

# *Centre for Distance & Online Education*

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU  
JAMMU



**Ist Semester**  
**SESSION 2025 ONWARDS**

**M.A. ENGLISH**

**Course No. ENG - 123**

**Unit – I, II, III, IV, V, VI**

**Lesson Nos. 1-27**

**Course Coordinator**  
**Prof. Anupama Vohra**

**Teacher Incharge**  
**Dr. Jasleen Kaur**

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<http://www.distanceeducationju.in>

*Printed & Published on behalf of the Centre for Distance and Online Education,  
University of Jammu by the Director, CDOE, University of Jammu, Jammu.*

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## **WELCOME MESSAGE**

We welcome all the distance learners who have enrolled for the Post Graduate Course in English. This Course has six units. Unit I is on the rise of the English novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with special reference to the different forms of novel. Unit II to VI has five novels for detailed study. The Self-Learning Material provided to you is quite comprehensive still you are advised to consult the books in the library and go through the prescribed texts and other reference books for preparing Internal Assessment Assignments and also for the preparation of semester end examination. We want you to make the optimum use of library facility.

Wish you good luck and success!

**Prof. Anupama Vohra**  
P.G. English Coordinator

**Course Code: ENG - 123**  
**Title of the Course : Novel I**  
**Credits : 6**

**Duration of Examination : 3 hrs.**  
**Total Marks : 100**  
**(a) Semester Examination : 70**  
**(b) Sessional Assessment : 30**

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

**Objective :-** The students will be required to study the rise of the English Novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with special reference to the epistolary, picaresque, gothic forms; character writing and realism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century fiction.

**Unit-I**

1. Literary and Intellectual background of Novel upto the Georgian era

**Unit-II**

2. John Bunyan : *The Pilgrim's Progress*

**Unit-III**

3. Daniel Defoe : *Moll Flanders*

**Unit-IV**

4. Henry Fielding : *Joseph Andrews*

**Unit-V**

5. Laurence Sterne : *Tristram Shandy*

**Unit-VI**

6. Jane Austen : *Pride and Prejudice*

# SEM I

**Course No. ENG-123**

**Title of the Course: Novel-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)

# SEM I

**Course No. ENG-123**

**Title of the Course: Novel-I**

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

## **SUGGESTED READING**

Allen, Walter. *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Books Way, 2015.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Penguin Books, 2003.

Dobson, Austin. *Fielding*. Cambridge UP, 2011.

Fielding, Henry. *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. Edited by Fredson Bowers, Modern Library, 2002.

Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Penguin Books, 2005.

Henry Fielding.” *The British Library*, 16 July 2018, [www.bl.uk/people/henry-fielding](http://www.bl.uk/people/henry-fielding).

“Jane Austen.” *Jane Austen Society of North America*, [www.janeausten.org](http://www.janeausten.org).

Kettle, Arnold. *An Introduction to the English Novel: Volume I*. Routledge, 2017.

Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction*. Double 9 Books, 2013.

Mutter, Reginald P. C. “Daniel Defoe.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 7 Jan. 2020, [www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Defoe](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Defoe).

“The Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan.” *The British Library*, 4 Nov. 2018, [www.bl.uk/people/john-bunyan](http://www.bl.uk/people/john-bunyan).

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UPTO THE GEORGIAN ERA**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 1.3 Historical Context
- 1.4 Political and Religious Context
- 1.5 History and Literature
  - 1.5.1 The Augustan Prose
  - 1.5.2 Essays and Journalism
  - 1.5.3 Dictionaries and Lexicons
- 1.6 Philosophy and Religious Writing
- 1.7 The Augustan Novel
- 1.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.9 Self-Check Exercise
- 1.10 Answer Key to Self-Check Exercise
- 1.11 Suggested Reading

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Augustan literature (sometimes referred to misleadingly as Georgian literature) is a style of English literature produced during the reigns of Queen Anne, King George I, and George II in the first half of the 18th century and ending in the 1740s with the death of Pope and Swift (1744 and 1745, respectively). It is a literary epoch that featured the rapid development of the novel, an explosion in satire, the mutation of drama from political satire into melodrama, and an evolution toward poetry of personal exploration. In philosophy, it was an age increasingly dominated by empiricism, while in the writings of political-economy it marked the evolution of mercantilism as a formal philosophy, the development of capitalism, and the triumph of trade.

The chronological boundary points of the era are generally vague, largely since the label's origin in contemporary 18th century criticism has made it a shorthand designation for a somewhat nebulous age

of satire. The new Augustan period exhibited exceptionally bold political writings in all genres, with the satires of the age marked by an arch, ironic pose, full of nuance, and a superficial air of dignified calm that hid sharp criticisms beneath. While the period is generally known for its adoption of highly regulated and stylized literary forms, some of the concerns of writers of this period - with the emotions, folk, and a self-conscious model of authorship - foreshadowed the preoccupations of the later Romantic era. In general, philosophy, politics, and literature underwent a turn away from older courtly concerns towards something closer to a modern sensibility.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the Augustan Age in English literature. This lesson will familiarise you with the political and religious background of this age, as well as, the various literary genres such as novel, prose, journalism, etc., which flourished during this era.

After going through this lesson you will be able to define the socio-political and historical background of the Augustan Age. You will also be able to describe the various genres which flourished during this time and the characteristics of those different genres.

## 1.3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Alexander Pope, who had been imitating Horace, wrote an *Epistle to Augustus* that was in fact addressed to George II and seemingly endorsed the notion of his age being like that of Augustus, when poetry became more mannered, political and satirical than in the era of Julius Caesar. Later, Voltaire and Oliver Goldsmith (in his History of Literature in 1764) used the term “Augustan” to refer to the literature of the 1720s and 30s. Outside poetry, however, the Augustan era is generally known by other names. Partially, because of the rise of empiricism and partially due to the self-conscious naming of the age in terms of ancient Rome, two rather imprecise labels have been affixed to the age. One is that it is the age of neoclassicism; the other is that it is the Age of Reason. While neoclassical criticism from France was imported to English letters, the English had abandoned their strictures in all but name by the 1720s. Critics disagree over the applicability of the concept of “the Enlightenment” to the literary history of this period. Donald Greene argued forcefully that the age should rather be known as “The Age of Exuberance,” while T. H. White made a case for “The Age of Scandal.” More recently, Roy Porter put forward the notion of a distinctively “English Enlightenment” to characterize the intellectual climate of the period.

One of the most critical elements of the 18th century was the increasing availability of printed material, both for readers and authors. Books fell in price dramatically, and used books were sold at Bartholomew Fair and other fairs. Additionally, a brisk trade in chapbooks and broadsheets carried London trends and information out to the farthest reaches of the kingdom. This was only furthered with the establishment of periodicals, including *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *the London Magazine*. Not only, therefore, were people in New York aware of the happenings of Parliament and the court, but people in London were more aware than before of the happenings of York. Furthermore, in this age before copyright, pirate editions were commonplace, especially in areas without frequent contact with London. Pirate editions thereby encouraged booksellers to increase their shipments to outlying centres like Dublin, which increased, again, awareness

across the whole realm. This was compounded by the end of the Press Restriction Act in 1693, which allowed for provincial printing presses to be established, creating a printing structure that was no longer under government control.

All types of literature were spread quickly in all directions. Newspapers not only began, but they multiplied. Furthermore, the newspapers were immediately compromised, as the political factions created their own newspapers, planted stories, and bribed journalists. Leading clerics had their sermon collections printed, and these were top selling books. Since dissenting, Establishment, and Independent divines were in print, the constant movement of these works helped defuse any one region's religious homogeneity and fostered emergent latitudinarianism. Periodicals were exceedingly popular, and the art of essay writing was at nearly its apex. Furthermore, the happenings of the Royal Society were published regularly, and these events were digested and explained or celebrated in more popular presses. The latest books of scholarship had "keys" and "indexes" and "digests" made of them that could popularize, summarize, and explain them to a wide audience. The cross-index, now commonplace, was a novelty in the 18th century, and several persons created indexes for older books of learning, allowing anyone to find what an author had to say about a given topic at a moment's notice. Books of etiquette, of correspondence, and of moral instruction and hygiene multiplied. Economics began as a serious discipline, but it did so in the form of numerous "projects" for solving England's ills. Sermon collections, dissertations on religious controversy, and prophecies, both new and old and explained, cropped up in endless variety. In short, readers in the 18th century were overwhelmed by competing voices. True and false sat side by side on the shelves, and anyone could be a published author, just as anyone could quickly pretend to be a scholar by using indexes and digests.

The positive side of the explosion in information was that the 18th century was markedly more generally educated than the centuries before. Education was less confined to the upper classes than it had been in prior centuries, and consequently contributions to science, philosophy, economics, and literature came from all parts of the new United Kingdom. It was the first time when literacy and a library were all that stood between a person and education. It was an age of "enlightenment" in the sense that the insistence and drive for reasonable explanations of nature and mankind was a rage. It was an "age of reason" in that it was an age that accepted clear, rational methods as superior to tradition. However, there was a dark side to such literacy as well, a dark side which authors of the 18th century felt at every turn, and it was that nonsense and insanity were also getting more adherents than ever before. Charlatans and mountebanks were fooling more, just as sages were educating more, and alluring and lurid apocalypses vied with sober philosophy on the shelves. As with the world-wide web in the 21st century, the democratization of publishing meant that older systems for determining value and uniformity of view were both in shambles. Thus, it was increasingly difficult to trust books in the 18th century, because books were increasingly easy to make and buy.

#### **1.4 POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT**

The Restoration period ended with the exclusion crisis and the Glorious Revolution, where Parliament set up a new rule for succession to the British throne that would always favour Protestantism over sanguinity. This had brought William and Mary to the throne instead of James II, and was codified in the Act of Settlement 1701. James had fled to France from where his son James Francis Edward Stuart launched an attempt to retake

the throne in 1715. Another attempt was launched by the latter's son Charles Edward Stuart in 1745. The attempted invasions are often referred to as "the 15" and "the 45". When William died, Anne Stuart came to the throne. Anne was reportedly immoderately stupid: Thomas Babington Macaulay would say of Anne that "when in good humour, [she] was meekly stupid and, when in bad humour, was sulkily stupid." Anne's reign saw two wars and great triumphs by John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough. John's wife, Sarah Churchill, was Anne's best friend, and many supposed that she secretly controlled the Queen in every respect. With a weak ruler and the belief that true power rested in the hands of the leading ministers, the two factions of politics stepped up their opposition to each other, and Whig and Tory were at each other's throats. This weakness at the throne would lead quickly to the expansion of the powers of the party leader in Parliament and the establishment in all but name of the Prime Minister office in the form of Robert Walpole. When Anne died without issue, George I, Elector of Hanover, came to the throne. George I was never comfortable with the English language, and his isolation from the English people was instrumental in keeping his power relatively irrelevant. His son, George II, on the other hand, spoke some English and some more French, and his was the first full Hanoverian rule in England. By that time, the powers of Parliament had silently expanded, and George II's power was perhaps equal only to that of Parliament.

London's population exploded spectacularly. During the Restoration, it grew from around 350,000 to 600,000 in 1700. By 1800, it had reached 950,000. Not all of these residents were prosperous. The Enclosure Acts had destroyed lower-class farming in the countryside, and rural areas experienced painful poverty. When the Black Act was expanded to cover all protestors to enclosure, the poor communities of the country were forced to migrate or suffer. Therefore, young people from the country often moved to London with hopes of achieving success, and this swelled the ranks of the urban poor and cheap labour for city employers. It also meant an increase in numbers of criminals, prostitutes and beggars. The fears of property crime, rape, and starvation found in Augustan literature should be kept in the context of London's growth, as well as the depopulation of the countryside.

Partially because of these population pressures, property crime became a business both for the criminals and for those who fed off of the criminals. Major crime lords like Jonathan Wild invented new schemes for stealing, and the newspapers were eager to report crime. Biographies of the daring criminals became popular, and these spawned fictional biographies of fictional criminals. Cautionary tales of country women abused by sophisticated rakes (such as Anne Bond) and libertines in the city were popular fare, and these prompted fictional accounts of exemplary women abused (or narrowly escaping abuse).

Increased population also meant that urban discontent was never particularly difficult to find for political opportunists, and London suffered a number of riots, most of them against supposed Roman Catholic agent provocateurs. When highly potent, inexpensive distilled spirits were introduced, matters worsened, and authors and artists protested the innovation of gin. From 1710, the government encouraged distilling as a source of revenue and trade goods, and there were no licenses required for the manufacturing or selling of gin. There were documented instances of women drowning their infants to sell the child's clothes for gin, and so these facilities created both the fodder for riots and the conditions against which riots would occur. Dissenters (Protestants not conforming to the Church of England) recruited and preached to the poor of the city, and various offshoots of the Puritan and "Independent" (Baptist) movements increased their numbers substantially. One theme of these ministers was the danger of the Roman Catholic Church, which they frequently saw as the Whore of Babylon. While Anne tended to favour the high church faction, particularly towards the close of her reign, the court of George I was more closely allied with [low church] and [latitudinarian] elements, and was warmer towards non-conformists. The convocation was effectively disbanded by George I (who was struggling

with the House of Lords), and George II was pleased to keep it in abeyance. Additionally, both of the first two Hanoverians were concerned with James Francis Edward Stuart and Charles Edward Stuart who had considerable support in Scotland and Ireland, and anyone too high church was suspected of being a closet Jacobite, thanks in no small part to Walpole's inflating fears of Stuart sympathizers among any group that did not support him.

## Activity

Dear learner, now that you are familiar with the historical, social, and religious background of the novel during the eighteenth century, check your progress before moving to the next section.

1. Alexander Pope addressed his *Epistle to Augustus* to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Voltaire and Oliver Goldsmith used the term \_\_\_\_\_ to describe literature from the 1720s and '30s.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the imprecise labels given to the 18th century.
4. The end of \_\_\_\_\_ in 1693 contributed to the increase in printed material during the 18th century.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ was the literary form which reached its apex in the 18th century.
6. The Restoration period ended with the \_\_\_\_\_ Crisis and the Glorious Revolution.
7. The Act of \_\_\_\_\_ 1701 codified the rule of succession that favoured Protestantism over sanguinity.
8. James Francis Edward Stuart launched an attempt to retake the throne in \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The attempted invasions by James Francis Edward Stuart and his son are often referred to as “the \_\_\_\_\_” and “the 45.”
10. \_\_\_\_\_ came to the throne after Anne died without issue.

## Answers

1. George II.	2. The Augustan literature	3. The Age of Reason
4. Press Restriction Act	5. Essay writing	6. Exclusion
7. Settlement	8. 1715	9. 15
10. George		

## 1.5 HISTORY AND LITERATURE

The literature of the 18th century, particularly the early 18th century, which is what “Augustan” most commonly indicates, is explicitly political in ways that few others are. Because the professional author was still not distinguishable from the hack-writer, those who wrote poetry, novels, and plays were frequently either politically active or politically funded. At the same time, an aesthetic of artistic detachment from the everyday world had yet to develop, and the aristocratic ideal of an author so noble as to be above political concerns was largely archaic and irrelevant. The period may be an “Age of Scandal,” for it is an age when authors dealt specifically with the crimes and vices of their world.

Satire, in prose, drama, and poetry, was the genre that attracted the most energetic and voluminous writings. The satires produced during the Augustan period were occasionally gentle and non-specific commentaries on the comically flawed human condition—but they were at least as frequently specific critiques of specific policies, actions, and persons. Even those works studiously non-topical were, in fact, transparently

political statements in the 18th century. Consequently, readers of 18th-century literature today need to understand the history of the period more than most readers of other literatures do. The 18th-century poetry of all forms was in constant dialogue: each author was responding and commenting upon the others. 18th-century novels were written against other 18th-century novels (e.g. the battles between Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, who, along with Eliza Haywood, wrote a novel satirizing Richardson's *Pamela*, and between Laurence Sterne and Tobias Smollett). Plays were written to make fun of plays, or to counter the success of plays (e.g. the reaction against and for Cato and, later, Fielding's *The Author's Farce*). Therefore, history and literature are linked in a way rarely seen at other times.

### **1.5.1 THE AUGUSTAN PROSE**

The essay, satire, and dialogue (in philosophy and religion) thrived in the age, and the English novel truly began as a serious art form. Literacy in the early 18th century passed into the working classes, as well as the middle and upper classes. Furthermore, literacy was not confined to men, though rates of female literacy are very difficult to establish. For those who were literate, circulating libraries in England began in the Augustan period. Libraries were open to all, but they were mainly associated with female patronage and novel reading.

### **1.5.2 ESSAYS AND JOURNALISM**

English essayists were aware of Continental models, but they developed their form independently from that tradition, and periodical literature grew between 1692 and 1712. Periodicals were inexpensive to produce, quick to read, and a viable way of influencing public opinion, and consequently there were many broadsheet periodicals headed by a single author and staffed by hirelings (so-called "Grub Street" authors). One periodical outsold and dominated all others, however, and that was *The Spectator*, written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (with occasional contributions from their friends). *The Spectator* developed a number of pseudonymous characters, including "Mr. Spectator," Roger de Coverley, and "Isaac Bickerstaff", and both Addison and Steele created fictions to surround their narrators. The dispassionate view of the world (the pose of a spectator, rather than participant) was essential for the development of the English essay, as it set out a ground wherein Addison and Steele could comment and meditate upon manners and events.

Samuel Johnson's command of words and his practical wisdom gained a following as he published more than 200 essays offering insights into the follies of human nature and moral perseverance. Rather than being philosophers like Montesquieu, the English essayist could be an honest observer and his reader's peer. After the success of *The Spectator*, more political periodicals of comment appeared. However, the political factions and coalitions of politicians very quickly realized the power of this type of press, and they began funding newspapers to spread rumors. The Tory ministry of Robert Harley (1710-1714) reportedly spent over 50,000 pounds sterling on creating and bribing the press (Butt); we know this figure because their successors publicized it, but they (the Walpole government) were suspected of spending even more. Politicians wrote papers, wrote into papers, and supported papers, and it was well known that some of the periodicals, like *Mist's Journal*, were party mouthpieces.

### **1.5.3 DICTIONARIES AND LEXICONS**

The 18th century was a time of enlightenment progression occurring in all intellectual fields. However, the English language was deteriorating into a tangled mess. A group of London booksellers commissioned well-known essayist Samuel Johnson to compile a set of rules governing the English Language. After nine

years and the help of six assistants the first edition of *A Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1755. Johnson's great knowledge of letters, words and literature brought uniqueness to his dictionary. Each word defined in detail, with descriptions of their various uses and numerous literary quotes as illustrations. This was the first dictionary of its kind, containing 40,000 words and nearly 114,000 quotes packed together with Johnson's personal touch. A warm reception greeted Johnson's Dictionary as it was the first dictionary that could be read with pleasure. The definitions full of wit and depth of thought supported by passages from beloved poets and philosophers, which a reader could be content spending an evening poring over its pages. Johnson's choice of structure and format has certainly shaped future English dictionaries and lexicons and the role they play in language development.

### Activity

Dear learner, let us take a break and revise the section that you just read.

1. The literature of the 18th century, particularly the early 18th century, is explicitly \_\_\_\_\_ in ways that few others are.
2. The 18th-century novelists Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding were involved in a literary battle, with Fielding and Eliza Haywood writing a novel satirizing Richardson's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. English essayists were aware of \_\_\_\_\_ models, but they developed their form independently from that tradition.
4. The periodical *The Spectator* was written by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. *The Spectator* developed a number of pseudonym characters, including \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* was published in \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Johnson's dictionary contained \_\_\_\_\_ words and nearly 114,000 quotes.
8. Johnson's dictionary was unique because it included literary \_\_\_\_\_ as illustrations for word definitions.

### Answers

1. Political	2. Pamela	3. Continental
4. Joseph Addison, Richard Steele	5. "Mr. Spectator" and Roger de Coverley	
6. 1755	7. 40,000	8. Quotes

## 1.6 PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS WRITING

The Augustan period showed less literature of controversy than the Restoration. There were Puritan authors, however, and one of the names usually associated with the novel is perhaps the most prominent in Puritan writing: Daniel Defoe. After the coronation of Anne, dissenter hopes of reversing the Restoration were at an ebb, and dissenter literature moved from the offensive to the defensive, from revolutionary to conservative. Defoe's infamous volley in the struggle between high and low church came in the form of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters; Or, Proposals for the Establishment of the Church*. The work is satirical, attacking all of

the worries of Establishment figures over the challenges of dissenters. It is, in other words, defensive. Later still, the most majestic work of the era, and the one most quoted and read, was William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728). *The Meditations of Robert Boyle* remained popular as well. Both Law and Boyle called for revivalism, and they set the stage for the later development of Methodism and George Whitefield's sermon style. However, their works aimed at the individual, rather than the community. The age of revolutionary divines and militant evangelists in literature was over for a considerable time.

Also in contrast to the Restoration, when philosophy in England was fully dominated by John Locke, the 18th century had a vigorous competition among followers of Locke. Bishop Berkeley extended Locke's emphasis on perception to argue that perception entirely solves the Cartesian problem of subjective and objective knowledge by saying "to be is to be perceived." Only, Berkeley argued, those things that are perceived by a consciousness are real. For Berkeley, the persistence of matter rests in the fact that God perceives those things that humans are not, that a living and continually aware, attentive, and involved God is the only rational explanation for the existence of objective matter. In essence, then, Berkeley's skepticism leads to faith. David Hume, on the other hand, took empiricist skepticism to its extremes, and he was the most radically empiricist philosopher of the period. He attacked surmise and unexamined premises wherever he found them, and his skepticism pointed out metaphysics in areas that other empiricists had assumed were material. Hume doggedly refused to enter into questions of his personal faith in the divine, but his assault on the logic and assumptions of theodicy and cosmogeny was devastating, and he concentrated on the provable and empirical in a way that would lead to utilitarianism and naturalism later.

In social and political philosophy, economics underlies much of the debate. Bernard de Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) became a centre-point of controversy regarding trade, morality, and social ethics. Mandeville argued that wastefulness, lust, pride, and all the other "private" vices were good for the society at large, for each led the individual to employ others, to spend freely, and to free capital to flow through the economy. Mandeville's work is full of paradox and is meant, at least partially, to problematize what he saw as the naive philosophy of human progress and inherent virtue. However, Mandeville's arguments, initially an attack on graft of the War of the Spanish Succession, would be quoted often by economists who wished to strip morality away from questions of trade.

Adam Smith is remembered by lay persons as the father of capitalism, but his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* of 1759 also attempted to strike out a new ground for moral action. His emphasis on "sentiment" was in keeping with the era, as he emphasized the need for "sympathy" between individuals as the basis of fit action. These ideas, and the psychology of David Hartley, were influential on the sentimental novel and even the nascent Methodist movement. If sympathetic sentiment communicated morality, would it not be possible to induce morality by providing sympathetic circumstances? Smith's greatest work was *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* in 1776. What it held in common with de Mandeville, Hume, and Locke was that it began by analytically examining the history of material exchange, without reflection on morality. Instead of deducing from the ideal or moral to the real, it examined the real and tried to formulate inductive rules.

## 1.7 THE AUGUSTAN NOVEL

The ground for the novel had been laid by journalism, drama and satire. Long prose satires like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) had a central character who goes through adventures and may (or may not) learn lessons. However, the most important single satirical source for the writing of novels came from Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615). In general, one can see these three axes, drama, journalism, and satire, as blending in and giving rise to three different types of novel.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was the first major novel of the new century and was published in more editions than any other works besides *Gulliver's Travels*. Defoe worked as a journalist during and after its composition, and therefore he encountered the memoirs of Alexander Selkirk, who had been stranded in South America on an island for some years. Defoe took aspects of the actual life and, from that, generated a fictional life, satisfying an essentially journalistic market with his fiction (Hunter 331-338). In the 1720s, Defoe interviewed famed criminals and produced accounts of their lives. In particular, he investigated Jack Sheppard and Jonathan Wild and wrote True Accounts of the former's escapes (and fate) and the latter's life. From his reportage on the prostitutes and criminals, Defoe may have become familiar with the real-life Mary Molineaux, who may have been the model for Moll in *Moll Flanders* (1722). In the same year, Defoe produced *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), which summoned up the horrors and tribulations of 1665 for a journalistic market for memoirs, and an attempted tale of a working-class male rise in *Colonel Jack* (1722). His last novel returned to the theme of fallen women in *Roxana* (1724). Thematically, Defoe's works are consistently Puritan. They all involve a fall, a degradation of the spirit, a conversion, and an ecstatic elevation. This religious structure necessarily involved a bildungsroman, for each character had to learn a lesson about him or herself and emerge the wiser.

Although there were novels in the interim, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) is the next landmark development in the English novel. Richardson's generic models were quite distinct from those of Defoe. Instead of working from the journalistic biography, Richardson had in mind the books of improvement that were popular at the time. Pamela Andrews enters the employ of a "Mr. B." As a dutiful girl, she writes to her mother constantly, and as a Christian girl, she is always on guard for her "virtue" (i.e. her virginity), for Mr. B lusts after her. The novel ends with her marriage to her employer and her rising to the position of lady. Pamela, like its author, presents a dissenter's and a Whig's view of the rise of the classes. The work drew a nearly instantaneous set of satires, of which Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, or an *Apology for the Life of Miss Shamela Andrews* (1742) is the most memorable. Fielding continued to bait Richardson with *Joseph Andrews* (1742), the tale of Shamela's brother, Joseph, who goes through his life trying to protect his own virginity, thus reversing the sexual predation of Richardson and satirizing the idea of sleeping one's way to rank. However, *Joseph Andrews* is not a parody of Richardson, for Fielding proposed his belief in "good nature," which is a quality of inherent virtue that is independent of class and which can always prevail. Joseph's friend Parson Adams, although not a fool, is a naïf and possessing good nature. His own basic good nature blinds him to the wickedness of the world, and the incidents on the road (for most of

the novel is a travel story) allow Fielding to satirize conditions for the clergy, rural poverty (and squires), and the viciousness of businessmen.

In 1747 through 1748, Samuel Richardson published *Clarissa* in serial form. Unlike *Pamela*, it is not a tale of virtue rewarded. Instead, it is a highly tragic and affecting account of a young girl whose parents try to force her into an uncongenial marriage, thus pushing her into the arms of a scheming rake named Lovelace. In the end, Clarissa dies by her own will. The novel is a masterpiece of psychological realism and emotional effect, and when Richardson was drawing to a close in the serial publication, even Henry Fielding wrote to him, begging him not to kill Clarissa. As with *Pamela*, Richardson emphasized the individual over the social and the personal over the class. Even as Fielding was reading and enjoying *Clarissa*, he was also writing a counter to its messages. His *Tom Jones* of 1749 offers up the other side of the argument from Clarissa. Tom Jones agrees substantially in the power of the individual to be more or less than his or her birth would indicate, but it again emphasizes the place of the individual in society and the social ramifications of individual choices. Fielding answers Richardson by featuring a similar plot device (whether a girl can choose her own mate) but showing how family and village can complicate and expedite matches and felicity.

Two other novelists should be mentioned, for they, like Fielding and Richardson, were in dialogue through their works. Laurence Sterne's and Tobias Smollett's works offered up oppositional views of the self in society and the method of the novel. The clergyman Laurence Sterne consciously set out to imitate Jonathan Swift with his *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767). Tristram seeks to write his autobiography, but like Swift's narrator in *A Tale of a Tub*, he worries that nothing in his life can be understood without understanding its context. For example, he tells the reader that at the very moment he was conceived, his mother was saying, "Did you wind the clock?" To explain how he knows this, he explains that his father took care of winding the clock and "other family business" on one day a month. To explain why the clock had to be wound then, he has to explain his father. In other words, the biography moves backward rather than forward in time, only to then jump forward years, hit another knot, and move backward again. It is a novel of exceptional energy, of multi-layered digressions, of multiple satires, and of frequent parodies. Journalist, translator, and historian Tobias Smollett, on the other hand, wrote more seemingly traditional novels. He concentrated on the picaresque novel, where a low-born character would go through a practically endless series of adventures. Sterne thought that Smollett's novels always paid undue attention to the basest and most common elements of life, that they emphasized the dirt. Although this is a superficial complaint, it points to an important difference between the two as authors. Sterne came to the novel from a satirical background, while Smollett approached it from journalism. In the 19th century, novelists would have plots much nearer to Smollett's than either Fielding's or Sterne's or Richardson's, and his sprawling, linear development of action would prove most successful.

In the midst of this development of the novel, other trends were taking place. The novel of sentiment was beginning in the 1760s and would experience a brief period of dominance. This type of novel emphasized sympathy. In keeping with the theories of Adam Smith and David Hartley (see above), the sentimental novel concentrated on emotionally labile characters capable of extraordinary empathy. Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* outsold her brother

Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and took the theory of "good nature" to be a sentimental nature. Other women were also writing novels and moving away from the old romance plots that had dominated before the Restoration. There were utopian novels, like Sarah Scott's *Millennium Hall* (1762), autobiographical women's novels like Frances Burney's works, female adaptations of older, male motifs, such as Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) and many others. These novels do not generally follow a strict line of development or influence. However, they were popular works that were celebrated by both male and female readers and critics.

### Activity

Dear learner, it is time to take another break. Check your familiarisation with the section that you have read by solving the exercise given below:

1. *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Bernard de Mandeville's \_\_\_\_\_ argued that private vices, such as wastefulness and pride, were beneficial for society.
3. *Theory of Moral Sentiments* by \_\_\_\_\_ emphasized the importance of sympathy between individuals as the basis of moral action.
4. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was published in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Daniel Defoe's \_\_\_\_\_ was a satirical work attacking the concerns of Establishment figures over dissenters.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is a tragic tale of a young girl named Clarissa.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is an example of the picaresque novel written by Tobias Smollett.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ wrote *David Simple* which outsold *Joseph Andrews*.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the 18th-century philosopher who emphasized the importance of "sympathy" as a basis for moral action.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ novel by Sarah Scott is an example of a utopian novel.
11. Samuel Richardson's \_\_\_\_\_ portrays a tragic tale of virtue rewarded, where the main character marries her employer and rises in social status.
12. The development of the novel in the 18th century saw the rise of the sentimental novel, exemplified by Sarah Fielding's \_\_\_\_\_.

### Answer Key

1. Daniel Defoe	2. The Fable of the Bees
3. Adam Smith	4. 1776
5. The Shortest Way with the Dissenters	6. Clarissa
7. The Adventures of Roderick Random	8. Sarah Fielding
9. Adam Smith	10. Millennium Hall
11. Pamela	12. David Simple

## 1.8 LET US SUM UP

The Augustan Age was marked by a focus on order, reason, and classical style in English literature. It saw the rise of the novel, satire, essays, and journalism, with writers using wit to critique society and politics. The period also reflected growing empiricism and early capitalism. While emphasizing formal structure, Augustan literature began exploring human emotions and individual experience, foreshadowing the Romantic era. Largely, it was a key transitional period blending tradition with new social and philosophical ideas.

## 1.9 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

- Q.1 What is one of the most critical elements of 18th century?
- Q.2 How did the Restoration Period end?
- Q.3 The Augustan Period showed less literature of controversy than the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q.4 Who wrote *Gulliver's Travels*?
- Q.5 Who wrote *Pamela*?
- Q.6 Write short notes on:
  - (a) Augustan Literature
  - (b) The novel of sentiment
- Q.7 What was one of the most critical elements of 18th century? Explain briefly.
- Q.8 What were the main trends in the novel during 18th century?
- Q.9 Discuss the political scenario during 18th century in England?
- Q.10 Discuss the major works of Daniel Defoe.

## 1.10 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

**Ans.1** One of the most critical elements of 18th century was the increasing availability of the printed material.

**Ans.2** The Restoration Period ended with the exclusion crisis and the Glorious Revolution.

**Ans.3** Restoration Period

**Ans.4** Jonathan Swift

**Ans.5** Samuel Richardson

**Ans.6** (a) Augustan Literature: Augustan literature (sometimes referred to misleadingly as Georgian literature) is a style of English literature produced during the reigns of Queen Anne, King George I, and George II in the first half of the 18th century and ending in the 1740s with the death of Pope and Swift (1744 and 1745, respectively). It is a literary epoch that featured the rapid development of the novel, an explosion in satire, the mutation of drama from political satire into melodrama, and an evolution toward poetry of personal exploration. In philosophy, it was an age increasingly dominated by empiricism, while in the writings of political-economy it marked the evolution of mercantilism as a formal philosophy, the development of capitalism, and the triumph of trade.

(b) The novel of sentiment: The novel of sentiment was beginning in the 1760s and would experience a brief period of dominance. This type of novel emphasized sympathy. In keeping with the theories of Adam Smith and David Hartley, the sentimental novel concentrated on emotionally labile characters capable of extraordinary empathy. Sarah Fielding's *David Simple* outsold her brother Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and took the theory of "good nature" to be a sentimental nature.

**Ans.7** One of the most critical elements of the 18th century was the increasing availability of printed material, both for readers and authors. Books fell in price dramatically, and used books were sold at Bartholomew Fair and other fairs. Additionally, a brisk trade in chapbooks and broadsheets carried London trends and information out to the farthest reaches of the kingdom. This was only furthered with the establishment of periodicals, including *The Gentleman's Magazine* and the *London Magazine*. Not only, therefore, were people in York aware of the happenings of Parliament and the court, but people in London were more aware than before of the happenings of York. Furthermore, in this age before copyright, pirate editions were commonplace, especially in areas without frequent contact with London. Pirate editions thereby encouraged booksellers to increase their shipments to outlying centres like Dublin, which increased, again, awareness across the whole realm. This was compounded by the end of the Press Restriction Act in 1693, which allowed for provincial printing presses to be established, creating a printing structure that was no longer under government control.

### **1.11 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Carter, Ronald and McRae, John. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. Routledge, 2001.
- \* "The Novel." *British Literature Wiki*, University of Delaware, [sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/the-novel/](http://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/the-novel/).

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UPTO THE GEORGIAN ERA**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 2.3 The Augustan Age
- 2.4 Historians of the Novel
- 2.5 The Rise of the Novel
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Self-Check Exercise
- 2.8 Answer Key to Self-Check Exercise
- 2.9 Suggested Reading

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Augustan age, also known as the Georgian era is one of the most important literary periods in English literary history. While the age remains significant for the flourishing of a lot of literary genres such as poetry, journalism, prose, etc., the age is considered significant for the rise of the novel.

#### **2.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to enhance the familiarity of the learner with the Augustan Age. The aim of this lesson is to provide an overview of the Augustan Age and to discuss the various factors which contributed to the rise of the English novel.

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to define the literary and intellectual background of the Augustan Age and will be able to associate the literary background with the rise of the genre of the novel. The learner will also be able to identify the major writers and the literary contributions made by them.

#### **2.3 THE AUGUSTAN AGE**

The eighteenth century in English literature has been called the Augustan Age, the Neoclassical Age, and the Age of Reason. The term ‘the Augustan Age’ comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace, by many of the writers of the period. Specifically, the Augustan Age was the period after the Restoration era to the death of Alexander Pope (1690 - 1744). The

major writers of the age were Pope and John Dryden in poetry, and Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison in prose. Dryden forms the link between Restoration and Augustan literature; although he wrote ribald comedies in the Restoration vein, his verse satires were highly admired by the generation of poets who followed him, and his writings on literature were very much in a neoclassical spirit. But more than any other it is the name of Alexander Pope which is associated with the epoch known as the Augustan Age, despite the fact that other writers such as Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe had a more lasting influence.

This is partly a result of the politics of naming inherent in literary history: many of the early forms of prose narrative common at this time did not fit into a literary era which defined itself as neoclassical. The literature of this period which conformed to Pope's aesthetic principles (and could thus qualify as being 'Augustan') is distinguished by its striving for harmony and precision, its urbanity, and its imitation of classical models such as Homer, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace, for example in the work of the minor poet Matthew Prior. In verse, the tight heroic couplet was common, and in prose, essay and satire were the predominant forms. Any facile definition of this period would be misleading, however; as important as it was, the neoclassicist impulse was only one strain in the literature of the first half of the eighteenth century. But its representatives were the defining voices in literary circles, and as a result it is often some aspect of 'neoclassicism' which is used to describe the era.

## Neoclassicism

The works of Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison and John Gay, as well as many of their contemporaries, exhibit qualities of order, clarity, and stylistic decorum that were formulated in the major critical documents of the age: Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), and Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711). These works, forming the basis for modern English literary criticism, insist that 'nature' is the true model and standard of writing. This 'nature' of the Augustans, however, was not the wild, spiritual nature the romantic poets would later idealize, but nature as derived from classical theory: a rational and comprehensible moral order in the universe, demonstrating God's providential design. The literary circle around Pope considered Homer pre-eminent among ancient poets in his descriptions of nature, and concluded in a circuitous feat of logic that the writer who 'imitates' Homer is also describing nature. From this follows the rules inductively based on the classics that Pope articulated in his *Essay on Criticism*

- \* Those rules of old discovered, not devised,
- \* Are nature still, but nature methodized.

Particularly influential in the literary scene of the early eighteenth century were the two periodical publications by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Tatler* (1709-11), and *The Spectator* (1711-12). Both writers are ranked among the minor masters of English prose style and credited with raising the general cultural level of the English middle classes. A typical representative of the post-Restoration mood, Steele was a zealous crusader for morality, and his stated purpose in *The Tatler* was "to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality." With *The Spectator*, Addison added a further purpose: to introduce the middle-class public to recent developments in philosophy and literature and thus to educate their tastes. The essays are discussions of current events, literature, and gossip often written in a highly ironic and refined style. Addison and Steele helped to popularize the philosophy of John Locke and promote the literary reputation of John Milton, among others. Although these publications each only ran

two years, the influence that Addison and Steele had on their contemporaries was enormous, and their essays often amounted to a popularization of the ideas circulating among the intellectuals of the age. With these wide-spread and influential publications, the literary circle revolving around Addison, Steele, Swift and Pope was practically able to dictate the accepted taste in literature during the Augustan Age. In one of his essays for *The Spectator*, for example, Addison criticized the metaphysical poets for their ambiguity and lack of clear ideas, a critical stance which remained influential until the twentieth century.

The literary criticism of these writers often sought its justification in classical precedents. In the same vein, many of the important genres of this period were adaptations of classical forms: mock epic, translation, and imitation. A large part of Pope's works belong to this last category, which exemplifies the artificiality of neoclassicism more thoroughly than does any other literary form of the period. In his satires and verse epistles, Pope takes on the role of an English Horace, adopting the Roman poet's informal candor and conversational tone, and applying the standards of the original Augustan Age to his own time, even addressing George II satirically as "Augustus." Pope also translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and, after concluding this demanding task, he embarked on *The Dunciad* (1728), a biting literary satire.

*The Dunciad* is a mock epic, a form of satiric writing in which commonplace subjects are described in the elevated, heroic style of classical epic. By parody and deliberate misuse of heroic language and literary convention, the satirist emphasizes the triviality of the subject, which is implicitly being measured against the highest standards of human potential. Among the best-known mock epic poems of this period in addition to *The Dunciad* are John Dryden's *MacFlecknoe* (1682), and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714). In *The Rape of the Lock*, often considered one of the highest achievements of mock epic poetry, the heroic action of epic is maintained, but the scale is sharply reduced. The hero's preparation for combat is transposed to a fashionable boat ride up the Thames, and the ensuing battle is a card game. The hero steals the titular lock of hair while the heroine is pouring coffee.

Although the mock epic mode is most commonly found in poetry, its influence was also felt in drama, most notably in John Gay's most famous work, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). *The Beggar's Opera* ludicrously mingles elements of ballad and Italian opera in a satire on Sir Robert Walpole, England's prime minister at the time. The vehicle is opera, but the characters are criminals and prostitutes. Gay's burlesque of opera was an unprecedented stage success and centuries later inspired the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht to write one of his best-known works, *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

One of the most well-known mock epic works in prose from this period is Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books* (1704), in which the old battle between the ancient and the modern writers is fought out in a library between "The Bee and The Spider." Although not a mock epic, the satiric impulse is also the driving force behind Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), one of the masterpieces of the period. The four parts describe different journeys of Lemuel Gulliver; to Lilliput, where the pompous activities of the diminutive inhabitants is satirized; to Brobdingnag, a land of giants who laugh at Gulliver's tales of the greatness of England; to Laputa and Lagoda, inhabited by quack scientists and philosophers; and to the land of the Houyhnhnms, where horses are civilized and men (Yahoos) behave like beasts. As a satirist Swift's technique was to create fictional speakers such as Gulliver, who utter sentiments that the intelligent reader should recognize as complacent, egotistical, stupid, or mad. Swift is recognized as a master of understated irony,

and his name has become practically synonymous with the type of satire in which outrageous statements are offered in a straight-faced manner.

### The Nature and Graveyard Poets

Neoclassicism was not the only literary movement at this time. However, two schools in poetry rejected many of the precepts of decorum advocated by the neoclassical writers and anticipated several of the themes of Romanticism. The so-called nature poets, for example, treated nature not as an ordered pastoral backdrop, but rather as a grand and sometimes even forbidding entity. They tended to individualize the experience of nature and shun a methodized approach. Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, was a rural poet in an urban era, and the poems of *Miscellany Poems by a Lady* (1713) were often observations of nature, largely free of neoclassical conventions. Her contemporaries regarded her as little more than a female wit, but she was highly praised by the Romantic poets, particularly William Wordsworth. A further influential poet of this school was James Thomas, whose poetical work *The Seasons*, which appeared in separate volumes from 1726 to 1730 and beginning with “Winter,” was the most popular verse of the century. In his treatment of nature, he diverged from the neoclassical writers in many important ways: through sweeping vistas and specific details in contrast to circumscribed, generalized landscapes; exuberance instead of balance; and a fascination with the supernatural and the mysterious, to name just a few.

This last was also the major concern of the poets of the Graveyard School. Foremost among them was Edward Young, whose early verses were in the Augustan tradition. However, in his most famous work, *The Complaint: or, Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742–45), the melancholy meditations against a backdrop of tombs and death indicate a major departure from the conventions and convictions of the preceding generation. While the neoclassicists regarded melancholia as a weakness, the pervasive mood of *The Complaint* is a sentimental and pensive contemplation of loss. It was nearly as successful as Thomas’s *The Seasons*, and was translated into a number of major European languages.

### Satire

The Augustan era is considered a high point of British satiric writing, and its masterpieces were Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*, Pope’s *Dunciads*, *Horatian Imitations*, and *Moral Essays*, Samuel Johnson’s *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and *London*, Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* and Jonathan Wild, and John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*. There were several thousand other satirical works written during the period, which have until recently been, by widespread consensus, ignored. The central group of “Scriblerians”—Pope, Swift, Gay, and their colleague John Arbuthnot, are considered to have had common satiric aims. Until recently, these writers formed a “school” of satire. After Swift and Pope passed away, the emergent “Age of Sensibility” discouraged the often cruel and abrasive tenor of the Augustans, and satire was rendered gentler and more diffuse.

Many scholars of the era argue that a single name overshadows all others in 18th-century prose satire: Jonathan Swift. Swift wrote poetry as well as prose, and his satires range over all topics. Critically, Swift’s satire marked the development of prose parody away from simple satire or burlesque. A burlesque or lampoon in prose would imitate a despised author and quickly move to *reductio ad absurdum* by having the victim say things coarse or idiotic. On the other hand, other satires would argue against a habit, practice, or policy by

making fun of its reach or composition or methods. What Swift did was to combine parody, with its imitation of form and style of another, and satire in prose. Swift's works would pretend to speak in the voice of an opponent and imitate the style of the opponent and have the parodic work itself be the satire. Swift's first major satire was *A Tale of a Tub* (1703-1705), which introduced an ancients/moderns division that would serve as a distinction between the old and the new conception of value.

The "moderns" sought trade, empirical science, the individual's reason above the society's, while the "ancients" believed in inherent and immanent value of birth, and the society over the individual's determinations of the good. In Swift's satire, the moderns come out looking insane and proud of their insanity, and dismissive of the value of history. In Swift's most significant satire, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), autobiography, allegory, and philosophy mix together in the travels. Thematically, *Gulliver's Travels* is a critique of human vanity, of pride. Book one, the journey to Lilliput, begins with the world as it is. Book two shows that the idealized nation of Brobdingnag with a philosopher king is no home for a contemporary Englishman. Book four depicts the land of the Houyhnhnms, a society of horses ruled by pure reason, where humanity itself is portrayed as a group of "yahoos" covered in filth and dominated by base desires. It shows that, indeed, the very desire for reason may be undesirable, and humans must struggle to be neither Yahoos nor Houyhnhnms, for book three shows what happens when reason is unleashed without any consideration of morality or utility (i.e. madness, ruin, and starvation).

There were other satirists who worked in a less virulent way, who took a bemused pose and only made lighthearted fun. Tom Brown, Ned Ward, and Tom D'Urfey were all satirists in prose and poetry whose works appeared in the early part of the Augustan age. Tom Brown's most famous work in this vein was *Amusements Serious and Comical, Calculated for the Meridian of London* (1700). Ned Ward's most memorable work was *The London Spy* (1704-1706). *The London Spy*, before *The Spectator*, took up the position of an observer and uncomprehendingly reporting back. Tom D'Urfey's *Wit and Mirth: or Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719) was another satire that attempted to offer entertainment, rather than a specific bit of political action, in the form of coarse and catchy songs.

Particularly after Swift's success, parodic satire had an attraction for authors throughout the 18th century. A variety of factors created a rise in political writing and political satire, and Robert Walpole's success and domination of House of Commons was a very effective proximal cause for polarized literature and thereby the rise of parodic satire. The parodic satire takes apart the cases and plans of policy without necessarily contrasting a normative or positive set of values. Therefore, it was an ideal method of attack for ironists and conservatives (those who would not be able to enunciate a set of values to change toward but could condemn present changes as ill-considered.) Satire was present in all genres during the Augustan period. Perhaps primarily, satire was a part of political and religious debate. Every significant politician and political act had satires to attack it. Few of these were parodic satires, but parodic satires, too, emerged in political and religious debate. So omnipresent and powerful was satire in the Augustan age that more than one literary history has referred to it as the "Age of satire" in literature.

## Activity

Dear learner, the preceding sections offered you an overview of the literary trends of the Augustan Age. Now before moving on to the next section, you can check your progress.

1. The term ‘the Augustan Age’ comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original Augustan writers, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Dryden’s *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele published two periodicals \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Steele’s stated purpose in *The Tatler* was to “enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with \_\_\_\_\_.”
6. Pope’s \_\_\_\_\_ is a mock epic, a form of satiric writing in which commonplace subjects are described in the elevated, heroic style of classical epic.
7. Jonathan Swift’s \_\_\_\_\_ features a battle between The Bee and The Spider in a library.
8. James Thomas’s *The Seasons*, was published in separate volumes from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Swift’s first major satire was \_\_\_\_\_ which introduced an ancients/moderns division.
10. Swift’s most significant satire, \_\_\_\_\_ published in 1726, critiques human vanity and pride through Gulliver’s travels.

## Answers

1. Virgil, Horace	2. 1668	3. 1711	4. <i>The Tatler, The Spectator</i>
5. Morality	6. <i>The Dunciad</i>	7. <i>The Battle of the Books</i>	
8. 1726, 1730	9. A Tale of a Tub	10. <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i>	

## 2.4 HISTORIANS OF THE NOVEL

Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) still dominates attempts at writing a history of the novel. Watt’s view is that the critical feature of the 18th-century novel is the creation of psychological realism. This feature, he argued, would continue on and influence the novel as it has been known in the 20th century. Michael McKeon brought a Marxist approach to the history of the novel in his 1986 *The Origins of the English Novel* (1986). McKeon viewed the novel as emerging as a constant battleground between two developments of two sets of world view that corresponded to Whig/Tory, Dissenter/Establishment, and Capitalist/Persistent Feudalist.

## 2.5 THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

The most important figure in terms of lasting literary influence during this period, however, was undoubtedly Daniel Defoe. An outsider from the literary establishment ruled by Pope and his cohorts, Defoe was in some ways an anomaly during a period defined as ‘Augustan,’ despite the fact that he was a writer of

social criticism and satire before he turned to novels. He did not belong to the respected literary world, which at best ignored him and his works and at worst derided him.

The works of fiction for which Defoe is remembered, particularly *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), owe less to the satirical and refined impulse of the Augustan tradition, and more to a contrary tradition of early prose narrative by women, particularly Aphra Behn, Mary Delariviere Manley and Jane Barker. Since Ian Watt's influential study, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), literary historians have generally considered *Robinson Crusoe* the first successful English novel and Defoe as one of the originators of realistic fiction in the eighteenth century, but he was deeply indebted to his female precursors and probably would never have attempted prose narrative if they had not created an audience for it in the first place.

The English novel was a product of several differing literary traditions, among them the French romance, the Spanish picaresque tale and novella, and such earlier prose models in English as John Lyly's *Euphues* (1579), Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684). The authors of these works collectively helped pave the way for the form of the novel as it is known today. The true pioneers of the novel form, however, were the women writers pursuing their craft in opposition to the classically refined precepts of the writers defining the Augustan Age. Particularly influential were Aphra Behn's travel narrative *Oroonoko* (1688) and her erotic epistolary novel *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1683). In *Oroonoko*, Behn provides numerous details of day to day life and a conversational narrative voice, while with *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, she pioneered the epistolary form for a longer work of fiction, over fifty years before Richardson. The political prose satires of Mary Delariviere Manley were racy exposés of high-society scandals written in the tradition of *Love Letters*, Behn's erotic roman à clef. Manley's novels *The Secret History of Queen Zarah* and the *Zaraians* (1705) and *The New Atalantis* (1709) were widely popular in their day and helped create an audience for prose narratives that was large enough to support the new breed of the professional novelist.

Eliza Haywood also began her career writing erotic tales with an ostensibly political or high society background. Her first novel, *Love in Excess* (1719) went through four editions in as many years. In the thirties, her writing underwent a transformation suitable to the growing moral concerns of the era, and her later novels show the influence of her male contemporaries Richardson and Fielding (this despite the fact that she may have been the author of *Anti-Pamela* (1741), an early attack on Richardson's first novel). Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751) in particular belongs in a more realistic tradition of writing, bringing the action from high society into the realm of the middle class, and abandoning the description of erotic encounters.

Particularly interesting among the works of early women novelists is that of Jane Barker. Her novel *Love Intrigues: Or, The History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia* (1713) tells in first-person narrative the psychologically realistic tale of a heroine who doesn't get her man. The portrayal of Galesia's emotional dilemma, caught in a web of modesty, social circumstances and the hero's uncertainty and indecisiveness, captures intriguing facets of psychological puzzles without providing easy answers for the readers. Galesia retreats from marriage, hardly knowing why she does so or how the situation came about, and the reader is no smarter.

Many of the elements of the modern novel attributed to Defoe, e.g. the beginnings of psychological realism and a consistent narrative voice, were anticipated by women writers. Defoe's contribution was in putting them all together and creating out of these elements sustained prose narratives blending physical and psychological realism. His most impressive works, such as *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* (1724), treated characters

to deal with the difficulties of surviving in a world of recognizably modern economic forces. Given his capitalist philosophy, it is not surprising that Defoe's protagonists are self-reliant, resourceful individualists who express his middle-class values. In his attempt to balance individualism and economic realism with a belief in God's providence, Defoe created multi-faceted characters who combine repentance for past misdeeds with a celebration of the individual's power to survive in a hostile environment.

Although Defoe and his female contemporaries were looked down upon by the intellectual establishment represented by Pope and Swift, later developments in literary history have shown that it was they who would define the literature of a new age, and not the so-called Augustans. While the novel remains the dominant literary form of the twentieth century, mock epic is at best an element used occasionally in comedy. *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* are still widely read; *The Rape of the Lock* is mentioned in history books. Jonathan Swift produced an enduring classic as well with *Gulliver's Travels*, but despite his brilliance it is the merchant Daniel Defoe, a journalist who saw writing as "a considerable branch of the English commerce", who is considered the father of the English novel.

### Activity

Dear learner, take a moment's time and try to solve the exercise given below. If you encounter any difficulty in answering the questions, don't get disheartened! You can re-read the section as well as check the Answer Key.

1. Daniel Defoe was a well-established member of the literary establishment during the Augustan era. (True/False)
2. The works of Defoe, particularly *Moll Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe*, owe much to the influence of female writers like Aphra Behn, Mary Delariviere Manley, and Jane Barker. (True/False)
3. Aphra Behn's work *Oroonoko* was a travel narrative and was influential in the development of the novel. (True/False)
4. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is considered one of the first successful English novels and the start of realistic fiction. (True/False)
5. Aphra Behn's novel *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1683) is an early example of the \_\_\_\_\_ form in fiction.
6. The genre of early English novels was strongly influenced by female writers, including Aphra Behn, Mary Delariviere Manley, and \_\_\_\_\_.

### Answers

1. False	2. True	3. True	4. True
5. epistolary	6. Eliza Haywood		

## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

The eighteenth century in English literature has been called the Augustan Age, the Neoclassical Age, and the Age of Reason. The term 'the Augustan Age' comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original

Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace, by many of the writers of the period. Watt's view is that the critical feature of the 18th-century novel is the creation of psychological realism. This feature, he argued, would continue on and influence the novel as it has been known in the 20th century. The English novel was a product of several differing literary traditions, among them the French romance, the Spanish picaresque tale and novella, and such earlier prose models in English as John Lyly's *Euphues* (1579), Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684). The authors of these works collectively helped pave the way for the form of the novel as it is known today.

## 2.7 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

Q.1 What is the most critical feature of the 18th century novel ?

Q.2 Jonathan Swift's first major satire was \_\_\_\_\_.

Q.3 From where has the term 'the Augustan Age' come ? \_\_\_\_\_.

Q.4 Daniel Defoe wrote \_\_\_\_\_.

(a) *Moll Flanders*      (b) *Robinson Crusoe*      (c) both      (d) none

Q.5 *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* treated characters to deal with \_\_\_\_\_.

Q.6 Why has 18th century in English literature been known as Augustan Age ?

Q.7 Comment on the rise of 18th century novel.

Q.8 Discuss neoclassicism.

Q.9 Explain the use of satire in the works written during the Augustan Age.

Q.10 Explain briefly the forerunners of the English novel during the Augustan Age.

## 2.8 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

**Ans.1** Psychological Realism

**Ans.2** *A Tale of a Tub*

**Ans.3** The term 'the Augustan Age' comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace, by many of the writers of the period.

**Ans.4** (c) both

**Ans.5** The difficulties of surviving in a world of recognizably modern economic forces.

**Ans.6** The eighteenth century in English literature has been called the Augustan Age, the Neoclassical Age, and the Age of Reason. The term 'the Augustan Age' comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace, by many of the writers of the period. Specifically, the Augustan Age was the period after the Restoration era to the death of Alexander Pope (1690 - 1744). The major writers of the age were Pope and John Dryden in poetry, and Jonathan Swift and Joseph

Addison in prose. Dryden forms the link between Restoration and Augustan literature; although he wrote ribald comedies in the Restoration vein, his verse satires were highly admired by the generation of poets who followed him, and his writings on literature were very much in a neoclassical spirit. But more than any other it is the name of Alexander Pope which is associated with the epoch known as the Augustan Age, despite the fact that other writers such as Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe had a more lasting influence.

**Ans.7** Literary historians have generally considered *Robinson Crusoe* the first successful English novel and Defoe as one of the originators of realistic fiction in the eighteenth century, but he was deeply indebted to his female precursors and probably would never have attempted prose narrative if they had not created an audience for it in the first place.

The English novel was a product of several differing literary traditions, among them the French romance, the Spanish picaresque tale and novella, and such earlier prose models in English as John Lyly's *Euphues* (1579), Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684). The authors of these works collectively helped pave the way for the form of the novel as it is known today. The true pioneers of the novel form, however, were the women writers pursuing their craft in opposition to the classically refined precepts of the writers defining the Augustan Age. Particularly influential were Aphra Behn's travel narrative *Oroonoko* (1688) and her erotic epistolary novel *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1683). In *Oroonoko*, Behn provides numerous details of day to day life and a conversational narrative voice, while with *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, she pioneered the epistolary form for a longer work of fiction, over fifty years before Richardson. The political prose satires of Mary Delariviere Manley were racy exposés of high-society scandals written in the tradition of *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister*, Behn's erotic roman à clef. Manley's novels *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zaraians* (1705) and *The New Atalantis* (1709) were widely popular in their day and helped create an audience for prose narratives that was large enough to support the new breed of the professional novelist.

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Particularly interesting among the work of early women novelists is that of Jane Barker. Her novel *Love Intrigues: Or, The History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia* (1713) tells in

first-person narrative the psychologically realistic tale of a heroine who doesn't get her man. The portrayal of Galesia's emotional dilemma, caught in a web of modesty, social circumstances and the hero's uncertainty and indecisiveness, captures intriguing facets of psychological puzzles without providing easy answers for the readers. Galesia retreats from marriage, hardly knowing why she does so or how the situation came about, and the reader is no smarter.

## **2.9 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Greene, Donald. *The Age of Exuberance: Backgrounds to Eighteenth Century Literature*. : McGraw Hill Companies, 1970.
- \* Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, Bodley. Head, 2015.
- \* Hasan, Mariwan N. "The Eighteenth Century and the Rise of the English Novel." *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2015, pp./ 18 21. doi:10.11648/j.ijla.20150302.12.

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UPTO THE GEORGIAN ERA**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 3.3 Political and Social Milieu
- 3.4 Interest in Reading and Publishing Houses
- 3.5 The Rise of the Middle Class
- 3.6 Evangelical Movement
- 3.7 Literary Characteristics of the Age
  - 3.7.1 Age of Prose and Reason
  - 3.7.2 Age of Satire
  - 3.7.3 Age of Neo-Classicism
  - 3.7.4 Follow Nature
  - 3.7.5 Town and city life as a Theme of Literature
  - 3.7.6 The Heroic Couplet and The Poetic Diction as the tools of the writers
- 3.8 The Age of Transition (1850-1898)
  - 3.8.1 Main characteristics of the Augustan Era
- 3.9 The Novel during the Augustan Age
  - 3.9.1 Forerunners of the Novel
  - 3.9.2 Major Novelists of the Augustan Era
- 3.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.11 Self-Check Exercise
- 3.12 Answer Key to Self-Check Exercise
- 3.13 Suggested Reading

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In literature this period is known as the Augustan age. According to Hudson the epithet - Augustan was applied as a term of high praise, because the Age of Augustus was the golden age of Latin literature, so the Age of Pope was the golden age of English literature. This epithet serves to bring out the analogy between the first half of the eighteenth century and the Latin literature of the days of Virgil and Horace. In both cases writers were largely dependent upon powerful patrons. In both cases a critical spirit prevailed. In both cases the literature produced by a thoroughly artificial society was a literature, not of free creative effort and inspiration, but of self-conscious and deliberate art. It is also known as the - classic age. Hudson writes: - The epithet - classic, we may take to denote, first that the poets and critics of this age believed that the writers of classical antiquity presented the best models and ultimate standards of literary taste, and secondly, in a more general way, that, like these Latin writers, they had little faith in the promptings and guidance of individual genius, and much in laws and rules imposed by the authority of the past. Some remarkable political and social changes began to take place in England during the closing years of William III and the accession of Queen Anne (1702). That had a great impact on the development of literature during this period. The literature of this era was partly new and partly a continuance of that of the Restoration.

This age may be divided into two periods: the first stretching from 1700 to 1750 in the neo-classic Age, and the second, the transitional period which spans from 1750 to 1798. The classical tendencies lost their hold during the second period and there was a transition from classicism to romanticism. The period of transition is also known as the Age of Gray and Collins.

### **3.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner the prime objective of this lesson is to make you aware of socio-political milieu of Augustan Age, of social change, of literary tendencies of the age, and of prose, novel, poetry and drama of the Augustan Age.

After studying this lesson, you will locate the prescribed texts into the literary period and appreciate the texts in the light of the Augustan Period.

### **3.3 POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MILIEU**

Politically, this age witnessed the rise of two political parties: the Whigs and the Tories. Their political opinions and programmes were sharply divided. The Whig party stood for the pre-eminence of personal freedom and the Tory party supported the royal Divine Right. The Tories objected to the foreign wars because they had to pay taxes to prolong them, while the trading class Whigs favoured the continuance of war because it contributed to their prosperity. In order to propagate their ideologies and programmes both the parties utilised the services of literary men. And the politicians bribed the authors to join one or the other political party. The politicians took the authors into their confidence. Thus began the age of literary patronage. Consequently, most of the writers showed a strong political bias. It was, in other words, a party literature. Literature was honoured not for itself but for the sake of the party. The politics of the period helped to make it an age of political pamphleteering. And the writers were too willing to make the most of it. In order to get prominence in political struggle both parties issued a large number of periodicals. The periodicals were the mouthpieces of their respective political

opinions. Thus began the age of journalism and periodical essay. The rise of periodical writing allowed great scope to the development of the literary talent of prose writers of the time. The real prose style (neat, simple, clear and lucid) was evolved during this period. In the words of Albert: "It was the golden age of political pamphleteering and the writer made the most of it."

People were keenly interested in political activity. A number of clubs and coffee houses came into existence. They became the centres of fashionable and public life. The Coffee houses were dominated by either of the parties. A Whig would never go to a Tory Coffee house and Vice Versa. The Coffee houses were the haunts of prominent writers, thinkers, artists, intellectuals and politicians. They figured prominently in the writings of the day. The Coffee houses gave rise to pure literary associations, such as the famous Scribblers and Kit-cat clubs. In the first number of *The Tatler*, Richard Steele announced that the activities of his new Journal would be based upon the clubs. The discussions in coffee houses took place in polished, refined, elegant, easy and lucid style. Thus coffee houses also contributed to the evolution of prose style during the eighteenth century.

### **3.4 INTEREST IN READING AND PUBLISHING HOUSES**

The rising interest in politics witnessed the decline of drama. It resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of reading public. Consequently, a large number of men took interest in publishing translations, adaptations and other popular works of the time. They became the forerunners of modern public houses. They employed hack writers (the writers who write for money without worrying about the quality of their writing) of the period. They lived in miserable hovels in the Grub Street.

### **3.5 THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS**

This period of literature saw the emergence of a powerful middle class. The supremacy of the middle class made it an age of tolerance, moderation and common sense. It sought to refine manners, and introduce into life the rule of sweet reasonableness. The church also pursued a middle way and the religious life was free from strife and fanaticism. The powerful dominance of the middle classes led to moral regeneration in the eighteenth century. The people were fast growing sick of the outrageousness of the Restoration period. People had begun once more to insist upon those basic decencies of life and moral considerations, which the previous generation had treated with contempt. The middle class writers were greatly influenced by moral considerations. Moreover, William III and Queen Anne were staunch supporters of morality. Addison in an early number of *The Spectator* puts the new tone in writing in his own admirable way: "I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit and wit with morality." It was an era of the assimilation of the aristocracy and the middle class. The middle class appropriated classicism with its moralising needs. The emergence of middle class led to the rise of sentimentalism, feelings and emotions, which influenced the literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

### **3.6 EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT**

Religion in the age of Pope was deistic, formal, utilitarian and unspiritual. In the great Evangelical Revival, known as Methodism, led by Wesley and Whitefield, the old formalism and utilitarianism was abandoned. A mighty tide of spiritual energy poured into the Church and the common people. From 1739 the Evangelical Movement spread rapidly among the poor all over England, and it became particularly strong in the industrial towns.

## Let Us Revise

Dear learner, as the previous section familiarised you with the political and social milieu of the Augustan Age, as well as the interest in publishing house, the rise of middle class, the Evangelical movement, etc., you can revise the contents of the section before proceeding to the next section by quickly going through these points.

- The Augustan era saw the rise of two main political parties, the Whigs and the Tories.
- Literature of the era became heavily influenced by political events.
- The age saw a rise in political pamphlets and periodicals, making it an age of political journalism.
- A clear, simple, and lucid prose style developed during this period.
- The age saw the rise of Coffee Houses and Intellectual and Political Clubs.
- The rise of the middle class influenced literature and culture and a shift toward tolerance, moderation, and moral regeneration.

## 3.7 LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE

The political and social changes exhibiting the supremacy of good sense, rationality, sanity and balance left an imperishable mark on the literature of the Age of Pope and Dr. Johnson. The literature of the period bore the hallmark of intelligence, of wit and of fancy, not a literature of emotion, passion, or creative energy. The main literary characteristics of the age are given below:

### 3.7.1 AGE OF PROSE AND REASON

It was an age of prose, reason, good sense and not of poetry. A large number of practical interests arising from the new social and political conditions demanded expression not simply in books, but in pamphlets, magazines and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task. Hence prose developed rapidly and excellently. Indeed, poetry itself became prosaic, as it was not used for creative works of imagination, but for essays, satires and criticism. The poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century as represented by the works of Pope and Dr. Johnson is polished and witty but lacks fire, fine feeling, enthusiasm and imaginative appeal. In short, it interests us as a study of life but fails to delight or inspire us. Matthew Arnold rightly calls the eighteenth century an age of prose. The poetry of this period, according to Hudson, lacked inevitably the depth and grasp of essential things which alone assure permanence in literature, and the quest for refinement in style resulted too often in stilted affectations and frigid conventionalism.

### 3.7.2 AGE OF SATIRE

The predominance of satire is an important literary characteristic of the age. Nearly every writer of the first half of the eighteenth century was used and rewarded by Whigs or Tories for satirising their enemies and for advancing their special political interests. Pope was an exception but he too was a satirist par excellence. W. J. Long writes, "Now satire, that is a literary work which searches out the

faults of men or institutions in order to hold them up to ridicule, is at best a destructive type of criticism.” A satirist is like a labourer who clears away the ruins and rubbish of an old house before the architect and builders begin on a new and beautiful structure. The work may sometime be necessary, but it rarely arouses our enthusiasm. While the satires of Pope, place them with our great literature, which is always constructive in spirit; and we have the feeling that all these men were capable of better things than they ever wrote.

### 3.7.3 AGE OF NEO-CLASSICISM

The Age of Pope and Johnson is often called the Neo-Classic Age. We should clearly understand the meaning of the word classic. The term classic refers to writers of highest rank in any nation. It was first applied to the works of Greek and Roman writers like Homer and Virgil. In English literature any writer who followed the simple, noble and inspiring method of these writers was said to have a classic style. Period marked by a number of celebrated writers who produce literature of a very high order, is also called the classic period of a nation’s literature. The age of Augustus is the classic age of Rome. The age of Dante is the classic age of Italian literature. The age of the classic age is like those of Homer and Virgil. The writers of this period disregarded Elizabethan literary trends. They demanded that their poetry should comply with exact rules. In this respect they were influenced by French writers, especially by Boileau, who insisted on precise rules of writing poetry. They professed to have discovered their rules in the classics of Aristotle and Horace. Dryden, Pope and Johnson pioneered the revival of classicism which conformed to rules established by the great writers of other nations. They preferred only set rules to the depth and seriousness of subject matter. They ignored creativity, depth, vigour and freshness of expression. The true classicist pays equal consideration to the depth and seriousness of subject matter, and the perfect and flawless expression.

The neo-classicist disregards the subject matter and expresses the hackneyed and commonplace subjects in a polished and finished style modeled on the stylistic patterns of ancient writers. Grierson in his famous book *The Background of English Literature* asserts that the hallmark of ancient classical literature is a harmonious balance between form and substance. This harmonious balance between form and substance was disturbed in the Age of Pope and Johnson. The writers of this period care for form, not for the weight of matter. They care only for manner, for artistic finish and polish, but not for genuine poetic inspiration. The content thought and feeling are subordinated to form. Good sense is one of the central characteristics of the literature of this period. In the words of W. H. Hudson: “Good sense became the ideal of the time, and good sense meant a love of the reasonable and the useful and a hatred of the mystical, the extravagant and the visionary.”

### 3.7.4 FOLLOW NATURE

Another important characteristic of the age was the belief that literature must follow nature. Pope wrote in *The Essay on Criticism* : “The rules of old discover’d, not devis’d,/ Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz’d; Nature like Liberty is but restrained/ By the same laws which first herself ordain’d .../ Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem/ The follow Nature is to follow them.” By nature, the Augustans meant to copy man and manners of society. Pope said, “The proper study of mankind is man.”

Addison also wrote, “Wit and fine writing consist not so much in advancing things that are new, as in things that are known, an agreeable turn.”

### 3.7.5 TOWN AND CITY LIFE AS A THEME OF LITERATURE

Another feature of the literature of the age is that it has a limited theme. It is a literature of the town and the fashionable upper circles of the city of London. Pope, Johnson, Addison, Steele etc., though urban in outlook and temperament, show remarkable interest in the middle classes and, thus, broaden the scope of literature. The theme of literature before them was strictly confined to fashionable and aristocratic circles. In the works of middle class writers' classicism shows itself slightly coloured by a moralising and secretly sentimental intension.

### 3.7.6 THE HEROIC COUPLET AND THE POETIC DICTION AS THE TOOLS OF THE WRITERS

The use of heroic couplet was predominant during this period. The heroic couplet was recognised as the only medium for poetic expression. In it the poets put all the skill and wrote with an unimaginable correctness and precision. The language of poetry became gaudy and inane. The common words or ordinary language were deliberately kept out from poetic literature. The result was that literature of the Augustan Age became artificial, rational and intellectual.

#### Activity

Learner, it is time to take another break! Now that you have read about the literary characteristics of the Augustan age, here are 10 fill in the blanks questions to check your progress:

1. The predominant literary characteristic of the period was \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The literature of the Age of Pope and Dr. Johnson was marked by intelligence, wit, and fancy with an emphasis on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The term “classic” refers to the works of writers like \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, who were seen as models for later generations.
4. The writers of the Neo-Classical Age, like Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, were influenced by the French writer \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Pope believed that the rules of writing were discovered from the works of the ancients such as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The predominant poetic form of the period was \_\_\_\_\_, which poets used to write with precision and correctness.
7. The writers of the Age of Pope and Johnson cared more for \_\_\_\_\_ and artistic polish than for the depth of the subject matter.
8. The literature of this period was primarily concerned with the manners and society of the \_\_\_\_\_ class, especially in the city of London.

#### Answers

1. satire	2. good sense, rationality	3. Homer, Virgil
4. Boileau	5. Aristotle, Horace	6. the heroic couplet
		7. form 8. upper

## **3.8 THE AGE OF TRANSITION (1850-1898)**

The second half of the eighteenth century is known as a transitional period. It was an era of change from pseudo-classicism to romanticism. The decline of party spirit and the democratic upsurge exercised great influence both on life and literature.

### **3.8.1 MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUGUSTAN ERA**

#### **I. DECLINE OF PARTY FUED**

The rivalry between the Whigs and Tories still continued but it had lost its previous bitterness. This naturally led to a considerable decline of the activity in political pamphleteering. The poets and satirists ceased to be statesmen. The institution of literary patronage gradually crumbled during this period. Men of letters learnt to depend entirely on their public.

#### **II. INFLUENCE OF FRENCH REVOLUTION**

During the second half of the eighteenth century new ideas were germinating and new forces were gathering strength. The French Revolution of 1789 was only the climax of a long and deeply diffused unrest. Revolutionary ideas gave birth to democratic and humanitarian feelings, and it influenced literature greatly.

#### **III. THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING**

This period is characterised by a kind of mild revival of learning. In literature it revealed itself in the study and editing of old authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. The writers revived the old form of ballad. The publications of Bishop Percy's *Reliques* (1765), containing the oldest and finest specimens of ballad literature, is a landmark in the history of the Romantic Movement. The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed the swift rise of historical literature.

#### **IV. THE NEW REALISM**

The birth of a new spirit of inquiry was at the root of realism which is expressed in the novels of this period and is noticeable in the poetry of this century.

#### **V. THE HUMANITARIAN SPIRIT**

This period is characterised by the rapid growth of democracy. Stress was laid on the individual mouth of man. People became familiar with the notions of equality, liberty and brotherhood. The philosophy of Rousseau and the French Revolution popularised the democratic and humanitarian ideals, which immensely influenced the literature of this period.

## Let Us Revise

Learner, before moving to the next section, you can go through the points provided here for a quick revision of the previous section:

- The decline of party feud led to a considerable decrease in the activity of political pamphleteering during the second half of the eighteenth century.
- The French Revolution of 1789 gave birth to democratic and humanitarian feelings that greatly influenced literature during this period.
- The revival of learning during this period was marked by the study and editing of old authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton.
- The swift rise of historical literature occurred during the latter half of the eighteenth century, influenced by the new realism spirit.
- The philosophy of Rousseau and the French Revolution popularised democratic and humanitarian ideals that shaped the literature of this period.

## 3.9 THE NOVEL DURING THE AUGUSTAN ERA

### 3.9.1 FORERUNNERS OF THE NOVEL

The development of English prose contributed to the rise of novel during the eighteenth century. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *A Journal of the Plague Year* and *Roxana* are the forerunners of novel. His fictional works are called fictional biographies. The entire gamut of his fictional work is biographical and he made no attempt towards the organization of material into a systematic plot. However, his fictional works are distinguished by the extraordinary realism which is an important element in the art of novel writing. His stories are told so convincingly as if they were stories of real life. He also knew the art of narrating details effectively. He had a swift and resolute narrative method and a plain and matter-of-fact style.

To the development of novel Defoe's contribution is remarkable. His fictional works form the transition from the slight tale and the romance of the Elizabethan time to the finished novel of Richardson and Fielding. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which satirises the manners and politics of contemporary England and Europe, is written in powerful and convincing prose. It has also contributed to the evolution of English novel. The famous periodical *The Spectator* is a forerunner of English novel. It contains all the elements of social novel, except a harmonious plot. The material for the novels of manners or social comedy is found in *The Coverley Papers*. It contains vivid and realistic presentation of contemporary society, well delineated characters, rich fund of humour and pathos and a clear, lucid style. Edward Albert remarks: "if Addison had pinned the Coverley Papers together with a stronger plot, if insisted on only referring to the widow who had stolen the knight's affections, he had introduced some important female characters, we should have had the first regular novel in our tongue." As it is, this essay series bring us within measurable distance of the genuine eighteenth century novel.

### 3.9.2 MAJOR NOVELISTS OF THE AUGUSTAN ERA

Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne are known as the four wheels of the novel. They brought this new genre to such maturity that it became the glory of England. Let's see, in short, these authors and their works as follows:

#### (i) **Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)**

Richardson's first novel *Pamela* tells the story of the trials, tribulations, and the final happy marriage of the heroine. It is written in the forms of letters. It is also known as an epistolary novel because the novel is developed with the exchange of letters between the characters. It was instantly successful. In it the moral and social purposes are successfully blended. Pamela's character is well drawn. The plot, though simple, is well developed. It is considered as the first novel in the modern sense.

His *Clarissa* or *The History of A Lady* in eight volumes is a sentimental novel. It gave Richardson European reputation and it is still regarded as one of the greatest of the eighteenth century novels. Clarissa's character is realistically drawn with psychological insight. It also contains the most remarkable study of the scoundrel, Lovelace. In it the dramatic element is strong. It is characterized by pathos, sincerity and minute realism. Richardson's novels are stories of human life, told from within, and depending for their interest not on incident and adventure, but on their truth to human nature. Reading his work is, on the whole, like examining an antiquated work of a stern wheel steamer, it is interesting for its undeveloped possibilities, rather than for its achievement. Richardson's place in the history of English novel is very high. Richardson, writes Rickett, "He introduced sentimentality into English novel and popularized it forever. Without his influence we never have had *Tristram Shandy*, we certainly should have been without *Joseph Andrews*, ... Then the feminine standpoint taken in his writings stirred many able women to continue and amplify the feminine tradition. Fanny Burney and Jane Austen are indebted to him and a host of lesser names." In *Clarissa* he introduced the epistolary form of novel. He was the first novelist to show the real and vital knowledge of human heart, its perversities and contradictions.

#### (ii) **Henry Fielding (1707-54)**

Fielding was the greatest of this new group of novelists. He is called the father of English novel because he for the first time propounded the technique of writing novel. He had a deeper and wider knowledge of life, which he gained from his own varied and sometimes riotous experiences. As a magistrate he had an intimate knowledge of many types of human criminality which was of much use to him in his novels. His first novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742) began as a burlesque of the false sentimentality and conventional virtues of Richardson's *Pamela*. In it Fielding humorously narrates the adventures of the hero, Joseph Andrews, and his companion, Parson Adams. From the very beginning we see the stamp of his genius- the complete rejection of the epistolary form and moralizing, the structural development of the story, the broad and vivacious humour which was denied to Richardson, the genial insight into human nature, and the forceful and pithy style. In *Joseph Andrews* Fielding emerges as a

pioneer of the novel of manners. In *Jonathan Wild* he gives us new and piercing glimpses of the ruffian mentality.

Fielding's masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, takes an enormous canvas and crowds it with numerous characters. It gives us the fullest and richest picture of English life about the middle of the eighteenth century. Although the picaresque element is strongly marked in this novel, it is more than a picaresque novel. Fielding calls it the comic epic in prose. *Tom Jones* stands unrivalled in the history of English novel for its coherent and well-knit structure, richness of characterization, vivid and realistic presentation of contemporary society, sane and wise point of view. *Amelia* is the story of a good wife who, in spite of temptation, remains faithful to a good-natured but erring husband, Captain Booth. It is at once a searching criticism of contemporary society. It soberly conceives story of everyday life, is rich in incident and, like *Tom Jones*, is remarkable for its insight into human character. Fielding has rightly been called the father of English novel. He for the first time formulated the theory of novel writing in the prefaces of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, and followed his own definition with utmost consistency.

Other novelists followed his example. He gave a definite form and shape to the novel. In the words of Richard Church, "He is the first writer to focus the novel in such a way that he brought the whole world as we see it, within the scope of this new, rapidly maturing literary form." Fielding is the first great realist in the history of English novel. Common life is the material of his novel but it is handled as Raleigh points out, "with the freedom and imagination of a great artist." He presents a complete and comprehensive picture of contemporary society. His realism is epic in its range, sweep and variety. He is the founder of modern realistic novel and the novel of manners. Fielding's realism is connected with his comic point of view, his wise, tolerant acceptance of things as they are. He had nothing to do with the prudish morality of Richardson. He threw it aside and presented man in full length as he found him.

Though he portrayed men with no reservations, he never forgot that he was one of them. From this inborn sympathy comes his large, tolerant way of looking at things, a view of life that often finds expression in raillery but never in cynicism. He laughs, but his laughter is always ready to give place to tenderness and pity. For him the tragedy of life lay in the presence of virtue and innocence in a world of evil, cruelty and deception. In the presentation of tragedy, Fielding is always direct, simple and sincere. Fielding was the first to infuse the novel with the refreshing and preserving element of humour. He was capable of presenting pure comedy in such characters as Adams and Partridge and lower and more farcical comedy in characters like Mrs. Squire and Squire Western. He effectively lashes out his satire at affectation, vanity, pedantry, hypocrisy and vice. But he is always human and humane. Irony is a great weapon of his satire. Fielding's aim was to replace Richardson's morbid morality by a healthy commonsense morality. This commonsense morality gave him a shrewd insight into the weakness of his character. Fielding was a superb craftsman. He changed the concept of plot construction. In his novels we get for the first time a closely-knit organic plot. Other novelists learnt the art of plot construction from him,

He is the creator of the novel of character. He peopled his novels with lively and interesting characters. He endowed his characters with life and vitality. He has vividly portrayed all kinds of characters like Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare, he has a sympathetic yet maturely detached view of

human comedy. The forces which guide his characters are; for the most part, natural human needs, for it were these that Fielding knew best. Settings in Fielding's novels are realistic and recognizable. His narrative is energetic and effective. He initiates the practice of the omniscient narrator, which has been universally followed, by many following writers. As a stylist he broke away from the mannered, artificial style of the earlier novelists. It is fresh, clear, direct, unaffected, vigorous and easy. It gives vitality to his characters.

**(iii) Tobias Smollett (1721-71)**

Smollett, who wrote *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle* and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, added new feathers to the cap of the craft called English novel. His novels are simply strings of adventures which are not organized into an artistic whole. He conceived the novel as a large diffused picture of life. It is the personality of the hero which has the semblance of unity to various incidents and adventures. His novels are called episodic or panoramic novels. As a panoramic novelist Smollett has never been surpassed. Smollett's characters are types and not individuals. He had a genius for depicting oddities and he excels as a caricaturist.

He describes his characters in terms of externals. His characters are grossly exaggerated and distorted. Smollett's presentation of the harsh and ugly realities of life and society makes him a forerunner of the novel of purpose. Hudson writes, "It has, however, to be remembered that Smollett wrote expressly as a satirist and reformer, and that his purpose was to paint the monstrous evils of life in their true proportions and colours that he might thus drive them home upon the attention of the public, and we must certainly set it down to his credit that the sickening realism of the ship scenes in *The Roderick Random* led directly to drastic changes for the better in the conditions in the naval service." He, thus, anticipates the novel with purpose. Smollett followed the tradition of the picaresque novel, which presents a union of intrigue and adventure. His style is vivid and lively. It is forceful and masculine. His method could be easily imitated. Dickens followed him. There was a spurt of picaresque by him.

**(iv) Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)**

Sterne's first novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* won him immediate recognition. It records the experiences of the eccentric Shandy family. Its chief strength lies in its brilliant style, and in its odd characters like Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, which, with all their eccentricities, are so humanized by the author's genius that they belong among the great creations of our literature. His second novel *A Sentimental Journey* combines fiction, sketches of travel, miscellaneous subjects and essays. It is remarkable for its brilliant style. Sterne defined all conventions of novel writing. He contributed to the development of English novel in his own peculiar way. He is a skilled master in creating brilliant effects. Plot is non-existent in his novels. There is neither chronology nor progression. His novels are one long parenthesis - a colossal aside to the reader. Yet despite the chaotic incoherence of his method of storytelling, his effects are made with consummate ease.

Sterne's prose style, which is characterised by brilliance, precision, force, melody and sensuousness of the highest order, helped him to create brilliant effects. His technique of creating striking effects influenced the school of the Stream of consciousness. Sterne's greatest contribution

lies in the field of characterization. Cross writes: "He enlarged for the novelist the sphere of character building by bringing into English fiction the attitude of the sculptor and the painter, combined with a graceful and harmonious movement, which is justly likened to the transitions of music."

His characters are drawn with an economy of strokes, and they are utterly solid, three-dimensional characters. He develops his characters by subtle and minute analysis of gesture, expressions, intonations and a hundred other details. He imparted humanity to his characters. His methods of characterisation is impressionistic, a method which he introduced for the first time. This method of characterisation was followed by the novelists of the Stream of consciousness school. Sterne is the most original of English humorists. He deftly intermingles humour and pathos. He smiles at sorrow and finds matter for pathos in the most comical situation. He was the first to use the word, sentimental to indicate the soft state of feelings and the imagination. He used this word in the sense now attached to it. He made the word classic and current in the record of his continental travel,

*The Sentimental Journey*. He could tell and distinguish between fine shades of feeling, and could communicate them to his readers in a way that aroused both compassion and mirth. Sterne is the pioneer of modern impressionism. His impressionistic narrative method is very close to that of modern impressionists like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. He is regarded as the first of the impressionists. Richardson had given sentimentality, Fielding humour, Smollet liveliness and Sterne impressionism.

### **3.10 LET US SUM UP**

The Augustan Age was shaped by important political and social changes, including the rise of the middle class and growing interest in reading, which expanded the literary audience. Literary characteristics of the period include a focus on reason and adherence to classical forms. The era also saw the rise of the novel, with early novelists like Defoe and Richardson laying the groundwork for modern storytelling. Toward the end, the Age of Transition began, moving away from strict classicism toward the emotional and imaginative focus of Romanticism.

### **3.11 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

- Q.1 The period of transition is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q.2 Who announced that the activities of his new journal would be based on clubs?
- Q.3 Who led the great Evangelical Revival known as Methodism?
- Q.4 The predominance of \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the most important characteristics of the Augustan Age.
- Q.5 The Age of Pope and Johnson is often called the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q.6 How can we divide the Augustan Age ?

Q.7 Comment on the Evangelical Movement.

Q.8 What was the political and social milieu during the 18th century ?

Q.9 Discuss the main characteristics of Augustan Era.

Q.10 Explain the rise of middle class during 18th century.

Q.11 Write a short on Epistolary novels.

Q.12 Discuss Tobias Smollet as a writer.

Q.13 Discuss Lawrence Sterne as a novelist.

Q.14 Comment on Gothic novel.

Q.15 Discuss the major works of Samuel Richardson.

Q.16 Explain briefly the major works written by Henry Fielding.

### **3.12 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

**Ans.1** The Age of Gray and Collins

**Ans.2** Richard Steele

**Ans.3** Wesley and Whitefield

**Ans.4** Satire

**Ans.5** Neo-classic Age.

**Ans.6** This age may be divided into two periods: the first stretching from 1700 to 1750 in the neo-classic Age, and the second, the transitional period which spans from 1750 to 1798. The classical tendencies lost their hold during the second period and there was a transition from classicism to romanticism. The period of transition is also known as the Age of Gray and Collins.

**Ans.7** Religion in the age of Pope was deistic, formal, utilitarian and unspiritual. In the great Evangelical Revival, known as Methodism, led by Wesley and Whitefield, the old formalism and utilitarianism was abandoned. A mighty tide of spiritual energy poured into the Church and the common people. From 1739 the Evangelical Movement spread rapidly among the poor all over England, and it became particularly strong in the industrial towns.

**Ans.8** Politically, this age witnessed the rise of two political parties: the Whigs and the Tories. Their political opinions and programmes were sharply divided. The Whig party stood for the pre-eminence of personal freedom and the Tory party supported the royal Divine Right. The Tories objected to the foreign wars because they had to pay taxes to prolong them, while the trading class Whigs favoured the continuance of war because it contributed to their prosperity. In order to propagate their ideologies and programmes both the parties utilised the services of literary men. And the politicians bribed the authors to join one or

the other political party. The politicians took the authors into their confidence. Thus began the age of literary patronage. Consequently, most of the writers showed a strong political bias. It was, in other words, a party literature. Literature was honoured not for itself, but for the sake of the party. The politics of the period helped to make it an age of political pamphleteering. And the writers were too willing to make the most of it. In order to get prominence in political struggle both parties issued a large number of periodicals. The periodicals were the mouthpieces of their respective political opinions. Thus began the age of journalism and periodical essay. The rise of periodical writing allowed great scope to the development of the literary talent of prose writers of the time. The real prose style, neat, simple, clear and lucid, was evolved during this period. In the words of Albert: It was the golden age of political pamphleteering and the writer made the most of it.

People were keenly interested in political activity. A number of clubs and coffee houses came into existence. They became the centres of fashionable and public life. The Coffee houses were dominated by either of the parties. A Whig would never go to a Tory Coffee house and Vice Versa. The Coffee houses were the haunts of prominent writers, thinkers, artists, intellectuals and politicians. They figured prominently in the writings of the day. The Coffee houses gave rise to purely literary associations, such as the famous Scribblers and Kit-cat clubs. In the first number of *The Tatler*, Richard Steele announced that the activities of his new Journal would be based upon the clubs. The discussions in coffee houses took place in polished, refined, elegant, easy and lucid style. Thus coffee houses also contributed to the evolution of prose style during the eighteenth century.

**Ans.9** Main Characteristics of Augustan era:

#### **I. Decline of Party Feud**

The rivalry between the Whigs and Tories still continued but it had lost its previous bitterness. This naturally led to a considerable decline of the activity in political pamphleteering. The poets and satirists ceased to be statesmen. The institution of literary patronage gradually crumbled during this period. Men of letters learnt to depend entirely on their public.

#### **II. Influence of the French Revolution**

During the second half of the eighteenth century new ideas were germinating and new forces were gathering strength. The French Revolution of 1789 was only the climax of a long and deeply diffused unrest. Revolutionary ideas gave birth to democratic and humanitarian feelings. And it influenced literature greatly.

#### **III. The Revival of Learning**

This period is characterised by a kind of mild revival of learning. In literature it revealed itself in the study and editing of old authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. The writers revived the old form of ballad. The publications of Bishop Percy's Reliques (1765), containing the oldest and finest

specimens of ballad literature, is a landmark in the history of the Romantic Movement. The latter half of the eighteenth century witnessed the swift rise of historical literature.

#### **IV. The New Realism**

The birth of a new spirit of inquiry was at the root of realism which is expressed in the novels of this period and is noticeable in the poetry of this century.

#### **V. The Humanitarian Spirit**

This period is characterised by the rapid growth of democracy. Stress was laid on the individual mouth of man. People became familiar with the notions of equality, liberty and brotherhood. The philosophy of Rousseau and the French Revolution popularised the democratic and humanitarian ideals, which immensely influenced the literature of this period.

**Ans.10** This period of literature saw the emergence of a powerful middle class. The supremacy of the middle class made it an age of tolerance, moderation and common sense. It sought to refine manners, and introduce into life the rule of sweet reasonableness. The church also pursued a middle way and the religious life was free from strife and fanaticism. The powerful dominance of the middle classes led to moral regeneration in the eighteenth century. The people were fast growing sick of the outrageousness of the Restoration period. People had begun once more to insist upon those basic decencies of life and moral considerations, which the previous generation had treated with contempt. The middle class writers were greatly influenced by moral considerations. Moreover, William III and Queen Anne were staunch supporters of morality. Addison in an early number of *The Spectator* puts the new tone in writing in his own admirable way. “I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit and wit with morality.” It was an era of the assimilation of the aristocracy and the middle class. The middle class appropriated classicism with its moralising needs. The emergence of middle class led to the rise of sentimentalism, feelings and emotions, which influenced the literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

#### **Ans.11 Epistolary Novels**

The novels written as series of letters were extremely popular during the 18th century. Fictional epistolary narratives originated in their early form in 16th century England; however, they acquired wider renown with the publication of Richardson's *Pamela*. Richardson and other novelists of his time argued that the epistolary form allowed the reader greater access to a character's thoughts. Richardson stressed in his preface to *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* that the form permitted the immediacy of “writing to the moment”: that is, Pamela's thoughts were recorded nearly simultaneously with her actions.

In the novel, *Pamela* writes two kinds of letters. At the beginning, while she decides how long to stay on at Mr B's after his mother's death, she tells her parents about her various moral dilemmas and asks for their advice. After Mr. B. abducts her and imprisons her in his country house, she continues to write to her parents, but since she does not know if they will ever receive her letters, the writings are also considered a diary.

In *Pamela*, the letters are almost exclusively written by the heroine, restricting the reader's access to the other characters; we see only Pamela's perception of them. In Richardson's other novels, *Clarissa* (1748) and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), the reader is privy to the letters of several characters and can more effectively evaluate the characters' motivations and moral values.

### 3.13 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Downle, J.A.. *The Oxford Handbook of the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, OUP, 2016.
- \* McKeon, Michael. *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*. John Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- \* "Rise of Novel in 18th Century." Empire Tuition Classes, [hlg7.weebly.com/rise-of-novel.html](http://hlg7.weebly.com/rise-of-novel.html).

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UPTO THE GEORGIAN ERA**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 4.3 Different forms of novels during Eighteenth Century
  - 4.3.1 Gothic Novel
  - 4.3.2 Epistolary Novel
- 4.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 4.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 4.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 4.8 Suggested Reading

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Augustan Age in English Literature is remarkable for the growth and development of the genre of the English novel. In the genre of novel, different forms such as the gothic novel, the epistolary novel, etc., were also experimented by writers.

#### **4.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the different forms of novel which existed during the eighteenth century.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to appreciate the different forms of novel flourishing during the Augustan Era. You will also be able to recognise the major writers who were experimenting with these varied forms as well as the major works composed by them.

#### **4.3 DIFFERENT FORMS OF NOVELS DURING EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

##### **4.3.1 THE GOTHIC NOVEL**

The eighteenth century novel from Richardson to Miss Burney was, on the whole, conceived on realistic lines. Towards the close of the century the novel, like poetry showed

signs of change, as it began to exhibit romantic tendencies. During the transitional period return to nature, absorption in the remote in time and space, especially in the middle Ages, became the marked literary characteristics. The new interest in nature made scenic descriptions or landscape an important element in novel. The interest in the past brought into being a new type of novel, known as the gothic novel, which anticipated the historical novel of the nineteenth century.

The Gothic novel or the novel of terror is the peculiar product of the late eighteenth century. It is a new genre of the romantic fiction which drew its inspiration from the general revival of interest in medieval life and art, in Gothic castles, in churches and Cathedrals and in ruins. The novelists resorted to the use of ghosts, portents and satanic forces in order to arouse emotions of awe, mystery and terror. Horace Walpole (1717-1797) wrote *The Castle of Otranto* which proclaimed the entry of romantic revival into English novel. Walpole gave to the Gothic romance the elements on which it was to thrive for a generation to come - a hero sullied by unmentionable crimes, several persecuted heroines, a castle with secret passages and haunted rooms, and a plentiful sprinkling of supernatural terrors.

Mrs. Anne Radcliffe (1764-1832) was the most popular of terror novelists. She wrote five elaborate romances of which the most famous are *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. Her stories have well constructed plots which contain medievalism, a lively, if undisciplined imagination, and a skillful faculty of depicting wild scenery. She could successfully create an atmosphere of suspense and dread. What distinguishes her as a novelist is the fact that she rationally used the supernatural machinery. William Beckford (1760-1844) wrote *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, which deals with the mysteries of oriental necromancy. Satire mingle with sensation in his novels. Matthew Lewis (1775-1818) wrote *The Monk*, which is the crudest terror novel. Miss Clara Reeve (1729-1807) is remembered for Old English Baron. It is a Gothic story. Maturina is remembered for *The Fatal Revenge* and *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the only terror novel which is still famous. It is the story of the ravages of manmade monster equivalent to the modern robot. It may be considered the first work of science fiction and the last one of the terror school. Thus, at the close of the nineteenth century, we find the three types of fiction: first, the realistic novel which deals with social life and manners; secondly, the romance which represented the purely emotional interest in nature and the past; and finally, the humanitarian novel, which seriously undertook to right the wrongs sustained by the individual at the hands of society. These three types, write Moody and Lovett, "...have defined three schools - the realists, the romanticists and the social novelists, which have continued, with innumerable cross divisions, until the present time."

#### **4.3.2 EPISTOLARY NOVEL**

Richardson was a skilled letter writer and his talent traces back to his childhood. Throughout his whole life, he would constantly write to his various associates. Richardson had a "faith" in the act of

letter writing, and believed that letters could be used to accurately portray character traits. He quickly adopted the epistolary novel form, which granted him “the tools, the space, and the freedom to develop distinctly different characters speaking directly to the reader.” The characters of *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *Grandison* are revealed in a personal way, with the first two using the epistolary form for “dramatic” purposes, and the last for “celebratory” purposes.

In his first novel, *Pamela*, he explored the various complexities of the title character’s life, and the letters allow the reader to witness her develop and progress over time. The novel was an experiment, but it allowed Richardson to create a complex heroine through a series of her letters. When Richardson wrote *Clarissa*, he had more experience in the form and expanded the letter writing to four different correspondents, which created a complex system of characters encouraging each other to grow and develop over time. However, the villain of the story, Lovelace, is also involved in the letter writing, and this leads to tragedy. Leo Braudy described the benefits of the epistolary form of *Clarissa* as, “Language can work: letters can be ways to communicate and justify.” By the time Richardson writes *Grandison*, he transforms the letter writing from telling of personal insights and explaining feelings into a means for people to communicate their thoughts on the actions of others and for the public to celebrate virtue. The letters are no longer written for a few people, but are passed along in order for all to see.

#### **4.4 LET US SUM UP**

In this lesson, we have discussed the social change in the eighteenth century called the Augustan Age which includes emergences of coffee houses and literary activities, interest of people in reading and publication houses and consequently the rise of middle class. It is followed by the discussion of the prime features of literary tendencies of Augustan age. On the literary domain, this period is called the age of prose and reason, the age of satire and the age of neo-classicism. It also covers the transitional poetry along with the eminent poets of transitional poetry that breaks its umbilical cord with neoclassicism and paves ways to the forthcoming age. The Augustan prose, poetry, drama and the emergence of new genre called novel are discussed in detail.

#### **4.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)**

1. Which literary genre was used mostly by middle-class people during the eighteenth century?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

  - a) Epic
  - b) Poem
  - c) Drama
  - d) Novel

2. The novels of 18th century was reflected \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Temperament of the middle class
  - b) Temperament of the rich class

c) Temperament of the poor class  
d) None of these

3. What was the major cause for the development of novels in the 18th century ? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Old prose style  
b) New prose style  
c) Blank verse style  
d) None of these

4. During the 18th century which of the writers used novels to express the realities of life?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

a) Joseph Addison  
b) Richard Stecle  
c) Oliver Goldsmith  
d) All of the above

5. What are the various reasons for the decline of the drama during the earlier part of the 18th century? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Artificiality  
b) Immorality  
c) Lack of dramatic techniques  
d) All of these

6. Which of the following was not considered the four wheels of the novel in the Augustan age?  
\_\_\_\_\_.

a) Samuel Richardson  
b) Henry Helding  
c) Lawerence Sterne  
d) William Shakespeare

7. Which novelist is famous for the epistolacy novel during the Augustan age ? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) John Milton  
b) Henry Fielding  
c) Samuel Richardson  
d) Tabias Smollett

8. Henry Fielding called which novel a comic epic in prose? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Joseph Andrews
  - b) Tom Jones
  - c) Pamela
  - d) Jonathan Wild
9. Which of the following novelists is known for his episodic or panoramic novel ? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Tobias Smollett
  - b) Henry Fielding
  - c) Richard Steele
  - d) Samuel Richardson
10. Which of the following novelists was the first to use the word sentimental to indicate the soft state of feelings and the imagination? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Edmund Burke
  - b) Tobias Smollett
  - c) Lawrence Sterve
  - d) Samuel Richardson

#### **4.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

**Q.1** What were the causes of the popularity and rise of novel in the Augustan Age ?

**Ans.** The following factors contributed to the development of novel during the eighteenth century:

##### **I. The Spread of Education and the New Reading Public.**

In the eighteenth century, the spread of education and the appearance of newspapers and magazines led to a remarkable increase in the number of readers. The newspaper and the periodical essay encouraged a rapid, inattentive, almost unconscious kind of reading habit. It is exactly such a kind of habit that is required for novel reading. The middle-class people, who had a foremost place in English life and society, wanted to read for pleasure and relaxation without caring for any high classical or literary standards, and this change of emphasis favoured the growth of the novel. Moreover, the new reading class wanted to read about itself, about its own thoughts, motives and struggles. It did not have leisure enough for reading the lengthy heroic romances. It demanded new type of literature. So the novel was born, which mirrored the tastes and requirements of this new class of readers. Women, who had plenty of leisure, sought pleasure through novel reading.

##### **II. The Democratic Movement.**

The rise of the novel is also associated with the democratic movement in the eighteenth century.

Hudson remarks, "The comprehensiveness of the novel, its free treatment of characters and doings of all sorts and conditions of men, and especially its handling of middle class and low life, are unmistakable evidences of its democratic quality." The rise of the middle class is closely related with the democratic movement. With the growth of commerce and industry, the prestige of the old feudal nobility was on the wane. And the middle classes were increasing steadily in social and political power. The middle classes were inclined to morality, sentiment and reality. The novel reflected the temperament of the middle class and, therefore, it became popular.

### **III. Comprehensiveness of Form.**

Novel as a new form of literary art offered a fresh field, in which the writers were to work independently. Hudson writes, "Finally, as the form of the novel, gives a far wider scope allowed to the corresponding form of drama for the treatment of motives, feelings, and all the phenomena of the inner life, it tended from the first to take the peculiar place as the typical art form of the introspective and analytical modern world."

### **IV. The Development of the New Prose Style.**

One of the important causes of the development of novel is the evolution of a new prose style. As the novel deals with ordinary life, ordinary people, and ordinary events and with all sorts of miscellaneous matters, it requires plain, lucid and straightforward style. During the eighteenth century, writers like Addison, Steele, Goldsmith, Burke etc. evolved a plain style which was capable of expressing the realities of life. It has a close relation with the reflections and expressions the novel expresses.

### **V. The Decline of Drama.**

Drama had grown artificial, unnatural and immoral during the earlier part of the eighteenth century. It was the decline of drama during the first half of the eighteenth century that made way for the novel. The latter part of the eighteenth century was the golden age of the novel. A true novel is simply a work of fiction which relates the story of plain human life, under stress of emotion, which depends for its interest not on incident and adventure, but on its truth to nature. Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, known as the four wheels of novel, all seem to have seized upon the idea of reflecting life as it is, in the form of a story, and to have developed it simultaneously.

**Q.2 Who are considered the major novelists of the Augustan Age?**

#### **4.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

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

#### **4.8 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Bulson, Eric. *The Cambridge Companion to the Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- \* Saintsbury, George, *The English Novel*. Zinc Read, 2023.
- \* Schwarz, Daniel R. “The Importance of Ian Watt’s ‘The Rise of the Novel.’” *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1983, pp. 59–73. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30225060.

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## JOHN BUNYAN AND HIS TIMES

### STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 5.3 His Early life
- 5.4 Restoration Period: Its influence on Bunyan
- 5.5 Middle Period
- 5.6 Other significant works of Bunyan
- 5.7 Prose style of Bunyan
- 5.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 5.10 Examination Oriented Questions
- 5.11 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 5.12 Suggested Reading

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

John Bunyan (1628-1688) was an English writer best known for his work *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He had a humble upbringing and turned to religious life later in his life and went on to produce *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a religious allegory, considered to be one of the most significant works in English literature. His other works *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* and *The Holy War* also reflect his Puritan beliefs. His writing style was characterised by directness and simplicity of expression.

#### 5.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to introduce the learner with the life and works of John Bunyan and the Restoration age. The lesson also aims to acquaint the learner with the prose style of John Bunyan.

After going through this lesson, the learner will be able to discuss detailed biography of John Bunyan as well as summarise the works composed by him. The learner will also be able to describe how the Restoration period influenced Bunyan, as well as narrate the writing style of John Bunyan.

### **5.3 HIS EARLY LIFE**

John Bunyan was born at Elstow, a village about a mile from Bedford, in November 1628. His father was a brazier. The family was humble, but respectable. As a boy, Bunyan learnt to read and write, and though not a scholar, he was decidedly a serious reader of books. When he was only fourteen, the Civil War between King Charles I and the Parliament broke out (in 1642). Two years later, Bunyan was called up by the Parliamentary army to serve as a soldier from 1644 to 1647 when he was demobilized. He then took over his father's profession as brazier and got married. Although not much is known about his life in the next seven years, his spiritual difficulties and adventures are described at length in his autobiographical book *Grace Abounding* which he wrote in 1666.

A great change came about in the life of Bunyan after his marriage. The precise date of his marriage and his wife's name are not known. But he himself records that his wife was a deeply religious person who greatly influenced him. After marriage he became a regular church-goer, an eager reader of the Bible, and a keen debater of religious matters. He, of course, took a long time before he reached any final state of conviction. After several years of internal struggle and conflict, he was at last gradually led to join the community founded in Bedford by John Gifford, a former Major in the King's army. Bunyan was received into the congregation as a brother in 1655. Thereafter, he became one of its most zealous and successful member. He began to preach with great success. Preaching soon drew him into controversy. In 1656 his first book was printed, which was an attack on the Quakers entitled *Some Gospel Truths Opened*.

### **5.4 RESTORATION PERIOD : ITS INFLUENCE ON BUNYAN**

The Lord Protector of England, named Oliver Cromwell died in 1658. With the death of this iron man, the dictator, the central control over many Puritan sects and factions was lost. In 1660, General Monk brought an end to chaos by inviting King Charles II to return to England from his exile in France. The Restoration of the King marked the beginning of the Restoration period of English literary history, which continued up to 1700, the year John Dryden died. In those days, religion and politics were inseparable. The cause of Civil War was also the combination of these two. The Puritan preachers, who were opposed to the royalist part of the Church of England lost their eighteen year long supremacy. Now, the unlicensed preachers as well as the self-appointed ones were not allowed to address their congregations, especially because some of them claimed a direct divine call and showed a religious enthusiasm which was dangerously exciting in these disturbed and hysterical times. Those zealots who believed that Christ's Second Coming was at hand would not mind even shedding the blood of those whom they considered the enemies of God, as it indeed occurred in London, in January 1661.

Although the attitude of the newly restored authorities was not unreasonable, and was indeed for the times even tolerant, a man of Bunyan's strong conviction and courage would not compromise on a straight issue between the Law of the Land and what he regarded as the Law of God. Also, much had happened to Bunyan during the six years, since he first joined the Bedford congregation. His first wife had died, leaving him four children, one of them blind. He married again, and his second wife was brave and

devoted. Bunyan was now a leader of his people with great reputation even outside Bedford. He was faced now with the choice of submitting to authority or of facing the consequences. On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1660, despite warning, he went to address a meeting. As a result, he was arrested and committed for examination in Bedford jail. Of course, there was no animus or desire to persecute Bunyan. At his first examination and at his trial many efforts were made by friendly officials to set him free, but he refused to yield or to make any kind of compromise that he would in any way refrain from his preaching. He, therefore, remained in jail. For the next twelve years he remained legally a prisoner. But as per the records in *The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting*, he was at first often allowed full liberty to go about his business. He never travelled so far as London. Although the records do not reveal much about the period between 1663 and 1668, it is likely that during this period he was more closely confined. His friends were, of course, allowed to visit him. He read and wrote a good deal in these years. After 1668, the records of the congregation were resumed. They show Bunyan taking full share in the affairs of his Church, visiting, admonishing, and attending meetings for worship.

During these years of hardship, Bunyan's courage and leadership grew more and more prominent. At last, on 21 January, 1672 he was solemnly elected as Pastor of the Bedford community. In the following March (1673), the general restrictions on preaching were relaxed. By this Declaration of Religious Indulgence, nonconformist ministers were allowed to apply for a license to preach. Bunyan's license was granted on 9 May 1672, which stated : "Teacher of the Congregation allowed by us in the House of Josias Roughed, Bedford, for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England, who are of the persuasion commonly called congregational." Bunyan was formally pardoned on 13 September 1672. He was now fully occupied of congregation. His authority was now so widely recognized that he was nicknamed "Bishop Bunyan." In 1675, the Declaration of Indulgence, was withdrawn and the persecution of nonconformists was for a time renewed. Once more Bunyan was a prisoner for about six weeks. It was during this period of forced idleness that he began to write *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

## 5.5 MIDDLE PERIOD

Bunyan was now forty-seven years of age. In his considerable experience of life and world, he had met and known a great variety of men and women. As a preacher, he visited many houses, great and small. As a pastor, he experienced most of the spiritual difficulties of the faithful and the wavering. By conviction and experience he was persuaded that, like the apostles of old, he had been specially chosen as a teacher of the people of God. To such a man, Bible was not a picturesque record of ancient events but a living and vital guide for all occasions. Moreover, as he detailed in *Grace Abounding*, his autobiographical work, he himself was assailed by Satan and rescued by the audible voice of God. For more than twenty years, Bunyan had been preaching to audiences of unlearned but very critical hearers. Since the time of his conversion, he had written more than twenty books in prose and verse. He was now ripe for a masterpiece. Since, we shall devote detailed attention to his masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the subsequent lessons, we shall take up here the other significant writings of John Bunyan.

## Activity

Dear learner, now that you are familiar with the life of John Bunyan, you can solve this exercise before going to the next section.

1. John Bunyan was born in the village \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Bunyan served as a soldier in \_\_\_\_\_ from 1644 to 1647.
3. Bunyan's autobiographical book *Grace Abounding* was written in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In 1656, Bunyan's first book titled \_\_\_\_\_ was printed, which was an attack on the Quakers.
5. The Restoration period in English literary history began in 1660 with the return of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* during a period of imprisonment in \_\_\_\_\_.

## Answers

1. Elstow	2. the Parliamentary army
3. 1666	4. Some Gospel Truths Opened
5. King Charles II	6. 1675

## 5.6 OTHER SIGNIFICANT WORKS OF BUNYAN

The one person who won permanent fame as a man of high narrative genius during the later seventeenth century was John Bunyan. This enthusiastic tinker and “mechanic” preacher made certain proletarian narrative forms into vehicles for spiritual instruction. His first important work of this type was *Grace Abounding* (1666), which is an autobiography focused on his conversion and early career as preacher. It is a common type of “fanatic” autobiography, its chief interest being the life of the author for more significant work. We learn from this book that Bunyan came “of a low and inconsiderable generation,” but inspite of that, he says, “It pleased God to put it into their [his parents] hearts to put me to school, to learn me both read and write.” All this small learning, however, he neglected and almost lost. His career, as he insists, was “a miracle of precious grace.” In Bunyan’s view, no achievement is to be credited to man’s instruction or ability. He quiet early became “the very ring leader of all the youth that kept me company, in all manner of vice and ungodliness.” His worse specific vices were cursing, swearing, lying, dancing, and furtive ringing of the church bell. He married a poor but God-fearing woman, who “not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon between us both, yet she had for her part, *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*, which her father had left for her when he died.” These two books, especially the former, by Arthur Dent, proved a useful dowry. His spiritual struggles brought him under the influence of these books. As his struggles protracted themselves, these pages of torment and ultimate triumph are studded with significant use of similitude and allegory.

*And truly I did now feel myself to sink into a gulf, as a house whose foundation is destroyed. I did liken myself in this condition into the case of a child that was fallen into a mill-pit, who, though it could make some shift to scramble and sprawl in the water, yet because it could find hold neither for hand nor foot, therefore at last it must die in that condition.*

Even earlier, Bunyan had a vision of the good Christians of Bedford “as if they were on the sunny side of some high mountain, refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold... Me thought also between me and then I saw a wall that did compass about this mountain. Now through this wall my soul did greatly desire to pass.” After much search and effort, he finds a straight and narrow passage in the wall, “and so was comforted with the light of heat of their sun.” Such passages are prophetic of better things in later works, especially in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Only next to *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, is Bunyan’s *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, presented to the World in a Familiar Dialogue between *Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive* (1680). The book issues a warning that “wickedness like a flood is like to drown an English world.” So Wiseman tells his friend the story of a reprobate child who became a bad apprentice, a fraudulent businessman, a painted sepulcher as a husband, and a hypocrite as a Christian. At death “His sins and his hope went with him to the Gate, but there his hope left him because it died there; but his sins went in with him to be a worm to gnaw him in his conscience for ever and ever.” Mr. Badman, though remotely allied to the rogues of the picaresque world, is only a little more interesting as a rogue than as a subject for moralizing. The tedious dialogue patterned after the method of *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* is drawn away from Mr. Badman by incessant preaching and by parallel episodic stories—borrowed at times from contemporary works such as Samuel Clarke’s *Mirror or Looking-Glass Both for Saints and Sinners* (1646). These stories are interesting, and they are surprising in that Bunyan superstitiously accepts them as veracious. One of these stories is that of Dorothy Mately, “Swearer, and Curser, and Lier, and Thief,” who on March 23, 1660, denied stealing two pence, and exclaimed “*That the ground might swallow her up if she had them.*” The ground promptly obliged, and when later Dorothy was “dragged up,” she had the pennies in her pocket. One gets many details of local manners—including the fashion in which Dr. Freeman (“who was more than an ordinary Doctor”) attempted to exercise a possessed ail-house keeper. But more than once the reader agrees with Mr. Attentive, who says, “These are sad stories, tell no more of them now.” These sad stories are now the most interesting bits in the book.

No less in merit than *Mr. Badman*, is Bunyan’s other book, namely *The Holy War*, which was published in 1682. Bunyan was somewhat conscious of literary success among the faithful. He made this book much more complex and subtle in thought and allegory than any of his earlier works. It narrates the warfare “made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the regaining of the Metropolis of the World, or the losing and the taking again of Mansoul.” Here again, remotely after the method of a narrated morality play, we have the theme of the salvation of the soul allegorically treated. But Bunyan’s Mansoul is not a person but a town—so curious, so commondious so advantageous that “there is not its equal under the whole Heaven.” The allegory tends to be political rather than personal in emphasis. We do not feel any such sympathy for this town divided against itself as we had for the torn mind of the man Christian in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. The story is one of Kings, princes, and great leader. It deals in technical and “ensnaring propositions.” The poise for its title-page (as for that of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*) was the text from no’s. 12:10 (from *The Bible*), “I have used similitudes.” The critical reader is tempted to exclaim, “Too many of them!” Apart from the allegory of the psychology of conversion, we have the allied biblical account of man’s fall and redemption. At times the political chicanery, detailed in the book, shadows forth the evils of Bunyan’s own days when nonconformist saints were persecuted. There is also, as many critics have argued, a consciousness

of the biblical story as reshaped by the millionaires Fifth Monarchy men in Bunyan's day. Sometimes these different levels of allegory clash, but not more commonly than is usual in such works.

If in general we have here the same bag of tricks that were so effective in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, it is still a good bag, and the tricks still dazzle. One may be slightly weary of the tumults of wars, the marshalling of forces, the "ensnaring propositions" for armistices, and the trials of war criminals. One may also feel that Bunyan should have stayed in Bedfordshire. But one must at least realize that Bunyan knows "the method of godliness" and is satirically caustic about those who do not. His daring directness is amazing. He lets that worthy gentleman Mr. Godlyfear remark of Emanuel, "If that is not a sign of his anger, I am not acquainted with the methods of Godliness." At the triumph after the first conquest of Mansoul from Diabolus, Bunyan tells us, "Now after the feast was over, Emanuel was for entertaining the Town of Mansoul with some curious riddles of secrets." The entertainment consisted of a reading and exegesis of the Holy Scriptures. Such passages are mildly breath taking. They might make one to doubt if a mind of such simple directness could be caustic. The careers of the "tatling Diabolonian gentleman" Mr. Carnal Security and of the bodyguard of Diabolus show that we need not fear for any naivete in Bunyan's thinking. Place of residence are neatly devised : "In All-base-lane, at a house next door to the sign of the Conscience seared with an hot iron." The trial scenes are numerous. But many of them are masterly executed. For instance, the scene where Mr. Falsepeace tries to deny his name.

The vivid moral psychology is still excellent : "Now there was an old man in the town and his name was Mr. Good-deed. A man that bore only the name, but had nothing of the nature of the thing." On this favourite theme, incidentally, even Henry Fielding was not more deft than John Bunyan. Old Good-deed is no satisfactory petitioner for mercy : "nor can a thousand of old Good-deeds save Mansoul." If *The Holy War* is found less gripping these days than *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the reason perhaps is that it is less psychological than social, that theological and political controversies intrude more obviously into the later book, and also that by the accident of history the application of military symbolism to religion is now definitely out of vogue. But *The Holy War* is as typical of its age as is its remote cousin *Paradise Lost*, or its nearer kin *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The same year *The Holy War* was published and saw the appearance of an unauthorized continuation of the *The Pilgrim's Progress* by Thomas Sherman. This event encouraged Bunyan to do his own continuing. It was also clear from the early conversation of Christian with Mr. Worldly Wiseman and with Charity that something had to be done for Christian's wife and family. Hence, in 1684 appeared the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, narrating the journey of the aged Christiana and her children. The situation is a little awkward. Hardly have the pilgrims left the wicket-gate behind, Christiana and her maid Mercy are attacked by two ruffians. Then, as their Reliever tells them, he marvelled, "being ye knew that ye were but weak Women, that you petitioned not the Lord... for a Conductor." Such a personage is presently forthcoming. He is Mr. Greatheart, and the pilgrimage speedily became his story. He kills giants, scoring a tremendous victory at Doubting Castle, and he offers much good counsel. In Bunyan's mind, conversion for women and children apparently lacked the tense terrors that Christian experienced, but required rather more in the way of spiritual instruction. The result is the diminished interest that one normally finds in continuations. And yet this second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a very pleasant reading. There is more homeliness in it. Mercy picks up an unsatisfactory beau in Mr. Brisk. Also, young Mathew picks up the gripes and undergoes a symbolic purgation. Vanity Fair is reputedly "far more moderate" than in the good

old days when Faithful fell its victim. We are continually delighted to find reminiscences of Christian extent along the way. It is more placid than the first part of the story, but it is pleasingly placid.

## Activity

Learner, it is time to take another break! Before moving to the next section, solve this exercise to check your familiarity with the previous section.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is John Bunyan's autobiography which focuses on his conversion and early career as preacher.
2. John Bunyan's work titled \_\_\_\_\_ is in the form of a familiar dialogue between Mr Wiseman and Mr Attentive.
3. Bunyan's novel \_\_\_\_\_ issued a warning that "wickedness like a flood is like to drown an English world."
4. \_\_\_\_\_ by John Bunyan narrates the warfare "made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the regaining of the Metropolis of the World, or the losing and the taking again of Mansoul."
5. The second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* narrating the journey of Christiana came in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Bunyan says that his career was "a \_\_\_\_\_ of precious grace."
7. In *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, Mr. Badman's sins went with him to the Gate, but his \_\_\_\_\_ left him there.
8. In *The Holy War*, Mansoul is not a person but a \_\_\_\_\_.

## Answers

1. Grace Abounding
2. The Life and Death of Mr. Badman
3. The Life and Death of Mr. Badman
4. The Holy War
5. 1684
6. miracle
7. hope
8. town

## 5.7 PROSE STYLE OF BUNYAN

Besides these major works, Bunyan also published a multitude of treatises and sermons, all in the same style. His prose style is direct, simple, convincing, expressing every thought and emotion perfectly in words that even a child can understand. Many of these are masterpieces, admired by working men and scholars alike for their thought and expression. Take, for instance, "The Heavenly Footman," put it side by side with the best work of Latimer, and the resemblance in style would look startling. It is difficult to realize that one work came from an ignorant thinker and the other from a great scholar, both engaged in the same general work. As Bunyan's one book was the *Bible*, we have here a suggestion of its influence in all our prose literature. The work of John Bunyan, major as well as minor, shows how his long experience of preaching helped him to develop a prose style which owed a great deal to the English Bible and the vigorous and homely vocabulary of popular exhortation. There had been a simple and popular strain in English preaching from the earliest times. Even though more ornamental traditions had developed, this simple strain had never died out and was much cultivated by the Puritans. So while a conscious reformation of English prose was being undertaken by members of the Royal Society in the interests of scientific clarity, and the psychology of John Locke was encouraging "clear and distinct ideas" expressed

in a clear and distinct vocabulary, Puritan literature was moving in a similar direction for quite different reasons. The cogency and flexibility of Dryden's prose style and the colourful simplicity of Bunyan's represent two contemporary kinds of "plain" prose—sufficiently different from each other, but in the long run flowing together to provide a prose that would make possible the English novel, which followed in the eighteenth century.

If in some ways Bunyan's best work represents a culmination of certain kinds of seventeenth century Puritan writing, in others it looks forward to the development of the English novel. His interest in spiritual autobiography and cautionary allegory stems from a long Puritan tradition, which in turn had roots in medieval religious thought and expression. His method of translating his theological ideas into vivid, realistic contemporary terms, reflecting with extraordinary immediacy the daily life and conversation of the ordinary people of England, shows the technique of the novelist in the making. Bunyan's own spiritual life followed a classic pattern of worldliness followed by conviction of Sin (as a result of a preacher's effective work upon him) and vocation or calling, followed in turn by various torturing doubts of his election that led him more than once to the brink of despair. At last, through many turns and twists to settled conviction of his salvation, firm saving faith, and steady progress in sanctification or holiness of life, he refused to conform to the various acts passed in the early and middle 1660s, which were directed against the dissenters. These acts were particularly against the holding of nonconformist preaching and religious meetings by unauthorized nonconformist preachers. All this from his life constitutes the stuff like Richardson's kind of god-fearing characters and Fielding's kind of Allworthys and Parson Adams, that could be easily created. His depiction of the scenes from the *Vanity Fair*, or of temptation in private, all came ready to the later novelists as raw material with which they constructed their own houses of fiction. Most of all, he designed a prose which was at once conversational as well as cogent, so much suitable for the rising form of the novel.

## **5.8 LET US SUM UP**

John Bunyan was an English preacher and writer who lived during the 17th century. He is best known for his novels, poems and work as an influential Puritan preacher who fought against some of England's religious restrictions. His best known publication is the novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the most famous books in Christian literature Bunyan converted to Puritanism after being immersed in his community church's teachings. He often read Puritan Christian texts and philosophies before his full communion into the church. Bunyan underwent severe spiritual and emotional turmoil which led to his conversion and full devotion to what he believed was the path to salvation.

## **5.9 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)**

1. John Bunyan was born in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1628
  - b) 1630

c) 1642

d) 1672

2. How old was Bunyan when the civil war between King Charles I and the Parliament broke out in 1642? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Eight years

b) Fourteen years

c) Fifteen years

d) Twenty years

3. Which of the following is autobiographical work by John Bunyan? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) *The Holy War*

b) *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*

c) *Grace Abounding*

d) None of these

4. John Bunyan was arrested in which jail \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Newgate

b) Bedford

c) Debtors

d) Central

5. When was John Bunyan elected as Pastor of the Bedford community? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) 1672

b) 1682

c) 1692

d) 1694

6. Which work is considered as the masterpiece of John Bunyan? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) *The Holy War*

b) *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*

c) *The Pilgrim's Progress*

d) *Grace Abounding*

7. John Bunyan style was mostly influenced by\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Bible
- b) Odyssey
- c) Virgil
- d) Faerie Queen

#### **5.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss the prose style of John Bunyan.

Q.2 Discuss the influence of Restoration on John Bunyan.

#### **5.11 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

- 1. a)
- 2. b)
- 3. c)
- 4. b)
- 5. a)
- 6. c)
- 7. a)

#### **5.12 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Belmonte, Kevin. *John Bunyan : A Biography of the Author of Pilgrims Progress*. Thomas Nehon, 2010.
- \* Keebla, Neil. *John Bunyan's Literary Life*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- \* Sharrock, Roger. "John Bunyan." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 27 Aug. 2025, [www.britannica.com/biography/John-Bunyan](http://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Bunyan).

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## THE STORY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

### STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 6.3 The Story
- 6.4 Significance of the novel
- 6.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.6 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 6.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 6.8 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 6.9 Suggested Reading

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the most important Christian allegories. The novel follows the journey of Christian, an everyman, who sets out on a journey of spiritual awakening from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. He encounters various figures on the way who represent some significant aspect of the Christian belief. The novel is one of the most widely read books in English literature.

### 6.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to offer a detailed summary of the novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The lesson also aims to highlight the literary significance of this novel.

After going through this lesson, the learner will be able to summarise the novel *The Pilgrim's Progress* and explain the various significant events in the plot. The learner will be able to appreciate the novel and explain its significance.

### 6.3 THE STORY

This famous story of man's progress through life to heaven has often been rated next to the Bible in importance as a Christian document. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* remains one of the most pleasing allegories of the Christian way, ever written. Bunyan, an early Puritan, wanted to write a book, which would be popular with the common masses as well as with the uncommon intellectuals. The characters in the allegorical novel are more than simple symbols; they are real people; only their names are abstractions.

Their speeches and actions, instincts and emotions, thoughts and feelings are concrete, just the same as are shown by real men and women. Since the novel, like any great literary work, has more than one aspect or dimension to it, it can be read as a symbolic narrative, a picaresque romance, and a realistic novel. The story of the novel can be summarized as under :

One day, according to Bunyan, when he lay down in a den to sleep, he dreamt a man standing in a field, crying out in pain and sorrow because he and his whole family as well as the town in which they are living were to be destroyed. The name of this crying person was Christian. He knew of this catastrophe because he had read about it in the book, he held in his hands. The book, we are told, is *The Bible*. Soon came the Evangelist, the Preacher of Christianity, to meet Christian. He presented the hero with a roll of paper in which it was written that he should flee from the wrath of God and make a way from the City of Destruction to the City of Zion. Running home with the hope of salvation, Christian tried to persuade his family and his neighbours to go away with him. But neither his family nor his neighbours would listen to him. In fact, they formed an adverse opinion about him. They thought that he was either sick or mad. Finally, shutting his ears to his family's entreaties to stay at home with them, he ran off towards the light, he saw at a long distance. He knew that under the light he would find the wicket gate which opened into Heaven.

Just a little while after he had started on his journey, Christian, the hero, met two persons named Pliant and Obstinate. They distracted him from his path to light to such an extent that he fell into a bog called the Slough of Despond. He tried hard to get out of the Slough. But since he had on his back the heavy bundle of sins, he could not succeed in his effort. A little while later, a person named Help came along and aided him to get out of the Slough of Despond. As he resumed his journey on the path to light, he met another person named Mr. Worldly Wiseman. This gentleman tried to convince Christian that he should give up his trip toward the light and settle down to the comforts of a burdenless town life, which would give him a life of happiness. The persuasion of this gentleman was so powerful that Christian found himself almost inclined to accept his advice. But sensing the danger of distraction facing Christian, the hero or the protagonist, Evangelist joined them in their debate. He countered the arguments of Mr. Worldly Wiseman and quickly showed to Christian the erroneous position, the gentleman was taking.

Thus, rescued by the Evangelist, Christian again started on his journey. He soon arrived at a closed gate, where he met a person named Good-Will. The latter told him that if he knocked at the gate, it would be opened for him. When Christian followed his advice, the gate opened. Here, he met a person called Interpreter who invited him into the house of the Gatekeeper. Christian learned from Interpreter meanings of many mysteries of Christianity. Here, he was shown various pictures of Christ. He also saw here the pictures of Passion and Patience. He also saw Despair in a cage of iron bars. He was shown finally a vision of the Day of Judgement : how on that day evil persons will be thrown onto the bottomless pit (another name for Hell), and how good persons will be carried up to Heaven. After seeing all these pictures of future prospects and possibilities, Christian was filled with both fear and hope. On resuming his journey he came to the Holy Cross and the Sepulcher of Christ, where his burden of sin fell off at once. This made him feel much lighter; he walked now with greater vigour on his path to light.

He had walked not a great distance when he came across on the way several persons namely Sloth, Presumption, Formalism, Hypocrisy, etc., but he kept to his way, and they kept to theirs. They did not make any attempt to dissuade him from his path, nor did he care to get close to them. Later, after some distance, Christain felt tired and went to sleep. When he got up after a while, he forgot to pick up the roll of paper Evangelist had given him. As he was reminded of it a little, he ran back to recover the roll. He found it there where he had gone to sleep. Trying to make up the time lost in the process, Christian started running rather than walking. As he was going running, he suddenly found himself faced with two lions. He felt afraid to pass by these lions. But then came a friendly help from the porter of the house where the lions were. The porter, who was standing on the road-side, told him that he need not fear the lions because they were chained, not free. Not only that, the porter even invited him into the house. Christian accepted the invitation and went into the house. Here, the hero saw some of the relics of Biblical antiquity, which were shown to him by four virgins who were the inmates of this house. Then these virgins, named Discretion, Prudence, Piety and Charity, gave Christian not only good advice but also the sword and shield of Christian faith. Now, armed with these mighty weapons of Faith, Christian resumed his journey on his path to light once again.

As he was walking his way on to the long journey, Christian came upon the Valley of Humiliation. Here, he was confronted with the giant devil, whom he had to fight. The body of the devil named Apollyon was covered with the scales of pride. In this grim battle with the devil, Christian received a severe wound. But he finally succeeded in driving away the devil. After the victory, Christian healed his wound with leaves from the Tree of Life, which grew there nearby. When he felt fine after a while, the hero resumed his journey and reached another valley named the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Here Christian had to pass through one of the gates of Hell. Here, a host of devils issued out of the terrible hole called Hell. In order to save himself from these devils, Christian took to reciting verses from the Psalms. This helped him to go out of the place. He was able to move on after successfully averting the danger of the devils he faced. No sooner than Christian had gone out of the gate of Hell, he came upon the caves of the old giants. He passed by these caves of the giants called Pope and Pagan without any curiosity on his part or attention on theirs. After having gone past these caves, Christian caught up with a fellow traveller named Faithful. Feeling goods in the company of Faithful, Christian proceeded on his journey with joy and no fear. As the two went along happily, they met Evangelist, who warned them of the dangers ahead in the town of Vanity Fair.

This town of Vanity Fair had ancient foundation, and from the very beginning had lured human beings from the path to Heaven. This town was full of the treasures of the material world, having all the glitter of the attractive distractions of the life of luxury. Here, the market was full with all the vanities of the world. The residents of this town were cruel and stupid, having not much sense nor sensibility. They would not welcome visitors such as Christian and Faithful. Getting to know the nature of the people of the town and the lure of the fair, the two travellers promised to themselves that they would remain on guard against these people and their town's temptations. Thus, prepared the two companions entered the town of Vanity Fair. Here, they met with strange treatment; since they would not buy anything from the town of Vanity Fair, they were arrested and put on trial. After the trial, both were awarded punishment.

While Christian was put behind the bars, Faithful was sentenced to be burned alive. The sentence was executed. When Faithful died in the fire, there came a chariot from Heaven and took him to the City of God. Christian succeeded in escaping from the prison. There was in the town of Vanity Fair a young man named Hopeful, who was highly impressed by the reward Faithful had received from God. He now decided to join Christian on his journey to light. Christian lost his earlier companion Faithful, but he found a new one, Hopeful. The two set off feeling happy in each other's company.

As they were walking along, they came upon the Valley of Ease, where they were tempted to dig into a silver mine costing nothing. But they did leave the Valley after some time after overcoming the greed for shining silver. Soon after they had left the Valley of Ease, they came upon the Pillar of Salt, which had been once Lot's wife. Here they got lost and were captured by a giant called Despair. The giant lived in Doubting Castle. Christian and Hopeful were now locked in the vaults beneath the Castle Walls. Here they remained lying helpless for a while. But then Christian was reminded that he had in his pocket a key called Promise, which could help them out of their bondage. So, he used the key called Promise and got out of the prison along with his companion Hopeful. Getting out of prison, Christian and Hopeful resumed once again their journey on the path to light.

They had not walked a very long distance when they met shepherds on the way. These shepherds were named Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Science. These shepherds guided them to the path to Heaven, but also warned against the possible risk of taking the wrong path to Hell. Following the path shown to them by the shepherds, the two pilgrims, Christian and Hopeful, came upon the Valley of Conceit. Here they met a person called Ignorance as well as a few more who had not kept to the straight and narrow path to Heaven. Leaving behind this lot of people like Ignorance, the two pilgrims again set on their journey, not the least distracted towards such people. Walking slowly but steadily they reached the country of Beulah. From here they were able to see the gates of the City of Heaven glistening with pearls and precious stones. They felt so happy and elated by the sight that they forgot about the distance yet to be covered before making it to the City of God. They felt that all their troubles were now left behind, so they lay down to rest.

After taking a long rest to their satisfaction, the two pilgrims, once again started towards the City of God. On the way, they soon came upon the River of Death. Since the way of the City of God lay across the River of Death, they had no choice except to wade through the waters of the River. While crossing the River Christian developed fear leading to more fear. But more and more he feared, deeper and deeper the waters rolled. His companion Hopeful shouted to him not to have fear and to have instead hope and faith. Hopeful's words cheered up Christian and pulled him out of the deep waters of fear. As he cheered up, waters became less and less deep, and finally he came out of the deep waters of the River of Death. Thus, Christian was saved by Hopeful from the deep-seated fear of Death, which had almost drowned him. As soon as they were out on the ground, they started running up the hill towards Heaven. As they reached the Gates of Heaven on the top of the hill, they met there the shining Angels who led them through the Gates.

## Activity

Dear learner, the previous section gave you an overview of the story of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. You can now make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the plot of the novel by going through the exercise given below.

1. Christian learns about the imminent destruction of his city by reading \_\_\_\_\_.
2. During his journey, Christian falls into the \_\_\_\_\_ due to the weight of his sins, but is helped out by a person named Help.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ tries to convince Christian to abandon his journey and settle in a burdenless town.
4. Christian is welcomed at the closed gate by \_\_\_\_\_, who tells him to knock for it to open.
5. Christian learns many mysteries of Christianity in the house of \_\_\_\_\_ including the vision of Despair, which shows the Day of Judgment.
6. Christian's burden of sin falls off at the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.
7. After sleeping and forgetting his roll of paper, \_\_\_\_\_ reminds Christian to recover it.
8. Christian and \_\_\_\_\_ are captured in the town of Vanity Fair after refusing to buy anything from the town's market.
9. Christian and Hopeful are captured by the giant Despair in \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Christian and Hopeful reach the country of \_\_\_\_\_ from where they can see the gates of the City of Heaven.

## Answers

1. The Bible	2. Slough of Despond	3. Mr. Worldly Wiseman
4. Good-Will	5. Interpreter	6. Holy Cross, Sepulcher
7. Evangelist	8. Faithful	9. Doubting Castle
		10. Beulah

## 6.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NOVEL

The significance of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is several-fold. First of all, it marks the beginning of the English novel by providing a prototype of the novel with all its elements. The backbone of every novel, whatever the technique used by the novelist, is the story, which is a set of incidents woven together to form a coherent whole. The excellence of the novelist lies in creating suspense in the narrative, in making his scenes and characters come alive, in involving the reader in the affairs of his characters. Bunyan in his *The Pilgrim's Progress* proved his merit in all the aspects of the novel, more so in the art of story telling. At the very sight we learn to distrust Mr. Worldly Wiseman and all others who may "look like Gentlemen." We also rejoice when Christian loses his burden, and tremble as we pass the lions in the way. We suffer with Faithful, and are terrified by Giant Despair. We pray to God for Hopeful as we see him swim the dark river, and feel complacent in assuring ourselves that the fate of Ignorance will never be ours. All this only shows Bunyan's power to draw life-like characters. Our responses are elicited by the reality and solidity of the characters' lives in the verbal world of the author's creation.

No less powerful is Bunyan's art of description and narration. Like any great novelist, he narrates incidents and describes scenes which capture our attention and leave behind an impact. All episodes in *The Pilgrim's Progress* are full of suspense, natural as they emerge along with the scenes of their happenings. Bunyan's realism in the narrative is never marred by his natural inclination to allegory. In his prefatory couplets, he tells us how he speaks in his work through symbols and metaphors :

*By metaphors I speak; Was not God's Laws,*

*His Gospel-laws, in older time held forth*

*By types, Shadows and Metaphors?*

His defensive tone here is interesting. His insistence on "my method" is natural. No writer of his type has ever made abstractions live more readily. Christian himself is both universal as well as a peasant from Bedfordshire. Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Talkative are very familiar types whom we meet so often in real life. Mrs. Diffidence's lecture to her giant husband is no less natural and authentic. It seems too wisely and familiar. The allegory in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is constantly ingenious. At the same time, it is seldom forced in its ingenuity. The real appeal of the allegory depends on our sympathy for Christian and on the weighty implications of each dramatic episode and of the action as a whole. Bunyan's sense of drama is no less acute. He always succeeds, like any other great novelist, in making the presentation of an event, or of a character, or of conversation, highly dramatic. The elements of suspense and surprise have always been the spices of the dramatic art, which are here in Bunyan's work in as much measure as is required by a scene or situation, character or conversation.

All these gifts that Bunyan demonstrates in his great work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, paved the way for the rise of the English novel in the eighteenth century. One can see how the models that Bunyan provided gets used over and over again, inspiring the whole bunch of novelists in the eighteenth century, and even later, from Defoe to Dickens, from Richardson to Radcliffe, from Smollett to Scott, from Fielding to Faulkner. Bunyan's significance as a novelist, or that of his *The Pilgrim's Progress*, is not confined to the aspects of the novel as a literary form; it is even more important in terms of the moral content and spiritual quest which each writer in his own way makes, and which informs all important works of prose fiction.

## 6.5 LET US SUM UP

Thus, Christian, the Pilgrim, progressed on his journey, going through all kinds of trials, encountering all kinds of impediments, but always coming out victorious. He finally progressed towards the spiritual height and reached the peak where there was heavenly abode meant for the soul saved and graced by God. As soon as the pilgrim, Christian, reached the Gates of Heaven and was taken in John Bunyan, as narrator, gives a suitable ending to the story of Christian's pilgrimage to Heaven. It runs as under:

*Now while he was thus in Discourse, his Countenance changed, his strong man bowed under him, and after he had said, take me, for I come unto thee, he ceased to be seen of them.*

*But glorious it was to see how the open Region was filled with Horses and Chariots, with Trumpeters and Pipers, with Singers and Players on stringed instruments, to welcome the Pilgrims as they went up, and followed one another in at the beautiful Gate of the City.*

*As for Christian's children the four Boys that Christiana brought with her with their wives and children, I did not stay where I was till they were gone over. Also, since I came away, I heard one say that they were yet alive, and so would be for the Increase of the Church on that place where they were for a time.*

*Shall it be my lot to go that way again, I may give those that desire it an account of what I here am silent about: meantime, I bid my Readers Adieu.*

And Bunyan does “give an account of what I here am silent about” to us in the second part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which he published in 1684. The latter work tells how Christiana, wife of Christian, and her children, accompanied by Mercy, follow the same route, and at last cross the river to enter the Holy City of God. This second part is decidedly the more finished work of art. The style is also more consistent in the second than in the first. It is, however, less full of incidents carrying violent encounters and tempting scenes. With Mr. Greatheart as escort, guide, and protector, the group is seldom in any grave danger. Their success is assured from the start of their journey.

## 6.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. The first part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1678
  - b) 1679
  - c) 1677
  - d) 1688
2. Who starts his journey from the city of Destruction? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Christian
  - b) Evangelist
  - c) Goodwill
  - d) Faith
3. The narrator learns about Christian from \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) a book
  - b) a wise man
  - c) a dream
  - d) an ancient poem
4. Pliable turns back to the city of Destruction after a bad experience in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) the Doubting Castle
  - b) the Slough of Despond

- c) the Detectable maintains
- d) the Interpreter's House

5. After seeing the cross and climbing the hill of difficulty. Christian falls asleep and loses \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) his certificate of entry to the Celestial city
- b) his burden
- c) his Bible
- d) his money

6. Discretion, Piety, Charity and Prudence are \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) fellow pilgrims
- b) mistresses of the Palace Beautiful
- c) prisoners of Giant Despair
- d) servants of Madam Bubble

7. Apollyon's skin is covered with \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) hair
- b) gold
- c) scales
- d) leather

8. The Giants Pope and Pagan present no danger to Christian because \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) they are already dead
- b) they are chained up
- c) they are exiled
- d) they are too old and weak

9. Faithful is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) the interpreter's servant
- b) the porter at the Palace Beautiful
- c) Christian's travel companion
- d) Giant Despair's son

10. Christian is imprisoned at Vanity for \_\_\_\_\_.

- disrespecting the local religion
- shoplifting
- killing the King
- Vagrancy

## **6.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 After reading the story of the novel what assessment do you make about the significance of the novel's narrative?

Q.2 How does *The Pilgrim's Progress* reflect the religious and social values of 17th c. England?

## **6.8 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

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

## **6.9 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Hofmeyr, Isabel. *The Portable Bunyan : A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress*, Princeton University Press, 2004.
- \* Horner, Barry. E. *John Bunyan's Pilgrim's. Themes and Issues*. Evangelical Press, 2003
- \* Sullivan, Charles R. "Impact of *The Pilgrim's Progress*." *EBSCO Research Starters: History*, 2022.

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## **JOHN BUNYAN : HIS HUMANISM**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 7.3 Influence of Calvinism
- 7.4 *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a Protestant Study
- 7.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.6 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 7.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 7.8 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 7.9 Suggested Reading

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

As the popular religious writing developed during the Middle Ages, it incorporated a wide range of thought and emotion. Soon the oral and written discourse of theology involved in it the entire human experience. Even the religious and political ordinances during the period of the Commonwealth (1642-1660), could not banish traditional ideas from the minds of the English people. When John Bunyan came to publish *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1678, he was still unconsciously in touch with the ideas of medieval Catholicism acknowledged by Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland. In fact, Bunyan even imbibed the tenets of the Anglican Church accepted and taught by George Herbert. The successful religious fiction is, however, dominated by conventions which are not entirely theological. The novelist, even of the religious hue, always has practical considerations which can't be ignored. As an author he is obliged, before embarking upon anything which he visualizes as popular literature, to recognise the nature and sophistication of his audience. It becomes imperative for him to make use of the tone and accent of current speech, as also to reduce the philosophical circumference of his work. Chaucer, Langland, Herbert, Johnson, and Shakespeare all share with Bunyan this linguistic trait. They may at times employ concentrated imagery but they are equally skilful in the direct colloquial expression of truth. Bunyan, for sure, shows these qualities in his work. Even though he employs an allegorical method of great integrity, his language is pre-eminently suitable for narrating legends, fables, and romances, besides teaching the faith of

Christianity. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, with its spiritual subtlety and its popularity of idiom, is at once excellent Puritan propaganda and pleasing adventure fiction. It offers much simultaneously to literary criticism as well as childhood wonderment.

## 7.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to analyse *The Pilgrim's Progress* by examining the influence of Calvinism on John Bunyan. The lesson also aims to analyse *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a Protestant allegory.

Dear learner, after reading this lesson, you will be able to analyse *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a vehicle of Puritan propaganda. You will also be able to explain how John Bunyan was influenced by Calvinism and how his religious belief has shaped his novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

## 7.3 INFLUENCE OF CALVINISM

A study of the works of John Bunyan reveals not only the religion of an old dispensation, but also the predestinarian philosophy of John Calvin. The most insistent of this theologian's demands upon his followers is a scrupulous examination of conscience for signs and proofs of salvation and damnation. Predestination is quite apparent in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It is for this very reason that this work cannot be interpreted as another version of the Catholic Morality *Everyman*, whose protagonist is indeed a symbol of mankind, as a whole. Christian, the hero of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, is one of the Lord's elect, and an individual Christian. Those, who oppose him, are reprobated and consigned to eternal damnation. In Calvin, there is also an insistence upon two covenants for two classes of man. There is the Covenant of Grace for the saved, which was the effectual sacrifice of Christ and an immediate passport to Paradise. There is also the Covent of the law for the damned, which was the standard of Commandments, a rule of life, which was impossible for any one, who lacked direct divine guidance. Symbols of both covents appear in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Without accepting these symbols of the author's intention, no reading of the text can be complete.

In our review of Bunyan's art, we also need to notice its heavy reliance on reality as well as its dependence on autobiography for so many incidents. Bunyan's experience in the Civil War, in Law Courts, in prison, and in the countryside all appear. Even more important than these are the episodes which depict spiritual striving. Bunyan dramatizes this striving and gives it a convincing and objective public form in a crucial literary experiment. At the same time, the author gives vent to an innocent desire for diversion. All these sources available to the author enabled him to contribute largely to the growth of the novel in the eighteenth century. Bunyan's combination of religious and rustic lives assume the shape of a soul and body amalgamation in his prose fiction. Several similarities, on that basis, can be seen between earlier Catholic writings and this allegorical fiction : Langland's *Piers Plowman* (1360-90), Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (1390), and Deguileville's *Pilgrimage of the Soul* (1330). Bunyan's book appears as a sort of culmination of such writings and similar oral discourses in the church tradition delivered through the centuries.

Bunyan's heavy subject of spiritual journey is counter-balanced by the light substance of the folk idiom. The language he uses is popular and agricultural, since he wrote as a man rather than as a gentleman, his sensibility being that of a practical nature. As a Calvinist, Bunyan abases himself and his pretensions in order to glorify the undeserved mystery of election and reconciliation with God, which became his happy lot. This personal element, however, gets lost in the shaping of the Pilgrim as a universally acceptable, though not universally applicable symbol. The simplicity of the medium that clothes the spiritual content is first attempted by Bunyan in his autobiographical work *Grace Abounding*. The following example from *The Pilgrim's Progress* gives us an idea about the secularization of the spiritual and sectarian through the medium of folk life :

*The neighbours also came out to see him run; and as he ran some mocked, others threatened, and some cried after him to return : Now among those that did so, there were two that resolved to fetch him back by force. The name of the one was Obstinate, and the name of the other Pliable. Now by this time the Man was got a good distance from them; but, however, they were resolved to pursue him, which they did, and in little time they overtook him.*

Here is a blend of rural life and theological pursuit in an idiom which is simpleton like the rural folk, but which also carries beneath it the subtlety of the sophisticated allegorical search. Thus, the spiritual goes hand in hand with the secular. This concrete style Bunyan developed for a simple and illiterate audience which was expected to observe personifications and identify them in real life. In this prose of the author, biblical texts emerge as a factual imagery and physical experience rather than as thoughts.

This blending of the theological and the practical, making the former the inmate of the latter, becomes a more clear shift in Bunyan's later writings, from the spiritual to the moral emphasis. In a way, his earlier Catholicism gets replaced by a form of Christian humanism. The best example of this emphasis is *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680), which is perhaps the most "modern" of all Bunyan's writings. It is a colloquy on urban life and a detailed examination of the habits of Vanity Fair. In that sense, it is a counterpart of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which studies the progress of reprobation in the soul of its protagonist. Mr. Badman is a trader whose life is a conglomeration of the rusts of sin. All the sins of childhood are fathered upon Badman at his arrival in the world. As he grows more knowledgeable and cunning, his range of sin widens at the same time. The novel proceeds up with the birth of illegitimate children and the hypocritical courtship of a religious girl, which ends up in their unhappy marriage. At each turn in the story, additional tales, recounted to the joy of narrators, are introduced to point the moral. The narrations are made in stark realistic details.

By adopting realistic reportage, Bunyan brings the nonconformist middle-classes to accept the novel as a legitimate device of self-improvement. For this very reason, *Mr. Badman* proved of a greater importance than *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a contribution to the development of the English novel. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* owe most to *Mr. Badman*, though they lack the traditional firmness of moral character which informs Bunyan's fiction. Bunyan's everyday discernment and his formal theology enrich jointly this most realistic of his writings. *Mr. Badman* may, indeed, be seen as a social document, relevant to the study of the rule of conscience in commercial ethics and practice. Bunyan was in no sense an apologist of capitalist enterprise, nor was he a social leveller. The phrase "grinding the faces of the poor"

is employed, and all manner of cheating and oppression from trader and landlord are severely condemned. Nowhere does he speak out more forcefully against Restoration society than in the preface to this novel. A long scholastic section is devoted to bankruptcy, since Badman declares himself broken prematurely in order to reserve stock and a "hateful of money." Bunyan's use of the words "Reason, Conscience, and Nature," in this context, sums up his demands of the whole society and its intercourse. These three words comprehend his standards of ethical conduct. In spite of certain similarities, they are further in spirit from the key words of the age of Pope that ensued, "Reason, Truth, Nature, Use and Sense" than the mere letter admits. A permanent belief in conscience and an insistence upon following all its dictates characterizes Bunyan's advice to mankind. Whether it is in the isolation of the heart or in the traffic of the market place, his instruction is the same, and in two very different books he gives similar advice. And the advice is decidedly, on the moral and humanist plane than on spiritual and theological.

Besides these two great creations of Bunyan, there are many other writings. They fill three large folio volumes, and several more of them are allegorical in method. Only one of these, *The Holy War* (1685), is ever reprinted. It is a work of great ingenuity, which maintains the allegorical form in a manner more complex than in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It describes the waxing, the waning of grace in Man soul through encounters between heavenly and diabolical armies for the possession of the fortified city of the soul. It is, of course, not a classic like *The Pilgrim's Progress*, lacking the feeling of 'character' as well as clarity so well done in the case of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But, it does show the author's preoccupation with artistic problems; he was too scrupulous to repeat past success. Since his death, the Bunyan tradition has not ceased to grow; many writers have responded imaginatively to the suggestions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In the nineteenth century two New England writers of America, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, have shown great influence of Bunyan. The former's *The Scarlet Letter* and *the Blithedale Romance* and the latter's *Benito Cereno* and *Billy Budd* have owed their assurance ultimately to the English Puritan of the seventeenth century. In twentieth century, the most distinctive allegory to stem from the tradition has been T. F. Powys's *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*. All these are reminders of the power of this long tradition. They are also an evidence of the fact that the Puritanism of the early generations was in accord with the culture, the vigorous speech, and living belief of the nation, a belief, which had existed for centuries and which was no deterrent to the production of works whose humanism we commonly think to be essentially repugnant to the name and nature of Bunyan's persuasion.

Bunyan's humanist belief in individual liberty and human dignity is better expressed in the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* than in the first. The second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1684) deals with the pilgrimage of Christian's wife Christiana and her children from the City of Destruction to salvation. It has less power than the first. Christiana's experiences are much less demanding. She has a companion on her pilgrimage named Mercy. After a while, she is also accompanied by a guide and protector, Great-heart. Much of her pilgrimage looks like a tourist's visit to the places where Christian underwent his ordeals. Now Bunyan seems more concerned with the spiritual struggles and temptations of the individual Christian soul. Christiana's pilgrimage represents the less arduous position of the ordinary believer and church-goer. One reason for this change must have been the easier circumstances of dissenters in the 1680's. Another must have been the relaxation of tension in the older, assured Bunyan, satisfied author of a religious best seller. But more important than these reasons is the fact that in the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan was writing of the position of women in the religious community. The note

of struggle now almost disappears. However, Bunyan's use of homely and vivid situations from the life he knew can still be found, giving that special Bunyan-esque life to the work, which combines the twin strands of Humanism and Puritanism.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, the previous section made you familiar with the influence of Calvinism on John Bunyan. You can give the following points a quick glance so that the contents of the previous sections are revised:

- John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* reflects John Calvin's predestinarian philosophy.
- Bunyan's work can be seen as one in line with the earlier works such as Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Deguileville's *Pilgrimage of the Soul*, as they share a focus on spiritual themes.
- *The Pilgrim's Progress* portrays Christian as an individual chosen for salvation, that is, one of the Lord's elect.
- The second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* deals with the pilgrimage of Christian's wife Christiana and her children from the City of Destruction to salvation.
- Christiana's pilgrimage in the second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is less about spiritual struggle and more about the experiences of ordinary believers and church-goers.

### 7.4 THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS AS A PROTESTANT STUDY

Had Bunyan's works been sectarian, selling the Doctrine of Christianity, they would not have had any readership in the non-Christian countries. The fact is that his works, especially *The Pilgrim's Progress*, has been valued all over the world over. The simple reason is the story interest, with narratives about men and women, their struggles, successes and failures, bringing to fore the human, rather than sectarian interests of his characters. His, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for instance, is not exclusively a Protestant study; it appeals to Christians of every name, and to Mohammedans and Buddhists in precisely the same way as it appeals to Christians. When it was translated into the languages of Catholic countries, like France and Portugal, the story became as popular there as it had been with the English readers. The secret of its success is perhaps simple. It is, first of all, not a procession of shadows repeating the author's declarations, but a real story, the first extended prose story in the English language. The Puritans may have read the story for religious instruction, but all classes of men have read it because they found in it a true personal experience told with strength, interest and humour. In a word, the experience in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is narrated with all the qualities that such a story should possess. Young people have read it first, for its intrinsic worth, because the dramatic interest of the story lures them into the very end. Secondly, because the story introduced them to true allegory. The child with his imaginative mind—the man also, who has preserved his simplicity—naturally personifies objects, and takes pleasure in giving them powers of thinking and speaking like himself. Bunyan was the first writer to appeal to this pleasant and natural inclination in a way that all could understand. Add to this the fact that *The Pilgrim's Progress* was the only prose book having any story interest in the great majority of English and American homes for a full century. As has been rightly remarked by Taine, "Next to the Bible, the book most widely read in England is *The Pilgrim's Progress*."

Underlining the concrete human, rather than the abstract theological aspect of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan, in "The Author's Apology for His Book," states the following :

*This book is writ in such a Dialect  
As may the minds of listless men affect;  
It seems a novelty, and yet contains  
Nothing but sound and honest Gospel strains.  
Would'st thou diverst thyself from Melancholy?  
Would'st thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?  
Would'st thou read Riddles, and their Explanation?  
Or else be drowned in thy contemplation?  
Dost thou love picking meat? or would'st thou see  
A man in 'the' clouds, and hear him speak to thee?  
Would'st thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep?  
Or would'st thou in a moment laugh and weep?  
Would'st thou lose thyself, and catch no harm,  
And find thyself again without a charm?  
Would'st read thyself, and read thou know'st not what,  
And yet know whether thou art blest or not,  
By reading the same lines? O then come hither,  
And lay my Book, thy Head and Heart together.*

Bunyan's "Apology", a part of which is reproduced here, explains at length the nature of fiction he offers in *The Pilgrim's Progress* as well as elsewhere in his other books. In the set of lines, cited above, he offers a range of interests which we men and women, adults and children, pursue in day-to-day life, and offers also pursuits beyond these contingent interests. In the first place, he lists the 'diversion' aspect of fiction, how it takes you away from your worries and entertains you with stories concerning 'others'. He attributes to literature the function of providing pleasure without its being accompanied, as it does in real life generally, by any folly or sin. Another aspect of fiction listed here is its offer of "riddles", that is, stories full of mysteries and surprises, making us impatient for explanation to those mysteries and surprises. The emphasis here is on the entertaining aspect of literature, its power to pull you out of the deep waters of "contemplation". Bunyan now lists a number, a variety of things that the stories of imagination offer to the reader. It offers you the "meat" of reading interesting incidents involving interesting men and women. It can create characters coming from the clouds, speaking to men and women born on earth. It can make the readers weep and laugh in a moment by creating incidents of misery and joy. Here in fiction, says Bunyan, is the world of imagination, in which the reader can "lose" herself/himself without catching any "harm", without any risk of losing any acquisition of life, and when done with reading, can find herself/himself out in cold, out of the "charming" world of imaginative literature. Finally, he comes to the subtle aspect of literature where you are reading something which conceals meanings beneath its surface, where you do not always know what you are going through. Bunyan then invites the reader to read his book

for finding all the aspects listed in these lines. Here, Bunyan is arousing interests about his own work as well as describing the various features of fictional prose or prose fiction.

### **7.5 LET US SUM UP**

From the description of prose fiction, given in the lines quoted here from Bunyan's "Apology", one can see how on reading the author promises to offer in his work is predominantly humanist in character, and not at all, certainly not overtly, theological or religious. No doubt, Bunyan never writes without a purpose in his fictional work, but the purpose is never didactically discoursed; it is always distilled through the medium of stories of men and women who are very much life-like, so life-like that the purpose underlined or allegorized in the stories gets overwhelmed by the concrete surface reality of those stories. It is there that the author's humanism lies. And in this sense, Bunyan's fiction is not different from any other literary work where pleasure is predominant but where pleasure is never without a purpose. As for the purpose, Bunyan offers his puritan beliefs very much in the guise of common spiritual interests of all those who seek truth beyond the surface reality of the physical world. Very much like Milton, his contemporary, Bunyan combines in his writings the Puritanism of the Reformation and Humanism of the Renaissance.

### **7.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)**

1. Whose ideas of medieval cathoticism influenced John Bunyan? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Geoffrey Chaucer
  - b) William Langland
  - c) John Milton
  - d) Both a and b
2. Which philosophy is most prominent in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Predestination
  - b) Post-destination
  - c) Arminianism
  - d) Determinism
3. Who is the well-known proponent of the predestination philosophy? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Socrates
  - b) John Caluin
  - c) Heraclitus
  - d) Parmenides
4. Who is the hero of the novel, *The Pilgrim's Progress*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Faithful
  - b) Mercy

- c) Christian
- d) Calvin

5. Which of the following words comprehend John Bunyan's standard of ethical conduct.

- a) Reason
- b) Conscience
- c) Nature
- d) All of these

### **7.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Evaluate *The Pilgrims Progress* as a vehicle for the Puritan propaganda.

Q.2 Discuss the novel as protestant study.

### **7.8 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

- 1. d)
- 2. a)
- 3. b)
- 4. c)
- 5. d)

### **7.9 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Brittain, Vera. *In the Steps of John Bunyan : An Excursion into Puritan England*. Rich and Cowan, 1950.
- \* Morden, Peter. *John Bunyan : The People's Pilgrim*. CWR, 2013.
- \* “*The Pilgrim's Progress Symbols & Motifs.*” *LitCharts*, [www.litcharts.com/lit/the-protestant-ethic-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/symbols/the-pilgrim-s-progress](http://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-protestant-ethic-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/symbols/the-pilgrim-s-progress).

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**GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL :  
*THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*****STRUCTURE**

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 8.3 The Novel as an allegory
- 8.4 Brief outline of the Story
- 8.5 Its Popularity
- 8.6 Genesis of the Novel
- 8.7 The style and form of the novel
- 8.8 Allegory and Realism in the novel
- 8.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.10 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 8.11 Examination Oriented Questions
- 8.12 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 8.13 Suggested Reading

**8.1 INTRODUCTION**

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the most significant religious allegories ever written in English literature. The novel can be considered a fine example of realism too.

**8.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce *The Pilgrim's Progress* as an allegory and a novel of realism. The lesson also aims to discuss the outline story of the novel and to analyse the form and style of the novel.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to appreciate *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a religious allegory, and describe the various allegorical and symbolist elements in the novel. You will also be able to evaluate the form and style of the novel as well as explain the elements of realism in this novel.

### **8.3 THE NOVEL AS AN ALLEGORY**

Bunyan's saturation in the Bible became most conspicuously evident in his greatest and most influential work : *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to That which is to come*. The full title given here is faithfully descriptive, if the subject-matter of the work we write in its short form as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Decidedly, the work is a direct development from *Grace Abounding*. It clearly objectifies and universalizes what, in the earlier work, had been an account of a personal spiritual pilgrimage. It is also a significant departure from the earlier work in its allegorical illumination of spiritual experience. The allegory in this work draws upon biblical images, on popular reeling of stories of righteous warfare, and on the kind of illustration offered in emblem books. As Bunyan claims in his verse "Apology for his Book," he "fell suddenly" into his allegory. And as he worked the ideas "they again began to multiply/like sparks from the coals of fire do fly." No wonder that *The Pilgrim's Progress* remains a work of fiery immediacy. The language, in which the narrative unfolds itself, is vivid, dignified and straightforward. The narrative line is as direct and unbending as the narrow road to heaven pursued by Christian, Faithful and Hopeful.

### **8.4 BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE STORY**

The forward movement of the elect, Christian, Faithful, and Hopeful is deftly opposed by the compromised back-sliders, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, Formalist and Hypocrisy who are encountered on the journey to heaven. The detractors counsel caution against "the dangerous and troublesome way." They avoid the gate of conversion by taking a short-cut and doing "what they had custom for." A large number of similar detractors come and try to deviate the path of progress the elect are set on. They use all kinds of deceptive and tempting means to detract the elect, but Christian and his companions keep meeting these continuous challenges to finally make it to the country they set for. The protagonist's progress in the novel, who is accompanied at first by the martyred Faithful and latterly by the redeemed Hopeful, represents that of the individual believer blessed by the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. He is also blessed with a gathering certainty of his election to eternal salvation. He forges a way forward aided simply by his understanding of Scriptural promises. Just as Milton allows in *Paradise Lost*, the reader's response to the narrative line of *The Pilgrim's Progress* depends on an individual freedom to identify with the progress of spiritual learning and ordinary heroism allotted to Christian. This process is extended in the second part to Christian's family, and above all to his wife Christiana. Accompanied by her champion and protector Great-heart, Christiana retreats the road marked by memories of her husband's moral victories.

### **8.5 ITS POPULARITY**

More than a hundred years after *The Pilgrim's Progress* first appeared in 1678, it was one of the very few books, apart from the Bible, which were owned and studied by relatively uneducated men and women, such as the parents of the Reverend Patrick Bronte and those of George Eliot. Later, Bunyan's book provided Thackeray with the title he had long sought for *Vanity Fair*. It also moulded important aspects of Dicken's very different pilgrimage narratives, *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*. None of Bunyan's later allegories ever rivalled the inventiveness and popular prestige of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Both *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682) share a considerable vitality of

observation and moral comment we find in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In fact, *Mr. Badman* has often been thought of an early experiment in realistic fiction, or as a proto-novel. It takes the form of a spirited, but somewhat repugnant, question-answer dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive. The dialogue is centered on the steady moral descent of a far from exceptional sinner, who is a small tradesman, wallowing sordidly in pretty lusts and animal pleasures. This sinner tradesman is clearly on his way to the infernal rather than the Celestial City. *The Holy War* is less narrowly censorious and more vividly informed with the language of battle that Bunyan had undoubtedly picked up during his services with the armies of Parliament. It tells the stories of the sieges and liberations of, and the attempted coups within, the City of Mansoul, the delight of its creator Shaddai (God the Father). Although these two have their own merit and significance, they do not match the more accomplished art of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

## 8.6 GENESIS OF THE NOVEL

*The Pilgrim's Progress* seems almost to have been an accident. As Bunyan has noted in his rhymed "Apology", he was writing "of the way / And race of saints, in this our gospel day," when he "fell suddenly into an Allegory." The book was apparently *The Strait Gate*, a homely work, intended especially for "professors". The intended work was full of his own experiences of the difficulties and backslidings of the faithful. It was to be written in plain English with some humour. But as Bunyan proceeded with the work, the allegory seemed to form itself in his mind and threatened to swamp the book. Bunyan, therefore, composed it as a separate piece at odd moments to divert his thoughts. There are from time to time signs of interruption in the narrative. But the author continued to the end until Christian had safely arrived at the Heavenly City. Bunyan had not attempted anything so elaborate in this creative kind of writing. He also had some doubts about publishing it lest he should cause offence. It also sounded like profane fiction, lacking the solidity expected from a well-known preacher. He showed the manuscript to his friends whose opinions were divided. At last, he decided to print it. Did not God himself speak in parables and types? He said to himself. His judgement was immediately justified, and the printer made a fortune.

The form of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not altogether original. The adventurous journey is the oldest of stories. The notion of the man's life as a pilgrimage has been common since real pilgrimages were a popular form of religious devotion. The personification of the Seven Deadly Sins and the cardinal virtues was a favourite device of preachers and artists in the Middle Ages. Also, quite often, the portrait, in the Morality Plays and Medieval Preaching, was recognizably that of a local sinner. Fights with giants were also a common feature in the Medieval Romances. Thus, Bunyan in his *The Pilgrim's Progress* was using familiar devices. But his individuality and power remain unmistakably his own. The allegory is not so much of a Christian soul in its earthly journey towards eternity. It is rather the story of the pilgrimage of John Bunyan as well as of everyman. Thus, Christian is as much real as is John Bunyan, or as is Everyman. The protagonist's spiritual adventures, temptations, and dangers in the form of allegory are as much Everyman's as they are Bunyan's. And they become so because they seem so real. Not less real are those who befriend or hinder Christian or share his journey to the Celestial City. All these characters, including Christian, speak as people do in real life. Bunyan was, of course, very much English in his imagination. He writes the same kind of literal matter-of-fact fiction as almost persuades the reader of *Robinson Crusoe* or *Gulliver's Travels* that he is reading the exact truth about life.

## Activity

Dear learner, the previous sections acquainted you with some of the important aspects of the novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Before you proceed with the reading of the next sections, make a self-assessment of the contents that you have read.

1. Bunyan's saturation in the Bible became most evident in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a direct development from Bunyan's earlier work titled \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The allegory in *The Pilgrim's Progress* draws upon \_\_\_\_\_ images, popular retellings of stories of righteous warfare, and illustrations from emblem books.
4. The forward movement of the elect Christian, Faithful, and Hopeful, is opposed by the compromised \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A large number of \_\_\_\_\_ try to deviate the elect from the path of progress.
6. Christian forges a way forward aided by his understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ promises.
7. In the second part of the story, Christian's wife \_\_\_\_\_ retreats the road marked by memories of her husband's moral victories.
8. Bunyan's book provided the writer \_\_\_\_\_ with the title *Vanity Fair* for his novel.
9. *The Holy War* tells the story of the sieges, liberations, the attempted coups within the City of \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Bunyan's \_\_\_\_\_ is the story of the pilgrimage of John Bunyan as well as of everyman.

## Answers

1. <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>	2. Grace Abounding	3. biblical
4. back-sliders	5. detractors	6. Scriptural
7. Christiana	8. Thackeray	9. Mansoul      10. <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>

## 8.7 THE STYLE AND FORM OF THE NOVEL

There are, however, considerable differences in style, and the mood changes quite often. The opening paragraphs might almost be a chapter from an unknown book of the Bible. But whenever Christian meets with a human adversary, such as Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Talkative, or Ignorance, the style drops into vivid everyday speech. One may even venture to identify some of the original characters as well as conversations. The arguments of Mr. Worldly Wiseman are much the same as those used to Bunyan himself at the time of his first arrest by Paul Coble, the clerk. Also, Evangelist encourages Christian as John Gifford had helped Bunyan. *The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting* has many records of the backsliding of unprofitable brethren who were the originals of Obstinate and Pliable, of By-ends, Holds the-World, and Ignorance. Bunyan had met and 'argued' with them all. *Vanity Fair*, too, with its crowds and bustle is a close picture of the great Stourbridge Fair, held annually at Cambridge.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is, of course, not all realistic either. The fight between Apollyon and Christian, for instance, owes something to Bunyan's reading of romances in his undergraduate days. Also, the theological arguments between Christian and Talkative are reminiscent of the discourses with which Bunyan had edified his flock in sermons or pastoral visits. At other times, the allegory is deliberately

compounded from texts and passages in the Scriptures. An example of this is the Interpreter's House, which is ingenious rather than spontaneous. The style of this famous work is, of course, far from the language of romance. Except when Bunyan is deliberately quoting or imitating the Bible, the style of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the best plain English, which is why the book continues to be readable even today. Bunyan was no scholar, and was not tempted to write the elaborate polysyllabic Latinized English which passed for the literary style among the learned of the time. He was used to speaking, by profession, to plain men and women. He had gained expertise in all methods of reaching the emotions of these people. He could use persuasive rhetoric, imagery of horror, and everyday anecdotes, to put his ideas across to them. Above all, he passionately believed what he wrote.

Bunyan was fifty years old when he published *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1678. He had, as stated earlier, no thought of writing a novel. Indeed, we read it as a novel today simply because of the amount of observed reality that it contains. It was written as a religious allegory, though not as a tract or a sermon. Scholars have tracked down works that may have influenced Bunyan and he may conceivably have read. These works do not matter so much as the narrative itself that Bunyan has left behind. He was, no doubt, a transcendent genius, the first to appear in English prose fiction of any kind. His work, for sure, is as original as anything in literature can be. The kind of work he wrote was completely unheralded. Bunyan may not have consciously written *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a novel, it did set a standard in storytelling, vivid characterization, and natural dialogue which must have influenced, consciously or unconsciously, a host of novelists coming after him.

If the word "picaresque" is stretched, as it commonly is, to mean any novel in which the protagonist undertakes a journey whose course plunges him into all sorts of conditions and classes of men, decidedly *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not so different in form from the conventional picaresque novel, such as *Robinson Crusoe* or *Joseph Andrews*. Christian's progress is nothing if not a journey through the world. Although the characters encountered in the way have only moral tags for names, they are unmistakably characterized by the words Bunyan puts them into their mouths. They come alive in their speeches, and come alive immediately. Here, for instance, is a piece of dialogue which shows how close Bunyan's work is to realistic novel or drama:

*Obstinate : What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?*

*Christian : I seek an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and it is laid up to in heaven, safe there, to be bestowed, at the time appointed, on them that diligently seek it. Read it so, if you will, my book.*

*Obstinate : Tush! Away with your book. Will you go back with us?*

*Christian : No, not I, because I have laid my hand to the plough.*

*Obstinate : Come then, neighbor Pliable, let us turn again and go home without him; there is a company of these crazy-headed coxcombs, that, when they take a fancy by the end, are wiser in their own eyes than seven men that can render a reason.*

*Pliable : Don't revile; if what the good Christian says is true, the things he looks after one better than ours; my heart inclines to go with my neighbours.*

*Obstinate : What! More fools still? Be ruled by me, and go back. Who knows whither such a brain-sick fellow will lead you? Go back, go back, and be wise.*

## Let Us Revise

Learner, the previous section familiarised you with the style and form of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Before proceeding to the next section, quickly go through these points to revise what all you read in the previous section:

- The novel's style shifts from biblical to everyday language in dialogues.
- The novel incorporated real-life influences and characters reflect Bunyan's personal experiences and events like Stourbridge Fair.
- The novel blends realism and allegory in so far it mingles real-life observations with biblical allegory.
- The novel's plain language and accessible writing style contributed to the book's lasting appeal.
- The novel incorporates certain picaresque elements and has similarities to picaresque novels like *Robinson Crusoe*.
- The characters in the novel speak realistically and naturally despite having symbolic names and being abstractions.

### 8.8 ALLEGORY AND REALISM IN THE NOVEL

No dialogue of such easy and homely naturalness has been heard in English fiction. This shows that Bunyan's allegory is deeply rooted in the actual. It is of the actual world in its most familiar aspects. Its concreteness is convincing in its vividness, if we compare it, say, with an allegory like *The Faerie Queene*. Also, when we come to the scenes of Vanity Fair and the trial of Christian and Faithful, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that we are in the presence of a work which already fulfils Smollette's definition of a novel as "a large, diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in different groups and exhibited in various attitudes, for the purpose of a uniform plan." Decidedly, it must have gone into the making to *The Pilgrim's Progress* a lifetime of passionate observation of men and women.

Lady Wishfort in Congreve's *The Way of the World* might be cynical about Bunyan but her cynicism is in itself a tribute to the universality of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, even apparently among that small, fashionable section of London society that arrogates to itself the title of the "world". The quality of Bunyan's novel which gives such force and solidity to its allegory and makes it a part of the tradition of the English novel is its realism, a concern with the actual, unimaginable problems of living besetting the average man and woman of Bunyan's age. Its realism emerges not only from the unsuspecting detail but from the very texture of the prose. Bunyan's prose has too often been described simply as "biblical". No doubt, the influence of the Bible is there and the authorized version itself was no dead work of academic translation. But to overemphasize Bunyan's debt to the Bible easily leads to an underestimation of his debt to his own ear.

*Christian : And what did you say to him?*

*Faithful : Say ! I could not tell what to say at first.*

*Here, the tone of that "Say!" is not the tone of the Bible. Nor is it sufficient to attach the label "biblical" to his conversation between Faithful and Talkative :*

*Faithful :.... for what things so worthy of the use of the tongue and mouth of men on Earth, as are the things of the God of Heaven?*

Talkative : I like you wonderful well, for your saying is full of conviction; and I will add, what thing is so pleasant, and what so profitable, as to talk of the things of God? What things so pleasant? (that is, if a man hath any delight in things that are wonderful !) for instance? If a man doth delight to talk of the History, or the Mystery of things; or if a man doth love to talk of Miracles, Wonders, or Signs, where shall he find things recorded so delightful, and so sweetly penned, as in the holy Scripture?

*Faithful : That's true : but to be profited by such things in our talk should be that which we design.*

What brings such scenes so splendidly to life is the way Bunyan captures the colloquial note of the speech around him. Thus, Talkative becomes not a dim personification, not a stock figure of allegory, but a genuine flesh-and-blood person, a real next-door neighbour. Such passages are very subtle, not because the speaker is a subtle character or that his shallowness is hard to see through, but because the precise nature of that shallowness is revealed to us with a remarkable economy of words and without any authorial comment. The difference, for example, between Talkative's view of "profit" and Faithful's could not be more effectively conveyed, nor could the quality of his interest in "the History, or the Mystery of things." Even the glib near rhyme has its contribution to make.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegorical work. Bunyan himself significantly calls it a "Dream". The novel is an allegorical representation of the individual Christian's struggle to achieve salvation. He abandons life, including his unfortunate wife and family, and seeks death. However, the desire for death in Bunyan's novel has nothing in common with the death-wish of later literature. Christian's wish is not to cease upon the midnight with no pain, or upon the bosom of his beloved, as is desired by Keats. On the contrary, his progress is one of constant struggle and conflict. Here, the words "life, Eternal life" are on his lips, not the Keatsean backward-look expressing an intense desire for the world of senses. No doubt, this identification here of life with death leaves Bunyan with some unsolved problems, some loose ends to his design. But the essential point is that, though he cannot wholly evade the consequences of a world-picture which sees death as more important than life, and salvation as a matter concerning the individual as an isolated entity, Bunyan manages to infuse a living breath into his fable despite his life-denying philosophy.

The impression conveyed by the allegorical novel is an exact opposite of what it literally professed. The phantasms of good and evil become the real world. In encountering them, the Pilgrim goes through the life that Bunyan had known in specific place and time. The pattern of his experience, his full and determined rising-up, his losing and finding, his resisting and overcoming, his despair and joy, along with the dark moaning valleys and the singing in the places of the flowers—it is the pattern of Bunyan's strenuous life. There are, in Christian's world, comrades and enemies, stout-hearts and cravens, men, who are only for the goal of fellowship and men of greed and fear, all of whom are men and women of contemporary England. The Celestial City is the dream of all England, all the world, united in Fellowship.

One may or may not agree with that vision of Christian, and may as well characterize it just Puritan, but no one can deny the importance of the positive quality of his belief in a life after death and the actual tensions of mortal struggle, which give the prose its muscular and colloquial qualities. These qualities run counter to the

anti-humanist, defeatist character of the myth Bunyan uses in the novel. The power to transform the myth in this way into something positive and vital comes from Bunyan's profound and disciplined participation not only in the folk-mythology of his day, which he made new but in the life of his time and in the actual problems which racked seventeenth century England. *The Pilgrim's Progress*, being bold allegorical and colloquial, provides a link between the medieval allegory and the moral fable of the eighteenth century. The austere yet unsophisticated (though by no means unsubtle) Puritan morality of Bunyan may have little that is obviously in common with the worldly and bitter satire of Swift, but essentially Bunyan's novel and Swift's satire are the same species of writing. The difference in tone springs, to a large degree, from the differences in background of the authors. Whereas from every page of Bunyan's book, there emerges the attitudes and hardships of the humble but independent "small-man". the tone of *Gulliver* is that of the supremely intelligent and sensitive member of the ruling class who has behind him all the sophistication of a polite society in which he is very much at home.

## 8.9 LET US SUM UP

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegorical work. Bunyan himself significantly calls it a "Dream." The novel is an allegorical representation of the individual Christian's struggle to achieve salvation. He abandons life, including his unfortunate wife and family and seeks death. Christian's wish is not to cease upon the midnight with no pain or upon the bosom of his beloved, as is desired by Keats. The identification of life and death leaves Bunyan with some unsolved problems, some loose ends to his design. But the essential point is that, though he cannot wholly evade the consequences of a world-picture which sees death as more important than life, and salvation as a matter concerning the individual as isolated entity, Bunyan manages to infuse a living breath into his fable despite his life-denying philosophy.

## 8.10 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. What is the full title of the novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *The Pilgrim's Progress* from this World to that which is to come.
  - b) The journey of Christian from this World to another.
  - c) The progress of Christian from this world to that which is to come.
  - d) None of these
2. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is what type of the novel \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a) Classical Allegory
  - b) Religious Allegory
  - c) Modern Allegory
  - d) None of these

3. Which of the following characters use all kinds of deceptive and tempting means to deviate Christian?\_\_\_\_\_.

- Mr. Worldly-Wiseman
- Formalist
- Hypocrisy
- All of these

4. Who is the wife of the Christian?\_\_\_\_\_.

- Mercy
- Hopeful
- Christiana
- Faithful

5. When was *The Pilgrim's Progress* first appeared?\_\_\_\_\_.

- 1668
- 1678
- 1688
- 1690

6. How old was John Bunyan when he published the novel?\_\_\_\_\_.

- Forty years
- Fifty years
- Sixty years
- Seventy years

### **8.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 What are the realistic elements in the dream-like world of the novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*?

Q.2 The form and style of the novel is biblical. Enumerate.

### **8.12 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. a)      2. b)      3. d)      4. c)      5. b)      6. b)

### 8.13 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Bradley, Maureen L. *The Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide*. P & R Publishing, 1994.
- \* Johnson, Barbara A. *A Reading Piers Plowman and The Pilgrim's Progress : Reception and The Protestant Reader*. University of Illionis Press, 1992.
- \* Vermilye, Alan. *The Pilgrim's Progress Study Guide*. Brown Chair Books, 2020
- \* "The Pilgrim's Progress As An Allegory." *nengayuu*, 30 Mar. 2013, [nengayuu.wordpress.com/2013/03/30/the-pilgrims-progress-as-an-allegory/](http://nengayuu.wordpress.com/2013/03/30/the-pilgrims-progress-as-an-allegory/).

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**THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS AS AN ALLEGORY****STRUCTURE**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 9.3 *The Pilgrim's Progress* as an Allegory
- 9.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 9.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 9.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 9.8 Suggested Reading

**9.1 INTRODUCTION**

The term “allegory” derives from the Greek word *allegoria*, which literally means “speaking otherwise”. As a rule, an allegory is a story in verse or prose with a double layer of meaning, or double meaning. The composition called allegory, in verse or prose, has first a primary or surface meaning; and then a secondary meaning, or under-the-surface meaning. It is a story, therefore, which can be read, understood, and interpreted at two levels. In some cases, an allegorical story can be read, understood, and interpreted at three or four levels. In this sense, allegory is closely related to the fable and the parable. The form of an allegory may be literary or pictorial, or even both as in the case of emblem books. An allegory, unlike drama or ode or sonnet, has no determinate length.

To know the meanings of allegory and fable more clearly we may take up the example of an old Arab fable of “The Frog and the Scorpion.” The fable has it that one day a frog and a scorpion meet on the bank of the River Nile, which they both want to cross. During their discussion, the frog offers to ferry the scorpion over by carrying him on his back, provided the scorpion promised not to sting him. The scorpion agreed so long as the frog would promise not to drown him. After exchanging the mutual promises, that is, after making an agreement between them, the frog and the scorpion crossed the river. On the far bank the scorpion stung the frog mortally or fatally.

“Why did you do that?” croaked the frog, as it lay dying.

“Why?” replied the scorpion. “We are both Arabs. Aren't we?”

Now, if we substitute for the frog a “Mr. Goodwill” or a “Mr. Prudence,” and for the scorpion “Mr. Treachery” or “Mr. Two-Face,” something like “We’re both men, aren’t we?” and make the river any river, and substitute for “we’re both Arabs, aren’t we?” we can turn the fable into an allegory. On the other hand, if we turn the frog into a father and the scorpion into a son, or a boatman and a passenger, and we have the son or the passenger say “We’re both sons of God, aren’t we?”, then we have a parable about the wickedness of human nature and the sin of patricide.

## 9.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to offer a detailed analysis of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as an allegory.

After a reading of this lesson, you will be able to explain *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as an allegory. You will also be able to describe how the main characters and situations can be allegorically interpreted to further explicate the allegorical meaning of the novel.

## 9.3 THE PILGRIM’S PROGRESS AS AN ALLEGORY

The best known allegory in the English language to date is Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678). The novel is an allegory of Christian salvation. In the story of the novel, Christian is the hero, or protagonist. He represents every Christian, as well as every man. In order that he may seek salvation, as a first step he runs away from the City of Destruction. This City of Destruction is none other than his own city of Bedford where he was born, brought up, and has been living all these years. The message here is that in case one wishes to seek salvation, one has to decide to quit the worldly way of life represented by the man-made towns and cities, where there is material life, but no spiritual pursuit. Leaving the City of Destruction, Christian sets off on his pilgrimage. During the course of his journey, he passes through various trials represented, allegorically, by the Slough of Despond, the Interpreter’s House, the House Beautiful, the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Delectable Mountains and the Country of Beulah, and finally arrives at the Celestial City.

On his way to the Celestial City, Christian also meets various characters, who also represent, allegorically, one or another virtue or vice to help or to hinder his progress towards the destination he is in pursuit of. These various characters include Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Faithful, Hopeful, Giant Despair, the Friend Apollyon, and several more. A similar kind of allegorical narrative continues in the second part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, in which Christian’s wife, named Christiana, and children make their pilgrimage accompanied by Mercy. They are also helped and escorted by Greatheart who destroys Giant Despair and other monsters. Eventually, they, too, arrive at the Celestial City. Thus, the whole work is a simplified representation or similitude of the average man’s journey of life, through its trials and tribulations, on his way to Heaven. The persons as well as places, therefore, have an arbitrary existence invented by the author. This fact distinguishes allegory from symbolism, because in the latter, persons and places have real existence, despite their being representative of one or another objective idea.

Bunyan was not really the first to use the allegorical mode. The fact that its origin goes back to ancient Greek shows how this literary mode of expression is as old as literature itself. Also, allegory seems to be a mode of expression, a way of feeling and thinking about things and seeing them, so natural to the human mind that it is universal. Early examples of the use of allegory in literature are to be found in various books of Plato. *Symposium* is an important example of this mode. Then, the myth of The Cave in Plato's *Republic* is a particularly well-known example. During the medieval period, the Morality plays and the Dream Allegory were very common forms of poetic literature. Then, besides *The Bible*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is an outstanding example of allegory in use.

For sure, thus, Bunyan was not the first to use the allegorical mode. But he makes use of it in such a manner that it does not undermine the surface reality of the prose narrative. It is, in fact, a happy blending of the two which makes the Pilgrim as a universally intelligible, though not universally acceptable symbol. We have in the novel an identification of people with sins or virtues, and of the whole of life with allegorical fragment or wanderings of the heart. Bunyan developed his concrete style for a simple and illiterate audience, which was expected to observe personifications and identify them in real life. In the process, the biblical texts emerge as factual imagery and physical experience in this book rather than as mere thoughts or pure abstractions. One of the finest short passages to exemplify such an amalgamation of rustic and moralist in *The Pilgrim's Progress* follows, in the dialogue between Mr. Talkative and the pilgrims. Christian remarks upon the danger of his empty woods in these terms :

His house is as empty as the white of an egg is of savour. There is neither prayer, nor sign of repentance for sin; yea, the brute in his kind serves God far better than he. He is the very stain, reproach and shame of religion, to all that know him; it can hardly have a good word in all that end of the town, where he dwells through him. Thus say the common people, that know him. A saint abroad, and a devil at home.

The first analogy here is essentially domestic, yet advanced as a permanent criterion. The words "kind" and "shame" retain early connotations, of creation and personal repentance respectively. The culminating epigram is succinct idiom with a long literary history, to be found in several authors of the century, and clearly indebted for its sharp visualization of the hypocrite to folk-tradition. Discussions of this nature in *The Pilgrim's Progress* provide effective drama, which are a result of the author's experience of moral teaching and of popular taste. They represent the summit of Bunyan's Puritan artistry.

It is not necessary to categorize *The Pilgrim's Progress* as a novel, morality, or allegory. In places the book is most vigorously related to dramatic speech with its informal movement and sinuous inflection. In others, it rises to didacticism of permanent vitality, its tone suggestive of a more academically trained mind. The places of rest in the pilgrimage, such as the halt by the River of Life, are carefully contrived and proclaim artistry as much as any rhetoric or skill in narrative :

*Besides on the banks of this river, on either side, were green trees, that bore all manner of fruit and the leaves of the trees were good for medicine; with the fruit of these trees, they were also much delighted; and the leaves they eat to prevent surfeits, and other diseases that are incident to those that heat*

*their blood by travels on either side of the river was also a meadow, curiously beautiful with lillies, and it was green all the year long.*

A halt of this nature offers spiritual refreshment and creates a store of potential energy; in its use of Biblical “green pastures” there is an artist’s handling of light and shade, of tension and relief. The poetic evocation of grace, “curiously beautiful with lillies”, is significant also, for it reminds us that the beauties of Puritan literature were never aesthetic ones; they always disclose connections with the practical or didactic. They exist to do good, “to prevent surfeits,” or to cure those “that heat their blood” in experiencing the world. Had this not been the case, a Puritan artist would not have dwelt at length upon them. Thus, even the simple descriptions of a scene or landscape are never without allegorical meanings. At the same time, the surface solidity and charm of such descriptions are never in any manner undermined or compromised by the meaning beneath the surface.

At the opening of the narrative, Christian (then called Graceless, it should be remembered) deserts his home in the City of Destruction in order to avoid the snares or traps of worldly life, symbolized by the townsfolk present in the early scenes of both the parts of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Two incidents of importance need to be discussed together, which are the Slough of Despond and that of the Wicket-Gate. The first incident recapitulates Christian history in the familiar manner later adopted by Jonathan Swift, an admirer of Bunyan, in his *The Tale of a Tub*, and is a fine example of a verbal wit, rare in a writer like Bunyan who had not had the benefit of formal education. Note, for instance, the following:

*It is not the pleasure of the King that this place should remain so bad; his labourers also have, by the direction of his Majesty’s surveyors, been for above these sixteen hundred years, employed about this path of ground, if perhaps, it might have been mended; yea, and to my knowledge, said he [Help] here have been swallowed up at least twenty thousand cart-loads; yea millions of wholesome instructions... but it is the Slough of Despond still.*

This description has the concreteness of the accounts one reads of the state of the roads in medieval England, and the handling of God under the title “King” and elsewhere the “Lord of the Manor” brings the allegory down to the life of the seventeenth century parish most vividly.

The second episode we mentioned above is an evidence of Bunyan’s retention of Catholic formulas. To negotiate, the Wicket-Gate successfully demands the same humble submission on the part of Christian, the pilgrim, as the confessional box. The time the hero spends here can legitimately be interpreted as a reference, perhaps unconscious, to that Catholic sacrament:

*...He knocked therefore, once or twice.....At last there come a grave person to the gate, named Good-Will, who asked who was there? And whence he came? And what he would have?*

**Christian:** Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the City of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come.

Just outside the Wicket-Gate the armies of the devil are massing. These armies lay siege to Mansoul (a city). They are prepared for a fatal attack upon those who seek to enter with a wrong disposition. The Catholic analogy need not be extended any further. The sack of sin Christian is carrying on his back becomes more and more oppressive as the true nature of its contents is realized by the patient. The manner, in which it finally disappears is so economically described that it deserves a separate discussion.

Between these two episodes we have been discussing stands Mr. Wordly-Wiseman, the first hypocrite to attempt to impose an alien pattern of life upon Christian and the nearest of them all to success. He points to a turning where

*“...dwells a gentleman whose name is Legality, a very judicious man, and a man of very good name, that still to help men with such burdens as thine are from their shoulders... and that which will make thy life the more happy is, to be sure, that thou shall live by honest labours, in credit and good fashion.”*

Here, in this description, all the terms of reference are ambivalent : “gentleman”, “judicious”, “good”, “honest”, and “happy” have different meanings for a Christian and a tempter. The Pilgrim, the hero, is too inexperienced to realize the nature of this difference. He accepts the appearance, and turns away from the name of reality until reaching the foot of Mount Senai which emits flames as he passes, he finds himself face to face with Evangelist. The hero’s mentor, Evangelist, upbraids him for deserting the path of light at the virtual cost of his soul.

Here, the symbol of Senai with the pressure of the Covenant of the Law behind it would be so interpreted within the theology of Calvin. But for Christian there is better news. As he passes the place of the cross and sepulcher, his sack of sin is taken away. Instead, the roll of election is borne to him by the angels :

*...upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulcher. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from his back... He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold, there shining ones came to him and saluted him with ‘Peace be to thee’.*

The “Shining Ones” are, of course, related to the Angels that stood with Abraham and were accepted in the medieval Church as symbols of the Trinity. Here they affirm election, which accompanies true grief for sin. Christian is nor released from the possibility of error even now. Had this been the case, the narrative would come to an end. Both in the interest of the narrative, which must continue, as also to instruct further lessons of humiliation, Bunyan continues to draw spiritual torments from his own experience and cover them, or externalize them, in the properties of the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Doubting Castle.

However, as is the belief based upon experience of ages, the Flesh is slow to learn, although the Spirit within Christian, the hero, quickly appreciates the sinful suggestion in the words of the wayside

interpreters. The greatest ordeal to which Christian's weakness of flesh leads him, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, is directly related to Bunyan's blasphemous verbal automatism which he described in *Grace Abounding* :

*No sin would serve but that: if it were to be committed by speaking such a word, then I have been as if my mouth would have spoken that word, whether I would or no : and in so strong a measure was this temptation upon me that often I have been ready to clap my hand under my chin, to hold my mouth from opening; and to that end also I have had thoughts at other times, to leap with my head downward into some mock-hill hole or other, to keep my mouth from speaking.*

Perhaps the effect of this writing was cathartic on the author John Bunyan. That is why, later in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he was able to present a similar state impersonally, in a very different tone altogether. Here is the said description :

*I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his own voice; and that I perceived it. Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him. And whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind.*

From these passages there is no question of any doubt about the intensity of Bunyan's experience, not about the relief from the Devil which was necessary before he could "place" this situation in calm words : "I took notice". What need to be noted here, much more than the personal experience of the author, is the allegorical import of the description. How the simply inarticulate gestures of the hero communicate the inner conflict of soul through which he is undergoing at the moment. The surface meaning and the allegorical meaning get simultaneously put across in single stroke. The rustic and the religious combine here so well that the former's simplicity begins to appear the natural medium of expression for the latter.

The other trials on Christian's way to the Celestial City are equally effectively recorded in the allegorical medium so well adapted by the author to his specific purposes. One of these trials is Christian's meeting with the lions which are chained, although the hero as one of the elected, need not know the fact of their being chained. He goes past these lions, although two others on the pilgrimage, Timorous and Mistrust, fall back in a highly dramatic manner :

*Christian* : Whither are you going?

*Men* : They said, Back ! Back ! And we would have you do so too, if either life or peace is prized by you.

"Life" and "peace", acceptable to these men, would not satisfy Christian. If he were to accept their advice, he would have identified himself with their retrogressive qualities. As it is, he lives to further his pilgrimage and yet to reach Doubting Castle, where he suffers severely for the capitulation to doubts and despairs. In fact, these doubts and despairs are more terrible because they are so late in the pilgrimage.

The allegory of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not complete without its insistence upon the punishments in store for those who are too full of themselves to attend to God. An outstanding example of such a person is Mr. By-Ends. In him we meet a more astute member of the tribe of Talkative, whose dialogue repays the closest attention as a perfect revelation of the *parvenu*. Then, there is the most plausible Mr. Ignorance, whose error lies in demanding the ends without bothering about the means. Thus, the allegorical narrative goes on until the end, maintaining both the levels of meaning in perfect balance. While the simple rustic story level of Christian's journey caters to our interest in the everyday happenings of life, meeting all sorts of people and experiencing all kinds of incidents, the deeper allegorical level satisfies anxiety about our conduct in life, always under the scrutiny of our sharp conscience, keeping us mindful of the open possibilities of saving or damning ourselves on the path of life. Bunyan's greatness as an artist lies in making a sectarian subject of Christian theology a universal experience of striving for virtue and escaping evil. And here lies the difference between *The Pilgrim's Progress* and a work like *Everyman* or even *The Faerie Queene*. The special spiritual concern of the seventeenth century, which made possible Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* and the devotional poetry of the Metaphysical from John Donne to Andrew Marvell, shows up at its best in prose in the works of John Bunyan, most so in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Although with the advent of industry and science and democracy, came up secular prose fiction, which had its rise in the eighteenth century, the allegorical form did not altogether disappeared. Both in poetry as well prose it has continued in one form or another all through the centuries following the seventeenth. Even in our own times instances of allegorical writings can be found, although it is no longer a popular mode as it was in the seventeenth century.

#### **9.4 LET US SUM UP**

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is a Christian allegory depicting the spiritual journey of Christian. Through symbolic characters and events, it illustrates the struggles, temptations, and faith needed to reach salvation. The work teaches moral lessons on perseverance and redemption, making it a timeless religious classic. John Bunyan uses allegory in such a manner that it doesn't overshadow the surface reality; rather, it is a happy blending of both. This approach makes *The Pilgrim's Progress* universally understandable.

#### **9.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)**

1. At the trial in Vanity, Faithful \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) is acquitted
  - b) escapes
  - c) is executed
  - d) is fined and let go
2. The term allegory derives from the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Greek
  - b) Latin
  - c) French
  - d) English

3. An allegory is a story in verse or prose with a \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) double meaning
- b) single meaning
- c) multiple meaning
- d) None of these

4. Christian is able to escape from the Doubting Castle because \_\_\_\_\_

- a) he kills Giant Despair
- b) he holds Despair's wife hostage
- c) Faithful storms the gates
- d) he remembers he has a key

5. In the Detectable Mountains, Christian is entertained by \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) servant girls
- b) dancers
- c) shepherds
- d) farmers

6. Just before arriving in the celestial city, Christian is dies in \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) the mountains
- b) a river
- c) a desert
- d) a pit

7. The streets of the Celestial city are paved with \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) silver
- b) gold
- c) diamonds
- d) good intentions

8. Mercy is \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Christiana's daughter
- b) Christian's guide in the Detectable Mountains
- c) the mistress of the Palace Beautiful
- d) Christiana's servant and companion.

## **9.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss *The Pilgrim's Progress* as an allegory.

Q.2 Write a detailed note on Bunyan's humanism with special reference to *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Q.3 Discuss the significance and theme of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

## **9.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

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

## **9.8 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress: An Allegory of the Christian life*. Parable Group Lumen Classics, 2015.
- \* Pooley, Roger. "The Pilgrim's Progress and the Line of Allegory." *The Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, edited by Anne Dunan Page, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 80-94. Cambridge Core, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-bunyan/pilgrims-progress-and-the-line-of-allegory/BEA4D8DB7D162658402A9439DE5> F960C.
- \* Vermilye, Alan. *The Pilgrim's Progress :A readable Modern Day version of John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress*. Brown Chair Books. 2020.

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**DANIEL DEFOE AND HIS TIMES****STRUCTURE**

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 10.3 Daniel Defoe and His Times
- 10.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 10.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 10.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 10.8 Suggested Reading

**10.1 INTRODUCTION**

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was an English journalist, pamphleteer, and writer. His contribution to the rise of the English novel remains singularly conspicuous. His realism, his narrative, his variety of incidents, all reflecting the life of the middle class rising to rule the political and cultural life of the country, provided a solid foundation on which the English novel arose to replace the dominance of highbrow literary genres of epic and tragedy, even comedy and satire.

**10.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to the life of Daniel Defoe, as well as provide an overview of the times to which he belonged.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to describe the life of Daniel Defoe, as well as the various significant events that shaped him as a writer. You will also be able to analyse the social conditions of his time, reflected as thematic concerns in his works.

**10.3 DANIEL DEFOE AND HIS TIMES**

No other writer of the eighteenth century had a life as full of adventures as did Defoe. He was born in 1660, the year of the Restoration. His father was a dissenting tallow-chandler of London named James Foe. Daniel added the genteel “De” to the family name when he was forty years old, making it Defoe. Daniel Defoe rebelled with The Duke of Monmouth in 1685, but escaped without punishment. He got

married in 1684, and had prospered for some years by trading in hosiery. His export was ruined by war in 1692. He was haunted by the prospect of prison for defaulting in debts. He learned the trick of quiet disappearance and practiced it often whenever the legal danger threatened. After his profession as merchant was ruined with no prospect of recovery, he adopted the profession of writing. Practically, all of his writing was done after he was thirty-five years of age. It was only in his sixtieth year that he got fame with the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Any career as political writer is fraught with dangers. Defoe, as a dissenter, a writer for hire, and an ironist, seems usually to have been in danger. He began as a satirical political poet. When he first collected his works in 1703, he had composed several poems on political themes in satirical mode. His best known and popular poem was *True-Born Englishman* (1701). It defended William III against the prejudices of such subjects as disliked the King's Dutch origin or Dutch advisers.

He begins the poem briskly :

*Where-ever God erected a House of Prayer,  
The Devil always builds a Chapel there:  
And 'twill be found on Examination,  
The latter has the largest congregation.*

Defoe concludes this poem in a rugged fashion natural to a bourgeois :

*Fame of Families is all a Cheat,  
'Tis personal Virtue only makes us Great.*

Defoe published an epic-size satirical attack in twelve books on divine right in 1706. It was called *Jure Divino*. But poetry was not really his fortune. It was in prose that he made a mark. Even when he used metre and rhyme, it was prose which remained his trade. His critical writings were also prose pamphlets. As a dissenter he early engaged, at times rather equivocally, in the arguments over "occasional conformity." In his *Enquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters* (1698), he speaks of such fellow dissenters as thus conformed, "these are Patriots indeed, that will dawn their Souls to save Country." Defoe himself claims that in 1701, he entered the House of Commons, "guarded with about sixteen gentlemen of quality," and presented the Speaker with Legion's Memorial to The House of Commons. The presentation said, "Englishmen are no more to be slaves to Parliaments than to a King. Our name is LEGION, and we are many." The pamphlet succeeded in its aims. But its author had no such luck the next year. His *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702), conceived as a playful ironic attack on the extreme High Church people, backfired. He offended both dissenters and churchmen, and his arrest was ordered by the government. After successfully hiding for over four months, he was arrested, tried, and condemned to pay a heavy fine as also to stand in the pillory three times. A sentence of such severity was no less a thunderbolt in the age of Defoe. In those days, more than one sinner died from the attack of missiles hurled by people at pillory heads. But Defoe's cleverness was equal to the occasion. He collected his friends to rally about him at the pillory to escape the missiles. He had also composed a poem for the occasion, *Hymn to the Pillory*, which sold well during his exposure at the pillory. Also, when he walked down from the Pillory, "from his wooden punishment," the crowd treated him, as was complained by a Tory journalist, "as if he had been a Cicero that had made an excellent oration in it." Later, returned to Newgate for an indeterminate sentence, Defoe was unable to pay the heavy amount of fine that had been imposed along with the pillory.

He became bankrupt with no prospect of release from the prison. Later in 1703, however, his fine was paid by the Crown (rather unexpectedly); and, bound over to good behaviour, he was released. Good behaviour, of course, meant becoming the man Friday of Robert Harley, a rising politician, who soon was to become the secretary of State, and finally a Tory Prime Minister.

During the first decade of the eighteenth century, Defoe's fortune took a turn for the better. He made progress through journalism and pamphleteering. His contributions included writings for *The Union with Scotland* (1707), the Whig cause and English trade. He did all this through his journal, *A Review of the Affairs of France* (1704-1713). Defoe wrote its nine volumes single handed, even though he was quite often out of London to distant places, such as Scotland, where he was serving as confidential agent of the government. Although *The Review* had not much in common with the periodical essay of *The Tatler*, its moralizing and amusing sections captioned as "Advice from the Scandalous Club" were among the formative influences of *The Tatler*. When Harley and the Tories came into power in 1710 the influences of the Whig Review declined. So Defoe started writing for the Tories a new trade journal called *Mercator; or Commerce Retrieved* (1713-1714).

Defoe, after 1715, became connected with various papers and periodicals, more prominent of which include *Mercurius Politicus* (1716-1720), *The Daily Post* (1719-1725), *Applebee's Weekly Journal* (1720-1726), and *Dormer's News-Letter* (1716-1718). They mark, with one exception, Defoe's principal periods and places of journalism. The exception is not without significance. In 1717 he was, as a reputed Tory, planted by The Whig ministry on the staff of the Tory-Jacobite Weekly Journal; or, Saturday's Post, published by National Mist. His task as a spy was to moderate the fury of this journalistic storm-center. He did succeed until 1724. More than once he was writing for both Whig Tory journals at the same time. Immediately after the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719, Defoe began to write for *Applebee's Journal*, doing stories about Jack Sheppard and other criminals, which led him into the genre of criminal biography.

Most of Defoe's longer works were, in one way or another related to his journalistic writings or to his love of "projects". But, for the success of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe would not have written his other novels. The first part of *Robinson Crusoe* was, in fact, a fictional grafting upon the story of Alexander Selkirk, who had lived alone on the island of Juan Fernandez from 1704 to 1709, and whose return to England in 1711 had led to the publication of many narratives of his adventures. Defoe's masterpiece was widely acclaimed at once. When four editions came out within four months, he followed it with a second volume of *Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, which proved unworthy of the first. In 1720, a moralizing treatise was added as a third volume, and was titled *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe*. This again proved a failure. Only the original first part continues to be considered a masterpiece of Defoe as a novelist. The novel proved more than a middle class masterpiece. Although sprawling in structure and careless in detail, it gave expression to an epic theme of its age - the poem of the average man to preserve life and organize an economy in face of exceptional odds on earth. One can imagine how a writer today would focus on the horrors of isolation and the loneliness of Crusoe. But for Defoe, these are not worth his worry. His mind, as always, focused on the God-given power of sinful man to win through, and on the human ingenuity that embellishes the effort.

The initial success of *Robinson Crusoe* led rapidly to Defoe's writing of other long narratives, and with an unbelievable speed. Within twelve weeks in the summer of 1720 he published his historical romance *The Memories of a Cavalier*, his *Captain Singleton*, which was also a voyage story which features a number of pirates. Also came out during the same period his *Serious Reflections of Crusoe*. Following these in 1722 came out Defoe's longer works including *Moll Flanders*, *Due Preparations for the Plague*, *Religious Courtship*, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, and *Colonel Jacque*. In 1724 appeared his *Roxana*; and in 1728, *Captain George Carleton*; in 1729, his *Robert Drury's Journal*. Defoe's last work was *Complete English Gentleman*, which was incomplete at the time of his death; was published in 1890. Not all these works are entirely his; nor are all these works of equal merit.

Obviously, Defoe was an untiring man of letters. Also, his art was largely unlearned. He wrote rapidly, and seldom revised. He always succeeded because of his gift for ingenious episode and specific detail. A large part of details in his *Journal of the Plague Year* are so graphic that they read like the actual memories of an eye-witness rather than the account of an author who was only five year old when the Plague ravaged London in 1665. The bellman walking in front of the dead cart at night, ringing his bell and calling, "Bringing out your dead!" are too horrifying realities to forget, similarly, the pitiful stranger's "agony and excess of sorrow," who, "muffled up in a brown cloak," comes to the great pit to see the body of someone dear to him buried, is described in such specific details that the horror of it all comes upon us in full intensity. For sheer grimness this book has been considered Defoe's masterpiece. The other books of his are no less grim and graphic in their depiction of stark reality. All his stories are, as Defoe himself said, full of "speaking sights."

Defoe's gift of narrative, though never in doubt, had late flowering. He was nearly sixty when his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe* appeared. He had been known to his contemporaries as a journalist and pamphleteer long before he overtly took to fiction writing. His verse satire in English, *The True-Born Englishman* had brought him fame much earlier in 1701. It was perhaps the most influential verse satire in English after Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. It was a defense of William III against those who thought that it was intolerable for a Dutch King to govern "true-born Englishmen." Defoe retorted to say that there was no such thing :

*We have been Europe's sink, the jakes where she  
Voids all her offal outcast progeny.*

He was, of course, not a great poet like Dryden or Pope. But his raw vigour was undeniable. It is evident in every line he wrote. Note, for instance, the following:

*But English gratitude is always such  
To hate the hand which doth oblige too much,  
Wherever God erects a house of prayer  
The devil always builds a chapel there:  
And 'twill be found upon examination,  
That latter has the largest congregation.*

Defoe knew his limitations as a poet full well. He wrote poetry, whenever he did, because that, since Dryden, was the most favoured mode of polemic. His real aim was not literary laurels, but

immediate effect. So in his preface to this poem he anticipated the critics in a comic manner. He said, "Without being taken for a conjuror, I may venture to foretell, that I shall be cavilled at about my mean style, rough verse, and incorrect language, things I indeed might have taken more care in. But the book is printed; and though I see some faults, it is too late to mend them."

Defoe could be cavalier because his main audience cared little for such niceties. They were, for sure, not cultivated patrons to whom so much of earlier literature had been addressed. They were plain middle-class folk, who now represented an important new force in the reading public of the eighteenth century. This new class of readers were strongly asserting their independence, cultural as well as political. They felt, and Defoe agreed, that

*Fate has but small distinction set  
Betwixt the counter and the coronet.*

And that the tastes of those who served behind the counter must also be served.

So, if the great Augustans, Swift and Pope, sneered at him as an outsider, Defoe cared little for their highbrow posture. He had the truculent self-reliance of the trading class to which he belonged. He could, in fact, be called more of a literary tradesman than an artist. His career was as much devoted to business and politics as to literature. Like a true tradesman, he produced some four hundred separate works as well as a vast number of journalistic pieces, including the whole of his thrice-weekly newspaper, *The Review*, which ran for nine years from 1704 to 1713. Today, it is his fictional works which interest us most, although Defoe himself was never greatly interested in it. His own literary preference was for something more factual; such as, political, economic, social and moral improvement of his countrymen. His fiction was a favour he did to the taste of the reading public. He had learnt as editor of *The Review* that his readers often needed to be "wheedled into the knowledge of the world," and to "carry out his honest cheat and bring people to read with delight." So he made an important journalistic innovation. It is for the reasons of delightful reading that he had added to his paper a lighter section, which dealt humorously with various aspects of social life of the day. The innovation was very successful. It is this aspect of his regular professional writing of journalism which finally led to the creation of his novels.

But, undoubtedly, he was a professional writer, who was always prepared to supply whatever the reading public (or market) demanded. Pope might attack him for his being a writer of the *Grub Street*. He might include him among the "Dunces" of that street. But for Defoe, *Grub Street* was an application of commercial principle to the manufacture of literary goods. As he wrote in a letter signed "Anti-Pope", published in the popular *Applebee's Journal* in 1725: "Writing, you know, Mr. Applebee, is become a very considerable Branch of the English Commerce.... The Booksellers are the Master Manufacturers of Employers. Several Writers, Authors, Copiers, Sub-writers, and all other Operators with pen and ink are the workmen employed by the said Master Manufacturers." Defoe was true to his understanding of his proper role, in writing fiction, despite whatever his personal inclinations might be.

Defoe was also true to himself in imposing on whatever he wrote so much of his own personality and outlook that it became something quite different from that the English readers had seen before in the realm of English prose. He almost accidentally created a form of prose narrative, which if it was not quite the novel in the sense in which we have been using it since the nineteenth century, or after Henry

Fielding, undoubtedly led to the rise of the English novel. In the eighteenth century, in any case before Fielding, prose narrative was regarded as a sub-literary form. Defoe created this sub-literary form in an improved form, making it responsive to the greatly enlarged reading public, so that it became a new form altogether, so new that it came to be called by a new name—novel. A sub-literary figure that Defoe himself was, he created the foundational novel in English, independent of patronage as well as the critical standard of the literati.

Thus, when the novel really emerged in the early years of the eighteenth century, it did so from a man to whom art and literary theory meant nothing. It emerged from a man who was not a “gentleman” but a tradesman dealing in commodities. In a sense, the relation that Defoe has with the artist is that of the forger. But what he actually forged were, not works of art, but transcripts of actual experience. By any standard, Defoe was one of the most remarkable men who ever lived. Yet, while it will be absurd to maintain that his genius had not received its due, it has been quite common among critics to offer some sort of apologetic praise for him. The class bias and the original opinion of his contemporaries like Swift and Pope have continued to view him and his significance in less glorious terms than has been his due. The fact of the matter is that Defoe was the prototype of a kind of Englishman increasingly prominent during the eighteenth century and reaching its apotheosis in the nineteenth century. The said kind is the man from the lower classes, whose orientation was essentially practical and whose success in life was intimately connected with his Puritan beliefs and personal responsibilities. Without benefit of a university, Defoe was a man of wide learning, speaking half a dozen languages, and reading seven. His interests and activities were many. His curiosity was endless. This new type of Englishman, whom Defoe represented, was self-reliant, energetic, and thoroughly practical. Thus, while Pope belonged to a tradition which was dying, low tradition of political and privileged patronage, Defoe belonged to an emerging tradition of independent, ordinary man of genius who has to practice his profession of writing for personal fulfilment.

During the eighteenth century, the middle-class writers like Defoe, felt secure in the outcome of the successful revolution by the middle classes. They took stock of the new world, which was controlled by the middle classes in collaboration with the old landed aristocracy. They were sure that with Newtonian science and Locke’s philosophy they will be able to completely submit the world to their will and for their use. They gathered tremendous confidence in themselves and harboured hopes for a glorious future. Free from the medieval uncertainties and the seventeenth century incoherence, they could find order in nature and impose one on individual as well as society. This, by and large was the world view Defoe derived from the environment in which he grew up as a writer. The central concern of the age was the study of mankind.

Defoe’s novels are among the first and most outstanding examples of such a study. They are informed, all of them, by the same impulse which made possible the scientific advances and the new prose associated with the Royal Society. The aim of the society was to make English language incubate “a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clean senses; a native easiness; bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can; and preferring the language of Artisans, Countrymen and Merchants before that of Wits, or scholars.” It was this impulse which was to lead a man like Boswell in his Journal to examine and record with utter honesty and reactions of his day-to-day experiences. This spirit of curiosity, of desire to see things as they are, is the drawing force behind the prose fiction of the eighteenth century. But when we see it in the background of the bourgeois revolution, we should not oversimplify it.

For example, it is not enough to describe Defoe simply as a bourgeois. No doubt, he is a bourgeois. But he is also more than a bourgeois. The truth about Defoe as well as his work is much more complex than the label of bourgeois would admit. We can see this complexity in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In one sense, the novel is in praise of the bourgeois' virtues of individualism and private enterprise. But in another sense, it celebrates the necessity of social living. It also reflects man's struggle to conquer nature. The hard fact is that while Defoe's novels could only have arisen out of the social milieu of the eighteenth century, his strength as a writer arises from his inability to feel the power of the code of his class as glibly as he mentally accepted it. His real strong point as a writer lies in his ability to extricate himself from the conventional Puritan morality. Also, his artistic merit squarely resides in his concentration on the surface texture of life. But his limitation is that he has no other values than those of his class to fall back upon. It is for this very reason that his books are ultimately without pattern. Mere presentation of surface life cannot constitute pattern. Such a fiction would always lack the benefit of a point of view, which gives the fictional tale a pattern and a view. Defoe's vitality does, of course, capture our imagination. And energy has its own charm and power.

#### 10.4 LET US SUM UP

Daniel Defoe is often considered the first author of the English novel. His best-known work is *Robinson Crusoe*, considered the first English novel. Defoe's early writing largely consisted of Political Pamphlets and satirical poetry. During the first decade of the eighteenth century, Defoe made progress through journalism and pamphleteering Scotland (1707), the Whig cause and the English trade. Defoe was a man of wide learning, speaking half a dozen languages, and reading seven. His interests and activities were many. His curiosity was endless. While People belonged to a tradition which was dying, low tradition of political and privileged patronage, Defoe belonged to an emerging tradition of independent, ordinary man of genius who has to practice his profession of writing for personal fulfilment.

#### 10.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. In which year Daniel Defoe was born \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1655
  - b) 1660
  - c) 1666
  - d) 1672
2. What was the original name of Daniel Defoe \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Daniel Foe
  - b) Daniel Albert Defoe
  - c) Daniel Defoe
  - d) Daniel Henry John Defoe

3. In which year was his most famous novel *Robinson Crusoe* published? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) 1714
- b) 1716
- c) 1719
- d) 1723

4. Where was Daniel Defoe born? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Paris
- b) Nigeria
- c) London
- d) Berlin

5. Which was Defoe's first notable publication which was a series of proposals for social and economic improvement? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) The Consolidator
- b) Captain Singleton
- c) An Essay Upon Projects
- d) Robinson Crusoe

6. Whom did Defoe marry in the year of 1684? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Helena Woodhouse
- b) Mary Tuffley
- c) Sonia Mary
- d) Jane Raloigh

7. Defoe's most famous work *Robinson Crusoe* was published in how many volumes originally? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Two volumes
- b) Three volumes
- c) Four volumes
- d) Five volumes

8. Robinson Crusoe is a historical fiction by Defoe published in 1719. Who is the publisher? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) W.Taylor
- b) Henry Fielding
- c) William Ponuorlby
- d) Hugh Singleton

9. How did Crusoe create a calendar on the Island in the novel *Robinson Crusoe*? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Marking lines on the sand
- b) Marking lines on a rock
- c) Marking lines in a wooden cross
- d) Carried a Calendar with him

10. Which is the best-known and popular poem of Daniel Defoe? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) True-Born Englishman
- b) Robinson Crusoe
- c) Moll Flanders
- d) June Divino

11. In the novel *Robinson Crusoe* which book does Crusoe read on the Island \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Utopia
- b) The Bible
- c) The Tempest
- d) *The Pilgrim's Progress*

12. In Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, what does Crusoe refers to himself several times in the novel? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) King of the Island
- b) Governor of the Island
- c) Leader of the Island
- d) Survivor of the Island

13. Which of the works of Daniel Defoe is the amalgamation of biography, Voyage literature and the moral treatise? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Robinson Crusoe
- b) Moll Flanders
- c) Jure Divine
- d) Both a and b

14. Which critic has a different opinion on the picaresque tradition of English novels? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Arnold Bennet
- b) Arnold Kettle
- c) F.R. Leavis
- d) I.A. Richards

15. Who said in the preface to *Moll Flanders* that the discriminating reader “will be more pleased with the moral than the fable” \_\_\_\_\_.

- Henry Fielding
- Samuel Richardson
- Daniel Defoe
- Henry James

16. Daniel Defoe’s novels are mostly in \_\_\_\_\_ narrative.

- First person
- Second person
- Third person
- Forth person

17. Whose primary qualities of object was focussed by Daniel Defoe in his novel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- John Locke
- Homer
- Aristotle
- Plato

#### **10.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Trace the development of Defoe as a novelist.

Q.2 Discuss the themes of Daniel Defoe’s novels.

Q.3 What is the contribution of Defoe to the development of English novel?

Q.4 Discuss the themes of Daniel Defoe’s novels.

#### **10.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. b)	2. a)	3. c)	4. c)
5. c)	6. b)	7. a)	8. a)
9. c)	10. a)	11. b)	12. a)
13. d)	14. b)	15. c)	16. a)
17. a)			

#### **10.8 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Defoe, Daniel. *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/daniel-defoe](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/daniel-defoe).
- \* Mutter, Reginald P. C. “Daniel Defoe.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 8 Aug. 2025, [www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Defoe](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Defoe).
- \* Richetti, John. *The Life of Daniel Defoe: A Critical Biography*, Wiley, 2005.

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***MOLL FLANDERS : STORY AND THEME*****STRUCTURE**

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 11.3 Story
- 11.4 Theme
- 11.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.6 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 11.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 11.8 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 11.9 Suggested Reading

**11.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the early phase of the English novel in the eighteenth century, the authors tended to give long titles to their fictional narratives. These long titles read almost like an advertisement or a leaflet for the new work, highlighting all the points the author thought would be of interest to the reader of his time. The complete original title of Daniel Defoe's novel *Moll Flanders*, as it came out in 1722, was as follows: *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders and Co., Who was Born in Newgate, and during a life of continu'd Variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (Whereof once to her own Brother), Twleve Year a Thief, Eight Year a transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest, and died a Penitent Written from her own MEMORANDUMS*. As the title so clearly suggests, the heroine or protagonist or central character, of the novel is perhaps one of the world's best-known *picaroon* (the female of *picaro*). Like the story of Defoe's first novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* is also written convincingly, with such an elaborately minute details of intimate information, that the reader feels it must be a true account of the entire life of Moll.

**11.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to offer a detailed summary of the novel *Moll Flanders* so that the various important events become clear to you. The lesson also aims to discuss the major thematic concerns of the novel to enhance your familiarisation with the novel.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to summarise the novel and describe the various important events in the novel and how they are related to one another. Further you will also be able to delineate the major thematic concerns in the novel and analyse the novel as a social document.

### 11.3 STORY

The story of the novel *Moll Flanders* is an interesting one. It begins with the very childhood of Moll, the central female character in the novel. When Moll was only eighteen-months old, her mother was transported to America, called at that time “the colonies,” as a felon. The girl child was left all alone with no family or friends to care for her. For some time, Moll was befriended by a band of gypsies, but later they, too, deserted her in Colechester. There, the child became the charge of the parish. She soon became there a favourite of the wife and daughters of the Mayor of Colechester. As such, she received special treatment, and great attention and flattery. At the age of fourteen, Moll was once again left without a home. When her indulgent instructress died, she was taken in service by a kindly woman of means. She also enjoyed in those days the privilege of receiving instruction along with the daughters of the family. In everything other than wealth, Moll was superior to all the daughters of the family. During this period, she fell prey to the oldest son of the family to whom she lost her virtue. She eventually became his mistress, though it continued to be a secret for some time. Meanwhile, the youngest son in the family Robin, got attracted to her. He soon made a proposal of marriage to her. She accepted the offer and married him. But as ill luck would have it, Robin, her husband, died after five years of their marriage. Left alone, she soon afterwards married a spendthrift draper, who in no time squandered all her savings, finally finding himself behind the bars. In the meantime, Moll took lodgings at the Mint. Passing as a widow, she started calling herself Mrs. Flanders.

Moll seemed fated to marry a number of times. Leaving her second husband to his own destiny in prison, she ventured in matrimony the third time. Her new husband was a Sea Captain, with whom she sailed to the Virginia colony (one of the British colonies in America). There, she discovered to her great embarrassment that the man to whom she was now married was no other than her own half-brother. After eight years of residence in Virginia, Moll returned to England to take up her residence at the town of Bath. While leaving Bath, she became acquainted with a gentleman whose wife was demented. Moll found an opportunity to get close to the gentleman when he fell ill. She nursed him with devotion all through his serious illness. Soon as he recovered, he groomed her into his mistress. She happily accepted her status. After a while, she found herself with a child. She made arrangements for her lying-in, and sent the child to a nurse, and joined her companion as a single woman. Now, they started living together. During the six years they lived together without marriage, Moll gave birth to three children. The gentleman after six years, regretted his indiscretion in keeping her with him without marriage, and left her. Wiser as she had become through long experience she had with “gentlemen,” she had saved enough money during these six years to support herself in such an eventuality.

By now Moll had forgotten the morals of her age. She had come to see how a single woman had to fend for herself. In social terms, this had also made her smarter than common woman of her day. Naturally, for a woman in the situation in which she found herself placed after having been used (even

exploited) by several men, it would not be surprising that she should start flirting with men of her own will. Now, she grew ambitious also, and aspired to become a woman of means. As luck would have it, she met at this stage a banker with whom she carried on a mild flirtation. However, finding a better alternative, she left him to marry an Irishman named Jemmy E., supposedly a very wealthy gentleman of Lancashire. Moll had cleverly made him believe that she was a woman of means. After marriage, she discovered to her shock that her husband was, in fact, without means. He was, as a matter of fact, penniless. He had only played on her precisely the same trick, she had used on him. In a way, here is an instance of tit for tat. Such instances were very common in the English comedy from Johnson to Dryden in what can be called the comedy of intrigue.

Both being similar in their approach to life and to themselves, relying largely on trick rather than truth, they remained a congenial couple for sometime. But after they had exposed themselves to each other thoroughly, there was no ground left for them to continue living together. As a matter of fact, now they had no face to encounter each other. Hence, they decided to separate. Jemmy had nothing to fall back upon except his old occupation of highway-robbery, which he soon resumed. As for Moll, she too had nothing much left to fall back upon, except that she could go to the city and wait for another victim or match. Hence, she returned to the city. As earlier, after Jemmy had left her, she again discovered that she was to be mother of a child once again. Lying-in at the house of a midwife, Moll delivered a healthy boy who was immediately boarded out.

For sometime now, Moll had been receiving letters from her admirer, the bank clerk. Having no better offers in hand at the moment, she decided to oblige the bank clerk. They met at an inn, and were soon married there. On the day after the ceremony of marriage, she met her Lancashire husband, the highwayman, in the courtyard of the inn. There, she was able to save this man from arrest. Moll would not have any trick with this man beyond the measure of mercy she showed him in his escape from arrest. She would rather go with her new husband, the bank clerk. And so she did. For five years thereafter, until the bank clerk died, they lived a happy life as a couple. After her husband's death, she sold all her property and took lodgings. Perhaps pinched by the hardships she was facing at the moment, having two children to support at the age of forty eight with no charms of youth and no other assistance at hand from a friend or philanthropist, she felt prompted to steal a bundle from an apothecary shop. Encouraged by her first success, she then stole a necklace from a pretty little girl on her way home from dancing school.

Thus, Moll embarked upon a twelve-year period of seeking her subsistence from stealing. Sometimes, for doing her daring acts of stealing, she even disguised herself as man. During this very period, she came across a gentleman at Bartholomew Fair, which resulted in an affair, and which they continued for quite sometime. After several years of practice in the profession of stealing, Moll then became the richest thief in all of England, which was not a small distinction for a woman in those times when woman hardly enjoyed any privilege in the man-dominated society. Her favourite disguise as a thief was that of a female beggar. She did the role and the business very successfully. Finally, she was seized one day while trying to steal two pieces of silk brocade and was sent to Newgate prison. In Newgate, to her surprise, Moll found her former husband, Jemmy the highwayman. He was living there in more gentlemanly quarters than the lower-class criminals. It was only after some subterfuge that Moll made herself known to him. It was

through her sorrow for his condition that Moll started to think about her own life. It was then that she started feeling first remorse and then the glimmerings of repentance.

In this new penitent frame of mind, Moll managed to get her own and Jemmy's sentence commuted to transportation. With whatever money and goods she had left in the care of Mother Midnight, Moll managed to purchase her freedom as soon as they reached Virginia. Because of his higher social status Jemmy was free to opt for transportation, but not Moll, who had low social position. Left to himself Jemmy would have opted for hanging which he considered "the more gentlemanly course of action," but Moll dissuaded him from it. Once in the colony (Virginia state of present-day America), hoping for some inheritance from her mother, Moll set about making discreet enquiries about her previous husband (step-brother), but managed instead to secure a most tender encounter with her own son whose father was her step-brother she had married by mistake. When she met her son, he was incharge of the property left by his grandmother to his mother, that is Moll. He ensured that Moll, her mother, received the entire revenue from the property bequeathed to her by her mother.

Receiving handsome revenue from the inherited property, Moll and Jemmy established a small plantation further down the river in Carolina. Owing to Moll's hard work and the proceeds (income) sent to her by her son, the couple gradually became very rich. After having worked out the time of their respective transportation sentences, they returned, in their old age, to live the remainder of their lives in prosperity and in freedom in their native land of England. And thus, ended "the fortunes and misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders."

### Activity

Dear learner, after going through the previous section, you can now summarize the novel *Moll Flanders*. To make a self-assessment of your familiarity with the plot of the novel, try to solve the self-check exercise given below.

1. Moll Flanders was left all alone after her mother was transported to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Moll was initially cared for by a group of gypsies, who abandoned her in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Moll married \_\_\_\_\_ the youngest son of the family, but he died after five years of marriage.
4. Moll's third husband was a Sea Captain who took her to the \_\_\_\_\_ colony.
5. After living in Virginia for eight years, Moll returned to England and settled in the town of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Moll married an Irishman named \_\_\_\_\_ who pretended to be wealthy but turned out to be penniless.
7. After being caught stealing, Moll and Jemmy were sent to \_\_\_\_\_ prison.
8. Moll and Jeremy's sentence was commuted to transportation to \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Moll and Jeremy set up a small plantation in \_\_\_\_\_.

### Answers (CYP)

1. America	2. Colchester	3. Robin
4. Virginia	5. Bath	6. Jemmy E.
7. Newgate	8. Virginia	9. Carolina

## 11.4 THEME

One of the major themes of *Moll Flanders* is the confusion of morals; which, in fact, reflects the confusion of the age of Defoe. As Juliet Mitchell has put it, “The first decades after the removal of King James in 1688 were in certain senses the most revolutionary in English history. This was the period of bourgeois revolution transcendent, of individualism and capitalism let loose, of the transition from the religion based ethics of feudalism to the secular ethics of capitalism, of traditional controls removed, of the enclosure movement run rampant. Right and wrong were to be negotiated. The Divine Right of Kings became the Divine Right of Providence. Property became King. Thus, the period was of utter moral confusion. It was also a period of unusual social, economic and moral mobility. It became a time of great uncertainty when different legal and moral codes clashed each claiming universal validity. Even the values in this period were up for grabbing; they were not self-evident.

All this confusion of values in the early eighteenth century England gets reflected in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*. A major theme in the novel is, undoubtedly, the juxtaposition of contradictory moral values. For instance, Moll is both heroine and villain, fair and foul, business woman and thief, wife and prostitute. As Arnold Kettle has aptly observed,

... *Moll speaks as though she were not implicated in the common lot of criminals. She doesn't think of herself as a criminal. When she learns what other criminals in Newgate think of her she is morally outraged. Occasionally, for a moment, like Joyce Cary's Sara, she catches sight of herself in some mirror and sees herself, surprised. And she does think of herself as .... a gentlewoman ....*

The underlying tension which gives *Moll Flanders* its vitality as a work of art can be expressed by a contradiction which is at once simple and complicated. Moll is immoral, shallow, hypocritical, heartless, a bad woman yet, Moll is marvellous. Defoe might almost (though he wouldn’t have dreamt of it) have subtitled his book ‘A Pure Woman.’

Moll’s splendour, her resilience and courage and generosity, is inseparable from her badness. The fair and the foul are not isolable qualities to be abstracted and totted up in a reckoning balancing one against the other. The relationship is far more interesting.

Defoe’s novel, *Moll Flanders*, has its own share of greatness; it displays contradictory social and psychic elements which, when perceived in terms of deep structure, achieve a unity. What remains highly interesting about the novel, however, is its historical aspect. It reflects, as emphasized earlier, the moral confusion of its age. We see here, as we see in the age, that the clear-cut oppositions of crime and conduct, morality and immorality have not yet separated themselves out. As E.P. Thompson, discussing this period, has observed, “property and privileged status of the propertied were assuming, every year, a greater weight in the scales of justice until justice itself was seen as no more than outworks and defences of property and of its attendant status.”

In his socially significant novel, *Moll Flanders*, Defoe presents the early eighteenth century England as a society without traditional God and without traditional law. Moll, in this society, represents the new woman of capitalism. She has a mother and is good at discovering surrogate mothers. Significantly, her

paternity is never mentioned. The moral confusion of the novel informs all its aspects; plot, character, and point of view are all marked by a certain lack of serious order or design. The purported moral does not quite tally with the plot of the novel. Defoe says in his preface to the novel, "there is not a wicked action in any part of it, but is first or last rendered unhappy." But, this is not borne out by the facts of the fiction stated in the novel. Moll, for instance, does not have to disgorge her ill-gotten gains, and they are the basis of her final prosperity. Such seemingly contradictory elements in the novel may be more than many. But that is precisely the matter of the novel, and the message, which squarely concern the age, not the individual. Moll not only represents the age, she is actually the age. She squarely and wholly reflects the capitalist order of class material pursuit where nothing succeeds like success, and all your crimes can be deposited in a corner provided you have managed to become, somehow, anyhow, a man (or a woman) of means. Property brings you all the privileges, including moral as well as social status, in a society where tradition stands shaken and the values no longer flow from religion.

What is all important is that you should be (or become) a gentleman or a gentlewoman. Moll is always saying that she doesn't mind marrying a tradesman but he must be able to cut the figure of a gentleman. The conception of a gentleman in Defoe's time was meant to be a man of dash, bravado and infinite leisure. The concept was a reformulation by a new middle-class society of the person it conceived to be its ancestor in the dominant class of the previous feudal epoch. In fact, the contemporary reality of the dominant middle-class was very different from that of the feudal times. Jemmy, Moll's Lancashire husband, sums up the predicament of this shift. Too much of a gentleman to turn his hand to a day's work, he likes to spend his time hunting in the forest of America.

*The case was plain; he was bred a gentleman, and by consequences was not only unacquainted, but indolent, and when he did settle, would much rather go out into the woods with his gun, which they call there hunting, and which is the ordinary work of the Indians.*

As with the "madam" (Moll), who is both, lady and prostitute, the irony is that Jemmy's gentlemanly habits are likewise those of the lowest possible social group—the American Indians. Thus, top and bottom meet in a society which is still trying to find its way to make its "middle" group seem uppermost. The actual life of the new dominant middle-class man is best embodied in Moll's reflections on the father of her first lover and her first husband. This man leaves the family affair of his son's unsuitable marriage to his wife because he is too busy : "...as to the father, he was a man in a hurry of public affairs and getting money, seldom at home, thoughtful of the main chance, but left all these things to his wife." The new gentleman-tradesman that was to represent the dominant social class of this stage of capitalism, Defoe call an "amphibians creature, a land-water thing." The ideological concept of the gentleman is inherited from the watery feudal past, but it has to adapt to the totally new social conditions of middle-class land.

Prostitution and theft, which Moll has to adopt as professions, in this new society are what you do, if you cannot get successfully married in one case, and have no capital in the other. Wife and prostitute, thief and capitalist can be one and the same person at different points of time. It is this lack of separation, this easy oscillation that is distinctive of Defoe's society. Prostitution and theft stand to marriage and investment as their necessary other side. Here, Defoe, like other writers of his age, offers in *Moll Flanders* a treatise on the meaning of new forms of contractual marriage. For both men and women of his age, love

and looks may be considered, but marriage essentially remains an economic undertaking. Moll is a heroine because, unlike the majority of her sex, she does not let men get the better of her at a bargain :

*The case was altered with me : I had money in my pocket ... I had been tricked once by that cheat called love, but the game was over; I was resolved now to be married or nothing, and to be well-married or not at all.*

Defoe believed that woman should be educated and allowed to carry on business as men did. In this respect, he was a liberal spokesman for the claims for sexual equality that were being made from the middle of seventeenth century until his own day. But he was also correct in perceiving that for woman, marriage was the passage to the desired state of middle-class security. Moll is an expression of Defoe's particular type of feminism. His view is that whoever had the energy to fight for it, had a right to an equal bargain. Defoe presents Moll as a woman who is like a man in her economic ambitions and hence her independence. But Defoe's realism means that Moll knows that her economic aspiration as a woman can only be achieved through marriage. Moll shows a keen sense of the gender difference when she says,

*.... I had no adviser .... and above all, I had nobody to whom I could in confidence commit the secret of my circumstances to, and could depend upon for their secrecy and fidelity : and I found by experience, that to be friendless is the worst condition, next to being in want, that a woman can be reduced to : I say a woman, because 'tis evident men can be their own directors, and know how to work themselves and of difficulties and into business better than woman.*

## 11.5 LET US SUM UP

Thus, the novel gives a keen representation to the key issues of its time. The major themes of the changing social values, including the change from feudalism to capitalism and the status of woman, are woven into the single story of Moll. As such, it is a novel of great social significance.

## 11.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who is the central character in the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Maria
  - b) Moll
  - c) Fanny
  - d) Jane
2. What was the age of Moll when her mother was transported to America? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Eighteen months
  - b) Sixteen months
  - c) Nine months
  - d) Eight months

3. Whose proposal of marriage was accepted by Moll Flanders? \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) William
- b) Bennet
- c) Robin
- d) Joseph

4. Moll was sent to which prison for stealing \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Newgate prison
- b) Central prison
- c) Debtoss prison
- d) None of these

5. In Newgate prison, she was astonished to see whom \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Her farmer husband
- b) Her mother
- c) Her brother
- d) Her friend

6. Moll Flander in this novel represents both \_\_\_\_\_ .

- a) Heroine and villain
- b) Wife and prostitute
- c) Business women and thief
- d) All of these

7. Who said, “Moll speaks as though she were not implicated in the common lot of criminals...think of herself as a gentlewomen.” \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) I.A. Richards
- b) Arnold Kettle
- c) Samuel Richardson
- d) Daniel Defoe

### **11.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss *Moll Flanders* as a novel of social significance.

Q.2 Discuss the theme of the novel *Moll Flanders*.

## 11.8 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b)	2. a)	3. c)	4. a)
5. a)	6. d)	7. b)	

## 11.9 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Novak, Maximillian E. Daniel Defoe: *Master of Fictions: His Life and Works*. OUP, 2003.
- \* “Later Life and Works.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 8 Aug. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Defoe/Later-life-and-works>.
- \* “The Secret Life of Daniel Defoe.” *BBC Radio 4*, BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1NKhjb2HrlD1TDzQ6pbqqrR/the-secret-life-of-daniel-defoe>.

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***MOLL FLANDERS AS A SOCIAL DOCUMENT*****STRUCTURE**

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 12.3 *Moll Flanders* as a Social Document
- 12.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 12.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 12.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 12.8 Suggested Reading

**12.1 INTRODUCTION**

Reacting to the general critical approach to the novel in terms of its various aspects, such as plot and character, form and content, etc., Henry James remarked, “A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of the other parts.” This is, of course, well said. Not even the critics who split apart the body of the novel in their critical dissections would disagree with the great American novelist. At the same time, it is impossible to evaluate literature in the abstract, or merely in terms of its “wholeness”. A book, as Arnold Kettle says, “is neither produced nor read in vaccum and the very word ‘value’ involves right away criteria which are not just literary. Literature is a part of life and can be judged only in its relevance to life. Life is not static but moving and changing. Thus, we have to see both literature and ourselves in history, not as abstract entities.” Thus, a novel, more than a poem, conveys contemporary life, and on a larger scale, and conveys it not simply as reflection, but as an organized or patterned piece, making sense of what life is about.

**12.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to enhance your familiarity with the novel *Moll Flanders* by offering an analysis of the novel as a social document.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to analyse *Moll Flanders* as a social document. You will be able to appreciate Daniel Defoe’s social concerns as he paints a realistic picture of society with special reference to the condition of women in the contemporary society.

## 12.3 MOLL FLANDERS AS A SOCIAL DOCUMENT

More than any other novelist of his age, Defoe shows a sense of solidity in his novels. Fiction was never nearer truth than in his novels. No other novelist ever took greater pains than him to convince the reader of this truth. His novels are marked by an anti-romantic and anti-feudal realism, which shows his deep commitment to the reality around him, the reality of social life as it existed in the early eighteenth century. Strictly adhering to the surface reality seen and observed by him during his long career as a journalist, Defoe wrote novels which give us a comprehensive view of English society of his age. And in that sense, they can legitimately be called social documents. Some of these novels, in fact, most of them, are based on actual personages and their actual experiences known to the novelist in person. He had seen and known, read and heard, these prototypes and their life histories. This lends greater authenticity of his novels as social documents.

Of all Defoe's novels, *Moll Flanders* decidedly gives representation to much wider scale of contemporary social reality than any other. The novelist uses Moll as a medium or a mirror for expressing and reflecting or dramatizing of the conflicts and confusions over values that took place in the England of Defoe's days. As Juliet Mitchell has observed, the novel "endures as a profound consideration of the creation of social values and of the relationship of the individual to society." When Defoe took up writing of this novel, he had gathered a very wide knowledge and experience of the society of his time. As a convinced dissenter, he had written widely about the politics, practice and spiritual meaning of religion. He had been editing his own magazine, *The Review*, in which he had been debating and discussing such subjects as marital problems, elections, stock-jobbing, bankruptcy, bribery, atheism, free-thinking, astrology, thieves, pick-pockets, comets, indecent literature, education, dreams and aspirations, sea-monsters, quack-doctors, the rights of women and journalism itself. Also, Defoe was not merely an observer but also a tradesman and speculator. He was deeply involved in the practical issues of his day. Some of his enterprises brought him to bankruptcy and imprisonment; the same experiences are reflected in *Moll Flanders*.

Defoe portrays Moll as a woman of ebullience with the determination to look only at her future. Moll is the new small-time capitalist in the making. She is the pilgrim progressing to what, as sharp-witted child and clear-headed woman, she rightly takes to be the capitalist definition of a gentlewoman—the wife of a prosperous businessman or a self-made woman in her own right.

More than any other aspect of eighteenth century English society, Defoe focuses in the forefront the criminal side of that. *Moll Flanders*, for sure, is a novel about criminal subcultures. One very pertinent question the novel raises is : Is Moll really a criminal, or is she, through ill luck and the conditions in which she is born and brought up, caught up in circumstances which compel her to become a criminal? The question of Moll's criminality is surrounded by the confusion of values in the society of the time itself. It is a topsy-turvy society, in which the punishment was often conspicuously more brutal than the offence. It is creditable for Defoe that even while creating in *Moll Flanders* an actual picture of contemporary society he is able to make it a novel with a larger universal message.

There is enough evidence to prove that Defoe based his portrait of Moll on an actual person or persons whom he had known and encountered first hand in real life. Both, personally and in his capacity as a journalist, Defoe was familiar with Newgate prison and its inmates. During larger part of 1721, he was regularly visiting a close friend of his. In the same prison during the same period there was a woman

prisoner named Moll King. She was one of the aliases of Mary Godson, who was a notorious thief and convict. Defoe used to meet Moll, who must have recounted the adventures of her friend 'Callico Sarah', a thief and a whore with a varied life-history of her own. As Gerald Howson says, "It seems likely that Defoe sought [Moll King] out when she was under sentence of death, as a suitable subject for a criminal pamphlet....After her reprieve, the pamphlet grew into the novel, the first of its kind in English." However, even though Defoe picks up his heroine from an actual figure of his time, his interest is not an individual. He converts her into a type. Not only that, he relates her to the social milieu. He gives the conditions obtaining at the time in English society, so many Molls would emerge, and so would emerge other criminals and crimes which are so realistically and convincingly drawn up in Defoe's novel. Hence, the emphasis in his novel is the social scene, not the individual case study of a female criminal.

In *Moll Flanders*, Defoe is writing from a time in which Moll as wife and Moll as prostitute, Moll as small capitalist and Moll as thief, are quite logically the same person. In a society that valued a person's life less than a teaspoon, the worth of the unborn foetus came into its own. A woman such as Moll's mother could escape hanging if she pleaded pregnancy. In a society, in which many of its most powerful members wanted a rising working population, obviously the only possible relationship that could be considered sacrosanct, was between the mother and her unborn child for adoption. A woman saved from hanging on account of pregnancy would be executed when her child was six months old. One can see here clearly how the needs of the rich determined the fate of the poor. And how the economic structure of the society determined the structure of morality. We cannot overlook the fact that the English society of the time was one that was sexually lax, and that placed small value on life, certainly the life of the poor.

In these circumstances, before the new moral codes about property had become sufficiently established to seem wholly natural, writers, thinkers and intellectuals, such as Defoe, whether consciously or otherwise, had to fall back for some sure ground onto those social crimes that are so basic to all societies that they are always felt to be sins against nature. For instance, a certain type of murder and incest have always been viewed unnatural. As E. P. Thompson has remarked, "Political life in England in the 1720's had something of the sick quality of a 'banana republic'." But even in this society marked by energetic corruption certain things had to be viewed too much. For instance, it is decidedly a measure of human desperation that confronted with mob lynchings and the Newgate hangings, abortion came to seem the only unnatural murder. Also, it is again a measure of human desperation that faced with what was in all probability a new level in the exploitation of sexuality, incest with a half-brother seemed the only utterly impossible sexual offence.

Moll then is a criminal and plebian heroine. The two seem much the same thing in the society in which she is born and brought up, exploited and empowered. She is a heroine because she has the courage to be successful. She has the ability to know what she wants and the necessary courage to go and get it. In the context of her social milieu, for any woman's success must have meant to become bourgeois and prosperous. As Juliett Mitchell has said, "Capitalism in England had developed at this stage into a situation, where there was an urban middle class and a growing urban plebian class—it had not yet developed an industrial working class with a consciousness of itself as a class. Anyone in their right mind who did not want to remain a plebian, which might easily mean being hanged as a criminal, can only have aspired to

be bourgeois." No wonder then Moll, and her alike, Jemmy and his alike, all are engaged in making money by hook or by crook so that they can be accepted as respectable members, or gentlemen and gentlewomen, in the society which does not fix premium on any other ability or effort except the one to acquire property.

Defoe's strength as a novelist lies in giving us in *Moll Flanders* a realistic document of its times and yet make it an atemporal narrative of universal appeal. No doubt, its realism is so solid and specific that the universal appeal remains buried under the concrete layer of contingent details, like the spirit inside the body. The beauty of his art is that despite the concrete surface, the spirit comes through the moment one interacts with the surface. Rousseau considered Defoe's hero, Robinson Crusoe, a man in his essence. Coleridge elaborated the feelings of the Romantics when he remarked, "He, who makes me forget my specific class, character and circumstances, raises me into universal man. Now that is Defoe's excellence. You become a man while you read." Virginia Woolf became a woman, or rather, in her feminism, a person, when she was re-reading *Moll Flanders* and saw the streets of London through Defoe's eyes. Here again, Juliet Mitchell makes a remarkable observation on the English society and how Moll is really a representative of that society and is, hence universal in her appeal :

"If, as seems to be the case, Moll, in her courage and determination, speaks to the type of urge to do well for ourselves that has been at the heart of the ideology of our society for three hundred years, there she will appear universal to us. Moll is an incarnation of capitalist woman at that moment when the society's ideologists are torn between an awareness that all is new and an effort to make all permanent and changeless. The treatment of marriage and prostitution illustrates this."

In terms of Marxist sociology, then, Moll's universality lies in her being a product as well as a representative of the spirit of a society whose only, and principal value is understood to be to do well as an individual in terms of making money and acquiring property therewith. Another level of universality, which we should not lose sight of, is that in the various situations which she encounters, her response to most of these situations also speaks of her humanity. She may have been debased and corrupted as a human, but her humanity is not dead altogether. She shows her feelings and thoughts appropriate to a normal well-meaning human in any society at any time.

One of the revolutionary ideologies of Puritanism that went hand in hand with capitalism was that all people were equal in the eyes of the Lord, which also included the equality of man and woman. *Moll Flanders* illustrates this ideology. But it also shows the social reality which was already very different. As the historian Christopher Hill reflects that doctrine had it that all men were equal but some were more equal than others. In the spirit of this doctrine, men were certainly more equal than women : "He for the market only, she for the market through him." Moll, too, is capitalist woman at this heroic moment, just as Crusoe is a capitalist man in Marx's view, at its heroic moment. Of course, this is not the only reason, as asserted earlier, which makes the novel seem to be about something more generally human than early eighteenth century England. In his novel, *Moll Flanders*, Defoe dramatizes the problem that a new type of society is faced with in establishing its continuity with the old and how it has to be done. In order that the particular aspects of this new society depicted or dramatized in the novel may seem universal, the novelist has to show, as Defoe does, the spirit of the age that drives in general populace and also as to how that spirit transcends this particular society to embrace a larger phenomenon of which this particular

society is only a stage. It is easier for a historian to draw such general inferences and study such larger currents. But for a novelist to achieve the same feat is a much more complex and difficult task. He has to do it through particular characters and incidents by involving them in a common story of the central character. He achieves it, as does Defoe very successfully in *Moll Flanders*, by showing an urge or emotion common to various character of different age groups and by showing them in people at very different and distant places (located as far apart as London and Virginia).

The particular genius of Defoe is that he clearly faces the fact that the conditions of his time are specific. It also shows up in his struggle to make them universal in a peculiarly appropriate manner. He does not struggle for it, for sure, in the manner in which, say, Swift does, by transferring his contemporary responses to a timeless realm of allegory. What Defoe does, is to locate his story in an earlier time, implying thereby that his own times are only, in fact, what the previous times have been. He makes an assertion in this dramatic fashion, just as Shakespeare did in his plays by dramatizing stories of earlier historical periods, that human nature is immutable. But, ironically, it is a mark of Defoe's ability that he only partially succeeds, decidedly deliberately, in this distancing of the story. It seems not many people realize that *Moll Flanders*, published in 1722, is in this sense a historical novel with its very last words reading "written in the year 1683." The reason for this back dating of his novel's story must have also been to disguise the identity of his characters and events. This also, for sure, alerts us to something else. The author must also be trying to protect himself against any adverse reaction or response from any individual or an institution or a section of society in which he was living. Whatever be the case, the fact remains that the pre-dating does not delude the reader about the time the novel depicts in the life of the society in England. He may technically evade responsibility about the identity of his characters and their actions, their thoughts and feelings, the reader without any misgiving, responds to them as a picture of the eighteenth century England.

If we match Defoe's dating of his novel, and hence of the story narrated in it with the portrayal of its protagonist, Moll Flanders, it comes to have a different, if unintentional meaning. It suggests a notion of development. Unlike the Pilgrims in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian is a full-grown man, Moll grows in the novel from her childhood, where she was only six months old, to her old age, when she is past sixty years. Incidentally, the tradition of the growing hero or heroine, first laid down by Defoe, becomes a major tradition in the English novel. In this sense, *Moll Flanders* is structured around the growth of Moll. What happens to her as a mature woman; in fact, who she is as a woman depends on the conditions of her infancy, her childhood, and her adolescence. The child, thus, becomes mother to the woman. As with a concept of social history, an idea of development is a *sine qua non* of a concept of the history of the individual. Both individuals and societies, in this concept, develop in accordance with the conditions surrounding them. Of course, conditions are always created by nature as well as man. Hence, the development of an individual or a society cannot be separated from the conditions which govern or determine that development.

In the context of Defoe's realism responsible for his concern with contemporary social reality, we should not forget the role played by the picaresque tradition. It did demonstrate that the novel must draw in vitality from a concern with the actual life of the people. It made impossible any serious attempt to move

back to the pastoral and courtly traditions of the early romances. And here lies the significance of novels like *Moll Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe*, which constitute the foundation of the English novel and its realism. After the modernist movement in the 1920's we have come to look in a novel for a controlling intelligence, which Defoe's novels cannot lay claim to. The English criticism of the novel after James has come to distrust an undifferentiated 'vitality' as criterion enough of a novel's worth. It has come to see the amorphous, sprawling tendencies of the earlier English novels as an unfortunate influence on later novelists. We must stand on guard against this too narrow an approach to the novel, which by its very definition is known for its vast canvas rather than narrow focus. The strength of the novel form has been its innate realism. If it does not address contemporary reality, directly or indirectly, magically or fabulously, inwardly or outwardly, socially or spiritually, it does not really qualify to be called by that name. Whatever be the later developments and whatever be the subsequent innovations in the technique of the novel, its foundation, as it was laid down by novels like *Moll Flanders* can never be ignored. Novels of this type give a more satisfying, and certainly more interesting, account of the age than do the historical or journalistic reporting of the same life. Defoe's novel, though seemingly the story of an individual, embraces within its fold the entire domestic and social life of the early eighteenth century England. The five husbands that Moll takes, the several affairs she gets involved into, the numerous individuals and families she encounters, the various social and religious, judicial and political institutions she has to deal with, all create cumulatively a whole panorama of the society of Defoe's time, and the whole comes alive as Defoe deflects not from the graphic details of persons and events related to Moll's life. Undoubtedly, *Moll Flanders* is a social document of the early eighteenth century English life and much more reliable at that than by history, precisely because it is not meant to be a history, and is meant instead to be an account of an individual's life, who narrates it herself.

#### **12.4 LET US SUM UP**

Defoe's *Moll Flanders* seeks to represent and recreate the socio-economic and sexual underworlds of the 18th century London. Defoe's novels give us a comprehensive view of English society of his age ; and in that sense, they can be called social documents. Some of his novels, are based on actual personages and their actual experiences. He had seen and known, read and heard, the prototypes of life histories. Of all of his novels, *Moll Flanders* gives representation to much wider scale of contemporary social reality than any other. The novelist uses Moll as a medium or a mirror for expressing and reflecting or dramatizing of the conflicts and confusions over values that took place in the England of Defoe's days. Hence, the emphasis in his novel is the social perspective, and not on the individual case study of female criminal.

#### **12.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)**

1. Whose novels are marked by anti-romantic and anti-feudal realism? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Thomas Hardy
  - b) Charles Lamb
  - c) Henry Fielding
  - d) Daniel Defoe

2. When Defoe started his journey, he was mostly writing about?\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Politics
- b) Spiritual life
- c) Social problems
- d) All of these

3. Which type of society is mentioned by Defoe in which punishment is more brutal than the offence?\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Topsy-turvy society
- b) Upper class society
- c) Middle class society
- d) None of these

4. Which magazine was started by Daniel Defoe?\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Rambler
- b) Tatler
- c) Spectator
- d) The Review

5. *Moll Flander* is which type of novel?\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Allegorical novel
- b) Picaresque novel
- c) Gothic novel
- d) Detective novel

6. Which novel is a social document on the life of women during the eighteenth century?\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Jane Eyre
- b) Moll Flander
- c) Clarissa
- d) Pamela

## **12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss *Moll Flanders* as a realistic novel.

Q.2 *Moll Flanders* is a social document. Enumerate.

## 12.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. d)	2. d)	3. a)	4. d)
5. b)	6. b)		

## 12.8 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Allingham, Philip V. "The Works of Daniel Defoe (1697–1895)." *Victorian Web*, 2 Feb. 2018, <https://victorianweb.org/previctorian/defoe/works.html>.
- \* "Moll Flanders." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Moll-Flanders>.
- \* Richetti John. *The Life of Daniel Defoe: A Critical Biography*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.

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## **CHARACTER OF MOLL FLANDERS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 13.3 Character of Moll Flanders
- 13.4 Moll as a complex character
- 13.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.6 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 13.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 13.8 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 13.9 Suggested Reading

#### **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

Even though we tend naturally to read *Moll Flanders* as a novel of social realism, as a picture of the early eighteenth century England, or as a sociological novel dealing with the making of a criminal as the emphasis throughout seems to fall on the effect of environment on character, an equally important aspect of the novel is the central character on whom the entire spectrum is unfolded. It cannot be denied that the novel's principal interest is the character of its protagonist, Moll Flanders, who is also the narrator of the novel's story, which is her own life story from childhood to old age. The novel reads like a long confession by a woman, who during her own life, has gone through all the dark streets of her society and has experienced the worst-kinds of human specimen. Moll exists completely in the round. Defoe's conception of her character is so perfect that her personality is completely brought before the reader. *Moll Flanders* is, for sure, the first instance, not merely in the English novel, but in the English literature as a whole, when an individual character is so thoroughly delineated with hardly any aspect, even the most intimate or private, left out of the portrait. Despite Henry James's title, *The Portrait of a Lady*, the novel reveals largely one side of Isabel's personality, although the novel's volume is much larger than that of *Moll Flanders*. Also, even in terms of social content, Defoe's novel gives the reader much more about the eighteenth century England (and its American colony) than does James's novel about the nineteenth century America (and Europe). In fact, James's speculative style takes us far away from the social milieu, whereas Defoe's practical prose keeps us grounded in society.

## 13.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

The objective of this lesson is to provide a detailed character analysis of *Moll Flanders*, the protagonist of the novel. The lesson also aims to analyse Moll Flanders not as a flat character but as a complex character who has multiple dimensions to her character.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to analyse the character of *Moll Flanders* and explain the motivations behind her actions in the narrative. You will also be able to appreciate Daniel Defoe's art of characterisation as he has provided multiple dimensions to Moll Flanders' personality making her a complex and sympathetic character.

## 13.3 CHARACTER OF MOLL FLANDERS

One reason why Moll Flanders is a much more convincing character in fiction than any other is her being drawn upon an actual woman, Defoe had intimately known and heard about in real life. During the period Defoe wrote his novel, there is evidence to show that he was visiting the Newgate prison rather regularly where, besides a friend of his, he used to meet one Moll King, a notorious thief and convict. Apart from acquainting Defoe with her own story she may have recounted the adventures of her friend "Callico Sarah", a thief and whore with a full and varied life-history of her own. "Callico" was contraband silk and may have suggested to Defoe the name Flanders. The name Flanders refers to a Flemish lace which too, was usually a contraband. At one time or another, both Moll King and Callico Sarah worked for and were finally impeached by the notorious gangster, Jonathan Wild. This gangster was not an ordinary member of plebian England, but a professional criminal and leader of a genuine subculture.

Moll King may have worked for Jonathan Wild and thus been part of a gang. However, even though Defoe used her as a model for his Moll Flanders, he did not do it to document criminality. On the contrary, he did it to document Moll's humble background. No doubt, at times, *Moll Flanders*, like her original Moll King, is a professional thief, working, despite her disliking, with other thieves. And yet Defoe does not lay any emphasis on any professional aspect of her work. Moll does steal, and even prostitutes her body. But she does it for one reason, and one only; she is poor, and is forced to seek her subsistence through whatever means available to her. We cannot ignore the fact that as a single woman, orphan from childhood, daughter of a mother imprisoned for stealing, Moll, in the society in which she is living, has no other options available to her. Wheresoever she may get work, the male members of the family as well as others living around, view her only as an easy target for sex, for use and throw.

Moll herself cries for economic security for a safe and noble life : "Give me not poverty, lest I steal." But no such securities are available in the society in which she is living. It is grim poverty which drives her to her criminal life : "The prospect of my own starving... hardened my heart." She always wanted to live a respectable life, a settled life, a life of virtue and dignity. But it was always denied to her by the hypocritical and callous capitalist society : "I wanted to be placed in a settled state of living, and had I happened to meet with a sober, good husband, I should have been as true a wife to him as virtue itself could have formed. If I had been otherwise, the vice came in always at the door of necessity, not at the door of inclination." Granted that Defoe took his model for Moll's character lives of two or more women working for Jonathan Wild, he did not at the same time develop his story into a portrait of a genuine criminal underworld. As E.P. Thompson's work, *Whigs and Hunters*, illustrates that for most

people in Defoe's time the line between a criminal class and all plebian England was a hard one to draw. Moll Flanders is both criminal and plebian heroine. It is not so much that the combination is plausible as that the distinction is not.

Defoe wrote at a time when Moll as a wife and Moll as a prostitute, Moll as a small capitalist and Moll as a thief are quite logically the same person. In all probability, Moll is essentially an average good woman, but she is caught up in the web of necessity in relatively "bad" acts. In fact, she is damned by her birth, by the circumstances of being a child whose father is not known, and whose mother is in prison where the child is born, and whom the mother leaves when the child is only six months old. Had she been born in different circumstances, in the family of a married couple well settled and prospering in society, she would not have been what she is forced to become. In a decade that introduced death penalty for the theft of a handkerchief or a sapling, good and bad, fair and foul, are not contradictions whose ultimate unity it takes a genius to perceive, but bedfellows whose proximity only subsequent historians have managed to miss.

This proximity can be clearly seen illustrated as it is played out in Moll's life in the novel. When she is only eight years old, Moll tells her foster mother that she does not want to go out in service (a clear case of child labour). A large number of wealthy visitors stand by as, in reply to her foster mother's teasing, Moll insists that what she wants to be in this life is a "gentlewoman". In friendly mockery she becomes known as "the little gentlewoman":

*Now all this while my good nurse, Mrs. Mayoress, and all the rest of them did not understand me at all, for they meant one sort of thing by the word gentlewoman, and I meant quite another; for alas! all I understand by being a gentlewoman was to be able to work for myself, and get enough to keep me without that terrible bugbear going to service, whereas they meant to live great, rich and high, and I know not what.*

*Well, after Mrs. Mayoress was gone, her two daughters came in and they called for the gentlewoman too, and they talked a long while to me, and I answered them in my innocent way; but always, of they asked me whether I resolved to be a gentlewoman. I answered Yes. At last one of them asked me what a gentlewoman was? That puzzled me much; but, however, I explained myself negatively, that it was one that did not go to service, to do housework. They were pleased to be familiar with me, and liked my little prattle to them, which it seems, was agreeable enough to them, and they gave me money too.*

*As for my money, I gave it all to my mistress—nurse, as I called her; and told her she should have all I got for myself when I was a gentlewoman, as well as now. By this and some other of my talk, my old tutoress began to understand me about what I meant by being a gentlewoman, and that I understand by it no more than to be able to get my bread by my own work : and at last she asked me whether it was not so.*

*I told her, Yes, and insisted on it, that to do so was to be a gentlewoman : for, says I, 'there is such a one,' naming a woman that mended lace and washed the ladies' laced heads : 'she', says I, 'is a gentlewoman, and they call her madam.'*

*'Poor child', says my good old nurse, 'you may soon be such a gentlewoman as that, for she is a person of ill fame, and has had two or three bastards.'*

Obviously, "in Moll's tumultuous society, a gentlewoman is a member of the leisured gentry, or a prostitute : both ends of the social scale meet and are still, today, exemplified by the title 'madam'." Juliet Mitchell's observation here is undoubtedly very perceptive. Both are indeed called 'madam'. Later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the kind of crimes, Moll commits, came to be considered eternally sinful and her penitence as a state of grace. Despite his best intentions, perhaps Defoe, in *Moll Flanders*, could not make Moll's crimes sinful, or her repentance more full of grace than that produced by a full belley. Moll has to steal because she is poor, and leads a moral life because she is prosperous. Her social crimes against property have not yet been, at this stage of capitalism, internalized by men to have become so much a part of their unconscious thinking that they seem equivalent to religious sin.

This point can perhaps be better grasped if we look at those situations in the novel in which Moll's actions look contemptuous to us. Obviously, Defoe meant those scenes to convey that feeling to us, his own feeling for Moll's actions, which is that of contempt. At least, incest and murder seem to be the instances which arouse the emotion of contempt for the doer. Moll's incestuous marriage with her half-brother is one such instance. Its seriousness can be understood in Moll's reaction to the proposed marriage with Robin, which incident foresees the incestuous marriage to follow. Robin is the younger brother of her first lover. She is taken ill at the prospect of what seems to her quite an unnatural marriage. After she has recovered from illness and has consented to marry Robin and has, in fact, been married for some years, she shows her guilty conscience in having entered into an unnatural or incestuous marriage: "... *I never was in bed with my husband, but I wished my self in the arms of his brothers... in short, I committed adultery and incest with him every day in my desires, which without doubt was... effectually criminal.*" Later in Virginia, when she finds that she has unknowingly married her own half-brother, her revulsion to the act is total. Her brother as well as husband, after mad rages, declines into a state of presenile dementia which is, in some sense, Defoe's unconscious metaphor for the man's corrupt and unnatural marital state. On the other hand, Moll cannot even entertain the idea of concealment :

*I was now the most unhappy of all women in the world. Oh! Had the story never been told me, all had been well; it had been no crime to have lain with my husband since.... I had known nothing of it... [However] I was but too sure of the fact, I lived therefore in open avowed incest and whoredom, and all under the appearance of an honest wife; and though I was not much touched with the crime of it, yet the action had something in it shocking to nature, and made my husband as he thought himself, even nauseous to me... indeed I mortally hated him as a husband, and it was impossible to remove that reveted aversion I had to him. At the same time, it being an unlawful,*

*incestuous living, added to that aversion, and ... everything added to make cohabiting with him the most nauseous thing to me in the world :and I think verily it was came to such a height, that I could almost as willingly have embraced a dog as have let him offer anything of that kind to me, for which reason I could not bear the thoughts of coming between the sheets with him. ”*

All this coming from Moll shows how she has inherited all the values of the society, or more precisely, the families, for whom she has been working. It may be her ambition to become a gentlewoman, to have a small business of her own, to have a husband of her own, and above all, to be called a ‘madam’. All these ideas have come to her in the form of ruling passions of the society of which she is a part, and any defiance of which would amount to committing a crime, even a sin. Her sense of crime and sin at the very idea of incest, and her abhorrence at the action she has committed of that nature, both are imbibed from the social milieu in which she has been living as a disgraced or discredited member. Despite the fact that she has been a victim of that society right from the start, demeaning her humanity, compelling her to what she, along with them, considers crimes, Moll does not seem to develop the consciousness of a rebel. On the contrary, she is still carrying her puritan conscience intact, which keeps making her regret and repent the “wrong” actions she thinks she has committed. Her scale of value judgment is the same as theirs.

The strength of Moll’s character lies in the fact that as she is thrown all alone into a world of men, quite a few of them are no less than sharks, she keeps struggling to survive on the terms that have been dictated by men. She does not commit suicide. She does not remain content with the servant’s life. She keeps trying to find a suitable husband, although repeatedly she hits upon a wrong one. She also keeps trying to make money enough to survive in the society in which money is the God, that all worship. Strangely though, she knows that money both secures life and at the same time endangers it, and yet money alone is the goal all work to achieve. Here is a key passage in the novel which depicts the dilemma of a person like Moll in a society where money and property determine all value to live by :

*And now I found myself in great distress; what little I had in the world was all in money, except as before, a little plate, some linen, and my cloths; and for my household stuff, I had little or none, for I had lived always in lodgings; but I had not one friend in the world with whom to trust that little I had, or to direct me how to dispose of it, and this perplexed me night and day. I thought of the bank and of the other companies in London, but I had no friend to commit the management of it to, and to keep and carry about with me bank bills, tallies, orders, and such things, I looked upon it as unsafe; if they were lost, my money was lost, and then I was undone; and, on the other hand, I might be robbed and perhaps murdered in a strange place for them. This perplexed me strangely, and what to do I knew not.*

Thus, here in combined is a subtle narrative technique; an exposition of Moll’s foreground character as well as reflection of the background social milieu, the two coming out simultaneously through the monologue of Moll Flanders.

Reading *Moll Flanders*, one is automatically reminded of *Pamela*. Both the novels belong to the same age. Defoe's comes first, Richardson's later. The latter may be in response to the former. But it is strange that while Richardson gives to his novel the subtitle *Virtue Rewarded*, Defoe's, without giving any such subtitle, shows how vice is rewarded. As in the last paragraph of the novel, Moll, the narrator tells us, "*Thus all these difficulties were made easy, and we lived together with greatest kindness and comfort imaginable. We are now grown old: I am come back to England, being almost seventy years of age, my husband sixty-eight... we are both of us in good heart and health.*" In Richardson, the reward is marriage to Pamela's master. Here, in Defoe, it is in terms of marital joy of togetherness in a house and estate of their own. The true picture of the age, including its morality, lies somewhere between the two. Another reminder about Moll is Chaucer's Wife of Bath. It cannot be a coincidence that Defoe also shows Moll having five husbands, just as the Wife of Bath has in Chaucer, and both are not averse to the prospect of the sixth. Also, it is again not a coincidence that Defoe makes Bath, one of the places of residence for Moll, where again she finds a husband to live together. These literary affinities one need to be aware of, and of such connections which show the factor of intertextuality illustrated—as to how texts are dependent upon each other, or are drawn upon each other.

### Activity

Dear learner, it is time to take a break from reading! The previous section made you familiar with the character of Moll Flanders. You can now make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the character of Moll Flanders by going through the exercise given below.

1. Defoe based the character of Moll Flanders on a real woman named \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ led a criminal subculture, and Moll King may have worked for him.
3. Moll Flanders is portrayed as a \_\_\_\_\_ heroine who must steal and prostitute herself due to poverty and lack of other options.
4. Moll's marriage to her \_\_\_\_\_ in the novel is an example of incest.
5. Moll Flanders can be seen as a precursor to Richardson's \_\_\_\_\_ as both novels explore the themes of virtue and vice.
6. Moll's desire to live a respectable life was constantly thwarted by the hypocritical capitalist society in which she lived. (True/False)
7. Because of the many struggles that she faces, Moll Flanders commits suicide in the end. (True/False)

### Answers

1. Moll King	2. Jonathan Wild	3. Plebian	4. half-brother
5. Pamela	6. True	7. False	

### 13.4 MOLL AS A COMPLEX CHARACTER

Moll Flanders is a complex character, not a flat one. She has many sides to her personality. She can be compassionate as well as callous, naive as well as cunning, intrigued as well as intriguer. She becomes mistress as well as wife, pauper as well as propertied, friend as well as foe, jailbird as well as

free holder. Thus, she goes through a wide variety of experience, encounters large number of people, stumbles on all kinds of misfortunes, finally gets to taste the fortunes of a comfortable life. Mother of legitimate and illegitimate children, mistress of legitimate and illegitimate goods, wedded to legitimate and illegitimate husbands, Moll has such a variety of experience that one could consider her representing in large part the entire society of her time. In terms of experience, she becomes large; she contains multitudes.

Besides, Moll is also a growing character. She grows from a child of six months into a woman of seventy. But that is not only biological growth. She grows morally and spiritually, intellectually and psychologically. She begins as an innocent child. She grows into a woman of experience. She leads a criminal life, undergoes punishments and finally, grows into a moderate person. She also leads a sinful life and finally ends up as a repenting puritan. She goes from man to man like an ever changing chameleon. But at the end she settles with an understanding husband who gives her joy of life. Her growth as a fictional character is phenomenal. No other character experiences so much, and assimilates so much, and changes so much, as does Moll Flanders.

Besides being the heroine, or the central and chief character in the novel, Moll is also the narrator of her own life, which is the story of the novel. In fact, she is the author of her own life, writing in all earnest the entire span of her life. Defoe poses to be only an editor, doing some agreeable changes in the author's text. What he has done, in his own words, "is to put it into a dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak language fit to be read." He claims to have improved the language of the female criminal from her "slang" idiom to standard English idiom. But he has also done another thing, as he claims in the "Preface" to the novel : "*There is an agreeable turn artfully given them [abundance of delightful incidents in the relating, that naturally instructs the reader, either one way or other.]*" Defoe's homage to the age of sentimentality, in any case the age of instruction, is to make the story of Moll an example of a bad woman from whose life people must draw a lesson. In this attempt the editor Defoe has done the editing of leaving out certain incidents of Moll's life, and choosing only those for inclusion which would not do much offence to the reader's morality : "*What is left 'tis hoped will not offend the chaste reader or the modest hearer; and as the best use made even of the worst story, the moral 'tis hoped will keep the reader serious even where the story might incline him to be otherwise.*" Labeling Moll wicked, changing her to a repenting or penitent puritan would obviously distort the true story of *Moll Flanders*. At the same time, Defoe makes Moll claim that she is making abreast of all her secret sins and crimes, withholding nothing. The two positions do not really agree with each other. The latter is perhaps more credible. The former Defoe has to say only to please the contemporary taste, even if it was highly hypocritical. Whatever be the case, one thing is certain: Moll will remain a memorable figure in fiction.

### 13.5 LET US SUM UP

Moll Flander is the central and chief character in the novel. She is also the narrator of her own life. She grows from a child to a woman of seventy. She is not biologically grows but also morally, spiritually and psychologically also. Her growth as a fictional character is phenomenal. Thus, she goes through a wide variety of experiences, encounters large number of people, stumbles on all kinds of misfortunes, finally gets to taste the fortunes of a comfortable life. It is creditable for Defoe that even while creating in *Moll Flanders* an actual picture of contemporary society he is able to make it a novel with a larger universal message.

### 13.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Which of the novel by Daniel Defoe presents the dark secrets of the society and the worst experiences of a woman? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Robinson Crusoe*
  - b) *Moll Flanders*
  - c) *The Storm*
  - d) *The Political History of the Devil*
2. Who said, “Give me not poverty, lest I steal.\_\_\_\_\_.”
  - a) Moll
  - b) Robin
  - c) John
  - d) Defoe
3. What are the things that Moll wanted to get in his life? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Money
  - b) Job
  - c) Marriage
  - d) A Big House
4. What does the Moll do when she is thrown all alone into a World of men? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) She commits suicide
  - b) She lives in the temple
  - c) She joins school
  - d) She keeps trying for survival
5. Moll Flander in this novel, grows from the age of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Nine months to fifty years
  - b) Eight months to eighty years
  - c) Six months to Seventy years
  - d) None of these

### 13.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss *Moll Flanders* as a Sociological Novel.
- Q.2 Comment upon Defoe's satire as reflected in *Moll Flanders*.
- Q.3 Is Moll responsible for her fate? Give a reasoned answer.

Q.4 Discuss *Moll Flanders* as an autobiography within a biography.

Q.5 Discuss the character of Moll. How does the role of the heroine reveal Defoe's art of characterisation in *Moll Flanders*?

**13.8 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. b)	2. a)	3. a)	4. d)
5. c)			

**13.9 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Boweres, Toni. *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760*. Cambridge UP, 2005.
- \* "Defoe's Moll Flanders Summary & Analysis." *Study.com*, uploaded by Joshua Wimmer, 15 Sept. 2025, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/video/defoes-moll-flanders-summary-analysis-quiz.html>.
- \* "Moll Flanders Study Guide." *LitCharts*, <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/moll-flanders>.

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## HENRY FIELDING : LIFE AND WORKS

### STRUCTURE

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 14.3 Henry Fielding : Life And Works
- 14.4 Sources of *Joseph Andrews*
- 14.5 The World of *Joseph Andrews*
- 14.6 Outline of the Story
- 14.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.8 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 14.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 14.10 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 14.11 Suggested Reading

#### **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) was an English novelist, considered to be one of the founders of the English novel. He is known for works such as *Tom Jones*, *Joseph Andrews*, and *Amelia* where he has satirised society and exposed the moral hypocrisy and class inequality. He is known for using wit and humour for achieving the purpose of satire in his works.

#### **14.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to offer a detailed biography of Henry Fielding as well as acquaint the learner with some of the important works composed by him. The lesson also aims to introduce the learner to the novel *Joseph Andrews* and provide background information to the novel such as the source of the work.

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to evaluate the literary contributions made by Henry Fielding to the development of the genre of novel. The learner will also be able to summarise the

major works composed by him. Further, the learner will be able to describe the outline story of the novel Joseph Andrews and analyse the sources which contributed to the genesis of this work.

#### 14.3 HENRY FIELDING : LIFE AND WORKS

Henry Fielding was born on April 22nd 1707 at the beginning of the Neoclassical age. He was the first son of Lieutenant General Edmund Fielding, the descendant of an illustrious family and Sarah Gould, the daughter of a judge, Sir Henry Gould. Fielding spent a happy childhood on a farm in Dorsetshire with several brothers and sisters reading the Bible and traditional romances, and storing up memories of rural England. The deep influence of the country surroundings is apparent in his novels. He saw the village as the home of natural virtue and the city as the home of vice and corruption.

In 1718, when Fielding was just eleven years old, his mother died. When his father remarried, Fielding was placed in the care of his grandmother. He was educated at Eton and developed a life long love of Greek and Latin literature. By the time he left Eton he was well over six feet tall, strong and handsome like his first hero Joseph Andrews. After school, he divided his time between a fling at London high life under the patronage of his famous cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and study of law at the University of Leyden in Holland.

In 1729, owing to financial problems he began a career as a satiric playwright and produced about two dozen works of satire, farce and burlesque. In the *Tragedy of Tragedies*, or *The Life and Death of Tom-Thumb the Great*, he lampooned the powerful Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole and his government. This career culminated with the production in 1737 at his Little Theatre (called Fielding's Scandal Shop) of a savage satire *The Historical Register*. The Licensing Act of 1737 imposed strict censorship and Fielding's theatre had to be closed down. As a dramatist, Fielding displayed a marvellous gift for parody and brutal realism. He believed already that no good could come of hiding a social evil, and that it was necessary first to open up the wound before seeking to cure it. He wanted to abandon force because he felt his talent lay in a drama of moral and social criticism.

In 1734, Fielding had married the beautiful Charlotte Craddock who was the inspiration for his heroines, Sophia and Amelia. With a wife and two daughters to support, Fielding took to journalism to augment his income as a lawyer. He became editor of a paper, *The Champion* and used it to attack his two enemies Robert Walpole and Colley Cibber. This period forms a kind of transition from the dramatist to the novelist.

In 1740, Samuel Richardson published *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. The book took London by storm but Fielding found its morality dubious. He first parodied it anonymously in *Apology for the life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* and then set out a full scale satirical reply in the form of a novel called *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and His Friend Parson Adams* (1742). The book enjoyed moderate success but within two years Fielding lost his daughter and then his wife. In 1747, he married his housekeeper Mary Daniel and had five more children. The last ten years of his life were divided between his triumphs

as a novelist and a jurist. In 1743, he wrote *Jonathan Wild*, which traced the career of an evil man to the gallows, and is regarded by some as the greatest satire in England. In 1749, he published his masterpiece *Tom Jones* followed in 1754 by *Amelia*, which is the story of a weak man redeemed by a good woman. As a Judge, he devised schemes to check crime and improve the Police Force. Finally, in 1754, broken by fever and gout, and advised to seek a warmer climate he went to Lisbon where he died that year on October 8.

### **Other works of Fielding**

- (i) *History of the life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) is an ironical biography of a criminal, Jonathan Wild. He was an infamous organizer of thieves, the informer with the blood of a hundred betrayed accomplices on his hands and was finally hanged in 1725. Many writers including Defoe had celebrated Wild as a hero in their books. Fielding wrote this fictitious biography to satirise human folly that pays tribute to such a notorious man. He wanted to caricature criminal biographies and picaresque romances that glorified rascality.
- (ii) *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1746) Tom Jones is the adopted son of Squire Allworthy, a man of superhuman virtues. Blifil is the orphan son of Allworthy's sister, Bridget. Blifil and Tom, brought up together, stand in precise antithesis to each other. Tom is open, honest and kind while Blifil is selfish, mean and servile. Both are often in the company of Sophia Western, only daughter of a neighbouring squire. Sophia falls in love with Tom, who is the soul of chivalry and has risked his life and limb more than once for her sake. He is entangled with a country wench, Molly Seagrim. Tom finds out later on that Molly was the seducer rather than the seduced; but having got her into trouble, he resigns himself to the prospect of marrying her if need be. The two families propose a match between Blifil and Sophia in order to unite the two estates. Tom is cast out penniless by Allworthy, and takes to the road several misfortunes later. Tom is discovered to be the son of Allworthy's sister. He is recognized as heir and married to Sophia.
- (iii) *Amelia* (1751) is Fielding's last novel and the portrayal of Amelia as an ideal of feminine goodness and forbearance is a tribute to his first wife. Booth is a military officer, out of employ, who married Amelia for love. He displays a singular lack of ability or prudence to look after his wife and children. Through all their misfortunes, Amelia remains steadfastly loyal to her husband and at the same time foils all attempts against her virtue. It is only through the intervention of their benefactor, Dr. Harrison, and the sudden recovery of a fortune which Amelia did not know was hers, that they escape ruin.

## Activity

Dear learner, the previous section familiarised you with the life and works of Henry Fielding. You can now make an assessment of your acquaintance with Henry Fielding's works by solving this exercise. Don't forget to check the Answer key to see if you have got the responses right!

1. Henry Fielding was born on \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Fielding was educated at \_\_\_\_\_ where he developed a lifelong love of Greek and Latin literature.
3. Fielding lampooned Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole and his government in the work \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Fielding's first satirical novel *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and His Friend Parson Adams* was written in response to Samuel Richardson's \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, considered Fielding's masterpiece was published in 1749.
6. In 1743, Fielding wrote the satirical work titled \_\_\_\_\_, which traced the career of an evil man to the gallows.
7. Fielding was divided between his work as a novelist and a \_\_\_\_\_ during his last years.
8. In *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1746), Tom Jones is the adopted son of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. In *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, Tom is honest and kind, while \_\_\_\_\_ is his opposite and is selfish and mean.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is Fielding's last novel, in which the ideal of feminine goodness and forbearance is a tribute to his first wife.

## Answers

1. April 22, 1707	2. Eton
3. "The Tragedy of Tragedies"	4. Pamela
5. Tom Jones	6. Jonathan Wild
7. jurist	8. Squire Allworthy
9. Blifil	10. Amelia

### 14.4 SOURCES OF JOSEPH ANDREWS

There are many sources for Fielding's first novel, his life in the country and in London; his reading in the romances and classics especially the epic, his experience as a journalist and as a satiric dramatist. *Don Quixote* by Cervantes also provided the inspiration for writing this novel and the character of Parson Adams is modelled on that of *Don Quixote*. But the immediate cause for the novel was Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740). It was published in two volumes as a series of letters by Pamela

Andrews to her mother. Pamela is a chaste young servant in the house of Squire B. After the death of her mistress, the Squire's mother, the young Squire tries to seduce Pamela for weeks together. At last worn out by her resistance, he makes an offer of marriage which Pamela promptly accepts. The book caught the public imagination and villages in the country rang church bells to celebrate Pamela's wedding. Fielding questioned the book's morality in an anonymous pamphlet *Shamela*. He parodied *Pamela* by turning the heroine into a prostitute who sets her cap for squire Booby. *Joseph Andrews* can be seen as full dress parody of *Pamela*.

#### 14.5 THE WORLD OF JOSEPH ANDREWS

The novel can appropriately be described as a document of 18th century English society. The England Fielding describes is a violent world of crime and social upheaval, war abroad and near anarchy at home, a divided church and a corrupt government under an autocratic Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. The middle class was growing in influence and its support to popular Literature would soon create the novel. But the vast majority of people lived in poverty and wealth, and power were concentrated in the hands of the landed aristocracy which was allied to Church and government. In London especially, the division between the rich and the poor bred crime, robbery, highwaymen, prostitutes and wholesale drunkenness. The other side of Fielding's picture was the rural England of pastoral beauty and predominantly agricultural. The road from Salisbury to London, on which Fielding travelled often fills his novels with images of peaceful farms and villages, manor houses and squires, inns, stage coaches and highwaymen. Like his hero Joseph Andrews, Fielding often escaped from the fashionable London society to the simplicity of the country.

The novel is a plea on behalf of the poor who are crushed by the world. In 18th century England, the wicked often triumph to the dismay of Adams, who believed in a virtuous humanity just as Don Quixote believed in a chivalrous one. If kindness is to be found sometimes, it is only among the poor and wretched. The postilion who will end up in the gallows and Betty the chambermaid, are the only ones who show Joseph any compassion.

Fielding and Richardson personify the two facets of England which were in collision with each other in 1740. Fielding was a writer who set out to amuse, while Richardson was a moralist whose aim was to instruct. Fielding typified the Old Merry England which laughs at the idea of a man who glories in chastity, takes pleasure in indecent jokes, he paints men who enjoy the good things of life. Richardson talks about the New England, religious, priggish, respectful of the established order, a little careful of what people say. Before Fielding no one had depicted the scene of life with its background and surroundings in perfect verisimilitude. As E.A. Baker puts it;

*It is Fieldings reading in  
the Book of Life, not the  
Book of the Life itself,  
that we are invited to pursue.*

## Let Us Revise

Dear learner, stop for some time before moving on to the next section. Quickly go through the points given below for a revision of the content that you have read in the previous sections:

- In writing *Joseph Andrews* Henry Fielding was influenced by his life in the countryside and London, his reading of romances and classics, as well as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.
- Fielding wrote *Joseph Andrews* as a parody to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* which became its immediate source.
- *Joseph Andrews* depicts the 18th century English society which was marked by crime, moral corruption, social upheaval, etc., and where wealth remained concentrated in hands of a few.
- The novel presents a contrast between the rich and the poor, as well as the city and the countryside.
- Fielding's contribution to literature lies in the way he depicted life with perfect verisimilitude.

### 14.6 OUTLINE OF THE STORY

The novel is divided into four books. Books I and IV tell the story of Joseph Andrews and Books II and III narrate the story of Parson Adams. Joseph is the brother of Pamela who is now married to Squire Booby. Joseph is employed as a footman at the house of Sir Thomas Booby and Lady Booby, who are related to Pamela's husband. Joseph admires his sister and resolves to emulate her chastity. After the death of Sir Thomas, Lady Booby moves with her household to London. Enamoured of Joseph's youth and good looks, Lady Booby tries to seduce him in the fashion that Squire B had tried to seduce Pamela. Joseph repels the overtures of his mistress and in a fit of anger she dismisses him. Joseph decides to return to his village where his sweetheart Fanny lives. He is robbed and beaten by highwaymen on the road and is brought half dead to an inn kept by Mr. and Mrs. Tow-wouse. Parson Adams accidentally arrives at the same inn.

Book II is centered on Adams who was on his way to London to sell nine volumes of his sermons. On discovering that he had forgotten to bring the sermons, he decided to return home with Joseph. They are joined by Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby's elderly maid, who had also cast amorous eyes on Joseph. Fanny, anxious about Joseph's welfare, has set out for London to meet him. She falls into the hands of a ruffian who tries to ravish her, but is rescued by Parson Adams. The trio, Adams Fanny and Joseph find themselves embroiled in one adventure after another.

In Book III they are joined by Mr. Wilson who tells them the story of his dissipations as a young man, and his retirement to the country. In Book IV all the main characters are brought together. Lady Booby wants to prevent the marriage of Fanny and Joseph. But her scheme is prevented by the visit of Pamela and Squire B. The plot takes a curious turn when Fanny and Joseph are discovered to be brother and sister. The appearance of Mr. Wilson resolves the issue because he recognizes Joseph to be his long lost son by the strawberry mark on his left breast. Parson Adams gets a small fortune, and Joseph and Fanny are married.

## 14.7 LET US SUM UP

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) was a British novelist and play wright. He was the son of Lieutenant General Edmund Fielding. His novels are comedic and satirical, fitting into the picaresque and mock-heroic genres. He was a satirist of political corruption. In all of his works, he helped to develop the English novel as a planned, realistic narrative genre surveying contemporary society. The deep influence of the county surroundings is apparent in his novels. He saw the village as the home of natural virtues and the city as the home of vice and corruption. His first major success was *Shamela*, an anonymously published parody of Samuel Richardson's novel, *Pamela*. Henry Fielding followed it a year later with even more successful novels such as *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*.

## 14.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. In which year was Henry Fielding born? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1707
  - b) 1709
  - c) 1708
  - d) 1710
2. He was born in an \_\_\_\_\_ family.
  - a) Upper
  - b) Aristocratic
  - c) Rich
  - d) Poor
3. His mother was the daughter of a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Landlord
  - b) Justice
  - c) Advocate
  - d) Judge
4. Fielding got his early education from the \_\_\_\_\_ chaplain.
  - a) family
  - b) priest
  - c) tutor
  - d) person
5. In the beginning, Fielding wrote some \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) novels
  - b) poems

- c) essays
- d) plays

6. In which year did he write *Joseph Andrews*?\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) 1739
- b) 1741
- c) 1742
- d) 1745

#### **14.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Who is Parson Adams?

Q.2 Comment on the character of Joseph.

#### **14.10 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. a)	2. b)	3. d)	4. a)
5. d)	6. c)		

#### **14.11 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Harper, Henry. *The Genius of Henry Fielding*, University Press of the Pacific, 2004.
- \* “Henry Fielding.” *British Literature Wiki*, University of Delaware, <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/henry-fielding>.
- \* Rawson, Claude Julien. *Henry Fielding: Playwright, Journalist, Majorette*. University of Delaware Press, 2008.

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**DETAILED SUMMARY OF *JOSEPH ANDREWS*****STRUCTURE**

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 15.3 Book I
- 15.4 Book II
- 15.5 Book III
- 15.6 Book IV
- 15.7 Bedroom Farce
- 15.8 Style
  - 15.8.1 Point of view
  - 15.8.2 Contrast
  - 15.8.3 Rhetorical attitude
  - 15.8.4 Style of *Joseph Andrews*
- 15.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.10 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 15.11 Examination Oriented Questions
- 15.12 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 15.13 Suggested Reading

**15.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Joseph Andrews* (1742) by Henry Fielding is a satirical novel about the adventures of a young footman named Joseph Andrews who is accompanied by a clergyman Parson Adams. Henry Fielding used the adventures of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams to satirise contemporary London society and exposes social and moral hypocrisy and class inequality.

**15.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the story of the novel *Joseph Andrews*. The lesson also aims to familiarise you with some of the important aspects of the novel, such as, point of view, contrast, rhetorical attitude, and style, etc.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to summarise the plot of the novel. You will be able to explain the various important events of the novel and their significance to the development of the plot. You will also be able to appreciate the stylistic aspects of the novel such as point of view and style of the novel.

### 15.3 BOOK I

Chapter I is about the writing of biography. Fielding talks about the autobiography of his contemporary Colley Cibber and about the story of Pamela Andrews. The authentic history of her brother Joseph is the subject of this novel.

Joseph is the son of Gaffar and Gammer Andrews. At the age of ten, he was apprenticed to Sir Thomas Booby (an uncle of Squire B, Pamela's husband), where he became an accomplished horseman. His good looks and physical strength attracted the attention of Lady Booby and she made him her footman. The curate Parson Adams is impressed by Joseph's knowledge of the scriptures and wants to instruct him in Latin. *Parson Adams* is modelled on *Don Quixote* and illustrates the contrast of innocent goodness in the midst of wordly corruption. Adams was a man of great learning," a man of good sense, good parts and good nature, but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of the world as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he never had any intention to deceive others, so he never suspected such a design in others. Lady Booby's maid, Mrs. Slipslop is a great comic creation whose mangled English is a ridiculous attempt to imitate her mistress, Lady Booby.

Lady Booby moves to London for the seasonal visit. Joseph adopts the fashionable airs of a dandy in London, but does not indulge in serious vices like swearing, gambling and drinking. Lady Booby flirted with Joseph and after the sudden death of her husband tried to seduce him. The action of the novel commences with the *Seduction Scene* which is the best example of Fielding's theory of the ridiculous. Lady Booby mourns her husband by retiring to her room for six days and playing cards. On the seventh day, she asks Joseph to bring her tea in bed and hints that she would allow him to be familiar with her, provided he kept it a secret. The contrast here is between the virtue that Lady Booby pretends to and the vice that is her real intention. Joseph, who is not fully accustomed to the fashionable lifestyle of London, thinks his mistress is demented because of her grief at the death of her husband. The hypocrisy of Lady Booby is contrasted with the simplicity of Joseph to reflect the basic moral idea of the novel, the vice of the city versus the virtue of the country.

After escaping from Lady Booby, Joseph is approached by Mrs. Slipslop in a farcical repetition of the Seduction Scene which reduces the mistress (Lady Booby) and the servant (Mrs. Slipslop) to the common level of vice. Lady Booby decides to dismiss Joseph. Mrs. Slipslop accuses him of making Betty the chambermaid pregnant. Lady Booby orders them both to be dismissed, she changes her mind several times and finally orders Joseph to her room. Under the guise of testing him, she offers familiarities to Joseph who rejects her because he is in love with Fanny.

Joseph is dismissed from service and starts his journey home. He is robbed, beaten, and left to die on the road. A stage coach comes by but the rich people in it refuse to help Joseph. It is the poor postilion who gives his coat to the naked Joseph: "he would rather ride in his shirt all his life, than suffer a fellow creature to lie in so miserable a condition." The Stagecoach Scene (chapter 12) offers a parallel to the Biblical Story of the Good Samaritan. At the inn, Mr. and Mrs. Tow-wouse wants to throw out Joseph as

he has no money, the poor maid Betty comes to his rescue. The arrival of Parson Adams allows Joseph to pay for his stay at the inn. The contrast between the selfish and self righteous Mrs. Tow-wouse and the generous but immoral Betty gives the message that charity does cover a multitude of sins. The innocent goodness of Adams is contrasted with the hypocrisy of Parson Barnabas.

#### 15.4 BOOK II

Chapter I is in the nature of a Prefatory essay, discussing the concept of unity and the division of a work into books and chapters. Since Parson Adams has forgotten his sermons at home, so he and Joseph began the return journey to the village by the mode of ride and tie i.e. one person will ride ahead on horseback then go on foot, leaving the horse tied for the other coming behind. Joseph is detained at the inn because Parson Adams has forgotten to pay the ostler for the horses board. So the two are separated and Adams becomes the focus of attention as the comic hero whose simple goodness serves to show up the evil and corruption of his society. Mrs. Slipslop rescues Joseph who continues the journey on horseback, while Adams is in the stage coach with Mrs. Slipslop. A lady in the coach narrates the story of the fickle Leonora, who jilts her devoted fiance Horatio, a poor but promising lawyer, for a French fortune hunter Bellarmine who, when he learns that her father will not provide a dowry, jilts her in turn, leaving her in disgrace to a life of solitary retirement. This digression caters to the taste of 18th century readers who saw digressions as an embellishment of the narrative especially if they had an obvious moral. The inconsistency of Leonora is contrasted with the constancy of Joseph and Fanny.

The story is interrupted by a fracas at an inn where Adams knocks out a rude inn keeper, his wife hurls a pan at the Parson and Mrs. Slipslop attacks her. After free for all the journey continues. Adams forgets the horse and starts walking, Joseph who is in the coach urges the driver to overtake Adams to remind him about the horse. Parson Adams thinks its a game and outruns the horse. He meets a gentleman shooting partridge who gives him a long lecture on bravery and patriotism, but when he hears the screams of a woman in distress, he runs away. Parson Adams armed only with a stick rushes to help the girl who turns out to be Fanny.

A group of bird-hunters comes along and the man, who has been pretending to be dead, accuses Parson Adams and Fanny of robbing him. They are hauled up before a judge, who is an ignorant fox-hunting squire and parades Fanny and Adams to the ridicule of his dinner guests. The mock trial satirises the judicial systems that ill-treated the innocent and allowed the guilty to escape. Someone in the crowd recognizes Adams, and he and Fanny are set free. Fanny and Joseph are reunited. Parson Adams goes to Parson Trulliber to borrow some money. The meeting between the two Parsons is a perfect moral exemplum i.e. (a story that exemplifies a lesson). Trulliber welcomes Parson Adams because he thinks he has come to buy his hogs. But when he realises Adams wants to borrow money, he calls him a beggar. Adams rebukes him with the words “whoever is void of charity, I make no scruple of pronouncing that he is no Christian.” When a clergyman refused to help Adams, a poor pedlar comes to his rescue and loans him some money. This is the same Pedlar who will reappear in Book IV to resolve the issue of Joseph’s birth. The trio, Fanny, Joseph and Parson Adams continue the journey. They arrive at an inn where the Squire of False Promises offers to help by paying for their board and lodging. The next day his servant informs Adams that his master has left on a long trip. The inn-keeper forgives them their debt and asks Adams not to be so gullible in future. Book II offers a series of comic contrasts between the naive and good Parson Adams and the selfish and bad people. The patriot, the judge, Trulliber and the Squire of False Promises.

## Activity

Dear learner, the previous sections gave you an overview of Book I and Book II of *Joseph Andrews*. You can now make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the plot of the novel by solving the exercise given below before moving to the summary of the next two books.

1. Joseph Andrews is the son of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Andrews.
2. Joseph's good looks attracted the attention of \_\_\_\_\_ who made him her footman.
3. The character of \_\_\_\_\_ is modelled on Don Quixote and represents innocent goodness in a world of moral corruption.
4. Lady Booby's maid, \_\_\_\_\_ is a comic character known for her ridiculous attempt to imitate her mistress' speech.
5. The stagecoach scene in chapter 12 parallels the Biblical story of the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ approaches Joseph after he escapes from Lady Booby, and creates a farcical repetition of the Seduction Scene.
7. The poor \_\_\_\_\_ helps Joseph and gives him his coat when he is robbed and left to die on the road.
8. Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews begin their return journey to the village because Parson Adams forgot his \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The story of \_\_\_\_\_ is a digression in the narrative, showing her jilting her fiancé for a fortune hunter.
10. The judicial system is satirized in the novel, through a mock trial in which \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are paraded before an ignorant judge.

## Answers

1. Gaffer, Gammer	2. Lady Booby	3. Parson Adams	4. Mrs. Slipslop
5. Good Samaritan	6. Mrs. Slipslop	7. Postillion	8. sermons
9. Leonora	10. Parson Adams, Fanny		

## 15.5 BOOK III

Like the previous two books this book also begins with a prefatory essay on how the biographer by the representation of universal truth aims at reforming society. The chapter discusses Aristotle's distinction between the artist who deals with universals and the historian who deals with particulars. Fielding applies to his work the neoclassical theory of comedy, "I describe not men but manners not an Individual but a Species."

The trio is back on the road to continue their picaresque journey. Darkness overtakes them and they wander for some time before they knock at a cottage and are taken in by a kindly couple. After the ladies retire, Adams tells their host, Mr. Wilson, of their adventures on the road. The second major digression of the novel begins when Mr. Wilson narrates the story of his life. He comes from a good family and has a liberal education. At sixteen, his father dies leaving him a moderate fortune to be received at twenty five, a point which he foolishly allows the trustees to contest. He goes to London to become a man-about town

and dissipates his inheritance in gambling, drinking and womanising. He buys a lottery ticket but sells it for bread and eventually finds himself in debtor's prison. There he receives a letter from Harriet Hearty, a beautiful and virtuous woman, he has secretly loved for long. She writes that her father who died the day of the lottery, leaving her his fortune, had bought the ticket and hearing of his penury, she encloses two hundred pounds. After his release, he marries Harriet and retires to the country. His eldest son was stolen by gypsies when he was only three. The child had a strawberry birthmark.

Like the digression of Leonora, the Wilson episode is a moral example and a pastoral idyll in which the simple virtues of the country are extolled in contrast to the corruption of the artificial life in the city. The Wilson episode is closer in its thematic relationship to the rest of the novel than the story of Leonora for two reasons. Firstly, it is designed as a key to the meaning of the whole novel, in its contrast of innocent goodness and wordly corruption. Secondly, the story of the stolen child, which is contained in this episode, will help in the resolution of the plot in Book IV.

The trio resumes their journey after enjoying the hospitality of the Wilsons for a night. They stop for lunch and find that Mr. Wilson has kept a piece of gold in it. Parson Adams says he will repay Mr. Wilson's generosity when he passes through their village in a week or two. By planting these minute details Fielding is hinting at the close connection between the Wilson episode and the resolution of the main plot. Adams and Joseph enter into an argument on the relative merits of private tuition and public school education. Adams considers public schools as nurseries of all vice and immorality and blames Mr. Wilson's misfortunes on his education. Joseph argues that a public school prepared a boy for the world and points out that Sir Thomas Booby, a public school product, was a fine person. Joseph's independent judgement demonstrates an equal if not superior understanding and a growing maturity of character. The dispute reveals Adams' blind side, which was that the school master was the greatest of men and he was the greatest schoolmaster.

While they are resting, a hunting pack chasing a hare overruns them. The dogs attack Parson Adams and Joseph jumps to his rescue armed with a cudgel. Fielding tries to disguise the crude slapstick of the action by casting it in the mock heroic mould or what he describes as "burlesque in the diction." Mock epic is a respected form of a parody in which the elevated, artificial style of classical verse is imitated in the description of some insignificant object or action, the resulting disparity making the event ridiculous.

The Squire, who owns the hunting dogs, invites the trio for dinner. This episode is analogous to Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*, in which various kinds of fools are gathered together or described, to demonstrate the varieties of human folly. The Squire of Fools and his friends play all sorts of practical jokes on Adams. He is finally ducked in a tub, but he ducks the squire in turn.

Leaving the Squire's house they put up at an inn, where Parson Adams and a disguised priest express their contempt for riches, and both discover that they are penniless. The Squire's gang attacks them and tie up Joseph and Adams and abduct Fanny. Joseph is distraught and Adams tries to comfort him with a sermon on submission to Providence. Fanny is rescued by Peter Pounce, Lady Booby's steward and is reunited with the Parson and Joseph.

## 15.6 BOOK IV

The final book of the novel opens without a prefatory essay. Lady Booby arrives at the village still enamoured of Joseph. At church, she hears the banns of marriage for Joseph and Fanny announced. She

threatens to remove the Parson, if he does not desist from publishing the banns but Adams refuses to do so. Lawyer Scout assures Lady Booby that he will use the law to prevent Joseph's marriage. Mr. Booby and Pamela arrive just in time to save Joseph and Fanny from being sentenced to prison for cutting a twig in a field owned by Lawyer Scout. Pamela objects to Joseph's marriage because Fanny is much lower in social status: "she was my equal but, I am now this gentleman's lady and as such are above her." With this incomparable stroke, Fielding completes his demolition of Richardson's priggish heroine. Parson Adams refuses Joseph's impatient plea for immediate marriage and lectures him on submission to Providence but when he hears that his little son has drowned he will not be comforted by Joseph. But his son is saved by the poor pedlar and he resumes his lecture. The stage is now set for the denouement i.e., the resolution of all the tangled relationships of the plot. The pedlar informed Adams that his common-law wife on her deathbed had made a confession that she had stolen a baby girl from a couple named Andrews and sold her to Thomas Booby. After the pedlar repeats his story before Lady Booby she invites everyone to stay the night at Booby Hall.

## Activity

Dear learner, it is time to take another break! The preceding sections familiarised you with the summary of Book III and Book IV of *Joseph Andrews*. You can check your progress by answering the questions provided below.

1. Book \_\_\_\_\_ begins with a prefatory essay on how the biographer, by representing universal truth aims at reforming society.
2. Fielding applies the neoclassical theory of comedy, stating, "I describe not men but \_\_\_\_\_, not an individual but a \_\_\_\_\_."
3. Mr. Wilson's story is a moral example, contrasting the virtues of the \_\_\_\_\_ with the corruption of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The story of the stolen child in Mr. Wilson's narrative helps in the resolution of the plot in Book \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Adams and Joseph debate the merits of private and public education, with Adams criticizing \_\_\_\_\_ schools for nurturing vice.
6. Fielding uses the mock heroic style in describing the attack on \_\_\_\_\_ by the hunting dogs.
7. Fanny is rescued by \_\_\_\_\_, who is Lady Booby's steward.
8. The final book of *Joseph Andrews* opens without a \_\_\_\_\_ essay.
9. At church, Lady Booby hears the banns of marriage for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ assures Lady Booby that he will use the law to prevent Joseph's marriage.

## Answers

1. III	2. manners, species	3. country, city	4. IV
5. public	6. Parson Adams	7. Peter Pounce	8. prefatory
9. Joseph, Fanny	10. Lawyer Scout		

## 15.7 BEDROOM FARCE

It deals with the Bedroom Farce, which begins with Beau Didapper's attempt to ravish Fanny, who is frustrated when he mistakenly ends up in Mrs. Slipslop's bed. To prove her chastity to her mistress, Slipslop makes an uproar, holding fast to the struggling Beau. Parson Adams in the next room, jumps out of bed and wearing only his nightcap, rushes in, and in the darkness lays hold of Mrs. Slipslop, thereby allowing Didapper to escape. Adams, convinced he had hold of a witch, wrestles with her until Lady Booby arrives with a candle to find him holding Slipslop fast by the hair. Parson Adams is reviled by Lady Booby until she sees some diamond buttons and a piece of lace shirt and surmising the truth, sends him back to bed. Adams takes the wrong turn and ends up in Fanny's room and quietly climbs into bed with her. When Joseph comes in the morning, he is amazed and so is Fanny, to find the Parson in her bed. Adams claiming he has been bewitched, finally explains the whole affair.

Gaffar and Gammer Andrews arrive. Mrs. Andrews says their little girl was stolen, but a sickly boy who is Joseph was placed in her stead. When her husband returned from the army, she did not tell him because he was so pleased to see Joseph. The Pedlar asks the Andrew couple if the child had a strawberry mark, to which they replied he did and Joseph proceeds to show it. Mr. Wilson walks in just then and claims Joseph as his long lost son. Joseph and Fanny are married by Parson Adams, who is the new curate of Pamela's parish. Lady Booby returns to London where the company of a young Captain quickly makes her forget Joseph. Fielding's resolution is logical but depends on the contrivance of the wildest kind of coincidence. He used the plot merely as a vehicle for the comic idea.

## 15.8 STYLE

It is said that style is meaning and meaning is style, which means the way in which something is said, affects the meaning of what is said. The French critic Buffon said, "The style, cest l'homme meme" i.e. style is the man. Diction: means the use of language; the choice of words and how they are combined. e.g. In *Huckleberry Finn*, the language is colloquial, but in *Joseph Andrews*, there was a general revival of Latinate language which distinguished the speech of educated people from the lower classes, who used Anglo-Saxon words, e.g. Mrs. Slipslop tries to mimic upper class speech.

**15.8.1 Point of View** : is the specific angle from which the narrative is presented. Huck is the narrator of *Huckleberry Finn*, so the story is told from his angle, from the first-person or "I" point of view. In *Joseph Andrews*, the narrator is the omniscient narrator (Fielding) who is all-seeing, all-knowing, and moves at will from one character and location to another. The former is more subjective, being restricted to a single character, and the latter, being unrestricted is more objective. A combination of these two, in the third person but restricted to the view of one character, is called single or restricted consciousness. In this, the entire narrative is viewed through the consciousness of a single character, usually the central figure or more rarely several successively. This gives it the effect of immediate participation in the action, but it is grammatically in the third person and lends a sense of objectivity or distance by using he/she instead of "I". So point of view enables the writer to establish the narrator's distance from the narrated event, and thereby affect the reader's reaction.

**15.8.2 Contrast** : or antithesis is the placing of two unlike things in juxtaposition, thereby pointing up their difference, which speaks for itself. The contrast can be between characters, actions or even

places, eg. contrast between city and country in *Joseph Andrews* or river and shore in *Huckleberry Finn*. There can be structural contrasts, in which one section of the work can be juxtaposed with another eg. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to represent the development of the hero's consciousness.

Contrast is so universal in *Joseph Andrews* and so vital to the concept of the ridiculous, that examples of it range from complete reversals within a sentence to successive scenes or episodes, to whole sections of the novel; from the simplest, between places or persons, to the most complex, between what people think their motives are and their actions show them to be. Contrasts multiply, appearing on every page, making the narrative scene an endless repetition of the same pattern.

**15.8. Rhetorical attitude :** is not just inflated or employing fancy figures or speech, but it simply means the art of composing or putting together. Thus, the author not only has a certain attitude towards his material, but he puts it together in such a way that it is communicated to the reader. So Fielding's "comic detachment" (expressed by his objectivity, his satiric contrasts and ironic tone) is communicated to the reader, who more readily perceives the ridiculous aspect of human folly.

**15.8.4 Style of *Joseph Andrews* :** Despite a tendency to Latinate words and long allusive sentences in neoclassical prose, Fielding's diction is forceful, direct and colloquial. The most vital element in Fielding's diction is his mastery of realistic dialogue.

Fielding uses the third basic mode of point of view i.e. the omniscient author. Like an all knowing deity, he speaks in the third person, moving from place to place and in and out of the consciousness of the characters at will. At time he does use "I" but that is done to reinforce the impression that he is recording a true history.

### Let Us Revise

Learner, stop for a minute! Go through the points given below for a quick revision of the previous sections:

- In *Joseph Andrews* educated characters use Latinate language, while lower-class characters use Anglo-Saxon words.
- In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding has made use of an omniscient narrator, which maintains objectivity in the narrative.
- Fielding uses contrast by juxtaposing two things, such as characters, actions, settings, etc., to highlight their difference.
- Fielding shows "comic detachment" through objectivity, satiric contrasts, and ironic tone,.
- Fielding's diction in *Joseph Andrews* is forceful, direct, and colloquial.

## 15.9 LET US SUM UP

*The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams* or *Joseph Andrews* was written by Henry Fielding and published in 1742 as a comic epic poem in prose. The novel is one of the first in English, encompassing many principles of the Augustan age. In this age, literature particularly satire was viewed as a means of instruction and observation was considered the best way to learn about human nature. The novel is similar in style to Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, as the main characters embark on a journey full of slapstick comedy. *Joseph Andrews* flips 18th century ideas of sexuality and virtue upside down. Henry Fielding shows that charity and virtue lead to true contentment and blessings from God, while selfishness and lust lead to nothing.

## 15.10 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who is the hero of the novel *Joseph Andrews*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Joseph
  - b) Mr. Booby
  - c) Parson Adams
  - d) Mr. Wilson
2. Who is Joseph's virtuous sister? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Pamela Andrews
  - b) Betty
  - c) Lady Booby
  - d) Fanny
3. Who is the steward of Lady Booby? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Peter Pounce
  - b) Mr. Tow-Wouse
  - c) Mr. Abraham Adams
  - d) Joseph
4. Besides Lady Booby, her servant also seduces Joseph. What is her name? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Betty
  - b) Lady Booby
  - c) Mrs. Slipslop
  - d) Pamela

5. "He was generous, friendly and brave to an excess; but simplicity was his characteristic." This line is about \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Parson Adams
- b) Joseph
- c) Mr. Wilson
- d) Betty

6. Who is the widow of Sir Thomas Booby? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Lady Booby
- b) Betty
- c) Slipslop
- d) None of these

7. The honest priest and schoolmaster is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Booby
- b) Mr. Wilson
- c) Mr. Abraham Adams
- d) Joseph

8. "The only source of the true ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation." Where does this line appear? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Tom Jones
- b) Joseph Adrews
- c) Pamela
- d) Shamela

9. Who supports Joseph in his determination to Marry Fanny? \_\_\_\_\_,

- a) Mr. Abraham Adams
- b) Lady Booby
- c) Mrs. Slipslop
- d) Mr. Wilson

10. Joseph turns out to be the lost son of \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) the Wilson family
- b) the Andrews family
- c) the Pamela family
- d) None of these

11. To whom does Lady Booby seduces? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Joseph Andrews
- b) Adams
- c) Fanny
- d) Wilson

12. Joseph has a distinctive birth-mark on his \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) chest
- b) thigh
- c) cheeks
- d) forehead

13. Fanny Goodwill is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) a milmaid
- b) a lady with high ambition
- c) a reputed lady of high society
- d) None of these

14. Whom does Joseph Andrews love? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Fanny Goodwill
- b) Betty
- c) Lady Booby
- d) Mrs. Slipslop

15. The pen name of Henry Fielding is \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Captain Hercules Vinegar
- b) Captain Hermes Vinegar
- c) Captain Homer Vinegar
- d) None of these

16. Whose sister is Sarah, a successful writer? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Richardson
- b) Dickens
- c) Fielding
- d) Hardy

## 15.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1 Answer briefly in about (50 words):

- (a) Picaresque Novel.
- (b) Parson Trulliber.
- (c) Mrs. Slipslop.
- (d) History of Mr. Wilson.
- (e) Parody.
- (f) Parson Adam's encounter with the Patriot. (*See Lesson 15*)

Q.2 How is *Joseph Andrews* a critique of social hypocrisy?

## 15.12 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. a)	2. a)	3. a)	4. c)
5. a)	6. a)	7. c)	8. b)
9. a)	10. c)	11. a)	12. a)
13. a)	14. a)	15. a)	16. c)

## 15.13 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Black, Jeremy. *Charting the Past: The Historical Worlds of Eighteenth –Century England*. Cambridge UP, 2014.
- \* “Joseph Andrews: Analysis of Major Characters.” *EBSCO Research Starters*, EBSCO, 2021, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/literature-and-writing/joseph-andrews-analysis-major-characters>.
- \* “Joseph Andrews Study Guide.” *Rephrasely*, <https://rephrasely.com/guides/joseph-andrews-study-guide>.

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**FIELDING'S THEORY OF COMEDY****STRUCTURE**

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 16.3 Comic epic poem in prose
  - 16.3.1 His use of mock-heroic
- 16.4 Digressions in the novel
  - 16.4.1 In the history of Leonora
  - 16.4.2 In the history of Mr. Wilson
  - 16.4.3 The history of Leonard and Paul
- 16.5 Universality of Fielding's Theory of Comedy
- 16.6 Theme of the novel is ridicule of all human imperfections which can be overcome by charity
- 16.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.8 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 16.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 16.10 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 16.11 Suggested Reading

**16.1 INTRODUCTION**

Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* is a comic epic in prose as in the text, the structure and characteristics of an epic poem are used but they are combined with the elements of comedy such as humour and light-heartedness, and they are presented in prose and not in verse. In this novel, digressions are not mere interruptions but they play a fundamental role in enriching the social and moral critique offered in the novel and also add a layer of humour to the narrative.

## 16.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to Henry Fielding's theory of comedy. The lesson also aims to familiarise you with the concept of comic epic in prose, its features, and digressions etc.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to explain Fielding's comedic style which includes the use of humour, wit, and satire. You will also be able to define the term comic epic in prose and identify its key characteristics. Further, you will also analyse how digressions are used in the novel to enrich the narrative.

## 16.3 COMIC EPIC POEM IN PROSE

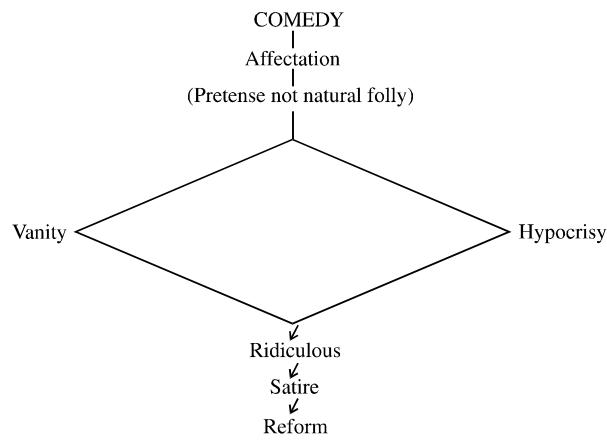
In the Author's preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding has described his kind of writing as a comic epic poem in prose. He says this kind of writing has not yet been attempted in English. Like Aristotle in *the Poetics*, Fielding says his kind of writing like the epic can be both comic and tragic, and furthermore, either in verse or prose.

His comic romance differs from the comic drama as the serious epic does from tragic drama. It has more complex as well as longer incidents and a greater variety of characters. Its 'fable' (plot) and action are light and ridiculous rather than serious; its characters are persons of inferior rank (ordinary people) rather than aristocratic or heroic figures. Its sentiments and diction are ludicrous and amusing rather than sublime and inspiring. Why was Fielding constrained to compare his novel to Homer's comic epic *Margites*? For two reasons, first, in 1741 there was no other example except with the epic which to compare his idea of a novel. Secondly, he was claiming for this new kind of literature the same respect accorded the epic, in an age which worshipped the classics, but regarded narrative fiction as an inferior form of literature. Since the epic was the first example of a narrative form on a large scale, Fielding tried to establish the novel as a continuation of a very old and honoured narrative tradition. Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson rejected the epic as a literary model because it tended to turn history into fable and romance and exhibited manners and morals, which were alien to a peace loving society. But Fielding was steeped in the classical tradition and said no author should be admitted into the order of critics, until he has read Aristotle, Horace and Longinus.

Why does he call the novel a poem when it is written in prose? Because his novel is not a mere transcription of society, but a particular version of reality seen through the focus of his comic vision, therefore, he calls it a poem. The remaining 5/6 of the Preface is devoted to Fielding's theory of comedy. Firstly, his novel is not meant to be a parody or burlesque but truly comic, i.e. it dealt with the ridiculous (truly laughable) aspects of life. The Neoclassical theory of comedy aims to reform society by exposing folly. It seeks to create a universal representative figure so true to life that mankind will recognize itself and its folly and be moved to reform itself.

To hold the glass to thousands in their closets that they may contemplate their deformity, endeavour to remove it, suffer private mortification and may avoid public shame.

Fielding says the only true source of the ridicule is affectation or pretense. Affectation arises from vanity or hypocrisy. The former affects a character in order to gain applause, the latter covers vice, pretending to its opposite, virtue. The discovery of affectation strikes the reader with surprise and pleasure which leads to the ridiculous or funny since hypocrisy provides a stronger surprise than vanity, so it is more ridiculous and needs to be satirised more. Natural folly is not the subject of ridicule but affected folly is e.g. we would not laugh at a poor crippled beggar but if the same figure descended from a fancy coach we would. “Vanity puts us on affecting false characters, in order to purchase applause; so hypocrisy sets us on an endeavour to avoid censure, by concealing our vices under an appearance of their opposite virtues.”



Fielding is at pains to clarify that his novel as an example of comic writing, is not to be classified as romance or burlesque. Fielding deprecates any mixture of the comic and the burlesque because the two species of writing are vastly different, what caricature is in painting, burlesque is in writing. Burlesque is the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural and our delight arises from “appropriating the manners of the highest to the lowest or converso.” But comedy confines itself “strictly to nature from the just imitation of which, will flow all pleasure.”

Fielding declares, “I describe not men, but manners, not an individual, but a species.” He draws a distinction between a satirist who aims to reform society by showing people their shortcomings and a libeller whose intention is to vilify and cast aspersions on people. Nature provides the comic writer with all he requires, life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous.” He further says, “scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observation and experience.” Even though the characters are drawn directly from actual people, Fielding has camouflaged them in various ways so that it is difficult to guess their real identity. Fielding reiterates the basic 18th century aesthetic that art should deal with timeless universals (types) not individuals. It should satirise general behaviour with the object of correcting faults.

In the prefatory chapter of the 1st Book of the novel, Fielding states that the example of a good man is better than a good book. If the biography of a good man is recorded, it instructs and entertains. Tongue in check he lists *An Apology for the life of Colley Cibber Comedian* (1740) and *Pamela or Virtue*

*Rewarded* (1741) as admirable examples of good behaviour. So he created Parson Adams the good man whose goodness and simplicity by contrast reveals the vanity and hypocrisy of the world. In an epic, the nature of conflict is heroic as the hero battles the forces of evil, but in *Joseph Andrews* the conflict is social between the goodness of the hero Parson Adams and the corruption of society represented by Lady Booby and others like her.

Since, Fielding was writing a comic variant of the epic, he could not imitate its two component parts, characters and sentiments. Heroic sentiments and sublime thoughts had no place in *Joseph Andrews*. But some aspects of the epic plot and diction could be used in burlesque form. So he introduced characteristic features of the epic plot in a comic context by

**16.3.1 His use of mock-heroic** i.e. use of the elevated epic style in an ironic manner to mock at contemporary subject matter e.g. Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and John Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*.

Fielding's use of the mock heroic is at variance with the dictates of formal realism and with the life of his times. Either because the events themselves are inherently improbable (e.g. Joseph's fight with the hounds who are attacking Parson Adams) or because they are narrated in such a way as to deflect our attention from the events themselves, to the way that Fielding is handling them and to the epic parallels involved. Such episodes would be quite unacceptable if Fielding directed our attention wholly to the action and feelings of the participants and it is only his burlesque manner and his Homeric style, that enables him to maintain the comic note. When he states in the Preface that he had admitted parody and burlesque in his diction for the entertainment of the classical reader, but has excluded them from his characters and sentiments because he wants to confine himself to an imitation of nature. By implication, Fielding is admitting that the direct imitation of the epic was in opposition to the imitation of nature. Lord Monboddo, Fielding's contemporary said "Fielding's abandonment of his simple and familiar style impaired the probability of the narrative which ought to be carefully studied in all imitations of real life and manners."

Fielding's increasingly serious moral outlook convinced him of the insufficiency of his earlier views of affectation as the only source of the ridiculous and therefore of comedy. Like Defoe, he began to regard Homer and other as corrupters of historical truth. His last novel *Amelia* is wholly serious in moral purpose and narrative manner and the analogy with Virgil's *Aeneid* does not detract from the veracity of the novel. Fielding eventually came to see his own society as offering sufficient interest and variety to make possible a literary genre of its own. Though he did not live long enough to embody his reorientation in another novel, he realised that the application of the epic analogy had been responsible for his obvious divergence from the role of a faithful historian. According to Ian Watt, the influence of the epic on Fielding was very slight, mainly retrograde and of little importance to the later tradition of the novel.

## Activity

Dear learner, before moving on to the next section, you can check your progress by solving the exercise given below.

1. Fielding compares *Joseph Andrews* to the comic epic \_\_\_\_\_ of Homer.
2. Fielding calls his novel a \_\_\_\_\_, despite it being written in prose.
3. Fielding distinguishes his comic writing from \_\_\_\_\_ because comedy confines itself to nature and the burlesque exhibits the unnatural.
4. In his preface, Fielding mentions that the biography of a good man is more instructive than a good \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Fielding introduces \_\_\_\_\_ as someone whose goodness and simplicity contrasts with the vanity and hypocrisy of the world.
6. Fielding uses the genre of \_\_\_\_\_ to parody the elevated style of the epic in order to mock contemporary society.
7. In his later work, Fielding's moral outlook grew more serious, and he began to regard the works of \_\_\_\_\_ as corrupters of historical truth.

### Answers:

1. Margites	2. poem	3. burlesque	4. book
5. Parson Adams	6. mock-heroic	7. Homer	

## 16.4 DIGRESSIONS IN THE NOVEL

In Renaissance and 18<sup>th</sup> century literature, digressions and interpolations were used for variety, change of pace or as indirect commentary on the main narrative. Fielding has used three digressions in the novel. The Mr. Wilson episode (Book III, chapter 3) is a major digression and has a direct bearing on the denouement of the novel. The history of Leonara (Book II, chapters 4 and 6) and that of Paul and Leonard (Book IV, chapter 10) are the other two digressions.

There is an obvious relationship between Fielding's theory of the ridiculous and the three main digressions. All the three are referred to as "histories" for the sake of convenience, but are quite distinct from one another. They are all digressive in the sense that the action of each stands completely apart from the action of Joseph Andrews, even though, there are attempts to establish parallels with each in the main narrative. Moreover, each of the three digressions could be considered variant illustrations of the theme of the ridiculous, which is the focus of Fielding's theory of comedy.

**16.4.1 In the History of Leonora**, it is obviously Leonara's vanity that leads her to jilt Horatio in favour of Bellarmine, and then fear of being mocked that prevents her from attempting a reconciliation, that Horatio would no doubt have gladly accepted. In this instance, Bellarmine's hypocrisy combined with her vanity leads to her self-destruction.

**16.4.2 In the History of Mr. Wilson**, the classical theme of *Vanitas Vanitatum* (found in Juvenal) associated with the corruption of London society is the focus of the episode. When Parson Adams asks the

reason that a man of sense could possibly devote himself to such folly, Mr. Wilson answered because of vanity.

**16.4.3 The History of Leonard and Paul** is more an anecdote than a history, the vain assumption on the part of one friend who is unmarried that he can improve the relationship of his married friend and his wife with impunity is the height of folly.

So each of the main digressions from the main plot of *Joseph Andrews* is clearly related to and in fact serves to exemplify the thematic idea of the ridiculous. Conversely, if this idea is the unifying concept, as Fielding intended it to be, then why are these episodes excluded from this unity? They are no less necessary to the action e.g. Parson Adams interview with Parson Trulliber which is not digressive simply because it involves Parson Adams. The relationship of the Trulliber episode to the plot is thematic, as is the relationship of the three so called digressions. So these three episodes definitely as thematic parallels give a greater depth to the total impression by reminding us of the universal presence of the ridiculous.

### Activity

Learner, it's time to take another break. The previous section gave you an overview of the digressions in the novel. Now check you progress by trying to solve the exercise given below by stating whether the given statements are true or false.

1. *Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding employs digressions which serve as indirect commentary on the main narrative. (True/False)
2. The history of Mr. Wilson in Book III has no bearing on the denouement of the novel. (True/False)
3. The story of Leonora is about her self-destruction and vanity. (True/False)
4. The History of Leonard and Paul is directly related to the action of the main narrative. (True/False)
5. The History of Mr. Wilson explored the theme of vanity and the corruption of London society. (True/False)
6. The three digressions in Joseph Andrews are not in any way related to the thematic idea of the ridiculous. (True/False)

#### Answers:

1. True	2. False	3. True	4. False
5. True	6. False		

## 16.5 UNIVERSALITY OF FIELDING'S THEORY OF COMEDY

For Fielding, the only source of the ridiculous (Laughable or comic) is affectation. But he also says that affectation becomes ridiculous because of the incongruity between what the pretender pretends to be and what he really is. Though Fielding limits the manifestation of this basic incongruity to its social impression in vanity and hypocrisy, he is hinting at the universal truth of great comedy i.e. the disparity between illusion and reality.

In the Preface, he says, it may be objected that he has not restricted himself to the laughable aspects of vanity and hypocrisy but has also introduced vices into the story. He defends himself by stating that, “it is very difficult to pursue a series of human actions and keep clear of them (Vices)” It is the result of the vice that is the object of ridicule rather than the vice which should not be ridiculed but detested.

Despite the restrictions of this theory (affectation as the only source of ridiculous), Fielding was able to perceive the true spirit of comedy and demonstrated it in practice in *Joseph Andrews*. Following the example of *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, Fielding created Parson Adams and used his simplicity to unmask the pretensions of society. The best way to reveal the incongruous is to juxtapose opposites e.g. Adams meets a braggart who gives him a long lecture on courage, but when Adams asks him to respond to a cry for help by a woman in distress, he turns tail and runs. This pattern of contrast between Parson Adams’ goodness and the pretensions of others is employed by Fielding in endless variations.

But Adams is not just used to reveal the ridiculous in others, he is in himself, the sum of the idea of the ridiculous and such is universal. He is wise, noble and brave, and as blind as a bat when it comes to recognizing hypocrisy in people. He thinks knowledge of human beings is to be learned only from books. He lectures Joseph on the philosophical acceptance of grief, and when he thinks his son is dead is inconsolable. In Adams, we laugh not at vanity and hypocrisy, but at the universal contradictions of humanity. We laugh because it is so incongruous that imperfection should exist with such nobility but we also laugh because it is true. Fielding started from his limited theory of affectation, but went beyond it to the universal spirit of comedy by creating a character like Parson Adams.

## 16.6 THEME OF THE NOVEL IS RIDICULE OF ALL HUMAN IMPERFECTIONS WHICH CAN BE OVERCOME BY CHARITY

Plot	Continuity of Action	Conflict	Theme
<b>Beginning cause of Journey</b>	Joseph incurs displeasure of Lady Booby.  Joseph on Journey on foot, robbed and beaten, forced to rely on charity of others, stage coach and Tow-Wouse inn.	Social Difference  Social inferiority emphasised by lack of money; leads to appeal to social superiors for help; help provided by inferiors (postilion and chamber maid).	Ridicule  Ridicule of hypocrisy arising from Vice. Ridicule of hypocrisy and vanity in variant forms of lack of charity, snobbery and greed.
<b>Middle Difficulties on Journey</b>	Joseph with Fanny and Adams, robbed and assaulted; asked help from those who should give it.	Lack of money, innocence and helplessness in face of superior wealth and power; accidental rescue by charity of few social inferiors (Pedlar and Wilson) and Superior (Peter Pounce) for hypocritical reasons.	Ridicule especially of the pretense of the powerful (including re-presentatives of aristocracy, Law and the Church) that they give Justice to poor.
<b>End Aftermath</b>	Joseph’s and Fanny’s marriage interfered with and Parson Adams intimated by Lady Booby with aid of false justice and pretentious relatives.	Rank and power in service of vice intimidate the powerless, who are rescued by accidental removal of social differences.	Ridicule—especially of affectation of virtue commensurate with social advantages.

## 16.7 LET US SUM UP

Henry Fielding in his novel *Joseph Andrews* uses the term ‘comic epic-poem in prose’ to emphasize that an epic can be written in prose, and this novel has epic qualities. He aims to distinguish his novel from lighter comedies, which he classifies as burlesque. While the traditional or classical epic was written in poetry, Fielding does not regard that as a defining characteristic. He believes that prose can be equally well suited to the purpose of the epic, which is vast in scope, characters and themes. Although Fielding limits the manifestation of this basic incongruity to its social impression in vanity and hypocrisy, he is hinting at the universal truth of great comedy i.e. the disparity between illusion and reality.

## 16.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Which form of narrative was the first example on a large scale in the literature? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Novel
  - b) Play
  - c) Epic
  - d) Comedy
2. According to Fielding, which is the only source of the ridicule is\_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Affectation
  - b) Surprise
  - c) Pleasure
  - d) Grief
3. Which of the following writers rejected the epic as a literary form of literature? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Daniel Defoe
  - b) Samuel Richardson
  - c) Samuel Johnson
  - d) Both a and b
4. Who used the term comic epic poem in prose?\_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Daniel Defoe
  - b) Henry Fielding
  - c) Samuel Richardson
  - d) Alexander Pope

5. Who declares, “I describe not men, but manners, not an individual, but a Species.” \_\_\_\_\_?

- a) Joseph Addison
- b) Samuel Johnson
- c) Henry Fielding
- d) Aristotle

### **16.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss in detail *Joseph Andrews* as a comic epic in prose.

Q.2 The theme of the novel is to ridicule human imprefections which can be over come by charity. Discuss.

Q.3 Joseph Andrews’ innocence is contrasted with the sexual immorality of Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop.

Q.4 The good clergyman Parson Adams contrasted with bad clergyman like Parson Barnabas and Parson Trulliber.

Q.5 Adam’s wisdom and nobility contrasted with his own vanity and folly.

### **16.10 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

- 1. c)
- 2. a)
- 3. d)
- 4. b)
- 5. c)

### **16.11 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Bell, Michael. *The Cambridge Companion to European Novelists*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- \* Maver, Michael. *Cliffsnotes on Fielding’s Joseph Andrews*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2001.
- \* “The Comic Epic in Prose: Structure and Style.” *Fiveable*, Fiveable, Sept. 2025, <https://fiveable.me/literature-in-english-late-17th-to-mid-19th-century/unit-7/comic-epic-prose-structure-style/study-guide/zWypmbP6S5lLXfpI>.

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## **THE MORAL BASIS OF JOSEPH ANDREWS**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 17.3 The theme of charity and chastity
- 17.4 Comparative study of the roles of Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews
- 17.5 Is the development of Joseph Andrews' Character incomplete?
- 17.6 Character of Parson Adams
- 17.7 Art of characterisation
- 17.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 17.10 Examination Oriented Questions
- 17.11 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 17.12 Suggested Reading

#### **17.1 INTRODUCTION**

Henry Fielding's art of characterisation is a key element in serving the broader goals of social critique in the novel. Characters are created with the intention to expose human folly and moral hypocrisy. The themes of charity and chastity are used by Henry Fielding to expose the social hypocrisy and moral corruption.

#### **17.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to introduce the learner to Henry Fielding's art of characterisation in the novel *Joseph Andrews*. The lesson also attempts to acquaint the learner with an important theme in the novel, that is, the theme of charity and chastity.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to appreciate Henry Fielding's art of characterisation by analysing the characters of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams. You will also be able to explain the motivations behind their actions and how their growth and development takes place and acquaint yourself

to critically evaluate the theme of charity and chastity and analyse its importance in achieving the broader goals of social critique.

### 17.3 THE THEME OF CHARITY AND CHASTITY

Fielding's views on human nature generally correspond to that of the Latitudinarian philosophers like Benjamin Hoadley and Isaac Barrow. Good nature represented by charity became the core of Latitudinarian Christianity which had as its goal the practical betterment of society. Charity was not mere giving alms, but an active universal love of humanity, expressed by practice and not merely by profession and limited only by the opportunity and power of the individual. Benjamin Hoadley stated, "an honest heathen is much more acceptable to God than a deceitful and dishonest Christian." In his sermon "of Being Imitators of Christ" Isaac Barrow lists four points of importance :-

- (1) Depiction of the good man as hero.
- (2) The notion that the sum of his goodness is chastity with respect to himself and charity with respect to society.
- (3) The choice of Joseph and his rejection of Potiphar's wife to exemplify the former and of the pilgrim Patriarch Abraham to represent the latter.
- (4) The analogy of man's life in a world of vanity and vexation to a pilgrimage through strange lands to his true home.

Like Barrow, Fielding proposes the usefulness of the good man's example as an encouragement to imitation and declares that the moral function of the historian novelist is to communicate such patterns of goodness to the world. Both Barrow and Fielding believe that the flawless model of righteousness of which Christ was the only instance is not only unreal but unreachable. In order to encourage emulation of the goodman, it is important to depict his virtue as well as vanities. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that the similarities between Barrow's sermons and Fielding's moral views are too striking to be merely accidental. The theory of the "goodman" reduced to his essential characteristics, personal chastity, and social charity forms the basis for many of the memorable characters of 18<sup>th</sup> century literature like, Sir Roger de Coverley, Squire Allworthy, Sir Charles Grandison, Uncle Toby and Parson Adams.

Adams performs, in the novel, function closely analogous to that of the persona of formal satire. Maynard Mach attributes three characters to the satirist and Adams operates both separately and simultaneously in these three categories :-

- (a) The *Vir bonus* or the moral man.
- (b) The *Naif*, simple and unsophisticated passing implicit judgement upon the immorality that bewildered him.
- (c) The *Hero*, indignant and courageous defending virtue and the public good. Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews function as twin protagonists in their capacity as moral exemplars of charity and chastity respectively. Fielding found the theory of the good man a convenient ethical foil to the vanity and hypocrisy he wished to expose. The Adams-

Joseph duo was given a mock heroic adaptation to suit the requirement of the comic epic. As a satirical moralist, Fielding, clothed his good man in antic dress.

The Wilson episode summarises the satiric and moral content of the novel as it is an amalgam of Christian and Classical commonplaces, namely *Vanitas Vanitatum*, the country versus the city and Providence and free will versus fortune. Juvenal's *Third Satire* is the basis of anti-urban literature. Juvenal's friend Umbricius, on the point of forsaking Rome for a quiet country life, relates with some bitterness a long catalogue of city vice and folly. Although it has no precise parallels in the scriptures, the concept of the happy life was also taken up by the Latitudinarians in stressing the vanity of earthly affairs. As they emphasised the Christians' obligations to charity, the Latitudinarians were reluctant to recommend the ideal of retirement without modifying it to include paradoxically an active involvement in the affair of society. Bishop Hoadly says it is an individual's duty to contribute to the well being of his neighbours. This is proved by the example of Mr. Wilson's charitable dealing with his neighbours as well as with Adams, Fanny and Joseph.

For Fielding, town and the country were always antithetical. They tended respectively to acquire values symbolic of the extremes of wordly vanity and vice, and true virtue and contentment. In his play *Love in Several Mosques*, Fielding said, "London would seduce a saint." But he was not naive enough to believe that there was no vice in a rural setting. Fielding felt though human nature is essentially the same everywhere, in the country it is found in a more plain and simple manner. Fielding's ethic of social amelioration preached the essential perfectibility of man, if only assisted by good education and good examples. This common sense notion of Christianity was being challenged by the Antinomian views of George Whitfield. Parson Adams ridiculed Whitefield's views to mean, "So you say you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you may live the life of the devils."

As a moral antithesis to vanity and self seeking, Fielding proposed the practical ethos of the Latitudinarians and the Christian heroism of the good man, whose comprehensive virtues of charity and chastity summed up religion. He sets his twin heroes way faring in a land at once familiar and alien, their pilgrimage symbolically represented in Mr. Wilson's progress from the vice of the city to the simplicity of the country. As Adams and Joseph proceed on their spiritual odyssey, we are amused at their innocence, but we laugh with contempt at the beaus and coquettes, the parsons and innkeepers, and squires. Their innocence helps to expose that Fielding's laughter is purposeful and his purpose is Christian.

1. **Latitudinarians :** A name applied to those divines of the English Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century who though not sceptics, were indifferent to particular creeds and forms of worship. They espoused a practical Christianity based on personal chastity and social charity.
2. **Antinomian :** One who maintains a moral law is not binding upon Christians under the law of Grace. This sect appeared in Germany in 1935.
3. **Joseph :** Joseph is Jacob's son. His brothers were jealous of him and sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar. Potiphar's wife Zoleikha tries to seduce Joseph in the same fashion as Lady Booby tempts Joseph Andrews.

4. **Abraham** : The Hebrew patriarch King Nemrod sought to throw him into a fiery furnace from where he was rescued by God.

### Activity

Dear learner, the previous section made you familiar with an important aspect of the novel *Joseph Andrews*, that is, the theme of charity and chastity. Now make an assessment of your familiarisation with this topic by solving the practice exercise.

1. Fielding's views on human nature correspond to those of the \_\_\_\_\_ philosophy.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ as per the Latitudinarian philosophers, is not just about giving alms but an active universal love of humanity.
3. In his sermon \_\_\_\_\_ Isaac Barrow emphasizes the importance of chastity with respect to oneself and charity with respect to society.
4. According to Fielding, the character of \_\_\_\_\_ defends virtue and the public good and operates both as the moral man, the naive, and the hero.
5. Fielding critiques urban life and its vices based on the concept of *Vanitas Vanitatum* as outlined by \_\_\_\_\_ in his Third Satire.
6. Parson Adams' critique of \_\_\_\_\_ ridicules the idea that by merely professing belief in Christ, one could live like the life of the devils.
7. In the relationship between Joseph and Fanny, Fielding presents their journey as a symbolic pilgrimage, with Mr. Wilson's progress from the vice of the \_\_\_\_\_ to the simplicity of the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Answers:

1. Latitudinarian
2. Charity
3. "Of Being Imitators of Christ"
4. Parson Adams
5. Juvenal
6. George Whitefield
7. city, country

### 17.4 COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ROLES OF PARSON ADAMS AND JOSEPH ANDREWS

If Fielding had written *Joseph Andrews* as a burlesque imitation of *Pamela*, only then Joseph would have remained the central figure throughout either because he thought parody was an inferior form or because the character of Parson Adams fascinated him. Fielding transferred the function of comic hero to Adams because his virtue by contrast ridiculed corruption and narrative hero to Joseph because his journey from London to the village is the occasion for the comedy. The basic action of the novel remains the same as it would have been without Parson Adams, Joseph's dismissal, the journey home, and the results upon arrival.

Through most of the First Book, Joseph figures as the single hero, centre of both the narrative and the comic action. In the first major sequence, the Seduction Scene, his incorruptible innocence and Lady Booby's affectation of virtue form the comic contrast, which is reinforced by Mrs. Slipslop's ridiculous

assumption that she can succeed where her mistress has failed. By the time Joseph sets out on his journey, Fielding has to decide what to do with him. In the Stage Coach Scene, his character is not a factor in the comic effect, but when he arrives at the inn, it is then that Parson Adams arrives on the scene.

In the last comic antithesis, in which Joseph's character figures, his fidelity and piety are in contrast to the hypocrisy of Parson Barnabas, but Parson Adams soon takes up the burden of contrast and is from then on a foil for Barnabas. In Book II, after the episode of Leonara, the two heroes are separated and the narrative follows the comic hero, Adams, through his meeting with the cowardly Patriot, his rescue of Fanny, the farcical trial, his reunion with Joseph. But even after they are reunited, Parson Adams continues to be the centre of the plot. He has a separate interview with Parson Trulliber and is fooled by the Squire of False promises.

In Book III, it is Adams who alone listens to all of Mr. Wilson's story, dines alone with the Squire of Fools, and at the end has a dialogue with Peter Pounce. In Book IV, it is again Parson Adams who heroically stands up for the lovers against Lady Booby giving Joseph the strength to resist, and finally it is he who takes the main part in the Bedroom Farce, proceeding the denouement of the plot.

Thus, Joseph begins as both narrative and comic hero, but gradually recedes into the background, where he functions only as narrative hero whose journey is the vehicle for the comic hero, Adams, who carries out Fielding's purpose.

## 17.5 IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOSEPH ANDREWS' CHARACTER INCOMPLETE?

Yes, as a review of the major incidents involving, Joseph will show. The Seduction Scene required of Joseph a lack of sophistication which does not argue well in a young man with years of previous experience as a footman in London. Lady Booby's open invitation is misconstrued by Joseph. He thinks, his mistress is demented with grief at the death of her husband. Joseph's priggish virtue arouses laughter but he is never the object of derision as a parodic hero would be. The prime target of ridicule is Lady Booby and not Joseph. In the climactic scene between Lady Booby and Joseph, before she dismisses him from service, our amusement at Joseph's mock-heroic posture of virtue is subordinate to Lady Booby's frustration. When Joseph argues, if Lady Booby has no virtue it is no reason for him not to have any, he comes across not as a comic simpleton but as a sophisticated wit. It is clear that Fielding began a parody that developed beyond the initial plan as did the character of Joseph along with it. As Parson Adams replaces Joseph as the comic hero, the latter appears more sophisticated.

When Joseph sets out on his journey, he is relegated to the secondary role. As Parson Adams takes a major part in the action of the plot, we see very little of Joseph's development as the titular hero, Yet he apparently develops in the course of the journey to a point where, in the finale he stands up against the objections of Pamela to his marriage with Fanny, resists various kinds of pressures applied by Lady Booby, calls a snob, boxes Beau Didapper and stands by Fanny against the whole world. When Joseph leaves Lady Booby's London house, he is an ignorant, credulous village bumpkin who fails to grasp the open invitation of Lady Booby's seductive behaviour. When he arrives at the village, he is a knowledgeable, sophisticated man of the world. In London, he was conscious of his place as a servant in the Booby house so he tried to make excuses for his mistress' shameful behaviour. In the village, he is confident of his station and can see through the hypocrisy of Lady Booby, Pamela, Peter Pounce, etc.

Even if we assume that the hardships of the journey polished and matured Joseph, Fielding has not made this very clear to the reader. The reader has seen Joseph demonstrating his new found wisdom in his suspicion of the Squire of False Promises, intelligence in his relations with Parson Adams, fearlessness in his defence of his beloved Fanny and humanity and compassion in general, but the development of his character has been rudimentary and incomplete. The only place where any clear cut change is pointed out, is the several discourses with Parson Adams in which Joseph shows an increasing independence of judgement and even challenges Parson Adams for not practising what he preaches (e.g. When Adam's son is supposedly drowned). But these instances are spread over in the course of the action which is dominated by Parson Adams and are not enough to create an impression of organic development in the character of Joseph.

Thus, Joseph remains an intermediate figure halfway between flat and round, coming to life intermittently and then fading before the giant shadow of Parson Adams. Tom Jones combines in himself the twin functions of the narrative as well as the comic hero, but Joseph had to share his glory with Adams and it was, natural that he would recede into the background. Fielding's purpose in *Joseph Andrews* was to set up the goodman as a moral exemplar to the corruption of society. Parson Adams in his social charity and Joseph in individual chastity complement each other to create the Person Fielding desired.

## 17.6 CHARACTER OF PARSON ADAMS

The character of Parson Adams was based on Fielding's friend the Reverend William Young, who was curate at East Stour. He collaborated with Fielding in a translation of *Plutus* of Aristophanes. There were many anecdotes about Rev. Young's absent mindedness, his learning and his inability to get along in the world. Some noticeable traits like his powerful but clumsy physique, his devotion to Aeschylus and the trick of snapping his fingers went into the portrait of Adams.

Adams is a curate and his wife and six children subsist on an annual stipend of 23 pounds sterling. He knows much, though his learning has not been acquired in schools or universities but by assiduous reading confined to classical writers and holy books. The only modern tragedy he has read is Addison's *Cato* and the only comedy he has seen is Richard Steele's *Conscious Lovers*. He is always ready to reason about everything, enjoys talks and discussions, enters into conversations with strangers knowing that every opportunity offers some sort of profit. He has built for himself an ideal world, the only world in which he cares to live. The world of reality seems to him difficult and he often forgets it.

At the age of fifty, he still has the fresh soul of a child who looks out upon our old world with young eyes. Credulous and simple he allows himself to be deceive with disarming ease as though he was actually inviting people to decieve him. It is only the virtuous people in the book who love Adams; fools and rogues deride and persecute him because his goodness by contrast shows up their vices. He too has certain affectations, but he is so ingeniously affected that we can but smile and do not have the heart to rebuke him. His chief vanity is that he is more learned than those among whom he moves, so he thinks himself wiser. He persists in nourishing an incurably optimistic philosophy in the face of all the shocks and contradictions of life. Fielding's lesson seems to be that a poor badly dressed man, humble and scorned, can play the part of a hero if beneath his rags, he carries a beautiful soul and a courageous

character. He is a true Christian whose Christianity is not based on useless rituals but on an active sympathy for the poor and the weak. His personal chastity and social charity makes him a truly good man.

In the Bedroom Farce (Book IV chapter 14), Adams' nakedness (Chastity) is contrasted with the nakedness (lust) of Beau Didapper and Mrs. Slipslop. Adams as he rushes to the rescue forgetting to put on his clothes, mistakes the soft body of Beau Didapper to be that of a woman, and the hairy one of Mrs. Slipslop to be that of a man. He discovers his mistake when Lady Booby enters the room with a candle. To cover his nakedness, Adams jumps into the bed with Mrs. Slipslop. Fielding ridicules Slipslop's vanity which poses as a seducible woman and Didapper's vanity which poses as a virile man. Mrs. Slipslop's nakedness emposes her as vice pretending to be virtue while Adams' nakedness reveals him in his essential goodness stripped virtually to the skin. "Affectations are like clothes put on, and it is the satirist's job to strip them off" and show up people for what they really are, minus their clothes/affectations. The Bedroom farce shows that underneath his torn disordered clothes, the essential (naked) Adams is a brave, honest, God fearing man.

He is a delightful character with the oddest eccentricities. He has Aristotle's *Politics* at his finger tips, but knows nothing of *Daily Gazetteer*. He travels to London to sell a collection of sermons which he has forgotten to carry with him. In a moment of excitement, he tosses into the fire the copy of the Aeschylus which has taken him years to transcribe. He lectures Joseph on the virtues of fortitude and resignation, but is overwhelmed with grief when his child is reported to be drowned. He truly is the grandest delineation of the perfect priest.

The title page of the novel says, "written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*." Quixote lives by the idealized principle of romance, while Adams lives by the idealized tenets of Christianity. Like Quixote, Adams is ignorant of the ways of the world. *Don Quixote* begins as a parody of romances and *Joseph Andrews* as a parody of *Pamela*, but both become serious but humorous books about people in a society. Like Don Quixote, Parson Adams takes to the road a horse as eccentric as Rosinante, both fall into strange adventures, the Don is accompanied by his squire Sancho Panza and Adams has Joseph as his companion. Although both are knights, Don's mission is to uphold a defunct ideal while Adams upholds the ideals of a pure Christian which is practically represented in charity. His mighty fist is as ready in the service of the weak as was the lance of Don Quixote. Comparing Don Quixote and Parson Adams, Walter Scott said

*Like Don Quixote Parson Adams is beaten a little too much, and too often; but the cudgel lights upon his shoulders as on those of the honoured knight of La Mancha without the slightest stain to his reputation and he is bastinadoed without being degraded.*

## 17.7 ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Most of the characters in *Joseph Andrews* are :-

- (a) Episodic and even though he draws them like a caricaturist they are not typical flat characters as in Charles Dickens.

- (b) Fielding describes species not individuals, but he always describes the species in terms of the individual e.g., Trulliber stands for a type i.e., boorish semi illiterate parson of the day who was more farmer than priest. But even though he appears just once, he is portrayed so realistically that he strikes us at first as just Trulliber, an individual
- (c) The majority of his characters are portrayed as nincompoops, knaves and hypocrites. Most of them belong to the category of low life which he found more entertaining than high life which was dull and afforded very little humour. He does not portray characters by mere description, it is by making his characters speak and act that he reveals their innermost selves.
- (d) Out of the mob of characters that Fielding created in *Joseph Andrews*, he selected only a few whom he painted at full or half length e.g., Parson Trulliber, Peter Pounce, Beau Didapper, the Towouses, Belty and Mrs. Slipslop.

**Fanny** : Symbolises the chaste and the fresh faced village lass who serves as a contrast to high society ladies like Lady Booby and her pretentious maid Mrs. Slipslop, who are unchaste and corrupt. The primary function of Fanny in the plot is a narrative one i.e., to motivate Joseph's actions from his rejection of Lady Booby, his journey back to the village and his final defiance of his sister Pamela. In serving this purpose, she is also the cause of several subsidiary actions: the attack upon her brings Adams to the rescue, her abduction leads to the rescue, by Peter Pounce, jealousy of her beauty leads to the Bedroom farce where Lady Booby instructs Beau Didapper to ravish her. In all these events, her role is passive and mechanical and the only significant aspect beyond this is her idealised portrait of a simple country girl whose virtue reinforces the contrast with the vice of sophisticated city women like lady Booby.

**Mrs. Slipslop** : Apart from Parson Adams, Mrs. Slipslop is the most comic character in the novel. Her sensitive dignity, her easy change from servility to insolence, her sensuality and her inimitably distorted vocabulary made her the perfect model for Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop and Dicken's Mrs. Gamp. Mrs. Slipslop is Lady Booby's waiting gentle-woman whose mangled English shows her vanity in attempting to behave like Lady Booby. Slipslop never forgets that she is of gentle birth that is why she shows contempt for Fanny's low birth and uses big words to show her superior breedings. She begs Lady Booby to forgive Joseph in the following words :

*O dear madam is it not a pity that such a graceless young man should die  
a virulent death? I hope the judge will take commensuration on his youth.*

Her attempts to capture Joseph with her superannuated charms are infinitely interesting. She pounces on Joseph like a hungry tigress. When Joseph says he had always loved her like a mother, she is enraged.

*Do you intend to result my passion must you treat me with such ironing*

A minor indiscretion in youth had cost Mrs. Slipslop her reputation and she had to exercise restraint after that. But in her fifties, she feels she can afford to indulge herself in return for the restraint she was forced to observe in youth. Her vanity in considering herself as sensual as Lady Booby makes her ridiculous and an object of laughter. Her role in the Bedroom Farce is hilarious because she catches poor Didapper (who mistakenly enters her bed) and creates an uproar to prove her chastity to her mistress. But Parson Adams mistakes her for a man (because of her hairy body) and allows Beau Didapper to escape. So Mrs. Slipslop is made to look ridiculous again because she is a hypocrite, who makes claims to a virtue she does not possess.

**Kinds of Character :** E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* defined characters in two categories:-

- (1) Round Characters :- are three dimensional, fully drawn who develop during the action of the novel as people do in real life.  
e.g. Parson Adams, Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby.
- (2) Flat characters :- are one dimensional, incomplete figures who may serve their authors purpose but do not convince us that they exist in their own right. e.g. Fanny, Poor Pedlar.

Aristotle stated that a character should be appropriate e.g. a warrior should be martial, a woman should not be masculine. His actions at one point of time should not be inconsistent with his actions at another point of time unless the inconsistency is accounted for we assume that characters have to develop i.e. change in the course of a novel, but this is not always so. Sometimes they change and can be called dynamic and sometimes they remain the same and can be called static, for example, the flat character of Joseph is intended to be dynamic, while the round character of Adams is meant to be complete and static. The function of a character in the novel determines to what extent he is dynamic or static. A character's function is also involved in determining the extent to which he becomes round or flat and whether in the working of the plot he is in the major or minor category. e.g. Joseph began as a major character in the I<sup>st</sup> Book of the novel, but was reduced to playing second fiddle to Parson Adams in the II and III books because his function in the novel changed from a comic to a narrative hero.

## Activity

Dear learner, the previous sections made you aware of the role of the various characters in the novel. Now you can check your progress by solving the fill in the blanks exercise.

1. Fielding transferred the function of comic hero to \_\_\_\_\_ in Joseph Andrews because his virtue by contrast ridiculed corruption.
2. In the Seduction Scene, Joseph's incorruptible innocence forms the comic contrast to \_\_\_\_\_'s pretension of virtue.
3. In Book II, Joseph and Parson Adams are separated after the episode of \_\_\_\_\_, and the narrative follows the comic adventures of Parson Adams.
4. The character of \_\_\_\_\_ was based on Fielding's friend Reverend William Young who was known for his absent-mindedness and learning.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is presented as a true Christian in Joseph Andrews whose Christianity is based on an active sympathy for the poor and the weak, not on useless rituals.
6. In the Bedroom Farce, Parson Adams' nakedness, which symbolizes chastity is contrasted with the nakedness of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ symbolizing lust.
7. In *Joseph Andrews*, \_\_\_\_\_'s attempts to appear virtuous are mocked, particularly when she uses distorted English in an attempt to show her superior breeding.

## Answers:

1. Parson Adams	2. Lady Booby	3. Leonara	4. Parson Adams
5. Parson Adams	6. Beau Didapper, Mrs. Slipslop	7. Mrs. Slipslop	

## DELINEATION OF CHARACTER

	Kind of character	Motivation	Function
<b>Joseph</b>	Incompletely developed, brave and virtuous stock hero.	Virtue and Love of Fanny	Narrative Hero
<b>Parson Adams</b>	Completely round, benevolent and good, universal figure	Charity	Comic Hero
<b>Fanny</b>	Completely flat; Stock heroine; virtuous and beautiful.	Virtue and love of Joseph	Narrative heroine
<b>Lady Booby</b>	Round in complex passion; proud and imperious not just a stock villainess.	Desire for Joseph; and social status	Comic heroine
<b>Mrs. Slipslop</b>	Round in vitality; vulgar and vain; hypocritical	Desire to be superior and desire for Joseph	Ridicule of pre-tense arising from vanity and hypocrisy.
<b>The Pedlar</b>	Completely flat stock figure	Charity	Resolves plot, <i>deux ex machina</i> .
<b>Mr. Wilson</b>	Incomplete, wise and virtuous	Charity	Provides thematic parallels; relieves complication of plot.
<b>Pamela</b>	Parody	Vanity	Ridicules vanity and hypocrisy; part of satiric re-resolution.

### 17.8 LET US SUM UP

Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* is full of characters who act one way on the surface but are often very different on the inside. The novel is a comedy with most of the humour coming from satire where the characters flaws are exposed for humour and as a commentary on how people act in the real world. Social class, religion, charity hypocrisy, lust and chastity were predominantly portrayed through the characters in the novel. Most of his characters belong to low life, which he found more entertaining than the high life. His novels tries to create a universal representative figure so true to life that mankind will recognize itself and its folly and be moved to reform itself.

### 17.9 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. The character of Parson Adams in the novel was based on \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) William James
  - b) Henry James
  - c) William Yeats
  - d) William Young
2. Which of the following tragedy has read by the Parson Adam? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Joseph Addison's *Cato*
  - b) Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
  - c) Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*
  - d) None of these
3. Who is the fiancee of Joseph Andrews? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Booby
  - b) Slipslop
  - c) Betty
  - d) Fanny
4. Whom did Joseph Andrews write a letter when Lady Booby fired him? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Betty
  - b) Fanny
  - c) Pamela
  - d) Parson Adams
5. Whose techniques of humour were used by Fielding in his novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Cervantes
  - b) Chaucer
  - c) Richardson
  - d) All of these

### 17.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss the themes of the novel *Joseph Andrews*.
- Q.2 Make a comparative study of the characters of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams.

### **17.11 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. d)                    2. a)                    3. d)                    4. c)  
5. d)

### **17.12 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Peereboom, John James. *Fielding Practice: A Study of the Novels of Henry Fielding*. Brill, 2022
- \* “Character Analysis of Joseph Andrews.” *SharkPapers.com*, 2025, <https://www.sharkpapers.com/blog/character-analysis/character-analysis-of-joseph-andrews.pdf>.
- \* “Joseph Andrews Character List.” *GradeSaver*, <https://www.gradesaver.com/joseph-andrews/study-guide/character-list>.

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## **STRUCTURE OF *JOSEPH ANDREWS***

### **STRUCTURE**

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 18.3 Parody
- 18.4 The structure of the novel
- 18.5 Plot of *Joseph Andrews*
- 18.6 Picaresque
- 18.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.8 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 18.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 18.10 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 18.11 Suggested Reading

#### **18.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding is a parody of Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* that mocks and critiques Richardson's moralist approach. The novel can also be categorised as a picaresque novel as its protagonist embarks on a series of adventures and misadventures.

#### **18.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the plot and structure of the novel *Joseph Andrews*. The lesson also aims to define parody and analyse *Joseph Andrews* as a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. Further the lesson attempts to analyse the novel as a picaresque novel.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to describe the plot and structure of the novel and identify key characters, events, and episodes. You will also be able to define how *Joseph Andrews* is a parody of *Pamela*. Further, you will elucidate how this novel fits within the literary conventions of the picaresque novel to offer a social critique of the contemporary society

### 18.3 PARODY

The 18th century was notorious for quarrels among literary figures. Addison, Swift and Pope belonged to political parties and their writings were satirical and attacked men rather than ideas. Fielding too had done so in his plays, journals and several pamphlets. In *Joseph Andrews*, he made it clear that in writing the novel he had *Pamela and Colley Cibber* in mind.

Against Cibber he had a personal grudge and the two men detested each other. Fielding was the author of a scurrilous pamphlet, *The Apology for the life of Mr. T.C.* in which he satirised Cibber's son Theophilus Cibber. In *Joseph Andrews*, Cibber takes second place as befits an already vanquished foe. Fielding reserves all his force for an intellectual adversary. Personal grievances and political disagreements stood between him and Cibber, but he was separated from Richardson by a fundamental conflict of ideas and of temperament.

*Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* was published on November 6th, 1740. It immediately became the sensation of the literary season and a host of attacks and parodies soon appeared to sour Richardson's triumph. Of these, the first and easily the best was *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* published on April 4th 1741, under the name of Mr. Conny Keyber. *Pamela* which was intended to be a moral exemplum, was actually a rather bourgeois success story which matched Richardson's own rise (from an industrious apprenticeship in a printing house to marriage with his master's daughter and succession to the firm) as well as the rise of the business classes in the 18th century. His Pamela, who was projected as a model young woman, was simply a middle class capitalist who looked on her chastity not as a virtue but as a commodity to be used for finding a rich husband. Fielding exposed Pamela's hypocrisy in *Shamela*.

A certain clergyman Parson Tickletext sends a copy of *Pamela* to his colleague Parson Oliver recommending the book for the lessons on virtue it taught young girls. Parson Oliver replies sternly that Pamela's real name is Shamela and she is the offspring of a scamp and an orange-woman at a playhouse. After an intrigue with Parson Williams she manages to catch Squire Booby by pretending innocence and after her marriage, continues to be friendly with Parson Williams.

*Shamela*'s value as a parody lies in the fact that it does not disfigure the original at all, but takes the incidents of *Pamela* and gives them a different interpretation. Fielding reveals Pamela for what she is, a hypocrite, her chastity is not real but a pretence. *Pamela* is not a lesson in virtue, but in vice because it teaches maid servants to hook their masters. Richardson said the author of *Shamela* was Fielding. Many reasons for believing this are :

1. *Shamela* contains a sharp attack on Colley Cibber because Fielding might have thought the author of *Pamela* was his old enemy.
2. The Booby of *Shamela* appears in *Joseph Andrews*.
3. Parson Tickletext recalls Parson Puzzletext in Fielding's *Grub-Street Opera* and Parson Oliver bears the same name as Fielding's tutor when he was a school boy.

4. Parson Williams is a disciple of Whitfield whose doctrines are attacked by Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews*. Adams snaps his fingers in a reproduction of Shamela's favourite gesture.
5. Mrs. Andrews forshadows Mrs. Slipslop: she says digression for discretion and murders the language in the same way as Slipslop does.
6. Parson Oliver defines the duties of a clergyman in the same language used by the Parson Adams.
7. In *Shamela*, we have the curious mixture of natural and worldly morality as in *Joseph Andrews*: natural morality condemns Pamela for her calculating conduct and worldly morality; laughs at Squire B who has a chance of possessing a woman without marrying her and does not do so.

So there is no doubt that it was Fielding who wrote *Shamela* not because he disliked Richardson but because he wanted to satirise his hypocritical morality that passed off a hussy as a virtuous woman. Fielding thought Richardson and *Pamela* were both ridiculous and laughable, because of their affected morality. Fielding follows the incidents of *Pamela* very closely, but gives them a contrary psychological explanation. Shamela feigns virtue only because Booby's inexperience makes her see that instead of "making a little fortune by my Parson," she can easily make "a great one by my virtue."

*Shamela* leads straight to *Joseph Andrews*, which can be partly seen as a parody of *Pamela*. The parody supplies the framework of the novel but the comic genius of Parson Adams, his admiration for *Dox Quixote* by Cervantes and his training in stage craft made him realise the scope of the novel is broader than mere parody. In order to parody *Pamela*, Fielding built *Joseph Andrews* around a central moral problem, the preservation of and the assault upon chastity. On the one hand Joseph must protect his virtue from such lustful creatures as Lady Booby, Mrs Slipslop and Betty, on the other Fanny must defend herself against the attacks of a beau, a squire, a rogue and a servant. At the same time Fielding also designed his novel along mere general lines, three virtuous and good-natured persons, Adams, Joseph and Fanny became the touchstones for exposing vanity and hypocrisy as well as goodness and kindness wherever they meet them in society. From a narrow perspective of parodying Pamela's pretence at morality, Fielding moves to a broader comic perspective of satirising affectation in society, from the individual he moves to the general, from men to manners.

However, parody does supply the initial thrust of the story. Joseph is the brother of Pamela and desires to imitate her and will soon find himself in the same situation as her. Like Pamela he attempts to improve his mind by reading good books; he has her manners and borrows her phrases. Till the end of Chapter X, the parody follows its model closely. Joseph imitates his sister to the point of heroism and absurdity. He becomes ridiculous because his virtue seems affected, because the men in those days did not lay much emphasis on male virtue. But in Chapter XI, Fielding says, Joseph was not chaste from any absurd sense of modesty, but because he was in love with Fanny. Hence, Joseph ceases to be ridiculous because we realise he is not affecting morality.

Critics say, Fielding was so carried away by the exploits of Parson Adams that he completely forgot his parody. In fact, Fielding gave up the original idea of parodying *Pamela* because the idea did not lend itself to further development. There is a great difference in the situation of Pamela and Joseph. Instead of Pamela's amazing literacy, he supplies a heroine who can neither read nor write. Pamela is constantly worried about her chastity, Joseph is a man, whose chastity will always be in his power. Since, Pamela betters herself by her virtue, Joseph refuses to do so, in fact he keeps himself pure and poor for the sake of Fanny, who is lower in the social scale than he. Fielding's real criticism of *Pamela* is the kind of world he creates in *Joseph Andrews*. With its squires, ladies, doctors, lawyers, parsons, innkeepers, beaus and prudes, it is a mere inclusive world than Richardson's and it is a more familiar one because it is motivated not just by sex but by the humdrum emotions of vanity, avarice, courage and love. As Coleridge said :

*Picking up Fielding after Richardson was like emerging from a sick room heated with stoves to an open lawn on a breezy day.*

The great difference in the situation of Pamela and Joseph did not allow the parody to develop. Pamela is secretly in love with Squire B who is rich and young. She is able to defend herself without discouraging him. Lady Booby is a mature widow and Joseph cannot love her in any sense and his refusal to be seduced will make him look a fool in his eyes and that will be the end of the book. Squire B can pursue Pamela for a long time without tiring of the game but Joseph's chastity is in his own power and when Lady Booby finds him impregnable, she loses patience and dismisses him.

Joseph is cast upon the roads of England in the company of Parson Adams, the parody ends. But the novel moves forward by the impulse of its first ten chapters and at the end, the parody returns to tie together the loose ends of the plot. The parody supplies the beginning as well as the denouement of the novel. Fielding did not forget the parody, but was not prepared to limit himself only to parody. Joseph is more than a mere caricature of Pamela. Like Pamela he resists repeated attacks on his chastity by Lady Booby, Mrs. Slipslop and Betty, but he is guilty neither of insensibility nor stupidity. He confesses he is not insensible to the charms of Lady Booby and he is shown as an impatient lover of Fanny. He has human qualities that foreshadow the great heroes of Fielding. When he is in danger of death, he is ready to repent of his faults but not for his love of Fanny or to forgive the robbers who have wounded him. He refuses to listen to Pamela when she wants to prevent his marriage to Fanny. Joseph of the early chapters who wrote such timid letters to Pamela is a far cry from the Joseph of the later part of the book, who dares to resist Parson Adams. The boy of the earlier episodes has become a man, from a parodic figure he has become the narrative hero of the novel.

Towards the end of the novel, the Parody becomes more delicate. The author is more sure of himself, hence, his satire becomes less personal and more penetrating. Fielding has not followed Richardson's novel page by page, but has grafted his novel onto *Pamela*. The author of a parody wears a mask, Fielding was now sufficiently sure of himself to go with uncovered face. That is why the actual plot which springs from the parody plays a secondary part. The ridicule is there but it is kept in its proper place, entirely subordinate to the main business, the adventures of Parsons Adams and Joseph on the road. The satire of *Pamela* is all the more telling for not being pursued too far.

## Activity

Learner, stop for a moment! Before moving to the next section, solve the practice exercise given below.

1. Fielding had a personal grudge against \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, whom he satirized in his works.
2. Fielding made it clear that in writing *Joseph Andrews*, he had \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in mind.
3. Fielding exposed the moral hypocrisy of Pamela, intended to be a moral exemplum, in his parody *Shamela*, published under the name of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In *Shamela*, Parson Oliver defines the duties of a clergyman in the same language used by \_\_\_\_\_ in *Joseph Andrews*.
5. The great difference between Pamela and *Joseph Andrews* is that while Pamela's virtue is depicted as a commodity, Joseph's chastity is grounded in love for \_\_\_\_\_.
6. By the end of *Joseph Andrews*, Joseph evolves to a complex character who is shown to have human qualities, such as his impatience for \_\_\_\_\_.

### Answers :

1. Cibber, Richardson	2. Pamela, Colley Cibber	3. Mr. Conny Keyber
4. Parson Adams	5. Fanny	6. Fanny

## 18.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

The structure of a novel is basically the relationship of its parts (plot and character) to the whole so that the unity conveys some meaning. Aristotle said, the plot (he called it fable) was a purposeful sequence of events with a beginning, middle and end, each part causing or resulting from the other and leading to a logical conclusion.

The primary relationship in every novel is that of plot and character. Plot can be the revelation of character or character can cause action e.g. in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding divides his story between Joseph as the narrative hero and Parson Adams as the comic hero and the structure and meaning is different from that of *Tom Jones*, where the narrative and comic functions are integrated in the character of the solo hero, Tom.

Structure (Plot) can be episodic, e.g. *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, where a series of unconnected episodes emphasises the nature of the hero who appears in all of them or as in *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, which emphasises the nature of the society through which the hero moves. Organic plot e.g. *Moby Dick* by Melville, where a single action, the pursuit of the white whale makes all other parts subservient to it.

## 18.5 PLOT OF JOSEPH ANDREWS

It is a thin but sufficient thread on which Fielding has strung consecutive scenes of jovial comedy. The plot of *Tom Jones* is an organic one because it seems to develop from within, but in *Joseph Andrews*,

the novelist arranges the successive incidents so as to bring them back to the starting point of the Pamela affair without interfering with his freedom to deal with the picaresque adventures of Parson Adams and Joseph on the road. The plot involving the love story of Fanny and Joseph is of secondary importance in comparison with the exploits of Adams who is the real hinge of the story.

Some critics say, *Joseph Andrews* is a kind of beadstring of amusing episodes assembled at random. F. Homes Dudden says, many of the adventures of the novel, though entertaining, in themselves, and serviceable for bringing out idiosyncracies of character have little bearing on the main action and contribute nothing to it. He says,

*Joseph Andrews is on the whole a tale of picaresque type. The plot was not clearly thought out from the start but almost seems to have evolved extempore as the author proceeded.*

But Fielding was much too aware of the principle of unity and epic regularity to compose in such a haphazard fashion. Much as he admired *Don Quixote*, he regretted its diffuseness of structure. He said, the ultimate model for *Joseph Andrews* was the *Odyssey*, which consists of a series of separate adventures, detached from and independent of each other yet all leading to one great end. So one cannot criticize Fielding for want of unity of action.

La Bossu established the rule that the fable (theme or moral) of the epic was primary, the action being designed to embody the particular moral that the work as a whole inculcates instruction not entertainment. The rule was the basis of *Joseph Andrews* and the plot and the characters mutually function to illustrate the dominant thematic motifs of the novel, i.e., the exposure of vanity and hypocrisy in society. The journey of the twin heroes, Parson Adams and Joseph, is not a mere picaresque rambling for the purpose of introducing new adventures as we find in *Don Quixote*. Martin C. Battestin says :

*The wayfaring of Fielding's heroes is purposeful, a moral pilgrimage from the vanity and corruption of the Great city to the relative naturalness and simplicity of the country.*

But this does not mean that instead of a great comic novel, Fielding was writing a book of Christian morality. But laughter and morality as Fielding used to insist are not incompatible. Hence, the theme of *Joseph Andrews* is implicit in its structure.

There are a number of similarities in manner and incidents between *Don Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews* :

1. Parson Adams is modelled on *Don Quixote*.
2. The night adventures at the inn involving Don, Maritornes and the mule driver is paralleled by the Bedroom Farce in the last book of the novel.
3. Maritorne's charity to Sancho Panza with that of Betty to Joseph.
4. Don and Sancho's surprise at the strange lights of the funeral cortege with the reaction of Fanny, Joseph and Adams to the lights of the sheep stealers.
5. Clara's recognition of her lover by the sweetness of his singing with the reunion of Fanny and Joseph.

6. The series of practical jokes that the Duke and Duchess play on Don Quixote and Sancho Panza with the treatment of Parson Adams at the hands of the Squire of Fools.

Fielding's experience as a dramatist stood him in good stead while writing his first novel *Joseph Andrews*. It is constructed exactly like the plays of the French classical writers with a regular and sure plan. The four books of the novel are like the four acts of a drama. Book I contains the exposition and the knot of the problem. The II and III Books gives the peripeteia or incidents and the IV Book gives the denouement.

In the first chapter, all the characters appear on the scene in turn, they meet and gradually the struggle between them is unravelled. The protagonists are put on the road and the author has simply to retard the denouement and he did so by the simplest means, rain and storm force Adams and Joseph to break journey, they are robbed, a judge arrests them.

Fielding subjects the novel to the discipline of the drama, nothing remains unexplained. The ending of the novel seems to be engineered from without but Fielding leads us towards it gradually. The arrival of Mr. Wilson which takes place in Chapter XV had been announced as early as chapter V. The chief mission of Lady Booby and Joseph is to carry the plot (based on Parody) along, and thus, people who form the centre of action are not always the centre of interest. Joseph is a pretext for Adams. Lady Booby is desperate to profit from the obstacles which stand in the way of Joseph and Fanny's happiness, she retreats step by step and only yields when her resistance has revealed all the characters in all their aspects. She is the utility man who bears upon the action, now retarding and now precipitating it. The adventures are not there for their own sake and the plot would be thin were it not filled out with characters. In novel writing, Fielding has the advantage over drama that he is no longer hampered by the conditions of the stage and can give free reign to his imagination.

Fielding's treatment of the plot suggests that he regarded it as little more than a nonrealistic vehicle for realistically exhibiting the follies of men. In the relationship between Plot and characters, the novel is perfectly Aristotelian in observing the primacy of plot over action. The novel is not about what happens to Joseph, rather it is about the manners of 18<sup>th</sup> century society, which are revealed to us by the actions in which Joseph takes part. Even the central comic figure of Parson Adams exists not merely for his own sake, but also to reveal to us the world he encounters on the journey.

## 18.6 PICARESQUE

Romances have two basic characteristics; they are episodic and they are comic. The first characteristic is the result of the action, which is invariably that of a journey or a wandering through the countryside. In this wandering, the rogue hero (Picaro) has a series of adventures and meets representatives of various levels of society. Since the adventures are unrelated except for a common hero, the narrative comprises a series of episodes rather than a single action.

Such a structure would be appropriate to Fielding's purpose of describing manners, but it would also conflict with his concept of epic unity. The rogue hero in the picaresque novel was a rascal whose crimes were not taken seriously and who was merely a means of satirizing society. Combining this satiric tradition with his idea of the ridiculous, Fielding substituted a narrative hero (Joseph) as the centre of the single action of his return home and a comic hero (Adams) as the centre of his satire of the ridiculous.

Thus, Fielding adopted the picaresque narrative by providing a unified framework for the episode of Joseph's and Adam's encounters with the various levels of society and a unifying concept for the satire in his idea of ridiculous.

### 18.7 LET US SUM UP

The plot of *Joseph Andrews* is a thin but Fielding has strung it with consecutive scenes of jovial comedy. In *Joseph Andrews*, the novelist arranges the successive incidents so as to bring them back to the starting point of the Pamela affair without interfering with his freedom to deal with the picaresque adventures of Parson Adams and Joseph on the road. The plot involving the love story of Fanny and Joseph is of secondary importance in comparison with the exploits of Adams who is the real hinge of the story. Fielding's experience as a dramatist stood him in good stead while writing this novel. It is constructed exactly like the plays of the French classical writers with a regular and sure plan.

### 18.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Which is the ultimate model for the novel *Joseph Andrews*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Poetics
  - b) Republic
  - c) Virgil
  - d) *Odyssey*
2. Which of the novel is both admired and regretted by Henry Fielding? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Don Quixote*
  - b) *Pamela*
  - c) *Tom Jones*
  - d) *Joseph Andrews*
3. What does Henry Fielding want to portray through his novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Follies of men
  - b) Hypocrisy of society
  - c) Difference between rich and the poor
  - d) All of the above
4. Henry Fielding belongs to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 16th century
  - b) 17th century
  - c) 18th century
  - d) 19th century

5. How is the novel *Joseph Andrews* by Fielding compared to \_\_\_\_\_.

- novels of French classical writers
- plays of French classical writers
- plays of Greek classical writers
- novels of Greek classical writers

#### **18.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss the plot and structure of the novel *Joseph Andrews*.

Q.2 Discuss the novel *Joseph Andrews* as picaresque novel.

Q.3 The novel is a parody of *Pamela*. Comment.

#### **18.10 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. d)                    2. a)                    3. d)                    4. c)  
5. b)

#### **18.11 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Johnson, Maurice. *Fielding's Art of Fiction: Eleven Essays on Shamela, Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Amelia*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.
- \* “Joseph Andrews.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, edited by Kathleen Kuiper, 15 Sept. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Joseph-Andrews>.
- \* Michie, Allen. *Richardson and Fielding: The Dynamics of a Critical Rivalry*. Bucknell University Press, 1999.

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## **LAURENCE STERNE AND HIS TIMES**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 19.3 Laurence Sterne's Times and his Novels
- 19.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 19.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 19.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 19.8 Suggested Reading

#### **19.1 INTRODUCTION**

Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) is often compared to a “little bronze satire of antiquity in whose hollow body exquisite odours were stored.” The comparison may be correct so far as the satire is concerned, for Sterne was one of the most unlovely and weazened personalities. But the odours mentioned in the comparison do not seem to be very appropriate. So far as Sterne’s work is concerned, he is the exact opposite of his contemporary novelist, Tobias Smollett (1721-1771). Whereas, Smollett is known for his coarse vulgarities, which are often mistaken for realism, Sterne is known for his whims and vagaries and sentimental tears, which in most cases only conceal Sterne’s sneer at human grief and pity.

#### **19.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the life of Laurence Sterne, an English novelist, best known for his work *Tristram Shandy*. The lesson aims to offer a detailed biography of the author as well as provide information about the social background of his times. Further, the lesson also aims to familiarise you with the various works composed by him.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to describe the life of Laurence Sterne. Along with describing the various events which shaped him as a novelist you will also be able to list the major works composed by him. Further you will be able to evaluate Laurence Sterne as a novelist by situating his works against the social background during his times.

### 19.3 LAURENCE STERNE'S TIMES AND HIS NOVELS

The two books, by which Laurence Sterne is remembered, are *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. Both these books are called novels because the critics have not found any other suitable title for them. Sterne perhaps never meant them to be novels. As he himself tells about *Tristram Shandy*, it was begun "with no real idea of how it was to turn out." Its nine volumes were published at intervals from 1760 to 1767. The volumes do not make any sensible sequence of events. Proceeding in the most aimless manner, the book records a wide variety of experiences of the eccentric Shandy family. The book was actually never finished. Its strength as literature lies mainly in its brilliant style, which has been considered the most remarkable of the eighteenth century English prose. The book is also remarkable for its unique creations in the characters of Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. Although quite eccentric, these characters are so humanised by the genius of the author that they are considered among the most memorable fictional characters in English literature.

The other book, *The Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, is a curious mixture of fiction, sketches of travel, and miscellaneous essays on a variety of odd subjects. But all of them are stamped with Sterne's false attitude towards everything in life. There are numerous borrowings also. Many of the best passages in the book are either adapted or lifted from Burton, Rabelais and a score of other writers. Thus, while reading Sterne's book one is never sure how much of it is his own work. But the mark of his grotesque genius can be seen on every page of the book.

The age of Sterne was the Age of Johnson, which is the later eighteenth century. Excessive articulation of the rule of poetry borrowed from Homer, Aristotle and Horace, had marked the poetry of the age of Pope, that is the early eighteenth century. The excessiveness also stimulated later subversion of such rules. But since tradition in English novel was too brief and even unformulated, no similar revolution in taste could be expected. In fact, the popularity of new literary form that is the novel, tended to withdraw attention from the classical tradition, which had never known this new literary form. In the novel form, changes in emphasis will relate to changes in attitude towards the nature of man and his daily life, and not to remote literary precedents. The function of the novel remained the study of men and women and their manners and rather than on their rational endowments. But just as the light of reason was considered the same in all right-thinking men so were the sentiments regarded as uniform among all men and women.

Rousseau's Julie provides us with the best example on the subject, which can be considered representative of the age. She reproaches her love for his preoccupation "with those peculiarities of manners and decorum, which ten years hence will no longer exist." She also reproaches him for his neglect of "the unalterable springs of the human heart, the constant and secret workings of his passions." It is these last which, under the influence of Richardson and Rousseau, increasingly engaged the novelists, though study of manners was by no means excluded. Manners were also found interesting by the novelist both among humble folk as well as among the aristocrats, in domestic fact as well as in foreign society. The problem of how far the particular (the novelists frequently termed it trivial) might enhance or diminish universality was seldom faced by the writers of the age. They did show consciousness, however of the fact that changeable manners and values, which were only relative, did possess the appeal of novelty and diversity. Strange Rousseauistic moral ideas found their way into the novel of the age of Sterne. Rousseau's Julie answered, "My virtue is unblemished and my love has left behind no remorse. I glory in my past life." But such a view was still foreign to the English sense of decorum, no English heroine of comparable behaviour regarded her eccentricities in this manner as does Rousseau's Julie. If highly individual

psychological reactions were to be recorded they were normally kept in some way on the universal plane. So, Sterne managed his Shandean sentiments; so Fanny Burney shaped her notorious and specialized "character-mongering"

There also came about certain other modifications in the novel in the later eighteenth century. For instance, the neat suspensive structure formulated by Fielding and Richardson, through its very excellence perhaps, led virtuoso writers like Laurence Sterne and his imitator Henry Mackenzie in *The Man of feeling* to play tricks with the plot of the novel. Normally, matrimony continued to remain the terminal point in most plots. But frequently, the writer also discarded the plot and affected the loose patterns in vogue in Defoe's time. Setting became definitely more important than plot. Medieval, or Oriental, or other remote backgrounds indicated a superficial interest in the exotic. More significant it also indicated disgust with trivial daily life as the subject-matter of fiction. The introduction of landscape backgrounds, which were peacefully idyllic or wildly sublime or mysterious, was an important development for the future of the novel. In its beginnings, the use of landscape background as in Ann Radcliffe, was rather artificial. This poetic tendency was an expression of a natural desire on the part of the undervalued new art of story telling to elevate its status as art. This desire could also be seen in the writers' habit of inserting poems in the narrative to give it a literary tone. The same desire could also be seen in the writers' use of a style at times excessively dignified or polysyllabic. These last habits for better or worse, were carried over into the next century. They were all to be seen in the work of Sir Walter Scott among others of that period.

The incurably sentimental tone of most novels of this period was in part due to feminine influence, as also in keeping with the general spirit of the age. It was not for nothing that the Age of Johnson (or Sterne) came to be called the Age of Sentimentality. Women were the novel reading public and there were a surprising number of women novelists, which was not the case in poetry or drama. Among these women novelist were Mrs. Charlotte Lennox (1720-1804), the American whose work was approved by Dr. Samuel Johnson; Mrs. Sarah Scott (1723-1795), author of a very successful book, *Millennium hall* (1762); Mrs. Frances Sheridan (1724-1766), the dramatist's mother, whose *Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761-7) and *History of Nourjahad* (1767) went through several editions; Mrs. Frances Brooke (1724-1789), author of *Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763). Then there was a further train of other ladies somewhat too seriously sentimental for long popularity. These would include Mrs. Elizabeth Griffith, Clara Reeve, Charlotte Smith, and the romantic Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald. So many women writers attempted to narrate elegant tales of feminine distress that in Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771), Tim Cropdale's failure is excused because novel-writing "is now engrossed by female author, who publish merely for the propagation of virtue, with so much of ease, spirit, delicacy, knowledge of the human heart, and all in the serene tranquility of high life, that the reader is not only enchanted by their genius, but reformed by their morality." Tobias Smollett who was a horse of another hue, thus, paid his left-handed complement to the gray mare (the female novelist) of the moment.

The basic attitude of the most eminent novelist of the period, Laurence Sterne was, by nature not very different from that of Smollett so far as the facile ease, spirit and knowledge of the heart was concerned. This affection in prose style by their contemporaries especially the women writers, was unpalatable to these two tough novelists of their day. At the beginning of his brief literary career, at least, Sterne saw all these matters as materials for comedy, if not for grotesque farce. In his first unsuccessful attempt (May, 1759) to sell Volume I of *Tristram Shandy* to Doddsely, he described the work as "taking in, not only, the

weak part of the Sciences, in which the true point of Ridicule lies, but everything else which I find Laugh-at-able in my way." He thought as he wrote to Carrick, that a "Cervantic Comedy" might be drawn from Volumes III and IV. The first volumes were certified by Cambridge friends as the "best and truest and most genuine original and new humour, ridicule, satire, good sense, good nonsense ever put forth." But even before sending the manuscript to Dodsley, Sterne had learned by reading parts of the story to his convivial and tolerant friend Stillington Hall that much of it was too gross. Even after revision, the work, when published, was widely condemned as too indelicate for a clerical pen. In later volumes, Sterne curbed in part his salacious bent and wrote with or without his tongue in his cheek, something more apparently sentimental. But the serene tranquility of high life at Shandy Hall has little in common with that of Rousseau's Eloisa at Clarens or with the senses depicted by Sterne's female contemporaries. The Shandy brothers led a life that was essentially tranquil and essentially comical.

Sterne's significant output was limited to two works of fiction, seven small volumes of *Sermons* (1760-1769), and his correspondence, which includes the *Letter from Yorick Eliza* (1773). To modern readers, he is the author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) and by product *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). No doubt, these works of Sterne are most highly individual achievements. To begin with, Sterne's intention was to bring out *Tristram Shandy* in annual installments during the rest of his life. But his health did not permit this. However, the method of the story was in part dictated by the plan for interminable serial publication. As in comic-strip drawing in presentday newspapers, it was essential here to husband one's material, to work with minutiae, in short, to get nowhere. The structural results were apparent. Sterne used small scenes and cultivated variety and surprise to the utter neglect of continuity or progress. The art of digression was never so continually or successfully cultivated. As Sterne tells us,

*Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshines ; they are the life, the soul of reading; take them out of this book for instance, You might as well take the book along with them; one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer; he steps forth like a bridegroom, bids all hail; brings in variety in variety ; and forbids the appetite to fail.*

After the close structuring or organization of Fielding's *Tom Jones* and the tragic rise and fall of complication in Richardson's *Clarissa*, such apparent chaos as in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* would be intolerable expected in the hands of a great genius.

A clergyman by profession, the son of a British army officer and an Irish mother, Sterne was able to draw on his early knowledge of garrison life to create some of the most memorable characters and episodes in his most famous novel. Being professionally linked with the private feelings of people, Sterne as a clergyman also became a connoisseur of feelings. His prose displayed great power of sentimentality, which could distinguish different nuances of feeling, creating subtlety of characterization and depth of insight. Many critics have found Sterne's sentimentality as offensive as his indecency. It must, however, be understood that along with his humour, his sentimentality is a part along with his way of interpreting life. As such, all the three, sentimentality, humour, and indecency cannot be separated from one another.

Sterne's mind is like a spectrum; all the three elements just mentioned fade into one another and it is never so easy to say at any moment as to which one of the three is dominant. Sterne is not out to make us laugh aloud or to weep. But when we do smile, he hopes there will be the suspicion of tears as well. And if we are moved by his sentimentality, his pity for a dead donkey, Uncle Toby's benevolence towards a fly, we are to smile at the same time, because such sentimentality, for all Sterne prizes it so highly, is also a hobby-horse, a foible to arouse and mirth.

Sterne, like any other writer, must be taken as a novelist just as he is or not all. What he did, he did very successfully. Critics have tried to trace down the sources of his style, especially that of Rabelais and Burton. No doubt, he shared with them both a delight in curious lore, an uncouthly sonorous vocabulary. He also shared with Rabelais a delight as in the parody of pedantry. But all this does not make him any less than an original writer. There is hardly any writer, especially among the great ones, who would not share one or other aspect of his writing or element of his style with some other writers of his age or those of the preceding ones. Sterne's style, even though grotesquely unsuitable for any kind of novel, with its digression, parenthesis, dashes, eccentricities of punctuation, is the perfect expression of his mind. His style is perfect for his purpose. Even after two centuries of the novel, *Tristram Shandy* remains an original work. No one else has been able to do what Sterne has done in this novel, although his influence on the later novelists has been tremendous.

Sterne's discovery of the delight of sensibility, the pleasure of the feeling heart, was the discovery of whole continent of experience which other eighteenth-century writers invaded with clarity. Of course, the influence of his sentiments has died away by now. Thackeray was the last great novelist to feel it, but it only harmed him as a satirist. What still continues to be Sterne's influence on the English novel is his humour. In fact, his potent humour had greater influence on the American novel. When we read, for example, a book like Clarence Day's *Life With Father*, or for that matter much of Thurber, we glimpse behind the author, the dubious shadow of the curate of Coxwold who took London and Europe by storm.

Sterne reflects in his novels the learning of his age, although largely for offering a comic critique, making us see the other side to an out-moded thought. His world of learning is not merely, as it is quite often assumed, the philosophical work of Locke and the eighteenth-century enlightenment. No one can ignore, for sure, his debt to Locke. Most of all, Sterne made full use of the Lockean theory of associations. It is possible to see this theory as the principle underlying not only the digression of *Tristram Shandy* but a great deal of modern "stream of consciousness" literature. But to oversimplify Sterne's debt to Locke is also to risk missing much of the point of his book. It cannot, for example, be denied that there is in *Tristram Shandy* a continuous and subtle tension between what might be described as eighteenth-century common-sense enlightenment and the old scholastic tradition of the medieval world.

The jokes in *Tristram Shandy* are thinkable or indeed comprehensible, only in relation to the scholastic tradition. The reason for this can be found in the intellectual habits of the pre-scientific epoch. The later phase of scholastic thought, as Whitehead has described, was one of "unbridled rationalism." Sterne differs in spirit from most of the other writers of the eighteenth-century who were influenced by Locke. In fact, Sterne differs from Locke himself in a vital way. He sees in his ideas, which neither Locke nor his eighteenth-century followers do, an opportunity for a play of fancy.

## 19.4 LET US SUM UP

Laurence Sterne was a major 18th-century writer known for breaking literary conventions. Writing during the Augustan Age and the Age of Sensibility, he combined humor, emotion, and philosophical reflection in his novels. His experimental style, especially in *Tristram Shandy*, challenged traditional narrative forms and helped shape the modern novel. Sterne's works reflect both the rational spirit and growing emotional depth of his time.

## 19.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Laurence Sterne was born in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1711 in France
  - b) 1712 in England
  - c) 1713 in Ireland
  - d) 1714 in Scotland
2. Which of the religious satire infuriated the Church and was burnt after that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) A political Romance
  - b) *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*
  - c) *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*
  - d) *The Pilgrim's Progress*
3. Laurence Sterne's posthumous journal to Eliza addresses to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Elizabeth Lumley
  - b) Eliza Draper
  - c) Maria Draper
  - d) Ann Lumley
4. Laurence Sterne wrote the religious satire A Political Romance in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1749
  - b) 1750
  - c) 1759
  - d) 1769
5. Which of the following is the second novel by Laurence Sterne that was published in 1768 \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Sentimental Journey*
  - b) *Journal to Eliza*
  - c) *Journal to Stella*
  - d) *Tristram Shandy*

6. Which of the following is the best-known novel by Sterne \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Journal to Eliza  
b) Tristram Shandy  
c) A Political Romance  
d) Sentimental Journey

7. The first volume of Tristram Shandy was published in \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) 1739  
b) 1749  
c) 1759  
d) 1779

8. Who praised Laurence as “the most beautiful spirit that ever lived, \_\_\_\_\_. ”  
a) Goethe  
b) Voltaire  
c) Johnson  
d) Pope

#### **19.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 What role did Laurence Sterne play in 18th C. literature?  
Q.2 What do you mean by “digression”?

#### **19.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

1. c)	2. a)	3. b)	4. c)
5. a)	6. b)	7. c)	8. a)

#### **19.8 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Cash, Arthur. *Laurence Sterne. The Early and Middle Years*. Taylor & Francis, 2024.
- \* “Laurence Sterne (1713-1768): writer, humourist, sentimentalist & clergyman.” *Laurence Sterne Trust*, The Laurence Sterne Trust, <https://www.laurencesterne.org.uk/sterne/life-and-times/>.
- \* Newbould, Mary-Celine. *Adaptation of Laurence Sterne’s Fiction: Sterne near a 1760-1840*. Ashgate, 2013.

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**SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL *TRISTRAM SHANDY*****STRUCTURE**

- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 20.3 Critical summary of the novel
- 20.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 20.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 20.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 20.8 Suggested Reading

**20.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Tristram Shandy* written by Laurence Sterne is a highly unconventional and innovative work of fiction which follows the life of Tristram Shandy. One of the most striking features of the novel is its non-linear and fragmented style which makes it a precursor to the post-modern narrative technique of story-telling. The novel is filled with digressions and deliberates on topics such as the nature of time, philosophy, human behaviour, memory, etc.

**20.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the story of the novel *Tristram Shandy*. The lesson aims to offer a critical summary of the novel so that you develop familiarity with the various plot intricacies.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to summarise the novel and explain the major events unfolding in the narrative. You will also be able to critically analyse the novel.

**20.3 CRITICAL SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL**

Laurence Sterne's novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* was published in several books from 1760-1767. The story is narrated by the central character of the novel, Tristram Shandy. The locale of the novel is the Shandy Hall in the city of London. The time of the plot of the novel is 1718-1766. The other major characters in the novel, besides Tristram Shandy are : Mr. Walter Shandy, the father of Tristram

Shandy; Mr. Toby Shandy, an old soldier and uncle of Tristram Shandy; Corporal Trim who is Uncle Toby's servant; Mr. Yorick, a parson ; Dr. Slop, a medical quack and Widow Wadman, a romantic woman.

*Tristram Shandy* is one of the most amusing books ever written in the English Language. As J. B. Priestly puts it, "There may be more laughable works in English literature... but there is none more strictly humorous." In part, the novel's humour derives from Sterne's delight in oddities of material and method. His pleasure in the unexpected creates surprise on almost every page. Memory and an intense sensibility combine to create the first true psychological novel in the English Literature. The organization of the novel is based on little more than Sterne's whims. Diagrams, unusual uses of type, and strange numbering of the pages are amusing pranks played by the author.

The story of the novel told by Tristram Shandy himself, is uncommon, surprising and shocking. The very first thing the narrator tells about his life is his conception by his mother. He seems to believe that most problems of his life came about by one single fact. That fact is the interruption his mother caused in his conception when she asked his father if he had remembered to wind the clock. He claims to know the exact date his mother conceived him. It was on the night between the first Sunday and the first Monday of March 1718. He is certain of this date because while his father had seriously inconvenienced by an attack of sciatica before the date of his conception, he had set out immediately after that date as recorded in his father's notebook to travel from Shandy Hall up to London.

Another problem involved in the birth of Tristram Shandy was the marriage settlement of his parents. According to this settlement quoted in full by the narrator, Mrs. Shandy had the privilege of going to London for her lying-in (for giving birth to a baby). But in case Mrs. Shandy was to put Mr. Shandy to the expense of a trip to London on false pretenses, then the next child was to be born at Shandy Hall. Before the birth of Tristram, we are told that there had occurred a circumstance of a needless trip to London. In such an eventuality, Mr. Shandy insisted that Tristram should be born at Shandy Hall, and not in London. As a result, Tristram's birth would be in the hands of a country midwife, rather than in those of a London doctor.

Still another event, Tristram believed, had its impact on the course of his life. On the night of his birth, his father and Uncle Toby were sitting in the living-room engaged in one of their interminable discussions and debates. As informed later by Susannah, the maid, when they felt that the child was about to be delivered by Tristram's mother, his father and Uncle Toby sent for the country midwife. As an extra measure of safety they also sent for Dr. Slop, a bungling country practitioner whom Mr. Shandy admired because he had written a five-shilling book on the history of midwifery. So, both the country midwife and the country quack reached to take charge of Tristram's birth. While the midwife attended Mrs. Shandy, the doctor, for a fee of five guineas, drank wine in the back parlour with Mr. Shandy and his brother Uncle Toby.

Uncle Toby had been a soldier until he was wounded during the siege of Numur in 1665. As a soldier he was paid the highest complement ever paid to human nature. The wound Uncle Toby had received during the siege forced him to retire to the country. The exact position of Uncle Toby's wound plays an important part later on in Tristram's life. At the suggestion of his faithful servant, Corporal Trim,

Uncle Toby had built in the country a large and complicated series of model fortifications and military emplacement on a bowling green behind Shandy Hall. Even while living a retired life in the country, Uncle Toby's entire life was spent playing soldier and thinking about this miniature battlefield. It would not be wrong to say that it was his hobby-horse and he rode it continually with the greatest of pleasure. But Mr. Shandy, the brother of Uncle Toby was not taken with the latter's hobby. He was, in fact, so averse to all this that he had to keep himself away from discussing it by violent interruptions so that he could himself continue, or start one of his long and detailed digression on obscure information.

As the two brothers, Tristram's father and Uncle Toby, sat waiting for the arrival of the midwife and Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy posed a rhetorical question of the subject of Mr. Shandy's preference for a midwife rather than a male doctor. Responding to the rhetorical question, Uncle Toby naively suggested that female modesty might explain Mrs. Shandy's choice for the midwife. This rather innocent explanation of Uncle Toby led Mr. Shandy into a long discussion of the nature of women, and of the fact that everything in the world has two handles. Uncle Toby's innocence, however always made it impossible for him to understand such affairs.

Meanwhile, after a long wait, Dr. Slop, with his bag full of tools, finally arrived at Shandy Hall. The midwife had already reached the place, she was, in fact, already in attendance when the doctor went up to see about the birth of the child. In order to while away the critical period of the birth, Corporal Trim started reading about sermon from the Holy Book, which is the *Bible*. While attending Mrs. Shandy, Dr. Slop unfortunately mistook Tristram's hip for his head. In probing with his large forceps, the doctor flattened what Tristram always referred to his nose. This mistake also Tristram, the narrator-hero, blamed essentially on the affair of the winding of the clock mentioned earlier. This, and a later incident concerning the falling of a window sash when Tristram, still a little boy, was relieving himself through a window, brought about a problem in his anatomy. These problems, which he considers responsible for whatever later happens in his life, Tristram often repeats in his narration of his life story.

Between Tristram's birth and almost immediate baptism, Mr. Shandy entertained the company with a long story he had translated from the Latin of the old German writer, Slawkenbergius, a tale-telling of the adventures of a man with an especially long nose. By the time Mr. Shandy had recovered from the bad news of the accident with the forceps, and asked about his child, he learned that it was very sick and weak. Consequently, he summoned Mr. Yorick, the curate to baptise the child immediately. While rushing to get dressed to attend the ceremony, Mr. Shandy sent word to the Parson by the maid, Susannah, to name the child Trismegistus, after an ancient philosopher who was favourite of Mr. Shandy. Susannah forgot the long and difficult name, and told Mr. Yorick to name the child Tristram. This name pleased the old man because it happened to be his own as well. It may have pleased the parson, but it did not please Mr. Shandy. When Mr. Shandy, still half-unbuttoned, reached the scene, the evil had been done. Despite the fact that Mr. Shandy thought correct naming was most important, his child was named Tristram, a name Mr. Shandy believed to be the worst in the world. He lamented that he had lost three-fourth of his son in his unfortunate geniture, nose, and name. There remained only one-fourth Tristram's education.

As a narrator of his own life story, Tristram manages to give only a partial account of his topsy-turvy boyhood between many sidelights on the characters of the members of his family. As for the events

in the story, Uncle Toby continued to answer most of his brother's, that is Mr. Shandy's arguments by softly whistling Lillibullero, his favourite tune, and going out to the little battlefield to wage small wars with his servant, Corporal Trim. The next important event in the family was the death of Master Booby, Tristram's older brother, who had been away at Westminster school in London. To this event, Mr. Shandy reacted in his usual way to calling up all the philosophic ideas of the past on death and discoursing on until he had adjusted himself to the new situation. The tragic news was carried to the Kitchen staff and Susannah, despite a desire to show grief, could think of nothing, but the wonderful wardrobe of dresses she would inherit when the mistress went into mourning. The vision of Mrs. Shandy's dresses passed through her mind. Corporal Trim also well demonstrated the transitory nature of life by dropping his hat as if he had suddenly died, and then making an extemporaneous funeral oration.

After many more digressions on war, health, the fashions of ancient Roman dress, the doubts of Mr. Shandy, Tristram's father, as to whether to get his son tutor, and whether to put him into long trousers, the narrator proceeds to tell the history of his Uncle Toby, both in war and love. Near Shandy Hall, the residence of the Shandy family, lived the Widow Wadman, who after laying siege to Uncle Toby's affection for a long time, almost made him to propose marriage to her. But the gentle ex-soldier, who literally would not kill a fly, finally learned the widow's purpose when she began to inquire so pointedly into the extent and position of his wound. First Uncle Toby promised the widow that he would allow her to put her finger on the spot where he was wounded. Then, he brought a map of Namur so that the widow could have a feel of the whole thing herself. Uncle Toby's innocence balked the widow's real question until Corporal Trim finally told his master that it was the spot on his body, not the spot on the surface of the world, where the accident took place, which was the point of Widow Wadman's interest. This realization so embarrassed the old Uncle Toby that the idea of marriage disappeared from his mind for ever.

Tristram, the narrator, then concludes his story with Parson Yorick's statement that the book had been one of the cock and bull variety, the reader having been led a mad, but merry chase through the satirical and witty mind of the author. An instance of the author's sharp wit and keen sense of humour can be cited here from book IX, Chapter XXXII:

*My father, whose way was to force every event in nature into an hypothesis, by which mean never man crucified truth at the rate he did-had but just heard of the report as my Uncle Toby set out ; and catching fire suddenly at the trespass done his brother by it, was demonstrating to Yorick, notwithstanding my mother was sitting by-not only 'That the devil was in women and that the whole of the affair was lust; and but that every evil and disorder in the world, of what kind and nature soever, from the first fall of Adam, down to my Uncle Toby's (inclusive), was owing one way or other to the same unruly appetite.*

As can be seen from this and other parts of the narrative, *Tristram Shandy* certainly does not satisfy the usual expectations as to how a novel should be organized. It is also uncommon in the choice of material as well as its presentation, both being rather unusual in the eighteenth – century novel, or even the novel thereafter. It is, for example, one of the good jokes of literature that the reader reaches the third book of

*Tristram Shandy* before the hero of the novel is born. And yet it is the hero himself who is narrating the story of his birth. But not all readers are able to appreciate why the joke is good. The entire designing of the novel depends on the fact that the starting point is not Tristram's birth but his begetting. At the very outset, the author, Laurence Sterne, announces his purpose, which is to begin literally *ab ovo*, alluding to Horace's principle, which he proposes to flout, that an epic should not begin with "Leda's egg," that is, with the ancestry and earliest beginning of the hero.

Between beginning and birth, many things may happen, but not such as novelists normally deal with. *Tristram Shandy* breaks off before the hero is mature enough to become what in literature is recognized as a character; that is, if we disregard the freakish episodes of continental travel, quite unrelated to the rest of the novel, in book VIII. Of the life history of Tristram, we know only what the influence of the prenatal period and earlier infancy have done to him. From the viewpoint of an ordinary novelist, very little has happened. But from the viewpoint of Laurence Sterne, or Mr. Shandy, or the modern psychologist, most of the really decisive things have happened in the life of Tristram. The hero's character and fortune have been more or less settled by the sequence of events beginning with the unfortunate circumstances of his begetting and culminating in the sash-window tragedy. In this very sequences of events lies the design or pattern of the novel.

Sterne cannot be accused of not announcing his theme of *Tristram Shandy* promptly. The first paragraph of the novel is all about the perils which attend one's begetting :

*I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me, had they duly considered how much depended upon what they were then doing—that not only the production of a rational. Being concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius as the very cast of his mind,— and for ought they knew to the contrary even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost. Had they duly weighed and considered all this and proceeded accordingly, — I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that in which the reader is likely to see me.*

Thus, the narrator goes on to elaborate these perils in psychological terms, with lively imagery. Uncle Toby's hobby-horse is one of the most interesting examples of Sterne's uncommon method of ordering the material of his novel. It also brings us back to the tradition of learned wit. Those days even military science was a form of learning like any other, and took similar forms to those of Mr. Shandy's intellectual interests. It had a relatively clear-cut system, with an ordered grouping of particulars, but with just enough complication to provide a pleasuring muddle. It had its lists of learned authorities and a terminology with rhetorical possibilities : scrap counterscarp, glacis, covered way, half-moon and revelin.

In his discourse on hobby-horse, Sterne puts forth a theory of characterization, the point of which is that when a man becomes deeply attached to favourite occupation, his character gradually takes on a shape and colouring derived from the materials belonging to that occupation. There is also, according to

Sterne, another side to the process, which the author does not mention, though his art illustrates it. If the man's nature is changed by the materials acting upon it, the materials themselves are changed by their association with the man. All organized pursuits or subjects for study may be said to have their abstract, impersonal character, their 'textbook' character let us say and also a variable 'human' character upon them by the different sorts of treatment which they receive when human beings have to do with them. The materials of military science, entering so deeply into Uncle Toby's sensibility, take on new shapes in the process.

Uncle Toby's hobby-horse arises, as the author explains so well, out of a difficulty he experiences in making himself clear when he tries to tell the tale of the siege of Namur, where he received his wound. Partly because Uncle Toby's hearers do not understand the technical terms, and partly because the terrain was somewhat complicated, he gets tied up in his narration, and this, by irritating him, adversely affects his recovery from the wound. The search for clarity leads Uncle Toby to the study of maps and textbooks. But now he becomes so full of his theme that he has to find other more elaborate ways of expressing himself through it. Hence, he raises miniature fortifications made from leaden gutters, a melted-down pewter shaving basin, and the weight from sash-windows.

There is a quality about Uncle Toby's hobby-horse that places it on a different imaginative level from other examples in fiction of make-believe and eccentric preoccupation. The difference is one of intensity. Sterne's art manifest itself in the transformation of the concrete objects so that they become completely assimilated to Uncle Toby's all-absorbing ideas. His hobby-horse differs from that of (say) Commodore Trunnion (in *Peregrine Pickle*) or Mr. Wemmick (in italicize), not only in intensity but in the fact that it refuses to keep within its allotted boundaries. The toys straying from their places, contribute to the complicated system of traps and obstacles in which the characters, bodily or mentally are caught. There is the sash- window episode. The drawbridge broken accidentally by Trim is confused with the bridge of Tristram's nose. Mr. Shandy's mention of a train of ideas makes Uncle Toby think of a train artillery.

Thus, the reader of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is usually likely to be contented to enjoy flavour and atmosphere, to bask in the wanton profusion of human idiosyncracy, without seeking to understand very much of the kind of mentality presented in the characters or expressed by their creator. It is an important point in favour of the novel that appeal remains most of the theme and patterns missed, its human appeal remains irresistible. But the ways of the Shandy world may be all better appreciated, if we can relate it to the rich and solid tradition of wit behind it.

#### 20.4 LET US SUM UP

Laurence Sterne's novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* was first published in nine volumes and is considered one of the greatest novels of the eighteenth century. The most striking feature of the novel is Sterne's preoccupation with the nature of time. This reflects how our experience of time, throughout our lives, is often non-linear. He experimented with the form of the novel to shake up the reader's experience and force them to actively engage with the text. In doing so, Sterne helped to change the way we think about what a novel can be and laid the foundations for a whole new way of writing. Laurence Sterne shows us how quibbling over the causes of things can lead us to endless digression and distraction when the important thing, sometimes, is just to figure out what's happening in our own lives.

## 20.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who is the narrator of the novel, *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Mr. Yorick
  - b) Tristram Shandy
  - c) Uncle Toby
  - d) Walter Shandy
2. How many volumes are there in the novel, *Tristram Shandy*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Nine
  - b) Six
  - c) Five
  - d) Three
3. What are the most remarkable characters in the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Uncle Toby
  - b) Corporal Trim
  - c) Tristram's mother
  - d) Both a and b
4. Who is a soldier and was wounded during the seige of numur in 1665? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Dr. Slop
  - b) Uncle Toby
  - c) Walter Shandy
  - d) Yorick
5. Who was reading a sermon from the Bible during the critical period of the birth of Tristram Shandy? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Yorick
  - b) Dr. Slop
  - c) Corporal Trim
  - d) Walter Shandy
6. What was the actual name that his father decided for Tristram? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Trimegistus Shandy
  - b) Tristram Shandy
  - c) Trismarius Shandy
  - d) Triton Shandy

7. Mr. Walter Shandy was Tristram's \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Father  
b) Uncle  
c) Doctor  
d) Brother

8. Who forgets the long and difficult name that was told by Mr. Shandy for his child? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Dr. Slop  
b) Yorick  
c) Uncle Toby  
d) Susannah

#### **20.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss in detail the narrative style of Laurence Sterne.  
Q.2 Discuss the character of Uncle Toby.

#### **20.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

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

#### **20.8 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Atchity, Kenneth John. "Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne." *EBSCO Research Starters*, EBSCO, 2023, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/literature-and-writing/tristram-shandy-laurence-sterne>.
- \* Keymer, Thomas. *Sterne, the Moderns and the Novel*. OUP, 2001.
- \* Ross, Ian Campbell. *Laurence Sterne: A life*. OUP, 2001.
- \* "Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne Plot Summary." *LitCharts*, LitCharts LLC, <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-life-and-opinions-of-tristram-shandy-gentleman/summary>.

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## THEME AND SIGNIFICANCE

### STRUCTURE

- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 21.3 Theme
- 21.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 21.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 21.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 21.8 Suggested Reading

#### 21.1 INTRODUCTION

However eccentric Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* might seem on first reading, it is not a novel without a purpose or a pattern. In fact, however unusual and untypical this novel might sound, actually it is not quite outside the eighteenth century novel in England. Sterne's debt to Rabelais is as clear as is Fielding's to Cervantes. At the same time, the tone of Sterne's work is very different from the tone of Rabelais's. With its tendency to snigger, it is much less verile than that of Rabelais. This aspect of Sterne, the garrulous social climber trying his best to come to terms with aristocratic society need not to be discussed here, being too much talked about already. At the same time this fact should not distract us from the real charm and value of this unique work.

#### 21.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to explain the important thematic concerns in the novel *Tristram Shandy* to enhance your familiarity with the novel. The lesson also aims to highlight the significance of the major themes in the novel.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to delineate the thematic concerns in the novel, as well as analyse the novel in the light of these themes and state their significance.

#### 21.3 THEME

The principle theme of *Tristram Shandy*, as Mr. Jefferson has put it "may be seen in term of a comic clash between the world of learning and that of human affairs." Although apparent, *Tristram*

*Shandy*'s relation to *Joseph Andrews* and also to *Don Quixote* does not need to be stressed. Mr Shandy's obsession with all kind of abstract learning: legal, physiological, philological and metaphysical, and Uncle Toby's hobby-horse, military science are in the line of Quixote's chivalry and Parson Adam's absorption in the classics. And these obsessions take a similar significance in Sterne's novel : they are forever at odds with reality. As Jefferson has rightly remarked at every point in *Tristram Shandy*, the misfortunes which are to determine Tristram's future are either the actual consequences of the hobby horse or else derive from hard fact which fly direct in the face of Mr. Shandy's darling theories. For example, at the very moment of begetting, Mr. Shandy's physical and metaphysical assurance is scattered by his wife's practical question about the winding of the clock. It is a pedantic legalism which leads to Tristram's birth in the country. This factor further leads to the involvement of Dr. Slop and Dr. Slop's involvement leads to the tragedy of Tristram's nose. Also, through the cussedness of life, Mr. Shandy's elaborate theory of names comes to nothing. His son gets the worst name he could ever think of. Another ghastly blow of the hopes of the novel's hero, Tristram, is stuck by the fall of the sash-window. This fall is caused by Uncle Toby's need, which is satisfied all too diligently by his faithful servant, Corporal Trim. This incident adds a special piquancy to the *Tristapaedia* and to Mr. Shandy's researches, involving a full investigation into the wardrobe of the ancients on the question of breeches.

Thus, the pedantic learning is made the butt, and in fact, the perverse driving-force of *Tristram Shandy*. It is also not just any learning, any concern with theory. No doubt part of the effect of the book could have been achieved by any contrast between theory and practice. It is also true that one of the levels of the novel's appeal is in its sense of the waywardness of life. It arises from the very difficulty of theorizing about anything as complex as the countless facts of actual existence. But in its final intent Sterne's novel depends very little on generalizations. In fact it is with considerable difficulty that we are able to abstract the principles behind it. Thus, to describe the novel as a satire on the theme of the conflict between theory and practice, though true enough in a way, does not fully convey its basic quality which is very concrete and particular.

One of the themes, no doubt of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is the satirical examination of an outmoded way of thinking. This aspect reveals Sterne's novel not as a mere idiosyncratic curiosity but as anti-romantic. It shows the novel is a contribution towards a more realistic and satisfying literature. Closely bound up with this is also Sterne's success in catching certain subtleties of human experience which had eluded earlier novelists. This success can best be illustrated by a quotation from the novel concerning the arrival belowstairs of the news of the death of master Bobby.

*My young master in London is dead! said Obadiah— A green satin night-gown of my mother's which had been twice scoured, was the first idea which Obadiah's exclamation brought into Susannah's head. —Well might Locke write a chapter upon the imperfection of words. Then, quoth Susannah, we must all go into mourning. But note a second time the word mourning, not notwithstanding Susannah made use of it herself failed also of doing its office, it excited not one single idea, tinged either with grey or black, — all was green. The green satin night-gown hung there still.*

*- O! twill be the death of my poor mistress, cried Susannah—My mother's whole wardrobe followed. What a procession! her red damask - her orange tawney, her white and yellow lute strings - her brown taffeta, - her bone - laced caps-her bedgowns and comfortable under-petticoats, -- Not a rag was left behind. -- No, -she will look up again, said Susannah.*

*We had fat, foolish scullion-my father, I think, kept her for her simplicity- she had been all autumn struggling with a dropsy. He is dead, sad Obadiah, he is certainly dead! —So am not I, said the foolish scullion.*

*—Here is sad news, Trim, cried Susannah, wiping her eyes as Trim stepp'd into the Kitchen, — master Bobby is dead and buried — the funeral was an interpolation of Susannah's — we shall have all to go into mourning said Susannah.*

*I hope not, said Trim — You hope not, cried Susanah earnestly. — The mourning ran not in Trim's head, whatever it did in Susannah's — I hope —said Trim, explaining himself. I hope in God the news is not true. ---I heard the letter read with my own ears, answered obadiah, and we shall have a terrible piece of work of it in stubbing the Ox - moor. --Oh ! he is dead said Susannah. -- As sure, said the scullion, as I'm alive.*

*I lament for him from my heart and my soul, said Trim fetching a sigh. --Poor creature! -- poor boy! - poor gentleman.*

*-- He was alive last Whitsuntide! said the coach-man. Whitsuntide! alas! Cried Trim, extending his right arm, and falling instantly into the same attitude in which he read the sermon, -what is Whitsuntide Jonathan (for that was the coachman's name), or Shrovetide, or any tide or time past, to this? Are we not here nowcontinued the corporal (striking the end of his stick perpendicularly upon the floor, so as to give an idea of health and stability) - and are we not -- (dropping his hat upon the ground) gone in a moment! -Twas infinitely striking! Susannah, Obadiah, the cook -maid, allmelted -The foolish fat scullion herself, who was scouring a fish! alas! Cried Trim, extending his right arm We not- (dropping his hat upon the ground) gone in a moment! 'Twas infinitely striking! Susannah, obadiah, the cook-maid, allmelted, - The foolish fat scullion herself, who was scouring a fish kettle upon her knees, was rous'd with it. -The whole kitchen crowded about the corporal.*

Here is indeed a brilliant comic drama. The way Sterne has woven together in a scene the simultaneous actions and reactions of several characters contrasted, individualized and yet grouped together and, at the same time, brought together in an act of interpretation, is indeed remarkable. In fact, the drama is so effectively narrated that the stage cannot compete with it, that green stained night-gown, for instance, is beyond the reach of the theatre, and beyond the reach of Defoe or Fielding. This is an example of just a

trivial incident, which is only a minor case in the wide spectrum of Sterne's achievements in the art of the novel. It demonstrates new possibilities in the art of the prose narrative. Sterne's method implies a questioning of Fielding's assumption that it is possible to describe a character in two dimensional terms.

In Sterne's view, life is unpredictable. As such, the texture of life experience, according to him, is much subtle than is presumed by a writer like Defoe or Fielding. In his view, human experience is much more complex, which cannot be easily captured, than is presumed by his predecessors. This includes even Richardson who is credited with an indepth view of his characters. Sterne also explores in *Tristram Shandy* the resources of language with an altogether new precision and a new adventurousness. Here, in this attempt of Sterne one can see the ghost of Rabelais presiding. The similarities between the two are quite obvious : The ambiguity of words, the daring invention, the sentence that dies away as you raise your voice,...for instance, "what prodigious armies you had in Flanders!" We must not also make a high claim for Sterne's novel! Many of its felicities are mere gestures, which should be taken as hints only to future insight. One also had to admit that there is much in the book which is perverse and as much which is trivial. And yet it is a great book undoubtedly. Despite all its faults, one continually relishes its detail, even though the total effect is less than satisfying. Finally, its significance in extending vastly and intricately the scope and possibilities of English novel has to be duly acknowledged.

Sterne's strength in *Tristram Shandy* lies in the sensitive perception of the comedy that goes in our minds. Of course, there are less attractive aspects also of his fooling. We do tolerate his use of blank pages, black pages, and marbled pages, his placing of the preface in the middle of the book, his dots, dashes, and index hands, and other tricks which Joseph Addison would have termed as "false wit." It is less easy to tolerate his recurrent grossness. Quite possible the comedy of the human mind depends to a large extent upon the grotesquely indecent association found even in the purest minds. In general, however, Sterne's grossness is not subtley psychological. It actually derives from the sort of stimulus that moves the urchin to evoke a snigger. His prurience is, however by intention and in effect comic rather than corrupting.

Comedy in *Tristram Shandy* also arises from the fundamental idiosyncrasy of characters. Corporal Trim learned his catchism in a military fashion, so to speak, and so he must deliver it whatever he might be doing. Uncle Toby, who devoted his waking hours to war games, was nevertheless the most pacific of mortals with "scarce a heart to retaliate upon a fly." At the start of the painful story of Le Fever, he sighed, "I wish Trim, I was asleep." With preparation befitting a foreign embassy he waited upon the Widow Wadman to tell her he was in love, but at that moment taking up the Bible and happening upon the siege to Jericho, he forgot completely the rest of his intended discourse, Uncle Toby's "hobby-horse" (war) furnished Sterne with the best possible burlesque of the popular eighteenth-century doctrine of the "ruling passion."

The comic writer is greatly dependent on the quality of the material social systems, conventions of behaviour, physiological or scientific ideas which his age supplies him. The writer's ability is to be judged in terms of his powers of distortion and travesty to work upon those materials. The wit of *Tristram Shandy* is in large measure of the kind which may be called 'learned'. Sterne's advantage as a writer lay in the fact that the learning, in which he was saturated, offered more scope for witty explication than does the

modern knowledge which has gradually taken its place. For instance, the old speculative medicine of medieval tradition provided better opportunities for an uninhibited play of wit and fancy than the materials of modern medical science. The spirit of the medieval speculative medicine was not yet dead at the time Sterne wrote his novel. Medieval science, related to and dominated by metaphysics and theology, was not afraid to offer a rational, complete, and readily intelligible conception of the nature of man, such as a literary artist could play with. Johnson's theory of humours is an obvious example, which comes to one's mind. The points of the system lend themselves to ingenious handling. The habit of free speculation uncrushed by the discipline of modern scientific method was stimulating to a witty imagination. The technical detail, though sufficiently elaborate, was not unlike that of modern science, hopelessly beyond the grasp of the average educated person. It was, in fact, open to any amateur to discuss the influence of radical heat and radical moisture on bodily health. The terms could be manipulated to provide an amusing explanation for an eccentricity of character or behaviour, such as the account in the third section of the, *Art of Sinking in Poetry*, of how bad poetry comes to be written :

*Against this I draw an argument from what seems to me an undoubted physical Maxim. That poetry is a natural and morbid Secretion from the Brain. As I would not suddenly stop a cold in the head, or dry up my neighbour's Issue, I would as little hinder him from necessary writing ..... I have known a man thoughtful, melancholy, and raving for divers days, who forthwith grew wonderfully easy, lightsome, and cheerful, upon the discharge of the peccant humour; in exceeding purulent metre.*

Sterne was engrossed in physiological lore. It meant very much to his imagination. Although he plays with ideas as old, what is important is that the freedom and familiarity with such writers as Rabelais, Johnson, Donne, and Swift had enjoyed in their witty treatment of learned ideas were not lost to him. When Sterne was writing, the crisis of the scientific revolution had already passed. But the traditional habits of thought were still alive. And these habits provided ample opportunities for the comic artist to play with them. If Mr. Shandy is the last embodiment of what Whitehead refers to the "unbridled rationalism" of the later pre-scientific age, he is indeed an impressive one. It is in the fitness of things that the Shandean philosophy should be stated in physiological terms :

True Shandeism, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of that body to run freely through its channels making the wheel of life run long and cheerfully round.

Such passages in the novel, flavoured by physiological wit, are scattered all over the vast narrative. The novelist's physiological approach to his subject is partly the secret of the structure of *Tristram Shandy*.

Not less important than the material of medicine to the comic writer of Sterne's status are the materials of law. Once again, the subject in its unreformed condition compares favourably with its more efficient modern counterpart, when considered from the view point of the comic artist. The amusing idea of law as a kind of net through which the undeserving, if sufficiently supple, may escape and, in which the deserving may be enslaved, has less point today than in earlier periods. The old pedantic rigidity of

the forms of action has gone and the reforms to the utilitarians have tended to make the legal system correspond more to what ordinary human nature sees as reasonable and just *ubi remedium ibi ius* has become *ubi ius ibi remedium*. Fewer people need to go to law today, which is one reason why legal complications, considered as a pattern in human affairs, play less part in giving shape to the words of literature, under the old regime of the legal system in real life as well as in literature, which was a field for playful inventions. Some of the fictitious proceedings which were used to manipulate the law, such as those involved in “barring the entail,” would have for us the qualities of ingenious farce. Thus, the art of the legal quibble is one application of that art of logic-chopping for which the schoolmen were chiefly renowned. The power to use logic for making a show of plausibility to an absurd or unreasonable argument is in general, one of the distinguished marks of the writers in the tradition of wit to which Sterne must be related. Legal quibbles are a common feature in the works of these writers. For instance, Donne, in *Woman's Constancy*, cynically invents for his mistress a far-fetched excuse, in legal terms, for infidelity. Similarly, Dryden's Almanzor in *Conquest of Granada*, confronted with Almahinde's betrothal to Boabdelin, seeks for a quasi-legal basis for his own claim to her. The discussion by the bogus cannonist and divine, in Johnson's *Silent Women*, of the possibility of a divorce for Morose is another instance of the use of legal learning. Still another example is the impeachment of Bridlegoose in Rabelais. The most amusing example of the kind is, of course, found in swift's *A Tale of a Tub* in the interpretation of the will of their father by the three brothers. This is one of the supreme examples of the legal wit. As for Sterne's novel, it is full of the legal wit. Some of these are based on cannon law. The “petite canulle” joke, the “in nomine patriac” dispute, and the debate as to whether Mr. Shandy is of kin to his own child are admirably entertaining. Sterne's legal approach to his subject plays its part, along with the medical approach in giving the novel its theme.

#### 21.4 LET US SUM UP

One of the peculiar traits of the pre-scientific types of learned work was the copious listing of authorities and fact called from authorities. This trait made these works tedious and intolerably prolix. But it also lent itself to a measure of artistic exploitation. For instance, in books like Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, this trait is a thing of glory, the inventory of a treasure-horse. Here, learning has a personal flavour. It represents individual achievement. On the contrary, modern learning, with its infinitely greater array of facts and formidable mechanical organization of them, is inevitably more impersonal. In Burton, Sterne and other scholars of the school of wit, two qualities are freely combined. There is a pedantic thoroughness in the listing of authorities and facts, as well as a lively grasp of everyday things. The piling on of learned detail does not choke the human interest. At the same time, the material of concrete experience is ordered with a learned thoroughness. Here, we must not miss an important link between the qualities of the wit achieved by writers like Sterne, Swift and Donne and the quality of their acquaintance with the learned ideas which they exploited. Their resourcefulness, the abundance of detail at their command, the accuracy with which they parody the solemn enquirer, the superb art of authority which they can assume these virtues point to a serious intellectual equipment in later humorists like Lamb. It is one of the great differences which separates Sterne from writers who sometimes are said to have been influenced by him.

## 21.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who said that the novel, Tristram Shandy is the “...comic clash between the world of learning and that of human affairs.”\_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Geoffrey
  - b) Hudson
  - c) Jefferson
  - d) Sterne
2. What is the major theme of the novel?\_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) The acceptance of impotence
  - b) Social Problems
  - c) Human Intelligence
  - d) Grief and Terror
3. What is the theme of identity in the novel reflects?\_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Identity is not fixed
  - b) Identity is fixed before a person is born
  - c) Education is responsible for identity
  - d) None of the above
4. What is the tone of the novel *Tristram Shandy*?\_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Humourous
  - b) Witty
  - c) Paradoxical
  - d) All of the above
5. Uncle Toby’s obsession in the novel is similar to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Quixtoe’s Chivalry
  - b) Parson Adam’s absorption in classics
  - c) Shandy’s eccentric behavior
  - d) All of the above
6. Tristram Shandy uses the term hobby-horse in the novel to describe \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Dancing horse
  - b) Hobbies of the horse
  - c) A person past time or intellectual passion
  - d) Type of horse

7. What is the narrative technique of the novel *Tristram Shandy*? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Non-linear narrative
- b) Stream of consciousness narrative
- c) Digressive - progressive style
- d) All of the above

8. Why is *Tristram Shandy* called an anti-novel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Events are not in chronology
- b) Unconventional time scheme
- c) The novel was open-ended
- d) All of the above

#### **21.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Discuss the themes of the Novel *Tristram Shandy*.

Q.2 What does Tristram feel about his name?

#### **21.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)**

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

#### **21.8 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Course Hero. "Tristram Shandy Themes." *Course Hero*, 15 Nov. 2017, <https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Tristram-Shandy/themes/>.
- \* Keymer, Thomas. *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- \* Williams, Helen. *Laurence Sterne and the Eighteenth-Century Book*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

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**PLOT AND STRUCTURE OF *TRISTRAM SHANDY*****STRUCTURE**

- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 22.3 Plot and structure
- 22.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 22.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 22.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 22.8 Suggested Reading

**22.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Tristram Shandy* has a highly experimental plot structure. The plot's progression in a non-linear manner with interruptions, breaks, and digressions, etc., reject the traditional narrative structure providing it a highly unconventional and innovative appeal.

**22.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to introduce the learner to the plot and narrative structure of the novel *Tristram Shandy*.

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to appreciate the narrative technique which Laurence Sterne has used in this novel. The learner will also be able to analyse the novel as a precursor to the post-modern narrative technique and its innovative appeal in terms of time, linearity, memory, etc.

**22.3 PLOT AND STRUCTURE**

The plot of *Tristram Shandy* has always posed a problem to the common readers as well as the uncommon critics. Even those, who have shown that there are strands in the narrative that give it shape and structure, have to offer an apology or two. Let us try to understand the problem as also the way the novel's structure should be approached to make sense of it. No doubt, Laurence Sterne made his novel different from those his contemporaries had written, but since he did it deliberately and not out of ignorance, there has to be a purpose behind it, and no purpose can be there without a pattern. Hence, *Tristram Shandy* does have a plot or structure. We only need to approach it from the view point it was written.

Laurence Sterne published the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* in 1760 and the last in 1767. Obviously, serialized novels tend to be loose in structure going from episode to episode as they do, responding to even the reader's demand at times, giving turns and twists to the narrative not foreseen at times even by the novelist himself. And yet no novelist worth the name would lose sight of his motives, and therefore, would not fail to give the motives a definite structure. The structure of course can be not necessarily of the sequences of episode, but of a pattern of ideas and images or a juxtaposition of characters and events. Laurence's novel no doubt has a unique plot but it does have one, and the threads of the texture are unmistakably there. It is remarkable to remember that with in eleven years of the appearance of Richardson's *Clarissa* and ten years of the appearance of Fielding's *Tom Jones*, the new literary form of the novel had been turned upside down and inside out in Laurence's *Tristram Shandy*. And yet it need to be repeated once again that *Tristram Shandy* is a novel, despite the fact that critics have been finding it difficult to find a suitable name for it. This should remain a reminder to us that novel form cannot be interpreted in narrow terms, even the conventional novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

To make an attempt to summarize the novel's plot is to say less about the book than the conventional procedure usually does. One may use here E.M. Forster's term and call *Tristram Shandy* a "fantasy". The use of this term for Laurence's novel will indicate that he was not out to produce a simulacrum of reality, which was being done in their different ways by both Richardson and Fielding. At the same time, the world that Sterne creates in his novel is very much like the real world with which we are familiar. No character incident can be called unreal by any standard. The main characters like Mr. Shandy and Uncle Toby as well as their conversations are as solid as any slice of reality. Sterne's character's major as well as minor, like the characters of any great writer have the enduring quality of mythical figures. They suggest much more than they actually represent. They give expression to ways of behaviour and inclinations of temperament that remain valid from generation to generation.

F.R. Leavis might feel morally outraged and call *Tristram Shandy* an "irresponsible (and nasty) trifling." Considered coolly and examined critically, one can see the force of Sterne's imagination which captures the essentials of a culture through innovative technique of narration, which even though almost "crazy" in his time does not look so strange today. After the modern psychological and experimental forms of the novel, *Tristram Shandy* only emerges as a precursor of many literary devices and techniques unknown in the eighteenth century and even in the nineteenth. Sterne's novel must be viewed as the work of a humourist. He was a humourist in two very different senses. In the first place he was very much skilled in the literary or artistic expression of humour. Secondly, he was also a fantastical or whimsical person as later Mark Twain was or Joseph Heller is, in the American tradition of the novel.

E.M. Forster was quick to understand the nature of the plot or pattern of *Tristram Shandy*. He compared Sterne's technique of narration with that of Virginia Woolf. A passage from Woolf's famous essay on the novel would explain how this narrative technique used by both Sterne and Woolf, itself is different from the conventional modes of narration. The passage in question runs as under :

*Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impression - trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come an incessant shower of*

*innumerable atoms; and as they fall as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday the accent falls differently from of old, the moment of importance came not here but there's so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose not what he must if he could base his work upon his feeling and not upon convention there would be no plot no comedy no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted sense and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it.....*

This passage could be used to describe the way Sterne saw life and wished to transmit it (the reality of life) to the printed page. Like Virginia Woolf, he too had come after a solid realist (Henry Fielding). His practice for sure is a protest against what he decidedly thought was an arbitrary convention. Like Woolf, he could have said that life at the moment, is being lived does not at all resemble life as it generalized after the moment has passed. The action of a realist's novel has finished before the book opens. But Sterne, like Woolf, writes in the present when the action is taking place. As Sterne, like himself said, "Writing when properly managed, is but a different name for conversation," or reminiscing. As Tristram Shandy is setting out to tell us about his life and opinions in his monologue. As he speaks, one thing reminds him of another with which it has no apparent and logical connection. The narrator is always forced to digress because a memory comes into his mind which will not be suppressed. He remembers a story, a fact, an instance of old learning, which will illustrate a point, and having brought it out find that it is quite beside or beyond the point. We are inevitably reminded today of the stream of consciousness novels of the modernist period, and the subsequent ones, of the soliloquies of Joyce's Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom. But there is also a fundamental difference between the two.

In Laurence Sterne novels, the narrator is in fact, the author himself. Sterne is Shandy as well as Yorick. Here, the names are nothing but convenient marks for the author himself. Another point of difference is that Sterne is constantly amused at the wayward behaviour of his own mind in the act of remembering. He continuously exploits the waywardness for two ends. He does it for the purpose of comedy as well as for shocking the reader. The second one is of fundamental importance in Sterne. In effect, he seems to say to the reader : "you believe you think logically, that one thought follows another, in ordered sequence believing that you are in control of your thoughts, always considering your mind a machine completely under your control. It is, in point of fact, nothing of the kind. When you are thinking, or remembering what happens is quite often entirely illogical and quite as often, not in your control." So, setting out to write his life and opinions, Shandy is not even born until the fourth book of the novel, which is almost half way through, and the narrator, Shandy himself, can note with delight :

*I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month and having got, as you may perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume - and no further than to my first day's life - tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty - four more life to write just now, than when I set out; so that instead of advancing as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it - on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back*

*- was everyday of my life to be as busy a day at this - And why not ? - and the transaction and opinions of it to take up as much description - And for what reason should they be cut short? As at this rate I should just live 364 times faster than I should write - I must follow, an please your worships, that the more I write, the more I shall have to write - and consequently, the more your worships read, the more your worship will have to read.*

*Will this be good for your worship's eyes? It will do well for mine; and; was it not that my OPINIONS will be the death of me, I perceive I shall lead a fine life of it out of this self-same life of mine; or in other words, shall lead a couple of fine lives together.*

One can see how Sterne is trying to question the conventional mode of thinking as well as writing, which was in vogue in the eighteenth century. His view of the mind's functioning is, decidedly, not without basis. He has both philosophical and psychological bases for his view. One of these bases was an irrational, and not rational process. At the same time, Sterne's basis was his habit of writing, as it were a gloss upon the theory, finding his examples, pointing them out, generalizing on them, making comedy out of them. In this manner of writing, one can see the working of the clowning spirit, the kind of spirit the fool displays in *King Lear*; Touchstone displays in *As You Like It*, or the gravedigger displays in *Hamlet*. Sterne clowns all the time on the subjects of childbirth and reproduction. If he had done so out of the context of his ideas and form and style he could have been offensive. But within the context of his ideas, he is for sure, not offensive. His style is in full agreement with his view of life, that he should stress what lies beyond and below accepted opinion, that he should stress prenatal influences on his narrator and find them funny and absurd. To be shocked by Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, as was F.R. Leavis, after reading the discoveries of Freud and his psycho-analysis is tantamount to a deliberate refusal to be liberated from the false shame.

The fact that Sterne makes comments even while he is recording the ideas, shows that he was not just imitating or implementing the Lockean principle of the associations of ideas in the mind. In fact, he uses the principle or theory with a very definite end in his mind. Not all feelings aroused by the ideas are alike. For Sterne, some are precious, some are not. The moments that he seems to cherish most are those charged with the comic, the pathetic, and the sentimental. The most valuable moments are those that isolate oddity - the foibles, hobby horses, idiosyncrasies of behaviour of his characters and pathos. And it is these feelings of pathos, of sentimentality, of humour which are central to his narrative, not the episodes and incidents. Sterne is interested not so much in what people do and how they react to their actions. Events may happen without a character's wishing them, but how that character responds to those events would reveal the inside of his characters. In other words, his interest is greater in character than in action.

No wonder then, that *Tristram Shandy* is not built or patterned or designed on the principle of sequence of incidents - conventionally called "plot", since the time of Aristotle. What seems to engross Sterne is not deeds but the implication of deeds. It is the emotional aura of the incidents in the story, especially their comic aspects, which Sterne loves to dramatize. Hence, the movement of the narrative, or the story line, in *Tristram Shandy* is casual, rather than formal, digressive rather than determined. The novel, thus, reveals a wholly new concept of form in fiction. Told in the first person by a narrator whose

personality and train of thoughts along with their association determine the tone and organization of the narrative, *Tristram Shandy* seems on the surface a rambling and eccentric patchwork of anecdotes, digressions, reflections, jests, parodies, and dialogues centering on the character and opinions of the narrator's Uncle Toby. Other characters and caricatures are also introduced in the narrative to provide humorous or sentimental stuff.

However, the seeming chaos of the plot of *Tristram Shandy* is wholly misleading. Sterne knew what he is doing in his multiple digressions and inset anecdotes and tales. He deliberately eschews chronological order. He does so partly because he knows that the past exists in present consciousness and colours and conditions it. In other words, we are but our memories. He does so also because he realizes that time as marked off by experiencing man is not the same as time as ticked off by the clock. For example, a short clock-time can seem, and be, much longer (or shorter) in experience than a much longer (or shorter) clock-time. Sterne has the chronology of his story firmly fixed in his mind. He is writing long after the events took place, when some of the main characters are already dead. It gives him freedom to leap forward to the present and see his story as history. Also, it allows him to stay, at time, with the moment whose events he is describing. Thus, a firm skeleton of dates lies underneath the author's jumping about in time. For instance, Uncle Toby's death is described in volume six, but he is alive at the end of volume nine, as is Yorick, who has the last word in the novel, yet who at several earlier points in the book is back on as long dead.

Thus, the author's whimsical, sentimental personality who is at once a moralist and a clown, alternatively tender and prurient, control the whole story or narrative. Also, the digressions not only determine the comic and moral scope of the novel, but also, in different parts of the book, help to keep the tone personal and even intimate. The suggestiveness, the appeals to the reader (quite often done rather slyly, assuming that the reader is a woman at some moment and at others addressing him as a man), the asterisks and blanks for the reader to interpret and fill up as he wishes, also help to implicate the reader in the novel. In fact, the reader is made a conspirator with the writer in producing the work.

Sterne, as said earlier, makes several remarks about his method or technique of writing. As often quoted, "Writing when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is)," says Sterne, "is but a different name for conversation." The tone of informal conversation or anecdote is sustained throughout *Tristram Shandy*. The author's personality pervades all. And it is the multifarious element which constitute the narrative of this novel and combine into a unity as a result. The author thus designed to create quite a new kind of narrative form, and gave the novel a kind of freedom it had never previously enjoyed. In fact, no novelist between Sterne and Woolf took advantage of this freedom in the manner in which these two did, making the picture of life presented three dimensional, so to say. In his attitude to time, to the individual consciousness, and in his use of shifts in perspective, Sterne is decidedly the most modern of eighteenth century novelists. But the lesson he learned from Locke about human loneliness and the relativity of time was not what other writers of his age learned from that philosopher. For other writers of the eighteenth, and even of the nineteenth century, reality remained public and socially recognizable. It was left for twentieth-century novelists, learning from their own philosophers and psychologists, lessons similar to that which Sterne had learned from Locke to develop the novel further along the lines that Sterne had indicated in *Tristram Shandy*.

Realism as an element of the novel's plot is not absent in Sterne's novel. The only difference is that here it is presented in split form and from a queer perspective. The society *Tristram Shandy* presented is provincial England, consisting largely of the inhabitants of Shandy Hall and certain neighbours. But the society is sufficiently lively, varied and representative to stand as a microcosm of mankind as a whole. The presentation may sound perverse, the picture a little distorted, but no one can miss the real traits of human nature which came out in the conversations and obsessions, oddities and absurdities of the highly idiosyncratic characters created by Laurence Sterne. They are individuals with their private worlds, and they make a world which emerges real and unified like our own. It is this wholeness which imparts the novel's plot its unity, not the conventional sequence of events.

## 22.4 LET US SUM UP

Laurence Sterne published the first two volumes of the novel *Tristram Shandy* in 1760 and the last in 1767. Sterne made earlier remarks about his method of writing, he says, "Writing when properly managed is but a different name for conversation." For the plot of the novel to summarize, E.M. Forster uses the term 'fantasy'. The use of this term in Laurence Sterne's novel will indicate that he was not out to produce a simulacrum of reality. The world that Sterne creates in his novel is very much like the real world with which we are familiar. In the novel, Sterne is trying to question the conventional mode of thinking as well as writing.

## 22.5 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. When was the first volume of novel was published? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1760
  - b) 1770
  - c) 1777
  - d) 1780
2. The structure of the novel is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Well knit
  - b) Chronological
  - c) Linear
  - d) Non-linear
3. Which term by E.M. Forster was used to summarize the plot of the novel, *Tristram Shandy*? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Aesthetic
  - b) Fantasy
  - c) Hobby Horse
  - d) Picaresque

4. Who said that the novel was an “irresponsible (and nasty) trifling?” \_\_\_\_\_.

- F.R. Leavis
- I.A. Richards
- S.T. Coleridge
- E.M. Forster

5. Who compared Laurence Sterne’s technique of narration with that of Virginia Woolf \_\_\_\_\_.

- E.M. Forster
- F.R. Leavis
- Geoffrey Chaucer
- I.A. Richards

## 22.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Q.1 Discuss the plot and structure of the novel.

Q.2 How does Sterne’s storytelling challenge traditional ideas of plot and narrative?

## 22.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. a)                    2. d)                    3. b)                    4. a)  
5. a)

## 22.8 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Parker, Jo Alyson. *Narrative form and Chaos Theory in Sterne, Proust, Woolf and Faulkner*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- \* “Tristram Shandy: Full Book Summary.” *SparkNotes*, SparkNotes LLC, <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/tristram/summary/>.
- \* “Tristram Shandy.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tristram-Shandy>.

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## HUMOUR AND PATHOS IN *TRISTRAM SHANDY*

### STRUCTURE

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 23.3 Humour and Pathos
- 23.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.5 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)
- 23.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 23.7 Answer Key (MCQs)
- 23.8 Suggested Reading

#### 23.1 INTRODUCTION

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is a skilful blending of the two elements of humour and pathos. While the novel is noted for its use of wit and humour, it has its moments of emotional depth also which makes it a narrative that is both entertaining and thought-provoking.

#### 23.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to humour and pathos as the main features of the novel *Tristram Shandy*. The lesson also aims to discuss the fundamental role that humour and pathos play in the novel.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to explain how Laurence Sterne has masterfully used the contradictory impulses of humour and pathos in *Tristram Shandy*. You will also be able to explain the narrative depth provided to the novel by this mingling of humour and pathos.

#### 23.3 HUMOUR AND PATHOS

*Tristram Shandy* is as new in its conception of comedy as it is in its conception of plot or form. It can be described as a kind of sentimental comedy equally removed from Fielding's comic epic and Smollett's didactic humour. Sterne's novel is both, sentimental and humorous. The novel is full of passages of extreme sentimentality, large part of which emerges from the character called Yorick, who is a sentimental and jesting person. In Sterne's own sense, sentimentality lies in a person's self-conscious

response to the slightest emotional stimulus, to relish every sensation and feeling. The self conscious response is both comic and moral. It makes its possessor sympathetic with the feelings of others. It helps to make his possessor charitable and affectionate. At the same time, it also leads to awareness of the ludicrous and promotes genial laughter at the idiosyncrasies and private fantasies of individuals.

Sterne's treatment of idiosyncrasy in *Tristram Shandy* is more than humorous in the Johnsonian sense. He had learned it from John Locke, his favourite philosopher, that the consciousness of every individual is conditioned by his private train of associations. As such every individual man or woman, lives in a world of his/her own, with his/her own "hobby-horse" (Sterne's word for private obsession) in the light of which he/she interprets (or misinterprets) the actions and conversations which other people's hobby horses have led them to engage in. Thus, every man in a sense is the prisoner of his private inner world, which in turn is the product of his own "association of ideas which have no connection in nature." For instance, Walter Shandy's chief obsession (he has quite a few) is his theory of names. Similarly, Uncle Toby's main hobby-horse is the theory and practice of fortification and siege warfare. When Walter harangues Toby about his pet theory, Toby misinterprets him and thinks he is talking about the theory of fortification. Very much in the same manner, Walter misunderstands Toby when the latter harangues about the theory of fortification. Such a gulf between individuals dominated by their private obsession can only be bridged by a rush of affection. That is why for Sterne it is very necessary that one is sentimental in order to escape from the prison of the private self.

No doubt Sterne, at times, gives vent in the novel to some of his personal and private dislikes and prejudices notably in the ludicrous character of Dr. Slop, the man-midwife. But in such satirical caricatures drawn by Sterne there is nothing of Smollett's stinging malice. Everything, such attacks included, in *Tristram Shandy* are subjected to the comic-sentimental-moral picture of individuals in their oddities, obsessions, and fundamental loneliness, teasing, misunderstanding, ignoring, amusing, or loving each other. And behind it all, there always lies a sense of human inadequacy. For instance, Walter Shandy begets Tristram with a certain measure of difficulty. He is already a middle-aged man who is worried by the thought of importance. Based on his own obsessive theories about names, about the importance of long noses, and such other eccentric ideas, his plans for his child go ludicrously astray. He is never understood even by his own wife, nor does he understand any one else. His wife keeps herself busy with her own occupations at home, never caring to listen to his pedantic arguments. In fact, she never quite knows what he is talking about.

Yorick the joking sentimentalist, is also misunderstood and ill used. Only Uncle Toby and his servant, Corporal Trim, simpletons as both of them are, enjoy living, for the most part, in their private world. Their gentle and emotional nature cannot comprehend evil and deceit. It is they alone in the entire world of *Tristram Shandy* who are never able to realize that they are prisoners of their private consciousness.

*Tristram Shandy* is also full of humourous and mock pedantry. Nothing more clearly and readily illustrates the idiosyncrasies of the human mind than the obsessive love of scholars for their own theories. Walter Shandy is himself the chief of eccentric pedants. The novelist parodies in Walter, a conversation the solemn disputation of scholars. Through the same conversation, he also creates his favourite kind of comic moral-dilemma. Sterne had learned from Cervantes, Rabelais, Burton and Swift, various obscure

minor works of learning he had come upon in the extraordinary library of his friend, John Hall Stevenson. What Sterne does in his novel is to put together his remarkable fragments of erudition with all sort of extravagant, fantastic and sometimes simply nonsensical elements to achieve a chorus of parodied pedantry. Sometimes, this method makes the material swell out into full-scale mock-treatise. At other times, it also makes the same material recede to a muttering reference or two.

Throughout *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne treats sex as both ridiculous and a little sad. Here, he has often been criticized for mixing sentimental idealism with low sexual innuendo. But this combination belongs to the essential spirit of his art. In his view, man is absurd, and nothing about him is more absurd than his sexual behaviour. For instance, the novel opens with Mrs. Shandy asking her husband, at the very moment when Tristram is about to be procreated, whether he had remembered to wind the clock. Mr Shandy had been accustomed to wind the clock first Sunday night of the month. As Tristram, the narrator, tells us Walter Shandy:

*Being somewhere between fifty and sixty year of age, at the time I have been speaking of - he had like - wise gradually brought some other little family concernment to the same period, in order, as he often say to my Uncle Toby, to get them all out of the way at the time, and be no more plagued and pestered with them the rest of the month.*

Thus, the two activities are associated in the mind of Mrs. Shandy. But on this particular occasion, it is the second Sunday of the month, for Mrs. Shandy has been away from home in the first week. However, since the association had been set up, the question comes forth at such an unreasonable moment. Decidedly, Mrs Shandy's odd timing of the question serves to make sex ludicrous. But it does not make the matter disgusting, as it does in Swift. Even the dirty jokes in Sterne are jokes at the expense of human absurdity. They are never, for sure, obscene in the proper sense of the term, nor are they cruel in any way. They are only a part of the comic sadness of the human situation.

In *Tristram Shandy*, sentimentality is never separated from humour. No doubt, sentimentality in Sterne at times reaches height which offend the modern reader. Anecdotes and inset stories of people with most delicate sensibilities weeping in each other's arm are not as popular now as they once were. But this particular element in *Tristram Shandy* is generally associated with Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. And it is bound up with both comic and moral elements. For instance, Uncle Toby gently releasing a fly out of the window because he does not want to hurt the creature, illustrates the comic simplicity of his character. It also illustrates at the same time the moral kindness to both his fellow men and to other creatures is man's only way of escaping from the prison of self to become a member of God's creation. Since, Uncle Toby is a retired soldier, who spends all his time building models of fortification and conducting mock sieges, his tenderheartedness becomes all the more comic. Here, comedy achieves a unique character. Uncle Toby would never have thought of applying his pacific principles to a consideration of war, because war as a theoretical art which was his private obsession. But it does not make Uncle Toby a hypocrite. His eloquent speech in defence of the military profession is wholly sincere. It omits, however most of the relevant considerations, and there lies the comedy of Toby's character.

Sterne can be characterized as a pure humourist and a pure sentimentalist. Both humour and pathos in Sterne are in alike ends in themselves. Unlike Swift, there is no satire in Sterne's humour. The laughter provoked by his character is of the gentlest nature. Only Lamb in his essays compares well with Sterne in this art of mixing humour and pathos. For example, there is Mr Shandy, the theorist with a theory on every subject whereas the son, and his wife, are the anti theorists with no mind for anything abstract. The relation between them is implicit in the following passage:

*It was a consuming vexation to my father that my mother never asked the meaning of a thing she did not understand. That she is not a woman of science, my father would say, is her misfortune; but she might ask a question. My mother never did. In short, she went out of the world without knowing whether it turned round or stood still— my father had occasionally told her above a thousand times which way it was, but she always forgot.*

Thus, the father and mother of Tristram have been living together in mutual incomprehension. And so do Walter Shandy and Uncle Toby, that innocent artless, child-like creation, the old soldier whose civilian life is dedicated to playing soldiers. All these characters are persons of fixed ideas, who obsessively ride hobby-horses, which they alone can appreciate their respective fancies. Sterne has drawn these characters with an absolute economy of strokes. They are wholly solid, three-dimensional characters. They are real characters in that they are at once convincing no matter how absurd. They begin to haunt the reader's mind soon after they are encountered. More real characters than these cannot be said to exist in any other novel.

Sterne's success as an artist lies in his power of pathos or sentimentality. Like Lamb, later Sterne was indeed a connoisseur of sentiments or pathos. The sentimentalist specializes in distinguishing nuances of feeling. When the sentimentalist is a novelist of Sterne's genius, the result is bound to be an enrichment of subtlety in the delineation of character. Some critics have found fault with Sterne's sentimentality. They find it rather offensive, as offensive his alleged indecency. It should not be forgotten that in Sterne, just as in Lamb and even Dickens, sentimentality cannot be separated from humour. The two together constitute his vision which goes into his interpretation of life. In fact, even the so-called indecency cannot be separated from the other two. None can be divorced from the other two. We must imagine Sterne's mind as a spectrum, in which humour, sentimentality, indecency fade on to one another. At any given moment in the narrative, it is never easy to say which one is dominant over the other two. Sterne is not the type of writer who would make us boisterously laugh or burst into tears. He is neither a clownish comedian who does not aim beyond making us laugh, nor is he tear jerker who does not aim beyond drawing tears in our eyes, like any other great writer, there is always the other side of laughter or tears. When we smile, for example, Sterne would hope that there would be the suspicion of tears as well. He can draw our pity even for a dead donkey. His sentimentality has the power to move us powerfully, Uncle Toby's benevolence towards a fly is one of the supreme example of Sterne's sentimentality. Here also, we are to pity as well as to smile at the same time. Compassion and mirth come together from an incident of sentimentality.

The inseparable nature of the three-humour, sentimentality, and indecency actually point to the complex nature of the human mind as well as the complexity of human perspective. It is for this reason that Sterne's fiction is considered complex, not simple, both in its delineation of character as well as in its depiction of incidents. Every character and incident in *Tristram Shandy* calls for a complex response. We can never be simple-minded in either leaving a matter with a smile or pity. Those who are simple-

minded like a child, who can have only linear response to a situation or a character, cannot, in fact, appreciate the complex art of Laurence Sterne.

Besides the humour of character, situation, and conversation, ironic as well as jestful, there is in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* the humour of parody. Any imitative use of the word, style, attitude, tone and ideas of an earlier author or work done in such a way as to make them look ridiculous is an act of parody. This is generally achieved by exaggerating certain traits, using more or less the same technique as does the cartoon caricaturist. In fact, a kind of satirical mimicry is the form of parody. In Sterne's novel, there is plenty of parody of certain ways of thinking and writing. An outstanding example is Sterne's parody of a passage from Rabelais. In the third book of Rabelais (ch. 13) where Pantagruel gives advice to Panurge on what to eat and what to abstain from in order to avoid fallacious dreams, we are given the impression that behind the choosing of Panurge's supper lies a vast body of theory on the dietetic properties of all the meats, vegetables, and fruits. Yet accompanying this is a personal knowledge of a peculiar fruit grown in a particular place. From an almost limitless world of possibilities everything is most studiously hand-picked.

Sterne makes a parody of this passage in *Tristram Shandy*. It figures in Mr. Walter Shandy's letter to Uncle Toby, in which he recommends a suitable diet for a wooer. It is hardly here to comment on the solemn absurdity of the advice, which contrasts oddly with the sardonic good sense shown earlier in the letter. A glimpse of the good sense can be had from the following : "..... and thou knowest, dear Toby, that there is no passion so serious as lust." We must note here the use of archaic words, "thou knowest", which add to the comic import of the advice. As for the parody of Rabelais, it runs thus :

*But thou must eat little or no goat's flesh, nor red deer-nor even foal's flesh, by any means : and carefully abstain - that is as much as thou canst, from peacock, cranes, coots, didappers, and water - hens .....*

*As for thy drink-I need not tell thee, it must be the infusion of Vervain and the herb Hanes, of which Aelian relates such effect-but if thy stomach palls with it-dicontinue it from time to time, taking cucumbers, melons purslane, water-lilies woodbine and lettuce, in the stead of them.*

This parody by Sterne of a passage from Rabelais also illustrates how in both the writers, who belong to the same tradition of wit, learning is closely related to life. The flexibility of these writers go beyond the field of abstract ideas to that of attitudes, for example, to religion or sex. The ability to manage the different levels of attitude to these subjects, enjoying a good deal of freedom at the less serious levels, is one of the great virtues of Sterne and other writers of the tradition of wit, such as Donne or Swift.

*Tristram Shandy* is fully of passages in which the learned idea is given a piquant concrete illustration. For example, a *propos* of the Milanese physician's theory concerning "a very thin, subtle and very fragrant juice" in the the occipital part of the cerebellum, which he affirms to be "the seat of the reasonable soul," we learn that

*..... the very idea of so noble, so refined, so immaterial and so exalted a being at the Anima or even the Animus, taking up her residence, and sitting dabbling, like a tadpole all day long, both winter and summer, in a puddle .... shocked his [Mr. Shandy's] imagination .....*

This ability to relate the concrete image felicitously to the abstract idea can be traced ultimately to a harmony in medieval (that is, pre-Enlightenment) system of knowledge between thing and their meanings, between concrete particular and the intellectual patterns into which they fit. But this imaginative habit is most conspicuously operative in the period when the old intellectual harmony has been disrupted, but not forgotten, and the poet, the metaphysical, delight us with an unexpected fantastic union of images and ideas not conventionally related to each other. It was natural for the medieval imagination to grasp the material world in term of ordered schematized pattern of particulars. This method becomes a feature of literary style which with modifications, survives in later writers like Johnson and Swift.

However, what was originally conscientious and conventional schematization, becomes the basis of a formidable virtuosity shown in the marshalling and concentration of the detail. In writers like Sterne and Swift, this elaborate exercise is, of course, done to achieve comic effects. There are passages in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* where the studied treatment of detail is made to suggest significant and insidious intentions. Much of the art of Sterne's novel lies in this queer comic ordering of descriptive detail, the motive for which emerge as we examine, in the light of the foregoing pages, the scheme of the novel as a whole. Thus, *Tristram Shandy* offers a rich feast of comedy, mixed serious critique of ideas and attitude of its time. One of the great aspects of this novel is its wonderful amalgamation of humour and pathos, which makes for the unifying thread in the novel.

### 23.5 LET US SUM UP

Laurence Sterne novel is both sentimental and humorous. It can be described as a kind of sentimental comedy equally removed from Fielding's comic epic and Smollett's didactic humour. In the novel, the author uses humour to keep the readers intact on the pages. With the help of the characters like Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy, the main source of humour in the novel is witnessed. Their characterization is done in such a way that makes the readers laugh and enjoy the story Sterne's ususage of the term 'hobby horse' with the addition of a humorous element is seen very widely in the story. Thus, the novel offers a rich feast of comedy mixed serious critique of ideas and attitudes of its time.

### 23.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy* can be described as a kind of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Picaresque novel
  - b) Gothic novel
  - c) Tragic novel
  - d) Sentimental comedy
2. Whose ideas were used by Laurence Sterne in his novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Aristotle
  - b) Homer
  - c) Virgil
  - d) John Locke

3. Who is obsessed with the theory and practice of fortification and siege warfare? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Walter Shandy
- b) Yorick
- c) Uncle Toby
- d) Tristram, the narrator

4. Which character in the novel is obsessive about the names and the importance of long noses? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Corporal Trim
- b) Walter Shandy
- c) Uncle Toby
- d) Yorick

5. Which character in the novel is a both sentimental and jesting person? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Yorick
- b) Uncle Toby
- c) Walter Shandy
- d) Corporal Trim

## 23.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss Sterne as a comic writer with special reference to *Tristram Shandy*.
- Q.2 Examine the plot structure or form of *Tristram Shandy*.
- Q.3 Write a note on the “modern” elements of the novel in *Tristram Shandy*.
- Q.4 Discuss *Tristram Shandy* as an experimental novel.
- Q.5 Examine *Tristram Shandy* as an example of a learned work in the tradition of wit.

## 23.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

## 23.8 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Day, W.G. "The Skull." *The Shandean*, vol. 10, 1998, pp. 6–6. Liverpool University Press, doi.org/10.3828/shandean.1998.10.0.
- \* Raymond, Richard C. *Satire, Comedy and Tragedy: Sterne "Hurdles" to Tristram Shandy*. Anthem Press, 2023.
- \* Richter, David H. *Reading the Eighteenth Century Novel*. Wiley, 2017.

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**JANE AUSTEN : *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*****STRUCTURE**

- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 24.3 Jane Austen as a Novelist
  - 24.3.1 Personal Background
  - 24.3.2 Formative Years
  - 24.3.3 Early Novels
  - 24.3.4 Later Works
  - 24.3.5 Death and Legacy
  - 24.3.6 Jane Austen as a writer
  - 24.3.7 Her Poise and Impersonality
  - 24.3.8 Focus on Healthy Emotions and Characters
  - 24.3.9 Focus on Inner reality
  - 24.3.10 Jane Austen as a Transitional Writer
  - 24.3.11 Her Limited World
  - 24.3.12 Well Knit Plots
  - 24.3.13 Her Style
  - 24.3.14 Dramatic Presentation of Reality
  - 24.3.15 Moral Concerns in Jane Austen's World
  - 24.3.16 Her Social Vision
  - 24.3.17 Her Narrow World

- 24.4 Outline summary of the novel: *Pride and Prejudice*
- 24.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 24.6 Self-Check Exercise
- 24.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 24.8 Answer Key to Self-Check Exercise
- 24.9 Suggested Reading

## **24.1 INTRODUCTION**

Jane Austen (1775–1817), one of the major women novelists in English literature is known for the social commentary that she offers in her works which mostly critiques the limitations and expectations placed on women. She is known for creating strong-willed and intelligent women protagonists who challenge the restrictive gender norms of the 19th century British society, particularly in terms of marriage and relationships.

## **24.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the life and works of Jane Austen. The lesson aims to discuss distinctive aspects of her writing such as her social vision, her writing style, plot construction, moral concerns in her works, etc. The lesson also provides an outline summary of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to recognize key events in Jane Austen's life which shaped her writing. The learner will also be able to examine Jane Austen's critique of society, especially in relation to gender roles. The learner will also be able to summarise the plot of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and evaluate it by placing it within the complete oeuvre of Jane Austen in terms of writing style and thematic concerns.

## **24.3 JANE AUSTEN AS A NOVELIST**

### **24.3.1 PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

Jane Austen's life resembles her novels : at first glance they seem to be composed of a series of quiet, unexceptional events. Such an impression is supported by the comment of her brother, Henry, who wrote after her death that her life was “not by any means a life of event.” Similarly, her nephew James added in a biography published fifty years later that “Of events her life was singularly barren: few changes and no great crisis ever broke the smooth current of its course.” However, just as readers find that the complexity of Austen's novel lies in its characters and style, those studying Austen herself discover that the events of her life are secondary to her compelling personality, quick wit, and highly-developed powers of observation.

The fact that Austen's life lacked the drama that other authors may have experienced is no way detracted from her skill as a writer. In actuality, Austen's lack of "extraordinary" experiences, as well as of a spouse and children, probably made her writing possible by freeing her time to work on her books. Additionally, because her books were published anonymously, Austen never achieved personal recognition for her works outside of her sphere of family and friends. Such anonymity suited her, for, as literary critic Richard Blythe notes, "literature, not the literary life, was always her intention."

#### **24.3.2 FORMATIVE YEARS**

Born on December 16, 1775, Jane Austen was the seventh of eight children born to George and Cassandra Austen. The family lived in Steventon, a small Hampshire town in south-central England, where her father was a minister. The Austens were a loving, spirited family that read novels together from the local circulating library and put on home theatricals. It was for the family circle that Austen first wrote high-spirited satires some of which later became novels after numerous and careful rewritings.

Out of her seven siblings, Austen was closest to her only sister, Cassandra. From 1783 to 1785, the two girls attended schools in Oxford and Southampton and the Abbey School at Reading. When the Austens could no longer afford the tuition, Jane and Cassandra returned home to read extensively and learn from their family how to speak French and Italian and play the piano. Most accounts agree that the Austen daughters were pretty and enjoyed the slightly limited but interesting round of country parties described in Austen's novels.

When Austen was twenty, she met Tom Lefroy, a young Irishman visiting his uncle in Hampshire. Seeing that the two young people were on the verge of an engagement, Lefroy's family sent him home rather than letting him attach himself to someone as poor as a clergyman's daughter. Austen's second brush with marriage occurred at age twenty-seven, when the wealthy Harris Bigg-Wither proposed and Austen accepted. The next morning, however, Austen changed her mind, giving up the wealth and security inherent in such a match because she did not love him. Although Austen never married, the emphasis of courtship and marriage in her novels demonstrates the impact that these experiences had on her and her interest in love and marriage.

#### **24.3.3 EARLY NOVELS**

From 1796-1798, Austen wrote her first three novels : *Northanger Abbey* (originally titled *Susan*); *Sense and Sensibility* (originally titled *Elinor and Marianne*); and *Pride and Prejudice* (originally titled *First Impressions*), but none was published until later. *Northanger Abbey*, which was published posthumously in 1818, satirizes the Gothic novels that were popular at the time by presenting a heroine whose overactive imagination and love of Gothic novels lead her to see mysteries where none exist when she stays at Northanger Abbey. In *Sense and Sensibility*, published in 1811, Austen examines the contrast between two sisters who represent reason (sense) and emotion (sensibility) as they deal with being forced to live on

a meager amount of money after their father dies. The threat of a father's death causing a reduced income also overshadows two sisters in *Pride and Prejudice*, which was published in 1813. In *Pride and Prejudice*, however, that threat of genteel poverty is still just a threat rather than a reality, and Austen focuses instead on how pride and first impressions can lead to prejudice.

In her early writing, Austen began to define the limits of her fictional world. From the first, there was a steady emphasis on character as she consciously restricted her subject matter to a sphere made up of a few families of relatives with their friends and acquaintances. She deliberately limited what she wrote about, and her work gains intensity and beauty from its narrow focus. In her books, there is little connection between this upper-middle class world and the strata above or below it, or consciousness of events external to it. It is, in fact, the world in which typical middle-class country people lived in early nineteenth-century Britain. The family is at the core of this setting and thus the maneuverings that lead to marriage are all important, because matrimony supplies stability, along with social and economic continuity.

#### **24.3.4 LATER WORKS**

In 1800, Austen's father decided to retire and move the family to Bath, a sea resort. Moving from the home she loved was difficult for Jane, especially because the family lived in several different places until 1809, when Mr. Austen died. During that period of nine years, Austen did not write. After her father's death, Austen, and her mother and sister moved to Chawton, a country town where Austen's brother lent the family a house he owned. There Austen was able to pursue her work again, and she wrote *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*.

Published in 1814, *Mansfield Park* tells the story of Fanny Price, a girl from a poor family who is raised by her wealthy aunt and uncle at Mansfield Park. The book focuses on morality and the struggle between conscience and societal pressures and is considered by some critics to be the "first modern novel." In *Emma*, published in 1816, Austen introduces Emma Woodhouse, the "handsome, clever, and rich" heroine who fancies herself a matchmaker. Her efforts at bringing people together, however, result in teaching her humility and her own discovery of love. Critics praise Emma Woodhouse as being Austen's most complex character, while readers find that they either love or hate Emma's story. Austen's final completed novel, *Persuasion*, was published posthumously in 1818. It deals with the broken engagement of Anne Elliott and Captain Wentworth and their second chance at love eight years later. Critics comment on the book's "autumnal feel" and note that Anne Elliott is not only Austen's oldest heroine, but also the one with the least self-confidence.

## Activity

Dear learner, the previous section made you familiar with Jane Austen's life and works. You can now make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the life and works of Jane Austen by going through the exercise given below.

1. Jane Austen's life was described by her brother, Henry, as "not by any means a life of \_\_\_\_\_."
2. Jane Austen was born on \_\_\_\_\_ and was the seventh of eight children born to George and Cassandra Austen.
3. Austen's second brush with marriage occurred at age \_\_\_\_\_ when Harris Bigg-Wither proposed to her.
4. From 1796-1798, Austen wrote her first three novels: *Northanger Abbey*, \_\_\_\_\_, and *Pride and Prejudice*, but none was published until later.
5. *Northanger Abbey* satirizes the popular \_\_\_\_\_ novels of the time by presenting a heroine whose overactive imagination leads her to see mysteries where none exist.
6. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen examines the contrast between two sisters who represent \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. *Pride and Prejudice* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
8. After her father's death in 1809, Austen, her mother, and her sister moved to \_\_\_\_\_ where she was able to resume her writing.
9. \_\_\_\_\_, published in 1814 focuses on morality, conscience, and societal pressures, and is considered by some critics to be the "first modern novel."
10. Austen's final completed novel, \_\_\_\_\_, was published posthumously in 1818 and deals with love between Anne Elliott and Captain Wentworth.

### Answers:

1. event	2. December 16, 1775	3. twenty-seven	4. Sense and Sensibility
5. Gothic	6. reason, emotion	7. 1813	8. Chawton
9. Mansfield Park	10. Persuasion		

### 24.3.5 DEATH AND LEGACY

Austen lived the last eight years of her life in Chawton. Her personal life continued to be limited to family and close friends, and she prized herself on being a warm and loving aunt as much as being a successful novelist. A sudden illness, possibly Addison's disease, made her stop work on the novel *Sandition*, and she died in 1817.

After her death, during the nineteenth-century romantic period, Austen was often looked upon with begrudging admiration, as her elevation of intelligence over feeling contradicted the romantic

temperament. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, Austen's reputation rose considerably, and she gradually gained an enthusiastic cult of admirers that were known as the "Janeites." In America, Austen was little known before 1900, but by mid-century she was receiving more critical attention there than in England. In the last decades of the twentieth century, Austen and her works received considerable attention from the general public: Most of her novels were adapted into films, modern novelists wrote sequels to *Pride and Prejudice* and endings to *Sandition*, and a mystery series was even developed with Jane Austen herself as the heroine.

#### **24.3.6 JANE AUSTEN AS A WRITER**

As a writer, Jane Austen was not just a natural genius, she was well-read, especially in the novel. As she herself said, her family were "great Novel-readers and not ashamed of being so." This reading in her family included not merely the classics of eighteenth century fiction and Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth, but also Mrs. Radcliffe and other purveyors of terrors and sentimentalism. The "gothic" novels were greatly read and enjoyed by the family, though the stuff was more laughed at than revered. Jane Austen learned from the novels of her predecessors one or another of the secrets of her craft of fiction. Each one of them offered her instructions in what to do and what not to do. She did, however, learn much more from her own practice. Her tastes were grounded upon Richardson, Steele and Addison, Cowper and her "dear Doctor Johnson." As such, her tastes were so much of the eighteenth century that her mind has been labelled "femininely Augustan."

She lived at a time when the tide of romanticism in England was at the flood. And yet she was never borne upon it or even sprinkled with its foam. She, of course, did not associate herself with any literary society of her time nor did she have even a single literary correspondent during her entire life. Walter Scott's poetry entertained her, but she mocked at it. She did admire his *Waverley*, but rather reluctantly. To Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron, she was completely indifferent. If anything in Romanticism gave her opportunity to ridicule Mrs. Radcliffe, it seems to have affected her in no other way. The conservative canon in English criticism has made much of her anti-romanticism. It was blown up by the modernist school for their own very valid reasons. Being highly reactionary themselves, hating everything new and radical, including democracy and science, they obviously found, though in the name of art, much to admire in the novels of Jane Austen. We do not, however, need to follow this canon created by critics like F.R. Leavis (in his *The Great Tradition*). We have our own progressive outlook that endorses and admires science and democracy, scientific approach and democratic values. The Romantic humanism and secularism, dubbed as paganism or pantheism, was attacked by the conservative critics who wanted to continue the values of orthodoxy in religion and social life, and wanted the same to be endorsed by the writers of prose and poetry.

#### **24.3.7 HER POISE AND IMPERSONALITY**

Keeping in view her environment at home and her favourite reading, it is not surprising that we find in Austen's novels an absence of large historical perspective and a wide social view. In her opinion, fiction was not expected to deal with such matters. The fact of the matter is

that even in her letters, she exhibits practically no interest in social problems and public affairs or events. One glaring example of her indifference to history is that there is not even a reference, direct or indirect, to Napoleonic Wars which just swept past and left no trace upon her books. This utter lack of concern with history reflects the state of mind of the provincial world of Jane Austen to which she belonged and which alone she wrote about. Similarly, the lower order of the English society (even in the province), portentously upsurging across the channel, appear seldom and casually in the novels. Whenever they do appear, it is only in their proper position as subservient to gentle folk. She never wrote the annals of the poor; she was not interested in the simple or the primitive. Collective humanity never finds any appearance in her novels. In her entire range (quite narrow), there is no mob, nor any scene of public disturbance. Her characters are not affected by the drift of contemporary thought. They show no concern whatsoever with abstract ideas; no anxiety about destiny disturbs them; and if death must come, it will come, at some intermediate date beyond the finis of their story.

### Let Us Revise

Learner, it's time to take a break from reading. Go through these points for a quick revision of the previous sections:

- Jane Austen's reputation grew in the late 19th century, and the "Janeites" formed.
- Her works became popular in the 20th century, with adaptations and a mystery series.
- She was shaped by writers like Richardson, Steele, and Dr. Johnson and she mocked gothic novels.
- Austen remained unaffected by Romanticism and avoided its major figures, and critics valued her resistance to Romanticism.
- Her novels don't focus on historical events like the Napoleonic Wars.
- She wrote mostly about the gentlefolk, rarely engaging with lower classes.
- Working-class characters are depicted in subservient roles.
- Her characters are not concerned with larger social or philosophical issues.

#### 24.3.8 FOCUS ON HEALTHY EMOTIONS AND CHARACTERS

The sole preoccupation of the novels of Jane Austen remains weaknesses of character (a typical eighteenth century of neo-classical concern). At the same time, there is little of positive evil in her novels. The only novel where she attempts portrayal of a bad woman is *Lady Susan*, in which the central character is an adventurer, who schemes to sell her daughter to a rake (one who lives an irresponsible and immoral life), while entrapping for herself the daughter's young lover. But Jane Austen huddles up the story to a hurried conclusion, showing her distaste for such a subject. She thought that "guilt and misery" were "odious subjects", and she quickly escaped such subjects whenever she had to touch upon them in her novels. Also, only in *Persuasion* is there a physical accident, external to character, which alters the

course of events. In the work of few other novelists of her time does coincidence play so small a part; in fact, in the case of others, including Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Stern (not to speak of the Gothic novelists), there is great reliance on incident and accident in maintaining the story's movement. Jane Austen was much concerned with the effect of emotion upon human beings, although the emotion itself is almost always indicated by implication. All her plots revolve upon the theme of love, but only once (in the case of Mr. Knightly) do we hear a lover declare himself. There is no lack of knowledge or interest in passion; but there is an instinctive reticence (unwillingness in revealing one's thoughts). She can maintain sympathy even while seeing the ironical or satirical implications in character and situation. She is, as Virginia Woolf later remarked, "a mistress of much deeper emotions than appears upon the surface. She stimulates us to supply what is not there." In the story of the woes of Marianne, although told without blindness to her absurdities, "the burning human heart", as George Moor maintained, was revealed for the first time in English fiction.

Thus, Jane Austen occupies, among her contemporaries, a unique position as novelist. Those writing around the time of her own preoccupation with the novel included Walter Scott, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Shelley, etc who solely relied on Gothic romance tales of horror and adventure. She alone remained loyal to the Augustan preference for reason over emotion, reality over romance, gentry over the populace, etc. Her adherence to irony and satire is in sharp contrast to the sentimentalism and emotionalism of the writers of gothic or historical romances. She has been rightly called the last Augustan writer and a feminine Augustan.

#### **24.3.9 FOCUS ON INNER REALITY**

However, Jane Austen cannot be adequately comprehended merely as an Augustan novelist, for there seems more in her novels than the mere satirical treatment of human weaknesses of character. Her emphasis, for example, on character rather than incident, on motivation and implication rather than coincidence and accident; her interest in the workings of human emotions; these are all interests not typical of the neo-classical credo in prose fiction, for all these traits tend to interiorize literature rather than exteriorize it. And if there is one thing that the Romantic writers of the early nineteenth century England did as a departure from the neoclassical practices, it was to interiorize literature, focusing on the inside of a man's life rather than remain restricted to the external appearance of a man's life through incidents and events. She shares with Maria Edgeworth, her interest in the provincial or regional life. We know how the English novel from Defoe to Sterne was highly confined to life in London, entirely ignoring the natural emotions and sentiments. Also, she is not, in any sense, writing the novel of incident, the comic epic poem in prose; for in her novel the mock-heroic mode is conspicuous only by absence. On the other hand, the novelist like Fielding, Smollett and Sterne exclusively focus on the mock-heroic style of writing, ridiculing whatever seemed to deviate from the neoclassical concepts of man, nature, and society. The same cannot be said of Jane Austen.

#### **24.3.10 JANE AUSTEN AS A TRANSITIONAL WRITER**

Therefore, it will be more appropriate to consider Jane Austen neither a romantic nor an Augustan novelist. To do her justice, she must be treated as a transitional writer of prose fiction. As a transitional novelist, she shares some traits of the novel with the Augustans, and some others with Gothic writers of the Romantic age. Like the transitional poets, W.B. Yeats and Robert Frost, she grew in the atmosphere of one age, but was irresponsible to the new wave sweeping the letters in the following. The two poets while having been brought up in the nineteenth century traditions of romantic poetry also absorbed the influences of the new wave of modernism. Thus, when Yeats declares himself as one of the last romantics, it only means that he (and others like him) shows for the last time remnants of a style on the way out. In one sense, the emphasis clearly is on the fact of the style dear to the transitional writer going out of vogue. Clearly, it lays emphasis, even by implication, on what has come to replace the old or outgoing style.

Like Janus (the Greek god with two faces looking both backward and forward), the transitional novelist Jane Austen looks back to the Augustan tradition and forward to the Romantic movement. Both the backward and forward pulls in her fiction are of equal importance, and to ignore either would mean a gross injustice to her correct historical position which she occupies in the growth and development of the English novel. Her contributions of giving primacy to character, emotion, and scenery are all forward-looking; even as her ironic or satirical outlook and treatment of her material remain an adherence to the dying Augustan tradition.

#### **24.3.11 HER LIMITED WORLD**

It has often been asserted by critics that she never depicts a scene in which there is no woman. It is also said that she knew almost nothing about finance, and the prestige and power of money play very little part in her stories. When a niece of Jane Austen, aspiring to write a novel, sought her advice, her response was, “let the Portmans (the central family in the proposed novel) go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the Manners there, you had better not go with them.” She went on to say that the niece should “stick to Bath” (the town she knew well) where she would be “quite at home.” As a novelist, she remained interested in the personal relationships of men and women, always regarding them with the shrewdness and acumen of the satirist, but never losing sight of moral values. In fact, in the strict sense of the term satirist, she cannot be called one. She was never motivated by any adverse instinct against any man or woman, the way, for instance, Swift and Pope were. She always treated her characters with essential human sympathy. Her irony is never hitting or stinging as it always is in the writings of Pope and Swift. She is never out to demolish or destroy any one, male or female. Her purpose is positive, never negative, when it comes to exposing a human weakness. It is for this very reason that she is not as inventive or fantastic as Swift and Pope are in their satires.

Consequently, there is no distortion in the perspective of Jane Austen. She only shows us the tangle resulting from conflict of personalities. We do hear the jangle (harsh metallic sound) of incongruous temperaments. Her province, we can say, is not that of somber, delinquency (guilt of persistent law breaking) but of venial (pardonable, being not so serious) error. Therefore, the faults of her characters are due most to bad training or want of training in youth. In older people, these very faults are often beyond repair; but in young, especially the young lovers, they are purged and

done away through tribulations which are none-the-less poignant for being generally mere misunderstandings. In that sense, each of her novels becomes a history of self-education and self-correction. The novelist proffers no counsels of perfection, for her practical idealism is content with the implied lesson that a sound education, a marriage based upon congenial dispositions as well as passion, and social decorum gives the best-promise of happiness in life.

One of the important aspects of a writer's genius is to be able to create living characters so that "the dreary intercourse of daily life" can be made significant. There is no doubt that Jane Austen possessed this ability in a measure, perhaps never excelled among writers of fiction. We as readers are made to know her people so well that when a crisis arrives they act as we expect them to act; their behaviour never astonishes us. Jane Austen knew them so well that she would narrate to her family, incidents (supposedly) from the lives of her characters which actually do not occur in the books. It must be admitted, however, as is asserted by Herbert Read in his *Prose Style*, that "in some moments of strain they do not talk as we should expect." As is said about her, Jane Austen does not always forgive her characters, but those whom she does she often loves. For instance, it was because "she fell in love with" Catherine Moreland that she expanded a mere skit on Gothic romance into a full-length novel, *Northanger Abbey*. Similarly, the element of burlesque, which was conspicuous in the original *Sense and Sensibility*, disappeared in the revision. It happened because, despite the sharp satire, there is the author's affection for the emotional Marianne.

Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* is an obvious case of the author's indulgence in the depiction of a character. The novelist loves the character unreservedly, declaring her to be "as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print." On the other hand, the author has described Emma as "a heroine whom no one, but myself will like much." In this last case, Jane Austen does not seem to be doing justice to the character. With all Emma's faults, we do like her. This self-deceived female protagonist still remains the profoundest of Austen's characterizations. In her novel *Persuasion*, where satire is directed against the people of Bath, there is nothing but sympathy for the long-parted lovers who are at length united. There is in this novel an unwanted self-revelatory tone, quite unusual with Jane Austen, who is considered one of the most impersonal of artists. This tone has made many readers suspect that in this book the novelist has for once unlocked her heart.

### Let Us Revise

Learner, it is time to stop again! You can give the following points a quick glance so that the contents of the previous sections are revised.

- Jane Austen's plots centre on love with implied emotions and not explicit passion.
- Jane Austen focuses on the flaws of characters, and avoids overt evil or misery.
- Austen blended the Augustan and Romantic traditions in her work and has earned the title 'last Augustan writer' because she preferred irony and reason over sentimentality.
- She focused on provincial life instead of London and avoided mock-heroic modes.
- Austen's characters are realistic, with predictable actions in the times of crises, and they often undergo self-education.

#### **24.3.12 WELL KNIT PLOTS**

For all her small world, however, Jane Austen's novels have firmly integrated plots. These novels are so well-knit in their patterns that it is almost impossible to isolate even minor characters. In contrast to her, we have Dickens, in whose novels even major character can be easily isolated from the patterns of his novels. It is possible in the case of Dickens because the plots of his novels are not tightly knit; they remain rather loose in the fabric. In the case of Jane Austen, each character remains a part of closely-woven fabric. All of her characters are what E.M. Forster has described as "three-dimensional" or "round figures". In the case of Dickens, most of his characters remain "two-dimensional" or "flat" in whom a single quality or factor is portrayed. This advantage of adding depth to characterization is achieved by Jane Austen by restricting the size of her canvas. Had she broadened it, just as Dickens did, the depth would have disappeared into a flat surface. If a novelist has a limited number of characters to handle, she/he can go into greater depth of her/his characters. Thus, what the novelist loses in width, she/he gains in depth.

It is for this very reason of depth that in Jane Austen there are no throwbacks, as in Dickens or Scott, to the old-fashioned Johnsonian "humours" in her art of characterization. She is able to view her men and women from so many facets. In depicting them she very rarely intrudes herself, as so often do Fielding and Meredith. Still less does she plead and cajole with her readers, as do Fielding and Dickens. In her novels, with direct recording of dialogues and events, and without any interpolation of comments, she depicts her people and their affairs. At times, however, the task of interpreting people and events is shared between the anonymous, omniscient narrator and certain of her dramatic personae. It is for this reason that we accept Elizabeth Bennet's point of view as, on the whole, a reflection of the author's. In general, we notice that the tangles in which the characters are enmeshed is observed from a single angle or point of view. She seldom distracts into digressions.

#### **24.3.13 HER STYLE**

Jane Austen's style, too, is sharpened or shaped in keeping with the demands of her small world. There are qualities of her style, such as, the delicate precision, the nice balance, the seeming simplicity, the lucidity and vitality and ironic which reminds the reader of Congreve's comedies. These qualities of precision and balance, lucidity and vitality, are, for sure, possible only when the novelist remains restricted to a small world, intimately known and inwardly understood. Wide range and large sweep of the social spectacle would not permit these stylistic virtues. In the neat rhythms of her dialogue there are powerful echoes of stage-comedy. And it is especially close when she verges upon the farcical. One example of such a close resemblance is the scene in which Mr. Collins proposes marriage to Elizabeth. The often-made remark about the significance of the three-volume form in which Austen's novels were first published seems to make great sense to the modern reader. The three-volume edition made a parallel with three-act comedy of the Restoration Period, with a crescendo, a crisis, and a development. Following this analogy between her novels and the dramas, her most dramatic novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, has even been analyzed into five acts.

#### 24.3.14 DRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF REALITY

Jane Austen's method of presenting her world is decidedly dramatic. This method involves a severe economy in the use of description. To put it a little differently, her slight interest in the external appearances of people or the details of places leads her, obviously, to adopt the dramatic method. This technique reaches perfection, as often noted by critics, in *Pride and Prejudice*. In the last three of her novels there is perhaps more description with more colour and sensitiveness. But there is also a corresponding loss in animation or liveliness and a new sobriety of tone. Of all Jane Austen's novels, *Mansfield Park* is considered the least dramatic. Although half a dozen strands in the novel are interwoven with wonderful skill, something is sacrificed along with unity of plot. But there follows in *Emma*, Austen's recovery of concentration. We also have in this novel, for the delight of readers, the greatest comic creations of the novelist. These creations are Mr. Woodhouse and Miss Bates, who are a superbly natural pair, quite recognizably at home if we saw them on the boards. The resemblance to drama is decidedly much less marked in *Persuasion*. Here, the novelist seems to feel her way towards an altogether new technique. What seems a new departure in *Sanditon* may have been due to a desire to work with fresh materials, perhaps to a belief that the original vein was running thin. But this fragment of a novel had not advanced far enough at the time of Jane Austen's death to warrant guesses as to the direction in which the novel and its author's genius might have developed. Speculative observations are bad criticism.

Through almost all her life Jane Austen might have said, with Blake, "I am hid". The remark seems justified because few of her books reached a second edition in her own lifetime. Only towards the end, some signs could be seen of coming recognition. Yet it was long retarded. The collected edition of 1833 supplied the market till 1882. It was only from about 1890 that biographies and appreciative estimates began to multiply. The twentieth century amply atoned for the neglect of most of the nineteenth century. There came in the last century many studies of her mind and art, her style and technique. There is not, in fact, even a fragment of her writings that has not been edited with great care. Scholars have deeply scrutinized and interpreted every detail of her picture of English society. Her world, however small, has been analyzed threadbare in terms of social hierarchy, the differing morals and manners of each strata, the inner aspirations and feelings of each individual and every family. Those who have made her the object of a cult have not alienated her from the widening circle of readers. The fact that she produced comparatively a small output, but always of the highest quality, has resulted in the unique distinction which her reputation now enjoys. She is the only author of her period whose works have remained of interest to the modern reader even now.

#### 24.3.15 MORAL CONCERN IN JANE AUSTEN'S WORLD

As already pointed out, intensity, rather than breadth, of representation remains the principle virtue of Jane Austen's art. However, the intensity of her novels cannot be separated from their social or historical correctness. This quality of intensity in her art must indeed be highlighted because it is so different from the charming and cozy qualities with which her art is often associated. For example, reading any of her novels, say *Emma*, is quite a delightful experience, but it cannot be characterized as a soothing one. On the contrary, her novels arouse our faculties, and we are called upon to participate in life with an awareness, a fineness of feeling and a moral concern more intense than most of us normally bring to our everyday experiences. In her novels, every incident and every

character matters. Each detail demands our moral attention. Jane Austen as a novelist, does not ask for our subjective involvement to an extent that it may prejudice our impartial judgment. On the contrary, an objective assessment becomes possible because of our intimate involvement in the actual experience dramatized in the novel. Such a state of mind, we need to note, is very valuable in the study of a literary text. The activities of knowing and understanding, on one hand, and of appreciating and evaluating, on the other, are closely, and significantly, related to each other; for no one can presume to pass judgement on a character or an incident unless one has known it. Similarly, no one can presume to have known incidents and characters without bringing to bear upon them one's critical intelligence.

In the presentation of her people and their affairs, Jane Austen ensures everywhere the involvement of our intelligence. She ensures it by continuously asking us, though not crudely, to judge what is being presented before us. Thus, the prevailing interest in her novels is not one of aesthetic pleasure only, but also a moral interest. It also needs to be remembered that she is the least theoretical of the novelists in English, having very little interest in life as opposed to living. She shows immense ability to intensely involve us in her characters and their affairs. She also demonstrates that this ability on her part is inseparable from her moral concern. Of course, the moral in her novels is not spread on top of the narrative; it is invariably bound up in the quality of feeling a scene or a spectacle evoked in the novel. Even when, although very rare, a moral conclusion is clearly and explicitly stated, its force always depends, not on its abstraction or generalization, but on the emotional conviction it carries. It also, of course, always involves our already acquired confidence in the character and her judgement. One can recall here the case of Mr. Knightly stating a moral conclusion after the Box Hill incident, or when he reads Frank Churchill's letter of explanation. The stated moral in the cited case may sound sententious, in fact, intolerably so, if read out of context. However, in the context of the novel's text, his remarks do not sound any sort of impositions on our reading of the incidents.

#### **24.3.16 HER SOCIAL VISION**

We also need to look further into the manner in which Jane Austen successfully combines intensity with precision, and emotional involvement with impersonal evaluation. Part of this success on her part as a novelist comes perhaps from her almost complete lack of idealism, the delicate and utterly unpretentious practicality or materialism of her outlook. Her judgement is never derived from any philosophic standpoint, rather, it is always based on actual facts and feelings of her men and women. Also, the clear-sightedness of her social perspective is always matched by the accuracy of her social judgements. Her concern invariably is with, not abstract principles or general truths, but human happiness. However, it is also her precision in social observation which is her ultimate limitation as well as her incomparable strength. Such a precision is also unimaginable in any other society than in an extraordinarily stable one.

Too much emphasis on the stability and, inevitably, the narrowness of Jane Austen's world may lead us to a rather narrow and mechanical view of her novels also. We shall tend to see them just as period pieces. And as has generally been the case, we shall tend to view them as comedies of manners, placing them at a par with the Restoration drama. A more appropriate view of her novels would be to consider them, not historical documents or social chronicles, but literary works having relevance for all times. Her novels have always captured the reader's imagination and

engaged their sympathies. We also need not over-emphasize her moral neutrality, for no writer worth the salt would ever be neutral in the matter of values. For, to be neutral in such a matter means to be indifferent. Such a position would only betray the writer's insensitivity to the matters of vital importance in human life. The intensity with which everything matters to us in the novels of Jane Austen is, decidedly, the product of her lack of complacency, her passionate concern for human values. What needs to be clearly comprehended about her novels is, what gives her novels their power to move us is their realism and depth of feeling behind the novelist's attitudes. She examines her human material with a scrupulous yet passionate and critical appropriateness. The materials she examines are, of course, the actual problems of the society surrounding her. That this world is narrow cannot be denied. However, how far its narrowness matters is an important question we need to examine.

#### **24.3.17 HER NARROW WORLD**

After going through the experience of reading her novels, one realizes that the smallness of her world does not matter at all. There is no way to measure the importance of a writer's literary work by size. What we, for sure, value in a work of art is the truth and depth of experience it offers to the reader. Decidedly, the value of its truth and depth cannot be identified with the special dimensions of the social scene covered by the work's narrative. We may find more about life in a village or town or even in a railway carriage between Delhi and Bombay, than by making a tour round the world. "The silliest of all criticisms on Jane Austen," remarks Arnold Kettle, "is the one which blames her not writing about the battle of Waterloo and the French Revolution." As Kettle rightly asserts, "She wrote about what she understood and no artist can do more."

#### **Let Us Revise**

Dear learner, take another break and quickly go through these points to reflect on the content of the previous sections:

- The plots of Jane Austen's novels are tightly woven, unlike the looser plots of Charles Dickens.
- Every character in Jane Austen's novels is integral to the plot and her characters are three-dimensional.
- Jane Austen's narrative style is balanced, precise, and full of vitality.
- Her novels are remarkable for their focus on the realistic portrayal of society and human happiness.
- Although limited in scope, Jane Austen's works remain timeless and are not just historical documents or comedies of manners.
- The smallness of Jane Austen's world doesn't diminish the depth of her work.
- Austen treats real social issues with realism and emotional depth.
- Critic Arnold Kettle has defended Austen's focus on what she knew, rather than grand historical events.

#### **24.4 OUTLINE SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL:*PRIDE AND PREJUDICE***

When Charles Bingley, a rich single man, moves to the Netherfield estate, the neighbourhood residents are thrilled, especially Mrs. Bennet, who hopes to marry one of her five daughters to him. When

the Bennet daughters meet him at a local ball, they are impressed by his outgoing personality and friendly disposition. They are less impressed, however, by Bingley's friend Fitzwilliam Darcy, a landowning aristocrat who is too proud to speak to any of the locals and whom Elizabeth Bennet overhears refusing to dance with her. Bingley and the oldest Bennet daughter, Jane, soon form an attachment. Any serious relationship between the two, however, is opposed by Bingley's sisters (who do not approve of Jane as a wife for Bingley because of her mother's lower status) and by Darcy (who believes that Jane is indifferent to Bingley). Meanwhile, Darcy finds himself attracted to Elizabeth despite his objections to her family. He is drawn to her spirited wit and expressive eyes, and Caroline Bingley's jealous criticisms of Elizabeth can do nothing to lessen Darcy's admiration.

As Darcy grows more interested in Elizabeth, Elizabeth continues to despise him and is instead attracted to George Wickham, a handsome and personable militia officer. Wickham tells Elizabeth that his father worked for Darcy's father and that he and Darcy grew up together. Stating that he was favoured by Darcy's father, Wickham claims that Darcy disobeyed his father's bequest of a clergyman's revenue to Wickham out of selfish resentment. Wickham's tale makes Darcy appear not only proud but cruel, and Elizabeth accepts Wickham's account without question, disliking Darcy even more because of it.

In the midst of Jane and Elizabeth's developing relationships, the Bennet family is visited by Mr. Bennet's cousin, William Collins, a clergyman who will inherit Mr. Bennet's estate when he dies because of a legal stricture known as an entail. Full of apologies for the entail and praises for his patroness, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Mr. Collins informs Mrs. Bennet that Lady Catherine has instructed him to marry and that he plans to choose a wife from the Bennet daughters. He settles on Elizabeth, but is stunned and offended when she refuses him. He quickly turns his attention to Elizabeth's friend, Charlotte Lucas, who wants to marry for security rather than love, and the two are soon engaged and married. At the same time, Jane is dismayed to find out that Bingley and the entire Netherfield party have unexpectedly left for London. Caroline Bingley writes to Jane that they do not intend to return, and she predicts a match between Bingley and Darcy's sister, Georgiana, who is also in London. Although Jane quietly resigns herself to a life without Bingley, Elizabeth is angry for her sister and suspects that Bingley's sisters and Darcy are trying to keep him from Jane.

Elizabeth visits Charlotte at her new home in Hunsford, Kent, and meets Mr. Collins' patroness and Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine De Bourgh, an overbearing woman who thrives on meddling in other people's lives. Soon after Elizabeth's arrival in Kent, Darcy visits his aunt with his cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam. Darcy puzzles Elizabeth with his behaviour; he seems to seek out her company, but he never says much. One day, he surprises Elizabeth by proposing to her. Still repelled by his pride and believing, Darcy is responsible for Bingley's separation from Jane and for Wickham's misfortune, Elizabeth refuses him. The next day, Darcy gives her a letter explaining his role in influencing Bingley away from Jane and details the facts of Wickham's situation. A careful examination of the facts reveals that Darcy, while proud, is innocent of wrongdoing, leaving Elizabeth mortified at her discovery of how her own pride prejudiced her against Darcy. After returning home for a month, Elizabeth goes on a trip with her aunt and uncle Gardiner to Derbyshire county, where they visit Darcy's estate of Pemberley. There they meet Darcy unexpectedly and are all surprised at how graciously he treats them. He calls on Elizabeth at her inn, introduces her to his sister, and invites her to Pemberley for dinner. Darcy is still in love with Elizabeth, and Elizabeth begins to have similar feelings for him.

In the midst of this promising situation, Elizabeth receives two letters from Jane telling her that Lydia has eloped with Wickham, causing Elizabeth and the Gardiners to leave for home immediately. Elizabeth fears that Lydia and the Bennet family are permanently disgraced and that her newly-discovered love for Darcy is hopeless. When Lydia is found, however, she and Wickham marry. After the wedding, Elizabeth discovers that Darcy was instrumental in orchestrating the marriage, thereby saving the reputation and marriageability of the other Bennet daughters.

Bingley returns to Netherfield and soon asks Jane to marry him. Jane, of course, accepts, and Mrs. Bennet's exultation is only lessened by her irritation at Darcy's occasional presence. Meanwhile, Elizabeth's happiness for her sister is interrupted by a visit from Lady Catherine De Bourgh, who has heard a rumor that Darcy and Elizabeth are engaged, which they are not. She lectures Elizabeth on the imprudence of such a match, and then demands that Elizabeth promise not to accept any proposal from Darcy. Elizabeth refuses, causing Lady Catherine to tell Darcy about Elizabeth's impertinence and to scold him about the folly of an engagement between them. Lady Catherine's description of Elizabeth's response to her demands gives Darcy hope that Elizabeth has had a change of heart. He proposes again and Elizabeth happily accepts.

## Activity

Learner, the previous section provided you an overview of the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. Solve this practice exercise to check your progress.

1. When Charles Bingley moves to the \_\_\_\_\_ estate, the neighbourhood residents are thrilled, especially Mrs Bennet.
2. Bingley's friend, \_\_\_\_\_, is a landowning aristocrat who refuses to speak to any locals and even refuses to dance with Elizabeth Bennet.
3. Jane Bennet, the oldest Bennet daughter, soon forms an attachment to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Elizabeth is attracted to \_\_\_\_\_, a handsome and personable militia officer.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ tells Elizabeth that he was favoured by Darcy's father and that Darcy disobeyed his father's will concerning Wickham's clergyman's revenue.
6. Mr. Bennet's cousin, \_\_\_\_\_, a clergyman, will inherit Mr. Bennet's estate because of a legal entail.
7. Mr. Collins settles on \_\_\_\_\_ as his choice for a wife, but she refuses him.
8. Mr. Collins turns his attention to \_\_\_\_\_ for marriage, who wants to marry for security rather than love.
9. Elizabeth visits \_\_\_\_\_ in Hunsford, where she meets Lady Catherine De Bourgh, Darcy's aunt.
10. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, but she refuses him because she believes that he is responsible for the separation of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

## Answers:

1. Netherfield	2. Fitzwilliam Darcy	3. Bingley	4. George Wickham
5. Wickham	6. William Collins	7. Elizabeth	8. Charlotte Lucas
9. Charlotte	10. Jane, Bingley		

## 24.5 LET US SUM UP

The novel's true focus, however, is the complex relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy. Both are intelligent and forthright, but their initial impressions blind them to the qualities in each other that will eventually form the basis for their love. Darcy is indeed proud and feels himself above the less refined country families in whose company he finds himself during his visit to Bingley. Elizabeth's mother, a vain, silly woman who is often a source of embarrassment to her daughter, is also an object of Darcy's scorn. When she overhears Darcy's assessment of her and her family, Elizabeth's own pride is wounded; she dismisses him as a proud, disagreeable man and is more than willing to believe the lies she is told about him by the charming, deceitful Wickham. For his part, Darcy's pride in his position and his family cause him at first to resist his attraction to Elizabeth and later to propose to her in a manner that she finds even more offensive than his initial hauteur.

Yet, as time passes and their interest in each other continues, both Elizabeth and Darcy begin to see beyond their original judgments of the other's personality and character. Both possess a measure of pride and prejudice that must be overcome before they will fully understand one another, and Elizabeth's younger sister, Lydia, is unintentionally a catalyst for the change. Foolish and headstrong, Lydia runs away with Wickham, and it is only through Darcy's intervention that the two are married and the Bennet family is saved from disgrace. Elizabeth has already learned the truth behind Wickham's slander toward Darcy, and Darcy's willingness to help her family despite her own stinging refusal of his proposal offers her a glimpse of the true nature of his character. Darcy, too, has changed, losing some of the stiffness and pride that accompanied his wealth and social standing.

The substantial emotional shift experienced by Darcy and Elizabeth is indicated by Mr. Bennet's reaction to the news of Darcy's second proposal: “‘Lizzy,’ said he, ‘what are you doing? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have you not always hated him?’” Mr. Bennet's reaction is understandable, given the disdain with which Elizabeth had expressed her initial reaction to Darcy. What her father has not been witness to, and the reader has, is Austen's gradual revelation of the qualities that Darcy and Elizabeth share and the manner in which each has come to appreciate these qualities in the other. That there is a meeting of the mind and heart is clear, and those qualities that at last draw them to each other and impel them to overcome their early misunderstandings will form the basis for a strong and happy marriage.

## 24.6 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

- Q.1 Where did Jane Austen live?
- Q.2 Who wrote *Sense and Sensibility*?
- Q.3 Which novel written by Jane Austen was published posthumously?
- Q.4 Jane Austen died in \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q.5 Who runs away with Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice*?
  - (a) Catherine
  - (b) Lydia
  - (c) Elizabeth
  - (d) Mrs. Bennet

#### **24.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

- Q.1 What are the major works of Jane Austen?
- Q.2 Discuss the outline summary of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice* briefly.
- Q.3 Discuss Jane Austen as a novelist.
- Q.4 Write a short note on the biography of Jane Austen.

#### **24.8 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

Ans.1 Steventon

Ans.2 Jane Austen

Ans.3 Persuasion

Ans.4 1817

Ans.5 (b) Lydia

#### **24.9 SUGGESTED READING**

- \* Southam, Brian C. "Jane Austen." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15 Sept. 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jane-Austen>.
- \* Stafford, Fiona. *Jane Austen : A Brief Life*. Yale University Press, 2017.
- \* Tomalin, Claire. *Jane Austen : A Life*. Penguin Books Limited, 2012.

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**JANE AUSTEN : PRIDE AND PREJUDICE****STRUCTURE**

- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 25.3 Introduction to the novel: *Pride and Prejudice*
  - 25.3.1 Publication History and Critical Appreciation
  - 25.3.2 Historical Context of *Pride and Prejudice*
  - 25.3.3 General Critique of *Pride and Prejudice*
- 25.4 Detailed Glossary of *Pride and Prejudice*
- 25.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 25.6 Self-Check Exercise
- 25.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 25.8 Answer Key to Self-Check Exercise
- 25.9 Suggested Reading

**25.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Pride and Prejudice*, originally titled *First Impressions* was initially rejected for publication and it was rewritten and published in the year 1813. Jane Austen's reputation as one of the major novelists in English literature primarily rests on this novel. As regards the historical context of the novel it was published during a time when British society was deeply under the influence of class distinction and marriage was seen as a means for social advancement.

**25.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to *Pride and Prejudice* from historical context along with a general critique of the novel. The lesson also aims to discuss the publication history of *Pride and Prejudice* and offer a general critique of the novel. Further, the lesson also provides a detailed glossary to further enhance your familiarisation with the novel.

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to critically analyse the novel by placing it against the social, political, and cultural background of the 19th century English society. You will be able to appreciate

Jane Austen as a writer by offering a general critique of the novel and identifying the factors which place her among one of the major novelists in the English language.

## 25.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE NOVEL *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

### 25.3.1 PUBLICATION HISTORY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

*Pride and Prejudice*, probably the most popular of Austen's finished novels, was also, in a sense, the first to be composed. The original version, *First Impressions*, was completed by 1797, but was rejected for publication (no copy of the original has survived). The work was rewritten around 1812 and published in 1813 as *Pride and Prejudice*. The final form must have been a thorough rewriting of the original effort, for it is representative of the mature Austen. Moreover, the story clearly takes place in the early nineteenth century rather than in the late eighteenth century.

Austen's works, including *Pride and Prejudice*, were barely noticed by critics during her lifetime. *Pride and Prejudice* sold fairly well (the first edition sold out at about 1,500 copies). Critics who eventually reviewed it in the early part of the nineteenth century praised Austen's characterizations and portrayal of everyday life. After Austen's death in 1817, the book continued to be published and read with little attention from critics for the next fifty years. The few critical comments made during that time continued to focus on her skill at creating characters, as well as on her technical mastery. In 1870, probably the most significant nineteenth-century critical article on Austen was published by Richard Simpson; in the article, Simpson discussed the complexity of Austen's work, including her use of irony.

Modern Austen scholarship began in 1939 with the publication of *Jane Austen and Her Art*, by Mary Lascelle. The scope and vision of that book prompted other scholars to take a closer look at Austen's works. *Pride and Prejudice* began getting serious attention in the 1940s and has continued to be studied heavily since that time. Modern critics take a variety of approaches to the novel, including historical, economical, feminist, and linguistic. Various critics have consistently noted that the plot development of *Pride and Prejudice* is determined by character; coincidence exerts a major influence, but turns of action are precipitated by character. Although human weakness is a prominent element, ranging from Miss Bingley's jealousy to Elizabeth's blind prejudices, outright evil is little in evidence. Austen maintains an attitude of good-humoured irony toward her characters.

### 25.3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

During Austen's career, Romanticism reached its zenith of acceptance and influence, but she rejected the tenets of that movement. The romantics extolled the power of feeling, whereas Austen upheld the supremacy of the rational faculty. Romanticism advocated the abandonment of restraint; Austen was a staunch exponent of the neo-classical belief in order and discipline. The romantics saw in nature a transcendental power to stimulate men to better the existing order of things, which they saw as essentially tragic in its existing state. Austen supported traditional values and the established norms, and viewed the human condition in the comic spirit. The romantics exuberantly celebrated natural beauty, but Austen's dramatic technique decreed sparse description of setting. The beauties of nature are seldom detailed in her works.

Just as Austen's works display little evidence of the Romantic movement, they also reveal no awareness of the international upheavals and consequent turmoil in England that took place during her

lifetime. Keep in mind, however, that such forces were remote from the restricted world that she depicts. Tumultuous affairs, such as the Napoleonic wars, in her day did not significantly affect the daily lives of middle-class provincial families. The ranks of the military were recruited from the lower orders of the populace, leaving gentlemen to purchase a commission, the way Wickham does in the novel, and thereby become officers.

Additionally, the advancement of technology had not yet disrupted the stately eighteenth-century patterns of rural life. The effects of the industrial revolution, with its economic and social repercussions, were still most sharply felt by the underprivileged labouring classes. Unrest was widespread, but the great reforms that would launch a new era of English political life did not come until later. Consequently, newer technology that existed in England at the time of *Pride and Prejudice*'s publication does not appear in the work.

### Activity

Dear learner, the previous sections provided you the publication history as well as well as the historical context of *Pride and Prejudice*. Check your familiarisation with the previous sections by filling in the blanks given below. Do check the answers to see if you have correctly answered the questions.

1. The original version of *Pride and Prejudice* was titled \_\_\_\_\_.
2. *Pride and Prejudice*'s rewritten version was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
3. After Austen's death in 1817, her novel \_\_\_\_\_ continued to be published and read with little attention from critics for the next fifty years.
4. Modern Austen scholarship began in 1939 with the publication of \_\_\_\_\_ by Mary Lascelle.
5. Jane Austen embraced the romantic ideals of emotional expression and abandonment of restraint. (True/False)
6. In Jane Austen's novels, the Napoleonic Wars do not significantly impact the daily lives of the middle-class families. (True/False)
7. Austen's works reveal an awareness of the industrial revolution and its impact on English society. (True/False)

### Answers:

1. First Impressions	2. 1813	3. <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
4. Jane Austen and Her Art	5. False	6. True
7. False		

### 25.3.3 GENERAL CRITIQUE OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

*Pride and Prejudice* continues to be popular today not only because of its memorable characters and the general appeal of the story, but also because of the skill with which it is told. In *Pride and*

*Prejudice*, Austen displays a masterful use of irony, dialogue, and realism that support the character development and heighten the experience of reading the novel. Jane Austen's irony is devastating in its exposure of foolishness and hypocrisy. Self-delusion or the attempt to fool other people is almost always the object of her wit; note how she has Elizabeth say that she hopes she will never laugh at what is wise or good.

The reader finds various forms of exquisite irony in *Pride and Prejudice*. Sometimes the characters are unconsciously ironic, as when Mrs. Bennet seriously asserts that she would never accept any entailed property, though Mr. Collins is willing to; other times, Mr. Bennet and Elizabeth serve to directly express the author's ironic opinion. When Mary Bennet is the only daughter at home and doesn't have to be compared to her prettier sisters, the author observes that "it was suspected by her father that she submitted to the change without much reluctance." Mr. Bennet turns his wit on himself during the crisis with Wickham and Lydia, "let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame. I am not afraid of being overpowered by the impression. It will pass away soon enough."

Elizabeth's irony is lighthearted, when Jane asks when she began to love Mr. Darcy: "It has been coming on so gradually that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley." She can be bitterly cutting, however, in her remark on Darcy's role in separating Bingley and Jane: "Mr. Darcy is uncommonly kind to Mr. Bingley, and takes a prodigious deal of care of him." The author, independent of any character, uses irony in the narrative parts for some of her sharpest, but often unnoticed judgements. The Meryton community is glad that Lydia is marrying such a worthless man as Wickham: "and the good-natured wishes for her well-doing, which had proceeded before from all the spiteful old ladies in Meryton, lost but little of their spirit in this change of circumstances, because with such a husband, her misery was certain."

Austen uses irony to both provoke whimsical laughter and to make veiled bitter observations. In her hands, irony is an extremely effective device for moral evaluation. Dialogue also plays an important role in *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel opens with a conversation between Mrs. Bennet and her husband: "'My dear Mr. Bennet.' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield is let at last?'" In the conversation that follows, we learn a great deal about Mrs. Bennet's preoccupation with marrying off her daughters, and Mr. Bennet's ironic and sarcastic attitude toward his wife, and her self-pitying nature. The stage is effortlessly set for the family's introduction to the Bingley group, and the dialogue has given us information on both incidents of plot and the attitudes which drive the characters.

The pieces of dialogue are consistently the most vivid and important parts of the novel. This is natural because novels were mostly read aloud in Austen's time, so good dialogue was extremely important. We learn of the major turning points through the dialogue, and even intense inner change like Elizabeth's famous self-recognition scene ("How despicably have I acted!") is related as a person talking to herself. Each character's speeches are individually appropriate and the most telling way of revealing what each character is like. Elizabeth's talk is forthright and sparkling, her father's is sarcastic, Mr. Collin's speeches are tedious and silly, and Lydia's fountain of words is all frivolity and no substance.

The things that happen in *Pride and Prejudice* happen to nearly all readers : embarrassment at the foolishness of relatives, the unsteady feelings of falling in love, and the chagrin of suddenly

realizing a big mistake. The psychological realism of the novel is revealed in the quick recognition we have of how the key characters feel. It is very natural for Elizabeth and Darcy to be angry at each other after she first turns him down, and it is very natural for them to feel twinges of regret, and then have a complete change of mind with the passage of time. Every step in their progress toward each other is described with a sensitivity to how people feel and act. In the subtle and beautiful description of Elizabeth's self-realization, is a convincing view of how an intelligent, feeling person changes.

When considering Austen's realism, however, readers should recognize that her major weakness as a writer is related to her greatest strength. She writes about what she knows, and this means that great areas of human experience are never touched on. We never see that much of the male characters, and they are rough sketches compared with her heroines. Extreme passions are usually avoided in her writing, and this becomes noticeable when, for example, she moves to a very impersonal, abstract voice when Elizabeth accepts Darcy: Elizabeth "immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change . . . as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure his present assurances." People who dislike Austen's works often cite this lack of extreme emotions as their main reason. Even so, no one can deny her ability to create unforgettable characters, build well-structured plots, or deliver assessments of society with a razor-sharp wit. Austen's works possess a timeless quality, which makes her stories and themes as relevant today as they were two hundred years ago.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, wait for a moment! Quickly go through these points to revise the previous section's content:

- *Pride and Prejudice*'s popularity rests on its memorable characters, interesting story, and Jane Austen's skill in storytelling.
- The psychological changes reflected in Jane Austen's characters, such as Elizabeth and Darcy seem realistic.
- Jane Austen makes excellent use of irony to expose the characters' foolishness.
- Jane Austen focuses on middle-class life which somewhat restrains the exploration of deep and profound experiences and intense emotions.
- Jane Austen's novels remain timeless due to their relatable characters, themes, and social critique despite criticisms.

### 25.4 DETAILED GLOSSARY OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

**abatement** - a lessening or reduction.

**abhorrence** - an abhorring; loathing; detestation.

**abhorrent** - causing disgust or hatred; detestable.

**ablution** - a washing of the body.

**adieu** - goodbye; farewell.

**adorned** - decorated; ornamented.

**brevity** - the quality of being concise; terseness.

**brooking** - putting up with; enduring: usually in the negative.

**brought her into public at an early age**- introduced her formally into society at an early age. Lydia has had her “coming out” early.

**business of love-making**- the wooing, or trying to get the love of, a woman.

**candour** - the quality of being fair and unprejudiced; impartiality.

**canvassed** - examined or discussed in detail; looked over carefully.

**capers** - playful jumps or leaps.

**circumspect** - careful to consider all related circumstances before acting, judging, or deciding; cautious.

**decorum** - propriety and good taste in behaviour.

**denoted** - was a sign of; indicated.

**depravity** - a depraved condition; corruption; wickedness.

**devoid** - completely without; empty or destitute (of).

**diffidence** - lack of confidence in oneself.

**dilatory** - inclined to delay; slow or late in doing things.

**engage** - to occupy or involve oneself.

**entailed** - to limit the inheritance of property to a specific line or class of heirs.

**enumerating** - naming one-by-one; specifying, as in a list.

**enumeration** - the process of naming one by one, or specifying, as in a list.

**environs** - surrounding area; vicinity.

**epithet** - an adjective, noun, or phrase, often specific one . a disparaging one, used to characterize some person or thing.

**faculties** - [Obsolete] powers to do; abilities to perform an action.

**felicitations** congratulations.

**felicity** - happiness; bliss.

**fender** - a low screen or frame in front of a fireplace to keep the hot coals in.

**fortnight** - [Chiefly British] a period of two weeks.

**gaily** - in a gay manner; happily; merrily; joyously.

**gallantry** - the courtly manner of one who is stylish.

**game of lottery tickets** - a card game.

**glazing** - the work of a glazier in fitting windows with glass.

**glen** - a narrow, secluded valley.

**hauteur** - disdainful pride; haughtiness; snobbery.

**heedless** - not taking heed; careless; unmindful.

**heinous** - outrageously evil or wicked; abominable.

**importune** - [Obsolete] to trouble; annoy.

**imprudence** - lack of prudence; lack of thought of the consequences.

**imprudent** - not prudent; without thought of the consequences; lacking in judgement or caution; rash; indiscreet.

**impute** - to attribute (especially a fault or misconduct) to another.

**incumbent** - lying, resting, or pressing with its weight on something else.

**incur** - to become subject to, through one's own action; bring upon oneself.

**indecorum** - lack of decorum; lack of propriety or good taste.

**indelicacy** - the quality of being indelicate or lacking modesty.

**jilt** - to reject or cast off (a previously accepted lover).

**licentiousness** - the disregarding of accepted rules and standards.

**livery** - an identifying uniform such as was formerly worn by feudal retainers or is now worn by servants or those in some particular group or trade.

**living** - in England, a church benefice (an endowed church office providing a living for a vicar or rector).

**meditate** - to plan or intend.

**mercenary** - motivated by a desire for money or other gain; greedy.

**Michaelmas** - the feast of the archangel Michael, September 29.

**milliner** - a person who designs, makes, trims, or sells women's hats.

**mince** - pies with a filling of mincemeat.

**obeisance** - a gesture of respect or reverence, such as a bow or courtesy.

**oblige** - to do a favour or service.

**obsequiousness** - the showing of too great a willingness to serve or obey; a fawning.

**obstinate** - unreasonably determined to have one's own way; stubborn.

**obtruded** - to offer or force (oneself or one's opinions) upon others unasked or unwanted.

**offered olive branch** - peace offering.

**officious** - offering unnecessary and unwanted advice; meddlesome.

**panegyric** - high or hyperbolic (exaggerated) praise; laudation.

**parade** - to walk about ostentatiously; show off.

**parasol** - a lightweight umbrella carried by women as a sunshade.

**partake** - to take part (in an activity); participate.

**patronage** - support, encouragement, or sponsorship, given by a patron.

**pecuniary** - of or involving money.

**prodigiously** - wonderfully or amazingly.

**profligate** - immoral and shameless; dissolute.

**prognostic** - a forecast; prediction.

**propitious** - favourably inclined or disposed; gracious.

**prospect** - the view obtained from any particular point; outlook.

**rectitude** - conduct according to moral principles; strict honesty.

**reel** - a lively Scottish dance.

**sagacity** - the quality or an instance of being sagacious; penetrating intelligence and sound judgement.

**sallied forth** - rushed out or came out suddenly, like troops attacking besieging forces

**saloon** - any large room or hall designed for receptions or exhibitions.

**sanguine** - cheerful and confident; optimistic; hopeful.

**solaced** - lessened or allayed (grief or sorrow).

**trade** - a means of earning one's living; one's occupation, work or line of business.

**transient** - passing away with time; not permanent; temporary.

**transport** - to carry away with emotion; enrapture; entrance.

**trepidation** - fearful uncertainty, or anxiety; apprehension.

**tumult** - great emotional disturbance; agitation of mind.

**tythes** - units that are one tenth of the annual produce of one's land or of one's annual income, paid as a tax or contribution to support a church or its clergy; any taxes or levies.

**untinctured** - not colored or tinged with some substance or quality.

**upbraided** - rebuked severely or bitterly; censured sharply.

**vehemence** - intense feeling or strong passion; fervent or impassioned state or condition.

## 25.5 LET US SUM UP

*Pride and Prejudice*, probably the most popular of Austen's finished novels, was also, in a sense, the first to be composed. Austen's works, including *Pride and Prejudice*, were barely noticed by critics during her lifetime. *Pride and Prejudice* sold fairly well, the first edition sold out at about 1,500 copies.

Critics who eventually reviewed it in the early part of the nineteenth century praised Austen's characterizations and portrayal of everyday life. Austen supported traditional values and the established norms, and viewed the human condition in the comic spirit. When considering Austen's realism, however, readers should recognize that her major weakness as a writer is related to her greatest strength. She writes about what she knows, and this means that great areas of human experience are never touched on. We never see that much of the male characters, and they are rough sketches compared with her heroines.

## 25.6 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

## 25.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the historical context of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.
2. Explain how Jane Austen displays a masterful use of irony and realism in the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*.

## 25.8 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

- Ans.1 Mary Lascelle
- Ans.2 (d) all of the above
- Ans.3 Mr. Bennet
- Ans.4 Mr. Collins'
- Ans.5 Well-structured

## 25.9 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Morrison, Robert. *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice : A Sourcebook*. Routledge, 2005.
- \* *A Study Guide for Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice*, Gale Cengage Learning, 2017.
- \* “*Pride and Prejudice: Summary*.” *LitCharts*, LitCharts LLC, <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/pride-and-prejudice/summary>.
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**JANE AUSTEN : *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*****STRUCTURE**

- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 26.3 Detailed Chapterwise Summary of *Pride and Prejudice* with Critical Analysis
- 26.4 Let Us Sum Up
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**26.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1813 is a classic novel by Jane Austen which explores the themes of social class, marriage, pride, relationships, etc. The story revolves around Elizabeth Bennet's relationship with Darcy as it is first guided by prejudice. However, both the characters shed their prejudices and develop mutual respect and affection towards each other. The novel is remarkable for its characters, especially Elizabeth Bennet who emerges as an independent-minded and intelligent woman amidst the constraining social environment.

**26.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to offer a detailed summary of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* along with critical analysis.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to critically summarise the plot of the novel which will help you in evaluating the literary merit of this work. You will be able to describe the various important happenings in the novel and how they contribute to plot development.

**26.3 DETAILED CHAPTERWISE SUMMARY OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* WITH CRITICAL ANALYSIS****Summary (Chapters 1-5)**

The residents of Hertfordshire county are excited by the news that a wealthy single gentleman named Mr. Bingley has rented Netherfield Park, a large house with extensive grounds. Mrs. Bennet urges

her husband to go meet Mr. Bingley when he arrives in the neighbourhood, so that their five daughters may then have the opportunity to meet the gentleman and attract his interest. Skeptical of his wife's matchmaking scheme, Mr. Bennet nonetheless visits Mr. Bingley, much to the delight of Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters :

Jane, Elizabeth (Lizzie), Mary, Catherine (Kitty), and Lydia.

Although Mr. Bingley returns Mr. Bennet's visit, the Bennet girls do not get the opportunity to meet him until a ball is held in the neighbourhood. At the ball, Mr. Bingley is accompanied by his two sisters, his brother-in-law, and a friend, Mr. Darcy. While Mr. Bingley impresses everyone with his outgoing and likable personality, Mr. Darcy is declared to be proud, disagreeable, and cold. He especially offends Elizabeth when she overhears him refusing Bingley's suggestion that he should dance with her.

After the ball, Jane and Elizabeth discuss Mr. Bingley's attentions to Jane, and Jane admits that she found him to be attractive and charming and was flattered by his admiration of her. Elizabeth comments on the difference between her temperament and Jane's, noting that Jane always looks for the good in people, a quality that sometimes blinds her to people's faults. Meanwhile, at Netherfield, Mr. Bingley, his sisters, and Mr. Darcy review the ball and the people who attended it. Although they differ in their perceptions of the ball in general, they all agree on Jane's beauty and sweet disposition. Discussion of the ball continues when the daughters of the Bennets' neighbour, Sir William Lucas, visit. The oldest daughter, Charlotte, is Elizabeth's close friend, and commiserates with Elizabeth over Mr. Darcy's snub. Charlotte acknowledges, however, that Mr. Darcy's family and wealth give him the right to be proud. Elizabeth agrees, noting that her resentment of his proud nature stems from his wounding her own pride.

### **Analysis (Chapters 1-5)**

With the first sentence of the book, Austen deftly establishes the major theme and tone of *Pride and Prejudice*. She states: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." This sentence introduces the theme of marriage, which is central to the novel's plot, and also introduces the tone of irony, which Austen will use both verbally and structurally throughout *Pride and Prejudice*. To fully appreciate the humour and artistry of Austen's novel, one must first understand what irony is and how it is used in literature. In its most basic sense, irony is the use of words to express something other than, or opposite of, the literal meaning. For example, if the first sentence of the novel is read literally, its meaning is "Everyone knows that a single rich man is looking for a wife." However, read ironically, the sentence means something other than its literal meaning: "Everyone knows that a single rich man will be pursued by women who want to be his wife." Austen also uses irony in the structure of the plot, placing her characters in situations that seem to signify one thing and are later revealed to signify something else.

As in many of Austen's other novels, irony is employed in *Pride and Prejudice* as the lens through which society and human nature are viewed. Through the novel, Austen studies social relationships in the limited society of a country neighbourhood and investigates them in detail with an often ironic and humorous eye e.g. her presentation of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. Their contrasting temperaments are first shown through their manner of conversation; Mrs. Bennet chatters on while Mr. Bennet counters her talk with mildly sarcastic statements, the mocking tone of which Mrs. Bennet completely misses. After letting

the reader hear the contrast between the couple through their dialogue, Austen then provides a general summary of the two parents' differing personalities. The disparity between them is amusing, but it is also ironic. In a novel about couples overcoming misunderstandings of each other to reach marital happiness, the reader's first view of marriage is one of a mismatched couple that cannot communicate.

The excitement Mrs. Bennet feels about Bingley's arrival is shared by the rest of the neighbourhood, giving the reader a glimpse of the nature of provincial society. Curiosity and gossip escalate with each Bingley sighting, and when Bingley leaves to bring more new faces into Hertfordshire, rumours about the size and composition of his group are constantly revised until he and his party make their appearance at the ball. This gossipy small town environment is a microcosm of society at large. When the narrator comments on the behaviours of the people of Hertfordshire, it can often be viewed as Austen's perspective on society as a whole. After the ball, the discussion between Elizabeth and Jane allows their characters to become more fully developed. Jane is depicted as a young woman with a kind and generous heart who is always willing to see the best in people. More spirited than her sister, Elizabeth is a sharp observer of human nature who doesn't hesitate to make judgments. She criticizes Jane for being blind to people's flaws, an accusation which will be ironic later in the novel when Elizabeth discovers her own blindness regarding appearances and prejudices.

Austen also introduces Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's close friend, when the Lucas family visits the Bennets to talk about the ball. Charlotte speaks only briefly in this scene, but what she says hints at aspects of her character that will become more apparent later in the book. In discussing Darcy's proud nature, Charlotte says, "His pride does not offend me so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, everything in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a right to be proud." Charlotte's assessment of Darcy's pride represents a perspective on wealth and privilege that was common in nineteenth-century Britain. As the novel progresses, Charlotte repeatedly expresses the views of society, especially in regard to money and marriage.

### **Summary (Chapters 6-9)**

Jane and Elizabeth begin spending more time with the residents of Netherfield. Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst seem fond of Jane, and the attraction between Mr. Bingley and Jane continues to grow. Meanwhile, Elizabeth finds Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst to be self-important but approves of their brother and the relationship that appears to be developing between him and Jane. As for Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth continues to view him as proud and reserved. She is unaware that his original assessment of her has changed and that he has begun to be unwillingly drawn to her. When he mentions Elizabeth's "fine eyes" to Miss Bingley, Miss Bingley jealously teases him about wanting to marry Elizabeth.

One morning, Jane receives a request from Caroline Bingley to come to Netherfield for dinner. Observing that it looks like rain, Mrs. Bennet sends Jane to Netherfield on horseback rather than in a carriage so that she will have to spend the night at Netherfield rather than ride home in the rain. The ploy works, and the next morning, the Bennets receive a note from Jane informing them that she is ill from getting soaked as she rode to Netherfield the previous day and will have to remain at Netherfield until she is better. Although Mrs. Bennet is satisfied at the thought of Jane spending more time in Mr. Bingley's

home, Elizabeth is concerned and decides to walk the three miles to Netherfield to see for herself how her sister is faring. When Elizabeth reaches Netherfield, she finds Jane to be sicker than her letter implied, and Miss Bingley reluctantly invites her to stay with Jane.

Although Elizabeth spends most of her time at Netherfield with Jane, she eats dinner with the others and joins them in the drawing room later in the evening. While Elizabeth is in their company, Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are polite to her, but when she is absent, the two women take delight in criticizing her relatives and the fact that she walked all the way to Netherfield to see Jane. Despite the ladies' disparagement of Elizabeth, Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy voice their approval of her. The next day Mrs. Bennet, Kitty, and Lydia visit Netherfield to check on Jane. While they are there, Elizabeth is embarrassed by the gauche behaviour of her family. Mrs. Bennet fawns over Mr. Bingley while simultaneously being blatantly rude to Mr. Darcy, while Lydia is overly forward with Mr. Bingley, reminding him that he promised to give a ball. Mr. Bingley good-naturedly agrees that he will give a ball as soon as Jane is better.

### Analysis (Chapters 6-9)

Two features that distinguish Elizabeth from other women throughout the novel are her quick wit and her energy. In these chapters, we see her display these qualities in a variety of situations, ranging from a one-on-one chat with her close friend to a neighbourhood gathering to an unplanned stay with people who consider themselves to be her social superiors. In all of these instances, Elizabeth exhibits a vigour and intelligence that appeals not only to characters within *Pride and Prejudice* but to the readers of the novel as well.

Elizabeth's wit is evident in her dialogue, whether she is debating with Charlotte the reasons for marriage or discussing with Darcy the existence of accomplished women. Readers get a sense of her energy from her speech, as well, as she delivers opinions and retorts with precision and speed. But Austen also shows Elizabeth's energetic nature through her actions. Throughout the novel, Elizabeth enjoys physical activity, especially walking, and readers find the first evidence of this proclivity when Elizabeth easily walks the three miles from Longbourn to Netherfield to see her sick sister. The snide responses of Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst to Elizabeth's action demonstrate that such behaviour is not the norm among gentlewomen.

Interestingly, the characteristics that set Elizabeth apart from other women in the novel are the very qualities that appeal to Darcy. He first notices that her face is "rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes." As he listens to her conversations, he is obviously intrigued by her ability to express herself and tells her that she speaks "with great energy." Darcy is also drawn to Elizabeth's "light and pleasing" figure and the "easy playfulness" of her manners. When she walks to Netherfield, Darcy feels "admiration of the brilliancy which exercise had given her complexion."

Elizabeth's appeal for Darcy becomes even more apparent in the scene in which Darcy, Miss Bingley, and Elizabeth discuss the requirements of an accomplished woman. Miss Bingley has already demonstrated her own hopes of being the future Mrs. Darcy in her comments to him and her flirtatious behaviour. In this scene, however, Austen gives a direct contrast between Miss Bingley and Elizabeth as they simultaneously interact with Darcy. While Miss Bingley agrees with everything Darcy says, Elizabeth counters his statements with her opposing opinions. When Elizabeth leaves and Miss Bingley begins to

criticize her remarks as attempts to attract men, Darcy reveals his own intelligent wit by subtly reproaching Miss Bingley for her hypocrisy.

Miss Bingley's behaviour toward Darcy makes the reader recall the first sentence of the novel: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." Austen has shown how desperately the mothers of Hertfordshire county have thrown their daughters at Bingley, and made clear that Darcy is much wealthier than Bingley. The only thing saving him from matchmaking schemes is his reserved, proud demeanor. However, his demeanor does not put off Caroline Bingley, and it is probable that he receives similar fawning treatment from a great number of aristocratic women. Consequently for Darcy, Elizabeth's forthrightness and apparent dislike of him are probably refreshing qualities in a woman. If Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst are examples of the women Darcy is used to dealing with, Elizabeth's spirited manner must be a welcome change, as is the fact that she is not pursuing him and his fortune.

A little knowledge of nineteenth-century society helps modern readers to understand some of Austen's ironic social commentary in this section. Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst take great delight in ridiculing Jane and Elizabeth's relatives who are pseudogentry, or professionals who do not own land, such as their Uncle Philips who is an attorney. Members of the landowning gentry, such as Darcy, or the soon-to-be-landowning gentry, such as Bingley, would consider those who earn their money through trade (a profession) to be socially inferior. Elizabeth's father is among the landed gentry, but her mother comes from a trade family. Consequently, Jane's and Elizabeth's standing in the eyes of elitists like the Bingley sisters is diminished due to their mother's family connections. However, their criticism of the Bennets is ironic, because Austen notes early on that "their brother's fortune and their own had been acquired by trade." In other words, the Bingleys' inherited fortune originates from the very circumstances that they now scorn.

### **Summary (Chapters 10-14)**

As Jane continues to recuperate at Netherfield, Elizabeth again spends the evening in the drawing room with the Bingleys, Hursts, and Mr. Darcy. She observes Miss Bingley's obvious attempts to flirt with Darcy, but Darcy seems unmoved by her efforts. Elizabeth is energized by the group's discussion of character, especially the contrast between Bingley and Darcy. Bingley, they note, is impetuous and impressionable, while Darcy is ruled by reason and reflection. Although Elizabeth frequently challenges Darcy's comments, he continues to find her more and more attractive and realizes that he "had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her." Only the social class of some of her relatives prevent him from pursuing the attraction.

The next evening, Jane is feeling well enough to join the group in the drawing room after dinner. Jane's attention is quickly monopolized by Bingley, leaving Elizabeth to again watch Miss Bingley disturbing Darcy with idle chatter. Eventually, Miss Bingley asks Elizabeth to walk around the room with her and then draws Darcy into a conversation with them, which soon turns into a debate between Darcy and Elizabeth over folly, weakness, and pride. Troubled by his fascination with Elizabeth, Darcy resolves to pay her less attention while she remains at Netherfield. Meanwhile, with Jane feeling better, both Jane and Elizabeth

are eager to return home. Mrs. Bennet resists sending them the carriage, so they borrow Bingley's and depart on Sunday, five days after Jane's arrival at Netherfield. Although Mrs. Bennet is displeased that they left Netherfield so quickly, Mr. Bennet is glad to have them home again.

The day after Jane and Elizabeth return home, their father announces that a visitor will be arriving that afternoon. The visitor is William Collins, Mr. Bennet's cousin and the man who will inherit Longbourn after Mr. Bennet dies. The estate is entailed, meaning that, according to the terms of inheritance, it must go to a male heir. Because Mr. Bennet's children are all female, the property will, by law, go to the next closest male relative: Mr. Collins. Mr. Bennet points out to his wife and daughters that Mr. Collins, as heir, "may turn you all out of this house as soon as he pleases" when Mr. Bennet is dead. Mr. Collins proves himself to be a curious blend of pompousness and obsequiousness. He is proud of his standing as the rector of the Hunsford parish and his patronage by Lady Catherine De Bourgh, and he does not hesitate to speak at length about his (or Lady Catherine De Bourgh's) opinions. At the same time, however, he displays a relentlessly deferential manner, apologizing at length, for example, when he offends Mrs. Bennet by implying that they cannot afford to have a cook on staff. Mr. Bennet finds his cousin absurd and is amused by him, while Kitty and Lydia are shocked at Mr. Collins' announcement that he never reads novels. When he instead tries to read to them from Fordyce's Sermons, Lydia offends him by beginning to talk of something else.

### **Analysis (Chapters 10-14)**

The arrival of Mr. Collins brings the issue of the entail to the forefront and helps readers to understand Mrs. Bennet's obsession with getting her daughters married. She doesn't want her daughters to get married simply for the prestige and wealth it may bring them, although that has appeal. Instead, there is a more urgent force behind Mrs. Bennet's fixation on marriage : the entail. Because Mr. Bennet has no male heirs, upon his death his estate will go to Mr. Collins rather than to any of his daughters. Because Mr. Bennet has mismanaged his money, his wife and daughters will be nearly destitute when he dies, unless the Bennet girls marry. Consequently, Mrs. Bennet hopes for a wealthy husband for at least one of her daughters so not only that daughter will be cared for, but Mrs. Bennet and any unwed sisters will be provided for, as well.

One of the delights of reading Austen is witnessing her remarkable skill at shaping characters into unique individuals through the most commonplace actions or events. In these chapters, for example, the development of Darcy and Mr. Collins' characters is of special interest. The personalities of both men are revealed through similar acts: letter writing, speaking, and reading, but while their activities are the same, the manner in which they engage in the activities varies with each man, thereby, illustrating the differences in their personalities. Before the advent of devices such as the telegraph or telephone, letter writing was a very important mode of communication, as demonstrated by the large number of letters and references to letters that occur in *Pride and Prejudice*. As Darcy and Bingley discuss, one's style of writing reflects that person's way of thinking. So it is natural for someone as impetuous and changeable as Bingley to write, as his sister describes, "in the most careless way imaginable. He leaves out half his words, and blots the rest."

Darcy's writing style is quite different, though. He states that he writes "rather slowly" and that his letters "are generally long." Miss Bingley comments that he writes evenly and Bingley declares that Darcy "does not write with ease. He studies too much for words of four syllables." These characteristics of Darcy's writing style serve to reinforce and expand what readers have already gathered about him: Darcy likes to think things through and is cautious when making choices or decisions, even when choosing the right word to write. Additionally, to whom he is writing to is as important as how he writes. By writing a long, carefully worded letter to his sister, Georgiana, Darcy exhibits that he both cares for his sister and takes his responsibility for her seriously. These hints at an emotional attachment to his sister contradict Elizabeth's perception of him as cold and unfeeling. However, just as Austen's readers aren't able to read that letter, Elizabeth is not yet able to truly read Darcy.

Meanwhile, Mr. Collins also writes a letter that introduces himself not only to Mr. Bennet but to Austen's readers as well. The impression the letter gives is that the writer is a curious blend of arrogance and obsequiousness. Mr. Collins apologizes in one sentence for a breach between the families, and then brags about his patroness and his position as clergyman. He then begins apologizing again for potentially offending the Bennet daughters. Regardless of whether he is apologizing or bragging, Mr. Collins delivers his sentiments in extremely long and complex sentences. From this letter, Elizabeth can accurately assess him as a man who lacks sense. Just as their style of writing reflects different aspects of Darcy and Mr. Collins' characters, so does the two men's style of speaking. Darcy, who is slow to write and careful of his word choice, is slow to speak and speaks judiciously, so that no word is frivolous. However, it is interesting to note how quickly this reticent man can be provoked into a fast-paced debate by Elizabeth. When Miss Bingley tries to get his attention while he is writing the letter to Georgiana, he responds with curt statements or with silence. However, as soon as Elizabeth makes a comment, Darcy begins responding at length, easily matching her intelligence and wit. His reaction to Elizabeth indicates how much he enjoys challenging and being challenged by her sharp mind.

Mr. Collins' speaking style, on the other hand, is as rambling as Darcy's is reserved. Like his letter, Mr. Collins communicates in long, convoluted sentences that range from unending apologies for some imagined slight to imperious moralizing for some perceived lapse into impropriety. Whereas, Darcy usually requires someone to draw him into a conversation, Mr. Collins needs no such invitation. Infact, he generally delivers dense monologues on his or Lady Catherine De Bourgh's opinions with little concern for what others may think or want to say. It appears that the only person Mr. Collins finds more interesting to listen to than himself is Lady Catherine. Austen rounds out the revelations of Darcy and Mr. Collins' characters in these chapters by showing the men's different approaches to reading. Darcy's extensive library at Pemberley is described earlier in the novel, indicating that Darcy and his family enjoy books and reading. Also, Miss Bingley notes that Darcy prefers the solitary activity of reading over the social activity of cards. As in the case of his writing to his sister, Miss Bingley finds it nearly impossible to distract Darcy from his book. She is finally able to gain his attention when she asks Elizabeth to join her in walking around the room. Just as Darcy is drawn out of his reticence when speaking with Elizabeth, he is also drawn out of his reading by her as he "unconsciously closed his book" to observe her moving around the room. Mr. Collins, on the other hand, seems to have an entirely different relationship with books. His rejection of

novels and consequent limiting of his exposure to books contrasts Darcy's ever-growing library. Additionally, while Darcy reads silently, Mr. Collins readily agrees to read aloud to the Bennets. Rather than selecting something that everyone will enjoy, Mr. Collins chooses a book of sermons and reads them "with very monotonous solemnity." His style of reading is just as imposing and ridiculous as his style of speaking or writing. Similarly, Darcy's style of reading reflects his reserved and aloof mannerisms.

### **Summary (Chapters 15-18)**

Feeling a sense of obligation to the Bennet family because of the entail, Mr. Collins plans to ask one of the Bennet daughters to marry him. After Mrs. Bennet tells him that they expect Jane to be engaged soon, he decides to propose to Elizabeth. That resolved, Mr. Collins joins Elizabeth and her sisters as they walk to Meryton where Lydia and Kitty are excited to see some of the officers stationed there. Everyone's attention is drawn to a new officer, George Wickham - who impresses Elizabeth with his good looks and charming manners. As Elizabeth and her sisters are speaking with Wickham, Darcy and Bingley ride up to them. Elizabeth is intrigued to notice that Darcy and Wickham recognize each other, and as the two men barely acknowledge each other, Wickham looks pale and Darcy appears angry.

The next day, the Bennet sisters and Mr. Collins return to Meryton to dine with Mrs. Bennet's sister, Mrs. Philips. Some of the officers are also present, including Wickham, who seeks Elizabeth out and sits next to her as she plays cards. Wickham astonishes her by revealing the nature of his relationship with Darcy, telling her that his father was Darcy's father's steward and that he and Darcy grew up together. According to Wickham, he was a favourite of Darcy's father and when Darcy's father died, Wickham was supposed to have received a position as a clergyman at the rectory that the Darcy family oversees. However, Darcy gave the job to someone else, out of jealousy, Wickham presumes, and left Wickham to fend for himself. Wickham declares that both Darcy and his sister are proud and unpleasant people, and Elizabeth eagerly concurs with his opinion. When Elizabeth shares Wickham's story with Jane, Jane insists there must be some sort of misunderstanding on both Wickham's and Darcy's parts. Elizabeth laughs at her sister's kind nature and declares that she knows Wickham to be right. As they are discussing the matter, Bingley calls to invite the family to a ball at Netherfield in a few days. Everyone is delighted, including Mr. Collins who, to Elizabeth's dismay, secures her promise that she'll dance the first two dances with him.

At the ball, Elizabeth is disappointed to discover that Wickham is absent and blames Darcy for making him uncomfortable enough to avoid coming. She is so surprised, however, when Darcy asks her to dance with him that she agrees to it without thinking. As they dance, they are at first interrupted by Sir William, who alludes to the anticipated engagement between Jane and Bingley. Darcy seems troubled by this, but is then distracted when Elizabeth raises the subject of Wickham. They discuss Wickham tensely and end their dance feeling angry and dissatisfied. At dinner, Elizabeth is mortified by her mother's incessant chatter to Lady Lucas about Jane and Bingley getting engaged. She notices that Darcy can't help but hear her mother's loud whispers and unsuccessfully encourages her mother to change the subject. After dinner, Elizabeth's sense of humiliation grows as her parents and all of her sisters except Jane act foolishly and without restraint. Mr. Collins adds to her misery by continuing to hover near her, causing Elizabeth to be grateful when Charlotte engages him in conversation.

## Analysis (Chapters 15-18)

With the introduction of Wickham to the novel, the plot begins to become more complicated. Note that even though Elizabeth is perceptive enough to immediately sense that something is wrong between Wickham and Darcy, her perceptive abilities where Darcy and Wickham are concerned will be blinded by her prejudice, rendering her unable to see Darcy's or Wickham's true natures. Elizabeth's prejudices stem from her first impressions of the men. Whereas, she was initially repulsed by Darcy's arrogant and reserved manners and his insulting refusal to dance with her, she is attracted to Wickham's "happy readiness of conversation, a readiness at the same time perfectly correct and unassuming." Additionally, Wickham further pleases Elizabeth by favouring her with his attention at her aunt's house. In other words, Wickham has behaved opposite to Darcy in his first encounters with Elizabeth, appealing to her appreciation of friendly manners and conversation as well as to her pride in being the woman he chose to sit with.

Consequently, Elizabeth's prejudice is so strong against Darcy and for Wickham that she will accept at face value everything that Wickham says. As Wickham talks about Darcy's pride, Elizabeth fails to note that her own pride is blinding her to a basic incongruity. Wickham professes to be discreet and hints that he would not defame anyone's character, but he talks extensively about Darcy. Elizabeth would not have tolerated such a conversation if anyone except the disagreeable Mr. Darcy were the subject of the talk. Austen emphasizes a theme of prejudice as Wickham imposes his prejudice upon Elizabeth and makes her even more prejudiced against Darcy, who, it is hinted, is prejudiced against all people. Note also in these chapters, the examples of the importance of manners and decorum in nineteenth-century British society. In observing the characters' behaviours and comments, it seems that in society, manners are associated with social class and accordingly with the quality of a person's character. So, for example, members of the aristocracy, such as Darcy or Lady Catherine De Bourgh, are perceived as justifiably proud in their manners because of their status in society.

The Bingley sisters, who aspire to that level, are also proud and careful in their manners and distinguish with whom they associate among the Bennet family based on manners. Jane and Elizabeth, who display proper behaviour, are acceptable, while Mrs. Bennet, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia, who speak and act on whim with no thought for appropriateness, are shunned. The differences in the Bennet girls' manners could be viewed from a societal perspective as reflecting the differences in their parents' class and backgrounds: Jane and Elizabeth are more closely associated with their father, a landowning gentleman, whereas Mary, Kitty, and Lydia emulate their mother, the daughter of a lawyer.

However, Austen's sense of irony comes through as she plays with this traditional societal perception of class and manners. Throughout the novel, she satirizes the manners of all classes, exposing people who have excessive pride as rude and often foolish, regardless of wealth or station. In these chapters, Austen uses Mr. Collins as an extreme example of how excessive pride can affect one's manners. In Mr. Collins' case, he prides himself on his sense of respectability, his profession, and his association with Lady Catherine. As a result, he behaves in a ridiculous fashion, going so far as to break one of society's rules and introduce himself to Darcy rather than waiting for Darcy to acknowledge their connection. Similarly, Mrs. Bennet appears absurd as she ignores decorum and talks unrestrainedly about Jane's prospective marriage to Bingley. With both Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet, Elizabeth acts as the voice of propriety, explaining to her un receptive relations the proper way to behave. The behaviour of Elizabeth's family at the Netherfield ball

embarrasses her because she understands the proper and improper modes of conduct at such an event. Remember also that Elizabeth's sense of etiquette has affected her perceptions of Wickham and Darcy, one man behaved appropriately upon their first meeting and the other did not. Austen's heroine seems to have a very democratic sense of proper manners, for rather than judging people by their class, she evaluates them based on how they treat others. Consequently, she likes Bingley and Wickham, who treat everyone equally, but dislikes Bingley's sisters and Darcy, who appear overly proud.

### **Summary (Chapters 19-23)**

The morning after the Netherfield ball, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth. He outlines his motivation for proposing and promises never to bring up the fact that she brings so little money to the marriage. Torn between discomfort and the desire to laugh at his officious manner, Elizabeth politely refuses him. Mr. Collins, however, thinks that Elizabeth is being coy in refusing him and lists the reasons why it is unthinkable for her to refuse him, namely his own worthiness, his association to the De Bourgh family, and Elizabeth's own potential poverty. Mrs. Bennet, who is anxious for Elizabeth to accept Mr. Collins, reacts badly to the news of her daughter's resistance and threatens never to see Elizabeth again if she doesn't marry him. When Mrs. Bennet appeals to Mr. Bennet for support, though, he states that he would never want to see Elizabeth again if she did marry Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins finally realizes that his suit is hopeless and he withdraws his offer.

In the midst of the uproar over the proposal, Charlotte Lucas visits the Bennets and learns of Elizabeth's refusal of Mr. Collins. After Mr. Collins withdraws his offer, Charlotte begins spending more time with him, and within a few days, he proposes to her. Charlotte accepts, not for love but for security, and news of their engagement outrages Mrs. Bennet and shocks Elizabeth, who cannot believe her friend would marry where no love exists. Meanwhile, Bingley leaves for what is supposed to be a temporary visit to London, but Jane receives a letter from Caroline Bingley stating that the whole party has left for London and will not return all winter. Caroline tells Jane that they are spending a great deal of time with Georgiana Darcy and hints that she would like Miss Darcy to marry her brother. Jane is dismayed by the news, but believes that Caroline's letter is written in friendship and goodwill. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is suspicious of the role Darcy and Bingley's sisters may be playing in keeping him and Jane apart.

### **Analysis (Chapters 19-23)**

Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth is one of the most humorous moments in the novel. Austen has already established the absurdities in Mr. Collins' speech and manners, but his proposal raises him to new heights of pompous foolishness. Although Elizabeth at first is desperate to get away, note how she is overcome by the humour of the situation when Mr. Collins begins to speak of his feelings running away with him. There are obviously no feelings involved in his offer other than self-pride and condescension. Austen states that as he prepares for the proposal, "he set about it in a very orderly manner, with all the observances which he supposed a regular part of the business." For Mr. Collins, this is a business transaction, not the culmination of love for Elizabeth. And as Elizabeth has stated before, she wants to marry for love, not convenience.

Elizabeth's romantic view of marriage results in her feelings of shock and disappointment when Charlotte decides to marry Mr. Collins. Blind to Charlotte's practical reasons for accepting Mr. Collins,

Elizabeth cannot conceive of Charlotte being happy in such a marriage. Elizabeth's view of marriage and response to Charlotte's concept of marriage are interesting considering Elizabeth's family and future prospects. In seeking a love match, Elizabeth is searching for a relationship opposite to that of her parents. Her parents neither love nor like each other, which creates a fragmented household in which neither parent seems very happy. Perhaps Elizabeth's objections to Charlotte's realistic perception of marriage are actually objections to her own parents' relationship. However, nineteenth-century readers would understand the riskiness of Elizabeth's idealistic position. As Mr. Collins is quick to point out, Elizabeth will have a severely limited income when her father dies and the estate passes to Mr. Collins. Most young women in her situation in nineteenth-century Britain might dream of marrying for love, but would accept the necessity of marrying for security, as Charlotte does. Consequently, for Austen's readers, Elizabeth represents an ideal view of the world, while Charlotte represents reality.

### **Summary (Chapters 24-27)**

Jane receives another letter from Caroline Bingley and unhappily reads that the Bingleys have no plans of ever returning to Netherfield. The news leaves Jane depressed and makes Elizabeth angry. She blames Darcy and Bingley's sisters for interfering with her sister's happiness, and resents Bingley for how easily he has been manipulated by those close to him. Elizabeth's mood is lifted somewhat by frequent visits from Wickham, who continues to be attentive to Elizabeth.

Mrs. Bennet's brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, come to Longbourn to spend Christmas with the Bennet family. Unlike Mrs. Bennet's other relatives, the Gardiners are well-mannered and intelligent, and Jane and Elizabeth feel especially close to them. Mrs. Gardiner cautions Elizabeth against encouraging Wickham, telling her that the lack of fortune on either side makes the hope of a match between the two of them impractical and irresponsible. Mrs. Gardiner also observes Jane's melancholy and invites her to return to London with them. Jane happily accepts and anticipates being able to see Caroline Bingley while she is there. However, after Jane is in London, a chilly reception from Miss Bingley makes her realize that Elizabeth was correct in her assessment of Bingley's sister as being a false friend to Jane.

Meanwhile, Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas marry and depart for Mr. Collins' parsonage in Hunsford, Kent. Before she leaves, Charlotte asks Elizabeth to visit her soon and Elizabeth reluctantly agrees. In March, Elizabeth accompanies Charlotte's father and younger sister, Maria, to visit Charlotte, whom Elizabeth has begun to miss. On their way to Hunsford, the group stops in London overnight to stay with the Gardiners. While there, Elizabeth and her aunt discuss Wickham's recent courtship of Miss King, an heiress. Mrs. Gardiner views his actions as mercenary, but Elizabeth defends his right to pursue a wealthy bride. Before Elizabeth leaves London, her aunt and uncle invite her to accompany them on a trip to northern England in the summer, and Elizabeth agrees.

### **Analysis (Chapters 24-27)**

As *Pride and Prejudice* progresses, the novel's carefully balanced structure becomes more apparent. In these chapters, for example, Jane's disappointment in love is juxtaposed with Charlotte's marriage. Notice how neither situation fits with Elizabeth's idealistic view of life. Elizabeth believes that people should marry for love, not security, and has been very vocal on the subject. When faced with the reality of Jane's broken heart and Charlotte's practicality, Elizabeth responds with anger and resentment, unwilling

to excuse or understand actions that deviate so greatly from her belief system. This attitude, especially toward Charlotte, is a sign of Elizabeth's immaturity and naiveté at this point in the book. As her beliefs continue to be challenged, however, she will mature.

Elizabeth's refusal to see any viewpoint other than her own is representative of the theme of blindness, or prejudice, that runs through the book. Up to this point, Charlotte has been the main person to question Elizabeth's judgement in such a well-reasoned manner that she makes the reader question Elizabeth's perceptions as well. In these chapters, though, Mrs. Gardiner enters the plot and matches Charlotte's ability to pinpoint Elizabeth's biases and inconsistencies. For example, Mrs. Gardiner warns Elizabeth against encouraging Wickham, stating "You have sense, and we all expect you to use it." She also questions Wickham's interest in Miss King, refusing to overlook the mercenary aspect of his attentions, unlike Elizabeth who readily excuses his actions. Mrs. Gardiner's concerns seem reasonable enough to make the readers wonder if Wickham is perhaps not as trustworthy and likable as Elizabeth believes him to be.

The introduction of the Gardiners to the novel presents a contrast to the rest of Mrs. Bennet's family. Unlike Mrs. Bennet and her sister, Mrs. Phillips, the Gardiners are intelligent, well-mannered, and sensitive. These differences are significant, not only because they show that Elizabeth has some relatives besides Jane that she can be proud of, but it also demonstrates that members of the middle class can be just as refined and well-bred as members of the upper class.

### **Summary (Chapters 28-32)**

The next day, Elizabeth, Sir William, and Maria leave London for Hunsford. When they arrive at the parsonage, Charlotte and Mr. Collins greet them enthusiastically and give them a tour of the house and garden. As they settle in, Maria is excited by the brief visit from Miss De Bourgh, but Elizabeth is unimpressed. The group is invited to dine at Lady Catherine De Bourgh's residence, Rosings, soon after they arrive. Mr. Collins' dramatic descriptions of Lady Catherine and her home make Sir William and Maria nervous, but Elizabeth approaches the visit with curiosity rather than fright. As Elizabeth observes Lady Catherine, she notices that her ladyship displays tireless interests in the smallest details of life at the parsonage and in the village and never hesitates to offer her opinion or advice. Lady Catherine also turns her attention to Elizabeth and begins querying her about her family and education, and Elizabeth shocks her by initially refusing to disclose her age.

After a week passes, Sir William returns home. Elizabeth spends much of her time walking outdoors, and the group dines at Rosings twice a week. The news that Darcy and his cousin Colonel Fitzwilliam will be visiting Lady Catherine, soon generates some excitement, especially after the two gentlemen call on the parsonage the morning after their arrival. Colonel Fitzwilliam impresses Elizabeth with his gentleman-like manner, while Darcy remains as aloof as ever. About a week after Darcy and Fitzwilliam arrive at Rosings, the residents of the parsonage are again invited to dinner. Lady Catherine focuses much of her attention on Darcy, while Colonel Fitzwilliam seems taken with Elizabeth. The colonel asks Elizabeth to play the piano for him, and she complies. Darcy soon joins them at the piano and it is not long before Elizabeth and Darcy become engaged in a spirited conversation about Darcy's reserved behaviour among strangers. Elizabeth reproaches him for not trying harder, while Darcy states that he simply isn't able to easily converse with people he doesn't know well.

The next morning, Darcy visits the parsonage and is surprised to find Elizabeth alone. Their conversation begins in a stilted and awkward manner, but soon Elizabeth cannot resist questioning him about whether Bingley plans on returning to Netherfield. Discussion turns to Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins, leading to a brief debate over what is an "easy distance" for a woman to be separated from her family after she marries. Charlotte comes home and Darcy soon leaves. Surprised by his presence, Charlotte wonders if Darcy is in love with Elizabeth and closely observes him in his subsequent visits.

### **Analysis (Chapters 28-32)**

After Elizabeth rejected Mr. Collins and then so strongly condemned Charlotte for marrying him, both Elizabeth and the reader cannot help but be curious about how Charlotte is faring in her new role as Mr. Collins' wife. From Elizabeth's observations and the narrator's descriptions, it seems that Charlotte is settling into a marriage very similar to that of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. Just as Mr. and Mrs. Bennet are mismatched in intellect and common sense, Charlotte and Mr. Collins also display a disparity of temperament. Where Mr. Collins is overbearing and effusive in his interactions with others, Charlotte is well-mannered and modest. When the group first dines at Rosings, for example, the narrator notes the differences between how Charlotte introduces her family and friend compared to how Mr. Collins would have handled it: "as Mrs. Collins had settled it with her husband that the office of introduction should be hers, it was performed in a proper manner, without any of those apologies and thanks which he would have thought necessary."

Additionally, like Mr. Bennet, Charlotte has found ways to distance herself from her exasperating spouse. Mr. Bennet uses his library as a retreat, and Charlotte similarly has chosen a sitting room for herself that Mr. Collins is less likely to invade regularly. Charlotte's approach to Mr. Collins is perhaps more respectful than Mr. Bennet's treatment of Mrs. Bennet, however. While Mr. Bennet responds to Mrs. Bennet's silliness with sarcasm, Charlotte does not react to Mr. Collins' inane statements. As Elizabeth observes, when Mr. Collins says something foolish, "Charlotte wisely did not hear." Notice how differently Elizabeth views her friend's situation now. Seeing Charlotte's new home and the dynamics of her marriage has given Elizabeth a new appreciation of her friend. Whereas, Elizabeth once expressed extreme disappointment in Charlotte for choosing to marry Mr. Collins, she now admires Charlotte's ability to manage her household and her husband. Elizabeth's change of heart here is subtle, but important. It demonstrates a key aspect of Elizabeth's character: the ability to change. Even when Elizabeth feels very strongly about something, in this case, Charlotte's marriage, she can be objective enough to reassess the situation and change her mind. So while she may still not agree with Charlotte's choice of husband, Elizabeth's sense of fairness allows her to eventually accept Charlotte's choice based upon her observations of Charlotte's contentment and well-managed life.

Another important aspect of these chapters is Elizabeth's interaction with Lady Catherine. While Sir William and Maria are frightened by Lady Catherine's overwhelming presence, Elizabeth is unmoved by Lady Catherine's rank or personality and instead demonstrates her ability to stand up to the woman. The establishment of this ability at this point in the book prepares readers for Elizabeth's tenacity in later confrontations with Lady Catherine.

Austen also reinforces Elizabeth's ability to verbally spar with Darcy. As seen previously at Netherfield, Darcy and Elizabeth cannot be in a room together for very long before they begin debating with each other.

Although Elizabeth is entertained by Colonel Fitzwilliam, Austen shows little of her dialogue with the colonel. It is only when Darcy enters the conversation that the dialogue is written out, and then the quickness of Elizabeth's energy and intelligence are apparent in every line. In this choice of narrative versus dialogue, Austen conveys the chemistry that exists between Elizabeth and Darcy. Elizabeth may be charmed by Colonel Fitzwilliam's genial manners, but it is Darcy who challenges and stimulates her.

### **Summary (Chapters 33-36)**

Elizabeth keeps encountering Darcy during her walks through the park and is bothered when, rather than leaving her alone, he continues to join her. One day, she meets Colonel Fitzwilliam as she's walking and they begin discussing Darcy's character. When Fitzwilliam relates the story of "a most imprudent marriage" that Darcy saved Bingley from, Elizabeth infers that he is speaking of Jane and reflects upon Darcy's actions with anger and tears when she returns to her room. Feeling unfit to see Lady Catherine and especially wanting to avoid Darcy, Elizabeth decides not to go to Rosings that night for dinner, telling Charlotte that she has a headache.

After everyone has left for Rosings, Elizabeth is startled by the arrival of Darcy, who inquires about her health. After a few minutes of silence, Darcy shocks Elizabeth with a declaration of love for her and a proposal of marriage. Initially flattered by his regard, Elizabeth's feelings turn to outrage as Darcy catalogs all of the reasons why he has resisted his feelings for her, namely how her inferior social class would degrade his own standing and the problem of her family. Elizabeth in turn stuns Darcy by refusing his proposal, stating, "I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry." She condemns him for separating Jane and Bingley, for treating Wickham poorly, and for his arrogance and selfishness. He accepts these accusations without apology, even with contempt. However, he flinches when she accuses him of not behaving like a gentleman and when Elizabeth finishes her denunciation of him, Darcy angrily departs. Overwhelmed with emotion, Elizabeth cries for half an hour afterward and retreats to her room when everyone returns home.

As Elizabeth is walking the next morning, Darcy approaches her, gives her a letter, and leaves her alone to read it. In the letter, Darcy does not renew his marriage proposal, but instead addresses Elizabeth's two main objections to him: his involvement in Jane and Bingley's breakup and his treatment of Wickham. Regarding Jane and Bingley, Darcy states that he believed that Jane did not love Bingley, and he consequently persuaded Bingley that it was so, as well. He admits that he wanted to save Bingley from an imprudent marriage, but he stresses that he felt that Jane's feelings were not deeply involved because her calm nature never displayed any indication of her strong attachment. Darcy adds that Jane's mother, her three younger sisters, and even her father act improperly in public and create a spectacle of themselves.

As for Wickham, Darcy states that he is a pleasant but unprincipled man who is greedy and vengeful. Contrary to Wickham's account, Darcy asserts that he did not deprive Wickham of the clergyman position without compensation. Instead, as Wickham's request, Darcy gave him 3,000 pounds to study law. Wickham squandered the money, tried to get more from Darcy, and when that failed, tried to elope with Darcy's sister. Darcy directs Elizabeth to ask Colonel Fitzwilliam for confirmation of anything she questions in his letter. At first, Elizabeth refuses to believe the letter, but after rereading it and thinking back on the circumstances Darcy recounts, she soon realizes, with a great deal of shock and chagrin, that it is completely

true. Reflecting upon her former behaviour and views, she is horrified and ashamed and exclaims, “I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself.” Depressed and ashamed, she finally returns to the parsonage, and learns that both Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam had visited and gone.

### **Analysis (Chapters 33-36)**

These chapters are among the most important of the novel. They present the plot’s climax, the turning point of the action of the novel, and the beginning of the denouement, the resolution of the plot. Here, Elizabeth experiences her great self-revelation about her prejudices, and Darcy receives a similar blow to his own expectations and perceptions of the world. Austen has carefully structured the plot so that Darcy’s proposal comes at the height of Elizabeth’s anger toward him. Elizabeth’s conversation with Colonel Fitzwilliam leaves her so upset and resentful of Darcy that she makes herself sick thinking about how he has harmed her sister. Her feelings are such that she cannot bear the thought of seeing him. At the same time, Darcy’s feelings for Elizabeth have reached the point of compelling him to go to her and expose his heart, leading to his outburst, “In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.”

The proposal itself is filled with pride as Darcy refers to all the obstacles which he has had to overcome in order to make himself take this step. Rather than emphasizing his love for Elizabeth, he focuses on the negatives of the situation and makes disparaging comments about her family. Meanwhile, the proposal completely stuns Elizabeth. She has been blind to Darcy’s affections for her because she has been so prejudiced against him. Note that throughout the scene, Darcy accuses Elizabeth of pride, while Elizabeth accuses him of prejudice, an ironic reversal of the way readers have viewed each character. Elizabeth tells him that he was prejudiced against Wickham, against Jane, and against things that do not fit into his social world. In turn, he tells her that she would not be so adamant “had not your pride been hurt by my honest confession.” This ironic reversal emphasizes that both Elizabeth and Darcy have been guilty of both pride and prejudice.

Darcy’s letter is important in three ways. First, it clarifies plot points from earlier in the book by explaining exactly what Darcy’s role was in Bingley’s sudden departure and Wickham’s job problems. Secondly, the letter provides the reader with invaluable insights into Darcy’s mind and personality. Because most of the story is told from Elizabeth’s perspective, readers have little chance to know Darcy beyond his outward behaviour. But the most important aspect of the letter is the impact it has on Elizabeth. Through Elizabeth’s reactions to the letter, Austen masterfully displays the process of revelation and self-discovery.

Watch the gradual method by which Elizabeth comes to a self-revelation of her own pride and prejudice. She begins reading the letter “with a strong prejudice against everything he might say.” Then as she reads the letter a second and a third time, one or two things begin to strike her as being true. After she has brought herself to accept one statement as being true, she realizes that she must ultimately accept every fact as true or reject them all. Her final realization is that she has been “blind, partial, prejudiced and absurd.” Previously, she had called Jane blind, and now she has gained a moral insight into her own character and sees that she has also been blind. This, therefore, is her crucial recognition about herself. Consequently, Elizabeth’s character increases in depth as she is able to analyze herself and come to these realizations.

## **Summary (Chapters 37-42)**

Darcy and Colonel Fitzwilliam leave Hunsford the day after Darcy gives Elizabeth the letter, and Elizabeth and Maria leave about a week later. On their way back to Longbourn, they stop at the Gardiners in London for a few days and Jane returns home with them. Back at home, Kitty and Lydia agonize over the fact that the militia is leaving for Brighton in two weeks. Elizabeth is pleased that Wickham will no longer be around. Elizabeth relates to Jane the details of Darcy's proposal and all about the letter, with the exception of the part about Jane and Bingley. Jane responds with shock and disbelief that Wickham could have such a mercenary nature. She and Elizabeth discuss whether this new information about Wickham should be made public, but they decide against it because he will be leaving soon.

As the regiment prepares to depart, the wife of the colonel of the regiment invites Lydia to accompany them to Brighton. Worried about her sister's immaturity and flightiness, Elizabeth tries to persuade her father to forbid Lydia's going, but he refuses, implying that he would rather risk Lydia embarrassing the family than deal with her misery if he made her stay. Lydia leaves, and Elizabeth awaits her trip with the Gardiners that summer. They leave in July and the Gardiners decide to shorten the trip to visit only Derbyshire county, where Mrs. Gardiner grew up. Derbyshire is also where Darcy's estate, Pemberley, is located. When they arrive in Derbyshire, Mrs. Gardiner decides that she wants to see Pemberley, and Elizabeth agrees after finding out that none of the family will be there.

## **Analysis (Chapters 37-42)**

In these chapters, Elizabeth returns home and the story returns to some of the minor plot elements, including Lydia and the militia, Meryton's perceptions of Wickham, and Mr. Bennet's irresponsibility. Elizabeth's most important action here is her inaction when she decides not to reveal Wickham's true nature to the public and even to keep it from her family.

However, Elizabeth does plead with her father not to allow Lydia to go to Brighton. Mr. Bennet's response exemplifies how he refuses to take responsibility for his family, especially because he knows that Lydia will probably behave inappropriately while she is there. Because Elizabeth has so recently been made aware by Darcy of the effects of her sister's indecorum, she argues strongly that the family should not allow another breach of decorum that could harm the girls' chances of finding a suitable husband. Considering that Mr. Bennet has squandered his money and will leave his daughters nearly destitute, he should be acting to help them gain the security of good marriages. However, his apathy on this matter and concern for his own comfort is stronger than any concerns he may have for his daughters. Although she cares about her father, Elizabeth is "disappointed and sorry" with his decision.

## **Summary (Chapters 43-46)**

Elizabeth and the Gardiners arrive at the Pemberley estate and are impressed by the beauty of the house and the grounds. As they tour the house, the housekeeper praises Darcy, saying "He is the best landlord, and the best master that ever lived." The housekeeper also confirms that Darcy isn't presently at home, but she adds that he is expected the following day. As the Gardiners and Elizabeth walk around Pemberley's grounds, however, Darcy suddenly appears. Mortified to have him find her there, Elizabeth's emotions are further confused by his courteous and gentle tone. He asks her if he can introduce his sister

to her soon, and Elizabeth agrees, wondering what this show of interest and pleasant behaviour can mean. As she and her relatives drive away, Elizabeth mulls over the encounter while her aunt and uncle discuss Darcy's surprising geniality.

Darcy calls on Elizabeth and the Gardiners the next day with his sister and Bingley. Elizabeth immediately notices that Miss Darcy is not proud, as Wickham had asserted, but painfully shy. Elizabeth also watches Bingley and Miss Darcy interact and is pleased to see no signs of a romantic attachment between them, as was implied by Miss Bingley. In fact, Elizabeth believes she detects several wistful references to Jane in his conversation. As Elizabeth nervously tries to please everyone with her manners and speech, the Gardiners observe both her and Darcy. From their observations, they are sure that Darcy is very much in love with Elizabeth, but they are uncertain about Elizabeth's feelings for him. Elizabeth is also uncertain, and lays awake that night trying to determine what her feelings for Darcy are.

The next day, the Gardiners and Elizabeth go to Pemberley at Darcy's and Miss Darcy's invitation. Mr. Gardiner goes fishing with the men while Mrs Gardiner and Elizabeth join Georgiana, Miss Bingley, Mrs. Hurst, and Georgiana's companion at the house. Although Miss Bingley treats Elizabeth coldly, Elizabeth attributes her behaviour to jealousy. When Darcy returns from fishing, his behaviour shows that he is clearly attracted to Elizabeth. Miss Bingley attempts to allude to Elizabeth's former attachment to Wickham and to make her look foolish by bringing up her sisters' attachment to the regiment in Meryton, but Elizabeth's calm response makes Miss Bingley look ill-natured instead. After Elizabeth and the Gardiners leave, Miss Bingley tries again to demean Elizabeth, this time by criticizing her appearance. She is deflated, however, by Darcy's remark that Elizabeth is "one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance."

Elizabeth soon receives two letters from Jane that shatter any hopes she has of further exploring her relationship with Darcy. In the letters, Jane tells her that Lydia has run away with Wickham from Brighton and that they probably have not gotten married. They were spotted headed toward London, so Mr. Bennet is going there to search for them and Jane asks that Mr. Gardiner join Mr. Bennet in London to assist in the search. Dismayed by the news, Elizabeth rushes to get her uncle, but is met there by Darcy. Troubled by Elizabeth's agitation, Darcy sends for her uncle and stays with her to try to calm her down. Overcome by what she has learned, Elizabeth begins to cry and tells Darcy what has happened. He expresses concern and worries that his own silence regarding Wickham is, in part, responsible for the present situation. Thinking he is only in the way, Darcy leaves. Elizabeth realizes that she loves him, but fears that the family scandal will ruin her chances of his wanting her for a wife. The Gardiners soon arrive, and they and Elizabeth leave immediately for Longbourn.

### **Analysis (Chapters 43-46)**

The changes in Elizabeth's feelings for Darcy that began earlier upon reading his letter continue in this section. Elizabeth already disliked Darcy, and her prejudice caused her to find more and more reasons to dislike him. However, after she realized the truth about her prejudices, she opened herself up to discovering Darcy's true character. By visiting Darcy's home, Elizabeth is finally able to see Darcy for what he is. Darcy has stated that he is uncomfortable with strangers, and the only settings Elizabeth had seen him in were places that were not his home. At Pemberley, Elizabeth not only views Darcy in the environment in which he is most comfortable, but she also observes his treatment of those things and

people that are under his care: his estate, his servants, and his sister. She now realizes that he is a fine brother and a landlord with a great sense of responsibility to his servants and tenants : admirable characteristics that she had previously failed to detect. Such discoveries cause Elizabeth to feel “a more gentle sensation” towards Darcy “than she had ever felt in the height of their acquaintance.”

However, Darcy’s dramatically altered behaviour toward Elizabeth and her relatives cannot be completely attributed to his being comfortable at home. His friendly manners, especially toward the Gardiners, suggest that the confrontation between Elizabeth and himself affected him just as strongly as it did her. The magnitude of Darcy’s change can be seen in his reaction to the news of Lydia’s elopement. Rather than being appalled at the disgraceful conduct of Elizabeth’s sister, Darcy displays tenderness over Elizabeth’s feelings and well-being.

Darcy feels a sense of responsibility for the situation, as does Elizabeth. The reader begins to see here how similar these two people are in their willingness to be held accountable for their actions and their desire to protect their families. Additionally, their responses to the crisis also demonstrate how much they care for one another. For Elizabeth, although the news about Lydia is shocking and disgraceful, she shares it with Darcy, showing that she trusts him. Elizabeth also tells Darcy that she should have revealed Wickham’s true nature to her family, letting him know that she believed his letter and has recognized that she was wrong when she accused him of treating Wickham badly.

Meanwhile, Darcy feels that he should have publicly dishonoured Wickham when Wickham tried to elope with his sister, but his family pride prevented it. Darcy realizes that his reluctance to disgrace Wickham over his sister’s near-mistake has resulted in Wickham ruining the reputation of another young woman, as well as the reputation of her family. Consequently, although Elizabeth believes that this elopement is a disgrace on her family, Darcy feels that the disgrace is on himself, a result of his earlier pride for not exposing Wickham’s untrustworthiness. Even though Elizabeth has learned to love Darcy, she still obviously does not really know him, for she projects her own sense of shame onto him and believes that he will want nothing more to do with her.

### **Summary (Chapters 47-50)**

As Elizabeth and the Gardiners rush back to Longbourn, they discuss Lydia’s situation. Although the Gardiners are hopeful that Wickham and Lydia have married, Elizabeth doubts that is the case. She knows Wickham’s mercenary nature too well to believe that he would marry someone like Lydia who has no money. When they reach Longbourn, they find that Jane is running the household. Mr. Bennet has gone to London, Mrs. Bennet is indisposed in her room with hysterics, and Kitty and Mary are absorbed by their own thoughts. The family’s distress continues to increase, especially because Mr. Bennet has not written with news of his progress in locating Lydia and Wickham in London. Mr. Gardiner leaves to join Mr. Bennet in London, and soon Mr. Bennet returns home, leaving Mr. Gardiner to manage the situation. Upon his return, Mr. Bennet admits to Elizabeth that she was right in warning him not to let Lydia go to Brighton and seems resolved to be stricter with Kitty.

Meanwhile, the whole town gossips about Wickham’s disreputable nature and speculates on Lydia’s future. A letter arrives from Mr. Collins condemning Lydia’s behaviour and advising the Bennets to disown her in order to save the rest of the family’s reputation. Relief comes at last with a letter from Mr. Gardiner

informing the family that Lydia and Wickham have been found. Although they are not married, they have been convinced to do so, provided that Wickham's debts are paid and Lydia receives a small yearly stipend. Mr. Bennet agrees to the conditions, but he fears that a much greater sum must have been paid out to persuade Wickham to marry Lydia. He assumes that Mr. Gardiner must have spent a great deal of his own money, and he dislikes the idea of being indebted to his brother-in-law.

Upon hearing that Lydia is going to be married, Mrs. Bennet's mood immediately shifts from hysterical depression to hysterical giddiness. Forgetting the shameful circumstances under which the marriage will take place, she begins calculating how much Lydia will need for new wedding clothes and planning to personally spread the good news to her neighbours. When Mr. Gardiner writes that Wickham has an officer's commission in the north of England, Mrs. Bennet alone regrets that the couple will be living so far away. Contemplating her sister's marriage, Elizabeth reflects that her wishes for a future with Darcy are completely hopeless now. Even if he would marry into a family as embarrassing as the Bennets, he would never willingly marry into a family of which Wickham is a part. This thought saddens her, for she realizes at last how perfectly matched she and Darcy would have been.

### **Analysis (Chapters 47-50)**

The degree to which Mr. Bennet's apathy and ineffectualness harm his family is most clear in his response to Lydia's elopement. That he recognizes the significance of Lydia's action is obvious from his initial anger and trip to London. From what Austen has shown us of him, we know that Mr. Bennet must be extremely affected by something to be persuaded to leave his library, much less his home, for an extended period of time. However, despite his burst of activity, he is unable to resolve the situation and, turning the problem over to his brother-in-law, Mr. Bennet returns home to settle back into his former attitude of indifference. His indifference is such that, even when Mr. Gardiner writes to communicate the good news of Lydia and Wickham being discovered, Mr. Bennet goes for a walk rather than immediately sharing the news with the family. Even after Jane and Elizabeth wring the news out of him, it takes all of their coaxing and persuasion to get him to respond to Mr. Gardiner. Instead of being happy that Lydia is safe and the family's reputation is saved, Mr. Bennet frets over the financial obligation he now feels toward Mr. Gardiner.

Lydia's marriage to Wickham provides Austen with another opportunity to explore the marriage theme that runs through the novel. Remember that the last wedding to occur was Charlotte's marriage to Mr. Collins. Elizabeth disapproved of such a marriage of convenience, but her visit to Hunsford showed her that although Charlotte lacks love and respect for her husband, she is relatively happy with her home and situation. The implication there, then, is that while a marriage of convenience may not be ideal, it can be made to work.

However, Lydia and Wickham do not run off together out of love; they elope out of infatuation, lust, and necessity. Lydia believes herself to be in love with Wickham, although Austen has emphasized that these feelings did not exist before Lydia went to Brighton. Wickham, meanwhile, seems to be attempting to escape some gambling debts and capitalized on Lydia's infatuation to give himself some company. When Elizabeth contemplates Lydia and Wickham's future, she wonders "how little of permanent happiness could belong to a couple who were only brought together because their passions were stronger than their

virtue”? Austen’s perspective on Lydia’s type of marriage, then, seems to be that a relationship based upon sexual gratification will soon lose its lustre.

To understand the significance of Lydia and Wickham’s rash action, it is important to realize how severely nineteenth-century British society condemned a woman who lost her virginity before marriage. Even the appearance of a loss of virtue was enough to damage a woman’s reputation, thereby ruining her marriageability and shaming her family. Because Lydia and Wickham lived together for two weeks before they were found, society’s assumption is that they have had sex and Lydia is therefore “ruined” unless Wickham marries her. Such a viewpoint explains why the news is such exciting gossip for Meryton and why Mr. Collins writes his letter recommending that Lydia be disowned. Although his view is harsh, it was not uncommon for families to do just that in order to save the reputations of other family members. Consequently, even though the Bennets (with the exception of Mrs. Bennet) disapproves of Lydia and Wickham’s behaviour, they are relieved when they are found and Wickham agrees to marry Lydia. Not only is Lydia’s reputation saved, but the whole family’s social-acceptability is saved as well.

### **Summary (Chapters 51-55)**

Soon after Lydia and Wickham marry, they arrive at Longbourn. Much to Elizabeth and Jane’s embarrassment and Mr. Bennet’s outrage, the couple acts completely self-assured and unashamed. In observing the couple, Elizabeth notes that Lydia seems to be more in love with Wickham than he is with her, and she surmises that Wickham fled Brighton mainly because of gambling debts, taking Lydia along because she was willing. Unimpressed by Wickham’s still-charming manners, Elizabeth politely informs him that she is aware of his past but wants to have an amiable relationship with him.

One morning, Lydia mentions that Darcy was present at her wedding. Intensely curious about Darcy’s involvement in her sister’s marriage, Elizabeth writes to her aunt to demand more information. Mrs. Gardiner quickly replies, explaining that it was Darcy, not Mr. Gardiner, who found Lydia and Wickham, and he persuaded Wickham to marry Lydia with a substantial wedding settlement : Darcy paid all of Wickham’s debts and bought him a commission in the army. Mrs. Gardiner implies that Darcy was motivated not only by a sense of responsibility but also out of love for Elizabeth. Elizabeth wants to believe her aunt’s supposition, but she questions whether Darcy could still have strong feelings for her.

Mrs. Bennet laments Lydia and Wickham’s departure, but the news that Bingley is returning to Netherfield Hall soon shifts her attention to Jane. While Jane claims to be unaffected by Bingley’s arrival, Elizabeth is certain that her sister still has feelings for him. When Bingley visits Longbourn, Elizabeth is surprised and excited to see that Darcy has accompanied him. He is once more grave and reserved, though, which troubles her. Making Elizabeth more uncomfortable is her mother’s rude treatment of Darcy, especially when she reflects upon how much Darcy has secretly helped the Bennet family. Darcy goes to London and Bingley continues to visit the Bennets. He and Jane grow closer, and much to everyone’s delight, he finally proposes.

### **Analysis (Chapters 51-55)**

Darcy completely wins Elizabeth over with his involvement in Lydia’s marriage. She is ashamed to think of how much he has done for her family, but she is also deeply grateful for his assistance and is

intrigued by his possible motivations. Note that despite the fact that Elizabeth has recognized how well-suited she and Darcy are and that she recognizes his generous and thoughtful nature, she still does not believe he can overcome the detriments of her family, especially now that Wickham is her brother-in-law. At this point, Darcy has proven his willingness to sacrifice a little pride for Elizabeth's happiness, especially in his dealings with Wickham. So perhaps Elizabeth's inability to believe in the magnitude of his love for her stems not from any fault of Darcy's, but rather from Elizabeth's own insecurities regarding her family and her seemingly pointless hopes for a life with Darcy. These insecurities paired with the intensity of her feelings for Darcy cause her to do something extremely uncharacteristic, she does not confide in Jane. Considering that she shares everything with Jane except potentially painful matters concerning Bingley, Elizabeth's silence on such important, life-altering matters is significant and seems to indicate the depth of her uncertainty.

Elizabeth's insecurities are not relieved at all by Darcy's visit to Longbourn with Bingley. His retreat into silence frustrates and confuses her, but instead of attributing his reticence to pride, Elizabeth fairly considers that "perhaps he could not in her mother's presence be what he was before her uncle and aunt." Austen cleverly builds the reader's sense of anticipation to mirror Elizabeth's as she is continuously prevented from speaking with Darcy. Throughout the novel, Austen has conditioned the reader to expect witty, intelligent, and rapid dialogue between Elizabeth and Darcy in the scenes in which they are together. She has made their exchanges central to the development of the characters and the plot. When Austen restricts their ability to interact here, she withholding one of the most enjoyable aspects of their relationship. The result of this technique is a heightened identification with Elizabeth and Darcy's obvious frustration as they are forced to prolong their uncertainty and suspense regarding their feelings for each other.

Unable to question Darcy about his attitude toward Bingley and Jane, Elizabeth instead watches closely as Bingley's presence revitalizes the relationship between him and her sister. Earlier, Darcy had objected to Jane and Bingley's marriage, but now as he accompanies his friend to the Bennets' home, it seems as if he is encouraging it. Elizabeth is not certain, but she feels strongly that Darcy is using his influence to bring about a proposal. Darcy's apparent support of Jane and Bingley's relationship again emphasizes the reversal that Darcy has undergone.

Austen's marriage theme, which up to this point has been a bit bleak, becomes more positive with Jane and Bingley's engagement. Finally, readers witness a love match, one of the few happy marriages in the novel. Jane and Bingley's relationship is based on genuine love, understanding, and a similarity of feelings and perspectives on the world. Such a relationship stands in obvious contrast to the marriages of the Bennets, the Collins, and the Wickhams, which all lack this type of emotion or compatibility. From the beginning of the novel, both Jane and Elizabeth have repeatedly stated that they want to marry for love. From the indisputable happiness caused by Jane's engagement, it seems that Jane and Elizabeth's view of marriage is the one approved by Austen. Such a marriage naturally enhances the lives of the couple, but it also enriches the lives of their family, friends, and future children.

### **Summary (Chapters 56-61)**

Lady Catherine De Bourgh unexpectedly drops by Longbourn one day to talk to Elizabeth. She has heard a rumour that Darcy and Elizabeth are or are about to be engaged and is determined to stop any

romance that may exist between them. Declaring that Darcy and Miss De Bourgh have been intended for each other since they were born, Lady Catherine tells Elizabeth that the match between her nephew and daughter will not be ruined by “a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family.” Despite Lady Catherine’s demands, Elizabeth refuses to be intimidated and she fuels Lady Catherine’s outrage by refusing to promise never to accept a proposal from Darcy. Lady Catherine leaves angrily, threatening to approach Darcy on the matter. Shaken by the confrontation, Elizabeth wonders how Darcy will react to his aunt’s denunciation of her. She decides that if Darcy does not return to Netherfield, she will know that he has submitted to his aunt’s wishes.

The next morning, Mr. Bennet asks Elizabeth into his library, where he shares a letter with her that he received from Mr. Collins. In it, Mr. Collins also addresses the rumoured engagement between Elizabeth and Darcy and warns his cousin against it, stating that Lady Catherine does not approve. Mr. Bennet finds the idea of Elizabeth being engaged to Darcy ludicrous and tries to get Elizabeth to laugh with him over the situation, while Elizabeth miserably listens and tries to think of something to say.

Several days later, contrary to Elizabeth’s expectations, Darcy comes to Longbourn with Bingley. She and Darcy go for a walk and Elizabeth blurts out her thanks for his involvement in Lydia and Wickham’s marriage. In turn, Darcy declares that he still loves Elizabeth and wants to marry her. When Elizabeth responds that her feelings have greatly changed and that she also loves him, Darcy is delighted and the two happily discuss the history of their relationship. Darcy tells Elizabeth that her refusal of his first proposal caused him to examine his pride and prejudices and to subsequently alter his behaviour. They also discuss Bingley and Jane. Darcy is happy about their engagement, and he admits to encouraging Bingley to propose.

Darcy and Elizabeth’s engagement is so unexpected that the Bennet family has difficulty believing it at first. Elizabeth’s criticisms of Darcy were initially so strong that no one except the Gardiners had any idea of the change in her feelings for him. After the family is convinced, however, everyone’s reactions are characteristic. Jane is genuinely happy for her sister, and Mrs. Bennet is thrilled at the prospect of Darcy’s wealth. Mr. Bennet is saddened that his favourite daughter will be leaving, but he is happy to discover that Darcy paid off Wickham rather than Mr. Gardiner, feeling that, because a family member did not pay the debt, Mr. Bennet is released from his obligation to pay the money back.

After the marriages of Elizabeth and Darcy, and Jane and Bingley, life progresses happily for the newlyweds. The Bingleys move close to Pemberley after about a year, and Elizabeth and Jane are frequently visited by their sister Kitty, who improves considerably under their influence. Back at Longbourn, Mrs. Bennet continues to be silly, Mr. Bennet misses Elizabeth and enjoys visiting her, and Mary appreciates having no pretty sisters at home to compete with. As for the rest of their families, Wickham and Lydia continue to squander money, Lady Catherine is cold to Elizabeth, and Miss Darcy and Elizabeth become very close. Darcy and Elizabeth’s happiness is increased by visits from the Gardiners, whom Darcy and Elizabeth feel are responsible for bringing them together.

### **Analysis (Chapters 56-61)**

The confrontation between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine underscores Elizabeth’s ability to hold her own with those aristocrats whose pride will make them prejudiced against her when she becomes Darcy’s

wife. From the beginning of the novel, Elizabeth was shown to be capable of resisting others' wills and clearly articulating her beliefs. However, Elizabeth's maturation process has given her a deeper understanding of herself and of others, and as a result she is able to deal with adversity in a much calmer, less confrontational manner. Since she had her self-revelation, Elizabeth has controlled potentially volatile situations with complete confidence. She deflated Miss Bingley's attempts to provoke her at Pemberley, put Wickham in his place after he married Lydia, and now easily routs her most challenging adversary, Lady Catherine De Bourgh.

The ironic result of Lady Catherine's visit is to ensure the marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth. Lady Catherine came in order to prevent it, but when Darcy hears the manner in which Elizabeth answered her, he realizes that Elizabeth's feelings must have changed in some degree. If she had felt as she did when she told him that he was "the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry," she certainly would not have refused to say she would never accept a proposal from him. Although Elizabeth and Darcy probably would have eventually made their feelings known to each other without Lady Catherine's meddling, her interference helps to expedite the process.

Austen resolves the plot tidily, wrapping up all of the storylines with a brief snapshot of the characters' futures. Most important of those futures, of course, are the successful marriages of Elizabeth and Jane. Austen's structural symmetry is evident in her concluding the novel with Elizabeth and Darcy's engagement and vision of their life together. In the beginning of the book, Austen presents the reader with the image of the Bennets' unhappy marriage and the sense of a perilous future for the Bennet daughters if they remain unwed. The difficulty of the situation for the young women was that they did not want unhappy marriages, which they knew first-hand to be a miserable way to spend one's life, but they also knew that if they did not marry, eventually they would be homeless and poor and would live miserably on the charity of other family members. As a result, the driving force behind the plot is for the Bennet girls (Jane and Elizabeth in particular) to find husbands they can love and respect.

Jane finds her ideal mate almost immediately, but circumstances keep them apart until almost the end of the novel. Elizabeth also immediately finds the man who will be her husband, but they both need to undergo a process of self-discovery before they can truly understand each other and have a successful marriage. Out of all the engagements and marriages that occur in the book, Elizabeth's takes the longest to come about. In the end, it also seems that her marriage will be the richest emotionally, intellectually, and monetarily, the exact opposite of her parents' marriage. Consequently, Austen concludes her novel with an implied message that marital happiness originates not from a love of security (Charlotte), passion (Lydia), or perfect harmony (Jane), but rather from an honest recognition and love of the whole person, strengths and weaknesses. Before people can find that kind of complete understanding of another, however, they must first fully know themselves.

#### 26.4 LET US SUM UP

In the beginning of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen presents the reader with the image of the Bennets' unhappy marriage and the sense of a perilous future for the Bennet daughters if they remain unwed. The difficulty of the situation for the young women was that they did not want unhappy marriages, which they knew first-hand to be a miserable way to spend one's life, but they also knew that if they did

not marry, eventually they would be homeless and poor and would live miserably on the charity of other family members. As a result, the driving force behind the plot is for the Bennet girls (Jane and Elizabeth in particular) to find husbands they can love and respect. Eventually, both are able to find their ideal husbands in Mr. Bingley and Mr. Darcy respectively.

### **26.5 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

Q.1 Who rents Netherfield Park ?

Q.2 Michaelmas means \_\_\_\_\_.

Q.3 Who is Mr. Bennet's cousin ? \_\_\_\_\_.

Q.4 Mr. Collins was under the patronage of \_\_\_\_\_.

Q.5 Darcy completely wins Elizabeth over with his involvement in \_\_\_\_\_ marriage.

### **26.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)**

1. What does Mrs. Bennet immediately want Mr. Bennet to do when she hears of Mr. Bingley's arrival? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Ask him to a dinner
  - b) Introduce him to their daughters
  - c) Visit him
  - d) Invite him to a ball
2. How many daughters do Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet have? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Four
  - b) Five
  - c) Six
  - d) Seven
3. What is the first impression that Mr. Darcy forms of Elizabeth Bennet when he meets her at the ball? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) He finds her quite charming
  - b) He finds her pretty but unrefined
  - c) He finds her prideful and disagreeable
  - d) He finds her too young
4. Who does Mr. Bingley seemingly become most interested in during the ball? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Elizabeth Bennet
  - b) Jane Bennet

c) Charlotte Lucas  
d) Lydia Bennet

5. What is Elizabeth Bennet's reaction to Mr. Darcy's refusal to dance with her at the ball? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) She feels embarrassed  
b) She laughs it off  
c) She is offended  
d) She feels relieved

6. Which character invites Jane Bennet at Netherfield for dinner? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Caroline Bingley  
b) Mr. Darcy  
c) Mrs. Hurst  
d) Mr. Bingley

7. Why is Jane sent to Netherfield on horseback by Mrs. Bennet rather than in a carriage? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) To impress Mr. Bingley  
b) To ensure Jane stays overnight at Netherfield  
c) To make sure Jane is well taken care of  
d) To make the journey faster

8. After hearing Jane is ill, who does Elizabeth walk to Netherfield to visit? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) Caroline Bingley  
b) Mr. Darcy  
c) Jane Bennet  
d) Charlotte Lucas

9. What is Mr. Collins' thinking about novels? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) He loves them  
b) He dislikes them  
c) He has never read them  
d) He finds them morally corrupt

10. In what way does Mr. Collins propose to Elizabeth Bennet? \_\_\_\_\_.

a) With great passion  
b) Awkwardly and formally  
c) In a letter  
d) At a ball

11. Why is Mr. Collins planning to marry one of the Bennet daughters? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) He is in love with Elizabeth
- b) To please Lady Catherine
- c) To ensure the Bennet family's future
- d) To make Mrs. Bennet happy

12. Which character is proud and aloof but gradually warms to Elizabeth? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Mr. Bingley
- b) Mr. Darcy
- c) Mr. Collins
- d) George Wickham

13. Who is responsible for causing Elizabeth to prejudge Mr. Darcy by spreading false information about him? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Caroline Bingley
- b) Charlotte Lucas
- c) George Wickham
- d) Lady Catherine

14. What is Elizabeth's reaction on finding out that Mr. Darcy helped Lydia marry Mr. Wickham? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) She is angry and refuses to forgive him
- b) She is confused and does not know how to respond
- c) She is grateful and admires him more
- d) She is indifferent

15. Who eventually proposes to Charlotte Lucas? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Mr. Collins
- b) Mr. Darcy
- c) Mr. Bingley
- d) Mr. Wickham

16. What is Elizabeth's view on the idea of getting married to Mr. Collins? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) She is excited about it
- b) She is indifferent
- c) She is repulsed by the idea
- d) She is flattered

17. Who does Jane Bennet eventually marry? \_\_\_\_\_.

- Mr. Darcy
- Mr. Collins
- Mr. Wickham
- Mr. Bingley

18. Who says the famous line, “In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you”? \_\_\_\_\_.

- Mr. Bingley
- Mr. Darcy
- Mr. Collins
- Elizabeth Bennet

19. What is Elizabeth’s feeling when Darcy proposes to her for the first time? \_\_\_\_\_.

- She is pleased but surprised
- She is angry and rejects him
- She is flattered but confused
- She is indifferent

20. In what way does Mr. Darcy change over the course of the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- He becomes more proud and stubborn
- He learns to be more humble and acknowledges his feelings for Elizabeth
- He becomes resentful of Elizabeth
- He leaves England for good

### **26.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

- Examine Austen’s use of irony throughout the novel. Give examples of structural irony as well as irony within the narrator’s descriptions and characters’ dialogue.
- Explore the developing relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. How do they misunderstand each other, and when do they reach accord?
- Why do you think *Pride and Prejudice* has such moving force for so many readers?
- Darcy’s behaviour is very different at the end of the novel from what it is at the start. Do you think this change is credible within the story? Explain why or why not.
- How do Elizabeth’s forthrightness and independence represent an attack on the conservatism of characters like Lady Catherine De Bourgh?

6. The Meryton community is described as materialistic and fickle. How does town opinion affect the novel's progress?
7. Why is Elizabeth so anxious to distrust Mr. Darcy at the start of the novel, and to instead trust Mr. Wickham?
8. How do Elizabeth Bennet's ideas on marriage differ from her society's? Which characters in the novel share Elizabeth's views of marriage and which characters reflect society's perspective?
9. Show how Austen uses minor characters like Miss Bingley, Mr. Collins, and Lady Catherine De Bourgh to bring Elizabeth and Darcy together.
10. Discuss the importance of social class in the novel, especially as it impacts the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy.
11. Though Jane Austen satirizes snobs in her novels, some critics have accused her of being a snob herself. Giving special consideration to Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins, argue and defend one side of this issue.
12. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel about women who feel they have to marry to be happy. Taking Charlotte Lucas as an example, do you think the author is making a social criticism of her era's view of marriage?
13. Giving special attention to Wickham, Charlotte Lucas, and Elizabeth, compare and contrast male and female attitudes toward marriage in the novel.
14. Discuss the relationship between Mrs. Bennet and her children, especially Elizabeth and Lydia.
15. Compare and contrast the Bingley-Darcy relationship with the Jane-Elizabeth relationship.
16. Compare and contrast the roles of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mrs. Bennet.
27. Explain in detail the summary of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*.
28. Give the critical analysis of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*.

## 26.8 ANSWER KEY

### Self Check Exercise

Ans.1 Mr. Bingley

Ans.2 The feast of the archangel Michael

Ans.3 Mr. Collins

Ans.4 Lady Catherine De Bourgh

Ans.5 Lydia's

### MCQs

1. c) Visit him

2. b) Five

3. c) He finds her prideful and disagreeable
4. b) Jane Bennet
5. c) She is offended
6. a) Caroline Bingley
7. b) To ensure Jane stays overnight at Netherfield
8. c) Jane Bennet
9. c) He has never read them
10. b) Awkwardly and formally
11. c) To ensure the Bennet family's future
12. b) Mr. Darcy
13. c) George Wickham
14. c) She is grateful and admires him more
15. a) Mr. Collins
16. c) She is repulsed by the idea
17. d) Mr. Bingley
18. b) Mr. Darcy
19. b) She is angry and rejects him
20. b) He learns to be more humble and acknowledges his feelings for Elizabeth

## 26.9 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Bright Summaries. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen (Book Analysis): Detailed Summary, Analysis and Reading Guide. BrightSummaries.com, 7 Dec. 2015. Google Books, <https://books.google.com/>.
- \* “Characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.” BBC Bitesize, BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zpv97v4#zn3k239>.
- \* Course Hero. “Pride and Prejudice Study Guide.” Course Hero, 10 Aug. 2016, <https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Pride-and-Prejudice/summaries/>.
- \* Todd, Janet. *The Cambridge Companion to Pride and Prejudice*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

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**JANE AUSTEN : PRIDE AND PREJUDICE****STRUCTURE**

- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 27.3 Characters in the novel: *Pride and Prejudice*
- 27.4 Major themes in the novel: *Pride and Prejudice*
- 27.5 Title of the novel: *Pride and Prejudice*
- 27.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 27.7 Self-Check Exercise
- 27.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 27.9 Answer Key to Self-Check Exercise
- 27.10 Suggested Reading

**27.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Pride and Prejudice* features a host of characters who are strongly individualistic, yet are timeless and universal at the same time. Elizabeth and Darcy are the two major characters in this novel who have become classic and memorable. The novel explores themes such as marriage, relationships, social class etc., and one of the major critiques in the novel is the way women are pressurised into marrying not for love, but for social security. The title of the novel seems apt as both Darcy and Elizabeth shed off their pride and prejudice respectively to find mutual love and comfort in each other's company.

**27.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to discuss the major and minor characters of the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The lesson also aims to discuss the major thematic concerns of the novel as well as the significance of the title to enhance the learner's familiarity with the text.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to identify the major and minor characters in the novel, their behaviour and mannerisms, and the role played by them. You will also be able to appreciate Jane Austen's social vision by analysing the major thematic concerns of the novel such as marriage, wealth,

social class, etc. You will be able to explain the significance of the title in relation to the characters' development and the key themes in the novel.

### **27.3 CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL: *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE***

#### **Elizabeth Bennet**

The reader sees the unfolding plot and the other characters mostly from her viewpoint. The second of the Bennet daughters, she is twenty years old and is intelligent, lively, playful, attractive, and witty, but with a tendency to judge on first impression (the “prejudice” of the title) and perhaps to be a little selective of the evidence on which she bases her judgements. As the plot begins, her closest relationships are with her father, her sister Jane, her aunt (Mrs Gardiner), and her best friend, Charlotte Lucas. As the story progresses, so does her relationship with Mr Darcy. The course of Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship is ultimately decided when Darcy overcomes his pride, and Elizabeth overcomes her prejudice, leading them both to surrender to their love for each other.

#### **Mr. Darcy**

Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy is the male protagonist of the novel and is twenty eight years old. He is the wealthy owner of the renowned family estate of Pemberley in Derbyshire, and is rumoured to be worth at least £10,000 a year. This is equivalent to anywhere from around £200,000 a year to around £10 million a year in 2014, depending on the method of calculation, but such an income would have put him among the 400 wealthiest families in the country at the time. Handsome, tall, and intelligent, Darcy lacks the social ease that comes so naturally to his friend Bingley. Others frequently mistake his aloof decorum and rectitude as further proof of excessive pride (he is the “pride” of the title). While he makes a poor impression on strangers, such as the landed gentry of Meryton, Darcy is greatly valued by those who know him well.

As the novel progresses, Darcy and Elizabeth are repeatedly forced into each other’s company, resulting in each altering their feelings for the other through better acquaintance and changes in environment. At the end of the work, both overcome their differences and first impressions to fall in love with each other.

#### **Mr. Bennet**

Mr Bennet is the patriarch of the Bennet family, a gentleman of modest income with five unmarried daughters. Mr Bennet has an ironic, cynical sense of humour that irritates his wife. Though he loves his daughters (Elizabeth in particular), he often fails as a parent, preferring to withdraw from the never-ending marriage concerns of the women around him rather than offer help. In fact, he often enjoys laughing at the sillier members of his family, partially the reason many have fatal faults, as he has not taken pains to amend them. Although he possesses inherited property, it is entailed, that is, it can only pass to male heirs, so his daughters will be on their own upon his death.

## **Mrs. Bennet**

Mrs Bennet is the wife of her social superior Mr Bennet and mother of Elizabeth and her sisters. She is frivolous, excitable, and narrow-minded, and she imagines herself susceptible to attacks of tremors and palpitations when she is displeased. Her public manners and social climbing are embarrassing to Jane and Elizabeth. Her favourite daughter is the youngest, Lydia, who reminds her of herself when younger, though she values the beauty of the eldest, Jane. Her main ambition in life is to marry her daughters to wealthy men; whether or not any such matches will give her daughters happiness is of little concern to her.

## **Jane Bennet**

Jane Bennet is the eldest Bennet sister. Twenty-two years old when the novel begins, she is considered the most beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood. Her character is contrasted with Elizabeth's as sweeter, shyer, and equally sensible, but not as clever; her most notable trait is a desire to see only the good in others. As Anna Quindlen wrote, Jane is "sugar to Elizabeth's lemonade." Jane is closest to Elizabeth, and her character is often contrasted with that of Elizabeth. She is favoured by her mother because of her beauty.

She falls in love with Mr Bingley, a rich man who has recently moved to Hertfordshire, and a close friend of Mr Darcy. Their love is initially thwarted by Mr Darcy and Caroline Bingley, who are concerned by Jane's low connections and have other plans for Bingley. Mr Darcy, aided by Elizabeth, eventually sees the error in his ways and is instrumental in bringing Jane and Bingley back together.

## **Mary Bennet**

Mary Bennet is the only plain (not pretty) Bennet sister, and rather than join in some of the family activities, she mostly reads and plays music, although she is often impatient to display her accomplishments and is rather vain about them. She works hard for knowledge and accomplishment, but she has neither genius nor taste. Like her two younger sisters, Kitty and Lydia, she is seen as being silly by Mr Bennet. Mary is not very intelligent but thinks of herself as being wise. When Mr Collins is refused by Elizabeth, Mrs Bennet hopes Mary may be prevailed upon to accept him and we are led to believe that Mary has some hopes in this direction but neither of them know that he is already engaged to Charlotte Lucas by this time. Mary does not appear often in the novel.

## **Catherine Bennet**

Catherine, or Kitty, Bennet is the fourth daughter at 17 years old. Although older than her, she is the shadow of Lydia and follows in her pursuits of the 'Officers' of the regiment. She appears but little, although she is often portrayed as envious of Lydia and also a 'silly' young woman. However, it is said that she has improved by the end of the novel.

## **Lydia Bennet**

Lydia Bennet is the youngest Bennet sister, aged 15 when the novel begins. She is frivolous and headstrong. Her main activity in life is socializing, especially flirting with the officers of the militia. This leads to her elopement with George Wickham, although he has no intention of marrying her. She dominates her older sister Kitty and is supported in the family by her mother. Lydia shows no regard for the moral code of her society, and no remorse for the disgrace she causes her family.

## **Charles Bingley**

Charles Bingley is a handsome, good-natured, and wealthy young gentleman of 23, who rents Netherfield Park near Longbourn. He is contrasted with his friend Mr Darcy as being more kind and more charming and having more generally pleasing manners, although not quite so clever. He lacks resolve and is easily influenced by others. His two sisters, Caroline Bingley and Louisa Hurst, both disapprove of Bingley's growing affection for Jane Bennet.

## **Caroline Bingley**

Caroline Bingley is the snobbish sister of Charles Bingley, with a dowry of twenty thousand pounds. Miss Bingley harbours romantic intentions for Mr Darcy, and she is jealous of his growing attachment to Elizabeth and is disdainful and rude to her. She attempts to dissuade Mr Darcy from liking Elizabeth by ridiculing the Bennet family in Darcy's presence, as she realises that this is the main aspect of Elizabeth with which she can find fault. She also attempts to convey her own superiority over Elizabeth, by being notably more polite and complimentary towards Darcy throughout. She often compliments his younger sister, Georgiana, suspecting that he will agree with what she says about her. Miss Bingley also disapproves of her brother's esteem for Jane Bennet, and it is acknowledged later that she, with Darcy, attempts to separate the couple. She sends Jane letters describing her brother's growing love for Georgiana Darcy, in attempt to convince Jane of Bingley's indifference towards her. When Jane goes to London she ignores her for a period of four weeks, despite Jane's frequent invitations for her to call upon her. When she eventually does, she is rude and cold, and is unapologetic for her failure to respond to Jane's letters. Jane, who is always determined not to find fault with anybody, is forced to admit that she had been deceived in thinking she had a genuine friendship with Caroline Bingley, the realisation of which she relays to Elizabeth in a letter.

## **George Wickham**

George Wickham has been acquainted with Mr Darcy since childhood, being the son of Mr Darcy's father's steward. An officer in the militia, he is superficially charming and rapidly forms an attachment with Elizabeth Bennet. He spreads tales about the wrongs Mr Darcy has done him, adding to the local society's prejudice, but eventually he is found to have been the wrongdoer himself. He elopes with Lydia, with no intention of marrying her, which would have resulted in her complete disgrace, but for Darcy's intervention to bribe Wickham to marry her.

## **William Collins**

William Collins, aged 25, is Mr Bennet's clergyman cousin and heir to his estate. He is "not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society." Mr Collins is obsequious, pompous, and lacking in common sense. Elizabeth's rejection of Mr Collins's marriage proposal is welcomed by her father, regardless of the financial benefit to the family of such a match. Mr Collins then marries Elizabeth's friend, Charlotte Lucas.

## **Lady Catherine de Bourgh**

Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who possesses wealth and social standing, is haughty, pompous, domineering, and condescending, although her manner is seen by some as entirely proper and even admirable. Mr Collins, for example, is shown to admire these characteristics by deferring to her opinions and desires. Elizabeth, by contrast, is duly respectful but not intimidated. Lady Catherine's nephew, Mr Darcy, is offended by her lack of manners, especially towards Elizabeth, and he later courts her disapproval by marrying Elizabeth in spite of her numerous objections.

## **Aunt and Uncle Gardiner**

Aunt and Uncle Gardiner: Edward Gardiner is Mrs Bennet's brother and a successful businessman of sensible and gentlemanly character. Aunt Gardiner is close to her nieces Elizabeth and Jane. Jane stays with the Gardiners in London for a period, and Elizabeth travels with them to Derbyshire, where she again meets Mr Darcy. The Gardiners are quick in their perception of an attachment between Elizabeth and Mr Darcy, and judge him without prejudice. They are both actively involved in helping Mr Darcy arrange the marriage between Lydia and Mr Wickham.

## **Georgiana Darcy**

Georgiana Darcy is Mr Darcy's quiet, amiable, and shy younger sister, aged 16 when the story begins. When 15, Miss Darcy almost eloped with Mr Wickham, who sought her thirty thousand pound dowry. Miss Darcy is introduced to Elizabeth at Pemberley and is later delighted at the prospect of becoming her sister-in-law. Georgiana is extremely timid and gets embarrassed fairly easily. She idolises her brother Mr Darcy (Fitzwilliam Darcy), and the two share an extremely close sibling bond, much like Jane and Elizabeth. She is extremely talented at the piano, singing, playing the harp, and drawing. She is also very modest.

## **Charlotte Lucas**

Charlotte Lucas is Elizabeth's friend who, at 27 years old, fears becoming a burden to her family and therefore agrees to marry Mr Collins whom she does not love, to gain financial security. Though the novel stresses the importance of love and understanding in marriage (as seen in the anticipated success of Elizabeth-Darcy relationship), Austen never seems to condemn Charlotte's decision to marry for money. Austen uses Lucas as the common voice of early 19th Century society's views on relationships and marriage.

## Activity

Dear learner, it is time to take a break! As the previous section familiarised you with the characters and their roles in *Pride and Prejudice*, you can check your familiarisation with the characters by solving the practice exercise given below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is an intelligent and spirited young woman who likes studying people's characters.
2. Mr. Darcy owns the estate of \_\_\_\_\_ in Derbyshire.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is Elizabeth and her sisters' ironic and often apathetic father.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is obsessed with finding husbands for her daughters.
5. Elizabeth's eldest sister \_\_\_\_\_ is gentle, kind-hearted, and the most beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ prefers reading and playing music and is the only plain Bennet sister.
7. \_\_\_\_\_, aged 15 when the novel begins, is the youngest Bennet sister.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the wealthy, good-natured young gentleman who rents Netherfield Park.
9. George Wickham, a charming but deceptive officer elopes with \_\_\_\_\_.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is Mr. Bennet's pompous and obsequious cousin who proposes to Elizabeth.

### Answers:

1. Elizabeth Bennet	2. Pemberley	3. Mr. Bennet	4. Mrs. Bennet
5. Jane Bennet	6. Mary Bennet	7. Lydia Bennet	8. Charles Bingley
9. Lydia	10. Mr. Collins		

## 27.4 MAJOR THEMES IN THE NOVEL: *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

Many critics take the novel's title as a starting point when analysing the major themes of *Pride and Prejudice*; however, Robert Fox cautions against reading too much into the title because commercial factors may have played a role in its selection. "After the success of *Sense and Sensibility*, nothing would have seemed more natural than to bring out another novel of the same author using again the formula of antithesis and alliteration for the title. It should be pointed out that the qualities of the title are not exclusively assigned to one or the other of the protagonists; both Elizabeth and Darcy display pride and prejudice."

A major theme in much of Austen's works is the importance of environment and upbringing on the development of young people's character and morality. Social standing and wealth are not necessarily advantages in her world, and a further theme common to Jane Austen's work is ineffectual parents. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the failure of Mr and Mrs Bennet as parents is blamed for Lydia's lack of moral judgement; Darcy, on the other hand, has been taught to be principled and scrupulously honourable, but

he is also proud and overbearing. Kitty, rescued from Lydia's bad influence and spending more time with her older sisters after they marry, is said to improve greatly in their superior society.

*Pride and Prejudice* is also about that thing that all great novels consider, the search for self. And it is the first great novel that teaches us this search is as surely undertaken in the drawing room making small talk as in the pursuit of a great white whale or the public punishment of adultery.

## Marriage

The opening line of the novel announces: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." This sets the marriage motif of the novel. It turns out that rather than the man being in want of a wife, the woman is in want of a husband who is "in possession of good fortune." Charlotte Lucas, Lydia Bennet, Jane Bennet and Elizabeth Bennet get married to men who are sufficiently appropriate for each of them. Marriage becomes an economic rather than social activity. In the case of Charlotte, the seeming success of the marriage lies in the comfortable economy of their household. The relationship of Mr and Mrs Bennet serves to illustrate all that a marriage relationship should not be. Elizabeth and Darcy marry each other on equal terms after breaking each other's 'pride' and 'prejudice' and Austen clearly leaves the reader with the impression that the two will be the happiest.

## Wealth

Money plays a key role in the marriage market, not only for the young ladies seeking a well-off husband, but also for men who wish to marry a woman of means. Two examples are George Wickham, who tried to elope with Georgiana Darcy, and Colonel Fitzwilliam. Marrying a woman of a rich family also ensured a linkage to a high family as is visible in the desires of Bingley's sisters to have their brother married to Georgiana Darcy.

Inheritance was governed by laws of entailment. When there was no heir to the estate, the family had to entail its fortune to a distant cousin. In the case of the Bennet family, Mr Collins was to inherit and his proposal to Elizabeth would have allowed her to have a share. Nevertheless, she refused his offer. Inheritance laws benefited males because most women did not have independent legal rights until the second half of the 19th century. As a consequence, women's financial security at the time the novel is set depended on men. For the upper middle and aristocratic classes, marriage to a man with a reliable income was almost the only route to security for the woman and her future children.

## Class

Much of the pride and prejudice in the novel exists because of class divisions. Darcy's first impressions on Elizabeth are coloured by his snobbery. He cannot bring himself to love Elizabeth or at least acknowledge his love for her even in his own heart because of his pride. His first proposal clearly reflects this attitude: "In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you." Also, Elizabeth quickly believes Wickham's account of Darcy because of her prejudice against him. Lady Catherine and the Bingley sisters belong to the snobbish category. Mr Bingley shows complete disregard to class. Because Mr. Bingley's fortune comes from trade, it would actually be a benefit socially to marry a gentleman's daughter, such as Jane.

## Self-Knowledge

Elizabeth and Darcy were not born a great match. It is through their interactions and their critiques of each other that they recognize their faults and work to correct them. Elizabeth meditates on her own mistakes thoroughly in chapter 36: “How despicably have I acted!” she cried; “I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself.”

## Style

*Pride and Prejudice*, like most of Jane Austen’s works, employs the narrative technique of free indirect speech. This has been defined as “the free representation of a character’s speech, by which one means, not words actually spoken by a character, but the words that typify the character’s thoughts, or the way the character would think or speak, if she thought or spoke.” By using narrative that adopts the tone and vocabulary of a particular character (in this case, that of Elizabeth), Austen invites the reader to follow events from Elizabeth’s viewpoint, sharing her prejudices and misapprehensions. “The learning curve, while undergone by both protagonists, is disclosed to us solely through Elizabeth’s point of view and her free indirect speech is essential ... for it is through it that we remain caught, if not stuck, within Elizabeth’s misprisions.”

## Activity

Learner, it is time to take another break. Before moving to the next section, check your progress by stating whether these statements are true or false.

1. The marriage market in *Pride and Prejudice* is only about romantic love, and there is no consideration for wealth or social status. (True/False)
2. The novel’s title, *Pride and Prejudice* reflects the traits displayed by both Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. (True/False)
3. Mr. Bingley shows a strong concern for social class difference when deciding whom to marry. (True/False)
4. Lady Catherine de Bourgh’s interactions with Elizabeth are totally free from prejudice and pretentiousness. (True/False)
5. Elizabeth Bennet realizes that it was her own prejudice and vanity that led her to misjudge Mr. Darcy. (True/False)
6. George Wickham tries to elope with Georgiana Darcy in order to gain access to her considerable fortune. (True/False)

## Answers:

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. True

## 27.5 TITLE OF THE NOVEL: *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

The title *Pride and Prejudice* is very likely taken from a passage in Fanny Burney's popular 1782 novel *Cecilia*, a novel Jane Austen is known to have admired: "The whole of this unfortunate business," said Dr. Lyster, "has been the result of PRIDE and PREJUDICE. ... Yet this, however, remember: if to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you owe your miseries, so wonderfully is good and evil balanced, that to PRIDE and PREJUDICE you will also owe their termination ... ." The terms are also used repeatedly in Robert Bage's influential 1796 *Hermsprong*. An earlier occurrence still is to be found in Chapter II of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* published in 1776. In the discussion of slavery the following sentence appears: "Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a distant prospect of freedom and honours was presented, even to those whom PRIDE AND PREJUDICE almost disdained to number among the human species."

## 27.6 LET US SUM UP

This lesson discusses all the characters of the novel in detail and also the title of the novel. The various themes used by Jane Austen in her novel have also been discussed thoroughly for the better understanding of the text by the learner.

## 27.7 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

- Q.1 Who is Charlotte Lucas ?
- Q.2 What is Mr. Darcy's full name ?
- Q.3 How many daughters does Mr. Bennet have ?
- Q.4 \_\_\_\_\_ is Lady Catherine's daughter.
- Q.5 The title of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* has been taken from \_\_\_\_\_ .

## 27.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Discuss the character of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*.
- Q.2 Discuss the appropriateness of the title *Pride and Prejudice*.
- Q.3 What are the major themes of the novel, *Pride and Prejudice*?

## 27.9 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

Ans.1 A sensible and intelligent friend of Elizabeth.

Ans.2 Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy.

Ans.3 Five

Ans.4 Miss De Bourgh

Ans.5 Fanny Burney's novel, *Cecilia*.

## 27.10 SUGGESTED READING

- \* Bartlett, Nora. *Jane Austen: Reflections of a Reader*. Open Book Publishers, 2021.
- \* Cheryl A. Wilson and Maria H. Frawley. *The Routledge Companion to Jane Austen*. Taylor & Francis, 2021.
- \* “Themes in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.” *BBC Bitesize*, BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zy3bwsg#z82ng2p>.

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