose as a son whom the poet wants the young man to father: They perpetuate the youth's beauty just as a son would. In fact, the sonnets are even more immortal than a son. The sonnets continue to be read even today, whereas the young man's progeny may have completely died out.

13.5 SONNET 66 – TIRED WITH ALL THESE, FOR RESTFUL DEATH I CRY

'*Tired With all these, for restful death I cry'* (text)

Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry, —-
As, to behold Desert a beggar born,
And needy Nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest Fair unhappily forsworn, 4
And gilded Honour shamefully misplac'd,
And maiden Virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right Perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
And strength by limping Sway disabled, 8
And art made tongue-tied by Authority,

And Folly, Doctor-like, controlling Skill,

And simple Truth miscall'd Simplicity,

And captive Good attending captain Ill: 12

Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone —-

Save that, to die, I' leave my love alone.

13.5.1 Summary of the Sonnet

The poet sees in the world and the arrangements of society so many things abnormal and wrong, that, in his weariness and loathing, he cries out for death, though unwilling to leave his friend. The tone of the sonnet pervades a great intense melancholy and the poet is wearied by his observations of many painful facts like depravity, worthlessness, betrayal, violation, rudeness, suppression, and all that is dominated by the ill over good deeds in the world he lives, that he is crying for absolute rest in the form of his death. The poet certainly desires to die as early as possible, but he stops short of desiring so, because he knows that if he dies, he will have to leave behind the Fair youth all alone.

13.5.2 Paraphrase of the Sonnet

Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry, —

As, to behold Desert a beggar born,

And needy Nothing trimm'd in jollity,

And purest Fair unhappily forsworn,

In the first quatrain the poet tries to emphasis the depravity of the world and because of which, he (first line) wishes for a restful death. (Second line) The poet says that like an empty, barren desert, he was born a poor man and that he got no help from anyone. In the third line he says that he has seen worthless person *(needy Nothing)* full of *(trimm'd)* mirth and carelessness. And finally adds a painful observation, (the last line) that sometimes absolutely faithful persons *(purest Fair)* are deceived and left in desolation.

And gilded Honour shamefully misplac'd,

And maiden Virtue rudely strumpeted,

And right Perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,

And strength by limping Sway disabled,

In the second quatrain the poet continues his view about the ways of society and says that, (first line) that at times professional honour or positions are shamelessly conferred upon undeserving persons. In the second line he expresses his disgust about how chastity of maidens is sometimes violated by force and how genuinely honest persons or good deeds of such people are sometimes wrongly disgraced by none other than persons who are in power (third line) and how little strength/ goodness existing are slowly crippled to non-existence (last line).

And art made tongue-tied by Authority,

And Folly, Doctor-like, controlling Skill,

And simple Truth miscall'd Simplicity,

And captive Good attending captain Ill:

In this third quatrain the poet further expresses the aggravated situation of society and says that, (first line) how art which has the power to praise good and criticize evil is controlled by the people in power, and how unintelligent persons or foolish people assume or pretend the air of intelligence (second line), and how straightforward and sincere honest people are wrongly thought to be stupid or dishonest (third line) and how, goodness being enslaved by the rising ills and making it subservient to evils.

Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone —-

Save that, to die, I' leave my love alone.

The poet in this last couplet concludes his sonnet and says that, he is tired with all these harsh realities and wishes to be gone far away (first line) and death is the only way for this deliverance, but then, he also realizes that it is hard to accept this because if he dies, he naturally has to leave behind his love all alone which he does not want to (last line).

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

Complete the sentences below based on Sonnet 66:

1. In Sonnet 66, Shakespeare expresses weariness with the world's _____.
2. The sonnet critiques societal injustice, such as the undeserved rise of _____ individuals.
3. Shakespeare laments that art is often silenced or made _____ by the powerful.
4. The poet uses the repetition of "And" to emphasize the many _____ of the world.
5. Despite his discontent, Shakespeare's love for someone keeps him from choosing _____.

Answers: Corruption, Unworthy, Mute, Wrongs, Death

13.5.3 Critical Appreciation of the Sonnet

John Kerrigan has aptly compared this sonnet in his *William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* with Hamlet's famous soliloquy 'to be, or not to be', where the Prince describes *'Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely'*. However, here the poet is wearied by his observations of many painful realities of his society and therefore he is crying for an absolute detachment in the form of death. Ingram and Redpath's comment on the expression *'needy nothing'* in the third line as 'a personification of worthless creature of no gifts of qualities', with no social pity extended by fellow human beings. *'Nothing'* as applied to person is a strong term in Elizabethan English. Cloten is *'that harsh, noble, simple nothing', Cymbeline* Act III Scene IV; and to Hamlet Claudius is *'a thing....of no thing', Hamlet* Act IV Scene II quotes Ingram and Redpath and makes clear that the term 'nothing', in the Elizabethan age, often meant a person of no significance.

Ingram and Redpath write about lines 9 and 10: "Learning and science are silenced by those in authority, and stupid ignorance, giving itself the air of an expert, controls and directs the real technicians. 'A number of commentators have either seen or conjectured a reference here to censorship difficulties of the players; but we regard the point as inconclusive". However, it won't be wrong to say that there may be some allusions in this sonnet to the anomaly in the ideal social order or hierarchy during the Elizabethan period, by some of which the poet might have been painfully affected.

In the 13th line, the poet repeats what he has said in the very beginning '*Tir'd with all these'* dejected unsocial experiences and wishes for a peaceful death. But he stops short of so desiring, because he knows that if he dies, he will have to leave behind the Fair youth all alone.

13.5.4 Theme of the Sonnet

The central theme of the sonnet is poet's lament about the corrupt and dishonest world, from which he desires to be released. The sonnet strikes a chord in almost any age, for it quite rightly epitomize the man's miseries; where graft and influenced people reign supreme, and whereas the one with inherent merit is never guaranteed of success. The dependent social structures and conditions aid and promote the unworthy, the malicious, the wealthy, the incompetent and those who are just good at manipulation of the system. The corrupt system is so malice that it has gripped all forms of intellectual development within its vicious circle and desiring to do well and be good is paid with social castration.

13.5.5 Let Us Sum Up

This sonnet belongs to the first group of sonnets or the 'Fair Youth Sonnets' and is dedicated to supposedly a poet's close friend and lover, the anonymous Fair Youth. The poet expresses his unconditional love for the person whom he loves and, though he hates the society and its lowly fellow dwellers to the extent of detest, he is willing to accept this social condition if he has the opportunity to live by his side.

13.5.6 Glossary

trimm'd in jollity: Full of mirth or ignorance.

forsworn: to reject or renounce under oath.

strumpeted: dishonored; to take away with force or to be sold.

Limping Sway: a very slow injured, helpless movement.

13.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. With whom the poet is tired of?
2. Why the poet rejects the idea of dying?
3. To whom the sonnet is addressed?
4. How many types of sonnet are there?

13.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The sonnet '*Tired With all these, for restful death I cry'* is addressed to?
   A. Dark Lady
   B. The Earl
   C. The Fair Youth
   D. None of the above
2. *William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* was written by?
   A. Ingram and Redpath
   B. John Kerrigan
   C. Dr. Samuel Johnson
   D. John Dryden
3. The first major English sonnet cycle was _____.
   A. Shakespearean Sonnets
   B. *Amoretti*
   C. *Astrophil and Stella*
   D. None of the above
4. The word sonnet is derived from Italian word *Sonetto*, which means a _____.
   A. 'little sound' or 'song'
   B. A Poem
   C. A Short Lyric
   D. A Verse

Answers: 1. C, 2. B, 3.C, 4. A.

13.8 FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The three basic forms of sonnets are namely_____, _____, and_____ sonnets.
2. The rhyming scheme of the Shakespearean sonnet is _____.
3. Sonnets are formed of _____ lines iambic pentameter.
4. In Sonnet 66 the poet does not wants to die because of his love for_____.

Answers:

1. Petrarchan or Italian; Spenserian; and Shakespearean or English.
2. abab, cdcd, efef, gg
3. Fourteen
4. Fair youth.

13.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Briefly analyze the central idea of the sonnet 66.
2. Discuss the themes of Shakespearean sonnets.
3. Write a note on the theme of sonnet *Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry*.

13.10 SUGGESTED READING

- Martin, Philip. *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Self, Love and Art*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Paul, Rajinder. *Shakespeare: The Sonnets*. Educational Publishers, 2007.
- Senna, Carl. *CliffsNotes on Shakespeare's Sonnets*. CliffsNotes, 31 Oct. 2024, https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/s/shakespeares-sonnets/about-shakespeares-sonnets.

SONNET-116 AND SONNET-35

STRUCTURE

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* is a collection of 154 poems that delve into themes of love, beauty, politics, and the passage of time. Written in iambic pentameter, these sonnets are celebrated for their emotional depth, technical precision, and innovative use of the sonnet form. Many of the sonnets explore the complexities of human relationships and the fleeting nature of life, leaving a lasting impact on readers and poets alike.

14.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are

a) To acquaint the learner with the sonnet.

b) To explore the sonnets 'Let me not to the marriage of the minds' and 'No more be griev'd at that which thou has't done'and analyse them critically.

c) To analyse the thematic concerns of the sonnets.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze the themes of love, constancy, and the nature of true affection in Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds") and Sonnet 35 ("No more be grieved at that which thou has't done").
2. Identify and explain the literary devices, such as metaphors and personification, used in these sonnets to convey their messages.
3. Compare the tone and perspective of Sonnet 116 and Sonnet 35 in relation to love, its challenges, and its enduring power.

14.3 SONNET 116- LET ME NOT TO THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS

Discussion

This sonnet attempts to define love, by telling both what it is and is not. In the first quatrain, the speaker says that love— "the marriage of true minds"—is perfect and unchanging; it does not "admit impediments," and it does not change when it find changes in the loved one. In the second quatrain, the speaker tells what love is through a metaphor: a guiding star to lost ships ("wand'ring barks") that is not susceptible to storms (it "looks on tempests and is never shaken"). In the third quatrain, the speaker again describes what love is not: it is not susceptible to time. Though beauty fades in time as rosy lips and cheeks come within "his bending sickle's compass," love does not change with hours and weeks: instead, it "bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom." In the couplet, the speaker attests to his certainty that love is as he says: if his statements can be proved to be error, he declares, he must never have written a word, and no man can ever have been in love.

Analysis

Along with Sonnets 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?") and 130 ("My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"), Sonnet 116 is one of the most famous poems in the entire sequence. The definition of love that it provides is among the most often quoted and anthologized in the poetic canon. Essentially, this sonnet presents the extreme ideal of romantic love: it never changes, it never fades, it outlasts death and admits no flaw. What is more, it insists that this ideal is the only love that can be called "true"—if love is mortal, changing, or impermanent, the speaker writes, then no man ever loved. The basic division of this poem's argument into the various parts of the sonnet form is extremely simple: the first quatrain says what love is not (changeable), the second quatrain says what it is (a fixed guiding star unshaken by tempests), the third quatrain says more specifically what it is not ("time's fool"—that is, subject to change in the passage of time), and the couplet announces the speaker's certainty. What gives this poem its rhetorical and emotional power is not its complexity; rather, it is the force of its linguistic and emotional conviction.

The language of Sonnet 116 is not remarkable for its imagery or metaphoric range. In fact, its imagery, particularly in the third quatrain (time wielding a sickle that ravages beauty's rosy lips and cheeks), is rather standard within the sonnets, and its major metaphor (love as a guiding star) is hardly startling in its originality. But the language is extraordinary in that it frames its discussion of the passion of love within a very restrained, very intensely disciplined rhetorical structure. With a masterful control of rhythm and variation of tone—the heavy balance of "Love's not time's fool" to open the third quatrain; the declamatory "O no" to begin the second—the speaker makes an almost legalistic argument for the eternal passion of love, and the result is that the passion seems stronger and more urgent for the restraint in the speaker's tone.

14.4 SONNET 35– NO MORE BE GRIEV'D AT THAT WHICH THOU HAST DONE

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud,
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud;
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
Excusing their (thy) sins more than their (thy) sins are:
For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense —
Thy adverse party is thy advocate—
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:
Such civil war is in my love and hate
That I an accessary needs must be
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

14.4.1 Summary of the Sonnet

In this sonnet the poet comforts his friend and tells him not to feel grieved at the past deeds which his friend should not have done. He says that even the most perfect things in nature also come with shortcomings. The beautiful rose has thorns, pristine water fountains have mud, clouds and eclipses (solar and lunar) cover beauty of moon and sun, and sweetest buds of flowers are sometimes infested with Cankers and never have a chance to bloom. Likewise, the poet enforces that, all perfect men make fault and even the poet himself, at moment, is at fault when he ignores and compares the errors done by his beloved friend with nature and hence forgiving him. He further adds that in this process of ignoring he is corrupting and thus encouraging his friend in his misdeed therefore the poet is himself the petitioner and the advocate of this wrong.

14.4.2 Paraphrase of the Sonnet

No more be griev'd at that which thou hast done:
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud,
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud;

In the first quatrain the poet develops the argument of the sonnet, (first line) the poet pleads to his friend that he should not feel sad at what he has already done, because (second line) he says that every beautiful or perfect things come with an ugly or fault part, even roses have thorns, and fresh water fountain has mud, and adds that sun and moon are also stained by clouds and eclipses (third line), and that sweetest buds of flowers are infested with pests (fourth line).

All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,

Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,

Excusing their (thy) sins more than their (thy) sins are:

In the second quatrain the poet while persuading his friend against his remorse tells him that all men commit error and even the poet himself is at one (first line) when he encourage his friend against his mistake and further compares it with nature (second line) and thus corrupting him and being an accomplice (third line) in the same. The poet also expresses the fact that forgiving his fault, he himself (poet), is committing a grave error (fourth line).

For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense –

Thy adverse party is thy advocate—

And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence:

Such civil war is in my love and hate

In these lines the poet further accuses himself of arguing for, or justifying the Fair Youth's sensual error (first line). In the next line the poet expresses his troubled situation (dilemma) where he is himself the petitioner and advocate of his complaints against his friend (second and third line). This is the cause of the poet's harboring hatred for the youth for whom, all at the same, he has all love and therefore there is a mental conflict within him regarding whether he will love the youth or whether he will hate him (last line).

That I an accessary needs must be

To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

In these concluding couplets the poet says that, both he and the youth are involved in corruption, and the poet himself is, of necessity, rather, an accomplice of the youth in this act of misdeed (first line). He further very intimately calls his friend an affectionate burglar who has cleverly robbed him.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

Complete the sentences below based on Sonnet 35:

1. In Sonnet 35, Shakespeare reflects on the pain of _____ love.
2. The speaker feels tormented by his own _____ of love and its consequences.
3. The poem expresses the paradox that love can both _____ and uplift.
4. The speaker refers to the idea of _____ as a way to cope with the torment of love.
5. Shakespeare suggests that love's power can be a _____ rather than a source of joy.

Answers: Unrequited, Confusion, Hurt, Forgiveness, Burden

14.4.3 Critical Appreciation of the Sonnet

The poem is among the better-known and more frequently anthologized of the sonnets and fall in the group of 'The Fair Youth sonnets'. It is in continuation with the theme with two sonnets that precede it, in which the poet expresses and lay charges against the fair youth for his betrayal. In this sonnet while forgiving his beloved's error, because he loves him too much to continue resenting him, he is also absolutely aware that in justifying the offense of the fair youth, he too has become an accomplice of the crime. What is most striking thing about this sonnet is not that the poet forgives the youth, but the fact that the poet actually blames himself for the youth's betrayal more than who has actually committed the crime. His sense of guilt is emphasized by the legal terminology incorporated in the sonnet: *"Thy adverse party is thy advocate — / And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence."*

Shakespeare is commonly regarded as an expert at evoking ambivalence and creating complex personae. One of the most apparent points that critics have addressed in this sonnet is the duality of the poem's tone. In the first quatrain the poet describes what at first appears to be praise and is followed by the other two quatrains, in which the speaker addresses lover's grave sensual sin against which he himself tries to defend. This ambivalence further develops confusion and dilemma as the poet poses himself as the pleader as well as the defender of his fair youth's error and finally concluding as an accomplice and justifying to his mistake.

In the first quatrain of the sonnet, the poet is rationalizing for the wrong done to him by the youth, and he persuades him not to grieve anymore for the wrongs done by him as it is only natural and an inseparable quality of the creation. Therefore, the poet is justifying the wrongs done to him by the fair youth. On the other hand, once he has justified the deed, the poet at once feels the vainness of his decision, because he is justifying a comparison between the youth's sensual faults to the faults in the nature. The poet further acknowledges his own fault because he is ignoring the fair youth's offences, and thus, he says, he is himself doing corruption.

The last line of the second quatrain is very confusing. Many critics and editors of Shakespearean text are of opinion that the word *'their'* which occurs twice in the line is a misprint of the word *'thy'*. Kerrigan, one of the supporter of this view, explained this line thus: "As he (poet) provides the young man (fair youth) with comparisons potent enough to excuse him from sins worse than those he has actually committed, the poet makes fault not only by tolerating misconduct but by displaying the doting weakness which makes him overindulgent to his beloved, and by bringing sophistry to the defense of *sensuality*, using a faculty which should know better than to absolve an instinctive amiss".

The poet further accuses himself for justifying the fair youth's carnal corruption and the phrase *'sensual fault'* may refer to the fair youth's promiscuity and physical relation with the dark lady. This might be the cause of the poet's developing hatred for the fair youth along with the spasmodic affectionate feeling. Therefore, the poet is confused whether to curse him or to accept his mistake and there is a mental conflict which is creating dilemma whether he should love the youth or whether he should hate him. Finally in the concluding couplet, the poet agrees that both he and the youth are equally involved, and that the poet himself is compulsively an accomplice of the sweet youth in his act of carnal corruption whereby the youth has stealthily robbed the poet of his possession which might refer to the Dark Lady.

14.4.4 Theme

Sonnet 35 is based on the theme of forgiveness whereby the poet though being utterly shattered by the unfaithfulness of his friend, the Fair Youth, he unwillingly overlooks his mistake and decides to continue loving him. To console himself he takes the advantage of nature and compares the fault in his friend with the lack and contrary in the nature. It begins with parallel objects that, although beautiful, contain some sort of imperfection: *"Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud."* Likewise, clouds, which are a recurring image in the sonnets concerning moral transgressions, darken both night and day, additional favorite images used by the poet. The poet therefore absolves the young man and defends the youth's betrayal.

14.4.5 Let Us Sum Up

This sonnet belongs to the first group of sonnets or the 'Fair Youth Sonnets' and is dedicated to supposedly a poet's close friend and lover, the anonymous Fair Youth. It also insinuate, along with sonnets 36, 40, 41 and 42, the relationship between the Poet, the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady and it is in this sonnet that we hear about the Dark Lady and her association with the youth and the poet for the first time.

14.4.6 Glossary

griev'd: To feel sad

Loathsome: Causing hatred or disgust; repulsive

Canker: Flower buds infest

Trespass: To cross prohibited area

Salving: to be slave

Amiss: Mistake

Accessary: Accomplice, Assistant

Sourly: Bitterly, cruelly

14.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q.1. Against whom the poet is complaining and what sin has he committed?

Q.2. Why the poet feels that he too is at fault?

14.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1. The statement, "*Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud"* is

a. Simile
b. Metaphor
c. Aphorism
d. None of the above

Q.2. Who claims to be the accessory of the culprit?

a. The poet
b. The poet's friend
c. Nature
d. None of the above

Answers: 1. C, 2. A

14.7 FILL IN THE BLANKS

Q.1. The poet refers to himself as an _____.

Q.2. _____ and _____ stain both moon and sun.

Q.3. The poet calls his friend _____ which sourly robs from him.

Answers: 1. Accessary 2. Clouds and eclipses 3. Sweet thief

14.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1. Critically analyse Sonnet 35.

Q.2. How far the poet is able to justify the error done by his friend as an excusable mistake?

Q.3. Does true love transgress the physical morality? Explain with reference to the poem at hand.

14.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Atkins. Carl D. Ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets: With Three Hundred Years of Commentary*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007.
- *A Study Guide for William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116"*. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016. ebook.

SONNET- 137

STRUCTURE

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Published in 1609, Shakespearean sonnets were dedicated to Mr. W.H., whose identity remains a mystery. It is generally held that Sir Thomas Wyatt and his literary disciple and colleague, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey were the harbingers of the sonnet into English language. Unlike in the Italian form of the sonnet, in the Shakespearean form, different ideas or thoughts are expressed in three quatrains. The first quatrain may be called the argument which is an explanation of what is going to happen in the following verses. The second quatrain may be called the theme or the central idea which may be expressed directly or indirectly. And the third or the last quatrain may be called the reason or logic that supports the whole argument. These three quatrains are followed by a couplet which links the argument and the theme, and hence, presents a conclusion. The rhyme-scheme of Shakespearean sonnets is: a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g and it is written in iambic pentameter.

William Shakespeare's sonnets are stories about a handsome boy, or rival poet, and the mysterious and aloof "dark" lady they both love. The sonnets fall into three clear groupings: Sonnets 1 to 126 are

addressed to, or concern, a young man; Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to, or concern, a dark lady (dark in the sense of her hair, her facial features, and her character), and Sonnets 153-154 are fairly free adaptations of two classical Greek poems**.** The two groups taken together constitute, "Shakespeare's early expression of his perceptions of friendship, of love and lust, of honour, of growth through experience, of sin and expiation, of mutability, platitude, and the knowledge of good and evil". In many ways, Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form is richer and more complex than this relatively simple division into parts might imply. Not only is his sequence largely occupied with subverting the traditional themes of love sonnets—the traditional love poems in praise of beauty and worth, for instance, are written to a man, while the love poems to a woman are almost all as bitter and negative as Sonnet 147—he also combines formal patterns with daring and innovation.

15.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are:

a) To acquaint the learner with Shakespearean sonnets.

b) To explore the sonnet and analyse it critically.

c) To familiarise the learner with the structure of Shakespearean sonnet.

d) To acquaint the learner with the thematic concerns of Sonnet 137.

After reading this lesson, learners will be able to:

1. Analyze the themes of love, jealousy, and betrayal in Shakespeare's Sonnet 137.
2. Identify the use of imagery and wordplay to express the speaker's complex emotions and feelings of betrayal.
3. Discuss how Sonnet 137 reflects the poet's experience and perspective on romantic relationships and trust.

15.3 ABOUT THE SONNET

15.3.1 Background of the Sonnet

The last twenty eight sonnets record the poet's infatuation for a dark lady, an evil temptress, and consequent moral chaos and spiritual suffering of the poet. The tone throughout is satiric and bitter. Edward Dowden says in this connection, "Shakespeare at sometime of his life was snared by a woman, the reverse to beautiful, according to conventional Elizabethan standards. Dark haired, dark-eyed pale cheeked; skilled in touching the virginal, skilled also in playing upon the heart of man; who could attract and repel, irritate and soothe, join reproach with cares, a woman faithless to her vow in wedlock".

15.3.2 Introducing the Sonnet: Thou Blind Fool Love, What Dost Thou To Mine Eyes

Shakespeare's sonnets are very different from Shakespeare's plays, but they do contain dramatic elements and an overall sense of story. Each of the poems deals with a highly personal theme, and each can be taken on its own or in relation to the poems around it. The sonnets have the feel of autobiographical poems, but we don't know whether they deal with real events or not, because no one knows enough about Shakespeare's life to say whether or not they deal with real events and feelings, so we tend to refer to the voice of the sonnets as "the speaker"—as though he were a dramatic creation like Hamlet or King Lear.

This is one of the famous sonnets in Shakespearean sonnet sequence. Being placed at number 137, this sonnet finds a semblance with sonnet 113 and 114 in which poet, like in present case, talks about the corruption of eyes by love. Sonnets 46 & 47 describe a conflict between heart and eyes which is resolved by an alliance between the two. In this sonnet both heart and eyes are portrayed as being at fault in perverting what they perceive. But pride of place is given to the eyes, in that they are shown to lead the way and, being corrupt, they drag the heart along behind them. In this sonnet, the poet is addressing the god of love, Cupid, as a blind fool. He grumbles that Cupid has damaged his eyes and he is unable to recognise anything. The poet tells about his lost sense of discretion that has made him incapable to ascertain the real beauty. He knows that his mistress is available to everybody for sexual pleasures but even then his love-sick heart doesn't want to admit it. In this sonnet, the poet tells about the licentiousness of the Dark Lady. He says that she is "the bay where all men ride" and that she is "false plague".

15.4 TEXT OF THE SONNET

Thou blind fool Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,

That they behold and see not what they see?

They know what beauty is, see where it lies,

Yet what the best is, take the worst to be.

If eyes corrupt by over-partial looks,

Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,

Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,

Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?

Why should my heart think that a several plot,

Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?

Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not

To put fair truth upon so foul a face?

In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,

And to this false plague are they now transferred.

15.4.1 Summary of the Sonnet

In this sonnet, the poet addresses Cupid, the god of love, as a blind fool because he has done damage to the eyes of the poet. The poet can only see the things but cannot comprehend them. He has lost his rational judgement due to love. No doubt, his eyes know what real beauty is; nevertheless they think the most beautiful thing to be the ugliest thing. He asks Cupid if his eyes are somehow corrupted for erroneous reflection, or they have been sheltered in the ocean where all men are free to ride for their pleasure. He says that Cupid has taken possession of the deceptiveness of his eyes and for his own amorous objectives. He questions the god of love why the land which once belonged to him is now a public possession. The poet says that though his eyes know that the Dark Lady is foul, yet they see her to be wearing an honest look. Both his eyes and heart have erred due to love and he has become devoted to a self-deceiving disease.

15.4.2 A Paraphrase of the Sonnet

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,

Cupid was traditionally portrayed as blind. The description of him as a fool was less common, but lovers were often thought of as being temporarily seized by insanity and guilty of many acts of folly. It is Cupid who is being addressed in the sonnet. Being blind and fool, the god of love has corrupted the eyes of the poet and he sees things mistakenly.

That they behold, and see not what they see?

As a result of the influence of Cupid, the poet's eyes observe the world but pretend not to see the unpleasant things. In fact, his eyes are deceived by the look of the things.

They know what beauty is, see where it lies,

The poet's eyes know what beauty is and where it is situated.

Yet what the best is take the worst to be.

And yet it seems to his eyes they take the worst things, both morally and physically, to be the best. Here the word order is inverted- 'take the worst to be the best'.

If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,

His eyes have lost their integrity because they are bribed and won over by flirtatious and seductive glances from the Dark Lady. However, *looks* probably refers to the glances from his own eyes which are already unable to make valid judgements of what they see (hence they are over-partial, biased, prejudiced in her favour).

Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,

This line conveys several interpretations. Literally, it means that being blinded by love, the poet adores his dark mistress who is like an ocean where all men ride. Symbolically, it is essentially a sexual metaphor intended to convey the poet's infatuation with his mistress' body and his brooding desires which visualise her nakedness. The imagery is of ships anchored in a sheltering bay or harbour, and puns on the meanings of 'to ride at anchor', as a ship does, and 'to ride', meaning to be astride a horse, or mounted on a woman and having sex with her. Poet's eyes and his mind are fixed upon her mistress' body.

Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,

The poet says that not only has Cupid corrupted the eyes, but out of this corruption he has made (forged) hooks which hold the heart firmly locked in its infatuate loving. Here the main culpability is attributed to the eyes, which see first of all, before the heart can apprehend anything.

Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?

The poet wonders why the judgement of his heart (mind) follows the lead given by the eyes because of which he cannot judge independently.

Why should my heart think that a several plot,

Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?

The poet says why should his heart believe that a piece of land which his heart knows as being available to everybody in this world should be thought by it to be the sole possession of one

man? In other words, he says why should he think that the dark lady is his exclusive property, and that she loves only him, when it is quite plain, that she offers her body to all comers?

Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,

Even after knowing the fact that his mistress is promiscuous, the poet's eyes nevertheless deny it.

To put fair truth upon so foul a face?

His eyes have become deceptive in order to make appear as truth and beauty that which is foul. There is a suggestion also of the distortion caused by cosmetics, which make a foul face seem fair. It is also a reference to 'putting a good face on things', i.e., making the best of a bad situation.

In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,

Both his heart and eyes have committed a blunder in their judgement of things. They should have correctly judged the beauty and the truth of beautiful women. Here the reference could be to former loves, even to the youth, whom the poet has deserted in favour of the dark lady. Or it could be to the dark lady herself, whom he has incorrectly judged to be fair and true.

And to this false plague are they now transferred.

The sickness of his eyes which is akin to plague has rendered him incapable of forming any right judgement. Critics suspect that the reference to 'plague', which was prevalent at the time, may have been hinting at infection with venereal disease.

Check Your Progress: Analyze the Tone and Imagery

Complete the sentences below to show your understanding of the themes and literary devices in Sonnet 137:

1. In Sonnet 137, Shakespeare expresses feelings of _____ and disillusionment.
2. The speaker uses the metaphor of _____ to illustrate the idea of betrayal.
3. The phrase "_____" suggests the speaker's resentment and pain from being deceived.
4. Shakespeare's use of _____ imagery contributes to the poem's emotional weight.
5. The speaker implies that love is both _____ and destructive.

Answers: Jealousy, Lies, Thy falsehood, Sensual, Beautiful

15.4.3 Critical Appreciation of the Sonnet

The poet reflects on his infatuation with the woman and is perplexed by what he finds. He is uncertain whether to blame his eyes or his heart, or both of them jointly. They both seem to be in error in supposing that so foul a person is in fact fair and worthy of love. The previous sonnets were far from flattering to the woman, having suggested that her sexual appetites were almost unlimited. This one is no better, and implies that she is like a common prostitute, being 'the bay

where all men ride' and 'the common' where all men have free access. This sonnet belongs to the category of those which have been written in a lucid and straightforward style.

15.5 THEME

The most dominant theme of this sonnet is love that is shown in broader perspectives and with its divergent facets. Poet's love with the dark lady is both mental and physical, though the later might not have been consummated. This sonnet has a deep strain of physical love which has defamed his mistress to the degree of a prostitute who is available to every other man for sexual pleasures. Though the poet knows about the character of dark lady, yet he cannot but love her. He is concerned with the sensuality and his love is of lower kind.

15.6 IMAGERY

The imagery of this sonnet is gross and disgusting. Here the emphasis is on dark and repulsive side of the character. He uses images of bay, a common place, a plague to address the dark lady. In the line, '*Be anchored in the bay where all men ride',* the imagery is of ships anchored in a sheltering bay or harbour, and puns on the meanings of 'to ride at anchor', as a ship does, and 'to ride', meaning to be astride a horse, or mounted on a woman and having sex with her.

15.7 LET US SUM UP

This sonnet is addressed to Cupid who has corrupted the eyes of the poet. As a result of this, he cannot go through the real character of his dark mistress. His mistress has become a lady of loose character but he is incapable of judging the real beauty of her. Here, he tells about the immorality of the dark lady.

15.8 GLOSSARY

Thou blind fool, Love – it is Cupid, the god of love. Love being blind, the god of love is believed to be blind

Behold – observe

Over-partial looks – biased looks, prejudiced in her favour

Be anchored in the bay – ships anchored in a sheltering harbour

A several land – a private piece of land, a separated enclosure

Common place – a piece of common land

This false plague – sickness, misery of making false judgements

15.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is the form of this sonnet?
2. To whom is the poet complaining in this sonnet?
3. List the images used in this sonnet.
4. Why love is called 'blind fool'?

Answers

1. A sonnet has fourteen lines in iambic pentameter
2. Cupid, the god of love

3. A bay or harbour, a common land, plague

4. Love is blind because people fall in love blindly without thinking of any consequence.

15.10 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The sonnets include a dedication to a mystery man. What are the initials of his name?

A. Mr. W.H.

B. Mr. A.R.

C. Mr. P.S.

D. Mr. W.S.

2. In what year were Shakespeare's sonnets first published?

A. 1600

B. 1609

C. 1619

D. 1630

3. How many sonnets does Shakespeare's collection contain?

A. 154

B. 160

C. 164

D. 170

4. What is the structure of the majority of the sonnets in the collection?

A. Three quatrains and a final couplet in trochaic pentameter

B. Five quatrains and a final couplet in iambic hexameter

C. Two quatrains and a final couplet in iambic tetrameter

D. Three quatrains and a final couplet in iambic pentameter

5. Who is the addressee of sonnet 137?

A. A fair lady

B. A rival poet

C. A dark lady

D. A fair youth

6. Which two sonnets are the adaptations of classical Greek poems?

A. 126 and 127

B. 136 and 137

C. 112 and 113

D. 153 and 154

7. Sonnet 137 bears a resemblance with

A. Sonnet 96 and 97

B. Sonnet 113 and 114

C. Sonnet 125 and 126

D. Sonnet 135 and 136

8. To which disease has the poet referred in sonnet 137 ?

A. Cancer

B. Tuberculosis

C. Plague

D. Cataract

Answers: 1-A, 2-B, 3-A, 4-D, 5-C, 6-D, 7-D, 8-D.

15.11 FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The last two lines of Shakespearean sonnet are called.....
2. The .....foot is used in Shakespearean sonnet.
3. In sonnet 137 .....has damaged the eyes of the poet.
4. Poet's eyes and heart are mistaken due to.....
5. In sonnet 137, the poet's love is of.....kind.

15.12 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Critically analyse the sonnet 'Thou Blind Fool Love, What Dost Thou To Mine Eyes'.
2. Discuss the thematic concerns of the sonnet.
3. Write a critical note on Shakespeare's imagery in the sonnet.
4. What is the nature of love as depicted by Shakespeare in the sonnets addressed to the Dark Lady?
5. What is a sonnet? How does Shakespearean sonnet differ from Italian form of sonnet?
6. Bring out the thematic concerns of Shakespearean sonnet addressed to the dark lady.
7. 'In things right true my heart and eyes have erred, / And to this false plague are they now transferred'. Explain.

15.13 SUGGESTED READING

- Callaghan, Dympna. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Wiley, 2008.
- Kingsley-Smith, Jane, and W. Reginald Rampone Jr. *Shakespeare's Global Sonnets: Translation, Appropriation, Performance*. Springer International Publishing, 2023.
- Bates, Catherine. "The Queerness of Shakespeare's Sonnets." The Huntington, 4 Apr. 2018, https://www.huntington.org/verso/queerness-shakespeares-sonnets.

LIFE OF JOHN MILTON

STRUCTURE

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Every writer is a representative of the age that produces him and his works reflect the age in which he lives. The poet who lends his name to the literary age, however was John Milton (1608-1674), the intellectual giant who reflects, as an authentic mouthpiece in his literary works and intellectual ferment, all that characterized the times. It is not an easy task to give even a cursory sketch of a life so crowded with literary as well as political activity. He was born in London on December 9th, 1608. His father's house was on the Spread Eagle in Bread Street, and his baptism took place at the neighbouring church of Allhallows. His father was a "scrivener" —a kind of combination of law stationer and solicitor—and a man who combined independent views and interest in the arts with the ability to make a success of his profession. Milton's father had a strong inclination towards music, he was a skilled musician, an ardent Republican with a strong leaning towards Puritanism. Milton evidently gave indications, from his early childhood, of the extraordinary intellectual powers which distinguished him from all other men; and his father aided his genius by giving him a generous opportunity to study. He was most carefully educated, first at home, under the supervision of Thomas Young, who afterwards, taught at Jesus College, Cambridge. From his private tutor, he went to St. Paul's School, where under a notable High Master, Alexander Gill, he spent nearly five years rapidly developing proficiency in the classics, as well as gaining a deep respect for the Renaissance tradition of learning.

The combined attention of Thomas Young and Alexander Gill met with an eager response from the young scholar and they were able to inculcate in him the passion for acquiring knowledge to gratify his aesthetic desire. In his own words:

My appetite for knowledge was so voracious that, from twelve years of age, I hardly ever left my studies, or went to bed before midnight.

By the time he went up to Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1625, he had acquired proficiency in Hebrew, French and Italian, as well as Latin and Greek; he had been introduced to the Elizabethan poet, Spenser; he had composed much in Latin and had rendered two psalms into English verse (Psalms, CXIV and CXXXVI). He inherited a natural aptitude and love for music from his father.

During the days of his youth, he could have easily yielded to the joys of wine and love, but he remained away from these pleasures and he spent his youth chastely like a priest. However, he was by temperament adamant, and could fight the authorities on issues and still be a studious scholar. He was never submissive to arbitrary authority, expecting more from humanity than common humanity could ever give, yet he was ardent, emotional and impressionable as a man.

He had little or no inclination to interact with living scholars. He visited France, Switzerland, and the most celebrated of the Italian cities, and being furnished with the best of introductions, was received everywhere with marked respect and admiration. He struck the learned and fastidious Italians with unusual astonishment and wherever he went he was highly appreciated, as he was well-acquainted with Latin and Italian verse and he showed his profound skill, thus giving proof of his intellectual genius. Milton had an interview with Galileo, "grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition." Among his other friends was Giovanni Diodati, a theological professor and a member of a noble house which sprung originally from Lucca. During his stay abroad, he gave proof, not only of his religious and political ardour, so hostile to Episcopacy and the monarchial system that he had received the wise recommendation of the wise diplomat to keep "his thoughts close and his face open". In Italian, he wrote at least as well as the majority of contemporary poets—for after Tasso's death, there arose no first-rate Italian poet – but in Latin verse his compositions have never been surpassed by any modern writer and still bear close and critical reading.

He spent about fifteen months abroad, then was recalled abruptly to England by the first ominous signs of war between the King and the Parliament. A person of fervent temperament was not likely to remain a passive spectator of the momentous conflict. He threw himself into the struggle with all the ardour of his natural temperament and convictions. From this point, the second phase of his career starts. He can be seen as a most eloquent, but vehement and furious controversialist – one of the most prolific writers of that epoch of agitation, producing works on all the burning questions of the day. He strongly advocated the establishment of Republican principles in the state and waged an uncompromising war against the Church party in the Kingdom.

Milton sought to open a school in Aldersgate Street; but among those who had the honour of his instructions, the only two celebrated persons were his nephews, Edward and John Phillips. These, the sons of his sister Anne, left several details respecting Milton's life.

Milton's actual career as a prose writer began in the year 1641, with his treatise, *Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England*, and his defence of the five ministers whose counter blast in the same year to Bishop Hall's Humble Remonstrance was known as "*Smectymnuus"*. His controversial work, so successfully inaugurated, continued without interruption until the Restoration defeated all his hopes and left him in blindness, poverty and danger, with nothing but the consciousness of the sincerity of his convictions, and the leisure to devote the closing years of his life to the composition of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

16.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Introduce learners to John Milton's career, focusing on his role as a poet, polemicist, and public servant during the 17th century.
2. Analyze the themes, style, and structure of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

3. Explore Milton's use of epic conventions and religious themes in his works, particularly his portrayal of the fall and redemption of humanity.

After reading this lesson:

1. Learners will be able to outline key milestones in Milton's career and their influence on his literary works.
2. Learners will be able to identify the central themes and epic elements in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.
3. Learners will be able to analyze Milton's portrayal of human disobedience and divine justice in his epic poetry.

16.3 *PARADISE LOST AND PARADISE REGAINED*

His writings in defence of *Smectymnuus* were directed against the Anglican Church. His violence led him to attack not only the large and influential party represented by Laud, but the moderate and almost Puritan views of men like Hall, whose theological position, apart from the episcopal question, was identical with Milton's own austere creed. But, in the midst of these struggles, he turned aside to take an active part in agitating a very important question which concerned the law of divorce. Some of the pamphlets of 1644 and 1645, including the famous *Tetrachordon*, were doubtlessly suggested by his own private affairs. He had been married in 1643, to Mary Powell, the daughter of an Oxfordshire squire of Royal sympathies. It is said that Mary Powell's father had borrowed a huge money from Milton's father and being unable to repay the money, had probably sought an easy way out of his difficulties by allowing his daughter to make an unsuitable and an unpromising match. Their marriage did not prove to be compatible and their married life was not very happy. In 1644, he wrote *Areopagatica*, an oration after the unique model, in which he addressed Parliament in defence of the liberty of the press. This and his treatise, *Of Education*, remain the best known and most widely read of his prose writings. His *History of England* was published in 1670, it comprised six short books and covered a period from the earliest times down to the Norman Conquest.

In 1647, his father died and his own movements were very slow and restless. He moved from house to house, carrying his small and not very flourishing school with him. But, in 1649, he was appointed as Latin secretary to the Council of State. In this post, his skill as a writer of Latin was employed in strengthening the diplomatic ties between the Republican Government and the European Powers – at this time such correspondence was always carried out in Latin.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

1. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton's central theme is the _____ of man and the justification of God's ways.
2. *Paradise Lost* is written in _____, an unrhymed form of iambic pentameter.
3. The primary antagonist of *Paradise Lost* is _____, who leads the rebellion against God.

Answers: Fall, Blank verse, Satan

In after years, when he lost his eye sight, he was joined in these duties, first by a man named Weckherlin, then by Philip Meadows, and afterwards by an excellent and accomplished Marvell. He completely lost his vision in 1652, but the weakness which caused it had been gradually coming on for ten years.

In his intense devotion to study, he had greatly strained his eyes. In one of his sonnets, *On His Blindness*, he alludes, with lofty self-consciousness and pious resignation, to his blindness, which he proudly attributes to his exertions on behalf of truth and liberty.

Milton showed sympathy with Cromwell and with the administration but, he was not a sycophant at all. He disapproved of the despotic and military character of the Protector's rule and pardoned some of the unavoidable severities of a revolutionary government, considering the benefits it brought and the patriotism which it fostered. He must have been pleased at Cromwell's efforts to raise the nation to the head of European affairs and his strict and strong Protestant policy. His views on the execution of king are clearly visible in *Iconoclasts* (1649) and his three *Defensiones contra Salmasium*. Milton, in 1651, wrote in retaliation to Salmasius's *Defensio Regis*, which was a pamphlet written in Latin, invoking the wrath of Heaven upon the Parliament of England. *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* was followed in 1654 by the *Defensio Secunda*, and in 1655, by the *Pro Se Defensio*. In these works, Milton justifies the English people in making war upon the monarchy.

Milton's prose style is a hybrid, borrowing its forms and styles from Greek and Latin sources. Milton amazes and convinces the reader, even in poetry he can be compared with Virgil and Dante, rather than Spenser.

With the Restoration, in 1660, begins the last, the most gloomy and yet the most glorious period of the great poet's career. Milton was imprisoned for having written against the monarchy, but he was liberated after a confinement of some months. It is said that Sir William D'Avenant successfully used his influence to spare him any further persecution. From this period till his death, he lived in close retirement for a short time in Holborn and then in Jewin Street, busily occupied in the composition of his great epic. *Paradise Lost*, after having been his principal employment for seven years, was finished in 1665, and published in 1667. *Paradise Regained*, a much shorter work, was published alongwith the noble tragedy of *Samson Agonistes*, in 1671. On November 8th, 1674, Milton died, at the age of 66. He was buried besides his father's grave in Cripplegate. He had been married three times. His daughters by Mary Powell survived him and are said to have treated him badly. Although his domestic relations were fragmented, but he still fought against all the odds and was able to give posterity a great epic in the form of *Paradise Lost*. He has been vilified and abused from time to time, his reputation has been mangled and torn by partisans. But his writing proved him a real genius – his loyalty, his love for God, nobility and his pity for fallen poets are all reflected in the works produced by him. Of all the English prose writers, Milton is placed on the highest pedestal, and he has attained the sublimity which others crave.

16.4 LITERARY CAREER OF JOHN MILTON

Milton's literary career can be divided into three great periods – his youth, his manhood, his old age. The Youthful phase can be extended from 1623 to 1640. The second extends from 1640-1660; and the third, from the Restoration to the poet's death in 1674. During his "youth" days, he produced a larger number of miscellaneous poems, including verse of very tender and graceful character; the second phase was chiefly occupied with his prose writings, whose invigorating effect and serious, exalted style lead on to the occupation of the third period, the slow and elaborate composition of *Paradise Lost, Paradise*

Regained and *Samson Agonistes*. Finally, the characteristic of the early epoch is grace; the middle epoch constitutes of force and vehemence, and last one almost an unapproachable sublimity.

In the early, almost boyish poems—the *Verses at a Solemn Musick,* the poetical exercises written at school and college, and the *Hymn on Nativity*— there are certain qualities which distinguish Milton from all other poets. The main among them is the grandeur of conception, which in Dante, was not free from harshness and ruggedness, but, in Milton, is combined with consummate harmony and grace. The austerity, however, remains in a modified but still remarkable form, the result of his Puritan cast of thought, whose stamp nothing could efface in his works. In addition, these poems which may sometimes appear occasional and sometimes trivial, display a scholarship so vast and complete that it would have overwhelmed and crushed a power of original conception less mightily than Milton's. In the least elaborate of his poems, there is always present solemn, full melody which made a later poet address him as the ''God-gifted organ-voice of England.'' There is no poet whose imagery is so vast and profuse, and yet so admirably designed to work in harmony towards the general meaning and effect.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, before you proceed to the lesson-end exercises, take a moment to review the key terms for a better comprehension of the lesson:

Scrivener: A historical term for someone who wrote legal documents and sometimes acted as a legal advisor or solicitor.

Aesthetic: Concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty.

Vehement: Showing strong feeling; forceful, passionate, or intense.

Sycophant:A person who acts obsequiously toward someone important in order to gain advantage; a flatterer.

Iconoclast: A person who attacks or criticizes cherished beliefs or institutions.

Pedestal: A position in which someone is admired or respected greatly.

Sublimity: Awe-inspiring beauty or grandeur; in literature, it refers to a lofty and elevated style that inspires admiration or wonder.

Can you find two synonyms each for the following words:

Aesthetic: _____, _____ Vehement: _____, _____

Iconoclast: _____, _____ Pedestal: _____, _____

16.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on the biography of John Milton.
2. Enlist the important works of John Milton and their themes.

16.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 Where was John Milton born?

A) Stratford-upon-Avon

B) London

C) Edinburgh

D) Oxford

Q.2 During which historical period did John Milton live?

A) Renaissance

B) Victorian

C) Enlightenment

D) Restoration

Q. 3 Which significant event deeply influenced Milton's politica and religious views?

A) The Magna Carta

B) The Glorious Revolution

C) The English Civil War

D) The Norman Conquest

Q.4 Which of Milton's works reimagines the biblical story of the Fall of Man and explores themes of free will and divine justice?

A) *Paradise Lost*

B) *Paradise Regained*

C) *Samson Agonistes*

D) *Areopagitica*

Q.5 What did Milton advocate for in his essay *Areopagitica*?

A) Religious conformity

B) Censorship and licensing of books

C) Freedom of the press and speech

D) The divine right of kings

Q.6 In *Paradise Regained*, what does the poem focus on?

A) The fall of Lucifer

B) The creation of the world

C) Christ's temptation and triumph

D) The battle between good and evil

Q.7 What historical event led to the execution of King Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth?

A) The American Revolution

B) The French Revolution

C) The Industrial Revolution

D) The English Civil War

Q.8 Which work by Milton portrays the story of Samson from the *Book of Judges*?

A) *Paradise Lost*

B) *Paradise Regained*

C) *Samson Agonistes*

D) *Lycidas*

Q.9 What role did Milton serve under during the Commonwealth period?

A) Prime Minister

B) Lord Protector

C) Chancellor

D) Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Q.10 Which aspect of Milton's writing had a lasting impact on political philosophy?

A) His romantic poetry

B) His religious sermons

C) His comedic plays

D) His defense of individual liberty

Answers: 1B, 2D, 3C, 4A, 5C, 6C, 7D, 8C, 9D, 10D

16.7 LET US SUM UP

John Milton (1608–1674) was an influential English poet and intellectual of the 17th century. Born in London, he lived through the English Civil War and Commonwealth era, advocating radical political and religious views. His most famous work, *Paradise Lost* (1667), is an epic poem that reimagines the Fall of Man and explores themes of free will and divine justice. His other significant works include *Paradise Regained* (1671), a sequel to *Paradise Lost*, and *Samson Agonistes* (1671), a dramatic poem. Milton's legacy lies in his profound impact on political philosophy and literature, as he championed individual liberty and his writings reflected the complex ideological currents of his time.

16.8 SUGGESTED READING

- Shawcross, John T. *John Milton: The Self and the World*. University Press of Kentucky, 2021. ebook.
- Milton, John, and Phillips, Edward. *The Poetical Works Of John Milton: To Which Is Prefixed A Biography Of The Author*. Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2015.
- Academy of American Poets. "John Milton." *Poets.org*, Academy of American Poets, poets.org/poet/john-milton.

PARADISE LOST: A SYNOPTIC VIEW

STRUCTURE

17.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson gist of all the twelve books of this great epic is given so as to introduce the learner to the basic purpose or the message which John Milton conveys in the poem, as a whole. A critical survey of Milton's life and works has been made in previous lessons. This would make easier for the learner to grasp the theme of the poem. The poem has a religious epicentre and for this, it is important to know the influence of religion on Milton.

17.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Examine the structure and content of the 12 books of *Paradise Lost*, with a focus on their narrative progression and themes.
2. Analyze the symbolism of paradise in the poem, including its representation of innocence, divine order, and loss.
3. Discuss Milton's use of classical epic conventions in the first four books of *Paradise Lost*, including the invocation of the muse and the depiction of Satan's rebellion.

After reading this lesson:

1. Learners will be able to summarize the key events and themes of each book in *Paradise Lost*.
2. Learners will be able to explain the symbolism of paradise as an idealized state of innocence and its theological implications in the poem.
3. Learners will be able to interpret the major characters and their motivations as introduced in the first four books, particularly Satan and his followers.

17.3 *PARADISE LOST*

Paradise Lost, is one of Milton's most ambitious works and one of the most complex works owing to its grand style and epic qualities. The poem comprising of 10,665 lines, consisting of XII Books, was written and published in 1667, during the period of Milton's blindness. The poem is a result of prolonged meditations on Biblical, Hebrew and Classical learning. The understanding of religious background, in order to grasp the essence of the poem, is very important.

The whole poem consists of four main parts:

(a) The war in Heaven leading to the expulsion of the defeated rebels.

(b) The rebels in Hell and the devising of the plan for revenge—the destruction of God's newly created human race.

(c) The execution of the plan—the temptation and the fall.

(d) The immediate consequences of the fall.

17.3.1 Book I: The fallen Angels abashed and writhing in the burning lake of Hell, are depicted. Satan, their leader, first rouses himself and makes his way to the smouldering shore, accompanied by his "next Mate" Beelzebub. After expressing his undaunted spirit and being answered by Beelzebub, he rallies thousands of his abject followers who follow him out of the lake. They form up on parade to listen to Satan's exhortation to them to resume the war, by guile or with new creation. Under the leadership of Mammon, a council palace—Pandemonium– is built. The innumerable masses of the lesser devils (their forms converted to pigmy size), remain in the outer Hall of the infernal palace while the 'great seraphic lords' sit in solemn conclave within.

17.3.2 Book II: It opens with the great debate. After an opening speech by Satan, the leader and chairman, first Moloch, then Belial and Mammon express their views. Realizing that the general feeling is with Belial and Mammon, who in their different ways argue that all thought of

war should be dismissed, Beelzebub rekindles enthusiasm for continuing the war and describe a practicable plan—the corruption of Man; for this, the arduous task of journeying to Earth has to be undertaken. Satan wants to execute the plan by going to the Earth. Satan's dangerous journey is described. He persuades sin to open the gates and ventures into Chaos. The rulers of Abyss—Chaos and Night meet him giving him travelling directions and he soon comes within sight of Earth's Universe hanging from Heaven by a golden chain.

17.3.3 Book III: It begins with the famous invocation to light. The scene shifts to heaven. God describes his plan for man, his coming, fall and the condition of his redemption if someone from Heaven will atone for his sin. Christ offers himself. The angels sing a hymn in praise of the Father and Son.

Satan passes through Limbo (Paradise of fools) and goes to the Orb of the Sun, but finding the archangel Uriel, disguises himself into a smaller angel and learns from him the location of the Garden of Eden. Uriel in ignorance, praises Satan's spirit of quest.

17.3.4 Book IV: After some misgivings, Satan confirms his malevolent purpose and reaches Paradise, which he surveys from the Tree of Life, in the shape of cormorant. He sees Adam and Eve, in all their perfection, but overhears that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to them. Uriel sees the evil in Satan's face and warns the Archangel Gabriel, the guardian of Paradise. Night approaches and Adam and Eve retire to rest. Gabriel and helpers search the garden and find Satan tempting Eve in a dream in the guise of a serpent. He offers resistance to Gabriel, but a sign from Heaven causes him to fly out of the garden.

17.3.5 Book V: This begins with Eve's report of her bad dream to Adam. They begin their day's work with a hymn of praise. God sends Raphael to warn them of the penalties of disobedience and of their danger. They suitably entertain Raphael, who, at Adam's request, tells them of the nature of their enemy and why he became one. This leads to an account by Raphael of Satan's rebellion which began when Satan fled to the North with his followers whom he there incited to revolt. Only the faithful seraph Abdiel refused to be seduced from his allegiance to God. Raphael reports the argument between Abdiel and Satan.

17.3.6 Book VI: Raphael continues his account. Abdiel is congratulated by God. War begins. Michael and Gabriel lead God's forces. Abdiel confronts Satan is again worsted, this time by Michael. But on the second day, Satan's forces use artillery, which disconcerts the loyal army. They, however, successfully counter the attack by hurling uprooted mountains at the enemy. On the third day, as Satan's forces are not fully defeated, God sends his son against them. He irresistibly pursues them to the edge of Heaven, whence, routed, they fall into the place of punishment made ready for them.

17.3.7 Book VII: It begins with another invocation to the Muse, containing personal references. The book itself relates Raphael's further answers to Adam's questions—he satisfies Adam's desire for information about the creation of the world by telling how the Son, at God's request, created the world in six days, and the angelic celebration thereof.

17.3.8 Book VIII: Adam asks Raphael to explain the laws of motion governing heavenly bodies. Raphael, replying, shows foreknowledge of later astronomical notions, but he warns Adam that he must not inquire too closely into such mysteries. Adam recounts what he has remembered since his own creation and Raphael leaves with repeated warnings.

17.3.9 Book IX: News of the fall is received in Heaven. The son is sent to pronounce judgement on the delinquents. He finds them ashamed and guilt ridden. Adam (inaccurately) reports what had happened, putting all the blame on Eve for his sin. The son sentences Eve to pain and submission, and Adam to working for his sustenance. Sin and Death, from their position at Hell gate, sense Satan's success and resolve to share in the spoils. They build a bridge over Chaos linking Hell to the Earth. They meet the returning Satan and celebrate their success. Satan arrives at Pandemonium and relates his triumph to his assembled followers. Their applause turns to hissing for they are all changed to serpents, like him. They see an orchard of the forbidden fruit, but when they eat, they find they are chewing bitter ashes. Sin and Death meanwhile invade the Earth. God permits them to scavenge but tells the Son that He will one day conquer them and cleanse the Earth. God also announces changes in the mechanics of the universe which will introduce seasons and climatic variations and so make man's life more difficult. Adam and Eve continue to quarrel but she appeases him. She urges suicide to save their offspring; he dissuades her by reminding her of the promise that her seed will in the end be revenged upon the Serpent and by advising, enduring repentance and confiding themselves to God's mercy.

17.3.10 Book X: The Son intercedes with God for Adam and Eve. God accepts their repentance but sends Michael to expel them from Paradise. Adam warns Eve of some imminent doom. He meets Michael, who announces their expulsion, which Adam's humbly accepts after some pleading. Michael then shows him a panorama of human history until the Flood.

17.3.11 Book XI: Michael continues mankind's history from the flood to Abraham. He reveals the meaning of the promise that the woman's seed would defeat the Serpent. He describes the coming of that Seed, man's Reedemer, with details of his Incarnation, Adam is comforted by these revelations. He awakens Eve and together they go, with the fiery sword and the guardian cherubim guarding the gate behind them.

Thus, this is the Synoptic view of XII books of the poem. The next Section will deal with the central theme of *Paradise Lost* Book I.

17.4 *PARADISE LOST* BOOK I: CENTRAL THEME

Milton conceived his unique vocation to be the writer of a work of literature so sublime that it would surpass all the great works of the past and so bring everlasting glory to his country. The greatest works of the past were epics; his work must therefore be an epic too, but the theme must be even greater than the themes of his mighty predecessors—Homer, Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso. He pursues ''Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rime'' for which only the highest themes will suffice. The highest theme, therefore, is:

I may, assert Eternal Providence,

And justifie the wayes of God to men

The first five lines of ''the great Argument'' state the theme — Man's first Disobedience against the background of the inexorable World Order, the Dispensation, Disobedience in the fall of Man and the beginning of Sin in Man. Disobedience is moral corruption and fall from Divine Grace. It also is corruption of the body politic and disorder and chaos in cosmos. The opening lines are highly suggestive and evocative:

Of Man's first Disobedience and the fruit

Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste

Brought death into the world, and all our woe,

With loss of Eden till one greater Man

Restore us and regain the blissful seat,

The subject matter of *Paradise Lost,* is taken from the first chapter of the Genesis: the disobedience of Man in eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and his fall as a consequence, bringing death into the world and all the woes from which man has continued to suffer. All ''our woe'' is human woe that is still with us. But on the same hand the ''Greater Man'', Jesus, the Redeemer will bring about the redemption of mankind. The sin, therefore, can be understood with reference to the Christian scheme of providence, repentance and salvation. Through sin of primal perversity—transgression of the divine benevolent dispensation — we have fallen and through Christ we are purged of our sin. Disobedience of Adam and Eve stem from Satan's monomania of taking revenge upon God, which ultimately led to chaos but Christ would cleanse the sin by making the innocent creatures (Adam and Eve) repent. Therefore, from perdition to repentance and ultimately salvation. *Paradise Lost* deals with the Christian theme of good conquering the evil. The first twenty-six lines of Book I indicate the central theme of ''Man's first Disobedience'' — the material is chiefly drawn from Genesis and with the aid of ''Heavenly Muse'', Milton fuses three great civilizations: Classical, Hebrew and Christian.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks (Books 1–4)

1. The opening lines of *Paradise Lost* invoke the heavenly _____ to inspire Milton's retelling of the fall of man.
2. In Book 1, Satan and his followers are cast into _____, a fiery and desolate place of punishment.
3. In Book 2, the fallen angels debate their next move and decide to corrupt _____, God's new creation.
4. In Book 3, Milton depicts God foreseeing the fall of humanity and appointing _____ to redeem them.
5. Book 4 introduces Adam and Eve in the Garden of _____, symbolizing innocence and divine harmony.

Answers: Muse, Hell, Earth, Jesus, Eden

Though the Prologue of Book I introduces us to the purpose behind writing the great epic of 10,665 lines, consisting of XII Books, but in Book I, the fall of Satan from heaven with his rebel angels is of utmost importance. The expulsion of Satan is the result of the ''impious war'' he had waged against God. The source behind this war is the Greek myth, where also wars were waged in heaven. The Greeks thought of Olympian history as a series of rebellions by sons against their father. First Uranus cast the Cyclops out of heaven into Tartarus, then his other sons, the Titans, dethroned him, who in turn were dethroned by Olympian Gods in alliance with Cyclops. The story of Prometheus, a Titan who sided with Zeus in his war on the Titans was punished with eternal tortures, is compared with Satan, whom God tormented with his expulsion:

Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the Ethered sky
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

Also, the Titans fell for nine long days, so did Satan who faced God's wrath :

Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal man, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,
Confounded, though immortal. But his doom
Reserved him to more wrath; for now thought
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him (P. L. Book I 50-57)

The message which Milton conveys through Satan's defeat is that infidelity towards God leads to downfall. Satan is that ''infernal serpent'', who, after his expulsion from Heaven still looks forward to further heroism. Heroic war had shown the rebel angels matchless except against Almighty. But now they will wage a war in which they would not use force but trickery:

We may with more successful hope resolve
To wage by force or guile eternal war.

Satan's feelings of ''revenge'' and ''immortal hate'' constitute an integral part of Book I. These feelings only bring back to him his lost will-power which inspires his angels and eventually leads to the building of the castle Pandemonium. Satan is full of indomitable courage:

All is not lost: the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.

Inspite of all this, Satan meets his miserable fate at the hands of God. (as we see that his angels are converted into snakes in Book X). The cause of Satan's plight is his ''obdurate pride'' which eclipses his heroic qualities. Of all the Seven Deadly Sins, Pride is the deadliest. Milton conveys a message that man's best virtues are overshadowed by pride—the highest sin. Satan pays the price of the sin he has committed. Satan was eminently well-equipped with intellect and will-power to exercise his enlightened self-interest. But he chose to be ''farthest from Him''—a statement that signifies his moral alienation.

The thematic scheme of *Paradise Lost* is modelled on the Calvinistic doctrine of Divine Providence. God has given every individual a rational and logical mind and the power to reason between good and evil. The one who leads the path of goodness is the "elect" and is graced by God. But the evil-doers are punished and ultimately damned. Man is the sum total of his deeds and he is given a free-will to exercise either to follow virtue or vice and then the fruits begotten are also a result of his deeds. It is implied from

this that Milton's aim in *Paradise Lost* is to "justify the ways of God to man". Satan, Adam and Eve are true representatives of free-will and the wrath of God faced by them as a consequence of their actions.

Hence, Milton successfully justifies the ways of God to men by the doctrine of free will and the theology of the fall i.e. Disobedience. Satan wilfully refuses to act with moral responsibility and intellectual honesty that goes with free will.

17.5 THE PURPOSE AND MEANING OF PARADISE

Lost is to assist man to act rightly and responsibly and to do this he must know not only himself but the entire, cosmic order, the Eternal Providence, of which man in Milton's age was the pivot and the nexus.

The progressively negative transformation that Satan and his fallen angels undergo in the subtly ironic similes as also the sprawling empire of evil as mapped out by the poet, amply affirm the above view, for instance, Satan's astonishment when he sees Belzeebub:

If thou beest he—but Oh how fallen/how
Changed
From him, who in happy realms of light,
Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst
Outshine
Myriads, though bright; if he whom,
Mutual league,
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
And hazard in glorious enterprise,
Joined with me once now misery hath joined
In equal ruin

The ruin is a result of Beelzeebub's own inclination to join hands with evil. Infidelity towards God and lack of faith and hope in Him led to downfall of other comrades of Belzeebub. Wallock points out:

When faith is lacking, the whole moral atmosphere breaks down. Faith and love are to be placed above pleasure, wealth, power, reason and knowledge. By persevering effort, by intelligence and discipline, prudence and temperance, fortitude and justice, by faith, hope and charity, we may achieve the individual and communal happiness that is the regard of virtue in men and in nations.

Thematic purpose of *Paradise Lost*, Book I is to represent the distinction between good and evil. Satan in Greek sense is Alazon—compulsive rebel who revolts and does not conform to any dictates. He defied God and is punished. In this sense he is a "rebel victim" and suffers his ironic tragic fate. Eiron, opposite of Alazon, is Christ who symbolized submissiveness, meekness and even obsequious behaviour. In light of this, the life of a Christian is pictured as a battle, but it is within the human that Christ and Satan are at war. Christ and Satan, therefore, are two extreme aspects of human nature and it is entirely left to them to choose either of the two. Hence, good and evil have to be distinguished as they determine the fate of man. Evil breeds evil. Satan's evil motto:

To do aught good never will be our task,

But even to do ill our sole delight.

But the end which he meets, clearly demarcates between good and evil, from this point of view—the conceptualization of good and evil, the theme is universal. It does not pertain to one individual but the whole cosmos. Satan's lot is the lot of every individual who follows and professes evil. This element of universalization makes the theme crucial.

In *Paradise Lost* Book I, the theme of "creation" and "uncreation" coincide. Theme of uncreation in Book I is conveyed through the apocalyptic imagery of Hell, where Satan meets his doom:

A dungeon horrible, on all sides around

As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames

No light, but rather darkness visible.

Further, the Apocalyptic imagery of ''red lightning and impetuous rage'' explains the process of uncreation of Satan and his fallen angels. From a state of bliss, they have suddenly entered into a dismal state. Satan himself declares the change:

Farewell, happy fields,

Where joy ever dwells/Hail, horrors/hail.

Infernal world!

Thus, the ''Glory'' ultimately had withered. Those who once tried to usurp Heaven–God's Empire and Creation – have been now themselves uncreated or deconstructed. Milton successfully describes these uncreated beings (fallen angels) as autumn leaves:

His legions, Angel forms, who lay entranced

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks

In Vallombrosa, whole the Etrurian shades

High over-arched embower;

The act of creation is the building of Pandemonium under the leadership of Mammon. The coming together of the fallen angels and diligent endeavor to make a castle for their new Empire, is a bold attempt. Eventually, Pandemonium rises like an exhalation of breath, at once a parody of the inspired awakening to life that recurs throughout the poem and of the music that accompanies authentic creation. It is definitely a creation, but a devilish one;

As in an organ, from one blast of wind,

To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge

Rose like an exhalation, with the sound

Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,

Built like a temple, where pilasters round

Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid

With golden architrave.'

It resembles a temple as a caricature resembles a type. This Limbo of fools is eventually filled by the ''locusts'' with Satan as their peer:

A solemn council forthwith to be held

At Pandemonium, the high capital

Of Satan and his peers

Though the martial intensity of Pandemonium's rising has the impact of genuine feeling of courage and will-power but the sinister plan of avenging God, has marred all the heroic deeds. Thus, the act of creation here (i.e. Pandemonium) paves the way for ''uncreation'' once more, (as in Book X). Creation of Pandemonium and "uncreation" of all the demons is a vicious process in this very sense. Again this vicious circle "justifies the ways of God to man.''

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, below is a list of important keywords. Take time to carefully read them, as they will help enhance your vocabulary and deepen your comprehension of the content you have just read:

Pandemonium: The capital of Hell built by Satan and his followers; the word now generally means a place of wild uproar and chaos.

Invocation: A formal call for assistance, often addressed to a muse or deity at the beginning of an epic poem.

Perdition Eternal damnation or spiritual ruin; complete loss.

Obdurate: Stubbornly refusing to change one's opinion or course of action; hardened in wrongdoing.

Transgression: An act that goes against a law, command, or code of conduct; a sin.

Providence: Divine guidance or care; God's plan and protection for the world.

Calvinistic: Related to the doctrines of John Calvin, especially the belief in predestination and the sovereignty of God.

Apocalyptic: Related to the end of the world or a great, often catastrophic, revelation.

Eiron and Alazon: Literary archetypes from Greek comedy.

17.6 LET US SUM UP

Paradise Lost has a purely didactic aim of inculcating virtue in man by showing God's truth, virtue, justice and mercy leading to peace; and Satan's deceit, injustice and hate, leading to war. Fundamentally, the poem is concerned with the opposition of Eros and Thanatos i.e. the opposition of love and hate, life and death, creation and uncreation. Though Book I is totally built around Satan and his ''inconquerable will'' but this ''will'' is ultimately conquered by God. So, the poem is an apostrophe to God's greatness and love for man, to the need and the wisdom of obeying Him. Milton's admonishment is to join in the force of life (Eros) and renounce the forces of death (Thanatos). Thus, Milton in his ''divine inspiration'' becomes the voice of the multitude singing ''Alleluia''.

17.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Theme of *Paradise Lost* Book I is didactic. Explain with proper references from the text.
2. The ultimate punishment of sin is damnation. Discuss the statement with reference to the central theme of *Paradise Lost* Book I.
3. Discuss the theory of free-will or Calvinistic doctrine with special reference to *Paradise Lost* Book I
4. Thematic purpose of *Paradise Lost* Book I is to represent the distinction between good and evil. Discuss.

17.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 Who is the speaker addressing in the opening lines of Book I of *Paradise Lost*?

A) Satan

B) Adam

C) Eve

D) Heavenly Muse

Q.2 Which angel is appointed by Satan to lead the fallen angels after their expulsion from Heaven?

A) Beelzebub

B) Uriel

C) Raphael

D) Abdiel

Q.3 In Book I, what event does Satan recall that led to his rebellion against God?

A) His envy of Adam's position

B) His desire for more power

C) His disagreement with other angels

D) God's declaration of His Son as His heir

Q.4 What is the fallen angels' new home after their expulsion from Heaven?

A) Earth

B) Hell

C) Purgatory

D) Limbo

Q.5 In Book I, which fallen angel proposes that the angels engage in open warfare against God?

A) Mammon

B) Moloch

C) Abdiel

D) Beelzebub

Q.6 What does Satan transform himself into when he enters Eden to corrupt Adam and Eve?

A) A serpent

B) A lion

C) A dragon

D) An eagle

Q.7 What is the ultimate goal of Satan's journey to Eden in Book I?

A) To overthrow Adam as ruler

B) To seize control of the Garden

C) To challenge God's authority

D) To tempt Adam and Eve into sin

Q.8 In Book I, how does Satan enter Eden?

A) Through a secret passage

B) Through the main gates

C) By disguising himself as an angel

D) By scaling the Garden walls

Q.9 What reason does Satan give for choosing to corrupt humans rather than animals?

A) Humans are more gullible

B) Humans are made in God's image

C) Animals are already corrupted

D) Animals are too intelligent

Q.10 At the end of Book I, what is Satan's state of mind as he gazes upon Eden and contemplates his next move?

A) Fearful and remorseful

B) Hopeful and determined

C) Confused and indecisive

D) Proud and triumphant

Answers: 1D, 2A, 3D, 4B, 5B, 6A, 7D, 8B, 9B, 10B

17.9 SUGGESTED READING

- A.W. Verity. Ed. *Milton's Paradise Lost: Books I and II*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Gale, Cengage Learning. *A Study Guide for John Milton's Paradise Lost*. Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2017.
- Loughborough University. "Paradise Lost by John Milton." *Loughborough University*, https://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/english/undergraduate/study-guides/paradise-lost/.

CHARACTER OF SATAN

STRUCTURE

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The character of Satan is one of the greatest creations in any language. The greatness lies not only—indeed, not primarily—in the depiction of the majestic character of Book I, but in the slow and steady degeneration of an angel, who once stood next to God Himself in Heaven. *Paradise Lost* Book I totally revolves around Satan. He exhibits many heroic qualities but they are eclipsed by his ''steadfast hatred'' towards God. Milton, introduces Satan as:

The infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile,
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The Mother of Mankind

He is throughout called names like ''Arch-fiend'' ''Arch Enemy'', ''the Adversary of God and Man,'' ''the Author of all ill''. Milton, throughout Book I, presents the craftiness of Satan as well as his plans to corrupt mankind. He is an embodiment of disobedience to God. The plans of Satan, his fall from Heaven with other rebel angels are the incidents which ''justify the ways of God to man''. His ''dark designs'' ultimately lead to his damnation :

Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he-might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enraged might see
How all his malice served but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy.

Satan's fall can be compared to the fall of Titans who also fell for nine long days, after their defeat by the gods of Olympus:

Nine times the space that measures day and night

To mortal men, he with his horrid crew

Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,

Confounded though immortal.

18.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to introduce you to the Character of Satan as a hero or an anti-hero. The lesson also aims to provoke your thinking to decide whether Satan is a renaissance hero or an anti-hero.

After going through this lesson:

1. Learners will be able to analyze the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, focusing on his qualities, motivations, and actions.
2. Learners will be able to evaluate Satan's role as a tragic hero or anti-hero, considering his defiance, ambition, and flaws.
3. Learners will be able to interpret the complexity of Satan's character through textual evidence, including his speeches and interactions with other characters.

18.3 CHARACTER OF SATAN IN *PARADISE LOST* BOOK-I

Satan, as portrayed by Milton, is a new kind of character in epic poetry. In Medieval and Renaissance literature, the devil is usually presented in a monstrous form. Taboo for example, depicted Satan with blood-shot eyes, blood-dripping jaws etc. Such a devil could only produce a melodramatic effect rather than conveying the theme of sin or temptation. In *Paradise Lost* Satan is representative of evil in human beings. So, sin and temptation are parts of human nature. Contrary to Taboo's devil, Milton's devil shows full range of human characteristics —on one side of ''obdurate pride'' and ''steadfast hate'' whereas on the other side of ''unconquerable will''. Satan is arrogant and stubborn. But beneath this arrogance and adamance lies a tormenting sense of despair. This overwhelms him until at last only the desire for revenge reigns supreme in his nature. Satan is full of malignity but Milton humanizes him. Satan's character has depth. It shows changes of mood – the fluctuations of revengefulness, pride and despair:

Cruel, his eye, but cast

Signs of remorse and passion.

Further:

Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn

Tears, such as Angels weep, burst forth.

Beginning with Satan's physical attributes, we see that Satan, as he emerges from the burning lake towards the shore has a tremendous size. As he moves towards shore, we are still more conscious of physical size. Milton implies Homeric similes to describe Satan's gigantic physique:

Prone on the flood, extended long and large,

Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, what warred on love,
Briaress of Typhoon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created huge that swim the ocean-stream.

In comparing Satan to the sea-beast Leviathan, Milton remembers the quaint old story of sailors mistaking a whale for an island. Apart from the huge dimensions, whale is enigmatic. Satan's deed of tempting Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit equates him to the whale which also led to the destruction of sailors (mistakenly) and here Satan's guile led to destruction of mankind.

By these lofty comparisons of Satan, Milton wants to present before us a picture of Satan's magnificence. To prove this point, he emphasizes two objects he carries. His shield which is compared to the largest round object human eyes had ever seen, the moon seen through Galileo's telescope:

The broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through Tuscian artist views
At evening from the top of fesole.

His spear is so gigantic that the tallest pine tree, used for the mast of a flagship, seems only a wand in comparison:

His spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Admiral.

Satan, in his physical attributes, had still not lost all his glory and original brightness of an angel in heaven for he still may be compared to the sun and the moon. But some of the glory was lost for he was like the sun seen through morning mist, or like the moon in eclipse. The sun through mist, the moon in eclipse, but still the sun and moon. So Satan continues for some time, majestic grand, yet always a little more flawed:

His form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess
Of glory obscured: as when the sun new risen
Look through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse.

In the meantime, we watch degeneration in Satan's moral character parallel to the changes in his physical appearance. The moral degeneration of Satan is suggested by subtle changes in figures of light and darkness.

A predominant aspect of Satan's character, which Milton depicts, is his "obdurate pride and steadfast hate." This is the sole reason for Satan's rebellion against God. This is the most dangerous quality of Satan emphasized by Milton. In classical mythology the belief that "Hubris" (the Greek word for pride) was the sin most frequently punished by the God. According to Christian belief, pride is the most deadly of the Seven Deadly Sins. His desire to continue the war only because of the "sense of injured merit." causes his downfall:

What time his pride

Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host

Of rebel Angels.

Satan's pride is quite evident in one of his speeches when he equates his faculty of reason to God's:

Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme

Above his equal.

Satan basically suffers from megalomania. He admits ambition as the real cause of his initial revolt against God. He is caught in the trap of leadership which later on leads to his damnation and endless pain in the horrible dungeon hell:

A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,

As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames

No light, but rather darkness visible

Served only to discover sights of woe,

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades.

Thus, Satan is a villain who himself is responsible for his doom.

Check Your Progress: Character Analysis of Satan (Match the Description)

1. "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."
2. Leads a rebellion against God, motivated by pride and ambition.
3. Demonstrates persuasive rhetoric to rally the fallen angels.
4. Exhibits moments of doubt and despair about his rebellion.
5. Determined to corrupt humanity, despite knowing the consequences.

Labels:

A. Tragic flaw

B. Charismatic leader

C. Villainous ambition

D. Defiant heroism

E. Inner conflict

Answers: 1D, 2A, 3B, 4E, 5C

18.4 SATAN'S HEROIC QUALITIES

Satan, though a personification of evil, is still dealt by the poet in an exalted manner. But after his tormenting fall, still his intrepidity and firm resolution raise him to the status of hero. Satan is a blend of noble and ignoble, exalted and the mean, the great and low. Satan's firm determination, his courage ''never to submit or yield'' has been admired by critics. William Blake expressed his view most emphatically by saying that Milton was of the Devil's party. In 'Defence of Poetry', Shelley says:

Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost.*

Hazlitt is of the opinion:

"Satan is the most heroic subject that was ever chosen for a poem; and the execution is as perfect as the design is lofty. He was the first of created beings who, for endeavouring to be equal with the highest and to divide the empire of Heaven with the Almighty, was hurled down to Hell. His aim was no less than the throne of the universe. His ambition was the greatest, and his punishment was the greatest; but not so his despair, for his fortitude was as great as his sufferings. His strength of mind was matchless as his strength of body. His power of action and of suffering was equal. He was the greatest power that was ever overthrown, with the strongest will left to resist or to endure. He was baffled, not confounded. He still stood like a tower. The loss of infinite happiness to himself is compensated in thought by the power of inflicting misery on others. If Satan represents malignity, abstract love of evil, then he also stands for abstract love of power or pride of self-will personified. His love of power and contempt for suffering is never once relaxed from the highest pitch of intensity. After such a conflict as his, and such a defeat, to retreat in order to rally, to make terms, to exist at all, is something; but he does more than this— he found a new empire in Hell, and from it conquers this new world, whither he bends his undaunted flight".

Although Milton's apparent purpose was to make Satan the villain, this intention appears to be frequently betrayed. Milton has put his heart and soul into projection of Satan in spite of consciously different purpose. The glowing descriptions of Satan in Book I stand for Satan's magnificence. His huge bulk is compared to Briareos who fought against Uranus and to Typhons who fought against Jove. He is compared to Leviathan. He raises himself above the fiery lake and looks around with "blazing" eyes. His heavy shield is compared to Galileo's telescope which he is still carrying on his back. His spear too is as large as the tallest pine tree. The heat of the Hell with the rising flames of fire forms a vault overhead and causes him pain. But he has immense power of tolerance as he still walks on the "marle" and surveys it:

He walked with, to support uneasy steps
Over the burning marle, not like those steps
On Heaven's azure; and the torrid clime
Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.
Nathless he so endured, till on the beach
Of that inflamed sea he stood, (P.L. Book I, 295-300)

Satan's powers of endurance and his resolution are unquenched by the burning "marle". Satan's firmness is symbolized by his comparison with a Hell:

In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a Tower (P.L. Book I, 590-591)

Further Satan has still not lost the lustre of his bodily form though his brightness is discussed:

His form had yet not lost
All her original brightness; nor appeared
Less than Arch-Angel ruined, and th' excess
Of glory obscured (P.L. Book I, 591-594)

All such descriptions raise Satan to the status of an epic hero, to some extent.

Satan's speeches not only assert his invincible resolution but also inculcate enthusiasm as well as maintain the morale of his uplifted followers. In his first speech, he defies his conqueror and "though in pain" he still does not lose his indomitable courage. He is tormented by the thought of the lost happiness:

Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells ! Hail, horrors, hail.

But this depression is predominated by his "unconquerable will". To Beelzebub, he says:

What though the field be lost ?
All is not lost the un conquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.

The lines are also an expression of Milton's own defiant spirit and indomitable courage in defeat. Although ostensibly, Milton is concerned to show Satan as a personification of evil but such lines are reflective of Milton's own character. Milton defied the kingship of Charles I. Satan did not admit God as Supreme ruler. So in both the cases, there was a rebellion against the supreme authority—Charles I in Milton's case and God in case of Satan. But God's flawlessness could not be compared to the tyranny of Charles. The forging of "War" by Satan can be compared to the Civil War (1642-1649), between the King and the Parliament. The "unconquerable will", "study of revenge", "courage never to submit or yield"—all reflect the spirit of Puritan armies, whom Milton favoured.

Satan is undaunted by God's victory. He retains his "fixed mind" and "high disdain". For this, he finds consolation in Hell. His strong will-power as well as easy adaptability is well reflected in the following lines:

Here at least .....
We shall be free .....
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.

Despite of all the oddities he has faced, Satan is still optimistic about his success. His horrifying fall has not doomed his spirits:

..... for the mind and spirit remains
Invincible, and vigour boon returns,

Though all our glory extinct, and happy state

Here swallowed up in endless misery. [(i) 139-142]

Satan is the true representative of "free-will" of the Calvinistic doctrine which holds that man himself is responsible for his damnations or grace.

Satan revives the lost energy of his fallen angels who are stupefied and are compared to autumn leaves which lie in large numbers in Vallombrosa:

His legions, Angel forms, who lay entranced,

Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks

In Vallambrosa [(i) - 302-304]

This vast multitude is regulated as well as controlled by one great martial hero i.e. Satan, who strongly believes:

A mind not to be changed by place or time,

The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven. [(i) - 253-255]

Such a strong leader's army could only be beaten by the strongest i.e. Almighty. But Satan is determined to avenge Him, so he reassembles his forces. He executes such a tremendous power on the fallen angels that his command, which is mingled with compassion, makes them forget about their sorry plight and they quickly respond to him. After he says, "Awake, arise or be for ever fallen", it has the sudden effect that:

They heard, and were abashed, and up they sprung

Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch

On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,

Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.

Inspite of the agonizing pains the angels obey their commander's voice. Thus, Satan is full of authority and his leadership qualities portrayed by Milton raise him to the status of a military commander whose "voice they soon obeyed/Innumerable."

It is the power of Satan's speeches that Pandemonium is constructed under the leadership of Mammon. The Doric style of architecture, the pillars overladen with a golden beam, gold carved roof, all were constructed with assiduousness. When Satan holds his first meeting in the Pandemonium, the palace is swarmed by the fallen angels who listen to him attentively:

Thick swarmed, both on the ground and in the air,

Brushed with the hiss of rushing wings, As bees

In spring-time, when the sun with Taurus rides,

Pour forth their populous youth above the hive

So thick the aery crowd

Swarmed and were straitened, till the signal given,

Behold a wonder [(i)–768-778]

The lines are quite evident of rebel angels' unshakable faith in Satan which could never be thwarted as their Emperor's word is absolute for them. Though Satan possessed immense leadership qualities but the root of Satan's enterprise was against God and his determination to persist, is the fundamental perversion of his will. This in turn, implies perversion of the intellect.

18.5 SATAN AS A TRAGIC HERO AND AN ANTI-HERO

According to Aristotle "A tragic hero should be a man, neither perfect nor utterly bad; his misfortune should arise from an error or frailty, which however, falls short of moral taint; and he must fall from the height of prosperity and glory". He emphasized on Hamartia i.e. tragic flaw or human error. Also, he said that fall should be of a person who was at the height of glory because it would arouse "pity and fear".

Satan definitely possesses all the heroic qualities but they are marred by his over-ambition, which is to rule—Hamartia or tragic flaw which leads to his downfall. In Heaven, he was loved the most by God, but it is the ambitious desire which tempts him to commit sin. Like Macbeth, who was also loved by Duncan but later on it is his ambition which prompts him to kill Duncan and finally, Macbeth is ruined. Satan, too, becomes a maniac in pursuing his ambition and deceives his Emperor i.e. God and then faces his doom:

..... with ambitious aim

Against the throne and monarchy of God

Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,

With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power

Hurled headlong, flaming from the ethereal sky,

With hideous ruin and combustion down to bottomless perdition

Satan's fall sometimes arouses pity, as when he makes a resolve to assemble his forces but before addressing them, he cries thrice. But relating Satan to a pathetic figure would be wrong as his extreme ego transcends the feeling of pity and inculcates hatred for him. His incapability for repentance and inclination towards evil drives away from him all the virtues. His following speech to Beelzebub justifies the point". Satan says:

The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,

Nor what the potent victor in his rage

Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,

Though changed in outward lustre, that fixed mind,

And high disdain from sense of injured merit.

Milton, like Shakespeare (in his tragedies) portrays Satan as a real tragic figure. Satan thus, is an anti-hero with a unique combination of epic grandeur and falseness. Satan is shown as possessing the virtues and the powers which are necessary for him to play his part as the Arch-fiend. He is shown possessing a towering genius but this genius is devilish. All his virtues are in fact corrupted by his situation and by the uses to which he puts his powers. He can be compared to the Nazi leader, Hitler, who urged the Germans to fight in order to conquer the world. Both are megalomaniacs as well as destroyers of mankind.

To sum up, Satan who is the central character of *Paradise Lost* Book I, is brave, strong, generous, prudent, temperate and self-sacrificing. But there are "dark designs" knitting up in his mind which eclipse all his illustrious qualities. If *Paradise Lost* narrates the fall of man, it narrates too – and no less clearly – the fall of man's tempter. The self-degradation of Satan is complete outward and inward of the form and of the spirit – a change – ever for the worse – of shape and mind and emotion.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here are some important keywords and their synonyms from the sections that you have read:

Degeneration: Decline, decay, deterioration, collapse

Guile: Deception, slyness, cunning, craftiness

Obdurate: Stubborn, unyielding, inflexible, hard-hearted

Megalomania: Arrogance, delusions of grandeur, egotism, self-importance

Entranced: Spellbound, captivated, mesmerized, enchanted

Now, try to find the synonyms of these words:

Perversion, Indomitable, Assiduousness

18.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. The central character of *Paradise Lost* Book I is Satan, not Adam and Eve. Discuss this statement.
2. The speeches of Satan prove him to be a heroic figure. Explain with reference to *Paradise Lost* Book I.
3. Discuss Satan's anti-heroic qualities.

18.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 How is Satan portrayed physically in *Paradise Lost*?

A) As a beautiful angel with radiant wings

B) As a monstrous creature with multiple heads

C) As a serpent with cunning eyes

D) As a fiery figure with a flaming sword

Q.2 What is Satan's initial motivation for rebelling against God in *Paradise Lost*?

A) Jealousy of God's power

B) Desire to rule Heaven

C) Love for humankind

D) Fear of punishment

Q.3 In *Paradise Lost*, Satan is often described as possessing which trait?

A) Humility

B) Courage

C) Selflessness

D) Obedience

Q.4 Satan's journey from Heaven to Hell represents his descent from:

A) Power to powerlessness

B) Goodness to evil

C) Heaven to Earth

D) Ignorance to knowledge

Q.5 What motivates Satan's decision to corrupt Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*?

A) A desire for revenge against God

B) A wish to save humanity from damnation

C) The temptation of forbidden knowledge

D) Jealousy of their happiness

Q.6 How does Satan use rhetoric to persuade his fellow fallen angels in Hell?

A) He uses logical arguments to prove his point

B) He employs flattery and manipulation

C) He threatens them with violence

D) He remains silent and lets his actions speak

Q.7 What emotion does Satan experience upon seeing Adam and Eve's happiness in Eden?

A) Compassion

B) Remorse

C) Anger

D) Envy

Q.8 Satan's character in *Paradise Lost* is marked by his:

A) Unwavering loyalty to God

B) Empathy for humankind

C) Reluctance to sin

D) Defiance and pride

Q.9 What is Satan's view on free will in *Paradise Lost*?

A) He believes that God's will is absolute and inescapable

B) He believes that free will is an illusion

C) He advocates for the preservation of free will

D) He believes that free will should be eliminated

Q.10 Satan's character development in *Paradise Lost* can be described as a journey from:

A) Humility to arrogance

B) Despair to hope

C) Goodness to virtue

D) Light to darkness

Answers: 1B, 2A, 3B, 4B, 5D, 6A, 7D, 8D, 9B, 10D

18.8 LET US SUM UP

In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Satan is portrayed as a complex and multifaceted character. He begins as a proud and powerful angel who rebels against God due to his jealousy and desire for power. His defiance and charismatic rhetoric rally his fellow fallen angels, leading them to Hell. Throughout the epic, Satan's character evolves from a heroic figure to a tragic antihero, driven by his relentless ambition, determination, and a deep-seated resentment towards both God and humanity. His cunning and manipulative nature make him a central figure in the epic's exploration of sin, temptation, and the complexities of moral choice.

18.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Rütters, B.A. Maximilian. *Satan as the Hero in John Milton's "Paradise Lost"*. GRIN Verlag, 2017.
- Leenen, Sarah. *John Milton's "Paradise Lost". Can the Literary Satan be Considered a Classic Hero?* GRIN Verlag, 2015. ebook.
- The Literature Channel. *Satan: Is He the Hero of Milton's Paradise Lost?* YouTube, 2 Aug. 2025, https://youtu.be/VmrDmz_0IoQ.

PARADISE LOST- SATAN'S SPEECHES

STRUCTURE

19.1 INTRODUCTION

"The first book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject, Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of paradise wherein he was placed. Then touches the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the serpent; who revolting against God, and drawing to his side many legions of angels, was by the command of God driven out of Heaven with all his crew into the great Deep. Which action past over the poem hastens into the midst of things, presenting Satan and his angels now fallen into Hell, described here as not in the Centre but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos. Here Satan with his fellow angels lying on the burning Lake, 'thunder-stuck and astonisht', after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him; they confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his Legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded. They rise, their numbers,, array of battle, their chief leaders named according to the Idols known afterwards in Canaan (Palestine) and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining Heaven, but tells them lastly of a new world and new kind of Creature to be created, according to the ancient prophecy or report in Heaven; for that angels were long before this visible Creation, was the opinion of many ancient Fathers. To find out the truth of this Prophesy, and what to determine thereon he refers to a full Council. What his associates thence attempt, Pandemonium the Palace of Satan rises, suddenly built out of the Deep; The Infernal Peers there sit in council."*(Paradise Lost*- ed. by VrindaNabar and Nissim Ezekiel).

As is characteristic of the classical epic tradition Milton invokes the aid of his patron Muse, Urania. Book I of *Paradise Lost* begins with a prologue in which Milton performs the traditional task of invoking the classical Muse Urania but also refers to her as the 'Heavenly Muse' implying the Christian nature of his work. He explains that the poem would deal with Man's first disobedience when he ate the fruit of the Forbidden Tree which resulted in sin, suffering and death in the world and the loss of Paradise, till Christ was born to redeem mankind and regain for him his 'Blissful seat'.

Milton supplicates the Muse who had inspired the shepherd Moses on mount Horeb and Mount Sinai to help him in his epic work. It was Moses who, inspired by the Muse (the Trinity in Christian Mythology) first gave the words of God to the 'Chosen People' of Israel. He told them how Heaven and Earth rose out of 'Chaos' (The Heavens refer to the sky of the Universe with its stars and planets not the Empyreal Heaven where God dwells). Milton appeals to the Muse to help him in his enterprise on which he has so boldly embarked with a spirit of adventure and with her aid his poem would attempt to reach the zenith of poetic inspiration. Milton presupposes that his poem will be greater than the poems of the classical poets because the Muse he has invoked is superior to the classical Muses. He asks her to remove the darkness of his ignorance and illumine him and to raise to sublimity what is base in him so with divine assistance he could establish 'Eternal Providence' and 'Justify the ways of God to men'.(Alexander Pope-*Essay on Man*- has similar lines-15-16

'Laugh where we must, be candid where we can,

But vindicate the ways of God to man'.)

Milton says that nothing in heaven or hell is hidden from the knowledge of 'The Holy Spirit'. He then questions as to who instigated the parents of mankind who lived happily in a state of innocence in Paradise, to violate the command of god and eat the 'Forbidden Fruit'. It was the wicked Devil who filled with jealousy and revenge beguiled Eve to violate the canon of God which was not to eat the fruit of the 'Forbidden Tree.'

Lucifer with a host of rebel angels had waged war against the Almighty hoping to rise above him in glory and trusting that if he rebelled he would become equal to the highest power in Heaven –God. But the attempt was in vain for god vanquished him and threw him headlong from Heaven onto Hell full of fire and ruin to live in admantine chains in the conflagration of purgatory.

The fall of the angels from Heaven to hell lasted for nine days and Satan and his rebellious crew lay defeated on the lake of fire, immortal but eternally damned. The thought of the celestial happiness which he had lost and eternal pain now as his punishment, tortured him and he threw his eyes, full of hatred and sorrow, and all he could see was suffering and misery all around. It was a horrible dungeon- a great burning furnace whose flames only served to highlight the darkness of hell. It was a region of despair and desolation because of 'doleful shades' because the rebel angels would find no rest and peace now and the gift of hope and salvation granted to all creatures was now denied to the fallen angels. This place, fed with a constant deluge of sulphurous fire which remained unconsumed and to such a place had the Almighty banished them- a place of utter darkness truly called 'chaos'-far removed from God who is light. Here Satan soon saw his fellow rebel angels overwhelmed by the storms of the 'Tempestuous Fire', rolling to and fro helplessly and by his side he espied Beelzebub (Lord of the flies –the Sun God of the Philistines) who was next to him in power, (Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* accepts him as a Prince

of the first rank of bad spirits who were those false gods of the Gentiles and he is given the same importance in demonology as in *Dr. Faustus*.)

19.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Analyze the rhetorical and poetic techniques used in Satan's speeches in *Paradise Lost.*
2. Examine how Satan's speeches reveal his character traits, motivations, and inner conflicts.
3. Evaluate the themes of pride, ambition, and rebellion as conveyed through Satan's dialogue.

After reading this lesson:

1. Learners will be able to identify and interpret the rhetorical devices and persuasive strategies used in Satan's speeches.
2. Learners will be able to explain how Satan's speeches contribute to his characterization as a tragic or anti-heroic figure.
3. Learners will be able to connect Satan's speeches to the broader themes of *Paradise Lost*, such as free will and defiance.

19.3 SPEECH 1

And to him the Arch Enemy 'Satan' (Satan's name being given for the first time, Milton explains that it means in Hebrew, 'Enemy'. It is mentioned in Book v. 658-9 that his former name is heard no more in Heaven, for Satan's other name is Lucifer) in bold words said how utterly his confederate had been changed for the worse; he who had outshone innumerable other heavenly beings bright though they had been. And just as they were once united by mutual association in all sorts of glorious hopes and ambitions they were now together in their sufferings and ruin. God with his omnipotence and thunder had hurled them onto this bottomless 'pit' from Heaven and till then he said, he was not aware of God's dangerous and powerful strength but pointed out that he did not know the extent of God's power, previously unknown because it had not been challenged. But Satan is not to be cowed down nor would he repent. (So had Prometheus, though defeated had, declared that his spirit would never yield to the thunder and lightning of Zeus-Aeschylus- *Prometheus Bound*). Despite the change they had outwardly undergone Satan stressed the unchanged nature of his attitude to God. His disdain and contempt for god which he said had sprung from a feeling of 'Injured merit' because he had not been accorded the treatment that he merited and this compelled him to rebel against God wherein he was joined by other numerous angels who disliked God's rule and preferred Satan and then he challenged 'His utmost power' and fought a battle whose outcome had been doubtful from the beginning. But Satan said that it was only the battlefield that they had lost. 'All is not lost' because his indomitable will would never submit freely to god's authority. From now on his thoughts would dwell only on revenge and with immortal hate burning in him he would have the temerity never to surrender to God. That glory of the unconquerable will could never be taken away from him either by God's wrath or might. It would indeed be stooping down low if he submitted to God with bent knees asking for his grace and mercy; no he would not 'deifie' God's power, who Satan claimed had been so frightened of the rebellion that he fell into doubting the security of his own kingdom. Genuflecting and supplicating to such a God would be an ignominy worse than their fall from Heaven. Satan asserted

that Fate has given the angels the same unchanging strength as to God and made them of the same spiritual (Empyreal) substance that could never die. Thus they did not owe their existence to God and the fiery element of which they were made could not perish and now because they had experience of battle, the fallen angels could optimistically continue their war against God in which force or cunning would be used and it would be eternal and 'irreconciliable' because the angels would never reconcile themselves to their 'Supreme Enemy's' will. Satan believes that god reigns through force and not by right.Thus Satan 'the apostate angel' who had abandoned his religious faith and vows, boasted loudly inspite of being racked with pain and profound despair.

Critical Comments

Satan's speech reveals pure Miltonic lyricism, the opening speech is a magnificent set piece. It reveals the character of Satan- a defiant rebel and a great leader. Satan first takes pity on his friend. He then refers to their friendship of the perilous enterprise in Heaven and their present misery. He is ashamed to admit the might of God but he will not allow it to cow him down. He has nothing but contempt for God who never gauged his worth. It is a sense of injured merit that makes him rebel against God. As for losing the war it is not for want of merit on their part but God's new and secret weapon the "Thunder'.

A single victory does not permanently ensure God's victory. They may have lost the field, but that does not mean that they have lost everything.

"What though the field be lost?

All is not lost- the unconquerable will….."

God has not conquered the heavenly qualities in them. Defeat is complete only when the spirit and the will too are subjugated. To bow down before God is worse than defeat. So he determines to wage eternal war through guile or force.

Beelzebub addressed Satan as 'Prince' and an angel who was the 'Chief' of angels and in the hierarchy was one who led the seraphs, under his dreadful courage and command to challenge God. But Beelzebub, while he acknowledged Satan's trial of God's might, bewailed the loss of heaven; their 'foul defeat' and the punishment the fallen angels were suffering. Though this calamitous suffering would never be alleviated by 'Death' because their heavenly essence would never perish. (Beelzebub differs significantly from Satan about his opinion of God's might – defeat has persuaded him that God is omnipotent and immovable and he questions Satan's faith in their recovered powers and spirit, since they may have been left to them only to serve God's purpose. Beelzebub is thus made clearly subordinate to Satan in hauteur and ill-will, though he is constantly Satan's lieutenant).

19.4 SPEECH 2

Immediately Satan rebuked Beelezebub. Addressing him as 'fallen Cherube' he said that to be weak was pathetic indeed and in itself would be a source of misery. What was of import was whether they were doing something about it or just suffering it passively. Their task from now on would be never to do anything good but always try to pervert to evil whatever good God did. If they were to act it certainly would not be to good ends, even if God wished it were so. They must devote themselves to producing evil however much would God seek to provide good. So their pleasure henceforth would be in doing evil since that would be opposed to God's will. He hoped that they would be successful in their endeavours and would bring grief to God and disconcert his closest advisors.

He then saw that God had called back his good angels who had fought on god's side to drive away the rebellious ones. The storm of sulphurous fire directed at the fallen angels had put to rest the ocean of fire that had received the angels when they fell from the precipice of Heaven and the raging 'Thunder' accompanied by fiery lightning had now subsided to rage through the 'boundless Deep'. Satan suggested that they should not let that opportunity slip through their fingers. Pointing to the desolate plain Satan told Beelzebub that it was a 'seat of desolation' devoid of any light except for the faint light arising from the burning flames. Satan then told him that they should leave the lake of fire and remove themselves to those plains far off to rest, if they could seek any rest now and reassemble their defeated forces and have a council about how they could offend their enemy and compensate for their loss; how they could overcome their disastrous situation; what could they achieve from hope and if they despaired what would their further action be.

Critical Comments

With his second speech Satan tries to sweep off all doubts from Beelzebub's mind. "To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering…." If God attempts to turn evil into good it would be the sacred duty of the fallen angels to turn all good to evil. God has now withdrawn his forces and this would be an opportunity for them to assemble their forces again and discuss the strategy to offend God and best repair their loss.

Satan's audacity and superb self-confidence are highlighted in these words. He seizes the moment to mobilize his forces once again and infuse fresh courage in them so they could realize their purpose of humiliating God.

Thus Satan tried to convince Beelzebub and ally his fears, and with his head raised above the flames and his eyes blazing with anger and hatred he saw all the other rebel angels of his army who lay floating on the sulphurous lake. Amongst them were angels of such colossal size as to resemble the Titans, Formidable gods in Greek mythology- Children of Uranus and Gaia i.e. (Heaven and Earth) or the Earth born Giants who had waged wars with Zeus or Jove (Jupiter).They were gigantic and monstrous like Briareos or Typhoon (Greek god of whirlwinds, born of the union of Earth and Tartarus) who inhabited the Cilician den. Satan like the Leviathan, the monster whale, the hugest creature created by God, lay chained on the burning lake. (Leviathan is often mistaken as an island by boats men, who anchor their boats on his scaly hide and imagine themselves secure, only to be deceived; Eve is similarly deceived by Satan's flattery and puts her trust in him only to commit the first sin). He and the other angels are free now only because of God's will who has left Satan to his own cunning and evil designs so with repeated crimes he may bring damnation onto himself through evil to other; but god has other designs- this malice of Satan will serve to bring forth only goodness' mercy and grace in the world. This theme is dramatically developed by Milton in Books IX and X of the poem; "God eventually converts every evil deed into an instrument of good contrary to the expectations of sinners, and overcomes evil with good". Satan would seduce man and tempt him to evil but in the process would bring upon himself unfathomable confusion through anger and a feeling of revenge.

Thus Satan rose, giant –like from the lake of fire whose soil was like the scorched and smoking floor of the volcano Etna after the eruption. (This eruption is preceded by an earthquake which, in accordance with the science of Milton's time, was caused by pent up winds underground, seeking an

outlet. The heat sublimed the solid matter of Etna into vapour and it is enveloped with an unpleasant smell; such is also hell). From here Satan flew followed by Beelzebub, both relieved at having escaped that Stygian flood, the fiery gulf that had received them when they fell from Heaven. (Styx is the main river of Hades, the underworld). Satan then wonders that was it for that hell, that scorching soil and clime that they had got in exchange for Heaven; that sorrowful darkness in place of "Celestial light". He then accepts it since God had determined it that way, that God whose supremacy according to Satan, rested on sheer force and not natural right. That God who according to reason is their equal but whom force has made superior. He then bids farewell to the "happy fields" of Heaven where joy forever dwells and welcomes the horrors of the "Infernal world", whose king is now Satan himself. (It is for lordship and possession that he had rebelled; now he is the lord of Hell).

19.5 SPEECH 3

But he is not to be swayed by his changed circumstances because the mind, says he, is not affected by any change in circumstances and it is the mind (the thought) that can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. The assertion is that the mind is so powerful that it can triumph over adversity and prove itself above the misfortunes, however wretched and it is therefore in the power of every individual to be happy or sad as he chooses. It did not matter where he was so long as he did not change and as far as what Satan knew of himself, he was not less than God in any way. God had become stronger because he had power but at least in hell they would not be slaves to God and the envious God would not be able to drive them away from what was now their domain. Satan maintains that God had driven them out of Heaven for sheer envy. He further asserts that the ambition they showed in heaven has proved worthwhile for they are rulers now even if of Hell. He asserts that it is better to rule in Hell than serve as slaves in Heaven. (Satan founded his rebellion on envy of God's sovereignty and interprets all desire for power as an outcome of similar envy). He then looks for and espies his fellow rebel angels, the associates and co-partners of his loss who had lain for nineteen days 'confounded' and entranced on that lake of sulphur, oblivious to everything, and decides to ask them not to continue being his associates in that unhappy 'abode' and if they would still be with him then once more with 'rallied arms' they should try to defeat the Omnipotent and regain their lost power in Heaven. Even if they lost the battle they had nothing more to lose now.

Critical Comments

After winning over Beelzebub and putting new courage in him, Satan asks him whether they are forced to exchange 'this mournful gloom for celestial light.' Now that they have become avowed enemies of God, the farther they are from him the better. So he welcomes the dismal horrors of the infernal world. For him Hell is as good a place as Heaven, for his mind remains unchanged.

The mind is its own place, and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

At least in Hell they are free from bondage and servitude. 'Farthest from him is best' is a statement of heroic defiance and of moral alienation. Once again the appeal is to the law of nature and God's supremacy is attributed to force and not reason.

The line 'Receive thy new Possessor' is characteristic of the Satanic mind and its desire for over lordship.

Satan's speech is full of ringing phrases expressed with a deliberate sonority. The brief elegiac note gives way to rhetorical assertions of self-confidence.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks, Satan's Speeches

1. In his first speech, Satan declares, "Better to reign in _____ than serve in Heaven."
2. Satan's speeches often reflect his excessive _____, which drives his rebellion against God.
3. In Book 1, Satan uses rhetoric to rally the fallen angels, addressing them as "_____ of Heaven."
4. Satan's inner conflict is evident when he admits, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a _____ of Heaven."
5. Satan uses persuasive language to justify his actions, portraying himself as a symbol of _____.

Answers: Hell, Pride, Spirits, Hell, Defiance

Beelzebub repeats Satan's suggestion advising him to call to the other angels, who would be revived by the sound of their leader's voice, that voice which had given them hope in the worst of perils, although they now lay 'grovelling' and 'prostrate' in misery on the lake of fire. While he spoke the 'Superior Fiend' moved to the edge of the lake, his heavy shield tempered out of heavenly metal hung on his shoulders, like the orb of the Moon as Galileo had witnessed through a telescope from the elevation of 'Fesole' in Florence. His spear was like a colossal pine hewn out of the forests of Norway.

19.6 SPEECH 4

Even when the hot clime of Hell smote Satan and he walked on feet that had once tread light and painless he comes to the edge of the burning lake and calls to his legions who were lying inert on the surface of the lake like autumn leaves on a brook. Satan calls out to them loudly addressing them as "Princes, Potentate, Warriors, the Flowers of Heaven, Heaven is lost to us but it would be so if only if you let this state of dazed astonishment persist in you; you are spirits and therefore, eternal." A note of sarcasm creeps in his voice when he asks them if they had chosen that place to rest and repose after the battle where they had shown their courage and enterprise and if they were finding it good to slumber there as they had done in Heaven. He further asks them if they had chosen to lie prostrate on that lake in abject misery as a way of adoring their 'Conqueror' by submitting themselves to his will thus. He addresses the 'Cherubs' and 'Seraphs' wallowing in the flood with their arms and banners scattered here and there and tells them that their pursuers, the good angels, will see them in that pathetic state and will come down to trample upon them or with their thunderbolts would chain them to the bottom of the lake.

Satan's call to his defeated army mingles promise, mockery and menace. Heaven may not be yet lost if they will only rise from their prostration. But they are perhaps deliberately wallowing there, either to enjoy a rest, or to show their utter surrender. In any case the enemy may take further advantage of them if they do not rally. The resounding last line sums up the attempt to move them by a mixture of hope, shame and fear.

19.7 SPEECH 5

Listening to their 'General's' resounding voice the devils, ashamed now, spring upon their wings and assemble around Satan like a swarm of locusts. (In order to force Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt, Moses called down the seven plagues one of which was the plague of locusts). The chief devils are:

Moloch- the Sun –god in his destructive aspect, usually worshipped with human sacrifices.

Chamos – in reality the same as Moloch, but worshipped by the Moabites and associated with orgiastic demon worship and idolatory.

Astarte or Astoreth – she was represented in the Phoenician religion by the planet Venus and was a female equivalent of Chamos.

Thammuz –a Phoenician fertility God, killed by a boar but revives every year; associated with rebirth of vegetation.

Dagon –worshipped by the Philistines; he was the God of agriculture.

Rimmon –a Syrian deity; his chief temple was in Damascus.

Osiris- the chief God of the Egyptians whose symbol was the sacred bull.

Belial – not the name of any God but associated with evil and worthlessness; the Puritans used the word to suggest a type of dissolute, deceitful and lustful god.

All these and the other angels came with depressed and dispirited looks but when they saw their chief not in despair, they were happy because they still believed that in their defeat they had not actually lost everything. Satan's face did have a shadow of doubt but he recovered his usual pride and with haughty words full of bravado but no substance raised their courage and dispelled their fears. At his command they sounded the trumpets of war while Azozel, a tall cherub, now a fallen angel, raised high the flag that bore the 'Imperial Ensign' which blazed like a brilliant meteor while the other rebel angels trumpeted the call of war which so resounded from the vaulted dome of Hell that it frightened Chaos, ruler of night, herself. Then the rebel angels fell into formation and raised their spears and shields, waiting for their 'Mighty' chief to give his word of command. Satan's eyes traversed across his legions and looking at their God-like stature his pride swelled up for never since Man was created had he witnessed such an assemblage. Compared to them any other force would be as ineffectual as an army of pygmies. He towered above them, formidable and proud, one who had not lost his original lustre but appeared like the sun, formerly dazzling, but now dimmed a little because of eclipse i.e. the fall. His face had been scarred by God's weapon –the thunderbolt, his wan cheek had a worried look but beneath his fortitude and haughtier lay a burning hunger for revenge. His cruel eyes had traces of remorse for the misery he had brought upon other angels thrown from Heaven's 'Eternal Splendour' and condemned now to eternal pain. As he was about to speak the angels all folded their wings and gathered around him, all attentive to what he would say. Thrice Satan tried to speak and thrice in spite of his efforts to mock 'Tears such as angels weep' burst forth from him and he spoke haltingly his words interspersed with sighs. Addressing them as myriads of immortal spirits whose might was unparalleled, he claimed that none save The Almighty could have matched their strength. Even with all his knowledge of past and present how could he has foreseen that God would defeat such powerful forces as were under his command. He claimed that it was hard to believe that the fallen angels whose exile had emptied Heaven would not re-ascend Heaven and regain their rightful position. They would through their own efforts rise and repossess Heaven. He told them that they were well aware that their defeat was not due to failure on his part to face danger or to the advice of his fellow angels. Satan

then accused God for their defeat because God who securely sat on the throne of Heaven, whether by consent or custom and held his position by the ready submission of the angels, had cunningly hidden his full power and this had led the angels to be deceived and to rebel. Now that they knew the full extent of God's strength as well as their own, they would neither provoke war nor fear God if he provoked war. Now he would use his intelligence to achieve his designs either by deception or cunning what he could not achieve through his forces. And God too might discover by their example that his victory had been only a partial victory. And he asserted that they had suffered a physical defeat not a spiritual one.

Satan then mentioned a rumour heard in Heaven, of a creation of a new world by God wherein he would plant humanity-as favoured of God as the angels. Towards that new world would be targeted their first action, even if it were just prying around. Either there or else-where because Hell would not be able to hold the 'Celestial Spirits' in bondage for long nor would the adumbrated chaos be able to hold them. But these thoughts must first be deliberated upon. They can have no hopes of truce now since submission to God was impossible. Satan finished by insisting that war of some kind, overt or covert and nothing but war must be 'resolved'.

As he concluded his speech, the rebel angels affirmed their loyalty by brandishing their millions of flaming swords whose sudden blaze illuminated hell far and wide. They railed and ranted against the Almighty and smiting their shields with their swords sounded the bugle-'noise' of war 'hurling defiance' at Heaven.

Critical Comments

Satan choked with emotions and tears addresses his fellow angels and is proud to have so many comrades in arms whose sheer number would be difficult to vanquish. They are all puissant and still there is every hope of regaining heaven. God has conquered them by use of hidden force but hell cannot contain so many valiant spirits for long. Peace is despaired and therefore the only course open to them is war. Satan invites them all to the great council.

Following the invocation, Milton continues in the epic style by beginning in 'medias res', in the middle of things. Satan has been thrown from Heaven and is lying in the pit of Hell. But he has not lost his angelic aura that was his in Heaven. In the first two books Satan comes across as a defiant hero but as the epic progresses his character, actions and appearance deteriorate. Probably the most famous quote about *Paradise Lost* is William Blake's statement that Milton was 'of the Devil's party without knowing it'. However, the progression, or more precisely, the regression, of Satan's character from Book I to Book X gives a much different and much clearer picture of Milton's attitude towards Satan.

Writers and critics of the Romantic era advanced the notion that Satan was a Promethean hero, pitting himself against an unjust God. Most of these writers based their ideas on the first two books of *Paradise Lost*. Throughout his speeches in these books Satan appears heroic and defiant. Satan also appears heroic because the first two books focus on Hell and the fallen angels and Milton makes the character of Satan understandable and unforgettable. He is magnificent, even admirable, in Books I and II but by Book IV he is changed. Away from his followers and allowed some introspection, Satan reveals a more conflicted character. In the end Satan calls to mind Macbeth of Shakespeare. Both characters are magnificent creations of ambition and evil. Both are heroic after a fashion but both are doomed.

19.8 CRITICAL COMMENTS

The first two Books of *Paradise Lost* are among the greatest things in English poetry. The practice of setting them for study, detached from the rest of the poem, can be defended against the obvious

objections it must rouse. Their concentrated magnificence is as good an introduction to Milton's genius as it is to his epic. Considered only as an arresting opening to a long and massive work, this burst of fiery energy is unsurpassed: Satan and Hell are launched like a meteor, whose flaming speed will draw after it the wider and more varied visions of Heaven, Earth, and Paradise. The richness of poetic texture is also immediately striking; Milton seeks to 'load every rift with ore' more openly than in later Books. Thus he establishes once for all the epic grandeur he will be able to sustain less ostentatiously, once established.

The intellectual statement of *Paradise Lost* as a whole is quite clear: that true happiness lies in salvation through Christ. And the application of this scheme of judgment to Satan is equally clear, particularly as the poem progresses: he is seen sinking lower in the moral scale, until his final success coincides with his final degradation, and he is transformed into a serpent.

The Fall is an act of disobedience, and the action of the poem is therefore about who is to obey or disobey. Milton makes obedience a symbol of faith, of the state of inward truth from which the epic sets out, and toward which it soars and marches. Eve disobeys God in order to obey the Serpent and her own appetites. Adam disobeys God for his own reason, when he obeys Eve and “the Link of Nature”. It is therefore a magnificent arrangement to open the poem with the character who originated all disobedience, who first invented the great revolt. Satan is disobedience personified, conscious and active. He appears first at the lowest point of his fortunes, as at the lowest point of Milton's Cosmos. From this point he rallies and begins to rise. As he reveals his greatness and the full splendour of his evil will, we see pass before us the forces of destruction and decay which are to assail mankind, and try to drag him down into their realm of living death.

Hell is ‘a Universe of death’. The fallen angels in their torments, their passion and resolutions, their policies and pastimes, represent a life cut off from the source of life, that is, God; they can neither possess nor understand the other life, which is true life, and their only purpose is to destroy it as far as they can, to extent the universe of death. The monstrous spectres of Sin and Death, guarding the gates of Hell, are other embodiments of the life-in-death which will be let loose on Earth when Man has fallen. But Hell is also ultimately, a state of mind, represented, in historical terms, by a great pageant of false religions and false civilizations. Some of these false ideals may allure or impress, as indeed they have held sway over mankind through his history. So we see pass before us the military discipline of Satan's legions, with all the moving associations of Greek and Roman warfare (but also with the darker suggestions of Oriental empires): their delight in epic games; their search for consolation in heroic poetry, or in the hollow pride of rational philosophy. All this is the concentrated picture of a pagan heritage, half noble, half corrupt, like the gorgeous architecture of Pandemonium, the pomp of Satan's kingship, and the solemn statecraft of the Infernal Council. And it is all a projection of Satan's defiant assertion:

“The mind is its own place, and in it self

Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.’

Where else than in Hell and the character of Satan could Milton find a place for the delight in evil, the intoxication of spirit, the exultation in cruelty and crime, which is profoundly written into human experience? It is chiefly in Book I and II that Milton makes us live through the experience of active evil, evil in its tragic splendour. The mingling of beauty and horror, and the glorying in evil are concentrated in the figure of Satan where Milton presents an entirely new conception of the Evil One in the Bible, the Devil of medieval belief and classical matter for Christian ends. Satan is conceived as one of Homer’s

warriors, an epic hero (we must not forget that Homer's heroes could be cruel and vindictive, wrong-headed and wantonly selfish, as well as, in some cases patterns of generosity and simply valour). Nobody, even in the renaissance had thought of treating the character of Satan with such bold imaginative sympathy. The rebel angel now becomes capable of evoking those ancient heroes, or Titans who fought hopelessly against the Gods or the decrees of Fate. He can recall their greatness of spirit, their resolution in despair, as well as the wicked ambitions of Greek and Roman tyrants. Milton created a more splendid image of revolt than any other poet. Satanism is the creed and cult of the rebel, the denier, the wilful sinner. Satan is the eternal enemy of God and man. Far from being a flaw in Milton's vision of a divinely ordained universe, Satan owes his greatness to that setting, within which the poet has been able to raise him to an all-but-divine stature. He testifies, not to the weakness of Milton's convictions, but to their strength; the framework had to be stout, that could contain such a disruptive power.

19.9 GLOSSARY

1. Legions of Angels: - a large number who joined Lucifer's revolt.
2. Of Man's First Disobedience: i.e. the Original Sin of Adam and Eve, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in Eden.
3. whose mortal….World: The fruit was fatal because Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden for tasting it, and were subject to mortality as well as the evils of the human condition.
4. till one greater…seat: the Christian theme of the soul's Redemption.
5. That Shepherd: Moses was a shepherd when he first went to Mount Horeb.
6. What in me is dark…support: The appeal to the Muse, now identified with the Holy Spirit, links the process of poetic creation with the original Creation.
7. baleful: full of sorrow.
8. obdurate: obstinate.
9. didst outshine…bright: Before the fall, Beelzebub outshone innumerable other heavenly creatures, bright though they were.
10. into what pit….Thunder: a remark qualifying "ruin". Satan refers to Hell as the "pit" into which they fell from Heaven as a result of God's superior strength.
11. luster: shining.
12. disdain: great contempt from: springing from: arising out of sense of injur'd merit: the feeling that one has not been treated according to one's merit.
13. study: pursuit of.
14. That Glory: the glory of the unconquerable will, the courage never to submit.
15. since by Fate …Tyranny of Heav'n: Satan's argument is that, being both imperishable and more experienced because of the earlier battle, the fallen angles can optimistically continue their struggle against God.
16. Empyreal: heavenly.
17. this great event: the battle in Heaven.

18. guile: cunning.

19. th' Apostate Angel: the Angel who had abandoned his religious faith and vows.

20. Doing or Suffering: whether one is doing something about it, or merely suffering it passively.

21. As being…resist: Satan says that their pleasure henceforth should lie in doing evil, since that would be opposed to God's will.

22. if I fail not: if I am not wrong (not mistaken).

23. inmost counsels: closest advisers.

24. His Ministers of vengeance and pursuit: the good angles who had fought on God's side and driven away the rebellious ones.

25. fiery Surge: the ocean of fire.

26. shafts: arrows.

27. repair: make up for.

28. Clime: climate.

29. Whom….equals: the old Satanic argument that God's supremacy rests on force, not on natural right.

30. Possessor: owner, Satan's greed for lordship and possession had made him revolt in Heaven.

31. The mind…Heav'n: Satan's mind, in effect, has made his own Hell since it contains the envy and hate with which he has to live.

32. What matter where: What does it matter where I am?

33. th' Almighty …hence: Satan maintains that God has driven them out through envy.

34. To reign….Hell: Satan says that the ambition they showed in Heaven has proved worthwhile for they may reign now, even though it be in Hell. Satan's use of the word "ambition" suggests that the word may imply some sacrifice.

35. Mansion: abode.

36. pernicious highth: a height great enough to threaten damage or destruction.

37. now lost… Spirits: Heaven is lost to us only if this state of astonishment persists in you, who are spirits and, therefore, eternal.

38. virtue: courage and enterprise.

39. Cherube and Seraph: heavenly orders of the angels.

40. Ensigns: banners.

41. puissant: powerful.

42. But he…fall: Satan accuses God of cunningly hiding His full power and later using it to defeat them.

43. Henceforth …provok'tie. Now we know God's strength, as well as ours and will neither provoke war nor fear Him if it is provoked.

44. our better part: our intelligence.

45. To work: to achieve.

46. What force effected not: what our force could not achieve.

47. A generation: species, i.e. humanity.

48. Sons of Heaven: the angles.

49. Thither: towards that new world.

50. eruption: action.

19.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. The Muse that Milton invokes is_____.

2. Who is next in power to Satan?

   a) Moloch b) Mulciber

   c) Beelezebub d) Azozel

3. The term 'Glorious enterprise' in Satan I speech means_____.

4. Complete the lines:

   'What though the field be lost?

   All is not lost,_____

5. The term 'Empyreal' in the line 'And this Empyreal' substance cannot fail means_____.

6. The 'Sulfurous hail' in Satan's II speech refers to _____.

7. What have Satan and the rebel angels changed for 'that celestial light' in Satan's III speech?

8. By what names does Satan refer to the rebel angels in speech IV?

9. In the words of Satan god uses_____ 'To transfix us to the bottom of this Gulfe.' (Speech IV).

19.11 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1 Highlight the resolution in the last lines of Satan's V speech.

2. What is Milton's appeal to the Muse?

3. Why did god hurl Satan and his legions onto Hell?

4. Explain the lines with reference to the context:

   "What though the field be lost?

   All is not lost……".

5. Why is Satan hopeful of success in the next war with God?

6. How does Satan rebuke Beelzebub?

7. How does Satan reprimand the rebel angels when he sees them wallowing on the burning Lake?

8. What does Satan mean when he says 'The mind is its own place'?

9. What is the rumour that Satan refers to in his Vth speech?

19.12 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. How does Satan encourage the other angels and give them hope?

2. Does Satan come across as a heroic character in Book I and II? If yes, how?

19.13 SUGGESTED READING

- Kean, Margaret. *John Milton's Paradise Lost: A Sourcebook*. Routledge, 2005.
- Edwards, Mike. *John Milton: Paradise Lost*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013. ebook.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost: Book/ 9*. The John Milton Reading Room, edited by Thomas H. Luxon, Dartmouth College, https://milton.host.dartmouth.edu/reading_room/pl/book_9/text.shtml.

EARLY LIFE OF JOHN DONNE AND METAPHYSICAL POETRY

STRUCTURE

20.1 INTRODUCTION

Metaphysical poetry, a genre that flourished in the early 17th century, is characterized by its intellectual rigor, intricate metaphors, and exploration of complex philosophical themes. Poets like John Donne, George Herbert, and Andrew Marvell are key figures in this movement. Their works often delve into topics such as love, religion, and mortality, employing wit, paradox, and a conversational tone to provoke thought and challenge conventional perspectives.

20.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of the lesson is to acquaint the learner with the early life of John Donne and to introduce the concept of Metaphysical Poetry and the use of metaphysical conceits. The style of Donne's writing is the main focus of the lesson.

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to summarize John Donne's early life and its influence on his development as a metaphysical poet.
2. Learners will be able to identify the key features of metaphysical poetry, including the use of conceit and intellectual depth.
3. Learners will be able to analyze Donne's poetic style, focusing on his use of paradox, vivid imagery, and unconventional themes.

20.3 JOHN DONNE'S EARLY LIFE

John Donne was born at London in 1572 and died there in 1631. His father was a prosperous London merchant. On his mother's side, he was connected with Sir Thomas More and John Heywood. He

was brought up as a Roman Catholic for which religion his family suffered heavily. As a Catholic, Donne could not take a degree though he spent three years at Oxford (1584-87) and three at Cambridge (1587-90). To get a University degree, students in those days had to take an oath of allegiance to the Anglican Church. In the early 1590's he was a student at the Inns of Court in London, which was more a University than a law school. He studied law, languages and theology. In his spare time, he was, as we are told, a "great visitor of ladies and a frequent theatre goer." In these years he wrote most of the Elegies and Satires, and the Songs and Sonnets. In 1596 and 1597, he took part in the expeditions led by the Earl of Essex against Cadiz and the Azores. In 1598, he was appointed secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, a minister of Queen Elizabeth from 1598 to 1602, but lost his favour by secretly marrying his niece, Anne Moore, in 1601. He was briefly imprisoned, lived a life of poverty and deprivation and sought different patrons. Donne summed up these years as "John Donne, Ann Donne, undone."

After several years of material troubles and fruitless attempts to obtain a position through court favour, his *Pseudo Martyr* (1610) won him the notice of King James I. James, however, refused to promote him except in the Anglican Church. At last in 1615, at the age of 44, Donne became an Anglican. He was appointed successively Royal Chaplain, reader in divinity at Lincoln's Inn, and finally, in 1621, Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London.

Three years after becoming an Anglican, in 1618, his wife, who had borne him twelve children and whom he had never ceased to love, died. It is believed that her death brought about his final sanctification and illumination, and it was certainly from the agony of his heart that he preached his first sermon after her death beginning: "Lo! I am the man that have seen affliction."

Most of Donne's poems circulated in manuscript during his lifetime through the hands of a select coterie of intellectuals at the universities. His audience was deliberately restricted to the happy few whose education, background and position equipped them to appreciate the most difficult poets of the day. His collected poems were not published until 1633, that is, two years after his death. His prose works include over 150 sermons, a satirical attack on the Jesuits and a small book of Devotions written during a serious illness in 1623.

Though Donne was a leader of the *avant garde* in late Elizabethan and Jacobean London, Eighteenth Century, which believed in smoothness and clarity, did not care for his poetry. Pope "translated" Donne's satires so thoroughly, that they were unrecognizable and Dryden mistakenly declared that he wrote "nice speculations of Philosophy" and not love poetry at all. Low estimate of Donne continued in the nineteenth century. It was possibly because he suffered in comparison with Milton. The poets of this century show, with the exception of Gerald Manley Hopkins, the influence of Milton rather than of the metaphysical poets. The poets of the twentieth century admired Donne's poetry. His modern reputation owes much to the edition of the Poems by H.J.C. Grierson (1912) and to the influence of the criticism of T.S. Eliot. It is not for nothing that Eliot's criticism has been mainly directed upon the seventeenth century. He has restored the seventeenth century to its proper place in the English tradition. In his "Homage to John Dryden," he says:

> A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the

noise of the typewriter or the smell of the cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.

This passage suggests synthesis of emotion, passion and thought as the corner-stone of Donne's poetry. Donne could be lyrical and intellectual, serious and cynical, intense and witty at the same time. Modern poets also exhibit the same kind of a complex sensibility in their poetry. Since both Donne and a modern poet do not find any coherence or certainty in the outside world, they fall back on the truth of their own experience.

20.4 JOHN DONNE'S POEMS

The best way to appreciate Donne's poetry is to make an effort to understand his poems. Following five poems are in your course:

1. "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"
2. "Lovers' Infiniteness"
3. "The Canonization"
4. "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness"
5. Sonnet XIV: "Better my Heart, Three Person'd God"

The first three are love poems and the last two are religious poems. The love poems which you have to read do not express the variety of Donne's love poetry. All the three poems express sincere, fulfilled, or spiritual love. It must not be forgotten that Donne, also wrote poems which are cynical, bitter or express sensual love. In "The Apparition", the poet is extremely bitter and mocking; in "Song: Go, and catch a falling star" he insists that there is no true and faithful woman anywhere in the world; in "The Flea" he convinces his mistress to yield to him; and in "The Indifferent", he presents his cynical doctrine of sensuality. In addition to the three poems of sincere love which you will read, there are several others which express the same feeling of true and fulfilled love. Some of the popular ones are: "The Sun Rising," "The Good-Morrow," "Song; Sweetest Love I do not go," "The Canonization" and "The Ecstasy." If you enjoy the poems included in your syllabus, read some more which you are able to find in any anthology.

It was once believed that as a young man, he was extremely cynical about love and lived a life of sensuality, but a change occurred when he fell in love with Anne Moore and married her. He expressed cynical love in the poems which he wrote before he met Anne, but he celebrated the ecstasy of love in his poems which he wrote later. There is no evidence to prove the truth of this. It is possible that he wrote some cynical poems about love after his marriage and some poems of fulfilled love before meeting Anne Moore. In fact, it is dangerous to mix up biography and poetry. Writing poetry, particularly during the seventeenth century, was like role playing. Donne's poetry is dramatic. He creates a speaker who is responding to, or interacting with a listener (his beloved) in a dramatic situation at a moment of great significance and urgency.

All the five poems in your course are reproduced (in modernized spellings) in these lessons and are closely analysed. Read very carefully each poem with the help of the given glossary and explication which follows. Since Donne is a difficult poet you must spend time in understanding them. Don't give up after the first reading. You will enjoy them after some effort. When you struggle with the five poems with the help of the glossary and explication of each poem, consider the nature of Donne's poetry–the quality of his experience whether it is secular or religious and its expression in words and images.

The following note on Donne as a metaphysical poet will become clear only after you have mastered a couple of his poems. So, if you like, you may go straight to the poems and read the following section later.

Check Your Progress: Fill-in-the-Blanks

1. John Donne's early life was marked by his upbringing in a devout _____ Catholic family.
2. Metaphysical poetry is known for its use of _____, an elaborate and intellectual metaphor.
3. Donne's poetic style is characterized by _____ imagery and argumentative tone.
4. A famous example of Donne's use of conceit is the comparison of two lovers to a _____ in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."
5. The term "metaphysical poetry" was first used by the critic _____ in the 17th century.

Answers: 1Roman, 2 Conceit, 3 Vivid, 4 Compass, 5 Dryden

20.5 METAPHYSICAL POETRY

The term "metaphysical" as applied to John Donne and a group of poets who wrote under his influence, had its origin in the same century in which the poets wrote their works. Drummond seems to have Donne in mind when he objected to the "modern" attempt to "abstract poetry to metaphysical ideas and scholastic quiddities," and Dryden later complained that "Donne affects the metaphysics not only in his satires but in his amorous verses," and "perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy." Dr. Johnson spoke of these poets as "the metaphysical poets" referring particularly to the exhibition of their learning.

Donne was not metaphysical in the same sense in which Dante, for example, was. Unlike Dante, he was not committed to a particular metaphysical or philosophical system, but he was interested in the fascinating, conflicting, and often disturbing philosophies of his period. The medieval way of thought, in which systems tended towards synthesis and unity, was giving way to the European scientific renaissance, which was analytical. Medieval (Ptolemaic) astronomy was challenged by Copernicus, Aristotle was challenged by Galileo. What interested Donne was not the ultimate truth of an idea but ideas themselves. There is a note of tension, springing from the contradictions in the very nature of things. Donne was keenly aware of the difficulty of metaphysical problems and saw them lurking behind any action, however, trivial it may be. In his greater poems, he comes up against fundamental problems and oppositions of a strictly metaphysical nature. He is concerned, in his love poems, with the identity of lovers as lovers and their diversity as the human beings in whom love manifests itself; the stability and self-sufficiency of love, contrasted with the mutability and dependence of human beings; with the presence of lovers to each other, though they are separated by travel and death; the spirit demanding the aid of the flesh, the flesh hampering the spirit; the shortcomings of this life summarized by decay and death, contrasted with the divine it aspires. In "A

Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" the lovers are two, yet one. They are united even when they are separated physically by travels. These problems of contemporary philosophy arising out of the problems of One and Many, I and Thou are seldom as elaborate or specific as it may appear. These allusions to ideas are there not to display his learning but to support an argument. He uses ideas as images and draws them from whatever belief best expresses the emotion he has to communicate.

A learner reading Donne's poems should carefully analyse the sources of his learned and unexpected comparisons for which he is famous. Though he draws upon everyday and commonplace experiences also, his distinctive source are the current beliefs in metaphysics, cosmology, geography, natural science, medicine and alchemy. All the poems included in your syllabus illustrate a great range of the areas from which Donne has taken his imagery. "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is a farewell to his wife on the occasion of his departure for a diplomatic mission to France. He tells her not to mourn because mourning would belittle their love. The souls of true lovers are united. Distance can separate their bodies but they will suffer no real absence. Notice the sources of his images to illustrate his theme: (i) the death-bed of virtuous men (St. 1); (ii) the physical phenomena of melting, making noise, floods and tempests (St. 2); (iii) church clergy and laity (St. 2); (iv) earthquakes and the movement of the heavenly bodies (St. 3); (v) the process of refining metals (St. 5); (vi) the process of beating gold into gold leaf (St. 6); and (vii) drawing of a circle with a pair of compasses (St. 7-9). The broader subjects which they embrace are: philosophy, cosmology, religion, astronomy, alchemy, and geometry.

20.6 METAPHYSICAL CONCEIT

A conceit is an elaborate metaphor comparing two apparently dissimilar objects or emotions, often with the effect of shock or surprise. Metaphysical conceits used by Donne consisted in what Johnson called, the "discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike." They are the result of a habit of mind that is immediately aware of logical situations recurring in diverse kinds of experience. The relation between separate and apparently unrelated parts is established with the help of the intellect. When Donne, in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,"compares two lovers to a pair of compasses it implies that all phenomena are facets of a single whole. The same flame which lights the intellect warms the heart; mathematics and love obey one principle. The fixed foot of the compasses does not move of itself, but when the circle is being described, it leans towards the other foot which moves. The firmness with which the fixed foot is pinned in the centre is what completes the circle. When the circle is completed the outstretched foot comes back to the other foot. The two feet of the compass are the lovers and words such as "roams," "leans," and "hearkens" gather up emotion into this intellectual image:

If they are two, they are two so

As stiff twin compasses are two,

Thy soul the fix't foot, makes no show

To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit

Yet when the other far doth roam

It leans and hearkens after it,

And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must

Like th' other foot, obliquely run;

Thy firmness draws my circle just,

And makes me end, where I begun.

It can be seen from this that a metaphysical conceit is neither a decoration nor an illustration which can be removed from the statement but the statement itself is made with the help of the conceit. Usually, a conceit is elaborated to the furthest stage, to which ingenuity can carry it. There are rapid associations of thoughts and no association is left unexploited.

Fusion of passionate feeling and logical argument is characteristic of Donne. Profound emotion generally stimulates Donne's powers of intellectual analysis and argument. For him the process of logical reasoning can in itself be an emotional experience. As he brings to the lyric poem a new realism and urgency and a new penetration of psychological analysis, so he carries further than any previous poet, the use of dialectic for a poem's whole structure and development. The argument of each of the five poems in your course has been very carefully analysed in the next lessons. The generalisation about the logical structure of his poems will become meaningful if you concentrate on the structure of one poem which you have liked the best.

As reasoning and analysis are not incompatible with feeling and sensuous immediacy, so there is no antithesis between wit and seriousness. Seriousness, for Donne, never becomes simple solemnity. Exaggerated tone, paradoxical argument, and surprising conclusion reached from a simple situation are the secrets of his wit. Witty analysis is most remarkable in "The Flea," which is not in your course. He starts in the tone of a serious argument trying to convince his mistress that there is nothing wrong in physical love: "Mark but this flea, and mark in this,/How little that which thou denies me is." The flea has flitted from him to her and by biting both of them and mingling their blood has achieved the union which he desires. The flea becomes a "marriage temple" and "marriage bed." He argues that her fears are false and she would not lose more honour when she yields to him. "The Relic" is another poem which displays his incomparable wit.

20.7 POETIC STYLE

Donne's style in his religious poetry is the same as in his love poetry. There are the same elements of surprise, boldness and audacity in both. His wit does not show lack of sincerity. In his holy sonnet "Batter my heart, three person'd God," Donne is carrying on an argument with God. In fact, he is impatient with God and criticizes Him for not trying hard to end his subjugation to sin. Tension inside the sinner is externalized in violent images. His focus is on one moment when he is conscious of the conflict between his devotion to God and his sinfulness. God is the rightful ruler of his heart and devil has shut him out. He pleads with God to use greater force to regain his heart, to break off his unsuitable betrothal to sin. Donne uses audacious paradoxes after a series of bold images in the end of the sonnet:

For I

Except you enthral me, never shall be free,

Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me

Seeking a divorce from the wrong partner (devil), Donne wishes to be mated to the right partner (God). It is a new kind of subjugation. His freedom consists in subjugation to God, his purity consists in the love of God.

Donne was an original craftsman. His irregular metres and broken rhythms were the outcome of a double motive. First, he was in revolt against the smooth flow of Elizabethan love poetry; secondly, he wanted to portray accurately the searchings of his complex mind. His metres are deliberately made irregular, jerky, yet thoughtful to follow the swift process of his mind. He attains the dramatic effect by shocking abruptness, harsh transitions, uneven accents and snatches of conversation.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, below are some important keywords from the content that you have just read:

Sanctification: The process of becoming holy or spiritually pure.

Coterie: A small, exclusive group of people with shared interests or tastes.

Quiddities: Subtle distinctions or fine details, especially in philosophical arguments.

Cosmology: The study of the origin and structure of the universe.

Alchemy: A medieval science aiming to transform base metals into gold and discover the elixir of life; symbolically, transformation or magic.

Dialectic: Logical argumentation or reasoning, often involving contradiction and resolution.

Audacity: Boldness or daring, especially with confident disregard for conventional thought.

20.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Donne's development towards being a Metaphysical Poet.
2. Write a note on the writing style of John Donne.

20.9 LET US SUM UP

John Donne (1572–1631) was an English poet, cleric, and metaphysical poet known for his innovative style and complex themes. Born into a Roman Catholic family during the Elizabethan era, he experienced religious tensions and faced social and career challenges due to his faith. Donne's early works included love poems marked by wit and paradoxes. Later, he became a cleric in the Church of England and produced religious poems and sermons. Donne's life spanned the transition from Tudor to Stuart rule, witnessing political changes, religious strife, and the flourishing of English Renaissance literature. His works continue to be celebrated for their intellectual depth and intricate exploration of human experiences.

20.10 SUGGESTED READING

- Carey, John. *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*. Faber & Faber, 2011. ebook.
- Burrow, Colin. Ed. *Metaphysical Poetry*. Penguin Books Limited, 2013.
- Gregerson, Linda. "On John Donne." *The Poetry Society*, poetrysociety.org/poems-essays/old-school/on-john-donne.

"A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING"

STRUCTURE

21.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne is one of the best known poets of the seventeenth century. He is known both for his love poetry and his holy poems. "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is one of his best known love poems, in which he describes the moment of his separation from his wife Ann.

21.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with John Donne's famous poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." The lesson will provide a detailed summary as well as critical analysis of the poem.

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to critically analyze the central themes of love, separation, and spiritual connection in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."
2. Learners will be able to interpret the use of imagery and metaphysical conceits to convey the strength of the speaker's love.
3. Learners will be able to evaluate the poem's structure, including its use of iambic tetrameter and rhyming couplets, to enhance its meaning.

21.3 BACKGROUND TO THE POEM

John Donne composed the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" in 1611 as he was preparing for one of his frequent journeys away from his wife, Ann. The occasion was Donne's departure to France with Sir Robert Drury. The poem showcases the deep love which John Donne had for his wife. The poet argues that even during separation, the couple should not be sorrowful because their love binds them together, regardless of distance.

At the time the poem was composed, Donne and his young wife had been married for ten years. Ann, Donne's wife was the niece of Donne's employer; with whom he eloped in 1601. By eloping with his employer's niece, he also ruined his career prospects. As a result, Donne had considerable difficulty finding work, and the couple struggled to provide for their ever-growing family. The background to this poem is significant because it gives the reader an understanding of the kind of love Donne and his wife shared; it was a love that kept the marriage strong and vibrant in the face of hardship.

21.4 TEXT

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.
Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.
But we by a love so much refined,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.
Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.

21.5 EXPLANATION OF THE LINES

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No:

The poet begins the poem with the assertion that virtuous men are not afraid of death and they humbly accept death. They are so self-effacing that they gently ask their souls to leave this world, without

any protest and complaint. The poet says that the virtuous accept death even if their friends, who are sad at the death of their beloved friends urge them to live for some more time while some simply do not want them to die at all.

So let us melt, and make no noise,

No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;

'Twere profanation of our joys

To tell the laity our love.

The poet asks his beloved that just like the virtuous people who accept their death humbly, they should also bid farewell to each other without making noise about it. The poet says that neither should they shed tears and raise floods with their tears, nor should they generate tempests and storms by their moaning. According to the poet, if they make much noise about their parting then it will be like a sacrilegious act which will make their love vulgar by letting the common people know about it. For the poet, his relationship with his beloved is something sacred and he does not want to degrade it by letting the common people know about it.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,

Men reckon what it did, and meant;

But trepidation of the spheres,

Though greater far, is innocent.

The poet says that when the earth moves, that is, during an earthquake, it brings with it fears and harms as the earthly beings are aware about it. The people calculate what damage the earthquake did and what was actually expected. However, the moving of the spheres, that is of other planets, though much greater in intensity is considered innocent by the people as neither the people are aware of the movement, nor does it harm them.

Dull sublunary lovers' love

(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit

Absence, because it doth remove

Those things which elemented it.

The poet says that earthly lovers, who place highest value on the senses and whose love is confined to the senses, and are ignorant about the true platonic love, cannot tolerate absence from their lover. As absence means the removal of the physical self on which their love is based, they lose the essence of love when they are apart from their beloved.

But we by a love so much refined,

hat our selves know not what it is,

Inter-assured of the mind,

Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

But the love between the poet and his beloved is different. It is so superior, pure, and spiritual that even they cannot comprehend its true nature. It is something heavenly and other-worldly. They are so intimately connected with each other's soul that their love has transcended the physicality of love and they

do not care about the physical features such as eyes, lips, and hands. Their souls are connected and theirs is such a spiritual union that they are not concerned about the absence of the beloved.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,

Though I must go, endure not yet

A breach, but an expansion,

Like gold to airy thinness beat.

The poet says that the love has merged their souls into one, and now although they are two bodies, yet their souls have become one. The poet says that although it is inevitable for him to go, but even after getting separated from his beloved, their love will not get a rupture. He says that their love, even after their separation will increase in intensity. He compares his love with gold, which when beaten does not break but becomes thin like air and expands.

If they be two, they are two so

As stiff twin compasses are two;

Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show

To move, but doth, if the other do.

The poet says that even if they consider their souls as two, they are like the two feet of a compass, which appear to be separate but are united in reality. The poet compares the beloved, who stays back at home to the fixed foot of the compass, which does not appear to be moving, but in reality it moves if the other foot moves.

And though it in the center sit,

Yet when the other far doth roam,

It leans and hearkens after it,

And grows erect, as that comes home.

The poet continues the conceit of the compass and says that his beloved is like that foot of a compass, which sits at the centre but moves and follows the other foot when it moves. In this way, it grows upright and unites with the wandering foot when that completes its circle and comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,

Like th' other foot, obliquely run;

Thy firmness makes my circle just,

And makes me end where I begun.

The poet says that the beloved has the same relation with the poet which the fixed foot of the compass has with the moving foot. As the firmness of the fixed foot enables the moving foot to draw the circle correctly, similarly the beloved although fixed and firm, assists the poet to move out and then return to the place from where he began. So, according to the poet, it is the love and faithfulness of the beloved which enables the poet to undergo his journey successfully and then return home.

21.6 SUMMARY

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is a poem about separation by John Donne. In the poem, the poet, who can be identified with John Donne consoles his beloved at the moment of their separation. During the development of this thought, the poem makes various comparisons to forbid his beloved at the moment of their separation.

The poem was inspired by a real life incident when John Donne was getting ready to move to France with Sir Robert Drury. At that moment, he addressed his wife, Anne Moore and advised her not to mourn at their separation as he viewed their love as something Platonic and in the separation also he saw the unbreakable union of their souls.

The poet begins the poem by referring to the virtuous persons who humbly accept their departure from this world, even when their friends request them to fight for their life. The poet expects similar kind of humility from his beloved at the time of his departure. The poet next urges his beloved not to mourn at the time of their separation and not vulgarise their love by doing so, thereby letting the common people know about it. The poet further says that only those people whose love is very earthly and gross, lament at events like separation from the beloved. The poet says that his love is spiritual and has transcended the earthly things such as the physicality of love. Their love has a metaphysical and other worldly connotation. The poet then compares their love with gold and says that just as gold expands at beating and does not break, similarly their love will strengthen at their separation and will not break.

In the next section of the poem, the poet introduces the well-known conceit of the compass. He compares his love with that of a compass. He says that the two lovers are like the two feet of the compass which, although separate, are united at the top. He compares his beloved to that foot of the compass which remains fixed. His own self he compares to the moving foot which is able to move only because of the firmness of the static foot. By making this reference to the compass, the poet is trying to say that it is because of the love and faithfulness of the beloved, that he is able to move out. He further extends this conceit of the compass and says that no matter how far he goes, he will return back to his beloved and be united with her like the two feet of the compass.

21.7 ANALYSIS

The poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is one of the best known poems of John Donne. In the poem, the poet is urging his beloved not to mourn at his departure. The poem is remarkable for Donne's use of imagery and metaphors. As belonging to the metaphysical school of poetry, Donne has used many metaphors and conceits. Donne has followed the convention of the Metaphysical poets by using certain conceits in the poem, the most remarkable being that of the compass.

21.8 THEMES

21.8.1 Death

Death is a common theme in John Donne's poetry. He has explored the theme in many of his poems like "Death Be Not Proud", "Relic", etc. Similarly, death is a significant theme in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." The theme of death is delineated in the very opening stanza of the poem, when the poet makes a reference to virtuous men who humbly accept their death, "virtuous men pass mildly away." The poet likens death to journey as both death and journey connote separation from the loved ones. In this poem specifically, the poet asks his beloved to humbly accept his departure just like the virtuous men accept death.

21.8.2 Separation

The poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is about separation. The poem is about the particular event of a lover's separation from his beloved. However, the poet's treatment of the theme of separation is very unusual. Instead of lamenting over the separation from his beloved, the poet asks his beloved to accept the separation in a manner as the virtuous men accept death, i.e. humbly. He also says that their love will increase as a result of their separation just like gold, which expands when it is beaten.

21.8.3 Love

John Donne has composed poems on diverse subjects, ranging from love poems to religious poems. However, he is better known for his love poems. The poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" also touches upon the aspect of love. The poem is an address from a husband to his wife at the time of his departure. It is because of the feeling of love that the wife is sad at the departure of her husband. Similarly, it is because of this feeling of love that the poet believes that they will not be parted even in their separation.

21.8.4 Platonic Love vs Earthly Love

John Donne has composed numerous poems on love. There is a constant focus in Donne's poetry on the various aspects of love, i.e., both earthly as well as platonic. Donne is also known for comparing his love with the saints' devotion to the gods. In the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" Donne deals with this aspect of love and gives his love a rather Platonic touch. In illustrating this, Donne compares and contrasts his love with that of the common people and says that their love is not like that of the common people which cannot tolerate separation, as it will separate the two physical selves. Donne says that their love is so pure that they do not care for such earthly things as eyes, lips, and hands. Theirs is spiritual love that transcends the material world and the limitations of their own bodies. In this way, Donne gives their love a Platonic bearing.

21.8.5 Religious Faith

Religious concerns are almost always discernible in Donne's poetry. The poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is also set in this tradition. In the poem, Donne compares his departure to the deaths of "virtuous men." By saying this, Donne is suggesting the fact that religious men who are devoted to God and keep their faith do not fear death. Rather, they embrace death humbly, as they know that after death they will be united with God Himself and they will become one with God in the eternity. Donne compares the faith of these virtuous people in God to his own faith in his beloved, which is no less than a religious devotion. As the virtuous men, because of their faith are sure about their deliverance, similarly Donne's faith towards his beloved makes him confident about the strength of their love.

21.8.6 Science

Along with religion, science is also a theme which is prevalent in many of Donne's works. The metaphysical poets are known for making unique comparisons in their poetry drawn from all the available sources. As during the seventeenth century, science was still in its infancy and the public in general and poets in particular were fascinated by the things it had to offer. In the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" the influence of science can be seen, whether it is the reference to mathematical tools, such as a geometrical compass, which was invented by Galileo

only two years earlier, or to a circle and its infinite, perfect qualities. Scientific references are also apparent as the poet makes a reference to the "moving of th' earth," and to earthquakes as they strike fear into the hearts of men. He also uses science as he refers to the moving of the spheres, i.e. the planets.

21.9 STRUCTURE OF THE POEM

The poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is written in nine four-line stanzas, called quatrains, using a four-beat, iambic tetrameter line. The rhyme scheme for each stanza is an alternating *abab*, and each stanza is grammatically self-contained. The poem is written in a simple form which is not a characteristic of Donne's poetry. Donne often invented elaborate and complicated stanzaic forms and rhyme schemes and employed them in his poetry for the handling of similarly complicated themes. The simplicity of the present poem, however, assists the reader more readily to follow the rather complicated argument of the poem.

Donne develops the main idea of the poem in three parts. In the first part, which consists of the first two stanzas, the poet argues that he and his beloved should separate quietly and should accept their separation humbly—as quietly as righteous men go to their deaths, and as humbly as they accept their death—because their love is sacred and should not be disrespected by public emotional displays. The next part which consists of the next three stanzas considers the sacred nature of their love. The poet contrasts their sacred love with ordinary lovers whose relationship is based only on sexual attraction. The third and final part of the poem, which includes the final four stanzas imaginatively considers the ways in which the lovers' souls will remain joined even during their physical separation.

Check Your Progress: Themes and Imagery

1. The theme of separation in the poem is depicted as temporary because the speaker compares the lovers' souls to _____, symbolizing their unity despite distance.
2. The metaphor of a compass in the poem represents the lovers' _____ and connection.
3. Donne contrasts physical love with _____ love, which he believes to be more enduring and profound.
4. The poem's structure consists of _____ stanzas written in iambic tetrameter.
5. The phrase "Dull sublunary lovers' love" contrasts the speaker's spiritual connection with love that is bound by _____ presence.

Answers: Gold, Stability, Spiritual, Nine, Physical

21.10 IMAGERY

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is written in the tradition of Metaphysical poetry. The Metaphysical school of poetry is remarkable for using strong imagery and making far-fetched comparisons. The present poem also uses imagery extensively and the whole poem is replete with images. The images are drawn from various sources, ranging from the most commonplace things to the heavenly bodies.

The poem addresses the moment when the lovers are preparing to bid each other farewell. Although their separation will be only temporary, it is a potentially emotional scene, and the speaker is explaining why there is no need for tears or sorrow. To make the beloved understand this point, the poet makes use

of diverse images. The speaker's task is a difficult one, and his argument is carried by the poem's unusual imagery. The very first stanza uses the image of the dying of the virtuous men. The poet compares the dying of virtuous men to his upcoming separation from his beloved. This is an unusual analogy but Donne's purpose is to explain that the virtuous accept both death and separation calmly and without fear and the beloved should also accept their separation calmly and without fear and sorrow.

The second stanza of the poem introduces the imagery of molten gold, "So let us melt, and make no noise", to which he will later return. Next he draws on extreme weather conditions as imagery for emotional outpouring. The comparison is not pleasing because he is discouraging this behaviour; the poet suggests that dramatic "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests" are profane and unfitting for these lovers.

In the third stanza, Donne extends the weather imagery by introducing one of the classic images of the metaphysical conceit— the universe: "Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears, / Men reckon what it did and meant." Here Donne is making a reference to thunderstorms and natural disasters. By making this reference, Donne highlights the fact that these natural forces are destructive and frightening, and they leave people confused about their meaning. The next lines indirectly compare the couple's love to a force greater than natural disasters, and yet harmless, by saying "But trepidation of the spheres, / Though greater far, is innocent." According to Donne the mighty trembling in the universe does not harm anyone, despite its magnitude and force. The indirect parallel is that the inner trembling that the lovers feel at the prospect of being apart is powerful yet causes no real harm.

In the sixth stanza, Donne uses gold imagery which carries meaning on many levels: "Our two souls therefore, which are one, / Though I must go, endure not yet / A breach, but an expansion, / Like gold to airy thinness beat." The poet compares his love to gold as gold is bright, shining, durable, and valuable. In short, gold is everything which the poet's love is. Donne, however, takes the imagery a step further. Describing the malleability of gold, the poet compares gold's ability to change shape and to extend with the lovers' ability to bend to circumstance yet keep each other spiritually close by virtue of their deep bond. Gold's qualities are expressed in two ways: it can be melted and merged, as suggested in line twenty-one, and it can be hammered and elongated. This analogy is well crafted because it works from every angle: both gold and love can be melted and merged; both can be "hammered" and yet remain strong and essentially unchanged.

In the next three stanzas, i.e. seventh, eighth, and ninth, Donne develops the compass imagery that has become almost identical with the term "metaphysical conceit" in contemporary literary discourse. The poet introduces the image in the seventh stanza and then elaborates it in the neat two stanzas: "If they be two, they are two so / As stiff twin compasses are two; / Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show / To move, but doth, if th' other do." Here Donne is referring to a compass used in geometry and explains that his beloved is the fixed leg in the centre, while he is the outer leg that moves. This idea is carried into the eighth stanza, where the poet adds, "And though it in the center sit, / Yet when the other far doth roam, / It leans and hearkens after it, / And grows erect, as that comes home." The imagery is apt as the compass is a unit, and its two legs only represent physical separation; they are not structurally separate as they are united at the top. The compass' behaviour (leaning, straightening) conveys that the two legs are connected and so are the two lovers.

In the final stanza, Donne concludes, "Such wilt thou be to me, who must / Like th' other foot, obliquely run; / Thy firmness makes my circle just, / And makes me end where I begun." Further elaborating the compass metaphor, the speaker explains that while he is away, the loyalty of his lover keeps him true. The image of the circle in line thirty-five carries multiple meanings and is particularly appropriate with

the compass metaphor. Circles traditionally symbolize infinity, perfection, balance, symmetry, and cycles. Again, Donne establishes unity and integration by using the image of the circle. The circle imagery signifies that the lovers will be together forever in perfect love. Since compasses create circles, the image of the compass legs separating, drawing a circle (where the beginning meets the end), and then coming back together thoroughly illustrates the lover's journey that "makes me end where I begun."

Through the progression of the poem, by using certain images, the poet has built a complex, yet flowing and beautiful, argument for why the lovers should not be saddened or worried about their upcoming separation. Donne's method is unique and a wonderful tool for understanding the Metaphysical poets. The poem, though intricate, is accessible precisely because of the array of interconnected images presented throughout. Although the images may not at first seem to be related, Donne's poetic genius becomes apparent as the thoughtful reader pieces the images together.

21.11 THE METAPHYSICAL CONCEIT OF THE COMPASS

Donne developed his well-known metaphysical conceit of the compass in the last three stanzas of the poem. In this conceit of the compass, he likens himself and his wife to the two feet of a mathematical compass. The two feet of the compass although separate are united at the top. As an instrument, a compass' function depends on the two parts working together in harmony. So, just like the compass, Donne and his wife are joined in their love in its togetherness. Donne compares his wife Ann to the "fixed foot," which provides strength to Donne who, as the other foot that moves about, must roam far. He points out though, that it is Ann who "leans and hearkens" after him just like the static foot of the compass which leans after the moving foot. This argument supports his claim that their love will expand to fill the space between them. Again, Donne refers to Ann's "firmness," which strengthens their love even in time of separation. It is this firmness, this devotion which according to him "makes [his] circle just." The image of the circle symbolizes perfection and infinity with a fixed centre. The notion of the infinite, something that is without end, cements the notion of Donne's elevated affection for his wife which is in sharp contrast to some of Donne's other works, written presumably in his younger days where he presented a more cynical conception of love.

21.12 "A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING" AS A METAPHYSICAL POEM

Besides being a beautiful love poem, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" endures because it contains classic illustrations of the metaphysical conceit. This term refers to a technique used by metaphysical poets in which commonplace objects or ideas are used to create analogies, offering insight into something important or profound. The metaphysical conceit is especially effective when the reader is almost immediately able to identify with the poet's meaning, despite the unexpected nature of the comparison. Today, discussion of the metaphysical conceit inevitably refers to "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" because of Donne's skilled use of unexpected imagery.

As a Metaphysical poet, Donne expressed his love for his wife in a particular way. Many of the characteristics typical of Metaphysical poetry are found in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."

First is the intellectual descriptions of emotions using unusual and often startling comparisons. Donne expresses his emotions in quite an unusual manner. In explaining that his wife should not mourn at their separation, Donne uses all kinds of descriptions ranging from the dying of the virtuous men, to Platonism, to comparing his love with gold, then heavenly bodies, and finally the geometrical compass. In order to convince his beloved that their separation will not weaken their love, he makes all sort of references ranging from the very ordinary to the very unusual. For instance, Donne compares his love with

gold. He says that their love is just like gold which does not break when it is beaten, but expands. Similarly, their love will also expand and grow in the face of their separation. Another unusual comparison is that with the geometrical compass where Donne compares his wife to the static foot and his own self to the moving foot. According to him, no matter how far the moving foot goes, it always comes back to the static foot because of the steadfastness and devotion of the static foot.

Next metaphysical element in the poem is a preoccupation with love, death, and religion. The poem is about the love of a man for his wife. However, their love is not something like the earthly love of the common people. Donne gives their love a Platonic connotation and according to him, the love which he and his wife share is not bound merely by physical attraction. Their souls are one and even in their separation, they are united. The reference to death comes quite early in the poem i.e. in the very first stanza. Donne compares his separation with death and he asks his wife to humbly accept their separation just like the virtuous people humbly accept death. The reference to virtuous men also lends a religious connotation to the poem. According to Donne the religious men who are devoted to God and keep their faith do not fear death. Rather, they embrace death humbly, as they know that after death they will become one with God in the eternity. Donne compares the faith of these virtuous people in God to his own faith in his beloved, which is no less than a religious devotion. As the virtuous men, because of their faith are sure about their deliverance, similarly Donne's faith towards his beloved makes him confident about the eternity of their love.

Another feature of the metaphysical poems is that the diction employed is simple. Donne has also framed his poem in a simple manner. Although the comparisons are far-fetched but the language and diction employed by Donne is quite simple. Further, the far-fetched comparisons help in heightening the overall impact of the poem, giving it a metaphysical touch. Simplicity of the present poem also assists the reader more readily to follow the rather complicated argument of the poem.

Another important feature which gives the poem a metaphysical bearing is that Donne has taken images from everyday life. He has used the common-place image of gold to illustrate the nature of his love. The image of the compass, although used by Donne in a very unusual manner is also an image taken from our everyday life.

Finally, another important element of metaphysical poetry is the formulation of an argument. In this poem also, the poet puts forth an argument and then develops it. In the present poem, Donne puts forth the argument that his beloved should not become sad during their separation as their love is beyond the earthly separation and union. To develop this argument, Donne uses various images and makes numerous comparisons like 'teare-floods", "sigh-tempests", "Dull sublunary lovers", "Like gold", "compasses", etc.

21.13 GLOSSARY

virtuous- having or showing high moral standards

prophanation-(from profane) not relating to that which is sacred or religious

layetie-commoners

trepidation-a feeling of fear or anxiety about something that may happen

sublunary- belonging to this world as contrasted with a better or more spiritual one

hearkens- calls

21.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" as a metaphysical poem.
2. What are the different themes delineated by Donne in the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"?
3. Discuss in detail the symbols and images employed by Donne in the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."
4. Explain the metaphysical conceit of the compass employed by Donne in the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."
5. How is love treated in the poem? How is it different from the traditional conception of love?
6. How does Donne deal with the concept of death in the poem?
7. Discuss the various sources from where John Donne borrowed the images he used in the poem.
8. What is the central idea of the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"?
9. Discuss John Donne as a metaphysical poet giving references from "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."
10. Discuss Donne's treatment of religion in the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."

21.15 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 What type of poem is "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"?

A) Epic poem

B) Sonnet

C) Ballad

D) Ode

Q.2 In the poem, what is the speaker's relationship with the person to whom he is addressing the valediction?

A) Parent and child

B) Sibling

C) Spouse or lover

D) Friend

Q.3 What does the title "Forbidding Mourning" suggest about the poem's theme?

A) It encourages open expression of grief

B) It advocates for stoic acceptance of loss

C) It discourages the display of emotion

D) It emphasizes the inevitability of mourning

Q.4 In the poem, what is the metaphor used to describe the separation between the speaker and his beloved?

A) A ship sailing across the sea

B) A bird taking flight

C) A compass drawing a circle

D) A flower blooming in the garden

Q.5 What celestial body is mentioned in the poem as a symbol of the constancy of the speaker's love?

A) The sun

B) The moon

C) A star

D) A comet

Q.6 According to the speaker, how should their parting be received by their beloved?

A) With sadness and tears

B) With cheerful celebration

C) With indifference and detachment

D) With hope and anticipation

Q.7 What emotion does the speaker use to compare the trembling of the legs of a compass?

A) Fear

B) Desperation

C) Love

D) Anger

Q.8 The speaker compares the connection between him and his beloved to the relationship between a compass and?

A) A ruler

B) A pencil

C) A circle

D) A straight line

Q.9 The poem's central theme revolves around?

A) Fear of separation

B) Romantic betrayal

C) The inevitability of death

D) The strength of true love

Q.10 The poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is often associated with the literary movement known as?

A) Romanticism

B) Classicism

C) Metaphysical poetry

D) Victorian poetry

Answers: 1B, 2C, 3B, 4C, 5A, 6D, 7C, 8C, 9D, 10C

21.16 LET US SUM UP

In "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," John Donne explores the theme of separation in a profound and metaphorical manner. The poem's speaker addresses his beloved, asserting that their parting should not be accompanied by public displays of grief. He compares their love to a compass, with one leg fixed and the other exploring, symbolizing their spiritual connection despite physical distance. The poem emphasizes the strength and constancy of their love, urging the beloved to accept the separation with dignity and trust in their enduring bond.

21.17 SUGGESTED READING

- Corns, Thomas N. *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell.* Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Summers, Claude J. and Ted-Larry Pebworth. *The Wit of Seventeenth-Century Poetry*. United Kingdom, University of Missouri Press, 1995.
- Holmes, John R. "Metaphysical Poets." EBSCO Research Starters, 2023, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/metaphysical-poets.

"LOVERS' INFINITENESS"

STRUCTURE

22.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne, whose poetic reputation languished before he was rediscovered in the early part of the twentieth century, is remembered today as the leading exponent of a style of verse known as "metaphysical poetry," which flourished in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. (Other great metaphysical poets include Andrew Marvell, Robert Herrick, and George Herbert.) Metaphysical poetry typically employs unusual verse forms, complex figures of speech applied to elaborate and surprising metaphorical conceits, and learned themes discussed according to eccentric and unexpected chains of reasoning. Donne's poetry exhibits each of these characteristics. His jarring, unusual meters; his proclivity for abstract puns and double entendres; his often bizarre metaphors (in one poem he compares love to a carnivorous fish; in another he pleads with God to make him pure by raping him); and his process of oblique reasoning are all characteristic traits of the metaphysicals, unified in Donne as in no other poet.

Donne is valuable not simply as a representative writer but also as a highly unique one. He was a man of contradictions: As a minister in the Anglican Church, Donne possessed a deep spirituality that informed his writing throughout his life; but as a man, Donne possessed a carnal lust for life, sensation,

and experience. He is both a great religious poet and a great erotic poet, and perhaps no other writer (with the possible exception of Herbert) strove as hard to unify and express such incongruous, mutually discordant passions. In his best poems, Donne mixes the discourses of the physical and the spiritual; over the course of his career, Donne gave sublime expression to both realms.

His conflicting proclivities often cause Donne to contradict himself. (For example, in one poem he writes, "Death be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so." Yet in another, he writes, "Death I recant, and say, unsaid by me / Whate'er hath slipped, that might diminish thee.") However, his contradictions are representative of the powerful contrary forces at work in his poetry and in his soul, rather than of sloppy thinking or inconsistency. Donne, who lived a generation after Shakespeare, took advantage of his divided nature to become the greatest metaphysical poet of the seventeenth century; among the poets of inner conflict, he is one of the greatest of all time.

22.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The main objective of this lesson is to highlight the importance of John Donne as a metaphysical poet and to explore the themes, motifs and symbols of his poem "Lovers' Infiniteness."

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to analyze the central themes of love, possession, and emotional paradoxes in "Lover's Infiniteness."
2. Learners will be able to identify the recurring motifs of unrequited love, infinite desire, and spiritual fulfillment in the poem.
3. Learners will be able to interpret the symbolic use of language in expressing the tension between material and spiritual love.

22.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

"Lover's Infiniteness" is one of the well known poems of John Donne. Grierson comments that the title is a strange one, in fact it should be Love's Infiniteness. However, the title seems fit to the actual mood of the poem. The poet is capable of giving more and more love each day and the beloved must reciprocate. However, this would only be possible if the lovers were themselves infinite.

At the beginning the poet describes all that he has done to gain his lady's love. He says that he has done everything possible. He says that in spite of all his efforts if her love towards him still remains partial then he can never have it fully. This is because he has spent all his treasures of sighs, tears, oaths and letters with which he can win the lady. He says that it is possible that she might have once given him all her love but since then new love might have been created in her heart. Other men who had a great stock of tears, oaths and sighs might have out bidden him or might do so in future. If it is so, it is a cause of fresh anxiety for him. The poet asserts that the heart of the beloved was his and hence whatever grows there was his and this would be so in future also.

The poet further says that the condition mentioned above is, however, not correct. He declares that he is capable of giving more and more love each day. He declares that his lady love, too, ought to be able to give fresh rewards. Hence she cannot give her heart everyday. If she does so, it proves that she has never given her heart at all. This may seem paradoxical but the facts about love are always so. Even though the lover loses his heart yet his heart stays with him. The beloved saves her heart in losing it. He says that

he will not change hearts, rather their two hearts will become one. The lovers will be infinite and they will ever be fresh.

Check Your Progress: Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

1. The poem explores the speaker's frustration with the idea of _____ love being finite or incomplete.
2. A recurring motif in the poem is the speaker's desire for _____, representing total unity with the beloved.
3. The poem uses financial imagery, such as "bargains" and "debt," to symbolize the transactional nature of _____ love.
4. The speaker contrasts earthly love with the notion of _____ love, which transcends physical limits.
5. The title of the poem, "Lover's Infiniteness," suggests a longing for love that is both boundless and _____.

Answers: True, Fulfillment, Earthly, Spiritual, Eternal

22.4 DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF THE POEM

22.4.1 Critical Appreciation of the Poem

Metaphorical Inferences

Like many of his romantic poems this one has an abrupt start too. It is unconventional in other ways too. The poet says that he does not have all of his lady's love and he thinks he is unlikely to ever have it. He has used up his treasure of tears, sighs and letters trying to win her over but his efforts have been unsuccessful. It's likely that someone else has been more fortunate than him. Throughout the poem the poet plays on the words "all" and "infiniteness". He suggests that love is infinite like God's love and it cannot be apportioned like material objects. The poet either gets all the love or none of it. The puns on the word "all" gives rise to paradox. Donne combines sacred and profane metaphors in his usual metaphysical style in this poem.

22.4.2 Theme of the Poem

The poet says that if he does not have all the love of his lady, then he is not likely to ever have it all. He has strived hard to gain her love but he has not got any more than what he had at the beginning. He has used his entire treasure of tears, entreaties and letters but he is no richer in love now than when the bargain for love began. Donne makes the whole thing sound like a business transaction rather than an emotional one. The poet is disturbed by the fact that, if the poet only has a part of his lady's love, someone else must have the rest of it. There was a time when he had all of her love but there is more love in her heart and there are claimants for that new love. These are men who have a larger store of tears and entreaties than the poet. The poet stakes his claim for this new love too as it has sprouted in the heart which was his sometime ago. His lady had then vowed to give him her whole heart. In a way he would rather not have all her love because once one claims

to have 'all' of a thing, one cannot have any more of it. But Donne's heart grows every day and thirsts for more love, hence he expects his lady to show him more love every day. Her inability of showing or giving him more love makes him realize the she never gave him her heart in the first place. When we love God, though we lose our heart to God we save it too. Instead of thinking in spiritual terms, the poet and his lady can marry and be one. That way they can be individuals and one at the same time.

22.5 ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

This poem, titled variously as "Lovers' Infiniteness", "Love's Infiniteness," or "Lovers Infinitenesse" depending on the edition, is a three-part argument in three stanzas. This type of poem, in which the lover is arguing with his beloved and trying to convince her of something (as in "The Flea"), is common with Donne. Appeals to reason, often combined with non-rational assertions, are common in Donne's shorter poems.

With three eleven-line stanzas, the form of "Lovers' Infiniteness" is unusual for Donne. The rhyming scheme is ababcdcdeee. Each stanza contains ten lines of four to five feet plus an eleventh line incorporating a different meaning of the word "all." There is a sense of refrain in the end of each stanza (lines, 11, 22, and 33): "Deare, I shall never have Thee All./.../Grow there, deare, I shoud have it all./.../Be one, and one anothers All." The refrain recalls the more musical of Donne's poems, such as "Song" ("Sweetest love, I do not goe").

The subject of the poem, at least on the surface, is the poet addressing his beloved, but it is important to remember that Donne, a metaphysical poet, often includes a deeper meaning in his discussions of love. The puns, metaphors, and allusions can point toward a more philosophical meaning.

Donne begins with "If yet I have not all thy love,/Deare, I shall never have it all." The tone suggests gentleness, but the lover also seems jealous: he wants claim to "all" of this woman's love. He has been her suitor; he has tried to "purchase" her with "Sighs, teares, and oathes, and letters." He has not yet been wholly successful, and he seems to think that he is entitled to the lady's love because of his efforts, rather than because he has fully persuaded her. Even if he has been mostly successful, he is creating the paradoxical metaphysical situation of giving herself entirely while remaining herself.

For the lover to demand this much from his lady is against poetic conventions, but Donne, unconventionally, is not asking for simply a marriage union. He also has abstract ideas about what love is, and, particularly, what is the totality of love. As is so often in Donne, he is aware of the paradox. He wants a totality of love, but he has also reached the limit of his capacity to feel (Stein 33); he wants more to look forward to. We will see in the third stanza how Donne resolves the paradox.

The theme of possession and, specifically, commercial transactions underscores the inadequacy the lover feels when he thinks of or discusses the "all" of love that he requires from the lady. He talks of "purchase" and what he has "spent" and is therefore "due." He has spent his emotional capital, and he worries that new suitors have their own "stock" to cash in as they "outbid" him. In the third stanza, he imagines their growing love as a kind of deposit with interest.

Yet, he knows that love cannot literally be bought. While the poem may strike the reader as a straightforward courtship plea, the paradoxes show how inadequate stock phrases such as "winning love" or "giving one's heart" are. The poet is humbled before the inadequacy of his understanding of love, and by his limitless desire for it. The comparison between love via finance and true love opens up a higher comparison, that between earthly love and divine love. Lines 29-30, "Love's riddles are that though thy

heart depart/It stays at home, and thou with losing savest it," allude to Matthew 16, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it." The paradox of love remains on the theological level; somehow we must fully love the divine without giving up ourselves as the ones who love.

Despite love's paradoxes, the poem affirms its mysteries with reverence and celebration. If desire is infinite, it cannot be satisfied on a finite earth. "Thou canst not every day give me thy heart" because in a financial transaction, the property is lost once it is given away. How can the lover get her heart back in order to give it again? Only if he returns it back to her with interest, perhaps. Yet, the lover himself does not have an infinite love, and he has used up his stock of resources for wooing. He is human and thus lives within the rules of the finite world. No matter how idealized the love, the love is still human; it must have a limit.

The third stanza unravels the paradox with "But we will have a way more liberall." On the human level, he suggests marriage and sexual union. The physical and mystical union of himself and his lover helps them share together as "one, and one another's all." This is concrete and understandable and, at least in one aspect, satisfies the longing of the lover for infinity. They can merge into one another and yet leave room to grow together, increasing the area of the circle of their union.

On the spiritual level, beyond the roles of lover and beloved, Donne, a devout Protestant and the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, suggests a similar growth in the spiritual devotion of a person for the divine. Since we are creatures of God, we may participate in the love of God even if we do not understand it. Donne was fond of expounding in his sermons not only on the nature of God, but also the impossibility of understanding certain divine mysteries. It is a common tenet of faith that the divine is in key ways unknowable, being infinite and eternal (outside of time) and ineffable. Donne's poems, such as this one, even though they may not at first appear to be religious, often express such spiritual themes.

22.6 PARAPHRASE AND EXPLANATION OF THE POEM

22.6.1 Stanza 1

If yet I have not all thy love,

Dear, I shall never have it all;

I cannot breathe one other sigh, to move,

Nor can intreat one other tear to fall;

And all my treasure, which should purchase thee—

Sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters—I have spent.

Yet no more can be due to me,

Than at the bargain made was meant;

If then thy gift of love were partial,

That some to me, some should to others fall,

Dear, I shall never have thee all.

(lines1-11): In the opening stanza Donne describes everything that he has done to win the love of his lady. He says that he has done all that was possible for him to win her heart. He has sighed, shed tears, taken oaths and written love letters. He has done all these actions to the maximum of his capacity. He calls these things treasures used to purchase the heart of the beloved.

He says that he has used all his treasure and has nothing left. Therefore, he cannot do anything else. If, in spite of his best efforts, he has failed to win his lady's entire love, he can never buy it fully. He says that if his lady love has given him only her partial love and not entire love, he cannot have it all. If she has given her partial love to someone else, then he can never have her entire love.

22.6.2 Stanza 2

Or if then thou gavest me all,
All was but all, which thou hadst then;
But if in thy heart, since, there be or shall
New love created be, by other men,
Which have their stocks entire, and can in tears,
In sighs, in oaths, and letters, outbid me,
This new love may beget new fears,
For this love was not vow'd by thee.
And yet it was, thy gift being general;
The ground, thy heart, is mine; whatever shall
Grow there, dear, I should have it all.

Donne says that it is possible that his beloved may have given all her at that time. But, after that, other men, by their tears, sighs, oaths and letters might have created new love in her heart or might do so in future. They can do so because they have their entire stock of sighs, tears etc. The poet says that the newly created love is the cause of fresh anxiety for him because it was not there in the beginning. It was later produced in the heart of the lady love. He says that her heart was entirely his at the beginning. Using an image from agriculture he says that whatever grows there belongs to him and therefore he will have that. The poet uses an image from agriculture. He likens the heart to a ground. Once a person becomes an owner of a piece of land, he has all that grows in that land. In the same way the poet says that he will have all emotions of love that are produced in the heart of his beloved after once possessing her heart.

22.6.3 Stanza 3

Yet I would not have all yet,
He that hath all can have no more;
And since my love doth every day admit
New growth, thou shouldst have new rewards in store;
Thou canst not every day give me thy heart,
If thou canst give it, then thou never gavest it;
Love's riddles are, that though thy heart depart,
It stays at home, and thou with losing savest it;
But we will have a way more liberal,

Than changing hearts, to join them; so we shall

Be one, and one another's all.

The poet says that he would not like to have the love of his beloved for that would stop further growth. He that has all cannot have any more. He says that his love grows to new heights everyday. He is capable of giving more and more love each day. As such, his lady love ought to be able to give him fresh rewards. He says to his beloved that she cannot give him her heart everyday and if she can do so that will mean she has in fact never given her heart to him. It is because if there is true love in her heart for him she must give rise to new love in her heart and therefore must always remain in possession of the heart. The paradoxical facts about love are that though we loose our heart in love yet the heart stays with us. In the case of true love, both the lovers must remain in possession of their hearts so that there may be new growth in the hearts. Thus true lovers save their hearts in losing them. The poet says that they will not change heart in love, rather they will join the two hearts into one.

22.7 LET US SUM UP

In the poem "Lovers' Infiniteness," the author, John Donne, suggest that love is something that a person can only pursue but never truly achieve. Donne manipulates the shifts in attitude along with a set of imagery to emphasize the misconception of love. Since the beginning of history, there are man made works, telling tales of love and its power. Therefore people often believe that love is an incredible power that can truly satisfy man once acquired. However, Donne believes that love can never be fully acquired but only constantly approached. By applying this concept, the author uses the title "Lovers' Infiniteness" that correlates with the meaning of the poem yet is mysterious enough to keep the reader guessing. This indefinite title allows the reader to apply his own interpretation of the title. The author assumes that the common person is clouded with the bandwagon of society that the misconception of love would most likely be their interpretation of this poem. Donne intends to lead the reader on to think that "Lovers' Infiniteness" stands for the eternal love of a couple who regardless of life or death cannot be separate. It is the predictability of such clichés that the author depends on to emphasize his point. The author begins with a melancholy tone, to draw upon the misconception. The first stanza portrays hopelessness and anxiety. The speakers states that regardless of all his "sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters – [he] have spent… no more can be due to [him]." (Donne 6-7) From this statement, the reader again assumes that the poem is about a man who is pursuing a women's love but is troubled because he cannot achieve it. The "sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters" symbolizes all of his efforts and because he still could not acquire "all [her of] love," the author strongly emphasizes the hopelessness in the first stanza. In the second stanza, the speaker still preys on the misconception of love's clichés by presenting anxiety. In this stanza the speaker creates a sense of sympathy by blaming himself for not being able to secure her heart. Even if "new love [is] created" between her and "other men," the speaker accepts that it is because all of his sighs, oaths, and letters, outbid [him]." (Donne 16/17) The picture of a man losing his lover to someone who out matched him develops a feel of drama. However by the end of the second stanza, the speaker begins to insert his thought on love and its true meaning. The speaker reveals his position on the meaning of lovers to the reader. The misconception, anxiety, hopelessness, and sympathy are all lifted here. The reader can finalize that the poem is portraying a positive connation by the third stanza when the speaker finally claims that "since [his] love doth every day admit new growth, [she] shouldst have new rewards in store." His love for her grows each day without limits; there isn't a way that he can love her enough. Therefore when he stated that he "shall never have it all," the reader realizes that the speaker was trying to portray a

connation for love being a method of pursuit because "he that hath all can have no more;" The speaker believes that love can only be pursued. To him, a man cannot acquire love truly. Therefore love is infinite.

22.8 GLOSSARY

Word	Meaning
1. treasure:	wealth, valuable thing.
2. bargain:	an agreement between parties settling what each shall give and take.
3. partial:	biased or prejudiced in favor of a person.
4. beget:	to cause; produce as an effect.
5. liberal:	favorable to progress or reform.

22.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Can you distinguish the physical and spritual love in the poetry of John Donne? In which poems do you find preference of a specific love?

Q2. How has Donne compared love to a piece of land?

22.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q1) How is Donne a Metaphysical poet?

Answer: Metaphysical poetry is distinguished by several unique features; unique metaphors, large and cosmic themes, absence of narrative, and philosophical ideas. Donne invented or originated many of these features in his poetry, and he was a master of this type. Metaphysical poetry may be lyrical in its tone, but its driving force is not necessarily the emotion of the poet. The striving to understand the world and ideas through strange and sometimes strained comparisons, esoteric and philosophical abstract ideas, and paradoxes and heterogenous parallels are the main differences between metaphysical and other types of poetry. These are common in Donne.

Q2) Choose a paradox in one of Donne's poems, and show how he puts two different ideas together to make a point or explain an idea.

Answer: A good example of this would be "The Flea," in which Donne describes the combination of his and his lady-love's blood in the flea's body like the union of the two lovers in marriage. How Donne could convert the bite of a pest into a love poem shows his ability to create new thoughts by combining difficult ideas with each other in unusual ways.

Q 3) How does Donne treat physical and spiritual love in his works?

Answer: As a Metaphysical poet, Donne often uses physical love to evoke spiritual love. Indeed, this metaphysical conceit in much of the love poetry is not explicitly spelled out. To this end, Donne's poetry often suggests that the love the poet has for a particular beloved is greatly superior to others' loves. Loving someone is as much a religious experience as a physical one, and the best love transcends mere physicality. In this kind of love, the lovers share something of a higher order than that of more mundane lovers. In "Love's Infiniteness," for example, Donne begins with a traditional-sounding love poem, but by the third stanza he has transformed the love between himself and his beloved into an abstract ideal which can be possessed absolutely and completely. His later poetry (after he joined the ministry) maintains some

of the carnal playfulness from earlier poetry, but transforms it into a celebration of union between soul and soul or soul and God.

Q4. How does Donne treat physical and spiritual love in his works?

Q5. What are the various symbols and images used in "Lovers' Infiniteness"?

Q6. How apt is the title of the poem "Lovers' Infiniteness"?

22.11 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. In "Lovers' Infiniteness," what does the speaker demand?
   a) That God listen to his prayer
   b) All of his lady's love
   c) song
   d) That he be heard
2. In "Lovers' Infiniteness," what does "infiniteness" most likely refer to?
   a) The infiniteness of the speaker's love
   b) The lover's heart
   c) The infiniteness of God's love
   d) The universe

Answers: 1-b, 2-a

22.12 SUGGESTED READING

- Redpath, Theodore. *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne.* Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Ray, Robert H. *A John Donne Companion (Routledge Revivals)*. Taylor & Francis, 2014.
- Jeddle. John Donne | Key Themes. YouTube, 25 May 2022, https://youtu.be/cByDvDY5ylk.

"THE CANONIZATION", "BATTER MY HEART", "HYMN TO GOD"

STRUCTURE

23.1 INTRODUCTION

John Donne (1572–1631) was a major English poet and preacher, known for Metaphysical poetry, which blends intellect, emotion, paradox, and complex imagery. In his poetry he has exploresd themes of love, faith, sin, death, and divine redemption. In "The Canonization", Donne defends his love against societal criticism, arguing that true lovers achieve a kind of sainthood through love, making their passion worthy of eternal praise. "Batter My Heart" is a desperate spiritual plea where the poet asks God to violently reshape his sinful soul, portraying salvation as a struggle involving divine force and inner surrender. In "A Hymn to God the Father", Donne confesses his sins with anxiety and humility, but ends with hope in God's mercy and Christ's redemption, showing his deep personal faith despite fear of judgment.

23.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Introduce learners to the summary and critical analysis of John Donne's "The Canonization", focusing on its central themes of love and spirituality.
2. Analyze the theological and emotional depth in Donne's "Batter My Heart" and "A Hymn to God the Father", exploring themes of redemption and divine love.
3. Examine Donne's use of metaphysical conceits, paradox, and symbolism across these poems to convey complex ideas about love and faith.

After going through this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to summarize and critically analyze the themes of love, spirituality, and paradox in "The Canonization".
2. Learners will be able to examine Donne's exploration of faith, redemption, and divine love in "Batter My Heart" and "A Hymn to God the Father".
3. Learners will be able to evaluate the literary devices, such as metaphysical conceit, symbolism, and paradox, used in these poems to deepen their meaning.

23.3 "THE CANONIZATION"

In "The Canonization," Donne explores the theme of love and its spiritual and societal significance, using metaphysical conceits and intricate language to convey the depth and intensity of the speaker's emotions.

23.3.1 Summary

Stanza 1

The speaker dismisses those who criticize his love, asserting that their criticisms are trivial and misdirected. He compares his love to the love of saints, implying that his love is as valid and worthy of praise as religious devotion.

Stanza 2

The speaker emphasizes that his love and his beloved's love are intertwined and beyond the understanding of others. He challenges anyone who thinks their love is profane or sinful, asserting that their love is pure and sacred.

Stanza 3

The speaker acknowledges that he and his beloved are misunderstood by the world, but he asserts that their love elevates them above worldly concerns. He describes their love as a "dying life," suggesting that it is both intense and everlasting.

Stanza 4

The speaker rejects materialistic pursuits and the accumulation of wealth, claiming that his love is richer and more valuable than gold. He contrasts his love with "busy old fools" who waste their time on trivial matters.

Stanza 5

The speaker dismisses the notion that lovers are isolated and self-absorbed. He asserts that their love is so strong that it transforms them into a single, harmonious entity, connected in both mind and soul.

Stanza 6

The speaker addresses those who mock his love, inviting them to witness its intensity and sincerity. He claims that their love is so powerful that it has the ability to elevate them to a divine state.

Stanza 7

The speaker uses the metaphor of alchemy to describe the transformation of his love. He implies that their love is a mystical process that turns ordinary experiences into valuable and rare elements.

Stanza 8

The speaker challenges those who consider his love trivial, asserting that their love is like a pilgrimage or a spiritual journey. He claims that their love is both rare and precious, deserving of recognition.

Stanza 9

The speaker rejects societal norms and expectations, asserting that he and his beloved are free from the constraints of convention. He encourages them to continue living in their unconventional and unique way.

Stanza 10

The speaker concludes by challenging critics to see the truth of their love. He declares that their love has been "canonized" or made sacred, emphasizing its worth and importance.

23.3.2 Themes

The main themes of "The Canonization" by John Donne are rich and varied, contributing to the depth of the poem's meaning. Here are the main themes and their significance:

Love and Spirituality

The theme of love is central to the poem, but it's not just romantic love. The poem explores the idea of love as a spiritual and transformative force that elevates the lovers to a divine realm. This theme is significant because it challenges conventional notions of love and presents it as a profound and sacred experience that transcends the physical.

Rejection of Materialism

The speaker rejects material wealth and the pursuit of materialistic goals. This rejection signifies his belief in the superiority of love over worldly riches, suggesting that the intangible and emotional aspects of life hold greater value.

Society and Convention

The poem challenges societal norms and expectations by portraying the lovers as unconventional and rejecting the opinions of those who mock them. This theme highlights the idea that true love operates beyond societal constraints and norms.

Criticism and Defiance

The speaker addresses critics who misunderstand and trivialize their love. He expresses defiance against their judgment, asserting the worthiness and sanctity of their relationship. This theme is significant as it reinforces the idea that love is a personal and profound experience that cannot be easily judged or dismissed.

Transformative Power

The theme of transformation is woven throughout the poem. The speaker compares love to alchemy, suggesting that their love has the power to transform ordinary experiences into extraordinary

and valuable ones. This theme underscores the idea that love can change perspectives and elevate the human experience.

Union and Identity

The concept of union is important in the poem, as the lovers are depicted as being so deeply connected that they are essentially one entity. This theme explores the idea of shared identity and unity in love.

Spiritual Aspects of Love

The poem blurs the lines between romantic love and spiritual devotion. This theme emphasizes the sacredness and purity of their love, presenting it as a form of worship or religious experience. The significance of these themes lies in Donne's skillful use of metaphysical conceits and complex language to explore the depths of human emotions and relationships. The themes allow readers to reflect on the nature of love, its various dimensions, and its capacity to transcend societal norms and conventions. Through these themes, Donne challenges readers to contemplate the intricate connections between the physical and the spiritual aspects of love.

23.3.3 Critical Analysis

The word 'Canonization' means the act or process of changing an ordinary religious person into a saint in Catholic Christian religion. This title suggests that the poet and his beloved will become 'saints of love' in the future: and they will be regarded as saints of true love in the whole world in the future.

The poem is written again in a defiant and frustrating tone. He starts the poem aggressively with imperative sentence, "For God's sake hold your tongue and let us live." The poem is written in first person plural pronoun. But the speaker remains only the lover; beloved hardly utters a word in the whole poem. The poem is written in monologue form. The first stanza makes the tempo and it seems that the whole poem needs to be finished in one breathe.The poem is perfect example of metaphysical poetry, he makes his arguments hyperbolically and that his sighs have not drowned any ship, nor has his tears flooded any ground, why should people not allow them to love. The stanza is similar to the stanza from the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," the words like tears, flood, sighs and tempest are repeated in both the stanzas.

The metaphysical conceits are again used freely by Donne in this poem, he compares himself and his beloved with fly and says that they are parasites to, for they are made so by their love, "Call her one, me another fly,/ We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,/ And we in us find the eagle and the dove." This stanza makes contrasting imagery of peace and violence, Dove is an image of peace, whereas fly and eagle represent the violent imagery. He compares his love with legends and says even if it be not fit for canonization; it will be fit for the verse, like those of Romeo and Juliet. The poet concludes the poem on a high note with a lot of optimism and says after their death their love will be revered and they will be invoked and everybody will like love like them.

Fusion of emotion and intellect is another important feature of the poem. The fusion is observed in the comparison of the lovers to the mysterious phoenix and the divine saints. The speaker assumes that like the phoenix, the lovers would 'die and rise at the same time' and prove

'mysterious by their love'. Reference to this mythical being well sums up Donne's theory of sexual metaphysics; a real and complete relation between a man and a woman fuses their soul into one whole. The poet is both sensuous and realistic in his treatment of love. The romantic affair and the moral status of the worldly lovers are compared to the ascetic life of unworldly saints. Thus, "Canonization" is in many ways a typical metaphysical poem where the complexity of substance is expressed with simplicity of expression. The general argument and its development are clear like its dramatic situations. The allusions are sometimes too forced, but that is a part of such poetry.

The poem is written in five stanzas, metered in iambic lines ranging from trimeter to pentameter; in each of the nine-line stanzas, the first, third, fourth, and seventh lines are in pentameter, the second, fifth, sixth, and eighth in tetrameter, and the ninth in trimeter. (The stress pattern in each stanza is 545544543.) The rhyme scheme in each stanza is ABBACCCDD.The poem was used by Cleanth Brooks in his "Well wrought Urn: The Study of Poetry" as an example to show the readers how the poems be studied from formalistic point of view.

Check Your Progress: "The Canonization"

Complete the following sentences based on your understanding of "The Canonization":

1. In "The Canonization", the speaker defends his love, suggesting that it is pure and worthy of _____.
2. The metaphor of lovers being compared to saints suggests that love can achieve a form of _____ immortality.
3. The poem uses the recurring symbol of a _____ to represent the unity and perfection of love.
4. The speaker dismisses societal criticism, claiming that their love harms neither _____ nor individuals.
5. The paradoxical nature of Donne's argument in the poem is central to its classification as _____ poetry.

Answers: Canonization, Spiritual, Phoenix, Kings, Metaphysical

23.4 "BATTER MY HEART, THREE PERSON'D GOD"

This poem is part of John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* sequence, which was probably written during the years 1609-1611 and meditates on God, death, divine love, and faith. "Holy Sonnet 14" comes later in the series and depicts a speaker's personal crisis of faith. The poem also boldly compares God's divine love to a rough, erotic seduction. This intimate and unconventional portrayal of a speaker's longing for faith has made the poem one of Donne's most famous.

The speaker asks the "three-personed God" to "batter" his heart, for as yet God only knocks politely, breathes, shines, and seeks to mend. The speaker says that to rise and stand, he needs God to overthrow him and bend his force to break, blow, and burn him, and to make him new. Like a town that

has been captured by the enemy, which seeks unsuccessfully to admit the army of its allies and friends, the speaker works to admit God into his heart, but Reason, like God's viceroy, has been captured by the enemy and proves "weak or untrue." Yet the speaker says that he loves God dearly and wants to be loved in return, but he is like a maiden who is betrothed to God's enemy. The speaker asks God to "divorce, untie, or break that knot again," to take him prisoner; for until he is God's prisoner, he says, he will never be free, and he will never be chaste until God ravishes him.

Critical Analysis

This poem is an appeal to God, pleading with Him not for mercy or clemency or benevolent aid but for a violent, almost brutal overmastering; thus, it implores God to perform actions that would usually be considered extremely sinful—from battering the speaker to actually raping him, which, he says in the final line, is the only way he will ever be chaste. The poem's metaphors (the speaker's heart as a captured town, the speaker as a maiden betrothed to God's enemy) work with its extraordinary series of violent and powerful verbs (batter, o'erthrow, bend, break, blow, burn, divorce, untie, break, take, imprison, enthrall, ravish) to create the image of God as an overwhelming, violent conqueror. The bizarre nature of the speaker's plea finds its apotheosis in the paradoxical final couplet, in which the speaker claims that only if God takes him prisoner can he be free, and only if God ravishes him can he be chaste.

As is amply illustrated by the contrast between Donne's religious lyrics and his metaphysical love poems, Donne is a poet deeply divided between religious spirituality and a kind of carnal lust for life. Many of his best poems, including "Batter my heart, three-personed God," mix the discourse of the spiritual and the physical or of the holy and the secular. In this case, the speaker achieves that mix by claiming that he can only overcome sin and achieve spiritual purity if he is forced by God in the most physical, violent, and carnal terms imaginable.

23.5 "HYMN TO GOD, MY GOD, IN MY SICKNESS": SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

"Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness" is Donne's splendid achievement in religious poetry. Conceived as a deathbed meditation on human suffering, physical death and resurrection in heaven, the poet is in perfect control of his emotion. He gains assurance that his sufferings on the sickbed and death will lead to eternal life in heaven. He uses splendid conceits to achieve this comfort.

In the first stanza, Heaven, man's goal after death, is picturised as a place with angels and saints singing and playing on their harps around the throne of God, the King of Kings. Donne evolves a concrete metaphor of himself on his deathbed as a court musician who is tuning up his instrument at the door of the King's Court in preparation for entering His Court to take his place in the choir of saints. He will be made not only one of the musicians who produce the harmonious music of heaven, but also part of the music itself. For this, he must tune his "instrument" (i.e. soul) to remove all that will create discord in the serene and joyous music of the "choir of saints." He must enter Heaven with his soul free of all earthly blemishes.

After the statement of the personal problem, the argument begins with stanza 2. Donne introduces the metaphor of geographical exploration and elaborates through stanzas 3 and 4. The poet's physicians, who study him with great concern may be thought of as geographers and he, lying on the sickbed, may be thought of as a map of the world. The physicians as geographers diagnose his case as South-west discovery. For the geographers, the "South-west discovery" refers to the discovery of the South-west Passage called the Straits of Magellan. As Ferdinand Magellan passed through the stormy straits which he discovered to die in the West, in the Philippines, so Donne himself is about to pass through the straits (i.e.

difficulties, sufferings) of fever to his own "West" (death). In case of Donne on his deathbed the South-west discovery means death (West) through high temperature (South).

The third stanza carries forward the metaphor of exploration. Just as the geographers looking at Magellan's passage on the map think only of Magellan's death, similarly, Donne's physicians only see that he will die of fever and feel sad. But Donne himself experiences joy and excitement of an actual explorer who has at last found the long-sought westward passage to the East. He does not regret that the currents in the "straits" will allow no one to return from his passage. Not afraid of the hardships, he goes forward into the West which now opens into the East. West and East which seem far removed from each other on a flat map are really very close on a globe; similarly death (his West) and resurrection in Heaven (his East) are very close to each other. Death leads to rebirth or resurrection in Heaven.

Medieval geographers tried to locate the Earthly Paradise which was considered a type of Heaven. In stanza 4, Donne develops the idea that bliss on earth, i.e., the riches of the world, can be reached only through straits. He identifies particular geographical strait with each of the three continents – Europe, Asia, Africa – which constituted the whole world for the medieval geographers and then each continent is identified with one locality of Earthly Paradise with its heavenly bliss. Peace and bliss on earth, typical of Heaven, can be reached through suffering ("straits").

In the last two stanzas, he uses theological imagery to present this argument. Suffering and death are punishment for Adam's Sin. After undergoing them, Donne may expect salvation through Christ's saving Grace. He makes use of the myth that the Cross was erected on the original site of the Garden of Eden. For Donne, this means that paradise with Adam's tree, which brought death, and Calvary with Jesus Christ's Cross, which brought resurrection and eternal life are related. The two Adams – the Adam who brought suffering and death and Adam who brought resurrection meet in Donne. As the first Adam's sweat (suffering and death) surrounds Donne's face (his mortal body), so the last Adam's blood (sacrifice and resurrection) may embrace Donne's immortal soul.

In the final stanza, the emphasis is on the parallel between Donne's experience on one hand, and Christ's crucifixion on the other. He prays that his soul ("me") be received by God in Heaven. At the time of crucifixion Christ dressed in a purple robe was offered a "crown of thorns." In Heaven, he was offered the Heavenly crown after he triumphed over the mortal sufferings. Donne equates his own mortal sufferings with Christ's sufferings on the Cross. Wrapped in the "purple" (red) of Christ's redeeming blood and having borne his sufferings on his sickbed, he prays that his soul ("me") be received in Heaven with the crown of resurrection and eternal life. In the last three lines, Donne describes the poem as a sermon on the word of God, which he used to preach to others to save their souls. This is sermon in the form of a poem where he addresses to himself for the purpose of confirming his religious faith. Like a sermon, the poem closes with a Biblical text ("my text") in the end: "Therefore that He may raise, the Lord throws down." The Biblical text which he has chosen for this poem-sermon summarizes the message of the poem. God requires man to experience suffering and death in order that He may justly grant man immortality. Suffering and death are man's atonement for the Original Sin.

23.6 GLOSSARY

1. **in my sickness:** The poem was written probably in his great sickness in December 1623 to comfort himself.

2. **holy room:** Heaven. According to Christians, angels and saints play on their harps and sing songs in Heaven.

3. **Thy Music:** The poet will join the choir of saints singing harmoniously around the throne of God. It also means that the poet will be made into music itself.

4. **I tune the instrument:** instrument is the soul.

In order to prepare for eternal life in Heaven after death, the poet must tune his soul so that its music is in accord with the serene and joyous music in Heaven. This hymn is his attempt to compose his mind to accept suffering and death to gain resurrection into eternal life.

4. **Cosmographers:** geographers.

5. **map:** In ancient philosophy it was believed that every man was a microcosm (i.e., little world). Donne changes the traditional metaphor of man as microcosm (the little world) to man as a map of the world. As he lies in the sickbed, he is the map of the world.

6. **(9-10) South-west discovery:** This refers to the Straits of Magellan – the narrow water channel connecting Atlantic Ocean with Pacific Ocean between Tierra del Fuego and Chile in South America. As Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521), the Portuguese navigator, who was the first one to circumnavigate the world, made a South-west journey through the Straits of Magellan (and later died in Philippines), so Donne will make his last journey "through the straits of fever" (per fretum febris). South suggests heat and west (where the sun sets) suggest death; so, Donne's "South-west discovery" is that he proceeds westward (dies) by going south (by fever). The word "straits" has two meanings: (i) a water channel connecting two seas and (ii) difficulties. East (where the sun rises) suggest life, rebirth.

7. **(13-14) West and East …** are one. Donne says elsewhere: "if a flat Map be but pasted upon a round Globe, the farthest East and the farthest west meet, and are all one."

8. **(16-17) Pacific Sea** suggests heavenly peace; eastern riches stand for heaven; and Jerusalem stands, as always, for the Heavenly City.

9. **(18) Anyan, Magellan, Gibraltar:** All these are straits. Anyan is Bering Straits; Magellan, as explained earlier, is Magellan Straits; and Gibraltar is the Strait of Gibraltar. The straits at places are very narrow (e.g., the narrowest breadth of the Strait of Gibraltar is 9 meters); so navigation in straits is very dangerous. Donne develops the idea that the riches of the world (which typify the Bliss of Heaven) can be reached only through straits i.e., through difficulties.

10. **(21) Paradise:** The original home of Adam and Eve.

Calvary: The hill outside the ancient city of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified.

11. **(22) Adam's tree:** The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Paradise. Adam committed Sin by disobeying God and eating the fruit from the Forbidden tree. Jesus Christ, by taking the punishment for this Sin upon himself, made eternal life for man possible.

12. **(23) both Adams:** Adam and Christ; the sinner and the receiver of punishment for Sin respectively.

13. **(24) the first Adam's sweat:** suffering and death that were the consequences of Adam's sin.

14. **(25) the last Adam's blood:** Christ's sacrifice which promised resurrection of the dead. All those who wash themselves in Christ's blood, that is, have faith in Christ, will be absolved of their Sin.

15. **(26) in his purple wrapped:** At crucifixion Christ was dressed in purple robes and was crowned with a crown of thorns. The triumphant Christ wore royal robes and heavenly crown when he came to Heaven.

23.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Donne as a Metaphysical poet.
2. Comment upon Donne's use of conceit, imagery, and diction with special reference to "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."
3. Analyse recurring religious themes in Donne's Poetry.

23.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 In "The Canonization," the speaker compares his love to the_____.

A) Stars in the sky

B) Sun and moon

C) Saints and martyrs

D) Flowers in a garden

Q.2 What is the central metaphor used in "Batter my Heart, Three-Person'd God"?

A) A stormy sea

B) A prison break

C) A wounded heart

D) A burning fire

Q.3 In "Hymn to God, My God, In My Sickness," what does the speaker emphasize as he approaches death?

A) His regret for missed opportunities

B) His unwavering faith in God's love

C) His anger at the injustice of life

D) His sorrow for leaving loved ones behind

Q.4 In “The Canonization,” what does the speaker mock as the worldly pursuits of critics?

A) Scientific discoveries

B) Political power

C) Romantic relationships

D) Literary fame

Q.5 In “Batter my Heart, Three-Person’d God,” the speaker desires God to _____.

A) Strengthen his resolve

B) Renew his faith

C) Break, burn, and rebuild him

D) Shower him with blessings

Q.6 In “Hymn to God, My God, In My Sickness,” what does the speaker express a desire for when facing death?

A) A grand funeral procession

B) Eternal salvation

C) Immortality through fame

D) A peaceful departure

Q.7 What is the speaker’s attitude toward earthly love in “The Canonization”?

A) He glorifies and idealizes it

B) He rejects and condemns it

C) He expresses nostalgia for it

D) He dismisses it as trivial

Q.8 In “Batter My Heart, Three-Person’d God,” the speaker uses violent imagery to convey his need for _____.

A) Physical healing

B) Spiritual transformation

C) Material wealth

D) Romantic love

Q.9 In “Hymn to God, My God, In My Sickness,” what does the speaker express regarding his relationship with God?

A) He questions God’s existence

B) He blames God for his suffering

C) He seeks forgiveness for his sins

D) He acknowledges God’s supremacy and mercy

Q.10 What does the speaker ask of God in "The Canonization"?

A) To make him wealthy

B) To reunite him with his beloved

C) To grant him eternal life

D) To bless his creative endeavors

Answers: 1C, 2B, 3B, 4D, 5C, 6B, 7A, 8B, 9D, 10B

23.9 SUGGESTED READING

- *A Study Guide for John Donne's "The Canonization".* Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016. ebook.
- Hugh A. Robbins, Robin. *The Poems of John Donne: Religion Poems, Wedding Celebrations, Verse Epistles to Patronesses, Commemorations and Anniversaries*. Pearson/Longman, 2008.

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

STRUCTURE

24.1 INTRODUCTION

The Rape of the Lock is a mock-epic poem written by Alexander Pope in 1712, later revised in 1714. It humorously addresses a real-life incident in which a lock of hair was cut from the head of a young woman named Arabella Fermor by her admirer, Lord Petre, sparking a feud between their families. Through this poem, Pope satirizes the triviality and vanity of the aristocratic society of his time, employing the grandeur of epic poetry to highlight the absurdity of the situation. The work is celebrated for its witty commentary, elegant versification, and its deft use of heroic couplets.

24.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Introduce learners to the social, political, and historical changes that shaped the Augustan Age, including its emphasis on order, reason, and satire.
2. Examine the major works of Alexander Pope, particularly their themes, style, and critique of society.
3. Analyze how literature of the Augustan Age reflects the intellectual climate and cultural concerns of the period.

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to summarize the key social, political, and historical developments of the Augustan Age and their influence on literature.
2. Learners will be able to analyze the themes and stylistic features of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

3. Learners will be able to critically discuss how the literature of the Augustan Age addressed issues such as morality, politics, and human folly.

24.3 THE ENGLISH AUGUSTAN AGE OR THE AGE OF POPE

About the middle of the seventeenth century, a change began to come over the spirit of English literature. This change is due to no mere fluctuation in literary fashion, but is deeply rooted in the life of the time. The age of the Renaissance was an age of spiritual and material expansion. Englishmen realised for the first time their solidarity as a nation; and, released suddenly from continental struggles, especially from the dread of Spanish supremacy, they found an outlet for their excited emotions in drama and song. Loyalty to Elizabeth became an article of faith; pride and delight in their country's past as religious creed. But the emotional fervour was too high-pitched to last. Already in the early years of the seventeenth century, its splendid exuberance had degenerated into extravagance and violence. The lofty idealism that had steadied the venturesome bark of Elizabethan poesy was growing attenuated, and the great minds in the closing years of the age, like Bacon and Milton, reflect in their writings the dawn of fresh interests. In their works, the purification of civic and political life emerges more and into the forefront.

Increasingly, during the seventeenth century, men's thoughts were directed to problems of civic and national life. The wild speculative interest and imaginative fervour of the Renaissance gave place to a partial application of these ideals to actual existence; and naturally enough literature itself became involved with the problems of practical politics. One may speak therefore, of three features in the literature of the new age.

Firstly, the triumph of the classical ideal was, after all, a natural result of the Renaissance. Secondly, the Romantic spirit had been aroused among other things by a study of Greek and Roman Classics. It was the substance that excited men at first–when the early exhilaration had worn off, the methods of the old writers attracted more and more attention. This classicism was fostered and encouraged by the political needs of the age; but even then the change might have been more gradual, less decisive, had it not been for the fact that a brilliant set of writers had arisen in France, actuated by classical methods, who excited a profound influence upon the literature of Europe. The influence, upon England was especially marked for Court reasons. Much of Charles' exile had been spent in France; he had been attracted towards its literature, and did his best to enforce the ideals he saw there, actuating English literature. Thirdly, psychologically, the new spirit involved the substitution of the critical for the imaginative spirit. Such a change is inevitable when literature is made the vehicle of attacking the political life of the day. The creative imagination moves on the plane of primal human qualities; it is concerned with the interpretation of human nature, and although passing movements may give ''a local habitation and a name'' to some of its diaramic pictures, the main object is not to criticize the life of the day, but to interpret it.

The new classical spirit, however, is above all critical and analytic, not creative and sympathetic; it brings the intellect rather than the poetic imagination into play. And the merits of the new school are to be found in its intellectual force and actuality; just as its demerits lie in its lack of deep imagination and tendency to deal with manners and superficialities, rather than with elemental things and the larger issues of life. Obviously then, this change was better adapted for a kind of literature which aimed especially at clearness, conciseness, and concentrated force. The less attractive aspect of this ideal is seen in the verse of the day; the finer and more valuable aspects in its prose.

The object of the leading writers of the time was to avoid extravagance and emotionalism. This, in many cases, they did so successfully as to suppress altogether the emotional and basic qualities of great

poetry, though their method found congenial expression in the satire. Poetry, starved of emotional sustenance, had to fall back on epigram, but the ‘‘good sense’’ ideal formulated in 1673 by Boileau was an admirable one for prose that had suffered from Romantic extravagances.

Summing up, therefore, different aspects of change in literature, we may say: There was (1) the academic aspect — the substitution of classicism for Romanticism; (2) the political aspect, due (a) to the general influence of France at this time, and (b) the particular influence through the medium of the king and his court; (3) the psychological aspect that underlay these, signifying surely more than a change of fashion, a change of attitude. While influencing all of them was the general drift of the age, towards matters of civil and national interest.

24.4 EXTERNAL CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE NEW AGE

The horrors of the Plague had darkened the careless gaiety of Restoration London, and the Great Fire that led to the transformation of its architecture are reflected in the literature of the time. The Plague was no new scourge. From medieval times, it had exacted its grim toll ever and anon. The Black Death of 1349 and the Sweating Sickness of 1507, were not easily forgotten. Worst of all was the Plague that broke out first in Tudor times, with repeated visits during the seventeenth century.

The characteristics of an age are more faithfully reflected in its imaginative literature than in its formal histories and chronicles. Pope reflects the hard brilliance, somewhat facile optimism of his generation in much the same way as Tennyson mirrors in his work the religious perplexities and social ideals of the Victorian England; and Addison is called the Thackeray of his age, in his pictures of the tastes, the fashions, and the follies of the “Town.”

The poet, the dramatist of the preceding ages depended for his livelihood upon a patron. Patronage still existed and Pope made his fortune by what has been called ‘‘a kind of joint stock patronage,’’ where the aristocratic patron found it convenient to induce his friend to subscribe towards the maintenance of the poet. But the older system was dying out. At first, the poet or the pamphleteer attached himself to some influential Minister, using his pen on behalf of this gentleman’s cause. Afterwards, when the Minister found he could get his work done more cheaply than by hiring men of taste, the literary man was thrown upon the suffrages of a public then rising into existence.

The coffee-house and later the clubs were centres around which radiated the thoughtful and intelligent. The politicians, lawyers, clergymen, literary men, met at these places and discussed the problems of the hour. Thus, the author and the public were forced into intimate proximity. The coffee-houses were the lineal descendants of the barbers’ shops (monastic or lay), the university dining and debating halls, and the taverns of the Middle Ages. Coffee-houses now multiplied rapidly and soon each house had its distinctive clientele – lawyers favouring one politician to another, and so forth. The famous ‘‘Wills’’ in Covent Garden was patronised by Pepys and Dryden. This place was termed the ‘‘Coffee-house.’’ It was a home for scandal and lampoons. Dryden was an agreeable, good-natured, somewhat, self-opinionated man. He enjoyed a great reputation as a conversationalist, in much the same way as did Addison who succeeded him.

Therefore, the coffee-house of the time was, as we see, the school of wit and dialectic. What the tavern had been to the sixteenth century, the coffee-house was to the seventeenth and eighteenth. It reached the height of its popularity in the eighteenth, but before its close coffee-house had passed into practical oblivion.

Check Your Progress: Augustan Age

Fill in the blanks with the correct terms related to the Augustan Age:

1. The Augustan Age is often referred to as the Age of _____, reflecting its admiration for classical ideals of order and harmony.
2. One of Alexander Pope's most famous satirical works is *The* _____ *of the Lock*.
3. The Augustan writers used satire to expose _____ in society, politics, and human behavior.
4. Pope's use of heroic _____ is a hallmark of his poetic style.
5. The literary works of the Augustan Age were heavily influenced by the political stability following the _____ Revolution.

Answers: Reason, *Rape*, Folly, Couplets, Glorious

24.5 ALEXANDER POPE: HIS LIFE

Alexander Pope was born on May 21, 1688 in London in a Roman Catholic family. His father was a prosperous tradesman. He, himself, was a sickly and delicate child. Sickly in body and lonely in spirit, he found his only delight in books. In those days, Roman Catholicism was a great handicap and the child was, therefore, denied the privilege of education at a first-class school. With a studious bent of mind, he made up for his imperfect schooling by reading at home. His religion also made it impossible for him to enter any of the professions, and he could not take up any business because he was not only weak in health but actually deformed. His own preference for literature, and the fact that his father was financially independent, and had retired to a small estate on the borders of Windsor forest, made it possible for him to follow his own inclinations. He displayed remarkable precocity in verse-writing, as many thousands of lines had been written by him before he was sixteen.

When he was fourteen, a translation of Statius was made by him, which was followed two or three years later by the *Pastorals*, which was published around 1709. He later on came in close association with poets like Walsh, Gray, Addison and Swift. He became a member of the Scribblers' Literary Club formed under the presidentship of Swift. It was soon after this that Voltaire called him ''The best poet of England and, at present, of all the world.'' Thus, by the time Pope was twenty-four, he had come to be regarded as the leading poet of his time.

In appearance, Pope was singularly unimpressive. He had a body of miserable weakness. He had inherited headaches from his mother and a crooked figure from his father. By middle age, his physical weakness was so constant that he could not dress without help. His chronic ill-health made him complain of his life as a ''long disease.''

Pope died in 1774 and was buried at Twickenham. He deserved to be buried in Westminster Abbey, but being a catholic, his religion prevented him from the honour which was certainly his due.

24.6 HIS WORKS: INFLUENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN LITERATURE

Three poems in which Pope is emphatically the spokesman of his age are *The Rape of the Lock*, picturing its frivolities; *The Dunciad*, unveiling its squalor; *The Essay on Man*, echoing its philosophy. His own attitude towards literature is nicely expressed in the *Essay on Criticism*, where the merits and limitations of the eighteenth-century school of poetry are clearly exhibited. What they admire, what they dislike, is patent to the most casual reader. The neatness of his rapier wit is happily shown in the passing allusion to the churlish old critic John Dennis (1657-1734), author of a tragedy, *Appius and Virginia:*

But Appius reddens at each word you speak.

Of his work, as a whole, it may be said that he was a master of literary mosaic. There is nothing of the easy breadth and vigour of Dryden in his satirical verse; on the other hand, he excelled his predecessor in exquisite finish and in detailed touches. His poems have no solidarity or homogeneity, with the exception, perhaps, of *The Rape of the Lock*. Rather they may be likened to polished fragments, cunningly fitted in, to form a whole and remarkable workmanship, rather than integral beauty.

Using the Drydenean couplet, he imparted to it a gossamerlike delicacy of touch that more than compensated for the lack of strength. If at times the glitter and sparkle fade into dullness, the occasions are comparatively rare, and the amazing thing is that he sustained his mercurial smartness and aptness for so long. There are few graces of style beyond crispness and lightness. The beauties, though abundant, are of the obvious kind. No one can dress up a commonplace sentiment or humdrum thought in finer clothes than he; but there is no hint in his work of high imagination, of subtle fancy, no sense of mystery, no romance, no depth of feeling, no greatness of impulse. In the era that followed, the deficiencies of Pope in this respect were so glaring as to call down on him undeserved contempt. With Jane Austen, we must grant him the ‘‘two inches of ivory,’’ and within these limitations there is no more skillful artist. If he is not to be reckoned with the master-spirits of English Literature, he was at any rate, an incomparable craftsman and a delightful wit.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here are some keywords from the sections that you have just read. Take a thorough look at these words as they will help enrich your vocabulary:

Mock-epic: A satirical poem that imitates the style and form of epic poetry but treats a trivial subject in a grand, exaggerated manner.

Vanity: Excessive pride in or admiration of one’s own appearance or achievements; self-importance.

Attenuated: Weakened or reduced in force, intensity, or value.

Exuberance: High-spirited enthusiasm or energy; lively excitement.

Dialectic: The art of investigating or discussing the truth of opinions through logical argument.

Superficialities: Aspects or details that are on the surface and not deeply meaningful or important.

Epigram: A short and witty poem or saying that expresses an idea in a clever and amusing way.

Precarious: Not securely held or in a stable position; dangerously uncertain or risky.

Homogeneity: The quality of being uniform, consistent, or similar in nature or composition.

Gossamerlike: Extremely delicate, light, and thin—like a spider's web or fine silk.

24.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Give an assessment of English Augustan Age.
2. Write a note on the biography of the author Alexander Pope.

24.8 LET US SUM UP

Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was an influential English poet, satirist, and critic of the 18th century. Born in London, he faced lifelong health challenges due to a rare illness that stunted his growth. Despite his physical limitations, Pope became one of the leading literary figures of his time. He is best known for his satirical works, including *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*, which targeted social follies and literary mediocrity. His translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* earned him acclaim, showcasing his mastery of heroic couplets. Pope's wit, keen observation, and skillful use of form left a lasting impact on English literature.

24.9 SUGGESTED READING

- Erskine-Hill, Howard. *Alexander Pope: A Literary Biography*. Clemson University Press w/ LUP, 2024.
- Dennis, John. *The Age Of Pope*. Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2023.
- Poetry Foundation. "Alexander Pope." Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/ poets/ alexander-pope.

BACKGROUND TO THE POEM

STRUCTURE

25.1 INTRODUCTION

The Rape of the Lock is a mock-epic narrative poem written by Alexander Pope.

25.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Familiarize learners with the historical and cultural background of *The Rape of the Lock*, including its satirical purpose and inspiration.
2. Provide a critical summary of the poem, focusing on its themes, structure, and use of mock-epic conventions.
3. Analyze the literary devices employed by Pope such as satire, imagery, and heroic couplets.

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to explain the background and context of *The Rape of the Lock*, including the real-life incident that inspired it.
2. Learners will be able to summarize the major events and themes of *The Rape of the Lock* such as vanity, social satire, and the trivialization of serious epic forms.
3. Learners will be able to identify and analyze Pope's use of mock-epic techniques in portraying aristocratic society and its frivolities.

25.3 BACKGROUND TO THE POEM

The poem, *The Rape of the Lock*, is a masterpiece of its kind. It was written to patch up a quarrel occasioned by a little piece of gallantry of Lord Petre who, in a pleasure party, found means to cut off a favourite lock of Arabella Fermor. A mutual friend, Mr. Caryll, laid the matter before Pope so that his wit might laugh away the clouds of unpleasant feeling that gathered between the two families of Fermor and Lord Petre. It was in response to Mr. Caryll's suggestion that Pope composed the poem. He wrote a letter to Mrs. Arabella Fermor, in which he made his noble intentions clear to her, as to why he had written the poem, the contents of his letter written to her are as follows;

MADAM,

It will be in vain to deny that I have some regard for this piece, since I dedicate it to you. Yet you may bear me witness, it was intended only to divert a few young ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own. But as it was communicated with the air of a Secret, it soon found its way into the world. An imperfect copy having been offer'd to a Bookseller, you had the good-nature for my sake to consent to the publication of one more correct: This I was forced to, before I had expected half my design, for the Machinery was entirely wanting to complete it.

The Machinery, Madam, is a term invented by the Critics, to signify that part which the Deities, Angels, or Demons are made to act in a Poem: For the ancient Poets are in one respect like many modern Ladies: Let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These machines I determined to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of Spirits.

I know how disagreeable it is to make use of hard words before a Lady; but tis so much the concern of a Poet to have his words understood, and particularly by your Sex, that you must give me leave to explain two or three difficult terms.

The Rosicrucians are a people I must bring you acquainted with. The best account I know of them is in a French book call'd Le Comte de Gabalis, which both in its title and size is so like a Novel, that many of the Fair Sex have read it for once by mistake. According to these Gentlemen, the four Elements are inhabited by Spirits, which they call Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs and Salamanders. The Gnomes or Demons of Earth delight in mischief: but the Sylphs, whose habitation is in the Air, are the best-condition'd creatures imaginable. For they say, any mortals may enjoy the most intimate familiarities with these gentle Spirits, upon a condition very easy to all true Adepts, an inviolate preservation of Chastity.

As to the following Cantos, all the passages of them are as fabulous, as the Vision at the beginning, or the Transformation at the end; (except the loss of your Hair, which I always mention with reverence). The Human persons are as fictitious as the Airy ones; and the Character of Belinda, as it is now manag'd, resembles you in nothing but in Beauty.

If this poem had as many Graces as there are in your Person, or in your Mind, yet I could never hope it should pass through the world half so uncensur'd as you have done. But let its fortune be what it will, mine is happy enough, to have given me this occasion of assuring you that I am, with the truest esteem, MADAM,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

A. POPE.

The poem has justly been regarded as the finest example of witty mock-epic ever written. There is in it, a deft combination of the serious and the non-serious. As an expression of the artificial life of the age–of its card-playing, parties, toilets, lap-dogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking, and idle–vanities, the poem reflects the boundless ambition of the Elizabethans. It is not only a satire on society; it is also a witty parody of the heroic style in poetry.

25.4 CRITICAL SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The Rape of the Lock is a poem, ridiculing the fashionable world of Pope's day. Its immediate aim was to reconcile the two families of the author's acquaintance into making up a quarrel over a somewhat trivial incident. This quarrel is presented in terms of the great epic wars such as those between the Greeks and the Trojans, and between God and Satan. The poem has been admired for the brilliance of its conception and the consistency of its execution. It is a sound judgement to say that the effect of the poem lies in the exquisite adjustment between the epic and mundane planes on which it moves.

25.4.1 Canto I

In the very opening lines, we have a statement of the theme and an invocation to the Muse of poetry. This follows the epic manner of the *Iliad.* The custom of beginning epic poems with a proposition of the whole work and an invocation of some God for his assistance to go through with it was solemnly and religiously observed by all the ancient poets. But, in the context of this poem, the invocation has a mock-epic character. We then enter the mundane world with a description of lap-dogs and sleepless lovers. But this is immediately followed by an account of ''the light militia of the lower sky'' which constitutes the mock-epic machinery of this poem. Four orders of these supernatural beings salamanders, nymphs, gnomes and sylphs–are mentioned by Pope. The chastity of maidens is saved from the lust of bold gallants by the intervention of sylphs. And here the mock-epic machinery is brought into a close relationship with the mundane world. An amusing description is given about how aristocratic ladies behave, and how the sylphs and the gnomes function. Some maidens, falling under the influence of the gnomes, develop excessive ambitions with regard to their matrimonial prospects. Such girls often refuse suitable offers of marriage, thinking only of peers and dukes. They are bound to feel frustrated when their hopes come to nothing. It is the gnomes, who play mischief with these girls. But sylphs are the protectors of maidens and virgins. When a maiden is about to fall a victim to a man, who gives an entertainment in her honour, her guardian-sylph so contrives that she feels more attracted by a man who arranges a bigger entertainment in her honour. If a virgin is about to yield to Florio's amorous appeal, her guardian-sylph so contrives that the advances of Demon would divert her attention. Different young gallants appeal to the different vanities of a young girl, with the result that her heart shifts from one gallant to another like a moving toy-shop. Ariel offers himself as Belinda's guardian-sylph.

When Belinda wakes up from her dream of Ariel and Ariel's account of the activities of Spirits, she sees a love-letter waiting for her. Going through this letter, with its mention of the wounds of love, the charms of love, and the ardours of love, Belinda forgets what she has seen and heard in her dream. Thus, we are again in the mundane world.

Belinda now gets ready for her toilet. A lady's efforts at self-decoration belong to the mundane world. But at Belinda's toilet operations, the sylphs are in attendance. Here is an exquisite adjustment between the mock-epic and the mundane worlds, the climax being reached with the lines in which we are told that ''the busy sylphs surround their darling care", "some setting her head, some arranging her hair, some folding the sleeve, and some folding her gown, and here Canto I ends.

Check Your Progress: Canto 1

Fill in the blanks with the correct terms from *The Rape of the Lock* (Canto 1):

1. The poem begins with an invocation to the _____, a nod to the classical epic tradition.
2. The central female character, _____, is described as the epitome of beauty and charm.
3. The poem uses the mock-epic style to satirize the trivialities of 18th-century _____ society.
4. Belinda's dream in Canto 1 is influenced by Ariel, the chief _____, who warns her of impending danger.
5. The imagery in Canto 1 emphasizes themes of beauty and _____, reflecting the superficial values of the time.

Answers: Muse, Belinda, Aristocratic, Sylph, Vanity

25.4.2 Canto II

This opens with a hyperbolic description of Belinda's beauty and charms which belong to the mundane world. This is followed by the Baron's worship of love, another ceremony of the mundane world. But the next moment, the mock-epic machinery is introduced. Ariel exhorts his fellow spirits to take every possible precaution to protect Belinda against a serious misfortune that threatens her. Once again the mock-epic machinery is brought into a close relationship with the affairs of the mundane world. As Ariel puts it, he does not know whether Belinda would allow her chastity to be violated, or some delicate china-jar in her house would crack; whether she would stain her honour or her new brocade; whether she would lose her heart or her necklace at a ball; or whether her pet dog, Shock, would meet a tragic end. Ariel then assigns various duties to various sylphs warning them that any negligence would be severely punished. The catalogue of punishments and torments to which the negligent sylphs are to be subjected has a mock-epic quality.

25.4.3 Canto III

This contains an account of the fashionable gathering at Hampton Court; a description of the game of ombre played by Belinda with two knights; a reference to coffee-making and coffee-drinking; and the clipping of a lock of hair from Belinda's head, which forms the central incident of the poem. All these episodes belong to the mundane world, but there are strong mock-epic suggestions in the poem. The game of ombre is described like an "epic-battle" with Ariel and other sylphs playing their part like the gods and goddesses in the Homeric battles. Even when Belinda is sipping coffee, the sylphs hover round her. Coffee stimulates the Baron's brain and he thinks of a clever stratagem to obtain the coveted lock. The account of how the lock is clipped, is again a matter belonging to the mundane world, but Belinda's guardian-spirits could not be absent from the scene, though they have to retreat quickly as Ariel finds an earthly lover lurking in Belinda's heart. At this stage comes the revelation that Belinda has been in love with the Baron, though she has kept her love a secret from him, which was a natural thing for her to do. Interestingly enough, one of the sylphs does interpose himself between the blade of the scissors in order to protect the lock, but is cut into two and the victorious Baron is jubilant.

25.4.4 Canto IV

This opens with a rhetorical account of the rage, resentment and despair of Belinda over her ravished hair. This brief mundane account is followed by the journey of a gnome to the gloomy Cave of Spleen. Belinda's lament at the end of this Canto is an excellent satire on the high society of the time. Belinda wishes that she had never gone to Hampton Court, and that she had lived unadmired on some lonely island where there were no gilded coaches, where there was no one to play the game of ombre, and where there was no tea to drink. She deplores the fact that she used to roam with youthful lords when she should have stayed at home and said her prayers.

25.4.5 Canto V

The highlight is Clarissa's speech which contains the moral of the poem. This speech is a parody of the speech of Sarpedon to Glaucus in Homer's *Iliad.* While Clarissa's plea for good humour and sanity belongs to the mundane world, it has a mock-epic side to it. Then, there is the battle of the sexes which is part of the mock-heroic design of the poem. The battle is compared to that of Mars against Pallas and of Hermes against Latona. Umbriel, perched on the top of a candle stick, witnesses the fight.

Belinda shouts for the return of her lock of hair but it was not to be found anywhere. Only the Muse of poetry knew where the lock had flown. The Muse had seen the lock ascending to the sky in the shape of a new star with a long line of hair trailing behind it. The lock of hair would remain in sky, in the form of a star, forever and the fashionable people would survey it from heaven. In the end, the poet urges Belinda to stop lamenting the loss of a lock of her hair 'as the Muse will give a name to it, which is now a constellation, the name of ''Belinda'' and it will be immortalised as she, herself, will die in due course of time.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here is a list of keywords from the sections you have just read:

Gallantry – Polite, respectful, or chivalrous attention shown by a man toward women, often in a romantic or flirtatious way.

Deities – Divine beings or gods, often associated with supernatural powers and worshipped in various religions.

Fictitious – Imaginary or made up; not real or based on fact, especially in a literary or fictional context.

Invocation – A formal appeal for assistance or inspiration, especially to a muse or divine power in poetry or epic writing.

Hyperbolic – Extremely exaggerated, often used to create a dramatic or humorous effect.

Chastity – The quality of being morally pure, especially by refraining from sexual activity, often associated with virtue or religious discipline.

Stratagem – A clever or crafty plan, often intended to outwit an opponent or achieve a hidden goal.

Try to make sentences using these words:

Stratagem: _____

Gallantry: _____

Fictitious: _____

25.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Critically evaluate the poem *The Rape of the Lock.*
2. Discuss the background of the poem and enumerate on how it influenced the poem with respect to style and technique.

25.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 What event triggers the central conflict in *The Rape of the Lock*?

A) A stolen necklace

B) A stolen kiss

C) A kidnapped prince

D) A stolen lock of hair

Q.2 Who is Belinda, the protagonist of the poem?

A) A mischievous sprite

B) A wealthy heiress

C) A vengeful witch

D) A cunning thief

Q.3 What supernatural element is introduced into the story to create a mock-epic tone?

A) An enchanted sword

B) A talking parrot

C) A mischievous gnome

D) A sylph

Q.4 Which character is often associated with vanity and shallowness in *The Rape of the Lock*?

A) Ariel

B) Canto

C) Clarissa

D) Thalestris

Q.5 What is the primary source of conflict between the "sylphs" and the "gnomes" in the poem?

A) A dispute over a magical amulet

B) A battle for control over the elements

C) A rivalry for Belinda's protection

D) A struggle for control of the human world

Q.6 What object is used as a symbol of Belinda's lost innocence and her social status?

A) A mirror

B) A fan

C) A diamond necklace

D) The lock of hair

Q.7 Which term best describes the poem's satirical portrayal of high society?

A) Admiring

B) Serious

C) Ironic

D) Tragic

Q.8 What does Pope satirize in *The Rape of the Lock* through the trivialization of a social incident?

A) Political corruption

B) Religious hypocrisy

C) Intellectual arrogance

D) Vanity and superficiality

Q.9 Which classical literary form does *The Rape of the Lock* imitate and parody?

A) Epic

B) Tragedy

C) Comedy

D) Romance

Q.10 What is the ultimate lesson or moral that the poem conveys?

A) The importance of wealth and status

B) The folly of vanity and superficiality

C) The inevitability of tragic outcomes

D) The power of love to overcome all obstacles

Answers: 1D, 2B, 3D, 4C, 5C, 6D , 7C, 8D, 9A, 10B

25.7 LET US SUM UP

The Rape of the Lock explores themes of social vanity, the trivialization of high society, and the consequences of frivolous actions. Through its satirical lens, the poem critiques the shallow preoccupations of the aristocracy, highlighting the absurdity of magnifying trivial incidents. The theft of a lock of hair becomes a mock-epic adventure, revealing the theme of how seemingly insignificant matters can escalate and disrupt social harmony.

25.8 SUGGESTED READING

- Damrosch, Leo. *The Rape of the Lock and Other Major Writings*. Penguin Books Limited, 2011.
- *A study guide for Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock"*. Gale Division of Cengage Learning Incorporated, 2015. ebook.

MOCK–EPIC STYLE IN *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

STRUCTURE

26.1 INTRODUCTION

The mock epic is a poetic form which uses the epic structure but on a miniature scale and has a subject that is mean or trivial. The purpose of a mock-heroic or mock-epic poem is satirical. The writer makes the subject look ridiculous by placing it in a framework entirely inappropriate to its importance. The subject of such a poem is trivial but the treatment of the subject is heroic or epic.

The best known and the most brilliant example of the form comes in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). The central incident in the poem is the theft of a lock of hair and the ensuing quarrel between two families. All the main features of epic surround this incident. The style is elevated, there is the celestial machinery in the form of the sylphs, a voyage (though only in Belinda's barge on the Thames), a visit to the underworld, and battles (though one is only at cards). By placing this incident in such a framework, Pope hoped to show the rape as trivial and tried to reconcile the two families, as a quarrel had arisen between the two families as a result of the theft of the lock of hair.

26.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Introduce learners to the concept of the mock-epic genre and its distinguishing features, such as the juxtaposition of trivial events with grandiose language.
2. Analyze Alexander Pope's use of the mock-epic style in *The Rape of the Lock*, focusing on how it satirizes aristocratic society and its values.
3. Examine the literary devices, including heroic couplets, classical allusions, and elevated diction, that contribute to the mock-epic tone of the poem.

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to define the mock-epic genre and explain its purpose in literature.
2. Learners will be able to identify and analyze examples of mock-epic conventions in *The Rape of the Lock*, such as the invocation of the muse and the parody of epic battles.

3. Learners will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of Pope's mock-epic style in critiquing the superficiality and trivial concerns of 18th-century aristocracy.

26.3 MOCK-EPIC STYLE OF THE POEM

All the main features of an epic surround the principle event of this poem. Trivial occurrences are handled with all the seriousness and dignity which properly belong to the epic. In other words, there is a deliberate and sustained discrepancy between the theme of the poem and the treatment of the theme. Such a discrepancy is the essence of this particular kind of parody. The effect is further supported by the arrangement of the plot upon the regular epic plan, the employment of the 'machinery' which every epic was supposed to require, and by many passages in which scenes and phrases from the great epics of the world are directly imitated and burlesqued. All this is well managed in the poem and it, thus, makes it as the most perfect thing of its kind in English literature.

The Rape of the Lock is the masterpiece of the mock-heroic because it mocks at the maximum amount of the epic. There is a general mockery of the epic form with its Vocations, its similes, its frequent use of " He Said ". There is a mockery of the epic matter or substance with its machinery, its battles, its journeys on water and down to the underworld. Apart from this, there is particular mockery of a scene or a detail or a certain speech or a comment by the poet. And the scale of the mockery is always varying. We find Belinda flashing lightning from her eyes as in Cowley's epic *Devideis*, Soul flashes it, and her screaming like the Homeric heroes. We find an altar at which ardent prayers are fatefully half-granted and a goddess who is worshipped, but the altar is built of French romances and the goddess is the image of the vain Belinda in the mirror of her dressing-table. We find a battle drawn forth to combat, like the Greeks, on a velvet plain; but it is only a game of cards on an expensive cardtable. We find a supernatural being threatening his inferiors with torture; but it's a sylph, not Jove, who utters the threats. And the tortures mentioned are neither the thunderbolts of Jove nor the agonies of Hades, but cruelties devised ingeniously from the resources of the toilet-table. The scale of the imitation is always varying. The story of the epic covers years; that of *The Rape of the Lock* covers only hours. The gods of the epic are heroic beings, Pope's sylphs are very small.

The opening invocation, the description of the heroine's toilet, the journey to Hampton Court, the game of ombre magnifield into a pitched battle–all lead upto the moment when the peer produces the fatal pair of scissors. But the action of mortals was not enough. Pope knew that in true epics, the affairs of men were aided or crossed by heavenly powers. He, therefore, added four bodies of fairy creatures - Sylphs, Gnomes, Nymphs and Salamanders as agents in the story. Belinda, the heroine, is under the special protection of the sylphs, whose devotion is not however, enough for saving the lock when the peer advances to the attack.

The poem contains parodies of Homer, Virgil, Aristotle, Spenser and Milton, as well as reminiscences of Ovid and the Bible. There are several instances of burlesque treatment. There is Belinda's voyage to Hampton Court, which suggests the voyage of Aeneas up the Tiber in Virgil. There is the coffee party which is a parody of the meals frequently described in Homer. There is Belinda's petticoat which is treated as the shield of Ajax, while her lament suggests Virgil's Dido. Clarissa's plea for sanity and goodwill is a parody of Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in the *Iliad*. The combat at the end recalls the fighting which is found anywhere in the ancient epics. The Cave of Spleen is a parody of an allegorical picture, examples of which may be found in English poets like Spenser. The description of the coffee-equipage is reminiscent of Virgil's use of the epic style in the Georgics to describe the lives of bees.

There are three major parallels between *The Rape of the Lock* and the great English epic, *Paradise Lost*. First, there is the dream of pride and vain-glory insinuated into Belinda's ear, which recalls the dream insinuated into Eve's ear in Books V and VI of *Paradise Lost*. Then, there is the parody of the ceremony performed by Belinda at her dressing-table, where Belinda worships herself, and which, vividly recalls the new-born Eve's admiration of herself as mirrored in the pool of Eden in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*. But perhaps the crucial parallel is the third, which occurs just before the cutting of the lock of hair, when Ariel searches out the close recesses of the virgin's thought. There he finds an earthly lover lurking in her heart and here, Ariel retires with a sigh, resigned to fate. This situation echoes the moment in *Paradise Lost,* when after the fall of Adam and Eve, the angels of God retire, mute and sad, to heaven. The angels could have protected Adam and Eve against any force attempted by Satan, but against man's own free choice of evil, they are helpless as Ariel and his comrades are in the face of Belinda's free choice of an earthly lover.

Check Your Progress: Mock-Epic Style in *The Rape of the Lock*

1. The mock-epic style elevates _____ incidents to the level of heroic grandeur for satirical effect.
2. Pope begins *The Rape of the Lock* with an invocation to the _____, mimicking classical epics like Homer's *Iliad*.
3. The "battle" in the mock-epic involves not warriors, but cards and a stolen _____.
4. In *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope uses _____ couplets to mimic the grandeur of classical epics while maintaining a satirical tone.
5. The use of supernatural beings like sylphs and gnomes parodies the involvement of _____ in traditional epics.

Answers: Trivial, Muse, Lock, Heroic, Gods

An outstanding mock-heroic element in the poem is the comparison between the arming of an epic hero and Belinda's dressing herself and using cosmetics in order to kill. Pope describes a society-lady in terms that would suit the arming of a warrior like Achilles. Then there are the two battles which receive an ironically inflated treatment. In the description of these battles, there are several echoes of Troy and Carthage. The first battle is the card-game between Belinda and the Baron. The second battle, which has even more of the mock-heroic element, is the battle of the sexes which is compared to the battles of gods and goddesses as described by Homer. The erotic slaughter of the fops that takes place is one of the highlights of this mock-epic poem. The climax of the mock-heroic battle is reached when Belinda uses two formidable weapons – a pinch of snuff and bodkin. The battle of the sexes is part of the mock-heroic design of the poem. The battle is compared to that of Mars against Pallas, and of Hermes against Latona. Umbriel, perched on top of a candlestick, witnesses the fight. Minerva, in like manner, during the battle of Ulysses with the suitors of Penelope in the *Odyssey,* perched on a beam of the roof to witness it. Jove's suspending his golden scales in the air refers to the passage in Homer where Jupiter, before the conflict between Hector and Achilles, weighs the issue in a pair of scales. The genealogy of Belinda's hair-pin is a parody of the history of Agamemnon sceptre in the *Iliad.*

Again and again Pope introduces us into the epic world and brings us back to the world of trivialities. To take only one example, the transition from the "declining of the day" and "the sun obliquely

shooting his burning ray" to the merchant returning from the Exchange after the day's work is a startling lapse from grand generality to trivial particulars. Such switches in and out of the epic world and the heroic style are, of course, characteristic of the mock-epic; but few mock-heroic poets are able to accomplish them with such dexterity.

In addition to the mighty trivial contrast, we have other contrasts which may be described as follows: primitive-sophisticated; antique-contemporary; masculine-feminine; principled-opportunistic; dramatic-histrionic. It is also to be noted that the gap between the contraries varies from the broadest burlesque of heroic wrath in Sir Plume's boastful words to Clarissa's rational appeal for sense and good humour, which partly recalls Sarpedon's ringing cry to battle in Book XII of *Iliad.*

According to the critic, Ian Jack, this is the poem which Hazlitt described as the most exquisite specimen of filigree work ever invented and which even Housman thought possibly the most perfect long poem in the language. When Pope was asked to write something that would restore everyone to good humour, it occurred to him to emphasise the triviality of the whole affair by describing it in the full pomp and splendour of epic verse. No poet has ever succeeded so well in "using a vast force to lift a feather" (as Pope himself described it in the postscript to his translation of the *Odyssey*). The style of the closing lines of Canto II, for example,

With beating hearts the dire event they wait,

Anxious, and trembling for the birth of fate.

would be splendidly appropriate at a crucial moment in an epic poem. When we realise that 'the birth of fate' is to be no more than the snipping off of a lock of hair, the result is high comedy.

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, below are some important keywords from the content that you have just read:

Parody – A humorous or exaggerated imitation of a serious piece of literature or writing.

Burlesqued – Mocked or made fun of by imitating in a ridiculous or exaggerated way.

Machinery – In poetry, especially in epics, this refers to supernatural beings (like gods or spirits) who influence the action of the story.

Trivialities – Unimportant or minor details that are not serious or significant.

Filigree – Delicate and intricate work (originally in metal); used here metaphorically to describe something finely detailed and ornamental.

Histrionic – Overly dramatic or theatrical in behavior or speech.

Reminiscences – Memories or references to something from the past.

Burlesque – A literary or dramatic work that makes fun of a subject by treating it in an exaggerated or absurd way, often through imitation.

26.4 LET US SUM UP

An outstanding mock-heroic element in the poem is the comparison between the arming of an epic hero and Belinda's dressing and using cosmetics in order to kill. Belinda arms for a battle just as an epic

hero prepares himself. The epic phrase for armour "glittering spoil," wittily suggests this. Thus, Pope describes a society lady in terms that would suit the arming of Achilles.

26.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the *Rape of the Lock* as Mock-Epic Poem.
2. Discuss the poem as a satire on the aristocratic society.

26.6 SUGGESTED READING

- Deutsch, Helen. *Resemblance & Disgrace: Alexander Pope and the Deformation of Culture.* Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Nichol, Don. *Anniversary Essays on Alexander Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock'*. University of Toronto Press, 2016.
- Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Analysis of Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*." *Literariness*, 9 July 2020, literariness.org/2020/07/09/analysis-of-alexander-popes-the-rape-of-the-lock/#google_vignette.

USE OF SUPERNATURAL MACHINERY IN *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

STRUCTURE

27.1 INTRODUCTION

Dr. Johnson gave high praise to *The Rape of the Lock*. He calls the poem, "the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful" of all Pope's compositions, occasioned by a frolic of gallantry, rather too familiar, in which Lord Petre cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair. *The Rape of the Lock* stands forward as the most exquisite example of ludicrous poetry.

27.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objectives of this lesson are to:

1. Explore the concept of supernatural machinery in literature and its adaptation in *The Rape of the Lock*.
2. Analyze Pope's use of sylphs, gnomes, and other supernatural beings to parody the epic convention of divine intervention.
3. Discuss how the supernatural machinery in the poem enhances its satirical tone and reflects the frivolity of aristocratic society.

After reading this lesson,

1. Learners will be able to define supernatural machinery and explain its role in *The Rape of the Lock*.
2. Learners will be able to analyze the function of sylphs and other supernatural elements in advancing the plot and reinforcing the poem's mock-epic style.
3. Learners will be able to evaluate how Pope uses supernatural machinery to satirize the exaggerated importance of trivial events in 18th-century aristocracy.

27.3 USE OF SUPERNATURAL MACHINERY

Dr. Johnson not only defends, but heartily approves of Pope's use of the supernatural machinery in the poem. He supports Warburton who said that the preternatural elements were very happily adapted to the purposes of the poem. The heathen deities can no longer gain attention. The employment of allegorical persons always excites conviction of its own absurdity; they may produce effects but cannot conduct actions. Pope brought in view a new race of beings, with powers and passions proportionate to their operation. The sylphs and gnomes act, at the toilet and at the tea-table, what more terrific and more powerful phantoms perform on the stormy ocean, or the field of battle; they give their proper help, and do their proper mischief.

He further observes that in this poem, Pope makes new things familiar, and familiar things new. A race of Aerial people, never heard of before, is presented to us in a manner so clear and easy, that the reader seeks for no further information, but immediately mingles with his new acquaintance, adopts their interests, and attains their pursuits, loves a sylph, and detests a gnome. Those familiar things are made new, every paragraph proves it. The subject of the poem is an event below the common incidents of common life; nothing real is introduced that is not seen so often as to be no longer regarded; yet the whole detail of a female's day is here brought before us, invested with so much art of decoration that though nothing is disguised, everything is striking, and we feel all the appetite of curiosity for that from which we have a thousand times turned fastidiously away.

In the letter written to Arabella Fermor, Pope describes what he means by the machinery of the poem, "*The machinery, Madam, is a term invented by the critics to signify that part which the deities, angels, or demons are made to act in a poem ... These machines I determined to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits*."

The sylphs, according to Pope, were once beautiful women, but the gentle process of death, cast off their earthly bodies and assumed airy bodies. But all the vanities that filled their hearts as beautiful women for instance, their love for cards and for gilded coaches, survived death and they carried these vanities with them in the next state to their existence. When beautiful women die in the fullness of their pride, they return to those elements from which they were first derived for example, termagants, who are violent-tempered women, pass into their native element, fire and become salamanders or spirits of the fire. Women of gentle and pleasing disposition gently pass into nymphs or water-spirits. Prudish women who affect too much modesty and propriety of conduct sink downwards and become gnomes or earth-spirits. Light-hearted coquettes ascend high and become sylphs or spirits of the airs, who merrily fly about in the atmosphere. They can "assume what sexes and shapes they please."

Pope has given a very amusing description of the occupations of the sylphs. He attributes to the mischievous influence of the sylphs or gnomes many unguarded follies of the female sex which he holds up to ridicule. The foremost occupation of the sylphs is the protection of fair and chaste ladies who reject the male sex. It is they who guard and save the chastity of maidens who are on the point of yielding themselves up to their lovers. They save these maidens from falling victims to the allurements of treacherous friends and handsome young men whose music softens their minds and dancing inflames their passions. The gnomes or earth-spirits fill the minds of proud maidens with foolish ideas which make them indulge in vain dreams of being married to Lords and peers. It is these gnomes who teach young coquettes to ogle and pretend blushing at the sight, and even the thought, of fashionable young men who cause their hearts to flutter. It is the sylphs, however, who safely guide the maidens through all dangers. It is most amusing to note how these sylphs do this. Whenever a maiden is about to yield to the seduction of one particular

young man, another more attractive and tempting appears on the scene and the fashionable lady at once transfers her favours to the newcomer. This may be called levity or fickleness in women but it is all contrived by the sylphs. A new lover, richer and brighter than the old, saves the honour of a maiden, by diverting her coquetry to himself.

In the very beginning, we are humourously told by Ariel, Chief of Sylphs (who has been named after Shakespeare's immortal creation in *The Tempest*) that these various tasks have been assigned by "laws eternal". Some of them play in the "field of purest ether" and bask in the "blaze of day"; some amusingly enough perform the awful task of guiding the course of wandering stars like comets, some pursue the shooting stars; some drink the vapours near the earth; some again, in order to paint their wings, dip them in the colours of the rainbow; some cause tempests to rise on the seas; some shower kindly rains on tilled fields. There are others who preside over the destiny of the human actions. Of these, the Chief has charge of national affairs and guards the British Throne.

Check Your Progress: Supernatural Machinery in *The Rape of the Lock*

Complete the sentences with appropriate terms related to supernatural machinery:

1. The sylphs in the poem are spirits that protect women's _____ and virtue.
2. Ariel, the chief sylph, warns Belinda of impending _____ in her dream.
3. The supernatural machinery in *The Rape of the Lock* is inspired by the epic tradition of divine intervention, seen in works like Homer's _____.
4. The gnomes are associated with mischievous behavior and represent the spirits of _____ women.
5. The sylphs' efforts to protect Belinda fail when the Baron cuts a lock of her _____.

Answers: Reputation, Danger, *Iliad*, Coquettish, Hair

Ariel further says that to him and his followers the task of serving fashionable ladies has been assigned. The functions of these sylphs is to save the powder from being blown off from the cheeks of fashionable young ladies, to prevent perfumes from evaporating, to prepare cosmetics by extracting fresh odours from the spring flowers, and to make washes for their complexion by collecting the coloured raindrops from the rainbow before they fall in showers. These sylphs also curl the hair of the ladies, "assist their blushes, teach them to put on enchanting airs and also suggest new ideas about dress". The sylphs also show a delightful down-scaling of the epic machines. They are "light" by any heroic standards. They feel scared when a crisis approaches. Yet they are in every detail Belinda's intimates and counsellors. They explain the various complicated conventions and anxieties that make up Belinda's day. Belinda is told in a dream that sylphs guide and protect her through the dangers of life. Ariel tells her that he is there to protect her purity according to sylphic theology. Defended by sylphs, the "melting maids" are safe. Reassuring Belinda in this way, Ariel is, in effect, undermining her moral position, taking away with one hand the credit he gives with the other. He explains how a woman's defence is achieved.

The machines are present at every crucial situation in the play. The sylphs are present in the course of Belinda's journey by boat to Hampton Court. They have been warned by Ariel to be alert and vigilant and fifty of them have been deputed to take charge of Belinda's petticoat. They are in attendance on Belinda when she plays ombre. They hover around her when she sips coffee. And they withdraw only when Ariel sees an "earthly lover lurking at her heart". A gnome called Umbriel, goes to the Cave of Spleen and returns with a bag full of sighs, sobs, screams, and outbursts of anger and a phial filled with fainting fits, gentle sorrows, soft griefs etc., — all of which are released over Belinda. And the sylphs are present to witness the flight of Belinda's lock of hair to the sky.

Pope has provided the myth of the sylphs in order to symbolise the polite conventions which govern the conduct of maidens. It also represents his attempt to do justice to the intricacies of the feminine mind. The machinery of sylphs is the principle symbol of the triviality of Belinda's world. The sylphs who protect Belinda are also her acceptance of the rules of social convention, which presume that a coquette's life is a pure game.

The machinery is superior not only on account of its novelty, but because of the satire that results from it. The use of this machinery serves other purposes also. It imparts qualities of splendour and wonder to the actors and the actions in the story.

Critic Thomas Campbell opines that the adaptation of the Rosicrucean machinery in *The Rape of the Lock* is indeed an inventive and happy creation. It is an epic poem in that delightful miniature which diverts us by its mimicry of greatness, and yet astonishes by the beauty of its parts, and the fairy brightness of its ornaments.

Joseph Warton's commentary on *The Rape of the Lock* is highly appreciative and worth quoting. He writes that it is judicious to open the poem by introducing the guardian-sylph warning Belinda against some secret impending danger. The account which Ariel gives of the nature, office and employment of these inhabitants of air, is finely fancied – into which several strokes of satire are thrown with great delicacy and address.

When Belinda is sipping coffee at the tea-table, the guardian spirits are very active and importantly employed:

Straight hover round the fair her airy band ;

Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned.

But nothing can excel the behaviour of the sylphs, and their wakeful solicitude for their charge, when the danger grows more imminent:

Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair.

The methods by which they endeavour to preserve her from the intended mischief are such, that they could only be executed by sylphs and have therefore, an admirable propriety as well as the utmost elegance:

A thousand wings by turn, blow back the hair;

And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;

Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.

Still further to heighten the piece, and to preserve the characters of his machines to the last. just when the fatal scissors were spread:

A wretched sylph too fondly interposed;

Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain...

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, below is a list of literary devices from the content that you have just read. Go through the terms, their meaning, and the examples provided for a better comprehension of the content:

Paradox: A seemingly contradictory statement that makes sense on reflection.

Example: “Pope makes new things familiar, and familiar things new.”

Hyperbole: Exaggeration for comic effect.

Example: “Fifty of them have been deputed to take charge of Belinda's petticoat.”

Allusion: A reference to another literary work.

Example: “Ariel, Chief of Sylphs (named after Shakespeare's immortal creation in The Tempest)”

Imagery: Descriptive language that appeals to the sense of sight.

Example: “They dip their wings in the colours of the rainbow.”

Mock-Epic Simile (Epic Simile Parody): over-exaggerating minor actions in a grand, heroic manner.

Example:“A thousand wings by turn, blow back the hair; And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear...”

Oxymoron: a figure of speech where two opposite or contradictory words are placed together to create a special effect or to express a complex idea.

Example: “Delightful miniature which diverts us by its mimicry of greatness…”

Metonymy: using one associated object to represent a broader concept.

Example: “To save the powder from being blown off from the cheeks...” (“Powder” stands for makeup)

Can you find any other literary device in the text? If yes, then use the space provided to write it down:

_____

_____

_____

The machinery of the poem is constantly kept in the readers' view, to the very last. Even when the lock is transformed, the sylphs, who had so carefully guarded it, are here once again artfully mentioned, as finally rejoicing in its honourable transformation, as it rises to heaven:

The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies;

And pleased pursue its progress through the skies.

27.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTION

1. Discuss the use of supernatural elements in the poem *The Rape of the Lock.*

27.5 LET US SUM UP

The supernatural elements in *The Rape of the Lock* serve several important purposes. First, they contribute to the mock-epic tone by elevating the trivial incident of the stolen lock of hair to a grand scale, parodying the conventions of epic poetry. Second, they provide a satirical lens through which the absurdities of high society can be exaggerated and critiqued, highlighting the vanity and shallowness of the characters. Third, the sylphs and gnomes reflect the dual nature of Belinda's character, symbolizing her innocence and susceptibility to social pressures. Lastly, the supernatural beings embody the theme of female agency, representing the competing forces that influence Belinda's choices and actions.

27.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. What supernatural beings are primarily featured in *The Rape of the Lock*?
   - A. Elves
   - B. Fairies
   - C. Sylphs
   - D. Nymphs
2. Who is the leader of the sylphs assigned to protect Belinda?
   - A. Ariel
   - B. Umbriel
   - C. Zephyretta
   - D. Brillante
3. What do the sylphs represent in the poem?
   - A. Human desires
   - B. Heavenly spirits
   - C. The frivolity and vanity of high society
   - D. Natural elements
4. How do the sylphs assist Belinda during her daily activities?
   - A. By helping her make decisions
   - B. By guiding her suitors away
   - C. By arranging her hair and makeup
   - D. By writing her letters

5. What is the role of Ariel in the poem?
   A. To act as a messenger between Belinda and her suitors
   B. To ensure Belinda's safety and chastity
   C. To bring Belinda wealth and prosperity
   D. To provide comic relief
6. What happens to Ariel's powers when he tries to warn Belinda about the impending danger?
   A. They are amplified
   B. They remain the same
   C. They are nullified by Belinda's free will
   D. They backfire and cause harm
7. Which supernatural being descends to the Cave of Spleen to retrieve a magical item?
   A. Ariel
   B. Umbriel
   C. Brillante
   D. Zephyretta
8. What is the primary function of the supernatural machinery in the narrative?
   A. To create an atmosphere of mystery and suspense
   B. To critique the trivialities of high society
   C. To illustrate the power of the supernatural over humans
   D. To showcase Pope's interest in fantasy and folklore
9. Which of the following best describes the tone Pope uses when depicting the sylphs?
   A. Reverent and respectful
   B. Mock-serious and satirical
   C. Dark and foreboding
   D. Light-hearted and whimsical
10. How does the use of supernatural machinery contribute to the poem's overall theme?
   A. It underscores the seriousness of the events
   B. It enhances the moral lessons imparted
   C. It emphasizes the triviality and superficiality of the aristocratic lifestyle
   D. It adds depth to the characters' personal struggles

Answers:

1. C. Sylphs
2. A. Ariel
3. C. The frivolity and vanity of high society
4. C. By arranging her hair and makeup
5. B. To ensure Belinda's safety and chastity
6. C. They are nullified by Belinda's free will
7. B. Umbriel
8. B. To critique the trivialities of high society
9. B. Mock-serious and satirical
10. C. It emphasizes the triviality and superficiality of the aristocratic lifestyle

27.7 SUGGESTED READING

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POPE'S USE OF SATIRE IN *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

STRUCTURE

28.1 INTRODUCTION

The Rape of the Lock is a poem ridiculing the fashionable world of Pope's day and is a masterpiece of satirical poetry. The poem is a satire on beautiful aristocratic women of the eighteenth century, whose lives centred round petty interests and the quest of shallow pleasures. It exposes to ridicule their laziness, idleness, frivolities, vanities, follies, shams, shallowness, superficiality, prudery, hypocrisy, false ideas of honour, excessive interest in toilet and self-embellishment. Pope also mocks at certain other aspects of the life of the eighteenth century. He laughs at "little" men engaging in tasks so "bold", and at gentle ladies who are capable of "such mighty rage."

28.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The lesson acquaints the learner with the use of satire in the poem. After going through the lesson, the learners will be able to explain how the writer targets the specific section of society and tries to reform the same.

28.3 POPE'S USE OF SATIRE

In tasks so bold can little men engage,

And in soft bosoms dwell such mighty rage ?

Pope mocks at the late rising of aristocratic ladies and gentlemen of the time. It was the twelfth hour when Belinda opened her eyes to fall asleep again:

How lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,

And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake.

The poet even makes fun of the vanities of women. He says that these vanities do not even end with the death of women:

Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,

That all her vanities at once are dead

Succeeding vanities she still regards,

And though she plays no more, o'er looks the cards.

Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,

And love of ombre, after death survive.

The aristocratic ladies of those days were fond of gilded chariots and of ombre, and Pope makes fun of their fondness for such things. He also gives satirical division of ladies of different temperaments into different categories – fiery termagants, yielding ladies, grave prudes, and light coquettes. He mocks at the extravagant aspirations of the ladies who imagined matrimonial alliance with peers and dukes and dreamt of "garters, stars, and coronets," Pope satirizes the fickleness and superficiality of the ladies by referring to their hearts as moving toy-shops and their varying vanities.

Pope also makes fun of Belinda by telling us that when she wakes up, her eyes first open on a love-letter in which the writer has spoken of "wounds, charms, and ardours." He not only laughs merely at a fashionable lady's desire to receive love-letters but also at the conventional vocabulary of those love-letters. He also ridicules women's excessive attention to self-embellishment and self-decorations. In a famous satirical passage, Belinda is described as commencing her toilet operations with a prayer to the "cosmetic powers". Belinda is depicted here as a warrior getting ready for the battle to kill men with her graces and charms. He laughs in the same vein at a lady's petticoat which was by no means impenetrable:

Oft have known that seven-fold fence to fail,

Though stiff with hoops and arm'd with ribs to whale.

The lines in which Belinda's reaction to the clipping of the lock is described are a satire on a woman's tantrums:

Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes,

And screams of horror rent the affrighted skies.

To the ladies of the time, their domestic pets were as important as their husbands and that showed in them a superficiality of mind and a lack of any depth of feeling which the poet has admirably satirised:

Not louder shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,

When husbands, or when lap-dogs, breathe their last.

In connection with the satire on men, one of the most amusing passages in the poem is the one in which the Baron is described as building an altar of love-vast French romances with three garters, half a pair of gloves, and all the trophies of his former loves, and setting fire to it with his amorous sighs and with tender love-letters. The Baron's worship of "Love" is comparable to Belinda's worship of the "cosmetic powers."

Pope has also mocked the kind of conversation that went on among the ladies and the knights at the court. This conversation was void of any substance. The talk generally centred around dance-parties, court-visits, and the scandalous behaviour of some member of the court. The pauses in conversation were filled by snuff-taking, fan swinging, singing, laughing, ogling and all that. The emptiness and the shallowness of the upper classes of the time could not have been more effectively exposed to ridicule. Pope does not even spare the hungry judges and the jury-men who were in a hurry to get back home:

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,

And wretches hang that jury-men may dine.

Pope has not even spared the game of ombre and coffee-drinking and satirized these two things. The satire becomes pungent when the coffee had the effect of stimulating the dormant wisdom of the politician. In the poem, there is confusion of values which are ridiculed. These passages include the one in which we have the catalogue of things lost on earth and which are treasured on the moon. Pope has satirized the blindness and the hypocrisy with which the fashionable world of the eighteenth century tried to maintain its fine exterior.

Critic Joseph Warton says that *The Rape of the Lock* is the best satire extant and it contains the truest and liveliest picture of modern life. Another critic, J.C. Cunningham is of the opinion that *The Rape of the Lock* is the achievement of a spirited imaginative intelligence. To marshal a host of literary allusions, at varying levels of suppression, from the blatantly overt to the secretive; to carry the mimicry of epic structure down to niceties of heroic idiom and tone; to maintain a firm discrimination between the admirable and the trashy in contemporary society, unmasking hypocrisy and pretentiousness. Such activites engage the intelligence but there is a sustained effort of wit and imagination behind those other aspects of the poem which are less readily found in other mock-heroic. Creating his brilliant myth of high society in Queen Anne's England, Pope continually prompts us not merely to measure it against the Homeric myths but also to see the element in it of romantic fiction and wistfulness.

The satire in *The Rape of the Lock* on aristocratic manners, makes a comment on polite society at large, and on fashionable women in particular. It exposes all values, especially trifling and artificial ones, by showing how small any world observing those values would have to be. Pope composed his poem with a long tradition of satires on women in mind. Belinda at her dressing-table is the heiress of a whole race of previous lady charmers. To an even greater degree than her predecessors, Belinda moves in a filigree world, a fairyland adorned with jewels, lap-dogs, and snuff-boxes. Her moves are seen to correspond to the glorious and bright light of Soul, the pervasive supernatural divinity of the poem. Indeed, Belinda herself is a sort of goddess and as such is truly divine, “Belinda smiled and all the world was gay”. And all through, she is the main target of Pope's satire exposing the insincerity of the fashionable game of love, because in his opinion, women are frivolous beings whose one genuine interest is in love-making: “Every women is at heart a rake.” This view is implied in the more playful lines in *The Rape of the Lock.*

KEYWORDS

Dear learner, here is a list of keywords from the sections you have just read:

Satire— A literary work that uses humor, irony, or ridicule to criticize people’s stupidity or vices, often in the context of politics or society.

Aristocratic— Relating to the highest class in certain societies, often noble or wealthy families.

Vanities— Excessive pride in or admiration of one’s own appearance or achievements; superficial things regarded as worthless.

Termagants— Quarrelsome or overbearing women.

Coquettes— Women who flirt lightheartedly to gain attention and admiration.

Toilet operations— The process of dressing and grooming oneself.

Tantrums— Sudden outbursts of anger or frustration.

Hypocrisy— The practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one’s own behavior does not conform.

28.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss *The Rape of the Lock* as a mock-heroic poem.
2. *The Rape of the Lock* presents a true picture of the aristocratic life of the eighteenth century. Discuss.
3. Discuss Pope as a great satirical poet with special reference to *The Rape of the Lock.*
4. Discuss Pope's use and treatment of supernatural machinery in *The Rape of the Lock.*
5. Discuss the character of Belinda in the poem *The Rape of the Lock.*

28.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 What does the "lock" in *The Rape of the Lock* refer to?

A) A stolen piece of jewelry

B) A stolen horse

C) A lock of hair

D) A secret code

Q.2 What is the primary reason for the conflict between Belinda and the Baron in the poem?

A) Religious differences

B) Political disagreements

C) A misunderstanding over a card game

D) A quarrel over a love letter

Q.3 What term is often used to describe the supernatural creatures who protect Belinda in the poem?

A) Elves

B) Goblins

C) Sylphs

D) Fairies

Q.4 What is the social class of the characters depicted in *The Rape of the Lock*?

A) Peasants

B) Aristocrats

C) Merchants

D) Soldiers

Q.5 Which literary form does *The Rape of the Lock* imitate and satirize?

A) Drama

B) Tragedy

C) Epic

D) Romance

Q.6 What is the significance of the "goddess" Ariel in the poem?

A) She represents the forces of nature

B) She serves as a messenger between characters

C) She symbolizes the power of love

D) She reflects the theme of vanity

Q.7 What is the primary theme that *The Rape of the Lock* satirizes?

A) Political corruption

B) Religious piety

C) Social vanity

D) Intellectual pursuits

Q.8 What is the role of the Baron in *The Rape of the Lock*?

A) He is Belinda's protector

B) He is a villainous kidnapper

C) He is a loyal friend of Belinda

D) He is a wise counselor

Q.9 What term is often used to describe the tone of *The Rape of the Lock*?

A) Tragic

B) Melancholic

C) Ironic

D) Romantic

Q.10 What social event is the main setting of the poem?

A) A wedding

B) A coronation

C) A funeral

D) A masquerade

Answers: 1C, 2C, 3C, 4B, 5C, 6B, 7C, 8B , 9C, 10D

28.6 LET US SUM UP

The Rape of the Lock is a mock-heroic poem that employs the elevated language and grandeur of epic poetry to satirize the trivial concerns of high society. Through playful exaggeration, the stolen lock of hair becomes the epic subject, and the actions of the characters are portrayed with epic seriousness. This

contrast between the grand style and the insignificant subject matter serves to highlight the absurdity of the aristocratic culture and its fixation on superficial matters.

28.7 SUGGESTED READING

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- Ask Literature. "The Rape of the Lock as A Social Satire | A Poem by Alexander Pope." YouTube, 1 Oct. 2022, www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYAZJ4WwwL0
