



## Welcome

Welcome to Semester II. This course is devoted to the study of the development of the novel from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Do read the texts in detail. Once again you are advised to consult the books in the library to prepare Internal Assessment Assignments and for term end exam. Kindly submit your IAAs before the last date.

Wish you good luck !

*Prof. Anupama Vohra*  
*PG English Coordinator*



# SYLLABUS

**Course No. ENG-223**

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

**Credits : 6**

**Duration of Examination : 3 hrs.**

**Maximum Marks : 100**

**(a) Semester Examination : 70**

**(b) Sessional Assessment : 30**

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

**Objective :** The purpose of the course will be to acquaint the students with the development of the novel from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, keeping in view the romantic, historical, and sociological perspectives, as well as the influx of modernistic trends in the art and craft of fiction.

## **Unit-I**

Literary and intellectual background of novel upto the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

## **Unit-II**

Charles Dickens : *Hard Times*

## **Unit-III**

George Eliot : *Middlemarch*

## **Unit-IV**

Thomas Hardy : *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

## **Unit-V**

Virginia Woolf : *Mrs. Dalloway*

## **Unit-VI**

George Orwell : *1984 (Nineteen Eighty Four)*

## SEM II

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Course No. ENG-223

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### Syllabus for the examinations to be held in May, 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 question: two each from Unit III and Unit IV shall be given. And the learner has to attempt two questions one each from Unit III and Unit IV in 100-150 words. (5x2=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 question in 40-50 words. (2.5x4=10)

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

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### MODE OF EXAMINATION

The paper will be divided into Sections A, B, 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 candidate 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 candidate 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 candidate will be required to attempt any five questions in about 300-350 words.  
Each answer will be evaluated for 10 marks. (5×10=50)

### **Suggested Reading**

Ashton, Rosemary. *George Eliot*. OUP, 1983.

Beatty, Jerome. *Middlemarch from Notebook to Novel: A Study of George Eliot's Creative Method*.  
University of Illinois Press, 1960.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. U of Chicago P, 1961, books.google.co.in Brewster, Dorothy.  
Doris Lessing. *Twayne's English Author's Series*, 1965.

Carroll, David, editor. *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge and K. Paul, 1971.

Chase, Karen. *Middlemarch in the Twenty First Century*. Collin-y.OUP, 2006.

Chesterton, G. K. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study*. Dodd, Mead & Company, 1906.

Gold, Joseph. *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralists*. Copp Clark Pub. Co., 1972.

Goswami, Darsana. *Tiny Individual in the Fiction of Doris Lessing*, Epitome Books, 2011.

Hardy, Thomas. *The Life and Work of Thomas*. Edited by Michael Millgate, McMillian, 1984, books  
google.co.in

*The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928*. Introduction by Michael Irving, Wordsworth Editions. 2007,  
books.google.co.in

Harvey, W. J. *The Art of George Eliot*, Chatto and Windus, 1961.

Iyex, Sharda N. *Doris Lessing: A Writer with a Difference*. Adhyayan, 2008.

James, Henry. *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*. Edited by Morris Shapira. McGraw  
Hill, 1965.

Leavis, F. R. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. Chatto and Windus, 1948.

Lukacs, Georg. *The Historical Novel*. U of Nebraska P. 2010.

Rubenstein, Roberta. *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing*. U of Illinois P, 1979.

Tillotson, Kathleen. *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*. Clarendon P, 1985.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. Columbia UP, 1958.

—*The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*. Vintage Digital, 2013.

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

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### Unit- I

Lesson No.		Page No.
1.	Literary and Intellectual Background of Novel up to the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	6-1
2.	Literary and Intellectual Background of Novel up to the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	18-27
3.	Literary and Intellectual Background of Novel up to the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	28-40
4.	Literary and Intellectual Background of Novel up to the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	41-51

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### Unit -II

Lesson No.		Page No.
5.	Charles Dickens- <i>Hard Times</i>	52-58
6.	Charles Dickens- <i>Hard Times</i>	59-63
7.	Charles Dickens- <i>Hard Times</i>	64-72
8.	Charles Dickens- <i>Hard Times</i>	73-80
9.	Charles Dickens- <i>Hard Times</i>	81-86

**Lessons Writer : Prof. Deepshikha Kotwal**

### Unit -III

Lesson No.		Page No.
10	George Eliot— <i>Middlemarch</i>	87-93
11.	George Eliot— <i>Middlemarch</i>	94-110
12.	George Eliot— <i>Middlemarch</i>	111-123
13.	George Eliot— <i>Middlemarch</i>	124-135

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Lesson No.	Unit -IV	Page No.
14.	Thomas Hardy- <i>Tess of the D'urbervilles</i>	136-143
15.	Thomas Hardy- <i>Tess of the D'urbervilles</i>	144-151
16.	Thomas Hardy- <i>Tess of the D'urbervilles</i>	152-161

17.	Thomas Hardy- <i>Tess of the D'urbervilles</i>	162-169
18.	Thomas Hardy- <i>Tess of the D'urbervilles</i>	170-176

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**Lesson No.**

**Unit -V**

19.	Virginia Woolf : <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	177-185
20.	Virginia Woolf : <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	186-195
21.	Virginia Woolf : <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	196-201
22.	Virginia Woolf : <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	202-213
23.	Virginia Woolf : <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	214-222

**Lessons Writer : Prof. Anupama Vohra**

**Unit -VI**

**Lesson No.**

24.	George Orwell : <i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	223-236
25.	George Orwell : <i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	237-248
26.	George Orwell : <i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	249-256
27.	George Orwell : <i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	257-264

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**LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL  
UP TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY****STRUCTURE**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 1.3 The Early Period of Novel
- 1.4 Social and Political Background in 18th Century
- 1.5 Literary Development during 18th Century
  - 1.5.1 Conditions of Literary Production
  - 1.5.2 Literary Principles
- 1.6 The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Novel
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 1.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 1.10 Answer Key
- 1.11 Suggested Reading

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The most important gift of the 18th century to English literature is the novel, which did not have a classical precedent. The novel was largely a product of the middle class, appealing to their ideals and sensibilities. The novel, representing the age, came to be the literary form to teach morality to common people but grew from thereon as it experimented with different forms.

**1.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to make learner aware of how novel came to be a literary form, its beginning and its evolution. Dear Learner after going through this lesson, you will be able to offer an overview of the age in which the novel first developed as a popular form of literature.

**1.3 THE EARLY PERIOD OF NOVEL**

As William J. Long puts it, “Probably the most significant remark made by the ordinary reader concerning a work of fiction takes the form of a question: Is it a good story?” The reader desires to be held on by the story element of the narrative before he begins to appreciate the style or the moral importance of the text. Thus, story element is primary ingredient to the novel

Early forms of the novel are to be found in a number of places, including classical Rome, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century Japan, and Elizabethan England. Early works of extended fictional prose, or novels, include works in Latin like the *Satyricon* by Petronius Arbiter Petronius (c. 50 AD), and *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius (c. 150 AD), works in Sanskrit such as the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century *Dasakumaracarita* by Dandin, and in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by Banabhatta, the 11<sup>th</sup> century Japanese *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, the 12<sup>th</sup> century *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* (or “Philosophus Autodidactus,” the 17<sup>th</sup> century Latin title) by Ibn Tufail, who wrote in Arabic, the 13<sup>th</sup> century *Theologus Autodidactus* by Ibn al-Nafis, another Arabic novelist, and in Chinese in the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Luo Guanzhong.

Murasaki Shikibu’s *Tale of Genji* (1010) has been described as the world’s first novel in *Encyclopædia Britannica* and shows essentially all the qualities for which Madame de La Fayette’s novel *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) has been praised: individuality of perception, an interest in character development, and psychological observation. Urbanization and the spread of printed books in *Song Dynasty* (960-1279 AD) China led to the evolution of oral storytelling into consciously fictional *Four Great Classical Novels* by the Ming dynasty. Parallel European developments did not occur for centuries, and awaited the time when the availability of paper allowed for similar opportunities. By contrast, Ibn Tufail’s *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* and Ibn al-Nafis’ *Theologus Autodidactus* are works of didactic philosophy and theology. In this sense, *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* would be considered an early example of a philosophical novel while *Theologus Autodidactus* would be considered an early theological novel. *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*, with its story of a human outcast surviving on an island, is also likely to have influenced Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), because the work was available in an English edition in 1711.

Epic poetry exhibits some similarities with the novel, and the Western tradition of the novel reaches back into the field of verse epics, though again not in an unbroken tradition. The epics of Asia, such as the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (1300–1000 BC), and Indian epic poetry or Indian epics such as the *Ramayana* (400 BCE and 200 CE), and *Mahabharata* (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) were as unknown in early modern Europe as was the Anglo Saxon epic *Beowulf* (c.750–1000 AD), which was rediscovered in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other non-European works, such as *Torah*, *Koran*, and *Bible*, are full of stories, and thus have also had a significant influence on the development of prose narratives, and therefore the novel. Classical Greek epic like Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (9<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century BC), and those of Ancient Rome, such as Virgil’s *Aeneid* (29–19 BC), were rediscovered by Western scholars in the Middle Ages. Then at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, French prose translations brought Homer’s works to a wider public, who accepted them as forerunners of the novel.

Romance or chivalric romance is a type of narrative in prose or verse popular in the aristocratic circles of High Middle Ages, High Medieval and Early Modern Europe. They were marvel-filled adventures, often of a knight errant with heroic qualities, who undertakes a quest, yet “the emphasis on heterosexual love and courtly manners distinguishes it from the *chanson de geste* and other kinds of epic poetry which involve heroism.” In later romances, particularly those of French origin, there is a marked tendency to emphasize themes of courtly love.

Originally, romance literature was written in Old French, Anglo-Norman and Occitan, later, in English language, in Italian language and German language. During the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, romances were increasingly written as prose.

The shift from verse to prose dates from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Prose became increasingly attractive, because it enabled writers to associate popular stories with serious histories traditionally composed in prose, and could also be more easily translated. Popular literature also drew on themes of romance, but with Irony, Satire or Burlesque (literature) intent. Romances reworked legends, fairy tales, and history, but by about 1600 they were out of fashion, and Miguel de Cervantes famously burlesqued them in *Don Quixote* (1605). Still, Medievalism, the modern image of medieval, is more influenced by the romance than by any other medieval genre, and the word “medieval” evokes knights, distressed damsels, dragons, and such tropes. Around 1800, the connotations of “romance” was modified with the development.

Renaissance period (1500-1700): The modern distinction between history and fiction did not exist at this time and the grossest improbabilities pervade many historical accounts found in the early modern print market. William Caxton's 1485 edition of Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1471) was sold as a true history, though the story unfolded in a series of magical incidents and historical improbabilities. Sir John Mandeville's *Voyages*, written in the 14th century, but circulated in printed editions throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was filled with natural wonders, which were accepted as fact, like the one-footed Ethiopians who use their extremity as an umbrella against the desert sun. Both works eventually came to be viewed as works of fiction.

In the 16th and 17th centuries two factors led to the separation of history and fiction. The invention of printing immediately created a new market of comparatively cheap entertainment and knowledge in the form of chapbooks. The more elegant production of this genre by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century authors were *belles lettres*; that is a market that would be neither low nor academic. The second major development was the first best-seller of modern fiction, the Spanish *Amadis de Gaula*, by García Montalvo. However, it was not accepted as an example of "belles lettres." The *Amadis* eventually became the archetypical romance, in contrast with the modern novel which began to be developed in the 17th century.

A chapbook is an early type of popular literature printed in early modern Europe. Produced cheaply, chapbooks were commonly small, paper covered booklets, usually printed on a single sheet folded into books of 8, 12, 16 and 24 pages. They were often illustrated with crude woodcuts, which sometimes bore no relation to the text. When illustrations were included in chapbooks, they were considered popular prints. The tradition arose in the 16th century, as soon as printing press and printed books became affordable, and rose to its height during the 17th and 18th centuries and many different kinds of ephemera and popular or folk literature were published as chapbooks, such as almanacs, children's literature, folklore, folk tales, nursery rhymes, pamphlets, poetry, and political and religious tracts.

The term "chapbook" for this type of literature was coined in the 19th century. The principal historical subject matter of chapbooks was abridgements of ancient historians, popular medieval histories of knights, stories of comical heroes, religious legends, and collections of jests and fables. The new printed books reached the households of urban citizens and country merchants who visited the cities as traders. Cheap printed histories were, in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially popular among apprentices and younger urban readers of both sexes.

The early modern market, from the 1530s and 1540s, divided into low chapbooks and high market expensive, fashionable, elegant *belles lettres*. The division between low and high literature, became especially visible with books that appeared on both the popular and *belles lettres* markets in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries: low chapbooks included abridgments of books such as Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

The term "chapbook" is also in use for present-day publications, commonly short, inexpensive booklets. Heroic Romance is a genre of imaginative literature, which flourished in the 17th century, but principally in France.

Satirical romances: Stories of witty cheats were an integral part of the European novella with its tradition of fabliaux. Significant examples include *Till Eulenspiegel* (1510), *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), and in England Richard Head's *The English Rogue* (1665). The tradition that developed with these titles focused on a hero and his life. The adventures led to satirical encounters with the real world with the hero either becoming the pitiable victim or the rogue who exploited the vices of those he met. A second tradition of satirical romances can be traced back to Heinrich Wittenwiler's *Ring* (c. 1410) and to François Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532–1564), which parodied and satirized heroic romances, and did this mostly by dragging them into the low realm of the burlesque. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1606/ 1615) modified the satire of romances: its hero lost contact with reality by reading too many romances.

Other important works of the tradition are Paul Scarron's *Roman Comique* (1651–57), the anonymous French "Rozelli" with its satire on Europe's religions, Alain-René Lesage's *Gil Blas* (1715–1735), Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), and Denis Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist* (1773, printed posthumously in 1796).

Histories: A market of literature in the modern sense of the word, that is a separate market for fiction and poetry, did not exist until the late seventeenth century. All books were sold under the rubric of "History and Politics" in the early 18th century, including pamphlets, memoirs, travel literature, political analysis, serious histories, romances, poetry, and novels.

That fictional histories shared the same space with academic histories and modern journalism had been criticized by historians since the end of the Middle Ages: fictions were "lies" and therefore hardly justifiable at all. The climate, however, changed in the 1670s.

The romance format of the quasi-historical works of Madame d'Aulnoy, César Vichard de Saint-Réal, allowed the publication of histories that dared not risk an unambiguous assertion of their truth. The literary marketplace of the late 17th and early 18th century employed a simple pattern of options whereby fictions could reach out into the sphere of true histories. This permitted its authors to claim that they had published fiction, not truth, if they ever faced allegations of libel.

Prefaces and title pages of 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century fiction acknowledged this pattern: histories could claim to be romances, but threaten to relate true events. Other works could, conversely, claim to be factual histories, yet earn the suspicion that they were wholly invented. A further differentiation was made between private and public history: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was, within this pattern, neither a "romance" nor a "novel." It smelled of romance, yet the preface stated that it should most certainly be read as a true private history.

Cervantes and the modern novel: The rise of the novel as an alternative to the romance began with the publication of Miguel de Cervantes' *Novelas Exemplares* (1613). It continued with Paul Scarron's *Roman Comique* (the first part of which appeared in 1651), whose heroes noted the rivalry between French romances and the new Spanish genre. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century critics looked back on the history of prose fiction, proud of the generic shift that had taken place, leading towards the modern novel/novella.

Europe witnessed the generic shift in the titles of works in French published in Holland, which supplied the international market. English publishers exploited the novel/romance controversy in the 1670s and 1680s. Contemporary critics listed the advantages of the new genre: brevity, a lack of ambition to produce epic poetry in prose; the style was fresh and plain; the focus was on modern life, and on heroes who were neither good nor bad.

The novel's potential to become the medium of urban gossip and scandal fuelled the rise of the novel/novella. Stories were offered as allegedly true recent histories, not for the sake of scandal but strictly for the moral lessons they gave. To prove this, fictionalized names were used with the true names in a separate key. However, one of the earliest English novels, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), has elements of the romance, unlike these novels, because of its exotic setting and story of survival in isolation. *Robinson Crusoe* lacks almost all of the elements found in these new novels: wit, a fast narration evolving around a group of young fashionable urban heroes, along with their intrigues, a scandalous moral, gallant talk to be imitated, and a brief, concise plot. The new developments did, however, lead to Eliza Haywood's epic length novel, *Love in Excess* (1719/20) and to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1741). Some literary historians date the beginning of the English novel with Richardson's *Pamela*, rather than *Robinson Crusoe*.

### Let us Revise

Dear learner, now that you have read about the Early Period of Novel, you might be able to explain the origin and development of the genre of novel. Let us now revise the section !

1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes \_\_\_\_\_ as the world's first novel.
2. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is said to be influenced by \_\_\_\_\_ with its story of a human outcast surviving on an island \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The literary genre of \_\_\_\_\_ tells the story of a knight-errant's marvel-filled adventures of a quest \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ were an early type of popular literature which were small, paper-covered booklets, usually printed on a single sheet folded into books of 8, 12, 16, and 24 pages \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The rise of the novel as an alternative to romance is said to have begun with the publication of Miguel de Cervantes' \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Eliza Heywood's epic length novel is titled \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Some literary historians date the beginning of the English novel with Samuel Richardson's \_\_\_\_\_.

## 1.4 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND IN 18TH CENTURY

The period is one of increasing commercial prosperity and global trade for Britain. The monarchical restoration was accompanied by the reopening of English theatres (closed during Cromwell's Puritan regime) and the restoration of the Church of England as the national church. Church and State continued to be closely intertwined. The Test Act of 1673 required all holders of civil and military offices to take the sacrament in the Anglican Church and deny transubstantiation; those who refused (e.g., Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics) were not allowed to attend university or hold public office. King Charles II, though he outwardly conformed to Anglicanism, had Catholic sympathies that placed him at odds with his strongly anti-Catholic Parliament. Charles had no legitimate heir. His brother James (a Catholic) was next in line to the throne. Parliament tried to force Charles to exclude his brother from the line of succession. Charles ended this "Exclusion Crisis" by dissolving Parliament.

The Exclusion Crisis in a sense created modern political parties: the Tories, who supported the king, and the Whigs, who opposed him. Once crowned, King James II quickly suspended the Test Act. In 1688, the birth of James' son so alarmed the country with the prospect of a new succession of Catholic monarchs that secret negotiations began to bring a new Protestant ruler from Europe to oust James.

In 1688, William of Orange and his wife Mary (James' daughter) landed in England with a small army and seized power—an event known as the Glorious or Bloodless Revolution.

James II fled to exile in France. For over 50 years his supporters (called Jacobites, from the Latin *Jacobus*, for James) mounted unsuccessful attempts to restore the Stuart line of Catholic kings to the British throne. Queen Anne, another of James II's daughters, was the next monarch (1702-1714). Anne's reign was a prosperous time for Britain, as the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) created new trade opportunities. England, Scotland, and Wales were united as Great Britain by the 1707 Act of Union. As Anne, like Mary, had no heirs, the succession was settled upon the royal house of Hanover. A long line of King Georges (I-IV) ensued, which is why the 18th century is also known as the Georgian period. We now associate the term "Whig" with liberalism and "Tory" with conservatism, but the principles behind these two parties remained fluid and responsive to political circumstance throughout the period.

Robert Walpole, a Whig politician who served under both King George I and George II, held a parliamentary seat from 1701 until 1742. Walpole was the first man to be described as a “prime” minister.

During King George III’s long rule (1760-1820) Britain became a major colonial power. At home and abroad, George III’s subjects engaged with a new rhetoric of liberty and radical reform, as they witnessed and reacted to the revolutions in France and America.

The Context of Ideas: The court of King Charles II championed the right of England’s social elite to pursue pleasure and libertinism. King Charles II authorized two new companies of actors. Women began to appear on stage in female roles. Dogmatism, or the acceptance of received religious beliefs, was widely regarded as dangerous. Charles II approved the Royal Society for London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge (1662). The Royal Society revolutionized scientific method and the dispersal of knowledge.

The specialized modern “scientist” did not exist; Royal Society members studied natural history (the collection and description of facts of nature), natural philosophy (study of the causes of what happens in nature), and natural religion (study of nature as a book written by God). The major idea of the period (founded on Francis Bacon’s earlier work) was that of empiricism. Empiricism is the direct observation of experience, which infers that experience (including experimentation) is a reliable source of knowledge. John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume all pursued differing interpretations of empiricism, and the concept itself had a profound impact on society and literature. Writers (including women such as Mary Astell) began to advocate for improved education for women during this period. Around 1750, the word “sentiment” evolved to describe social behavior based in instinctual feeling. Sentiment, and the related notions of sensibility and sympathy, all contributed to a growing sense of the desirability of public philanthropy and social reforms (such as charities for orphans).

Increased importance was placed on the private, individual life, as is evident in literary forms such as diaries, letters, and the novel.

There was no single event in the political sphere in the 18th century which had the farranging impact of the two great upheavals of the 17th century, the Civil Wars and the Glorious Revolution. These events had become history; and more than just history, they formed the mythical underpinnings for the increasing democratization that characterized the period. Probably, the real forces that shaped the lives of English people in the eighteenth century were economic. It was in this century that the foundations of the modern British state were laid; the eighteenth century saw the establishment of modern party politics, the emergence of Britain from the isolationism to internationalism, the change in economic policy from mercantilism to *laissezfaire* capitalism, the growth of the British empire, and the start of the industrial revolution.

The mushrooming of the cities caused inevitable growing pains. Despite improvements in sanitation and the introduction of streetlights, city life was difficult and dangerous. Crime and disease were rife, and alcoholism was a serious problem. The inhabitants were usually from somewhere else; they lacked the roots that traditionally supported village dwellers and the inherited sense of where they fit into the picture. But this rootlessness could be a blessing as well as a curse. The Cities permitted greater social mobility and offered much more diverse economic opportunities than were possible in a rural setting; many successful entrepreneurs— Watt, Wedgwood, Arkwright, and Peel, to name a few—rose from the lower middle classes. Rural life, though more stable, also underwent changes. An important development of this period, which was undoubtedly stimulated to some extent by the needs of the industrial society, was the growth of literacy.

The philosophical tendencies of the 18th century are not easy to generalize about. Many ideas, vaguely interrelated but often confusing and even contradictory, were in the air as thinkers attempted to grasp, explain, respond to, or criticize the social upheavals which marked the period. A number of these issues implicitly raised questions about the status of women, although this was often not the original intention of those who formulated the ideas. Especially in the latter part of the century, many ideas surfaced which profoundly affected the way women thought about themselves, and the way men thought about them. The economic developments which we have been discussing were clearly antithetic to this philosophy, since they tended by their very nature to break

down the traditional hierarchical structure and substitute a more immediate economic one; a poor man need not—and if he is to be economically productive, should not—resign himself to a life of deprivation simply because he is born to poverty. By the middle of the century, “Whatever IS, is RIGHT” was an idea whose time had passed. But the philosophical tendencies which most directly and immediately influenced the way in which women perceived themselves were what are variously known as benevolism, philanthropy, sentimentalism, sensibility, or *sensibilité*.

**Activity**

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the Words in your conversation.

- 1. Aristocratic: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Chapbook: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Exploit: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Dragging: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Merchand: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Mounted: \_\_\_\_\_

**1.5 LITERARY DEVELOPMENT DURING 18TH CENTURY**

According to the Norton Anthology of English Literature, the literary development during the 18th century can be traced as follows:

**1.5.1 Conditions of Literary Production**

- The Stage Licensing Act (1737) established a form of dramatic censorship in which the Lord Chamberlain pre-approved and licensed all plays for performance in London.
- Censorship of other print material changed radically with the 1710 Statute of Anne, the first British copyright law not tied to government approval of a book’s contents.
- Copyrights were typically held by booksellers.
- The term “public sphere” refers to the material texts concerning matters of national interest and also to the public venues (including coffeehouses, clubs, taverns, parks, etc.) where readers circulated and discussed these texts.
- Thanks to greatly increased literacy rates (by 1800, 60-70 percent of adult men could read, versus 25 percent in 1600), the eighteenth century was the first to sustain a large number of professional authors. Genteel writers could benefit from both patronage and the subscription system; “Grub Street” hacks at the lower end of the profession were employed on a piecework basis.
- Women published widely.
- Reading material, though it remained unaffordable to the laboring classes, was frequently shared. Circulating libraries began in the 1740s.
- Capital letters began to be used only at the beginnings of sentences and for proper names, and the use of italics was reduced.

**1.5.2 Literary Principles**

- Literature from 1660 to 1785 divides into three shorter periods of 40 years each, which can be characterized as shown below.

- 1660-1700 (death of John Dryden): emphasis on “decorum,” or critical principles based on what is elegant, fit, and right.
- 1700-1745 (deaths of Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope in 1744): emphasis on satire and on a wider public readership.
- 1745-1784 (death of Samuel Johnson): emphasis on revolutionary ideas.
- England’s Augustan age was modeled on that of Rome, when Augustus Caesar re-established stability after civil war following Julius Caesar’s assassination. English writers, following the restoration of King Charles II, felt themselves to be in a similar situation, in which the arts (repressed under Cromwell) could now flourish.
- English writers endeavoured to formulate rules of good writing, modeled on classical works, but with a new appeal to the passions, in simple, often highly visual, language. This embrace of new (*neo*) aims and old models is called “neoclassicism.”
- Horace’s phrase, *ut picture poesis* (meaning “as in painting, so in poetry”) was interpreted to mean that poetry ought to be a visual as well as a verbal art.
- Augustan poets began the century’s focus on nature, by examining the enduring truths of human nature.
- The classical genres from which Augustan writers sought to learn included epic, tragedy, comedy, pastoral, satire, and ode. Ensuring a good fit between the genre and its style, language, and tone was crucial.
- Augustan writing celebrates wit, or inventiveness, quickness of thought, and aptness of descriptive images or metaphors.
- The heroic couplet (two lines of rhymed iambic pentameter) was the most important verse form of Pope’s age, for it combined elegance and wit. Poets also continued to use blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter, not closed in couplets).

Not just aristocrats and classically educated scholars wrote verse: ordinary people also began to write poetry, often featuring broad humor and burlesque, thereby creating a distinction between high and low verse.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, let us take a break now. As you are now familiar with the social and political background of 18<sup>th</sup> Century England as well as the literary development during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, you can try to solve the exercise given below to make self-assessment to your progress:

1. The Exclusion Crisis created two modern political parties in England namely \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The 1688 Revolution in England is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. England, Scotland, and Wales were united as Great Britain by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Act of 1737 established a form of dramatic censorship in London \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Literature from 1660-1785 can be divided into five short periods \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
6. England's Augustan Age was modelled on that of Greece \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
7. The heroic couplet was the most important verse form of Pope's age \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
8. The beginning of Circulating libraries facilitated the conditions of literary production in England \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
9. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first man to be declared as Prime Minister in England \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge was approved by Charles II in the year \_\_\_\_\_.

### 1.6 THE 18TH CENTURY NOVEL

The chief literary developments of the 18th century were the so-called Classicism, the revival of romantic poetry, and the discovery of the modern novel. The last one of the three is the most significant. Novel is regarded as the most modern and most widely read and influential type of literature. While the essentially conservative ideas embodied in the Great Chain of Being became less influential, some more democratic ideas gained ground over the course of the century. The idea that man was endowed with certain inalienable, "natural" rights had held a place in the mainstream of English philosophical thought at least since Locke, but the controversies aroused by the American and French revolutions spurred a more practical application of these ideas.

Modern novel began to develop during the 18th century. It was in opposition to the term 'romance,' referring to a chivalric story in verse. It was used to refer to a prose fiction which was new because it told stories about recent events. There were many causes which brought to the development of the *Novel*: expansion of the reading public, growth of a new middle class, different position of women, economic reasons. People, who were richer than before, could afford buying books and women had more time for reading because, after the industrial revolution, they had much free time at home: they could buy in shops the products which before were handmade in the houses. Publishing became a profitable business, thanks to the spread of literacy and of reading as a form of entertainment among the wealthy middle class. The professional writers began to appear. They did not have rich patrons but earned their living by writing essays and books. This new situation, together with the creation of the *circulating libraries* which borrowed books in return of a small subscription fee, increased the numbers of readers. Yet the number of those who could afford buying books was very small and

there was still widespread illiteracy. The masses gained a low salary and books were still very expensive to buy. There was no real public education system yet. Poor children had little opportunities to study since they were used as industrial labourers and a huge number of people could neither read nor write.

The 18th century novel was labelled as realistic novel: the characters were real people with ordinary names and surnames; they were described in their daily routines; the settings were real geographical places and the contents were taken from real stories. Unlike the early Augustans, the novelists liked to write about ordinary people acting in real life situations. The novelists tried to meet their middle class readers who wanted to read about ordinary people because they enjoyed seeing themselves as protagonists of the stories. They were the ones who bought the books and consequently the authors' point of view was the same as the readers.'

### 1.7 LET US SUM UP

Dear learner, the novel as a literary form was quite different from most poetic and dramatic forms popular during the 18th century. It could afford the freedom of form and so introduced realism, democratic spirit, and psychological interest. It suited the genius and temper of the times.

### 1.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ is regarded as the most modern and most widely read and influential type of literature.
- b) Novel was a product of the \_\_\_\_\_ class and essentially appealed to their \_\_\_\_\_
- c) The 18th century novel was labelled as \_\_\_\_\_ .
- d) Copyrights in the 18th century were held by \_\_\_\_\_ .

### 1.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Briefly state the reasons for the rise of novel in 18th century.
2. Trace the evolution of novel as a literary form before 18th century.
3. Discuss how the period of 18th century proved fertile for development of novel.

### 1.10 ANSWER KEY

#### Let Us Revise

1. *Tale of Genji*
2. *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*
3. Chivalric Romance
4. Chapbooks
5. *Novelas Exemplares*
6. *Love in Excess*
7. *Pamela*

## CYP

1. Tories, Whigs
2. the Glorious Revolution/Bloodless Revolution
3. 1701 Act of Union
4. The Stage Licensing
5. False
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. Robert Walpole
10. 1662

**SAQs :** a) Novel; b) middle, sensibilities; c) realistic novel; d) booksellers

### Examination Oriented Questions

**Ans.1. The reasons for the rise of novel during the 18th century are as follows:**

- i) The rise of the novel during the 18th century is greatly associated with the rise of individualism at that time.
- ii) Individualism stressed the fact that every individual was independent from other individuals, and as a direct result of industrial capitalism, it emphasized that the individual had to choose and decide his future. Modern industrial capitalism, also, taught people how to earn money, and how to increase it. Thus it brought emphasis on the individual and his money.
- iii) In the past, characters in the romances stood for certain qualities (e.g. Mr. Greedy, Mr. Angry... etc.) and not for themselves.
- iv) In the 18th century novel, individual characters are drawn as independent regardless of their social status or personal capacity. They are portrayed as complex characters, affected by social pressures.
- v) The 18th century novelists such as S. Richardson, H. Fielding, and D. Defoe studied the individual's attitudes, feelings, and motivations. Defoe emphasized individualism by writing a novel that has one central character with independent individual characteristics. Likewise, Richardson and Fielding concentrated on the individual and named their novels after their main characters.
- vi) The modern industrial capitalism made people pay great attention to money: how to gain it and how to keep it. In the earlier prose fiction, the main character had moral ideas, and thought only of virtues and good deeds. The 18th century writers became more realistic and dealt with the only interest of the individual at their time, i.e. money. All Defoe's characters pursue money, and they pursue it very methodically according to the loss and profit of book-keeping. Thus Robinson Crusoe leaves his father's house and the secure life of the middle class to seek more money. This materialistic point of view began to have a tremendous influence to the extent that idealistic moral values were no longer the core of stories, but the individual and his struggle to gain money.

## 1.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. Kettle, Arnold. *An Introduction to the English Novel-Volume Two: Henry James to the Present*, Creative Media Partners. LLC,2023
2. Chesterton, G.K. *Charles Dickens : A Critical Study*. Beyond Books Hub, 2023, ebook.
3. Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction*. Digicat, 2022, ebook.
4. “English Novel.” Rampurhat College,  
<https://www.rampurhatcollege.ac.in/images/uploads/English%20Novel.pdf>.

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UP TO THE 20TH CENTURY**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 2.3 Novelists of 18th Century
- 2.4 Women Writers of 18th Century
- 2.5 Early 19th Century or the Romantic Period
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 2.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 2.9 Answer Key
- 2.10 Suggested Reading

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the 18th century, the novel became established as a popular literary form all over Europe. Britain proved an especially fertile ground, with Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne and Fanny Burney as early exponents of the novel form. Some of them devoted to writing because, as an effect of the Test Act of 1673, being Roman Catholics or Dissenters, they were forbidden to hold any important position in society and chose to become novelists or journalists.

### **2.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to some of the best-known novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This lesson also aims to offer an overview of the Romantic Period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

After a detailed reading of this lesson, you will be able to describe the development of novel as a literary form. You will also be able to explain the literary contributions made by some of the major novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2.3 NOVELISTS OF 18TH CENTURY**

**Daniel Defoe :** He is considered the pioneer of the modern novel and the first novelist in English literature as well as the first journalist (his *The Review* is considered the first newspaper).

He interpreted the likes and interests of the emerging middle-class and depicted the 18th century world. Defoe's characters are common men and women with whom his middle-class readers could identify themselves. All characters of his novel narrate their individual struggles for survival in a difficult world, from Moll Flanders,

a prostitute, thief and incestuous wife to Robinson Crusoe, Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton and Roxana. His novel *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* is regarded as the first English novel. The novel is a true realistic novel: it is based on the real story of a Scotch sailor, Alexander Selkirk, who had lived alone for four years on the Isle of Juan Fernandez in the Pacific after a shipwreck. The story is told in the first person singular in the form of a diary.

*Robinson Crusoe* is the first narrative in which the character is not a hero, but an average man. Defoe went on with the Puritan ideas that had survived even after the collapsing of the Puritan Republic of the Commonwealth. Robinson, a shipwrecked merchant who remained on a desert island for about 28 years, is considered the true Puritan man: he showed industry, colonizing spirit, courage and initiative and was seen by the readers as the personification of their own qualities: practical-minded, resourceful, religious. He organized his life on the island and succeeded through hard labour in surviving in a difficult situation exploiting all that the place offered. Further, he not only made the native man Friday to accept him as master but also made him use his language and converted him to Christianity. Many critics charged this novel with being an imperialistic novel because it contained an affirmation of capitalism and saw man as an economic animal. Robinson was considered by those critics as the first capitalist hero in English literature, because he looked at everything in economic terms: produced more than he needed, kept from the ship a lot of things, expanded his power on the whole island and eventually became rich. They pointed out that when Robinson managed to go on board the ship which had been carried within a reaching distance, he also kept some money which, of course, was of no use on a desert island.

**Jonathan Swift:** He was the greatest satirist of his age. Using irony and satire he tried to change his own society and attacked it at all levels. Together with Alexander Pope and others, he established the Scriblerus Club, an association of witty writers who satirized their contemporaries. People of his own time failed to see the irony and, sometime, they cried shame. An Anglican priest, he was appointed Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, where he was buried. A Latin epigraph he had composed himself was placed over his tomb: "The body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Sacred Theology, Dean of this Cathedral Church is buried here where fierce indignation can no more lacerate his heart... ."

Swift is remembered for his *Gulliver's Travels*, a novel that, like *Robinson Crusoe*, is nowadays regarded as a book for children and as an anticipation of the modern fantasy novel. Actually the book was intended to be a bitter satire of his own country. Swift himself wrote to Pope that it "was intended to vex the world rather than divert it." The novel satirizes the follies and the vices of politicians and scholars and is a very serious comment on politics, on learning and on all Mankind. It shows Swift's bad opinion on people. He is very intolerant of people in general and once he wrote to Pope: "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man." He maintains that man is not a reasonable animal but an animal endowed with reason, which he is not always able to use in the right way. *Gulliver's Travels* tells the various imaginary voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon on a ship, to various strange lands where he meets several man-like creatures. The philosophical basis of the whole novel is in the contrast between rationality and animality. In the first book he is shipwrecked near Lilliput where he meets a race of tiny people, only six inches tall, and he is a giant among them. Rationality is represented by the Lilliputians with their organized society and their deep knowledge of mathematical science in contrast with Gulliver described as a big body. In book 2 the situation is reversed: he is in Brobdingnag, the land of giants and he is a dwarf among them. The giants embody animality while Gulliver rationality. In the third book he visits the flying island of Laputa inhabited by scientists concerned with abstract ideas. He visits the University of Lagado where he meets the "projectors," who work on new scientific odd plans : take sunbeams out of cucumbers, melt ice into gunpowder and so on. They are presented in a decadent way: badly dressed, long hair and beard, very dirty, and even as beggars. Animality is seen in the scientists while rationality is seen in man. In the last book he is in the land of the Houyhnhnms, intelligent horses that can talk. They are perfectly rational and virtuous. They have man-like slaves, the Yahoos, who are bestial, irrational and vicious. Gulliver himself is seen by the Houyhnhnms as a Yahoo. In these various countries Gulliver explains to the inhabitants about life in Europe and in particular in England. What Gulliver says is how things should be, not how they are, and so his words become an ironical attack on what he is describing. In the first book he attacks the English Government and the

hypocrisies of the party system. Catholic Religion is ironically attacked, too. Swift comments the dispute over whether an egg should be broken, to be eaten, at the big end or at the little end: “all true believers shall break their eggs at the most convenient end.” In the second book he attacks the judicial and the political system in Britain aiming at stressing the hypocrisy and corruption practised in the Institutions. In the third book there is an attack on science and on members of the Royal Society while in the fourth and last he attacks man. When he comes home after his rescue, he cannot accept the human race any longer. The human beings appear to him like the Yahoos and he goes to live in a stable with the company of horses.

Swift was not insensible to the sufferings of the Irish and he was indignant at their exploitation by the British Government. The Irish lived on bad condition. He wrote and published a work in defence of Ireland: *Modest Proposal from Preventing the Children of poor people from being a burden to their parents or the country*. It was a new attack against the English. Using satire, he explained, that the misery of the starving Irish could be easily relieved by selling their children to the rich as food. There was also another benefit for the Irish: it should have solved the problem of overpopulation of Ireland, too. It was of course a provocation but at the times some foreign readers took it as an actual and serious one and there was quite a scandal

**Samuel Richardson:** He is considered the inventor of the epistolary novel and the father of the novel of sentimental analysis. He introduced psychological studies of the characters, especially women. He started his career as a novelist quite late in his life when some booksellers asked him to help the uneducated in their correspondence writing a sequence of letters dealing with everyday subjects. Among these letters were to be included some to instruct pretty servant-girls to protect their virtue. He liked this idea also because, when he was at school, he used to be the adviser of girls who wanted to correspond with their sweethearts. He decided to make a novel from the letters, and wrote *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. He chose an actual case he had heard of, in which a virtuous 15-yearold maidservant, who worked in a rich household, had resisted her master’s advances.

The story is told through a series of letters from Pamela Andrews to her parents and their answers to her. She asked for advice to defend herself from her master, Mr B, who wanted to seduce her. Published in November 1740, the novel had an instant success and it was followed by a second edition in February 1741, a third in March and even a fourth in May. As we can see, *Pamela* originated from the realistic moral problem for many young girls who worked as maids: how to resist the advances of their rich masters. *Pamela* celebrates the middleclass value of chastity before marriage in opposition to the lasciviousness of the aristocracy. The theme of the persecuted maiden attracted many readers. The readers divided into “Pamelists”, who were for Pamela, and “Anti-Pamelists,” who criticized her. Pamelists maintained that she was a poor and simple girl who tried to keep herself honest and chaste. Anti-Pamelists, instead, maintained that her behaviour was not guided by purity but by utilitarianism: she was a cunning girl, who used her virtue to climb the social ladder and she provoked her master to make him marry her. In the 18th century many people thought that virginity was not a value for a poor girl to defend and that it was her duty as a servant to please her master. Not all women considered chastity and honesty virtues to be defended. For instance Moll Flanders, the heroine created by Defoe uses her beauty and her seductive charm to improve the conditions of her miserable life. *Pamela* is considered the first best-seller in English Literature. It had got a happy ending, she married Mr B., and it pleased the readers, women above all, helping its success. *Clarissa Harlowe*, his second epistolary novel, is considered Richardson’s masterpiece. It deals with a woman who tries to escape from a combined marriage to a man she does not like. She finds refuge at a nobleman’s who seduces and rapes her. Clarissa refuses to marry him and eventually lives as an outcast condemned by society.

Richardson’s success in his own age is mostly due to the subject matter of his novels, and to the technique of narration he used. As far as the former, that is the theme of women who defend their virtues from the advances of a powerful man, it appealed to a vast audience, above all, women who constituted the larger part of the reading public. The other element was the suspense created by the technique that Richardson used. He himself defined it as “writing to the moment.” This technique is a bit similar to the one used in modern soap operas: each letter dealing with the present has got elements whose consequences will happen in the next letter thus letting the reader wait.

**Henry Fielding:** He was the first English novelist to introduce the burlesque element in the novel. He defined his novels as “comic epic poem in prose.” The mock epic is a parody of the epic because it treats trivial things as if they had great importance. The protagonist is involved in a series of apparently dangerous adventures. Fielding was different from Defoe and Richardson. He belonged to the aristocracy and unlike them, he did not believe in sexual chastity above all other virtues. The aristocracy regarded uninhibited sexuality with indulgence and considered other virtues as courage, generosity and loyalty above it. His first novel, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews* is to be considered as a reaction against the hypocrisy of the time as well as a reaction to Richardson’s *Pamela*. Fielding wanted to ridicule the Puritan view of morality. The *Shamela* in the title is a pun on the words of “shame” and Pamela. In his second novel, *Joseph Andrews*, he wanted at first to parody Richardson’s *Pamela* but he puts aside this idea and wrote a story based on the life and adventures of Joseph, Pamela’s brother, and a friend of his. The situation is reversed and we have a young man who works at a lady’s that wants to seduce him after her husband’s death. Joseph, who is chaste and virtuous, refuses her advances.

*Tom Jones*, his best novel, is a picture of the life of the lower and upper classes of the 18th century society. Fielding depicts with humour and irony human weaknesses and stresses his tolerant attitude towards them. Tom is an unheroic character and has all the limits of the ordinary man. Fielding’s novels are considered picaresque in style, written in imitation of Cervantes (Picaresque novels come from Spain and deal with the adventures of a rascal of low social class; they are usually humorous, full of action and excitement).

**Laurence Sterne:** In his own time, Sterne was considered an anti novelist because he did not follow the canons of the realistic novel. He is the closest novelists to the modern ones of all 18th century novelists. His novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, A Gentleman* was written in instalments in nine volumes between 1759 and 1767. It does not respect the 18th century canons of the realistic novel. It is unconventional and very difficult to summarize. It recalls the stream of consciousness technique of Joyce and Woolf: it has no plot, no time scheme; it is full of the author’s interventions, digressions, comments, asides, long quotations, and many unusual devices and eccentric typographical characteristics as black pages ( to mourn a friend’s death), marbled pages, white pages, asterisks, arabesques, a little hand with printed finger to direct the reader’s attention to a point. When a digression takes place, the author shifts from the main theme of the novel to other topics which are not related with what the character is going to do or say. The time of the story is interrupted to be resumed at the end of the digression. The temporal dimension is non-existent and clock time is abandoned for psychological time. The digressions allowed Sterne to tell events of the past or of the future in whatever order he pleased. The story is told in the first person singular by the main character, Tristram Shandy who remembers particular events of his past and present life. It starts with a flashback: we meet Tristram in the first volume as an adult but his birth happens in the third volume. We may suppose that Sterne was influenced by John Locke’s theory of the Association of Ideas. Tristram himself defined Locke’s *Essays* as “a history book...of what passes in a man’s own mind.” Sterne made a distinction between time of the clock, that is the chronological time, and time of the mind. Organizing his plot, the author goes backwards and forward in time, thus disrupting the chronological order. He anticipated Bergson’s theory of time, “*la Durée*”. Bergson thought that each individual lives moments and experiences that cannot be measured in fixed periods of time since the mind has its own time different from the conventional one of the external world.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, take a moment's time before moving to the next section and try to solve the exercise given below. If you are not able to answer all the questions, don't get disheartened! You can re-read the section as well as check the Answer Key.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ by Daniel Defoe is regarded as the first English novel.
2. In *Robinson Crusoe* \_\_\_\_\_, the native man accepts Robinson Crusoe as his master and is converted to Christianity \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is considered to be a great satirist who has extensively used irony and satire in his works \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In \_\_\_\_\_, Jonathan Swift in a satirical tone explains that the misery of the starving Irish could be relieved by selling their children to the rich as food \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is regarded as the father of the novel of sentimental analysis.
6. Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* is subtitled \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Henry Fielding defined his novel as \_\_\_\_\_.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ by Henry Fielding is considered to be a reaction against the moral hypocrisy of Richardson's *Pamela* \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ was considered to be an anti-novelist in his own time.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ by Laurence Sterne is an unconventional novel which uses the stream of consciousness technique, has no plot, and is full of digressions.

### 2.4 WOMEN WRITERS OF 18TH CENTURY

**Fanny Burney, 1752-1840 :** Burney's novels were immensely popular during the late 18th century. However, Burney herself had to overcome family disapproval in order to make a name among English literary circles. Her father, Charles Burney, a renowned musicologist, discouraged his daughter's literary activity and provided her with no formal education. In spite of this, she read widely and began writing at a young age. But at the age of fifteen, in response to her father and perhaps her stepmother's objections to imaginative poetry, plays, and stories, she dramatically sacrificed all of her writings to a huge bonfire. Not completely deterred, she resumed writing and anonymously published her first novel, *Evelina* (1778), which became a great success. *Evelina* won Burney not only her father's approval, but also writer and critic Dr. Samuel Johnson's. She went on to secure a place in Queen Charlotte's court and in English literary society. She later left court to marry French General Alexandre D'Arblay (1791) and lived until the age of eighty-seven. Her novels deal with women's roles in relation to the British aristocracy, marriage, wealth, and power. Her successful works influenced other women writers, including Jane Austen, whose name is among the list of subscribers to *Camilla*.

**Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806:** Carter, known for her translations, poetry, essays, and letter writing, was fortunate enough to be educated by her father, the Perpetual Curate in Deal, England. Learning alongside her brothers, she received a well-rounded education, which included knowledge of several languages. She was skilled in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, Spanish, and German. As an adult, she taught herself Portuguese and Arabic. According to tradition, Carter lost her health by studying long nights as a child, and did in fact suffer from severe headaches as an adult. Her father was a friend of *Gentleman's Magazine* editor, Edward Cave, who began to publish Carter in his periodical. She became active in England's literary circles and developed friendships with Samuel Johnson, Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Montagu, Samuel Richardson, Edmund Burke, Horace Walpole, and Hannah More.

**Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 1689-1762:** Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, cousin of writer Henry Fielding, was born in London to parents of the aristocracy. Her father, Evelyn Pierrepont, later became the first Duke of Kingston. She eloped with Edward Wortley (1712) and the two became active in court. Through social activities, she made social contacts with several literary figures, including John Gay and Alexander Pope, although Pope later attacked her in print. From 1716 to 1718, her husband served as ambassador to Turkey, where Montagu wrote her *Embassy Letters*. At age 47, she shared an infatuation with Francesco Algarotti, a 24-year-old native Italian with literary promise. She moved to Italy to join Algarotti and, although their relationship cooled, remained on the Continent for the next twenty years. Montagu distributed her writings privately and was content not to publish avidly during her lifetime. With the exception of some anonymous articles and a pirated edition of her poetry, her letters, essays, and poems were published posthumously. In her works, she advocated higher education for women and, in turn, more political interest and involvement.

**Hannah More, 1745-1833:** She was one of the most prolific and widely read writers of her time. Educated as a schoolmistress, she soon began publishing plays for the instruction of children and, later, religious writings, including several chapbooks for youths. She also became a part of Samuel Johnson's illustrious circle. Besides being a writer, she was a committed religious and social reformer, establishing Sunday schools for the poor. She encouraged other women to volunteer their time to help the poor and, as a result, increased women's influence in social work. However, although she advocated female education, she did so only in the context of an educated domesticity. In her only novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, she stresses the role of the subservient wife. Ironically, More, herself, never married or entered into a domestic situation. She "died friendless and alone, the victim of servants who mistreated her" (Horwitz).

**Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, 1741-1821:** She was born into the English aristocracy and well educated. In 1763, after her father's death, her mother forced her into an unloving marriage with Henry Thrale, a wealthy brewer, by whom she had twelve children—only four living to adulthood. In 1765, she met Samuel Johnson and helped him with a translation of Boethius. Through Johnson, she was introduced to several popular figures, including Fanny Burney, David Garrick, Oliver Goldsmith, and Sir Joshua Reynolds. After her husband's death, she chose to marry a man both Italian and Roman Catholic, Gabriel Piozzi. Her decision to marry both a foreigner and a Catholic was controversial, and ruined her relationship with Johnson, who adamantly opposed the union. Despite objections, their marriage was highly successful. During the time of their travels on the Continent and later settling in Wales, she became a prolific writer of histories, travel accounts, and poetry.

**Sarah Scott, 1723-1795:** Elder sister to writer Elizabeth Montagu, Scott grew up in a family that valued education. Scott was briefly, and apparently unhappily married to George Lewis Scott. After her family "rescued" her from the marriage, she went to live with Lady Barbara Montagu (unrelated) and began an active life of charity work and writing. She tried to start a "utopian community" with her sister, Elizabeth, and friends. Her novel, *A Description of Millenium Hall*, idealizes her utopian ideals. Her novels were published anonymously and sold quite well. Although they lost popularity in the next century, her work has recently been reprinted.

**Mary Wollstonecraft, 1759-1797:** After surviving an unhappy childhood with an alcoholic and violent father, Mary Wollstonecraft spent time as a lady's companion, a schoolmistress, and a governess. Later, her life took a dramatic turn. Beginning in 1794, she visited France and Scandinavia. She had a daughter out of wedlock with an American businessman and attempted suicide when their relationship failed. She then had an affair with British author William Godwin, and the two married after she became pregnant. Sadly, she died shortly after giving birth to a daughter, Mary, who would later be known as Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. Wollstonecraft's diversified writings include subjects such as education, travel, history, politics, and women's rights. She is best known for *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

## Let Us Revise

Learner, it's time for another activity which will not only refresh your mind but will also help you in assessing your progress.

Match the name of the writer with the works written by them :

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| a) Fanny Burney              | i) <i>Evelina</i>                               |
| b) Mary Wollstonecraft       | ii) <i>A Description of Millenium Hall</i>      |
| c) Lady Mary Wortley Montagu | iii) <i>Embassy Letters</i>                     |
| d) Hannah More               | iv) <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> |
| e) Sarah Scott               | v) <i>Coelebs in Search of a Wife</i>           |

## 2.5 EARLY 19TH CENTURY OR THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

The monarch on England's throne during the beginning of the 19th century was King George III; however, in 1811, George III was deemed insane and unfit to rule, and was king in name only. Actual political power was handed over to his son, George IV (left), whose title was Prince Regent, giving the time period the name Regency. The period, unlike the peaceful Victorian Era which followed, was one of political turmoil.

The British Empire had lost the United States, but was not quite ready to accept this loss. The result was the War of 1812, a war which resulted in yet another British defeat and no significant gains for either side. Alongside the pressure of Napoleon rising to power, the monarchy felt the pressure of trying to keep the people under control. Any attempt at giving the citizens of England more freedom was generally viewed as treason.

The subject of Jane Austen's stance on politics revealed through her literature is hotly debated and is the topic of several books. The general consensus, however, is that Austen commented on society rather than the government. Her books probably provided an entertaining escape for the people of the era.

Regency era society was marked by extreme excess in the upper classes and a wide gap between rich and poor. Austen's works tend to ignore the lower classes and focus almost totally on the upper-middle to upper classes. Women had a difficult role in society; they were almost totally dependent on men. Women could not honorably work, except perhaps as governesses, tutors, and writers. As we see in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, women could not inherit property either. For financial security, the only option was to marry, and to marry well. In fact, this expectation is addressed in the famous opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife." Austen is speaking ironically, of course. What she is saying is that a woman must be in want of a single man with a good fortune. In the novel, Mrs. Bennet, a mother of five girls, has no business so important as to get all of her daughters married, and she worries and frets over this matter constantly. Austen feels that women *do* have a choice, however; her heroines often reject those suitors who could support them financially but for whom they have no love.

With little else to do, women delighted in gossip, fashion, social gatherings, and especially balls. Jane Austen herself loved to dance and socialize, and such occasions feature prominently in her books. The dances performed were lively and bouncy English country dances. Along with dancing came many social expectations. Men could ask women to dance, but women had only the power to refuse. If a woman did refuse, she was to make it seem as though she had no intention of dancing with anyone, so as not to offend the particular man who had asked her. If there were more women than men present at a ball, as we see in *Pride and Prejudice*, it was polite for the men to dance as much as possible with different women, so the women would not have to sit out for very long. It was also acceptable, in such a situation, for women to dance together. Conversation was expected during dancing. One of the most prominent features of the time period was the propriety expected

between members of the opposite sex. This was the beginning of the social restrictions that were one of the defining characteristics of the Victorian period, which directly followed the Regency period. A young unmarried woman should not be alone with a man without a chaperone; likewise, women were never to travel unescorted. Extended correspondence between two members of the opposite sex was seen as a sure sign of engagement. This explains why many of the letters in Austen's works go unanswered. It would be improper for an unmarried man and woman to write many letters back and forth. A double standard was in place, however, when it came to purity and chastity; a woman who was discovered to have had an extramarital affair was shunned and considered unmarriageable. If the woman was already married, infidelity was grounds for divorce. However, in the men's case, an affair was overlooked and hardly even a blot on his reputation. Jane Austen's writings are quite proper for the time period; no explicit love scenes, not even a kiss, are included in her novels. However, a few incidents occur, such as elopement and affairs, but they are never more than hinted at, and the reader must be very alert to note that these events take place.

Jane's novels must be looked at through the lens of the times, or behavior of their characters may not make sense to the modern reader. It is not enough to read her stories as mere romances; to truly appreciate the satire and caricature, one must know what Jane is making light of from the era.

## **2.6 LET US SUM UP**

The first half of the 19th century records the triumph of Romanticism in literature and democracy in government. Romanticism primarily referred to extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. Though it had more visible effect on poetry of the period, the novel with writers like Jane Austen reached a new stage of development. She refined and simplified the novel to make it a reflection of English life.

## **2.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)**

- a) \_\_\_\_\_, by Defoe, is the first narrative in which the character is not a hero, but an average man.
- b) Swift is remembered for his \_\_\_\_\_, a novel that is now regarded as part of children literature.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ is considered the inventor of the epistolary novel.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ is a novel made from letters.
- e) The first English novelist to introduce the burlesque element in the novel was \_\_\_\_\_

## **2.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

1. Trace the development of novel through authors of the 18th Century.
2. Discuss novelist Jane Austen as a representative of her times.
3. Account for the development of novel in context of the changing socio-political conditions of the 18th and early 19th centuries.
4. Write a note on the literary development in the Romantic Period.

## 2.9 ANSWER KEY

### CYP

1. *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*
2. Friday
3. Jonathan Swift
4. *A Modest Proposal*
5. Samuel Richardson
6. *Virtue Rewarded*
7. Comic epic poem in prose
8. *Shamela*
9. Laurence Sterne
10. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*

### Let Us Revise

a-i ; b-iv ; c-iii ; d-v ; e-ii

**SAQs :** a) *Robinson Crusoe*, b) *Gulliver's Travels*, c) Samuel Richardson, d) *Pamela*, e) Henry Fielding.

### Examination Oriented Questions

**Ans. 1. Literary development in the Romantic Period :** The Romantic Period in English literature is taken to begin with the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* and end with the death of the novelist, Sir Walter Scott. The historical and literary contexts and effects covered a broader time span. No other period in English literature displays more variety in style, theme, and content than the Romantic Movement of the 18th and 19th centuries. Furthermore, no period has been the topic of so much disagreement and confusion over its defining principles and aesthetics. Imagination, emotion, and freedom are certainly the focal points of Romanticism. Any list of particular characteristics of the literature of Romanticism includes subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism; spontaneity; freedom from rules; solitary life rather than life in society; the beliefs that imagination is superior to reason and devotion to beauty; love of and worship of nature. Instead of "improbable" notions and "false" sensibility, Romanticism came to stand for authenticity, integrity and spontaneity. It was seen as a positive artistic and intellectual assertion of the extremes in the human psyche, the areas of experience beyond logic and reason which could only be expressed in a direct and heartfelt way.

First and foremost, Romanticism is concerned with the individual more than with society. The individual consciousness and especially the individual imagination are fascinating for the Romantics. The technological changes included the use of new raw materials (iron, steel), new energy sources (coal, the steam engine), the invention of new machines (spinning jenny, power loom), new organization of work (factory system), important developments in transportation and communication (steam locomotive, steamship). The non-industrial changes included agricultural improvements, economic changes (wider distribution of wealth), political changes (new political innovations corresponding to the needs of an industrialized society), sweeping social changes (growth of cities, development of working-class movements, the emergence of new patterns of authority), cultural transformations of a broad range.

The preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), by English poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge was also of prime importance as a manifesto of literary romanticism. Here, the two poets affirmed the importance of feeling and imagination to poetic creation and disclaimed conventional literary forms and subjects. Thus, as romantic literature everywhere developed, imagination was praised over reason, emotions over logic, and intuition over science—making way for a vast body of literature of great sensibility and passion. This literature emphasized a new flexibility of form adapted to varying content, encouraged the development of complex and fast-moving plots, and allowed mixed genres (tragicomedy and the mingling of the grotesque and the sublime) and freer style.

## 2.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. Williams, Raymond. *The English Novel From Dickens to Lawrence*. Random House 2013, ebook.
2. Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. University of Chicago Press, 2010, ebook.
3. Leavis, F. R. *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad*. Faber & Faber, 2011, ebook.
4. rosariomario. *The 18th Century Novel: De foe-Swift-Richardson-Fielding-Sterne*. Spazio personale di mario aperto a tutti 24 ore su, 16 Jan. 2014, <https://rosariomariocalbo.wordpress.com/2014/01/16/the-18th-century-novelde-foe-swift-richardson-fielding-sterne/>.

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UP TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 3.3 Characteristics of the Victorian Age
- 3.4 Literary Trends of Novel in Victorian Age
- 3.5 The Novelists Representative of Victorian Age
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 3.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 3.9 Answer Key
- 3.10 Suggested Reading

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the Victorian period, England had entered into a new free period, in which every form of literature, from pure romance to gross realism, struggled for expression. The novel in this age fills the place which drama had during the Elizabethan period. The fiction of this period was marked with experimentation and revolt on one hand and perfection of style on the other.

### **3.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to offer an overview of the Victorian period to the learner by focusing on the development of novel. The lesson also aims to trace the literary contributions made by the novelists of this period.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to explain the literary scene that dominated the Victorian era which facilitated the development of novel. You will have clarity regarding the literary trends which dominated the Victorian novel as well as list the major writers of the age along with their representative works.

### **3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE**

If there is one transcending aspect to Victorian England life and society, that aspect is change – or, more accurately, upheaval. Everything that the previous centuries had held as sacred and indisputable truth came under assault during the middle and later parts of the nineteenth century.

The salient features of the age are mentioned here:

**Democracy:** Amid the multitude of social and political forces of this great age, four things stand out apparently. First, the long struggle of the Anglo-Saxons for personal liberty is definitely settled and democracy becomes the established order of the day. The king who appeared in an age of popular weakness and ignorance, and the peers who came with the Normans in triumph are both stripped of their power and left as figure-heads of a past civilization. The last vestige of personal government and the divine right of rulers disappears; the House of Commons becomes the ruling power in England; and a series of new reform bills rapidly extend the people's right to choose for themselves the men who shall represent them.

**Social Unrest:** Second because it is an age of democracy, it is an age of popular education, of religious tolerance, of growing brotherhood, and of profound social unrest. The slaves had been freed in 1833 but in the middle of the century multitudes of men, women, and little children in the mines and factories were victims of a more terrible industrial and social slavery. To free this competitive method, has been the growing purpose of the Victorian age until the present day.

The idea of "manners" essentially sums up the social climate of middle-class England in the nineteenth century. Rules of personal conduct were in fact so inflexible that the Victorians garnered a reputation for saying one thing while doing another – an attack that the next generation of writers would take up with vigor. In the world at large, change was happening faster than many people could comprehend. A surging global economy was orchestrated by the might of the British Empire. The nobility, formerly at the top of the pyramid in society, found their status reduced as agriculture lost its prominence in the now industrial economy. Mechanization and steam power led to ruthless efficiency, while more often than not the poor suffered under the weight of the capitalist middle class. Being impoverished in Victorian England was unpleasant to say the least, but there were efforts underway to improve the lot of the poor. The Reform Bills of the nineteenth century extended voting rights to men who were previously disenfranchised – but not, of course, to women. That would require years more of struggle. For all of the social inequalities which still persisted, the Victorians successfully undermined some of humanity's most timehonored institutions. Some writers greeted these changes with fear, and wanted desperately for society to check its relentless pace. Others embraced the new world that was coming into being, thrilled at the progress of science and society.

**The ideal of Peace:** Third, because it is an age of democracy and education, it is an age of comparative peace. England begins to think less of the pomp and false glitter of fighting and more of its moral evils, as the nation realizes that it is the common people who bear the burden and the sorrow and the poverty of war, while the privilege classes reap most of the financial and political rewards. Moreover, with the growth of trade and of friendly foreign relations, it becomes evident that the social equality for which England was contending at home belongs to the whole race of men that brotherhood is universal, not insular that a question of justice is never settled by fighting and that war is generally unmitigated horror and barbarism. Tennyson, who came of age when the great reform bill occupied attention, expresses the ideas of the liberals of his day who proposed to spread the gospel of peace.

**Arts and sciences:** The Victorian age is especially remarkable because of its rapid progress in all the arts and sciences and in mechanical inventions. A glance at any record of the industrial achievements of the nineteenth century will show how vast they are and it is unnecessary to repeat here the list of the inventions, from spinning looms to steamboats, and from matches to electric lights. All these material things, as well as the growth of education have their influence upon the life of a people and it is inevitable that they should react upon its prose and poetry thought as yet we are too much absorbed in our sciences and machines to determine accurately their influence upon literature. When these new things shall by long use have become familiar as country roads or have been replaced by newer and better things, then they also will have their associations and memories and a poem on the rail roads may be as suggestive as Wordsworth's sonnet on Westminster bridge and the busy, practical working men who today throng our streets and factories may seem to a future and greater age as quaint and poetical as to us seem the slow toilers of the middle ages.

The few colonial wars that broke out during the Victorian period did not seriously disturb the national life. There was one continental war that directly affected Britain: the Crimean war and one that affected her indirectly though strongly: the Franco German struggle, yet neither of these caused any profound changes. In America, the great civil struggle left scars that were soon to be obliterated by the wise statesmanship of her rulers. The whole age may be not unfairly described as one of peaceful activity. In the earlier stages the lessening surges of the French revolution were still felt but by the middle of the century they had almost completely died down, and other hopes and ideals largely specific were gradually taking their place.

This period is also known as the Age of Compromise. During the 18th century, religion formed the centre of life. The rules regarding religion and Church were strictly followed. The Church authority was very powerful. While during the Victorian period the science was developing. Gallilio had proved that it is earth that revolves round the sun, not the sun. On the one hand 50% of the English were the believer of the Christianity and the Bible and the other 50% of the English were under the influence of the advancement of Science. Science had challenged the old order of living the life and Christian way of life, values, the assurance regarding redemption and salvation were being challenge and looked with the element of doubt. That is why this Age is called the Age of Compromise which was between religion and science.

**Imperialism and Material Developments:** During the 19th century, the British empire extensively expanded its colonial presence in many parts of Africa, in India, in the Middle-East and in other parts of Asia. This process has had many long-term effects, including the increased use of the English language outside of Europe and increased trade between Europe and distant regions. It was also an age alive with new activity. There was a revolution in commercial enterprise, due to the great increase of available markets and as a result of this an immense advance in the use of mechanical devices. The new commercial energy was reflected in the great exhibition of 1851 which was greeted as the inauguration of a new era of prosperity. On the other side of this picture of commercial expansion we see the appalling social conditions of the new industrial cities, the squalid slums and the exploitation of cheap labor (often of children), the painful flight by the enlightened few to introduce social legislation and the slow extension of the franchise. The evils of the industrial revolution were vividly painted by such writers as Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell and they called forth the missionary efforts of men like Kingsley.

**Intellectual developments:** There can be little doubt that in many cases material wealth produced a hardness of temper and an impatience of projects and ideas that brought no return in hard case yet it is to the credit of this age that intellectual activities were so numerous. There was quite a revolution in scientific thought following upon the works of Darwin and his school, and an immense outburst of social and political throrizing which was represented in this country by the writings of men like Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. In addition, popular education became a practical thing. This in its turn produced a new hunger for intellectual food and resulted in a great increase in the production of the press and of other more durable species of literature.

Nearly every institution of society was shaken by rapid and unpredictable change. Improvements to steam engine technology led to increased factory production. More manufacturing required more coal to be mined from the ground. The economies of Europe expanded and accelerated, as the foundations of a completely global economy were laid. Huge amounts of wealth were created, and the spirit of the times discouraged the regulation of business practices. Today, this is called laissez-faire economics. This generation of wealth was to the sole benefit of the newly risen "middle class," an urbane, entrepreneurial segment of society which saw itself as the natural successor to the noble's former position of influence. At the same time, scientific advancements were undermining the position of the Church in daily life. Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection brought humanity down to the level of the animal, and seemingly reduced the meaning of life to a bloody struggle for survival. Rather than a benign Creator, the world was dominated and steered by strength alone. In the general population, the ever-present gap between the haves and have-nots widened significantly during the Victorian period. The poorest of their poor found their lot in life to be worse than it had ever been, as the new market economy favored industry over agriculture. Large numbers of dispossessed farmers and peasants migrated from the countryside to the cities, seeking work in the factories. The effects of that

demographic shift can still be observed. Conditions in the overwhelmed, sprawling cities degenerated as the infrastructure simply could not handle the influx of new workers. Slums and shantytowns became the norm, and depredation was a fact of life for the majority of the working class.

### 3.4 LITERARY TRENDS OF NOVEL IN VICTORIAN AGE

The sixty years commonly included under the name of the Victorian age present many dissimilar features. Yet in several respects we can safely generalize. Nearly all observers of the Victorian age are struck by its extreme deference to the conventions. To a later age these seem ludicrous. It was thought indecorous for a man to smoke in public and for a lady to ride a bicycle. To a great extent the new morality was a natural revolt against the grossness of the earlier regency, and the influence of the Victorian court was all in its favor. In literature it is amply reflected. But it is almost laughable to observe this anxiety to be ‘moral’. This type of writing is quite blameless but it produced the kind of public that denounced the innocuous *Jane Eyre* as wicked because it dealt with the harmless affection of a girl for a married man.

Many writers protest against the deadening effect of the conventions. Carlyle and Matthew Arnold in their different accents were loud in their denunciations. Thackerary never tired of satirizing the snobbishness of the age and Browning’s cobbly mannerisms were an indirect challenge to the velvety diction and the smooth self-satisfaction of the Tennysonian School. As the age proceeded the reaction strengthened. In poetry the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne and William Morris proclaimed no morality but that of the artist’s regard for his art. By the vigour of his method Swinburne horrified the timorous and made himself rather ridiculous in the eyes of sensible people. It remained for Thomas Hardy to pull aside the Victorian veils and shutters and with the large tolerances of the master to regards men’s actions with open gaze.

The literary product was inevitably affected by the new ideas in science, religion and politics. On the *Origin of Species* (1859) of Darwin shook to its foundation scientific thought. We can perceive the influence of such a work in Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, in Matthew Arnold’s meditative poetry and in the works of Carlyle. In religious and ethical thought the Oxford movement as it was called was the most noteworthy advance. This movement had its source among the young and eager thinkers of the old university and was headed by the great Newman who ultimately (1854) joined the Church of Rome. As a religious portent it marked the widespread discontent with the existing belief of the church of England. As a literary influence it affected many writers of note, including Newman himself, Roude, Maurice Kingsley and Gladstone.

The new education acts, making a certain measure of education compulsory, rapidly produced an enormous reading public. The cheapening of printing and paper increased the demand for books so that the production was multiplied. The most popular form of literature was the novel and the novelists responded with a will. Much of their work was of a high standard so much so that it has been asserted by competent critics that the middle years of the nineteenth century were the richest in the whole history of the novel.

#### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Upheaval: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Assault: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Vigour: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Privilege: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Missionary: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Influx: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Ridiculous: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Absorb: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Victorian Novel:** Victorian novels tend to be idealized portraits of difficult lives in which hardwork, perseverance, love and luck win out in the end; virtue would be rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. They tended to be of an improving nature with a central moral lesson at heart. While this formula was the basis for much of earlier Victorian fiction, the situation became more complex as the century progressed.

Victorian fiction was very much a product of its times, and one of the dominant characteristics of Victorian novelists was their sense of identification with their age. One curious aspect of the Victorian novel is the respective censorship exercised by the public opinion. An unofficial censorship exercised by the circulating libraries was able to force the literature to conform to middle-class standards.

The 19th century saw the novel become the leading form of literature in English. The works by pre-Victorian writers such as Jane Austen and Walter Scott had perfected both closely-observed social satire and adventure stories. Popular works opened a market for the novel amongst a reading public. The 19th century is often regarded as a high point in British literature as well as in other countries such as France, the United States and Russia. Books and novels in particular, became ubiquitous, and the “Victorian novelist” created legacy works with continuing appeal.

Significant Victorian novelists and poets include: Matthew Arnold, the Bronte sisters (Emily, Anne and Charlotte Bronte), Christina Rossetti, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Joseph Conrad, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, George Meredith, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing, Richard Jefferies, Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Philip Meadows Taylor, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Thackeray, Oscar Wilde, Lewis Carroll and H. G. Wells (although many people consider his writing to be more of the Edwardian age).

Characteristics of Victorian novel:

- Lose Plots (Fielding’s tradition of writing novel)
- A mixture of strength and weakness
- Entertainment value
- Panoramic value
- Immense variety
- Imaginative rendering of reality
- Humor
- Characterization
- Lack of high artistic standard

Victorian novels tend to be idealized portraits of difficult lives in which hardwork, perseverance, love and luck win out in the end; virtue would be rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. They tended to be of an improving nature with a central moral lesson at heart, mixed with a heavy dose of sentiment. While this formula was the basis for much of earlier Victorian fiction, the situation became more complex as the century progressed.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

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

#### State whether True or False

1. Democracy is not a salient feature of the Victorian Age \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
2. The idea of “manners” essentially sums up the social climate of middle class England in the nineteenth century \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
3. The Victorian age is remarkable because of rapid progress in the arts and sciences \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
4. The Victorian age did not see a compromise between science and religion \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
5. The British Empire extensively expanded its colonial presence in many countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)

#### Fill in the Blanks

1. The Victorian era commonly includes \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_.
2. *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ Movement in religion marked the widespread discontent with the existing belief of the Church of England \_\_\_\_\_.
4. During the Victorian era, \_\_\_\_\_ became the leading form of literature \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In their adoption of loose plots, Victorian writers followed the literary tradition of \_\_\_\_\_.

### 3.5 THE NOVELISTS REPRESENTATIVE OF VICTORIAN AGE

**Charles Dickens (1812-70):** Charles Dickens was extraordinarily popular in his day, with his characters taking on a life of their own beyond the page, and he remains one of the most popular authors of this era. His first real novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, written when he was only twenty-five, was an overnight success, and all his subsequent works sold extremely well. He worked diligently and prolifically to produce entertaining writing the public wanted, but also to offer commentary on social challenges of the era. The comedy of his first novel has a satirical edge which pervades his writings. These deal with the plight of the poor and oppressed and end with a ghost story cut short by his death. The slow trend in his fiction towards darker themes is mirrored in much of the writing of the century, and literature after his death in 1870 is notably different from that at the start of the era. Dickens, very effectively revolts against such a new system in his literary style. In *Oliver Twist*, he presents the seamy (immoral or sordid/ dishonest) side of children being exploited by the underground world. The way Oliver demanded for more soup in the orphanage is perhaps the first protest against the exploitative practices of the age. With the background of industrial revolution and utilitarian philosophy in *Hard Times*, Dickens directly opposes Jeremy Bentham’s and Adam Smith’s theory of education and economy. His famous novels are *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), *Oliver Twist* (1838), was first published with the title *Oliver Twist* with a subtitle, *The Parish boy’s Progress*, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *Barnaby Rudge* (1841),

*Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), *Dombey and Son* (1844), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (unfinished, 1870). Apart from these he has also written many short stories, essays and travel books. Dickens has given his many literary contributions with the pen name 'Boz.' He always wished to please his readers and his works had a strong emotional appeal, good or bad characters would make the reader laugh or cry, while the plot would offer twists and mysteries. He successfully merged realism and fancy. It was his first novel that established him as a comic novelist in the 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition, then his keener social awareness grew with *Oliver Twist* (1837-38) which was based on the living conditions of the poor - especially children - in the city, on the workhouses, on the underworld of London. With him, the 'condition of England novel' developed in England in the 1840s as a result of the growing middle-class awareness of the miserable life of the industrial working-class. His *Hard Times* (1854) ridicules utilitarianism and laissez-faire ideology, while *David Copperfield* (1849-50) describes the society of Victorian England. *Great Expectations* (1860-61) offers more disappointed, more disillusioned view than before (it characterizes Dickens' later works), the first-person narration of the life of Philip Pirrip (Pip), telling how in his childhood he helped the starving convict, Magwitch, how he became devoted to the cold-hearted Estella, the ward of Miss Havisham, how he was given the opportunity to rise and become a gentleman with the allowance of a mysterious benefactor, and how he learns loyalty and humility from his bitter experiences.

**William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63):** He was Dickens's great rival at the time. With a similar style but a slightly more detached, acerbic and barbed satirical view of his characters, he also tended to depict situations of a more middle class flavour than Dickens. He is best known for his novel *Vanity Fair*, which is also an example of a form popular in Victorian literature: the historical novel, in which very recent history is depicted. His realism is different, wherein he keeps a distance —no heroes, no villains – fools, snobbish, selfish, and vain characters. His *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* (1848) offers the Victorian materialistic view of life — opportunism (ambition, self-help: Becky Sharp) and snobism; it shows that life is 'unheroic' none of the characters deserve admiration: the author wished "to indicate in cheerful terms that we are, for the most part, an abominably foolish and selfish people, desperately wicked and all eager after vanities." Even Dobbin is a fool for loving and eventually marrying the unworthy Amelia. It is far from Victorian optimism.

**Emily Brontë (1818-48), Charlotte Brontë (1816-55), Anne Brontë (1820-49):** The sisters spent their childhood in Yorkshire, Northern England amidst nature and the moors. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is a romantic novel, a story of passionate love; multilayered narration: Lockwood (the ordinary outsider) and Nelly Dean (the more subjective 'insider') and many others within the main narrations; Gothic elements (revenge, gloomy settings, ghosts, the demonic Heathcliff); framed narrative with broken chronology. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) is a 'bildungsroman' (a novel of development, tracing the protagonist's growth) where Jane Eyre is an orphan girl growing into an independent, mature woman; though her actions observe the conventional codes, her behaviour still claims independence for women – her marriage in the end means spiritual and financial equality, intellectual companionship as well as sexual passion (much unlike the Victorian pattern); Gothic elements: the mystery of Bertha Mason (the lunatic wife of Rochester).

**George Eliot [Mary Ann Evans] (1819-80):** Another important writer of the period was George Eliot, the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans, who wished to write novels which would be taken seriously rather than the romances which women of the time were supposed to write. She stands at the gateway between the old novel and the new, no unworthy heir to Thackeray and Dickens and no unworthy forerunner of Hardy and Henry James. Her most talked about novels are *Adam Bede* (1859), *Mill on the Floss* (1860, it is a spiritual autobiography), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Middlemarch* (1872), *Romola* (1863), etc. George Eliot is her pen name but her original name is Mary Ann Evans. She was much aware of the concerns of the age. Having studied theology, she could no longer believe in God (her translation of Strauss), and also lived to some extent as an outcast for living together with a married man, George Henry Lewes. She has a definite claim for realism in literature as well as in art, observes and analyses in depth and detail characters and circumstances, called herself a "belated historian" in *Middlemarch* (1871-72), also likened herself to a scientist; her realism is coupled with

sympathy, she tries to understand the motives, the concerns of her characters. Her *Middlemarch* portrays English economic, social and religious life in the years 1829-32. Its heroine, Dorothea Brooke, is a woman in search of her “mission”: a meaningful active life difficult to find for a woman; while Casaubon fails writing his *Key to All Mythologies* for ignoring scientific results. Caleb Garth: the personification of High-Victorian earnestness: serious, determined, hard-working; yet helpful, benevolent and honest, while his wife is the true ‘angel in the house.’

**Thomas Hardy** (1840-1928): Thomas Hardy was born on 2 June 1840 in the village of Higher [Upper] Bockhampton in Stinsford parish near the town of Dorchester in Dorset County, England, the first of four children born to Jemima *nee* Hand (1814-1904) and Thomas Hardy Sr. (1811-1892), builder and stonemason. His birthplace, built by his great grandfather, is now a museum owned by the National Trust. Young Thomas was given to quieter childhood pursuits, often spending time alone wandering the countryside, exploring the flora and fauna, gaining a profound connection with nature and the familiar sights and sounds of his rural home county. His mother had a great influence on his imagination, entertaining him with stories and songs, many of which would later inspire his Wessex tales.

His well-known novels are *The Desperate Remedies* (1871, first novel), *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872, first Wessex novel), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of the Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1895, last novel). Apart from these he has also written poems and short stories. His novels are set in “Wessex,” his characters are no longer masters of their fates, they are exposed to the indifferent forces that determine human destiny. Hardy’s pessimism is quite apparent in his works. Unlike the high Victorians who were concerned with people in society, Hardy studies the elemental forces of human behaviour. For instance, *Tess of D’Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* (1891) is the story of Tess, an innocent young girl seduced by the vulgar Alec D’Urberville, later rejected by her love and suitor (husband) Angel Clare for her ‘fallen’ state, finally driven to murder and consequently being hanged.

**Oscar Wilde** (1854-1900): Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde was an Irish playwright, novelist, essayist, and poet. After writing in different forms throughout the 1880s, he became one of London’s most popular playwrights in the early 1890s. He published two collections of children’s stories, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888), and *The House of Pomegranates* (1892). His first and only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was published in an American magazine in 1890 to a storm of critical protest. He expanded the story and had it published in book form the following year. Its implied homoerotic theme was considered very immoral by the Victorians and played a considerable part in his later legal trials.

Lord Henry in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) is a spokesman of ‘new hedonism,’ which is a belief that pleasure is the most important thing in life, of aestheticism [art for art’s sake], of the conscious disregard for high Victorian values, especially morals. Dorian, an innocent young man, has his portrait painted by his friend, Basil Hallward. Dorian wishes that the picture would grow old instead of himself, it comes true, and as the portrait becomes hideous (bearing the traits of Dorian’s wicked, sinful life), Dorian preserves his youthful, innocent looks. Life and art change places; wishing to destroy the portrait Dorian stabs ‘himself’ and is found dead aged and ugly. The novel ‘deconstructs’ itself: it preaches ‘new hedonism’ but the outcome suggests that such a way of life would not pass without its due punishment.

By contrast, the novels of Anthony Trollope [1815-1882] are light of touch, pleasant, amusing, and thoroughly healthy. They make no attempt to sound the depths of character or either to propound or solve problems.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, now that you have read about the representative novelists of the Victorian age, here is an exercise for you which will help you revise the previous section.

Match the name of the writer with the works written by them:

- |                                |                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. Charles Dickens             | i. <i>Jude the Obscure</i>            |
| b. William Makepeace Thackeray | ii. <i>Jane Eyre</i>                  |
| c. Emily Bronte                | iii. <i>Vanity Fair</i>               |
| d. Charlotte Bronte            | iv. <i>Middlemarch</i>                |
| e. George Eliot                | v. <i>Hard Times</i>                  |
| f. Thomas Hardy                | vi. <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> |
| g. Oscar Wilde                 | vii. <i>Wuthering Heights</i>         |

### 3.6 LET US SUM UP

Dear Learners, we discussed that the literature of the age was disciplined by the demand for strong moral earnestness. A new temper which is described as “realistic” is the dominant note of this age. A Victorian novelist had to satisfy a multiplicity of tastes: he had to be a philosopher, psychologist, and an artist to mix slapstick and sentiment. Victorian novel was marked with a note on individuality and originality.

### 3.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. He was a Victorian novelist who first started writing under the pseudonym “Boz.” His novel *David Copperfield* is considered autobiographical \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Thomas Hardy
  - b) Charles Dickens
  - c) George Eliot
  - d) Oscar Wilde
2. The book *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carol abounds in fusions of the real and the fantastical. What is this genre called? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Literary Nonsense
  - b) Realism
  - c) Fantasy
  - d) Tragedy
3. This Victorian novelist wrote many poems too. His collection of poems *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* was published in 1898 \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Charles Dickens
  - b) George Eliot

- c) Oscar Wilde
  - d) Thomas Hardy
4. Many of Dickens' characters have symbolic names. Name the benefactor of Pip, the protagonist in *Great Expectations*. \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Magwitch
  - b) Mr Jaggers
  - c) Mr Pumblechook
  - d) Wemmick
5. Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brönte were three sisters, each of whom published a novel in 1847. Which novel is not one of the three published that year? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Villette*
  - b) *Agnes Grey*
  - c) *Jane Eyre*
  - d) *Wuthering Heights*
6. What is the name of the female protagonist in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* who marries Mr. Casaubon? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mary Garth
  - b) Dorothea Brooke
  - c) Rosamond Vincy
  - d) Celia Brooke
7. William Makepeace Thackeray wrote a novel which is a satire of the English society during the 19th century. The title of the novel was borrowed from the allegorical story *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Name the novel. \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *The Virginians*
  - b) *Catherine*
  - c) *The Luck of Bary Lyndon*
  - d) *Vanity Fair*
8. Oscar Wilde was a prolific writer in various genres - drama, prose, poetry. What is his only published novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Intentions*
  - b) *A Woman of No Importance*
  - c) *The Importance of Being Earnest*
  - d) *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

### 3.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the main novelists of the Victorian age and how they represented their times.
2. Discuss the social and political context of the Victorian period that formed the background for development of the novel.
3. Write a note on the art of Charles Dickens as a novelist.

### 3.9 ANSWER KEY

#### CYP

#### True or False

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. True

#### Fill in the Blanks

1. sixty
2. 1859
3. Oxford
4. Novel
5. Henry Fielding

#### Let Us Revise

a- v; b- iii; c-vii; d-ii; e-iv; f-i; g-vi

SAQs : 1) b, 2) a, 3) d, 4) a, 5) a, 6) b, 7) d, 8) d

#### Examination Oriented Questions

**Ans. 3. Art of Charles Dickens as a Novelist:** According to David Cecil, Dickens is “the most representative of Victorian novelists”. Some will contend that he is also the greatest. He shows his basic humanity, a childlike naivete, and an amazingly fecund imagination through his works. These qualities place him among the foremost of all English novelists. Dickens achieved in his lifetime wide popularity among all sections of readers.

Dickens’ art is art with a purpose. Dickens did not shut himself up in an ivory tower of such a kind as “aesthetic culture” or “Gothicism.” In his novels he strikes from first to last a loud and clear note of humanitarianism which is the most attractive note in the Dickensian orchestra. He can be called one of the greatest social reformers of his time. That he works in earnest is unquestionable-but he does not let himself fly into tantrums or slide into the quagmire of cynicism of social reformers.

Many a novel of Dickens seems to have been built around a particular social theme. For instance, *Bleak House* attacks “the law’s delays”; *Nicholas Nickleby*, the abuses of charity schools and the sadism of schoolmasters; *Hard Times*, the pet concepts of the then current “political economy” which was also attacked by Ruskin and Carlyle; *Little Dorrit*, the inhumanities to which poor debtors are often subjected; and so forth. But above all such social criticism is the basic lesson of humanness and charity which almost all Dickens’ novels teach implicitly or explicitly. Nowhere does Dickens say that “all is right with the world,” but nowhere does he say either that “all is wrong with the world.” He is a realist no less than an optimist.

The fertility of Dickens’ creative imagination is simply amazing. His first novel, *Pickwick Papers*, had a swarming mass of finely delineated characters, and he kept up the pace of supply for all the subsequent novels. One very peculiar feature of Dickens’ work as a novelist is that his novels, when joined together, create a world of their own, somewhat different no doubt from our world and even the real world of his own day but nonetheless akin to both in many ways.

The world of Dickens’ novels has very recognizable contours and peculiarities and is full of characters whom we know better than even our aunts and uncles. Take any character from Dickens. He seems every inch a denizen of Dickens’ world. We generally find it difficult to recall to which *novel* he belongs, but we do not find it difficult to say to which *world* he belongs. As a painter of the life of his day Dickens works on a very crowded canvas, and very often he uses colours which are too blazing to be compatible with reality. Dickens is more successful with characters drawn from the middle and lower classes of his society. As a child and young man he had seen and even experienced the life of these classes. It was in his blood even after he had become a high-hat with his thumping success in the field of fiction. He is much less successful with the bigwigs and aristocracy. There are some set types which make their appearance much too often in Dickens’ novels.

On the strictly structural side of his art, Dickens can boast only of modest success. Several of his novels mock the very ideal of structure, or even any other principle of pattern. It was only in his latest novels—*Bleak House*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Our Mutual Friend*—that he was able to offer somewhat coherent plots. For the rest, they all exhibit a gross neglect of all architectonic principles. For one thing, he is always more interested in individual episodes and individual characters than in the job of integrating them into a wellproportioned pattern.

But we readily excuse Dickens’ architectonic deficiency the moment we take cognizance of his humour. Humour is the very soul of his work. It prevents his novels from becoming tiresome. He is never a bore. Dickens’ humour arises from a deep human sympathy and is ever fresh and refreshing. Sometimes his humour is corrective and satiric-but it always has the quality of geniality, charity, and tolerance. But in one way, at least, Dickens’ humour rises above being a flashy, superficial affair, and that is its proximity to pathos.

A peculiar feature of Dickens’ art as novelist is his tendency to be autobiographic. He constantly draws upon his own experience, and the sympathies and antipathies which we find so persistently manifested by him in his work very often have their origin in the years of his adolescence. Many of his novels are the records of his own life-though modified by subjection to the canons of art. Thus *David Copperfield* is, in essentials, Dickens’ autobiography. *Oliver Twist* uses a lot of material supplied by his own experience of the low life of London in his tender years. In *Bleak House* he draws substantially upon his early knowledge of law courts and legal affairs. He recollects his school days in *Nicholas Nickleby*. And so forth.

In spite of the formidable number of flaws and limitations from which Dickens’ art as a novelist suffers, he is a great novelist. His humour, basic human sympathy, and his rich, vitalising imagination are his basic assets, even though he is deficient in the architectural skill as well as other formal and “technical” qualifications as a novelist.

### 3.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. Rodensky, Lisa, *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel*. University Press, 2016.
2. David, Deirdre. *The Cambridge Companion to The Victorian Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
3. Mac Donald Tara. *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel*. Taylor & Francis Limited, 2019.
4. Horton, Tim, and Neha Anand. *Characteristics of English Literature in Victorian Era*. Dominant Publishers & Distributors, 2022. *Characteristics of English Literature in Victorian Era*, [wisdompress.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Characteristics-of-English-Literature-in-Victorian-Era.pdf](http://wisdompress.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Characteristics-of-English-Literature-in-Victorian-Era.pdf).

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## **LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF NOVEL UP TO THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

### **STRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 4.3 Historical and Political Background of the 20th Century
- 4.4 Literary Trends in 20th Century
- 4.5 Novel in 20th Century
- 4.6 Main Novelists of the 20th Century
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 4.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 4.10 Answer Key
- 4.11 Suggested Reading

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The modern novel rejected the culture of the past but at the same time, it would be wrong to say that the 20th century novel as an art form was dead. As the novel of this age broke free from the dominance of religion and moral codes, it experimented with techniques like stream of consciousness and genre like science fiction.

### **4.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to the social background of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the literary trends of novel in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to analyse the social background of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and relate it with the development of novel. You will also be able to list the literary trends as well as recognise a few important figures who have added new dimensions to the genre of novel during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **4.3 HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

The long and progressive reign of Queen Victoria came to a climax in the Diamond Jubilee Year (1897), a time of peace and plenty when the British Empire seemed to be at the zenith of its power and security. When Queen Victoria died, England was one of the most powerful nations in the world, the British Empire was huge, the Navy and the Army were well trained and invincible, the manufacturing and trading middle class was

prosperous. However, the 20th century saw the decline of Britain partly caused by the impressive growth of German industry and also by new emerging powers, the USA and Japan.

During the reign of Queen Victoria's eldest son, Edward VII, a policy of peace and good relationships with foreign countries was followed. England lived in the wave of Victorian optimism: the illusion that the economic and social situation of the country was destined to prosper forever even if the gap between the rich and the poor still existed. Society was organized like a pyramid, at the top of the social ladder there was the aristocracy with its privileges, it was followed by the middle class divided into upper (professionals and managers) and lower (shopkeepers and clerks). At the bottom there was the working class divided into skilled and unskilled workers whose families were very large with high infant mortality rate, very bad housing conditions and still subject to social injustices.

In this period the Liberal Party won the general election and launched a program of social reforms to help the poor and the old, laying the foundations of the welfare state. It was the first time the British Government decided to spend money on the welfare of people; the most important reforms included School Meal Act for providing meals for children in need; Coal Mines Regulation Act for 8 hours' working day, Old Age Pension for people over 70; Parliament Act to weaken the power of the House of Lords and National Insurance Act: to insure workers against sickness.

In this period (1903) the movement of Suffragettes was born asking for universal suffrage for all women. It came in 1918 (for women aged 30) and in 1928 (for women aged 21) after they chained themselves to railings, broke windows and cried for their rights. It was the first form of battle for emancipation. When George V went to the throne in 1910 he had to face the event which changed the face of the world: World War I. The main cause was the ambition of the German Emperor William II who abandoned the policy of peace of Bismark and wanted his country to become more powerful than England and France. He wanted to conquer the Balkan States to cut off Russia from the Mediterranean and England from its control over Egypt and India.

The occasion was the murder of the heir to the Austrian throne, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand by a Serbian student. So Austria attacked Serbia and Germany attacked the neutral territory of Belgium. On the other side Russia supported Serbia, while England and France declared war to Germany.

It was Britain's first European war since Napoleonic times apart from the Crimean war. George V decided to abandon his name "Hannover" and changed it into Windsor. The war lasted four years, Russia collapsed in 1917 because of the Bolshevik revolution. Italy, which was neutral at the beginning and had sided with England, France and Russia in 1915, was defeated by Austria at Caporetto, while the USA joined the war in 1917 as a "crusade for democracy" and accelerated the German defeat. The armistice was signed in 1918 and the Peace treaty was signed at Versailles in 1919.

The war caused the ruin of the four great European Empires and made possible a communist revolution in Russia. The American President Wilson devised a plan to keep peace so the League of Nations was born, but the American Senate voted against involvement in European matters, so the USA never joined the league. During the years of the first post-war period enthusiasm was replaced by discomfort and disillusion. The consequences of the war were:

- even if unemployment disappeared thanks to a rise in demand for war production, there was a rise in prices which led to inflation and rise in taxation;
- the process of emancipation of women started because women proved to be competent in every field during the absence of men who were at war (suffragettes); a step towards equality of the sexes;
- labourers became conscious of their rights so trade unions grew in power and importance; there were many social reforms and even living habits changed: cigarette smoking, cinema, gambling, use of contraceptives;

The growth in industries in Asia and Japan caused a deterioration of European economy. Great depression,

which was made worse by the wall street crash in 1929 followed by the new deal policy established by the American President Roosevelt. It was an age of reforms according to which people were set to work on jobs which were useful to the community as building new roads, schools, hospitals. It was only towards the end of the 30s that the situation improved. Industries were reorganized and new sectors were created such as electricity, artificial fibres, plastic, motor-vehicles. Mass production led to the creation of chain stores, advertising became very important, the growth of the population slowed down because of birthcontrol practices, families became smaller and women with more leisure time became more independent.

As regards England, the two main events were the situation in India and the Irish question. As for India the situation worsened because many Indians had fought for Britain in the First world war and asked for more freedom but the English Parliament refused, so Gandhi started a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience and non-cooperation until the British government declared to leave India in 1947. Thus India was divided into two parts : a Hindu one and a Muslim one later called Pakistan and Gandhi was killed by a fanatic in 1948. Even other dominions of the former British Empire acquired their independence as Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Commonwealth was created.

As regards politics, in 1918 the Liberal Party was replaced by the Labour Party even if power was always in the hands of the Conservatives, who faced the Second World War. When in 1936 George V died, his son Edward VIII went to the throne but his reign only lasted 10 months because he abdicated in favour of his brother George VI to marry a twicedivorced American lady. George had to face the II world war conflict. It started in 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland and in 1940 Denmark and Norway and then Holland, Belgium and France. England and France formed a coalition to stop Germany, the USA decided not to join the war at first, Roosevelt only obtained consent from the Congress to send war material to England.

In 1940 Italy declared war to France and England, France was defeated and in England there was the Battle of Britain won by the pilots of the Royal Airforce. In 1941 Germany attacked Russia and Japan bombed the American naval base of Pearl Harbour forcing the USA to enter the war. Because of the cold Russian winter Germany and Italy were defeated, Italy was invaded by the Americans in 1943 and in 1944 the Allies invaded Normandy and freed France. The USA, using atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima destroyed Japan so the war was over. In 1945 after Hitler's suicide Germany surrendered.

The English Prime Minister Winston Churchill drew up the Atlantic Charter aiming at the respect of human rights because this war cost more civilians than soldiers for bombing of towns, atomic bomb and racism against the Jews. After the war the Labour Party won the elections and followed the ideas of the Beveridge Report which promoted a series of measures to be taken in order to protect and promote the welfare of British people. The welfare state was born, it was a series of schemes and services assumed by the Government and local authorities to deal with all types of social problems such as housing, education and health.

### **Let Us Revise**

Dear learner, the previous section familiarised you with the historical and political background of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Take a moment to revise the section before proceeding to the next section.

1. A few important reforms which laid the foundation of a welfare state in England during the 20<sup>th</sup> century include: \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Universal suffrage for women in England came in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When World War I broke out, England was headed by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. After Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England, \_\_\_\_\_ became the monarch of England\_\_\_\_\_.
5. The Atlantic Charter was released by the British Prime Minister \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 4.4 LITERARY TRENDS IN 20TH CENTURY

Adapting the theories of linguists and philosophers such as Ferdinand Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein, twentieth-century writers began to treat language as a “game,” creating fragmented word combinations, ambiguous meanings, and experimental forms. Dadaism and Surrealism were among the most influential early twentieth-century literary movements. The goal of the Dadaists was to abolish the restraints of authority by breaking the conventions of literature and art; the goal of the Surrealists was to express the unconscious mind through dream writing, automatic writing, and fantasy. Although the term “modernism” generally refers to the collective literary trend in the early twentieth century, it more precisely applies to a group of British and American writers—such as James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot—who crafted carefully worded images in colloquial language. In the broader sense of “modernism,” early twentieth century writers broke up the traditional plot structure of narratives, experimented with language, fragmented ideas, played with shifting perspectives, and drew self-conscious attention to the very nature of language itself.

Despite the experiments with style and content, early modernists continued to hope that through art they could rediscover the meaning and unity lost in modern society. By midcentury, a growing number of writers, often referred to as postmodernists, abandoned that hope and began instead to create literature that celebrates rather than laments the inability of language and literature to bring conclusion and meaning to the modern experience. Postmodern writers playfully create allusions, contradictions, meta-narratives, and linguistic games in order to disrupt reader’s expectations of fixed, objective references. At the end of the 20th century, as geopolitical boundaries blurred and shifted, an increased recognition of the diversity of cultural identities in ethnic, gender, and sexual issues led to a correspondent pluralism in writing that depicts the full range of human diversity. Included in these new perspectives is attention to the efforts of postcolonial cultures to develop a consciousness apart from that of their colonizers.

#### 4.5 NOVEL IN 20TH CENTURY

The 20th century has been called the “age of interrogation”, with the spirit of inquiry testing the age-old beliefs. With the encouragement of inquisitiveness came emancipation, but it was not without vengeance. Values began to crumble. So, the nature and function of the novel also changed. It was felt that a novel could be about anything, and none of the tacit obligations, which had been ruling till this time, were regarded important anymore. Even intelligible language could be compromised. Experimentation became the norm of the times. The novel could be realistic or unrealistic, it could either conform to a storyline or even dispense away with a rigid plot and instead present a range of scenes.

The modern novel had a different conception of what is significant in human life. Earlier, the novelists were primarily concerned with the economic and social context and how these conditions influenced the life of the characters. But the modern novel, instead of tracing the graph of individuals on the lines of social and economic conditions, considered these as less significant. Moreover, modern psychology had an impact on the novelists and the genre.

The conception of time also changed. It was no longer treated as a movement of moments, each of which passes away irretrievably. Rather, it was considered as a continuous flow having no divisible parts. All moments were always present.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Collapse: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Abolish: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Restraints: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Crumble: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Voyage: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Dominate: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.6 MAIN NOVELISTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

**H.G. Wells:** Herbert George Wells was born on 21 September 1866 in Bromley, Kent County, England, son of Sarah Neal, maid to the upper classes, and Joseph Wells, shopkeeper and professional cricket player. The Wells were quite poor and it was not the happiest of marriages; they would soon live apart though neither re-married. At an early age Herbert was an avid reader but it would be some years before his talents as a writer were realised. He attended Thomas Morley's Academy for a few years before financial hardship forced him to leave and seek practical employment.

H.G. Wells is regarded as the father of the science fiction. His *Two Men in the Moon*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The Wonderful Visit* are imaginative and hold the attention of the reader. In his novels like *Kipps* and *The History of Mr Polly*, he offers a sympathetic but an unsentimental picture of the lower middle class English life.

Wells' masterpiece spawned more invasion literature and inspired numerous movie adaptations and print sequels. Part prophet, part pessimist, Wells was a prolific author not just of science fiction but also fiction and non-utopian and dystopian short stories, travel sketches, histories, and socio-political commentary. While his most popular works tend to show a bleak future for humanity, he was not without his sardonic wit and wry humour.

**John Galsworthy:** He was the eldest son of solicitor John Galsworthy (1817–1904) and Blanche Bailey (1837–1915). He was born at Parkfield, Kingston Hill, Surrey on 14 August 1867. After attending Harrow School (1881–1886) he went on to study law at New College, Oxford, from which he would be elected as an honorary fellow in 1926. He was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1890. Over the course of his lifetime he earned honorary degrees from the Universities St Andrews (1922), Manchester (1927), Dublin (1929), Cambridge (1930), Sheffield (1930), Oxford (1931), and Princeton (1931). Whilst travelling with the aim of studying marine law, he met Joseph Conrad on a South Seas voyage near Adelaide, Australia. They soon became life-long friends.

Writing merely for his own amusement around the age of twenty-eight, Galsworthy first published a collection of his short stories, *From the Four Winds* (1897) and the novel *Jocelyn* (1898) at his own expense and under the pseudonym John Sinjohn. After realising that the practice of law was not for him, he published his first novel *The Island Pharisees* (1904) under his own name, and which in his opinion remained his most important work. The English novelist and playwright won the 1932 Nobel Prize in Literature "for his distinguished art of narration which takes its highest form in *The Forsyte Saga*" published between 1906 and 1921 and as a collection in 1922. The second series of novels in the Forsyte roman fleuve would be *The White Monkey* (1924), *The Silver Spoon* (1926), and *Swan Song* (1928). *Maid in Waiting* (1931), *Flowering Wilderness* (1932), and *Over the River* (1933) comprised the third.

*The Man of Property* (1906) would be the first of the *The Forsyte Saga*. Chronicling three generations of the Victorian upper-class Forsyte family, it was followed by *Indian Summer of a Forsyte*, *In Chancery*, and *Awakening* in 1920 and *To Let* in 1921. The Forsyte obsession with wealth, status, and acquisition is apparent. Galsworthy satirically though not unsympathetically criticises the hollow insularity of everything from matters of property and marriage to the ideologies of the very class he was born into.

**D.H. Lawrence:** David Herbert Lawrence was born on September 11, 1885, in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, central England. He was the fourth child of a struggling coal miner who was a heavy drinker. His mother was a former schoolteacher, greatly superior in education to her husband. Lawrence's childhood was dominated by poverty and friction between his parents. He was educated at Nottingham High School, to which he had won a scholarship. He worked as a clerk in a surgical appliance factory and then for four years as a pupil-teacher. After studies at Nottingham University, Lawrence matriculated at 22 and briefly pursued a teaching career. Lawrence's mother died in 1910; he helped her die by giving her an overdose of sleeping medicine. The appearance of his first novel, *The White Peacock* (1911), launched Lawrence into a writing career. In 1912 he met Frieda von Richthofen, the professor Ernest Weekly's wife and fell in love with her. Frieda left her husband and three children, and they eloped to Bavaria.

Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* appeared in 1913 and was based on his childhood. In 1914 Lawrence married Frieda von Richthofen, and traveled with her in several countries. Lawrence's fourth novel, *The Rainbow* (1915), was about two sisters growing up in the north of England. Lawrence started to write *The Lost Girl* in Italy. He dropped the novel for some years and rewrote the story in an old Sicilian farmhouse near Taormina in 1920. Lawrence's best-known work is *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, first published privately in Florence in 1928. It tells of the love affair between a wealthy, married woman, and a man who works on her husband's estate. The book was banned for a time in both UK and the US as pornographic. Lawrence's other novels from the 1920s include *Women In Love* (1920), a sequel to *The Rainbow*.

*Aaron's Rod* (1922) shows the influence of Nietzsche, and in *Kangaroo* (1923) Lawrence expressed his own idea of a 'superman.' *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) was a vivid evocation of Mexico and its ancient Aztec religion. *The Man Who Died* (1929), is a bold story of Christ's Resurrection. Lawrence's non-fiction works include *Movements In European History* (1921), *Psychoanalysis And The Unconscious* (1922) and *Studies In Classic American Literature* (1923). D.H. Lawrence died in Venice, France on March 2, 1930. He also gained posthumous renown for his expressionistic paintings completed in the 1920s.

**James Joyce:** James Joyce was born in Dublin, on February 2, 1882. He was the son of John Stanislaus Joyce, an underprivileged gentleman, who had failed in a distillery business and had tried different kinds of professions, including politics and tax collecting. Joyce's mother, Mary Jane Murray, was an accomplished pianist, whose life was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. In spite of their poverty, the family struggled to keep up a middle-class facade. Joyce, an Irish novelist, is noted for his experimental use of language in works like *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Joyce's technical innovations in the art of the novel include an extensive use of interior monologue. In fact, he used a complex network of symbolic parallels drawn from the mythology, history, and literature, and created a unique language of invented words, puns, and allusions. In 1914, his *Dubliners* was published, then came *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1916, and *Ulysses* in 1922. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* relied heavily on Joyce's autobiographical experience and was written with complexity and objectivity. This novel did very poorly, financially; however, many avant-garde writers admired this book.

**Virginia Woolf:** Born as Adeline Virginia Stephen on January 25, 1882, in London, England, she came to be an essayist, novelist, publisher, critic, especially famous for her novels and feminist writings. A fine stylist, she experimented with several forms of biographical writing, composed painterly short fictions, and sent to her friends and family a lifetime of brilliant letters. Her most notable works are the novels *Mrs Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves* and the feminist essay *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf was an active figure in the London literary society during the interwar period. Virginia Woolf was part of the Bloomsbury Group, an intellectual circle of artists and writers. The group became known in 1910 with Dreadnought Hoax, a hoax in which Woolf had participated with a masculine pen name. In the Bloomsbury group she met Leonard Woolf, they married in 1912 despite his poverty. The couple is known to have led a happy married life and also to have collaborated professionally, most notably with the founding of the Hogarth Press. *Mrs Dalloway* is the story of Clarissa Dalloway, a society woman preparing a party that she would host. The story is set in England, just after World War I. The narrative travels back and forth in time as well as in and out of each character's

minds, constructing a unique perspective on post-war English society as well as Clarissa's life. The novel also works with themes of mental illness, in the figure of a shell-shocked war survivor who suffers as doctors dismiss his condition, and who ultimately commits suicide. The book examines feminist issues with Dalloway as a personification of the female stereotype, sexually and economically repressed, as well as in the figure of Sally Seton, who appears as her opposite; an independent and carefree woman. It is also with Seton that Dalloway shares an unforgettable kiss which Dalloway defines as the happiest moment of her life.

In 1927 Woolf published *To the Lighthouse*, a novel set over the course of two days, with a gap of ten years. The novel is the drama of the Ramsay family in its reflections on a visit to the lighthouse. One of the central themes within this novel is the creative process of a painter named Lily Briscoe. The work also explores the everyday life of people during times of war, as well as the unbalanced relationship between men and women.

In 1928 Virginia Woolf published *Orlando*, partly as a portrait of Vita Sackville-West, her lover. The book is a parodic biography of an eternally young nobleman that lives for three centuries without becoming older than thirty, and who suddenly turns into a woman. In *Orlando*, Woolf satirically assumes the role of a historical biographer. The work also satirizes Vita herself, even if it was meant as consolation for the loss of Vita's ancestral home. Virginia Woolf died on the 28th of March 1941 in East Sussex, England, at the age of 59.

**Joseph Conrad:** His real name was Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski. He was born on December 3, 1857 at Berdichev in Ukraine. This writer of Polish descent is known for novels including *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostramo* (1904), and *The Secret Agent* (1907). During his lifetime Conrad was admired for the richness of his prose and his renderings of dangerous life at sea and in exotic places. But his initial reputation as a masterful teller of colourful adventures of the sea masked his fascination with the individual when faced with nature's invariable unconcern, man's frequent malevolence, and his inner battles with good and evil. To Conrad, the sea meant above all the tragedy of loneliness. A writer of complex skill and striking insight, but above all of an intensely personal vision, he has been increasingly regarded as one of the greatest English novelists. He died on August 3, 1924, at Canterbury, in Kent, England.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, now that you are familiar with the literary trends as well as the major novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, you can assess your progress by trying to answer these questions. You can check the answer key if you are not able to get all the answers right.

Fill in the blanks:

1. Twentieth century writers were influenced by the linguistic and philosophical theories of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were among the most influential early twentieth-century literary movements \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Exploration of the unconscious mind through dream writing, automatic writing, and fantasy is a characteristic of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are major modernist writers \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been called \_\_\_\_\_.

State whether True or False

1. H.G. Wells is regarded as the father of the science fiction \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
2. *Finnegans Wake* is written by H.G. Wells \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
3. *The Silver Spoon* is John Galsworthy's first published novel \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
4. John Galsworthy won the Nobel Prize in Literature for *The Forsyte Saga* \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
5. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was banned in the UK and US because it was considered pornographic \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
6. *Women in Love* is a sequel to *The Rainbow* \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
7. James Joyce was an English novelist \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
8. James Joyce extensively used interior monologue and a complex network of symbolic parallels drawn from mythology, history, and literature in his novels \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
9. *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, and *Mrs Dalloway* are novels written by Virginia Woolf \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
10. *The Secret Agent*, *Lord Jim*, *Nostramo* is the correct sequence of publication of Joseph Conrad's novels \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)

#### 4.7 LET US SUM UP

Despite diversity, the 20th century novels typically focus on themes like the individual in society and the temporality of human existence. Modernist novels tend to fall into three obvious periods: 1900-1920s (a time of experimentation, allusiveness, and complexity); 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s (a time when novelists returned to social realism); and post-1960s (a period when important writers emerged from post-colonial contexts). In its early stages, the Modernist novel turned inward to contemplate the workings of the individual mind (of characters and authors themselves). This marked a reaction to the Victorian concern for exploring vast social landscapes in the novel. Later Modernist novelists were no less experimental, necessarily, though they often returned the issues of politics and class to fiction that early Modernists had not examined so closely. Contemporary English fiction, if it is possible to distill any common tendencies from its diversity, often looks backwards, uneasily, to England's earlier days. Much contemporary fiction thus looks to provide a sense of perspective, as though the culture itself is now working through what its own history has meant, for good and for ill.

#### 4.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Which of these novels is not part of the *Forsyte Saga*, written by English novelist John Galsworthy? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Money*
  - b) *In Chancery*

- c) *The Man of Property*
  - d) *To Let*
2. This massive novel, consisting of eighteen chapters, chronicles the events of one single day in the life of the protagonist Leopold Bloom. \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Ulysses*
  - b) *Dubliners*
  - c) *Finnegans Wake*
  - d) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
3. Which of these influential 20th century authors was not Irish-born? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) George Bernard Shaw
  - b) William Butler Yeats
  - c) James Joyce
  - d) William Golding
4. In 1989, the author of this book and all those involved in its publication were sentenced to death by the Supreme Leader of Iran. \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Lady Chatterley's Lover*
  - b) *The Gate at the End of the World*
  - c) *Songs of Enchantment*
  - d) *The Satanic Verses*
5. Which of these English authors was a member of the Bloomsbury group, a literary circle that rejected the Victorian taboos on religious, artistic, social, and sexual matters? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Virginia Woolf
  - b) George Orwell
  - c) D.H. Lawrence
  - d) John Fowles
6. Which allegorical novel by William Golding features a group of boys stranded on a desert island? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Lord of the Flies*
  - b) *Rites of Passage*
  - c) *Darkness Visible*
  - d) *Fire Down Below*

7. This novel focuses on Winston Smith and his attempt to rebel against the totalitarian state in which he lives.\_\_\_\_\_.

- a) *The War of the Worlds*
- b) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
- c) *Animal farm*
- d) *The Invisible Man*

#### **4.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

- 1. Write a note on the social and cultural background of the 20th century.
- 2. Trace the development of the modern novel/20th century novel through the novelists of the time.

#### **4.10 ANSWER KEY**

##### **Let Us Revise**

- 1. School Meal Act, Coal Mines Regulation Act, Parliament Act
- 2. 1928
- 3. George V
- 4. George VI
- 5. Winston Churchill

##### **CYP**

##### **Fill in the Blanks**

- 1. Ferdinand Saussure, Ludwig Wittgenstein
- 2. Dadaism, Surrealism
- 3. surrealism
- 4. Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot
- 5. Age of Interrogation

##### **True or False**

- 1. True
- 2. False
- 3. False
- 4. True
- 5. True
- 6. True

7. False
8. True
9. True
10. False

SAQs : 1) a, 2) a, 3) d, 4) d, 5) a, 6) a, 7) b

### Examination Oriented Questions

**Ans. 1. Social and cultural background of the 20th century:** The twentieth century introduces a cultural period in which individuals not only reject the past but also question the very basis of knowledge and consider the possibility that knowledge and concepts once thought to be fixed and objective are instead constantly shifting and subjective. Philosophers and thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud challenged nineteenth-century science and the positivist confidence in its ability to explain both the physical and social worlds in completely rational terms. World War First had a powerful impact in its aftermath, causing Europeans to reconsider their very belief systems and leading to widespread dissatisfaction with the authorities who, many believed, were motivated by greed, class exploitation, and hunger for power. A growing interest in psychology influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud contributed to a new emphasis on the internal reality of individuals, the importance of the self, and the alienation of the self in modern society. New studies in the relationship between reality and appearance led to the philosophies of phenomenology and existentialism as represented in the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. After the Second World War, the rise of Communism, the gradual disintegration of colonialism, and the exponential development of technology, existentialism flourished in the 1940s and 1950s as individuals struggled to find meaning in an increasingly fragmented and confusing world. A growing awareness of a variety of other cultures that have differing worldviews than traditional European or American ones undercut the assumptions of “cultural parochialism” and led to pluralistic and postcolonial perspectives.

### 4.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. Caserio, Robert L . *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth Century Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 2009, ebook.
2. Nevins, Jess. *Horror Fiction in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century : Exploring Literatures, Most Chilling Genre*. ABC-CLIO, 2020, ebook.
3. Woodcock George. *20<sup>th</sup> Century Fiction, Volume 6*. St. James Press, 1985.
4. Beer, John Bernard. “*The Modernist Revolution*.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 12 Dec. 2025, [www.britannica.com/art/English-literature/The-Modernist-revolution](http://www.britannica.com/art/English-literature/The-Modernist-revolution).

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**CHARLES DICKENS: *HARD TIMES*****STRUCTURE**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 5.3 Charles Dickens' Early Life
- 5.4 Social Background of Victorian Society
- 5.5 Reaction against Victorian Materialism
- 5.6 Let us Sum Up
- 5.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 5.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 5.9 Answer Key
- 5.10 Suggested Reading

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Charles Dickens was an English writer and social critic. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters and is regarded by many as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. His works enjoyed unprecedented popularity during his lifetime, and 20th century critics and scholars had recognised him as a literary genius. His novels and short stories are still widely read even today.

**5.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to offer you a detailed biography of Charles Dickens, one of the major novelists during the Victorian era. The lesson also aims to make you familiar with the social conditions during the Victorian era.

After going through this lesson, you will be familiar with the life of Charles Dickens as well as recognise the literary contributions made by him. Further, you will get acquainted with the social conditions prevalent during the Victorian era and establish Charles Dickens as a representative novelist whose works reflect the social reality of Victorian England.

**5.3 CHARLES DICKENS' EARLY LIFE**

Charles Dickens was born at Landport, in Portsea, on February 7, 1812. His father was a clerk in the Navy Pay-Office, and was temporarily on duty in the neighbourhood. Very soon after the birth of Charles Dickens, the family moved for a short period to Norfolk street, Bloomsbury, and then for a long period to Chatham, which became the real home, and for all serious purposes, the native place of Dickens. Dickens family had two servants, one of whom, named Mary Weller used to tell Dickens terror tales that gave him nightmares. Charles Dickens' father, John Dickens seemed, most probably, a hearty and kind character who was an irresponsible father and a selfish man.

Charles Dickens was ambitious as a child. He longed to go to school and college to be a thorough gentleman and share the tradition of great English men of letters. Charles thought his home and family a very good platform to work for the fulfilment of his dreams. And almost as he was about to start himself, the whole structure broke under him and all his dreams were shattered with a sudden blow of circumstances. His father became bankrupt and was imprisoned in Marshalsea prison. He was forced to pawn the household goods including his books as a means of sustenance. As a result, Charles Dickens, at the age of twelve, found himself in the Warren's Blacking Factory, pasting labels on the bottles from morning till night. The experience of working in the Blacking Factory for six months left an indelibly humiliating impression on the sensitive and dreaming mind of Dickens that it haunted him for rest of his life. To a sensitive child, the whole affair in the factory—the work, the rooms, the boys, the language—was a terrible nightmare. He left school at the age of fifteen and worked as an assistant in a solicitor's office. Meanwhile he learnt short-hand and became an accomplished short-hand writer at a court of law, and became acquainted with intricate legal system. After leaving the court of law he took up the job of a reporter of the proceedings of the Parliament and formed a very low opinion of it. In 1836, he published his first book, *Sketches by Boz* which is a collection of character sketches, humorously drawn of the people that Dickens knew personally. Dickens' another work, *Pickwick Papers*, appeared in monthly instalments. In 1836, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth and his marriage proved a failure. In the year 1839, he published *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. *David Copperfield*, an autobiographical novel appeared in 1850 and *Hard Times* in 1853. He died on 9th June 1870, leaving *Edwin Drood* incomplete. Charles Dickens was buried in Westminster Abbey.

#### 5.4 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF VICTORIAN SOCIETY

The few colonial wars that broke out during the Victorian epoch did not seriously disturb the national life in Britain. There was one Continental War that directly affected Britain—Crimean War - and one that affected her indirectly though strongly—the French-German struggle; yet neither of these caused any profound changes. In the early 19th century, the aftereffects of French Revolution were still felt, but by the middle of century they had almost completely died down. It was an age alive with new activities. There was a revolution in commercial enterprise due to the great increase of available markets, and as a result an immense advance in the use of mechanical devices. The new commercial energy was reflected in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was greeted as the inauguration of a new era of prosperity. On the other side of this picture of commercial expansion, one could see the appalling social conditions of the new industrial cities, the congested slums, and the exploitation of the cheap labour (often of children), the painful fight by the enlightened few to introduce social legislation and the slow extension of the franchise. The evils of the Industrial Revolution were vividly painted by such writers as Charles Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell, and they called forth the missionary efforts of men like Kingsley.

In the middle of 19th century, there was a revolution in scientific thought following upon the works of Darwin and an immense outburst of social and political theorising which was represented by the writings of men like Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. In addition, popular education became a practical thing. This in its turn produced a new hunger for intellectual food and resulted in a great increase in the productions of the press and of other more durable species of literature. Amid the multitude of social and political forces of this great age four things stand out clearly. First, the long struggle of the Anglo-Saxons for personal liberty was settled and democracy became the established order of the day. The king, who appeared in an age of popular weakness and ignorance, and the peers, who came with the Normans in triumph both settled of their power and left as figureheads of a past civilization. The last vestige of personal government and of the divine right of rulers disappeared; the House of Commons became the ruling power in England.

Next, because it was an age of democracy, it was also an age of popular education of religious tolerance, of growing brotherhood, and of profound social unrest. The slaves had been liberated in 1833, but in the middle of the century, England awoke to the fact that slaves were not necessarily negroes, stolen in Africa to be sold like cattle in the market place, but that multitude of men, women and little children in the mines and factories were victims of more terrible industrial and social slavery. To free these slaves, the unwilling victims of our unnatural competitive methods, had been the growing purpose of the Victorian Age.

The concern with specific social problems is the most noticeable feature of Victorian Literature. The First Reform Bill (1832) of Parliament recognised the economic dominance of the middle class by placing direct political power in its hands. The vote was thus extended to all the members of middle class. At this time the old concepts of “Whig” and “Tory” made way for “Liberal” and “Conservative.” In 1829, the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed and in 1833 Slavery was abolished, and thereafter free trade became a national policy with the repeal of Corn Laws in 1845, Jews were made eligible for public office; and in 1872, the institution of voting by ballot was inaugurated. The Conservatives were as responsible as the Liberals for the passage of these Acts. For a long time, there was little difference between the two parties. Both were committed to the teaching of Utilitarianism, as promulgated by Jeremy Bentham, that it was necessary to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number.

This philosophy of unrestricted individualism in economics vastly increased the holdings of the middle class as well as its material comforts. The British Colonial Empire expanded in Asia and Africa by conquest and colonisation. But there was a less attractive side to the picture which industrialists chose to overlook. The philosophy of non-interference by the government meant unrestricted hardship to the legions of workers who were dependent for their very existence on their employers. Labour was cheap, the birth-rate high, and slum conditions became increasingly worse. The earliest attempts by working men to combine for better living conditions met with ferocious opposition in parliament. A law of 1825, fixed punishment at hard labour as the penalty for attempting any act inconsistent with the freedom of employers to make contracts. The Victorian age, from a working class point of view, is the record of long struggle of wage-earners to win recognition from the government. A Peoples’s Charter was drawn up in 1838, and began the so-called Chartist Movement which demanded universal manhood suffrage, the secret ballot and abolition of property qualifications for the members of the Parliament. Universal manhood suffrage was perhaps inevitably the foundation of any further progress. Actually, it was not until 1917 that the point was won in the Manhood Suffrage Bill. Before that Act was passed, the decades were punctured by a series of strikes and riots in urban centres. Though the Chartist Movement was for a long time unsuccessful, it served the function of making the general public aware of the problems involved. By unceasing protest, small gains were realised. In 1847, a ten-hour working day was established. In 1842 women and children were forbidden employment in the mines. In 1867 and 1873, women and children were excluded from heavier agricultural work. By 1875, a series of public health Acts had become law.

Meanwhile, Liberals and Conservatives alike had no intention of impeding the solid profits of British Industry. As long ago as 1798, Malthus (in his answer to Godwin) had given them the theory which justified governmental indifference. Malthus’ *Essay on Population* had insisted that poverty, disease and war are necessary to prevent the greater catastrophe of over-population. One of the few authors, who looked to the future instead of the past was Robert Owen (1771-1858), who originated the idea of co-operative. He was convinced that machine must be controlled for the benefit of the people who run it. His socialistic self-supporting communities made their experiments in Ireland, Scotland and in New World. Some succeeded at first; all eventually failed. But Owen’s teachings have had important bearing on the history of trade unions, and various species of socialistic theory.

Science took on undreamt importance in the Victorian Age. The whole world was brought together, first by building of railroads, then by the telegraph, the telephone, the auto-mobile, and the beginnings of travel by air. Everywhere machinery was revolutionised by the use of steam and electricity.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, now that you are familiar with the life of Charles Dickens, you can solve this exercise before going to the next section:

1. Charles Dickens was born on \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Charles Dickens' father worked as a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Charles Dickens started working in the Warren's Blacking Factory at the age of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Charles Dickens left school at the age of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. His first published book is titled \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Dickens married Catherine Hogarth in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is an autobiographical novel written by Charles Dickens, published in the year 1850
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is Dickens' incomplete novel \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The Great Exhibition took place in the year \_\_\_\_\_.

### 5.5 REACTION AGAINST VICTORIAN MATERIALISM

The growth of the material well-being of the middle class and the development of scientific invention provoked violent reactions on the part of some writers. There were men who felt that all this progress was suicidal to the soul. Carlyle was sick at the sight of the sordid lives led by men and women in the factories and he sought refuge from the tentacles of the machine by preaching the doctrine that human labour alone was sacred. An enemy of industrialisation, he looked back to the Middle Ages to prove that consecration to humble labour had made great souls. John Ruskin was to a certain degree his disciple. He denounced utilitarianism as an apology for the evils of industrial society. He, too, found in the Middle Ages a noble spiritual ideal which the modern world had lost.

In the Victorian Age, this escape to the Middle Ages became a favourite resource for many who could not bear the ugliness of contemporary life. The Pre-Raphaelites Brotherhood, (Rossetti and Morris) frankly imitated medieval painters and poets in their own work. In the field of religion, John Henry Newman, Leader of the Oxford Movement, found in the ritual of the medieval Church a beauty nourishing to the soul. He sought to annihilate the traditions of Puritanism which he felt had impoverished the English Church. His own spiritual struggles mark the beginnings of re-birth of Roman Catholicism and the conversion to that faith of thousands in England.

Perhaps the most cataclysmic of all new ideas were in the field of natural science. The Theory of Evolution propounded by Darwin questioned the authority of the Bible. Many felt that the whole groundwork of ethics and morals was crumbling. The doubts and despair occasioned by the Darwinian theories can be read in a number of Victorian writers, notably in the poetry of Matthew Arnold.

#### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Collapse: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Abolish: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Restraints: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Crumble: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Voyage: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Dominate: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson you have been introduced to the life and works of Charles Dickens. Charles John Huffam Dickens was his full name. An English writer and social critic, he is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of the Victorian era. His famous works are: *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. Much of his work was inspired by the difficulties he faced in childhood as well as social and economic problems in Victorian Britain.

## 5.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. In which year was Charles Dickens born? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1801
  - b) 1812
  - c) 1817
  - d) 1823
2. Which of these was a pen name occasionally used by Charles Dickens? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Huffman
  - b) Moses
  - c) Boz
  - d) Dicken
3. What was the first novel written by Charles Dickens? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Oliver Twist*
  - b) *Nicholas Nickleby*
  - c) *The Pickwick Papers*
  - d) *Barnaby Rudge*
4. Little Nell is a character in which of the novels by Charles Dickens? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Hard Times*
  - b) *Great Expectations*
  - c) *Oliver Twist*
  - d) *The Old Curiosity Shop*
5. Which of the novel by Charles Dickens attacks the New Poor Law of 1834? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) *Great Expectations*
  - b) *Hard Times*
  - c) *Oliver Twist*
  - d) *Nicholas Nickleby*

6. Which of Charles Dickens's novel opens with the words "It was the best of times, it was the worst of time...."? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Oliver Twist*
  - b) *A Tale of Two Cities*
  - c) *Pickwick Papers*
  - d) *Hard Times*
7. Name the novel of Charles Dickens which deals with the life of a circus child named Sissy Jupe? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Bleak House*
  - b) *Little Dorit*
  - c) *Hard Times*
  - d) *Dombey and Son*
8. Who compared Dickens with Shakespeare in making "a character as real as flesh and blood"? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Margaret Atwood
  - b) T.S. Eliot
  - c) Matthew Arnold
  - d) F.R. Leavis
9. Name the last and unfinished novel of Charles Dickens? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) *Little Dorrit*
  - b) *Oliver Twist*
  - c) *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*
  - d) *The Battle of Life*
10. How old was Charles Dickens when he died? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) 75 years
  - b) 80 years
  - c) 45 years
  - d) 58 years

## 5.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on the life of Charles Dickens.
2. Comment on the social background of Victorian society.

## 5.9 ANSWER KEY

### CYP

1. 7 February 1812
2. clerk
3. twelve
4. fifteen
5. *Sketches by Boz*
6. 1836
7. *David Copperfield*
8. *Edwin Drood*
9. 1851

### SAQs

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

## 5.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. Peacock Books, 2021.
2. Ackroyd, Peter. *Dickens: Public Life and Private Passion*. Hylas Publishing, 2005.
3. "Charles Dickens and the Critique of Victorian Society: Literature as a catalyst for Social Reform." *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, vol. 15, no. 2, Apr. 2024, [www.the-criterion.com/V15/n2/CT04.pdf](http://www.the-criterion.com/V15/n2/CT04.pdf)

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**CHARLES DICKENS: *HARD TIMES*****STRUCTURE**

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 6.3 Charles Dickens as a Novelist
  - 6.3.1 Dickens' Early Novels
  - 6.3.2 Dickens' Later Novels
- 6.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 6.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 6.7 Answer Key
- 6.8 Suggested Reading

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Charles Dickens was an English novelist generally considered the greatest of the Victorian era : Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity during his life time. He is known for a blend of humour and pathos in his works. His works are also characterized by a reformist zeal.

**6.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to provide you an overview of Charles Dickens' works. The lesson will discuss the literary career of Charles Dickens by dividing it into parts, that is, the early novels of Dickens and the later novels composed by him.

After going through this lesson, your familiarisation with Charles Dickens as a writer will be enhanced. You will be acquainted with Charles Dickens' works as a result of which you will be able to list the various novels composed by him as well as define the various thematic concerns delineated in his works.

**6.3 CHARLES DICKENS AS A NOVELIST****6.3.1 Dickens' Early Novels**

An interesting picture emerges from the study of the conditions which led to Dickens' first three novels. *Pickwick Papers* was written, at the suggestion of an editor, for serial publication. Each chapter was to be accompanied by a cartoon by Seymour (a comic artist of the day), and the object was to amuse the public and to sell the papers. The result was a series of characters, scenes and incidents which for vigour and boundless fun have never been equalled in English language. *Pickwick Papers*, containing some sixty distinct situations and more than three hundred and fifty characters has a large canvas. Though these characters are mostly the humours

of comedy, they are not merely such. Sam Weller is the embodiment of all that is delightful in London cockney. Dickens wrote about the customs and manners of the men and women of his time, which his imagination, seizing hold of, lifted into the world of the grotesque.

While *Pickwick Papers* was still running, Dickens became editor of *Bentley's Miscellany* for which he began *Oliver Twist* in a serial form. In this novel, he added to the humour of *Pickwick*, two other features which became characteristics of his work : the pathos of innocent childhood, and protest against the abuses of power, especially on the part of governmental institutions. Moreover, in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens used more powerfully than Scott, the power of the mob. His object was to tell the truth in this novel; to show how crime is bred, and that vice systematically pushed does not yield the delights gaily asserted by the romances.

His next novel *Barnaby Rudge* is a comparative failure. It fails as a historical novel. It also shows that Dickens is never clever at painting the gentleman but *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a glorious example of a masterpiece made out of the thinnest plots. Here, again the minor characters add real zest to the tone of the book : "This novel is a huge medley of all his own brands of comedy, from farce to purest humour, interspersed with melodrama that reaches the level of tragedy; a melody in which the American chapters form such a contrast to those dealing Martin's life in England that there is no comparing them, in the lack of common standards of measurement. Some of Dickens' most daring creations appear in the English chapters, and some that are astonishing though not of the same order in the American scenes; but Mark Tapley is the only one of note who plays part in both countries for that the hero is of minor interest as a character goes without saying in a novel by Dickens." This novel has clumsy construction. It is a monument of haphazard composition to the flight of Mr. Moddle at the end.

*Dombey and Sons* is the last of the early novels of Dickens. In this novel selfishness is replaced by pride which is incarnated in Mr. Dombey. The benevolent humour is furnished by Susan Nipper and Captain Cuttle, and pathos by Florence and Paul Dombey. In his other novels, there is clumsiness and carelessness in weaving his plots. But he exerted himself to give shape and coherence to this novel. He took pains to give his leading characters the manners and bearing of superior class. Mr. Dombey, the wealthy London merchant, is of the same high standing as the elder Osborne, in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

### 6.3.2 Dickens' Later Novels

Dickens' later series begins with *David Copperfield* which was published in 1849-50. "Of all my books," wrote Dickens, "I like this the best." It is Dickens's veiled autobiography. It reproduces the battle against poverty and misery which Dickens himself had worn. Cruelty is represented by Mr. Murdstone, benevolence by Betsey Trotwood, and sneaking humility by Uriah Heep.

"There is a plot in *David Copperfield*, and some of the largest episodes are as theatrical as any he ever devised. It is a tale of ups and downs, joys and sorrows; but the prevailing tone is one of cheerfulness and confidence in the essential goodness of life. Dickens had some inkling of the great truth that virtue is its own reward and ought to be a sufficient reward, else he would not have been so simple and yet so moving in the speech of Betsey Trotwood: "Never," said my aunt, "be mean in anything; never be false, never be cruel. Avoid those three vices, Trot, and I can always be hopeful of you."

Dickens' next novel, *Bleak House*, was published in 1853. It depicts social abuses. It is Dickens' most elaborate and telling attack upon one of his chief detestations, the delays and iniquities of the law. Having worked as a young boy in a lawyer's office, he knew his brief from the inside as well as from the point of view of the unfortunate public. He attacked bitterly, the court of Chancery. This novel is a masterpiece by itself. It is so full and so varied that Galsworthy said it was "utterly readable."

His novel, *Hard Times* was published in 1854. It gives the picture of the industrial system in Coketown. Dickens champions the unfortunate people bleeding under the wheels of modern industrialism. In fact, novel presents the squalor and misery of a textile town. It is necessary to understand the story of this novel in order to

appreciate it critically. Thomas Gradgrind, a citizen of Coketown, an industrial centre, is an ‘eminently practical man’, who believes in facts and statistics, and nothing else, and brings up his children Louisa and Young Tom, accordingly, ruthlessly repressing the imaginative and spiritual sides of their nature. He marries Louisa to Josiah Bounderby, a manufacturer, and a humbug, thirty years older than herself. Louisa consents partly from the indifference and cynicism engendered by her father’s treatment, partly from a desire to help her brother, who is employed by Bounderby and who is the only person she loves. James Harthouse, a young politician, without heart or principles comes to Coketown, in close contact with her, and taking advantage of her unhappy life with Bounderby, attempts to seduce her. The better side of her nature is awakened by this experience, and at the moment of crisis, she flees for protection to her father, who in turn is awakened to the folly of the system. He shelters her from Bounderby and the couple is permanently separated. But further trouble is in store for Gradgrind. His son, young Tom, has robbed the bank of his employer, and contrives for a time to throw the suspicion on a blameless artisan. Stephen Blackpool, is finally detected and hustled out of the country. Among the notable minor characters are Sleary, the proprietor of a circus; Jupe, a performer in his troupe; and Classy the latter’s daughter.

*Little Dorrit*, published in 1857, portrays the picture of two governmental institutions, the Circumlocution office and the Malshalsea Prison. Dickens had a public object when there was loud outcry at the delays and the inefficiencies of the great Government offices and the sheltered affluence of the drones who lurked there. His next novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* was published in 1859. It is set against the background of French Revolution. “It is the only one of his novels that he called a tale. Dickens had read Carlyle’s *French Revolution* and been carried away by it; his ambition was to tell such a story as would convey the effect that tremendous book had upon himself. It is a powerful story and the culminating scene, when Sydney Carton atones for a mis-spent life by his act of self-immolation, is nobly conceived and has made many a heart beat. The subordinate figures, the young aristocrat who owes his life to Carton’s devotion, the heroine, the bloodthirsty revolutionaries, Madame Defarge and the rest of the women of the terror, are creatures of the melodrama which he did his best to authenticate from such books as he had time to read from other sources.

After *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens wrote another great novel *Great Expectations*. It is a novel of adventure, the sort of adventure, that might well happen to a person who got himself mixed up with questionable characters, in such a spot as this, close to the convict-ships or in what really were in those days, the wilds of London. Pip has a narrow escape, and goes through many raking experiences. It is a masterpiece of art, whether in narrative and description or in the dialogue.

## 6.4 LET US SUM UP

The novels of Charles Dickens show the dark side of Victorian life. He is famous for his great contribution to classic English literature. He wrote 15 novels, many short stories, essays, articles and novellas. His epic stories, vivid characters and exhaustive depiction of contemporary life are outstanding.

## 6.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Which novels is not written by Charles Dickens? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (A) *Hard Times*
  - (B) *Vanity Fair*
  - (C) *Little Dorrit*
  - (D) *Our Mutual Friend*

2. Charles Dickens portrays the degradations and sufferings of the poor in English work- houses in the novel.....
- (A) *Little Dorrit*
  - (B) *Great Expectations*
  - (C) *Oliver Twist*
  - (D) *David Coppefield*
3. Which are the two cities referred to in Dickens’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities*? \_\_\_\_\_.
- (A) Paris and Berlin
  - (B) Paris and Rome
  - (C) London and Athens
  - (D) London and Paris
4. Charles Dickens said about one of the novels: “I like this the best.” Which novel was he referring to ? \_\_\_\_\_.
- (A) *David Copperfield*
  - (B) *Great Expectations*
  - (C) *A Tale of Two Cities*
  - (D) *Oliver Twist*
5. Which is not a novel by Dickens? \_\_\_\_\_.
- (A) *A Tale of Two Cities*
  - (B) *Hard Times*
  - (C) *To the lighthouse*
  - (D) *None of A, B, and C*

## 6.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Which is Charles Dickens’ first novel? Write a short note on it.
2. What is the literary style of Charles Dickens?
3. What is the shortest novel by Charles Dickens? Write a short note on it.

## 6.7 ANSWER KEY

### SAQs

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. C

## 6.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. Peacock Book, 2021.
2. Callow, Simon. *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012.
3. “*Charles Dickens (1812 1870)*.” *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, Feb. 2014, [www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119\\_2014\\_02\\_19\\_5.%20Charles%20Dickens.pdf](http://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119_2014_02_19_5.%20Charles%20Dickens.pdf).

**CHARLES DICKENS: *HARD TIMES*****STRUCTURE**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 7.3 Salient Features of Novels of Charles Dickens
  - 7.3.1 Dickens' Interest in Social Reforms
  - 7.3.2 Children in his Novels
  - 7.3.3 Dickens' Humour
  - 7.3.4 Dickens' Pathos
  - 7.3.5 Dickens' Imagination
- 7.4 Dicken's Art of Characterisation
- 7.5 Limitations of Dicken's Characterisation
- 7.6 Plots of Dickens' Novels
- 7.7 Autobiographical Elements in his Novels
- 7.8 Dickens as a Humanitarian Novelist
- 7.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.10 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 7.11 Examination Oriented Questions
- 7.12 Answer Key
- 7.13 Suggested Reading

**7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Charles Dickens is recognised as one of the major writers writing during the Victorian era. Dickens is well-known for a remarkable portrayal of characters and his art of characterisation has widely been appreciated by critics. Another aspect characterising his works is his interest in social reform. In almost all of his works, his vision as a social reformer is apparent. Additionally, a mingling of humour and pathos is another characteristic of his works which gives a realistic appeal to his novels.

**7.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to offer you insights about Charles Dickens as a writer. The lesson aims to make you familiar with certain important aspects of Charles Dickens' writing style such as humour, pathos, imagination, portrayal of children, and a spirit of social reform.

After going through this lesson, you will appreciate Charles Dickens as a writer who wrote with an intention to reform society of the various social evils. You will also examine how aptly the two contradictory impulses of humour and pathos mingle in his works, making his works a rich tapestry of human experience. Further you will also be able to analyse how skilfully he has created children in his novels which at once evoke sympathy.

### 7.3 SALIENT FEATURES OF NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS

#### 7.3.1 Dickens' Interest in Social Reforms

If Dickens was not insular, he was essentially English and Victorian. His age was an age of transition - the industrial revolution was rapidly gaining momentum and England was changing from a country that was mainly agricultural to a country that was mainly industrial. But Dickens knew only imperfectly the industrial classes of the Midland and the North. Machinery was coming into all the mills, life was getting harder and more dreary for working people. Vast wealth went side by side with grinding poverty, wretchedness, and misery. But this is not England that Dickens depicts. Though the steam engine appeared in 1830 (when Dickens was 18), his England was mainly an England of the stage-coach. This was England that he loved—the plain, homely, oldfashioned England of country inns, of queer old shops and little houses in the vastness of the city.

He could portray the poor of England to the wealthy because he had known the hardships of poverty; he could make the wealthy and the powerful listen to his championing of the poor because (though he became a wealthy land-owner himself) he could never forget — or ever desired to forget — an unhappy childhood in London. In the words of Wyatt and Clay: “We find Dickens taking himself more and more seriously as social reformer. It was not sufficient for him to show to his contemporaries the humour and pathos of the life around them; he felt he must also instruct them. Hence, we get such things as the attack on the administration of the Poor Law in *Oliver Twist*, the satire on the chancery procedure in *Bleak House*. He had himself experienced the evils of imprisonment for debt in his childhood and gave the world the benefit of that experience in *Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield*, most of all in *Little Dorrit*.”

#### 7.3.2 Children in his Novels

In the crowd of human beings that throng these books there are many boys and girls. Indeed, a novel is the story of a boy or a girl growing into manhood or womanhood; and no other novelist had written so much in depth about the experiences of childhood. We follow the adventures of David Copperfield or of Pip, who meets the escaped convict on the marshes and later form those Great Expectations which give the title to his story, or, we wander with little Nell about the English countryside and meet many odd travellers along the country roads. *Oliver Twist* and *Paul Dombey* and *Tiny Tim* are children whom you will never forget when once you have made their acquaintance. The children reveal the same qualities of genius in their creator as do his adults, wonderful invention, an overflowing humour and a human sympathy that has quickened the hearts of millions of readers. *Hard Times* is also a novel mainly concerned with the effect of a particular system of education adopted by Mr. Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby on children like Louisa, Tom, Bitzer and Sissy.

#### 7.3.3 Dickens' Humour

Humour was the supreme quality of Dickens' genius. It was as a humorist that Dickens made his name. Humour is the soul of his work. Even as a writer of true farce, Dickens has never been surpassed. In his fight to rouse sympathy on behalf of sufferers of all classes, Dickens possessed the weapon of humour. He could make the people laugh; and “if once the crowd has laughed with you, it will not object to cry a little, nay, it will make good resolves and sometimes carry them out.” For the humour of Dickens is not the dry bitter humour that comes from the lips only; it comes from the heart. Nor is it merely the broad humour of comic situation (though Dickens had that form of humour too); it is deep-rooted in character; it throws light on human nature and over it all shines the light of true charity. According to J.B. Priestly: “Fashions come and fashions go, ... but the supremacy of Dickens as a humorist remains unchallenged. We have only one name to put beside his, as a creator of humorous character, and that of course is Shakespeare. There is no comic figure in Dickens as great as Falstaff, who has in himself the genius of humour. On the other hand, Shakespeare has not the same comic fecundity...”

The humour of Dickens is essentially a humour of character. It is his comic figures we remember first, before we remember the books that contain them. Dickens lives chiefly now in his comic characters, but these are so numerous, so astonishing, so altogether delightful, that a writer could hardly wish for a better hold upon posterity. It can be easily noted that Dickens' humour is not very subtle. But it goes deep and in expression it is free and vivacious. His satire is apt to develop into mere burlesque as it does when he deals with Mr. Stiggins and Bumble. In spite of this, Dickens is a great humourist and no one would be bold to deny the title to the creator of the immortal Micawber.

### 7.3.4 Dickens' Pathos

Inseparable from the gift of humour is that of pathos in Dickens. In other words, humour and pathos go side by side in his novels. Sometimes, his emphasis on sentimental scenes leads to the charge against him of mawkishness in the description of the death of Paul Dombey, or of Jo. The earliest instance of true pathos is the death of the Chancery prisoner in *Pickwick Papers*. He is at his best in bringing out the pathos of a child life. We see how closely the truly pathetic and the humorous are allied in Dickens. *Little Dorrit* is strong both in pathos and humour. In *Hard Times*, the portrait of Louisa and Stephen Blackpool becomes the epitome of Charles Dickens' unsurpassed pathos. Stephen becomes the victim of an infathomable industrial and capitalist system around him which makes his life "all a muddle." He dies in a ditch which symbolises the industrial system. His inability to get rid of his drunken wife and his desire to marry Rachel, his fellow worker are pathetic situations.

Dickens' memories of the childhood goaded him to write about the squalid prison-world, and life there was no less fertile in pathos than humour. Pathos of a graver and subtler kind is the distinguishing note of *Great Expectations*. Perhaps, his best pathos is seen in the 'Christmas Books.' In spirit, he continues the work of two writers whom he always holds dear, Goldsmith and Sterne. Goldsmith's sweetness and compassion and Sterne's sensitive humanity together form his mental make-up.

Dickens is truly and profoundly national; the very incarnation of humour, he cannot think of his country without a sunny smile. To quote Crompton Rickett : "Humour, said Carlyle, 'is a sympathy with the seamy side of things.' Whatever may be said of this as a comprehensive definition of that elusive quality, humour, it fastens with unerring insight upon the essentials of Dickens' humour. A sympathy, with what is odd, out-of-the-way, bizarre, lies at the bottom of all uproarious fun. His humour and pathos are not to be sharply differentiated, laughter and tears lie closely together in his writings and frequently invade one another's territory. In no other writer of our time do we realise more fully the truth of John Bunyan's quaint comment, "Some things are of that nature as to make one's fancy chuckle while his heart doth ache."

### 7.3.5 Dickens' Imagination

No English novelist excels Dickens in the multiplicity of his characters and situations. *Pickwick Papers* teems with characters, some of them finely portrayed. He creates for us a whole world of people. Dickens enjoys to portray persons of the lower and middle ranks of life.

#### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, the previous section made you familiar with the salient features of Charles Dickens' novels such as his interest in social reform, humour and pathos in his works, as well as the portrayal of children in his works. You can assess your progress by solving the exercise:

1. During Dickens' time, Victorian society was changing from agricultural to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Poor Law is attacked by Dickens in the novel \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Charles Dickens has satirised chancery procedure in the novel \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Dickens' experience of debt is represented in the novel \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Mr. Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby are characters in the novel \_\_\_\_\_.
6. According to \_\_\_\_\_, as a humourist Charles Dickens stands next to Shakespeare.
7. In *Hard Times*, Stephen Blackpool's death in a ditch is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

## 7.4 DICKENS' ART OF CHARACTERISATION

### (a) Dickens' creative power

Dickens is like Shakespeare in marvellous creative power of his mind, the creation of men and women on paper who are in many ways more real to us than real people who surround us: characters who are as usual and eccentric as Squeers, Micawber, Stephen etc, yet as universal as human nature. It has been said about Dickens that he does not create characters but 'caricatures' that his people are not real individuals, but creatures observed only from the outside with a single, constantly repeated mannerism. Thus, Mr. Micawber is always waiting for something to turn up; Uriah Heep has cold, damp hands and is 'humble'; Mr. Bounderby always calls him a self-made man and talks boastfully of his humble origin; Sam Weller makes humorous comparisons; Mrs. Squeers is always giving the boys brimstone; Mrs. Gumiridge is always weeping. But the undoubted fact is that they all live; that is his supreme achievement. And they live by the power of imagination with which Dickens almost overwhelms.

### (b) Different Types of Characters

We find, in most of Dickens' novels three or four types of characters : first, the innocent little child, like Oliver, Joe, Sissy Jupe, and Little Nell, appealing powerfully to the child love in every human heart; second, the horrible or grotesque foil, like Squeer, Fagin, Tom etc., third the grandiloquent or broadly humorous fellow, the fun maker, like Micawber and Sam Weller; and fourth, a tenderly or powerfully drawn figure like Lady Deadlock of *Bleak House* and Sydney Carton of *A Tale of Two Cities*, who attain to the dignity of noble characters. We note also that most of Dickens' novels belong decidedly to the class of problem novels. Thus, *Hard Times* attacks the evils of Industrialism, law and the excesses of the philosophy of Utilitarianism; *Bleak House* attacks the 'laws delays' *Little Dorrit* the injustice which persecutes poor Twist, and the unnecessary degradation and suffering of the poor in the English work-houses. Dickens' serious purpose was to make the novel the instrument of morality and justice, and whatever we may think of the exaggeration of his characters, it is certain that his stories did more to correct the general selfishness and injustice of society towards the poor than all the works of other literary men of his age combined.

### (c) Characters belonging to Middle-Class Society of London

Dickens was not well conversant with the characters belonging to high society of London. Once or twice in later days-notably in the case of Sydney Carton-he was successful, but his gentlemen were usually theatrical figures and colourless extractions.

The experience of his youth afforded him no foundation where on to build, and without such foundation he was helpless. It is well known that his characters (at any rate successful ones) are all portraits, or it may be, mosaics pieced together from observation.

## 7.5 LIMITATIONS OF DICKENS' CHARACTERISATION

Dickens' power of characterisation was limited. Apart from the obviously stogy and dramatic figures, he is apt to carry the reader away by sheer quantitative achievements. On closer analysis many of his immortal creatures turn out to be not real persons but brilliantly sketched personifications of vices and virtues, reminiscent of the 'humours' of Ben Jonson. His serious characters, with a few brilliant exceptions like David Copperfield, are the conventional, virtuous and vicious dummies of melodrama. He cannot draw complex characters.

Moreover, it has often been pointed out that his characters are created 'not in the round.' but 'in the flat.' Each represents one mood, one turn of phrase. Uriah Heep is 'unable.' Barkis is willing. In this fashion, his characters become associated with catch phrases, like the personages in inferior drama.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, as the previous section gave you an overview of Dickens' art of characterisation, you can revise the contents of the section before proceeding to the next section by quickly going through these points:

- Dickens portrays different types of characters in his works such as-
  - The innocent little child.
  - The grotesque foil to the innocence.
  - Grandiloquent or broadly humorous fellow.
  - A tenderly or powerfully drawn figure.
- Dickens' novels belong to the category of problem novels.
- Dickens mostly crafted characters belonging to the middle-class society of London.
- Some of Dickens' characters are merely caricatures.

## 7.6 PLOTS OF DICKENS' NOVELS

His plots are not well-constructed organic wholes. Most of his novels were published as a serial in newspapers. Thus, his novels lack unity. They are critically appreciated because of unique characterisation. Lord David Cecil believes that Dickens cannot construct. His books lack organic unity and are full of detachable episodes; the characters in his novels serve no purpose in furthering the plot. Nor are these the least interesting characters; Mr. Micawber, Mrs. Gamp, Flora Finching etc., to name a few. Dickens' most brilliant figures, are almost irrelevant to the action of the books in which they appear. It is not because there is not much story, but because Dickens, like Tchekoy, has eschewed the conventional plot in order to give free play to his imagination.

Plot is the one element of Dickens' novels which fails to display the dramatic quality. In their structure they carry on the tradition of the picaresque romance, following a titular hero, with many digressions and side-plots. Indeed, Smollet's novels and *Gil Blas* were Dickens's favourite readings as a boy, and his earliest models. It is true that after his first success with the amorous chronicle of *Pickwick Papers*, he tried to graft a plot upon his picaresque structure, e.g. in *Oliver Twist* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*; but the practice of extempore publication in parts interfered with this technique. As Dickens watched the periodical reception of his work by the public, he was tempted to emphasize the features which gained circulation, or to introduce new ones when the original devices failed to draw. The method was, of course, fatal to the structure of the novel. For example, finding Martin Chuzzlewit falling behind in public favour, he suddenly sends the hero to the United States to revive his own fortunes and those of his creator. But Dickens found the combination of the protest against imprisonment for debt, satire upon governmental inefficiency and the appeal of the childhood more to the taste of the reader. Only in his latest novels, *Bleak House*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend* did he develop something like coherent plots, and in *Bleak House* the arbitrary shifting of the narrative back and forth between the author and one of the characters, with no change in style, constitutes a defect which was overlooked by the original readers of the serial.

## 7.7 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN HIS NOVELS

Those who have read Dickens will see how largely he drew upon his own experience and observation. His early knowledge of the low life of London supplied material for *Oliver Twist*, his school days for *Nicholas Nickleby*, his visits to Marshalsea prison, where his father was imprisoned, for *Little Dorrit*, his life in a law

office in *Bleak House* and other novels. Dickens constantly walked and rode about London, and nothing escaped his observation. As important as these reproduction of actual scenes from his past is his attitude towards various classes of society, which was determined by what he had felt and seen. He had a profound sympathy for poor and wretched people and his moving portrayal of innocent suffering and of the crime stirred the heart of England. *Hard Times* depicts the travails of a child.

## 7.8 DICKENS AS A HUMANITARIAN NOVELIST

In addition to high love for children and compassion for their tribulations, we notice in Dickens' novels a profound humanity, an interest in man as man, apart from accidents of rank and condition. He enjoys picturing the most obscure or eccentric character as also exalted or distinguished lives. This sympathy he communicates to the reader. He succeeded in wonderfully impressing his views on his age and nation, so that his writings, gradually, wrought vast and important changes in public sentiments, and brought about a far clearer realisation of social needs. As has been already pointed out, his pictures of life are, undoubtedly, at times exaggerated and satirical, for doubtless, he felt that a tame description would have little effect in impressing his vision of social injustice on the minds of his reader. Although we may, sometimes, feel impatient with an overdrawn character or incident, we realise that Dickens was always bent on showing the truth of things out of a generous interest in his fellow men.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Misery: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Evils: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Charity: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Constantly: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Tame: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7.9 LET US SUM UP

Charles Dickens had an extraordinary range of language, from comic invention to great eloquence. He invented character and situation with a range that had been unequalled since Shakespeare. He elevated compassion and cheerfulness of heart into the supreme virtues. He also used humour, pathos and satire to significant effect in his writing. Through his use of characters, plot, and language, Dickens created an artistic power- 'Dickensian' -to compel readers to feel certain emotions.

## 7.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What is the name of Sissy's father's dog? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Happylegs
  - b. Bandylegs
  - c. Merrylegs
  - d. Mr. Snips

2. What is the main principle of Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Fact
  - b. Fancy
  - c. Love
  - d. Patriotism
3. Mrs. Pegler is the mother of which character? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Gradgrind
  - b. Sissy
  - c. Stephen
  - d. Bounderby
4. Who robs the bank? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Stephen
  - b. Tom
  - c. Sissy
  - d. Mrs. Sparsit
5. What is the common name for poor Coketown factory workers? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Cogs
  - b. Scum
  - c. Hands
  - d. Proles
6. Sissy believes her father abandoned her for what reason? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Her own best interest
  - b. To elope with a Frenchwoman
  - c. Grief over her mother's death
  - d. A desire to see the world
7. Which of the following characters dies during the course of the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Sleary
  - b. Mrs. Gradgrind
  - c. Gradgrind
  - d. James Harthouse

8. Who is Kidderminster? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A circus worker who dresses up as Cupid
  - Mr. Gradgrind's fellow Member of Parliament
  - Sissy's father
  - The Hand who organizes the workers' union
9. What does Rachael find that leads her to believe Stephen has been murdered? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A trail of bloody footprints
  - A note from the killer
  - His hat, abandoned in a field
  - An empty bottle of poison
10. How does Stephen die? \_\_\_\_\_.
- He is crushed by factory machinery
  - A fall into Old Hell Shaft
  - Murder
  - Malnutrition as a result of poverty

### 7.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1 Write a short note on humour.
- Q.2 What role do children play in his novels?
- Q.3 Comment on Dickens art of characterization.

### 7.12 ANSWER KEY

#### CYP

- Industrial
- Oliver Twist*
- Bleak House*
- Little Dorrit*
- Hard Times*
- J.B. Priestly
- pathos

#### SAQs

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

### 7.13 SUGGESTED READING

1. Collins, Philip. *Charles Dickens : The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 2009.
2. Crotch, Walter. *Charles Dickens : Social Reformer*. FB & C Limited, 2016.
3. Collins, Philip. "The Invention of the Christmas Books." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 28 Dec. 2025, [www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Dickens-British-novelist/The-invention-of-the-Christmas-books](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Dickens-British-novelist/The-invention-of-the-Christmas-books).

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**CHARLES DICKENS: *HARD TIMES*****STRUCTURE**

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 8.3 Characters
- 8.4 Summary of the Novel *Hard Times*
- 8.5 Let us Sum up
- 8.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 8.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 8.8 Answer Key
- 8.9 Suggested Reading

**8.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Hard Times*, by Charles Dickens, was first published in serial form in the weekly magazine *Household Words*, from April to August of 1854. Set in fictional Coketown in the industrial north of England, the novel follows the fortunes of a variety of characters, including Thomas Gradgrind, who believes only in the Utilitarian, “hard facts.”

**8.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarise you with the characters in the novel *Hard Times*. The lesson also aims to offer a detailed summary of *Hard Times*.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to identify the major characters in the novel *Hard Times* as well as analyse the role these characters play in the novel. Their motives and the peculiarities of their character will also be clear to you. Further, you will be able to summarize the plot of the novel and critically evaluate the major events in the novel.

**8.3 CHARACTERS**

**Mr. Gradgrind** :– Mr. Gradgrind is one of the main characters of the novel whose complete name is Mr. Thomas Gradgrind. He owns a school where he wants the students to be provided education based on the “facts.” He is, totally, contemptuous of fanciful ideas. He asserts “In this life, we want nothing but facts, sir; nothing but facts.” He has a wide, thin, and hard-set mouth. He considers his children, especially, Louisa and Tom as model children. But at the end, he realises his fault for holding such principles of education and realises that love, charity, and faith are more important things than bare facts.

**Mr. Bounderby** :– Mr. Bounderby is an accomplished banker, merchant and manufacturer. He calls himself, a self-made man. He is a bully of humility, a person who always talks loudly of his humble birth. He also talks highly of Mrs. Sparsit’s high family background. He is a shrewd businessman. He marries Louisa, who is almost

half his age, and proves a failure in his marriage. At the end he dies and leaves a will, according to which he divides his property among twenty-five humbug people, all above fifty-five years of age.

**Sissy Jupe** :- She is a leading female character, who is the daughter of a circus-man. Her father abandons her. Mr. Gradgrind takes charge of her education and upbringing. She returns Mr. Gradgrind's affection with great love and care for his family. She tends Louisa in her illness and saves Tom from being caught. At the end, she receives the news of her father's death.

**Louisa** :- Louisa is the daughter of Mr. Gradgrind who doesn't like the way she is being brought up and educated. She marries Mr. Bounderby, who is double her age, to please her father and to secure the future of her brother Tom. She loves nobody except her brother Tom whom she provides with a lot of money, knowing that he loses all the money in gambling. She falls in love with Mr. Harthouse but doesn't elope with him on his continuous insistence. She leaves Bounderby and lives with her father Gradgrind.

**Tom** :- Tom is the son of Mr. Gradgrind and brother of Louisa. He, like Louisa, is also not satisfied with his life. He exploits his sister's love for him and loses all the money in gambling which she gives him stealthily. He commits robbery at Mr. Bounderby's bank and manages to shift the blame on Stephen Blackpool. With the help of his father, he manages to escape abroad where he dies in exile, repentant.

**Stephen Blackpool** :- Stephen Blackpool is a successful weaver at Mr. Bounderby's factory. He has a drunken wife who is a source of continuous trouble for him. He loves a fellow worker, Rachael and wants to marry her by seeking divorce from his wife. For him life is a "muddle." He is suspected for the bank robbery which is actually committed by Tom. He is found lying in a chasm after which he dies, declaring his innocence.

**Mrs. Sparsit** :- Mrs. Sparsit is the housekeeper of Mr. Bounderby. She is an elderly lady with a good family background. Her great aunt Lady Scadgers is a rich woman of means and connections. Mr. Bounderby always talks highly of Mrs. Sparsit's social background. Though Mrs. Sparsit works for Mr. Bounderby, but, in fact, she hates him and calls him 'a noodle' when she stands before his portrait. She also acts as a spy on Mrs. Bounderby i.e., Louisa, but cuts a sorry figure at the end.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, it's time to take a break! Now that you are familiar with the different important characters in the novel *Hard Times*, you can make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the characters of the novel by solving the practice exercise:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the character who owns a school which runs on the principle of providing education to students based on based.
2. "In this life, we want nothing but facts, sir; nothing but facts" is a statement made by Louisa \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are Mr. Gradgrind's children.
4. Mr. Gradgrind's character undergoes a change at the end \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
5. Mr. Bounderby is an unsuccessful banker, merchant, and manufacturer \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
6. Mr. Bounderby marries \_\_\_\_\_.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is the daughter of a circus-man \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Louisa falls in love with \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Tom commits robbery at Mr. Bounderby's bank \_\_\_\_\_. (True/False)
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is found lying in a chasm after which he dies.

## 8.4 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL *HARD TIMES*

The Novel *Hard Times* is divided into three Books. The First Book: “Sowing” comprises fifteen chapters, The Second Book: “Reaping,” twelve chapters and The Third Book : “Garnering” has nine chapters.

### BOOK THE FIRST : “SOWING”

‘Facts’ alone are important in life. This is what Thomas Gradgrind wants the schoolmaster to teach to the students. He looks upon boys and girls in the class-room as “pitchers” that need to be filled with facts. He tells girl number twenty in the class to change her name from Sissy Jupe to Cecilia. He, then, asks this girl to define horse which she fails to do. He then tells Bitzer, another boy, to give the definition of a horse. Bitzer defines horse as an animal having four legs, which eats grass, has forty teeth including twenty grinders, sheds its coat in the spring, has hard hooves, and whose age is judged by certain marks in its mouth. Bitzer’s definition is acceptable to the school inspector also. The inspector opposes anything like ‘fancy’ and asserts that facts have the supreme importance. The school master, Mr. M’Choakumchild proceeds to teach the class in accordance to the principles of education enunciated by Mr. Gradgrind and the school inspector.

Mr. Grandgrind has a house, Stone Lodge, at Coketown where he lives with his wife and five children, whom he thinks he is providing the best education. He considers himself an “eminently practical father.” On his way home, he gets a shock when he finds his two children, Louisa and Thomas, peeping through the tents of a circus watching horse-ridings. The circus is owned by Mr. Sleary.

Mr. Bounderby is a self-made man, and is an accomplished businessman and a close friend of Mr. Grandgrind. He always boasts of his low birth. Mr Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby decide to expel Sissy Jupe from the school because she is the daughter of Mr Signer Jupe, the circus man. They think Sissy’s contact with Louisa is responsible for the latter’s curiosity for imaginative things like circus. In fact, Grandgrind wants the education to be based on reason and facts, and not on fancy and imagination. One day Mr. Bounderby plants kiss on Louisa’s cheek which is not liked by her. When Mr. Bounderby and Mr. Grandgrind reach Sissy’s father’s apartment called Pegasus’ Arms in connection with Sissy’s expulsion, they discover that he, Signer Jupe, has abandoned his daughter and disappeared. In view of the circumstances, Mr Gradgrind tells Mr. Sleary, owner of the circus that he would take the charge of Sissy’s education and upbringing, only if they promise him the termination of Sissy’s all relations with the circus to which Mr. Sleary and Sissy agree. Mr. Bounderby tells Mr. Grandgrind to reconsider his decision of taking charge of Sissy. Meanwhile Sissy stays at Mr. Bounderby’s house. Mr Bounderby always speaks highly of his housekeeper, Mrs. Sparsit, an elderly lady, and of her social background. He also reveals to her, his intention of employing Tom, Mr Grandgrind’s son, in his bank. Mr. Grandgrind, finally, decides to take Sissy home on the condition that she would not mention things like fairies. Mr. Grandgrind teaches his children not to wonder at all. He says, “By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, settle everything somehow, and never wonder.” Tom, the elder son of Mr Grandgrind expresses his discomfiture on the type of life he is leading and resolves to take revenge when he goes to live with Mr. Bounderby.

Stephen Blackpool who is an efficient weaver in the town of Coketown, is a middle-aged man of 40 years. He has a friend called Rachael. He has estranged relations with his wife who is a drunkard. Stephen mentions his case to his employer, Mr Bounderby, and wants a legal divorce, which according to Bounderby will prove very costly for him. Stephen, after coming out of Mr. Bounderby’s house meets an old woman who tells him that he comes there every year just to have a look at Mr. Bounderby. Stephen leaves her and goes home thinking about his own misery. At home, he finds Rachael tending Stephen’s wife and resolves to stay for night in her care. At midnight, Stephen awakes suddenly to find his wife attempting to drink poison mistaking it for liquor.

Mr. Gradgrind becomes the member of the Parliament, a dream which he has cherished for long. Mr. Grandgrind tells Louisa that Mr. Bounderby wants to marry her, which Louisa doesn’t oppose. Sissy feels sorry for Louisa. It is decided by Mr. Bounderby that after his marriage, Mrs. Sparsit would live at an apartment in the Bank and would continue receiving “annual compliment” as already.

## **BOOK THE SECOND : “REAPING”**

Mrs. Sparsit receives a stranger with a letter of introduction by Mr. Gradgrind from London to meet Mr. Bounderby. The stranger whose name is Mr. James Harthouse meets Bounderby and Louisa. He is a practical man whose motto is “What will be, will be”. Mr. Harthouse discovers that Louisa is impassive, throughout, except in the presence of her brother Tom. Mr. Harthouse takes Tom along to the hotel he is staying and offers him tobacco and liquor. Under the influence of liquor, Tom tells him that Louisa doesn’t love Bounderby and that her marriage was not based on love.

The factory workers, who are called “hands,” form a union under the leadership of Slackbridge to which Stephen Blackpool doesn’t join, as a result of which he is excommunicated from the labour union. He cannot even see Rachel. Mr. Bounderby wants Stephen to act as his informer about the activities of the members of the Labour Union, which Stephen refuses. He urges Mr. Bounderby to treat the workers as human beings not as inanimate objects and machines. On hearing this, Mr. Bounderby is annoyed and dismisses Stephen from the job. At Mr. Bounderby’s house, Stephen finds Rachel in the company of the old woman whom Stephen has already met, and who comes there on her yearly visit to have a look at Mr. Bounderby. All the three go to Stephen’s house where Louisa, who is now Mrs. Bounderby comes to see Stephen, accompanied by her brother Tom. Louisa gives some money to Stephen as help which Stephen accepts as a loan only. At the time of departure, Tom advises Stephen to hang around the bank in the following evenings to receive some good message by Bitzer.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Harthouse becomes intimate with Louisa and succeeds to win her love for him. The next day a robbery takes place at Bounderby’s bank and he holds Stephen Blackpool under suspicion because he was found loitering around the bank during the evening. Louisa suspects Tom for the robbery and, therefore, probes him but all in vain. Louisa receives a message about Mrs. Gradgrind’s serious illness. She, at once, departs to see her mother and finds Sissy Jupe tending to her mother with care, following which Mrs. Gradgrind dies. At Mr. Bounderby’s house, Mrs. Sparsit keeps an eye on Louisa’s and Mr. Harthouse’s behaviour. She, in her imagination, visualises Louisa descending down into the pit of shame. But, on the other hand, she thinks that Mr. Bounderby well deserves this for having married Louisa. She, also, is a witness to a love scene between Harthouse and Louisa. Mrs. Sparsit pursues Louisa out of her house, thinking she would elope with Mr. Harthouse but, instead, Louisa arrives at her father Mr. Grandgrind’s place. She tells her father that his teachings have proved harmful for her. She tells him that she married a man whom she hated only to please her father. She tells him that she has fallen in love with another man who expects her to elope with him; and presently, she is in a miserable state of affair. After saying this she faints and falls unconscious on the floor.

## **BOOK THE THIRD : “GARNERING”**

Mr. Gradgrind realises the errors of his principles of education. He feels sorry for Louisa. Louisa now asks Sissy’s pardon for having treated her badly ever since her marriage to Mr. Bounderby. On the other side, Mr. Harthouse is waiting for Louisa or her message. One day, he receives a visitor who is none else than Sissy Jupe. She persuades Mr. Harthouse to leave the town forever. Mrs. Sparsit goes to London where Mr. Bounderby is presently staying to tell him that Louisa has eloped with Harthouse. Mr. Bounderby rushes to Mr. Gradgrind, and finds Louisa there. He warns Mr. Gradgrind that he would have nothing to do with Louisa if she doesn’t go to Mr. Bounderby’s the next day. When Louisa doesn’t appear at Mr. Bounderby’s house, till the next day, Mr. Bounderby begins to lead the life of a bachelor.

Mr. Bounderby announces a reward of twenty pounds for Stephen’s arrest which really hurts Rachael. Rachael goes to Mr. Bounderby to tell him about Louisa’s visit to Stephen’s house along with Tom, and about her financial help that she gave to Stephen. She claims Stephen to be innocent. She tells Bounderby that Stephen would come back within the next two days. Weeks pass, but there is no sign of Stephen Blackpool. Rachael is apprehensive about him. In the meanwhile, the true identity of the old woman is discovered. She is none else than Bounderby’s mother who used to come every year to have glimpse of his son, Mr. Bounderby. During

a walk towards the countryside, Sissy and Rachael discover Stephen lying in a deep chasm. Dying Stephen asserts his innocence and asks Gradgrind to interrogate Tom about the real story behind the bank robbery. The discovery of the fact that Tom has committed the bank robbery is a source of great distress for Mr. Gradgrind. Mr. Gradgrind, in a desire to save Tom, plans to send him abroad. He, along with Sissy and Louisa goes to Mr. Sleary's circus to see Tom, where he is hiding, having been sent by Sissy. Meanwhile Bitzer appears and catches hold of Tom to take him to Coketown, to hand him over to Mr. Bounderby. Mr. Sleary, with the help of his trained circus-horse and circus-dog manages Tom's escape, for which Gradgrind offers any amount of money which Mr. Sleary declines to take. Mr. Bounderby dies, just after dismissing Mrs. Sparsit. Mr. Gradgrind also realises his mistake for holding the principle that education must be based on facts. Now he feels that charity, hope and faith are more important values than bare facts. Tom dies in exile repentant, whereas Sissy gets married and leads a happy life.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Shrewd: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Chasm: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Reveal: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Annoy: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Robbery: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Intimate: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Witness: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Desire: \_\_\_\_\_

## 8.5 LET US SUM UP

*Hard Times* novel by Charles Dickens was published in serial form (as *Hard Times: For These Times*) in the periodical *Household Words* from April to August 1854 and in book form later the same year. The novel is a bitter indictment of industrialization, with its dehumanizing effects on workers and communities in mid-19th-century England. Louisa and Tom Gradgrind have been harshly raised by their father, an educator, to know nothing but the most factual, pragmatic information. Their lives are devoid of beauty, culture, or imagination, and the two have little or no empathy for others. Louisa marries Josiah Bounderby, a vulgar banker and mill owner. She eventually leaves her husband and returns to her father's house. Tom, unscrupulous and vacuous, robs his brother-in-law's bank. Only after these and other crises does their father realize that the manner in which he raised his children has ruined their lives.

## 8.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Who runs the circus? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Sleary
  - b. Bitzer
  - c. Mrs. Pegler
  - d. Sissy's father

2. Which character is a Member of Parliament? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Bounderby
  - b. Mr. McChoakumchild
  - c. Bitzer
  - d. Gradgrind
3. What is Bounderby's son's name? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Bitzer
  - b. Tom
  - c. James Harthouse
  - d. Bounderby has no son
4. In which city does most of the novel take place? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Coketown
  - b. Liverpool
  - c. London
  - d. Evenly divided between Coketown and London
5. From what does Mrs. Sparsit imagine Louisa falling? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. A ladder
  - b. A staircase
  - c. The opera balcony
  - d. The moon
6. Who is the first character to speak in the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Bounderby
  - b. Sissy
  - c. Bitzer
  - d. Gradgrind
7. Why is Stephen unable to marry Rachael? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. He is already married
  - b. He is too old
  - c. He is too poor
  - d. She is in love with another man

8. How do the poor of Coketown attempt to improve their conditions? \_\_\_\_\_.
- By burning the factory
  - By looting the bank
  - By forming a union
  - By petitioning Parliament for assistance
9. What is the name of Mrs. Sparsit's aristocratic relative? \_\_\_\_\_.
- Col. Reginald Powler
  - Lady Scadgers
  - Rupert Hardwick, Esq
  - Ephraim Gride
10. What does Gradgrind hope Tom will be able to do after Stephen's death? \_\_\_\_\_.
- Escape England
  - Move up at the bank
  - Marry Sissy
  - Inherit Stephen's fortune

### 8.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- 1.1 Comment on the opening of the novel *Hard Times*.
- 1.2 Write a critical note on the women characters in the novel *Hard Times*.
- 1.3 Critically evaluate the plot structure of *Hard Times*.

### 8.8 ANSWER KEY

#### CYP

1. Mr. Gradgrind
2. False
3. Louisa, Tom
4. True
5. False
6. Louisa
7. Sissy Jupe
8. Mr. Harthouse
9. True
10. Stephen Blackpool

## SAQs

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

## 8.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. *A study Guide for Charles Dicken’s Hard Times*. Gale Cengage Learning. Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2017.
2. *Study Guide to Hard Times by Charles Dickens*. Dexterity, 2020.
3. “*Hard Times Characters*.” *LitCharts*, [www.litcharts.com/lit/hard-times/characters](http://www.litcharts.com/lit/hard-times/characters).  
“*Hard Times Summary*.” *LitCharts*, [www.litcharts.com/lit/hard-times/summary](http://www.litcharts.com/lit/hard-times/summary).

**CHARLES DICKENS: *HARD TIMES*****STRUCTURE**

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 9.3 *Hard Times* as a Social Novel/ Dickens as a Social Reformer
- 9.4 Let us Sum up
- 9.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 9.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 9.7 Answer Key
- 9.8 Suggested Reading

**9.1 INTRODUCTION**

The novels of Dickens belong entirely to the humanitarian movement of the Victorian age, of which they are indeed, in the sphere of fiction, by far the most important product and expression. He used his novels to bring the attention of social ills and abuses of Victorian England in such a way that the general public could relate and react to.

**9.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the previous lesson familiarised you with the characters and plot of the novel *Hard Times*. The objective of this lesson is to further enhance your familiarity with the novel by acquainting you with an important aspect of the novel, that is, the sociological aspect of the novel.

After going through this lesson, you will critically analyse the novel *Hard Times* as a social novel which deals with some of the social problems the Victorian society was facing such as industrialisation and utilitarianism. You will also appreciate Dickens' social vision and establish him as a writer writing not only for entertainment purposes but as a social reformer also.

**9.3 *HARD TIMES* AS A SOCIAL NOVEL****OR****DICKENS AS A SOCIAL REFORMER**

*Hard Times* presents a microcosm of early Victorian society. It presents two themes. One deals with the divorce law through the agency of Stephen Blackpool, whose wife is a drunkard and uncivilized. Dickens voices his indignation at the high expenses involved in getting divorce, which remains a privilege of the rich. Stephen consults Mr. Bounderby regarding his predicament because of his wife and asks him if there is any legal procedure of getting rid of his wife. Bounderby says that though there is a way but it is too costly for him to follow.

The second social problem of *Hard Times* is concerned with a radical criticism of the very structure of society, based on the oppression of the poor by the rich. Dickens, in *Hard Times* attacks the dominant philosophy of Utilitarianism, propounded by Jeremy Bentham, according to whom society should aim at the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Dickens attacks Utilitarianism by taking to task the system of education based on the principles of this philosophy, that results in a damaging impoverishment of the moral and emotional life of the individual. Mr. Gradgrind is the exponent of the system of education based on the principles of Utilitarianism. He wants children to be taught nothing but “facts.” His own children Louisa and Tom study in the school owned by Gradgrind where another student namely Sissy Jupe studies. He is strictly against anything pertaining to “fancy” or imagination symbolised by Mr. Sleary’s Circus. Mr. Gradgrind asks certain questions in the class. He gives Sissy Jupe a new name “Girl number twenty” and asks her to define a horse. When she fails to answer, Mr. Gradgrind directs the same question to Bitzer, whom he considers the model student of his school. Bitzer defines a horse as:

“Quadruped, Graminivorous, Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.”

Bitzer gives the definition in small bits as his name implies. Mr. Gradgrind’s reproof to the circus-girl caps this ludicrous episode, which introduces one of the major themes of the novel— the contrast between factual knowledge and the knowledge of the senses and the heart. Mr. Gradgrind, at the end, realises the error of the principles he held earlier. He finds his daughter Louisa unhappily married with Bounderby; he finds his son Tom as ‘a fugitive in some foreign country; he finds Sissy Jupe as the most affectionate friend of his family and finally, he finds Bitzer a complete ungrateful student. He admits that love, hope and faith are more important than mere “facts.”

Dickens is also seriously concerned with the social and economic injustice because individuals conditioned by such a system are incapable of dealing with the human problems created by it. Stephen Blackpool is the victim of the system of industrialism. Having failed to understand and endure the slings of the system around him, he calls his life a “muddle.” He fails to seek divorce from his wife because it is only a privilege of rich. He dies in a chasm which is a symbol of industrialism.

In *Hard Times*, there is no mistaking Dickens’ violent hostility to industrial capitalism and its entire scheme of life. It is a morality drama, stark, formalized, allegorical, dominated by the mood of piercing through to the underlying meaning of the industrial scene rather than describing it in minute detail. In short, *Hard Times* becomes a critique that shows the crushing of humanity embodied by Sissy Jupe, Louisa, Tom, Stephen etc. by the Industrial capitalism and 19th century utilitarianism embodied by Mr. Bounderby, and Mr. Gradgrind respectively. Mr. Bounderby is the embodiment of the principle of laissez faire who is treated ironically and satirically. He is an accomplished banker and industrialist who calls his workers “hands.” He is a man completely devoid of human feelings. He leaves his mother Mrs. Peglar on mean pension and always boasts of his humble birth. Though Mr. Gradgrind shows some signs of humanity but Mr. Bounderby dies as an imposter.

Charles Dickens, in the novel *Hard Times*, is not critical of the philosophies like utilitarianism and laissez faire but dislikes the excessive use of them. He doesn’t attack institutions but people who make the wrong use of these institutions. According to him, Industrialisation is not bad but what is bad is its excessive and wrong use in the hands of the people.

Ordinarily, Dickens’ criticism of the world he lives in is casual and incidental – a matter of including among the ingredients of a book some indignant treatment of a particular abuse. But in *Hard Times*, he is for once possessed with the comprehensive vision, one in which the inhumanities of Victorian Civilization are seen as fostered and sanctioned by a hard philosophy, the aggressive formulation of an inhumane spirit. This philosophy as already mentioned is called utilitarianism which is imbibed into the minds of the students through education.

D.H. Lawrence, himself, protesting against harmful tendencies in education, never made the point more tellingly. Sissy Jupe has been brought up among horses, and among people whose livelihood depends upon understanding horses. According to Gradgrind, such knowledge is not real knowledge. The definition given by Bitzer suits Gradgrind's ear. This kind of ironic method might seem to commit the author to very limited kinds of effect. In *Hard Times*, however, it associates quite congruously, such is the flexibility of Dickens' art, with very different methods; it co-operates in a truly dramatic and profoundly poetic whole. Sissy Jupe, who might be taken here for a merely conventional persona, has already, as a matter of fact, been established in a potentially symbolic role : she is part of the poetically-creative operation of Dickens' genius in *Hard Times*.

Dickens' main intention in *Hard Times* as F. R. Leavis says, was 'to comment on certain key characteristics of Victorian civilization.' He was concerned about the difference (as he expresses it in the first chapter of the novel) between Fact and Fancy. The purpose of the novel was to emphasize with all his power and skill, that this was not just a rhetorical antithesis : that mere fact, or logic, that leaves half of our lives out of account — any method of ruling conduct or affair that lacks sympathy, love and understanding between human beings — is in the end, not merely sterile, but bitterly destructive of all the moral virtues, beauty and everything that is best; that a sound life cannot exist without happiness; and that the proper education of children must take into account their moral development which it should foster through their fancy and love of life. The government of a country, he maintained, cannot safely be left to be administered from self-interest, nor trusted to a single class certain to look after itself first and last. He held that the relations between capital and labour, or (as he preferred to call them) between Masters and Men, can never be properly managed or understood if it is assumed that they must be in a perpetual state of conflict, or that the men must inevitably be subject to the paternal rule of the masters. Above all, he believed that the relations between men and women; between father and children, mother and child, or brother and sister, between friends, or any persons in almost any permanent association, must originate and be rooted in liking, affection, love.

The novel was, thus, a protest not merely against certain characteristics of Victorian society, but against certain tendencies to be found in any industrial civilization. It was a protest against all repression of human spirit by the repressive atmosphere of the classroom, the constitution, the law, and the so-called principles of political economy. Dickens' purpose was not just to strike at everyday, run-of-the-mill, mid-nineteenth century 'utilitarianism' — and, especially, not at anything so abstract as the 'Utilitarian Philosophy' alone as expounded by Bentham and Mill. It was aimed at all kinds of social abuses which he thought ran counter to human life and happiness because they were framed according to supposed 'facts' while they ignored obvious human needs. That is why even the sawdust ring of the circus was preferable to the cinders of Coketown or the dust and ashes of the political arena. The novel as such serves a broad purpose even though it included references to some of Dickens' living contemporaries which most of them were unable to recognise, and satire of specific abuses which was too pointed to be understood by the general reader; and it is only by understanding this broader purpose that one can see how it unifies Dickens' remarks on Stephen Blackpool's marriage, the aesthetic theories of the 'third gentleman' in the second chapter, the problems of Trade Unionism, Louisa's marriage to Mr. Bounderby, and her brother's theft from the bank.

Dickens once said that the ideas in the book took him 'by the throat' and forced him to write. A careful reading shows that he succeeded in giving them a unified purpose, and that *Hard Times* has coherence and power which deserve great respect even though it is not as entertaining as many of his other novels. Unfortunately, its purpose has often been misunderstood. Because it was partly about the differences between a mill-owner and his men, it has been thought that Dickens wrote it in order to take sides; and because both Mr. Bounderby, the mill-owner, and Slackbridge, the trade union agitator, are described as utterly worthless, he has been claimed as a kind of socialist. Infact, Dickens was not so simple-minded. He was very like many people today. He thought it just that there should be the right to strike. He disliked extremists on both sides. He hated employers like Bounderby and he distrusted trade union organizers such as Slackbridge. He was in favour of all attempts to encourage better industrial relations and for conciliation on both sides; and he considered that the government should take action by setting up an independent body to arbitrate between them. Addressing an audience of

working men in industrial Birmingham at the reading of the Christmas Carol, a month before he started *Hard Times*, he had referred perfectly happily to the value of education ‘in the bringing together of employers and employed; in the creating of a better understanding of those whose interests are identical.’

Charles Dickens was neither an apologist for industrial capitalism, nor a critic.

Although, George Bernard Shaw wrote, in an important introduction to the novel, that ‘Dickens’ occasional indignation’ had ‘spread and depended into a passionate revolt against the whole industrial order of the modern world.’ This is certainly wrong if we take it to mean that Dickens protested against the arrival of the machine and somehow foresaw where it would lead. For there are other unperceived topicalities which show that Dickens meant to satirise certain recent and most enlightened attempts to improve industrial design in his own worst manner. Of course Dickens was attacking society, not to arouse revolution, but in the hope that all who were part of it would act with greater Christian humility and charity.

A major critic, Humphrey House writes that one of the reasons why, in the fifties, Dickens’ novels begin to show a greater complication of plot than before, is that he was intending to use them as a vehicle of more concentrated sociological argument. In the character of Gradgrind, Dickens’ satire is directed against a kind of thought. Gradgrind is, in fact, the only major Dickensonian character who is meant to be an ‘intellectual.’ Dickens was caught with the idea of a man living by a certain philosophy, as in the past he had been caught with the idea of a man living by a vice such as hypocrisy or pride. To sum up, it can be said that *Hard Times* is not a convincing book as a novel because it is not better than other Dickensonian novels but it combines in itself almost all the concerns of the author as a social critic as also his belief in man-to-man relation, criticism of the excesses of Industrialism, love of imagination and respect for a moral code.

#### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Muddle: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Indignant: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Theft: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Apology: \_\_\_\_\_

### 9.4 LET US SUM UP

*Hard Times* by Charles Dickens is set in the Victorian age predominantly attacking the then existing social problems, educational system, caste system, economic system and many more. The Victorian era was dominated by an aristocratic group of people whose power later slowly faded away and lost its influence. *Hard Times* is a great example of “attack on the utilitarian Philosophy” of the Victorian era, where emotions and sentiments were not counted but only the working efficiency, facts, number and calculations were given more importance. The facts have replaced the love and sentiments.

### 9.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What is Bitzer’s defining characteristic? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. His pale skin
  - b. His facial scar
  - c. His limp
  - d. His red hair

2. Where does Louisa flee after Harthouse's declaration of love? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Her husband's house
  - b. Her father's house
  - c. Stephen's room
  - d. The circus
3. What are Sissy's father's first words after he returns to his daughter? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. "Oh, Sissy, how I've missed you!"
  - b. "At last ..... at long last ..... my daughter ....."
  - c. "Child, do you not know me at last?"
  - d. He never returns
4. What motivates Harthouse to become one of Gradgrind's political disciples? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. He believes in Gradgrind's philosophy of fact
  - b. Boredom
  - c. The desire for wealth
  - d. Pride
5. Mr. Gradgrind claims that nothing will ever be of service to children except for \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Facts
  - b. Family
  - c. Instincts
  - d. Wealth
6. Who does Mr. Gradgrind hire to become a teacher at his school? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Mr. Gulpidge
  - b. Mr. Pumblechook
  - c. Mr. Tulkinghorn
  - d. Mr. McChoakumchild
7. What is the name of the Gradgrind home? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Whitewood
  - b. Last Home
  - c. Stone Lodge
  - d. The Grange
8. What does Mr. Gradgrind catch Tom and Luisa spying on? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. A circus
  - b. An execution

- c. A ship's arrival
  - d. A street fight
9. Mrs. Gradgrind shoos her children away, telling them to, "go and be \_\_\_\_\_."
- a. Intelligencicle
  - b. Somethingological
  - c. Book-like
  - d. Edumacated
10. What is Sissy out buying when her father leaves? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Liquor
  - b. Fresh fruit
  - c. Medicinal oils
  - d. A dress

### 9.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss salient characteristics of Dickens' novels.
2. Draw a character sketch of Mr. Gradgrind.
3. Draw a character sketch of Louisa.
4. How has Charles Dickens indicted the Utilitarian philosophy in *Hard Times*?
5. Discuss Charles Dickens as a Social Reformer.
6. How is *Hard Times* an indictment of the Victorian society as a whole?

### 9.7 ANSWER KEY

#### SAQs

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

### 9.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Frank, Joachim, and Lena Steveker. *Charles Dickens as an Agent of Change*. Cornell University Press, 2019.
2. Chesterton, G.K. *Charles Dickens*. Blurb, Incorporated, 2019.
3. Mishra, Alok. "Charles Dickens as a Social Reformer – A Critical Observation." *English Literature Education*, <https://englishliterature.education/articles/general/charles dickens as a social reformer a critical observation/>.

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**GEORGE ELIOT: *MIDDLEMARCH*****STRUCTURE**

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 10.3 Biographical Sketch of the Author
- 10.4 George Eliot's Works
- 10.5 The Times of the Author
- 10.6 The Context of *Middlemarch*
- 10.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.8 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 10.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 10.10 Answer Key
- 10.11 Suggested Reading

**10.1 INTRODUCTION**

George Eliot was one of the leading women writers of the nineteenth century. Her novels, most famously *Middlemarch*, are celebrated for their realism and psychological insights. She was unconventional both as an individual and as a writer.

**10.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to introduce you to the writer George Eliot by offering a glimpse into the biographical aspect of her life and works. The lesson aims to familiarise you with the times of the author as well as offer contextual information to the novel *Middlemarch*.

After going through this lesson, you will explain the various important events in the life of George Eliot. You will also be able to list the major works written by George Eliot as well as describe the times during which she wrote. You will be able to explain the context of the novel *Middlemarch* and its importance to the plot of the story.

**10.3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

Mary Ann Evans (22 November 1819 – 22 December 1880) is more popularly known by her pen name George Eliot. She was an English novelist, journalist, translator and one of the leading writers of the Victorian period.

She was born at South Farm, Arbury Hall in Warwickshire and was the youngest of five children. The young Evans was certainly an intelligent child and a voracious reader. Because she was not considered physically beautiful, and thus not thought to have much chance of marriage, and because of her intelligence, her father

invested in her education not often provided to women. So Mary Anne was afforded the privileges of a private education. She enjoyed books and learning from a young age; she was reflective, self absorbing and quiet, and thus was a bit of an anomaly among young women of the time. Unfortunately, Mary Anne was forced to leave school at the age of 16, when her mother died in early 1836. However, her father continued to indulge her love of learning and would purchase books for her to help her to learn German and Italian besides general reading. In 1841, Mary Anne's father moved the family to the larger town of Foleshill, where Mary Anne met Charles and Cara Bray, who later became good friends of hers.

Evans, who had been struggling with religious doubts for some time, became intimate friends with the progressive, free-thinking Brays, whose "Rosehill" home was a haven for people who held and debated radical views. The people whom the young woman met at the Brays' house included Robert Owen, Herbert Spencer, Harriet Martineau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through this society Evans was introduced to more liberal theologies and to writers such as David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach, who cast doubt on the literal truth of Biblical stories.

Mary Anne soon, however, became very self-conscious about her unconventionality among this group of friends. She also began to renounce her faith in Christianity, which caused distance between Mary Anne and her father, with her father threatening to throw her out of the house. They reconciled for the most part, and Mary Anne cared for her father closely when he became ill in 1847 until his death in 1849.

Through the Brays, she met John Chapman, a publisher and bookseller from London. Chapman and Mary Anne became good friends, and he asked Mary Anne to become the behind-the-scenes editor for the *Westminster Review*. Mary Anne worked at the *Review* for two years, despite the fact that she received no credit for her work. In 1851, Mary Anne met George Henry Lewes, and the pair became romantically involved. Though Lewes was already married, he and his wife had been separated for some years and his wife was living with another man, with whom she had three children.

It was all but impossible for Lewes to divorce his wife because he had condoned her adultery, so his and Mary Anne's options were limited. They decided to try living together abroad first, so in 1854 they traveled to Germany together. They were as vague with their friends and relatives as possible, but after some months abroad they started to receive word that even their most liberal-minded friends disapproved of their lifestyle. They returned to England in 1855, and Mary Anne remained separate from Lewes until his wife declared that she had no intention of ever reuniting with him. After this, Mary Anne moved in with Lewes in London, and insisted on being called Mrs. Lewes, which caused great scandal and her general isolation from society. Mary Anne's decision meant a break with the Brays, who disapproved of her decision. She and George were very happy, despite the stir that their relationship caused.

She used a male pen name, she said, to ensure her works would be taken seriously.

Female authors were published under their own names during Eliot's life, but she wanted to escape the stereotype of women only writing lighthearted romances. She also wished to have her fiction judged separately from her already extensive and widely known work as an editor and critic.

In 1863 the Leweses bought the Priory, 21, North Bank, Regent's Park, where their Sunday afternoons became a brilliant feature of Victorian life. There on Nov. 30, 1878, Lewes died. For nearly 25 years he had fostered her genius and managed all the practical details of life, which now fell upon her. Most of all she missed the encouragement that alone made it possible for her to write. For months she saw no one but his son Charles Lee Lewes; she devoted herself to completing the last volume of his *Problems of Life and Mind* (1873–79) and founded the George Henry Lewes Studentship in Physiology at Cambridge. For some years her investments had been in the hands of John Walter Cross (1840–1924), a banker introduced to the Leweses by Herbert Spencer. Cross' mother had died a week after Lewes. Drawn by sympathy and the need for advice, George Eliot soon began to lean on him for affection too. On May 6, 1880, they were married in St. George's, Hanover Square. Cross was 40; she was in her 61st year. After a wedding trip in Italy they returned to her country house

at Witley before moving to 4, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where she died in December. She was buried at Highgate Cemetery.

#### 10.4 GEORGE ELIOT'S WORKS

At Weimar and Berlin, she wrote some of her best essays for *The Westminster* and translated Spinoza's *Ethics* (still unpublished), while Lewes worked on his groundbreaking life of Goethe. She turned to early memories and, encouraged by Lewes, wrote a story about a childhood episode in Chilvers Coton Parish. Published in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1857) as *The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton*, it was an instant success. Two more tales, *Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story* and *Janet's Repentance*, also based on local events, appeared serially in the same year, and Blackwood republished all three as *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 2 vol. (1858), under the pseudonym George Eliot.

*Adam Bede*, 3 vol. (1859), her first long novel, she described as "a country story—full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay." Its masterly realism—"the faithful representing of commonplace things"—brought to English fiction the same truthful observation of minute detail that Ruskin was commending in the Pre-Raphaelites. The book is rich in humour. The germ of the plot was an anecdote her Methodist aunt told of visiting a girl condemned for child murder. The dialect of the Bedes she had heard in the conversations of her Derbyshire uncles with her father, some of whose early experiences she assigned to Adam. But what was new in English fiction was the combination of deep human sympathy and rigorous moral judgment. *Adam Bede* went through eight printings within a year, and *Blackwood* doubled the £800 paid for it and returned the copyright.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, 3 vol. (1860), she returned again to the scenes of her early life. The first half of the book, with its remarkable portrayal of childhood, is irresistibly appealing, and throughout there are scenes that reach a new level of psychological subtlety.

At this time historical novels were in vogue, and during their visit to Florence in 1860 Lewes suggested Savonarola as a good subject, George Eliot grasped it enthusiastically and began to plan *Romola* (1862–63). First, however, she wrote *Silas Marner* (1861), which had thrust itself between her and the Italian material. Its brevity and perfection of form made this story of the weaver whose lost gold is replaced by a strayed child the best known of her books, though it has suffered unfairly from being forced on generations of schoolchildren. *Romola* was planned as a serial for *Blackwood's*, until an offer of £10,000 from *The Cornhill Magazine* induced George Eliot to desert her old publisher; but rather than divide the book into the 16 installments the editor wanted, she accepted £3,000 less, an evidence of artistic integrity few writers would have shown. Details of Florentine history, setting, costume, and dialogue were scrupulously studied at the British Museum and during a second trip to Italy in 1861, it was published in 14 parts between July 1862 and August 1863. Though the book lacks the spontaneity of the English stories, it has been unduly disparaged.

George Eliot's next two novels are laid in England at the time of agitation for passage of the Reform Bill. In *Felix Holt, the Radical*, 3 vol. (1866), she drew the election riot from recollection of one she saw at Nuneaton in December 1832. The initial impulse of the book was not the political theme but the tragic character of Mrs. Transome, who was one of her greatest triumphs. The intricate plot popular taste then demanded now tells against the novel. *Middlemarch* (8 parts, 1871–72) is by general consent George Eliot's masterpiece. Under her hand the novel had developed from a mere entertainment into a highly intellectual form of art. Every class of Middlemarch society is depicted from the landed gentry and clergy to the manufacturers and professional men, the shopkeepers, publicans, farmers, and labourers. Several strands of plot are interwoven to reinforce each other by contrast and parallel. Yet, the story depends not on closeknit intrigue but on showing the incalculably diffusive effect of the unhistoric acts of those who "lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs".

*Daniel Deronda* (8 parts, 1876), in which George Eliot comes nearest the contemporary scene, is built on the contrast between Mirah Cohen, a poor Jewish girl, and the upper class Gwendolen Harleth, who marries for money and regrets it. The less convincingly realized hero, Daniel, after discovering that he is Jewish, marries

Mirah and departs for Palestine to establish a home for his nation. The picture of the Cohen family evoked grateful praise from Jewish readers. But the best part of *Daniel Deronda* is the keen analysis of Gwendolen's character, which seems to many critics the peak of George Eliot's achievement.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, it's time for you to take another break! Before moving to the next section, check your progress to make sure that you are ready to proceed to the next section:

1. What is the real name of George Eliot? \_\_\_\_\_
2. George Eliot was born on \_\_\_\_\_.
3. George Eliot worked as editor for two years for \_\_\_\_\_.
4. After George Henry Lewes' death, George Eliot completed the last volume of his work titled \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Which novel by George Eliot is described as "a country story – full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay?"
6. The details of Florentine history find a reflection in which of George Eliot's novel?
7. *Romola* was published in \_\_\_\_\_ parts \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Which two novels by George Eliot are set in England at the time of agitation for the passage of the Reform Bill?
9. In which novel by George Eliot do the characters Mirah Cohen and Gwendolen Harleth appear?
10. *Middlemarch* is a novel published in how many parts?

## 10.5 THE TIMES OF THE AUTHOR

George Eliot belonged to the Victorian period. By the beginning of the Victorian age, the Industrial Revolution, as this shift was called, had created profound economic and social changes, including a mass migration of workers to industrial towns, where they lived in new urban slums. But the changes arising out of the Industrial Revolution were just one subset of the radical changes taking place in mid- and late-nineteenth-century Britain — among others were the democratization resulting from extension of the franchise; challenges to religious faith, in part based on the advances of scientific knowledge, particularly of evolution; and changes in the role of women.

All of these issues, and the controversies attending them, informed Victorian literature. In part because of the expansion of newspapers and the periodical press, debate about political and social issues played an important role in the experience of the reading public. The Victorian novel, with its emphasis on the realistic portrayal of social life, represented many Victorian issues in the stories of its characters. Moreover, debates about political representation involved in expansion both of the franchise and of the rights of women affected literary representation, as writers gave voice to those who had been voiceless.

England is in the process of rapid industrialization. Social mobility is growing rapidly. With the rise of the merchant middle class, one's birth no longer necessarily determines one's social class for life. Chance occurrences can make or break a person's success. Moreover, there is no single coherent religious order. Evangelical Protestants, Catholics, and Anglicans live side by side. As a result, religious conflicts abound in the novel, particularly those centering on the rise of Evangelical Protestantism, a primarily middle-class religion that created heated doctrinal controversy.

In the past, the landed gentry occupied the top of the social ladder. A gentleman had no determined occupation. In fact, a gentleman didn't work, because his money allowed him to live a life of leisure. Working for a living was considered beneath him. Eager to ameliorate the stigma of earned money, many members of the middle class ascribed to this moral system. A growing middle class and a strict moral system characterize the Victorian period.

Although industrialization created greater freedom of choice in vocation and greater upward social mobility, it also created insecurity. A middle-class man's moral exterior was supposed to coincide with his private life. If there was a contradiction, he was expected to hide it well. The social and economic cost of ostracism for the revelation of private sins raised the stakes for contradictions between one's public and private selves. Respectability, like wealth, had to be earned. The blessings of the range of opportunities available to the self-made man were mixed. Private actions that contradicted the public veneer of respectability could destroy everything.

## 10.6 THE CONTEXT OF *MIDDLEMARCH*

Eliot scorned the stereotypical female novelist; rather than writing the silly, unrealistic romantic tales expected of women writers, she wrote according to her own tastes. Her first attempt to write *Middlemarch*—now her most famous novel—ended in failure and despair. Shortly after this initial failure, she began a short novella entitled *Miss Brooke*. The writing proceeded quickly, and she later integrated the novella into *Middlemarch*. The novel was published serially in eight parts.

*Middlemarch* is a novel of epic proportions, but it transforms the notion of an epic. Epics usually narrate the tale of one important hero who experiences grand adventure, and they usually interpret events according to a grand design of fate. Every event has immediate, grand consequences. Kings and dynasties are made and unmade in epic tales.

*Middlemarch*'s subtitle is "A Study of Provincial Life." This means that *Middlemarch* represents the lives of ordinary people, not the grand adventures of princes and kings. *Middlemarch* represents the spirit of nineteenth-century England through the unknown, historically unremarkable common people. The small community of *Middlemarch* is thrown into relief against the background of larger social transformations, rather than the other way around.

England is in the process of rapid industrialization. Social mobility is growing rapidly. With the rise of the merchant middle class, one's birth no longer necessarily determines one's social class for life. Chance occurrences can make or break a person's success. Moreover, there is no single coherent religious order. Evangelical Protestants, Catholics, and Anglicans live side by side. As a result, religious conflicts abound in the novel, particularly those centering on the rise of Evangelical Protestantism, a primarily middle-class religion that created heated doctrinal controversy.

*Middlemarch* readers will be astonished by the novel's amazingly complex social world. Eliot continually uses the metaphor of a web to describe the town's social relations. She intricately weaves together the disparate life experiences of a large cast of characters. Many characters subscribe to a world-view; others want to find a world-view to organize their lives. The absence of a single, triumphant world-view to organize all life is the basic design of *Middlemarch*. No one occupies the center of the novel as the most important or influential person. In *Middlemarch* social relations are indeed like a web, but the web has no center. Each individual occupies a point in the web, affecting and affected by the other points. Eliot's admirable effort to represent this web in great detail makes her novel epic in length and scope. Unlike in an epic, however, no single point in the web and no single world-view reigns triumphant.

*Middlemarch* is quite an unusual novel. Although it is primarily a Victorian novel, it has many characteristics typical to modern novels. It is regarded as Eliot's masterpiece work and received mixed reactions. A common accusation leveled against it was its morbid, depressing tone. Many critics did not like Eliot's habit of scattering obscure literary and scientific allusions throughout the book. In their opinion a woman writer should not be

so intellectual. Eliot hated the “silly, women novelists”. In the Victorian era, women writers were generally confined to writing the stereotypical fantasies of the conventional romance fiction. Not only did Eliot dislike the constraints imposed on women’s writing, she disliked the stories they were expected to produce. Her disdain for the tropes of conventional romance is apparent in her treatment of marriage between Rosamond and Lydgate. Both Rosamond and Lydgate think of courtship and romance in terms of ideas taken directly from conventional romance. Another problem with such fiction is that marriage marks the end of the novel. Eliot goes through great effort to depict the realities of marriage.

Moreover, Eliot’s many critics found *Middlemarch* to be too depressing for a woman writer. Eliot refused to bow to the conventions of a happy ending. An ill-advised marriage between two people who are inherently incompatible never becomes completely harmonious. In fact, it becomes a yoke. Such is the case in the marriages of Lydgate and Dorothea. Dorothea was saved from living with her mistake for her whole life because her elderly husband dies of a heart attack. Lydgate and Rosamond, on the other hand, married young.

Short, romantic courtships lead to trouble, because both parties entertain unrealistic ideals of each other. They marry without getting to know one another. Marriages based on compatibility work better. Moreover, marriages in which women have a greater say also work better, such as the marriage between Fred and Mary. She tells him she will not marry if he becomes a clergyman. Her condition saves Fred from an unhappy entrapment in an occupation he doesn’t like. Dorothea and Casaubon struggle continually because Casaubon attempts to make her submit to his control. The same applies in the marriage between Lydgate and Rosamond.

The choice of an occupation by which one earns a living is also an important element in the book. Eliot illustrates the consequences of making the wrong choice. She also details at great length the consequences of confining women to the domestic sphere alone. Dorothea’s passionate ambition for social reform is never realized. She ends with a happy marriage, but there is some sense that her end as merely a wife and mother is a waste. Rosamond’s shrewd capabilities degenerate into vanity and manipulation. She is restless within the domestic sphere, and her stifled ambitions only result in unhappiness for herself and her husband.

Eliot’s refusal to conform to happy endings demonstrates the fact that *Middlemarch* is not meant to be entertainment. She wants to deal with real-life issues, not the fantasy world to which women writers were often confined. Her ambition was to create a portrait of the complexity of ordinary human life: quiet tragedies, petty character failings, small triumphs, and quiet moments of dignity. The complexity of her portrait of provincial society is reflected in the complexity of individual characters. The contradictions in the character of the individual person are evident in the shifting sympathies of the reader. One moment, we pity Casaubon, the next we judge him critically.

**Activity**

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Glimpse: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Voracious: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Strayed: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Strict: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Destroy: \_\_\_\_\_

**10.7 LET US SUM UP**

The lesson paints the picture of George Eliot, the person and the kind of writer she was. Her woes reflected the complexities of real life, the same ones that their author had been unafraid to confront. *Middlemarch* stubbornly refuses to behave like a typical novel. The novel is a collection of relationships between several major players in the drama, but no single person occupies the center of the action. No one person can represent provincial life. It is necessary to include multiple people. Eliot’s book is fairly experimental for its time in form and content, particularly because she was a woman writer.

## 10.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

- a) George Eliot is the \_\_\_\_\_ name of Mary Ann Evans.
- b) The title of Eliot's first long novel is \_\_\_\_\_.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ is regarded as Eliot's masterpiece.
- d) *Middlemarch* represents the spirit and life of the \_\_\_\_\_ century England.
- e) The novel, *Middlemarch*, was published serially in \_\_\_\_\_ parts.

## 10.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) What Contributions did George Eliot make to the English Novel?
- b) What is the theme of the novel *Middlemarch* by George Eliot?
- c) What are George Eliot's major achievements?
- d) What is George Eliot's idea of realism?
- e) Discuss the portrayal of women in George Eliot's works.
- f) What are the agnostic elements in George Eliot's works?

## 10.10 ANSWER KEY

### CYP

1. Mary Ann Evans
2. 22 November 1819
3. The *Westminster Review*
4. *Problems of Life and Mind*
5. *Adam Bede*
6. *Romola*
7. 14
8. *Felix Holt, the Radical, Middlemarch*
9. *Daniel Deronda*
10. eight

**SAQs:** a) pen, b) *Adam Bede*, c) *Middlemarch*, d) nineteenth, eight

## 10.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. Ashton, Rosemary. *George Eliot: A Life*. Faber & Faber, 2013.
2. Hughes, Kathryn. *George Eliot : The Last Victorian*. Cooper Square Press, 2001.
3. Carlisle, Clare. "George Eliot." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2025 Edition, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/george-eliot/>.

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**GEORGE ELIOT: *MIDDLEMARCH*****STRUCTURE**

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 11.3 Major Characters
- 11.4 A Brief Summary of the Novel
- 11.5 Chapter-wise Summary
- 11.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 11.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 11.9 Answer Key
- 11.10 Suggested Reading

**11.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Middlemarch*, published in 1871-72, carries the subtitle “A Study of Provincial Life.” The novel is not about individuals’ stories but also their place in the society of the times. By telling the story of three young women of slightly different classes, their suitors and the social milieu in which their relationships develop, Eliot is able to show the nuances of class in the 1830s.

**11.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce you to the plot of the novel *Middlemarch*. The lesson provides a detailed chapter-wise summary of the novel which will familiarise you with the various important events in the novel.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to summarize the novel as well as describe the important happenings in the course of the narrative. You will not only explain the plot development, but describe how the various incidents are related to one another.

**11.3 MAJOR CHARACTERS****Dorothea Brooke**

Dorothea is a kind-hearted woman who wishes to improve the world. She marries Casaubon believing him to be a great scholar and intellectual. However, her marriage proves to be disastrous as there is no compatibility between her and Casaubon. She later falls in love with Will Ladislaw, Casaubon’s cousin. Towards the end of the novel she marries Will as a result of which she has to lose inheritance as Casaubon’s widow.

**Edward Casaubon**

A middle-aged scholar who marries Dorothea and she later finds him to be incapable of love. He devotes himself on a fruitless writing project and is also jealous and insecure.

### **Will Ladislaw**

He is Casaubon's cousin. He is very intelligent but occupies a lower social standing than Casaubon. Dorothea and Will fall in love with each other and prove to be good for each other.

### **Tertius Lydgate**

He is the orphan son of a military man. He is interested in the medical profession and much against the advice of his cousins, he adopts this profession and comes to Middlemarch in the hope of innovating methods of treatment. He gets stuck in a disastrous marriage with a vain woman, Rosamond Vincy because of which he gets into debt, which leads to further financial difficulty.

### **Rosamond Vincy**

Rosamond Vincy marries Lydgate whom she believes is rich and she will be able to afford her expensive lifestyle even after marriage. She wants to live an aristocratic life for which she longs to leave Middlemarch. However, it is because of her expensive lifestyle that Lydgate gets into debt.

### **Fred Vincy**

A young man whose father wants him to become a clergyman, something that he does not like. He lands himself into financial difficulty and gets himself into debt by gambling. He is deeply in love with Mary but she is ready to accept him as a lover only when he finds a stable occupation, so he starts working for Caleb Garth.

### **Mary Garth**

Mary is the love interest of Fred. Although low in social standing than Fred, she is much more sensible and intelligent. It is because of her only that Fred improves as a person.

### **Walter Vincy and Lucy Vincy**

They are the father and mother of Fred Vincy.

### **Mr. Bulstrode**

A rich person who is a prominent figure in Middlemarch. Although he is rich, yet he is disliked by many people because he pretends to be very pious.

### **Celia Brook**

She is Dorothea's sister.

### **Arthur Brook**

He is Dorothea and Celia's uncle.

### **Let Us Revise**

Dear learner, before moving to the next section, you can make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the characters in the novel *Middlemarch*:

1. Dorothea marries the scholar named \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Dorothea falls in love with \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a medical professional.
4. Tertius Lydgate's marriage with \_\_\_\_\_ proves disastrous.
5. Fred Vincy wants to marry \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is Dorothea's uncle.

## 11.4 A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

*Middlemarch* is a novel of epic proportions, but it transforms the notion of an epic. Epics usually narrate the tale of one important hero who experiences grand adventure, and they usually interpret events according to a grand design of fate. As *Middlemarch*'s subtitle, "A Study of Provincial Life," suggests, the novel represents the lives of ordinary people, not the grand adventures of princes and kings. *Middlemarch* represents the spirit of nineteenth-century England through the unknown, historically unremarkable common people. The small community of Middlemarch is thrown into relief against the background of larger social transformations, rather than the other way around.

Two major life choices govern the narrative of *Middlemarch*. One is marriage and the other is vocation. Eliot takes both choices very seriously.

*Middlemarch* presents an amazingly complex social world. Eliot continually uses the metaphor of a web to describe the town's social relations, while she intricately weaves together the dissimilar and incongruent life experiences of a large cast of characters. Many characters subscribe to a world-view; others want to find a world-view to organize their lives. However, here is no single world-view that stands triumphant, as each struggles to organize one's own life. Neither is there single character to occupy the centrestage in the novel and be the most important or influential person. All are so scattered that it is impossible to locate a centre. Each individual occupies a position, affecting and getting affected by the others' positions.

## 11.5 CHAPTER-WISE SUMMARY

### Book I

The first chapter introduces the character of Dorothea Brooke. She and her sister Celia are orphans in the care of their uncle, Mr. Brooke. Although she is from a wealthy family, Dorothea prefers to dress plainly and hopes to live an ascetic life devoted to improve the world around her. She keeps convincing her uncle to spend money to improve the lot of the tenants on his estate. Mr. Brooke is afraid that her Puritan character will hinder her marriage prospects. However, many men find her bewitching, especially on horseback. Dorothea is oblivious to this. Even Sir James Chettam's frequent visits to Tipton Grange, the Brooke estate, she believes are because his interest in marrying Celia but it is the opposite.

When, on Celia's insistence, Dorothea divides their late mother's jewellery, she takes only an emerald ring and a matching bracelet for herself and allows Celia to take the rest. Innocently, Celia asks whether Dorothea will wear the ring and bracelet in company. The question offends Dorothea.

During a small dinner party at Tipton Grange, Sir James informs Mr. Brooke and Dorothea of his plans to improve conditions for the tenants on his estate. While Mr. Brooke says that he spends far too much on such works, Dorothea points out that Mr. Brooke spends good amount of money on entertainment and little on socially responsible projects. Her well-spoken retort catches the attention of Mr. Casaubon, a middle-aged scholar and clergyman. Dorothea admires Casaubon for his dignified, intellectual conversation. Celia knows that Sir James wishes to marry Dorothea and believes that Casaubon is old, boring, and ugly. For her part, Dorothea thinks that Sir James is silly. Casaubon and Dorothea begin to spend more time in conversation. He admires her because she does not care for the frivolous and trivial things in life. She admires him for his "great soul". On the other hand, Sir James attempts to please Dorothea by showing interest in her "plan for cottages."

Dorothea devotes her spare time to drawing plans for better housing for the tenants on Brooke's estate. Sir James states that he would like to follow her plans at Freshitt, his own estate. Dorothea is delighted, and the two of them set to work on putting the plan into action. Celia informs Dorothea that Sir James wishes to marry her; Dorothea reacts with utter disbelief and plans to discourage him. However, Mr. Brooke arrives to tell her that Casaubon has asked him for her hand in marriage. Dorothea is overjoyed and accepts the proposal right away.

Brooke does not understand why she prefers Casaubon over Sir James, but he wishes to allow her to make her own choice. Dorothea informs Celia of her engagement to Casaubon. Celia reacts with anxiety and sadness at the news. Mrs. Cadwallader, learning of Dorothea's engagement from Mr. Brooke, reports the news to Sir James. Sir James reacts with disbelief. Mrs. Cadwallader states that Dorothea is too high-flown and strictly religious for him anyway. However, she had planned to play match-maker for Dorothea and Sir James since she had come to live with Mr. Brooke. She resolves instead to get Sir James and Celia married. Sir James decides to be a gentleman. He continues collaborating with Dorothea on the cottages according to her plans.

Casaubon looks forward to the end of the courtship, as he is eager to return his energies to his great work, the Key to all Mythologies. Dorothea offers to learn Latin and Greek in order to help him with his project. Casaubon, pleased with her submissive affection, consents to teach her.

Sir James believes that Brooke should not have allowed Dorothea to become engaged to such an old, dry man as Casaubon. He appeals to Mr. Cadwallader to speak to Brooke about putting a stop to the marriage and feels that the difference in age between bride and groom is enough justification for postponing the marriage. However, he finds that his relationship with Dorothea is easier because he no longer has any "passion to hide or confess."

The Brookes visit Lowick manor, Casaubon's residence. Dorothea notices the miniature portraits of Casaubon's mother and her older sister. Casaubon confirms her assertion that there is little resemblance between the sisters. During the tour of the grounds, they notice a young man drawing sketches, who is introduced as Will Ladislaw, his second cousin. Brooke and Celia admire his sketches, but Dorothea says that she is not educated enough to judge them. Will thinks she means to criticize or insult him. They bid good bye to Will, and Casaubon tells them that he fears that Will has no ambition. He has agreed to pay the expenses of a trip abroad for Will, however, to give him time to settle on a profession.

At the engagement party, Dorothea meets Lydgate, the new, young surgeon. Lydgate thinks she is a fine girl, but too earnest. She wants too many reasons for everything. He prefers the company of Rosamond Vincy, the daughter of the mayor. She is beautiful and looks at things from "the proper feminine angle." Rosamond becomes interested in Lydgate. She prefers to marry a man who is not from Middlemarch, and she believes Lydgate has important, aristocratic relatives.

Rosamond and her brother, Fred, decide to go visit their elderly uncle, Peter Featherstone. Featherstone's second wife, Mrs. Vincy's sister, died with no children. She hopes that her own children, especially Fred, will inherit Featherstone's wealth. Featherstone accuses Fred of borrowing money for gambling debts, using his possible inheritance of Featherstone's wealth as security. He names Mr. Bulstrode, Fred's uncle, as the man who could prove or disprove the rumor. Bulstrode, a wealthy banker, would know everything about the borrowing or lending of money. Featherstone demands that Fred secure a letter from Bulstrode confirming or denying the rumor. Mary Garth, Featherstone's niece by his first marriage, is charged with the care of the sick old man. Fred is also madly in love with her. He asks Rosamond if Mary mentioned anything about him. He fears that Mary has heard the rumor about his gambling debts. Rosamond replies that Mary only said that he is unsteady and that she would refuse to marry Fred if he proposed.

## **Book II**

Bulstrode plans to have Lydgate as superintendent of the new Fever Hospital. Farebrother warns Lydgate that he will incur professional jealousy among other Middlemarch medical men because he wants to reform their outdated treatments. The hospital lies within Mr. Farebrother's parish, but Bulstrode wishes to elect another clergyman because he doesn't like Farebrother's doctrine. He wishes to elect Mr. Tyke as chaplain for the hospital. Lydgate replies that he doesn't want to become involved in clerical disputes. Lydgate is the orphan son of a military man, and he settled on the medical profession at a young age. His guardians paid for his education, but he is forced to earn his own living, and he doesn't plan to marry soon. He once fell in love with an actress who killed her husband on stage. She reported that it was an accident, and Lydgate helped clear her of charges.

She later confessed that she meant to do it, and he resolved to avoid romantic entanglements for a long while. He wants to discover the tissue that is the most basic building block of life.

Bulstrode arrived in Middlemarch some twenty years ago, and no one knows his origins. He managed to marry Mr. Vincy's sister and ally himself with an important, respectable family. He has an intimate view into the private lives of Middlemarch citizens through their finances. He uses his money as a lever to spread his strict Protestant ethic and to scrutinize its effect on his fellow citizens. Power is his favorite game.

Mr. Vincy arrives, and Lydgate is rescued from the sticky situation. Fred has told his father about Featherstone's request. Bulstrode is reluctant to write the letter because he disapproves of Fred's extravagant habits. He believes that Vincy made a mistake in paying for Fred's expensive college education. Vincy criticizes Bulstrode for moralizing and hints that his sister, Mrs. Bulstrode, will disapprove of Bulstrode's refusal to help her brother's family. Bulstrode agrees to write the letter after a short consultation with his wife.

Fred delivers the letter, and Featherstone gives him one hundred pounds as a gift. Fred retreats to speak with Mary. Fred demands that she promise to marry him, but she refuses. She suggests that he pass his exam as proof that he is not an idler, even though she thinks he would be an unfit clergyman. She refuses to encourage his marriage prospects. He owes one hundred and sixty pounds for a gambling debt. His creditor holds a bill signed by Mary's father as security against the debt.

Lydgate attends dinner at the Vincy household, where the debate over Tyke rages on. Vincy states his preference for Farebrother on matters of doctrine. Lydgate states that he only wants to choose the best man for the job, rather than the person he likes most. The debate turns to reforms of the medical profession, and Lydgate finds himself in the minority when he supports them. He inadvertently insults the Middlemarch coroner. Farebrother arrives and invites Lydgate to visit him. Lydgate observes Farebrother's skill at card games. Later, he wonders whether Farebrother cares for the money he wins at cards. His thoughts turn to Rosamond. He admires her, but he doesn't plan to marry for some years. Meanwhile, Rosamond believes she will live in aristocratic style as his wife.

Lydgate visits Farebrother and learns that he supports his mother, aunt, and sister on his meager income. He also learns that Tyke is a fervent, strict person. He also learns that Farebrother smokes, gambles, and studies entomology as well. Farebrother warns Lydgate of Middlemarch's petty politics and prejudices. Lydgate's liking for Farebrother increases with greater acquaintance, but he disapproves of Farebrother's gambling, and he knows that Farebrother wants the chaplaincy for the forty-pound salary. Lydgate is also frustrated that his vote will damage his relationship with Bulstrode. He begins to feel the harness of petty Middlemarch politics.

During the election, Lydgate votes last, breaking a tie. Farebrother's supporters state that they know how Lydgate will vote and why. The hints insult Lydgate, but he votes for Tyke anyway. Farebrother treats Lydgate no differently than before.

Naumann, a painter friend of Will Ladislav, draws his attention to a beautiful woman on the streets of Rome. The woman is Dorothea. Will informs him of her identity, and Naumann asks him to persuade Dorothea to sit for a portrait. Meanwhile, Dorothea is sobbing. She cannot name the reason for her sadness. She has begun to realize that her marriage is not what she expected it to be. Casaubon states that he wishes to return to his work soon. She hints that he should begin sifting through his notes and writing his book. Casaubon takes her suggestion as criticism. He suggests that she defer to his better judgment. Dorothea, although indignant, bows to his will because the quarrel pains her.

Ladislav visits the Casaubons, but only Dorothea is home. Casaubon arrives, interrupting the conversation. His dry, dark, aged appearance contrasts starkly with Will's sunny, bright youth. Will agrees to dine with them the next day. Dorothea begs forgiveness for her short temper with him earlier, but peace is not fully restored.

Ladislav takes Dorothea and Casaubon to visit Naumann's studio. Naumann wants to sketch Dorothea. He flatters Casaubon and asks him to sit as a model for Thomas Aquinas. Afterwards, he asks to do a quick sketch

of Dorothea. Will is stricken with an intense admiration for Dorothea. He wishes her to take special notice of him, so he schemes to see her alone. He goes to visit when he knows Casaubon will not be at home. During their conversation, Will declares that he will renounce Casaubon's charity because he wishes to be independent. He hopes to impress Dorothea. She admires his resolve, but she pleads that he never mock Casaubon's work again. Dorothea reports Will's plan to Casaubon. He replies that Will is of little interest to him except as an object of duty, and he asks her not to mention him again.

### **Book III**

Fred did not want to go to his father about his debt, because Mr. Vincy tends to rage about his expensive habits. He settled on Caleb Garth, Mary's father, who had always liked Fred. However, the family has little money, because Garth failed in the building business. He makes his living managing the estate of wealthy landowners. Mrs. Garth, a former schoolteacher, supplements their income by giving lessons. Garth did not tell his wife that he co-signed a debt for Fred Vincy. Fred attends a fair, sells his horse, and buys another with Featherstone's gift. He hopes to sell the new horse at a profit and pay his debt. The new horse turns out to be a nasty one, however, and lames itself during a struggle. Fred, miserable at his bad luck, resolves to confess his inability to pay his debt. He visits the Garth home and tells Mrs. Garth.

Mrs. Garth must part with all the money that she has saved to pay the fee to apprentice her fifteen-year-old son to a trade. They have to ask Mary to part with some of her own savings to cover the rest of the debt. Fred apologizes generously and rides to Stone Court, Featherstone's estate, to confess all to Mary. Mrs. Garth expresses deep disappointment in Fred and scolds her husband for being foolish enough to co-sign the debt. Fred arrives at Stone Court and declares to Mary that she will think of him as a good-for-nothing. He suggests that she ask Featherstone to advance the money to apprentice her brother, but Mary replies that her family prefers earning their money to begging for it. She accuses him of being selfish because he does not think about the consequences others suffer as a result of his actions. Garth arrives to collect a portion of her savings and tells her that he fears that Fred is not to be trusted. Mary assures her father that she will not engage herself to Fred if he remains so irresponsible. Featherstone lets Mary know that he is aware of what has occurred, and he criticizes her father's lack of financial sense.

Fred catches a terrible fever, but Mr. Wrench, the Vincy family doctor, says that it is not serious. The medicines he prescribes, however, have no effect. Mrs. Vincy catches sight of Lydgate, so she asks him to examine her son. He diagnoses Fred with typhoid fever. Mr. Vincy is furious with Wrench's mistake, so he tells Wrench his opinion of him and names Lydgate as the new family doctor. Wrench is insulted, and Lydgate makes an enemy.

Meanwhile, Featherstone sends messages wishing Fred well and urging him to visit Stone Court when he is able. Fred listens to the message, hoping for a scrap of information concerning Mary. Lydgate feels a growing attachment to Rosamond, so he looks forward to the end of Fred's illness. Flirtation is all very nice, but he still sticks to his plan to defer any romantic entanglements for a period of years. Meanwhile, Rosamond dreams of marrying, ridding herself of boring Middlemarch society, and choosing all the best furnishings for her new home. Ned Plymdale and other men who hoped to court Rosamond become increasingly jealous. Lydgate begins to build his medical practice despite his growing feud with other medical men. One day a servant of Sir James arrives to ask him to visit Lowick Manor. After returning home from Rome, Dorothea contemplates the portrait of Casaubon's ill-fated aunt and feels a reluctant kinship with her because she experienced marriage difficulties. Brooke comments to her that Casaubon looks pale. Celia tells Dorothea that she is engaged to Sir James Chettam. Casaubon thought he had found everything he wanted and more in Dorothea: a ready helpmate with "the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex." He wanted a wife who would admire him uncritically, but he doesn't experience the bliss he expected.

Two letters from Ladislav arrive, and Casaubon reports that Ladislav suggests that he would like to visit Lowick Manor. Casaubon tells her he must decline because Will's presence would distract him from work. Irritated, Dorothea responds that she could not take pleasure in anything that would displease him. Casaubon

begs her to drop the subject. They work for a short while until Casaubon collapses with some kind of fit. They send for Sir James, who suggests that they have Lydgate examine Casaubon. Lydgate advises Casaubon to be satisfied with moderate work and frequent relaxation. In private, Dorothea begs him to tell her if she is to blame for Casaubon's heart attack. He tells her that she is not guilty. He states that Casaubon could live another fifteen years only if he is careful to follow Lydgate's advice. Dorothea reads Ladislaw's letters and requests that Mr. Brooke write Will and tell him not to come to Lowick because Casaubon is ill. Brooke invites Will to come and stay at Tipton Grange without telling Dorothea.

Selina Plymdale, Ned Plymdale's mother, tells Mrs. Bulstrode that she believes Rosamond and Lydgate are secretly engaged. Mrs. Bulstrode visits Rosamond to ask her about her secret engagement. Rosamond informs her that she has not become secretly engaged to Lydgate. Mrs. Bulstrode warns Rosamond that Lydgate is not wealthy and that the medical profession is not likely to make him wealthy. Rosamond tells her that she is sure Lydgate has good connections, so he must not be poor.

Mrs. Bulstrode hints to Lydgate that Rosamond has gotten the wrong idea. Lydgate resolves to stay away from the Vincy household. Rosamond becomes very unhappy. However, one day she has to go to see Mr. Vincy because Featherstone's health is beginning to fail. Vincy is not home, but Lydgate sees Rosamond, whose obvious heartache touches him. She begins to cry, and he kisses her tears away. He leaves the Vincy household as an engaged man. He asks Mr. Vincy's permission to marry Rosamond. Vincy is so delighted that Featherstone is on the brink of death—he hopes Fred will inherit his estate—that he gives his blessings.

The news of Featherstone's imminent demise brings all of his relatives to Stone Court. They all watch one another suspiciously and quarrel over who deserves to get Featherstone's money and land. Featherstone refuses to see any of them. One night, Featherstone tells Mary that he has written two wills, and he plans to burn one of them. He asks her to open his iron chest and take out the will inside it. She refuses. He is too weak to do it himself, so he tries to bribe her. Mary says she won't compromise her reputation. Featherstone dies that night clasping his would-be bribe money and the key to his iron chest.

## **Book IV**

Featherstone's funeral is large and impressive in accordance with his wishes. Dorothea and the Brookes watch the funeral from a window. They observe a frog-eyed stranger in attendance. Celia informs Dorothea that Ladislaw is staying at Tipton Grange. The news displeases Casaubon. He believes that Dorothea asked Mr. Brooke to invite Ladislaw to Tipton Grange. She cannot explain in front of the others that she had nothing to do with his presence in Middlemarch. All of Featherstone's relatives attend the reading of the will, as does the frog-eyed stranger. Rumor has it that his name is Mr. Rigg and that he is Featherstone's illegitimate son. Featherstone's lawyer, Mr. Standish, reads the earlier will first. Featherstone leaves small bequests to his siblings, which causes a flurry of indignant outbursts. The first will leaves ten thousand pounds to Fred, but the land is left to Joshua Rigg, who is to take the name of Featherstone.

The second will revokes everything except some small bequests. Joshua Rigg receives everything else excepting some property to be used for the erection of some almshouses in Featherstone's name. Mary wonders if her decision to refuse Featherstone's last request deprived Fred of his ten thousand pounds. Fred laments that he will have to become a clergyman after all.

Mr. Vincy regards Fred's idleness with increased severity and determines to send Fred back to school to pass his examination. Mr. Vincy resolves to revoke his consent to Rosamond's marriage. However, Rosamond is determined to have her way. Vincy also makes it clear that he won't advance any money should he and Rosamond get into financial straits.

Lydgate arranges to rent a nice home in preparation for married life. Lydgate decides to hasten the marriage and the purchase of furnishings for his new home. His savings begin disappearing rapidly, so he begins buying on credit. Rosamond insists on visiting Lydgate's uncle, Sir Godwin, during their wedding journey. She begins planning to have Lydgate leave Middlemarch and find a practice elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Mr. Brooke hires Will Ladislaw as editor of the *Pioneer*, a newspaper he has purchased. Ladislaw believes Casaubon wronged Dorothea in marrying her, so he resolves to stay near her and watch over her. He sets out to visit Dorothea. Dorothea regrets that Casaubon will not hire a secretary. He announces that he plans to stay in Middlemarch. Dorothea reports this information to Casaubon. The news greatly distresses him. He believes that Will feels contempt for him. Without telling her, Casaubon writes Will requesting that he leave Middlemarch, because he feels his chosen profession reflects badly on him. Dorothea asks Casaubon to leave half his wealth to Will upon his death to make amends for the disinheritance of his grandmother. Casaubon orders her to cease interference in his relationship with Will. He suspects Will and Dorothea are conspiring against him. Meanwhile, Will writes to state that he will not leave Middlemarch. Casaubon forbids Will to come to Lowick again.

Sir James and the Cadwalladers discuss Brooke's political ambitions and hope that the public embarrassment will prompt him to improve the conditions on his estate. Sir James attempts to convince Brooke to hire Garth to manage his estate, but he is unable to succeed. Sir James convinces Dorothea to aid in reforming Brooke. Dorothea expresses admiration that he plans to make the conditions on his own estate coincide with his political ambitions to "enter Parliament as a member who cares for the improvement of the people."

Farebrother arrives to deliver a message on Fred's behalf. Fred has left to return to college, and his shame over his debt prevented him from delivering his farewell in person. He reports that Fred has asked him to try and convince Mr. Vincy to allow Fred to choose a profession other than the Church. Mr. Garth plays with the idea of taking Fred into his business, but Mrs. Garth thinks his family would never allow it. He also tells his wife that it appears that Mr. Bulstrode plans to buy Stone Court from Joshua Rigg Featherstone.

Joshua Rigg Featherstone argues with John Raffles, his abusive stepfather. Raffles hassles him for money, but Rigg will pay his mother a weekly allowance and no more. Raffles notices a letter signed by Mr. Bulstrode and carries it away with him.

Despite all of her devoted care, Casaubon is convinced that Dorothea judges him harshly. His speculations regarding Will and Dorothea are full of suspicion and jealousy. He believes she is vulnerable to Will's manipulation. He resolves to protect Dorothea from Will's machinations. He consults Lydgate about the state of his health. Lydgate replies that his health is fragile, but he could still live another fifteen years.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Innovate: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Disaster: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Prominent: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Adventure: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Frivolous: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Trivial: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Rumor: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Persuade: \_\_\_\_\_

### Book V

Dorothea visits Lydgate's home to ask if Casaubon consulted him because of new health problems. Lydgate is not home, but she discovers that Will is there visiting with Rosamond. Will offers to go to the New Hospital to fetch Lydgate, but Dorothea chooses to go to the hospital herself. She does not want to speak with Will, because she knows she could not tell Casaubon about it without upsetting him. She also doesn't want to hide things from her husband. Dorothea's abrupt departure mortifies Will, and he suspects he has fallen in her opinion. Rosamond

teases Will by saying he worships Dorothea. Lydgate sets Dorothea's mind to rest about Casaubon's health.

Public opinion of Lydgate's support of reform of the medical profession is divided.

Lydgate's sparing use of drugs arouses distrust in potential patients, professional jealousy in other doctors, and anger in the local apothecaries. His habit of sometimes contradicting other doctors' methods angers and embarrasses his colleagues. However, Lydgate's successful treatment of some serious illnesses balances the public distrust somewhat.

Bulstrode would be happy to pay for everything at the hospital in return for the exclusive right to manage it, except for the fact that he wishes to purchase Stone Court from Joshua Rigg Featherstone. Therefore, he must secure large donations for the hospital. He gives Lydgate full authority over the treatment of the patients. Other doctors can consult, but they cannot contravene Lydgate's decisions. Every medical man in town refuses to visit the Fever Hospital. Rosamond tells Lydgate that she wishes he weren't a medical man. Lydgate tells her that she cannot love him if she can't love the medical man in him.

Casaubon suspects that Will plans to fool Dorothea into marrying him when she becomes a widow in order to get possession of his wealth. However, Will worships Dorothea for other reasons. He plans to go to Lowick Church during services in order to catch a glimpse of her, even though it would be an outright defiance of Casaubon's prohibition. He goes nevertheless, but he regrets his impetuous action immediately because Dorothea pales when she sees him. Dorothea is upset that her husband continues in refusing to speak to Will. Casaubon's health continues to decline. Later that night, Casaubon asks Dorothea to make a promise. She asks him to defer the matter until the next morning. In the morning Casaubon takes a walk. Dorothea resolves to promise whatever Casaubon wants and searches for him on the grounds. She finds him seated on a bench and discovers that he has died.

The day after Casaubon's burial, Sir James and Mr. Brooke discuss a codicil to his will. Casaubon has forbidden Dorothea to marry Will Ladislaw. Sir James demands that Brooke send Ladislaw out of the country, but Brooke says that he can't ship Will off like a herd of cattle. They resolve to keep the codicil a secret from Dorothea, but they fear that gossip will soon endanger Dorothea's reputation. Dorothea insists that she look through Casaubon's papers. She wants to find some clue about the unspecified promise he wanted of her. Celia reveals the details of the codicil. If Dorothea were to marry Will, she would be stripped of Casaubon's property. The knowledge that Casaubon viewed her with suspicion embitters Dorothea.

Lydgate tells Dorothea to consider allowing Farebrother to take over the parish at Lowick instead of Tyke.

Will doesn't know of Casaubon's codicil. He only knows that Brooke arranges for him to be at Tipton Grange as little as possible. He concludes that Dorothea's friends want him to stay away on her account. He wonders if they view him with suspicion. He despairs at the growing chasm between them and considers leaving the neighborhood, but he wants to coach Brooke for the Parliamentary elections.

Brooke gives an election speech. He notices an effigy of himself held above the shoulders of the crowd.

Farebrother learns that he is to have the Lowick parish. His mother, aunt, and sister urge him to court Mary Garth now that he has sufficient income to marry. Fred, having taken his degree, requests that Farebrother ask Mary if there is any chance that she would marry him. Farebrother assures Mary that her refusal to burn Featherstone's second will made no difference in Fred's lot. It would have been valid regardless. He asks Mary about her feelings for Fred. Mary states that she won't marry Fred if he becomes a clergyman and if he doesn't settle on a steady occupation. Farebrother hints that he himself loves her. Mary says that she loves Fred too much to give him up for another. Feeling pained for his loss and proud for having done his duty, Farebrother leaves to deliver the message.

John Raffles learns that Bulstrode purchased Stone Court from his stepson, Rigg Featherstone. Bulstrode bribes Raffles to stay away from Middlemarch. Raffles could damage Bulstrode's reputation as an eminent

Christian by revealing the fact that Bulstrode contrived to prevent his first wife from finding her missing daughter and grandchild. The missing daughter's married name was Ladislaw.

## **Book VI**

Dorothea returns to Lowick Manor. She wishes to get to know Farebrother's household better. She also wishes to hear some word of Will, but she fears asking about him directly. Will himself chooses to visit her at Lowick. Will tells Dorothea that he plans to depart from Middlemarch soon, hoping to elicit some sign of strong feeling from her. Sir James arrives and interrupts their visit. He treats Will with disdain, arousing Will's indignation and pride and Dorothea's sadness. Mrs. Cadwallader connives to marry Dorothea off as soon as her period of mourning ends. Everyone hopes that a speedy marriage will cut short any malicious gossip regarding her relationship with Will. Irritated at such meddling, Dorothea declares that she will never marry again.

Dorothea hires Caleb Garth to manage her estate. On her behalf, he negotiates with a company wishing to purchase rights to build a railway through Lowick parish.

Garth is angry that he cannot work without his assistant, so Fred offers to help with the day's work. Fred asks Garth if he would consider hiring him. He confesses his love for Mary and informs Garth that she has refused to marry him if he becomes a clergyman. Garth tells him to report to his office early the next morning. He decides to consult his wife before taking any steps, however. He tells her he wants to hire Fred. He also tells her about Mary's conditions for marrying Fred. Mrs. Garth is disappointed that Farebrother seems to have no chance of marrying her daughter.

Fred arrives at Garth's office in the morning, and Garth asks him to demonstrate his handwriting. Fred's handwriting is terrible, but Garth decides to give him a chance.

Fred visits the Garth household to speak with Mrs. Garth. He wishes to win her goodwill. She tells him that Mary's willingness to consider marrying him surprised her. She says that he made a mistake in asking Farebrother to speak to Mary on his behalf. She admonishes him for thinking of his own wants without considering what his wishes might cost others. Astonished, Fred asks if Farebrother loves Mary too. She confirms his speculation. Fred walks to Lowick to find Mary. He finds her in the company of Farebrother's mother, aunt, and sister. Farebrother returns home and contrives to allow Fred and Mary some time alone together. When they are alone, Fred declares that he has no chance, because she will probably marry Farebrother after all. Mary assures Fred that Farebrother has not tried to win her away from him and admonishes him for his unfair distrust of Farebrother. Fred is relieved, but he still feels an intense jealousy.

Captain Lydgate, Lydgate's cousin and son of Sir Godwin, comes to visit. The captain takes Rosamond out riding. Lydgate forbids her to go riding again because of her pregnancy. Rosamond defies him; she suffers an accident and miscarries. Rosamond wants to ask her father for money, but Lydgate forbids it. She tries to persuade him to sell everything and leave Middlemarch, but he refuses. He asks her to choose some of their dishes and her jewelry to return. She sullenly places all of her jewelry in front of Lydgate and tells him to choose everything himself. Lydgate relents and tells her to keep her jewelry.

Gossip concerning the codicil to Casaubon's will spreads throughout Middlemarch. Rosamond mentions it to Lydgate, who knows more than most. He advises Rosamond not to mention it to Will. Will knows nothing of the codicil until Rosamond defies her husband's advice and teases him about it. She is surprised to find that Will knew nothing of it. She is unhappy with her marriage, and she has already unsuccessfully tried to get money from her father.

Bulstrode hires Will to attend an auction and bid for a painting that Mrs. Bulstrode wants. Will meets John Raffles there. Raffles says he knew Will's mother and that her parents made a fortune by selling stolen goods.

In his youth, Bulstrode met Mr. Dunkirk, a pawnbroker, at church and befriended him. He became a partner in the business and slowly discovered that they were selling stolen goods. Dunkirk died, leaving his wife a

wealthy woman. Her son died. She wanted to marry Bulstrode, but she asked him to locate her missing daughter before she would consent. Bulstrode hired Raffles to find her. The daughter, Sarah Ladislaw, and her small child, Will, were found, but Bulstrode bribed Raffles to keep silent. He married Mrs. Dunkirk and received all of her wealth upon her death. Bulstrode tells Will that he married his grandmother and that he became wealthy as a result. He offers to give Will a fair share of the inheritance that would have come to him if Bulstrode had located Will's mother. Later, Bulstrode admits his guilt and says he wants to atone for it. Will asks if Bulstrode's wealth derives from the thievery Raffles hinted at. Bulstrode replies that he entered the business after it had already become established. Will refuses Bulstrode's tainted money, because he doesn't want to do something that would disappoint Dorothea

## **Book VII**

Farebrother catches Lydgate alone after dinner at the Vincys. He thanks Lydgate for freeing him of his gambling habit by convincing Dorothea to give him the Lowick parish. He says that he is chastened to realize how much a man's good behaviour depends on not being in want of money. Lydgate coldly replies that all money seems to come by chance, especially money earned in a profession. Lydgate's fatalistic attitude surprises Farebrother. He intuits that Lydgate is having trouble, so he hints that a man should depend on his friends. Lydgate continues to behave coldly. His distrust wounds Farebrother. Lydgate is so deeply in debt that he needs at least one thousand pounds. He tells Rosamond that he wishes to move to a smaller, cheaper house. Ned Plymdale and his new wife are looking for a suitable home. They are wealthy, and Lydgate thinks they will take the house as well as most of the furniture. Lydgate plans to employ Trumbell to negotiate the deal with Plymdale. Rosamond pleads that Lydgate write Sir Godwin and ask for money. Lydgate refuses.

Rosamond secretly pays a visit to Trumbell and revokes Lydgate's order. She needles the information out of Lydgate that a thousand pounds is necessary to remain in their present home. She secretly writes Sir Godwin asking for that sum. Lydgate tells her that he plans to instruct Trumbell to advertise their home in the papers, and Rosamond confesses that she revoked his order. Lydgate is furious. He begins thinking about traveling to see his uncle, Sir Godwin, to ask for money.

A letter from Sir Godwin arrives ordering Lydgate never again to set his wife to write him when he has something to ask. He has no money to spare, because the rest of the family is continually draining him. Lydgate rails at his wife, but she responds with stubborn silence. Finally, she tells him that he has made her life unpleasant and that marriage has brought hardships upon her. She cries and Lydgate tenderly consoles her.

Lydgate goes to the Green Dragon to speak with Mr. Bambridge about trading his good horse for a cheaper hack. Bambridge is not there, however, so Lydgate plays billiards to pass the time. The spectators begin placing bets. Before long, Lydgate is betting on his own play and winning. Meanwhile, Fred Vincy arrives. Lydgate's frenzied betting startles him. He considers placing some bets, but Lydgate's strange behaviour kills the impulse. Lydgate has begun to lose, but he doesn't stop betting.

Fred receives the message that Farebrother is waiting to speak with him downstairs. Hoping to save Lydgate from further loss, Fred asks him to act as a shield because Farebrother is sure to castigate him. Lydgate agrees. After some small talk, Lydgate departs, and Farebrother hints that he will court Mary himself if Fred falls into his former extravagant ways. Fred promises to stay away from the Green Dragon. Lydgate's financial troubles reach fever pitch. He learns that Rosamond has twice asked her father for money and been refused. She presses him to leave Middlemarch and practice elsewhere. Bulstrode suggests that Lydgate approach Dorothea and ask her to increase her contribution accordingly. Lydgate swallows his pride and asks for a loan. Bulstrode refuses and tells Lydgate that he should declare bankruptcy. Looking rather ill, Raffles appears at Bulstrode's home on Christmas Eve and spends the night. Bulstrode sends him away the next morning with a hundred pounds. Bulstrode's wife is uneasy, so he tells her he is merely taking care of the "wretched creature."

Anxious to earn Lydgate's goodwill, Bulstrode tells him that he has changed his mind and wants to loan Lydgate the money. Enormously relieved, Lydgate goes away with a check for a thousand pounds. Exhausted,

Bulstrode asks the housekeeper to take over. The housekeeper knocks on his door and tells him that Raffles is begging for brandy. After a moment's hesitation, Bulstrode gives her the key to the liquor cabinet. Lydgate returns in the morning to watch Raffles take his dying breath. Lydgate is puzzled at the change, but he is so happy to be saved from bankruptcy that he thinks nothing of it. Bulstrode is doomed. They also know that the auction of Lydgate's furniture was canceled suddenly. Suspicions grow about the circumstances of Raffles' death and Lydgate's sudden freedom from debt. The gossip spreads like wildfire.

Bulstrode attends a town meeting to discuss sanitation measures. Every important Middlemarch citizen attends the meeting. Lydgate notices strange looks when he and Bulstrode take their seats. A member of the board, Mr. Hawley, announces that there are scandalous accusations against Bulstrode. He demands that Bulstrode deny them or resign from all public positions. Lydgate notices Bulstrode shrink with misery. The other men request that Bulstrode leave the meeting.

Dorothea learns of whole sad story from Farebrother and Mr. Brooke after they return from the meeting. She asks how they could believe Lydgate could be guilty. She demands that they learn the truth and clear him.

### **Book VIII**

Dorothea asks Farebrother if it would be possible to approach Lydgate about the scandal and offer help. Farebrother tells her that Lydgate may not respond positively to questioning. Sir James says that they cannot manage another man's life for him. Dorothea decides to wait until she approaches Lydgate about taking over Bulstrode's interest in the hospital before broaching the subject of the scandal. Lydgate deduces that Bulstrode loaned him the money to bind him through a strong obligation in the event that Raffles disclosed any damaging details about his past. The townspeople avoid him, and he begins losing clients. He resolves to stay in Middlemarch and face the worst, but the thought of Rosamond's reaction pains him deeply.

Bulstrode knows that his wife returned home, claiming that she wasn't well, so he perceives that she has heard everything. He prepares himself to hear her say that she is leaving him. She dresses herself in mourning clothing and goes to see him. He will not look at her. A wave of compassion hits her when she sees his shrunken frame. He bursts into tears with her sitting by his side. His confession and her resolve to stick with him are unspoken.

Happy to be free of debt, Rosamond sends out invitations to a dinner party but they are declined. She visits her parents. They tell her everything and say that Lydgate will probably have to leave town. Dorothea summons Lydgate to discuss her involvement in the hospital. He tells her not to depend on him to manage the hospital, as he may have to leave town. Dorothea states her belief in his innocence and says that she wants to clear his name. Her support touches Lydgate deeply. He tells her that he must consider Rosamond's happiness, so he is disposed to leave Middlemarch. She offers to speak with Rosamond to show her that they are not completely abandoned. Dorothea decides to take over Lydgate's debt to Bulstrode. She sets out to visit Rosamond with a check for one thousand pounds. She encounters Will Ladislaw clasping Rosamond's hands. Rosamond has been crying. Dorothea recalls all the gossip concerning Will's relationship with Rosamond, so she departs abruptly. She considers Lydgate's marriage troubles under a new light, and she is ready more than ever to be his champion.

Will knows exactly what Dorothea thinks. He is shattered at the loss of her good opinion. Rosamond tries to touch his coat sleeve, but he angrily shakes her off. She sarcastically tells him to go after Dorothea. They quarrel, and Will leaves her home in a huff. Later, Rosamond collapses sobbing into Lydgate's arms. He doesn't know the cause of her depression.

Will returns to the Lydgate home later. Lydgate informs him that Rosamond is ill. He tells Ladislaw that his own name is included in the present scandal. Dorothea's anger and disappointment dissipate. She resolves to see Rosamond again. Lydgate consents to allow Dorothea to take over his debt from Bulstrode. Dorothea tells Rosamond that she, Farebrother, Sir James, and Mr. Brooke all support Lydgate wholeheartedly. Rosamond bursts into hysterical crying. Dorothea comforts her and counsels her to cling to her husband. Rosamond tells

Dorothea that she is wrong to think badly of Ladislav. She tells her that Will has done nothing wrong. She hints that Will loves another woman. Lydgate and Rosamond reach an uneasy peace.

However, he still must suffer the gossip about his parentage. People say that he is the grandson of a thieving Jewish pawnbroker. They kiss, but Will declares sorrowfully that they can never be married. Dorothea replies that she cares nothing for her wealth and that her heart will break if they must part. She has a sufficient income from her deceased parents and Mr. Brooke. They become engaged. Sir James reacts with anger, partly because he dislikes Ladislav and partly because he wants his son to inherit both Tipton and Freshitt. Dorothea decides to go to London and live with Will Ladislav.

Bulstrode prepares to leave Middlemarch. He doesn't want to sell Stone Court. He asks his wife if there was anything she would like him to do. She asks him to do something for Lydgate and Rosamond, but Bulstrode tells her that Lydgate has refused any further service from him. He tells her that Garth once planned to manage Stone Court in order to place Fred there. Since Garth declined to do business with him, he tells his wife to ask Garth to enter into an agreement with her.

Garth approaches Mary to see if she still wants to marry Fred considering the scandal concerning his uncle Bulstrode and his brother-in-law, Lydgate. She says that she still loves Fred, and that there has been no change in her plans. He tells her of the offer he has received from Mrs. Bulstrode. Fred is delighted at the news. He and Mary plan to marry shortly after he settles into Stone Court.

Fred and Mary settle into a solidly happy marriage and have three sons. They never become rich, but they manage comfortably. Lydgate leaves Middlemarch and sets up a successful practice elsewhere. He still considers himself a failure and dies at fifty. His marriage never becomes a peaceful or wholly happy arrangement. He never has anything but praise for Dorothea, which continually arouses Rosamond's jealousy. Rosamond later marries a wealthy physician. Will Ladislav becomes an ardent public man working for reforms. Dorothea remains happy in her position as wife and mother. Dorothea's son inherits Tipton Grange.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Decline: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Crowd: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Tease: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Pitch: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Claim: \_\_\_\_\_

## 11.6 LET US SUM UP

The lesson, through the summaries of novel's chapters, offers a close look into the way that people in England lived, worked, and behaved, as represented by George Eliot. In fact, the provincial life that Eliot portrays in this novel is different from what even some of the characters expected. The developing relationships of four couples form the backbone of the novel as these young people learn to relate to each other and the world around them.

## 11.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. When was Middlemarch published? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 1800-01
  - b) 1831-32

- c) 1871-72
  - d) 1894-95
2. Whom does Tertius Lydgate marry?\_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Rosamond Vincy
  - b) Mary Garth
  - c) Celia Brooke
  - d) Miss Noble
3. What is the name of the Garth's oldest son, a well regarded young scholar of solid character? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Edward
  - b) Harold
  - c) William
  - d) Christy
4. Which sanctimonious character was involved early in his career in a seedy business and cheated Will Ladislaw's mother out of an inheritance? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mr. Bulstrode
  - b) Mr. Cadwallader
  - c) Tertius Lydgate
  - d) Mr. Featherstone
5. What plagues Tertius Lydgate and places a severe strain on his marriage?\_\_\_\_\_.
- a) a shadowy past
  - b) substantial debt
  - c) alcoholism
  - d) a secret affair
6. Who is the blackmailer who emerges later in the novel?\_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mr. Dill
  - b) Mr. Rigg
  - c) Mr. Baldwin
  - d) Mr. Raffles
7. Whom does Dorothea Brooke marry after the death of her first husband?\_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Tertius Lydgate
  - b) Will Ladislaw

- c) Sir James Chettam
- d) Mr. Featherstone

8. What is the subtitle of *Middlemarch*? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) A Study of Provincial Life
- b) A Study in Manners
- c) A Village Apart
- d) Village Life and Manners

9. George Eliot is the pen name of which person? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Mary Anne Evans
- b) Elizabeth Burnett
- c) Henrietta Scott
- d) Constance Jones

10. Whom does Mr. Brooke employ as his assistant in his unsuccessful bid to win a seat in Parliament? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Mr. Casaubon
- b) Mr. Bulstrode
- c) Will Ladislaw
- d) Mr. Featherstone

### 11.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. The novel *Middlemarch* carries the sub title as “a study of provincial life.” Discuss if this is appropriate?
2. Draw a character sketch of Dorothea Brooke.
3. Draw a contrast between two women characters — Rosamond Vincy and Dorothea Brooke.

### 11.9 ANSWER KEY

#### Let Us Revise

1. Casaubon
2. Will Ladislaw
3. Tertius Lydgate
4. Rosamond Vincy
5. Mary Garth
6. Arthur Brook

**SAQs** : 1. c, 2. a, 3. d, 4. a, 5. b, 6. d, 7. b, 8. a, 9. a, 10. c

## Examination Oriented Questions

### Ans. 2. Character sketch of Dorothea Brooke

Dorothea is an exceptional woman: she is smart, pious, and beautiful, and the governing principle of her character is her desire to help the needy, seen in her interest in redesigning the local farmers' cottages. Described as a modern-day St. Theresa, "helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul," unable to find an outlet for her spiritual needs in the England of 1830s. Eliot clearly indicates from the very beginning that Dorothea has a mind of her own: "[t]he thing which seemed to her best, she wanted to justify by the completest knowledge; and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted on" (Eliot, III). Dorothea is also stubborn and strong-willed, going against common advice to wed Casaubon, a much older man.

Even though it is obvious that Dorothea would rather work on improving the cottages, she is reminded of her "feminine" mind over and over by her uncle, Mr. Brooke. When Dorothea mentions her indifference towards domestic music and feminine arts during a visit by Mr. Casaubon, Mr. Brooke quickly remarks that "there is a lightness about the feminine mind—a touch and go—music, the fine arts, that kind of thing—they should study those up to a certain point" (Eliot, 112). Since Dorothea is unable to make good of her intellect, she basically decides to accept the marriage proposal from the man who seems to be the most intelligent in Middlemarch, Mr. Casaubon. Mr. Brooke, whose mind is traditionalist in some aspects and progressive in other, leaves the decision of who to marry up to Dorothea. This shows that he says things dismissive of Dorothea's intellect not because he wants to be insulting but because notions like these are so deeply rooted in the society that they seem completely normal.

Dorothea marries Casaubon but the marriage does not fulfil her expectations. Since she was imagining herself almost like one of Milton's daughters, helping the blind poet, it is rather a disappointment for her that Casaubon is quite secretive about his work. He does, however, consent to teach Dorothea the basics of Latin and Greek. Casaubon is happy that Dorothea is so submissive and wants to be taught, indeed it seems that all Casaubon needs is a completely submissive woman. On the other hand, Dorothea is obviously not studying classic languages just to please Casaubon. Since as a woman she has practically no possibilities to obtain institutional education in these subjects, she uses Casaubon, so to say.

During honeymoon in Rome, Dorothea for the first time fully realizes that her marriage is something completely different than what she expected. While Dorothea is unhappy, Casaubon thinks that he has found a perfect wife and assistant with "the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex" (Eliot, Ch. 11). Casaubon does not even think about whether he is adequate for Dorothea because "society never made the preposterous demand that a man should think as much about his own qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy." (498).

The marriage works for some time in this strange mode where neither Casaubon, nor Dorothea is really happy. When Will Ladislaw's visits to Dorothea start being more numerous Casaubon starts to be silently jealous. Casaubon's jealousy progressively grows stronger and after some time he writes a letter to Will saying that he is no longer invited in the Lowick Manor, Mr. Casaubon's house. Will is about to leave Middlemarch but then he is approached by Mr. Brooke, who has bought local newspaper in hopes of being elected into the Parliament. Since he considers Will to be a smart man with a brain for such matters, he is naturally Brooke's first choice as the editor of the newspaper. Will accepts and stays in Middlemarch, which angers Casaubon even more.

After some time, however, Mr. Casaubon dies of heart attack. Dorothea is devastated and then Mr. Brooke and Sir James Chettam find out that Mr. Casaubon amended his last will in such a way that Dorothea would lose the whole inheritance if she married Will Ladislaw. Casaubon does not prevent her from marrying altogether; he is just very particular about Dorothea not marrying Will. Sir James is especially furious about the fact that Casaubon would do something like this.

Interestingly, in the very end of the novel when Dorothea marries Will after all, it is Sir James who finds it unacceptable and disreputable to marry like this. It should be noted however that Sir James acts as a voice of tradition in *Middlemarch* and thus it is quite understandable that he would be against a widow's marriage.

### **11.10 SUGGESTED READING**

1. Eliot, George. *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2003.
2. *Study Guide to Silas Marner and Middlemarch by George Eliot*. Dexterity, 2020.
3. *Middlemarch Summary*. LitCharts, Learneo, Inc., 2025, [www.litcharts.com/lit/middlemarch/summary](http://www.litcharts.com/lit/middlemarch/summary).

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**GEORGE ELIOT: *MIDDLEMARCH*****STRUCTURE**

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 12.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Novel
- 12.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 12.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 12.7 Answer Key
- 12.8 Suggested Reading

**12.1 INTRODUCTION**

George Eliot through her novel *Middlemarch* underscores different nuances of social life towards the end of nineteenth century as the times and conditions were changing in England. The lesson offers a detailed analysis of each section of the novel, bringing out the symbolism, metaphorical suggestions and underlying meanings in the literary text.

**12.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the previous lesson made you aware of the plot summary of the novel *Middlemarch*. The objective of this lesson is to offer insights into the various important aspects of the novel. The lesson also aims to provide critical appreciation and textual analysis of this classic novel.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to explain the various underlying meanings in the novel *Middlemarch*. You will also be able to explicate the various symbolic and metaphorical elements which enrich the text and provide it with deeper layers of meaning.

**12.3 A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL****Book I**

The Prelude refers to the life and work of Saint Theresa, a sixteenth-century Spanish mystic. She devoted her life to a combination of religious deliberations and practical actions. The narrator states that her “passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life.” However, there are many “Therasas” who have been born since then without the opportunity to have an epic life. The narrator attributes this to the absence of a “coherent social faith and order” through which they could enact great works. It is obvious that the Prelude positions Dorothea as an unsung Theresa. While the real Theresa is a famous, well-known saint, Dorothea is an ordinary, unknown woman in a small, provincial community.

Eliot uses this metaphor to point out that even the most ordinary life can be extraordinary. Dorothea stands out even in poor dress, she does not meet the general standard of feminine virtue like her sister, Celia. Social

convention requires women to avoid too much learning, not have an opinion of their own and to dress with a touch of the coquette. Dorothea is none of these. She doesn't shy away from criticizing and offering a piece of her own mind. Her interest and her participation in politics and social reform make her different from other women. She believes she can do much more in life than being only a home-maker. But since she is a woman, being an intellectual philanthropist becomes a taboo for her. But she thinks she can live out her dreams through Casaubon after becoming his wife. She would then be able to assist Casaubon in his scholarly pursuits and through this role, she also gains access to the education available to men only. Besides, for Dorothea is it unconditional and complete devotion that is the mark of happy companionship, and happy married life. She makes Casaubon into her ideal potential husband, and she will later suffer for her idealism.

From another perspective, it can be said that Dorothea has little self-knowledge. She dreams of submitting herself to an epic theory of self-sacrifice and virtue, but she has more pride than she is aware of. Her social reality and her idealism do not coincide, and Dorothea will be forced to undergo a process of disillusionment.

Casaubon himself suffers from unrealistic notions regarding the ideal wife. Dorothea may not relate to him as an individual, but he does not relate to Dorothea as an individual either. He wants a completely submissive helpmate. Despite numerous clues, he fails to recognize her stubborn, independent streak. People continually describe Dorothea and Casaubon with opposing metaphors. Casaubon is dry, old, and deathly; Dorothea is young and lively. Dorothea's idealism also leads her to misinterpret the assistance Casaubon gives Will. He helps Will out of a strict notion of duty. Dorothea believes he does so out of a naturally generous nature.

The Vincy family represents the successful middle-class family with upper-class pretensions. The changing social structure brought about by industrialization made upward social mobility possible. Walter Vincy is not a worldly, educated man, but he dreams of offering his children a step up the social ladder. He pays for Fred's expensive college education in order to socialize him into manners and customs of the landed gentry, as well as to prepare him for a career as a clergyman.

For the Vincy daughter, however, the process of upward social mobility is different. Rosamond represents one stereotypical view of women. She has been trained to be a socialite wife by going to an expensive finishing school. Her "education" has molded her into the perfect ornament for a wealthy husband. Rosamond views her future husband with an unrealistic idealism. To her, Lydgate is the mysterious newcomer in town with rumored family connections. She views him as though he stepped out of a conventional romantic novel. Lydgate himself suffers from stereotypical ideals of femininity. He finds Dorothea "troublesome." His ideal wife is an adornment to his life. He believes that he wants an ornament, not a partner. However, he will find that his "ideal" wife isn't necessarily the best wife for him.

## **Book II**

Lydgate is an orphan and a newcomer to Middlemarch. The orphan is a metaphor for the changing social structure. Before industrialization, familial connections largely determined social status. Family honour largely determined the range of social possibilities for the individual, including marriage and profession. As an orphan, Lydgate is less fettered by familial concerns. Moreover, Lydgate represents the example of an important, and distinctly modern, character type: the self-made man. He represents the growing importance of modern scientific thought, further strengthening his position as herald of modernity. He comes to Middlemarch as a reformer of outdated medical practice, which further marks him as a representative of social change. Moreover, he dislikes his aristocratic relations, and he chose the medical profession against their wishes. A fierce individualism characterizes Lydgate's personality. He disdains petty social politics. For him, the hospital represents a purely professional project, not a social or political entanglement.

Bulstrode was once a newcomer to Middlemarch as well, but his method of integration into the community is directly opposed to Lydgate's. Bulstrode took great pains to insert himself deeply into the web of Middlemarch society by marrying Walter Vincy's sister and allying himself with an old, influential family. Bulstrode intends to use Lydgate's professional and personal obligation to him in order to control Lydgate's vote in the clerical

dispute. Lydgate does not realize that the new opportunities for social mobility carry disadvantages as well as advantages. He achieves one form of personal independence as a self-made man, but he must deal with matters of professional obligation. Even though Bulstrode is extremely powerful, he too must deal with the constraints within the web of social relations.

In many ways, money performs the function that family honour once did. The growth of the middle class has increased social mobility and freed many individuals from the constraints imposed by ideas of family honour.

Most characters in *Middlemarch* suffer conflicts with independence. The prevalence of these conflicts owes largely to the transitions undergone by most social relations. There is more opportunity for independence because of social mobility; family name and honour don't outright determine an individual's life choices, but they still carry influence. The blurred definition of "debt" carries social pitfalls. Bulstrode and Featherstone deliberately keep the matter of "debt" indistinct. They leave the question of "debt" somewhere in between its strict financial meaning and the vaguer notion of personal obligation.

Lydgate's relationship with Farebrother is rife with personal conflicts. He is caught between his friendship with Farebrother and his professional relationship with Bulstrode. The election for the chaplaincy quickly develops into a moral dilemma. Lydgate is a moral man, but he suffers from "spots of commonness." Like most other characters in *Middlemarch*, he has a number of small prejudices and moral failings related to the need to balance self-interest and other people's interests. Lydgate undergoes a process of self-deception to justify giving into Bulstrode's pressure.

### **Book III**

Fred learns the social cost of the careless pursuit of self-interest. He wants to hide his money problems, and he knows that pursuing a loan through official channels will mean revealing his troubles to his uncle Bulstrode. He chooses to find a co-signer through a more informal channel: friends. He settles on Caleb Garth. Fred soon learns that financial favours obtained on the basis of friendship incur far greater debts than official loans. Unlike a defaulted official loan, his inability to pay means more than the loss of pride, minor personal embarrassment, and a tirade from his father.

The relationships between men and women are characterized with unrealistic, stereotypical ideals. Lydgate's ideal wife is little more than a beautiful ornament. Rosamond's ideal exists only in romance novels. Dorothea's ideal is a "great soul," not a man. Casaubon's ideal is an utterly submissive servant. All of these ideals are produced by conventional gender roles. Men and women do not often relate to one another as individuals, but rather through the distorting lens of social expectations and their own self-delusion.

Lydgate's entanglement in professional politics leads to a further social entanglement. His treatment of Fred draws him into Rosamond's proximity. He flirts with her as though he were merely playing a romantic game until social opinion forces him to be a gentleman. His disregard for the rules governing the relationships between men and women leads him into a troubled marriage.

Casaubon's heart attack forces him to face his mortality. His embittered response to Lydgate's advice reveals his fear of dependence. He doesn't want to enter a second childhood or a period of extreme infirmity. Dorothea's anxious concern for his health increases his feelings of helplessness. These personal difficulties generally highlight Casaubon's fear that he is slowly losing his masculine pride. He cannot mold his wife into a model of appreciative submission; she threatens to rival him in conventionally masculine scholarship, and he feels inadequate to deal with her emotionally. He feels threatened in his capacity to do his duty toward Will, both by Dorothea's interference and Will's rejection of his financial assistance. He must rely on Dorothea after his heart attack. He is continually described as old, unattractive, and dry, descriptions that emphasize his frailty and lack of virility.

Whether Lydgate likes it or not, his flirtation with Rosamond is public material. Their mutual interest in one another angers Rosamond's previously frustrated suitors. Lydgate's naive disdain for the importance of the web of social relations has only succeeded in making him a very unpopular man. His belief that he can work with Bulstrode and still remain independent of any personal or professional consequences is equally naive. Rosamond regards Lydgate as a character from a romance novel come to life. Lydgate himself, despite his rational scientific zeal, is attracted to this role. After a bad experience in love, he resolves to avoid romantic entanglements afterwards, but he nevertheless plays the romantic gallant when he sees Rosamond's tears, forgetting the practical matter of his meager income. Like many characters in *Middlemarch*, Lydgate deceives himself.

#### **Book IV**

It is significant that everyone in Dorothea's home can watch Featherstone's funeral even though they are not in attendance. This demonstrates that privacy is extremely difficult to maintain in a small community like Middlemarch. They comment at great length on those who attend the funeral from a vantage point from which they themselves cannot be seen. An individual can never be sure who may be watching, so secrets are difficult to keep.

Featherstone's final defeat is ambiguous. He fails in his attempt to do what he wants at last by burning one of his wills. However, Fred learns of a large inheritance bestowed by the first will only to have it revoked by the second. Featherstone's mercurial, manipulative nature continues jerking Fred's chains from the grave. He displays his wealth with a lavish funeral only to bring a largely neglected, illegitimate son out of the woodworks and leave everything to him. Fred himself was a tool to manipulate and antagonize his other relatives. Featherstone promises Fred a light and comfortable future only to tie a heavy stone to all his dreams.

Rosamond's marriage prospects are affected deeply by the financial misfortunes of her male relatives. Fred's disappointment affects her plans to marry. Her only notion about money is that it will be provided when she wants or needs it.

By now it is quite clear that for many characters in the novel, making the correct choice of a profession is an issue. In those days, industrialization had increased the available options as far as occupations were concerned. On the other hand, when industrialization began, money earned through work carried a stigma. The only really "clean" money was inherited money.

The rise of the middle class accompanied the rise of the strict, moralizing Protestant work ethic.

Bulstrode represents the middle class Victorian morality. He illustrates the ambiguous moral status of earned money. As a banker, he is even more interesting. He makes money with money. In the older paradigms of Christian morality, income generated from the lending of money was actually completely un-Christian. Money-lending was a Jewish occupation. However, Bulstrode is an Evangelical Christian. His money occupies an even greater ambiguous moral status than Vincy's money. He lives by a stricter moral system as well. His strict Christian value system "cleanses" his money somewhat. Moreover, he uses his money to enforce his moral system on others, making himself the means of "moral improvement" for his fellow Middlemarch citizens.

#### **Book V**

Lydgate experiences problems when he continues to ignore the importance of social relations. He concentrates so strongly on reforming the practice of medicine in Middlemarch that he fails to realize the importance of establishing cordial relationships with his colleagues. His professional life cannot be independent of the web of social relations. His resistance to dispensing drugs threatens the livelihood of the local apothecaries. Ironically, it threatens Lydgate's livelihood as well, because potential patients distrust his treatment, as they are accustomed to receiving drugs.

However, he treats the community of Middlemarch as a passive body on which he can experiment with his reforms. His refusal to recognize the human aspect of the web of multiple social relations entails consequences.

Rosamond's dream is to live an aristocratic lifestyle. The narrow range of possibilities for self-realization available to women is perhaps partly responsible for Rosamond's manipulative nature. She can achieve her dream only through a man. She, without much education, certainly cannot hope to earn a fortune on her own, as a man would. Conventional gender roles stifle Rosamond's natural ambition, and because of her frustrated ambition, both she and her husband are miserable.

Casaubon pursues a similar path with Dorothea. He treats her like a child because he resolves to "protect" her from Will's supposedly ulterior motives. He convinces himself that Will wants to get Dorothea's money. A woman's safety is a man's concern, not her own. Dorothea's idealization of self-sacrificing virtue comes to an end. She has tried to submit to Casaubon in accordance with this moral system. However, her idealization of self-sacrifice actually arises from a suppressed pride. She expects appreciation for her submissive self-sacrifice. However, Casaubon considers her self-sacrificing submission part of her duty as a wife, not a mark of extraordinary virtue.

In fact, Casaubon's tragedy is an ordinary human tragedy. Petty jealousy and the small failures of character make his end almost pathetic. However, it is difficult not to sympathize with his struggle to maintain his moral system until the very end. He justified the idea of adding the contemptible codicil by telling himself he was only doing his duty as a husband by providing for Dorothea's protection after his death. He lived continually with the fear that others would discover his self-doubt, and he dies leaving behind the glaring evidence of those very doubts.

Lydgate, however, manages a small triumph. He once deprived Farebrother of a much-needed boost in income. When he voted against Farebrother for the chaplaincy, he furthered his own personal interests and the interests of a wealthy man at the expense of a poor man. In a manner of speaking, Lydgate repays a debt when he speaks with Dorothea on Farebrother's behalf. He secured the financial resources offered by Bulstrode by denying much-needed financial resources to Farebrother, so he now goes against Bulstrode's wish to secure the Lowick parish for

Tyke. Lydgate's debt to Farebrother doesn't involve money directly, but money is nevertheless deeply entangled in it.

There is a great deal of irony in Lydgate's redemption. He himself has had a chance to experience the anxiety that minor debts can entail. Lydgate's experience with small financial needs modifies his earlier contempt for the manner in which small, unmet financial needs govern a man's actions. Lydgate himself must now contend with the responsibility of supporting a woman in times of financial troubles.

The greatest irony is that Lydgate never really knows the full extent of the social cost incurred by following one's ambitions at the expense of another person. He didn't know that the marriage prospects of either Farebrother or his sister depended on his vote. Neither does he know that his act of redemption made any bigger difference in Farebrother's life beyond alleviating the pressure to gamble. Eliot clearly demonstrates that ordinary actions made by ordinary people can have a truly significant impact.

Bulstrode's world is about to come crashing down around him. The contradiction between his public self and his private sins is about to come to light. It is money that leaves the trail that Raffles follows. A letter written to Joshua Rigg Featherstone regarding his purchase of Stone Court is the clue that leads his tormentor to him. Bulstrode makes the mistake of using the same tainted money to try to cover the trail by bribing Raffles to leave Middlemarch.

## **Book VI**

Casaubon's unwarranted suspicion and his contemptible codicil compromise Dorothea's reputation. There are few secrets in Middlemarch. Gossip spreads through the community like wildfire. Dorothea's Puritan attitude and behaviour does not coincide with an extramarital affair.

However, standards for men and women are different. Featherstone can bring his illegitimate son out of the woodworks and make him into a landed, wealthy gentleman by tacking on his last name to Rigg and signing a piece of paper. His extramarital sexual activities aren't necessarily damaging. But, the standard of behaviour is a much different matter where a woman is concerned. If Dorothea were suspected of an extramarital affair, even one that had not been consummated, it would destroy her reputation.

Caleb Garth represents the Victorian ideal of the virtue of work. He sees work as a redeeming activity. His primary joy is not the money he receives in payment. He often says he would be glad to do his job for free if it were not for the fact that he has a family to support. Work is an end in itself for Caleb Garth. His basic philosophy of work mirrors the idealized Victorian conception.

Fred, in a manner of speaking, is trying to repay his debt to the Garths. The debt he owes them is not strictly financial. He disappointed their expectations of his honour. They trusted him to be a gentleman and keep his word to pay the loan Garth co-signed for him. He failed to comply with their expectations and caused them a good deal of trouble.

Rosamond's miscarriage is infused with symbolic meaning. The conventional expectation of wives is that they obey their husbands' wishes. To disobey a husband's wisdom is a transgression of her socially accepted gender role. Moreover, the wife's primary duty is to produce and care for children. Rosamond fails in both respects. Her first transgression is "punished" by the second. Her behavior might inspire harsh criticism, but before one judges, it is necessary to attend to Eliot's rich psychological treatment of Rosamond's character. Her transgression of conventional expectations placed on women's behaviour is met with an unfortunate, regrettable accident. The miscarriage should be read symbolically. It is a symbolic punishment for exercising the power of her free choice. It is a sign that demonstrates in no uncertain way the consequences of her resistance against the constraints of conventional gender roles.

Moreover, Rosamond has an agenda that goes contrary to Lydgate's. He plans to stay in Middlemarch for the long term. She wants to leave. Husband and wife do not form a complementary unit.

Meanwhile, Bulstrode continues using tainted money to cover the trail leading back to its tainted origins. Ironically, Bulstrode's one inability to contradict his outward presentation of himself as an eminent Christian is probably the strongest reason that he fails to save his reputation. He can't lie.

Mary refused to accept bribe money because she knew the trail it would leave behind. Her choice likely saved her reputation. Moreover, Will refuses to accept Bulstrode's barely veiled attempt to bribe him. Bulstrode quickly learns that the power he gained through his tainted money is also the heaviest stone that weighs him down.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Deliberate: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Saint: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Virtue: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Submissive: \_\_\_\_\_

## Book VII

Lydgate's bitter response to Farebrother's offer of help directly names a major theme in *Middlemarch*. Many of the triumphs and misfortunes of the characters in the novel arise because of combination of their determined action and the vicissitudes of chance. Those characters who do not respect the power of random fluctuations of chance to affect their lives suffer for their hubris. They believe that their success and failure depend solely in

their self-determined actions. Lydgate believes he can control all the variables in his life, that his conscientious professional merit will win him success in Middlemarch. Bulstrode trusts in his ability to control all the variables of his life by using his money to influence people and events.

However, chance plays a significant role. It is impossible to control everything. Bulstrode cannot control the fact that Featherstone's illegitimate son would be Raffles' stepson. He cannot control the chance event that results in Raffles finding a letter he wrote to Rigg Featherstone. Various minor factors affect major life events in the lives of Rosamond, Lydgate, and Bulstrode. If Fred Vincy had never gotten typhoid fever, Lydgate and Rosamond would never have spent such long periods of time in close proximity. It is difficult to predict what would have happened, but Fred's illness clearly served as a catalyst for their relationship. Rosamond might have reacted differently had she never suffered her miscarriage.

The novel points out the obviously flawed reasoning that leads people to believe the course of their lives can be controlled completely through self-determined action. Bulstrode and Lydgate suffer for their hubris on that count. However, that does not mean that sitting back and letting chance decide everything is any better. Fred illustrates the problems in that approach. His gambling debt is a metaphor for that extreme. Lydgate's despair leads him to interpret all money and all success as chance-gotten. He is deceiving himself again, however; both he and Rosamond made determined decisions that contributed to their indebtedness.

Between the two extremes lies Farebrother. He doesn't leave the course of his life entirely to chance, but neither does he attempt to determine every event in it.

As a woman, Rosamond cannot obtain a loan officially, so she tries to get one through informal channels. However, the men she asks decline to deal in financial matters with a woman. Although her secret attempts to get a loan may appear selfish and underhanded, Lydgate's stubborn refusal to ask his friends for help is not exactly responsible either. He waits until the last minute to ask Bulstrode, after the debt has grown to a thousand pounds. Rosamond is unable to help, because men do not believe women should be involved in money matters, even though her own support depends on it. Lydgate stubbornly refuses to take her suggestions. They never reach a compromise, so the conflict and resentment escalate on both sides.

Another theme that should be clear by now is that an individual life is greatly formed by its relations to other lives. Human society and all of its institutions are basically a collection of relations, class and gender being two very important factors in the novel. In the older paradigm of social relations, one's birth and family name determined one's relationship to the rest of society. After the rise of the middle class and the resultant transformation into a cash economy, money became a major metaphor for social relations.

Money is pure relation. Money in and of itself is worth absolutely nothing, but it has worth as a sign measuring social relations between buyer and seller, worker and employer, and agent and client. The standardization brought about by a cash economy allowed for an explosive growth of diverse social relations. Because all money looks alike, the specifics of those social relations were often ambiguous. This most likely contributed to the general stigma attached to earned money. The wealth of the landed gentry came from a very clear source.

The earned money of the middle class, however, was a different matter. The middle class phenomenon of the strict Protestant moral value system was, in many ways, an attempt to ameliorate the ambiguous moral status of earned money. There is nothing on the money itself that names its origins. It's impossible to know if it came by thievery or by application of the Protestant work ethic.

Caleb Garth's new-found prosperity is much too precious to lose. He is not willing to take the chance of giving Bulstrode the benefit of the doubt. He can't be sure that the origin of Bulstrode's money is morally safe. Therefore, he cannot allow himself to accept doubtful money. Accepting tainted money would establish a compromising relationship between him and Bulstrode's past sins, the origin of Bulstrode's wealth.

The spread of guilt by association very much mirrors the spread of disease through a population. Disease too was a marker of a relation in a population (indeed, Lydgate wants to study the spread of disease through populations). However, his mind is much too literal to make the connection between the spread of physical disease and its metaphorical mirror, the spread of guilt through tainted money. Lydgate's desperation leads him to accept unknowingly a bribe from Bulstrode. Not naming the money as a bribe allows Bulstrode to tie a yoke to Lydgate surreptitiously. He merely wants to establish an obligation that he may need later to manipulate Lydgate should Raffles talk. He obscures the origins of his motivation in giving Lydgate the loan in order to continue obscuring the origin of the money itself.

Lydgate's tainted money spreads its poison like a disease. Unfortunately, Lydgate does not recognize the metaphorical illness, because the literal one occupies his attention. Bulstrode's control over the course of his own life is rapidly spinning out of control. He suffers most from the blow of fateful circumstances. Raffles' arrival and discovery of his whereabouts could never have been foreseen, and the effect of his presence cannot be controlled. Even name "Raffles" implies the unlucky blows of fate. In the course of chance events, Bulstrode's raffle ticket spells disaster.

Lydgate suffers the unfortunate coincidence between Raffles' illness and the desperate escalation of his financial emergency. He is a sitting duck for a manipulator like Bulstrode.

Of course, the publication of the auction of his furniture also coincides with these events, unfortunately. The public has concrete proof of the extent of his desperate financial straits.

The coincidence between Raffles' death, Lydgate's sudden financial salvation, and Bambridge's attendance at a horse-fair is a final cruel blow of chance events that lead to Lydgate's devastating association with Bulstrode's sins.

Lydgate seals his relationship with Bulstrode's infamy when he helps him walk from the room during the town meeting. The moment of revelation has come. Bulstrode is called to answer for his private crimes in the public sphere. A contradiction between his public presentation of himself as a moral, upright Christian and his private life has arisen. Bulstrode cannot reconcile that contradiction, so he is ejected from his position of public influence.

## **Book VIII**

The lives of wives are deeply affected by their husbands' social status. Just as in financial matters, however, Rosamond and Harriet Bulstrode are kept in the dark about everything. The scandal is a fairly petty, provincial kind of scandal. The only truly dramatic element to all of it is the suspicion of murder. The scandal is, in short, not particularly extraordinary. However, various players in the drama experience moments of extraordinary dignity and courage. Lydgate struggles with his duty to his intractable, yet extraordinarily fragile wife. His determined courage to face the scandal head-on, despite the slow blackballing occurring against him, is admirable. He realizes the full weight he has taken on with marriage. He must consider the vulnerable position Rosamond occupies as his wife.

His moral nature, which drives him to help the shattered Bulstrode out of the town meeting, demonstrates that Lydgate has learned a great deal about the social web. He offers a moment of dignity to a destroyed man at significant social cost to himself. It is an admirable sacrifice, considering his weak moment when he voted for Tyke.

The most poignant moment in this section, however, occurs when Bulstrode's wife goes to meet her husband after she learns the full details of his past. She has the opportunity to leave him and save herself the worst of the consequences. The town doesn't blame her, although it associates her with his false life in Middlemarch. In spite of her window of opportunity to escape the scandal, she decides to stay with him. His life is shattered, and she is all he has left. Her sacrifice in the midst of a petty, small-town scandal is a quiet moral triumph.

Dorothea encounters her own test when she mistakenly assumes that Ladislaw and Rosamond are having an affair. She is forced to confront the conflict between her own individual desire and the self-interest of the people she has vowed to help. Her abrupt departure and her sleepless night hint that she fails to rise to the occasion. She opens the novel as an unsung Theresa, so her failure to help Rosamond seems to indicate that she fails to live up to early predictions for her character.

In the end, Dorothea lives up to the Prelude's prediction. In an extraordinary moment of courage, she returns to see Rosamond a second time. Rosamond herself rises above her vanity and selfishness. She puts aside her own jealousy to tell Dorothea the truth. This means giving up her entertaining fantasies about Will and herself. It is the first time that Rosamond does not act according to her own personal desire, but out of consideration for someone else.

Dorothea cleanses Lydgate's tainted loan by replacing it with her own money. Although it doesn't stop Lydgate from leaving Middlemarch, it removes Lydgate's humiliating relationship with Bulstrode. His reputation in Middlemarch is damaged beyond repair; the virtue of Dorothea's act of kindness toward him is that Lydgate knows that at least one person in Middlemarch has a good opinion of him.

At the last, even Bulstrode himself makes a small step towards redemption. Through his actions, Fred and Mary are finally able to marry. Caleb Garth himself is good enough not to lump

Harriet Bulstrode in with her husband's crimes. He doesn't entertain himself with her misery like some people do.

Dorothea's final situation illustrates again the regrettable restrictions on access to the public sphere for women. She makes one independent act by helping Lydgate, and her assistance is a much-needed balm on the misery and stress of the Lydgates. However, her marriage to Will signifies her return to the narrow domestic sphere. The promise she shows as a reforming philanthropist is never realized independently. She lives her chosen occupation through her husband. Will becomes the ardent public advocate of reform, and Dorothea lives in his shadow as his wife and the mother of his children. Rosamond and Lydgate never really achieve an easy peace in their marriage, so it is unclear whether Dorothea's help made much of a difference.

In short, the ending is ambiguous. We have followed two unhappy marriages to their conclusion. Lydgate's only escape from his unhappy marriage is an early death. After becoming a widow, Dorothea marries the man she loves. We are never sure if she is satisfied with the domestic sphere. The unhappy marriages have failed due to various personality differences, unrealistic ideals of the respective roles of husbands and wives, and the processes of selfdeception that seem to mark all human activity.

There is one possible, happy marriage that doesn't happen, however. Farebrother advised Lydgate to marry a "good, unworldly woman." This is the opposite of Rosamond. Farebrother was recommending a woman who doesn't mind waiting through the years it takes to build a lucrative practice. Moreover, Farebrother was recommending someone who appreciates Lydgate's passion for his vocation. This advice clearly suggests Dorothea; the marriage that doesn't happen is, obviously, the one between Lydgate and Dorothea. She shares his passion for reform and his human concern for the alleviation of suffering. She doesn't care for wealth. She also showed a strong interest in the New Hospital itself. However, they met before each of them had obtained real life experience. They met before they had lost their unrealistic idealism about marriage. They were married to other people before they could appreciate one another.

It is difficult to tell whether Dorothea would have been able to exercise a public role in the hospital had she married Lydgate, but there is some indication that she would have. The best wife for Lydgate would have been a patient, equal, sensible partner. Dorothea would have been that woman. However, the vicissitudes of fate worked against their marriage.

**Activity**

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Combination: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Fluctuate: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Predict: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Yoke: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Escalation: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Precious: \_\_\_\_\_

**12.4 LET US SUM UP**

George Eliot's novel, regarded as the study of a provincial life, is set in the period of 1829-32. The novel, which is a work of realism, touches on various themes like the status of women, the nature of marriage, idealism, self-interest, religion, hypocrisy, political reform, and education. The lesson analytically presents the reading of the chapters, discussing the social realities that lie behind the conception of a society.

**12.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)**

1. Who marries Edward Casaubon? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Celia Brooke
  - b) Dorothea Brooke
  - c) Rosamond Vincy
  - d) Mary Garth
2. What is the title of the scholarly work that Casaubon is writing? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Mythologies of the World
  - b) Mythology for Dummies
  - c) The Key to All Mythologies
  - d) Mythologies Past and Present
3. What is the occupation of Tertius Lydgate? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Doctor
  - b) Lawyer
  - c) Innkeeper
  - d) Merchant
4. What relation is Will Ladislaw to Edward Casaubon? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Cousin
  - b) Son
  - c) Nephew
  - d) Employee

5. Who initially courts Dorothea Brooke but ends up marrying her sister Celia? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Edward Casaubon
  - b) Fred Vincy
  - c) Mr. Featherstone
  - d) Sir James Chettam
6. What is Dorothea Brooke's defining character trait? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) selfishness
  - b) idealism
  - c) skepticism
  - d) hard-nosed pragmatism
7. What is the relation of Mr. Brooke to Dorothea and Celia? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) father
  - b) uncle
  - c) brother
  - d) cousin
8. Which is the best description of Rosamond Vincy's character? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) vain and shallow
  - b) generous and selfless
  - c) versatile and clever
  - d) socially inept
9. Who is the mayor of Middlemarch? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mr. Featherstone
  - b) Mr. Vincy
  - c) Mr. Cadwallader
  - d) Caleb Garth
10. Which character is in love with Mary Garth? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mr. Bulstrode
  - b) Mr. Featherstone
  - c) Fred Vincy
  - d) Mr. Tyke

## 12.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the relationship between Dorothea and Casaubon.
2. Describe the society of Middlemarch as presented in the novel.
3. What two issues or problems does Eliot present as central to life of the characters in the novel *Middlemarch*?

## 12.7 ANSWER KEY

**SAQs:** 1. b, 2. c, 3. a, 4. a, 5. d, 6. b, 7. b, 8. a, 9. b, 10. c

### Examination Oriented Questions

#### Ans.1 Relationship between Dorothea and Casaubon

Dorothea and Casaubon, though get engaged believing that they are both fond of each other, prove incompatible after marriage. Dorothea's personality and basic philosophy of life are directly opposed and contradictory to that of Casaubon. Dorothea protests Will Ladislaw's assertion that her belief system is remarkably similar to mysticism, but Will comes closer to an accurate description than she thinks. The comparison between Dorothea and Saint Theresa, a mystic nun, also defines Dorothea's philosophy in the same way.

Casaubon's philosophy can best be described as Rationalism. He places far more emphasis on strict, academic reasoning than he does on emotions. He interprets reality through abstract, theoretical terms such as duty, for example. Dorothea, however, in accordance with mysticism, places emotional response above abstract reasoning as the motivation for moral choices. Casaubon's *Key to All Mythologies* is a metaphor for Rational thought. He wants to construct an all-encompassing method to interpret the world through rational, academic reasoning.

Casaubon first noticed Dorothea for her intelligence and assertiveness. However, these very qualities make him unhappy after his marriage. Casaubon isn't the "great soul" that Dorothea wants him to be, and she isn't the docile, submissive woman he wants her to be. Casaubon is an insecure man. His life-long work, *Key to All Mythologies*, is impossible to complete. He views the process of beginning to write it with apprehension and anxiety.

George Eliot sympathetically represents the disappointment of both Casaubon and Dorothea. She presents human nature as a necessarily contradictory thing. The qualities that Casaubon admired before marriage become a threat after marriage. Casaubon views Dorothea's involvement with his project as intellectual rivalry. Her desire to learn Latin and Greek further increases this feeling. As a woman and a wife, her rivalry with his field of research heightens his self-doubt. An unambitious, appreciative wife would bolster his esteem. However, Dorothea only exacerbates his pre-existing anxieties.

Dorothea's passionate, emotional temperament bewilders Casaubon. She needs an emotional response, but he is too strictly rational. His inability to give her what she needs makes him feel inadequate as a husband. The collective effect of these anxieties doesn't dispose him to react positively to Dorothea's relationship with Will. Dorothea's attempt to become involved in his dealings with Will further increases his self-doubt. He takes it as a tacit criticism of his ability to do his duty towards Will.

Casaubon drains Dorothea's vitality and happiness out of her, and she increases his anxieties and self-doubts. The juxtaposed metaphors of youth and death used to describe them come to take on a morbid quality. Casaubon's unnamed promise bears a strong symbolic relationship to the structure of their marriage. Dorothea is never able to agree to his promise. She will never be able to make him happy. His unnamed need haunts her, because she will never be able to please him. The unnamed promise symbolizes the inability of both to fulfill their idealized expectations of one another. It is a promise never spoken, but one that inevitably will be broken.

Dorothea fails to realize that Casaubon doesn't want an equal partner. She even deludes herself into thinking she *wants* to submit to him. Her self-delusion arises partly out of a need to legitimize her pursuit of higher learning, but it also arises from her idealization of self-sacrifice.

Dorothea also wants passionate, tender affection from Casaubon. However, he considers her happiness in the same way he views Will's. He wants to do his duty as a husband.

## 12.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Carroll, David. *George Eliot : The Critical Heritage*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2009.

2. Cooke, George Willis. *George Eliot : A Critical study of Her Life, Writings, and Philosophy*. Houghton, Mifflin, 2004.

3. Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Analysis of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*." *Literariness.org*, 9 May 2025, [literariness.org/2025/05/09/analysis-of-george-eliot-s-middlemarch/](https://literariness.org/2025/05/09/analysis-of-george-eliot-s-middlemarch/). Barker, Michelle. "Story Skeleton—*Middlemarch*." *The Darling Axe*, 6 Sept. 2024, <https://darlingaxe.com/blogs/news/middlemarch>.

**GEORGE ELIOT: *MIDDLEMARCH*****STRUCTURE**

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 13.3 Social Environment in the novel *Middlemarch*
- 13.4 Brief notes on Themes
  - 13.4.1 The Imperfection of Marriage
  - 13.4.2 The Harshness of Social Expectations
  - 13.4.3 Self-Determination vs. Chance
- 13.5 Important References
- 13.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 13.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 13.9 Answer Key
- 13.10 Suggested Reading

**13.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Middlemarch* is a major novel by any standard. The historical canvas is very wide. The several storylines of the multiple plots are traced from their beginning, gradually combining into a drama which gathers intense human and moral interest.

**13.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarise you with the social environment in the novel *Middlemarch*. The lesson also deals with an exploration of the various themes underlying the novel.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to identify the various themes that George Eliot has explored in the novel. You will also be able to explain the author's treatment of human relationships, particularly love and marriage, which is a central concern in the novel. Additionally, you will locate the novel against the social environment and analyse the impact social environment has on the characters and their motivations.

**13.3 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE NOVEL *MIDDLEMARCH***

Bernard J. Paris, in his essay *George Eliot's Religion of Humanity* quotes an idea by George Henry Lewes, an idea that Eliot very much admired, saying that "human psychic phenomena cannot be fully explained unless they are regarded as the products of our organic inheritance from the past—of the "psychological evolution of

sociological material”—and of our interaction with the super-organically evolved social medium” (Paris, 422). This clearly illustrates how important was the role of society in Eliot’s writing. Social environment including social setting and economic and political life as these are the aspects to which Eliot pays the greatest deal of attention and which shape the plot of the novel in a significant way.

The subtitle of *Middlemarch*, “*A Study of Provincial Life*” suits the novel rather well indeed because the novel, in all its rich descriptions and various details really is an almost perfect and complete study of the provincial life in England in the early 1830s. Eliot manages to cover almost all of the aspects of social, political and economic life of this particular place and period. Most of these aspects are undergoing rapid changes, most notably in the form of the building of the railroads, the passing of the Great Reform Bill and the continuing industrialization. This development means that the provincial life of the Old England, so to say, seems to be progressively vanishing.

Since *Middlemarch* takes place in the early 1830s but was first published in 1874, Eliot does look on the social environment of the 1830s England with a view of how things were changing. She begins the novel with a description of an “old provincial society” which experiences only subtle movement. The society is mostly closed and only gradually opens up to the external influence:

Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection— gradually, as the old stocking gave way to the savings-bank, and the worship of the solar guinea became extinct; while squires and baronets, and even lords who had once lived blamelessly afar from the civic mind, gathered the faultiness of closer acquaintanceship. Settlers, too, came from distant counties, some with an alarming novelty of skill, others with an offensive advantage in cunning. (*Middlemarch*, Ch. 11)

The town of Middlemarch is depicted as a provincial, somewhat backward and suspicious of outsiders who are expected to be swallowed and assimilated into the society. The society itself is clearly divided into ranks which hardly ever mix together. This is first illustrated on the relations between the Garths and Vincys. Caleb Garth, the head of the Garth family, is quite successful in his work as an administrator of various local estates but is still unable to provide an income large enough to be considered rich. Mr. Vincy, on the other hand, as the mayor of Middlemarch and a businessman dealing with dyes, is regarding himself as socially superior. As Eliot puts it, there are “nice distinctions of rank in Middlemarch; and though old manufacturers could not any more than dukes be connected with none but equals, they were conscious of an inherent social superiority which was defined with great nicety in practice, though hardly expressible theoretically” (Eliot, Ch. 23). Eliot goes on to explain that even though Caleb Garth has earned esteem through his work, in “no part of the world is genteel visiting founded on esteem, in the absence of suitable furniture and complete dinner service.” In addition to her Husband’s status, since Mrs. Garth has been working as a teacher before her marriage, she was looked down upon by women like Mrs. Vincy who considered themselves socially higher.

While Eliot makes sure to draw the boundaries between social groups very clearly, she nevertheless manages to create an interesting contrast a few chapters later while comparing the ways in which Mr. Vincy and Mr. Garth work.

Through the contrast of Mr. Garth and Mr. Vincy, Eliot compares their social classes and for the first time in *Middlemarch* rather openly and directly criticizes a character in higher social rank while focusing on a hard-working man of lower social status. Gillian Beer, in her essay *What’s Not in Middlemarch* argues that for the reader of the 1870s their presence was readily recognized. As she puts it, “the workers in the mines and the dyeing houses and at the handlooms are crucial to the town of Middlemarch, its economy and its psychic health. These industrial workers are present in the plot and in the discourse of the novel” (Beer, 23).

There are nevertheless characters in the novel that some kind of expectations from their future lives in regards to the social mobility and their possible advancement.

Probably the most striking examples of this issue are the three marriages, namely between Fred Vincy and Mary Garth, Rosamond Vincy and Tertius Lydgate and finally Dorothea Brooke and Edward Casaubon. All six of these characters move up and down in terms of their social status only slightly, certainly not in any extreme manner, as none of the characters really leaves the upper-middle class. Still, Eliot recognizes this limited mobility and does not portray her characters completely conserved in their respective social classes, although any significant improvement in the social standing seems impossible. Dorothea marries Ladislav even though it means losing the property she inherited from Casaubon, Fred Vincy marries Mary Garth even though he is from the very beginning pushed by his parents' expectations into marrying someone of a higher social status than she is and Rosamond Vincy's hopes of using Lydgate's aristocratic connection prove to be in vain. The following paragraphs will deal with the marriages one by one, examining their initial social status, the expectations they or their surroundings had on the advancement of their social status and finally their position in the final parts of the novel.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, the previous section made you aware of the social environment of the novel. Now you can go through the points provided here for a quick revision of the previous section

- Social environment such as social setting, economic, and political life play a significant role in shaping a narrative.
- The social environment during the early 1830s was rapidly changing.
- Society is divided into ranks which hardly mix together.
- Limited mobility in the social standing of characters.

## 13.4 BRIEF NOTES ON THEMES

### 13.4.1 The Imperfection of Marriage

Most characters in *Middlemarch* marry for love rather than obligation, yet marriage still appears negative and unromantic. Marriage and the pursuit of it are central concerns in *Middlemarch*, but unlike in many novels of the time, marriage is not considered the ultimate source of happiness. There are two major broken marriages in *Middlemarch*. The first is Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon and the second is Tertius Lydgate and Rosamond Vincy. Both marriages share the same initial problem; the haste with which the partners get married. Dorothea's marriage fails because of her youth and of her disillusion about marrying a much older man. It is obvious from the first pages of *Middlemarch* that Dorothea is exceptionally intelligent but also rather naïve and the fact that she accepts Casaubon's marriage proposal with such haste only reinforces the impression of naivety. After a very short time it becomes clear that Dorothea expects something completely different in a marriage from what Mr. Casaubon expects. Dorothea wants some kind of an intellectual and romantic soulmate while Casaubon seems to simply need someone who will organize materials for his *Key to All Mythologies*. Be as it may, when Casaubon dies the marriage is over anyway, Dorothea finds the truth about the secret part of the last will and in her anger she refuses to finish the *Key to All Mythologies* that Casaubon did not finish due to his premature death. Not only this, Dorothea in the end marries Will Ladislav even against Casaubon's clear prohibition of any such thing. The marriage of Ladislav and Dorothea, however, turns out completely opposite to the marriage with Casaubon. Will and Dorothea find mutual respect and love in the marriage, something not really possible in Dorothea's previous marriage. In the very end of the novel, Will gets into the parliament and becomes a public speaker. As Eliot puts it: "Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother" (Eliot, Ch. 86).

On the other hand, Lydgate's marriage fails because of irreconcilable personalities.

Rosamond's own ambitions for upward social mobility are stunted by the rigid social constraints on women. Unlike Lydgate, she has no public vocation to perform. She has no outlet for her intractable, headstrong energies outside her home. Her only outlet for her frustrated ambition is her husband. Captain Lydgate represents the social world she wishes to enter. Lydgate forbids her to go out riding with his cousin a second time, but Rosamond is already restless, so Lydgate's order only exacerbates those feelings. He represents yet another male voice telling her what to do with her life. Rosamond is not willing to play the passive ornament to Lydgate's life. Neither do Lydgate and Rosamond form an amicable partnership. In other words, there is a deep conflict in their marriage. The efforts of one spouse resist the efforts of the other. Such a situation produces nothing but conflict.

Mr. and Mrs. Bulstrode also face a marital crisis due to his inability to tell her about the past, and Fred Vincy and Mary Garth also face a great deal of hardship in making their union. As none of the marriages reach a perfect fairytale ending, *Middlemarch* offers a clear critique of the usual portrayal of marriage as romantic and unproblematic.

#### **13.4.2 The Harshness of Social Expectations**

The ways in which people conduct themselves and how the community judges them are closely linked in *Middlemarch*. When the expectations of the social community are not met, individuals often receive harsh public criticism. For example, the community judges Ladislaw harshly because of his mixed pedigree. Fred Vincy is almost disowned because he chooses to go against his family's wishes and not join the clergy. It is only when Vincy goes against the wishes of the community by foregoing his education that he finds true love and happiness. Finally, Rosamond's need for gentility and the desire to live up to social standards becomes her downfall. In contrast, Dorothea's decision to act against the rules of society allows her to emerge as the most respectable character in the end.

#### **13.4.3 Self-Determination vs. Chance**

In *Middlemarch*, self-determination and chance are not opposing forces but, rather, a complicated balancing act. When characters strictly adhere to a belief in either chance or self-determination, bad things happen. When Rosamond goes against the wishes of her husband and writes a letter asking for money from her relative, her act of self-determination puts Lydgate in an unsavory and tense situation coupled with a refusal to help. On the flip side, when Fred Vincy gambles away his money, relying solely on chance, he falls into debt and drags with him the people who trust him. Only when he steps away from gambling and decides not to go into the clergy do good things begin to happen for him. In particular, the character of Farebrother demonstrates the balance between fate and self-determination. This balance is exemplified in his educated gamble in the game of whist. Through a combination of skill and chance, he is able to win more often than not. His character strikes a balance between chance and his role in determining that fate. The complexity of the tension between self-determination and chance is exemplary of the way in which the novel as a whole tends to look at events from many vantage points with no clear right or wrong, no clear enemy or hero.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, it is time to take another break! Now that you have read about the important themes of the novel *Middlemarch*, you can check your progress by going through the exercise. Don't forget to check the answer key to see if you have got the responses right.

1. Most of the marriages in *Middlemarch* appear positive and romantic. (True/False)
2. There are two major broken marriages in *Middlemarch*. (True/False)
3. Dorothea finds mutual love and respect in her marriage with Casaubon. (True/False)
4. Dorothea agrees to finish Casaubon's book *Key to All Mythologies*. (True/False)
5. Rosamond and Lydgate's marriage fails because of irreconcilable personalities. (True/False)
6. In *Middlemarch* failure to conform to societal expectations leads to the characters' receiving harsh public criticism. (True/False)
7. *Middlemarch* emphasises a balance between fate and self-determinism. (True/False)

### 13.5 IMPORTANT REFERENCES

*Not only young virgins of that town, but grey-bearded men also, were often in haste to conjecture how a new acquaintance might be wrought into their purposes, contented with very vague knowledge as to the way in which life had been shaping him for their instrumentality. Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably.*

This passage, located at the end of Chapter 15 after Lydgate is introduced as the idealistic new doctor, introduces the neighborhood of Middlemarch as a sort of character. Middlemarch is not particularly interested in Lydgate as an individual and instead views him as an instrument and part of the greater community. This illustrates the pull between individual and community that drives the novel forward. In the novel *Middlemarch*, there cannot be individuals without community nor a community without individuals. This passage also shows a contradiction between Middlemarch as an ominous force that swallows its inhabitants and a comfortable force that draws its inhabitants into its community that is part of the structure of the novel. It demonstrates the pluses and the minuses of living in a country community, much like the entire book does. It captures the realistic, contradictory nature of Eliot's realistic portrayal of country living.

*"It was wicked to let a young girl blindly decide her fate in that way, without any effort to save her."*

Sir James makes this remark in Chapter 29, when he learns that Mr. Casaubon has fallen ill. Sir James finds it morally deplorable that Dorothea was allowed to choose her own husband. While he is somewhat motivated by his own jealousy that Dorothea didn't marry him, he is more distressed that she was not better advised as to the ramifications of marrying an older and not very desirable man. That it was wicked to not interfere in the affairs of another shows how important community interference and interaction is to the novel. This quotation also draws attention to the novel's tension between self-determination and chance. The contradiction in the phrase "decide her fate" shows that Sir James (and by extension the novel) believes that the individual has a part in deciding his or her own fate, even if, at times, a person's life seems to move forward of its own accord, for better or for worse.

*"I mean, marriage drinks up all of our power of giving or getting any blessedness in that sort of love. I know it may be very dear—but it murders our marriage—and then the marriage stays with us like a murder—and everything else is gone."*

Dorothea makes these comments to Rosamond at the end of Chapter 81. Dorothea believes that Rosamond is having an affair with Ladislaw, and this quotation shows how Dorothea believes romantic love and marriage are incompatible. By linking marriage and murder, Dorothea's quote supports the idea prevalent in the work that marriage isn't always perfect or always a guarantee of happiness. The choice of the metaphor of murder is particularly interesting because she is speaking of Lydgate being under suspicion of aiding in the Raffles' murder. Murder, in the literal sense, is already a part of Rosamond's married life.

*But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know.*

In her final thoughts at the end of the novel, Eliot shifts from third person to first person plural in order to present the moral of the story. The shift to the "we" breaks the rigidity of Dorothea's story being particular to the fictional world of *Middlemarch* and expands it to the greater real world. By calling attention to how the acts of common people create cultural norms, Eliot holds everyone who does not question the norms of social life responsible for the sadness of their fellow citizens. By focusing on the trials of Dorothea, Eliot calls particular attention to a woman's role in marriage. Ending on this thought makes Eliot's concern with conventional marriage the central theme of the story. This move points to a particularly feminist type of thought in a novel long before feminism was a common ideology.

### 13.6 LET US SUM UP

The lesson throws light on how *Middlemarch* is a complex work of art and a number of themes and ideas are woven into its complex fabric. One of its major themes, however, is the frustration of noble ideals and lofty aspirations by meanness of opportunity. The novel represents the spirit of nineteenth-century England through the unknown, historically unremarkable common people.

### 13.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Where do Will and Dorothea live after they get married? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Tipton Grange
  - b) London
  - c) Stone Gate
  - d) Lowick
2. How much money does Lydgate need to settle his debts? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) 160 pounds
  - b) 10,000 pounds
  - c) 500 pounds
  - d) 1,000 pounds
3. What does Raffles take from Rigg's home with Bulstrode's name on it? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Bank papers
  - b) A letter
  - c) A calling card
  - d) An invitation

4. Which one of their mother's jewels does Celia think her sister should keep? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) A pearl cross
  - b) An emerald ring and bracelet
  - c) A purple amethyst ring
  - d) A diamond ring
5. What is Fred's inheritance in Featherstone's will? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Land only
  - b) Money and land
  - c) Nothing
  - d) Money only
6. What is the cause of Lydgate's death? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Breathing trouble
  - b) Heart trouble
  - c) Cancer
  - d) Liver failure
7. What is the name of the horse that Fred buys hoping to settle his debt? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Nickel
  - b) Quartz
  - a) Gold
  - b) Diamond
8. With what disorder does Lydgate say Raffles is suffering? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Alcohol poisoning
  - b) Cirrhosis of the liver
  - c) Alcohol withdrawal
  - d) Cholera
9. How are Raffles and Rigg related? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Uncle and nephew
  - b) They aren't related
  - c) Father and son
  - d) Stepfather and stepson

10. To whom is Lydgate able to tell his side of the story concerning Raffles' death? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Rosamond
  - b) Rigg
  - c) Dorothea
  - d) Farebrother
11. What is Casaubon's profession? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) He is a professor
  - b) He is a clergyman
  - c) He is a doctor
  - d) He is a banker
12. Who tells Mrs. Bulstrode the truth about her husband? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Raffles
  - b) Her brother
  - c) Mr. Bulstrode
  - d) Will Ladislav
13. To whom is Lydgate attracted? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mary
  - b) Rosamond
  - c) Celia
  - d) Dorothea
14. In the minds of most people in *Middlemarch*, for what purpose does Bulstrode give Lydgate 1000 pounds? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Medical services
  - b) Hush money
  - c) A loan
  - d) A gift
15. Who buys Stone Court from Rigg? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Bulstrode
  - b) Fred Vincy
  - c) Caleb Garth
  - d) Ladislav

16. Who is with Featherstone when he dies? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Raffles
- b) Fred
- c) Riggs
- d) Mary

17. Who is put in charge of Stone Gate when the Bulstrodes move? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Caleb Garth
- b) Lydgate
- c) Farebrother
- d) Fred Vincy

18. What does Bulstrode allow Mrs. Abel to give Raffles that he isn't supposed to have? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Opium
- b) Brandy
- c) Soup
- d) Money

19. What does Featherstone ask Mary to do for him? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Burn his second will
- b) Apologize to Fred
- c) Find his son
- d) Hide his money

20. What gift does Sir James Chettam try to give Dorothea that she refuses? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) A cottage
- b) A horse
- c) A puppy
- d) A ring

21. What does Raffles know about Bulstrode? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) His lineage
- b) His real name
- c) How far in debt he is
- d) How he earned his money

22. Whom does Dorothea decide to hire as the new clergyman at Lowick? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Lydgate
  - b) Tyke
  - c) Fred Vincy
  - d) Farebrother
23. What does Featherstone demand from Fred to prove he didn't put Featherstone's land up as a surety on his loan? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Full payment of the loan
  - b) A signed note from Bulstrode
  - c) A signed note from Garth
  - d) A new horse
24. For whom does Lydgate want to vote for in the chaplain election? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Bulstrode
  - b) Farebrother
  - c) Tyke
  - d) Casaubon
25. Who suggests to Dorothea how much Will cares for her? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) Mr. Brooke
  - b) Celia
  - c) Rosamond
  - d) Bulstrode

### 13.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Explain the following lines from George Eliot's novel: "The Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them." (Book 1, Chapter 1 paragraph 4)
- b) Is marriage always more of a prison for women than for men in the world of *Middlemarch*?
- c) Draw the character sketch of Tertius Lydgate.
- d) What conflicts do characters experience between their ideals and their realities? How do these conflicts relate to marriage? Consider the role of gender and the contradictions between the public and private worlds.

## 13.9 ANSWER KEY

### CYP

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. True

SAQs : c, a, a, b, c, b, d, b, b, c, b, b, b, b, a, d, d, b, a, c, d, d, b, b, c

### Examination Oriented Questions

Ans. c. Character sketch of Tertius Lydgate.

As Rosemary Ashton argues in her introduction to *Middlemarch*, the novel “is above all about change and the way individuals and groups adapt to, or resist, change. In their marriages, in their professions, in their family life and their social intercourse, the characters of the novel are shown responding in their various ways to events both public and private” (Ashton, ix). Tertius Lydgate is a doctor who moved to Middlemarch in hopes of establishing a fever hospital and enhancing the quality of medical profession in Middlemarch by using modern methods he acquired during his studies in Paris. However, not just Lydgate’s methods are new the whole concept of a physician as a hero. Lydgate fights with the backwardness of both doctors and patients in Middlemarch.

Ultimately losing his battle against backwardness, Lydgate moves away from Middlemarch, into an unspecified spa town. The best way to emphasize Lydgate’s modernity is to compare him with another scholar and scientist, Mr. Casaubon. While Casaubon, writing his *Key to All Mythologies* is deeply rooted in the past, becoming almost a living fossil, Lydgate is concerned with the future of medicine. While Casaubon’s greatest work aims at summing up the mythologies, which are by their very nature connected with the past, Lydgate is portrayed as using the newest and most modern medicinal practices of the day. Even though eventually both men fail to accomplish their most important goals, the finishing of the Key in the Case of Mr. Casaubon and a scientific breakthrough in the case of Tertius Lydgate, the latter seems to be generally more successful, as Casaubon dies without having children or finishing his great work.

Lydgate first appears in the tenth chapter during a party, although his presence in Middlemarch is only hinted by Lady Chettam and Mrs. Renfrew in a scene where the two women share some local gossip, one of them describing Lydgate as a new young surgeon who appears to be “wonderfully clever” and a “fine brow indeed” (Eliot, ch. 10). Although Mr. Brooke, who seems to be one of the more forward-thinking and liberal citizen, argues that Lydgate has “lots of ideas, quite new, about ventilation and diet,” he is immediately challenged by Mr. Standish who argues that it was the old treatment that made the Englishmen what they are. Mr. Bulstrode claims that the medical profession in Middlemarch is undeveloped and Lydgate will be only helpful, Mr. Standish again says that he will rather trust medicine that has been already tested. Nevertheless, Mr. Bulstrode gains the help of Lydgate in the building of a new feverhospital. Mr. Featherstone, the oldest man in Middlemarch, after asking Lydgate some questions

“screws up his face while he hears the answers, as if they were pinching his toes” (Middlemarch, ch. 11).

The event that changes the public opinion in his favour, at least to a certain degree, is the illness of Fred

Vincy. Fred, besides his financial problems, seems to have caught a serious case of fever. Mr. Wrench, the Vincy family doctor is called but contrary to the family's expectations, pronounces the fever to be only a mild illness. However, the prescribed medicine does not help Fred and the Vincy's contact Lydgate. Lydgate immediately recognizes that Fred is suffering from typhoid fever and prescribes the correct medicine.

All in all, the development of Lydgate and his character up until this part of the novel shows Lydgate as a voice of reason and progress in Middlemarch. By this time, Lydgate is still convinced and confident in his resolution to be a man of medicine and science and stay above the gossip and all the internal relationships present in Middlemarch. By this time, he however also divides the public opinion about his person, makes a first enemy in Middlemarch, becomes entangled, although only a little, in the politics of Bulstrode's hospital and also starts to notice Rosamond Vincy.

Lydgate's primary concerns still lie with medicine and science and marriage, for him, is only something a proper gentleman does as a supplement to his life. It is certainly not his main objective to marry, and by this time he does not even want to marry prematurely, at least not until his physician's practice grows and he finds a proper place to live. In the end, however, Lydgate does marry Rosamond Vincy even though he has not yet achieved any of his goals. But the marriage is unsatisfactory for both Lydgate and Rosamond. Due to the haste with which they married and their differing expectations, Lydgate soon runs out of money and his medical and scientific breakthrough is even further than when he arrived to Middlemarch. By the end of the novel, when a man who knows about Mr. Bulstrode's shady past, Mr. Raffles, comes to Middlemarch and falls ill, Lydgate shows his medical skills again.

Lydgate after all leaves Middlemarch and dies relatively young, never making any significant scientific or medical discovery. As Eliot puts it, "he always regarded himself as a failure: he had not done what he once meant to do" (*Middlemarch*, ch. 86). From the analysis of the events that lead to this end it becomes obvious that Lydgate's failure is caused not by him being an unqualified doctor or scientist. Rather, it is caused by social factors, like his failed marriage ("an unmitigated calamity, (*Middlemarch*, ch. 63)" as he puts it) and the society itself.

### 13.10 SUGGESTED READING

1. Mintz, Alan. *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation*. Harvard University Press, 2013.
2. *A Study Guide for George Eliot's Middlemarch*. Cengage Learning Gale. Creative Media Partners, LLC. 2017.
3. Course Hero. *Middlemarch | Themes*. Course Hero, 17 Aug. 2016, <https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Middlemarch/themes/>.

**THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*****STRUCTURE**

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 14.3 Thomas Hardy's Life and Works
- 14.4 Hardy as a Regionalist
- 14.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 14.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 14.8 Answer Key
- 14.9 Suggested Reading

**14.1 INTRODUCTION**

Thomas Hardy is one of the greatest novelists in the whole range of English literature. His first novel *The Desperate Remedies* appeared in 1871, and thereafter novels after novel flowed from his pen in quick succession. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude, the Obscure* are regarded by universal consent as his masterpieces, and they have been compared to the four great Shakespearean tragedies

**14.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with the life and works of the novelist Thomas Hardy. The lesson also aims to establish Hardy as a regionalist so that you get a fairly good idea about the nature of his work.

After a careful reading of this lesson, you will be familiarised with Thomas Hardy and the nature of his writing. You will also analyse Hardy as a regionalist since the geographical locale plays a significant role in his novels, which not only acts as mere background, but shapes characters' lives in important ways.

**14.3 THOMAS HARDY'S LIFE AND WORKS**

Thomas Hardy, very cautiously, termed his ideas and emotions as his "tentative metaphysics." This metaphysics took shape so gradually that we cannot, for sure, put our finger on a particular date when his youthful fatalism gave way to his later determinism. We can, of course, trace anticipations of his mature convictions in his earliest writings. Similarly, we can trace the vestiges of his early speculation in his latest writings. His career as a poet and novelist also cannot be separated by any linear demarcation. It is generally said that he turned to poetry when forced to abandon fiction writing. But that is not true. As a matter of fact, it was poetry that he first started writing. The publication of Hardy's first volume of poems took place in 1898, although he had been writing poems in his youth. He only withheld their publication for some years. He also

turned to fiction only when he did not find audience for his poetry. But he never renounced his ambition to be a poet during the entire period of twenty-five years when he was writing novels. He, finally, reverted to poetry when forced to abandon his fiction. We say forced because his last two novels – *Jude the Obscure* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*– provoked violent protests, including burning of his novels. This discouraged him and he discontinued writing novels, which he had considered a more effective medium for the expression of his ideas on man, nature and society. It is not possible, therefore, to divide Hardy's writing career into periods of poetry and novel. There does, of course, exist a natural sort of division in terms of his early and later periods. We need not relate these phases to the kind of writing he produced. The titles of the two volumes of his memoirs, too, make a similar kind of distinction. These titles, that he had thoughtfully chosen, are *The Early Life* and *The Later Years*.

Thomas Hardy was born in a small hamlet close to the wild stretch of upland in Dorsetshire which he called Egdon Heath. His life-span spread from 1840 to 1928. He belonged to the old yeoman stock. From his early childhood, Hardy carried in his mind strong impressions of the past, relating to the Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Medieval, and Georgian. It is perhaps for this very reason that there remained vestiges of primitive ideas and superstitions, folkways and folklores right through the more superficial, modern and sophisticated strata of his novels. No doubt, he came under the strong influence of the modern scientific ideas, especially those espoused by Darwin and other evolutionary thinkers, but he always remained attentive to whatever was uncanny and preternatural in life. Peasant song and dance as also the church music always fascinated him. His father's trade of master-builder determined his choice of architecture as a profession. At the same time, when the movement for church restoration was in full swing, he was articled to a local practitioner. Later, he continued his profession of architecture in London. His natural bent of mind was towards literature, not architecture. He remained at the centre of intellectual ferment during the critical years of the 1860's. Reading Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, he contemplated upon the unknown First Cause as well as upon the incalculable element of "Casualty" in the affairs of men. It was also during this very period that he wrote a good deal of poetry. He later destroyed many of the poetic compositions of the period. Some did survive in their original form, while others were later worked into changed or revised compositions. Some of these poems have for their themes the freaks and pranks of the purblind "Doomsters" who mismanage man's life. In some of them, there are also hints of the contrast between the "unweening" First Cause and the human consciousness, which by some unaccountable cosmic irony has evolved from that Cause.

In Hardy's poems, we find, that chance is sometimes personified as a malignant deity who deliberately sports with human misery. For this kind of angry fatalism, Hardy found support in Swinburne's "upbraiding of the gods." Hardy was, in fact, highly influenced by Swinburne. As is clear from Hardy's response to Spencer, Swinburne, etc., he was highly sensitive to the intellectual and emotional atmosphere of the time. And it was from his active response to the climate of his times that he shaped his thoughts towards that "twilight view of life" which was highly deprecated by writers like Meredith. Although Hardy's novels as well as poems portray a dark picture of life, it is not entirely unredeemed. The despondency is reduced, if not redeemed, by his rustic humour. What comes out more convincing in Hardy's world than his "cosmic pessimism" is his genuine resentment against the social distinctions and discriminations, of which he was made to become more conscious in London than in his native Dorset. Something of the spiritual conflict which Hardy experienced in the early years of his life is certainly reflected in the narrative of Angel Clare's renunciation of the Christian ministry in *Tess*. Similarly, something of the social conflict is reflected in Jude Fawley's thwarted aspirations in *Jude the Obscure*. In his older age, Hardy, of course, flatly denied the existence of any autobiographical substratum in his novels. Nevertheless, it is very much there, although it need not be literally interpreted.

Hardy's first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1867-1868), shows that to begin with there is very little of metaphysical speculation. There is, of course, a good deal of social radicalism, reflected in a mix of rural life with satire directed against the metropolitan "upper-classes." Since this novel was rejected by publishers, portions of it were incorporated in the subsequent novels. One section of it survived in the form of a short novel or novelette, *An Indiscretion in the Life of a Heiress* (1878). The left-over pages of the manuscript were destroyed. The publishers' readers, George Meredith (himself a novelist) and John Morley, advised Hardy to

avoid social satire and contrive an intricate plot. The younger Hardy followed the advice. The result was the next novel, *Desperate Remedies* (1871), which is a highly improbable tale of mystery and murder. In its sensational incidents and complex concatenation of circumstances, the novel betrays the influence of Willkie Collins. Hardy discovered his subject and style in the composition of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). The title, we know, is derived from Shakespeare's comedy, *As You Like It*, in which there is a song under that heading. It is a slight tale of rural courtship and feminine wiles mingled with episodes of rich rustic humour.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Personified: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Malignant: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Satire: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Metropolitan: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Passion: \_\_\_\_\_

Hardy's next novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), combines sensational intrigue and incredible coincidences in the fast-moving narrative of a romantic tragedy. The strength of the novel lies in its yokels which, in the humorous or gruesome episodes are drawn with a more intimate art than their social superiors in the main plot. This novel (or romance) was an instant success. One evidence of its success was an invitation from Leslie Stephen for contribution to *Cornhill Magazine*. Hardy happily responded. As a result, Hardy's first masterpiece, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, appeared in 1874 in the columns of *Cornhill*. Hardy chose not to give his name for its authorship, which became a cause for widespread speculation. The novel's success made Hardy feel securely launched upon his career. He soon after married, and remained in different cities in England as well as abroad thereafter. Finally, in 1885, Hardy settled at Max Gate on the outskirts of Dorchester, which remained Hardy's home for the rest of his life, that is until 1928. His next major novel, *The Return of the Native* (1878), came to be considered as a great work of art in terms of its balance and control. How the public taste dominated the fortunes of fiction those days can be gauged from the circumstances associated with the publication of this novel. It was refused publication by Leslie Stephen on the ground that a story of tragic passion would annoy *Cornhill's* clientele. And it was published by *Belgravia* only after Hardy agreed to twist the novel's secondary plot to a happy ending. In such a situation, one wonders how much of a work is genuinely the author's own. What judgements can be passed on the merit or demerit of such a work?

Hardy's next novel, *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), generally considered the most genial of the Wessex Novels, reflects the Napoleonic era. The next novel, *Two in a Tower* (1882), is rather fragile in theme and carries dream-like tone. But it is memorable for its projection of human passion against the background of starry distances. Hardy's outspoken treatment of sexual relations in this novel was viewed as a violation of literary propriety of the Victorians. It caused rumblings of British prudery. This was followed by a rather minor novel, *The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid* (1883). But then came out Hardy's masterpiece under the title *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). In this, he focused the novel's action on the fortunes of a single character, Michael Henchard. Although external circumstances and crass coincidences continue to play their part in the novel's action, one can see a new emphasis on the role of character in shaping one's destiny. The novel moves, like the Greek tragedy, with a rapid pace, going through reversals and recognitions, always heading, with a sense of inevitability, towards the final and total disaster. The tragedy takes place because of the tragic flaw in the character of Henchard. Otherwise, there is Farfrae as foil to Henchard, who prospers, progressively, in quiet and steady movement towards the peak of his fortunes. He succeeds because he is not flawed. He succeeds also because he is devoid of elemental (or human) passions of Henchard. What the novel lacks is the sweetness, the poetry, of the earlier novels.

What, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* lacked, being tragic, is in abundance in, *The Woodlanders* (1887). It is perhaps the tenderest of Hardy's novels. It is thrilling in its narrative power and memorable for its main characters (who are noble) as well as for its exquisitely observed scenes and customs of woodland folk. Hardy's first volume of short stories, *Wessex Tales* (1888), was followed by several other volumes in the same vein. Notable among these are *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891), *Life's Little Ironies* (1894), and *A Changed Man and Other Stories* (1913). A few of these are excellent stories, but most cannot be considered artistically perfect. Largely, they are either trivial or extravagant local anecdotes cast in literary form or else give the impression of being sketches or drafts for full-length novels. The tone of many is rather bitter, in some cases even sinister, though they do not afford much scope for an explicit comment on the human quandary. Decidedly and evidently, short-story was too small a canvas for Hardy to depict his view of life. Especially now in the mature years of his life, when he had developed almost a philosophy of life, he needed the full-scale canvas of the novel to make an exposition of that philosophy. Hence, he took up writing of his two most philosophic novels, namely, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.

Hardy made his first notes for *Jude the Obscure* in 1887, and the composition of *Tess* was taken up soon after. Since he was well aware of the public reaction to what he was going to portray in these two novels, he tried to prepare the public for the acceptance of his rather unconventional, in fact, provocative, novels. He wrote for the purpose, two articles in the nature of manifestoes, namely, *The Profitable Reading of Fiction* (1888) and *Candour in English Fiction* (1890). In these two articles, he pleaded for the novelist's right to treat conventional topics with the same sincerity as is permitted in private intercourse, to discuss candidly the sexual relation, the problems of religious belief, and the position of man in the universe. Notwithstanding this urgent argument, however, he was forced for the sake of his livelihood, to expurgate (remove) and dismember *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* when it was serially published in 1891. Although the most famous of Hardy's novels, *Tess* was bitterly denounced when Hardy restored its integrity in the book form. The two-fold polemic—against social prejudice and against “the President of the Immortals”—roused a storm of protest. He felt perturbed by the public reaction and remained disturbed for quite sometime. In fact, the effect of public hostility caused artistic damage to his next novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

Hardy's last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, is a powerful but overwrought story of “the derision and disaster that follow in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity.” The very fact that a novel like this could be printed, despite recent protests against *Tess*, only shows that the Victorian prudery was waning. At the same time, the fact that it caused a great scandal shows that the Victorian prudery was not quite extinct. The experience of these last two books “cured” Hardy, as he wrote afterwards, of any desire to write more novels. As a matter of fact, he had used to the maximum the medium of the narrative fiction for the depiction of life as he saw it. Also, despite his mastery over the art of story-telling, he never felt as comfortable in the medium as he did in that of poetry. He always took poetry to be the native country of his mind. So, once again, he turned to composing poems, to forget the bitter experience of the last two novels. But he never reverted to writing novel, thereafter, even until his death in 1928.

In poetry too, Hardy showed his genius and talent, which seemed to some more remarkable than that displayed in his fiction. Also, he proved to be as prolific in writing poetry as he had done in writing novel. Two volumes of poems followed at the turn of the nineteenth century, namely *Wessex Poems* (1898) and *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1902). And not long after followed his epicdrama, *The Dynasts* (1903-1906-1908). This work was the result of Hardy's life-long interest in the Napoleonic Wars. It was also, even more, an exposition upon the amplest scale of his philosophy of mechanistic determinism. There followed more volumes of poems, which included *Time's Laughing Stocks* (1909), *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), *Moments of Vision* (1917), *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922), *Human Shows* (1925), and *Winter Words* (posthumously in 1928). Hardy also wrote in these later years of his life a poetic drama called *The Queen of Cornwall* (1923). It is a short play on the legend of Iseult, which is more ingenious than convincing to harmonize the two conflicting versions of the story. In these very years Hardy also occupied himself with the memoirs which appeared after his death as a biography professedly by his own widow.

When Hardy's first wife died in 1912, his mind turned to their romance of long ago about which he produced some wonderful little elegies or elegiac poems. It is these poems that F.R. Leavis has highly praised in his *New Bearings in English Poetry*. Differences of temperament and opinion had come between the couple, but it never reached the breaking-point of separation. In a second marriage, that took place in 1914, to Florence Emily Dugdale, he found congeniality and happiness. During the last two decades of his life, when his fame had widened enormously, Hardy bore his honours with deprecating modesty. But he remained curiously sensitive to the few voices of dissent.

He died in January, 1928. His ashes were placed in Westminster Abbey among England's poets.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, the previous section familiarised you with the life and works of Thomas Hardy. You can now make an assessment of your familiarisation with Thomas Hardy's works by matching the works with the year of publication.

Match the novel with the year of its publication:

- |                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| (a) <i>Desperate Remedies</i>         | (i) 1874    |
| (b) <i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i>   | (ii) 1886   |
| (c) <i>A Pair of Blue Eyes</i>        | (iii) 1873  |
| (d) <i>Far From the Madding Crowd</i> | (iv) 1895   |
| (e) <i>The Return of the Native</i>   | (v) 1878    |
| (f) <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>  | (vi) 1871   |
| (g) <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i>  | (vii) 1891  |
| (h) <i>Jude the Obscure</i>           | (viii) 1872 |

## 14.4 HARDY AS A REGIONALIST

As a regionalist writer, more as novelist than as poet, Hardy has fore-runners of sorts in Maria Edgeworth and other Irish novelists, also in John Galt and other Scots. But none of these predecessors of the regional novel had confined to a small, and well-defined area, the way Hardy did in his novels. As a matter of fact, all of them were nationalists, rather than regionalists. In a modest way, the claim to be Hardy's predecessor actually belongs to the Dorset poet, William Barnes. However, similar to Barnes in several ways, steeped as both were in the traditions of their countryside, Hardy was not primarily "folkloristic." His yokels do not form a class entirely apart from the other characters in the Wessex novels. They are, in fact, by almost imperceptible gradations, through persons of middle rank, connected with the characters who are higher in the social scale. From these characters of higher social class the rustics are distinguishable by their use of dialect and by the serenity with which they hold their poverty. Instead, he insisted that their misery had been much overestimated. He shows, on the contrary, that they have discovered the secret of happiness. This secret, as is expressed in *The Woodlanders*, lies in limiting one's aspirations. Many of them are shrewd, some witty, nearly all unselfconsciously humorous. They are, at once, a part of the Wessex background as well as a sort of chorus commenting upon the actions in which their superiors are engaged.

Hardy's depiction of his rural characters is not sentimental at all. These characters are rather a normal stuff, neither saints nor villains. They are the true representatives of common humanity, without vicious as well as virtuous extremes. His villains are invariably sophisticated intruders from the world outside of Wessex. His leading characters are always of Wessex blood. As and when Hardy ventured beyond Wessex, as he does in some of his minor novels, he found himself beyond his range. In that case, he could never come as good as he did in his Wessex novels. He strongly believed, like Wordsworth, that in rustic life "the essential passions of

the heart find a better soil” and are “less under restraint” than in urban life. The closer man lives to nature in humility and ignorance, the likelier he is to be happy, for knowledge is sorrow. But nature, in Hardy, is no friend, nor mother, nor guide as in Wordsworth. Here, it is shown full of cruelty. In fact, Hardy stresses in his novels only those aspects of nature that are found inimical to man. Yet with faulty logic, Hardy is on the side of natural impulse, as in *Tess* or *Jude*, in opposition to social law, convention, and restrictions. Also, nature is not just a setting for his stories and novels, poems and plays, but rather an integral part of them.

Man in Hardy’s novels, is shown to be a plaything in the hands of natural or cosmic forces. The dominant theme is the struggle of the individual against the obscure power which moves the universe. This struggle, however, inevitably ends in failure and tragedy because man is no match to the powerful cosmic forces. Since love accentuates individuality, it is in love that the conflict of humanity with destiny is at its most intense. In his earlier masterpieces like *The Return Of The Native* and *The Mayor Of Casterbridge*, the blows of fate are shown to be consequent upon weaknesses of character. One could recall here A.C. Bradley’s dictum about Shakespeare’s great tragedies where, he says, character is destiny. Chance or coincidence as cause of human tragedy is not altogether absent in Shakespeare’s great tragedies. The chance fall of handkerchief in *Othello* is a significant instance to this effect, although, it is never as predominant as in Hardy’s novels. In Hardy’s later novels, it assumes a much darker aspect, where blind destiny strikes the innocent and the guilty with mindless impartiality. In fact, Hardy seems to place man and nature together on the one side as sufferers of their common tormentor, the blind destiny or the cosmic imbecility. His mythmaking imagination gave “a kind of rationality to the hoary old superstitions of hostile or capricious powers which he cherished and half-believed.”

Hardy was, in fact, a scientific determinist. He meant by “Fate” or “Chance” or “Casualty” human life as determined by all antecedent circumstances in a chain of causality. Groping for a name for this concept, he discarded such terms as “Nature” or “God” and finally chose to call the unintelligent and unconscious urge or impulse in things the “Immanent Will.” Whether it was before or after he read Schopenhauer is a debatable point, but the affinity between the two on the question of the nature of cosmic force is more than obvious. In Hardy, the term Immanent Will is, however, not more than a “metaphysical convenience” to express the unity and pattern of existing things. Critics have generally deplored Hardy’s sacrifice of tragic grandeur which this concept logically demands. For once you reduce human protagonists to an automata so that even in their struggles against destiny they are merely pulled to and fro by the “halyards” of the Will, there is no room for that internal conflict which is taken to be the essence of tragedy. Hardy would have readily agreed. The root of his indictment against life was “the intolerable antilogy of making figments feel.” As he remarked, “the emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed into it.” Yet in the inexplicable evolution of human consciousness from the unconscious and of intelligence from the unknowing lay Hardy’s strange, dim hope that “in some day unguessed of us” the Will may “lift its blinding incubus” and, becoming informed by consciousness, “fashion all things fair.”

Hardy was not at all bitter in his personal relations. In fact, he was quite jovial. His temperament, however, was basically saturnine. He found the “twilight view of life,” just as Hawthorne did, congenial to his temperament. A rich fund of sympathy with suffering often made him angry and indignant. But, with a want of love, he indicted circumstances and the miseries of man’s own contriving alike. He was not a sociological novelist, but he was happy to recognize that reforms often begin in sentiment and sentiment sometimes begins in a novel. As a professional writer, he openly used fiction as a medium for polemic. It was only in his early phase, and that too under pressure from public, that he accepted his profession as an entertainer. However, what came out openly and clearly in his later novels was always implicitly there in his early novels. Hardy’s architectural ability is clearly evidenced by the compact construction of his fictional plots. Among his contemporaries, he remained unmatched in this aspect of the novel.

#### 14.5 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson you have been introduced with the life and works of Thomas Hardy. Many of his novels, beginning with his second, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), are set in the imaginary county of Wessex. *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), his first success, was followed by *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor*

of *Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), all expressing his stoical pessimism and his sense of the inevitable tragedy of life. Their continuing popularity (many have been made into movies) owes much to their richly varied yet accessible style and their combination of romantic plots with convincingly presented characters. Hardy's works were increasingly at odds with Victorian morality, and public indignation at *Jude* so disgusted him that he wrote no more novels. He returned to poetry with *Wessex Poems* (1898), *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), and *The Dynasts* (1910), a huge poetic drama of the Napoleonic Wars.

#### 14.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Hardy was born in 1840 in which English county? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Cornwall                      b) Devon  
c) Dorset                         d) Somerset
2. What was the title of Hardy's first volume of poetry, published in 1898? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Essex Poems                 b) Middlesex Poems  
c) Sussex Poems                d) Wessex Poems
3. *The Return of the Native* begins when? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Halloween                    b) Guy Fawkes Night  
c) Christmas Eve               d) New Year's Eve
4. Which was Thomas Hardy's first novel? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) The poor man and the lady    b) Rich Dad Poor Dad  
c) Think and grow rich            d) Think and grow poor
5. Which novel of Thomas Hardy has a chapter in which a man sells his wife? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) *Two on a Tower*                b) *The Return of the Native*  
c) *The Mayor of Casterbridge*    d) *Desperate Remedies*
6. In which year Thomas Hardy announced that he would not write fiction again? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) 1940                          b) 1928  
c) 1912                          d) 1896
7. Which county is depicted in the novels of Thomas Hardy? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) Essex                         b) Wessex  
c) Sussex                        d) Surrey
8. Which novel of Thomas Hardy first gained notice? \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) *Vestiges of an Old Flame*        b) *Far from the Madding Crowd*  
c) *Under the Greenwood Tree*     d) *A Pair of Blue Eyes*

9. Who conferred the Order of Merit on Thomas Hardy? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Victoria                      b) Edward VII  
c) George V                      d) Edward VIII

10. Which poem of Thomas Hardy deals with Napoleonic Wars? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) *The Grave by the Handpost*    b) *A Changed Man*  
c) *The Dynasts*                      d) *Enter a Dragoon*

11. When was *Wessex Tales* published? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) 1912                      b) 1914  
c) 1916                      d) 1928

#### 14.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Write a brief note on the life of Thomas Hardy.
2. Comment on Hardy as a Regionalist writer.

#### 14.8 ANSWER KEY

##### CYP

a-vi ; b-viii; c-iii; d-i; e-v; f-ii; g-vii; h-iv

SAQs : 1. c, 2. d, 3. b, 4. a, 5. c, 6. d, 7. b, 8. b, 9. c, 10. c, 11. a

#### 14.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. Millgate, Michael. *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
2. Bullen, J.B. *Thomas Hardy: The World of His Novels*. Frances Lincoln, 2013.
3. *Thomas Hardy. Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/thomas-hardy>. Nath, Chittaranjan. *Regionalism in the Novels of Thomas Hardy. Pratidhwani the Echo: A Journal of Humanities & Social Science*, Dept. of Bengali, Karimganj College, Assam, India, Vol. II, Issue III, Jan. 2014, <https://www.thecho.in/files/Dr.-Chittaranjan-Nath.pdf>.

**THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*****STRUCTURE**

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 15.3 Thomas Hardy as a Wessex Novelist
- 15.4 As a Tragic Novelist
- 15.5 Hardy's Pessimism
- 15.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 15.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 15.9 Answer Key
- 15.10 Suggested Reading

**15.1 INTRODUCTION**

Thomas Hardy is a regional novelist. He is the creator of "Wessex." Wessex has an epic grandeur and his principal characters have the greatness of epic heroes and heroines. He has thus imparted a new emphasis and significance to the regional novels which had already been dignified by the Brontes.

**15.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to introduce Thomas Hardy as a regional novelist who has situated his works in the fictional region he addressed as Wessex. The lesson also aims to study Thomas Hardy as a pessimist whose works are dominated by tragedy.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to analyse Thomas Hardy as a regional novelist who has created the fictional region of Wessex which imparts a distinctive character to his novels.

Further, a reading of this lesson will aware you about the nature of Hardy's writing which is marked by a sense of tragedy, thereby making you critique him as a pessimist.

**15.3 THOMAS HARDY AS A WESSEX NOVELIST**

Hardy's novels, from his earliest to the last, carry a distinct flavour of the region he chose to call by the name of Wessex. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* as well as in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, we are introduced to a scene, set in a region whose particularities are gradually unfolded in a series of novels following these early ones. It was a region that was to become familiar in the mind's eye as the "Wessex of Thomas Hardy."

It is a region which is centred in the hamlets, villages, towns, woods, meadows, and heathland of Dorset and overflowing into the adjoining counties. It is a countryside inhabited by rural people living, largely, under the conditions prevailing at the time when Hardy was a boy. The character of the place and more so the attitudes of the people have drastically changed since then. It is infact, these outer and inner changes, which began over a hundred years ago, that are invariably linked with the tragedies of his protagonists. However, the memory of the region (Wessex) is fixed for posterity as long as the English novel would continue to be read. The "Wessex" of Hardy's novels lives in our imagination more distinctly than any other region created by an English writer, maybe any writer. Compared with Scott's or Burns' country, or the Lake country of Wordsworth, Hardy's Wessex clearly comes out much more distinct a presence than any of these. Here, in Hardy's world one experiences a reality which is charged with all that is intimate and poignant in human experience.

The power of Hardy's Wessex is captivating. Not only are we shown the wild expanse of Egdon Heath, the rich meadowland of Talbothays, where Tess milked her cows and Angel Clare made love to her; the fire plantations of the Hintocks among which moved Giles Winterbourne and Marty South; the houses and streets and cornmarket of Casterbridge, frequented by all the farmers of the neighbourhood; but also we become aware of these places as influences subtly entering into the lives of the men and women born and living there, who inherit memories, habits, and instincts handed on through the centuries. Those born in the Hintocks with "an almost exhaustive biographical or historical acquaintance with every object, animate and inanimate, within the observer's horizon know all about those invisible ones of the days gone by, whose feet have traversed the fields which look so grey from the window; recall whose creaking plough has turned those sods from time to time; whose hands planted the trees that form a crest to the opposite hill; whose horses and hounds have torn through that underwood; what birds affect that particular brake; what bygone domestic dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, or disappointment have been enacted in the cottages, the mansions, the street or the green." Thus, the Wessex country, inhabited by simple people and the ghosts of their ancestors, and no less by living animals and trees and grasses, is the background which is never wholly absent from Hardy's work, in prose or verse.

What Hardy tells us of Clym Yeobright, walking on Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*, could as well apply to the author himself :

*If anyone knew the heath well, it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, with its odours. He might be said to be its product. His eyes had first opened thereon; with its appearance all the first images of his memory were mingled; his estimate of life had been coloured by it; his toys had been the flint knives and arrowheads which he found there, wondering why stones should "grow" to such odd shapes; his flowers, the purple bells and yellow gorse; his animal kingdom the snakes and croppers; his society, its human hunters.*

One can see Hardy's coloured vision in this description also. There are no song birds here, nor rainbow in the sky; even the toys are knives and arrow-heads; and the animal kingdom confined to snakes and croppers. He was always observant, percipient, sensitive and thoughtful, and yet he was a person of great simplicity. There was something of the peasant in him which his intellectual sophistication did not wholly eliminate. Hence, when he depicts his Wessex world both the peasant as well as the philosophic side of his personality leave their mark on the representation. He grew up to know a world of a certain kind, filled with a certain life, human and natural. And he grew up to know this world in all its beauty, its contrariness, and its perplexing painfulness. That life, which he calls the Wessex, as he had known from his childhood, he absorbed imaginatively, and it became the raw material of his art.

Hardy was never to be at his best except when writing about Wessex, although he transcended its narrow limits and placed it in a wider context. Even when he was growing, his view of this world was being modified by his reading of English literature, the classics, and history, by his careful study of architecture, by his interest in pictures and in acting, his disturbing contacts with Darwin and Spencer and Schopenhauer and his puzzled study of the Oxford Movement theologians and their opponents. It can be seen that as he grew up, he became more and more uneasy at innovations which were displacing rustic customs and social ideas at variance with

the older codes of life. He felt evils were aggravated by the intolerant judgement of society, as if there were not enough that are beyond man's control and inherent in human life. The problems that were thus revealed were to become insoluble and almost unbearable. They became all the more painful because the men and women of Wessex, the raw material of his art, with primitive passions and developing consciousness, continuing their plodding existence, were converted into tragi-comic realities of the imagination. "The business of the poet and novelist," he wrote in his Memoranda two days after he had written the last page of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, "is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things."

The people and the countryside of Wessex, seen through the prism of a romantic imagination, gave to Hardy the Archetypal forms of human existence. During the entire period of his career as a novelist the kind of life he depicted in his various works became like the notes and chords in an orchestral composition, moving from theme to theme as the motive dictated. In his case, it can be said that the author is possessed by his subject. In his novels, a more than personal richness has found expression. They bring into literature a very rare combination of influences and gifts. None of these novels with the possible exception of *The Hand of Ethelberta*, is metropolitan in its setting. All show evidence, directly or indirectly, of the tension in Hardy's mind between the world of Dorset (Wessex) and that of London. There is no comparison between his Wessex and Barsetshire. His local or country attachment or piety had in it, no doubt, some desire for simplification. But Hardy was not self-deceived. He knew that a way of life was vanishing in his time. Being a "meliorist," he was on the side of the steam engines. He was not, however, a prophet of *The Waste Land*. He was much occupied with the idea of the return of the native, but he was primarily aware of his own good luck and his rich sense of connection. Of course, much of what he felt connected with had already become a matter of antiquarian lore, or recollection in "the Mead of Memories" where "the sad man sighed his fantasies."

When we have made all deductions, and have pointed out the merely literary, faintly Shakespearean ancestry of many of his rustic humourists, there is still left enough truthfulness in Hardy's vision of Wessex to make his attitude of suspense between things ancient and modern a poignant one.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, it's time to take a break. Before you proceed to the next section, quickly go through the points given below for a revision of the content that you have read:

- Hardy's novels are marked by a distinctive flavour of the region he called Wessex.
- Wessex is a countryside inhabited by rural people.
- In Hardy's world we experience a reality charged with human experience.
- Hardy's creation of Wessex is marked by both his peasant and philosophic side.
- The people and the countryside of Wessex are seen through the prism of a romantic imagination.

## 15.4 AS A TRAGIC NOVELIST

The five novels which are considered as Hardy's great work, are all tragedies on the grand scale. They are all of them love stories, as before, but the men and women who suffer this passion in its extremity, individuals as they are, also become representatives of the human race.

We are to look at these love stories through Hardy's eyes, as Aeschylus saw Prometheus chained to a rock, against a vast background of nature, the victim of "the President of the Immortals." The wonderful opening description of Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native* shows what sort of a place it was in which the persons

were to suffer. It creates an impression of Nature which appeared to share the sufferings of men. "Fair prospects wed happily with fair times; but alas, if times be not fair...Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion...wearing a somberness distasteful to our race when it was young." "The storm was its lover, and the wind its friend." It could become "the home of strange phantoms." "Like man, slighted and enduring," it was "colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony." In *The Woodlanders*, too, though there are some gentler pictures, "the bleared white visage of a sunless winter day emerged like a dead-born child." Also, in the wood we observe "the unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is," working havoc underground – "the leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling." Though Nature assumes a far sweeter aspect at Talbothays during those months when Tess and Clare were working among the cows and the meadows, the sweetness of it becomes as a foil to the horrors which are to follow.

Hardy peoples this alternately lovely and sinister world with men and women, the more ordinary of whom play the chorus, and others, the exceptional ones, feeling in themselves "the ache of modernism." These men and women of the latter category are the tragic lot. In *The Return of the Native*, the hero Clym Yeobright's face reflected, we are told, "the view of life as a thing to be put up with replacing that zest for existence which was so intense in early civilizations." Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* perceives more simply but passionately. The shape of his ideas in time of suffering simply "a moody 'I am to suffer, I perceive.'" His superstitious nature leads him to the grim conclusion that his misfortunes are due to "some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him." In *Jude the Obscure*, the percipience of the new type of man reaches an extremity where it becomes unbearable. Even as a boy Jude shows that he is "the sort of man who was born to ache." At times, he is "seized with a sort of shuddering." And as a man he is a victim of "the modern man of unrest." Sue the ethereal, the fine-nerved, the idealist, has the same sensitiveness. She becomes almost a masochist in her love of suffering. Hardy pursues the theme of tragic suffering to a point where it becomes almost horrible. He reproduces, for example, the affliction of the parents in their children. "I ought not to be born, ought I?" says Little Father Time, working himself up to the mood which ends in the hanging of his baby brother and sister followed by his own. "The doctor," it is reported, "says there are such boys springing up amongst us – boys of a sort unknown in the last generation.... It is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live."

These five novels, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* being one of these, are not to be taken as a statement of Hardy's philosophy. However, in giving body to human life as Hardy finds it there does appear a pattern, in accordance with which human life manifests itself. The pattern does yield a philosophy, imposed on Hardy by his intuitive apprehension of life. There does emerge in these novels a theory of society into which the facts, as he sees them, fit. The theory then widens into nothing less than a view of the universe. In *The Return of the Native*, we see the problem of a young man of bucolic origin moving too quickly to intellectual and sophisticated aspirations. He reaches a condition of imbalance between the two elements – of body and mind or earth and fire – in himself. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* we see in Lucetta the half-emancipated woman – "I'll love whom I choose," though, the old superstition still strong in her, she shrinks and withers to her death before the terrors of the skimmity-ride. In *The Woodlanders* we are confronted with the deficiencies of the divorce laws. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* we are introduced to the cruelty of public opinion towards those who have offended against its decrees. In *Jude the Obscure* Sue Bridehead, so clear-sighted in vision, though so unreasonable in action, makes her explicit protest against "the social moulds civilization fits us into." She asks in an agitated state of mind whether a marriage ceremony is a religious thing, or "only a sordid contract, based on material convenience in householding, rating, and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children." "When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what will they say!" she exclaims. Jude, too, makes a disturbing comment on the institution of marriage, the fundamental error of "having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling."

In these five of his subtlest and most tragic novels (like the great tragedies of Shakespeare), Hardy has made a searching criticism of modern life and finally of all life. In these novels, just as in the great tragedies of Shakespeare, we have all the chorus of ordinary men and women, with rustic minds not yet unhinged, accepting

life and judging it, gaily or sadly, in accordance with the conventional norms. But in the forefront of the same chorus we have others, born in the same milieu, who, confronted with odds of social and cosmic life, come to question almost everything from social institutions to cosmic order. These are the ones who have acquired the self-consciousness which is the distinctive mark of modern man. He questions the fundamentals of the society in which he is born to live, its social conventions. He questions the very progress of a civilization which keeps bringing so much misery to men. Finally, he questions the benevolence or the omnipotence of the Power that is said to rule the universe. For instance, Clym Yeobright in *The Return of the Native* sees “the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain.” Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* fears “some sinister intelligence.” Tess in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* supposes that we are living on a star that is “a blighted one.” She questions the “use of learning,” though she says “I shouldn’t mind learning why – why the sun do shine on the just and the unjust alike.... But that’s what books will not tell me.” Sue Fawley in *Jude the Obscure* once imagines that “the world resembled a stanza or melody composed in a dream.” Her fully awakened intelligence, however, concludes: “the First Cause worked automatically like somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage.” She continues, “All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit.” Thus, these characters in Hardy, like those in Shakespearean tragedy, emerge more sinned against than sinning. They are those of human beings who are set in a framework of universal Destiny.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Tragedy: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Aware: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Meadow: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Chords: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Sophisticate: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Aggravate: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Sinister: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Expanse: \_\_\_\_\_

## 15.5 HARDY’S PESSIMISM

Much has been written about Hardy’s “pessimism” and “philosophy,” considering both as intimately related to each other. Probing the problem the critics have inevitably traced on him the influence of various thinkers of his time, notably John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen, and Schopenhauer. No doubt, the serious view of life which underlies his early comedies intensifies into a tragic (call it pessimistic) vision in his later novels. It cannot be ignored that there is in his mature works the inherited and timeless quality of Hardy’s skepticism, which deepened into pessimism under the stress of personal experience and the spirit of the age. Fundamentally, his was the normal skepticism which subsists peaceably beside local pieties and traditions. It resembles the fatalism of the milkmaids in *Tess*, who “had been reared in the lonely country nooks where fatalism is a strong sentiment.” Hardy never outgrew, it seems, his preoccupation with class. Significantly, his first novel, never published and now lost, was entitled *The Poor Man and the Lady*. He, also frequently, betrays a certain measure of personal involvement or self-projection in majority of his major novels. The involvement is, of course, not on the emotional level so much as on the intellectual. We find that his ideas on man, society, and universe quite often find direct expression in these novels.

At the same time, it will not be proper to insist that Hardy set out to give us a pessimistic philosophy in his novels. He did set out, for sure, to show how certain persons, selected because they were interesting, having certain characters, would behave under certain given circumstances. One might say that these circumstances in his novels, created for his characters to confront, are arbitrarily conceived. But it cannot be said that these

circumstances or the way the characters confront them are implausible or impossible. In bringing his characters to an almost inevitable disaster, Hardy is, decidedly, prone to tilt the chances against their prosperity by too many coincidences. His frequent use of the unlucky accident is a blemish in nearly all of his plots. The action in Hardy's novels is always significant. It moves according to a pattern which is part of the pattern of all life. As such, it yields an account of the world and the universe we live in. This seen tract of life, as it is unfolded before our eyes, springs from the author's vision of life as a whole. It is nothing short of his conception of the Universe expressing itself at given moments of time and in a given place. In fact, in his novels, the time and even the place participate in his cosmic conception.

Hardy's tragic pattern, however, does not always follow (just as Shakespeare's pattern does not) the Aristotelian rules of construction. A good plot (in spite of the coincidences); characters, serious and deserving of our attention; action, calling forth pity and fear; all of these are present. But Hardy does not hesitate to violate the rules which forbade the shocking spectacle of a virtuous person (such as Tess) brought, though no fault of her/his own, from prosperity to adversity, or from happiness to hardship. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy goes to the extreme in showing men and women relentlessly chased by a cruel "Universe" through no fault of their own. At the end of the novel, one experiences a sense of horror which no tragedy, including *King Lear* of Shakespeare, had ever before unleashed. Even *Tess*, which is quite cruel a tragedy in many ways, does not cause as much horror as *Jude* does. When "Justice" is done, and "the President of the Immortals," in Aeschylean phrase, "has ended his sport with Tess," and has shown the last of her, so grimly, on the gallows, the penultimate scene does have its compensation. It brings happiness, at least so Tess calls it, in the final reunion and understanding between herself and Clare. When the pursuers at last find them at Stonehenge, "It is as it should be," she murmurs. "Angel, I am almost glad – yes, glad! This happiness could not have lasted. It was too much." She faces the end bravely, heroically, with her habitual courage. "I am ready," she says quietly.

Hardy's pessimism has a very sharp pointed edge. It is not an all-round sort of pessimism. He is pessimistic only with regard to the governance of the Universe. He is not quite pessimistic about human beings. In his lesser books, there are conventional villains playing their melodramatic parts, but in his greater novels there are no villains of that order. There are people, who are weak, and volatile, and selfish people, like Wildeve or Fitzpiers, but they are not manipulative Machiavellians or scheming scoundrels. We can come across in his novels a coarse and unscrupulous creature like Arabella, but not villainous like Lady Macbeth. Besides, Hardy's chorus of ordinary men and women are full of good humour and the milk of human kindness. His heroes and heroines have noble and lovable qualities. They stand in sublime contrast to the Supreme Powers. Being a meditative poet, Hardy gave to the novel a sublimity which in his own country it had not attained before.

One can see from the long series of his novels that Hardy was not a powerful analyst of human life. He was instead, a meditative story-teller, a meditative poet, or romancer, who shared keenly the imagined vicissitudes of his characters enacting their destined roles against the background of an agricultural setting menaced by the forces of change. He had the story-teller's unselfconscious liking for his own command of dialect, which accounts for the length of some of his rustic dialogues. His short stories counterbalance the intense pessimism of his major and mature novels. These stories help us to see the novels as the creation of a writer, not, like George Eliot, primarily interested in the processes of moral choice, frustration, and fulfillment, but rooted in place, reflective, fond of pathos, fluent, humorous rather than witty, slightly bewildered and upset by his later notoriety as the exponent of advanced moral views, much ahead of his time. Hardy is always at pains in his mature fiction to explain that because everything is destined or fated, the characters can only suffer as they follow their appointed courses. Like all dogmas which oversimplify the moral texture of life, Hardy's deterministic notions, whether derived from Aeschylean tragedy or his own contemporary evolutionism did not help him to overcome his prime weakness as a novelist, his inability to go beyond stereotypes of character and to deepen the intrinsic development of his plot. As a result, there always remains a gap between his general statement of themes and the action (or the objective correlative) which should embody them. The gap is quite glaring in the case of *Tess*. Not less glaring is the gap in *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of the Native*.

## 15.6 LET US SUM UP

The captivating beauty and vibrant landscapes in Thomas Hardy's Wessex novels serve a purpose greater than mere aesthetic appeal. Capturing the rural enchantment of the fictional region, Hardy employs meaningful symbolism in his depictions of nature throughout his works to reflect an intricate relationship that his characters maintain with their environment. This symbolism is used to convey major themes, such as constraint, societal pressure, and the rural way of life that permeates novels like *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *The Return of the Native*.

## 15.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

- The action of the novel takes place in what area of England? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Essex
  - Sussex
  - Wessex
  - London
- Which of the following does John Durbeyfield learn at the beginning of the novel?
  - That he has lost his job
  - That he comes from an aristocratic family
  - That he won the lottery
  - That he is a prince
- Angel and Tess first see each other at \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The market
  - The May Day dance
  - Trantridge
  - Talbothays Dairy
- Who tells Angel that Tess has gone to Sandbourne? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Mrs. Brooks
  - Reverend Clare
  - Alec
  - Mrs. Durbeyfield
- After Angel picks up Tess while sleepwalking, where does he place her? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - In a coffin
  - In their bed
  - On a rock
  - On a bridge
- Which of these women is not a milkmaid? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Marian
  - Izz
  - Mercy
  - Retty
- Angel plays which musical instrument? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The harpsichord
  - The accordion
  - The harp
  - The guitar
- In what town did Tess grow up? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Kingsbere
  - Trantridge
  - Sandbourne
  - Marlott

9. Why can't Mr. Durbeyfield make the trip to the market? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. He is too sick                      b. He is too tired
- c. He is too old                        d. He is too drunk

10. What advice does Mrs. Durbeyfield give Tess? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. Not to tell Angel her secret            b. Not to tell Alec her secret
- c. To leave Alec                              d. To marry Alec

### 15.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of Wessex for Hardy's novel?

2. What is the Wessex Tales by Thomas Hardy about?

### 15.9 ANSWER KEY

#### SAQs

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

### 15.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Gartell, Simon. *Thomas Hardy's Vision of Wessex*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003.
2. Ozturk, Riza. *The Origin of Hardy's Tragic Vision*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.
3. Fincham, Tony. "Life of Thomas Hardy." *The Thomas Hardy Society*, <https://www.hardysociety.org/life/>.

**THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*****STRUCTURE**

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 16.3 Major Characters
- 16.4 Story and Plot of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*
- 16.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 16.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 16.8 Answer Key
- 16.9 Suggested Reading

**16.1 INTRODUCTION**

Thomas Hardy was the first English novelist who dared to make a woman who had sinned, or who was an adultress, the heroine of his novels. Tess is a woman with a past, yet Hardy had made her the heroine. Hardy, thus, shocked Victorian notions of morality and was vehemently criticized as being immoral and a corrupter of the people.

**16.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, our objective in this lesson is to acquaint you with various intricacies of the plot construction of the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to summarize the plot of the novel as well as explain the various significant events taking place in the novel. You will also be able to analyse how the various incidents of the plot are linked to one another and how an interaction of these various incidents lead to plot development.

**16.3 MAJOR CHARACTERS****Tess Durbeyfield**

Tess is the eponymous protagonist of the novel. She is a beautiful young woman living in poverty with her family. She is devoted towards her family and tries to do the best she can for her family.

She is sent to work at the D'Urbervilles, an aristocratic family, after a link is discovered with them, mistakenly. Tess' arrival at the D'Urberville mansion opens a life of misfortune and misery for her as she is seduced by Alec

D'Urberville, whose child she later gives birth to. The child dies a few days after its birth and Tess starts her life anew. She falls in love with Angel Clare and marries him but is rejected by him when he discovers her past. A series of unfortunate events then follow till the time Tess is finally executed for killing Alec D'Urberville.

### **Alec D'Urberville**

He is the heir to the D'Urberville family's fortune and is a playboy. He plays a major role in bringing misfortune upon Tess as first he seduces her and abandons her along with child. Later he convinces Tess that her husband Angel Clare will abandon her and will not come back to her. He is finally killed by Tess when his machinations become too much for Tess to bear.

### **Angel Clare**

Angel becomes a source of happiness for Tess for a short period of time. He falls in love with Tess and marries her. However, he soon leaves her when he finds about Tess' past with Alec and her son. He goes to Brazil and spends the next year there. He comes back to Tess and accepts her as his wife and stays with her until Tess is arrested for killing Alec D'Urberville.

### **John Durbeyfield and Joan Durbeyfield**

John Durbeyfield and Joan Durbeyfield are Tess' parents, who suffer not only due to their living amidst poverty but also at the tragic fate of their daughter.

### **Sorrow Durbeyfield/D'Urberville**

Tess' child with Alec who dies shortly after birth

### **Eliza-Louise (Liza Lu)**

She is Tess' younger sister. Although she appears in a few chapters, yet it is she who Tess desires that Angel Clare should marry after Tess dies.

### **Check Your Progress (CYP)**

Dear learner, the previous section gave you an overview of the various important characters in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Now, before moving to the next section, you can check your progress by going through the exercise given below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the eponymous protagonist of the novel.
2. Tess is sent to work at an aristocratic family called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. At the D'Urberville mansion Tess is seduced by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Tess falls in love and gets married to \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Tess is executed for killing \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Angel Clare leaves Tess and goes to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The name of Tess' child is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. After Tess dies, Angel Clare marries \_\_\_\_\_.

## 16.4 STORY AND PLOT OF *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

The publication of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in 1891 caused the storm of public protests in various forms. It did, however, blow out itself after about two years. The work survived the storm. It has become one of the classics in English literature. The famous ending of the novel, "Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess," refers to the *Prometheus Vincetus*. The story of Tess, like the legend of Prometheus chained on the mountain crag, embodies an heroic attempt to bring light to mankind. Although much else went into the making of the novel about Tess, there lies at its centre an impassioned plea for warmth and charity towards women, for a more enlightened view of the sexual relationship. There is, indeed, a plea for justice to women at various levels of the man-woman relationship. Hardy's sub-title to the novel, "A Pure Woman," was an afterthought. But it is not without substance. Several times in the story's narration the author stresses the essential purity of Tess, both in terms of her womanhood as well as her human heart. The emphasis that the novel clearly makes, is that although in conventional terms Tess is a "fallen" woman, she should be judged not in conventional terms, but by her intentions, her life and nature seen as a whole. What she feels and thinks constitute her character; since her feelings and thoughts are pure, so her character is pure. It is on the basis of this premise that Hardy calls her a pure woman. Tess is a spirit of pure loving-kindness. More than thirty years before he created the character of Tess, Hardy had underlined in his copy of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, "Who so ever has chastity, not that which is taught in schools, but that which is by nature." Tess is one of those who are "chaste" by nature.

If the contours of the plot of *Tess* are followed, the novel can be seen as the hounding to death of a graceful, innocent animal. But for a few respites, Tess is always on the move, like a hunted deer that finds all the exits closed. It is a rather long chase. From Marlott in the Black moor Vale to Cranborne Chase in the north-east; from the Chase to the Vale of the Great Dairies in the south; then east to Woolbridge, far west to Port Bredy, back to central Dorset – the starveling farm at Flintcomb Ash, and west again to Emminster; the chase goes on. Tess, like the hunted creature twists and doubles in her tracks, till she is hunted out of her own territory, and brought to bay far east on Salisbury Plain, where the President of the Immortals "ended his *sport* with Tess." The scene of her ravishment (in our idiom rape) by Alec D'Urberville is a mist-bound wood where she is lying like a dead-bead animal on a pile of dead leaves. Returning home, she shuns mankind – "On these lovely hills and dales her quiescent glide was of a piece with the element she moved in. Her *flexuous and stealthy* figure became an integral part of the scene." Later, Hardy speaks of her as "a bird in a springe." Then, we come upon the following: "'Now, punish me!' she said, turning up her eyes to him with the hopeless defiance of the sparrow's gaze before its captor twists its neck." Or again, "there was something of the habitude of the wild animal in the unreflecting instinct with which she rambled on." Then, at the end "her breathing now was quick and small, like that of a *lesser creature* than a woman." Not only in such allusion as these, but almost all along the novel's narrative do we get images of hunted and hunter, chased and chaser. From this angle, the story of Tess reads like the story of the hare and the hound.

But the pertinent point that arises in the narrative is who is the hunter. About the hunted there remains no ambiguity. But about the hunter, there certainly remains a cloud of mystery as to the precise identity of the chaser. Is it an individual? Is it Man? Is it Destiny? Or should we see *Tess* as the tragedy of a born victim, and her fate as self-inflicted? Hardy did have as one of his beliefs that some women are inevitably attracted to those who will hurt and destroy them. As he once said, women have "an illogical power entirely denied to men in general—the power not only of kissing, but of delighting to kiss the rod." Whatever Hardy might have said elsewhere, so far as *Tess* is concerned its heroine is not at all a case of pessimism, nor is she fatally attracted to her destroyer. Tess as a woman is a rare combination of a dove and a tigress. While in love, she is pliant, docile, and self-sacrificing. But otherwise she is also a person of spirit and independence. In any case, she is far from being a doormat or a meek martyr. To have a clear understanding of her character, we must realize how much Hardy's thinking was influenced by the Greek tragedies. He was intellectually influenced by it because it emotionally appealed to him. It appealed to a deep vein of melancholy in his disposition, and the countryman's fatalism he inherited from his forebears. It can be seen in his use of coincidence, which is generally viewed as

arbitrary, even reckless. There is plenty of it in *Tess*. However, it is not there just as a facile means of weaving the plot. Hardy, in fact, saw in chance a paradigm of the inscrutable workings of Destiny.

It is very true that coincidences would seem improbable or meaningless if they were related with the conscious, purposive designs of the human mind. But if we believed, as Hardy did, that “Crass Casualty” disregards and overrides such designs, imposing upon our lives a pattern we can seldom comprehend or modify. In that case, we shall accept coincidences as moves in a game whose rules are hidden from us. This sort of fatalism is, no doubt, a cheerless creed. Also, in the case of an author less compassionate than Hardy, it is likely to be artistically sterile. Hardy achieved through it not only pathos but grandeur. Like the Greek heroines, Antigone and Electra, Tess achieves that glorious status. The one difference between the Greek tragedies and Hardy’s *Tess* is that in the latter it is far from self-evident that the struggle is only or chiefly against Fate. Tess does indeed seem to be dogged by Fate; and we feel that Hardy meant this to be so. But viewed closely, the course of Tess’ tragedy shows at every step that human institutions, or states of mind produced by them, are no less responsible for her misfortunes. It *may* be that an external Fate is working through them. However, on the face of it, not much happens to Tess which could not be put down solely to human agency – to the harshness of custom and moral law, and man’s perverse inhumanity.

At the start of the novel’s story, Tess goes to Trantbridge because her parents have been corrupted by the news that John Durbeyfield is a descendant of an old Dorset landed family. Tess’ slightly superior education leads to the quarrel with the “Queen of Spades.” This leads Tess to accept Alec’s escort home, which results in his ravishing (raping) her. “Doubtless, some of Tess d’Urberville’s mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same measure even more ruthlessly towards peasant girls of their time.” It is, as a matter of fact, the opportunism and snobbery of Tess’ mother which exposes the girl to danger at Alec’s hands. The girl’s mother goes to the extent of even rebuking her for failing to get a marriage ring from him. It is highly (morally) creditable for Tess that despite this early, rather devastating, disgrace, she is not fully demoralized. Not less creditable is the fact that she refuses to be tempted by the “dreams of hell” her mother nourishes for her—that she focus on attracting the impure and immoral rich, Alec. At this point of narrative Hardy comments, “but for the world’s opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education.” Towards the end of the tale, it is the village gossip and the system of life-tenancy which force Tess into accepting Alec’s protection for the sake of her impoverished family.

These are just a few instances of the way human institutions or human weaknesses indirectly create the “opposing environment” which prevents Tess’ natural fulfillment. More directly, her tragedy is caused by the two men who walk into her life. It is the work of Alec D’Urberville and Angel Clare. Alec, unfortunately, is an absurd character. He is the conventional rapist, the bold, bad, seducer of the melodrama (like the Hindi movies). He literally twirls his moustaches and says, “Ha, ha, my Beauty!” He is hardly more convincing in this role than later as a convert to evangelical Christianity. But, for whatever little he is worth, this innately brutal character has been further depraved by too much money and leisure. He represents Hardy’s view of the idle rich. Like any view, however, it may not be universally true of all the idle rich. But, like all views, it has the force of universality, given the attitude to life and people that the likes of Alec’s have. Besides, Hardy does not present Alec as prototype of the rich. He is substantially individualized as character. Decidedly, Hardy is no Bunyan or Spenser.

The other man, Angel Clare, is a very different proposition. Compared with Tess, he comes out a rather bloodless figure. But he certainly has more reality about him than he is generally credited with. This wrong impression about his substantiality is, perhaps, because Hardy puts a certain amount of his own self into the character of Angel: “something nebulous, preoccupied, vague in his bearing and regard, marked him as one who probably had no very definite aim or concern about his material future.” As it is, this description of Angel Clare would not be far amiss if applied to Hardy as a young man. Angel has gone away from the simple Christianity of his excellent parents. This has happened under the influence of contemporary skepticism. One can at once see the case of Hardy in this aspect of Angel. But, “despite his heterodoxy, faults, and weaknesses,

Clare was a man with a conscience.” Here, again, the similarity between Hardy and Clare is unmistakable. Like Hardy, again, Clare, we are told, was one who came to feel “the great passionate pulse of existence, unwarped, uncontroverted, untrammelled by those creeds which futilely attempt to check what wisdom would be content to regulate.”

But there is a worm in this seemingly wholesome fruit. Angel Clare loved Tess “rather ideally and fancifully than with the impassioned thoroughness of her feeling for him.” So, when Tess makes her confession, we find that “with all his attempted independence of judgement this advanced and well-meaning young man... was yet the slave to custom and conventionality.” No wonder that even Tess’ heart-rending appeals break on a heart petrified and arid. We comprehend this arid and petrified heart when we are told: “Within the remote depths of his constitution, so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam [rich soil], which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it.” As it comes out in the novel’s plot, the basic flaw in Angel’s character is a morbid idealism. It is an idealism which is derived from certain human institutions and certain social attitudes prevalent in his time and class, but has now gone bad and become negative. Before their marriage takes place, Tess’ intuition has divined this danger to her. She says in her solitude, “she, you love is not my real self, but one in my image; the one I might have been!” And, after she has made a confession to him, Angel, out of his frozen recalcitrance, echoes it again and again – “You were one person, now you are another... the woman I have been loving is not you.” So, blinded by his idealistic prejudice, which overpowers his intelligence as well as his tenderness, Angel Clare cannot even glimpse the height and depth of the love he is rejecting. Rather than appreciate Tess’ own ideal of honesty and her innate innocence, he follows the conventional notion of chastity and rejects her outright and at once. This “vein of metal” in his constitution sours his love and destroys Tess’ life.

Hardy being an omniscient narrator keeps educating us about his characters at every stage of the plot’s development. When Clare rejects Tess after marrying her, we are told: “Clare did not know at that time the full depth of her devotion, its single-mindedness, its meekness; what long-suffering it guaranteed, what honesty, what endurance, what good faith.” One recalls here the rashness with which Henchard, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, sells his wife to a sailor for a few pounds. Henchard, at least, was drunk and did not quite know what he was doing. Here, rashness is all the more inexcusable or unpardonable because Clare is under no intoxication except that of his male arrogance acquired from his patriarchal environment. Tess is, in truth, a perfect image of woman’s love. The moral attitudes that force her love to run to waste are, of course, no longer in vogue, carrying no credibility, the meaning of her story, just as the beauty of her character, remain unimpaired. Hardy has not presented Tess as an idealized character. She does possess all the qualities which Angel realized, too late, that she possessed. But she is, at times, also moody, over-impulsive, crude, self-deceiving, quick-tempered, proud, too self-absorbing, and under great stress—in-firm of moral purpose. As C. Day Lewis has rightly observed, “No other heroine of fiction, save Anna Karenina, is so intensely present to the reader in all her changes of mood, her emotional force, her physical charm. Through that rank, sappy, milky, perfumed summer at Talbothays Farm, we are made even more aware of her sensuous bloom; while in the terrible winter at Fintcomb Ash her steadfastness is unforgettably imaged. With Tess, as with Anna, we seem to enter into the whole nature of woman.”

The plot of *Tess* is not without its share of flaws. The dialogue, for example, is often stagey. There are in the narrative, naïve and untimely moralisings. In the later part of the novel, there is a good deal of melodrama. There are a lot many improbabilities in the last fifteen chapters. But all these flaws of the plot are overcome by the vitality of the person and character of Tess. And yet Hardy does not romanticise her character in any sense. As the poet Lewis puts it, “With her heart of gold, her genius for suffering and for long-suffering, her moments of more-than-mortal stature, she remains a village girl, the heroine and victim of a simple village tragedy, a child of the earth who, milking, harvesting, hoeing turnips, tending the threshing machine, stays close to her roots and draws reality from them.” In Hardy’s novel, the moral virtues of simplicity, honesty, purity, loyalty, love, faith are not mere words; they are unquestionable facts of the fictional narrative, and of life, the life that the novel represents. These values are made all the more real by the searching sincerity of the author himself.

The plot of *Tess* is not perfect, not well-rounded, is also borne out by the fact that it originally appeared in sketches, in bits and pieces. Hardy, in his “Explanatory Note,” reveals it all: “The main portion of the following story appeared – with slight modifications – in the *Graphic* newspaper; other chapters, more especially addressed to the adult readers, in the *Fortnightly Review* and the *National Observer*, as episodic sketches.” Although Hardy had much better sense of structure than most novelists of the Victorian period, the bane of “episodic sketches” was too dominant a practice to escape in that age. Those wanting to escape it would face the inevitable option of not being acceptable to the conventional public of the Victorian period. At the same time, Hardy remained a lone fighter in his age for the freedom of the artist, who alone took risks in writing about forbidden subjects, raising inconvenient issues, questioning social cruelties, especially against women. His own assertion in the “Explanatory Note” makes it clear :

*I will just add that the story is sent out in all sincerity of purpose, as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things; and in respect of the book's opinions and sentiments, I would ask any too genteel reader, who cannot endure to have said what everybody nowadays thinks and feels, to remember a wellworn sentence of St. Jerome's: If an offence comes out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed.*

Truth being the overriding concern of Hardy, he was bound to be less mindful of fable's form so long as it conveyed his philosophic truth. As a matter of fact, his philosophy always spoils partly, if not wholly, Hardy's artistic forms, his plots and stories. He took his philosophy of the Immanent Will very seriously, and, undoubtedly, saw Tess as the victim of the “President of the Immortals.” Undoubtedly, there is behind *Tess* the author's conscious philosophy, a pessimistic and deterministic view of life of the world in which man (more so, woman) is at the mercy of an unyielding outside Fate. The novel's subtitle, ‘a pure woman,’ indicates the kind of significance Hardy attached to his story of Tess. There is also no doubt that this conscious philosophy affects the novel's plot in general for the worse. As Arnold Kettle argues, “It is responsible for instance, for the ‘literary’ quality which mars the final sentence. It is responsible for our sense of loaded dice. And it is responsible ultimately for the psychological weakness such as the idealisation of Tess, for the characters are made too often to respond not to life but to Hardy's philosophy.”

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Eponymous: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Seduced: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Abandons: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Storm: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Starveling: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ravish: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Quarrel: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Thresh: \_\_\_\_\_

Kettle has argued it well. There is all the force in the argument. One point, of course, is not palatable, the one about the idealisation of Tess. We have seen earlier, and we have well documented the case from the narrated facts, that Tess is not at all idealized. She is very much a “human” character, a village girl with all the purities and impurities her environment permits. With the exception of this remark, however, Kettle's observation is a brilliant one, and is very well formulated, its rhetorical construction notwithstanding. The critic sounds more convincing when he asserts that Hardy's novel (*Tess*) survives Hardy's philosophy. The reason that he attributes to the novel's survival, too, is equally, in fact, more convincing. The novel survives, we are told, because the novelist's imaginative understanding of the disintegration of the rural way of life is more powerful

than the limiting tendency of his conscious outlook on life. What salvages Hardy's pessimism in the novel is his sound basis for this pessimism in the natural outlook of the Wessex peasantry facing an extinction in the Darwinian struggle for survival in which only the fittest survives. In this case, the fittest are those materially and scientifically best equipped but morally and spiritually equally defenceless.

To carry argument further it could be said that there is in *Tess* an unceasing battle between the author's philosophic ideas and his imaginative understanding. As can be easily comprehended, it is the untenability of his ideas that gives to the novel's plot an oddly thin and stilted quality which leads to the unsatisfactory manipulation of chance and coincidence. It sounds like a desperate attempt to create an artificial stipulation for achieving a communication otherwise unobtainable. Hardy's understanding of the fate of the Wessex peasants is sound, indeed. He convincingly displays an instinctive comprehension of the problem being faced by the Wessex folk. However, his conscious philosophy does not always give him adequate expression to say it. Consequently, the plot comes to be governed by the long, and highhanded arm of chance and coincidence. It also results in half-digested classical allusions and apparent psychological weaknesses in the novel's narrative. Thus, there emerges the novel's strength from its social understanding, the superb expression of the relation of men to nature, the haunting evocation of the Wessex landscape, not as backcloth but as the living challenging material of human existence, and the deeply moving tale of the peasant girl Tess.

It is quite easy to find faults with Hardy's plots, notoriously as he has been for the dominance of chance and coincidence in his fictional narratives. That has been the case too often and too much of it. What is not so easy is to appreciate the novel's strength without ignoring its weakness. The novel's triumph is aptly symbolized by the extraordinary final scene at Stonehenge. We could do no better in summing up the novel's triumph than citing on the subject Arnold Kettle's well-formulated judgment:

*There is nothing bogus about the achievement here, no sleight of hand, no counterfeit notes of false emotion. The words of speech have not quite the ring of speech nor the integral force of poetry; the symbolism is obvious, one might almost say crude. And yet this very clumsiness, the almost amateurish manipulation of the mechanics of the scene, contributes something to its force, to its expression of the pathetic and yet heroic losing battle waged by Tess against a world she cannot successfully fight and can only dimly apprehend. The final mood evoked by Tess of the D'Urbervilles is not hopelessness but indignation and the indignation is none the less profound for being incompletely intellectualised. Hardy is not a Shakespeare or an Emily Bronte. His art does not quite achieve that sense of the inner movement of life which transcends abstractions. He is constantly weakening his apprehension of this movement by inadequate attitudes and judgments. But in spite of this weakening Tess emerges as a fine novel, a moral fable, the most moving expression in our literature – not forgetting Wordsworth – of the destruction of the peasant world.*

Thus, the story and plot of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are moving and powerful, not without flaws, but more with merit, making an overall impact of a lasting experience and distinguished work of art.

Compared to Hardy's early comedies, it is a sad work. Compared to his later tragedies, especially *Jude the Obscure*, it is sad but not shocking. It deeply hurts, but it does not destroy the grandeur that Tess the heroine has, still the hope of humanity.

## 16.5 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, we discussed the tragic story of Tess Durbeyfield, a poor peasant girl in rural England, who discovers that she is a descendant of the once-noble d'Urberville family. After a series of unsettling events, including a sexual assault and an illegitimate child, Tess faces judgment from her community and struggles to find redemption in a society that harshly judges her for her perceived transgressions. Set in the fictional county of Wessex, Hardy's novel reflects the social and economic changes of the late 19th century in rural England.

The narrative explores themes of class, morality, and the impact of fate on characters.

Tess's story is emblematic of the challenges faced by women in a society that imposes rigid moral standards, particularly concerning issues of sexuality and social status. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is considered one of Hardy's masterpieces, known for its realistic portrayal of characters and its investigation of the human condition.

### 16.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What part of the house do the Durbeyfields need to repair? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The floor
  - b. The wall
  - c. The roof
  - d. The door
2. Where is the Talbothays Dairy located?
  - a. The Valley of the Herons
  - b. The Valley of Marlott
  - c. The Valley of the Great Dairies
  - d. The Valley of the Small Dairies
3. Who does Cuthbert Clare marry? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Izz
  - b. Mercy Chant
  - c. Liza-Lu
  - d. Marian
4. Midway through the novel, Alec becomes a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Farmer
  - b. Preacher
  - c. Traveling salesman
  - d. Nice guy
5. Who is primarily responsible for Prince's death?
  - a. Mr. Durbeyfield
  - b. Parson Tringham
  - c. Abraham
  - d. Tess
6. Angel leaves England to farm where? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. America
  - b. Italy
  - c. Brazil
  - d. Argentina
7. What is the stone monument called on which Alec makes Tess swear? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Stonehenge
  - b. Poor Man's Pass
  - c. Cross-in-Hand
  - d. The Rosetta Stone
8. Which of these people or animals does Tess not kill? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The pheasants
  - b. Alec
  - c. Sorrow, her baby
  - d. Prince, the horse

9. What is the name of the bar to which the Durbeyfield's go? \_\_\_\_\_
- a. McSorely's    b. Rolliver's  
 c. Heffernan's    d. Ye Olde Pubbe
10. What does Tess confess to Angel on their wedding night? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. That she lied about her age  
 b. That she does not love him  
 c. That she is not a virgin  
 d. That she ran away from home

**16.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

1. Why do you think Thomas Hardy chose the subtitle ; A Pure Woman?
2. Discuss the roles of Alec d'Urberville and Angel Clare in Tess's life.
3. What is the significance of the seven phases into which the book is divided?
4. What is the significance of the legend of the d'Urberville Coach?
5. Outline the differences between Talbothays Dairy and Flintcomb-Ash.
6. Discuss the differences found in Angel Clare and Alec d'Urberville.
7. How is the novel an indictment of the class system of English society near the end of the 19th century?
8. How do nature and fate play a role in this novel?

**16.8 ANSWER KEY**

**CYP**

1. Tess Durbeyfield
2. D'Urbervilles
3. Alec D'Urberville 4. Angel Clare
5. Alec D'Urberville
6. Brazil
7. Sorrow
8. Eliza-Louise (Liza Lu)

**SAQs**

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 2. c | 3. b | 4. b | 5. d  |
| 6. c | 7. c | 8. c | 9. b | 10. c |

## 16.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. Hardy Thomas. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
2. Wilson, Keith. *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*. Wiley, 2009.
3. Course Hero. "Tess of the d'Urbervilles | Characters." *Course Hero*, 23 Aug. 2017, [www.coursehero.com/lit/Tess of the dUrbervilles/characters](http://www.coursehero.com/lit/Tess%20of%20the%20dUrbervilles/characters).  
LitCharts. "Tess of the d'Urbervilles Characters." *LitCharts*, LitCharts LLC, 2025, [https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tess of the d urbervilles/characters](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/tess%20of%20the%20d%20urbervilles/characters).

**THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*****STRUCTURE**

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 17.3 *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as a Social Chronicle
- 17.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 17.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 17.7 Answer Key
- 17.8 Suggested Reading

**17.1 INTRODUCTION**

Thomas Hardy is a master of the art of characterisation. Some of his characters are among the immoral figures of literature. He chooses his characters from the lower strata of society. His female characters are better and more forceful than his male characters, because women are more elemental “nearer to nature” than men.

**17.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner our objective in this lesson is to familiarise you with an important aspect of the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, that is, the analysis of the novel as a social chronicle, thereby enhancing your familiarity with the text.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to analyse *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as a social novel which chronicles the lives of poor and destitute people. You will also analyse the novel not only as a work of fiction created for the sake of story-telling but the importance it holds as a social document as it comments on the lived reality of the rural poor. Additionally, you will be able to examine Thomas Hardy not only as a masterful storyteller but also an author with a social vision.

**17.3 *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES* AS A SOCIAL CHRONICLE**

Although the subtitle of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, “a pure woman,” suggests that the novel relates to the fortunes of its heroine only, it actually covers a much larger theme than the destiny of an individual character. Through the individual tragedy of *Tess*, the novel's heroine, Hardy has depicted the larger theme of the destruction of English peasantry. More than any other novel in English between Fielding and Hardy, it is this novel which has the quality of a social document. It is, in fact, what is characterized as the thesis novel. The thesis here is that the disintegration of the English peasantry, or the agrarian way of life, having had its beginning in the eighteenth century, reached its final and tragic stage in Hardy's own time. The process began with

the extension of capitalist farming much before Hardy's time. The capitalist farming is done by the landowners, not for their own sustenance, but for profit. In this system, the landworkers became wage-earners. The worst hit by this system were the old yeoman class of smallholders or peasants. They had been used, for centuries, to a settled life of continued family occupation of farming, having a culture of their own, living an independent life. With the arrival of capitalist farming, with big players to buy lands from small-holders and cultivate it for profit, making the occupation of farming a business and an industry, this peasant class of yeoman was bound to disappear. The new forces of industry and business were too strong for these poor people. It disrupted the age-old traditions, and gradually destroyed them. Since the way of life of the English peasantry has been deep-rooted, its destruction was highly painful and tragic. *Tess* is a powerful story and symbol of the destruction of this traditional way of life.

Tess Durbeyfield is a peasant girl, who belongs to the stock that was under threat of disintegration at the time. Her parents belong to a class ranking just above the farm-labourers. It is a class, as the novel explains, "including the carpenter, the smith, the shoemaker, the huckster, together with nondescript workers other than farm-labourers; a set of people who owed a certain stability of aim and conduct to the fact of their being life-holders, like Tess' father, or copy-holders, or, occasionally, small freeholders." The theme of disintegration is indicated right at the beginning of the novel. We find that already the Durbyfields have fallen on bad days. Their plight is by no means solely due to the lack of stability in the characters of John and Joan. The family's condition is made worse by the accident in which their horse gets killed. This accident, as Kettle points out, is a "striking symbol of the struggles of the peasantry." The nail-cart "with its two noiseless wheels, speeding along these lanes like an arrow" runs into Tess' slow, unlighted wagon. The peasants, driving their carts without light, were often found on the wrong side of the road. Consequently, they were frequently run-down by army vehicles, although the army drivers were not always to blame. What is to be noted about these accidents is that every accident represented a clash between something more than two individual vehicles. The result was always an addition to the misery of the peasant, who could hardly afford even to replace his cart.

It is Tess' sense of guilt over this accident that allows Tess to be persuaded by her mother into visiting the Trantridge D'Urbervilles to "claim kin" with a more prosperous branch of the family. As we know so well, it is from this very visit that the tragedy of Tess flows. It is all the more important to note that in the ten to twelve opening chapters of the novel there is an immediate and insistent emphasis on historical processes. One way of doing it is to give weight to characters more as social entities than as individuals. In *Tess*, from the very start of the narrative, the characters are not seen merely as individuals. For instance, the discovery by John Durbeyfield, Tess' father, of his ancestry is not just an introductory comic scene, a delineation of a quaint character. It hits upon the very base of the subject Hardy intended to handle in the novel. The subject, clearly, is what the Durbeyfields have been and what they become. The description of the landscape in the second chapter, which is far more effective than the famous set-piece at the beginning of *The Return of the Native*, carries significance almost entirely in terms of history.

The "club-walking" scene, again, is contrasted with the May Day dances of the past. Also recalled here are the early pagan rites for contrast. Tess is recalled as one of a group, as a typical ("not handsome than others") peasant girl, not just an individual. Even in the comparison made between Tess and her mother it is the changes effected by the historical process which are emphasized. John Durbeyfield lives in the peasant folk-lore of the past. In contrast to that fact, we are told, Tess has been to a National school – a new phenomenon. "When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed." Evidently, the characters of John and Tess are historical, not individual.

The sacrifice of Tess by her parent to D'Urberville, too, is symbolic of the historical process at work. It is made clear, for one thing, that D'Urberville is not a D'Urberville at all. He is instead the son of the *nouveau riche* stoke family. They are a family of capitalists who have bought their way into the gentry. In this context, the cry that Tess raises at the sight of the D'Urberville estate carries a good deal of irony: "I thought we were an old family; but this is all new." Tess herself does not want to go to D'Urberville's. When she is compelled to do so, she dresses in her working clothes. Her mother also insists upon her dressing up for the occasion :

*'Very well; I suppose you know,' replied Tess with calm abandonment. And to please her parent the girl put herself quite in Joan's hands, saying severely, 'Do what you like with me, Mother.'*

Once again the moment is symbolic. Here is a working-class girl being handed over to one of the ruling class for use. The girl, with her new consciousness, is unwilling to submit herself as a slave. But she is compelled by the forces of change, the historical forces, into submitting to the change. It is this very reluctance, ultimately, on the part of Tess which will become the cause of her tragedy. She is crushed by the forces at large, playing havoc with whatever appears to put up resistance to them.

From the moment of her seduction (we call it rape today) by D'Urberville, the story of Tess becomes a losing battle, a hopeless struggle, against overwhelming odds, to maintain her selfrespect. After the death of her child, she becomes a wage-labourer at the dairy-farm at Talbothays. Her social degradation is mitigated by the kindness of the dairyman and his wife. The work they offer her is, however, seasonal only. The more important thing that happens here is that she meets Angel Clare with whom she soon falls in love. She thinks that through her marriage with him, she will be able to escape her fate. But she experiences, after marriage, an altogether a new Clare. The intellectual Clare turns out to be more cruel than D'Urberville, the sensualist. With all his emancipated ideas, Angel is actually a prig and a hypocrite and a snob. He understands nothing of the decline of the D'Urbervilles, and his attitude to Tess remains one of selfrighteous idealisation :

*'My position—is this,' he said abruptly. 'I thought—any man would have thought—that by giving up all ambition to win a wife with social standing, with fortune, with knowledge of the world, I should secure rustic innocence as surely as I should secure pink cheeks....'*

Now when his dream of securing rustic innocence does not come good and is instead shattered, he can only taunt Tess with the following :

*'Don't Tess; don't argue. Different societies, different manners. You almost make me say you are an unapprehending peasant woman, who have never been initiated into the proportions of social things....'*

Sensitive as Tess is, she is stung by the retort even at the moment of her deepest humiliation :

*'Lots of families are as bad as mine in that! Retty's family were once large landowners, and so were Dairyman Billett's. And the Dibbyhouses, who now are carters, were once the De Bayeux family. You find such as I everywhere; 'tis a feature of the country, and I can't help it.'*

It is important to note that both Tess and Clare speak, not as individuals, but as representatives of certain classes of the Victorian society. And it is the classes here, not the individuals, that are being discussed by the two. Such passages carry within them the weight of the novel's subject. They reveal the full dimensions of the novel's social or historical theme, of the kind of novel it is. Such passages, read as "psychological drama," as some have done, sound rather absurd. The interpretations of the kind ring rather queer on the ear. The instance only proves yet another time that every text sets its own bounds, and the reader cannot interpret it any way he likes. We say it here, and say it with emphasis, because in this our era of postmodernism, of post-death-of-the-authorism, it has become a fashion to do, in the name of reader-based theories, with the text whatever one likes to do. One is reminded here of E.D. Hirsch, a contemporary American critic, who still (and sensibly) insists that a text means what its author intended. Intention is, therefore, not a fallacy, whatever the New Critics like Wimsatt and Beardsley might say. Here, the bounds of the text and the author's intention both clearly suggest a social theme, which cannot be overlooked for a proper and full reading of the work. The function in the novel of the passages like the ones we cited above is evidently to stress the social nature of Tess' individual destiny and its typicality.

Carrying his conventional notion of a woman's chastity (which Tess has lost because she was raped in a state of unconsciousness), this so-called intellectual or pseudo-intellectual at once abandons Tess even after

marriage. We must note here the integrity and honesty of the girl who considers it her duty to reveal all about her to her husband. Had she been a woman of the world like her husband who is the man of the world, she would have kept quiet about her past and, perhaps, he would have never known about it. But in her peasant innocence and simplicity, in her rural straightforwardness, she told him all. The result was not better understanding between them, which was expected, but the reversal of expectation, the Aristotolian reversal in the manner of the Greek tragedy. He leaves her callously to her own fate with no shelter, no money, to survive on her own in a hostile world. Imagine a young and beautiful girl thrown on the road, so to say. She is fully at the mercy of the social sharks like D'Urberville who would make a quick meat of her and enjoy her as a commodity.

After she has been abandoned by Clare, the social degradation of Tess continues. At the farm at Flintcomb Ash, she and the other girls become fully proletarianised, working for wages in the hardest, most degrading conditions. It also needs to be noted here that Tess' fate is shared by Marion and Izz who have not, in the same way, "sinned" morally. At the farm, the threshing scene is particularly significant. It is a symbol of the dehumanized relationships of the new capitalist farms. At Talbothays there remained at least some possibility of pride and interest in the labour, as well as a certain humanity in the common kitchen where the dairyman's wife dominated. Here nothing is either satisfying or humane and the emphasis on Marion's bottle is not passing, not just a matter of an individual trait. These selections of small scenes from the life of Tess as a working-class girl are carefully chosen and arranged to effect significance through design, or structural pattern. They are neither there for their own sake, nor are they without a studied pattern. Hardy, we know, was an architect, and knew very well the significance of structures and patterns. *Tess*, more than any other novel of its status, is very well designed and patterned.

All hopes of Tess to maintain her self-respect are dashed to the ground when her father dies leading to the ejection of the Durbeyfields from their cottage. John Durbeyfield had been a lifeholder :

*But as the long holdings fell in they were seldom again let to similar tenants, and were mostly pulled down, if not absolutely required by the farmer for his hands. Cottagers who were not directly employed on the land were looked upon with disfavour, and the banishment of some starved the trade of others, who were thus obliged to follow. These families, who had formed the backbone of the village life in the past, who were the depositories of the village traditions, had to seek refuge in the large centres; the process, humorously designated by statisticians as 'the tendency of the rural population towards the large towns,' being really the tendency of water to flow uphill when forced by machinery.*

Now, driven out of the family cottage and driven off the land, Tess is finally forced, by the dire need to support her family, back to Alec D'Urberville. And when Angel Clare, now chastened and penitent, returns, the final sacrifice becomes necessary and inevitable. Tess is left with no choice but to kill D'Urberville. The policemen take her from the altar at Stoneherge and the black flag is run up on Winchester jail.

With these events narrated to us in the style carrying the stamp of authenticity about the life rendered, it is important for a number of reasons to emphasize that Hardy's novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, is very much of a moral fable. It is, decidedly, the expression of a generalized human situation placed in a historical context. As such, it will be unfair to consider the novel, as is often done, either an individual tragedy or a philosophic comment on life. As a matter of fact, both these aspects, though not absent, are subsidiary to the main theme, which is the social change involving the tragic end of English peasantry. Once it is conceded, in fact recognized, that the subject of *Tess* is the decline and destruction of peasantry in rural England, then many of the more casual interpretations of the books, especially the detracting ones, will be found to be rather wide of the mark. Merely, or narrowly psychological and formal or generic interpretations, for instance, belong to this category. To justify those interpretations, one would have to ignore not only the stylistic thrust of the narrative but also a bulk of the wealth of detail the novel contains.

One of the issues that's needed to be considered in this context is the character of Alec D'Urberville. Many interpreters have taken offence to his presentation in the novel as the stock villain of Victorian melodrama. He seems to represent the typical moustache-twirling, florid bounder who refers to the heroine (whom he is about to rape) as "Well, my beauty..." The question raised about Alec is: Is he not a character who has stepped-out of the third-rate theatre? One can raise a similar question about Tess and say, is she not that usual melodramatic stuff where we say, "Oh! She was poor but she was honest." However, to view these characters and the novel in which they are leading characters as mere stereotypes is to take Hardy's novel rather casually and overlook all that carries weight in its narrative. As Arnold Kettle has rightly argued, "the whole point about D'Urberville is that he is indeed the archetypal Victorian villain. Far from being weakened by the association of crude melodrama, he, in fact, illuminates the whole type and we understand better *why* the character of which he is a symbol did dominate a certain grade of Victorian entertainment and was enthusiastically hissed by the audience. It is the very typicality of D'Urberville that serves the purposes of the novel."

Just as the treatment of the stock but typical character has direct relevance to the social theme of the novel, so does the treatment of Christianity. D'Urberville's conversion is not, in itself, necessary to the plot of the novel. For his rediscovery of Tess could have been easily contrived in some other way. Clearly, Hardy's objective in this context is to heighten the association, implied all along the narrative, of the Christian faith and Tess' downfall. In the novel's pattern, the Christian church is seen as at best a neutral observer, at worst an active abettor in the process of destruction. And historically considered, it is not an unreasonable comment. The position of the Christian church just stated applies to a good deal more than Hardy's view of religion. One of the aspects of *Tess* that we tend to find peculiarly unconvincing – if not downright impulsive – is the sense of the loaded dice to which J.I.M. Stewart makes a reference. In its least acceptable form, it emerges in those passages of the novel which are very clearly intended as fundamental philosophical comment. For instance, this is the famous episode in which Tess, driving the cart to market, speaks to her little brother of the stars:

*'Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?' 'Yes.'*

*'All like ours?'*

*'I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to be like the apples on our stubborn-tree. Most of them splendid and sound – a few blighted.'*

*'Which do we live on – a splendid one or a blighted one?' 'A blighted one.'*

*'Tis very unlucky that we didn't pitch on a sound one,*

*when there were so many more of 'em!' 'Yes.'*

*'Is it like that really, Tess?' said Abraham, turning to her much impressed, on reconsideration of this rare information. 'How would it have been if we had pitched on a sound one?'*

*'Well, Father wouldn't have coughed and creeped about as he does, and wouldn't have got too tipsy to go this journey; and Mother wouldn't have been always washing, and never getting finished?'*

*'And you would have been a rich lady ready-made, and not have had to be made rich by marrying a gentleman?'*

*'O Ah, don't – don't talk of that any more.'*

This and similar episodes in the novel are rejected on two grounds: in the first place, it is said that no peasant girl can talk so intelligently as does Tess here; in the second, it is said that the philosophy implied in the episode here, as well as elsewhere, is not calculated to win our support.

The whole pattern of the novel's plot, however, makes us give it the weight of the author's full sympathy. It is also alleged that the presentation of the world as a blighted apple is an image too facile to satisfy the reader, even though it may emphasise the force of Tess' pessimism. What is generally ignored in such allegations against *Tess* is the fact that even in a passage like the present, the pessimism expressed is given a very explicit basis in actual conditions in which Tess is living. It is the kind of life the family of Tess is made to live that drives her to the feelings of despair. What Tess finally says about her mother "never getting finished" actually saves the scene. For here there is no pretentious philosophy of fatality. It is only a bitterly realistic recalling of the actual fate of millions of working women.

It is such scenes in the novel – and they are not just a few – that make available to us most perceptive insight into the kind of work *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is. It is not a psychological novel. Nor is it a symbolic novel in the manner of *Wuthering Heights*. Hardy does not go deep into the inner-most level of Bronte's understanding of the process of life. When he does choose to make philosophical generalizations, the result is rather embarrassing. And yet, this novel, with its cramped literary style and its rather imposed Aeschylean philosophy, gets hold of something of life. It illuminates a phase of human history with an extraordinary compulsion and an insight of oddly moving delicacy. The ultimate strength of the novel, therefore, lies in its social and historical content, not in its philosophy or pessimism. Also, Hardy is not Chaucer, who chronicled his age with greater warmth and gentler irony than any critical account of an age we have had in a literary composition. In the case of Hardy, the presentation or chronicling of the age perforce tends to be rather bitter and pessimistic. However, its specificity and solidity are so strong in Hardy that the representational aspect, or the socio-historical aspect, absorbs much of its bitterness and grounds its pessimism in an intimate experience.

What one does look for in *Tess* is a reconciliation between the historical and the tragic elements, for these two normally would conflict in a single structure. One simple reason for this conflict is that while tragedy demands intensity of action, history requires adequate width to come out convincingly. The fictional narrative, by its very nature, cannot, of course, attain the tragic intensity of the dramatic form. However, in the hands of a novelist like Hardy, large part of this difficulty is overcome through the condensation effected with the devices of both style and structure. Thus, in *Tess*, he is able to combine with a measure of success the antithetical form of tragedy and history. Both are happily reconciled without permitting either to encroach upon the claims of the other. Such a combination is also not without a precedent. Shakespeare's plays, such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, are histories as well as tragedies.

#### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Plight: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Destitute: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Queer: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Fallacy: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mercy: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Cramp: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 17.4 LET US SUM UP

Although the subtitle of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, "a pure woman," suggests that the novel relates to the fortunes of its heroine only, it actually covers a much larger theme than the destiny of an individual character. Through the individual tragedy of Tess, the novel's heroine, Hardy has depicted the larger theme of the destruction of English peasantry. More than any other novel in English between Fielding and Hardy, it is this novel which has the quality of a social document. The disintegration of the English peasantry, or the agrarian way of life, having had its beginning in the eighteenth century, reached its final and tragic stage in Hardy's own

time. The process began with the extension of capitalist farming much before Hardy's time. The capitalist farming is done by the landowners, not for their own sustenance, but for profit. In this system, the land-workers became wage-earners. The worst hit by this system were the old yeoman class of small-holders or peasants. They had been used, for centuries, to a settled life of continued family occupation of farming, having a culture of their own, living an independent life. With the arrival of capitalist farming, with big players to buy lands from small-holders and cultivate it for profit, making the occupation of farming a business and an industry, this peasant class of yeoman was bound to disappear. The new forces of industry and business were too strong for these poor people. It disrupted the age-old traditions, and gradually destroyed them. Since the way of life of the English peasantry has been deep-rooted, its destruction was highly painful and tragic. *Tess* is a powerful story and symbol of the destruction of this traditional way of life.

### 17.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Liza-Lu is Tess's \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Daughter      b. Sister
  - c. Mother        d. Friend
2. How does Alec die? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. He commits suicide    b. Angel kills him
  - c. Tess kills him        d. He does not die
3. How does Tess die? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Pneumonia            b. She is hanged
  - c. Angel kills her        d. Heartache
4. Who surprises John Durbeyfield by calling him "Sir John?" \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. A merchant    b. A parson
  - c. A sailor        d. A nun
5. When John learns about his noble ancestry, what kind of festival is Tess attending? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. May Day      b. Harvest
  - c. Christmas    d. Easter
6. When Tess and the other girls are at the festival, who do they encounter? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Three local farmhands      b. Three visiting soldiers
  - c. Three highborn brothers    d. Three young beggars
7. Where does Mrs. Durbeyfield hide her copy of the Compleat Fortune-Teller? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Under her mattress    b. The coal cellar
  - c. Behind a bookcase    d. The outhouse
8. Where does John go to celebrate his newly-discovered noble lineage? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The parish church    b. A local drinking establishment
  - c. Behind a bookcase    d. His family burial ground

9. The day after learning about their noble heritage, what do Tess and Abraham take to market? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Cattle                      b. Wool  
c. Bee hives                  d. Barley
10. Tess suggests to Abraham that of the many stars that have planets, their star must be a \_\_\_\_\_ one.
- a. Forgiving      b. Forgotten  
c. Blessed      d. Blighted

### 17.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Why does Alec’s family take the name d’Urberville?
2. Why is Angel at the dairy farm?
3. Why does Tess hide her ancestry from Angel?
4. Why does Angel hold Tess’s past against her, despite his own promiscuity?
5. Why does Tess agree to marry Alec?

### 17.7 ANSWER KEY

#### SAQs

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

### 17.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Watts, Cedric. *Thomas Hardy Tess of the d’Urbervilles*. Penrith Humanities Ebooks. 2007.
2. Elvy Margaret. *Thomas Hardy’s Tess of the D’Urbervilles : A Critical Study*. Crescent Moon Publishing, 2012.
3. Tandon, Dr. Neeru. “*Tess by Thomas Hardy.*” *Nineteenth Century English Literature, e PG Pathshala*, ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/engp03/chapter/tess by thomas hardy/.

**THOMAS HARDY: *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*****STRUCTURE**

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 18.3 Thomas Hardy's Characters
- 18.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 18.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 18.7 Answer Key
- 18.8 Suggested Reading

**18.1 INTRODUCTION**

Hardy's writing often explores what he called the "ache of modernism," and this theme is notable in *Tess*, which, as one critic noted, portrays the energy of traditional ways and the strength of the forces that are destroying them. In depicting this theme Hardy uses imagery associated with hell when describing modern farm machinery as well as suggesting the effect nature of city life has the milk sent there must be watered down because towns people cannot stomach whole milk.

**18.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with Thomas Hardy's art of characterisation with reference to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

After reading this lesson, you will appreciate Thomas Hardy's art of character portrayal and will be able to analyse the motivations which shape them. Further you will be able to analyse the distinctive qualities of Hardy's characters which impart them not only an individual but a universal appeal also.

**18.3 THOMAS HARDY'S CHARACTERS**

As a creator of characters, Thomas Hardy was very different from his contemporaries, such as George Eliot. He was almost diametrically opposite to George Eliot. She is considered a psychological novelist, whereas Hardy is more of a chronicler, like Scott, of a society. He is, in fact, so much less of a psychologist that whenever he makes an attempt to offer an analysis of a character, he generally succeeds only in reducing the power of his tragic heroes and heroines. The worst examples of such an attempt are the characters of Clym and Father Time. The reason for the inadequacies of his analyses is that he is never able to conceive characters in terms of their own motivations. In other words, since his conception of human character is governed by his

cosmic philosophy, motivations alone cannot offer adequate explanations for what they do and why they act as they do. Sometimes, as with Sue in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy cannot himself adequately explain' his characters' motives. Even though Sue is subtle and complex, she has been instantly apprehended by her creator (Hardy). She has, like all Hardy's great tragic characters, the authority, only dimly and half apprehended, of a force of nature. In this sense, his characters sound more natural than they sound convincing. They may not (logically or rationally) be found consistent, but they are always found forceful.

Thus, Hardy's characters tend to be differentiated only in the great emotional situations. And then their triumphant life comes and form the poetry that invests them. The most glaring example of this is Bathsheba Everdene's realization, in the fir plantation at night, of the presence of Sergeant Troy, in *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), and the miraculous description of Troy's sword-play which follows a little later:

*He flourished the sword by way of introduction number two, and the next thing of which she was conscious was that the point and the blade of the sword were darting with a gleam towards her left side, just above her hip; then of their reappearance on her right side, emerging as it were from between her ribs, having apparently passed through her body. The third item of consciousness was that of seeing the same sword, perfectly clean and free from blood held vertically in Troy's hand (in the position technically called 'recover swords'). All was as quick as electricity....*

*In the instant the atmosphere was transformed to Bathsheba's eyes. Beams of light caught from the low sun's rays, above, around, in front of her, well-nigh shut our earth and heaven – all emitted in the marvellous evolutions of Troy's reflecting blade, which seemed everywhere at once, and yet nowhere specially. These circling gleams were accompanied by a keen rush that was almost a whistling – also springing from all sides of her at once. In short, she was enclosed in a firmament of light, and of sharp hisses, resembling a sky-full of meteors close at hand.*

*Never since the broadsword became the national weapon had there been more dexterity shown in its management than by the hands of Sergeant Troy, and never had he been in such splendid temper for the performance as now in the evening sunshine among the firs with Bathsheba. It may safely be asserted with regard to the closeness of his cuts, that had it been possible for the edge of the sword to leave in the air a permanent substance wherever it flew past, the space left untouched would have been almost a mould of Bathsheba's figure.*

With so much poetry in the description, with so much emphasis on light and shade, sound and silence, sides and curves, there is hardly any scope left for a movement verticle. The whole thing is so dazzling in terms of sensuous apprehension that the analytic mind is laid asleep. No activity of the mind remains possible after such a body concentration. Also, after all this, there is no necessity for analysis. Bathsheba's sudden subjugation to Troy, her complete possession by him, is shown in the most striking way possible. She is as much his victim, as helpless before him, as if she had really met him in the field of battle.

Just as in Shakespeare's tragic heroes, poetry is the constant attendant of Hardy's tragic characters. Of course, his is not an intellectual poetry like that of Meredith. It is much more primitive and magical. But it always heightens the significance of the characters. Besides, it enhances the reader's consciousness of their tragic grandeur. As Hardy moved away from the prose norm to the poetic, from the comic to the tragic, so he move his novels more and more out of the realm in which they could be criticized from the prose point of view. In some ways, his simplest and the most successful tragic novel is *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Henchard is his grandest tragic hero, and Tess his most moving heroine. In fact, much of Henchard's tragic grandeur springs from his impercpience. He can be said to contain all nature within himself. This almost animal impercpience removes him far away from the tragic heroes of Shakespeare. And yet, in one respect at any rate, it is Macbeth with whom he invites comparison. External nature fights against Henchard, but it is nature interpreted by superstition. It is actually the poetic quality of the whole that makes the superstition credible. The poetry heightens and deepens our sense of the hero's tragic fate. Here, we can cite two instances of poetry, which will clarify the point. One

of these is the moment when Henchard's wedding present to his daughter, Elizabeth Jane, is discovered. Note, what follows the discovery: "a new bird-cage shrouded in newspaper, and at the bottom of the cage a little ball of feathers – the dead body of a goldfinch." The second instance is the scene in which Henchard sees the dead body, "lying stiff and stark upon the surface of the stream:"

*In the circular current imparted by the central flow the form was brought forward, till it passed under his eyes; and then he perceived with a sense of horror that it was himself. Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten Hatches Hole.*

To match the first of these with pathos and the second for the twitch of horror felt along the nerve one has to go back to John Webster.

Thus, characterization in Hardy is not merely a matter of depicting actions, thoughts, emotions, manners, etc., of men and women, but equally a matter of evoking the environment, involving the cosmos, capturing the circumstances. What has been named 'poetry,' here is one of the most potent devices Hardy uses for drawing the portraits of his characters. Sometimes, the poetry is the poetry of attendant and pervasive circumstances. An example of this is the description of the Valley of the Great Dairies in *Tess of the D'Urberville*. It provides setting to Tess' meeting and falling in love with Angel Clare. The setting contributes to the revealing of characters placed in it as much as does action or dialogue or description. Hardy's poetry, working through imagery as much as it does through setting, is another effective device used in the service of characterization. Thus, Hardy describes Tess as having been "caught during his days of immaturity like a bird in a springe." In another novelist this could turn into a sentimental cliché. It is not so in Hardy. As John Holloway has pointed out, "it is an exact and insistent image to remind us that when

Tess was seduced [raped] at night in the wood, her experience really was like that of an animal caught in a trap – as might have happened in the very same place." The image goes to the heart of Tess' situation. She is caught in tragedy because she is innocent like an animal. However, had she been a mere animal like, it would not have been a tragedy.

Like Henchard and Tess, Jude is also a distinct character Hardy created. There had been no other like him in fiction until Hardy's time. Jude, we are made aware, is sensualist and a man who, at crucial times in his life, seeks escape in drink. But as we see him under these times in his life, he is certainly not a mere sensualist. In fact, his tragedy lies in that he is not. What brings him down are the intellectual ambitions beyond his station, his dream of the student life at Christminster. The commonsense advice to a man in his station, with his aspirations, is the Master of Biblioll's: "Judging from your description of yourself as a working man, I venture to think that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your own trade than by adopting any other course." Had he taken the master's advice, he might have indulged in drink and fornication far beyond anything suggested in the novel with relative impunity. The tragedy of Jude is one of unfulfilled aims, which were impossible of fulfillment in the age in which he lived, even if he had had the purity and selfcontrol of a saint. In the case of Jude, for the first time in Hardy, we notice a strong undercurrent of what can only be called class-consciousness.

Characters of Hardy's earlier novels did not show any signs of this consciousness. They did not have this because there was no need for it. Hardy was dealing with events and characters in those novels belonged to a world which was still traditional. But in *Jude*, by making the hero a working-class intellectual, Hardy removed the novel's action far away from the world of Wessex. But perhaps he could do no other because he had chosen his theme and his hero from a world which was strictly contemporary. It has been noted by every reader how the rustic chorus, so predominant in Hardy's other novels, disappears altogether from *Jude*. Even the texture of writing in this novel becomes much thinner in comparison to what we have in *Tess* or *The Return of the Native*. The links between men and women on the one hand and nature on the other, so definingly strong in other novels, almost disappears in this one. There is no place in *Jude* for the heroic or poetic scenes which delineated

the character in earlier novels. All these absent elements represent an enormous loss, precisely where Hardy was strongest, and his characters most convincing. But these elements had to go, because they stand for that way of life from which Jude and Sue Bridehead, by virtue of their being working-class intellectuals, are totally uprooted.

Nevertheless, Jude remains the characteristic Hardy hero. He is hypersensitive, highprinciple, essentially soft-minded-made actual in a Victorian working man. We get to know him in much more detail than we do, say, Clym Yeobright in *The Return of the Native*, or Angel Clare in *Tess of the D'Urberville*. But the same cannot be said of Sue Bridehead. She cannot be claimed a typical Hardy woman. She marks a clear departure from the typical Hardy women. Sue is, decidedly, the opposite of Eustacia Vye, Bathsheba Everdene, and Tess. She is different from them not merely in the fact that she is an intellectual, but because she is much more than Hardy's version of the "New Woman." She has her charms much beyond her intellectualism. She has survived as a character because of her ambiguity, her sexual ambivalence. She, too, is not fully in grasp of its real nature. She is aware of it all the time, but she is able to have an understanding of it :

*'At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you I merely wanted you to love me. I did not exactly flirt with you; but that inborn craving which undermines some women's morals almost more than unbridled passion – the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it may do the man – was in me; and when I found I had caught you, I was frightened.'*

Perhaps the key to her character lies in Hardy's word "intellectualized." Sue can be said to be the most subtle creation of a not uncommon type of woman in the modern world. It is also significant that the only writer on Hardy who has fully understood his achievement in creating her is D.H. Lawrence.

Summing up Hardy's status as a novelist, one can say that despite his glaring faults of plotting and characterization, despite the occasional oddities of his style, he remains almost the only tragic novelist in English literature. When one considers his tragic status as a writer one has ultimately to do so in relation to Shakespeare and Webster and to the Greek dramatists. In many ways, the subsequent novelist most akin to him has been D.H. Lawrence. When all this is said about Hardy one cannot resist the recall of his supreme talent for integrating his characters with the environment, the setting, in which they are placed. Even more difficult to resist in this context is the recall of the last chapter of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the chapter closing on the hanging of Tess. Here is that short last scene full of sheer poetry and pathos:

The city of Wintoncester, that fine old city, aforesaid capital of Wessex, lay amidst its convex and concave downlands in all the brightness and warmth of a July morning. The gabled brick, tile, and freestone houses had almost dried off for the season their integument of lichen, the streams in the meadows were low, and in the sloping High Street, from the West Gateway to the medieval cross, and from the medieval cross to the bridge, that leisurely dusting and sweeping was in progress which usually ushers in an old-fashioned market-day.

From the western gate aforesaid highway, as every Wintoncestrian knows, ascends a long and regular incline of the exact length of a measure mile, leaving the houses gradually behind. Up this road from the precincts of the city two persons were walking rapidly, as if unconscious of the trying ascent – unconscious through preoccupation and not through buoyancy. They had emerged upon this road through a narrow barred wicket in a high wall a little lower down. They seemed anxious to get out of the sight of the houses and of their kind, and this road appeared to offer the quickest means of doing so. Though they were young they walked with bowed heads, at which gait of grief the sun's rays smiled on pitilessly.

One of the pair was Angel Clare, the other a tall budding creature – half girl, half woman – a spiritualized image of Tess, slighter than she, but with the same beautiful eyes – Clare's sister-in-law, 'Liza-Lu. Their pale faces seemed to have shrunk to half their natural size. They moved on hand in hand, and never spoke a word, the drooping of their heads being that of Giotto's 'Two Apostles.'

When they had nearly reached the top of the great West Hill the clocks in the town struck eight. Each gave a start at the notes, and, walking onward yet a few steps, they reached the first milestone, standing whitely on the green margin of the grass, and backed by the down, which here was open to the road. They entered upon the turf, and impelled by a force that seemed to overrule their will, suddenly stood still, turned, and waited in paralyzed suspense beside the stone.

The prospect from this summit was almost unlimited. In the valley beneath lay the city they had just left, its more prominent buildings showing as in an isometric drawing – among them the broad cathedral tower, with its Norman windows and immense length of aisle and nave, the spires of St. Thomas', the pinnacled tower of the College, and, more to the right, the tower and gables of the ancient hospice, where to this day the pilgrim may receive his dole of bread and ale. Behind the city swept the rotund upland of St. Catherine's Hill; further off, landscape beyond landscape, till the horizon was lost in the radiance of the sun hanging above it.

Against these far stretches of country rose, in front of the other city edifices, a large redbrick building, with level gray roofs, and rows of short barred windows bespeaking captivity, the whole contrasting greatly by its formalism with the quaint irregularities of the Gothic erections. It was somewhat disguised from the road in passing it by yews and evergreen oaks, but it was visible enough up here. The wicket from which the pair had lately emerged was in the wall of this structure. From the middle of the building an ugly flat-topped octagonal tower ascended against the east horizon, and viewed from this spot, on its shady side and against the light, it seemed the one blot on the city's beauty. Yet it was with this blot, and not with the beauty, that the two gazers were concerned.

Upon the cornice of the tower a tall staff was fixed. Their eyes were riveted on it. A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff, and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Eschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess. And the D'Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Subtle: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Triumphant: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marvellous: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Subjugation: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Grandeur: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Superstitious: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Pervasive: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Glaring: \_\_\_\_\_

## 18.4 LET US SUM UP

*Tess of the d'Urberville* has a variety of characters, from upper, middle and lower class. Hardy's method of characterization is analytical in the novel. The depiction of his characters is realistic and genuine.

## 18.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. The day after learning about their noble heritage, what do Tess and Abraham take to market? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Cattle                      b. Wool  
c. Bee hives                  d. Barley

2. Tess suggests to Abraham that of the many stars that have planets, their star must be a \_\_\_\_\_ one.
- a. Forgiving      b. Forgotten
  - c. Blessed        d. Blighted
3. What is the name of the horse that dies in the crash during the return from market? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Laddy            b. Prince
  - c. Harold          d. Lancer
4. When Tess goes to the d'Urberville estate, how does it look? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Old and crumbling
  - b. New and fashionable
  - c. Small and cozy
  - d. Poorly-planned and unfinished
5. What job does Tess take at the D'Urberville estate? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Tending fowls                              b. Milking cows
  - c. Threshing grain                             d. Cleaning the outbuildings
6. When Alec is driving recklessly, he agrees to slow down if Tess will \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Marry him      b. Have sex with him
  - c. Hold him        d. Kiss him
7. Who agrees to help Tess learn how to blow whistles?
- a. Mrs. d'Urberville      b. Izz
  - c. Alec                      d. Retty
8. When Tess's friends get drunk, why are they irritated with Tess?
- a. She's the richest                          b. Her irritating voice
  - c. Alec gives her attention                d. Her poor farm skills
9. What does Alec buy for Tess's father in order to win Tess's favor?
- a. A new suit      b. A new horse
  - c. A new cart     d. A new house
10. What is Tess doing when Alec first takes advantage of her sexually?
- a. Sleeping                                  b. Praying
  - c. Imagining Angel                        d. Drinking

## 18.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Victorianism of Thomas Hardy as a novelist.
2. Write a note on the pessimism of Thomas Hardy with special reference to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.
3. Discuss Hardy's philosophy of life as it emerges in his novels, especially *Tess*.
4. Examine the case of Hardy as a regional novelist or the novelist of Wessex.
5. Discuss *Tess* as a tragedy in narrative form.
6. Make a feminist interpretation of *Tess*.
7. Write a note on Tess as a tragic heroine.
8. What is the role of "nature" in Hardy's novels? Discuss *Tess* in the light of this aspect of his fiction.

## 18.7 ANSWER KEY

### SAQs

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

## 18.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Grimsditch, Herbert Borthwick. *Character and Environment in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*. Textbook Publishers, 2003.
2. Barad, Dilipsinh P. *The Women Characters in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*. Atlantic Publishers, 2009.
3. Barrett, Charlotte. "Character and Environment in Thomas Hardy's Fiction." *Great Writers Inspire*, 15 May 2012, <https://writersinspire.org/content/character-environment-thomas-hardys-fiction>.

**VIRGINIA WOOLF : *MRS DALLOWAY*****STRUCTURE**

- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 19.3 Virginia Woolf and Her Times
- 19.4 Literary Influences on Woolf
- 19.5 Her Novels
- 19.6 Her desire for New Experiments in Literature
- 19.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.8 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 19.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 19.10 Answer Key
- 19.11 Suggested Reading

**19.1 INTRODUCTION**

Virginia Woolf was a British born novelist, critic, essayist and publisher who was best known for works such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *A Room of One's Own*. She was famous for pioneering the stream of consciousness method of writing, as well for experimenting with various forms of narration in her other novels and stories. Today she is considered to be one of the most important and influential modernist writers of the 20th Century.

**19.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarise you with Virginia Woolf and also the literary background of her time. The lesson also aims to provide an account of her works.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to appreciate Virginia Woolf as a writer who has explored the depth of the human experience through her distinctive style of writing.

**19.3 VIRGINIA WOOLF AND HER TIMES**

The literature of the first half of the twentieth century has come to be known as the “Modernist Literature,” which moved in two different and contrary directions. One of these two types was the literature of action, “in

the destructive element immerse.” The other type was the literature of recollection, “be still and know.” While, the major representatives of the first type were Joyce, Lawrence, who wrote the novels of violence, the second included Forster, Myers, and Virginia Woolf. One thing common between the two types was the technical experimentalism. Another was their concern with the “modern” consciousness as against the conventional. There were others, such as, Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy, whom Spender called “contemporaries,” not modern. The modern writers refused the conventional forms as well as the notion of art as social representation.

Virginia Woolf began to write fiction around 1915, when James and Conrad had already made departure from the Victorian convention of the novel as social comedy or social tragedy. They had rejected the restrictions of realism to move into the deeper region of reflection. Woolf went a step further to abandon action altogether, rejecting the conventional notions of plot and character, subject and style. Since she was aiming at something new, deliberately not using a conventional technique or seek to arouse stock responses in her readers, her novels came to be commonly held as “difficult.” Her very first novel, *The Voyage Out*, makes clear her intention to make a radical departure from the Victorian model of the English novel. Terence Hewet, a character in that novel, confides to Rachel Vinrace: “I want to write a novel about Silence... the things people don’t say.” Woolf actually did what Hewet wishes to do as a novelist; she wrote novels about “things people don’t say.” She shared this interest with her contemporaries like, Lawrence and Joyce. The common interest of all the three was to make silence speak, to give a tongue to the complex inner world of feeling and memory, and to establish the validity of that world’s claim to the term “reality.” This subjective reality came to be identified with the technique rather loosely called “stream of consciousness.”

#### 19.4 LITERARY INFLUENCES ON WOOLF

For this then new technique of “stream of consciousness” Woolf is said to have been indebted to M. Proust, D. Richardson, and H. Bergson. However, it is less important as specific indebtedness than as a symptom of “the dominant metaphysical bias of a whole generation.” Literary historians have generally made a trio of Woolf, Joyce and Lawrence, emphasizing that the three shared this “Metaphysical bias.” But we need to remain aware as much of their singularities as of their shared attitudes and techniques. For example, it is not quite certain that Woolf and Lawrence shared the same narrative strategies in their novels. One of the common things between Woolf and Lawrence, at least while they were alive, has been the creation of their legendary characters. Both remained for a long time victims of their respective obscuring personal legends. Ultimately, both have of course, survived their obscuring legends and have secured safe places in the history of the English novel.

Speaking of the legend about Woolf, one cannot ignore the special complication it carried in her connection with Bloomsbury. Once she wrote in her diary: “Bloomsbury is ridiculed; I am dismissed with it.” To describe Bloomsbury, it is a London neighbourhood near the British Museum, where Virginia Woolf and her brother Adrian moved after their father’s death in 1904. Virginia’s sister, Vanessa, and her husband, the art critic, Clive Bell, were already residing in that area. Virginia’s father was the famous Leslie Stephen who, along with Huxley and Spencer, spearheaded the revolution of “agnosticism” during the Victorian age. While some considered the use of “Bloomsbury” for the group rather incorrect, Leonard Woolf did consider it valid as it referred to the years 1912-1914 and included the three Stephens, Bell, himself, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, E.M. Forster, Roger Fry, Desmond MacCarthy and Sydney Saxon-Turner. By 1912, all of the members of “old Bloomsbury” “live geographically in Bloomsbury within a few minutes walk of one another.” The roots of Bloomsbury go back to Cambridge where all the men had known one another and had come under the influence of the philosopher G.E. Moore. Friendship was a critical part of his teachings and of the ideals of his admirers. For our purposes, Bloomsbury matters more for the aesthetic upper class aura critics of the 1930’s saw in it than for what it may have been. For them, it cast the same “peculiar atmosphere of influence, manners, responsibility” Leonard Woolf had found in the Stephen home.

E.M. Forster, himself a member of the Bloomsbury group, wrote an essay on Virginia Woolf, concluding that she “escapes the Palace of Art.” His essay reflects the view that Mrs. Woolf lived in an ivory tower during

the politically left-oriented 30's, that she was remote from reality (though at times a shrill feminist), ignorant of the class struggle, and in William Troy's words, "as acutely refined and aristocratic" as Henry James. This criticism became still stronger in the writings of F. R. Leavis and his *Scrutiny group*. Besides her own and her father's agnosticism, her deep concern with the status of women, her marriage to a life-time left-socialist journalist who, despite his Cambridge background, would as a Jew always be an outsider in England, their management of the Hogarth Press which they started in their basement, the death of her nephew, Julian Bell, in the Spanish Civil War and her anxiety over the rise of Hitler - all these at the time honorific participations were ignored by critics like Leavis and his followers while drawing the hyperaesthetic portrait of this "quiet" and feminine novelist.

As one can clearly see, Virginia Woolf became a victim of hostile criticism for reasons entirely unliterary, reasons which only expose her opponents for their inherent prejudices against agnosticism, which she inherited from her father, against the Jews one of whom happened to be her husband, and against women, the "weaker sex." All the three prejudices combined to give a punch to the hostile criticism against her, criticism which made her intellectual class a social one and dubbed her as an aristocrat, which she never was, neither by origin, nor by marriage, nor by temperament. Another fact that seems to have added to the adverse criticism of Woolf and her work was their knowledge of her mental illness. It may have reinforced for many the frailness and the remoteness they found in her fiction. The publication of *A Writer's Diary* and of Leonard Woolf's autobiographies after her death made available to us more details about her maniac-depressive condition which governed her life, resulting in four mental breakdowns and suicide attempts. Her death by suicide was more the culmination of life-long condition than it was the inability of a sensitive soul to take the bombing of Britain during World War II as was suggested by certain critics.

What seems an important aspect for critical consideration is that Virginia Woolf's depression which brought on her death came, as three previous severe depressions did, with the completion of a novel, *Between the Acts*. The testimony of *A Writer's Diary* shows Mrs. Woolf quite able to function under the strain of bombing and the fear of invasion that so totally filled the years 1940 and 1941. It can, therefore, be concluded with some certainty that critical attitudes towards her personality, her origins, and her literary-political circle must have conditioned the "partisan" portrait of her person which has affected (rather adversely) the reading and interpretation of her fiction as "disengaged." Her novels can, in fact, justifiably claim to have represented a portion of "reality," even of social reality. For an artist so deeply committed to subjective vision, Virginia Woolf was, like D.H. Lawrence ("Never trust the artist. Trust the tale."), unusually insistent on the separation of the self from the artist. T.S. Eliot can be said to be the pacesetter in this regard. It was he who, as early as 1920, had pleaded in "Tradition and Individual Talent," the separation of the "man who suffers and the artist who creates." During the gestation of *The Waves* Virginia Woolf had asked herself: "Who thinks it? And am I outside the thinker? One wants some device which is not a trick?" Another diary entry notes, apropos of a visit from Sydney Webb: "Sydney comes and I'm Virginia; when I write I'm merely a sensibility." The time when readers and critics should see her as writer rather than Virginia did not arrive during her life-time.

The publication of *A Writer's Diary* in 1953 significantly brought that time closer. It brought before the reader a complete picture of Mrs. Woolf's life as a writer and of the genesis and growth of her major novels. It initiates a less partisan reading of her work. The subsequent years have also made additional biographical material about her and her circle of writers and friends available to us. This includes Leonard Woolf's autobiographical volumes, John Maynard Keynes's earlier essay, "My Early Beliefs," the two volume biography of Lytton Strachey, the memoirs of Sir Harold Nicolson (the husband of Vita Sackville-West) and those of John Lehmann, one of the first employees of Hogarth Press. Letters and manuscripts have also become available meanwhile. This sort of material related to her own life and the life around her has been swelling since her death. But this particular kind of material can impede as well as enlighten our reading of her works. As one of her own characters puts it, "so much depends upon distance." It does make a more enduring examination of the relationship between art and autobiography more possible than it has been during her life time, or even soon after her death.

One thing that has become clear over the years is that Virginia Woolf's novels are not unstructured thoughts and feelings flowing through the stream of consciousness of her central characters. The fact that one of her novels went into nine different versions or revisions before it could be published shows, how consciously the novels were constructed by her to give them form and meaning. There have been lot of studies of her work showing how there is consistency and coherence in each of her novels, and how all her novels constitute a single body showing her growth as an artist. After the advent of feminist criticism, her work has assumed much greater importance than it enjoyed ever before. Critics have discovered much more beyond her use of the technique of stream-of-consciousness.

A significant critical piece of permanent value about the work of Virginia Woolf appeared at the end of Erich Auerbach's famous book, *Mimesis*. In his rare tribute to her contribution to the European literature, Auerbach, as an outsider uninvolved in local prejudices, placed her in the larger tradition of Western Literature, developing the concluding chapter of his study of the representation of reality in Western literature from Homer to the present, to Virginia Woolf, stressing that she, rather than Joyce, exemplifies the modern vision of subjective reality. Published after Woolf's death, Auerbach essay appeared earlier than her own *A Writer's Diary*. Another significant seminal criticism of her work appeared in the special number of *Modern Fiction Studies* (February 1956), which laid stress on the poetic element of her work. These two critical works of her fiction have proved trend-setters that gave direction to the subsequent studies forming a sort of mainstream in the critical heritage. The final outcome has been the emergence of Virginia Woolf as a tougher and more focused writer than she was thought to be in the early phase of her criticism.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, a reading of the previous sections acquainted you with the life of Virginia Woolf as well as the age to which she belonged. Further, you also became aware of the various literary influences that have shaped her as a writer. Now before moving to the next section, quickly revise the previous sections by going through the points given below:

- Modernist literature included the literature of action and the literature of recollection.
- Virginia Woolf rejected the restrictions of realism to move into the deeper regions of reflection.
- Virginia Woolf abandoned the conventional notions of plot and character.
- Virginia Woolf adopted the technique of 'stream-of-consciousness' in her novels.
- Virginia Woolf became closely associated with the Bloomsbury Group.

## 19.5 HER NOVELS

Virginia Woolf's first two novels are apprentice works that put in too much and include too little. No later novels took so long or was rewritten so much as *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*. As these two titles indicate, she had a constantly adventuring spirit as also an equally constant sense of duality of terror and ecstasy, flux and the moment, fact and vision. Both these novels are social comedies, showing deep dissatisfaction with the conventional modes of courtship and marriage. Her third novel, *Jacob's Room* shares with the other two its literary talk and literary allusions. Although much shorter in length than the first two, *Jacob's Room* uses time far more selectively and is more consistent in tone and method than the novels preceding it. It also shows for the first time Woolf's characteristic repetition and use of imagery for structural purposes. What the reader is made to follow all the time in this novel are the portraits of Jacob projected by other people, not the true life of Jacob as he lives it from cradle to grave. This new technique makes *Jacob's Room* a first novel of its kind. In short, Woolf's third novel represents her true beginning, for from now on, her novels came quickly and regularly, usually written in a year, sometimes two, and usually alternating with critical writing. No wonder that her next four turned out to be her best, which are *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, and *The Waves*.

The first two of Woolf's great novels abandon the narrative forms of *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*. They also abandon the cradle to grave chronology of *Jacob's Room*. What is known as "tunnelling process" in *Mrs Dalloway*, in which the narrative moves between the present time of one day and the personal past of Clarissa, Peter and Septimus, also looks forward to the culminating event of the day, Clarissa's party. The other great novel of Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, deals with a past created in the novel rather than with one that existed prior to the novel as in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In both the novels, however, time and memory are handled with wit and risk, although the greater risk in *Mrs Dalloway* is not the manipulation of memory but the splitting up of personality into a man and a woman who never meet. Thus, both novels may be said to use the chronology of a day as basic strategy; but Mrs. Woolf had clearly learned how to use and how to escape chronology at the same time.

In the other two great novels, *Orlando* and *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf had moved further and further away from the kind of modern novel she helped to define. Even in her own canon, however, *Orlando* is a sport, an "essay novel" on English literature, character and manners from Elizabethan times of the present, a fantasy with a main character who changes sex in 1683 and is over 300 years old when the novel closes in 1928. On the other hand, *The Waves*, considered by some critics her best novel, can be called an anti-novel, with its artistic risk in the splitting up of personality into six voices only tenuously connected to external reality. Bernard, the talkiest of the six, wonders: "Am I all of them?" This novel, of voices without bodies or setting, may be an intellectualized-tour-de-force that the common reader Mrs. Woolf prized would never return to, a kind of sport, like *Orlando*.

Woolf's last two novels have been considered re-combinations of familiar fictional strategies, as though the writer were enjoying a conventional holiday – one quite unlike the writer's holiday she said she was taking when she wrote *Orlando*. The principle of selection her mature works reflects is no longer there in *The Years*, but reasserts itself in *Between the Acts* in which the evocation of England is achieved more effectively than in its predecessor. The counterpoint of a village pageant play which covers the English past against a few hours of present time moves lyrically and unostentatiously within what are essentially traditional novelistic techniques of dialogue and description. *Orlando* may also look ahead to these last two novels which are less interested in personal memory or personality than in nationality, tradition and myth – the dimension Mrs. Woolf was likely to continue to explore had she written more novels.

Both as a reader and a critic Mrs. Woolf used these activities for the enrichment of her fiction. In these areas, her first publications were reviews for the *Times Literary Supplement*. Her reading was quite avid and deep, especially in English literature. As a reader she was more a common reader in her taste than a selective or exclusionary reader friends like T.S. Eliot were. Although she chafed under the need to write reviews, she chose not to give them up when she was financially able to do so. These reviews were for her both refreshment as well as exploration. Novels like *Orlando* and *Between the Acts* are only more obviously connected with her deep involvement in English tradition than are her other novels. Although she has usually been considered more impressionist than formalist as a critic, a case has also been made for her criticism as formalist in foundation. At least two of her essays have been considered seminal for an understanding of modernist fiction theory. In her frequently anthologized "Modern Fiction" (1919) and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1919), she appeared to have articulated the dissatisfactions and the yearnings of a whole generation.

Virginia Woolf's feminism may be another facet of her toughness, perhaps best seen against her constant sense of opposing states. She describes *Orlando*, as also perhaps herself, as "censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither." The engagement of her first fictional couple, Terence and Rachel, may postulate a united androgynous self. But the union never takes place as Rachel dies. Only in fantasy, only in *Orlando* can ideal androgyny exist. A witty view, yes; also a shrewd one."

Mrs. Woolf's couples in her later novels are more separated than united. Her best female figures are, in fact, her wives and mothers – an interesting paradox in a woman violently attacked for her feminism. The artistic relevance of her feminism has received less partisan examination than before. In fact, in the postmodernist era, Woolf has received special attention as a leading feminist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century British literature.

A central emphasis in Virginia Woolf's novels seems to be her perception of human insufficiency. One can see here, of course, affinities with existentialism and the novel of violence. However, where the existentialists give up in despair and the likes of Lawrence and Greene seek their panacea in action - that is, in the movement away from the still centre - Virginia Woolf works consistently inwards, away from the world of events. A fine example to this effect can be given from her last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941). In the passage cited below, we find a positive statement, that is, a presentation of a moment of sufficiency. However, what we are shown is that such a moment can exist only under special circumstances: in the mind of a child rather than an adult, in the absence of distraction, and subject to the threat of instant destruction.

*Amy was saying something about a feller when Mabel, with her hand on the pram, turned sharply, her sweet swallowed. 'Leave of grubbing,' she said sharply. 'Come along, George.'*

*The little boy had lagged and was grouting in the grass. Then the baby, Caro, thrust her fist over the coverlet and the furry hear was jerked overboard. Amy had to stoop. George grubbed. The flower blazed between the angels of the roots. Membrane after membrane was torn. It blazed a soft yellow, a lambent light under a film of velvet, it filled the caverns behind the eyes with light. All that inner darkness became a hall, leaf smelling, earth smelling of yellow light. And the tree was beyond the flower; the grass, the flower and the tree were entire. Down on his knees grubbing he held the flower complete, then there was a roar and a hot breath and a stream of coarse grey hair rushed between him and the flower. Up he leapt, toppling in his fright, and saw coming towards him a terrible peaked eyeless monster moving on legs brandishing arms.*

Here, the description of Little George's moment of sufficiency is flanked by two insufficiencies: The nursemaids' with their talk of 'fellers' and their sweets, the old man with his Afghan bound and the need to impose himself on his grandson. The vision which consists in a perfect observation of and identification with that which (in this case the flower, roots, and soil at the foot of a tree) is broken by the incomprehension of an adult world. This is the final example of Mrs Woolf's work of a repeated pattern. It can be observed in passing here that there is no condemnation of the nursemaids for being stupid or of Bart for being tyrannical: things are what they are, and we have moved out of the moral, discriminatory world of Dickens and Thackeray. This absence of judgement in Mrs. Woolf can be called a note of modernity and indeed of maturity, for we do not come upon this aspect in her earlier work. Her early work, like Forster's, offers valuejudgements, particularly in situations directed against organized religion and its ministers. There is, it is true, a survival of this in the clergyman of *Between the Acts*, but the balance is preserved with the sympathetic portrait of Lucy fingering her crucifix. In her mature work, all that Mrs. Woolf does is to put her experience into words and leave it there.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, it is time to take another break from reading. The previous section made you familiar with Virginia Woolf's works. You can now make a self-assessment of your familiarisation with the works of Virginia Woolf by going through the exercise given below:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is Virginia Woolf's first novel.
2. "Tunnelling process" is a narrative method used in the novel \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the culminating event of the day in *Mrs Dalloway*.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is an 'essay novel' on English literature, characters, and manners from Elizabethan times to the present.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ by Virginia Woolf can be called an anti-novel.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ by Virginia Woolf have been considered seminal for an understanding of modernist fiction theory.
7. Virginia Woolf's last novel is titled \_\_\_\_\_.

## 19.6 HER DESIRE FOR NEW EXPERIMENTS IN LITERATURE

Virginia Woolf, like any other writer, was of her age, in the first place. She shared the restless experimentalism of the modern period in the history of English literature. The drive to make it new, as Pound kept hammering it, can be seen as a sort of compulsion with Woolf; it can be seen as a kind of courage, an artistic strategy that is anything but soft. It fits into the scheme of Pound's other slogan for the modern age: Make It Hard. Before Woolf had given *The Waves* its name or design, she noted her lack of "any notion what it is to be like," and assumed it would be "a complete new attempt," adding "So I always think." However, each of her new attempt did contain a set of constants, one of which was her need to explore her double vision of reality. This double vision is also reflected in her division of her work into novels of fact and novels of vision. Her view was that this classification is inherent in life and in fiction. Although in her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," she attacked the realism of Wells-Bennett-Galsworthy, her own work is an evidence that fact did not interest her less than vision. If death invariably appeared in the midst of life in all her novels, fact is always found in the midst of her vision.

## 19.7 LET US SUM UP

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an English novelist, essayist, biographer, and feminist. Woolf was a prolific writer, whose modernist style changed with each new novel. Her letters and memoirs reveal glimpses of Woolf at the center of English literary culture during the Bloomsbury era.

Woolf represents a historical moment when art was integrated into society, as T.S. Eliot describes in his obituary for Virginia. "Without Virginia Woolf at the center of it, it would have remained formless or marginal... With the death of Virginia Woolf, a whole pattern of culture is broken."

## 19.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

- Q.1 How old is Clarissa Dalloway in the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. 32      B. 42  
C. 52      D. 62
- Q.2 In what city is the novel set? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. London      B. Paris  
C. New York      D. Rome
- Q.3 What does Clarissa feel is her one gift? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Spotting social opportunities      B. Having a beautiful face  
C. Knowing people by instinct      D. Possessing self confidence
- Q.4 When she meets the admirable, proper Hugh Whitbread on the street, what makes Clarissa self-conscious? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Her accent      B. Her shoes  
C. Her hair      D. Her hat
- Q.5 How does Clarissa believe the world sees her? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. As her own person      B. As her husband's wife  
C. As her father's daughter      D. As her daughter's mother

- Q.6 When Clarissa returns home, she feels like she is returning to a \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Convent      B. Castle  
C. Prison      D. Dream
- Q.7 Clarissa is attracted to \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Married men    B. Servants  
C. Foreigners    D. Women
- Q.8 Who once ran naked through the hallway at Bourton? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. Clarissa      B. Richard  
C. Sally      D. Peter
- Q.9 What does Clarissa repair in preparation for the night's party? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. A green dress    B. A silver broach  
C. A leather shoe    D. A feathered hat
- Q.10 What is Peter Walsh constantly fiddling with? \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. His hat      B. His wristwatch  
C. His cane      D. His pocket knife

## 19.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Discuss Virginia Woolf as a novelist
- b) What were the literary influences on Virginia Woolf?

## 19.10 ANSWER KEY

### CYP

1. *The Voyage Out*
2. *Mrs. Dalloway*
3. Clarrissa's Party
4. *Orlando*
5. *The Waves*
6. "Modern Fiction", "Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Brown"
7. *Between the Acts*

### SAQs

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A  |
| 2. B | 7. D  |
| 3. C | 8. C  |
| 4. D | 9. A  |
| 5. B | 10. D |

## 19.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. Goldman, Jane. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
2. Gill, Gillian, *Virginia Woolf and the Women who shaped her World*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019.
3. Svendsen, Jessica, and Pericles Lewis. “Virginia Woolf.” *Modernism Lab*, Yale University, [campuspress.yale.edu/modernismlab/virginia woolf/](http://campuspress.yale.edu/modernismlab/virginia%20woolf/).
4. Reid, Panthea. “Mrs. Dalloway, *To the Lighthouse*, *A Room of One’s Own* and Other Major Works of Virginia Woolf.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 21 Nov. 2025, [www.britannica.com/biography/Virginia Woolf/Mrs Dalloway To the Lighthouse A Room of Ones Own and other major works](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Virginia%20Woolf/Mrs%20Dalloway%20To%20the%20Lighthouse%20A%20Room%20of%20Ones%20Own%20and%20other%20major%20works).

**VIRGINIA WOOLF : *MRS DALLOWAY*****STRUCTURE**

- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 20.3 Summary of *Mrs. Dalloway*
- 20.4 Stream of Consciousness Technique
- 20.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 20.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 20.8 Answer Key
- 20.9 Suggested Reading

**20.1 INTRODUCTION**

Despite debilitating battles with mental breakdowns, Woolf produced a body of work considered among the most groundbreaking in 20th Century literature. Her father was a literary critic, and her mother a renowned beauty and artist's model. Her mother's sudden death when she was thirteen may have been the catalyst for the first of her recurrent breakdowns. As a young woman, Woolf developed her writer's voice with a number of literary pursuits. She wrote criticism and essays while her literary reputation modestly and steadily increased.

**20.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to explain the summary of the novel *Mrs Dalloway* so that the plot of the novel becomes clear to you. The lesson also aims to familiarize you with the stream of consciousness technique extensively used by Virginia Woolf in her works.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to summarize the plot of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*.

You will explain the 'stream of consciousness' technique and its importance for exploring the multitudinous thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind.

**20.3 SUMMARY OF *MRS. DALLOWAY***

The novel's narration is third-person omniscient, but it changes its focus throughout. The narrative begins and ends with Clarissa as it details a day in her life. Clarissa is a seemingly disillusioned socialite whose mood fluctuates: at some moments she seems delighted, at others she seems depressed.

Her overall affect suggests suppressed symptoms of depression.

*Mrs. Dalloway* begins with Clarissa's preparatory errand to buy flowers. Unexpected events occur—a car emits an explosive noise and a plane writes in the sky—and incite different reactions in different people. Soon after she returns home, her former lover Peter arrives. The two converse, and it becomes clear that they still have strong feelings for each other. In a moment of shared vulnerability, Peter asks Clarissa if she is happy. Before Clarissa can answer, her daughter, Elizabeth, interrupts them.

Perspectives switch, and the narrator inhabits Septimus Warren Smith, a World War I veteran suffering from shell shock. He is waiting with his wife, Lucrezia, to see a psychiatrist named Sir William Bradshaw. The reader is informed that Septimus has been suffering greatly since returning from the war, and his suffering is something the other characters are unable to grasp.

The perspective shifts to Richard, Clarissa's husband. In a fit of passion, Richard wants to run home and tell Clarissa he loves her. However, he finds himself unable to do more than give her flowers. Clarissa acknowledges that she respects the gulf between herself and Richard, as it gives both of them freedom and independence while also relieving them of paying attention to certain aspects of life.

The novel's perspective shifts back to Septimus, who has been told that he is to be taken to a psychiatric hospital. Septimus would rather die than see himself inside such a place, so he throws himself out of a window and becomes impaled on a fence. The narration then switches to Clarissa's perspective again, this time during her party. She is primarily concerned with entertaining her guests, some of whom are very esteemed. Sir William Bradshaw arrives with his wife, who announces that Septimus has killed himself. Clarissa, though at first annoyed that Mrs. Bradshaw would discuss such a topic at a party, is soon ruminating on Septimus's situation. In a small room, by herself, she identifies with how overwhelmed Septimus must have felt. She respects him for choosing death over compromising the integrity of his soul by allowing it to be confined. In light of what he did to preserve his soul, she feels ashamed of the ways she has compromised her own soul in order to go on living. Thus chastened, she returns to the party as it is winding down. (For detailed study, read the text of *Mrs. Dalloway*, watch the movie adaptation of *Mrs. Dalloway* on youtube, and also refer e-gyankosh)

### Self-Check Exercise

Dear learner, after going through the previous section, you can now summarize the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. However, to make a self-assessment of clarity regarding the plot of the novel, try to solve the self-check exercise given below:

1. What type of narration has been used by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *Mrs Dalloway* narrates a day in the life of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. How does *Mrs. Dalloway* begin?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the name of Clarissa's former lover?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How is Elizabeth related to Clarissa?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is the war veteran in *Mrs Dalloway* suffering from shell shock.
7. Clarissa's husband is named \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Which character in *Mrs Dalloway* dies by throwing himself out of a window?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 20.4 STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS TECHNIQUE

One of the often-quoted statements of Virginia Woolf explains the nature of her novel. "Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." Coming after the vogue of Victorian novel as social comedy, as a chain of incidents, logically arranged, this statement must have had a fresh ring to the readers' ears at the time. Not only in rhythm and tone but also in the imponderable vagueness of its diction, the statement shows a sharp departure from the Victorian practice of rhetorical prose. The voice of Mrs. Woolf in the statement echoes the voice of Henri Bergson, who gave to the modern age in the early twentieth century the new concept of time, the simultaneity of past, present, and future than their spatial sequence on a linear plane. Behind the statement lies, decidedly, an acceptance of a whole theory of metaphysics. Also lies behind that assertion Woolf's resistance to the naturalistic formula, all that enthusiastic surrender to the world of flux and individual intuition. Whether Woolf was directly influenced by Bergson, the prime force behind modernist experimentation in form and characterization, or indirectly through Proust, or some other secondary source, is not so important as the fact that the influence is obvious enough. What we often regard as unique in her fiction is, however, less the result of an individual attitude than of the dominant metaphysical bias of a whole generation.

For the modern novelist like, Woolf, Joyce and Laurence, who were concerned with fiction, the philosophy of flux and intuition offered a relief from the cumbersome technique and mechanical pattern of naturalism. Against even such mild practioners of the doctrine as Wells and Bennett, Mrs. Woolf raised the tirade in her critical piece *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. Besides, the new philosophy opened new treasures of interest for fiction which made it possible for the "modern" writer to do away with whatever values the Victorian novelists had depended upon. Like naturalism, however, modernism brought with it its own version of aesthetic; it made available a medium which carried no values except the primary one of self-expression. Of course, we cannot altogether ignore the wonderful help psychology extended with its new tool of psychoanalysis. The modernist novel, therefore, derived its new narrative strategies from sources both metaphysical as well as psychological. World War I provoked men and women of sensibility to make a personal statement about the new or modern world that followed the international disaster.

Inheriting her father's philosophic bent of mind, then schooled in abstract theory, especially interested in the new ideas of her time, Virginia Woolf felt naturally attracted by a method which was contemporary and challenging. This method was the stream of consciousness which she used in several of her novels. The subjective method suited her sensibility. She felt fascinated by the functioning of the human mind, its movements and vacillations. Proust had found the method most suitable for his needs. Mrs. Woolf, too, found it the only method capable for projecting the sensibility. One of Mrs. Woolf's creations, Bernard in *The Waves*, shows what sort of stuff she was really interested in:

A space was cleared in my mind. I saw through the thick leaves of habit. Leaning over the gate I regretted so much litter, so much unaccomplishment and separation, for one cannot cross London to see a friend, life being so full of engagements; not take ship to India and see a naked man spearing fish in blue water. I said life had been imperfect, an unfinished phrase. It had been impossible for me, taking snuff as I do from any bagman met in a train, to keep coherency - that sense of the generations, of woman carrying red pitchers to the Nile, of the nightingale who sings among conquests and migrations...

This piece of prose is quite representative of Woolf; her characters, certainly the central ones, speak that way. From such a passage as this it can be appreciated how perfectly the subjective or "confessional" method is adapted to the particular sensibility reflected through her work.

As subject determines style, so sensibility selects medium. Mrs. Woolf's use of stream of consciousness technique was necessitated by the kind of subject - the workings of sensibility - she had chosen to write about. From *The Voyage Out* to *The Waves* she has written about only one class of people, almost one type of

individual, whose experience is largely vicarious, whose contacts with realities have been rather incomplete, unsatisfactory, or uninhibited. This class consists of poets, thinkers, scientists, painters, etc., whose world is a sort of superior Bohemia, as acutely refined and aristocratic in its way as the world of Henry James, with the only exception that its inhabitants concentrate on their sensations and impressions rather than on their problems of conduct. Life for these people is painful less for what it has done to them than for what their excessive sensitivity causes them to make of it. No consolation is left for them but solitude, a timeless solitude in which to descend to a kind of self-induced Nirvana. Through solitude these people are able to relieve themselves with finality from the responsibilities of living, they are able to complete their divorce from reality even to the extent of escaping the burden of personality. Once, one has abandoned the effort to act upon reality, either with the will or the intellect, the mind is permitted to wander in freedom through the stored treasures of its memories and impressions, following no course but that of fancy or simple association.

Nothing in Mrs. Woolf's work serves as a better revelation of the way her characters as a whole live than these ruminations of Mrs. Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse*:

To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive; glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness.... When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless.... Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity....

The very stream-of-consciousness which we see at work here in Mrs. Ramsay's interior monologue, which Mrs. Woolf is said to have derived from Proust, is a means of bringing the unconscious to the conscious, of demonstrating how much we are bound in our mental processes by memories, reactions, obsessions. But should the artist also be bound in his art? That, for Mrs. Woolf, is the question, which leads her to make experiment with technique. The question that exercised her mind was: Can words, can phrases, can the very structure of the novel be stripped of their conventional trappings, made to evoke other than stock responses? Can the reader be induced to expect something different, or, if not to expect, at least to accept it? Is it possible above all, to emulate the technique of the painter (we recall here Mrs. Woolf's interest in the post-impressionist painters) and say, 'There is what I saw - that is how the thing you call a rose, a jam-jar, or a boat appeared to me, then, at that moment, under those conditions of light inner and outer?' Can the novel present, as the picture can, the thusness of each object as it exists in relationship to blue sky, yellow sand, or striped table-cloth?

We also need to note the curious manner in which the theme of sensibility, expressed through the suitable technique of stream of consciousness, asserts itself - this time in the unique (even dubious) relationship of author and reader. It is the common reader who now turns back from the immediate experience offered to him by the novelist. The writer comes bearing gifts and is greeted by 'Timeo Danaos'! I offer you, says the novelist, a new slant on life, the immediate perception that I have achieved, I doubt if you have been given anything quite like it before. I don't want your new perception, says the reader, I want Tarzan, or Forsyte, or the mixture as before of Catholicism-andviolence. Go away and leave me in peace. I don't want reality. It bores me and frightens me. In any case, I don't understand you. I can't follow what you are presenting in the 'novel.'

The reader fails to follow what the new novelist, Mrs. Woolf, is presenting because what she is attempting in her fiction is not the stuff the reader has been fed on, the conventional stuff. Besides, she is presenting that new stuff in a new fashion altogether, using a new technique. From the very beginning, and right up to the end, Virginia Woolf was intensely conscious of making a different thing out of the novel. The *genre* had, she knew, been developed and exploited by men but she was a woman, and she was sure that a woman novelist had to create her own form. Jane Austen had done it; but the Brontes and George Eliot had been hampered by too close an adherence to the old masculine pattern. The feminine mind, the feminine sensibility, cannot profitably imitate the masculine. A woman novelist has something new to bring to the art of the novel. And so Virginia Woolf experimented ceaselessly in new forms, new techniques, always trying to get nearer to an integral expression of life. For truth-her great devotion - operates here as well as in the realm of ideas, in how a thing is said as well

as in what is said. The form of the conventional social novel (of realism and naturalism) is not *true* in Woolf's terms. It is stereotyped, deals only with certain detached aspects of living (which it exaggerates and distorts for creating comedy) glued together by crude devices such as set descriptions, coincidences, catastrophes, transition passages of mere padding. And all moves on the surface. How, thought Virginia Woolf, how could she find a form that would convey the movement of things under the surface, the free movement of thought, emotion, insight?

To learn to do what she was wanting to do, Virginia Woolf tapped the available sources in the European tradition. She looked around on the continent what her own contemporaries were doing. She read through the works of Proust and Joyce and Dorothy Richardson. Perhaps not fully satisfied, she also tapped the old sources, read the old masters in whose works she discerned the same experimental quality, the same focusing on an interior world. There was Laurence Sterne, for instance, with his technique of disintegration, his flouting of the time sense and of the connecting link. Then, there was Montaigne, with his delicately poised exploration of consciousness, his irony. There were, above all, the Russian stalwarts, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekov, who dominated European novel for half a century. In her early novels, one can also discern quite a strong echo of E.M. Forster. Of course, all those mentioned above were not radical innovators in narrative technique, but their interest in the deeper recesses of human psyche was something that attracted Woolf to them. She felt that they had much to offer to her in the art of characterization, which she had chosen to make the main focus of her fiction.

Perhaps mentioned earlier also, Virginia Woolf was not an experimentalist from the very beginning of her career as novelist. Some of her early novels are quite conventional, not departing into novelty even as far as Forster had done. Reviewing her novels in chronological order, one finds that *The Voyage Out* (1915) is a fairly straightforward narrative of a young girl, Rachel Vinrace, who is thrust suddenly out of a backwater into the whirl of life, falls in love, and dies. Similarly, *Night and Day* (1919) is about another young girl, Katharine Hilberry, more self-possessed, more mature, who wonders whether falling in love and marrying may not be a matter of quitting life for a backwater. It is only with her next novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922), and perhaps even more with the little volume of short stories, *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), that we find her experimenting: experimenting with the stream of consciousness technique, experimenting, above all, with the disruption of time.

Time was a technical problem for the most of modern writers. They felt bound, cramped, by the necessity of keeping to the strict sequence of events, A followed by B and B followed by C. They envied the plastic artist's freedom of movement in space, his power of presenting a totality to the eye. Poetry, of course, they felt has liberty than prose - poets have always enjoyed a certain license to jump about from present to past and from past to future, to organize their intuitions within not a strictly temporal pattern. But now Woolf began writing fiction that the novel had been bound. Restricted as it was to the sphere of action, to the telling of a story, it had to present the sequence of cause and effect. The reader was eager to know 'what was going to happen next'; in particular, the Victorian convention of serial publication prescribed a rigid scheme of 'continued in our next' and made development and experiment almost impossible. We know very well how the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope followed the fortunes of their characters in time sequence from week to week and month to month, like the narration of historical events.

Perhaps the first note of revolt in England was sounded by E.M. Forster. Only tentatively in his novels, but quite boldly in his lectures on the theory of the novel collected under the title *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), he criticized the time-obsession in fiction. Indeed, he assailed the story element in the novel, the element of plot as well, as Mrs. Woolf also pointed out in her review of *Aspects of the Novel*.

As she put it,

Many are the judgements that we would willingly linger, as Mr. Forster passes lightly on his way. That Scott is a story-teller and nothing more; that a story is the lowest of the literary organism; that

the novelist's unnatural preoccupation with love is largely a reflection of his own state of mind while he composes - every page has a hint or a suggestion which makes us stop to think or wish to contradict.

As a reviewer, Mrs. Woolf had neither time nor space to debate on these issues. As a novelist, we find them influencing her increasingly. The argument about Scott makes its appearance at a crucial point in *To the Lighthouse*. She noted and she contemplated. Even within the limits of her review, she arrives at highly significant conclusions. One of these conclusions is, 'In England at any rate the novel is not a work of art. There are none to be stood beside *War and Peace*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, or *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.' She calls upon the critic to be less domestic and the novelist, the English novelist, to be bolder.

He might cut adrift from the eternal tea-table and the plausible and preposterous formulas which are supposed to represent the whole of our human adventure. But then the story might wobble; the plot might crumble; ruin might seize upon the characters. The novel, in short, might become a work of art.

There can be no doubt that this bold statement, one among many more of the kind, was stimulated and encouraged by Mrs. Woolf's reading of Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* and such other theoretical pieces on the novel she must have read at the time. We have also seen that just about the same time, in fact, a little earlier, she had started to put into practice most of Foster's hints. *Monday or Tuesday*, however, was only a collection of sketches, but as early as this collection Mrs. Woolf had started to put into practice her "new" ideas on the novel. It was in 1920, with *Mrs. Dalloway*, that she makes her first serious attempt at disruption of the time-pattern within the space of a full-length novel. Here, she makes her bold experiment of restricting her scheme to the limits of a single day, a single district of London, a single in-the-round character (a return to the three unities already signalled in Joyce's *Ulysses*, 1922) while employing the devices of memory and dramatic counterpoint (Septimus Warren Smith's day is linked harmoniously with Clarissa's, though the two characters never meet) to escape poverty and monotony.

#### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Renowned: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Catalyst: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Obvious: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Treasure: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Provoke: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Revelation: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Curious: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Envied: \_\_\_\_\_

Later, in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) we find Mrs. Woolf playing other tricks with time; in the first section of the novel, the action is restricted to one evening, the hours between six o'clock and dinner, and in fact even these few hours are foreshortened to a single moment, for in obedience to Mrs. Ramsay's 'Time stand still here!' there is a suspension similar to that imposed by Mr. Weston, in T.F. Powys's novel, *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, on the bewildered inhabitants of Folly Down. In the second section 'Time Passes' but the human element is withdrawn; the house is left alone to decay. In the third section, memory comes into its own and the present is displaced by the past.

Why, one feels inclined to ask, this preoccupation with time on the part of Virginia Woolf as a novelist? Why this ceaseless experimenting with the devices of memory and foreshortening? It is probably not enough to say that Mrs. Woolf found the time-sequence inadequate to her intuition of the structure of reality, though that remains an important point for a writer like her who, as she does, essays to give a this-worldly rendering of an

other-worldly pattern or series of patterns or glimpses of patterns. But there seems another reason, equally, or even, more important than the one we just mentioned. Perhaps she found the time sequence also inadequate to the simple rendering of character, to the display of her creatures' inner lives. This can be seen most strikingly demonstrated in her next novel, the fantasy, *Orlando* (1928), in which the life of her heroine, which in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* had been foreshortened to one day, is stretched out to the perspective of four centuries; in which, too, there is a change of sex from masculine to feminine. All this metamorphosis, this complication and explication, is necessary to elucidate the most mysterious entity, the human spirit. 'One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with,' Lily Briscoe reflects in *To the Lighthouse*. 'Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought.' Very well, one can imagine Virginia Woolf responding, let us see how many pairs of eyes, in four hundred years, are needed to pluck out the heart of Orlando's mystery. Let us show Orlando as first masculine, and then feminine; first in love, and then loved; first jilting, and then jilted; a man of action and a poet, a woman of fashion and a Victorian lady.

In a still later novel, *The Waves*, (1931), Virginia Woolf carries the process a step further; indeed, to what we can only imagine to be its conclusion, for further development can hardly be expected along a line which has led, as here, to the suppression of plot, dialogue, and exterior description. *The Waves* presents us with six characters who grow up from children to men and women, but who never address one another, never attain an effective relationship, but more in and out of a pattern as in the intricate steps of a ballet. Counterpointed against the changing emotions and sensations of six lifetimes is the inexorable process of a solar day. We are presented with a tissue of infinite complexity, in which each personality is mirrored in the minds of the other five, and that multiple image is again multiplied in the great mirror of the whole novel, itself a fractional image reflected from the moving pageant of sea, earth and sky which forms the exordium to each of the nine sections of the book. The undertaking is prodigious, and so, I think, is the effect; but many readers have found the effort of concentration which they are called upon to make beyond their powers. More than any other of her novels, *The Waves* deserves to be labelled as the most difficult.

Virginia Woolf's next novel, *The Years* (1937) is a marking time. In some respects, there is a sort of regression to the early technique of *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*. The element of plot returns, there are hints of set descriptions. Time, it is true, is disrupted, but not in a very radical sense: we are carried from 1880 to 1891, from 1907 to 1910, and so on, but the result is a series of fragmentary impressions rather than a bold and original perception. It is only with her final (and indeed posthumous) novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), that we find a hint of the new direction along which Virginia Woolf's art is going to develop, a direction which, with its suggestion of a marriage of poetic and prose technique, picks up a note sounded in *Monday or Tuesday* and a thread she had left hanging in her review of Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* :

The assumption that fiction is more intimately and humbly attached to the service of human beings than the other arts leads to a further position which Mr. Forster's book again illustrates. It is unnecessary to dwell on her aesthetic functions because they are so feeble that they can safely be ignored. Thus, though it is impossible to imagine a book of painting in which not a word should be said about the medium in which a painter works, a wise and brilliant book, like Mr. Forster's, can be written about fiction without saying more than a sentence or two about the medium in which a novelist works. Almost nothing is said about words.

Thus, Mrs. Woolf did supremely well what no one else before her had attempted to do. She exploded the world of the mind-especially the feminine mind-under certain precise conditions of character and environment. What Eliot attempted in poetry, she attempted in novel. Both broke the conventional form into fragments and reassembled them on new principles drawn from contemporary knowledge related to Time and Mind. The fragmented modern world of the post-war period could not have been pictured in any conventional form. Hence, both experimented and succeeded.

## 20.5 LET US SUM UP

Dear learners, Psychology was the field of interest for all the Modern writers such as Joyce, Proust and Henry James. Following the psychological insights by Freud and Jung, the modern writers, came to view human personality from a new perspective under the pressure of developments in physical science, psychology, philosophy and other streams of knowledge. Virginia Woolf stood up as a spokesperson for these modern writers. Whereas the conventional writers drew their characters minutely about how they dressed, what they ate, and other things, the characters in the modern fiction like *Mrs. Dalloway* are differently poised from the angle of inner being. Clarissa is a seemingly disillusioned socialite whose mood fluctuates: at some moments she seems delighted, at others she seems depressed. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, a variety of characters with complex, unique personalities are brought to life. Through vivid imagery and poignant monologues *Mrs. Dalloway* highlights and simultaneously criticizes the social structure, political affairs, and economic state of post-World War I.

*Mrs. Dalloway* is considered one of the best novels by Virginia Woolf, one of the most important novelists of the 20th century. She was also a prolific writer of essays, diaries, letters, and biographies. She wrote many literary works in her literary career. Among them *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando, A Room of One's Own* are world famous. Her works have been translated into more than 50 languages. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is the perfect example of 'Stream of Consciousness' style because it doesn't have a specific theme, but it's rather following the thought of the main character. Virginia Woolf portrays the mental condition of all characters including Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus, and Peter in the novel. They are all mentally disturbed because of their pastlife incidents. This is the main characteristic of "Psychological Fiction", which Virginia Woolf represents through the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*.

## 20.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q.1 After reconnecting with Clarissa, Peter feels that she has grown \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Kind and generous
- B. More youthful and beautiful
- C. Tired and forgetful
- D. Hard and sentimental

Q.2 Who does Peter intend to ask for help finding a job? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Clarissa
- B. Richard
- C. Hugh
- D. Sir William

Q.3 What is Peter trying to do in London? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Reconnect with Clarissa
- B. Avoid an Indian creditor
- C. Arrange his lover's divorce
- D. Execute his father's will

Q.4 When Peter falls asleep in the park, what does he dream about? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Places he may travel
- B. Various images of women
- C. Being Elizabeth's father
- D. Reliving his youth

Q.5 When they were young, Peter saw that Clarissa treated Richard with a \_\_\_\_\_ affection.

- A. Maternal
- B. Sexual
- C. Sisterly
- D. Childish

Q.6 When Septimus sees Peter approaching, he believes that he is seeing \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. His dead friend
- B. His dead father
- C. His dead brother
- D. A dead German soldier

Q.7 Richard once said that reading Shakespeare's sonnets was like \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Seeing God's face
- B. Dying of boredom
- C. Drinking rare wine
- D. Listening at a keyhole

Q.8 When she was young, who did Clarissa see killed by a falling tree? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Her mother
- B. Her father
- C. Her sister
- D. Her brother

Q.9 When Septimus's friend and officer, Evans, was killed, what did Septimus feel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Loss
- B. Anger
- C. Loneliness
- D. Nothing

Q.10 What does Septimus blame for condemning him to death for his inability to feel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. The German army
- B. His marriage
- C. Human nature
- D. Alcohol

## 20.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Justify *Mrs. Dalloway* as a stream of consciousness novel.
- b) Analyze Woolf's narrative technique in *Mrs. Dalloway*.
- c) Examine Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* as an illustration of interior monologue technique.

## 20.8 ANSWER KEY

### Self-Check Exercise

1. third-person omniscient
2. Clarissa
3. *Mrs. Dalloway* began with Clarissa's preparatory errand to buy flowers
4. Peter
5. Elizabeth is Clarissa's daughter
6. Septimus Warren Smith
7. Richard
8. Septimus Warren Smith

### SAQs

- 1. D
- 2. B
- 6. A
- 7. D

- 3. C                    8. C
- 4. B                    9. D
- 5. A                    10. C

**20.9 SUGGESTED READING**

1. Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Canterbury Classics, 2022.
2. *A Study Guide for Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway*. Cengage Learning Gale. Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2017.
3. Patel, Vimal B. "Stream of Consciousness Technique Used in Virginia Woolf's Novel *Mrs Dalloway*." *Research Guru: Online Journal of Multidisciplinary Subjects*, vol. 13, no. 1, June 2019, pp. 280–283, <https://www.researchguru.net/volume/Volume%2013/Issue%201/RG36.pdf>

**VIRGINIA WOOLF : *MRS. DALLOWAY*****STRUCTURE**

- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 21.3 Woolf as a feminist writer
- 21.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 21.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 21.7 Answer Key
- 21.8 Suggested Reading

**21.1 INTRODUCTION**

Virginia Woolf was determined to create a new form of literature that was more internal, a savoring of experience, and a departure from traditional storytelling. Her work *Night and Day* was published in 1919, followed by *Jacob's Room* (1922). The latter was a Stream of Consciousness novel that, according to the *Penguin Companion to English Literature* breaks down experience into a series of rapidly dissolving impressions that merge together. *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), one of her best known works, takes place in one day of the main character's life, fleshing it out in flashbacks taking place within her consciousness. In *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Woolf explores the concept of time and change as it relates to personality. *Orlando* (1928) takes the main character through several lifetimes, changing genders as he/she moves through time.

**21.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to make the learner familiar with the feminist aspect in the novels of Virginia Woolf. The lesson aims to discuss some of the significant works composed by Virginia Woolf and explore the various issues concerning women, thereby establishing her as a feminist writer.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to analyse Virginia Woolf's works in the light of feminist criticism. You will also appreciate Virginia Woolf as a writer whose works contain a multifaceted exploration of feminist issues.

**21.3 WOOLF AS A FEMINIST WRITER**

Although a friend and mentor of Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster was perhaps the first to attack her feminism. In his famous lecture on Mrs. Woolf, Forster finds feminism "responsible for the worst of her books – the cantankerous *Three Guineas* – and for the less successful streaks in *Orlando*. There are spots of it all over

her work, and it was constantly in her mind.” Forster admired her *A Room of One’s Own* but felt that there is “something old fashioned” about her subsequent concern with the status of women. “By the 1930’s she had much less to complain about and seems to keep on grumbling from habit.” Three things clearly emerge from Forster’s criticism of Woolf’s feminism. First, that feminism makes her work inferior; second, that her feminism is “oldfashioned;” third, that Forster’s use of words like grumbling, “habit,” etc., betray his “mainly” attitude towards women, a conventional gender bias, implying the inferiority of the “other sex.”

Forster’s criticism of Mrs. Woolf’s feminism is rather dismissive, unwilling to consider her case in the context, impatient to pass judgement. For instance, Mrs. Woolf did not write *Three Guineas* in a vacuum. It does not raise an out-dated cry for the voting right to women, but draws on a spirit of resentment which was in some ways peculiar to the 1930’s intensified as it was by the effects of the depression, by certain aspects of Fascism, and by a popular misuse of sexual psychology.

In her considered opinion, the disabilities of women were nothing but a part of malignant conspiracy by which educated women are “the weakest of the classes in the state.” Her specific grievances demonstrate that these weakness are not illusory : women do not fill the top rank in the Civil Service or the Church; their hold in the universities is precarious; they are “stateless” in the sense that they take their nationality from their husband; and their slavery as housewives is unpaid.

Unlike the present-day feminists, who are much more aggressive in their posture and believe in all kinds of activism including the political, to secure rightful place to women in every respect, Woolf disliked feminists and was suspicious of organized political activity for women. This can be clearly felt in the caricatures of Evelyn Murgatroyd in *The Voyage Out*, Julia Hedge in *Jacob’s Room*, Mr Claxton and Mrs. Seal in *Night and Day*, and in the decidedly grudging approval allowed to Peggy (the doctor) in *The Years* and Mary Datchet (who is perhaps the only feminist in the literal sense) in *Night and Day*. As Ruth Gruber, cited earlier, remarked, Virginia Woolf could not forgive women who adopted a “warrior attitude.” How far the feminist movement has come can be noted from the title of Ruth Prawar Jhabwala’s *Get Ready for Battle*, which in fact, is not among the recent. Compared to the present-day feminists, Woolf sounds a member of the “genteel” generation, sharing her sensibility with James and others for whom “culture” of sensibility was above all considerations in human life.

A commentary on Virginia Woolf by Bernard Blackstone reminds us, with characteristic sensitivity, that she values individual life irrespective of gender:

“The great duty of the individual is to be himself, to be honest with himself, and not to judge others. Tolerance is the supreme virtue, we must learn to let others alone.”

Now, if we place side by side the dicta of ‘to live one’s femininity’ and ‘to learn to let others alone,’ as is done in *A Room of One’s Own*, they are tantamount to a positive activity: that of being a mute commentator, or commentator by example, on the actions of men. Virginia Woolf’s instinctive rejection of “The Warrior attitude” can be traced all through her work. We can see how indignant she is with women such as, head-mistresses and principals of colleges because they have abdicated, in her opinion, their specialized role for which their femaleness equips them by adopting male standards. In her view, women must not try to emulate men, for they have a better role of their own to perform. She makes her view clear both explicitly as well as poetically. Women, in her view, can give men a “renewal of creative power” by the contact of contrasting ways of life, and for this reason women’s education should “bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities.” In her description of a young couple meeting and taking a cab Virginia Woolf symbolizes, in a rare moment of unqualified generosity, the ideal state of men and women.

Compared to *A Room of One’s Own*, there is greater of the “warrior” in *Three Guineas*, in which the essential point is, itself, not pacific as it is in the former. In the better-known “feminist” book of Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, the point being emphasized is that by their presence and “indifference” women can renew a sense of life (and of the importance of life) in men, and, thereby, protect them from their own instinctual lust for war and death.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia, a feminist author does not even ask men for cooperation; she only asks for the liberty to live (as a woman) her own feminine life to the full. Men are only asked not to make attempt to re-order their lives, but only to remove the obstacles from hers. The obstacles that she particularly finds in the path of female writers such as, their lack of education, the lack of privacy, the constant distractions, and the interruptions attendant upon life at home, the lack of economic independence, and the use of chastity as fetish to prevent women from expressing themselves freely. This last is also complained in the paper *Professions for Women*, where she decides "the extreme conventionality of the other sex." More obstacles included in *A Room of One's Own* are the lack of a tradition of significant relationships between women in English fiction, and the instinctive male dislike of publicity for women.

This gender concern, that women must have the freedom to develop their own personalities, reappears (of course divested of its anger) in most of Mrs. Woolf's novels. In this regard Forster's structure, "there are spots of it all over her work," seems justified. Beyond this fact Forster's remarks do not seem to have much relevance in understanding the novels of Mrs. Woolf. For instance, her novels do not get impaired, as Forster alleged, by bringing in her feminist concern into their bodies. On the contrary, it is this very concern of her that gives her novels a special status and a firm tone. In both, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* a young woman attempting an escape from a suffocating domestic world forms the centre of the action. The effects of the "chastity fetish" are exemplified by Rachel (in *The Voyage Out*), who when awoken to the facts of life exclaims: "that's why I can't walk alone." She "saw her life for the first time a creeping, hedged-in thing.... dull and crippled for ever." In the theme of escape and fulfillment which runs through these two novels, both written around the time of the 1918 Reform Act, one is made to feel that the atmosphere of vigour and resentment that surrounded the suffragettes has had some influence. Apart from the portrait of Mary Datchet there is little direct reference to the suffrage movement, but Virginia Woolf conveys a certain indignation when Dalloway, as the average male, says: "may I be in my grave before a woman has the right to vote in England." This is from Woolf's novel *The Voyage Out*. Then, there is Hewet who comments on the "curious, silent, unrepresented life" of women. This too, is from the same novel.

In the next three novels, her best known and most representative, Mrs Woolf's concern with the obstacles in the path of women relaxes, as it seems appropriate to the sense of relaxation among all intellectual women following the 1918 act. In *Clarissa Dalloway* (*Mrs Dalloway*), particularly, we have the portrayal of a woman who has fitted so snugly into the limitations of being a female that the awareness of these limitations shrinks into the background.

No doubt, the two major female characters of Woolf - Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay - are not feminist "warriors," yet if Mrs. Dalloway is a woman who is "feminine" within the intention of *A Room of One's Own*, who withdraws her life to such an extent that she is free to round it out and make it perfect within its own limitations, Mrs. Ramsay is "feminine" within the intention of *Three Guineas*. The way in which the contrasting ways of life of the two sexes are enriched by contact, and the way in which the male and the female modes of creation, the one an agitation of the brain and the other an outpouring of life, must inevitably conflict, is expressed with a surge of conviction in this novel (*To the Lighthouse*). Mrs. Ramsay's creative power is seen as a "delicious fecundity, this foundation and spray of life" (the expressions are very much Lawrencian) into which "the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a break of brass, barren and bare" (it again echoes Lawrence). Mrs. Ramsay comforting her husband anticipates, on the domestic level, all the sweetening and civilizing of male life that Virginia Woolf was to urge as the feminine role in *Three Guineas*. In *A Room of One's Own*, there are passages describing the role of a woman which closely resemble those in *To the Lighthouse* and *Three Guineas*. In all of these, the woman "renews creative power" in the man and makes her house a work of art, in which "the very walls are permeated by [her] creative force." The present-day Feminists would not accept all this; they would find Woolf's picture of woman rather conventional that subordinates her to the other sex, showing only her usefulness for the master, the male. They would firmly insist on equality of sexes, no subordination or secondariness of the female to the male.

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is a different kind of novel altogether, a special case. So far, we have been trying to show that "feminism," as we understand it today, is not applicable to Woolf largely because her novels emphasize the differences rather than the similarities between the sexes. Yet this fantasy, *Orlando*, in which a woman lives three hundred years and spends her first century as a man, seems to be a fable in which the author implicitly denies that there is any essential difference between the sexes.

It needs to be noted here that *Orlando* was immediately followed by *A Room of One's Own*. We also need to note that the later work, originally called *Women and Fiction*, was conceived as "a lecture to the Newhamities about women's writing." Both works are, then, out of the same mould, and the focus of *Orlando* is specifically on woman as writer rather than woman as entity (as in *Mrs Dalloway*, for example). The central thread of the work is Orlando's poem, *The Oak Tree*, which takes the full three hundred years of Orlando's life to be written, and the historical settings are taken from literary history, and certainly not from history in the sense in which it is used in *The Years*. Also, the question after *Orlando* has become a woman is essentially over her liberty to write, and the concern with her liberty to govern her own life is only incidental to this.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Composed: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Grumbling: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Inferiority: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Vacuum: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Peculiar: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Genteel: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Conspiracy: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Grievances: \_\_\_\_\_

The central concern integral to the entire work of Virginia Woolf is the androgynous nature of the literary mind. The persistence of this concern is the more interesting for her reluctance to insist on it categorically. "Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine" and "in fact, one goes back to Shakespeare as the type of the androgynous mind," is how she phrases it in *A Room of One's Own*, and this is an oddly tentative expression of something which is fundamental in her work. In *Orlando*, to take the immediate case first, the same point is expressed, through the fantasy and the fable, with complete conviction. Orlando as a woman is far more understanding, far more knowledgeable, and, therefore, far better equipped to write, than if she were wholly female. This is expressed in the knowing conversations that she has with Nell the prostitute, whom Orlando (now an eighteenth century lady) visits disguised as a man, and the wide amorous experiences she has as a bisexual Regency rake; "for the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally." When she meets her Victorian husband (a blend, probably, of all the Romantic poets into "Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine") they promptly recognize in each other the androgynous writer's mind: "an awful suspicion rushed into both minds simultaneously. 'You're a woman, Shell!' she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried."

Despite the marriage of Orlando and Marmaduke Banthrop Shelmerdine, one is left with the feeling that the marriage of a woman writer is almost a fraud: "If one still wished, more than anything in the whole world, to write poetry was it marriage? she had her doubts." This, perhaps, accounts for Mrs. Woolf's hesitancy over "the type of the androgynous mind." She loved and admired women like the ideal woman of *Three Guineas*, like Mrs. Ramsay, and like old Mrs. Swithin of *Between The Acts*; women who live with men, sweetening them and making life into an art. Yet, taken to its logical conclusion, the position is at odds with this: in these works woman must withdraw her life from man, rounding it out and making it complete within itself. Woolf's

reluctance to make this act in any way aggressive - to make it an act of rejection - is clear from the emphasis she places on this “withdrawal”: Mrs. Dalloway’s mounting the stairs to her narrow bed, Orlando retiring from life into the privacy of his/her look-out post under the oak tree, and the unnamed woman writer of *A Room of One’s Own* insisting on five hundred a year and a private room to write in. Yet rejection of the male is necessarily implicit in this withdrawal, and it is more firmly implied in her theme of the androgynous mind.

## 21.4 LET US SUM UP

*Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) is the most popular novel of Virginia Woolf. This novel has been translated into a number of languages including French, Danish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish etc. David Daiches has praised and remarked *Mrs. Dalloway* as the first wholly successfully novel that Virginia Woolf produced. Joan Bennett has branded it as “one of her four most satisfying novels”. E.M. Forster has said in the *Criterion*, “it is perhaps her masterpiece.” Set in a post-war society grappling with the aftermath of the conflict, *Mrs. Dalloway* employs stream-of-consciousness narrative techniques, allowing readers to delve into the minds of its characters. Her prose is marked by its poetic and introspective qualities, offering a nuanced exploration of the complexities of human consciousness. Published during a period of significant cultural and social change, the novel is celebrated for its innovative narrative style and its portrayal of the inner lives of its characters. *Mrs. Dalloway* has become a canonical work of modernist literature.

The novel depicts a single day in June from the perspective of a number of characters. The year is 1923. The Great War is over, but the memory of its unprecedented destruction still hangs over England. In a posh part of London, a middle-aged woman plans a party. She goes out to get flowers. A man whom she refused to marry drops by for a visit. She is snubbed by an acquaintance. She remembers an alluring girl she once kissed. Later, guests pour into her house for the party. In the midst of all this, she hears news of a stranger’s violent death. In between these modest plot points, Clarissa Dalloway wanders around London, lies down for a rest, and takes note of Big Ben striking out the hours again

## 21.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q.1 How does Septimus think of soldiers? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Heroes            B. Schoolboys
- C. Slaves            D. Sheep

Q.2 What does Sir William prescribe for Septimus’s depression? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Laudanum                      B. Travel with Rezia
- C. Talking with other veterans    D. Weight gain and rest

Q.3 Why won’t Septimus confess the crime that is torturing him? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. He can’t remember it            B. He’s ashamed
- C. Rezia would leave him            D. He’s afraid

Q.4 What does Rezia think of Sir William? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. That he’s a genius            B. That he’s handsome
- C. That he’s not nice            D. That he’s too generous

Q.5 Sir William’s attempt to help people conform to social norms is a \_\_\_\_\_ masquerading as brotherly love. \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Desire for power            B. Scientific cruelty
- C. Sadistic habit            D. Snake oil

Q.6 What does Richard think Lady Burton should have been? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. A general      B. An actress
- C. A blacksmith      D. An artist

Q.7 When Lady Burton asks for help in writing a letter to the newspaper, what is the cause that interests her? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Poverty in the city      B. Emigration to Canada
- C. The Falkland Islands      D. Indian independence

Q.8 What does Lady Burton call Hugh when she is delighted with him? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. My Prince      B. My Lord
- C. My Prime Minister      D. My Hero

Q.9 When Richard looks at jewelry for Clarissa, what is he struck with? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. His love for Clarissa      B. The cost of everything
- C. The nature of class      D. The emptiness of life

Q.10 What does Clarissa conclude is her reason for throwing parties? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. She is shallow      B. She wants attention
- C. She loves life      D. She's scared of loneliness

## 21.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Discuss Virginia Woolf as a feminist writer.
- b) What does Woolf mean by "a room of one's own"?

## 21.7 ANSWER KEY

### SAQs

- 1. B      6. A
- 2. D      7. B
- 3. A      8. C
- 4. C      9. D
- 5. A      10. C

## 21.8 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. Hafley, James. *The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as a Novelist*. University of California Press, 2022.
- 2. Freedman, Ralph. *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity*. University of California Press, 2024.
- 3. Hebert, Aiden. "Virginia Woolf's Legacy of Gender Equality and Activism." *Trinity Tripod*, Trinity College, <https://trinitytripod.com/arts/virginia-woolfs-legacy-of-gender-equality-and-activism/>.

**VIRGINIA WOOLF : *MRS DALLOWAY*****STRUCTURE**

- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 22.3 *Mrs. Dalloway's* Structural Pattern
- 22.4 The Story
- 22.5 Symbols, Imagery, and Metaphors in the Novel
- 22.6 Key Metaphor in the Novel
- 22.7 Characters in the Novel
- 22.8 Role of Septimus
- 22.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.10 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 22.11 Examination Oriented Questions
- 22.12 Answer Key
- 22.13 Suggested Reading

**22.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Mrs. Dalloway* chronicles a June day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway - a day that is taken up with running minor errands in preparation for a party and that is punctuated, toward the end, by the suicide of a young man she has never met. In giving an apparently ordinary day such immense resonance and significance - infusing it with elemental conflict between death and life - Virginia Woolf triumphantly discovers her distinctive style as a novelist.

**22.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the plot as well as the characters of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. The lesson also aims to offer certain analytical perspectives to the novel such as the important symbols, images, and metaphors used by the writer.

After going through this lesson, you will be able to summarize the novel *Mrs Dalloway* and describe the various important incidents shaping the plot. Further, you will get to know about the various symbols and metaphors that have enriched the text and you will be able to explain their significance to the plot. Additionally, you will list the major characters and also explain the role played by them in plot development.

### 22.3 MRS. DALLOWAY'S STRUCTURAL PATTERN

*Mrs. Dalloway* is not a conventional novel that depicted external reality of incidents and characters woven together into a plot involving those characters in a tragic or comic situation arising out of a logically arranged pattern of incidents. Using the new ideas of Henri Bergson and William James about the simultaneity of time and the associational (not logical) functioning of the human mind, Virginia Woolf came out with a new novel form where the conventional elements of plot and character, setting and situation were totally discarded. Her firm belief was that if a writer wanted to depict full reality, it could not be done within the predetermined framework of 'genre' or its subsidiary concepts of plot, character, etc. As she put it :

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions-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 that of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer was a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he want, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it.

A few things that become clear from this passage about Woolf's theory of the novel are: first, that she is going to write about men and women, not heroes and heroines; two, that her field of interest would be the internal thoughts and emotions, memories and recollections of these men and women, not their external incidents and characters; third, that she would not follow the conventional theories of genres or decorum or unities, and that she would 'freely' write about what she feels; that, her fiction would have its own form determined by the very stuff of the mind she would unfold in her composition.

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* illustrates it all, for it projects the inner life of not so distinguished a woman - her thoughts and feelings, recalls and memories, aspirations and frustrations - as she prepares herself for the evening party she has to arrange at her place.

### 22.4 THE STORY

Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, has a story, however scattered and unsequenced, and some characters, however ill-matched and disconnected. By conventional standards, the novel has a fragmentary dramatic design, in which the dramatic sequences are connected through a single metaphorical nucleus, in which the key metaphors are projected and sustained by a continuous web of subtly related minor metaphors and harmonizing imagery. Once this design can be seen as also the vision of life it implies, it can be appreciated as for why *Mrs. Dalloway* takes the form it does, why as a story the novel has properly no beginning or ending. It opens one morning with Clarissa Dalloway in the midst of preparing for a party. The major event of her day is the return of Peter Walsh, the man she had almost married instead of Richard Dalloway, a successful member of Parliament. Clarissa and Richard have a daughter, Elizabeth, who is temporarily attached to a religious fanatic, a woman with the Dickensian name of Miss. Kilman. There is also in the novel another set of characters who at first seem to have no connection with Clarissa and her world: Septimus Smith, a veteran of the First World War, and his Italian wife, Rezia, a hatmaker by trade. Septimus, who is suffering from shellshock, is being treated - somewhat brutally - by a hearty M.D., Dr. Holmes. During the day of Clarissa's preparations, Septimus visits Sir William

Bradshaw, an eminent psychiatrist, who recommends rather too firmly that Septimus should be taken to a sanatorium. In the late afternoon, as Dr. Holmes comes to take him away, Septimus jumps from the balcony of his room and gets killed.

That evening, Sir William Bradshaw reports the story of his death to Clarissa's party.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, it's time to take a break! Go through the exercise given below to check your progress:

1. *Mrs Dalloway* makes use of the new ideas of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. *Mrs Dalloway* has a fragmentary dramatic design. (True/False)
3. The novel opens in the night time. (True/False)
4. When the novel opens, Clarissa is preparing for a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Clarissa Dalloway is waiting for the return of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Clarissa and Richard's daughter is named \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Septimus Smith is a veteran of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ reports the story of Septimus Smith's death to Clarissa's party.

## 22.5 SYMBOLS, IMAGERY AND METAPHORS IN THE NOVEL

Now, any one who has read the novel would feel the story he has heard and the novel he has read do not quite square with each other. One feels that to put the novel's happenings in the form of a conventional narrative is to lose the peculiar texture of Woolf's book. The ebb and flow of her phrasing and the frequent repetition of the same or similar expressions, through which her characteristic rhythmic and metaphorical designs are built up completely disappear. The words and phrases, images and metaphors and symbols keep recurring, forming a pattern and a rhythm, offering a new form of fiction altogether. The repeated word does not occur in a conventional metaphorical expression, and its metaphorical value is felt only after it has been met in a number of contexts. Woolf's most characteristic metaphors are purely symbolic.

It can be indicated from the adjective "solemn" how a recurrent expression acquires its special weight of meaning. If we can see how metaphor links with metaphor, we can also get a notion of the interconnectedness of the entire novel. The word "solemn" appears on the very first page of *Mrs. Dalloway*:

How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen....

It is then echoed on the very next page, in the first account of Big Ben's striking (an important passage in relation to the whole novel):

For having lived in Westminster - how many years now? Over twenty, - one feels even in the midst of traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air.

Now, we can see how the word "solemn," which in its first appearance on the opening page had only a vague local meaning of "something awful about to happen," is now connected with a

more particularized terror, the fear of a suspense, of a pause in experience. Each time that “solemn” is repeated in subsequent descriptions of Big Ben, it carries this additional meaning. The word appears three times in the afternoon scene in which Clarissa looks across at an old woman in the next house:

How extraordinary it was, strange, yes, touching, to see the old lady (they had been neighbours over so many ears) move away from the window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her. Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn.

And if we move a little further in the novel:

... Big Ben... laying down the law, so solemn, so just... on the wake of that solemn stroke which lay flat like a bar of gold on the sea.

In the early morning scene near the end of the book, we see Clarissa going to the window, again seeing the old lady, thinking, “It will be a solemn sky ... it will be a dusky sky, turning away its cheek in beauty.” In the passage, there is some suggestion in the imagery of Big Ben’s stroke coming down and marking an interruption in the process of life. By the end of the book, we see the significance in the use of “solemn” on the first page in a passage conveying a sharp sense of freshness and youth. The terror symbolized by Big Ben’s “pause” has a connection with early life, “... one’s parents giving it into one’s hands, this life, to be lived to the end.” The “something awful... about to happen” was associated with “the flap of a wave, the kiss of a wave”; the “solemnity” of life is a kind of “seatererror” (so Shakespeare might express it in *The Tempest*). Wave and water images recur in other “solemn” passages: “the wave,” “the wake,” “the leaden circles dissolved in the air.” Thus, through a chain of various associations, the word “solemn” acquires symbolic significance in the story of the novel. Some terror of entering the sea of experience and of living life and an inexplicable fear of a “suspense” or interruption.

Thus, it can be seen that in *Mrs. Dalloway* the novel’s meaning is contained in a web of metaphors and symbols with various associated images around them, one leading to another, a cluster gathering into a significance, finally related to the psychological state of mind of the central character in the novel. Also, we need to carefully note that in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the metaphor that links the continuities (such as “solemn”) and give unity to the novel’s dramatic design is not a single, easily describable analogy, but two complementary and extremely complex analogies which are gradually expressed through recurrent words and phrases and through the dramatic pattern of the various sequences. Also, even though these recurring words and the sequences they create are salient in relation to all the major characters, they are best interpreted from the sequences related to Clarissa Dalloway, the novels’ central figure. This is so because it is her experience which forms the focal point of the reader’s attention.

Looking for these little poles in the novel’s design of sequences one discovers that one of the two metaphorical poles of the novel emerges in a passage that comes just after the first account of Big Ben’s striking:

Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest trumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can’t be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In people’s eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jungle and the strange high singing of some over plane over head was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June.

Here, as it seems evident, the key phrase in the passage is “they love life,” and what is meant by “life” and “loving it” is indicted by the other metaphors surrounding it, such as “building it,” “creating it every moment,” “the swing, tramp, and trudge” - and also by the various images of sights, sounds, actions.

## 22.6 KEY METAPHOR IN THE NOVEL

The crucial metaphor in novel, especially with reference to Clarissa's narrative, is twofold : the exhilarated sense of being a part of the forward moving process and the recurrent fear of some break in this absorbing activity, which is symbolized by the "suspense" before Big Ben strikes. We are to feel all sorts of experiences qualified as at once "an absorbing progression." Such in crudely schematic terms are the two analogies which make up the metaphorical nucleus of the novel. As has been indicated earlier, this complex metaphor is expressed through a large number of variant minor metaphors and images. Here is one such instance:

Quiet descended on her, calm, content, as her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them, very lightly, to the belt. So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying "That is all" more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, that is all. Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking.

Note carefully, how the opening statement expands the wave simile in a metaphorical bloom which expresses in miniature the essence of the novel. The quiet, calm, and content (Clarissa's absorption in what she is doing) and the rhythmic movement of the needle are the points in the immediate situation from which the two main meanings of the key metaphor grow. The comparison between sewing and wave movements draws in these further levels of meaning, thanks to the nice preparation of the earlier scenes and the delicate adjustment of those that follow. There the wave and sea images which have been appearing when Clarissa recalls the terror of early life or when she hears Big Ben's solemn stroke merge into each other. Much later in the novel, there is Clarissa at her party scene, the waves mainly symbolize Clarissa's complete absorption in life: "That is all" - the phrase she had used twice while shopping and which had come back in her musings on "the solemn progress up Bond Street." At this moment, there is nothing for the heart except the process, and the individual becomes a mere percipient body, intensely aware of the immediate sensation. But the moment has a dual value, as suggested indirectly by the allusions to solemnity and terror. Thus, the reader is fully prepared for the return of "Fear no more" which clearly suggests freedom from interruption, meanings which are dramatized in the scene that comes immediately after.

Clarissa's quiet, we find then, is rudely shaken by the sound of the front-door bell. Note how Woolf expresses it:

"Who can - what can," asked Mrs. Dalloway (thinking it was outrageous to be interrupted at eleven o'clock on the morning of the day she was giving a party), hearing a step on the stairs. She heard a hand upon the door. She made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy.

Here, the mature Mrs. Dalloway, feeling an interruption, by the return of her former lover, Peter Walsh, responding to the interruption "like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy," echoes another analogy in the novel, which is simply a special aspect of the "life" metaphor. This may be termed as the "destroyer" theme. Peter's temporary presence destroys Clarissa's domesticity, even her marriage. As a lover Peter had allowed her no life of her own. Clarissa reasserts herself and her life by calling after him as he leaves, "Remember my party tonight." Peter is one of those who would cut her off from her way of living by making her into another person: he is one of the "destroyers of the privacy of the soul." Here, it will not be out of place to recall that in Hawthorne and James and, in fact, even later in the American tradition, such persons are portrayed as evil characters - Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* and Gilbert Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady* belong to that type.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, compulsion of this sort is a special form of the "suspense" in life's exhilarating process. The "suspense" may be fear itself, or the sense of time's passing, or death, or a failure in personal relationship,

or, finally, the loss of independence with results from love or hatred or officiousness. What deserves special attention is the remarkable extent to which the novel's central metaphor penetrates and organizes the novel's pattern. The dramatic sequences of the major characters are all connected with Clarissa's through a shuttling pattern of verbal reminiscences. Although "life" is peculiarly the key figure in Clarissa's experience, it has some, if not the same, importance in that of other characters, including Septimus and Miss Kilman, who are unable to live as Clarissa lives. We can recall here Hemingway's "lost generation" people, majority of whom get "broken" by the war, but some, such as, the Hemingway hero, emerge stronger at the broken points. While Septimus and Kilman get broken, Clarissa emerges stronger at the broken points.

### **Activity**

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Courage: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Subsidiary: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Genres: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Stuff: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Swing: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Tramp: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Trudge: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Solemn: \_\_\_\_\_

## **22.7 CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL**

Dear Learners: An Introduction to the Characters in Mrs Dalloway

### **Clarissa Dalloway**

Clarissa Dalloway is the central character of the novel, and the narrative mainly follows her thoughts and perceptions. As she prepares to host a party, her mind moves freely between past and present. She is lively, socially aware, and concerned about how others see her. Clarissa often reflects on the meaning of life and happiness and feels both joy and fear about existence. She struggles to balance her desire for personal independence with her need for emotional connection. Throughout the day, she revisits her youthful decision to marry Richard instead of Peter Walsh and remembers her intense bond with Sally Seton.

### **Septimus Warren Smith**

Septimus Warren Smith is a war veteran who suffers from severe psychological trauma after World War I. Married to Lucrezia, he feels alienated from society. Like Clarissa, he struggles between isolation and the need to communicate. Unable to endure the oppressive values of society and medical authority, he ends his life, becoming a tragic symbol of war's mental devastation.

### **Peter Walsh**

Peter Walsh is Clarissa's close friend and former lover who once wished to marry her. After her rejection, he left England and lived in India, returning to London after many years. Peter often regrets the past and struggles with romantic relationships. His character represents passion and uncertainty.

### **Sally Seton**

Sally Seton is Clarissa's closest friend during youth and represents liberty and rebellion. As a young woman, she challenged social conventions and shared a strong emotional and romantic bond with Clarissa.

### **Richard Dalloway**

Richard Dalloway is Clarissa's husband and a Conservative Member of Parliament. Richard believes in social reform but also respects English traditions. His character represents conventional masculinity and provides Clarissa with security rather than passion.

### **Hugh Whitbread**

Hugh Whitbread is an old friend of Clarissa and a symbol of traditional English respectability. He is proud of his appearance and social position but lacks depth and self-awareness. Through Hugh, Woolf satirizes the superficiality and vanity of upper-class society.

### **Lucrezia Smith (Rezia)**

Lucrezia Smith is Septimus's young Italian wife who endures great emotional suffering due to her husband's illness. Once cheerful and energetic, she becomes anxious and lonely in England. Rezia represents the silent suffering of those who care for the mentally ill.

### **Elizabeth Dalloway**

Elizabeth Dalloway is the only child of Clarissa and Richard. She is calm, observant, and uninterested in social glamour. Elizabeth prefers the countryside and spends much time with her teacher, Miss Kilman.

### **Doris Kilman**

Doris Kilman is Elizabeth's history teacher and a deeply religious woman who harbors resentment toward the upper class. She feels humiliated by poverty and social exclusion and strongly dislikes Clarissa.

### **Sir William Bradshaw**

Sir William Bradshaw is a powerful psychiatrist who believes mental illness results from a lack of balance and discipline. His methods emphasize control rather than compassion. Through his character, Woolf criticizes authoritarian oppression.

### **Dr. Holmes**

Dr. Holmes is Septimus's physician who dismisses his mental illness as insignificant. His cheerful ignorance and lack of empathy worsen Septimus's condition. He represents society's refusal to acknowledge psychological suffering.

### **Lady Bruton**

Lady Bruton is a commanding woman of high social rank. Though confident in public matters, she depends on men to express her ideas formally. Her character highlights gender inequality in political life.

### **Miss Helena Parry (Aunt Helena)**

Aunt Helena is Clarissa's elderly aunt and a representative of strict Victorian values.

### **Ellie Henderson**

Ellie Henderson is Clarissa's poor and socially awkward cousin who feels out of place at the party.

### **Evans**

Evans is Septimus's close friend who died during the war. Septimus continues to see him in hallucinations, showing the lasting psychological effects of trauma.

Virginia Woolf seems to have deliberately set up a contrast between the characters of Clarissa and Septimus

- the one who finds a meaning in life by committing herself to certain pattern of living and the other, who unable to connect and commit himself to any pattern, is sucked by the vacuum created by the experience of war. While Clarissa generally feels her inclusion in everything and only occasionally feels *outside*, Septimus is almost always “alone” and unable to connect with the world about him. He had “felt very little in the war,” and “now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these thunder-claps of fear. He could not feel.” Rezia, his wife, is his refuge from fear, though like Clarissa she too has moments of panic when she cries, “I am alone; I am alone!” But she is shown as having some of Mrs. Dalloway’s gift for active enjoyment, and through her Septimus is, for once, able to recover his power of feeling and to enter into the real life around him. The moment comes near the end of his narrative, in late afternoon, as he lies on a sofa while Rezia is making a hat. The writing in this scene shows remarkably the way in which the novelist moves from one narrative plane to another via image and metaphor.

Just before this scene is the episode of Elizabeth’s bus ride, with “this van; this life; this procession.” We find that later these very metaphors are echoed in a long description of cloud movements which cast changing lights on the moving buses; the transition to Septimus takes place as he watches the “goings and comings” of the clouds. The movements and colours referred to and the verbal rhythm (“watching watery gold glow and fade”) prepare us easily for the return of the wave and sea imagery of Clarissa’s and Peter’s monologues:

Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air; the sound of water was in the room and through the waves came the voices of birds singing. Every power poured its treasures on his head, and his hand lay there on the back of the sofa, as he had seen his hand lie when he was bathing, floating, on the top of the waves, while far away on shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more.

Here, we can see how the last words anticipate the next phase of the scene. Septimus watching Rezia sew a hat, loses himself for a moment in his interest in her activity; “She built it up, sewing is decidedly symbolic.” Septimus begins to take note of actual objects around him, as Rezia extends him assurance that real things are real: “There she was, perfectly natural, sewing.” The words, “There she was” (as also the last sentence of the novel) are an exact repetition of one of Peter’s earlier remarks about Clarissa, where they signified her “extraordinary gift, that woman’s gift, of making a world wherever she happened to be.” Septimus’s participation in life is interrupted, as was Clarissa’s, by one of the compeller’s, Dr. Holmes. His suicide is a protest against having his life forcibly remade by others.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, the previous sections made you familiar with the various symbols, images, and metaphors that have been used by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*. You can give the following points a quick glance so that the contents of the previous sections are revised

- In *Mrs Dalloway*, the various words, phrases, images, symbols, and metaphors recur offering a new form of fiction.
- The novel’s meaning is contained in an intricate web of metaphors and symbols related to the psychological state of mind of the central character.
- Virginia Woolf has set up a contrast between the characters of Clarissa and Septimus. Clarissa always feels inclusion while Septimus is always alone.
- Septimus’ suicide is a protest against having his life forcibly remade by others.

## 22.8 ROLE OF SEPTIMUS

Septimus Smith is a complex character who is not easily understood. He went to war in order to defend his country, in an attempt to exert his masculine, protective traits, but he came up short. During the duration of the

book, Septimus seems to be on an emotional rollercoaster. He moves around from being contentedly happy with his circumstances, then goes on to feel anxious and fearful. Septimus Smith's war experiences severed his ability to cope with daily life. After witnessing the horrors of the war and the death of his friend Evans, Septimus finds himself disconnected and unfeeling. His inability to come to terms with his relationship with Evans and the loss of his ability to feel eat away at him- he panics and impulsively marries an Italian girl Lucrezia and returns home to England - a lastditch effort to break through to the world - but regrets not loving or ever loving her. Septimus outwardly acts as one would expect a senile person to do- shouting randomly, snapping at his wife without reason, and being generally unstable (threatening to kill himself in public). He is very removed from the world around him; not being able to connect with anyone in the real world and instead living in his own mind, where he contemplates the world in a deeper sense than most of the other characters in the book. He is often overwhelmed with the beauty he sees in the world, which is first exhibited when he begins crying at the sight of an airplane writing a message into the sky. Though Septimus believes he has no feeling, he actually has an excess of it. He is too sensitive for the world in which he lives. Like his wife, he is a foreigner, but in terms of social conformity, rather than national identity.

Dr. Holmes has been treating Septimus, although he does not take his patient's problems seriously; nor does Septimus have any respect for Dr. Holmes. Conversely, Sir William Bradshaw immediately sees there's a problem with Septimus. The only trouble is that his philosophy of wellness-based on Proportion and Conversion- has a creepy scientific and inhuman sound to it, and involves Septimus being placed in one of his mental homes, away from everything he cares about. Septimus is clearly affected by post-traumatic stress disorder, but the only mention Bradshaw makes of damage from the war comes at the party, where he says there should be some governmental provision regarding shell-shock. Under the care of these doctors, Septimus senses that they're part of the same authoritarian system that controlled the war. As these doctors see him, Septimus is a danger to society because he serves as a reminder of the damage of war, instead of the heroism. He must be put away so people can still believe in the grandness of English empire.

In the introduction to the 1928 edition of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf explains outright that Septimus and Clarissa are doubles. In fact, she originally planned to have Clarissa kill herself in the end. Both Septimus and Clarissa are disturbed by the social structure and oppressions of British life. They both love Shakespeare, and are both very attuned to life's deep meaning, and both have bird-like faces.

The two protagonists also share psychological qualities. Where Clarissa manages to feel nothing after witnessing the death of her sister, Septimus is also initially pleased with his manly, detached attitude toward the loss of Evans. Thoughts of death are central to both of them: Septimus thinks about Evans' death and Clarissa dwells constantly on her own. Both willingly participate in a lifestyle that validates imperialism, nationalism, and war. And while Clarissa manages far better than Septimus, they both manage to see beauty in the world in spite of the suffering and isolation.

Septimus succeeds in slapping convention in the face, but is only able to do so by killing himself. His death is experienced by Clarissa as an expression of defiance, a real communication of the self, from which she can benefit, too:

A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death.

Neither Woolf nor Clarissa consider Septimus' death a tragedy per se; it's more like the ultimate acknowledgment of the failures of the world around him - a bold rejection of tyranny and the only way to preserve himself. He therefore "plunges holding his treasure," as Clarissa describes it, which is to say that he has held on to part of himself and his dignity.

In the figure of Sir William Bradshaw, we get an almost allegorical representation of a “destroyer.” His talk of keeping a “sense of proportion” and his shrewd questions are a cover for his firm intention of getting patients to do what he thinks proper. There is a close relation, we are told, between preaching proportion and being a converter, for proportion has a sister, Conversion, who “feats on the wills of the weakly.” Clarissa, too, is pursued by Kilman. She ruins Clarissa’s enjoyment of life and is shown as having herself no capacity for delight. In the mock-heroic tea-table scene, she fails in her mother’s party. As Miss Kilman questions Elizabeth, we at once recall Mrs. Dalloway’s parting words to Miss Kilman and her daughter which are precisely those that she had used to Peter:

“Remember my party!” Her words are symbolic of defiance.

All of the related analogies that make up the key metaphor are combined near the end of the novel, at the point when Bradshaw tells Clarissa of Septimus’s death and when Clarissa, reflecting on its meaning, looks out of the window at the old lady going to bed. Bradshaw, a man “capable of some indescribable crime - farcing your soul, that was it -,” momentarily ruins her party (“in the middle of my party, here’s death, she thought...”). But Clarissa, at once, realizes that Septimus’s death has a further meaning in relation to his life and hers. By killing himself, Septimus had defied the men who make life intolerable, and though he had literally “thrown it away,” he had not lost his independence of soul. [One cannot help recalling here the case of Dimsdale in *The Scarlet Letter*, whose death, too, is a defiance of people like Chillingworth who are out to capture his soul]. This (in so far as it can be defined) is “the thing” he had preserved. By contrast, Clarissa had sacrificed some of this purity. She had made compromises for the sake of social success, “She had schemed: she had pilfered.” But she had not given in to Peter, and by marrying Richard, she had been able to make a life of her own. The delight, though impure, remained. The old lady, in her second appearance as in her first, symbolizes the quiet maintenance of one’s own life, which is the only counterbalance to the fear of “interruption” whether by death or compulsion.

Septimus’s plunge from the window is linked with those earlier windows and “the triumphs of youth” and, thereby, with the exhilarating and “solemn” sense of delight expressed through the central metaphor of the novel. The recurrence of a single word is a quiet indication of the subtlety and closeness of the structure which Virginia Woolf was “building up” as she wrote this novel. Thus, in order that we may be able to make sense of the novel, we must learn to see it differently, unconventionally, as a pattern of images and metaphors, scenes and symbols, all woven into a web of rich texture.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Subtle: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Triumphant: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Marvellous: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Subjugation: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Grandeur: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Superstitious: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Pervasive: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Glaring: \_\_\_\_\_

## 22.9 LET US SUM UP

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf uses a multifaceted narrative technique of direct and indirect narration which absorbs us completely and illuminates the thought and feeling of the protagonists. The three protagonists in *Mrs. Dalloway* are initially on different level of consciousness- physical, complex and neutral. But this

schematization diminishes when Clarissa and Septimus are diffused by their consciousness and Peter too finally reaches out to Clarissa's plane of consciousness. Their narrative thus concludes on a unitary whole. The novel commences with a glimpse into Clarissa's consciousness. Even though she was middle aged, "she felt unspeakably young" and "at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on".

Her soliloquies give us a glimpse of her inner being. Socially, she holds a supremely regal position but in reality, she is a warm and affectionate person, even though she tries to maintain a snobbish attitude in her social relationships. Virginia Woolf herself was a very lonely and forlorn individual. Her physical problems had deprived her pleasure of motherhood and a normal marital life. Thus in the role of Clarissa, she pervades this narration with her self-dejection. Clarissa achieves a sense of identity and finally Septimus's death redeems the hollowness, the corruption and the lies and the useless chatter of her life

## 22.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

- Q.1 After reconnecting with Clarissa, Peter feels that she has grown\_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. Kind and generous      B. More youthful and beautiful  
C. Tired and forgetful      D. Hard and sentimental
- Q.2 Who does Peter intend to ask for help finding a job? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. Clarissa      B. Richard  
C. Hugh      D. Sir William
- Q.3 What is Peter trying to do in London? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A.Reconnect with Clarissa      B. Avoid an Indian creditor  
C. Arrange his lover's divorce      D. Execute his father's will
- Q.4 When Peter falls asleep in the park, what does he dream about? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. Places he may travel      B. Various images of women  
C. Being Elizabeth's father      D. Reliving his youth
- Q.5 When they were young, Peter saw that Clarissa treated Richard with a \_\_\_\_\_ affection.
- A. Maternal      B. Sexual  
C. Sisterly      D. Childish
- Q.6 When Septimus sees Peter approaching, he believes that he is seeing \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. His dead friend      B. His dead father  
C. His dead brother      D. A dead German soldier
- Q.7 Richard once said that reading Shakespeare's sonnets was like \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. Seeing God's face      B. Dying of boredom  
C. Drinking rare wine      D. Listening at a keyhole
- Q.8 When she was young, who did Clarissa see killed by a falling tree? \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A. Her mother      B. Her father  
C. Her sister      D. Her brother

Q.9 When Septimus's friend and officer, Evans, was killed, what did Septimus feel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Loss                      B. Anger  
C. Loneliness      D. Nothing

Q.10 What does Septimus blame for condemning him to death for his inability to feel? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. The German army      B. His marriage  
C. Human nature              D. Alcohol

## 22.11 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Women characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* portray contemporary society. Discuss.  
b) How Septimus holds and advances *Mrs. Dalloway* as a narrative? Comment.

## 22.12 ANSWER KEY

### CYP

1. Henry Bergson, William James
2. True
3. False
4. Party
5. Peter Walsh
6. Elizabeth
7. First World War
8. Sir William Bradshaw

### SAQs

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. A  |
| 2. B | 7. D  |
| 3. C | 8. C  |
| 4. B | 9. D  |
| 5. A | 10. C |

## 22.13 SUGGESTED READING

1. Berman, Jessica. *A Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Wiley, 2016.
2. Black, Naomi. *Virginia Woolf as Feminist*. Corwell University Press, 2004.
3. Course Hero. "Mrs. Dalloway Study Guide." *Course Hero*, 28 Nov. 2016, [www.coursehero.com/lit/Mrs Dalloway/characters/](http://www.coursehero.com/lit/Mrs-Dalloway/characters/).

**VIRGINIA WOOLF : *MRS. DALLOWAY*****STRUCTURE**

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 23.3 *Mrs. Dalloway* as a Topical Novel
- 23.4 Woolf's Aesthetics of Fiction
- 23.5 Structure of the Novel
- 23.6 Woolf's use of Technique in the Novel
- 23.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.8 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 23.9 Examination Oriented Questions
- 23.10 Answer Key
- 23.11 Suggested Reading

**23.1 INTRODUCTION**

This novel is about an upper-class Londoner, Clarissa Dalloway, married to a member of Parliament. *Mrs. Dalloway* is essentially plotless; what action there is takes place mainly in the character's consciousness. The novel addresses the nature of time in personal experience through multiple interwoven stories, particularly that of Clarissa as she prepares for and hosts a party and that of the mentally damaged war veteran Septimus Warren Smith. The two characters can be seen as foils for each other.

**23.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the structure of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. The lesson also aims to familiarise you with Woolf's writing style, as well as some other important aspects of the novel which are significant.

After going through this lesson, you will critically analyse the structure of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. You will also appreciate the writer Virginia Woolf as well as her writing style. Additionally, you will be able to explain the various stylistic techniques used by Virginia Woolf in this novel.

**23.3 *MRS. DALLOWAY* AS A TOPICAL NOVEL**

Although Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is apparently one day's events, mostly memories in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, the heroine of the novel, it offers, however the picture of life in London in the 1920's. One needs to carefully note the wealth of details, through references and reflections about a cross-section of people

living in the city of London, the location of Mrs. Woolf's novel. It may sound surprising, but the fact is that Mrs. Dalloway is as much representative a picture of postwar London as Joyce's *Ulysses* is of post-war Dublin, or Eliot's *The Waste Land* is of post-war London. To an extent *Mrs. Dalloway* is a depiction of London life in the early 1920's, it is a topical novel grounded in the historical context of a nation's life, picturing a particular phase in that history. Such a novel is called a period piece or a topical novel.

Generally considered one of the architects of the stream-of-consciousness novel, or the psychological novel, Virginia Woolf is actually a novelist of sensibility. This sensibility, as in the novels of Henry James, is made the central consciousness of the novel, but what this sensibility registers and records, through an individual experience, encompasses the entire social life of its time. Woolf was well-versed in the writings of Proust, Joyce, and Dorothy Richardson, from whose works, she absorbed a good deal. No doubt, her peculiar contribution to the novel of subjectivity lay in her awareness from the very beginning that she could achieve given effects of experience by a constant search for the condition of poetry, her canvas was never restricted to matters strictly personal and private. The fact that she was highly influenced by James Joyce, known for his comprehensive view of the world, is by itself, enough to prove that she was as much interested in the large issues of life as in the private lives of individuals. We know how she was prompt to seize upon *Ulysses* as a transcendent work long before it was published and only a few chapters had been serialized. What she said about Joyce's work carries significance:

Mr. Joyce... is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of those signposts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see.... If we want life itself, here surely we have it.

Here, the last sentence is significant: "If we want life itself, here surely we have it." Obviously, Joyce, in her view, has given representation to life in *Ulysses*, life that he saw in the early twentieth century, and that Woolf as reader, at once, acknowledges to be the life she had seen around her. Whatever experiments the modernists might have innovated for representing real modern life, their focus remained representation. Virginia Woolf followed Joyce truly and wholly.

Woolf was to have reservations about Joyce, but these were to be, in effect, afterthoughts. In her early years, she was powerfully impressed by Joyce. Her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, published in 1915 and 1919, were conventional enough. The narrative proceeded in a traditional fashion and there was no attempt to go very far into the minds of the characters. There are, however, interesting portents of things to follow. In *The Voyage Out*, one of the characters observes: "What I want to do in writing novels is very much what you want to do when you play piano, I expect. We want to find out what's behind things, don't we? - Look at the lights down there scattered about anyhow. Things I feel come to me like lights.... I want to combine them." It makes clear that the representation of life in modern novel would be, not what we had seen in realism, rendering of surface life, but a rendering of life analyzed. In other words, Joyce and Woolf do give us realism, but it is analytical realism, which gives, along with representations, the reasons behind happenings on the surface. This deeper realism would move as much below the surface as it does on the surface.

#### **23.4 WOOLF'S AESTHETICS OF FICTION**

Thus, what we find in the novels of Virginia Woolf is the bright flame-like vividness of her books, which creates beautiful illuminated surfaces. There is no tragic depth in them, just as there is no tragic depth in the works of Joyce and Eliot. Instead, there is only the pathos of things lost and outlived, the past irretrievable or retrieved as an ache in the present. And in this, she was able to fuse the examples of both Proust and Joyce. One would naturally think of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* as a Joycean novel, diluted, and washed and done in beautiful water-colour. Similarly, *To The Lighthouse* is a Proustean novel in its time-sense, but again the medium is a kind of water-colour of the emotions.

Like Proust and Joyce, Virginia Woolf expressed her aesthetic of fiction. Once she had grasped the lesson of her two great predecessors, she seems to have known exactly how she would apply it. She tried to catch the shower of innumerable atoms, the vision of life, the “luminous halo.” It was her way of circumventing the clumsiness of words. She went on to specify:

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon that consciousness.... Any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express, if we are writer; that brings us closer to the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought, every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss.

No matter how much Woolf might assert the need to record the shower of atoms “in the order in which they fall,” she neither accepted that order, nor believed in describing their frequent incoherence. Her method was rather similar to that of the lyric poet, her interest being the sharpened image, the moment, the condensed experience. She saw the world around her as if it were a sharp knife cutting way into her being.

What she seems to have obtained from James Joyce is a certain sense of *oneness* and the isolation that resides within it: from him she learned how to give meaning to the simultaneity of experience. In this regards, *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot, *Ulysses* of James Joyce, and *Mrs. Dalloway* of Virginia Woolf follow the same subject and the same technique. London is to Mrs. Dalloway what Dublin is to Leopold Bloom. But her London is a large canvas background with light clearly playing over it and, unlike Joyce, her people are distillations of mind and flesh. Eliot’s London is the same as Woolf’s; both focus on what had gone wrong with the people in the post-war city of London. Clarissa Dalloway’s day in London, also a day in June, just as in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, begins at nine in the morning and finishes early the next morning. (Indeed, in most of Woolf’s fiction, time is reduced to a few hours, so that even in *To The Lighthouse*, where a number of years are bridged in the middle passage, “Time Passes,” it is but to link two single days at each end of that period.) Clarissa Dalloway walks through London, just as Leopold Bloom walks through Dublin, or as the reader is made to see different slides of London in *The Waste Land*. The people around Mrs. Dalloway form an encircling wave as she goes to Bond Street or strolls along the Green Park, while in the midst of the day the big bronze accents of Big Ben remind us of the ticking of mechanical time while we move in and out of Mrs. Dalloway’s mind and the minds of other characters in the story.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, stop for a moment. Before you proceed with the reading of the next sections, make a self-assessment of the content that you have read:

1. *Mrs Dalloway* records the events of one day in the life of which character?
2. What is the location of *Mrs Dalloway*?
3. How is *Mrs Dalloway* a topical novel?
4. Was Virginia Woolf influenced by James Joyce?
5. What kind of realism does Virginia Woolf deal with?
6. Do *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses*, and *Mrs Dalloway* follow the same subject and same technique?

### 23.5 STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

*Mrs. Dalloway*’s structure seems largely modelled on the multiple-scanned chapter in *Ulysses* which is held together by the progress of the vice-regal cavalcade through Dublin’s streets. We find ourselves in many minds in the London streets; we get to see through these minds the different faces of the city. However, the mind of Mrs. Dalloway, and that of Septimus Warren Smith, hold the centre of the book, just as do the minds

of Bloom and Dedalus in *Ulysses*. The complete inwardness of the novel, its restricted time-frame, the use of multiple views, so that we feel we have seen London through many eyes - and so are aware of it through many awarenesses - the glimpsing of certain characters and then the glimpse of them anew through the perceptions of the Joycean complexities. However, if Bloom and Dedalus are a pair of father and son who meet for a brief moment at the end of a long day symbolically, as Odysseus (in English Ulysses) met Telemachus after a lifetime of wanderings, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith seem to be two facets of the same personality - indeed, the projection by Virginia Woolf of two sides of herself. Mrs. Woolf's diary shows that she conceived Mrs. Dalloway as an attempt to show "the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side." And we know from the novelist's own preface to it that she first intended Septimus to have no existence: it was Clarissa who too die at the end of her London day and her brilliant party. Finally, she envisaged Septimus as a "double" of Clarissa.

But in what sense can he be the double of Septimus the insane, Clarissa the sane? What connections, one can ask, unified these two seemingly very different from each other? They never actually meet, not even by chance, very much like Bloom and Dedalus do not, although their separate paths converge during the day; and it is the doctor of Septimus, the clumsy inept Harley Street psychiatrist, who brings to Clarissa's party the little piece of news that Septimus has committed suicide. The breaking of this little news, a mere incident in a meta-city, far-removed from Clarissa, plunges her nevertheless into a deep fantasy and identification with the unknown man who is now no more:

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party - the Bradshaws talked of death.

So far, the incident is the intrusion of unpleasant reality, and Clarissa is hard at work trying to submerge her feelings. Then follows the identification:

He had killed himself - but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party!

This is Clarissa whom Peter had described as the "perfect hostess" and whom he had remembered as a girl, "timid, hard; something arrogant; unimaginative, prudish." There was a "coldness," a "woodenness," an "impenetrability" in her. But the reader knows better; he knows also that this facade of the perfect hostess submerges Clarissa who has intuitions and feelings which she can never fully confront. It is on the ground of the failure to feel that Clarissa and Septimus are each other's double. Septimus had choked feeling when his friend Evans was killed at his side during the war. He goes through life utterly numbed by this experience:

He could reason; he could read, Dante, for example, quite easily... he could add up his bill; his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then - that he could not feel.

We need to note here, how in a subtle manner, Woolf connects one individual with another, and both with the war, and then with the big city, creating in this manner an enlarging modern society in a big city where individuals live each in his/ her cell, with the world as much inside them as outside. And so these two principal characters dissociate experience constantly from themselves. Both, in their respective ways, are incapable of establishing a meaningful relationship with the emotional texture of life: Clarissa escapes by giving some slight play to her insights and intuitions, "If you put her in a room with someone, up went her back like a cat's; or she purred," but the façade of the perfect hostess remains untouched; the feeling submerged. Septimus escapes by trotting feeling and creating a new world within, filled with private demons and private terrors, from which he can only seek, in the end, the swift obliteration of consciousness.

*Mrs. Dalloway*, thus, poignantly puts across Mrs. Woolf's response to Joyce's success in reflecting how, in a big city, the modern inferno, people's paths cross and dramas go on within range of dramas, and yet, in spite

of innumerable points of superficial contact and relation, each drama remains isolated and each individual remains locked within the walls of private experience, within an isolated cell. We can recall here Eliot's use of the cell as a symbol of modern individualism and isolationism, and extreme alienation from society. The novel's brilliance as a poetic structure lies in the skill with which Mrs. Woolf weaves from one mind into another. For instance, Septimus sees in the park a man walking towards him and suddenly invests him with the aspect of another man and the man, Peter, who sees only a rather disturbed-looking Septimus and his anxious wife Rezia, without beginning to know what images have been flickering in Septimus's consciousness. This complex inner material could be hindered only by the use of brilliantly evocative poetic narrative. And this novel, like those that Virginia Woolf wrote after it, admirably illustrates the advantage of the symbolist technique in narrative fiction. We have only to think of a Zola or a George Moore creating Clarissa after the manner of their naturalist doctrines to understand the difference. In their version of her character, Clarissa would emerge as a commonplace woman, the façade described in great detail, but no hint of the fascinating and troubled and mysterious personality behind her exterior, the public self. Mrs. Woolf extended with remarkable skill and literary virtuosity the creation of a new type of novel that conveys inner experience, just as *The Waste Land* does in its own way. Woolf was capable of finding the words that would show the world through the minds of her central characters: and she participated fully in the significant shift of emphasis, initiated by Henry James, from the outer social world - as explored by Balzac or the naturalists - to the sensibility with which that outer world is appreciated and felt.

### Let Us Revise

Dear learner, the previous section acquainted you with the structure of *Mrs Dalloway*. Before proceeding to the next section, go through these points to quickly revise what all you read in the previous section:

- *Mrs Dalloway*'s structure seems largely modelled on *Ulysses*.
- Mrs Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith seem to be two facets of the same personality.
- Virginia Woolf poignantly puts across that each individual remains isolated and locked within the walls of private experience.
- *Mrs Dalloway* illustrates the advantage of the symbolist technique in narrative fiction.

## 23.6 WOOLF'S USE OF TECHNIQUE IN THE NOVEL

Virginia Woolf's peculiar technique, as exemplified in *Mrs. Dalloway* as well as other major novels, resides in the fact that the exterior objective reality of the momentary present which the author directly reports and which appears as established fact is nothing but an occasion. The stress squarely falls on what the occasion releases, things which are not seen directly but by reflection, which are not tied to the present of the framing occurrence which releases them. Here, one naturally thinks of Proust's work, where this sort of thing was done for the first time. We know how his entire technique is bound up with a recovery of lost realities in remembrance, a recovery released by some externally insignificant and apparently accidental occurrence. Proust describes the procedure he follows in his narratives more than once. Like Proust, Woolf, too, aims at objectivity; she wants to bring out the essence of events. She strives to achieve this goal by acceptance the guidance of her own consciousness - not, however, of his consciousness as it happens to be at any particular moment but as it remembers things. A consciousness in which remembrance causes past realities to arise, which has long since left present, sees and arranges that content in a way very different from the purely individual and subjective. Getting freedom from its various earlier involvements, consciousness views its own past layers and their content in perspective; it keeps confronting them from their exterior temporal continuity as well as from the narrow meanings they seemed to have when they were bound to a particular present.

The distinctive characteristics of the realistic novel of the era between the two great wars... - multipersonal representation of consciousness, time strata, disintegration of the continuity of exterior events, shifting of the narrative viewpoint (all of which are interrelated and difficult to separate) - seem to us indicative of a striving

for certain objectives, of certain tendencies and needs on the part of both the author and the reading public. One of these tendencies is particularly striking in the work of Virginia Woolf. She holds to minor unimpressive random events: measuring the stocking, a fragment of a conversation with the maid, a telephone call. Great changes, exterior turning points, let alone catastrophes, do not occur; and through such things do get mentioned in the narrative, it is done rather hastily, without preparation or context, incidentally, and as it were only for the sake of information.

At the time of the First World War and after certain writers discovered a method which dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness. That this method should have been developed at this time is not hard to understand. But the method is not only a symptom of the confusion and helplessness, but only a mirror of the decline of our world. There is, to be sure, a good deal to be said for such a view. There is in all the major works of modern literature - those of Eliot, Joyce, Woolf - a certain atmosphere of things falling apart. There is often something confusing, something hazy about them, something hostile to the reality which they represent. We frequently find a turning away from the practical will to live, or delight in portraying it under its most brutal forms. In *Mrs Dalloway*, there is an air of vague and hopeless sadness. We never quite get to learn what Clarissa's situation really is. Only the sadness, of lost love, and gained eminence, both dissatisfying at bottom - remembrance of love and solace nor leading eminence any enjoyment. The novel is full of good and genuine love but also, in its feminine way, with irony, amorphous sadness, and doubt of life.

And yet what realistic depth is achieved in every individual occurrence. Aspects of the occurrence come to the fore, and link to other occurrences, which, before this time, had hardly been sensed, and yet they are determining factors in our relatives. And in the process something new and elemental appears: nothing less than the wealth of reality and depth of life in every moment to which we surrender ourselves without prejudice. To be sure, what happens in that moment - be it outer or inner process - concerns in a very personal way that individuals who live in it, but it also (and for that very reason) concerns the elementary things which men in general have in common. It is precisely the random moment which is comparatively independent of the controversial and unstable orders over which men fight and despair; it passes unaffected by them, as daily life. The more it is exploited, the more the elementary things which our lives have in common come to light. The more numerous, varied, and simple the people are who appear as subjects of such random moments, the more effectively must what they have in common shine forth. In this unprejudiced and exploratory type of representation we cannot but see to what an extent - below the surface conflicts - the differences between men's ways of life and forms of thought have already lessened. The strata of societies and their different ways of life have become inextricably mingled. So the complicated process of dissolution which led to fragmentation of the exterior action, to reflection of consciousness, and to stratification of time seems to be tending towards a rather simple solution.

When all is said about the advantages of the method Virginia Woolf chose to adopt in her work, it will have to be added that neither in *Mrs. Dalloway* nor in any of her other novels does she stand back far enough to see the outline of important features of life; to shift attention from the crocus and the moment to society and the larger, historic flow of time, or to grasp experience not through the limitations of the window but from the expanse of the countryside. Neither *Mrs Dalloway* nor any other of her novels is informed by a sense of the really dramatic uses of juxtaposed and interacting prose and poetry.

Thus, the limitations of sufficient detachment notwithstanding, Woolf's representation of contemporary reality, through the novel technique of reflection through remembrance, bringing reality multilaterally through the parallel functioning of various consciousnesses of different characters. This novel technique does, of course, does take care for direct description or detail, but it does carry us beneath the surface of things to the very depth of events and affairs being recalled and reflected upon. Clarissa's consciousness piles up before us a vast panorama of contemporary life, relating to the years following the First World War, that we get no less a feel of that world than is given to us by Joyce's *Ulysses* or Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Modern techniques, of course, are sophisticated, demanding a good deal of developed consciousness. And to that extent, *Mrs. Dalloway* does not belong to the category of popular literature, such as the Victorian novel, or, in her own time, the work of Galsworthy. Those for popular form of simple literature would brand it elitist. We know how that elitist character



5. Septimus' friend \_\_\_\_\_ was killed at his side during the war.

- a. Peter
- b. Evans
- c. Richard
- d. Dr. Holmes

6. Woolf would show the world through the minds of her characters, a technique initiated by \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. Thomas Hardy
- b. Henry James
- c. Jane Austen
- d. Charles Dickens

### 23.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What are the aspects of Virginia Woolf's work which reflect the modern period of history between the two World Wars?
2. Discuss Woolf's use of the stream-of-consciousness technique in *Mrs. Dalloway*.
3. In what sense can we consider *Mrs. Dalloway* as a 'period piece,' or a 'topical novel,' presenting a picture of its time of writing?
4. What aspects of life are most favourite of Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*?
5. Discuss *Mrs. Dalloway* as a poem in prose.
6. Write a note on Woolf's use of image and metaphor in *Mrs. Dalloway*.
7. Examine the structural pattern of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

### 23.10 ANSWER KEY CYP

1. Clarissa Dalloway
2. London
3. *Mrs Dalloway* is a topical novel because it is grounded in the historical context of a nation's life
4. Yes
5. Analytical realism
6. Yes

### SAQs

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

### 23.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. Sellers, Susan. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
2. Fernald, Anne E. *The Oxford Handbook of Virginia Woolf*. Oxford University Press, 2023.
3. <https://socialresearchfoundation.com/new/publish-journal.php?editID=6572>.

**GEORGE ORWELL : *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR (1984)*****STRUCTURE**

- 24.1 Introduction
- 24.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 24.3 Life and Works of George Orwell
- 24.4 George Orwell's England
- 24.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 24.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 24.7 Examination Oriented Questions
- 24.8 Answer Key
- 24.9 Suggested Reading

**24.1 INTRODUCTION**

Eric Arthur Blair known by his pseudonym George Orwell is one of the most important literary figures of the twentieth century. He is particularly known for composing dystopian fiction in which he opposes totalitarianism. His best known works are *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

**24.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to acquaint you with the life of the author George Orwell. The lesson also aims to provide an overview of his literary career as well as the times during which George Orwell composed his works.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to describe the significant events in the life of George Orwell which shaped him as a writer. You will also be able to list the significant works composed by him which have established him as one of the significant writers of the twentieth century. Further you will be able to explain the kind of society to which George Orwell belonged which will help you to contextualise the writer and his works.

**24.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF GEORGE ORWELL**

George Orwell's original name was Eric Arthur Blair. He was born in 1903, at Motihari, in British-occupied India. His father, aged 46, named Richard Blair, was an agent in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service. His grandfather, too, had served in the Indian Army who had later become an Anglican clergyman. His maternal grandfather had been a teak merchant in Burma and later a rice-grower. When Eric Blair (George Orwell) was only four year old, the family returned to England and settled at Henley, though the father continued working in India until his retirement in 1912. Eric later wrote that he barely saw his father before he was eight. Eric's mother, eighteen years younger than her husband, bore their third child in 1908. The family was then comprised of two daughters and a son, born at five-year intervals.

When Eric was eight-year old, he was sent to a private preparatory school in Sussex and lived there, except in the school holidays, until he was thirteen. Thereafter, he went to two private secondary schools on scholarship, one at Wellington (only for a term) and the other at Eton, where he lived for four and a half years. Thus, during the entire period of his schooling, Eric remained away from home, except, of course, during the holidays. When he left Eton, the family moved from Oxfordshire to Suffolk. After his schooling, Eric joined the Indian Imperial Police for which he was trained in Burma. He served there for about five years, whereafter, in 1927, while home on leave, he decided not to return to India. His resignation from the Imperial Police became effective on the first day of 1928.

Until Blair grew twenty four years of age, his life, in all its visible details, was a training for membership in the administrative middle class of imperialist Britain. On both sides, his family had lived and worked in India and Burma, in the army, administration, and trade. His first adult literary work directly reflects this pattern. Also he had grown up with that characteristic absence of normal family life, in an England which was primarily a home base and a network of ruling-class schools. In 1927, when this pattern was broken, Eric found himself in an England where he had spent two-thirds of his life but always within institutions or, more rarely, in a family situation, which defined a particular set of social relationships. The political and cultural dominance of men with similar backgrounds and histories has been so marked, in the early half of the last century in Britain, that Eric Blair's growing up has been generally described as normal and orthodox. In any other terms, including those of the lives of most people in Britain, it was, in significant ways, strange and even alien. We need to remember and emphasize as we look at the next phase of his life. For what these amounted to were the making of a new set of social relationships and the creation, in an important sense, of a new social identity. This, in fact, is the critical evolution of Eric Blair into George Orwell.

If we look into the reasons for the first break, we find that they are decidedly complex, but two factors remain evident. In his adolescent period, Eric had been clear about his ambition to become a writer. He realized quite early in his career as an officer in the Imperial Police that it was an unsuitable profession for a writer. Not only that. He had also come to understand, as the available evidence shows, the politics of Imperialism and had rejected it. His resignation from the Imperial service indicated both of these realizations on his part. As he wrote at the end of his change, imperialism was an evil thing. Yet, while in service, his response was not as simple: he was stuck, as he later saw it, between hatred of the Empire he was serving and rage against the native Burmese who opposed it and made his immediate job difficult. Theoretically, he says, he was all for the Burmese and all against their British oppressors. Practically, he was at once opposed to the dirty work of imperialism and involved in it.

Some glimpses of Orwell's complex response to the colonial situation can be seen as continuing through the rest of his life. Yet what is also not less crucial, at the moment of the break, is his uncertain and ambiguous, relationship to England: the society he knows and belongs to, yet in other ways, except in abstraction, does not know at all. Thus it would have been possible for him to leave the Imperial Police and settle in England within the same class network. Had he been reacting against imperialism alone, this could have been the normal course. But the problem of relationship within England itself (his own country) was even more critical. Soon after his quitting the Imperial service, Orwell (then Eric Blair) went on what he considered as an expedition to the East End of London, to get to know the English poor. He hired in Notting Hill a room which he used as a base. Then, in the spring of 1928, he moved to a room in a working-class district of Paris. His favourite aunt, Nellie Limouzin, had lived in the same road in Notting Hill and was now living in Paris for the eighteen months of his stay there. The expedition to the East End was of a kind which he was later often to repeat: a journey of discovering of ordinary English life.

However, taking those first two and a half years of his new life as a whole, we can reasonably conclude that his main impulse was to establish himself as a writer. For that purpose the choice of Paris was characteristic of the time. Ten years later, he wrote that Paris in the later 1920's was "invaded by such a swarm of artists, writers, students, dilettanti, sight-seers, debauchees, and plain idlers as the world has never seen... in some quarters of the town the so called artists must actually have outnumbered the working population." Then "the

slump descended like another Ice Age, the cosmopolitan mob of artists vanished.” Here, it is important to note that Orwell shows the habit, characteristic of several phases of his experience of writing in these contemptuous terms of something of which he had himself been a part. He is believed to have written two novels which were lost in Paris, he did not have a happy time besides the two novels that were lost, he wrote there (and published) some articles in French and English. But he became ill with pneumonia, worked ten weeks as a dishwasher and kitchen porter, and then returned to England at the end of 1929.

Now, Orwell worked to establish himself as a writer from a different base in the next two and a half years. He used his parents’ home in Suffolk for writing and earned money from occasional articles and teaching. He completed several drafts of what was to become his first work, caned, not by his own liking, *Down and Out in Paris in London*. As he said, “I would rather answer to “dishwasher” than ‘down and out’ .” This work was, indeed, a record of his experiences, “but if it is all, the same to everybody I would prefer [it] to be published pseudonymously.” Since, he was earning his living as a teacher when his first work was due to be published, one aspect of this preference is understandable. But the question of a name, and the deeper question of an identity, had arisen before. He was still going on what he thought of as expeditions in England: living with tramps, with hop-pickers, and in working-class districts. Discussing the publication of *Down and Out in Paris and London*, he wrote to his agent in late 1932:

As to a pseudonym, a name I always use when tramping, etc. is P.S. Burton, but if you don’t think this sounds a probable kind of name, what about

*Kenneth Miles George Orwell*

*H. Lewis Always*

*I rather favour George Orwell.*

*[The Orwell is a river in Suffolk, south of his parent’s home.]*

This first fictional work of George Orwell was published in 1933. He succeeded in the next three years in completing his establishment as a writer. He continued earning money from teaching, working in a bookshop, and reviewing. Around this time, he also began living for longer periods away from his parents’ home. *Down and Out in Paris and London* was followed by the novel *Burmese Days*, published first in America, not in England, because his English publishers feared that the work would give offence to its Burmese readers. Then in quick succession followed two more novels, *A Clergyman’s Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936). The same year he married one Eileen O’Shaughnessy, an Oxford graduate in English, a teacher and journalist, and later a London graduate student in Psychology.

George Orwell’s reputation at this time, as writer and journalist, was based mainly on his accounts of poverty and depression. His expeditions and then his convincing reports had given him a particular though limited identity in the literary world. He had first broken his orthodox social relationships and then for irregular periods but consciously and recurrently, dropped out of them. What he brought back, into a class-conscious culture and at a time of general poverty and depression, were reports from a world that seemed as distant in experience as Burma. His next work was a commission in this precise identity: an enquiry, for the Left Book Club, into the life of the poor and unemployed.

But when George Orwell received this commission in 1936, the year was marked by a crisis and change in quite a different direction. While the commission perpetuated his previous identity as a writer, his way of fulfilling it, in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, marked his entry to a new project altogether, as a political writer, which was to last the rest of his life. For while the first part of this work is the kind of reporting that he had been asked for and that he could do so well, the second part is an essay on class and socialism which is, in effect, the very first statement that Orwell made of his basic political position. Reiterating his strong opposition to imperialism and the class system, he now adds a commitment to socialist definitions of freedom and equality. But he also attacks at the same time most forms of the organized socialist movement and, in particular, the various kinds of English middle class socialists.

Orwell had made the journey to Lancashire and Yorkshire in February and March of 1936, before settling at Wallington and opening his shop in the afternoons. He was married in June that year. During the summer and autumn of that year he wrote his book (*The Road to Wigan Pier*). But in July, the Spanish Civil War broke out, and by the end of the autumn Orwell was making preparations for being there in Spain, first to collect material for articles, but then also to join the war for the rights of the people. Shortly, after his arrival in Barcelona, the capital city of Spain, he joined the militia of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación, Marxista), and was in action with them in January 1937. Later, he transferred to the British independent Labour Party contingent serving with the POUM, became a corporal and later a lieutenant, and was wounded in the middle of May. In the April of the same year, he had tried to join the International brigade in Madrid, but became involved in the conflict between the Republican authorities and the POUM. Also, again, after his convalescence, he became personally involved in this conflict when the POUM was declared illegal. He got out into France in the month of June.

This intense and rewarding experience of war and revolutionary politics, just as in the case of the American writer Ernest Hemingway, hardened his position in several ways. Of course, it did not make him anti-communist although he is presented as such by a vast majority of vested interests in literature and literary criticism. In fact, several years before the Spanish Civil War, Orwell had rejected the Soviet-style Communism as a possible commitment. Yet he had made a serious attempt to join the International Brigade, in the crisis of Spain, and it was primarily his personal experience of Communist-POUM rivalry that sharpened his anti-communism to a more positive position. He also became, at the same time, for the next two or three years, a revolutionary socialist. *The Road to Wigan Pier* in which he had attacked most orthodox British socialist positions, including what he knew as Marxism, had been published in March 1937, while he was at the front in the Spanish Civil War. However, soon after he returned from Spain, he took up the writing of his next work, *Homage to Catalonia*, which completed his break with the orthodox Left. This latest work of Orwell was published in April, 1939. In July, he joined the Independent Labour Party, in which he continued until the early months of the war.

Around this very time George Orwell was eager to visit and be in India once again in order that he did another book on the subcontinent. But the fortune did not favour him; he fell ill with tuberculosis in the winter of 1938. As a result, he had to be removed to a sanatorium, where he remained until the late summer. With a loan from L.H. Myres (a contemporary novelist, famous for *The Near and the Far*) he then went to spend the winter in Morocco. He returned to England (from Morocco) in the spring of 1939. During the winter while in Morocco, Orwell wrote his fourth novel, *Coming Up for Air*. On return, he took to writing essays and articles, some of which continue to be considered among the best written by an Englishman.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Rage: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Swarm: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Phase: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Comprise: \_\_\_\_\_

Among his best-known-essays of the period are on Dickens, on Boy's Weeklies, and, as war was beginning, "Inside the Whale." While in Morocco, Orwell had also been writing letters sketching the possibility of an underground anti-war Left, as the only alternative to the slow drift into fascism in Britain. However, when war began he came to the conviction that "now we are in this bloody war we have got to win it and I would like to lend a hand." His wishes were not fulfilled because the army rejected him on the ground of physical unsuitability. At the same time, he found himself short of money once again as opportunities for occasional journalism declined. Consequently, he moved back to London in May 1940, and in the autumn of the same year wrote "The Lion and the Unicorn," an essay with the subtitle "socialism and the English Genius." From early

1941, Orwell started writing his now famous “London letters” for the American *Partisan Review*. In the August of the same year, he joined the BBC as a talks producer in the Indian section of the Eastern Service, where he stayed until late in the year 1943. He also served for a while in the Home Guard and as a firewatcher.

In more than one way, the year 1943 was a turning-point in the life of George Orwell. His mother died in the March of that year. He had to leave the Home Guard because of his long illness. He also left BBC to become the literary editor of *Tribune*, which, at that time, was being directed by Areurin Bevan. Thereafter, he also stopped taking regular book-reviewing. A really decisive moment in Orwell’s life, however, came when late in the year he began writing *Animal Farm*. He completed this famous novel by the end of February 1944. Several publishers declined to bring out the novel on the grounds of its political overtones. The novel did not, eventually, appear until August 1945, at the end of the war

Towards the end of the war in Europe (World War II), Orwell travelled to France and later to Germany and Austria as a reporter. In 1944, he and his wife adopted a son, but he lost his wife in March 1945. Her death was caused during an operation in hospital. He did keep the adopted child.

Later in the year (1945) Orwell made his first journey to the island of Jura off the Scottish coast. In 1946, he settled there, with his younger sister as house-keeper, though returning to London for the winter. His elder sister had died in 1946, and his own health was steadily deteriorating. During 1947, in the early months of renewed tuberculosis, he wrote the first draft of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and in 1948, amidst several attacks, wrote the second draft. By the end of that year Orwell was very seriously ill and was hardly to write anything else thereafter. The extraordinary commercial success of *Animal Farm* was to end the financial worries from which he had suffered as a writer, since that time of decision, nearly twenty years earlier, when he left the Imperial Police. But by the time this had happened he was already into his last years of recurrent illness and pain. In September, 1949 he went into hospital in London, and in October married Sonia Brownell. In January, 1950, he died.

Soon after his death Orwell became, in effect, a symbolic figure. He was one of those men whose life and writing were in practice inseparable, and who seemed to offer a style in which others could live and write. Some critical opinions have attributed this to his being a disillusioned, decent, and plain-living, anti-communist: a figure “the age demanded” (Pound’s words). No doubt, the promotion of this image of Orwell took place, but most people who had read him saw past it. We need to note here that Orwell was not respected only by people who had given up their commitment to radical social change and who were using his disillusion as a cover. There were lot of such people around that time. And there were others who didn’t even have to live the process through, who could take Orwell’s disillusionment. But there were just as many who began their political commitment from the point where Orwell left off, who agreed with him about Stalinism and about imperialism and about the English establishment, and it is in this detached view of Orwell that the value of his work lies.

Indeed the contradictions, the paradoxes of Orwell, must be seen as paramount. Instead of flattening out the contradictions by choosing this or that tendency as the “real” Orwell, or fragmenting them by separating this or that period or this or that genre, we ought to say that it is the paradoxes which are finally significant. No simple explanation of them will do justice to so complex a man (the more complex because he appears, on the surface, so plain). Some of the concepts needed for any complete explanation may not be within our reach just because of what we share with Orwell: a particular kind of historical pressure, a particular structure of responses and failures to respond. But two points can be suggested which may help adopt a more appropriate attitude to his work of fiction

First of these two points is, the key to Orwell as an individual is the problem of identity. Educated as he was to a particular consciousness, the key to his whole development is that he renounced it, or attempted to renounce it, and that he made a whole series of attempts to find a new social identity. Because of this process, we have a writer who has successively many things that would be unlikely in a normal trajectory: an imperial police officer, a resident or a casual word, a revolutionary militaryman, a declassed intellectual, a middle-class English

writer. And the strength of his work is that in the energy of his renunciation, he was exceptionally open to each new experience as it came. Different kinds of life flowed through him with only a minimal check from a more established identity, and the style he evolved – studied simplicity, letting the meaning choose the word, shows that while always travelling seriously, he was always travelling light. Yet in a period of exceptional mobility, this has positive as well as negative elements. Orwell could connect as closely and with as many different kinds of people as he did, precisely because of his continual mobility, his successive and serious assumption of roles. When he is in a situation, he is so dissolved into it that he is exceptionally convincing, and his kind of writing makes it easy for the reader to believe that this is also happening to himself. The absence of roots is also the absence of barriers.

As is evident from his various novels, Orwell tried again and again to affirm, putting his life on the line. That is, in fact, what makes him much more than a passive figure in this dominant structure of feeling. He shared it, but he tried to transcend it. As clearly as anyone in his generation, he sensed that this was, after all, a historical crisis, not a human condition of a metaphysical fact. His mobility, then, had a clear social intention. He was travelling light, but it was sureness of instinct, not chance, that took him to all the critical places and experience of his epoch. He was, in fact, not only a visitor, either, but a man wanting and hoping to join us. He made a single life contain, at first hand, the experiences of imperialism, of revolution, of poverty. He had no theory to explain them and no rooted positive beliefs extending beyond his own role. But with great stubbornness and persistence and courage he went to the centers of the history that was determining him, so that it might be experienced and differently determined. This, above, everything, was his individual achievement. He was the writer who put himself out, who kept going and taking part, and who learned to write as a function of this very precise exploration.

But it is, therefore, more than an individual history. Nobody who shared or overlapped with his epoch can, in good faith, reduce his crisis to personal development. There were important personal factors in his successes and in his failures, but some of the deepest contradictions are part of a shared history, and we cannot set ourselves above it, as if he were an abstract critical problem. The point is that he is one of those writers (another of his type being Hemingway) whose work cannot be understood and appreciated if detached from either the personal history of its author or the impersonal history of his age.

### Check Your Progress (CYP)

Dear learner, now that you are familiar with the life and works of George Orwell, you can check your familiarisation with the same by going through the exercise give below:

1. George Orwell's real name was \_\_\_\_\_.
2. George Orwell was born at \_\_\_\_\_ in India.
3. George Orwell's first work is titled \_\_\_\_\_.
4. *A Clergyman's Daughter* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ initiated George Orwell as a political writer.
6. George Orwell wrote \_\_\_\_\_ while he was in Morocco.

## 24.4 GEORGE ORWELL'S ENGLAND

D.H. Lawrence produced a title *England my England*, in reply to which Orwell wrote *England your England*. Orwell's contribution to the subject was his set of two essays, namely, "The Lion and the Unicorn" (1940) and "The English People" (1944). Near the opening of each of his essays, Orwell introduced the viewpoint of someone arriving in England. "When you come back to England from any foreign country, you have immediately the sensation of breathing a different air." "It is worth trying for a moment to put oneself in the position of a foreign observer, new to England, but unprejudiced, and able because of his work to keep in touch with ordinary, useful, unspectacular people." This strategy is, in fact, no more than a literary device.

For much of Orwell's writing about England is so close and detailed, his emphasis on ordinary English virtues so persistent, that he is now often seen as the archetypal English man, the most native and English of writers. At the same time, it is important not to forget the real history: the conversion of Orwell from Blair. For many of the ways in which he sees England are affected and sometimes determined by his history: born, educated, and taking his first job in a ruling-class network that was in some deliberate ways cut off from ordinary England; rejecting this network and setting out on his own to discover the country for himself.

In the same way, many of the ways in which Orwell values English life are affected and determined by this kind of journey. His notable attachment to what he saw as ordinary England is an act not so much of membership as of conscious affiliation. As will be seen, this affected his deepest imagination and his values. But, first of all, what we need to do is to look at the England to which he was reaching in the especial way. For he enjoyed in his history of England one special advantage: that he came to look at England within a knowledge of its empire: a point of view on this insular society which was in many ways penetrating. In 1939, Orwell wrote a piece called "Not Counting Niggers" about the plan for Federal Union which was geographically similar (and hence politically similar) to what we now know as NATO and the common market. What Orwell left out of the plan, rather in a convenient oversight, was the existence of huge colonial population controlled by the block. "What we always forget is that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat does not live in England but in Asia and Africa. This is the system which we all live on." And as Orwell wrote elsewhere, "I was in the Indian Police for five years, and by the end of that time I hated the imperialism. I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it."

What Orwell seems to suggest is that the eyes of the observer, of the man coming back to England, are eyes full of this experience of imperialism. But he is not coming to England in the same way as, say, 'Indian or an African student: to a foreign country about which he has only read (and dreamed). He has been educated here; his family lives here. He is aware of the internal structure of English society, but he is aware of it, from a class position which he has only theoretically rejected. At school, he said, he had "no notion that the working class were human beings. At a distance, "I could agonise over their sufferings, but I still hated them and despised them when I came anywhere near them. To the shock-absorbers of the bourgeoisie, such as myself, 'common people' still appeared brutal and repulsive."

This special position of Orwell, which was a sort of conscious double vision, is central to the novelist, and crucial to our understanding of his fiction. Time and again, we find, this crucial factor has been ignored by critics who read back from his later reporting, especially by those who share his kind of childhood and education but who have not undergone his subsequent direct revulsion from imperialism. It is almost impossible to convince critics of this hue, those who have received Orwell's kind of separated education, that they are not, in the most central ways, English. "For of course", as Raymond Williams argues, "the definition of 'England,' its myth and its ideology, has been for more than a century in just these hands. This is the class which does most of the writing, which direct not only its own but most other institutions, and which, travelling abroad, is known to most of the world as 'the English.' A world-view of England, we can fairly say, has been based on the characters of this tiny minority."

At the same time, it needs to be noted that as a minority, this class of educated, book-writing people, was not without its internal differences. The class, of course, has to be described as a ruling class, and at Orwell's time the ruling class of an empire. It was, however, only a part of this ruling class which was quite wholly in command: able to live on its property and investments, or to move directly into the central metropolitan institutions. A much larger part of this class was, actually, made to perform a harder and humbler function. This larger segment of the ruling-class had its education, essentially, for the purpose of working as servants of a system to which it belonged only as a class of functionaries. It were, in fact, the members of this segment of the ruling class who went out to the edges of the system facing its realities directly. Eric Blair (George Orwell) was born into what he later described, in precisely this very sense, the "lower-upper-middle-class."

Theoretically, a member of the ruling class, and sharing its insistent myth and ideology of “England,” Orwell and others like him were in practice on the outer edge of the system, in several ways. Being owners of no land or substantial property, they were dependent on their professional salaries which were in turn dependent on accepting the definitions of “profession” and “service” which the system as a whole had created. Often, in such a group of professionals, there can be seen a kind of over-adjustment to the very myths which offer to define their membership in the class as a whole. The fear of dropping out of the class of which they are literally the bottom edge can produce more rigid and more blatant definitions of their “England” than might be found at the relaxed and comfortable center. Orwell’s first appearance in print, at the age of eleven (when he was actually Eric Blair), was with a characteristic poem: “Awake! Young Men of England.” It is a boy miming a country and a role, unmindful of the implications of both, their true characters.

Seen from outside, as most of us must now see it, this position (the one held by Orwell at the time) generates a particular tension: that of the man who is simultaneously dominator and dominated, ruler and ruled, subordinating and subordinated. The tension can be overlaid by a miming rigidity that can come to serve as the whole personality. Or it can lead, as it did in the case of George Orwell, to crisis. In fact, it was this crisis that converted him from Blair to Orwell. And then the double vision, rooted in the simultaneous positions of dominator and dominated, is at once powerful and disturbed.

When George Orwell made his re-entry into England, that is to say, his Initial Impulse was negative: a rejection of the system and the ideology in which he had been educated and in which he had served. However, owing to the character of the system, there was no other England to which he could immediately take recourse to. He could only drop out of the one England and make expeditions to the other. When he summed up all of this towards the close of his journey, what he wanted to say was affected as much by the character of the negation as by the character of the subsequent and conscious affiliation. His statement on the problem he was faced with throws some light for our understanding:

*I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants.... It was in this way that my thoughts turned towards the English working class. It was the first time that I had ever been really aware of the working class, and to begin with it was only because they supplied an analogy. They were the symbolic victims of injustice, playing the same part in England as the Burmese played in Burma.*

Decidedly, what Orwell has stated here amounts to that form of *negative identification* in which approach and affiliation to a new group is merely a function he subject’s initial and formative social experience.

England, whose England? In Orwell’s early novel *The Road to Wigan Pier* the sense of the journey is still active; Orwell, like Disraeli, is describing the “two nations,” making discovery as to how (in that middle-class phrase) the “other half lives.” He is at once compassionate and indignant, drawn and repelled. He gives description of a country in which two-thirds of the population are working-class people at a time of depression and widespread unemployment. All the active arguments and images Orwell uses in his description are of contrasts, intolerable contrasts. “England,” as any simple idea, has been destroyed by these contrasts. The single image of his childhood has been replaced by the particularities, the variations, the inequalities, of mine and mill, slum and council house, caravan site and slagheap, teashop and Tudor villa. This is an active England, an England to move through.

The England of George Orwell’s later essays, written in war time, is quite different. It is not a question of its being more or less true than the England of his earlier writings. What is important about this England is that it is again, in some significant ways, single: “Economically England is certainly two nations, if not three or four. But at the same time the vast majority of the people feel themselves to be a single nation and are conscious of resembling one another more than they resemble foreigners.” The fact that Orwell is talking about England here is not surprising. It would presumably be true of any long-settled country. But in and through this unexceptional observation, George Orwell is, in fact, something else as well:

*England is the most class-ridden country under the sun. It is a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and silly. But in any calculation about it one has to take into account its emotional unity, the tendency of nearly all its inhabitants to feel alike and act together in moments of supreme crisis.*

Orwell wrote this in 1940, at a time of exceptional national unity under the threat of invasion. The last clause of the quotation here is more obviously acceptable than the preceding description of “emotional unity”, which makes a much larger claim. “England is...but.” is the recurring pattern of this argument, leading to a particular climax which comes “as near as one can...to describing England in a phrase.”

*a family with the wrong members in control.*

We know well that “in his description of England George Orwell was neither the first nor the last to say something like this. The statement’s interest is in where it comes on the scale of development. There is not much sense of a family or of emotional unity in the depressed and suffering England of *The Road to Wigan Pier*. There, the emphasis is clearly on the realities and consequences of a class society. What seems to have happened is that Orwell first moved through two phases of response to “England”: the myth of his boyhood - the special people, the “family”— was succeeded by the observations of his return, a scene of bitter and bleak contradictions. But, then, in a phase beyond these two, Orwell created a new myth which remained effective for quite sometime. Qualifying the original image with the facts of the economic and social inequality, he created the sense of an England of basic ordinariness and decency, a “real England.” “an everlasting animal stretching into the future and the past,” in which it can be seen almost as an accident, or at least as an evident archaism, that the “wrong members” of the family are in control.

George Orwell’s unprecedented influence since the 1940’s can be attributed as much to this powerful image as to any other single achievement. Also, it would not be so unprecedented if it did not contain some truth. His emphasis on the depth of civil liberties in Britain and on the feelings that support them is, in the world as he knew it and as we continue to know it, justified. His further emphasis on the gentleness and mildness of much ordinary English life, on these qualities being positive achievements in a world of killing and anger, is again reasonable. Certain kinds of informality, friendliness, and tolerance in much of everyday English life support his emphasis on “decency” as a virtue. But it is possible to know and acknowledge all these things and still, in analysis, go either way.

It can be seen from Orwell’s writing that he is closest to the truth when he describes these characteristics as part of a genuinely popular culture which “must live to some extent against the existing order.” Or again when he speaks of a “subtle network of compromises,” of adjustments through which certain virtues, certain achievements are maintained alongside certain evident and radical injustices. However, as we begin to define in these ways, it is seen that we are discussing very complicated relationships within a very complicated social fabric. It must be noted here that Orwell is quite aware of this complexity and duly emphasizes it, although he does not develop any kind of thinking which can sustain and extend a critical analysis of social and economic structures. He does collect evidences, often in quite sharp detail, and creates a sense of a climate, an atmosphere, which is decidedly memorable. But we very well know that social or economic structure is not a climate, that it can never be enough to say that certain virtues exist alongside certain injustices, as if they were contrasting facts of the natural world. In fact, the fact that Orwell commonly draws upon, in his social imagery, on the natural world betrays the shortcoming of his understanding of the social order. In any society, these facts are relationships of an active, historical, and developing kind. And, it is this kind of reality which Orwell’s image of England obscures.

Unfortunately, that remains a fact about Orwell’s method. But, as so often, the method ultimately depends on the writer’s point of view, or ideology, if you will. Orwell’s method of describing the faults of this “family” with the “wrong members” in control had also been influential. Class, for example, is described mainly in terms of differences and snobberies in accent, clothes, tastes, furnishing, food. And this seems to have become

habitual. In his *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell depicts the sinking middle class as realizing the identity of their interests with the exploited working class, would have “nothing to lose but our aitches.” Correspondingly, in the middle world of “The Lion and the Unicorn,” the prosperous workers are becoming “visibly... more middle class.” In this way of thinking Orwell prepared the orthodox political beliefs of a generation. For, of course, it is true that if class means only these differences in private social behaviour, differences that are often little more than superficial and trivial, a certain “classlessness” is inevitable in conditions of growing prosperity and extended education and communications. The difference from the old overt and vulgar display of class distinction is something any reasonable person would welcome. But by keeping the definition of class to these characteristics, which any prosperous industrial society will in any case erode, another set of facts, in which class is a powerful and continuing economic relationship - as between the owners of property and capital and the owners only of labour and skill - is effectively masked.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Paramount: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Tendency: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Amidst: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Despised: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Agonise: \_\_\_\_\_

What George Orwell fails to do is to go into the causes that put the “wrong members of the family” in control. Is it only a difference to their accents, their clothes, their styles of eating and furnishing? It may sound strange that we are compelled to make this point about a Orwell whose emphasis on the determining fact of money is so intense and even at times (in the thirties in particular) extreme. But, there is money in the pocket, and more money in more pockets will mean precisely the classlessness to which he refers. There is also, however, that quite different “money” which is capital, which is the ownership and creation of the means of social life itself. Here any question about control is inevitably a question about this ownership, which can indeed remain unaltered in any major way during a period in which the visible signs of class, the small change of the system, have been if not wiped out (for there is no sign of that happening, decades after Orwell wrote) at least modified, moderated, and evolved.

One of the most glaring aspects of Orwell’s weakness as an analyst of English society can be discerned in his discussion of what he still calls the ruling class. Here one can see that his initial attitudes get complicated, and for the same very reasons we have been discussing. His limitation is that he sees his own group, the service families, pushed down in importance by the growth of centralized bureaucracy and by the monopoly trading companies. Their vitality and initiative, thinks Orwell, have declined since the high point of Empire in the years just before he was born. At the same time, a part of the same class has become not merely frustrated but disaffected. This is his regular description of English middle-class intellectuals, especially left intellectuals shallow, negative, and out of touch with and against their own country.

But these middle-class, serving intellectuals Orwell sees as the outsiders. They do, of course, still belong to the ruling-class family but their status has now shifted to either as its servants or as its black sheep. The core of the ruling class is still there, and what is most remarkable about it, says Orwell, is its stupidity. In terms of the family, that is England, there are the “irresponsible uncles and bed-ridden aunts.” The image presented by Orwell in his writings, as it happens, admits no father. Decidedly, it is a beguiling picture. According to Orwell, what seems to have happened in the ruling class is only a decay of ability. Their position “had long ceased to be justifiable.” An “aristocracy constantly recruited from parvenus... there they sat, at the center of a vast empire and a world-wide financial network, drawing interests and profits and spending them - on what?” On nothing

useful, to be sure. “Only half a million people, the people in the country houses, definitely benefited from the existing system.” True enough, but what is remarkable is that it is seen as the “decay” of a ruling class as if that gang of aristocrats recruited from parvenus had ever had any different or more justifiable social aims. And the only real test of their “ability” would be, surely, their capacity to continue to impose themselves.

We need to remind ourselves the fact that it is easier to despise the ruling class than to hate and break them. Orwell’s comic uncles and aunts are a radical image, but to see the actual ruling class in that way is ultimately nothing short of an indulgence, dependent emotionally on the very middle-class image of England as a family. Once again, we can see, the naive myth has been qualified by some of its unacknowledged consequences and then, in a more acceptable form, in part restored. “Long ceased to be justifiable”- that presupposes an original justification, when the aristocracy was not bumbling and stupid but able, daring, and ruthless: No doubt, the rhetoric used by Orwell is quite radical, and so is the illusion it embodies. The estimate of aristocracy offered here is certainly sentimental and indulgent. It is also an underestimate, which has been a weakening factor of the British Left. Orwell can be seen nearer the facts of the society he was observing, when he writes with an anger, he usually reserves for his enemies on the left, of “the rat-trap faces of bankers and the brassy laughter of stockbrokers”, against which all social criticism broke.

The entire problem involved in Orwell’s attitude lies, for sure, in the original image of the family he so fondly uses in his descriptions of England. He hated what he saw of the consequences of capitalism, but he was perhaps never able to see it, fully, as a economic and political system. His great strength as writer in personalizing particular injustices was not supported by any adequate understanding of the very general forces involved in constituting and controlling that system. He did, of course, want, deeply and sincerely, to bring the “real England” to the surface, to turn the war into a “revolutionary war,” both defeating fascism and finishing capitalism. In fact, Orwell’s emphasis seems an understandable rhetoric of 1940, and it was quite widely shared throughout the war years. But, inside it, there is a special view of the system that is being opposed: an influential view, right through to the Labour government of the sixties, which later proves its inadequacy. The old system, with its aristocratic and parvenus stupidities, is seen as a top layer, to be replaced with “new blood, new men, new ideas.” The spread of the middle-class is seen as having made the old class analysis almost obsolete, and the working-class anyway is behind to be rapidly acquiring middle-class habits and ideas. The ruling class is seen as having become mere owners, their work done for them by managers and technicians. All that is then needed, it seems, is for all the decent members of the family - middle-class and working-class alike - to get rid of the outdated old fools in charge.

It is perhaps not George Orwell’s fault that he did not foresee the “England, England” of advanced capitalism. But it also remains an undisputed fact that he popularized a version of England - all the more effective because it was a version and not a theory, a mood rather than analysis susceptible of disproof- which in some of its very strengths and closeness has been in practice disarming. Thus, while Lawrence’s “England my England” is an assertion, a declaration of independence, a challenge, Orwell’s “England your England,” by contrast, is a version, a story, a dream. And when it bleaks, underpressure, it will become a nightmare.

## **24.5 LET US SUM UP**

Dear learner, Orwell’s & His works are marked by keen intelligence and wit, a profound awareness of social injustice, an intense opposition to totalitarianism, a passion for clarity in language, and a belief in democratic socialism. Orwell’s influence on contemporary culture, popular and political, continues decades after his death. Several of his neologisms, along with the term “Orwellian” — now a byword for any oppressive or manipulative social phenomenon opposed to a free society — have entered the vernacular.

## 24.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. How old is Julia? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. 26      b. 30
  - c. 32      d. 35
2. Winston commits thoughtcrime by writing which of the following in his diary? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. I HATE BIG BROTHER
  - b. DOWN WITH THE PARTY
  - c. DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER
  - d. DEATH TO BIG BROTHER
3. What piece of evidence of the Party's dishonesty does Winston remember having coming across several years earlier? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. A diary containing O'Brien's secret confession that Big Brother does not exist
  - b. A videotape from a telescreen showing Inner Party members burning historical documents
  - c. A tape-recorded conversation of Emmanuel Goldstein admitting that he is a Party operative, not a party enemy
  - d. A photograph proving that certain individuals were out of the country when they were allegedly committing a crime
4. What organization urges children to turn their parents over to the authorities? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The Party Youth      b. The Junior Spies
  - c. The Outer Party      d. The Committee of Oceanian Patriotism
5. The psychological principle that allows an individual to believe contradictory ideas at the same time is called what? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Doublemind      b. Thoughtcrime
  - c. Doublethink      d. Doublespeak
6. Who really wrote the manifesto that O'Brien gives to Winston? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Emmanuel Goldstein      b. Big Brother
  - c. Ayn Rand      d. O'Brien
7. What does O'Brien use to torture Winston in Room 101? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. A cage full of rats
  - b. A laser heat machine
  - c. A machine that causes full-body physical pain
  - d. Hallucinogenic drugs

8. Where do Winston and Julia make love for the first time? \_\_\_\_\_.
- The room above the antiques shop
  - The forest
  - Trafalgar Square
  - The beach
9. What is the last line of the St. Clement's Church song? \_\_\_\_\_.
- Here comes the Party, dear Winston, you're dead!
  - Here comes Big Brother to step on your shoe!
  - Until the mousetrap goes snap! on your head!
  - Here comes a chopper to chop off your head!
10. What does Winston trace in the dust on the table at the end of the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
- $2 + 2 = 5$
  - I love Big Brother
  - I love Julia
  - O'Brien

#### 24.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Briefly discuss George Orwell as a novelist.
- Discuss prose style of George Orwell.
- Is Orwell a Socialist or an Anti-Socialist? Discuss

#### 24.8 ANSWER KEY

##### CYP

- Eric Arthur Blair
- Motihari
- Down and Out in Paris in London*
- 1935
- The Road to Wigan Pier*
- Coming Up for Air*

##### SAQs

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

## 24.9 SUGGESTED READING

1. Crick, Bernard. *George Orwell. A Life*. Sutherland House Incorporated, 2019.
2. Bradford, Richard. *Orwell : A Man of Our Time*. Bloomsbury Publishing. Ebook, 2020.
3. Woodcock, George, and *The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*. "George Orwell." *Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 8 Dec. 2025, [www.britannica.com/biography/George-Orwell](http://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Orwell).

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**GEORGE ORWELL: *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR* (1984)****STRUCTURE**

- 25.1 Introduction
- 25.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 25.3 *Nineteen Eighty Four* : Characters
- 25.4 *Nineteen Eighty Four* : Summary
- 25.5 Orwell as a Political Novelist
- 25.6 Let us Sum Up
- 25.7 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 25.8 Examination Oriented Questions
- 25.9 Answer Key
- 25.10 Suggested Reading

**25.1 INTRODUCTION**

George Orwell, one of the most important writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has overtly dealt with political themes in his works. George Orwell's works are marked by a political consciousness and he offered a critique of totalitarianism in his works. It is because of these concerns in his works that he is characterised as a political novelist.

**25.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarise you with the summary as well as the important characters in the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*. The lesson also aims to acquaint you with George Orwell as a political novelist by focusing on his major works including *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

After reading this lesson, you will enlist the major characters in *Nineteen Eighty Four* as well as summarise the plot of the novel. You will be able to analyse George Orwell as a political writer whose works are marked by overt political undertones. You will also appreciate social concerns in George Orwell's novels which have wider social implications and are timeless in appeal.

**25.3 *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR*: CHARACTERS****Winston Smith**

Winston Smith is the protagonist of the novel. He is 39 years old when the novel begins and he works in the Outer Party. Winston is an intellectual and in spite of the Party's numerous ways to control the intellectual activities of the citizens, Winston still retains a sense of intellectual freedom as he rebels privately against the

totalitarianism of the Party. Unlike the rest of the citizens, Winston is able to perceive that the Party aims to completely control the lives of the people. That is why, although he is aware that the cost of dissent is very grave, he nonetheless, takes risk and not makes forbidden connections but also tries to contact others who might share his outlook on the Party.

### **Julia**

Julia is a young twenty six years old girl. She is also referred to as the The Dark-Haired Girl. Julia has a rebellious attitude and she is also practical. She largely remains uninterested in politics. She believes that secret disobedience if the only way to carry out revolt because the Party cannot be defeated by on overt resistance. She likes to break the rules and it is she, who initiates the forbidden romantic-sexual relationship with Winston. It is her courage which motivates Winston to take greater risks.

### **O'Brien**

O'Brien is a corrupt bureaucrat and a member of the Inner Party. He is a charismatic leader and he deceives Winston into believing that he is working against the Party. He, therefore, represents the corruption prevalent in the Party as well as the dehumanising despotism practised by the Party.

### **Mr. Charrington**

He is a member of the Thought Police. Winston rents a room from him for his clandestine meetings with Julia. He plays an important role in Winston and Julia's arrest as he deceives Winston into trusting him.

### **Big Brother**

Although Big Brother never makes an appearance in the novel, but this imposing figure retains an oppressive presence throughout. He is less of a character and more of a symbol who represents the totalitarian government of Oceania. Big Brother is not even a real person and he is just invented by the Party to develop people's feelings of respect, love, and fear towards this character.

#### **Check Your Progress I (CYP I)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the protagonist of the novel.
2. Winston Smith works in the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Julia is referred as the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Julia initiates a forbidden romantic-sexual relationship with \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is a corrupt bureaucrat and a member of the Inner Party.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ works as a spy for the Thought Police.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ represents the totalitarian government of Oceania.

### **25.4 NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR: SUMMARY**

The setting of the novel is in the future year of 1984 where the world is divided into three superstates namely, Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. These three superstates are in a continuous state of war. These superpowers keep the war continued because so that they can keep their economies productive. However, as a result of these continuous wars, the wealth of the citizens does not grow and they continue to live in poverty. The society has only a few privileged citizens who have accumulated the wealth.

Oceania is a territory made up of the coming together of the English-speaking countries. It is ruled by the political party, simply called The Party, which runs on the principles of a despotic oligarchy. The members of

the Inner Party make up about two percent of the population while the members of the Outer Party constitute about thirteen percent of the total population. The members of the Inner Party are for the purpose of governing while the members of the Outer Party unquestioningly and effectively execute the orders of the Inner Party. The rest of the population of Oceania, that is, roughly about eighty five percent constitutes the Proles, that is, the common people. The Proles are systematically ignored by The Party because they are intellectually not capable of bringing about an organised political revolution. Their mind and intellect has been controlled by the government in such a way that the prospects of a political revolution look highly unlikely. Additionally, the Party also keeps its citizens under severe political control and they live constantly under a state-controlled surveillance system. As a result, all the activities of the people, including the physical ones as well as the intellectual ones, are constantly being monitored. To maintain this extreme control on the citizens, arrests are made in every case of defiance to the political authority and that person is then systematically erased from society, the process described as ‘vaporizing’ in the novel.

Although access to the power centre of the party is strictly limited, the Party, nonetheless is represented by the figure of the Big Brother. Posters with Big Brother’s face on them are displayed almost everywhere in the region giving the citizens an impression that they are always under the watchful gaze of this figure of authority. Every citizen must carry a feeling of respect, love, and ultimate loyalty to the Big Brother.

Winston Smith is a morose member of the Outer Party. He lives in a single room flat in a dilapidated apartment complex which is named Victory Mansions. The nature of his job is to keep altering historical facts so that they suit the present government’s narrative. The purpose is to establish the present government as just and invincible, thereby to maintain its position of authority. Winston Smith is a gifted writer who works at the Ministry of Truth. His job requires him to rewrite news article in compliance with ideology of the Party. Winston keeps a diary, an activity which is punishable by death. Like all the rooms in the country, Winston’s room is also outfitted with a telescreen that can transmit sounds and images as well as receive them. It is because of this reason that Winston Smith is extremely careful in disguising his dissenting activities. Winston imagines that he is writing the diary to a charismatic bureaucrat of the Inner Party, O’Brien. Winston believes that O’Brien is a member of the Brotherhood, an underground counterrevolutionary organization. Writing is also necessary for Winston for another reason. He writes so that he can preserve his sanity. As everything is controlled by the Party, including reality, which means that the citizens are required to deny the presence of their senses, a practice in vogue under the leadership of the Party. This practice is called doublethink. As Winston cannot openly and freely talk to anyone in the country about the goings-on in his mind, he takes to the practice of writing the diary where he can give expression to his feelings.

One day, Winston Smith receives a small note from a girl on which ‘I love you’ is written. The girl is named Julia and Winston Smith mistakenly suspects the girl of being a spy for Thought Police, a government organisation whose work is to hunt and punish people who indulge in thoughtcrime, that is, any type of unorthodox thinking. As romantic relationships and sexual desire between couples is forbidden in Oceania, Winston gets terrified when he receives the declaration of love from Julia. However, keeping aside his apprehensions, he gathers the courage to talk to Julia and the two begin a love affair, something which is forbidden in Oceania. They start to regularly meet each other in the countryside, crowded streets, finally in a room which does not have a telescreens. The proprietor is Mr. Charrington and Winston believes that this person can be trusted because he retains reverence for the past.

However, Winston and Julia do not realise that they are being trapped as Mr. Charrington is a member of the Thought Police and had been working for the Party all along. Moreover, O’Brien deceives them into believing that he is counterrevolutionary. To prove this, he gives them a book written by Emmanuel Goldsmith, a former leader of the Party who is now living in exile. He has been denounced as a traitor by the Party. Naturally, reading a book written by Emmanuel Goldsmith is not permissible to be read in Oceania. As a result, Julia and Winston are arrested.

After their arrest, Julia and Winston are tortured by the Party and brainwashed in the Ministry of Love by O'Brien. Julia and Winston betray each other during the torture that takes place in the dreaded room 101. Consequently they lose their self-respect, sense of individuality, and sexual desire. As the Party releases them, they are required to live separately, carry on with their broken lives and live with a life-long allegiance to the Party as loyal Party members. Winston transforms as a person and he becomes an alcoholic. As the novel comes to an end, he is seen as lovingly looking towards the portrait of the Big Brother. He has at last learned to love the Big Brother.

### Check Your Progress II (CYP II)

Dear learner, now that you are familiar with the plot of *Nineteen Eighty Four*, you can make an assessment of your familiarisation by going through the exercise given below:

1. The setting of the novel is in the future year of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In the novel the world is divided into three superstates namely: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The superstate of Oceania is ruled by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The members of the Inner Party make up about \_\_\_\_\_ percent of the total population.
5. The common people, who constitute the majority of the population of Oceania are called \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The Party runs on the political principle of \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The process of systematically erasing people from society is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the figure of authority in Oceania whose posters are displayed everywhere.
9. All the rooms in Oceanian are fitted with a device called \_\_\_\_\_ to keep surveillance on people.
10. The torture room is called \_\_\_\_\_.

### 25.5 ORWELL AS A POLITICAL NOVELIST

Addressing the question of George Orwell being a political novelist is, at bottom, a question regarding the meaning of a writer for the generation of the 1910's to which Orwell belonged. The question, what does it mean to be a writer? is, in fact, an idea that, on analysis, is found to have a social history. In the case of Orwell, the definition of the writer is of particular importance, not only as a way of understanding his achievement and his influence, but also as a way of seeing a particular kind of literary-crisis, itself clearly party of a social crisis, at just the historical moment when he was learning to write. This historical movement was the late 1920's. What Orwell wrote seven years later is important to note in this context:

*On the occasion when Punch produced a genuinely funny joke, which was only six or seven years ago, it was a picture of an intolerable youth telling his aunt that when he came down from the university he intended to write. "And what are you going to write about, dear?" his aunt enquires. 'My dear aunt', the youth replies crushingly, 'one doesn't write about anything, one just writes.'*

Orwell goes on to say that the cartoon was a 'perfectly justified criticism of current literary cant.' But this comes in 1936. In fact, the problem was one that he was never quite sure about and that the state of literary argument in his period didn't help him resolve. He was always likely, for example, even late in his life, to make a distinction in *intention* between the writing of prose and the writing of verse. On closer scrutiny, this turns out to be a distinction between writing for the effect of the content and writing for the effect of the words. In prose, though not in all prose, the former is presumed to predominate.

Viewed historically, this distinction itself is the product of a divided aesthetics. Language, characteristically, is taken to be an agent rather than a source of experience. Or, to put it a little differently, content is taken to precede language, and the writer can then choose whether to reveal content directly or to work with words for their own sake. Even if we take it as merely a matter of emphasis rather than a rigid distinction, it is profoundly

misleading. For it is always the *relation* between experience and expression, in an individual writer and in the language and forms which he shares with his society, that is really decisive.

Looking into the growth of Orwell as a writer, we discover that he kept coming back to this problem, as he tried to direct and understand his development. In 1946, writing in "Why I Write?" he sketched his very early development, from fantasies with himself as hero to what he calls "more and more a mere description of what I was doing and the things I saw." Here, Orwell's use of "metre" is important. It is repeated and the things he sees as the next stage in his adolescent development, when he suddenly discovered "the joy of mere words, i.e., the sounds and associations of words." This way of seeing the literary problem remained important: not only in his development, but as one characteristic form of the underlying social crisis of his time.

In George Orwell's time, when he was growing up in the 1920's the writer as artist had no commercial aims, but also, at root, no social function and, by derivation, no social content. He just "wrote." And then as a self-defined recognizable figure, he lived outside society unconventional, the "artist." This development and polarization of the successful artist and the real artist—is a real social history. It is at the root of the conventional distinction between "content" and "form" in their effective modern senses. Orwell, too, in order to become a "writer," went to Paris: that is to say, to live "outside" society and "write". His choice as a "writer," we may now see, was in the other direction from that emphasis of the twenties. It can be said that he chose content before form, experience before words; that he became the socially conscious writer of the thirties rather than the aesthetic writer of the twenties. Certainly, to an important extent, that is how he saw it himself. But then, just as important, seeing the choice in this way he sometimes regretted it. In "Why I Write," for example, he said that a writer has four motives: sheer egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, political purpose. These sometimes contradict each other, and in degree and proportion will vary in all writers and in any writer according to his period.

In a different age, said Orwell, the first three motives would, for him, have outweighed the fourth. He would have written "ornate or merely descriptive books." But "as it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer." What has then happened, if we accept Orwell's account of his own position as writer, is a virtual invasion of his natural self, his natural writing, by an inevitable social and political reality. That he sees it as inevitable is of course important. How could a man, a writer, stand aside when such things were happening? But the form of this acknowledgement remains interesting. For it presupposes a situation in which a writer could choose whether to be exposed to a social and political reality. The bitterness of the thirties was that no decent man could choose not to be exposed. But this is nothing but a repetition of Orwell's original and persistent world-view. For him, men have their natures not innate natures but their formed adult selves which a social and political reality invades. His apparently limited statement about writing turns out, on relation, to be a very general statement about individuals and societies. The relation between "writing" and "reality" is a form of the relation between men and their history.

Orwell himself eventually generalized this problem, of "writer and society," in his late essay called "Writers and Leviathan":

*The invasion of literature by politics was bound to happen. It must have happened, even if the special problem of totalitarianism had never arisen, because our grandparents did not have, an awareness of the enormous injustice and misery of the world, and a guilt stricken feeling that one ought to be doing something about it, which makes a purely aesthetic attitude towards life impossible. No one, now, could devote himself to literature as single-mindedly as Joyce or Henry James.*

This account of the invasion is quite revealing. Totalitarianism, active interference with writers, is a special problem, but underlying it is something more general, a social conscience. And that is an invasion? It would be easy to say that almost all of Orwell's important works are about someone who gets away from an oppressive morality. From the central characters of *The Clergyman's Daughter* and *Keep the Aspistris Flying* to those of

*Coming up for Air* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; this experience of awareness, rejection, and flight is repeatedly enacted. Yet, it would be truer to say that most of Orwell's important failure, that reabsorption, happens, in the end, in all the novels just mentioned, though of course the experience of awareness, rejection and flight has made its important mark.

Tracing all this history of Orwell's development as artist, we may clearly see his real paradox. Without the act of awareness and rejection Orwell would not, probably, have been a writer at all. Most of his emphasis, understandably, is on that. But what if he felt, all the time, that just in this movement he was destined to fail? What if he felt, simultaneously, that the flight was necessary but always useless? This would explain a good deal. For Orwell is then not only the man and the writer setting out on a new path, but also, could it not be, the man and the writer whose "nature" has been invaded by an unwelcome reality, who has to live and write in these ways but who would have preferred other ways? "Being a writer," in one definition, had been a possible way out. But being the writer he was, the real writer, let him into every kind of difficulty, every tension that the choice had seemed to offer to avoid. In other words, despite his inclination to the contrary, Orwell could not help writing novels which carry his clear reactions and responses to social and political reality of his time. And it is in this very sense that he is to be called a political novelist.

The problem of social relationship is in fact, a problem of form as well. *Down and Out in Paris and London* is in effect not a novel, but a journal. What Orwell puts into it is the experience of being without money in a modern city: the experience of dishwashers and tramps, of filthy rooms, dosshouses, casual wards. The author is present, but only insofar as these things are happening to him along with others. His own character and motivations are sketched as briefly as those of anyone else met in the kitchen or on the road. He is neither "inside" nor "outside"; he is simply drifting with others—exceptionally close to them but within the fact that they are drifting, that this is happening to their bodies and minds. But then compare *A Clergyman's Daughter*, which is a novel about a repressed girl who has a breakdown, goes vagrant, and eventually returns, via teaching, to where she started. The attempted characterization of the girl as more than a surrogate presence is at times serious and detailed, at times merely functional. But a sustained identity, through diversity and dislocation of experience, cannot yet be realized.

What is unique about the novel in Orwell's work is that he creates an entire social and physical milieu within which the social criticism and the personal break are defined elements. In all his later novels, the essential form is shaped by what became separated elements: the personal break, and social criticism through it, in the novels of the thirties; the social criticism, with the personal break inside it, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell's artistic failure, in his novels of the thirties, is in a way and paradoxically due to his social achievement. He had known passivity at least, very closely, as he describes in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. But he had known it not in his capacity as a writer but as its victim, and in so far as it was "matter" it was matter of a kind that concerned him personally rather than as a writer. What we have seen him describe as an "invasion" is the growth of that social consciousness which required his intervention, which made either acceptance or passivity impossible. And then in shaping a literary form, Orwell created the figure of the intermediary (the shock-absorber of the bourgeoisie as he once referred to people like himself). Instead of direct realization of what was observed, he created the intermediary figure who goes around and to whom things happen. This figure in the novel is not himself, and this is very important note. Observation through a limited intermediary, with the limit as the basis for a deeper pattern: a self-proving of both the need and the impossibility of a sustained break, so that active intervention dwindles to a temporary protest or self-assertion. This pattern in the altered world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; on further analysis along with other changes, gains an added significance.

After failing to solve his profoundly difficult problem in the novel, Orwell turned to other forms which were in practice more easily available. His social and political writing was a direct release of consciousness, the practical consequence of intervention. "Shooting an Elephant," for instance, is much more successful than anything in *Burmese Days*, not because it is "documentary" rather than fiction - the fiction, as we have seen, similarly relied on things that had happened to him - but instead of a Flory an Orwell is present: a successfully created character in every real sense. Instead of diluting his consciousness through an intermediary, as the

mode of fiction had seemed to require, he now writes directly and powerfully about his whole experience. The prose is at once strengthened as the alternation between an anxious impersonation and a passively impersonal observation gives way to a direct voice, in which there is more literary creation than in all the more conventionally “imaginative” attempts. “Shooting an Elephant” is not a document; it is literary work. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is not a matter of whether the experience happened to the writer, a distinction between real and imaginary. The distinction that matters is always one of the range and consciousness. Written human experience of an unspecialized and primary kind must always be recognized as literature. Particular forms, and the origins of the material, are secondary questions. Orwell began to write literature, in the full sense, when he found this “non-fictional” form: that is when he found a form capable of realizing his experience directly.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Oligarchy: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Vaporizing: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gaze: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Scrutiny: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Expose: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Diluting: \_\_\_\_\_

Orwell’s position as a political novelist is best illustrated by the case of his early work, *The Road to Wigan Pier*. We learn from the writer’s diary notes that after some days wandering on his own through the Midlands, Orwell was given some political contacts in Lancashire and met workingclass socialists and members of the Unemployed Workers Movement. Through one of these contacts, he got the chance to go down a mine: and through the NUWM collectors, he obtained facts about housing conditions. It is important to note here that when Orwell comes to write a literary work (*The Road to Wigan Pier*) about this experience, he omits most of it - an actual and political network. Even in the diary, some of the difficulties are apparent. A local trade union official and his wife, “both working-class people,” are seen as living in an entirely middle class atmosphere. To Orwell, socialism came to be seen as a middle-class affair. But what we need to note here is that in the present work the political point is the literary point. What is created in the book is an isolated independent observer and the objects of his observation. Intermediate characters and experiences which do not form part of this world— this structure of feeling - are simply omitted. What is left in “documentary” is enough, but the process of selection and organization is a literary act: the character of the observer is as real and yet created world so powerfully.

As Orwell argued, in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, the urgent duty of socialists to make more people act like socialists - was being hindered by what seemed to him an alienated atmosphere and style. He thought of himself as an anti-imperialist and an anti-fascist, as a believer in equality, and only through these positions as a socialist. His joining the Communist front in the Spanish Civil War need not be misunderstood as joining or accepting the communist line of thought. As he himself put it, “as far as my purely personal preference went would have liked to join the Anarchists,” but serving on the most critical front came first. As is clear from his various statements and positions he took in the war, Orwell was an undoctrinal socialist. It can indeed be argued that socialism as such was always secondary, in his mind, to the struggle against fascism and imperialism and inequality. Socialism was only a general idea, a general name, against all these evils. And before Orwell left England it had little more positive content. It was only during his involvement in Spain that he became a revolutionary socialist. It is, then, ironic that at the moment when Orwell became a revolutionary socialist, he became involved with an internal struggle so deep and lasting that it is still very difficult to see his experience and his development clearly.

The writer’s own account of his involvement in the war in Spain brings out its extraordinary complexity, and he is quick to say that he can only report what he saw and that like every other account, his own is partisan and subject to bias and error. The experience, which saw the fighters themselves rounded by guards, left a scar on

Orwell which was never likely to heal. One would think worse of him, indeed, if it had ever healed. *Homage to Catalonia* is in some ways the most political and most moving work of Orwell. It is an unforgettably vivid personal account of a revolution and a civil war. For the same very reason (of its being most political), it has been less highly valued than some of his earlier and later works for political factors of a double kind. As in the case of Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (a novel about the Spanish Civil War), Orwell's work annoyed both the Left as well as the Right-wing readers. His inevitably controversial account of the internal struggles have cut the book off, then and since, from many readers on the Left. But also, and less often noted, his open and moving commitment to revolutionary socialism has, but the work off from a different and much larger group of readers, who from his later work have a fixed idea of Orwell as the voice of political disillusion of the inevitable failure of revolution and of socialism. There is evidence to this view in *Homage to Catalonia* in its account of the loss and suppression of the revolutionary spirit - "it was simply a temporary and local phase in an enormous game that is being played over the whole surface of the earth."

Here, it must be asserted that in none of his writings on Spain, which are his most direct treatment of political subject, does Orwell draw what can later be seen as the Right-wing conclusion. Although the revolutionary movement to which Orwell belonged had to be suppressed, he decidedly returned from Spain a convinced revolutionary socialist: "Where I see an actual flesh and blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on." Of course, he was certainly suspicious, as he had been before he went, of what he called "bourgeois communism," with its idealized "worker." But in the actual conflict he had made a clear choice. He was very bitter about official communist policy in Spain, and about the foreign reporting in the Spanish struggle. This hatred of what he was already calling "Stalinism" never left him. But his own position, after his experience in Spain, remains that of a revolutionary socialist:

what would now, from the outside, be called an "ultra." His account of the Spanish struggle is quite similar to his later accounts of the struggles in Budapest and Paris, which are decidedly written from the viewpoint of revolutionary socialism, and which are bitterly hostile to the capitalist order and to orthodox communism. This stage of Orwell's political development need to be particularly emphasized.

It is worth to mention here that during this period of revolutionary antiwar socialism, Orwell was not, in the jargon he usually dismissed, a "Trotskyite." He often argued that this description of his was simply loose abuse, though he used "Stalinist" himself. But, in this very period, he made it clear that he believed the faults of the Soviet Union went back to "the dims and nature of the Bolshevik Party." "Trotsky, in exile denounces the Russian dictatorship, but he is probably as much responsible for it as any man now living." What Orwell wrote, in his "Inside the whale," in relation to Henry Miller can as well be said about his own case as a writer. The statement in question runs as under:

*the viewpoint of a man who believes the world process to be outside his control and who in any case hardly wishes to control it. Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly, there is nothing left but quietism — robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it. Get inside the whale — or rather, admit that you are inside the whale (for you are, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it.*

This is Orwell's prescription for a writer, under the danger of his time, but in a more general way it marks his real discouragement. Once again, Hemingway's case comes to mind; for after the Spanish Civil War, he, too, turned on to the same track of a political endurance of life, viewing it as an individual's struggle against not-so-friendly a universe (*The Old Man and the Sea* illustrates that outlook). Orwell, like Hemingway, had exposed himself to so much hardship and then fought so hard; had got a bullet in the throat in Spain; had been severely ill with a tubercular lesion; had given so much of his energy to what seemed a desert of political illusions, lies, and bad faith. Between the myth of "England" and this profound European (or universal) disillusion he had to make what settlements he could find.

Much of Orwell's wartime journalism is lively but it cannot be considered his best literary work. In his criticism of people who went on holding or who came to hold positions identical or close to his own between 1937 and 1939, there is some lively polemic but also a good deal of rancour and even random abuse. Under the desperate pressure of the time, as he had reason to know as well as anyone, it was hardly possible to find any decent and consistent position, and the sectarian squabbling, the branding and naming of "defeatist" groups, had a smallness and meanness which at times he recognized. As he wrote in 1946.

*It is not easy to believe in the survival of civilization..... I think one must continue the political struggle, just as a doctor must try to save the life of a patient who is probably going to die. But... we shall get nowhere unless we start by recognizing that political behaviour is largely non-rational, that the world is suffering from some kind of mental disease which must be diagnosed before it can be cured.*

This is the conclusion that matters, in understanding his last work, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Certainly, it was given a political superstructure the key element of which was the substitution of communism for fascism as the totalitarian threat. This was part of the movement of the times, in the early years of the cold war. But given the experience and development of Orwell, it was very crucial. The use of atomic bomb was seen by him as a major turning-point: "Either we renounce it or it destroys us." But the political shapes were altering. What he had written in 1943, he reversed in 1947.

The atom bomb changed Orwell's perspective of the world, which in turn changed the tone and tenor of his fiction. The focus of his attention became the future of mankind, rather than the present-day problems of contingent reality. Beneath the political adjustments between the antipoles of capitalism and communism, or between America and Russia, lurked a deeper disquiet that the world would soon fall apart into two or three super-states, each holding the atomic bomb, and that with each such state, there would be a new authoritarianism: what he came to call in a phrase taken from Borkenau, "oligarchical collectivism." This is, of course, the world of *Nineteen Eighty Four*, but it is significant that just in these critical years, Orwell ignored a future based on power politics, the permanent war economy and authoritarianism trends which he saw everywhere, behind almost all the political labels - and then identified it, directly, only with the Soviet system. Orwell remained to the last a democratic socialist. He devoted most of his political energies to the defence of civil liberties over a wide front. But in his deepest vision of the future of mankind, of what was to come, he had at once actualised a general nightmare, and then, in the political currents of the time, narrowed its reference until the nightmare itself became one of its own shaping elements.

Thus, Orwell remains one of the leading political novelists of the recent times. His art may have suffered in its being rather overtly political. But it also gained a specificity and authenticity for that very reason, qualities unknown to the purely fictitious or avowedly non-political. Reacting strongly against the modernist aestheticism of the 1920's, Orwell firmly committed himself to the purposive art of contemporary social and political relevance. In accomplishing his desired goal, his occupation of pluralism and his zeal to participate in anti authoritarian struggle stood him in good stead. His activism made him look down upon aestheticism as something pale and sick, not worthy of those given to thinking in terms larger than those derived from an ego-centred life of social sterility.

## 25.6 LET US SUM UP

*Nineteen Eighty Four* is a political novel. Orwell had, in an article, spoken of a tension which he felt between the public and the private lives. That tension is at the heart of this novel. When Winston thinks, "Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull," he is expressing the basis on which Orwell's whole morality rests. Orwell here expresses his belief that to be human is to be private and to have a personal identity that is inward and inviolable. Winston's rebellion against the Party in this novel is an attempt to preserve that small area of privacy: to think, and to feel as himself, as a private individual, without interference or encroachment. Authority in a totalitarian State tries to destroy personal identity entirely by whatever means

possible, and it is significant that the only sciences which have made any considerable progress by the year 1984 are the science of invading privacy and the science of torture.

### 25.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. How many times does Julia claim to have had sex with Party members? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. 2
  - b. 10
  - c. Scores
  - d. Hundreds
2. Which of the following characters is secretly a member of the Thought Police? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Winston
  - b. Mr. Charrington
  - c. Syme
  - d. Julia
3. What happens to the glass paperweight? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. It is confiscated by the Thought Police.
  - b. Julia hides it under the mattress.
  - c. O'Brien flings it out the window.
  - d. It is shattered on the floor.
4. Where is the telescreen hidden in the room above Mr. Charrington's shop? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Behind the picture of St. Clement's
  - b. Under the bed
  - c. Behind the light fixture
  - d. Behind the poster of Big Brother
5. What is the name for the mass rally held every day? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The Two Minutes Rage
  - b. The Ten Minutes Hate
  - c. The Two Minutes Hate
  - d. TheDaily Rage
6. Besides Oceania, what are the two countries that make up the rest of the Earth? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Eurasia and Australasia
  - b. Eurasia and Eastasia
  - c. Eastasia and Africasia
  - d. Australasia and Americom
7. What project is Syme working on at the beginning of the novel? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. A pamphlet on Emmanuel Goldstein
  - b. A new slogan for the party
  - c. A revision of a children's history book
  - d. A Newspeak dictionary

8. Who turns Parsons in to the Thought Police? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. His children      b. Julia  
c. His wife          d. O'Brien
9. What does O'Brien say when Winston asks if he has been captured? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. "I would die before I would let that happen."  
b. "They got me a long time ago."  
c. "I'm afraid so."  
d. "I am one of them."
10. To what organization does Julia belong? \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. The Junior Spies  
b. The Two Minutes Hate Committee  
c. The Inner Party  
d. The Junior Anti-Sex League

### 25.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Discuss George Orwell as a political novelist.
- b) *Nineteen Eighty Four* is a pessimistic portrayal of the society in future. Give your comments.

### 25.9 ANSWER KEY

#### CYPI

1. Winston Smith
2. Outer Party
3. Dark-Haired Girl
4. Winston Smith
5. O'Brien
6. Mr. Charrington
7. Big Brother

#### CYPII

1. 1984
2. Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia
3. The Party

4. two
5. Paroles
6. despotic oligarchy
7. vaporizing'
8. Big Brother
9. telescreen
10. Room 101

**SAQs**

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

**25.10 SUGGESTED READING**

1. Rodden, John. *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
2. Davison, Peter. *Orwell and Politics*. Penguin UK, 2020.
3. Jason, Adam. "1984 Summary, Characters, Themes and Symbolism." EssayPro, 10 Apr. 2024, <https://essaypro.com/blog/1984-summary>.

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**GEORGE ORWELL : *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR*(1984)****STRUCTURE**

- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 26.3 *Nineteen Eighty Four* as a Satire
- 26.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 26.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 26.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 26.7 Answer Key
- 26.8 Suggested Reading

**26.1 INTRODUCTION**

George Orwell in *Nineteen Eight Four* has made use of the literary device of satire to critique the totalitarian society. The skilful use of satire has made *Nineteen Eighty Four* one of the best dystopian novels ever written in English Literature.

**26.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

Dear learner, the objective of this lesson is to familiarise you with the satirical aspect of the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

After reading this lesson, you will be able to appreciate *Nineteen Eighty Four* as a satire. You will also be able to describe how the use of satire has enhanced the critique of totalitarianism that Orwell was trying to offer.

**26.3 *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR* AS A SATIRE**

Like his *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is both a satire on totalitarianism as well as a prophesy about the future of mankind in a world dominated by the power of the atom. Both these novels of his last phase, came to be used for the cold-war propaganda by the forces of anti-communism. Ironically, they were used by those very people with whom Orwell had no sympathy, and both the novels were extensively used for political propaganda. In fact, the last novel was used even more extensively, to the extent that it fixed a version of Orwell which he, at least, would have considered misleading. In *Animal Farm*, a satire on Stalinist Authoritarianism, Orwell is able to release an exceptionally strong and pure prose. "All animals are equal... but some are more equal than others." It is not surprising that this has passed into ordinary language with a meaning much stronger than the simple satire on revolutionary betrayal. It is one of those permanent statements about the gap between pretence and actuality, profession and practice, over a very wide range. In its small scale and within its limited terms, *Animal Farm* has a radical energy which goes far beyond its occasion and has its own kind of permanence.

Compared to *Animal Farm*, in a sense, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also a very different sort of novel. The curve of isolating feelings, of a ragged and breathless exposure, has returned and is decisive. Yet there are still many aspects of the novel which belong to a more liberating consciousness. The novel's "appendix," "The Principles of Newspeak," was never fully assimilated in the novel's imaginative world, but its central perception of a relation between linguistic and social forms is powerful: "the special function of certain Newspeak words, of which *oldthink* was one, was not so much to express meaning as to destroy them." Some of these Newspeak words- *prolefeed speedwise, sexcrime* - have already, a generation later, an ominously familiar sound. So too have the names of new government departments: in Newspeak, Minitrue, Minipax, and Miniplenty. Much of the jargon of "modernisation" that extraordinary substitute for social democracy which the British Labour Government adopted and propagated - is almost wholly Newspeak. Some of the techniques of news management sound equally familiar. The Fiction Department, as institution, would now hardly even be noticed.

Again, in a rather different way, "Big Brother is watching you" has also made its way into ordinary language, as the motto of skeptical resistance. In these very simple but subtle ways, Orwell succeeded in articulating certain quite obvious elements of the prolonged social crisis in England. As an intransigent enemy of every kind of *thoughtcrime* and *doublething*, Orwell is still very close and convincing. The transposition of official "allies" and "enemies" has already happened, almost openly, in the generation since he wrote. His idea of a world divided into three blocks - Oceania, Eurasia, and East-Asia, of which two are always at war with the third, though the alliances change, is again too close for comfort. And there are times when one can believe that "what had been called England or Britain" has become simply Airstrip One.

With these elements of the projection (the novel's prophesy) so recognizable, at least in their general outlines, it seems imperative to ask why so much else is so wrong. It is an important indication that Orwell took his model of a controlled and military society from Soviet communism, even including detailed elements of its part such as the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky (Big Brother and Goldstein). It was quite natural that he should, because he remained, at the core of his heart, a revolutionary socialist, and he felt pained when he saw, before his own eyes, the Revolution being betrayed. About capitalism he never had any love or attachment, nor any misgiving of any kind. Therefore, no disappointment or disillusion about what it was practicing. It is in the light of this hard fact about Orwell's politics that we must view his satire in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

One pointer to this position of Orwell is the ideology of Airstrip One, which is Ingsoc- English socialism - and when the book became a success in the United State (obviously for wrong reasons), the novelist had to issue a denial that this related to Post War Labour Government:

*My recent novel is NOT intended as an attack on Socialism or on the British Labour party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralized economy is liable and which have already been partly realized in Communism and Fascism.*

Ingsoc, it might then be said, is no more English Socialism than Minitrue is the Ministry of Truth. But the identification was in effect made, and has been profoundly damaging. Not in what it says about Soviet society - Orwell's position on that issue was clear and consistent - but in what it implied generally about socialism and a "centralized economy."

Here, we need to see the close connection between Orwell's anti Sovietism and the most evident error he makes in his projection in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, that the permanent and controlled war economy is shabby and under supplied. The structural relations, that we can now see, between a militarist economy and a controlled consumer affluence amount to more than a historical development which Orwell did not foresee. They show some of the social facts which, in what became an obsession with ideology, he did not take account of. There are sound reasons why Orwell might not have foreseen an affluent and militarist capitalism, and saw only an affluent militarist socialism, why he did not see the possibility of a world of international corporations which function, internally and externally, very much like his projected Party. But he had the soundest of reasons - in direct experience - for knowing that political police, for example, were not a socialist or communist

invention; or propaganda, or censorship, or *agents provocateurs*. By attributing all modern forms of repression and authoritarian control to a single political tendency (communism), Orwell not only misrepresented it, but cut short the kind of analysis that would recognize these in human and destructive forces wherever they appeared, under whatever names and masked by whatever ideology. For it would, for sure, now, be *doublethink* to suppose that the only source of these elements is a form of socialism (as practiced in the Soviet Russia), just as it is only thought/crime that could prevent us from seeing a propaganda phrase like “the free world” as a very clear example of Newspeak. In making projection of a world that is all too recognizable, in the view of Raymond Williams, Orwell confused us about its structures, its ideologies, and the possibilities of resisting it: it is in this hard fact of *Nineteen Eighty Four* that the real failure of Orwell as a novelist lies. But, then, satire is never expected to be objective and impartial, much less the political satire.

### Activity

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Ominously: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Shabby: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Obsession: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Radical: \_\_\_\_\_

This sort of position, taken by George Orwell, can be characterized as state revolutionary romanticism, and is as insulting as the original observation. It is the rising of animals, as in the fable. “When you put it in words it sounded reasonable; it was when you looked at the human-beings passing you on the pavement that it became an act of faith.” It needs to be expressed, however bitterly, that if the tyranny of Nineteen Eighty Four ever finally comes, one of the major events of the ideological preparation that will have been just this way of seeing the masses, “the human beings passing you on the pavement” the eighty five percent of whom are proles. “And nobody who belongs to this majority or who knows them as people will give a damn whether the figures on the other side of the street see them as animals to be subjected or as unthinking creatures out of those mighty loins the future will come. The incomplete humanity will be too clearly visible in the gesticulating observer himself.

That is how, we find, it goes, politically, throughout the novel. Orwell had seen clearly the world of the power blocks, but the “hundreds of millions of its paid and hardworking coolies,” inhabiting “a rough quadrilateral with its corners at Tangier, Brazzaville, Darwin, and Hong Kong” are also passive: “if they did not exist, the structure of world society, and the process by which it maintains itself, would not be essentially different.” It seems a very dreadful underestimate, not only of those people but of the structure, of exploitation through which the metropolitan states are sustained. By viewing the struggle as between only a few people over the heads of an apathetic mass, Orwell creates the conditions for defeat and despair. He continues his underestimate. He had seen people go back in Spain, under the threat of arrest, because of general and particular loyalties. He had seen hundreds of cases of fidelity under pressure. His wife had stayed in Bracelona, even lying in bed while the police searched her room, to be near him and help him, but still

*Under the spreading chestnut tree I sold you and you sold me.*

Orwell is capable of describing this accurately as “a peculiar, cracked, braying, jeering note... a yellow note,” but still it is what he makes happen. The cynical jingle of the rat race, which in similar forms we have been hearing ever since from the agency offices and parties, leads straight to the nightmare of the rat in Room 101. Of course, people break down under torture, but not all people break down. And in a filthy and repressive world there are deeper forms of personal resistance - as Orwell had reason to know - than the temporary affair between Winston and Julia.

One of the strongest satirical elements in the novel, *Nineteen Eighty Four*, is the party campaign against sex. That it seems to have been taken from Zamyatin’s *We are relevant but secondary*. The object of the campaign

is to prevent uncontrollable loyalties but even more to “remove all pleasure form the sexual act.” There have been such campaigns, though in some exploiting systems the first purpose can be achieved by a kind of abstract reversal of the second: pleasure without loyalty is even a marketable and institutional commodity. It sounds rather strange that Orwell could oppose the controls and perversions with nothing better than the casual affair between Winston and Julia. This begins like the lovemaking trip to the country in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, but then it moves right away from any mutually recognizing personal experience:

*His heart leapt. Scores of times she had done it: he wished it had been hundredsthousands.  
Anything that hinted at corruption always filled him with a wild hope.*

Decidedly, here is not the ordinary and continuing love of men and women, in friendship or in marriage, but a willed corruption or indifference- “the simple undifferentiated desire”- that is presented as opposed to (though it is usually part of) that joyless world. Winston’s marriage is a cold and miserable routine; only with the hurt of corruption can the pleasure come.

Of the various failures that have been noted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* this seems to be the deepest. All the ordinary resources of personal life are written off as summarily as the proles. The lovely fantasy of “mighty loins” of the future is joined by the lonely confusion of adolescence - so guilty about lovemaking that corruption of the object is a necessary element of its pleasure. Winston Smith is not like a man at all - in consciousness, in relationships, in the capacity for love and protection and endurance and loyalty. He is the last of the cut-down figures-less experienced, less intelligent, less loyal, less courageous than his creator - through whom rejection and defeat can be mediated.

The question that immediately arises in the reader’s mind about the view of the future in *Nineteen Eighty Four* is, decidedly, not an abstract one concerning a change from the optimism of Mercier or Wells to the pessimism of Huxley or Orwell. Optimism and pessimism in abstract form are almost equally beside the point. In fact, there are plausible grounds for seeing a generalized future that is either dark or bright. What matters much more than the imposed general mood is the amount of experience that is drawn on. Promises or warning that limit experience have limited relevance. So the question that arises about *Nineteen Eighty Four*, just as it arises about Orwell’s earlier novels, is why the novelist created situations and people that, in comparison with his own written observations, are rather wooden and predetermined. This is not primarily a matter of politics, but of a more extended experience of self and society. Under the strength and sense of his own successful character, Orwell moved these feeble and less conscious figures in an undifferentiated theatrical landscape. The principal significance is not in the personal contradictions but in the much deeper structures of a society and its literature. In making his satirical prophesies, Orwell seems to have certainly expressed much more than himself.

We can see a clear line, for sure, from Orwell’s “Inside the whale” and *Nineteen Eighty Four* to an orthodox North Atlantic mood in which all humane and positive beliefs, and especially a belief in radical change, can be recognized in advance as either a projection of some personal or social maladjustment, or as an inexperienced, naive, adolescent idealism, which inspite of the will and vision of its bearers leads in practice straight to the authoritarianism which more sinister figures are all the time preparing behind this apparently innocent front. It seems, in relation to this, there is a dear line from Orwell’s social thinking in the “The Lion and The Unicorn” and similar essays to the British Labour Party revisionists of the fifties and sixties. Their definition of socialism as the pursuit of equality had a traditional sound but a more precise contemporary significance. In Orwell’s time, what had been understood as a socialist economy was (it was argued) made outdated by the development of an affluent industrial society; in this view, a new classlessness was emerging of its own accord and would be confirmed by measures of pragmatic social reform. Or, as Orwell puts it, the “wrong members of family”, the old feudal or aristocratic elements, would be displaced by the new set, the smarter set, the “new Britain”. After this change has taken place (as a matter of inevitable consequence of industrialized affluence and social reform), the nation would become more civilized, more humane, more generally and equitably prosperous. In other words, the nation would become what Orwell had wanted as far back as *The Road to Wigan Pier*. This

vision, so to say, relates to the feeling held by radicals who were not directly involved in the political arguments that Orwell, unlike others of the socialist hue, understood English life - its pace, its tolerance, its distrust of abstractions and of any theory pushed to extremes. In other words, a sensible, moderate, decent kind of life, which any hurried or drastic changes would disturb or put at risk, but which was still the basis for a steady extension of humane and responsible living. Thus, we can reasonably argue that *Nineteen EightyFour* is more an expression of a mood (prevailing the post-war England) than an ideology or a political theory. Besides, the novel also projects a picture of the world to follow (as a consequence of the new power blocks created by the atombomb), implied wherein is a warning about the horrors of the world to come. The mood that the novel expresses is that of near despair about the future of humanity. The warning that the novel issues (of course, through an illustrative fiction) is that unless the course of history changes, people all over the world will lose their most human qualities, and will become instead soulless automatons, and will not even be aware of what they have actually become. This mood of hopelessness about the future of mankind is in marked contrast to one of the most fundamental features of Western thought, which lays stress on the faith in human progress and in man's capability to create a world of peace and justice. The roots of this hope go back to the Ancient Classical Greeco-Roman thought, as well as the Medieval Messianic concept of the Old Testament Prophets. The Old Testament philosophy of history assumes that man grows and unfolds in history and, eventually, becomes what he potentially is. It assumes that he develops his powers of reason and love fully, and is thus enabled to grasp the mysteries of the world, having one with this fellowmen as well as nature, but preserving at the same time his integrity and his individuality. Universal peace and justice are the goals of men, and the prophets have expressed faith that despite all sins and errors, eventually this "end of days" will arrive, symbolized by the figure of the Messiah.

The very concept of prophesy, as a matter of fact, was a historical one, a state of perfection to be realized by man within historical time. Christianity made a transformation of this concept into a transhistorical, purely spiritual one, yet it did not abandon the idea of the link between moral norms and politics. The Christian thinkers of the late Middle Ages emphasized that although the "kingdom of god" was not within historical time, the social order must correspond to and realize the spiritual principles of Christianity. The Christian sects before and after the Reformation emphasized these demands in more urgent, more active and revolutionary ways. With the breakup of the medieval world man's sense of strength, and his hope, not only for the individual but for social perfection, assumed new strength and took new ways.

One of the important forms of these new ways is a new kind of writing which developed since the Renaissance. The first expression of this new form of writing was the famous *Utopia* of Thomas More, which literary means in Greek "Nowhere". In fact, "utopia" was a name generally applied to all other similar works. More's famous work, expressing the true spirit of the European Renaissance, combined within its fold a most scathing criticism of the society of his time (the England of the reign Henry VII), its irrationalities and its injustices, with the picture of a society which, though perhaps not perfect, had solved most of the human problems which sounded insoluble to his own contemporaries. What characterizes Thomas More's *Utopia*, and the others, is that they do not speak in general terms or principles, but give an imaginative picture of the concrete details of a society which corresponds to the deepest longings of man. In contrast to prophetic thought, these perfect societies are not at "the end to the days" but exist already-though in a geographic distance rather than in the distance of time. Thus, satire and Utopia (or distopia) are two sides of the same coin.

Thomas More's *Utopia* was followed by two others, the Italian friar Campanula's *City of the Sun*, and the German humanist Andreae's *Christianopolis*, the last being the most modern of the three. Among the various Utopias formulated by men of imagination there are differences in viewpoint as well as in originality. The three mentioned here are no exception. Yet the differences are of minor nature in comparison with what they have in common. Utopias were written from then on for several hundred years, until the beginning of the twentieth century. The latest and most influential Utopia was Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*, which was published in 1888. Aside from Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Ben Hur*, it was undoubtedly the most popular book at the turn of the century, printed in many millions of copies in the United States, which was also translated

into more than twenty languages. Bellamy's Utopia is part of the great American tradition as expressed in the writings of the transcendentalists, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. It is, in fact, the American version of the ideas which at the time found their most forceful expression in the socialist movement in Europe. Implied or stated, utopia always has on its reverse side satire on contemporary life.

This hope (expressed in the various fictions) for man's individual and social perfectibility, which in philosophical and anthropological terms was clearly expressed in the writings of the Enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century and of the socialist thinkers of the nineteenth, remained unchanged until after the First World War. This war in which millions died for the territorial ambitions of the European powers, although under the illusion of fighting for peace and democracy, of fighting for saving mankind, was the beginning. Other events followed in quick succession. The betrayal of the socialist hopes by Stalin's reactionary state capitalism; the severe economic crisis at the end of the nineteen twenties, signalled by the Wall Street Crash, which plunged all the countries of the Western Hemisphere into fiscal darkness. The victory of barbarism in one of the oldest centers of culture in the world, Germany; the insanity of Stalin's terror during the thirties; the Second World War, in which all the fighting nations lost some of the moral considerations which had still existed in the First World War; the unlimited destruction of civilian populations, started by Hitler and continued even by the more complete destruction of cities such as Hamburg and Dresden and Tokyo, and eventually by the use of atomic bombs against Japan. Since then the human race has been confronted with an even greater danger—that of the destruction of our civilization, if not of all mankind, by thermonuclear weapons as they exist today and as they are being developed in increasingly frightful proportions.

As we know very well, most people are not consciously aware of this threat and of their own hopelessness. Some believe that just because modern warfare is so destructive, war is impossible; others declare that even if sixty or seventy million Americans were killed in first one or two days of nuclear warfare, there is no reason to believe that life would not go on as before after the first shock has been overcome. It is precisely the significance of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that it expresses the new mood of hopelessness which pervades our age before this mood has become manifest and taken hold of the consciousness of people. It is a prophetic novel, which bases its vision on the available reality of the post-war period (including the war years) and makes prediction, on that basis, about the life to come. As Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., a contemporary American novelist of science fiction, has said, the writer is like a canary bird whose function is to sound an alarm about the possible danger to the mineworkers. Like the canary bird, therefore, Orwell had sounded the danger bell, and much of what he forewarned about is being witnessed in our own time. We are living in a world of nuclear powers that have divided the world into their blocks of influences and operations, in a world where individual is an anonymous or invisible presence, a mere figure to be counted as consumer or taxpayer, remaining of no consequence in the "movement" of the world machine. The sting of satire in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is as painful as the horror of the frightful future the novel projects.

## 26.4 LET US SUM UP

The novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* represents political satire. Living under a tyrannical system, no one is safe in the novel, including 39-year-old, Winston Smith who lives in a society where he is deprived of all his rights and freedoms. The novel depicts a dystopian future, where freedom and individuality are lost to totalitarian government systems like "Big Brother" and "The Party" who brainwash society through inhuman tactics of psychological and physical control forcing its citizens into submission. Therefore, in a society where a totalitarian government exists, freedom is restricted through technology, psychology and history, and resistance is futile.

## 26.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Winston has a memory of running away from his mother and sister and stealing what from them?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
a. Chocolate    b. Clothing  
c. Money                      d. A diary

2. The setting for Winston's fantasy about Julia running toward him naked is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Eastasia
  - b. The place where there is no darkness
  - c. The Golden Country
  - d. The Old Curiosity Shoppe
3. In what nation did Orwell work for the British Imperial Police? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Bangladesh
  - b. Zanzibar
  - c. Burma
  - d. India
4. In what nation was Orwell born? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. India
  - b. Bangladesh
  - c. Zanzibar
  - d. Burma
5. What was George Orwell's real name? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Eric Snow
  - b. Terrence Buskington
  - c. Timothy Sneed
  - d. Eric Blair
6. What can Winston's role in the Party best be described as? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. High-ranking
  - b. Insignificant
  - c. Undercover spy
  - d. Informant
7. What is the purpose of the Ministry of Truth? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. To collect information about the Party's enemies
  - b. To document historic events for future generations
  - c. To alter historical records to fit the Party agenda
  - d. To manage economic shortages in Oceania
8. What is the relationship between the proles and the Party? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The Party considers the proles insignificant and non-threatening
  - b. The Party considers the proles a population likely to rebel
  - c. The proles constitute the foundation of the national economy
  - d. The proles provide information to the Thought Police
9. What leads Winston to believe O'Brien also hates the Party? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Winston sees loathing in O'Brien's eyes before the Two Minutes Hate
  - b. O'Brien slips Winston a note that reveals his feelings toward the Party
  - c. A member of the revolution tells Winston about O'Brien
  - d. O'Brien flashes a symbol of the revolution to Winston

10. What crime does Winston commit in Chapter 1? \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. He visits a proletarian neighborhood
- b. He skips a day of work
- c. He is vocally critical of his superior
- d. He starts a diary

## 26.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- a) Discuss the main theme of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*.
- b) Discuss *Nineteen Eighty Four* as a satire on the contemporary society.

## 26.7 ANSWER KEY

### SAQs

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

## 26.8 SUGGESTED READING

- 1. Hammond, J. *A George Orwell Companion : A Guide to the Novels, Documentaries and Essays*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016. Ebook.
- 2. Connelly, Mark. *George Orwell: A Literary Companion*. McFarland Incorporated Publishers, 2018.
- 3. Rubb, Dr. Asha N. "George Orwell: 1984." *Twentieth Century English Literature*, e PGP (Inflibnet), [ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/engp04/chapter/george-orwell-1984/](http://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/engp04/chapter/george-orwell-1984/).

**GEORGE ORWELL : *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR*(1984)****STRUCTURE**

- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Objectives and Outcome
- 27.3 *Nineteen Eighty Four* as Prophecy
- 27.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 27.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
- 27.6 Examination Oriented Questions
- 27.7 Answer Key
- 27.8 Suggested Reading

**27.1 INTRODUCTION**

*Nineteen Eighty Four* by George Orwell is often considered a warning story about totalitarianism, government surveillance, and manipulating reality. The novel seems to be prophesying about what will happen if future generations are not serious about securing their freedom.

**27.2 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOME**

The objective of this lesson is to discuss the novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* as a prophecy novel which forewarns the people about the abuse of excessive government interference and control on people's lives.

After reading this lesson, you will appreciate George Orwell's critique of dystopian society. You will analyse him as a writer with a far-sighted vision who offered warning to the future generations about the excesses of political control which restraint individual freedom and gradually transforms to totalitarianism

**27.3 *NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR* AS PROPHECY**

Orwell was not alone in sounding the alarm about the dangerous life ahead after the invention of the nuclear bomb. The World War II, which saw the use of atom bomb on two Japanese cities, triggered the sort of ideas we find embodied in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These ideas were generated by the men of imagination, the writers of fiction in the 1930's and 40's. Two other writers, besides Orwell were the Russian Zamyatin, who wrote his book *We*, and the English Writer Aldous Huxley, who wrote his *Brave New World*. Both expressed the mood and the fear of their time, as also a warning for the future. They expressed both mood and fear in ways very similar to those adopted by Orwell. This new trilogy came to be called "negative utopias," or "dystopian" novels, of the middle of the twentieth century. They constituted a sort of counterpoint to the trilogy of the positive utopias we mentioned in the preceding lesson, written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One could also add here an early "dystopian" novel by the American novelist Jack London, who wrote, during the Age of Realism, his *The Iron Heel*, which made prediction about fascism in America. London's novel's in fact, the earliest of the modern "negative utopias."

These “negative utopias,” written by the American and European novelists, express the mood of powerlessness and hopelessness of modern man just as the early utopias expressed the mood of self-confidence and hope of the post-medieval or Renaissance man. There could, perhaps, be nothing more paradoxical in historical terms than this change from utopian to dystopian fiction: man, at the beginning of the industrial age, when in reality he did not possess the means for a world in which the table was set for all who wanted to eat, when he lived in a world in which there were economic reasons to eat, when he lived in a world in which there were economic reasons for slavery, war, and exploitation, in which man only sensed the possibilities of his new science and of its applications to technology and to production nevertheless man at the beginning of modern development was full of hope. Four hundred years after that beginning in the sixteenth-century Renaissance, when all these hopes are realizable, when man can produce enough for everybody, when war has become unnecessary because technological process can give any country more wealth than can be made available by territorial conquest, when this globe is in the process of becoming what Macluhan called a “global village” (he had said it in 1968), of becoming as unified as a continent was four hundred years ago, at the very moment when man is on the verge of realizing his hope, he begins to lose it. This, in fact, is the essential point of all the three negative utopias by the European writers, which describe (offer a picture of) not only the future towards which we are moving (or have moved), but also attempt to explain the historical paradox.

The three negative utopias do, however, differ from each other in detail and emphasis. Zamyatin’s *We*, written in the twenties, has more features in common with Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* than with Huxley’s *Brave New World*. *We* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* both depict the completely bureaucratized society, in which man is a number only, a figure in the census, a consumer, a voter, a tax-payer, who loses all sense of his individuality or individual identity, who loses a sense of belonging (to community or nature). This phenomenon is brought about by a mixture of unlimited terror (in Zamyatin’s book a brain operation is added eventually which changes man even physically) combined with ideological and psychological manipulation. In Huxley’s *Brave New World* the main tool for turning man into an automaton is the application of hypnoid mass suggestion, which allows dispensing with terror. It can be said that Zamyatin’s and Orwell’s examples resemble more the Stalinist and Nazi dictatorships, while Huxley’s novel is a picture of the development of the western industrial world, provided it continues to follow the present trend without any fundamental change.

Despite the differences, however, there remains one basic question common to the three dystopian novels of the twentieth century. The question is a philosophical, anthropological and psychological one and perhaps also a religious one. The question is: can human nature be changed in such a way that man will forget his longing for freedom, for dignity, for integrity, for love - that is to say, can man be made to forget that he is human? Or does human nature have a dynamism which will react to the violation of these basic human urges by attempting to change an inhuman society into a human one? It must be noted here that the three writers we have been discussing do not take the simple position of psychological relativism which is common to so many social scientists in our time. They do not start out with the assumption that there is no such thing as human nature; that there is no such thing as qualities essential to man; and that man is born as nothing but a blank sheet of paper on which any given society can write its text. These writers do, however, assume that man has an intense striving for love, for justice, for truth, for solidarity, and in this respect they are quite different from the relativist thinkers. In fact, they emphatically seem to affirm the strength and intensity of these human strivings by the description of the very means they present as being necessary to destroy them. In Zamyatin’s *We* a brain operation similar to lobotomy is necessary to get rid of the human demands of human nature, which clearly implies an acceptance of the existence of human nature and its natural demands. In Huxley’s *Brave New World*, artificial biological selection and drugs are necessary, which again implies an acceptance of a fundamental human nature. In Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is the completely unlimited use of torture and brainwashing. None of the three novelists can be accused of the thought that the destruction of the humanity within man is an easy task. Yet all the three seem to arrive at the same conclusion that it is possible, with means and techniques which are common knowledge today. If not eradication, at least manipulation of human nature has been shown to be possible by the means of technology - even TV and cellphone have changed our attitudes to vital issues of life. Consumerism, in general, has weaned us away from social concerns.

In spite of many similarities to Zamyatin's *We*, Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, makes its own original contribution to the question, how can human nature be changed (or at least controlled)? Here, we need to discuss some of the more specifically "Orwellian" concepts. The contribution of Orwell which seemed most immediately relevant to the postwar period of the 1950's and 1960's is the connection he makes between the dictatorial society of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the atomic war. Atomic wars had first appeared as early as the nineteen forties; a large-scale atomic war broke out about ten years later, and some hundreds of bombs were dropped on industrial centers in European Russia, Western Europe, and North America. After this war, the governments of all countries became convinced that the continuation of the war would mean the end of organized society, and hence of their own power. For these reasons no more bombs were dropped, and the three existing power blocks "merely continued to produce atomic bombs and stored them up against the decisive opportunity which they all believe will come sooner or later." It remains the aim of the ruling Party to discover how "to kill several hundred million people in a few seconds without giving warning beforehand." Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* before the discovery of thermonuclear weapons, and it is only a historical footnote to say that in the 1950's the very aim which was just mentioned had already been reached. The atomic bomb which was dropped on the Japanese cities seems small and ineffective when compared with the mass slaughter which can be achieved by thermonuclear weapons with the capacity to wipe out 90 percent or 100 percent of a country's population within minutes.

The importance of Orwell's concept of war lies in a number of very keen observations he makes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. First of all, he shows the economic significance of continuous arms production, without which the economic system cannot function. Furthermore, he presents an impressive picture of how a society must develop which is continuously preparing for war, continuously afraid of being attacked, and preparing to find the means of complete annihilation of its opponents. (America of today is the best example of such a country.) Orwell's picture is so pertinent because it offers a telling argument against the popular idea that we can save freedom and democracy by continuing the arms race and finding a "stable" deterrent. This soothing picture ignores the fact that with increasing technical "progress" (which creates entirely new weapons about every five years, and will soon permit the development of 100 or 1000 instead of 10 megaton bombs), the whole society will be forced to live underground, but that the destructive strength of thermonuclear bombs will always remain greater than the depth of the caves, that the military will become dominant (in fact, if not in law), that fight and hatred of a possible aggressor will destroy the basic attitudes of a democratic, humanistic society. In other words, the continued arms race, even if it would not lead to the outbreak of a thermonuclear war, would lead to the destruction of any of those qualities of our society which can be called "democratic," "free," or "in the American tradition." Orwell demonstrates the illusion of the assumption that democracy can continue to exist in a world preparing for nuclear war, and he does so imaginatively and brilliantly.

Another important aspect of the author's description, in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, of the nature of truth, which on the surface is a picture of Stalin's treatment of truth, especially in the thirties. But anyone who sees in Orwell's description only another denunciation of Stalinism is missing an essential element of his analysis. What Orwell is actually talking about is a development which was taking place in the Western industrial countries also only at a lower pace than it took place in Russia and China. The basic question which Orwell was raising is whether there is any such thing as "truth." "Reality" so the ruling party holds, "is not external. Reality exists in the human mind and nowhere else ... whatever the Party holds to be truth is truth." In a dramatic conversation between the protagonist of the Party and the beaten rebel, the basic principles of the Party are explained. In contrast to the Inquisitor, however, the leaders of the Party do not even pretend that their system is intended to make man happier because men, being frail and cowardly creatures, want to escape freedom and are unable to face the truth. The leaders are, of course, aware of the fact that they themselves have only one aim, and that is power. To them "power is not a means: it is an end. And power means the capacity to inflict unlimited pain and suffering to another human being." Power, then, for these agents of authority, these holders of power, creates reality, it creates truth.

The position that Orwell attributes to the power elite in *Nineteen Eighty Four* can be said to be an extreme form of philosophical idealism, but it is more to the point to recognize that the concepts of truth and reality which exist in the novel are an extreme form of pragmatism in which truth becomes subordinated to the Party. Alan Harrington, an American author, has given, in his book *“Life in the Crystal Palace (1960)”* a subtle and penetrating picture of life in a big business corporation. He has coined an excellent expression for the contemporary concept of truth: “mobile truth.” If I work for a big corporation which claims that its product is better than that of all competitors, the question whether this claim is justified or not in terms of verifiable reality becomes irrelevant. What matters is that as long as I serve this particular corporation, this claim becomes “my” truth, and I decline to examine whether it is an objectively valid truth. In fact, if I change my job and move over to the corporation which was until now “my” competitor. I shall accept the new truth, that its product is the best, and subjectively speaking, this new truth will be as true as the old one. It is one of the most characteristic and destructive developments of our time that man, becoming more and more of an instrument, transforms reality more and more into something relative to his own interests and functions. Truth is proven by the consensus of millions; to the slogan “how can millions be wrong” is added “how can a minority of one be right.” Orwell shows quite clearly that in a system in which the concept of truth as an objective judgement concerning reality is abolished, anyone who is a minority of one must be convinced that he is insane, not “normal” like the majority. Foucault, in his book *Civilization and Madness*, asserts the same proposition, which the history of mankind bears out.

In characterizing the kind of thinking which dominates in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell has coined a word which has already become part of our vocabulary: “doublethink.” “Doublethink” means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one’s mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. This process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision. But it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence of guilt. It is precisely the unconscious aspect of doublethink which seduces many a reader in the Western World of Orwell’s novel into believing that the method of doublethink is employed by the Russians and the Chinese, while it is quite foreign to those western readers. This, however, is an illusion, as a few examples can demonstrate (in fact, it only proves Orwell’s argument in the novel, for, like the corporate man, the western reader so believes because the Western society says so) Those in the West speak of the “free world,” in which are included not only democratic systems but dictatorships and similar other forms of systems. In other words, when the American or British authorities speak of the “free world,” they always mean all the states except those governed by the communist governments. Recently, the Muslim countries (those on the wrong side of the Imperial powers) are also clubbed with the world “not free.” To put it differently, all those states that support the Western block constitute the “free world”, and all others opposed to that block are “not free” world.

**Activity**

Look for meaning of these words in the Dictionary and write in the space given. Use the words in your conversation.

1. Utopias: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Hypnoid: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Strivings: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Eradication: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Frail: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Slaughter: \_\_\_\_\_

While this is not the place for a lengthy discussion of disarmament as a necessity in a nuclear world, the examples given here were necessary for an understanding of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The point made in the novel is that “doublethink” is already with us and not merely something which will happen in the future, and in dictatorship. Another point made in the novel, and related to “doublethink,” is that in a successful manipulation

of the mind the person is no longer saying the opposite of what he thinks, but he thinks the opposite of what is true. Thus, for instance, “if he has surrendered his independence and his integrity completely, if he experiences himself as a thing which belongs either to the state, the party or the corporation, then two plus two are five, or slavery is freedom” and he feels true because there is no longer any awareness of the discrepancy between truth and falsehood. It specifically applies to the ideologies. Just as the inquisitors who tortured their prisoners believed that they acted in the name of Christian love, the Party “rejects and vilifies every principle for which the socialist movement originally stood, and it chooses to do this in the name of socialism.” Its content is reversed into its opposite, and yet people believe that the ideology means what it says. In this respect, Orwell quite clearly refers to the falsification of socialism by Russian communism. This must also, however, be added that the West is no less guilty of a similar falsification. It presents its society as being one of free initiative, individualism and idealism, whereas in reality these words remain only a matter of rhetoric. The Western states are no better than centralized managerial industrial societies, of an essentially bureaucratic nature, which are motivated by a materialism that is only slightly mitigated by truly spiritual or religious concerns. Related to this is another example of “doublethink,” namely that few writers, discussing atomic strategy, stumble over the fact that killing, from Christian standpoint, is as evil or more evil than being killed. We can discover several more features of the present-day Western society in Orwell’s description of *Nineteen EightyFour*; provided we can overcome enough of our own “doublethink”.

Orwell’s picture in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is for sure, exceedingly depressing, especially if we recognize that (as the novelist himself points out) it is not only a picture of an enemy but of the whole human race at the end of the twentieth century. There can be two ways to react to this picture: either by becoming more depressed, or by feeling there is still time, and by responding with greater clarity and courage. All the three Utopias, including Orwell’s, make it appear that it is possible to dehumanize man completely, and yet for life to go on. One might doubt the correctness of this assumption, and think that while it might be possible to destroy the human core of man, one would also in doing this destroy the future of mankind. Such men would be so truly inhuman and lacking in vitality that they would destroy each other or die out of sheer boredom and anxiety. If the world of Orwell’s novel is going to be the dominant form of life on this globe, it will mean a world of madmen, and hence not a viable world. One can be sure that Orwell does not want to insist that this world of insanity is bound to come. On the contrary, it seems quite obvious that his intention is only to sound a warning by showing where we are going unless we succeed in the renaissance of the spirit of humanism and dignity which is at the very root of Occidental culture (in fact, any culture properly understood). Orwell simply seems to imply that the new form of managerial industrialism, in which man builds machines which act like men, and develops men who act like machines, is conducive to an era of dehumanization and complete alienation, in which men are transformed into things and become appendixes to the process of production and consumption. Orwell obviously implies that this danger exists not only in communism of the Chinese or Russian versions, but that it is a danger inherent in the modern mode of production and organization, and is relatively independent of the various ideologies.

Hence, Orwell’s novel is not a prophecy of disaster. The novel only warns us and awakens us to the possible and potent danger; in fact, the novelist still hopes, even though his hope is desperate. This hope, the novel seems to suggest, can be realized by recognizing the danger of a society of automatons who will have lost every trace of individuality, of love, of critical thought, and yet who will not be aware of it because of their “doublethink”. The novel remains a powerful reading even after the collapse of USSR, because it is not a topical piece. Since its thrust is general, related to the entire modern society (and not to anyone of its segments), its universal appeal continues. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has become one of those classics that continue to be read across the bounds of space and time.

#### **27.4 LET US SUM UP**

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a satire, a prophecy, a warning, a political thesis, a work of science fiction, a spy thriller, a psychological horror, a gothic nightmare, a postmodern text and a love story besides a Dystopian novel. The book’s title and many of its concepts, such as Big Brother and the Thought Police, are instantly recognized and understood, often as bywords for modern social and political abuses.

## 27.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQS)

1. Who comes to Winston's door while he is writing in his diary? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Members of the Junior Spies
  - b. The Thought Police
  - c. O'Brien
  - d. His neighbor, Mrs. Parsons
2. What is the purpose of the Junior Spies? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. It is a television program that offers propaganda to Oceania's youth
  - b. It is a training program for future spies in the Oceania military
  - c. It trains children to spy on their parents and other adults
  - d. It teaches children to be ninjas
3. What are the world's three ruling nations? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. America, Russia, and China
  - b. America, Europe, and Asia
  - c. Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia
  - d. Oceania, Eastasia, and Westasia
4. Why does Winston have trouble remembering his childhood? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. He suffered a traumatic accident as a teenager
  - b. He has subconsciously buried the painful memories of his youth
  - c. He has no photos or other records of that time
  - d. He has been brainwashed by the Party
5. When did Big Brother first emerge as a political figure? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The 1930s
  - b. The 1960s
  - c. The 1950s
  - d. It's unclear because the Party has altered historic documents
6. What is the public's reaction to the Party's efforts to alter historic records? \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. For the most part, people accept the altered fact
  - b. People are left in a constant state of frustration
  - c. The Party's efforts breed contempt among the general population
  - d. The public never believes anything the Party says

7. Who is Comrade Ogilvy? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. Winston’s link to the rebellion
  - b. A fictitious person invented by Winston
  - c. A former Party official who has been vaporized
  - d. A war hero who is being honored by the Party
8. What is the goal of Newspeak, as Syme explains it to Winston? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. To narrow language so that thought crime is impossible
  - b. To incorporate all languages into one
  - c. To reduce the language to only pleasant-sounding words
  - d. To make every word start with the letter A
9. What does Winston conclude the Party views sex as? \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. A way to keep husbands and wives from cheating
  - b. A way to keep the masses happy
  - c. An outlet for stress and boredom
  - d. A way to produce future Party members
10. TRUE or FALSE: Writing in his diary provides no relief for Winston’s feelings of frustration and anger. \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. True
  - b. False

## 27.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Examine Orwell’s technique of the novel as used in *Nineteen Eighty Four*.
2. Discuss *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a “dystopian” novel.
3. Examine *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a “prophetic” novel.
4. Evaluate Orwell’s view of contemporary society as depicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.
5. Examine Orwell’s use of fantasy in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

## 27.7 ANSWER KEY

### SAQs

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

## 27.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Williams, Ian. *Political and Cultural Perceptions of George Orwell*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2018.
  2. Gleason, Abbott. *Nineteen Eighty Four : Orwell and Our Future*. Princeton University Press, 2010.
  3. “1984 Symbols.” *LitCharts*, Learneo, Inc., 2025, [www.litcharts.com/lit/1984/symbols](http://www.litcharts.com/lit/1984/symbols).
- “Nineteen Eighty four.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nineteen Eighty four](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nineteen%20Eighty%20four).

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