Introduction to Literary Genres II: Prose & Fiction

COURSE CODE: SGB24EG203MC

English Langauge and Literature (Honours)

Major Course

Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Introduction to Literary Genres II: Prose & Fiction

Course Code: SGB24EG203MC

Semester - III

Four Year Undergraduate Programme
English Language and Literature (Honours)
Major Course
Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY GENRES II: PROSE & FICTION

Course Code: SGB24EG203MC
Semester- III
Major Course
BA English Language and Literature (Honours)

Scan this QR Code for reading the SLM on a digital device.

Second Edition
May 2025

ISBN 978-81-986991-2-1

www.sgou.ac.in

Visit and Subscribe our Social Media Platforms

MESSAGE FROM VICECHANCELLOR

Dear Learner,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Four Year UG Programme in English Language and Literature offered by Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Established in September 2020, our university aims to provide high-quality higher education through open and distance learning. Our guiding principle, 'access and quality define equity', shapes our approach to education. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards in our academic offerings.

Our university proudly bears the name of Sreenarayanaguru, a prominent Renaissance thinker of modern India. His philosophy of social reform and educational empowerment serves as a constant reminder of our dedication to excellence in all our academic pursuits.

The Four Year UG Programme in English Language and Literature covers all relevant areas aligned with English language and literary studies. We have incorporated the latest trends in English studies to ensure a comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum. Moreover, the programme encompasses flexible options for learners to choose from a range of Ability Enhancement Courses, Multi-disciplinary Courses, Value Added Courses, and Skill Enhancement Courses, complemented by discipline-oriented Advanced and Additional Advanced Courses.

Our teaching methodology combines three key elements: Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling, and Virtual modes. This blended approach aims to provide a rich and engaging learning experience, overcoming the limitations often associated with distance education. We are confident that this programme will enhance your understanding of English language and literature, preparing you for various career paths and further academic pursuits.

Our learner support services are always available to address any concerns you may have during your time with us. We encourage you to reach out with any questions or feedback regarding the programme.

We wish you success in your academic journey with Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Best regards,

Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.
Vice Chancellor

01-05-2025

Contents

Block 01	**Shades of Prose**	**1**
Unit 1	The Essay	2
Unit 2	Introduction to the Important Essayists in English Literature	11
Unit 3	Of Studies - Francis Bacon	18
Unit 4	A Dissertation upon Roast Pig - Charles Lamb	24
Block 02	**A Miscellany of Prose Writings**	**30**
Unit 1	Introduction to Prose Writings	31
Unit 2	Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech - Albert Camus	38
Unit 3	Misguided Guide - R.K. Narayan	45
Unit 4	Ngugi wa Thiong'o with Harish Trivedi (Interview)	55
Block 03	**Introduction to Fiction I**	**64**
Unit 1	An Introduction to Short Fiction	65
Unit 2	The Gift of the Magi - O Henry	78
Unit 3	Parson's Pleasure - Roald Dahl	88
Block 04	**Introduction to Fiction-2**	**98**
Unit 1	The Tell-Tale Heart - Edgar Allan Poe	99
Unit 2	The Bet - Anton Chekov	104
Unit 3	The Eyes are Not Here - Ruskin Bond	108
Block 05	**Introduction to Novel-1**	**112**
Unit 1	Aspects of the Novel	113
Unit 2	Techniques in Narrative Fiction	129
Unit 3	Pride and Prejudice - Jane Austen	135
Unit 4	Victorian Novels and their Characteristics	140
Block 06	**Introduction to Novel-2**	**156**
Unit 1	A Brief Survey of the Important Novels of the 20th Century	157
Unit 2	Main Features of Twentieth Century Novels	165
Unit 3	The Old Man and the Sea - Ernest Hemingway	172
	Model Question Paper Sets	**177**

BLOCK - 01

Shades of Prose

Unit 1

The Essay

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- become aware of the essay as a form of prose writing
- acquaint themselves with the historical evolution of essays in English literature
- identify and differentiate between the various types of essays
- familiarise them with the basic structure of an essay

Prerequisites

A student sits at their desk, staring at a blank page, trying to turn scattered thoughts into a clear and compelling argument. This familiar scene captures the challenge and the power of essay writing. From our earliest school assignments to advanced academic work, the essay has served as a key tool for organising ideas, developing reasoning, and expressing ourselves with purpose.

Over time, essay writing has grown beyond the boundaries of the classroom. It now plays an important role in extracurricular activities, college applications, and even professional settings where clear communication is essential. Yet, effective essay writing is not just about having something to say – it is about knowing how to say it. It requires a balance of deep understanding of the topic and mastery of structure to guide the reader through a coherent, engaging argument.

In this unit, we will break down the elements that make essays both impactful and persuasive. We'll explore a variety of essay types, from analytical and argumentative to narrative and descriptive, each serving its own unique function and audience. To deepen our appreciation for this literary form, we'll also take a brief look at the essay's historical evolution, discovering how it has adapted and expanded across centuries.

Keywords

Purpose, Structure, Types, Features, Essays.

Discussion

1.1.1 The Essay: Definition and Features

An essay is a short piece of writing that provides information as well as the writer's opinion. It is of reasonable length and explores a specific issue or subject. It is an academic and literary write up that is analytical, interpretative and reflective in nature. The word 'essay' comes from the French word 'essayer' which meant 'to attempt' or 'trial'. The intent of an essay is to inform or persuade. It is a scholarly work that provides the author's personal argument. Essays are characterised by their purpose, logical organisation of content, formal structure and reasonable length. Generally, essays are made up of five paragraphs. They help students enrich their writing, critical thinking and reasoning skills. Essays will have an introduction, writer's arguments, counter arguments and conclusion. There are different types of essays like narrative essays, descriptive essays, argumentative essays and expository essays. The writer's view is presented in a non fictional way. An essay can be short in length with 500 words or it can be as long as 5000 words. The topic chosen, the writer's purpose and her/his perspectives determine the length of the essay. Essays are considered as subjective; they include expository elements, personal opinions and viewpoints.

A typical academic essay has an introduction, body paragraphs and the conclusion. Introduction contextualises the intention of the essay. It has a thesis statement which guides the entire essay. The writer's claims and arguments come in the following body paragraphs. The writer's opinions, her/his claims, interpretations and supporting evidence must be provided. All this must strengthen the thesis statement. Evidence must include facts and statistics. Reliable sources like books, journal articles and academic online sources can be used. Formal language must be used. Counter arguments can be provided and then disapproved. The writer can challenge the counter arguments suggested by others. The writer's arguments can be made strong by adding supporting statements. Each paragraph must be logically connected. All topic sentences must be related to the thesis statement. There should be a clear transition from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion. The content that comes between the introduction and the conclusion constitutes the evidence, analysis and interpretation. The conclusion restates the thesis statement to remind the readers of the essay's original intent. The concluding statement must be clear, convincing and strong.

While writing essays one must pay attention to the language, tone and style used. It is better to use scholarly and formal language, maintain an academic tone and also follow a structured and systematic approach. As essays are always referred to as academic and formal, it is advisable not to use jargon or regionalised slang. When it comes to adding supporting arguments or evidence to one's statements, books, scholarly journals, academic publications and good online sources can be used. Each paragraph should be opened with a topic sentence and closed or concluded with a concluding sentence. There must be a clear flow from one paragraph to another. This will ensure a logical connection among all the paragraphs from the introduction to the conclusion.

Essays are classified as formal and informal. They are found in literary criticism, political manifestos, memoirs and reflections. The oldest literary essays are credited to Montaigne, who published the first edition of essays in the work entitled *Essais* in 1572. Ben Jonson first used 'essayist' in 1609. Francis Bacon, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Samuel John-

son, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt and Thomas de Quincey are the other significant essayists. R L Stevenson raised the standards of the literary essay through his witty yet philosophical works. The 20th century writers like TS Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Edmund Wilson are known for critical essays.

1.1.2 Types of Essays

1.1.2.1 Personal Essay

A Personal essay attempts to describe a personal experience or a lesson learnt from the writer's personal experiences. The personal essay generally focuses on a significant event. It has a first person perspective and can be written in the style of a formal essay or like creative nonfiction. It is also considered a short work of autobiographical nonfiction characterised by a sense of intimacy and a conversational manner. Personal essays are based on personal experience of the writer that results in a positive or drastic change. These essays also include facts. Sensory details can be added too. These two ideas create a connection with the reader. This type of essay aims to motivate the readers. It also has a didactic spirit, that is, it intends to give a message. Personal essays can be about a variety of subjects like failure, victories in school, broken relationships, and realisations during early adulthood, campus experiences or meeting with an inspiring person. Such essays are enriched by personal memories and anecdotes.

Personal essays can be longer than formal essays. It can have 5 or more paragraphs. The introduction of such essays should be attractive. It is better to avoid clichéd beginnings as seen in stories or fairy tales. The body of the essay is the core where the writer shares his / her personal experiences, perspectives and opinions. The conclusion contains the moral of the narrative and has a deeper truth. Personal essays have an emotional impact on the reader. While writing a personal essay one should have a defined focus, that is, one should outline the experience or detail that is to be the focus point. To make the essay and the narrative interesting and deep, one may add personal narratives, character descriptions, dialogue and setting description. As in the case of other essays, the personal essays should have a strong introduction, interesting details, logical sequence and strong conclusion.

1.1.2.2 Argumentative Essay

The Argumentative essay requires the student or the writer to investigate a topic, analyse facts, critically evaluate evidence and reach a conclusion. Argumentative essays need extensive research of literature or previously published content. They also need empirical research. Data for the essay is collected through interviews, surveys, observations or experiments. Argumentative essays must establish a clear thesis statement and logical reasoning. A clear, concise and defined thesis statement is presented in the first paragraph. There must be clear and logical transitions or movements from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion. Body paragraphs include evidence and support. Each paragraph should be limited to one major point. Each paragraph should have a logical connection with the thesis statement. It should support and give evidence to the thesis statements. The last paragraph of the body paragraphs can hold the conflicting ideas and opinions.

The Argumentative essay is characterised by its evidence. The evidence provided by the writer can be factual, logical, statistical or anecdotal. The conclusion should not restate the thesis but readdress it in the view of the evidence provided. Synthesise the information provided in the body paragraphs and provide a final overview. Longer argumentative essays discuss the topic, sources of information and

their credibility as well as a number of different opinions on the issue before the conclusion. Argumentative essays aim to clear debates and to uncover the truth. They are seen as a methodical way to reach conclusions. Therefore they should be centered on compelling discussions and must have accurate, detailed and current information to support the thesis statement. It should also consider other valid points of view. Counter arguments can be added to increase the credibility of the essay.

1.1.2.3 Descriptive Essay

Descriptive essays come under those writings that describe an object, place, experience, emotion or situation. These essays test the writer's ability to provide a written description on the given topic. It allows a great deal of artistic freedom. A descriptive essay requires brainstorming, concise language and clarity in describing impressions. It also requires imaginative thinking and formal organisation. It generally has five paragraphs. These paragraphs must be written in a coherent and connected manner. There must be a thesis sentence in the introductory paragraph followed by three body paragraphs and conclusion. There can be more body paragraphs if the descriptive essay is on a larger topic like the rituals associated with certain festivals. Descriptive essays function to present a person, place or thing in a vivid manner. Writers use sensory information to make the description clear to the readers. The description can be presented in an honest manner. These essays teach the art of self expression through writing. They are found in newspaper articles, book reports and research papers. Reports of a single event, travelogue and memoirs also use the descriptive mode of writing.

Descriptive essays are the most preferred form of essays as they provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of a topic. Such essays are characterised by the addition of concrete details and figurative language. The first step in writing a descriptive essay is to choose a specific topic. The writer should have a defined focus and must try to avoid irrelevant deviations. The introductory paragraph should have a strong thesis statement, leaving a dominant impression. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence that catches attention. The body paragraphs should include information on physical characteristics, background information and sensory information. As in the case of other types of essays, it is essential to organise the information into logical paragraphs. The writer ought to be specific in providing information. Suitable examples make a better impact than generalisations. The writer must summarise the key details in the concluding paragraph. New details can be avoided in the conclusion. A descriptive essay becomes more impressive and effective when written in simple yet persuasive language. The writer can use literary devices but they should be easy enough to be understood by all. A descriptive essay expects a writer to be able to create an image by appealing to the senses of the readers.

1.1.2.4 Narrative Essays

A narrative essay is a type of essay that has a core theme or central idea which is supported by a larger narrative. It has the same structure as a formal essay. However, it is an essay in a narrative form with characters, situations and dialogues. It is also categorised under non-fiction writing. It is different from the short story as it has a specific aspect to discover. A narrative essay has three elements- characters, theme and dialogues. The characters behave just like characters in novels. They revolve around a theme. The central idea is presented in the thesis statement. The thesis statement is divided into three or more sections. It is then elaborated in the body paragraphs. Dialogue

is an interesting element used in narrative essays. Dialogues add the angle of conversation between characters.

Narrative essays describe people, their conversations, and their experiences. They aim to give a message to readers. The major intention is to provide information about life experiences and lessons learned from them. They try to promote the importance of the experience. There will be a moral or theme for the readers to learn from. Narrative essays tell a story from one person's point of view.They are usually written in the first person. A narrative essay has all the elements of a story- beginning, middle and end. It has a plot, characters, settings and climax. The narrative is in a chronological order. It is written with sensory details. Ornamental or figurative language is used to express the feelings of the writer/ narrator. Flashbacks and flashforwards are used to help the story progress toward a climax.

A narrative essay usually starts by introducing characters and settings. They have a personal and creative outlook. They are anecdotal, experimental and personal. Characters and places are described in detail. The personalities of characters and the features of places are also described. The place where the narrative happens, that is, the setting should be presented in the right ambience. The narrative can be expressed in an intriguing manner to create an element of suspense. Narrative essays tell a story from a personal experience or personal point of view. It is a representation of a story not a story itself. All the elements of storytelling are used. The purpose is to inform. The mood of a narrative essay is emotional and imaginative. The style of writing is emotive and subjective in the first person. Examples are personal essays in newspapers and magazines.

1.1.2.5 Expository Essay

An expository essay is a type of essay where the author investigates a topic by analysing evidence. The word 'expository' is derived from 'exposition' which is a noun of 'expose'. An expository essay is a genre of writing that aims to explain, illustrate, clarify or explain a topic in a clear manner. It attempts to investigate, evaluate an idea. It can be written on personal experiences, literature, history, social issues, science and technology. An expository essay is written to teach the readers about the topic. It describes and explains facts on the topic. Information is given on the topic in a detailed manner. Third person perspective is used and the tone is neutral. An expository essay is written in a formal and logical manner. The main idea is described in an elaborate manner. Arguments are added in a coherent manner.

An expository essay starts with an introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement. It is written in a manner so as to capture the attention of the reader. There are three or four body paragraphs with one idea in each paragraph. There should be a suitable movement or transition from paragraph to paragraph. Suitable evidence and supporting information are provided. The conclusion restates the argument, summarises facts and proposes alternative ideas and future possibilities. The goal is to provide an informative and logical explanation of the topic. The writer should take an objective approach and not express her/ his personal ideas and perspectives too liberally.

An expository essay requires clear and concise language. Figurative language is not suitable. The writer should keep the arguments clear and logical. The readers should not be confused by adding too many details. It is good to write a brief before writing the essay. The thesis statement is the core of the

essay. It summarises what the essay is about in one sentence. An appealing introduction will clearly state the intent of the essay and set the tone for the arguments in the essay. Each body paragraph has a topic sentence; one main idea in each paragraph. Suitable supporting arguments must be added to make ideas more convincing. The writer should connect all the paragraphs using transition words and sentences. Words like 'however', 'for example' and 'such as' can be used. There should be a logical continuation of the idea. Facts and statistics are an important element in expository essays. They add strength and authority to the writer's argument. The writer ought to find relevant data to support her/ his ideas. This should be done by systematic research. A strong conclusion must summarise the main arguments briefly and clearly. One can even add rhetorical questions in the conclusion to intensify the level of conviction.

Table 1.1.1 Aims and features of different types of essays

Type of Essay	**Aim**	**Features**	**Details added**	**Perspective**
Personal essay	To describe a personal experience	Categorised as creative nonfiction; can be written in the style of a formal essay	Personal narratives, character descriptions, dialogue and setting description.	First person point of view
Argumentative essay	To investigate a topic, analyse facts and critically evaluate evidence	Involves empirical research, thesis statement and logical reasoning	Have accurate, detailed and current information	First person point of view
Descriptive essay	To describe an object, place, experience, emotion or situation.	Requires brainstorming, concise language and clarity in describing impressions	Concrete details and figurative language; appealing to the senses of the readers	First person point of view
Narrative essay	Has a core theme or central idea which is supported by a larger narrative	Has a narrative form with characters, situations and dialogues; has a plot, characters, settings and climax	Anecdotal, experimental and personal	First person point of view
Expository essay	To investigate a topic by analysing evidence	Aims to explain, illustrate, clarify or explain a topic in a clear manner	Facts and statistics are important elements	Third person point of view

Recap

- Essay is a short piece of writing
- Provides information and opinion
- Essays are characterised by their purpose, content, structure and length
- Academic essay has an introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion
- Pay attention to the language, tone and style used
- Classified as formal and informal
- A Personal essay attempts to describe a personal experience
- A Personal essay focuses on a significant event
- It has a first person perspective and can be written in the style of a formal essay or like creative nonfiction
- Narrative essays have a central idea which is supported by a larger narrative
- Essay in a narrative form with characters, situations and dialogues
- Argumentative essays investigate a topic, analyse facts, critically evaluate evidence and reach a conclusion
- Need extensive research
- Data collection needed
- Must establish a clear thesis statement and logical reasoning
- Descriptive essays describe an object, place, experience, emotion or situation
- Require brainstorming, concise language and clarity
- Found in newspaper articles, book reports and research papers
- In Expository essay, the author investigates a topic by analysing evidence
- Aims to explain, illustrate, clarify or explain a topic in a clear manner
- Written on personal experiences, literature, history, social issues, science and technology

Objective Questions

1. To which writer are the oldest literary essays credited?
2. Who first used 'essayists' in 1609?
3. What kind of language is it better to use while writing essays?
4. What does the French word 'essayer' mean?
5. What is the intent of an essay?
6. Who wrote the famous essay "On Running After One's Hat"?
7. Who is the author of the essay "Modern Fiction"?

8. What is the opening sentence of a paragraph called?
9. Who wrote the essay "Dream Children : A Reverie"?
10. Who wrote the famous essay "What is Culture?"
11. Which type of essay investigates a topic by analysing evidence?
12. Which essay usually starts by introducing characters and settings?
13. Which type of essay provides a comprehensive and detailed understanding of a topic?
14. What are the three main features in a narrative essay?
15. What is an Argumentative essay characterised by?
16. Which essay is considered a short work of autobiographical nonfiction?
17. What type of essay is found in newspaper articles?
18. Which point of view has a neutral tone ?
19. What are the publications that report the results of original scientific research?
20. What tells the reader the significance of the subject matter under discussion?

Answers

1. Montaigne
2. Ben Jonson
3. Scholarly and formal
4. 'to attempt' or 'trial'
5. To inform and persuade
6. G K Chesterton
7. Virginia Woolf
8. Topic sentence
9. Charles Lamb
10. Jawaharlal Nehru
11. Expository essay
12. Narrative essay
13. Descriptive essays
14. Characters, theme and dialogues.
15. Evidence
16. Personal essay
17. Descriptive essays
18. Third person point of view
19. Primary literature
20. Thesis statement

Assignments

1. Compare and contrast different types of essays.
2. Prepare a descriptive essay on a topic of your choice.
3. Write an expository essay explaining the process of climate change and its effects on the environment.
4. Narrate a personal experience where you overcame a significant challenge. What lessons did you learn from this experience?

Suggested Reading

- Roberts, Jamie. *Essentials of Essay Writing*. Brisbane,2017.
- Schnorenberg, Leslie. *Basic Essay Writing: How to Write Different Types of Essays*. CreateSpace, 2013.
- Warburton, Nigel. *The Basics of Essay Writing*. Taylor, 2020.
- Wood, Nancy W. *Writing Argumentative Essays.* Prentice, 2000.

Unit 2

Introduction to the Important Essayists in English Literature

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- describe the stages of growth of essays
- identify the major essayists
- discuss the major essays and their relevance
- examine the features of essays in different ages of literature

Prerequisites

A reader sits curled up with a well-worn book of essays, pages filled with sharp observations, timeless reflections, and the unmistakable voice of a writer speaking across the ages. These are the works of essayists whose words have shaped not only literature but also the way we think about ourselves and the world around us.

Now that we have explored what makes an essay effective, its structure, purpose, and diverse forms, it's time to turn our attention to the voices that defined the genre. Across centuries and continents, influential essayists have left behind a rich legacy of thought, insight, and innovation. Their contributions have stretched far beyond the page, influencing culture, politics, philosophy, and art.

In this section, we will journey through literary history to meet some of these pivotal figures. From Montaigne's introspective musings to the sharp wit of Virginia Woolf and the cultural critiques of James Baldwin, each writer offers a distinct perspective on the human experience. Their essays do more than inform, they challenge, inspire, and reveal the evolving nature of society and self.

By studying their works, we not only gain a deeper understanding of the essay as a literary form, but we also connect with the intellectual and cultural currents that have shaped human discourse. These essayists don't just write about the world, they invite us to see it differently.

Keywords

English Prose, Essayists, Periodicals, Pamphlets, Critical essay

Discussion

1.2.1 Essayists of the 16th Century

Essays became a popular form of literary expression in the 16th century. The Elizabethan Age was an age of vigor, reawakened intellectual esteem and imagination. This age was best known for drama and poetry. English prose gradually acquired an identity of universal application. The introduction of mass printing was an important factor in making English prose popular. The early years of the 16th century registered prose writers like Sir Thomas Elyot, the author of *Governance of England* (1531), George Cavendish who wrote the biography of Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas Willson's whose main work is *Art of Rhetoric* (1553)and Roger Ascham who wrote *Toxophilus* (1545) and *The School Master*. The prose writers of this age promoted English as the medium of prose. The later 16th century prose took its forms, such as Prose romances, Pamphlets, Translations, Critical prose, Sermons, Dramatic prose, Character writing and Essays. Short tracts on religion, politics, and literature became popular. Elizabethan pamphleteering was quite masculine, satirical and energetic.

The notable pamphleteers were Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), Robert Greene (1560-92) and Thomas Lodge (1558-1625).They cultivated a journalistic style characterised by intellectuality, force and directness. The birth of literary criticism during this period indicates the growing stature of the national literature and the realisation of the need to establish the principles of writing. It was concerned with three topics: the status and value of poetry, the importance of classical models, the merits and demerits of rhyme. Stephen Gosson attacked poetry as immoral in his Puritanical treatise *The School of Abuse* (1579) and Philip Sidney countered Gosson in his iconic treatise *The Apologie for Poetrie* (1582).

The English essay has its roots in the Elizabethan period, in the miscellaneous work of Lodge, Lyly and Greene and other literary freelancers. The first formal English essayist was Francis Bacon, who published a short series of essays in 1597.Francis Bacon is called the Father of English essay. His essays introduced a new style and spirit to the English essays. Bacon's essays are objective, impersonal and yet leave a lasting impression. His writing was lucid, clear, masculine and pithy.

1.2.2 Essayists of the 17th Century

The development of English prose and the genre of essays in the 17th century can be divided into two periods: 1) prose in the age of John Milton 2) prose during Restoration. The Age of Milton saw the development of prose. There was a notable advancement in sermon writing; pamphlets were popular; and history, politics, philosophy and many other topics were written on. The prose writers used a grand style that was loose in structure, rich and elaborate. Latinised words of classical construction were used liberally. The prose of this period had a freshness of form. It was also a period of biography, autobiography, history and personal essays. The prose of this age possesses a strongly religious or theological and philosophical character.

The important prose writers of this period are Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Fuller, Jack Walton and John Milton. Robert Burton (1577-1613) made notable contributions through his work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). Sir Thomas Browne's (1605- 82), *Religio Medici* (1635/1642) is a mixture of religious faith and scientific skepticism. Jeremy Taylor's (1613-67) prose works consisted of tracts, sermons, essays and theological books. His popular works were *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647), *Holy Living* (1650), and *Holy Dying* (1651). Thomas Fuller's (1608-1661) had

an original and thought provoking style. His historical books include *The History of the Holy War* (1639), dealing with the crusades, and *The Church History of Britain* (1655). John Milton (1608-74) was not only a great poet but also a fine writer of prose. He has written twenty-five pamphlets on themes like divorce, episcopacy, politics, education and liberty of the press. His greatest prose work is *Areopagitica* (1644), which is a noble and impassioned plea for the liberty of the press.

The other prose writers in the age of Milton were Izaac Walton, Earl of Clarendon and Thomas Hobbes. The prose work of the Restoration times is dominated by John Dryden's prose which is predominantly literary criticism and John Bunyan's remarkable development of the prose allegory. John Dryden (1631-1700) is the representative writer of the Restoration age. *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668) is his most appreciated work. The general subject of his prose work is literary criticism. John Bunyan (1628-88) is applauded for his first book Grace Abounding (1666). Lord Halifax's(1633-95) fame as an author rests on a small volume called *Miscellanies*. It contains a number of political tracts. Sir William Temple (1628-99) was well known for his works *Letters* (1700), *Memoirs* (1691) and *Miscellanea, A Series of Essays* (1680, 1690 & 1701). The two diary writers Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) and John Evelyn (1620-1706) wrote during this period.

1.2.3 Essayists of the 18th Century

The 18th Century was an age of great prose. Matthew Arnold termed it a century of prose. The period had great prose writers like Addison, Steele, Swift, Defoe and Johnson. Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) was a journalist and pamphleteer who wrote with extraordinary felicity and authority. Defoe wrote a number of political tracts and pamphlets. He issued his own journal *The Review* in 1704 which was the forerunner of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Richard Steele (1672-1729) and Joseph Addison (1672- 1719) become prominent contributors of prose through their well known periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Richard Steele started his journal *The Tatler* in 1709, *The Spectator* in 1711 and several other short lived periodicals *The Guardian* (1713), *The Englishman* (1713), *The Reader* (1714), and *The Plebeian* (1719). Steele's essays were didactic; he desired to bring about a reformation of contemporary society manners, and was notable for his consistent advocacy of womanly virtues and the ideal of the gentleman of courtesy, chivalry, and good taste. Joseph Addison was famous for drama, poetry and essays. The aim of Addison and Steele was to present a true and faithful picture of the 18th century. They wanted to bring about a moral and social reform in the conditions of the time. The best of Addison's essays are centered around the imaginary character of Sir Roger de Coverley and known as 'Coverley Papers'. Addison wrote four hundred essays in all, which are of almost uniform length, of nearly unvarying excellence of style and of a wide variety of subjects- immorality, jealousy, prayer, death and drunkenness. He advocated moderation and tolerance.

Periodical literature occupied a prominent place. Defoe's *Review* (1704), Steele's *The Tatler* (1709) and *The Spectator* (1711) and *The Plebeian* (1719) are some prominent periodicals of this time. With the advancement of periodical press the short essay took a great stride forward. Samuel Johnson (1709-84) is an excellent writer of prose. In 1747 he began working on his Dictionary which was his great contribution to scholarship. While working on the Dictionary he also wrote periodical essays for *The Rambler*. He wrote *Rasselas* (1759), which was meant to be a philosophical novel but it was actually a number of Rambler essays strung together. During 1758-60 he con-

tributed papers for *The Idler, The Universal Chronicle* and *Weekly Gazette*. *The Lives of the Poets* (1777-81), a series of introductions to the works and lives of fifty two poets is an epic work. The prose of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74) is of astonishing range and volume. His *The Citizen of the World* (1759) is a series of imaginary letters from a China man whose comments on the English society are both simple and shrewd. He wrote many essays in the manner of Addison. Some of these works are *An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* (1759), *The History of England* (1771) and *A History of Earth and Animated Nature*. Edmund Burke (1729-97) was appreciated for his purely philosophical writings and his political pamphlets and speeches. *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756) and *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756) were his most philosophical works.

The prose of the Romantic period was quite evolved and great essayists like Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt contributed substantially. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Shelley and Keats also wrote some substantial prose works. Apart from a steep rise in periodicals the age witnessed the beginning of daily journals. Some of the dailies that started are *The Morning Chronicle* (1769), *The Morning Post* (1772), *The Times* (1785) and others. Literary magazines like *The Edinburgh Review* (1802), *The Quarterly Review* (1809), *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817), *The London Magazine* (1820), and *The Westminster Review* (1824) were started. Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* is a fine specimen of prose and critical theory. The prose of Coleridge is philosophical and literary in theme. In 1817 he published *Biographia Literaria,* his most appreciated prose work. Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* (1821) is a strong exposition of the Romantic point of view. His prose style is somewhat heavy but clear. Sir Walter Scott compiled beautiful prose like his prefaces to the editions of Dryden (1808), Swift (1814), *Lives of the Novelists* (1821-24), *Life of Napoleon* (1827) and the admirable *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828-30).

1.2.4 Essayists of the 19th Century

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) began his literary career as a poet, attempted a tragic play and compiled *Tales from Shakespeare* with his sister Mary Lamb. His substantial critical work is found in his Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, Who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare (1808) which is remarkable for its delicate insight and good literary taste. The original series was published as *The Essays of Elia* (1823) and a second under the title of *The Last Essays of Elia* (1833).His essays abound in humor and pathos.

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) held unusual political and literary views and contributed to *The Edinburgh Review, The Examiner, The Times* and *The London Magazine.* His reputation rests upon the lectures and essays on literary and general subjects published between 1817 and 1825. His lectures on *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (1817), The English Poets (1818), The English Comic Writers (1819) and The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820) are* good examples of literary criticism and scholarship. The best of his essays are collected in *The Round Table (1817); Table Talk, or Original Essays on Men and Manners (1821-22)* and *The Spirit of the Age or Contemporary Portraits (1825*). Hazlitt's writing is remarkable for its fearless expression of an honest and individual opinion, his ability to communicate his own enjoyment and his gift for evoking unnoticed beauty. His judgments are based on his emotional reactions rather than on objectively applied principles. Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) wrote prose; most of them of the highest merit. His *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*

(1821), appeared in The London Magazine.

The Victorian age recorded the growth of essays. Essays became popular literary writing with Macaulay, Carlyle, Pater, Ruskin and many others. John Ruskin (1819-1900), developed his own advanced notions on art, politics, economics and other subjects. His works include *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) and *The Two Paths* (1859). Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) is considered as the most representative name in Victorian prose. His translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1824), *The Life of Schiller* (1825) and his essays on Burns and Scott are good works. Walter Pater (1839-94) is known both as a stylist and a literary critic. The collection of his first essays appeared as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). The essays were chiefly concerned with art. *Imaginary Portraits* (1887) deals with artists and *Appreciations* (1889) is on literary themes with an introductory essay on style. Pater was a representative of the school of aesthetic criticism. He was a strong believer of the theory of art for art's sake. He focused his attention always on form rather than subject matter. R L Stevenson (1850-94) is remembered for his collection of essays titled *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879) and *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881).

Matthew Arnold (1822-88) is ranked as a great poet and a literary critic. His prose works are large in bulk and wide in range. His critical essays are ranked of the highest value. *Essays in Criticism* (1865 & 1889) contain the best of his critical works, which is marked by wide reading and careful thought. His judgments are logical and measured. He appears to be an advocate of sanity and culture. Two of his best books of this class are *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and *Literature and Dogma* (1873). His style is perfectly lucid, easy, elegant, distinct and rhythmical.

1.2.5 Essayists of the 20th century

GK Chesterton (1874- 1936) was a prominent 20th century essayist known for his wit and humor. He contributed regularly to the *Daily News*. EV Lucas (1868- 1938) is referred to as the Charles Lamb of the 20th century. His essays are characterised by urbanity, common sense and sophistication. AG Gardiner (1865-1946) was both a journalist and an essayist whose essays reflect energy and modern sensibility. Robert Lynd (1879- 1949) is remembered as a skilled phrase maker and a writer of personal, subjective essays. The 20th century saw the rise of critical essays written by literary greats like Virginia Woolf, TS Eliot, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell.

Recap

- Essays became a popular form of literary expression in the Elizabethan Age
- Pamphlets were popular in the 17th century
- The 18th Century was an age of prose
- The period had great prose writers like Addison, Steele, Swift, Defoe and Johnson
- Periodicals became popular
- Charles Lamb and Hazlitt represented the 19th century essayists

- Victorian period essay writers were Macaulay, Carlyle, Pater and Ruskin
- 20th century saw the rise of critical essays written by literary greats

Objective Questions

1. Who is referred to as the Charles Lamb of the 20th century?
2. Who wrote the work *Literature and Dogma?*
3. Whose collection of first essays appeared as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance?*
4. Who wrote *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful?*
5. Who wrote *Areopagitica?*
6. Which essayist wrote *Tales from Shakespeare* with his sister Mary Lamb?
7. In which year was *The London Magazine* started?
8. Which 20th century essayist is remembered as a skilled phrase maker?
9. Which Victorian poet is regarded as a great critical essayist too?
10. Who is credited with the work *Confessions of an English Opium Eater?*

Answers

1. E.V. Lucas
2. Matthew Arnold
3. Walter Pater
4. Edmund Burke
5. John Milton
6. Charles Lamb
7. 1820
8. Robert Lynd
9. Matthew Arnold
10. Thomas De Quincey

Assignments

1. Write a note on Victorian age essayists.
2. Write about the evolution of essays in the 17th century.
3. Analyse the works of prominent 20th-century essayists.

Suggested Reading

1. Albrecht, WP. *Hazlitt and the Creative Imagination*. The University of Kansas Press, 1965.
2. Benson, AC. *The Art of the Essayist*. Oxford UP, 1977.
3. Blunden, E. *The Last Essays of Elia*. Oxford UP,1929.
4. Killick, Tim. *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century*. Ashgate, 2013.
5. Walker, Hugh. *The English Essay and Essayists*. S. Chand, 1959.

Unit 3

Of Studies

-Francis Bacon

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- identify the writing style of Bacon
- analyse the main theme in the given essay
- become aware of the style of essays prevalent in the 16th century
- reflect on their own learning habits and consider how they can improve their educational experiences

Prerequisites

In the halls of government, a seasoned advisor carefully crafts a speech, choosing each word with precision, drawing not only from current affairs but also from centuries of philosophical thought. Among his inspirations is a familiar voice from the past: Francis Bacon. His essays, particularly "Of Studies," continue to guide thinkers, leaders, and decision-makers with their clarity, balance, and insight.

Having previously explored the influential essayists of the 16th century, we now turn our attention to one of the era's most prominent and enduring figures. Francis Bacon, philosopher, statesman, and essayist, was a visionary who helped shape both the English language and the intellectual landscape of his time. His essays are not only literary milestones but also practical reflections on life, learning, and human behavior.

In "Of Studies," Bacon offers a timeless meditation on the value of reading, contemplation, and the disciplined application of knowledge. His writing is marked by a rare blend of elegance and pragmatism, emphasising how intellectual pursuits serve as tools for personal growth, critical thinking, and informed decision-making.

Through close study of this essay, you will gain insight into the way Bacon's ideas have influenced generations across fields, from education to politics to philosophy. His words continue to remind us that learning is not an end in itself but a lifelong resource for shaping both thought and action.

Keywords

Uses of studies, Great habit, Bacon's pithy style,Aphorism, Brevity.

Discussion

1.3.1 Introduction

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was also known as Lord Verulam. Bacon was an English philosopher, lawyer and statesman who served as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England. Bacon's works are credited with developing the scientific method and remained influential through the scientific revolution. His main interests included Natural Philosophy and Philosophical logic. He was greatly influenced by Aristotle, Plato and Roger Bacon. He influenced Isaac Newton, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire and Rousseau.

Bacon's writings include *The Advancement of Learning*, *New Atlantis* and *History of Henry VII*. Bacon has been called the "Father of Empiricism". His works argued for the possibility of scientific knowledge based upon inductive reasoning and careful observation of events in nature. Bacon was a patron of libraries. His essays are written on a wide range of topics in a range of styles- plain, unadorned to the epigrammatic. They cover topics from both public and private life. The initial version of his essay collection consisted of ten essays, but a significantly expanded second edition, featuring 38 essays, was released in 1612. Subsequently, in 1625, another edition titled *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* was published, encompassing a total of 58 essays. The best essays include "Of Truth", "Of Death", "Of Revenge", "Of Adversity", "Of Marriage and Single Life", "Of Love", "Of Envy", "Of Atheism", "Of Travel", among others. In his essays he expressed his views on ideas like human lives, wisdom, interpersonal relationships and moral responsibilities. As an intellectual of the 16th and early 17th centuries, Bacon was strongly influenced by the ideals of humanism and the liberation of human thought associated with Renaissance. He belonged to the era of Renaissance philosophy. He believed that knowledge should be gained using inductive reasoning. Bacon has been appreciated for his short and meaningful essays that have been written in polished language. His prose style is considered direct, pithy and brief with deep meanings.

1.3.2 Summary

"Of Studies" is universally considered one of the most astute and thought-provoking essays ever written in the history of literature. Bacon employs a very direct and observational style. This essay evidences that Bacon is not just an intelligent philosopher but also a wise man who is practical enough to understand and share his understanding of the world in general and life in particular."Of Studies" focuses on the relevance of studies in the lives of individuals and formation of character. Bacon describes the importance of studies in human life in a very pithy and intellectual manner. Bacon's style is integrated, and brevity is the most important characteristic feature. His sentences are intense with meaning and can be expanded into a paragraph. He skillfully employs adaptation of Latin idioms and phrases. He is a master of expressing a lot of ideas through a minimum of words. He employs aphorisms to make the understanding of his topics clear to the reader.

Bacon begins the essay by talking about the three uses of studies – "to delight, for ornament and for ability." He states that studies delight most when one is secluded and focused .One enjoys studies when one has no dominant

distractions. Knowledge acquired through studies serves as an ornament in a conversation. It means that a well read man will have a good vocabulary and greater knowledge. It will enhance the quality of his conversation and therefore its worth. Studies improve one's judgmental and authoritative abilities. One would be able to understand people, complex situations and ideas better. 'Ordinary men' can no doubt go about their daily business without difficulty but a learned man will do so with higher efficiency. Bacon means to say that studies will make us a well equipped individual. He interestingly adds that studying too much is a sign of laziness and displaying it in conversation makes one look pretentious and boastful. To make judgments only on the basis of rules is the eccentricity of a scholar. To apply formal education to every situation in life is not a very wise thing to do. Bacon continues and states that studies make a man perfect. Studying is not an inborn talent; it is a consciously acquired strength. The natural abilities of man are enhanced and made better by studies just like the growth of plants is enhanced by trimming it regularly.

Studies provide both direction and experience. Practical men often condemn studies but wise men use it. Practical men feel that studies are too restrictive and limiting. Wise men understand that studies need to be consciously integrated and applied to lives to solve problems. Studies teach man to learn from observation. One must not use knowledge as a means of contradiction or confutation. Studies must also not be used to believe or to take for granted, or to talk and discourse but "to weigh and consider". Bacon means to say that studies should be applied positively and should aid our judgments and rational decisions. He uses the Latin phrase *"Abeunt studia in mores"* that translates into English as 'studies become habits'. He is convinced that studies are a great habit to develop.

Bacon speaks about the different ways in which different books are to be read. He says, – "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." This means some books are to be perused lightly, that is, tasted while some other books are to be understood and enjoyed, and swallowed. On the other hand, certain books are to be digested, that is, one must completely comprehend their meaning and implement it in one's life. Therefore, some books are to be read only in parts, others are to be read with less curiosity, and some books are to be read with attention and diligence. Bacon however also says that sometimes it may be enough to read extracts or reviews of books made by others instead of reading the whole book by oneself. However, according to Bacon this type of secondary reading ought to be done only in the case of books of less importance. He considers these "distilled books" to be distilled waters which he calls "flashy things".

Bacon reiterates that reading makes a man complete, conversation makes a man quick and witty, and writing improves the memory. If a man writes less, he will not possess a good memory; if he speaks less, he will lack wit and presence of mind and if he reads less, he will not possess much knowledge. Bacon also enunciates on how the study of various disciplines influences individuals. A study of history makes a man wise while a study of poetry makes him witty. Mathematics makes a man exact and precise and natural philosophy increases the depth of the mind. Morals make a man grave and serious whereas a study of logic and rhetoric makes him more comprehensive and widely knowledgeable. Studies pass into character. A man's character is influenced and defined by the type of books he reads.

Bacon believes that there is no disease of the mind that cannot be cured by proper study.

Bowling is good for the bladder and the kidneys, shooting for the lungs and breast, walking for the stomach and riding is good for the head. Similarly, Mathematics is the remedy for a wandering mind because if a man's mind wanders while solving a problem he will have to begin again. If a man is unable to make distinctions, he must study schoolmen or philosophers and if he is not quick in passing through matters, he should study the law. Thus Bacon concludes the essay by establishing that for every deficiency of the mind, a remedy is to be found in studies.

1.3.3 Analysis

The 16th century essayist Francis Bacon's essay, "Of Studies." forms a part of his renowned collection of essays, celebrated for their succinct and aphoristic style. In "Of Studies," Bacon explores the manifold advantages of reading and scholarly pursuits. He commences the essay by recognising the diverse forms and objectives of studies, underscoring that individuals may have distinct goals when engaging in study, yet the ultimate power resides in knowledge.

Bacon contends that the act of studying should transcend mere mental exercise; it should bear practical implications. He asserts that knowledge acquired through study must be harnessed to enrich both personal lives and society at large. He extols the utility of knowledge across various domains, from commerce and politics to personal growth.

Bacon lauds the diversity of studies encompassing fields such as history, philosophy, science, and literature. He proposes that a well-rounded individual should embrace a wide spectrum of subjects, as each offers unique insights and wisdom.

While encouraging a judicious balance between study and action, Bacon cautions against excessive immersion in books, as an overdose of reading may hinder practical experience. He underscores the importance of discerning quality over quantity, advocating for the selection of books pertinent to one's goals and interests.

Bacon introduces the concept of "digesting" knowledge, endorsing active reflection and internalisation rather than passive absorption. He underscores the significance of critical thinking and analysis in the learning process.

Bacon also recognises the value of writing as a tool for comprehension and retention of knowledge. He posits that the act of jotting down thoughts and insights clarifies ideas and facilitates the learning journey.

Balancing intellectual pursuits with practical application, Bacon cautions against both the pitfalls of becoming an erudite recluse and the perils of unbridled action bereft of the foundational knowledge gained through study.

The essay culminates in a contemplation of the worth of books and the wisdom they contain. Bacon reiterates the timeless maxim that knowledge equates to power and should be wielded sagaciously. This essay continues to resonate today, urging readers to ponder the purpose and utility of their studies in a perpetually evolving world.

Recap

- Bacon talks about the three uses of studies – "to delight, for ornament and for ability."
- Studies provide both direction and experience
- *"Abeunt studia in mores"*- 'studies become habits'.
- Some books are to be read only in parts, others are to be read with less curiosity, and some books are to be read with attention.
- Bacon says that reading makes a man complete, conversation makes a man quick and witty, and writing improves the memory
- A man's character is defined by the type of books he reads.
- Every disease of the mind can be cured by studies
- Studies have a remedy for every deficiency of the mind

Objective Questions

1. What is bowling good for?
2. Which subject increases the depth of the mind?
3. Which subject makes a man wise?
4. What quality comes in a person who studies poetry?
5. What are the ideals that Bacon was strongly influenced by?
6. What was the other name of Francis Bacon?
7. What is most important in Bacon's essays ?
8. What is Bacon's writing style called ?
9. Who remarked that Bacon's essays are the 'classics of English prose'?
10. Which essay by Bacon talks about the divine right theory followed by rulers?

Answers

1. Bladder
2. Natural philosophy
3. History
4. Wit
5. Humanism
6. Lord Verulam
7. Subject matter
8. Aphoristic
9. Emile Legouis
10. Of Nobility

Assignments

1. Analyse the main themes and arguments presented in Bacon's "Of Studies."
2. Explore the importance of selective reading and discuss how one can determine which books are valuable and relevant to their goals and interests.
3. Discuss the role of critical thinking and analysis in studying and reading.
4. How can individuals apply Bacon's advice on studying and reading in their personal and academic lives?
5. Discuss the advantages and potential drawbacks of excessive reading without practical application.

Suggested Reading

1. Bevan, Bryan. *The Real Francis Bacon.* Centaur, 1960.
2. Lovejoy, Benjamin. *Francis Bacon: A Critical Review.* Unwin, 1888.
3. Walker, Hugh. *The English Essay and Essayists*. Oxford UP, 1915.

Unit 4

A Dissertation upon Roast Pig

-Charles Lamb

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- understand the conversational writing style of Lamb
- analyse the main theme in the given essay
- describe the concept of using personal memories in essays
- identity the various important works written by Lamb

Prerequisites

A curl of smoke rises from a rustic kitchen, where a curious scent lingers in the air, something rich, savory, and entirely accidental. According to Charles Lamb, this is how humanity first discovered the joy of roast pig. In his whimsical essay "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," Lamb invites readers into a world where culinary bliss is stumbled upon through serendipity and the simplest pleasures are celebrated with the greatest enthusiasm.

Now that you have explored the thoughtful reflections of Francis Bacon's "Of Studies," it's time to take a lighter, more humorous turn. Charles Lamb, one of the most beloved English essayists of the early 19th century, shifts the tone from intellectual inquiry to playful storytelling. Known for his warmth, wit, and gentle satire, Lamb crafts a narrative that is as delightful as it is absurd, blending fiction and commentary with effortless charm.

In "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," Lamb spins the tale of a culinary accident that leads to the invention of one of life's tastiest delights. But beneath the laughter lies a deeper appreciation for life's simple joys. Like Bacon, Lamb showcases a distinct voice and literary style, one that urges us not only to think but to savour.

By engaging with this essay, you will not only enjoy Lamb's comic genius but also discover how humor can be a powerful lens through which we explore culture, tradition, and human nature.

Keywords

Essays of Elia, Culinary, Roasted pig, Personal narrative voice,Humour.

1.4.1 Introduction

Charles Lamb (1775 - 1834) is a phenomenal English writer and critic. He is counted among the best essayists of the world. He is best known for his work *Essays of Elia*(1823-1833). Lamb's personal life had a strong impact on his writing. The sensitivity and deep feelings expressed in his works were sourced from his own experiences. Lamb's life was punctuated by tragedies. In 1796, his sister Mary, in a fit of madness, killed their mother. Lamb showed courage and loyalty and looked after his disturbed sister. He started as a poet. In 1802, he published *John Woodvil*, a poetic tragedy. "The Old Familiar Faces" (1789) remains his best known poem. In 1807, Lamb and Mary published *Tales from Shakespeare*, a retelling of the plays for children. In 1808, Lamb published a children's version of the Odyssey, called *The Adventures of Ulysses*.

Lamb also wrote critical articles on Shakespeare and William Hogarth. He is most appreciated for his remarkable letters and the essays that he wrote under the pseudonym 'Elia' for *London magazine*. His style was highly personal and mannered- its function being to 'create' and delineate the persona of 'Elia'. His essays bring up a mixture of humour, pathos, scenes from childhood and express the author's sense of playfulness and fancy. As a writer who belonged to the Romantic Age, Lamb created a new tone to the genre of essay writing. His essays have a very personal feel and use a conversational style. They are not very formal in structure.

Lamb used his essays as a medium of expressing his most personal feelings. He is remembered as an essayist who erased the strict line between fiction and nonfiction. His essays are personal but are very literary. He set new standards to the essays of his age. There is the essence of humanity and philosophy in his essays. His essay collections *Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia* have the narrative persona of a man called Elia.

Like most essayists of his age, Lamb also often digressed or changed the track of his essays to involve his thoughts and related memories. He wrote in a lyrical and conversational style. His famous essays include "Old China", " Dream Children", "A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig", "The South Sea House", "Ellistoniana" , " Rejoicing Upon a New Year's Coming of Age", "Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading", "Grace Before Meat", "The Old and New Schoolmaster" and "The Praise of Chimney Sweepers". In these essays he deals with a wide range of topics that include his fancy for old china, his nostalgic thoughts on his past love, his dream children, his love for food and sharing food, his experience of working in the South Sea House bank, obituary for his friend, personification of days in an year, his compulsive reading habit, the hypocrisy in religion, his moral beliefs, the old and new kind of education and the nobility of the lower classes.

1.4.2 Summary

"A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" is considered one of the most witty and light-hearted essays that has been ever written. Charles Lamb starts the story with an amusing story told to him by his friend Thomas Manning. In September 1822, Lamb published this essay in *London Magazine* under the pen name of 'Elia'. He uses 'exaggeration' to create humour and provoke laughter.

It has comic elements and talks about delight in eating roast pig. He uses literary devices like hyperbole and exaggeration to praise the taste of roasted pork. Lamb uses a funny story on the discovery of the taste of roast pig. The story itself seems hyperbolic and very imaginative. It talks about how a fire in a house in

China led to the roasting of pork. There are fictional elements in the essay. This makes the narrative interesting. Lamb creates a fable to say that it is not clear why humans eat cooked animals at all. The writer uses the Romantic idea of using a personal or subjective narrative voice. This helps the reader to connect with the writer and his experiences.

Charles Lamb talks about the idea of food and delight in good food as the basic idea. He considers food as a social connector. He uses the concept of food to talk about human relationships. The writer introduces the essay by stating that in the early part of human history, people ate raw meat. Lamb claims that the writings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius refer to that idea that the Chinese did not cook meat before he started writing. Confucius' essay goes on to describe the discovery of roasting pork. It was discovered by Bo- bo, the son of Ho-ti, who was a pig herd. The narrative says that the discovery was accidental. Bo- bo was playing with fire one day. The family cottage was burned. Along with the cottage, nine pigs were also burnt to death. Bo- bo started thinking of explanations to give to his father. While thinking of excuses , Bo- bo feels tempted by the smell of burnt pigs. When he touches them, his fingers get stuck to the roasted fatty skin. He finds it delicious when he tastes it. He eats the burnt pigs to his full. When his father Ho- ti returns; he is angry that the cottage is destroyed. He is very upset over the burnt pigs. However, his son convinces him to taste the roast meat. When the father tastes it, he too loves the roasted meat.

Ho-ti and Bo-bo plan to keep the burnt pigs a secret. However, people in the region notice that there are frequent fires on their property. This implies that the father and son continued to roast pigs to enjoy the meat. Eventually, their secret is found out. They are taken to court for trial. During the trial, they request the jurors to taste the burnt pig. The jurors too love it and they decide to set the father and son free. The judge is very angry and displeased. However, some days later there are mysterious fires at the judge's house also. This kind of fires became common around the town and soon roasted pig became a favorite food of the people.

Lamb comes back from the historical story and talks of the delight in eating roast pig. He describes its crispy skin and delicious flesh. He makes an ironic parallel between the pig which is considered a greedy and dirty animal and man who enjoys eating its roasted meat. Lamb states that he enjoys all kinds of meat – from strange birds to oysters. He loves sharing them with his friends. He recalls giving a plum cake baked by his aunt to a beggar. He talks about the ironic custom of sacrificing pigs by people who were against meat eating. The narrator is not bothered about such moral issues. He loves eating pork with a sauce of shallots. He says that roast pig is very special to him. He can share anything with his friends but not roast pig. He would not like to part with roast pig. He uses archaic and pedantic words in the essay to bring in an old world charm. He adds trivial stories to enhance the sense of humour.

1.4.3 Analysis

Charles Lamb's essay, "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," featured in his 1822 collection "Essays of Elia," offers a delightful and humorous exploration of the origins and pleasures associated with the culinary wonder that is roast pig. Lamb employs a narrative style that blends whimsy, humour, and satire, weaving the essay into a charming story within a story. This narrative approach, reminiscent of folk tales and fables, captivates readers' imaginations and imbues the work with a sense of innocence and charm.

Furthermore, Lamb's mastery of vivid language adds a layer of sensory richness to the essay, allowing readers to savour descriptions of the roasted pig as "crispy as crackling" and the sauces as "meandering into the crevices." These descriptions create a mouthwatering imagery that enhances the reader's engagement with the text.

At the core of Lamb's essay lies a reflection on human curiosity and the relentless pursuit of culinary innovation. Through the character of Ho-ti, who stumbles upon the joys of roast pig due to a house fire, Lamb playfully highlights the unpredictable and sometimes accidental nature of invention and progress. He satirises the human tendency to experiment and improve upon established practices, suggesting that innovation can emerge from the most unexpected and even calamitous events.

Lamb's essay also subtly comments on cultural and societal values, particularly the interplay between tradition and change. He suggests that culinary traditions and tastes evolve through a combination of necessity and experimentation, humorously alluding to the fact that a simple accident birthed a cherished culinary tradition.

Moreover, Lamb contends that humans readily embrace new discoveries, even when they initially appear absurd or unconventional. This observation on the adaptability of cultural norms recurs in many of his essays.

In a broader sense, Lamb challenges the notion of culinary perfection. He argues that some of the most gratifying culinary experiences arise from imperfections or accidents, as exemplified by the delectable flavor brought out by the accidental fire in the case of roast pig. This subtle message encourages readers to appreciate imperfections as potential sources of delight.

Understanding the historical context in which Lamb composed this essay is crucial. The early 19th century witnessed substantial transformations in British society, including shifts in culinary preferences and the emergence of new culinary traditions. Lamb's essay can be seen as a reflection of this period of culinary experimentation and openness to novel tastes and ideas, making it a valuable historical and literary artifact.

In summary, Charles Lamb's "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" masterfully combines humor, narrative charm, and insightful commentary to explore the whimsical origins of roast pig and the broader themes of human curiosity, innovation, cultural norms, and culinary pleasure within the context of early 19th-century British society.

Recap

- Charles Lamb talks about the idea of food
- He uses the concept of food to talk about human relationships
- Lamb refers to Confucius and describes the discovery of roasting pork
- It was discovered by Bo- bo, the son of Ho-ti who was a pig herd
- The narrative says that the discovery was accidental
- Bo- bo was playing with fire one day
- The family cottage was burned

- Nine pigs were also burnt to death
- Bo- bo feels tempted by the smell of burnt pigs
- He finds it delicious when he tastes it
- Father too loves roasted meat
- Ho-ti and Bo-bo plan to keep the burnt pigs a secret
- Bo-bo and Ho-ti are taken to court
- The jurors love roast pig and they decide to set the Bo-bo and Ho-ti free
- Roasted pig became a favourite food of the people
- Roast pig is very special to Lamb
- Essay is enhanced by the sense of humor

Objective Questions

1. When was Charles Lamb born?
2. What was the title of Lamb's poetic tragedy?
3. What was the name of Lamb's sister?
4. Who is the Chinese philosopher that Lamb refers to?
5. What is the pen name adopted by Lamb?
6. What does Lamb love eating pork with?
7. Which literary age did Lamb belong to?
8. For which famous British magazine did Lamb regularly write?
9. When was the work *The Last Essays of Elia* published?
10. What is the epithet attributed to Lamb?

Answers

1. 1775
2. *John Woodvil*
3. Mary Lamb
4. Confucius
5. Elia
6. Sauce of shallots
7. Romantic Age
8. The London Magazine
9. 1833
10. Prince of Essayists

Assignments

1. How does Lamb challenge the conventional notion of culinary perfection, and what message does he convey through his exploration of imperfection?
2. Analyse Lamb's use of vivid language and descriptions in the essay, "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig."
3. Explore how Charles Lamb's essay serves as a form of social commentary.
4. Consider the enduring relevance of Lamb's essay in today's culinary landscape.
5. Comment on how did reading "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig" impact your perspective on culinary traditions, experimentation, and the role of imperfection in the pursuit of pleasure?

Suggested Reading

1. Blunden, E. *The Last Essays of Elia.* Oxford UP, 1929.
2. Daishes, David. *Critical Approaches to Literature*. Prentice, 1956.
3. Mair, George H. *English Literature 1450- 1900*. Oxford UP, 1969.
4. Porter, Jeff. *Understanding the Essay*. Broadview, 2012.

BLOCK - 02

A Miscellany of Prose Writings

Unit 1

Introduction to Prose Writings

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- introduce themselves to the genre of prose
- become equipped to distinguish between different prose styles
- get introduced to some of the finest writers and master various prose writing styles
- analyse selected essays, speeches, and interviews to get familiar with their context and content

Prerequisites

Imagine stepping into a vast library, not just of books, but of human expression. Every shelf holds a different voice, a unique way of making sense of the world. Some speak in stories, others in speeches. Some are playful and imaginative, while others are thoughtful and reflective. To truly appreciate this world, we need to understand the tools humans use to shape their thoughts into language and share them with others.

Language, at its core, is more than a method of communication; it's how we organise experience, build relationships, and pass down knowledge. Over time, humans have developed different forms and formats of language use depending on what they wanted to achieve. This is where discourse comes in. Discourse is language in action, it's how we engage in conversations, deliver speeches, tell stories, write articles, or even share personal experiences.

These expressions aren't random. They follow patterns, structures that help both the creator and the audience make meaning. One of the broadest ways to categorise these patterns is by their form: either verse or prose.

Verse, commonly associated with poetry, is like music made from language. It plays with sound, rhythm, and symbolism. It doesn't always follow everyday rules of grammar or logic; it bends and reshapes them to create beauty, emotion, and impact. It's more about how language feels than what it directly says.

Prose, on the other hand, is the language of our daily lives. It's direct, grounded, and versatile. Whether we're reading a news article, a short story, a personal reflection, or

a biography, prose is the format that carries the message clearly and logically. It aims to inform, narrate, describe, or persuade using the familiar structures of everyday speech.

Understanding prose is essential to navigating the world. It's the foundation of almost all written and spoken communication outside of poetic forms. In this unit, we'll explore different genres that fall under prose, each with its purpose, structure, and style. From the motivating power of a well-delivered speech to the timeless charm of a fairy tale, you'll learn not only how these genres work but why they matter.

Before we begin this unit, this is your starting point: to see language not just as a tool, but as a living, evolving craft, a way we share who we are and how we see the world.

Keywords

Speeches, Anecdotes, Biographies, Autobiographies, Articles, Fairy Tales, Interviews

Discussion

2.1.1 Speeches

Growing up, we have all listened to a lot of speeches, from the chief guest's speech at a school function to the speeches by world-renowned public figures. Some of these speeches have influenced us and made us reconsider our view of ourselves and the world around us, while others did not offer us anything. So, why do we feel that certain speeches are good and others are not? Though transcripts of speeches are available, speech is primarily an oral discourse.

Speeches have been employed by orators of all ages to disseminate knowledge, motivate people, explain things, and persuade others in decision making. In all these contexts, speakers can exploit the scope of nonverbal communication devices to boost the verbal content. It is one advantage that speech has over written discourse. Modulating the voice, using appropriate body language, maintaining eye contact, and keeping the content emotionally appealing are techniques that make a speech great. Knowing the audience and choosing a suitable tone and vocabulary are also important. The audience connects with a speaker who is identifiable to them.

A speech should be delivered with a comprehensible structure that gives focus to the topic of the presentation. It should have a proper beginning, where the speaker establishes the subject and purpose of the speech. The body of the speech must concentrate on developing the topic without any digressions. Related ideas, anecdotes, examples, and other substantiating evidence can be used there. The speech should not introduce any new ideas in the conclusion; instead, it should reiterate and sum up the main ideas of the speech.

The following are some of the tools employed to make a speech appealing to the crowd:

- Quotation: Quoting renowned people or lines from literary works helps attract the attention of the audience and substantiate the ideas easily. Eg: As Shakespeare has pointed out: "all the world's a stage".
- Rhetorical questions: Asking questions that do not demand an answer will challenge the audience to critically think about the question and accept the stance of

the speaker. Eg: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?"

- Alliteration: Alliteration is the consecutive use of words with the same sounds. Eg: "The world needs peace, prosperity, and progress."
- Anecdotes: Anecdotes are stories used to demonstrate an argument made by the speaker. Eg: Narrating stories of hard work from the lives of politicians, scientists, or celebrities to motivate the audience.
- Anaphora: If different clauses of a sentence start with the same word or phrase, it is called anaphora. Eg:"So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania . . ."
- Metaphor: Metaphors help to equate two things with one another. Eg: "The television has made a generation of couch potatoes."
- Similes: When comparisons are to be made in a speech, similes can be used. Eg: "Nobody should be treated like a guinea pig."
- Personification: Human qualities can be attributed to inanimate things to give emphasis. Eg: "India won her freedom from the British in 1947."
- Critical questions: Posing questions to the audience before talking about something will help to capture their attention. Eg: "How are we going to survive on this earth if the climate changes like this?"
- Hyperbole: Exaggerating something can be used to emphasise a point. Eg: "I have warned them a thousand times about the impending economic depression."

2.1.2 Anecdotes

It is common to hear engaging stories about famous or notorious people or events that have happened in their lives. Most often, these stories portray certain characteristic behaviours of the individual and sound biographical. For example, stories about sports stars like Steffi Graf or Muhammad Ali will depict their commitment to sports and their struggles to excel in their fields. On the other hand, narratives about an autocratic ruler will showcase how cruel he has been. In certain rare cases, such stories go against the popular image of the person in the story. These stories need not always be factual. Some of them are fictional but serve to expose the personality, affiliations, and attitudes of an individual. These narratives are called anecdotes.

Anecdotes are different from stories. Stories have a well-structured plot with characters and events in certain spatial and temporal settings. Anecdotes are brief narratives that focus on an individual or an event. The number of characters and major events will be very limited. Most often, there will be two or three characters, including the central character. Anecdotes are used in literature, eulogies, and speeches. They contain elements of exaggeration, wit, and drama to entertain the audience. Public speakers use them to inspire, give cautionary warnings, evoke humour, talk about the past, or make the audience think philosophically about something.

2.1.3 Biography

Reading about the life events of a person with reputation and fame is a good way for anyone to know more about them and to derive inspiration from their lives. Life writings can also be of interest to people from literature and history backgrounds. A biography, or bio, is not only an account of the life events of an individual written by someone else; it is also a historical document. Biographies can be written when a person is alive or after the person's death. Though both have their challenges, writing a biography when the subject is alive will make the data collection much easier. Biographers collect data from different sources, like writings, letters, speeches, and other documents by the subject, as well as interviews with relatives, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances of the subject. If the biographer is a close friend or family member of the subject, the biography will have more authenticity.

Biographers' retellings are generally expected to be non-fictional in nature and objective in approach. They follow a chronological sequence of the events in the life of the subject from childhood, pausing at junctures to elaborate on certain crucial events. The aim is to provide the reader with an opportunity to dive deep into the character and life of the subject. The most read biographies include *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (by Stephen Greenblatt, the biography of William Shakespeare), *Steve Jobs* (by Walter Isaacson, the biography of Steve Jobs), *Her Own Woman: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (by Diane Jacobs, the biography of Mary Wollstonecraft) and *A Beautiful Mind* (by Sylvia Nasar, the biography of John Nash)

2.1.4 Autobiography

It is interesting to listen to people tell their stories to the world. Starting with influential events and people in their lives and how they perceive the world will equip us to view the world from a different perspective. Autobiographies, as a literary genre, are self-written documents of episodes in one's life. Hence, they are generally subjective and have a first-person narrative voice. Traditionally, only people like politicians, writers, scientists, sports stars, celebrities, and well-known people used to come up with autobiographies. Such books have inspired many to look at the authors as role models and copy their ideals in life. These days, with the wide availability of publishing platforms, including social media, more people are empowered to write and find readers for their life stories. Though autobiography is supposed to be self-written, some very busy and eminent people have taken help from others to write their stories. These writers hired for writing are called ghost writers.

Autobiographies have helped us learn not only about individuals but also about the time in which they have lived. The socio-political and cultural subtexts of these works deserve the readers' attention. Certain autobiographies have presented us with parallel histories and compelled historians to revisit the known annals. At the same time, factual analysis of these writings is hard. The authors may have expressed only their side of the story. This makes it hard to accept it as evidence of past happenings.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* by Mahatma Gandhi, and *Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela are some of the world-famous autobiographies.

2.1.5 Articles

Every day, we come across written pieces on specific topics ranging from politics to fashion

on platforms like newspapers, websites, books and journals. These writings cover a wide range of subjects, and are written by experts in the fields. These independent, non-fictional prose compositions on specific topics by an authoritative writer are known as articles. In literature, the term article is sometimes used synonymously to refer to general essays. They follow the structural pattern of an essay with a proper introduction, body, and conclusion but are longer than an essay. The major purpose of an article is knowledge dissemination and information sharing.

Articles can be illustrative, argumentative, narrative, descriptive or analytical. Illustrative articles substantiate the claims of the article with examples. The number and type of examples cited in such articles will depend on the topic discussed. Argumentative articles are persuasive. They try to convince the reader with evidence, arguments and counterarguments. Narrative articles follow the pattern of storytelling. They present a plot with events and characters to appeal to the audience. When the topic of the essay is something like a phenomenon, process, or artifact, a descriptive style that focuses on stating facts descriptively can be followed. Analytical articles approach the subject with critical evaluative questions to expose the details.

2.1.6 Fairy Tales

Stories about the unknown and the supernatural attach to them an element of high imagination and curiosity. Children love to listen to stories with non-human characters. These short stories with mythical and fairy creatures take place in unknown times and foreign lands. “Once upon a time” is the classic beginning of these tales. The narratives feature elves, dragons, imps, unicorns, fairies, mermaids, sleeping beauties, witches, animals capable of talking, and so on. Magic and enchantments in fairy tales add to the mystical setting of the tales. These tales do not cater to teaching morals to children.

Fairy tales as literary works are classified into different genres, like folktales and fantasy. They have both oral and literary traditions. A study of fairy tales across the globe has evidenced some commonalities in their plot structure and characterisation. This proves the transmission of tales across communities. The most commonly narrated fairy tales include *Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Hansel and Gretel* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*.

2.1.7 Interview

The best way to know people is to ask them about themselves. That is what an interview does. It is a dialogue between an interviewer who poses questions and an interviewee(s) who responds. Interviews are of different types, with the most common being job interviews, celebrity interviews, and talk shows. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face, over telephone lines, or via videoconferencing. Interviews are navigated by the interviewer through structured questions and follow-ups. So, it is mandatory for the interviewer to do solid research on the interviewee to get the most out of an interview. When addressing the interview as a literary genre (transcript of the interview), the interviewer and the interviewee may be considered co-authors.

Interviews are most often contextual, and the set of questions should address the context. These conversations are aimed at getting to know the interviewee better. The questions may span from the personal to the professional. A healthy rapport between the parties in conversation is essential for a good interview.

Recap

- Prose is a genre of literature where straightforward everyday language
- It is used for communicating a narrative, idea, thought or information
- Anything that is not verse can be identified as prose
- Different kinds of prose writing include speeches, anecdotes, biography, autobiography, articles, fairy tales, and interviews
- Speeches are public addresses
- Using anecdotes, quotations, anaphora, and figurative language will make speeches appealing to the audience
- Anecdotes are retellings of factual or fictional narratives based on the life of a person to expose a personal trait or character
- Biographies are the life stories of individuals written by another person
- Autobiographies are self-written biographies
- Articles are structured writings on specific topics by experts in the area
- Fairy tales are tales about the fairies
- Interviews are conversations between an interviewer who asks questions and an interviewee who responds

Objective Questions

1. What kind of prose work is *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*?
2. What is a book written by a person about another person's life called?
3. What is a writer who writes the autobiography of another person called?
4. What is a tale with fairies as characters called?
5. What are speeches?
6. Whose autobiography is *The Diary of a Young Girl*?
7. What is exaggerating something to emphasise a point called?
8. What are questions that do not demand an answer called?
9. Who wrote *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, the biography of Shakespeare?
10. What are brief narratives that focus on an individual or an event called?

Answers

1. Autobiography
2. A Biography
3. A ghostwriter

4. Fairy tales
5. Public addresses
6. Anne Frank
7. Hyperbole
8. Rhetorical questions
9. Stephen Greenblatt
10. Anecdotes

Assignments

1. Write a note on some techniques to be used to make a speech appealing to the audience.
2. What are the features of a fairy tale?
3. List out the differences between a biography and an autobiography.
4. What is prose writing? Write an essay on some genres in prose.

Suggested Reading

1. Abrams. MH. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Harcourt, 1993.
2. Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford UP, 2015.

Unit 2

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

-Albert Camus

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- develop active listening skills to understand their needs, concerns, and interests
- deepen understanding of the major themes presented by the speaker in the speech
- learn how to gather, evaluate, and integrate information from various sources
- enhances the ability to communicate effectively

Prerequisites

At the heart of every great honour lies a moment of profound responsibility, and few moments carry that weight like the Nobel Banquet Speech. Every December 10th, as the world watches, Nobel laureates step up not merely to express gratitude, but to articulate something enduring- an idea, a truth, a challenge, spoken from the summit of recognition and aimed at the conscience of humanity. These speeches are not just ceremonial; they are acts of bearing witness. They reveal how thinkers, artists, and scientists see the world at its best and at its worst.

In 1957, when Albert Camus took the stage in Stockholm, he stood not just as a literary icon but as a man forged in the fire of war, injustice, and existential crisis. His life had been shaped by the chaos of two World Wars, the weight of colonialism, and the fracture of human belief in reason and morality. As an Algerian-born French writer, Camus understood conflict intimately, not just geopolitical conflict, but the inner conflict of a world that had lost its moral compass.

Rather than simply celebrate his achievement, Camus used the platform to pose a radical question: What is the writer's duty in an age of violence and silence? His answer was clear and compelling: writers must speak when others are silenced. They must serve truth and liberty, not power or propaganda. For Camus, art was never a retreat from life, it was a response to its most difficult questions.

He didn't see the writer as a prophet or a saint. Instead, he saw the writer as a fellow human being: flawed, vulnerable, and often overwhelmed, but with a responsibility to reflect the world honestly and humbly. At a time when entire generations were collapsing under the

weight of war, trauma, and disillusionment, he argued that the artist's role was not to offer easy answers, but to resist despair and keep alive the fragile idea of human dignity.

This unit deals with Camus' speech not just because of his literary merit, but because his speech is a manifesto for what it means to 'create' in times of crisis. His voice reminds us that literature is not only about imagination, but also about responsibility. Writers, like all of other human beings, live in a world of turmoil and contradictions, but their unique gift lies in their ability to make sense of that world and speak to others through it.

By examining this speech and the context around it, we don't just learn about a moment in history, instead, we are invited to reflect on the enduring power of words, the burden of truth, and the quiet courage it takes to keep speaking when it's easier to remain silent.

Keywords

Art, Truth, Liberty, Nihilism

Discussion

2.2.1 Summary

Albert Camus opens his address by expressing his gratitude to the Swedish Academy for honouring him with the Nobel Prize for literature. He expresses his surprise at being awarded the prize as he does not consider himself worthy of it. At the same time, he does not hesitate to admit that, like everybody else, especially artists, he also enjoys being validated. Yet, he continues, the Nobel Prize is too much for a person like him who exists in self-doubt and whose work is still in progress. He confesses his nervousness at being the centre of everyone's attention. He understands his privileged position, which is unavailable for many of his contemporaries. There are better writers who deserve the award than him. He feels privileged not because he was considered for the Nobel Prize but because he can write at a time when even the greatest writers in Europe are silenced by the governments and dictators in power and the people of his country, Algeria. When he accepted the Nobel in 1957, Algeria was at war with France for independence. Algerian War of Independence or the War of 1 November (1954–1963), a guerrilla war, was in progress between the Algerian National Liberation Front and France, which was won by Algeria. This war also paved the way for a civil war among and within different communities in Algeria. That is what he means when he says "the country of my birth is going through unending misery". So he cannot figure out with what feelings he should accept the award.

Camus discloses that he has undergone a lot of inner conflicts and trauma in his life, but all through those times, something has supported him. And he believes that it is the idea he has about his art and the role of a writer. He uses this speech to share those ideas with the audience.

For Camus, art is an inevitable part of his life. Life is impossible without it. But he has never placed art at the top of his list of priorities. There are other equally important or more important things. He wants his art so that he can be himself, stay connected, and live on one level with his fellow men who are tormented like him. Art presents him with an

opportunity to address and influence a large number of people and offer them a portrayal of their joys and sufferings. In doing so, artists are obliged to be humble and to be one among the commoners. Often, some artists consider themselves different from others. But, in Camus's opinion, such an artist will not be able to continue as an artist unless he feels camaraderie with others. An artist cannot take himself away from his immediate community and its realities. He should not feel contempt for anything or anyone; he has an obligation to understand and not judge other people, communities, or their experiences. And in this process of understanding, if the artist is expected to stay with one side, what should he do? Camus quotes Nietzsche and says the artist should stay in a society that is ruled by the creator and not the judge. This creator may be a common worker or an intellectual. That doesn't matter. But the artist should not side with someone who judges.

Camus moves on by elaborating on the role of a writer, especially in his century. All the writers have some difficult duties to shoulder. They should declare allegiance not to those in power who create history but to those who suffer when this history is created. If the artist fails to do that, he will be isolated. And no one, not even the most powerful army with all its men, will be successful in helping the artist come out of his isolation. Here, Camus also warns those artists who take sides with the tyrants that the fate of loneliness will befall them. The position of an artist is among the commoners, not among the rulers. An artist should be the voice of the silenced prisoners who are abandoned and pushed to live a life of humiliation. The privileges of freedom enjoyed by an artist should not make him forget the silenced and underprivileged. Instead, his art should transmit and resonate with the voices of the voiceless.

Camus assumes that no artist is capable enough to succeed in that task. Yet he believes that writers can win the hearts of many through their writing if they hold on to two ideals. The writers should be at the service of truth and liberty. These two tasks constitute the greatness of his craft. Writers are expected to bring people together through their work. And if a writer compromises with truth, the resultant literature will only separate people. Writers may have their personal weaknesses, but if they cannot refuse lies and resist oppression, their craft will lack nobility. Thus, writers should be truthful to themselves and to whatever they know about history, rulers, and the common man's sufferings and joys.

Camus moves on to detail what writing meant to him. He lived through an insane time of turmoil and felt hopelessly lost. During those more than twenty years, it was writing that supported him in his senses. He perceived it as a commitment- a commitment to all those who lived through his time and shared his trauma. His generation was born during the First World War. They were in their twenties during Hitler's regime and the Holocaust. Then they witnessed the Spanish Civil War, The Second World War, the concentration camps, and a Europe where people were tortured and imprisoned. These people are now expected to raise their children and make creative contributions in a world that could be destroyed at any time by nuclear weapons. Camus's generation has gone through catastrophes unprecedented in history. So we cannot blame them when they are not optimistic about the future. They should be excused for rushing into the nihilism of the era. But there was a ray of hope. Most of the people in Algeria and Europe refused nihilism and found a way of living by constantly fighting for a way out of dishonour and death.

All generations feel the need to reform the world they live in. Camus generation also felt the same need but knew that the reformation would not happen. They understood that their duty was much more serious. They had to prevent the world from destroying itself. They were the inheritors of a corrupt history. They have suffered fallen revolutions one after the other. Their generation has lost faith in religion, ideologies, and even science. Gods and philosophers failed to answer their questions, and technology had gone mad. Different countries in the world were waging a raging war against each other without trying for peace and reconciliation. People lost their minds, and there was hatred and oppression everywhere.

It was the responsibility of Camus's generation to re-establish the dignity of life and death. They were obliged to stop the disintegration of the world and the establishment of the kingdom of death forever. They had to strive hard to restore peace among nations and make amends so that the human race would not go extinct. Camus uses the metaphor of the Ark of the Covenant (a gold-plated wooden chest that in biblical times housed the two tablets of the Law given to Moses by God) here. He feels the rulers of the world are like grand inquisitors who eliminate anyone not affiliated with their ideologies. So there comes a situation where people have to remake the Ark of the Covenant to save the world. These tasks are laborious and Camus doubts whether the people of his time will ever be able to accomplish them. But they are trying their best. People have accepted the challenge of truth and liberty and are ready to fight for and die for it. This change in people's thoughts deserves acknowledgement and appreciation. Camus would like to pay homage by dedicating the honour he received to these people of his generation. They were worthy of recognition because they fought for the cause of humanity and were never applauded.

After talking about the terrifying times of the 20th century, Camus comes back to his idea of a writer and his place in society. A writer has no special claims other than those he shares with his fellow men, his comrades. He is vulnerable yet obstinate, unjust, and passionate for justice. He does his work for the good of everyone without shame or pride. Yet he tries stubbornly to write, even in the worst times. Expecting high morals and solutions to all questions from such a writer would be too much. Even then, he should strive for truth and liberty. The truth says Camus "is mysterious, elusive, (and) always to be conquered". "Liberty is dangerous, as hard to live with as it is elating". So the journey to these goals will be painful, and we may fail on the way there too. Still, it is worth taking that pain.

Camus then clarifies that a writer is not a preacher of virtue. He does not believe in the didactic role of literature. He has always enjoyed the pleasure of being and the freedom he had when he grew up. He has committed mistakes. But he has a better knowledge of his abilities now. This knowledge aids him in being supportive of all the silenced men who live in hope of brief and free happiness.

Concluding the speech, he thanks all those behind the Nobel committee and declares that he would like to accept the honour on behalf of all the people, especially the writers, of his time who stood for truth and liberty and were not privileged to be honoured like him. For whatever good they have done, they have received only misery and persecution in return. He winds up with a promise that he will stay faithful to his art and people- a vow that all true artists are reminded of every single day.

2.2.2 Analysis

Camus's speech is a very structured, organised into a proper beginning, development of

thought, and a befitting conclusion. He starts by thanking everyone and admitting how privileged he is to be able to write and win an honour. Moving on, taking his own time, he explains why he feels privileged. He places himself as a writer against the socio-political situations that his generation has gone through. As a person who can influence a massive audience, he does not want to escape from his duties as a writer who is still able to write at a time when writers more talented than him are silenced around the globe. In the end, when he dedicates the honour to the people of his generation who were not privileged like him to win the Nobel, we are fully convinced of his decision.

Camus seems to be fully aware of the reach a Nobel banquet speech has and utilises its scope to address the political and cultural scenario of the 20th century. His speech itself lives up to the ideologies presented in it. So when he leaves us with the promise of faithfulness to his readers, we can do nothing but trust him.

There are various perspectives on the responsibilities of an artist. Some opine that an artist should only be loyal to his art, while others believe that an artist has some duties towards society. Camus, in his speech, reiterates the role of an artist in society. Artists are a minority group who are privileged to address and influence a massive audience. So the authorities in power have always tried to silence them. Still, artists should not keep their mouths shut. They should elevate themselves to be the voice of the voiceless.

The speech touches on the political events that made life in the 20th century troublesome. Humanity lost its faith in future. In despair, people reflected upon the pointlessness of existence and social institutions. Nihilist tendencies began to influence people. Science, religion or other social institutions failed to impart meaning or purpose to knowledge, morality or values.

Recap

- Camus starts by thanking everyone for the honour given to him
- He doubts whether he is worthy of the Prize as others are more talented than him
- Those writers are silenced by the governments and dictators in power
- Camus says his idea of his art and the role of the writer supported him all through his life
- Camus has never placed art above everything
- Art connects him with his fellow men
- An artist can maintain neither his art nor his difference unless he admits that he is like the others
- True artists scorn nothing
- Like the artist, the writer has duties too
- He should not serve those who make history but serve those who suffer it

- If the writer sides with the autocratic rules, he will become lonely and be deprived of his art
- The writer should be the mouthpiece of the silenced unknown prisoners
- The writer should be of service to truth and liberty
- The truth is mysterious, elusive, and always to be conquered
- Liberty is dangerous, and hard to live with, it is elating
- The writer should refuse to lie and show resistance to oppression
- Camus's generation has witnessed the World Wars, Hitler's regime, concentration camps, and the Spanish Civil War and is now living in a world threatened by nuclear destruction
- We cannot expect his generation to be optimistic
- Camus dedicates the honour bestowed upon him to the people of his generation

Objective Questions

1. In which year did Albert Camus win the Nobel Prize in Literature?
2. Where was Camus born?
3. In which language did he deliver his Nobel banquet speech?
4. What is it that Camus cannot live without?
5. According to Camus, what has supported him through all his life, even in the most contrary circumstances?
6. What will happen to an artist if he puts himself at the service of those who make history and at the service of those who suffer it?
7. In which two commitments is the nobility of an artist's craft rooted?

Answers

1. 1957
2. Algeria
3. French
4. His art
5. The idea that he has of his art and the role of the writer
6. He will be alone and deprived of his art.
7. The refusal to lie about what one knows and the resistance to oppression.

Assignments

1. Analyse the importance of Camus's speech with reference to the political environment of the 20th century.
2. What are Camus's ideas on the roles of the artist and the writer?

Suggested Reading

1. Camus, Albert. *Speaking Out: Lectures and Speeches, 1937-1958*. Knopf, 2022.
2. Gloag, Oliver. *Albert Camus: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2020.
3. Zaretsky, Robert. *A Life Worth Living.* Harvard UP, 2013.

Unit 3

Misguided Guide

-R.K. Narayan

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- enhance their knowledge on the components of storytelling and how authors use them to engage readers
- improve their reading comprehension skills
- enhance their ability to recognise and appreciate literary devices used by the writer
- reflect on their own experiences and gain insights into human nature

Prerequisites

Imagine watching a film based on your favourite novel, only to realise that the soul of the story has been lost in translation. Now imagine you're not just the viewer but the author of that novel. That heartbreak, intensified a thousandfold, is what R. K. Narayan experienced when his celebrated novel, *The Guide,* was adapted for the big screen.

Best known as the creator of Malgudi, a fictional South Indian town that feels more real to readers than some places on the map, R. K. Narayan (1906–2001) was one of India's literary giants. Through books like *Swami and Friends, The English Teacher*, and *The Financial Expert,* Narayan built a universe filled with the quiet drama of everyday life. *The Guide* (1958), one of his most acclaimed novels, not only won him the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award but also placed him at the intersection of literature and cinema.

This is where things took a dramatic, and deeply personal, turn.

In 1965, *The Guide* was adapted into two major films: a Hindi version directed by Vijay Anand that went on to win several Filmfare Awards, and an English version directed by American filmmaker Tad Danielewski with a screenplay by Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck. Despite their commercial success, Narayan was far from pleased. His concerns weren't about fame or recognition, but were about authenticity, artistic integrity, and the painful realisation that cinema can reshape a story to the point where its essence is lost.

In his reflective and often ironic essay "Misguided Guide", Narayan takes us behind the scenes of this cinematic journey. He shares the excitement of the initial proposal, the promise of collaboration, the glamour of international film crews, and ultimately, the heartbreak

of seeing his Malgudi vanish into a commercial spectacle filled with grand visuals, dislocated settings, and creative choices he never imagined, like a tiger fight to symbolise emotional conflict.

This essay isn't just about a failed film adaptation. It's about an artist confronting the painful clash between literature and popular media, between artistic vision and commercial interests. It's a rare look into how storytelling changes when handed over to another medium, and how it feels when the story you birthed becomes someone else's to reshape.

Reading this narrative gives us more than just the behind-the-scenes of a film. It offers insights into the creative process, the responsibility of adaptation, and the emotional cost of watching your work take on a life you never intended for it. And perhaps, it reminds us of the quiet dignity of an author who chose to tell his story, not with anger, but with wit, restraint, and heartbreaking honesty.

Keywords

Film adaptation, Narrative essay, Malgudi, Other places

Discussion

2.3.1 Summary

One day, R K Narayan received a letter by airmail from Los Angeles written by Bollywood heartthrob Dev Anand. Anand introduced himself as a producer and actor from Bombay and as someone whose name may not be familiar to Narayan. The writer finds this too modest for an actor admired by millions of young men in India who copied his screen image. The letter was sent to seek Narayan's assent to make film adaptations of his novel *The Guide* in Hindi and English. It says that Dev Anand has made arrangements with an American producer for collaboration and is ready to visit Narayan in Mysore if he is willing to consider the proposal.

R. K. Narayan felt a sense of urgency in the letter and sent back an invitation for a meeting. Anand came to Narayan's house in Yadava Giri without wasting much time. He spoke at length about the cinematic merits of the novel and, in an hour, established a strong friendship with the writer. The meeting was fruitful, and they decided to move forward with the project. Anand was ready to offer any sum of money to buy the rights from the writer, but Narayan asked only for a slight advance, thinking that if the movie became successful, the makers would share the fame and profit with him. Anand agreed with it and added that if the movie became successful, they would be on top of the world, and the sky would be their limit.

The months that followed the meeting were action-packed: long-distance calls, telegrams, letters and meetings. Narayan was summoned every now and then for meetings. Once he was invited to Imperial Hotel in Delhi. He took a break from his novel-in-progress and flew to Delhi to attend a press conference announcing the movie. The American director explained to the press the uniqueness of the project. For the first time in the history of Indian movie-making, there was going to be a hundred-percent-Indian story, with a hundred-percent- Indian cast and a hundred-per-

cent-Indian setting for an international audience. And this movie would be the first colour and widescreen movie in the country. A group of eminent American writers led by the Nobel laureate Pearl S Buck were to produce the film. They all assured Narayan repeatedly that the movie would be completely faithful to the novel and they needed his co-operation at every stage.

After a couple of days after the press meeting, the crew assembled in Mysore. They wanted Narayan to show them all the locations that inspired his novel. A photographer and a bunch of unfamiliar people accompanied the writer to the locations in two cars. Tad Danielewski, the American director, declared that the American film would be made first.

Danielewski engaged himself in discussions with Narayan about the finer points of the novel. From those conversations, the writer understood that the director did not perceive the novel the way he should have. For example, he felt that the hero of the novel is a man of impulsive plans, a daydreamer, and a self-made individual. When the writer attempted to correct his impression, he did not quite appreciate that. He rejected Narayan's comments and went on to talk about other characters. So Narayan understood the futility of his remarks and took such monologues from the director as the privilege of a film-maker. The crew wanted Narayan's presence and not his voice. They wanted to see him but were not heard.

Under the pretext of sightseeing, they drove around 300 miles that day. On that trip, Narayan showed them all the important locations in his novel. A little shrine overshadowed by a banyan, on the banks of Kaveri, was the first. It was a readily available film set where the director only need to put the actors and ask them to act. Even the draught scene of the novel can be shot there in summer when the river dries up. Then he took them to the tiny town of Nanjangund. The town had small streets, street shops, a temple and pilgrim groups taking a dip in the holy river Kabini. The place was so lively and colourful that it could be used to shoot the crowd scene in the last pages of the novel. If the film-makers note the date of the annual temple festival and send the cameraman there, they can capture authentic visuals absolutely free of cost.

The producer was so impressed by the location that he ordered his assistant to send an outdoor unit at the appropriate time. In that happiness, they posed for a photograph and then drove up to the mountains and captured images. Narayan felt this exercise tiresome, but the American director told him that location hunting was a part of filmmaking, and he had even travelled 5000 miles for it. They then proceeded to Gopalaswami Hill to see the original of the "Peak House" in *The Guide.* It was a fifty year old bungalow with glassed in verandas.

Near the bungalow was a foot-track through the undergrowth that led to an ancient temple with rusty hinged doors and crumbling walls. That setting also looked ready-made for the film. Even the indoor shots could be captured with a generator and lights. Everyone seemed excited about finding out the perfect locations, and their journey back was dedicated to thinking about the practical aspects of the shooting, like where the camp and advance units should be located. Seeing the ease with which the film executives were planning the whole schedule arrangements for shooting, Narayan felt that they could solve mankind's problems on a global level with the confidence of demigods.

After the location seeing exercise, there was total silence for many weeks. The next thing Narayan heard was that the producers were searching for locations in Northern India. They

had decided to shift the locations to Jaipur and Udaipur in Rajaputana. Narayan couldn't digest it as his story does not take place in such a geographical situation where people, their lives, and costumes are entirely different. He raised the issue in their next meeting in Bombay. He told them that all his stories take place in Malgudi, an imaginary town in south India. Readers all over the world appreciate it that way. So a location change is inappropriate. But one of the producers tries to reason it out by giving a technical explanation that they are shooting in India for the first time on widescreen and Eastman Colour. They want the frames to be spectacular, and Jaipur will be best for that.

Narayan rejected the explanation and asked them if they wanted picturesque scenes, why did they hunt for locations in his place, and why should they even need his story for that. They gave the most absurd reply to that. They asked, "How do you know that Malgudi is where you think it is?" Narayan got bewildered and replied, "I know because I have imagined it, created it, and have been writing novel after novel set in the area for the last 30 years".

They said they wanted to expand the notion of Malgudi to Kashmir, Rajasthan, Bombay, Delhi, or even Ceylon. Narayan could not accommodate this notion of expansion. He recalled what Satyajit Ray, the great director, told him about the novel. He said, "Its roots are so deep in the soil of your part of our country that I doubt if I could do justice to your book, being unfamiliar with its milieu." The American director was not bothered by such shortfalls. He seemed disinterested in learning about India, even though he was visiting the country for the first time. They have solved the problem by deciding that they won't mention that the story is taking place in Malgudi. After that declaration, 'Malgudi' became a taboo word in their discussions.

Without knowing about the ban on 'Malgudi,' Narayan's brother, R K Laxman, who has illustrated the stories, ventured to enlighten the director on the importance of a little town with a neutral shade as the backdrop of the narrative. The characters wore dhotis and jibbas there. The protagonist charmed the tourists with made-up history and archaeology, and giving him solid monuments would negatively influence the fabric of the plot. But the director is adamant that there is no Malgudi in the movie. He has also added that he is not making a 'Festival Film' but a million-dollar spectacle on-screen to be released in 2000 theatres in America.

The conflicts over the details of the movie did not stop with Malgudi. It was only a beginning. The next came in the form of the characterisation of the lead female role. The novel's heroine is a small town dancer trained in Bharat Natyam. The film makers thought that one woman dancing on stage would not be adequate. So they employed a popular dance director with a troupe of more than a hundred dancers to make the heroine's performance extravagant and flashy. This team travelled around in an Air India Boeing for shooting, even if the distance was short. When the end product came on screen, there was no unity of place. The audience were shown places like the U.S. Embassy building in Delhi, Parliament House, the Ashoka Hotel, the Lake Palace and Elephanta Caves, but there was no countryside. Narayan remembers Mrs Indira Gandhi asking him about this transition of setting when they met after a special screening of the film. She remarked that the film looked like a travelogue when it was dragged away from the simple background in the book to other places. She also added that the makers must have had other considerations.

When more people got engaged with the film production, there even came a shortage of books in the market. The director always car-

ried a copy with him studying it like he was writing a doctoral thesis on it. He was seen making pencil marks in the book. But Narayan came to know later about what he actually was doing. He was marking the passages to be avoided from the film.

Narayan read the script with mixed feelings. Everything changed drastically but the director kept on saying that everything was as per his novel. To the question from which part of the novel, silence was the answer. The final screenplay also did not offer any solace to the novelist. They had started shooting before Narayan read the screenplay. Whenever he expressed his opinion they reassured him that everything would be rectified in the editing. But he knew for sure that those promises would not be kept. The film production was already gaining momentum at laboratories, workshops and editing rooms. Narayan had to finally give up on all his hopes.

More than everything what shocked Narayan was the director's decision to include a fight between two tigers over a spotted deer to symbolically establish the destructive animality of the heroine's husband and lover fighting over her. The Indian producer also couldn't approve of this plan for obvious reasons. But the director was adamant about the inclusion of tigers. Associates were sent around India in search of a tiger. A circus company had one, but the owner refused to lend the tiger when he realised that the tiger would be killed. Finally, they found a Bengal tiger from a man in Madras who gave the tiger for shootings after sewing its lips and pulling out its claws. But they couldn't manage to get a second tiger and had to be settled for a leopard. Finding a deer was easy. The 'second unit' was sent to Madras for the tiger fight sequence. When they returned after ten days they did not have the visuals they planned. The animals refused to fight at the beginning. The crew kicked, irritated and fed the deer into their jaws to capture some manageable content. In the movie, this scene appears for the split of a second. Another crisis came up in the form of a moral questions when the American director wanted an on screen kissing between the hero and heroine. The director knew about Indian morality according to which kissing in public was unacceptable. He also knew that his American audience would reject his movie if there was no kiss. The director was left with no choice but to fake a kiss by tricky editing when the heroine stood firm about not kissing. She even remarked that there was enough kissing on and off the screen in America that people would definitely come for a movie without kissing.

The next issue arose when an influential group gave a representation to the Ministry dealing with films that the movie glorifies adultery. In their opinion, the dancer in the movie does not have any justification for preferring the Guide to her husband. The Ministry asked the producers to revise the script. In the novel, Raju, the Guide weans the dancer away from her husband when he realises that she and her archaeologist husband are in a loveless relationship. The husband is busy in his field that he has no time for marital life and is not interested in her dance. But to satisfy the demand of the Ministry the film makers converted the husband into a drunkard and womaniser who kicked his wife when he realised that another man appreciated her art. Narayan knew about this change only when he saw the rushes months later. This made him regret the contract he signed with the makers that allowed them to alter the story according to their whims and fancies.

The publicity tricks of the movie producers were yet another shocking discovery for Narayan. He felt that all the money spent on the pressmen, V.I.P.S., ministers and other

officials in power could be channelised for creating sensible artwork. Narayan recollects how Lord Mountbatten was pulled into their publicity campaign. This happened when Vijayalaxmi Pandit, the Governor of Bombay invited the movie's crew to a banquet at Raj Bhavan conducted in honour of his Lordship. When an opportunity came Pearl S Buck spoke to Lord Mountbatten on behalf of the film crew in their presence. She wanted him to influence Queen Elizabeth to preside at the world premiere of the film in London. He said openly that it would not be possible, but was interested to know the movie's story. Pearl Buck, who was supposed to have written the screenplay, volunteered but couldn't narrate the story properly or answer his questions promptly.

Narayan goes on to describe the efforts made by the makers to shoot the last scene of the movie. The scene to be visualised was a scene in which the saint was on fast to bring rain. The director chose a village outside Delhi called Okla on the banks of the Jamuna. To create a two dimensional temple there thirty truckloads of property and the labour of hundreds of people were used. Over Rs.80000 was spent on this. They also spent a lot for a crowd of 100000 people for a helicopter shot. All this money could have been saved had they planned to shoot it at Nanjangud.

Unfortunately, the preparations completed for the shoot got washed out overnight in a flood in Jamuna that was caused by unexpected rains in Simla. The crew tried their best to save the equipment but they couldn't do much. They had to shift the location from Okla to a place in Western India called Limdi reputed for low annual rainfall. The artisans rebuilt the entire film set there and in a week the last scene was shot. When the crew was about to pack up a storm broke, destroying the entire set. Narayan feels that it is an appropriate conclusion for his story that it has rained at the end.

He concludes the essay by remembering some happy coincidences associated with rain. It was raining when he went to New York City to sign a contract with Viking Press. Later, Keith Jennison, his editor, wrote a letter about the same evening saying that he will always associate the rainiest days in New York with Narayan because they became his publisher on one such day.

2.3.2 Analysis

Though this piece of writing belongs to the genre of the essay, it does not follow the conventional objective, analytic and critical style of composition. Instead, a narrative style with subjective voice is selected for recounting a chain of personal events. The first person narrator is Narayan himself. As a short story writer, he has developed his unique style in unfolding a story. The same pattern and treatment of the subject are followed in this essay. He starts the essay with enough drama and suspense. There is no hurry in setting the context. Then with the precision of a master storyteller, he presents each event one after the other taking enough time. The excitement in the tone of narration at the beginning gives place to helplessness and then to pathos with the progress in events. Narayan wins the trust of the readers and takes them to his side from the beginning itself. Readers look at him as a victim of commercial movie production and empathises with his fate. Narayan's helplessness and the destruction being done to his creative endeavour invite the readers to rethink the movie *The Guide.*

Though the whole essay is dedicated to exposing the makers of *The Guide,* he never attacks them directly. He places them in different parts of the essay and elaborates their follies. The American director becomes a laughing stock

for the readers with his ridiculous ideas. Even the Nobel Laureate Pearl S Buck is not spared. The crew with their adamant outlook, despotic ways and commercial approach create an impression of antiheroes in the readers. That is why we feel that the unpleasant turn of events at Okla and Limdi is something they invited for themselves. The conclusion of the essay is noteworthy. Narayan does not pronounce any judgements and ends the essay on an entirely different note by citing an event disconnected to *The Guide,* the movie, but connected to *The Guide,* the novel.

The use of irony, sarcasm, and wordplay elevates the style of the narrative essay. The ironic title reflects the title of the novel and the movie. The title echoes Narayan's disagreements with the way the movie was made. Narayan feels that the movie did not do justice to his novel. He uses a witty and sarcastic approach in talking about the process of movie -making and the hurdles the makers had to face. Quoting people's dialogues and lines from letters and messages adds life to the narration. Capitalisation, use of hyphenated words, hyperbolic descriptions and the care taken in detailing make this essay nothing short of a short story.

The major themes in the narrative essay are:

Faithful film adaptation:

Not all literary works can be adapted for the screen. They should be cinematic. Even then being completely faithful to the original work is too ambitious a task. Converting the large canvas of a novel to a motion picture of 2 to 3 hours is a laborious activity. Modifications are necessary on characters and events. Adding new elements or omitting the already existing ones are part of the process. But there are movies that did justice to the originals. R K Narayan feels that the movie adaptation of his novel failed to capture the essence of his novel. He enlists the damages done to his story by the film makers. We get a sense that all these happened because the makers wanted a commercial movie and were ready to compromise on the quality of the plot.

The portrayal of India in Western movies:

Western movies have in general portrayed India as an exotic land of diverse cultures, unique customs and vibrant colours. *The Guide* is one such early movie. The movie does not portray India as it is but as imagined by the West. That is why the American director feels that Malgudi is not picturesque enough. He wants to have a troupe of dancers dancing with the heroine, a fight scene between two tigers and all the possible beautiful places in his movie because of the same reason.

Recap

- R K Narayan receives a letter from Dev Anand seeking his permission to make film adaptations of his novel *The Guide* Narayan agrees
- The film will be the first film with a hundred-percent-Indian story, a hundred-percent- Indian cast and a hundred-percent-Indian setting for an international audience
- They start with location hunting
- Narayan shows them authentic locations in Nanjangud and Gopalaswami Hill

- The film makers want to have an extravagant spectacle on screen
- So they shift the location to Jaipur
- Narayan protests against the location change as it will affect the geography and sociology of Malgudi
- They decide not to mention where the story takes place
- The makers keep on changing various elements in the movie to make it a commercial movie
- The heroine who is a Bharat Natyam dancer in a small town is portrayed as dancing with a troupe of dancers in the movie
- The movie does not portray any locations from the countryside where the novel is set
- Indira Gandhi feels that the movie looks like a travelogue
- A shortage occurs in the availability of the novel as the film crew purchased them all
- By the time Narayan read the screenplay, he knows that he does not have any say in the movie
- The director insists upon a scene in which two tigers fight over a deer to be included
- There happens a crisis when the American director wants to have on screen kissing in the movie
- Another issue arises when the Ministry asks the makers to revise the film script so that the movie does not glorify adultery
- The makers try to promote the movie by all means even by influencing Lord Mountbatten
- The crew tries to shoot the final scene of draught and rain at a high production cost by setting up artificial infrastructure at Okla on the banks of Jamuna. But a flood washes the whole set out
- They shift the location to Limdi to avoid the rain
- Immediately, after the pack up a storm breaks out destroying their set
- Concludes with how some very important events in his life coincidently had rain in the background

Objective Questions

1. Who first wrote to R K Narayan seeking his permission to make film adaptations of his novel *The Guide*?
2. In which languages did Dev Anand want to make *The Guide*?
3. Where did Anand and Narayan meet for the first discussion?
4. What is the name of the Guide in the novel?
5. In which art form is the heroine of the novel proficient?
6. What is the heroine's husband?
7. Who draws illustrations for Narayan's stories?
8. Name the Nobel Laureate who wrote the script for the English version of *The Guide.*
9. Who was the American director of *The Guide?*
10. Which places in Northern India were selected for the main locations?

Answers

1. Dev Anand
2. Hindi and English
3. At Narayan's house in Yadava Giri
4. Raju
5. Bharat Natyam
6. An archaeologist
7. R K Laxman
8. Pearl S Buck
9. Tad Danielewski
10. Jaipur and Udaipur

Assignments

1. Comment on R K Narayan's writing style in "Misguided Guide".
2. Write an essay on the major changes made by the film makers on the original story. How did they affect the movie's plot?
3. What were the crises faced by the makers while shooting? How did they overcome them?
4. What all changes happen to Narayan's attitude to the film from signing the contract to the pack up of shooting?

Suggested Reading

1. Leitch. Thomas M. *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ.* John Hopkins UP, 2007.
2. McFarlane, Brian. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation. Clarendon, 1996.*
3. Narayan, R.K. *Writer's Nightmare.* Penguin, 2000.
4. - -.- .*The Guide*. Penguin, 2010.

Unit 4 Ngugi wa Thiong'o with Harish Trivedi(Interview)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- gain a deeper insight into the viewpoint presented in the particular interview
- learn how to ask insightful questions and engage in meaningful conversations
- evaluate the information presented critically
- increase their cultural and social awareness, helping them understand different perspectives and societal dynamics

Prerequisites

Colonisation is often reduced to a narrative of land acquisition, political domination, and military conquest. But beneath this visible structure lies a deeper, more invisible process: the colonisation of the mind. The most lasting impact of imperialism is not just in the re-drawn borders or looted economies, but in how it restructured the way colonised peoples perceive themselves, their cultures, and their histories. It was not just about taking control of territories, but about seizing control of meaning.

Language, in this sense, becomes the primary site of this epistemic violence. The colonial project did not just spread English, it established English as the standard of intelligence, civility, and legitimacy. It invalidated indigenous languages, not merely as tools of expression, but as systems of knowledge, modes of thought, and repositories of collective memory. Colonised people were made to internalise the idea that their languages, and thus their identities, were inadequate or inferior.

This internalisation creates a fracture within the self. A postcolonial subject often exists in two worlds- one native, intuitive, and historically rich; the other imposed, globalised, and institutionally rewarded. English, for many, becomes both a ladder and a cage. It grants access to power, education, and mobility, yet it distances one from one's cultural roots.

This is the dilemma Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o addresses in his life and work. His decision to abandon English and embrace Gikuyu was not a nostalgic return, it was an act of intellectual resistance. By choosing to write in Gikuyu, Ngũgĩ was reclaiming his right to imagine, narrate, and critique from within his epistemological framework. He wasn't just writing differently; he was thinking differently.

The conversation between Ngũgĩ and Harish Trivedi unfolds this complex terrain: the role of translation as both a bridge and a battleground, the risk of being "translated" out of one's culture, and the potential for indigenous languages to reassert themselves not just as local dialects but as global epistemes. This is not merely a linguistic issue, it is a philosophical one. Whose knowledge matters? Whose stories get told, and in what tongue?

To fully engage with this interview, you should be prepared to think about colonisation not just as history, but as an ongoing cognitive and cultural condition. This approach urges a shift from viewing English as neutral or universal to seeing it as a historical agent with ideological weight. It calls for a revaluation of marginalised languages not as "less developed" but as alternative, equally valid ways of knowing the world.

Keywords

Postcolonial Writing, Gikuyu Language, Identity, Translation, Bilingualism, Third World Nations, Linguistic Imperialism

Discussion

2.5.1 Summary

This interview of Ngugi wa Thiong'o by Harish Trivedi was taken at a conference on cross-cultural translation held at the University of London. Trivedi through his intriguing questions attempts to elicit Thiong'o's ideological takes on colonisation and the use of English, the coloniser's language, by the Third World nations. They also discuss the linguistic imperialism of English and how English language and translation can be devised to enable the other, especially the languages in the Third World countries.

Harish Trivedi addresses Ngugi wa Thiong'o as the most radical Third World postcolonial writer in English and praises him for his decolonisation efforts. Being a writer Thiong'o's career has two parts: the first when he wrote in English under the name James Ngugi and second when he assumed the name Ngugi wa Thiong'o and began writing in Gikuyu. Thiong'o himself has called the novels of the former period the 'Afro-Saxon novel' and the latter as the 'African novel'. Trivedi asks him to talk about the role of language, bilingualism and translation in Thiong'o's campaign against neo-colonialism and the causes of changing his name and language of writing. Thiong'o admits that he published 3 novels (*Weep Not, Child, A River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat)* under his baptismal name James. He got this name when he was christened during primary school. But later he realised that this name had some colonial undertones. The African slaves were renamed after their American masters following their trade and this naming system was followed in the colonies too. All such names were biblical and most importantly they were 'English'. When Thiong'o recognised this as a symbolic replacement of identity he rejected the name James and embraced his African birth name Ngugi wa Thiong'o which meant 'Ngugi, son of Thiong'. And 'Ngugi' means 'hard work'.

Trivedi proceeds by adding a supplementary question to this. He enquires whether the change in identity had something to do with his controversial novel *Petals of Blood* and the imprisonment that followed it. Thiong'o assures the change in name happened in 1979

and it had no connection with the novel or his detention. The change happened as a result of him questioning the naming systems, including language. Language is used for naming the environment and naming our reality. So changing his name and the language of writing had the same ideology behind them.

Trivedi then remarks that according to the Book of Genesis, Adam names the objects and they become what they are. This again provides supremacy to the English language.

Thiong'o agrees with it and says that he has been questioning it for long. After the publication of *Petals of Blood,* the question of language gained more weight for him and something very significant happened with Thiong'o. He started working with the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre in Kamiriithu village. While working with that community centre he understood that the question of language is something that requires a practical response. Indigenous languages should get the place they deserve. So they decided to produce literature in the African language. Gikuyu language was chosen for it. They staged a play in Gikuyu titled *Ngaahika Ndeend,* or *I'll Marry When I Want.* But the government officials of the Moi regime closed down the play on 16 November 1977 and Thiong'o was put behind the bars for a year from 31 December 1977 to 12 December 1978. During his term in prison, he took the most significant decision of his life that he would choose Gikuyu language for his writing.

Thiong'o, before he became a part of the community centre and chose Gikuyu, was a student and then a teacher of English literature. So, Trivedi wants to know whether Thiong'o, did feel any kind of alienation when he went back to his community. As an answer to this, Thiong'o points out the positives and negatives of English literature. Whether we like it or not, English literature has a great critical and intellectual tradition. Writers like Conrad, Jane Austen, Shakespeare, Dickens and George Eliot have enriched this tradition. But at the same time, it presented a history and an environment alien to the people of Africa. It failed to reflect the reality of the human condition as expressed in the novels of African writers like Chinua Achebe, Peter Abrahams and George Lamming. These writers presented a familiar world- a colonial world- to which Thiong'o belonged. But, this world was completely absent in English literary tradition.

Moving on, Trivedi mentions the linguistic theory that languages reflect the world of its speakers and in that way what a speaker can say is determined and delimited by the language. Trivedi would like to know whether there are things in Gikuyu that could never be expressed in English. Thiong'o thinks that it is just a matter of telling things differently.

Every language has its capacity and possibilities. Just like English other languages in the world, say for example Gikuyu, Hindi, Gujarati, Yoruba or Igbo, are great languages. But colonialism prepared a hierarchal order for languages and convinced the others that English is 'the language'. This pushed us to the belief that all our languages are inferior to English. But every language is rich with a "memory bank of the experiences, the feelings, the history of a given community and culture". He also adds that he feels liberated when he writes in Gikuyu as he gets to express his environment. As a connected question to these remarks, Trivedi asks whether Thiong'o considers postcolonial writers writing in English are actually doing an act of translation in the sense that they are mentally and subconsciously translating from their native language. Thiong'o agrees that there is translation. And he quotes an example from his life. When he wrote *The River Between* about a Gi-

kuyu speaking Kenyan community's colonial experiences, he had to do a mental translation of their thoughts into English. He opines that it happens with all the writers who try to write about one community in a language that is alien to them. During this mental translation process what happens is "there is an original text which should have been there but which is lost". He faced the same plight in the case of his other novels *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. In normal translation, there will be an original text which gets translated into another. But in the case of all these novels by him, the original texts are not there.

Trivedi then asks whether Thiong'o's early novels are translated into Gikuyu.Thiong'o says they are not yet translated. But he says that he is working with the International Centre of Writing and Translation in an effort to restore the whole of African intellectual and artistic products now existing in English into African languages. He believes that all these products have drawn heavily from African culture and languages and have enriched English. So, in effect English gained a lot while the languages from which the artists drew their strength are at the losers end. This need to change. For example, Wole Soyinka is a postcolonial writer writing in English. One cannot expect him to change his language of writing as it is his choice. But we can make his texts available in languages like Gikuyu, Zulu, Igbo and others. That way, we can restore the language. At this point, Trivedi quotes Vikram Seth, who in his preface to the Hindi translation of his novel *A Suitable Boy* made two remarks- that his novel would now be available in the language that he heard resonated in his ears while writing in English and that some of the characters in the novel would be able to read it. Thiong'o absolutely agrees with it and says there should be a program at the global level to do translations. The next question from the interviewer is a little critical of Thiong'o's ideas about translation. Thiong'o in one of his lectures said that translation should be viewed more as a 'conversation' between two languages than as 'dictation' by one language to another. He also possesses the view that there is a hierarchical arrangement of languages with English on top. So, Trivedi points out that there is a contradiction in the view because a 'conversation' is possible only between equal languages. Thiong'o says that his team is trying to categorise languages into two groups- the dominant ones (most of them from Europe like English) and the marginalised ones. They envisage having a conversation between the marginalised languages like Gujarati, Yoruba, Zulu, Igbo and others. And at the same time a conversation between these languages as a whole and the dominant languages. Therefore, the conversation will be multilateral or multi-sided. And while doing translation, because of obvious historical reasons, there may not be two people who can simultaneously converse in two languages from the marginalised group. In such a situation English can be used as a meeting point. For example, a conversation between Yoruba and Zulu can be made possible with English. In this way, we may use the dominant language to *enable* and not to *disable* the marginalised languages.

The explanation does not fully convince Trivedi, so he asks whether Thiong'o is sure that English will enable other languages in a world where English becomes increasingly dominant. Thiong'o admits that if the right questions are not asked in the conversation between languages English will disable them even more. But keeping the translation as a multi-sided activity will definitely help the marginalised languages. But Trivedi is all for making direct translations between two marginalised languages. He believes that if Yoruba translated into English is translated into Gujarati then both the languages will serve the cause of English and not the other way around.

Thiong'o agrees with it but remarks that they cannot wait till they get scholars proficient in both Gujarati and Yoruba. Trivedi then comments that he thought every shopkeeper in Nairobi knows both Gikuyu and Gujarati. Thiong'o says that's not true. He also points out that they wish people to be able to talk with each other directly but where ever that is not possible bringing in English as a meeting point would help. A Hindi scholar and Gikuyu scholar can come together and use English as a medium to talk to each other.

Thiong'o is then asked about him being a translator and, irrespective of being busy, why did he choose to translate his works, to write them once again. He says he has had three kinds of experiences being a translator- translating his work, auto-translation and having his works translated by someone else. He has translated *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow* on his own and got someone else to translate *Matigari*. He took all the pains to write and translate because he wanted to make his point clear. He wanted people to see the original text and the English text so that they would understand that writing in an African language would not make a writer invisible to other communities. He also admits that he prefers to write in Gikuyu and get it translated by someone else.

On asking whether there is any text of his that exists only in Gikuyu, he says all his works, except a journal that he is editing, are translated into English. This journal called *Mutiiri* gave a platform for a lot of Gikuyu writers to publish their writing. There is no other Gikuyu writer than Thiong'o, who is translated into English but there are Gikuyu writers who have international visibility. When Trivedi comes to know that there were no major Gikuyu novelists before Thiong'o, he asks whether Thiong'o is the founder of Gikuyu novel.

Thiong'o laughs it away but mentions that the journal *Mutiiri* has paved the way for many writers who were previously writing in English to reconsider their choice of language. Writers like Gitahi Gititi and Waithera Mbuthia are examples.

The interview continues with a remark on Thiong'o's publisher. Though Thiong'o stopped writing in English and started writing in Gikuyu, which is appreciable but continuing with the same publisher Heinemann, a metropolitan Western publisher, makes it seem like Thiong'o is in a dilemma. Thiong'o discloses that though it is the same publisher, they had a branch in Nairobi called Heinemann Kenya. In Thiong'o's opinion getting a metropolitan publish African languages is a remarkable thing. They publish in all African languages yet their English publication is dominant. But there are no publishers in Nairobi who are willing to publish in Gikuyu or other African languages.

Trivedi now quotes Salman Rushdie, a postcolonial writer like Thiong'o, who calls the postcolonial writers (including him) who write in English and live in a western country as 'translated men'. These writers not only translate between languages but translate themselves from one country to another. Many writers like Rushdie live abroad by choice. But in the case of Thiong'o, he had to leave his home country because of personal safety. So, Trivedi wants to know whether Thiong'o would like to call him a 'translated' man in exile. Thiong'o says he is more of a 'transported' man. And he talks about exile philosophically. Writers living in the Third World live in exile when they start writing in English or French. They get alienated from their language and culture. Thiong'o admits that when he was forced into exile he lost the location of his inspiration. He was taken away from his raw materials, he became deprived of his en-

counters with people at marketplaces, public transport and in religious centres. At the same time, some positive things happened. He constantly tried to reconnect with his roots and the journal *Mutiiri* happened.

The next dialogue is about how Thiong'o looks at globalisation, neo-liberalisation and America being a superpower. According to him, globalisation has its positive and negative shares. Technology became globalised and ordinary working-class people can connect with each other irrespective of nationality. Intellectual exchanges are happening across continents. These are all the positive things brought about by globalisation. Trivedi then questions the contradiction in having views against neo-colonialism and working at the University of California at Irvine. Thiong'o replies that there are contradictions in everything. But the contradictions that get highlighted are the ones one wants to highlight. Many leaders of the anti-colonial movement like Gandhi, Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah were all educated in colleges abroad and some in colleges founded by the colonial authority in Africa. Thiong'o believes in finding the connections- when he is in America he tries to find its connection with Kenya.

The interview ends with Trivedi asking Thiong'o about his ,plans. Thiong'o thinks that the political climate in Kenya is favourable for his return. But since he has a job at the University in California he has no permanent plans to stay in Kenya. But if something comes up he might reconsider his plan.

2.5.2 Analysis

An interview is expected to expose the thoughts, opinions, affiliations, takes on different topics and the like of the interviewee. A good interview will have clearly structured questions in an organised way so that the listeners or the readers will be provided with a better understanding of the person being interviewed. In this interview, the interviewer Harish Trivedi, who is a well-known critic of postcolonial writings, engages the Kenyan postcolonial writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o in a conversation on the question of language and the politics of language in a postcolonial country.

This interview is not a one sided assertion rather it is a conversation between two academicians. It is evident that Trivedi had his homework done properly. The order of the questions testifies that the structure of the interview was pre-planned. It starts with a small introduction to Thiong'o to set the context right. And then tries to track Thiong'o's development of thought in a chronological order starting with the change in his name and language of creative writing. Among other topics, the writer's take on English, indigenous languages, translation, his exile and the political situation in Kenya come under discussion. The interview explains Thiong'o's choices in life and what he had to pay a lot for them.

Towards the end, they also discuss Thiong'o's plans for the future.
Trivedi sometimes goes beyond his ready-made questions to follow certain leads that come up during the course of the conversation. He appreciates Thiong'o for switching his language of writing to Gikuyu and at the same time takes the liberty to question and challenge him about his ideas of translation as a 'conversation' between languages and his selection of a western publisher. Thiong'o answers them politely and convincingly.

The major Themes in the interview are:

Postcolonial writing:

Postcolonial writing is the literature produced by writers from formerly colonised countries. These writings deal with, among others, the themes of colonial atrocities, cultural domi-

nance, inequality, racism and the ways to fight them back. There are conflicting views on who can be a postcolonial writer and in which language a postcolonial writer, should write. Some say that any writer who writes about themes related to colonisation can be considered as a postcolonial writer while some others say that the writer should be from a former colony. In the same way some believe that a postcolonial writer may use English as his language of writing, while others expect postcolonial writers to write in their mother tongue.

Identity/ Identity crisis

Colonisation facilitates interaction between people from different cultures, nations, ethnicities and classes. In this interaction, the colonisers get an upper hand. So naturally, the colonisers will try to teach their ways in the colonies. If the colonisation continues for generations, the people in the colonies will start to forget who they really were. The same confusion will be there after the colony gets independence.

People will neither completely know about their ways of living nor the colonisers'. This will lead to an identity crisis. Thiong'o talks about his English name 'James' and how that name replaced his identity. Linguistic imperialism of English Linguistic imperialism happens when a language becomes dominant and when it tries to replace the other languages. English attained the global language position because of linguistic imperialism. Britain had colonies all over the world and whereever they went they taught their language. In some places, they even wiped out the local tongue. When a language imposes itself on other languages, it imposes the culture built in it. That is the only reason why people who speak English earn respect from others who cannot.

Colonial Influence on Indigenous Languages:

A language spoken by an indigenous community native to a particular region is called an indigenous language. Due to linguistic imperialism, many languages got extinct.

Native American languages got replaced by the languages of European colonisers including English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Thiong'o talks about how languages get marginalised by dominant languages and how, through translation, dominant languages can be used to enable marginalised ones.

Recap

- Interview of the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o by Harish Trivedi
- Thiong'o's view on English as a colonial language and its influence on the indigenous languages
- Thiong'o changed his baptismal name, James, when he realised that it is an English name and the name fails to embed his identity in it
- He also changed his language of writing
- Thiong'o believes that English literature has a great tradition, but it never accommodated the non-European history or reality
- Novels by Chinua Achebe and Peter Abrahams helped Thiong'o experience a world known to him

- All languages are great
- Every language carries a memory bank of a given community
- Colonialism made us believe that English is superior
- Through translation, we can restore all the languages
- Languages can be classified into dominant languages and marginalised languages
- Translating a text from Yoruba to Zulu directly will be ideal
- But in the absence of scholars proficient in both languages, English can be a meeting point
- English can thus be used to enable other marginalised languages
- When a writer writes in a foreign language there happens a mental translation of a text that does not exist
- Thiong'o editing a journal in Gikuyu called *Mutiiri* encouraged many writers to abandon English and choose Gikuyu
- Thiong'o thinks that it is good to have a metropolitan publisher like Heinemann publish in African languages
- As a man underwent exile he thinks that he is a 'transported' man
- While in exile he got deprived of access to his culture and locations that could have inspired him
- He opines that like every phenomenon globalisation has both merits and demerits

Objective Questions

1. What was the name Ngugi wa Thiong'o acquired when he was baptised into Christianity?
2. What does the name Ngugi wa Thiong'o mean?
3. What does the word 'Ngugi' mean?
4. What is Ngugi wa Thiong'o's mother tongue?
5. Name the journal in Gikuyu edited by Thiong'o.
6. Which is Thiong'o's native country?
7. From English to which language did Thiong'o change his writing?
8. What term does Thiong'o use to talk about his novels written in English?
9. What term does Thiong'o use to talk about his novels written in Gikuyu?
10. Name Thiong'o's publisher.
11. Name Thiong'o's controversial novel of 1977.
12. Name the novel written by Thiong'o in Gikuyu while in prison.

13. Name the play that led to Thiong'o's imprisonment.
14. In which university was Thiong'o teaching when this interview was taken?

Answers

1. James Ngugi
2. Ngugi, son of Thiong
3. Hard work
4. Gikuyu language
5. Mutiiri
6. Kenya
7. Gikuyu
8. Afro-Saxon novels
9. African novel
10. Heinemann
11. *Petals of Blood*
12. *Devil on the Cross (Caitaani Mutharaba-ini)*
13. *I'll Marry When I Want (Ngaahika Ndeend)*
14. The University of California at Irvine

Assignments

1. Being a postcolonial subject how does Thiong'o look at the English language?
2. How do you evaluate Harish Trivedi as an interviewer?
3. After reading the interview, what did you understand about Thiong'o's attitude to globalisation and neo-colonialism?

Suggested Reading

1. Pennycook, Alastair. *English and the Discourses of Colonialism.* Taylor, 2002.
2. Thiong'o, Ngugi wa. *Decolonising the Mind:The Politics of Language in African Literature*. East African, 1992.

BLOCK - 03

Introduction to Fiction I

Unit 1

An Introduction to Short Fiction

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- analyse the genesis and development of short fiction as a genre
- identify and analyse its structure and features
- describe extensively the notable figures who have strengthened the genre and their particular contributions
- familiarise with the views and narrative techniques used by different writers

Prerequisites

What if we told you that stories are the original version of apps for the human brain? Long before we were swiping through screens or syncing data, we were already wired for narrative. No update required. Stories are how we download empathy, install meaning, and run simulations of choices and consequences.

From the moment we could listen, we lived through words. Think back, your grandmother's bedtime tales, the Panchatantra fables, Aesop's wise animals, or that one fairy tale that's still stuck somewhere in your heart. Maybe it was Cinderella's lost slipper, Sherlock Holmes's sharp logic, or the quiet heartbreak in "The Gift of the Magi." Stories like these left a fingerprint on your imagination-and you're not alone. They've done that for centuries.

But why do stories stay with us?

Because storytelling is more than just entertainment. It's how the human brain thinks. Stories help us make sense of chaos. They teach, warn, soothe, and ignite. Whether it's a myth told around a village fire or a tweet-length micro-tale, stories are one of the most adaptive technologies humans have ever created.

And in this fast-scrolling, notification-fuelled world, the short story feels more relevant than ever. Unlike long novels that ask for hours of attention, short fiction offers immersion in a single sitting. It's the literary equivalent of a power-packed espresso shot, sharp, focused, and unforgettable.

But make no mistake, short doesn't mean simple. In fact, the brevity of a short story demands precision. Every sentence, every word, carries weight. Much like a viral video or a

perfectly crafted photo caption, the best short stories leave a lasting impression in very little time.

What makes short fiction even more fascinating is how deep its roots run.

Long before Netflix or print books, people gathered under trees, inside caves, or by the hearth to tell tales of gods and animals, tricksters and heroes. These oral stories evolved into myths, legends, folktales, beast fables, parables, and frame narratives like The Arabian Nights, The Panchatantra, and The Kathasaritsagara. In these stories lived inside other stories, unfolding like a Russian doll of meaning and imagination.

As writing spread, so did the short story in new forms. Early literary collections like Metamorphoses by Ovid, The Decameron by Boccaccio, and The Canterbury Tales by Chaucer helped cement storytelling as a cultural cornerstone. With the invention of the printing press and the rise of periodicals, people began to crave shorter, sharper narratives. These weren't just stories anymore, they were snapshots of life, psychology, and society.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the short story found its strongest voices. Edgar Allan Poe championed the idea of a story built for a "single effect", a focused emotional hit. Writers like Chekhov, Maupassant, Hawthorne, Katherine Mansfield, and Saki stretched the form, delving into suspense, irony, morality, and human complexity. Later, with the rise of psychological realism, writers like Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce turned the lens inward, capturing the subtle chaos of the human mind through a technique called "interior monologue."

Even today, short fiction continues to evolve. With blogs, audiobooks, podcasts, and online zines, it lives everywhere, from your phone screen to your bookshelf. Its flexibility, emotional depth, and brevity make it one of the most powerful forms of modern storytelling.

So, as you begin this unit, do not just skim these stories- feel them. Look between the lines. Notice what's said, and what's left unsaid. Some stories will comfort you. Others will challenge you or even leave you unsettled. And the best ones? They won't just reflect your world like a mirror. They'll open up windows you didn't even know were there.

Welcome to the world of short fiction. Small stories. Big impact.

Keywords

Plot, Point of View, Character, Setting, Time, Metaphor, Voice, Irony

3.1.1 Short Story: The Genre and its Characteristics

3.1.1.1 Short Story

Short fiction, or short story, is a brief fictional prose narrative that can be read at a single stretch. It may range from five hundred to two thousand words, which may then be called a 'short' short story. Or it may stretch from twelve thousand to fifteen thousand words to be considered a novella or a 'long' short story. In the stories prescribed for detailed study, we will encounter the story 'The Unicorn in the Garden' by James Thurber, which belongs to

the first type. It can be called a micro-story or a 'short' short story, which is slightly longer than an anecdote. The story 'Parson's Pleasure' by Roald Dahl, which runs into twenty pages, may be considered a rather 'long' short story. Edgar Allan Poe, the first major practitioner of the genre, and its first critical theorist, defined the "prose tale" as a narrative that can be read in one sitting for from half an hour to two hours and is limited to "a certain unique or single effect" to which every other detail is subordinate. Yet, truth be told, the genre of short fiction resists universal definition.

3.1.1.2 Short Fiction and Long Fiction: Similarities and Differences

Both short fiction and long fiction are prose narratives. A short story differs from a novel in its '*magnitude*' (proportion) and '*scope*' (capacity). Its length limits and determines the effect or impact of a story. It also influences the selection and expansion of the elements to achieve those effects. Short fiction is woven around a single, detached event, character, or location. A novel, or long fiction, on the other hand, is large and epic in scope. It may range and digress. There may be a world of characters and several subplots. It is an enterprise that involves laborious work. However, short fiction relies on the totality of impressions. There is sustained concentration on the part of the writer and reader alike.

A novel may introduce elements that may not seem strictly relevant to the story. All the same, short fiction cannot deviate and bring in aspects out of context. Short fiction has a limited number of characters. It does not give in to leisurely analysis or sustained development of character. Characters are disclosed in action and not in description or comment. As a novelist does, a short story writer cannot develop a layered and well-detailed social milieu. In other words, short fiction is marked by purposeful craftsmanship. Artistic choices have to be made. Decisions regarding the length, treatment, aim, and scope of the story have to be made. Short fiction aims for richness with brevity. The narrative is scanty. It makes its craft highly visible.

Short Story and the Visual Arts

Short story has been compared to a still **photograph** (a snapshot), while long fiction is likened to a movie.

- Both photograph and short story belong to the same generation.
- Both the short story writer and the photographer, freeze frame a moment in time.

Often short stories are compared to **paintings** too. It is a fact that movements in painting such as Impressionism and Surrealism have influenced short story writing too.

Like novels, short stories may be comic, tragic, romantic, satiric, etc. It may be written in the modes of fantasy, realism, and such. It may be presented from different points of view.

Short fiction differs from anecdotes too. An anecdote is a simple or sketchy narration of a single incident, while a short story displays careful and deliberate artistry. It organises the action, thought, and dialogue of the characters into the artful pattern of a plot. This is directed at creating a particular effect on the reader. 'Short' short stories like "The Unicorn in the

Garden" are slightly refined anecdotes. Middle length works, called novellas or novelettes, generally fall under the category of short fiction. They allow greater space for character development and the creation of layered environments. Despite all the differences, the basic elements of a short story are the same as those of a novel.

3.1.2 Elements of Short Fiction

We spoke about the "purposeful artistry" of short stories. Now let us look at how a short story is written and what elements go into its making. The main elements of short fiction are Plot, Character, and Setting. They reveal WHERE the story occurs, WHAT happens, and HOW it happens and to WHOM. The secondary elements include Point of View, Style and Theme. As B. Prasad, the literary critic, puts it in a nutshell: "The plot is confined to the essentials, the characters to the indispensables, and the setting to a few suggestive hints."

3.1.2.1 Structure: Plot

To understand what plot is, one has to first understand what story means and how plot and story differ. The story is the entirety of the situation. In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster gives a famous example. When we say, "The King died and then the Queen died," it is a story. "The King dies, and then the Queen dies of grief" is a plot. The "story" answers the questions "who", what," and "where." The mere deaths of the king and queen is a story because it answers only the questions "who" and "what". The plot tells us "how," when," and "why." The queen dying of *grief* is a plot because it answers the question "How". The story is the timeline—the sequence of events. A plot is a literary device that determines how a story is organised. It presents the sequence of events in a manner in which it catches the interest of the readers and leads them through a story. A plot may be written in two different ways. The writer can assemble the key events and arrange them in a manner that creates curiosity in the reader. Stories with such plots are called *Stories of Incident*. Here, the focus of interest is primarily on the course and outcome of the events. Detective stories fall mainly into this category. However, if the writer decides to dwell upon the characters and their nature, and how this affects the events of their lives, then these are *Stories of Character*. Here, the focus is on the state of mind, motivation, and psychological and moral qualities of the protagonists. Stories of Anton Chekov, Ernest Hemingway, and many others, fall into this category.

The Plot can be ordered in two different ways, either chronologically or *anachronologically*. The *chronological* (from the Greek word "Chronos" meaning time) storytelling keeps to the way the story unfolds in time. It is a *linear* way of narrating. It starts with the beginning, moves to the middle, and then the end shows the way in which the story concludes. In an *anachronological* handling of the plot, the story may begin halfway when several things have already happened, and using flashback mode, the writer will narrate what happened in the past. Time is handled in a *non-linear* manner.

The usual plot structure, which is equally applicable to drama, fiction, and short stories, is as follows: The beginning of the plot is called the *exposition*, where the characters are introduced and the background is set. Then the writer introduces a *complication* into the story, which is called the *rising action.* This leads to the *climax*, which forms the central point or, at times, the *turning point* of the story. What follows is the *falling action,* or *denouément* (French word for "loosening the knot," pronounced *de-noo-mãh*), leading to the *resolution* of this complication. Depending on the

Plot Beginnings

The Plot of a story can begin in three different ways:

1. ***Ab ovo***: A Latin phrase that means from the "beginning of things." It literally means "from the egg." The story starts by describing the place and the character. It goes on to describe what happens next. "Once upon a time" is a famous *ab ovo* beginning used in storytelling.
2. ***In medias res***: It means "in the middle of things." The story begins at a dramatic moment or when events are actually happening. It then uses a flashback to describe what happened earlier. For instance, the story starts with a quarrel and then goes on to describe how things led to that quarrel and then the rest of the story.
3. ***In ultimas res***: It means "from the end." The tale starts at the outcome and narrates events in the reverse order. The reader is shown **how** something happened rather than **what** happened. For eg. It may start with a death or a wedding and then describe how it happened to take place.

ending, the plot is classified as tragic or comic. If the story ends in tragedy, it is called a *catastrophe*. If you are happy, it is a *conclusion*.

For example, in the beginning of the story, the writer may introduce two families who are affluent but bitter enemies. This is the *exposition*. Then the daughter of one family falls in love with the son of the other family. To complicate matters, the daughter's wedding is fixed with another person. This part forms the *rising action*. The daughter and her lover then decide to elope and make plans to escape during the night. But unfortunately, they were discovered. This forms the *climax* of the story. What happens next is the *falling action,* where the girl may be kept captive at home and her wedding preparations are made. Finally, if the family recognises the depth of their love, relents, and lets the girl and the boy get married after all the trials, we have a happy and satisfying *conclusion*. However, if the family continues to be adamant and the boy and girl take their own lives by committing suicide, the story turns tragic, and we have a *catastrophe*.

In some plots, the falling action introduces a reversal of fortune. In the prescribed stories, we see this happening. For example, in "Parson's Pleasure," Mr. Boggis' fortunes take a tumble at the end. This reversal usually occurs due to some hidden knowledge coming to light. We see this in the story "The Tempest."

In the case of a short story, the exposition and rising action happen swiftly. The author begins the story almost on the verge of a climax. The writer minimises the details of exposition and setting. Complications are kept to a minimum, and the denouement is cleared up rapidly.

3.1.2.2 Character

A character is a figure in a literary work around whom the plot is spun. The plot revolves around these characters, their experiences, their adventures, and their encounters; in short, what happens to them. Characters may be humans or non-humans. Animals or other beings may take part in the action of the story. For instance, in *The Panchatantra*

tales, animals are the central characters. Alternatively, they may be extra-terrestrials or robots. Characterisation is organically connected with the development of the plot. The complication in the plot happens because of the nature of the characters. The motives and goals of the characters determine the events in the plot. As Eudora Welty, the American short story writer, says, "We *are* our desires." It has been said that there are very few original plots. What makes similar plots seem different is the uniqueness of each character. In order for a work to be believable, the characters must appear convincing to the readers. For the readers to be convinced, they should be able to visualise them. Authors make the characters come alive not only through the description of their attire, physical attributes, etc. but also through their thoughts, emotions, and actions. The author can achieve this through two different modes of representation. The first is by *describing* the character to the reader, which is the *direct* way. The second is by *showing* the reader what the character is like, which is the *indirect* method. *Dialogue* is an important technique to reveal the character. Dialogue makes possible both direct and indirect characterisation through their own words. It also makes the character more believable.

Characters in short stories are limited in number. The brevity of the genre calls for economy of expression while portraying the character. Characters may be defined according to their depth and complexity. E. M. Forster has differentiated between *Flat* and *Round* characters. Flat characters are *one-dimensional*. They remain types throughout the tale, representing a single idea, and do not show any psychological growth. Such characters may remain good or evil throughout. We see such depictions in caricatures or cartoons. Round characters, however, are *multidimensional* and wholesome. They shift and change and register emotional and psychological growth. Characters may also be divided into *static* and *dynamic types*. Static characters remain *unevolved* and *unchanging,* whatever experiences they may undergo. Dynamic characters, however, *evolve* and *change* in response to their experiences.

The main character is called the *Protagonist*.

Anthropomorphism:

It is attributing human characteristics to non-human beings, such as animals, robots, extra-terrestrials, or even gods. They dress, live, think and speak like humans and are governed by passions, such as anger, jealousy, lust, love, greed, etc. which are human traits. E.g., Animal characters in the Aesop's Fables, The Panchatantra, or George Orwell's The Animal Farm. Cartoon animals like *Donald Duck* and those in the movie *The Lion King* are anthropomorphic.

The character that stands as an adversary to the protagonist is called an *Antagonist*. Minor characters occupying a subsidiary position are called *Tertiary* characters. Then there are *Stock* characters that appear in many stories. They stand for a certain type. For instance, the soldier who boasts, or the cruel stepmother are stock characters. The character, which stands in contrast to the main character in personality traits, is called a *Foil*. To illustrate, if the main character is simple and naive, the foil may be worldly wise.

3.1.2.3 Setting and Time

Setting includes Place, Historical Time, Cultural Context, and Social Milieu in which the

story takes place. Eudora Welty calls these "the lesser angels of fiction." However, these lesser angels play a crucial role in building up the story and creating its unique atmosphere. Setting is often identified as the 'milieu,' which includes the physical and political setting. The cultural context involves the various value systems, beliefs, customs, religions, lifestyles, etc. shared by the people in the story in a specific timeframe. The cultural context helps the reader understand what is happening in a story and why.

Place

Setting as backdrop: The story is propped against a "place" or "backdrop". It is the most basic way in which the concept of place works in a story. For instance, the setting can be an apartment, a farmhouse, a ship, a shop, a street, an island, or a battlefield. It sets the stage for how the characters interact. The conflict is played out against this backdrop. In O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," it is the run-down apartment where the protagonists Jim and Della live.

Setting as Atmosphere: The setting helps create the mood of the story and connects the reader to the emotional state of the character. In "The Gift of the Magi," Della looks out of the window of her seedy apartment and sees "a grey cat walking on a grey fence in a grey backyard." We instantly know that she sees the world as dull, grey, and hopeless because of their poverty and her inability to buy her husband a deserving Christmas gift. Setting also helps in the build-up of character. We feel what the character feels, sees, hears, tastes, and smells. What is observed and the manner in which it is described illustrate the character.

The setting makes the story much more believable. Even if it is fantasy, it imparts to the story, "a local habitation and a name," to use Shakespeare's words. In "The Tempest," it is the unknown island in the Caribbean. Setting, at times, can be the situation. Della feels depressed because she lives in a squalid Manhattan apartment, surrounded by luxury and riches of the city. Setting can provide motive and act as a metaphor. In "Parson's Pleasure," the country landscape, divided and assigned as squares by Mr. Boggis to be covered in his hunt for antique furniture, becomes the metaphor of a huge chessboard where he plays a manipulative game of chance with the houses and their occupants. You will observe more of this when we read the stories in detail.

> ***"What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but illustration of character?"***
>
> **- Henry James**

Time

When we speak of time, we are referring to "fictional time" or historical time. It is not the chronological time that we experience in real life. Fictional time is illusory. The story is usually set in a particular historic period, current or past. This historical time forms the backdrop of the story. In addition, time may be stretched out or compressed. Things that happen over months and years may be compressed into a few paragraphs or pages. The writer handles time in different ways while writing a scene, a summary, a flashback, a flash forward, or slow motion. By creating a scene, the dramatisation of an event, the felt-time of the story is established. While giving a summary of an event, the writer makes a survey of significant time that the reader experiences while reading. Flashback or flash forward manipulates fictional time while tak-

ing the reader into the past or the future. Slow motion helps the writer freeze an important moment so that the reader may absorb the full significance of what is actually happening.

3.1.2.4 Point of View, Style, Ending

The Point of View (PoV) is the "eye of the story," which sees the events that happen in the story unfold. It is at once the witness and the narrator. Also known as the narrative perspective, it is an essential element in story telling. It is the perspective from which the story is told. It determines the character with whom the audience will sympathise.

Most of the stories are narrated from three possible points of view: the First Person (I, Me, My, Us, and Ours), the Second Person (You, yours), and the Third Person (He, She, It, They, or any other name). However, the narration may be either subjective or objective. The First Person Point of View uses the pronoun 'I.' This 'I' may be a character in the story or the 'persona' of the author. The whole story unfolds as a first hand experience. First Person PoV sounds more intimate and authentic. It gives the reader confidence. By its very nature, the first person point of view is also subjective. This would render the narrator unreliable. An unreliable narrator will not give a complete account of what is occurring in the story. This may be because of either bias or a lack of awareness due to limited scope or restricted vision. Another common factor in all the first person narratives is the unique voice of the narrator. The distinctive quality of the speaker is highlighted by the narration. The manner in which they speak, the words they choose, and the ways in which their sentences are patterned are all very distinctive. For example, the novel *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville is narrated in the first person: "Call *me* Ishmael. Some years ago - never mind how long precisely - having little or no money in *my* purse, and nothing particular to interest *me* on shore, *I* thought *I* would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world."

The Second Person narrative voice puts a distance between the narrator and the reader. It also makes the reader implicit in the action. By referring to "You," the reader is drawn into the scene, while the narrator distances himself or herself from the subjectivity of "I." Instead, a more impersonal, more objective "you" makes the reader personally involved in the narrative. The second person PoV offers an intense and immersive experience. The readers feel that things happen right down close in front of them. For instance, look at the personal involvement of the reader in the sentence, "*You* crack open the door of the mansion and *you* find a woman sitting alone on a chair."

Fiction and Metafiction

- Fiction is any literary narrative. It is imagined or invented account of events. It may also be based on facts or partial facts.
- "All Fiction is a lie," says American short story writer Eudora Welty. Pablo Picasso wrote that "Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realise truth."
- If fiction simulates life, Metafiction is about fiction. The story examines the elements of fiction itself. It is self-conscious and self-reflexive writing. It refers back to itself. The readers are asked to be aware that what they are reading is nothing but made-up. Many of the post-modern short stories are metafictional.

The Third Person is usually the narratorial voice. The narrator can be equated with the writer. The persona need not be the writers themselves. It is a role assumed by the writer. It can also be a character within the story. There are four types of Third Person points of view: *Subjective* and *Objective*, *Omniscient* and *Limited*. The *subjective* narrator feels for the character takes to heart the human drama that is unfolding as they narrate, and the reader is intimately tied to the situation. The third person *objective* narrator is detached and reveals through dialogue what is happening, leaving the reader to make the inferences. The *omniscient* narrator sees everything, and hears everything, even the innermost thoughts of all the characters. In O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," we have an omniscient narrator who is truly all-knowing. The *Limited* Third person, however, has a restricted point of view and is not let into all the thought processes. Later, we will be reading "Parson's Pleasure" by Roald Dahl, in which we have a limited third person narrator who speaks in detail about the main character but reveals the thoughts of the subsidiary characters only through their dialogues.

Style

Each writer has his or her own style. Style is the way in which a story is written, the devices used by the authors to express their thoughts and convey the subject matter. This style is moulded by the unique personality and quirks of the author, and stands out as distinctive. It can be identified by the means an author uses to create an effect, such as diction, imagery, and rhetorical devices. Style refers to the ways in which the author presents the content of a work. It influences its aesthetic quality and determines the emotional response of the reader. Style may also reflect the literary movement or the period in which the author writes. For instance, we can say that the author is writing in a formal or romantic style, or in a Classical or Modernist style.

3.1.2.5 Language

The language used depends on accuracy to convey the exact meaning and mood that the writer intends. The words used must be precisely the right words. To convey the appropriate mood, a specific word has to be used. For instance, "skipped with joy, "jumped with joy," and "danced with joy" convey different types of intensity and delight. The writer may use suitable rhetorical devices to embellish the language and convey the mood. The use of authentic dialects and slang in dialogues enhances the quality and credibility of the work.

Artfulness and Artlessness

The author may adopt a self-conscious style of narration. Then it is called an Artful style. Artfulness in narration can be identified by the way the author calls attention to the way they write. The style may be oblique. For example, writers may use their creativity to come up with new sentence structures.

Artlessness in narrative style is just its opposite. The writing is straightforward. It is marked by spontaneity and authenticity. The reader feels that the narration is natural and unselfconscious.

Voice

Voice is the writer's signature. It is the attitude of the author towards the subject matter of a literary work as well as the reader. It would include manner, mood, and outlook in the work. The Narrative Voice is the narrator's distinctive use of language. This includes the tone, diction, and word choice. The author's voice may appear serious, sad, angry, mocking, commanding, friendly, detached, apologetic, intimate, pompous, playful, etc. Some critics equate tone with voice. But voice refers to the

authorial presence in the whole of the literary work and encompasses not only tone, but also character, plot, theme and imagery. Tone goes into building the mood and atmosphere of the story.

3.1.2.6 Theme

The theme is the central message that the story conveys. It is the general concept or doctrine appearing in a literary work. This statement can be moral or amoral. It can be stated directly or indirectly. For instance, in the story, "The Gift of the Magi," the central themes are love and sacrifice.

3.1.2.7 Irony

Stories may employ irony. It is a contradiction between appearance, or expectation, and reality. Irony shows the contrast between the expectations of the reader or the characters and the actual outcome. Roald Dahl employs huge irony in "Parson's Pleasure." Irony is of two types: verbal and situational.

3.1.2.8 Ending

Stories can be close-ended or open-ended. Close-ended stories neatly merge or link the various details, leaving the reader with a neat, clean cut ending. There is a proper closure. It leaves the reader satisfied. Stories that end with the statement "And then they lived happily ever after" are considered close-ended. However, open-ended stories usually leave things unsaid and dangling. They abandon the reader at the pinnacle of excitement. Many things are left unsaid, and there is no proper closure. The reader has to use his imagination to guess what may happen. "The Tempest" has a neat ending with all the loose ends tied, and is close-ended. "Parson's Pleasure," however, is open-ended. The author leaves us at the point when things heat up. We are overcome with curiosity thinking about how the central character is going to react to the turn of events.

Recap

- Short fiction is comparatively a new genre, though tale telling is ancient
- The changing lifestyle, urbanisation and technology forged the art form of short fiction
- Edgar Allan Poe is considered as the originator of modern short story
- The elements of short fiction are similar to those of long fiction, except for its intensity and brevity
- A short story is marked by deliberate craftsmanship
- Short fiction is woven around an event, character or setting
- The plot determines how a story is organised
- The two types of plots are Stories of Incident and Stories of Character
- The plot can be organised chronologically or anachronologically
- Stories are wound around the figures of characters, which may include human and non-human beings

- Character traits can be described directly or indirectly
- Characters may be flat or round, static or dynamic
- Setting includes place, time, cultural context and milieu
- Setting forms the backdrop, creates atmosphere, makes the story more believable, provides motive and acts as a metaphor
- The story represents a fictional time or a historical time
- Point of view provides narrative perspective and can be delivered in the First Person, the Second Person, or the Third Person
- First person narrator uses the pronoun 'I' and is often a subjective and unreliable narrator
- The second person narrator distances from the author and the reader by using the pronoun "you"
- The third person narrator may be subjective, objective, omniscient or limited
- Style is way the author presents the content using diction, imagery and rhetorical devices, and determines the aesthetic quality and the emotional response of the readerStyle may be artful or artless; self-conscious or spontaneous
- Language should be accurate to convey the appropriate mood
- Voice is the author's signature and exhibits the mood, manner and outlook of the author
- Stories may be close-ended or open-ended
- There are two types of ironies, verbal and situational

Objective Questions

1. Who is known as the originator of the short story form?
2. What are frame tales?
3. What is an example for a frame tale?
4. Which are considered to be the first stories in the English language?
5. Name two physical reasons for the growth of the short story genre.
6. What were the reasons for an increase in demand for shorter pieces of writing?
7. Mention two outstanding French and Russian story writers.
8. Which mode of writing developed with the development of modern psychology?
9. Which genre depends on "totality of impression" for its perfection?
10. What are middle length stories called?
11. What are the two types of stories according to its emphasis?
12. What are the two ways in which plots can be organised?

13. Which is the basic architecture of a story?
14. Which are the two types of characters according to their growth or movement?
15. What is the main character in a story called?
16. Who is an antagonist in a story?
17. What role does dialogue play in a story?
18. What are the three major points of view of narration?
19. How many types of third person PoVs are there?
20. Which pronoun is used in second person narrative?
21. Which point of view refers to himself or herself while narrating a story?
22. What does an omniscient narrator do?
23. What is voice?

Answers

1. Edgar Allan Poe
2. A story which forms a frame into which a whole set of stories are fitted
3. The Panchatantra / The Arabian Nights
4. The Canterbury Tales
5. The growth of the printing technologies and the rise of the magazines and periodicals
6. Busier lives and less time
7. Guy de Maupassant and Anton Chekov
8. The stream of consciousness technique
9. The short fiction / the short story
10. Novellas or Novelettes
11. The story of incident and the story of character
12. Chronologically or Anachronologically
13. Exposition – (Motive) – Rising Action – (Conflict) – Climax – Resolution (Denouement)
14. Round and flat / Dynamic and static
15. A protagonist
16. The one who opposes the main character; his enemy
17. Dialogue helps in direct or indirect characterisation
18. The first person, the second person and the third person narration
19. Third person subjective, objective, omniscient and limited
20. "You"

21. The first person point of view
22. Sees and hears everything. Knows everything that is happening and reports.
23. Voice is the attitude of the author towards the subject matter of a literary work as well as the reader.

Assignments

1. Write an essay on the genesis of short stories as a genre.
2. What are the major characteristics of short fiction? How does it differ from long fiction?
3. How do plot, character, and setting contribute to the writing of short fiction?
4. Which are the "lesser angels of fiction" and what role do they play in building up a story?

Suggested Reading

1. Bailey, Tom. *A Short Story Writer's Companion*. Oxford UP, 2001.
2. Hudson, William Henry. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. Rupa, 2015.
3. Prasad, B. *A Background to the Study of English Literature*. Lakshmi, 2020.
4. Shaw, Valerie. *The Short Story: A Critical Introduction*. 1983. Routledge, 2013.

Unit 2

The Gift of the Magi

-O Henry

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- identify the elements of short story
- determine the central theme and explain its development throughout the text using specific details
- relate the story to their daily life experiences
- become aware of the narrative techniques used by the writer

Prerequisites

Some stories never lose their shine-"The Gift of the Magi" is one such gem. Written by O. Henry in 1905, this short story continues to resonate with readers around the globe. It is a simple tale about a young couple, Jim and Della, who sacrifice their most prized possessions to buy gifts for one another. Yet within that simplicity lies a deeply moving message: love, when genuine, values selflessness above material wealth. Over the years, this story has become a global touchstone, translated into countless languages and adapted into every form from plays to films to classroom discussions. It is more than a Christmas story; it is a quiet celebration of love in its purest form.

But what of the man behind the pen name?

O. Henry, born William Sydney Porter in 1862, led a life as eventful as the stories he wrote. Raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, and schooled by his aunt, he developed a love for reading early on. At just nineteen, he became a licensed pharmacist, but his life would take many turns- from working on a Texas ranch to becoming a bank teller, a journalist, and even a fugitive. Accused of embezzlement, Porter fled the country but returned to be with his ailing wife. Following her death, he served time in prison- ironically, the place where he truly found his voice as a writer.

It was during this time that William Porter transformed into "O. Henry." The origins of this pseudonym are shrouded in mystery and rumour. Was it inspired by a prison guard named Orrin Henry? A playful nod to his cat? Or perhaps a veiled reference to "Ohio Penitentiary"? No one knows for sure. But the name stuck, eclipsing his real identity and becoming synonymous with wit, irony, and emotional depth.

When Porter moved to New York City in 1902, he found a city teeming with stories waiting to be told. He affectionately dubbed it "Baghdad-on-the-subway," capturing its chaotic

charm and vivid humanity. He observed life in the margins- bartenders, beggars, shop-girls- and transformed them into unforgettable characters. His keen observations and ironic twists made him a regular contributor to the New York World Sunday Magazine, where many of his best-known stories were first published.

Despite his rising fame, Porter's personal life was marked by tragedy and struggle. A second marriage faltered, and he slipped into heavy drinking and financial hardship. He died in 1910 at the age of forty-seven, leaving behind a rich legacy of short stories that remain widely read and revered.

Collections such as The Four Million, The Voice of the City, and Cabbages and Kings introduced readers to a vibrant world of everyday people- salesgirls, waiters, cops, clerks- each with dreams, heartbreaks, and small triumphs. His storytelling honoured the unnoticed and elevated the mundane into something almost magical. And though some of his works reflect the racial biases of his time, his overarching theme was always compassion for the ordinary soul.

In 1919, almost a decade after his death, the O. Henry Prize was created in his honour, a prestigious award that continues to celebrate excellence in short fiction. Today, it stands as one of the highest accolades for short story writers in North America. Its recipients have included literary legends such as William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Parker, Raymond Carver, and Alice Munro. In 2021, the prize went to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, reaffirming its legacy as a champion of powerful storytelling.

At its heart, "The Gift of the Magi" remains a quiet reminder of what it means to love beyond material things. O. Henry's unique voice- witty, heartfelt, and ever observant- ensures that his stories live on, not just on the page, but in the emotions and imaginations of generations of readers. In a world often chasing grandeur, he reminds us that the truest riches are sometimes found in the smallest acts of love.

Keywords

O. Henry Twist or Ending, Comic Irony, Magi, Wisdom, Love, Selflessness and Sacrifice

Discussion

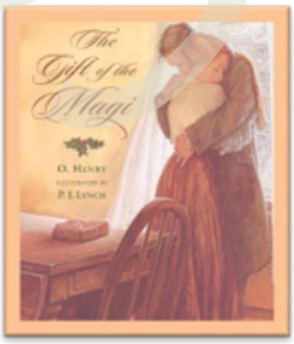


Fig 3.2.1 "The Gift of the Magi"(cover page)

"The Gift of the Magi " is a touching tale of a young couple, Della and Jim, and the sacrifice they make to show the deep love they have for each other. In a witty and humorous way, the story reveals their life in penury. It describes how they try to overcome poverty, which stands in their way of giving each other a meaningful Christmas present. Ironically, their gifts to each other prove useless. On the other side, their love and sacrifice highlight their "wisdom." O. Henry has woven a tale that may appear simple on the outside but is

deep and touching when analysed. The story is also a classic example of the famous "O. Henry twist" – the sudden, unexpected plot twist at the end of the story that characterises most of his short stories. Belonging to the special group of Christmas stories like Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, "The Selfish Giant " by Oscar Wilde, "The Elves and the Shoemaker " by the Brothers Grimm, etc., "The Gift of the Magi" illustrates the real Christmas spirit, spreading hope and happiness in the reader's mind.

3.2.1 Summary

The story narrates the events happening on Christmas Eve. We see Della, a young woman, counting the money that she has collected over the past few months by bargaining with vendors. She finds that it amounts only to one dollar and eighty-nine cents. The next day is Christmas. She knows that this amount will not be sufficient to buy her husband Jim a Christmas present that is worthy of him. She weeps piteously. The narrator goes on to describe the characters and their circumstances. Della and James Dillingham Young, who is affectionately called Jim, are a young couple very much in love with each other. However, they are very poor because Jim earns a paltry salary that amounts to a meagre twenty dollars. In fact, it was recently reduced from thirty dollars to twenty. They live in a shabby little flat with worn out furnishings. Their letterbox is too tiny to drop a letter, and the electric bell does not ring. However, they are very happy with each other.

Della finds the day very dull and bleak. Everything around her appears grey to her. That is when she sees her own reflection in a narrow pier-glass and an idea strikes her. The only precious possessions that Della and Jim have are Della's luxuriant hair, which falls down to her knees like a waterfall, and Jim's pocket watch, a family heirloom, which was handed down to him by his father as a legacy. Both Jim and Della were very proud of these possessions. If the Queen of Sheba, with all her riches, were living in a flat opposite hers, Della would have shown off her long hair, making her jealous. Jim would have displayed his watch to King Solomon, had he been the janitor of their building. Della decides to sell her hair, though she is sad to lose it. She visits Madame Sofronie, a wig maker, who buys hair of all kinds. Madame Sofronie, a shrewd and detached businessperson, offers her twenty dollars in return for her hair. It is obvious that she is taking advantage of Della's desperation. Della accepts the offer without question. Pocketing the twenty dollars, Della hunts all shops and finally spots a platinum fob chain for Jim's watch. She finds that it is "quiet and valuable," like Jim himself. She buys it for twenty-one dollars and returns with the chain and a balance of eighty seven cents.

On her return, she tries to make herself look better by curling her short hair with a hot iron. She is scared that Jim will cease loving her because she has lost her hair. She fears that she looks cheap, like a Coney Island Chorus girl. Nevertheless, she prepares the dinner and waits for Jim to arrive from his workplace. She prays that Jim will not stop loving her and will find her as pretty as ever. Jim arrives. He looks at her with a strange expression, as if he cannot believe his eyes. When Della tries to pacify him, he tells her why he was shocked. He gives her the gift he bought her for Christmas. Inside the box, Della finds a set of beautiful tortoise shell combs that she had always desired and would have adorned the hair that she has now lost. Seeing this gift, Della breaks down, weeps, and tells Jim that her hair will grow back. Then, with a cry, she remembers that she has not yet shown Jim his gift. She pulls out the fob chain and hands it over. Jim smiles and tells her to put it away, as both their gifts have proved useless for the time being.

Jim had sold the watch to buy her the expensive set of combs. Thus, a loving couple sacrificed the most precious thing they had to buy each other the best Christmas present. In the eyes of a materialistic world, they may appear foolish. However, the narrator feels that they are truly the Magi, the wise persons who sacrificed the greatest thing they had, and proved the sincerity of their love for each other. They are the ones who have imbibed the true Christmas spirit.

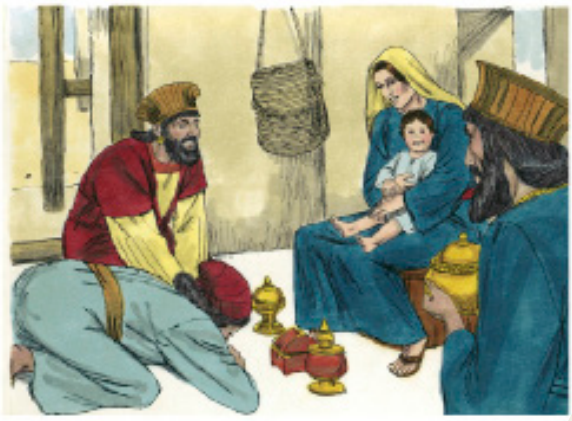


Fig 3.2.2 The Magi visit Baby Jesus

Fig 3.2.3 The Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon

3.2.2 Analysis

"The Gift of the Magi" is a touching tale about the deep love that a couple feels and the extent to which they go to affirm it. O. Henry is a masterly manufacturer of soft sentiments, and he does so admirably in this story. It is considered a modern-day fairy tale, and weaves its own magic through the lofty ideals of love and sacrifice highlighted in it.

George Eliot has said, "One must be poor to know the luxury of giving." In the story, Della and Jim struggle to buy each other a worthy Christmas gift. Henry vividly sketches the poverty that encircles their lives. Della penny-pinchers by haggling with vendors and saving each penny she gets. Referring to the shabby couch, the red carpet, the too narrow pier glass that adorns the apartment, the defunct electric bell, and the tiny, unusable mailbox in the vestibule, O. Henry points out how poor they were. Therefore, when they finally come up with the grandest gifts each could afford to present to the other, it signifies their ultimate sacrifice and their ultimate triumph. Della, by sacrificing her luxuriant hair, which she was immensely proud of, and Jim, by selling off the watch, the only heirloom he possessed, proudly proclaim that their love transcends paltry considerations like a lack of money.

The plot unfolds in a striking manner. The opening sentence is a vehement declaration in media res: "One Dollar and eighty-seven cents." The reader then understands that this is the only amount that Della has. The narrator exposes how Della managed to obtain it by bargaining shamelessly with various traders. Next, he goes on to introduce the Dillingham Youngs. Gradually, O. Henry eases us into the state of their poverty, their love for each other, and the pride that they take in their possessions. It is through Della's thoughts, moods, and reactions that the story unfolds. Rising action comes when Della is seized by the idea of selling her hair. The story takes us to New York's busy streets, into Madame Sofronie's,

where she sells her hair, and then to the shop where she buys the platinum fob chain for Jim's watch. The story then proceeds to show Della's distress on seeing her shorn hair, her attempts to mend her looks by curling the hair, and her fear that Jim may not find her pretty anymore. Jim's entry and his startled expression on seeing Della are the climax. Falling action reveals the reason for Jim's shock, the purchase of the much coveted tortoise-shell combs for Della and the fact that Jim had sold his watch to buy the combs. This is the famous O. Henry twist. The story ends happily with the reaffirmation of their love and devotion to each other. The writer inserts a moral at the ending, equating the loving couple to the Magi, who have discovered the true meaning of gifting, elevating this story into a fable.

The narration is from the "third person omniscient" point of view. The intrusive narrator knows everything that takes place. Even the inner thoughts and moods of the characters. Thus, he knows how unhappy and depressed Della is, and that she perceives the whole world as grey and dull. He adopts a caring, avuncular tone (that of an uncle) throughout, referring to the protagonists as "foolish children" in the last paragraph. He is often chatty, telling us about things concerning Della and Jim as if he were revealing a secret. He tells us how the precious possessions they have are a matter of great pride for them. By placing the immense riches of Queen Sheba and King Solomon side by side with Della's hair and Jim's watch, he tells us how rich they feel about their prized possessions. Occasionally, O. Henry addresses the readers directly as "You," involving them in the narrative, as in, "Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat."

The author advances the story not only through description but also through the mode of dialogue, which is crisp and concise. It makes the story more engaging and believable. It is through the dialogue between Jim and Della that their deep love for each other is revealed. The turn in the tale is revealed through the dialogue when Jim divulges that he has sold off the watch to buy her the combs.

Henry's stories are famous for their surprise endings. Here too, a disclosure at the end brings on the same twist that characterises his stories. We find that not only Della but Jim too had sacrificed his valued heirloom to give his spouse a fitting gift.

The setting is a shabby apartment in New York. O. Henry draws the reader's attention to the poor condition of the couple very strikingly by inserting hints about the general squalor. The greater share of action happens within the flat. The flat is dull and dingy and Della's state of mind makes it more depressing. She sees a grey cat walking on a grey fence in a grey backyard. The author evokes an atmosphere of gloom by painting a grey world, which they inhabit. Later, O. Henry hurries the reader through the streets of New York for a few moments when Della sells her hair and purchases the hob chain for the watch.

Henry contrasts the two worlds: the one inside the flat and the other, outside. The outside world is one of opulence and privilege. It is casual, insensitive, soulless, and businesslike. The world inside the flat, though dull and impoverished, is soulful and filled with warmth, care, and love.

There are only two main characters, Jim and Della. Rather flatly sketched, they epitomise sincerity, affection, and selflessness. They are foolhardy youth who take decisions without considering the consequences. Despite their poverty, they have a great deal of self-respect and pride. In the final paragraph, O. Henry describes them as the Magi. Because they em-

body the true spirit of Christmas, and have understood the true meaning of gift giving.

Henry introduces the story by describing Della's plight. He follows her thoughts and actions from the beginning. Their story unfolds through Della's disappointment at their poor state, her inability to buy Jim a decent present for Christmas, and her sudden brainwave to sell her luxuriant hair, which resembles a brown waterfall, and obtain money.

Della is shown as a young and pretty woman, conscientious and very much in love with her husband. She is feminine, sentimental, and slightly hysterical. She appears to be childlike in her raptures and miseries. She weeps when she finds that she does not have enough money and later when she sees herself shorn of her lovely hair. She is apprehensive that Jim may not find her pretty anymore. She is ecstatic when she suddenly sees a way out of her predicament and when she finally finds the right gift for Jim. She is over the top when Jim presents her with the tortoise shell combs, but she breaks down and weeps when she realises that she will not be able to use them.

Jim appears only later in the story and acts as a foil to Della. Jim is described as "The Lord of the flat." He is a young man, thin and anxious looking, barely twenty-two years of age, and earning a meagre income. His character is described as "fine, rare, and sterling." While Della adores Jim, Jim is equally fond of Della. Towards the end of the story, we come to know that whatever changes occur in Della's appearance, his love will not waver, and he will stand by his wife's side. He appears to be more practical because, despite the terrible letdown at seeing Della's glorious hair cutr short, he overcomes his disappointment and pacifies her. He has the grace and composure to smile at their predicament. As emotional as Della is, Jim is sober and level headed.

The only other character, who appears for a brief span in the story, is Mme. Sofronie, the dealer in hair goods. O. Henry describes her as large, too white, and chilly. Sofronie in Greek means beautiful and wise. However, O. Henry states that there was nothing "Sofronie" about her. There is no warmth in her manner, and she is extremely business-like. It is obvious that she dupes Della by offering her a mere $20 when her type of hair would fetch a higher price in the market.

The central themes of the story are unconditional love, selflessness, and generosity. Jim and Della prove that their love for each other is more powerful than their attachment to material possessions. They prove this love by sacrificing their greatest assets in a spirit of generosity toward each other.

The subjects of poverty and true value also arise in it. Della and Jim are poor. Their clothes are threadbare. Jim badly needs a new overcoat and a pair of gloves. Della's jacket and hat are old. Their sofa is shabby, the pier-glass thin, and dusty. Everywhere, evidence of squalor and poverty prevails. The only objects of value are Della's long hair that cascades down to her knees and Jim's heirloom of a watch. Ultimately, these are the things that they sacrifice to buy gifts and affirm their love for each other. Closely connected with this is the conflict between material and spiritual values. Their lack of resources does not stand in the way of their love. Jim and Della sacrifice their material possessions, in this case, the hair and watch, to uphold greater values of love and affection. From a worldly point of view, their sacrifice proves futile because both are unable to enjoy each other's gifts. Della loses her hair and Jim his watch, and instead they gain tortoise-shell combs and a platinum fob chain, which are rendered useless. Nevertheless, spiritually, they stand on a high plane because it reinforces their mutual avowal of love.

O. Henry has a breezy way of stating things. His language is laced with humour. It is never sarcastic, but he uses a gently ironic and sympathetic tone while referring to his main characters. Humour and pathos mingle in his descriptions. Statements such as "it did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the look-out for the mendicancy squad," "when the income was shrunk to $20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D," etc. are humorous as well as witty. They also convey his sympathetic attitude towards their poverty.

"The Gift of the Magi" abounds in different types of dramatic irony: verbal irony and situational irony. Verbal irony works in several statements made by the narrator in mild sarcasm. For instance, Della's curling her short hair into a pageboy style is ironically referred to as "a mammoth task." The story is a classic example of "dramatic irony," where the readers know more about events than the characters themselves. Della opens the gift containing tortoiseshell combs and forgets for a moment that her hair is not long enough to wear them. Even before Jim reveals that he sold his watch to buy the combs, the readers can anticipate what is about to come. Jim coming home with tortoise shell combs for Della's shorn hair is situational irony.

The story has several biblical allusions. The reference to the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Israel, though somewhat humorously, reinforces the spirit of Christmas. The title "The Gift of the Magi" is also biblical and builds up the central tenet of gift giving as a Christmas ritual and a human tradition. The final paragraph explains the greatness of their sacrifice from the author's point of view. Like the Magi, who braved the terrible weather and an arduous journey to bear gifts to the newborn baby Jesus in the manger in Bethlehem, Jim and Della overcame their poor circumstances by sacrificing the most valuable thing they possessed and giving the most coveted and precious gift they could afford. In the truest sense, they become the modern magi.

Recap

- Della and Jim are a loving couple who prove their devotion to each other
- They sacrifice their most prized possessions to buy gifts for each other
- Della sells her luxuriant hair and Jim sells his watch, which he had received as an heirloom
- The gifts prove futile as both sell the things for which they are bought
- The title is significant as it connects the Magi (bearing gifts to baby Jesus) with Jim and Della, who undertake a great sacrifice to show their love and care for each other
- The plot begins in the middle of action with Della counting the money she had saved
- The narrator is third person omniscient and intrusive
- The settings underline the poverty in which the main characters live
- Jim and Della are counterparts to each other; they also act as foils to each other

- Love and Sacrifice are the main themes; poverty, as well as material vs spiritual, are the other themes
- The story is narrated in a lighthearted, though sentimental way
- Humour and pathos mingle in the story
- The story abounds in verbal and situational irony.

Objective Questions

1. How much money did Della have at the beginning of the story?
2. How did Della collect so much money?
3. Why did Della want the money?
4. What was Jim's income?
5. What was Jim's full name?
6. What were the useless things in the vestibule?
7. When Della looked out of the window, what did she see?
8. What idea did Della have when she looked into the pier-glass?
9. According to the narrator, to whom would Della and Jim show off their precious possessions?
10. What description does O. Henry use to describe Della's hair?
11. Who did Della visit in the street, and why?
12. How much was Della offered for her hair?
13. What gift did Della buy, and how much did she pay for it?
14. What did Della do after returning to the flat?
15. What was Della's prayer as she waited for Jim?
16. What gift did Jim purchase for Della?
17. How did Jim obtain the money to buy the gift for Della?
18. Why do you think O. Henry compares Jim and Della with the Magi? Do you agree?
19. Do you think that the title of the story suits it? Why?
20. For what types of endings was O. Henry famous?
21. What type of narrative point of view is used in the story?
22. What type of characters are Jim and Della?
23. What does Madame Sofronie represent?
24. What are the main themes of "The Gift of the Magi?"
25. What type of ironies do you see at work in the story?

Answers

1. One dollar and eighty-seven cents
2. By haggling with the grocer, the vegetable man, and the butcher
3. She wanted to buy her husband, Jim, a Christmas present
4. Twenty dollars a week
5. James Dillingham Young
6. A letterbox into which no letter would go and an electric bell that would not ring
7. She saw a grey cat walking on a grey fence in a grey backyard
8. To sell her hair
9. To the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon
10. A cascade of brown waters
11. Madame Sofronie, dealer in hair goods. She went to sell her hair
12. Twenty dollars
13. Platinum fob chain for Jim's watch. She paid twenty-one dollars for it.
14. She curled her hair with curling irons
15. She prayed to God to make Jim think she was still pretty
16. A set of jewelled tortoiseshell combs
17. By selling his watch
18. Yes. Like the Magi, who travelled a long way with gifts for baby Jesus, Jim and Della sacrificed their precious possessions to buy each other gifts
19. The title is apt and fitting, as Jim and Della become examples of sincere love who sacrifice their greatest possessions to give each other the best present, during Christmas time
20. For O. Henry twists, which brought surprise endings to the stories
21. Third Person Omniscient
22. Flat characters
23. A soulless businesswoman
24. Unconditional Love and Selfless Sacrifice
25. Verbal and Situational ironies

Assignments

1. "The Gift of the Magi" is a reflection of the true Christmas spirit. Discuss.
2. Analyse the elements of the short story as revealed in O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi."

Suggested Reading

1. Henry, O. *O. Henry Short Stories*. Fingerprint, 2020.
2. Current-García, Eugene. *O. Henry: A Study of the Short Fiction.* Twayne, 1993.
3. Page, Arthur W., and Nicholas Fachel Lindsay. *The Amazing Genius of O. Henry.* Fredonia, 2001.

Unit 3

Parson's Pleasure

-Roald Dahl

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- comprehend the theme of the story
- get acquainted with the writing style of the writer
- become equipped to interpret the short story by analysing the different characteristics
- become familiar with the changing trends in modern fiction writing

Prerequisites

There's something deeply satisfying about watching a cunning cheat fall flat on his face, especially when the trap he falls into is one he built himself. When someone who spins lies for a living finally falls into their own trap, it feels like justice served with a twist of irony. That's exactly the kind of pleasure Roald Dahl offers in "Parson's Pleasure", a tale that wraps up this unit on a delightfully sharp note. In this story, we meet a sly conman posing as a clergyman, who travels the countryside fooling unsuspecting folks out of their valuable antiques, until, quite poetically, his own scheme backfires in a way he could never have predicted.

It may surprise some to know that this wickedly clever tale comes from Roald Dahl, who is best known for enchanting young readers with fantastical stories filled with chocolate rivers, telekinetic girls, and friendly giants. But Dahl had many sides to him; while children's books made him a household name, he also wrote for adults, and these stories often showcased a darker, more ironic edge. "Parson's Pleasure" is one of those: it's witty, it's biting, and it lands its final blow with precision.

Dahl's own life reads like a series of stories. Born in 1916 in Wales to Norwegian parents, he faced early hardship when his father passed away. His mother, determined to give her children a proper British education, kept the family in England. Dahl's school years were far from pleasant, he often spoke of the cruelty of teachers and older boys, and these experiences left a permanent mark on his imagination. Though not an outstanding student, Dahl shone in athletics and later in the unpredictable game of life.

After finishing school, Dahl worked in Africa for Shell Oil before joining the Royal Air Force during World War II. His career as a fighter pilot came to a sudden halt after a crash in the Libyan desert. From there, he shifted to diplomatic and intelligence work, even op-

erating out of the United States for a time. These rich, often dramatic chapters in his life fed his early writing, including stories based on his experiences in war and espionage.

Dahl's first published work was The Gremlins, a children's story inspired by RAF folklore. But his transition into writing for both adults and children happened almost organically. At home, he began inventing stories for his own kids, many of which would become beloved classics like Matilda, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and The BFG. These books, though full of wonder, often contain shadows: villainous adults, cruel headmistresses, greedy aunts, because Dahl understood that darkness is part of life, even for children.

His adult stories, meanwhile, were often collected in anthologies like Someone Like You, Kiss Kiss, and Tales of the Unexpected. These stories aren't deeply psychological, but they don't need to be, they're built on smart structure, devilish humour, and surprise endings. His characters, like the fraudster in "Parson's Pleasure", are often ordinary people with hidden vices. And more often than not, they get exactly what's coming to them.

Parson's Pleasure made its first appearance in Esquire magazine in 1958 and was later featured in Kiss Kiss and the popular Tales of the Unexpected series. It's a brilliant example of Dahl's storytelling formula: take a morally flawed protagonist, place him in a familiar world, and twist the ending until it snaps. The tale walks us through the swindler's plan to trick some country folk into parting with a valuable piece of antique furniture, but things don't go as planned, and the ending is both hilarious and grim.

Though Roald Dahl died in 1990, his work remains timeless. His stories continue to be adapted into films, plays, and musicals. He was honoured with numerous awards, including the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement and the British Book Awards for Children's Author of the Year. After his death, his second wife, Felicity, took on the mantle of his legacy, supporting various charitable causes through the Roald Dahl Foundation.

Whether he was writing about mischievous children, menacing adults, or poetic justice, Dahl had a knack for storytelling that cuts across age groups. "Parson's Pleasure" is no exception. It's a tale that doesn't just entertain, it satisfies a deep, universal craving to see the smug undone and the sneaky outsmarted. As you read, enjoy the ride, and pay close attention to the little ironies tucked into every line. Because in Dahl's world, even the cleverest fox can be outfoxed.

Keywords

Tales of the Unexpected, Linear Narration, Reversal of Fortune, Open-ended story, Round character, Flat Character, Stock character, Dramatic Irony

Discussion

3.4.1 Summary

Cyril Winnington Boggis was a dealer in antique furniture with a small shop in Chelsea, London. His business was a small one, but he managed to accumulate a great profit by buying remarkable pieces of antiques cheaply from unsuspecting owners and selling them dearly in the market.

Nine years ago, he realised that the English countryside was teeming with houses that had antique furniture tucked away in their rooms. He was on one of his trips back from his mother's place when he had to halt at a place to get water for the overheated radiator of his car. To his surprise, he saw a couple of fifteenth century armchairs in good condition in their living room. After a few moments of bargaining and haggling, he was able to convince the woman of the house to part with them at one twentieth of their market value. This incident made him come up with a scheme of conning residents of houses by pretending to be a clergyman, since priests are welcome everywhere. He was a small, fat man with a belly, his face was round and rosy; and his large, protruding eyes gave the impression of slight stupidity. He dressed himself in a Parson's black suit with a dog collar and a soft black hat. With his oak walking stick, he looked every inch like a country Parson.

Every Sunday found him scouting the countryside to identify houses, that may contain precious pieces of furniture and owners that he could easily dupe. He would avoid the houses of the prosperous, because he knew that they would not be desperate enough to fall for his scheme. He targeted the needy and impoverished. Disguised as a parson, he visited farmhouses and traditional homesteads under the pretense of collecting information to write articles for the "Society for the Preservation of Rare Furniture in Association with the Victoria and Albert Museum," an organisation his fertile brain had cooked up. His expertise helped him identify the heirloom and assess its worth, which the owner was not aware of. He would pretend that these were cheap replicas and buy them *for a song*. He would cart away the piece of furniture in his big station wagon that he drove for easy transportation of furniture. He was a consummate actor who would easily put on an act that would fool anyone. Dahl describes him as being grave and charming to the aged, fawning towards the rich, sober for the godly, masterful towards the weak, mischievous towards the widow, and arch and saucy towards the spinster. He was the master of psychological moves, sweet-talking and winning over his potential clientele according to their interests or pretending to be disinterested to *pique* (stimulate) their curiosity and greed.

On the day the story begins, we see Mr. Boggis standing on top of Brill hill surveying the places in the village of Brill that he would cover that day. Like a chess player, he marks the countryside into squares on his map and decides which route to take. The first house that he visits, whose owner is a huge horsy woman with anti-Socialist leanings, whom he charms with his talk about preserving hunting and horses, however yields no results. The second one, which looks promising with Hepplewhite furniture, unfortunately has no one at home. He decides to come back another day.

He visits yet another farmstead, leaving his station wagon out of sight. Seeing no one at home, he walks to the backyard, surprising the three people standing there talking. They are Rummins, the owner of the farm, his son Bert, with one of the eyes looking like a fish's; and Claud, one of their neighbours. Claud had come there hoping to get a piece of pork or ham from the pig that had been slaughtered

the previous day. Since killing a pig without a permit was an unlawful act, the three men are shocked when they see the Parson approaching them. They think that he is a government spy reporting on them. However, Mr. Boggis makes small talk with them and introduces himself and his bogus mission of coming in search of antique furniture. They try to brush it off, saying that they do not have that type of furniture. But Mr. Boggis talks about his previous successes in spotting rare furniture, and how profitable it would be, if it turned out that they actually had one. Finally, he is admitted into the house for a quick look around.

The moment he enters, his eyes fall on the magnificent Chippendale Commode, a large ornamental chest of drawers built by Thomas Chippendale, the 18th century cabinet maker and furniture designer, hidden under a layer of dirty white paint. He recognises its value because, so far, only three Chippendale commodes have been discovered in Britain, and each has fetched recognition and a handsome amount from the discoverer at the furniture auction. He realises that if he manages to buy it from them, this commode would be known by his name as the Boggis Commode and would bring him immense fame as well as money. However, being the skilled actor that he is, he hides his thoughts and asks for a glass of water. When questioned by Rummins, who is a shrewd fellow, he tells them that it is a crude Victorian machine-carved reproduction and pretends to be uninterested in it. However, he questions them and tells them that he might buy it for its legs because he had a coffee table at home that he was fond of, whose legs were damaged carelessly by the movers, and these legs would fit it perfectly.

He plays a clever cat and mouse game with Rummins and others, pretending to be interested in it for a moment and then suddenly losing interest the very next, thus whetting their interest and greed. He learns from Rummins that Bert had earlier discovered a yellowed piece of paper in one of the drawers. When Mr. Boggis examines it, he recognises it to be the original invoice made by Thomas Chippendale himself that accompanied the purchase of the commode, increasing the value of the commode several notches higher. However, he tosses it away contemptuously, saying that it is only the invoice of the seller from Victorian times.

Mr. Boggis sets out to prove to them that the commode is a worthless replica. At the same time, his close examination of the commode helps him ascertain its authenticity and value beyond doubt, for himself. At each of his discoveries, he gets excited but manages to hide his mounting eagerness. He chipped off a few inches of the coat of white paint covering it, which Bert had applied some time ago. The patch of mahogany that glowed like topaz reaffirms that it is indeed an antique. However, he pretends to dismiss this clue, saying that it proves that it is only treated wood. He explains that wood processed with lime would replicate the veneer of old mahogany. He uses big words like "patina" of the wood to impress them with his knowledge. He invites them to touch the exposed bit of wood and asks them whether it feels warm or cold. When they say it is cold, he immediately says that a fake patina is always cold to touch. A real patina would have a warm feel. It is obvious to the reader that if they had replied warmly, he would have come up with a different response to suit the occasion.

To reinforce his argument, he unscrews one of the handles, saying that if the screws were genuine old brass, they would be hand-cut and slightly uneven. At the last moment, as he draws out the screw, the devious Mr. Boggis exchanges the old screw for a new shiny, machine-cut one that he had been carrying in his pocket ready for such emergencies, which he had hidden in his palm while unscrewing.

The switch goes unnoticed, and the breadth of Mr. Boggis' knowledge leaves Rummins impressed. They start bargaining hard, with Boggis playing the card of indifference. He says that he needs only the legs and that the body of the commode, or "*carcass*" (dead body) as he calls it, would be fit only for firewood, and offers them ten pounds for the commode. Rummins protests and asks for fifty pounds. Finally, they settle at twenty pounds, which is dirt-cheap considering it would fetch Boggis at least fifteen to twenty thousand pounds at the auction. Keeping an impassive face, Mr. Boggis goes out, saying that he will fetch his car to take away the commode.

Out of their sight, he giggles and jumps with joy and breaks into a trot, reminding himself to walk slowly to behave like a sedate Parson. He imagines him riding back with the Boggis commode in the Boggis car all the way to London. It was a historic occasion for him! The day appears sunny and bright in his newfound delight at pulling off quite a coup.

While Boggis is gone, Rummins and others feel happy that they succeeded in getting twenty pounds for "junk like this". However, they are overcome by doubt about whether the Parson would be able to take back the huge commode with him. Parsons usually drives small cars, and such a huge commode will not fit into it. They are afraid that he will go back on his word and not buy the commode. Then a bright idea seizes Claud. He says that the Parson wanted only the legs, and so to save him trouble, they will take the legs off the commode. This idea pleases them all, and in no time, they drag the commode out into the yard. They see the Parson's figure at a distance, jogging and singing a cheerful song. They think that he is crazy. They hurriedly fetched a long saw and neatly cut the legs off the commode. Then, looking at the carcass of the commode, they wonder whether it would fit into the car even without its legs. They say that the Parsons are cunning people, and if they are unable to take the commode, they may *renege* (back out) on making the whole payment. Since the Parson had said that the rest of the commode was fit only for firewood, they would make his task easy by providing him with firewood. Bert fetches the axe, and in no time, the beautiful Chippendale commode is reduced to *tinder* (firewood). As they finish the job, they hear the car approach and say, "We're just in time! Here he comes!"

The story ends on this note. The reader does not see the devastated face of Mr. Boggis as his well-laid plan backfires and his dreams lie shattered like the carcass of the Chippendale commode. We do not see the trickster getting his just desserts. However, the outcome is obvious, and Roald Dahl leaves everything else to the fertile imagination of the reader.

3.4.2 Analysis

There is nothing more pleasing than seeing a trickster get what is due to him. In "Parson's Pleasure" by Roald Dahl, we encounter a wily individual who, at the end of the story, gets his comeuppance. Dahl writes a light and frothy comic story with the right amount of suspense and tension, making it a very engaging read. "Parson's Pleasure" has a common plot device that presents the classic "biter bitten" resolution. A swindler is served with the same kind of adversity, knowingly or unknowingly. In this case, his well-laid plan of duping people backfires on him in the most unexpected manner.

Dahl has titled it "Parson's Pleasure" because the central character, Mr. Boggis, who is really a furniture dealer, disguises himself as a Parson, a man of the church, to get easy entry into the houses of those whom he wishes to swindle. Boggis had considered several other personae, before deciding on being a parson

because of the respectability of a church official. His reading proves to be the right one because he not only gets entry into people's homes but is invited in the friendliest manner by all and enjoys several perks of being a holy man. He takes pleasure in discovering antique furniture buried in unassuming homes without the knowledge of the owners. It does not stop there. His pleasure extends to enacting a role in those houses, often improvised, and the psychological moves he makes. He takes pleasure in duping the unsuspecting owner by playing upon their greed and offering them a pittance in contrast to what it would fetch him in the market. Of course, he takes great pleasure in amassing wealth. It is also obvious that his pleasure would have been at its zenith if he had a genuine Chippendale commode known under his label. In short, money and fame give him pleasure. However, by the end of the story, *Parson's* pleasure ultimately turns out to be the *reader's* pleasure, because it provides immense delight to the reader to witness poetic justice being meted out to the fraudster.

The plot of the story is simple and direct. In the *exposition*, the author introduces us to the main character and the plans he has for the day. Dahl has patterned the plot in an artistic way, introducing it *in medias res*, with Mr. Boggis surveying the land that he is going to cover that day. In the *rising action*, Dahl takes us to a couple of farmhouses and their subsequent disappointments, until he reaches the Rummins' place with their furtive owners. The *turning point* is the discovery of the Chippendale commode disguised under a coat of dirty white paint. The *falling action* is long drawn and contains a lot of haggling and Boggis cleverly trying out his psychological moves on Rummins and crew, trying to lower the price. However, his cocksure manner is going to be his bane, and his clever plan of pretending to buy it only for the sake of its legs, seals the fate of the commode. The *conclusion* comes as a surprising shock when Rummins, Bert, and Claude decide to remove the legs of the commode, hack the rest of it into pieces, and put the plan into action just as Boggis drives up. There is a *reversal of fortune* when all the well- laid plans of Mr. Boggis boomerang. The *open-ended* conclusion maintains the suspense as to Mr. Boggis' reaction, leaving it to the reader to imagine what it might be.

The straightforward narration of "Parson's Pleasure" has an easy charm. The narration is *linear* except for a couple of flashbacks to inform the reader as to how Mr. Boggis was introduced to the con game and how he enjoyed it. The story uses a limited third person point of view. The narrator lets us know what the "parson" thinks. However, when it comes to other characters, the narrator does not follow their thoughts but lets them reveal themselves through their dialogues. The dialogues are lively and interesting. The language is not stilted but organic and distinctive. The dialogue between the woman of the house and Mr. Boggis at the beginning of the story is enjoyable for its witty delivery.

"Parson's Pleasure" is a story of an incident, so the characters show no great psychological depth. Mr. Boggis is the main character, and is round, complex, and dynamic. He is the fulcrum around which the story revolves. He is enterprising and devious, as well as clever and skilled in handling people psychologically. He takes pride in his role-playing and acting capabilities and feels that the entire world is his stage. It is as if he takes a bow before an imaginary audience after each performance. He is proud of himself and wants to see himself famous and rich. He is self-motivated and puts his plan into action diligently and religiously. However, he is greedy and wily. Rummins, Bert, and Claud, the only other characters with names, are minor ones, but important

for the progression of the story. They are cautious and curious men with matters to hide, and they are suspicious of the parson and his intentions. Rummins proves to be rather clever in the way he questions Boggis. The other characters that appear, such as the woman of the house at the beginning of the story, whom he dupes first, and the horsy Tory woman who hates Socialists, are *tertiary* characters. The horse loving Tory woman, who is mad about hunting and suspicious of Socialists, is also a *stock* character appearing in British novels and stories.

The story takes place on a Sunday sometime in the 1950s. The English countryside near Buckinghamshire in general and the village of Brill in particular become the locations of the story. Scenes shift from outdoors to indoors according to the movement of the main character. When he surveys the land he wants to cover that day, he stands atop Brill Hill. He drives through a peaceful countryside filled with flowers and visits places with distinctive character. When he reaches Rummins' place, the scene of action alters between the backyard and the indoors. The general seediness of the place and the shadiness of the characters provide the right atmosphere for the shady dealing that occurs.

The language is simple and easy to follow. Nevertheless, it is rich and idiomatic. Dahl adopts a breezy style to narrate the story. His tone is flippant at times as well as humorous. His descriptions of people and things are graphic. For instance, Dahl's description of Bert's eyes is very vivid. He gives the right language to each person. Thus, the parson, who is supposed to be a learned person, uses highly knowledgeable and sophisticated language. Dahl uses similes and metaphors to great effect. The huge, rounded belly of Mr. Boggis is a symbol of his greed and acquisitiveness, while his bulging eyes are metaphors for his curiosity and rapacity. Verbal irony laces the dialogue. Mr. Boggis criticises people for being swindlers just to show others that he is a decent fellow, and tells them that these frauds will get their just desserts. "The time and trouble that some mortals will go to in order to deceive the innocent! It is perfectly disgusting." He says that this "knavery" upsets him. Little does he know that a similar sticky end awaits him and his dreams.

Greed and selfishness are the major themes of the story. Unscrupulous pursuit of wealth with no moral compass is the trait inhabited by the main character. Even minor characters are avaricious. Mr. Boggis dupes them by taking advantage of their greed. The moral of the story is that the overconfident will one day overreach themselves to their downfall.

Recap

- Roald Dahl is a writer mainly of children's stories
- There is a surprise ending in most of his stories
- "Parson's Pleasure" tells the tale of Mr. Boggis, a furniture dealer and a swindler
- He dupes people into sell their precious furniture at very low prices
- He is greedy, clever, and scheming, and has perfected a method of narrowing down and thoroughly covering his field of action

- Boggis had accidentally discovered about furniture lying in old farmhouses to be bought at bargain prices when the car broke down
- He meets his match at Rummins' place unexpectedly
- His well-laid plan goes awry when he goes overboard to emphasise that the commode is a cheap reproduction and that he needs it only for its legs
- Rummins and company hack the commode to bits because they fear that he will not be able to fit it in his car, and parsons usually drive small cars
- They fear that he may backout of the dealThe plot is linear and begins in the middle of action as he surveys the area to be covered that day
- Discovering the commode is the turning point of the story
- The conclusion is open-ended leaving the reader to imagine Boggis' reaction
- Mr. Boggis is a rounded and dynamic character, while Rummins and others are flat and static characters
- Boggis's protruding belly and eyes are metaphors for his avarice and greed

Objective Questions

1. Who was Mr. Boggis?
2. What was Mr. Boggis disguised as?
3. What types of houses did Mr. Boggis choose to search for antiques?
4. What did Mr. Boggis pretend to be for his clients?
5. What type of vehicle did Mr. Boggis drive?
6. Whom did Mr. Boggis meet at the Queen Anne House?
7. Who did Mr. Boggis meet when he reached the old farmhouse?
8. Who were the three men that Mr. Boggis met at the farmhouse?
9. Why did Claud come to Rummins' place?
10. Why were the three people shocked upon seeing the Parson?
11. What made Mr. Boggis stop in his tracks when he entered Rummins' living room?
12. What did Mr. Boggis say the commode was for—to trick the farmers?
13. What was the clue that Bert showed Mr. Boggis to prove that the commode was authentic?
14. What was the peculiarity of Bert's eyes?
15. How did Mr. Boggis explain the hard veneer of the commode once a tiny portion of the paint was removed?
16. How did Mr. Boggis trick the three people regarding the screw of the commode?

17. Why did Mr. Boggis say that he needed the legs of the commode?
18. How much did Mr. Boggis finally offer to buy the commode?
19. Why did Rummins and others decide to chop off the legs of the commode?
20. What did Rummins and others do to the commode once the legs were sawed off?What sort of ending does the story 'Parson's Pleasure' have?
21. Do you feel that the "Tale of the Unexpected" is an apt description for 'Parson's Pleasure'?

Answers

1. Adealer in antique furniture and a trickster
2. A clergyman, a parson
3. Old and dilapidated houses where impoverished rich people who were in need of additional money lived
4. Reverend Cyril Winnington Boggis, the President of the *Society for the Preservation of Rare Furniture* in association with *The Victoria and Albert Museum*
5. A station wagon, a car big enough to transport furniture
6. A gigantic horsy woman who wore riding breeches and reeked of horse manure and stables
7. Three shifty looking men in the backyard of the house
8. Rummins, his son Bert, and Claud, their neighbour
9. In hope of getting a piece of pork or ham from the pig that had been secretly killed the day before
10. Killing a pig without permit was unlawful, and they feared that the Parson had come to investigate on behalf of the government
11. An original Chippendale commode that would fetch him enormous profits
12. A cheap Victorian reproduction
13. There was an original invoice written in copperplate hand on yellowed paper by Thomas Chippendale, the furniture manufacturer, which made it even more valuable and authentic
14. Bert had a different set of eyes. One of them was queer, boiled, and misty pale with a black dot in the centre, like a fish eye on a plate.
15. It was processed wood treated with lime to give it a mahogany finishHe switched the original old brass screw for a new one
16. To fix it to a coffee table that he used at home, whose legs were shattered by movers
17. The price for the commode was fixed at twenty pounds

18. They felt that the old parson would not have a car big enough to accommodate the big commode and they were afraid that he would withdraw from the deal
19. They felt that the body of the commode was too big to fit into the car, and they hacked it to pieces with an axe to turn it into firewood
20. As it ends just before Mr. Boggins arrives to witness the horrible shape into which his precious commode has been reduced
21. Yes. The story ends on an unexpected note when Rummins and crew, in a dramatic move, hack the coveted piece of antique furniture to bits and pieces, thus giving the fraudulent Mr. Boggis the comeuppance he truly deserves

Assignments

1. "Parson's Pleasure" proves that you cannot fool people all the time, and karma will teach you a lesson. Discuss.
2. Technically, analyse "Parson's Pleasure" as a well-written short story.
3. How does Roald Dahl develop the character of Mr. Boggis?
4. Is Mr. Boggis' tale a case of "Biter Bitten?" How would you explain?
5. How do Boggis's well-laid plans go awry? Attempt a detailed sketch.

Suggested Reading

1. Dahl, Roald. *The Best of Roald Dahl. Knopf,* 1990.
2. Kelley, True. *Who Was Roald Dahl?* Penguin, 2016.
3. Sturrock, Donald. *Storyteller: The Life of Roald Dahl.* Harper, 2011.

BLOCK - 04

Introduction to Fiction-2

Unit 1

The Tell-Tale Heart

-Edgar Allan Poe

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- familiarise themselves with the narrative technique and style used by the writer.
- get insight on the evocative symbolism used in the story.
- identify the mood and tone used to create suspense.
- reflect upon various themes present in the story.reflect upon various themes present in the story

Prerequisites

Before stepping into the claustrophobic intensity of "The Tell-Tale Heart", one must understand the shadowy brilliance of its creator, Edgar Allan Poe. A master of the macabre and a pioneer of psychological horror, Poe's own life was steeped in sorrow, loss, and inner torment: elements that bleed into every syllable of his prose. Orphaned young, plagued by poverty, and haunted by death, Poe's existence mirrored the darkness of his fiction. In "The Tell-Tale Heart", he unleashes his inner demons into a tale that is not merely about murder, but about the unrelenting tyranny of guilt and the fragility of the human mind. The story is a chilling dance between lucidity and lunacy, told by an unreliable narrator whose protestations of sanity only deepen the reader's suspicion. Poe doesn't ask us to witness horror, he demands we feel it, hear its heartbeat, and descend with him into the mind's abyss. His genius lies not in the grotesque alone, but in revealing how horror festers within.

Keywords

Madness, Guilt, Obsession, Paranoia, Unreliable Narrator

Discussion

4.1.1 The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe: An Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American short-story writer, poet, critic, and editor, who is renowned for his profound and mysterious story telling. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Poe lost both his parents at the age of three. Separated from his siblings, Poe was raised in the home of John Allan, a prosperous Richmond merchant from Virginia. By the age of thirteen, Poe was a prolific poet, but his literary talents were discouraged by his headmaster and John Allan, who preferred that Poe follow him in the family business. Preferring poetry to profits, Poe reportedly wrote poems on the back of some of Allan's business papers. He attended the University of Virginia in

1826 but did not receive enough funds from Allan to cover his expenses. Poe turned to gambling but ended up in debt. He returned to Richmond to find his sweetheart, Sarah Elmira Royster but she was engaged. Heartbroken and frustrated, Poe moved to Boston. After being enlisted in the army, he published his first poetry collection, *Tamerlane, and Other Poems* in 1827. The volume went unnoticed by readers and reviewers, and a second collection, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* received only slightly more attention when it appeared in 1829. He subsequently went to New York City, where *Poems*, his third collection of verse, was published in 1831. Poe's first short story appeared in the "Philadelphia Saturday Courier" and his "MS. Found in a Bottle" won a cash prize for the best story in Saturday Visitor. While in New York City in 1838, he published a long prose narrative, "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym", combining factual material with the wildest fancies. It is considered as one of the inspirations of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. In 1839, he became co-editor of "Burton's Gentleman's Magazine" in Philadelphia. A contract for a monthly feature stimulated him to write "William Wilson" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," stories of supernatural horror. It was during these years that he established himself as a poet, a short story writer, and an editor and published some of his best-known stories and poems, including the stories; "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and the poem "The Raven." It was during this time that American states began to experience changes caused by the industrial revolution, which influenced Poe's life as well as literary career. He believed that the vulture of Industrial Age science had caused the poet to take flight from his bright dreams and forced him to replace them with the dull realities of mundane existence. Poe's work as an editor, a poet and a critic had a profound impact on American and international literature. With his imaginative storytelling and tales of mystery, suspense, and horror, he marked himself as one of the originators of both horror and detective fiction. The short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) initiated the modern detective story and the atmosphere in his tales of horror has been unrivalled in American fiction. He was often quoted as the "architect" of the modern short story. He was also one of the first critics to focus primarily on the effect of style and structure in a literary work and has been seen as a forerunner to the "art for art's sake" movement. His stories represent the highest achievements in the literary genre of the gothic horror. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is a horror short story by Edgar Allan Poe. The story was first published in 1843 in "The Pioneer". It is considered a classic of the Gothic fiction genre and is one of Poe's best known short stories. The story is about the murder of an old man by an unnamed narrator who insists on his sanity after the crime. He confesses that the motive for the murder is the evil, vulture-like eyes of the old man and goes on to describe his well-planned attempt in a proud manner. As the growing guilt begins to torture his mind, he shouts out a confession and points to the burial spot of his victim's body.

4.1.2 Summary of the story

The story begins with the confession of an unknown narrator, who claims that he is nervous but not mad. He admits that he killed an old man not out of passion or desire for money but rather out of fear of the man's pale, blue, vulture-like eye. He describes his careful precision and planning in committing the murder to prove that he cannot possibly be mad. For seven nights, the narrator opens the door of the old man's room to shine a ray of light from a lantern onto the "evil eye." On the eighth night, the old man awakens after the narrator's

hand slips and makes a noise, interrupting the narrator's nightly ritual. He asks if anyone is there, and the narrator freezes. The narrator does not draw back and, after some time, decides to open the lantern. A single, thin ray of light shines out and lands precisely on the "evil eye". The narrator hears the old man's heart beating, which only gets louder and louder. The beating gets so loud that the narrator fears the neighbours will hear it. Hence, he decides to attack. The old man shrieks once before the narrator drags him to the floor and pulls the bed on top of him. He waits until the heartbeat stops, then pulls off the bed and examines the body. The old man is dead. The narrator then dismembers the body and conceals the pieces under the floorboards. He ensures that all signs of the crime are removed. As he finishes his job, a clock strikes the hour of four. At the same time, the narrator hears a knock at the street door. The police have arrived, having been called by a neighbour, who heard the old man shriek. The narrator is careful to be chatty and to appear normal. He leads the officers all over the house without acting suspiciously. He even brings them into the old man's bedroom to sit down and talk at the scene of the crime. The police officers do not suspect anything. The narrator is comfortable until he starts to hear a low, thumping sound. He recognises the faint sound as the heart of the old man, pounding away beneath the floorboards. He panics, believing that the police officers must also hear the sound and know about his crime. Driven mad by the idea that they are mocking his agony with their pleasant chatter, he confesses to the crime and shrieks at the men to rip up the floorboards.

4.1.3 Analysis

"The Tell-Tale Heart," a short story by Edgar Allan Poe, is an excellent representation of Gothic literature that explores deep into the murky corners of the human brain. Poe creates a disturbing story in a few pages that still holds the interest of readers, by exploring the themes of guilt, madness, and the morbid. The protagonist of the novel, who remains anonymous, opens about having a neurological illness that heightens his senses, especially his keen hearing. Even as he reveals his horrific act, the murder of an elderly man, he makes an effort to persuade the reader of his sanity. The narrator's preoccupation with the old man's eye develops into a key motif in the narrative and serves as a metaphor for his own mental decline. The unreliable narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is one of the novel's most notable features. Poe expertly distorts the reader's perspective of reality by narrating events through the eyes of a clearly deranged narrator. The protagonist's emphasis on his sanity and lengthy justifications for his acts only highlight how unstable he is. This unreliable point of view instils discomfort and makes the reader wonder about the narrator's objectivity throughout the entire story. The plot's organisation helps to create tension. By using a first-person perspective, Poe enables readers to peer into the narrator's troubled mind. The story develops linearly, creating tension as the narrator painstakingly plans and conducts the murder. Poe uses short, abrupt phrases to intentionally slow down the rhythm and reflect the narrator's unstable brain processes and intense emotions. "The Tell-Tale Heart," which alludes to the protagonist's conviction that he can still hear the old man's heart beating long after he has killed him, is one of the story's most recognisable components. The protagonist's increasing sense of guilt and paranoia is represented by this auditory hallucination. The heartbeat increases in volume and intensity throughout the narrative, mirroring the narrator's intensifying internal conflict. Poe's incorporation of symbolism can be seen throughout the narrative. The "vulture-eye" of the elderly guy represents the protagonist's

own remorse and inner darkness. The mutilated body hidden beneath the floorboards symbolises the narrator's effort to cover up his guilt and the physical proof of his crime. Nevertheless, these signs finally turn on him, causing his psychological disintegration. A well-known example of Gothic literature, "The Tell-Tale Heart," is distinguished by its emphasis on the irrational, the grotesque, and the psychological. The story's rich descriptions, which engender a sense of dread and foreboding, demonstrate Poe's mastery of atmosphere and mood. The story is set in a darkly lit room at midnight, which heightens the ominous atmosphere. In conclusion, "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe is a terrifying investigation of the human psyche and the effects of remorse and lunacy. Poe tells a story that continues to grab readers and make them wonder about the narrow boundary of sanity and madness, through its unreliable narrator, evocative symbolism, and beautifully built atmosphere. Poe's enduring reputation as a master of the macabre is attested to by this classic tale.

Recap

- A tale of the narrator's guilty feelings.
- The story is about the murder of an old man by an unnamed narrator.
- The Unreliable Narrator is justifying his sanity by describing his well-planned crime.
- The narrator's obsession with the old man's 'vulture eye' is the motive behind the crime.
- He invites the police, who arrived at the house, and acts normal and well comfortable in front of them.
- Although the narrator is trying to prove his sanity, his guilty conscience throws him into the depths of insanity.
- At last, he confesses his crime upon hearing a low thumping sound from the floorboards where he buried the body.
- A person's inner turmoil and fear can drive him insane.
- The Gothic elements as well as the sentence building in the narrative arouse a sense of suspense and horror in the reader.

Objective Questions

1. From whose perspective is the story narrated?
2. What prompts the narrator to kill the old man?
3. What is the mood of the story "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
4. For how many nights does the narrator look in upon the old man?
5. Where does the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" murder the old man?

6. What is the low, dull, quick sound that the narrator hears?
7. What hour does the clock strike as the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" finishes hiding his victim's body?
8. What does the narrator do with the dead man's body?

Answers

1. First person - Unnamed Narrator
2. Pale, blue vulture-like eye
3. Gothic- Horror
4. 8 Nights
5. Bedroom
6. Old man's heartbeat
7. Four
8. Under floor boards - old man's room

Assignments

1. Explain the Gothic elements in Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
2. Prepare a character study of the Narrator in the story "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
3. Analyse the theme of guilt and mental deterioration in the story?
4. Describe the features of Gothic fiction in the light of "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
5. Why does the Narrator wait eight days to commit his crime? How does the narrator explain his reasoning?

Suggested Reading

1. Poe, Edgar Allan. *Edgar Allan Poe Complete Tales and Poems*. Race Point, 2014.
2. Saliba, David R. *A Psychology of Fear: The Nightmare Formula of Edgar Allan Poe*. University Press of America, 1980.
3. Zapala-Kraj, Martha. *Edgar Allan Poe's Contribution to American Gothic*. Grin, 2015.

Unit 2

The Bet

-Anton Chekov

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- determine the central idea of the story
- analyse the development of the theme over the course of the text
- examine how complex characters evolved along the narrative
- explore how the author orders events within the structure of the story and manipulates time through pacing, flashbacks, etc.

Prerequisites

Before going into Anton Chekhov's "The Bet", one must first pause and consider the enduring conflict between material wealth and spiritual truth, between the glitter of gold and the silence of a soul in isolation. Written in the waning years of the 19th century, a time when Russia grappled with philosophical and social upheaval, Chekhov's story is not simply a tale about a wager, but a profound meditation on the value of life, knowledge, and human endurance. Chekhov, a master of subtlety and psychological insight, invites readers into a moral and intellectual duel between a young lawyer and an aging banker. What begins as a boastful argument turns into a chilling exploration of solitude, freedom, and the deceptive promises of society. With his signature restraint and quiet irony, Chekhov reveals that the greatest revelations often come not from victory, but from loss and that silence can speak louder than all the riches in the world. To study "The Bet" is to reflect on what it truly means to live, to learn, and to let go. Chekhov offers no answers, only a mirror, held up to our deepest assumptions about purpose, progress, and the price of pride.

Keywords

Party, Capital punishment, Life imprisonment, Bet

Discussion

4.2.1 Summary of the Story

The story begins on a "dark, autumn night" with the old banker reminiscing about a party he had thrown one autumn evening fifteen years ago. The party was full of intelligent people who were engaged in interesting conversation. One interesting topic of discussion was the justifiability of capital punishment. Most of them gathered in the party were against capital punishment, and they

all suggested that it should be replaced by life imprisonment. But according to the wealthy banker, capital punishment is way better than solitary confinement. For him, the death penalty is more moral and humane than life imprisonment because the former kills a person instantly, whereas the latter kills him slowly.

The young lawyer opined against the banker's conviction that being alive is what matters most. In the heat of the spirited debate among the people gathered at the party, the banker laid a bet with the lawyer, saying that he would pay him two million rubles if he could stay in solitary confinement for five years. The lawyer agreed, saying that he would stay for fifteen rather than five years. Thus, the bet was carried out. However, while recollecting what happened fifteen years ago, the banker now considers it "nonsensical and meaningless." Realising the futility of the bet, he refers to it as "the caprice of a pampered man" on the one hand and "simple greed for money" on the other. The lawyer was put in solitary confinement in the banker's garden without any contact with the outside world. His only contact with the out- side world would be a small window through which food, books, music, wine, etc. would be passed to him. Any attempt on the part of the lawyer to violate the agreement would free the banker from paying the money. The first year of the lawyer's confinement saw him suffering from "loneliness and depression." He refused wine and tobacco and asked for "light" books. In his second year of confinement, the piano was silent, and classics were requested. In the fifth year, he asked for wine and played the piano once again. Observers commented that he relaxed around the whole year and cried at times. The second half of the sixth year was spent studying languages, philosophy, and history, and the prisoner even wrote a letter to the banker in six languages correctly. After the tenth year, the lawyer read the Gospel and spent quite a lot of time on it. Now the banker muses on the fact that the next day at 12 o'clock, the prisoner will walk out to freedom, and he himself will be ruined if he pays him two million as his finances have dwindled. He worries about the fact that the lawyer is only forty and could well start life anew, while he himself would turn into a failed man. In desperation, the banker, therefore, makes up his mind to kill the lawyer to save himself from bankruptcy. With this intent in mind, he creeps to the lodge before daybreak and silently goes in. He finds the prisoner asleep on the table. He looked almost unearthly, with a skeletal appearance. There is a piece of paper on the table with something written on it. The banker thinks that the lawyer must be dreaming of becoming rich. He considers it an easy matter to stifle the emaciated man, and no one would find any sign of a violent death. But first, he decides to read the note. The banker is surprised to read that the lawyer has developed a great contempt for freedom and all the good things in life. Through the books he read, he has soared to flights of fancy and become wiser than other men. But realisation has dawned upon him that all his wisdom is "fleeting, illusionary, and deceptive," and life is only transitory. He has disdain for the people who have exchanged "heaven for earth." Therefore, he has decided to renounce the two million and walk out of his confinement five hours before the stipulated time, thus breaking the contract. The lawyer forsakes material happiness for spiritual bliss and enlightenment. On reading the letter, the banker is moved to tears and feels great contempt for himself for his behaviour and petty thoughts. He kisses the sleeping man and comes out of the lodge. The next morning, the watchman came running to tell him that the prisoner had been seen climbing out of the window into the garden and then disappearing. The banker, to avoid unnecessary gossip, quietly puts the lawyer's note in his fireproof safe.

4.2.2 Analysis

The short story "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov is a perceptive examination of human nature, materialism, and the worth of life. In just a few pages, Chekhov creates a gripping story that poses challenging inquiries about the nature of existence and the ramifications of radical philosophical stances. The story opens at a party where a wealthy banker and a young lawyer are debating the merits of the death penalty versus life imprisonment. The lawyer angrily disagrees, saying that he would prefer life imprisonment to execution any day, while the banker claims that life imprisonment is a more humanitarian penalty. The banker wagers two million rubles that the lawyer cannot withstand fifteen years of solitary confinement in response to this argument. Most of the action occurs in the lawyer's prison cell, when he goes through a significant shift. He comes out as conceited materialistic, and uninterested in the deeper significance of life. He passes his time educating himself, reading voraciously, and engaging in sensual activities. To demonstrate his dedication to the wager, he even writes a letter rejecting his inheritance. However, the lawyer eventually has to face the emptiness of his life due to his solitude. He experiences a great intellectual and spiritual awakening. As the years go by, he gives up materialism, appreciates the little things, and commits himself to the quest for knowledge and growth. He gains a profound understanding of spirituality, philosophy, and literature. The story's turning point occurs when the lawyer has barely one day remained to win the wager. He understands that the wealth that was promised to him now has no value. He makes the decision to run away and lose the money. This choice represents his rejection of materialism and his understanding of the actual worth of freedom and life.

The shallowness of consumerism and the vain pursuits that frequently rule our lives are sharply criticised in "The Bet" for their shallowness. It implies that genuine fulfilment derives from inner development, self-discovery, and the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom rather than from wealth or material goods. The morality of the death penalty is frequently questioned, as is the psychological effect of isolation.

Recap

- A banker conducts a party fifteen years ago
- A debate takes place over capital punishment and life imprisonment
- The lawyer is of the opinion that life imprisonment is a better option than death, as the person has the time to develop character
- The banker bets the lawyer
- The lawyer consents to stay imprisoned for fifteen years for a bet of two million roubles
- The banker wins the bet in the literal sense, but it is the lawyer who is the true winner as he has acquired a holistic understanding of life
- The idea of renouncing material happiness for spiritual bliss
- The power of books and knowledge to transform human nature

Objective Questions

1. What is the conflict in the short story?
2. Where does the discussion about capital punishment and life imprisonment take place?
3. What is the best in the story?
4. Who has agreed to stake his freedom?
5. How old is the young lawyer when the contract is made?
6. What is the lawyer doing during the second half of the sixth year in imprisonment?
7. In which year of his confinement does the lawyer start to read the Gospel?
8. Why does the banker weep when reading the notes of the lawyer?

Answers

1. Disagreement - banker and lawyer - capital punishment and life imprisonment
2. Party
3. 15 years voluntary imprisonment- 2 million roubles
4. Lawyer
5. Twenty-five
6. Studying languages- philosophy- history
7. After the tenth year
8. Filled with guilt

Assignments

1. How does the lawyer spend his 15 years of imprisonment in "The Bet"?
2. What is the moral of the story "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov?
3. What happens to the lawyer at the end of the story "The Bet"?
4. Which is more humane: capital punishment or life imprisonment? Critically examine in the light of the story.
5. How does the lawyer decide to conclude the bet, and why?

Suggested Reading

1. Chekhov, Anton. *The Very Best of Anton Chekhov: Short Stories*. Embassy, 2007.
2. Power, Chris Power. *How Chekhov Invented The Modern Short Story*. Orca, 2011.
3. Pritchett, Victor Sawdon. *Chekhov, a Biography*. Bloomsbury, 2012.

Unit 3

The Eyes are Not Here

-Ruskin Bond

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- enhance their knowledge on the components of storytelling and how the writer uses them to engage readers
- improve their reading comprehension skills
- enhance their ability to recognise and appreciate literary devices used by the writer
- reflect on their own experiences and gain insights into human nature

Prerequisites

Before entering the quiet, tender world of Ruskin Bond's "The Eyes Are Not Here," one must first learn to listen, not with the ears, but with the heart. Bond, a master of understated storytelling, strips away the noise of the world to reveal something profoundly human beneath: the fragile beauty of connection, the dignity of silence, and the bittersweet charm of chance encounters. Set within the confined space of a train compartment, the story unfolds like a whisper, deceptively simple, yet emotionally resonant. Two strangers meet, speak, and part, but what lingers is not what is said, but what is left unsaid. The narrator, blind yet perceptive, teaches us that vision is not merely of the eyes but of the soul, and that sometimes, in losing sight, we truly begin to see. Bond's story is a meditation on perception, identity, and the invisible threads that connect us. In a world often obsessed with appearances, "The Eyes Are Not Here" reminds us that truth lies not in what is seen, but in what is felt. To study this tale is to explore the quiet corners of the human heart, where vulnerability meets grace, and blindness becomes a kind of insight.

Keywords

Blindness, Perception, Irony, Human Connection, Mystery

Discussion

4.3.1The Life and Times of Ruskin Bond: An Introduction

Ruskin Bond (born May 19, 1934) is an eminent Indian writer of British descent. Born on May 19, 1934 in Kasauli, India, he was the son of Edith Clarke and Aubrey Bond. His father served in the Royal Air Force and frequently moved from place to places along

with his son. When he was eight, his parents separated, and his mother left him. After the sudden demise of his father, he moved to Dehradun where his grandmother raised him. He received his early education from Bishop Cotton School in Shimla. During his school years, he won several writing competitions, including the Hailey Literature Prize and the Irwin Divinity Prize. In 1952, he completed his graduation, moved to England, and stayed at his aunt's house for four years. Despite his suffering and lonely childhood, Bond developed an optimistic outlook on life. He chose the path of becoming an earnest writer that his father wished him to follow. He found solace in reading books, a habit that was also inculcated in him by his father. Some of his favourite reads included T. E. Lawrence, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë and Rudyard Kipling. At the age of seventeen, in London, he began to write his first novel, *The Room on the Roof*. The book had a strong autobiographical element as it was based on his actual experiences of living in a small, rented room on a roof in Dehradun. It was not published until he was twenty-one. He was awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial prize for his first novel. Its success gave him the impetus to write its sequel, Vagrants in the Valley. Subsequently, he returned to India and worked as a journalist in Delhi and Dehradun for a few years. Later, he relocated to a town in the Himalayan foothills, Mussoorie, where he had pursued freelance writing since 1963. His essays and articles were published in numerous magazines, such as "The Pioneer", "The Leader", "The Tribune" and "The Telegraph." Some of the other notable works by Ruskin Bond include "Blue Umbrella", "A Flight of Pigeons," and "Funny Side Up." His works have also been adapted for television and film. "The Blue Umbrella" was made into a Hindi film of the same name, which bagged the National Film Award for Best Children's Film, in 2007. He was renowned for his role in promoting children's literature in India. He spent most of his childhood in Shimla and Dehradun. These places provide the background for many of his short stories. He has written over 500 short stories, essays, and novels. Ruskin Bond received the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014.

"The Eyes are Not Here" is a light-hearted story about two passengers in a train who are both blind, and either of them does not realise that the other is also blind. The irony lies in the fact that the narrator of the story learns that his co-passenger too, has been blind only after she gets off the train. There is pathos in the situation, and the irony in the ending adds to its effect.

4.3.2 Summary of the Story

The narrator in the story is a blind young man. While he was travelling on the train, a young girl boarded the train alone. The writer was keenly observing the precautions being given to her by her parents. He gradually befriended the girl and asked where she was going. She told him that she was going to Saharanpur which would take two hours to reach. The writer consciously hid the fact that he was blind. He appreciated the girl by saying that she had an interesting face. She was impressed by such a remark. The narrator was attracted to her sweet voice and the scented smell of her hair. The two strangers have a pleasant conversation, and the narrator is drawn to the young woman's beauty and intelligence. When she gets off at her destination, he is disappointed to see her go. He realises that he has missed the opportunity to tell her that he is also blind. When the girl was about to get off, he felt like touching her hair. However, his modesty prevented him from doing so. After she got off, another passenger entered the compartment. The narrator asked the new per-

son whether the girl's hair was long or short. The new passenger answered that he noticed only her eyes and not her hair. He further said that she had beautiful eyes- but they were of no use. This meant that the girl was also blind. The story ends with the narrator reflecting on the irony of the situation. He and the young woman have shared a close connection, even though they have never seen each other's faces. He realises that the eyes are not always the most important way to see the world.

4.3.3 Analysis

The apparently simple short story "The Eyes Are Not Here" by Ruskin Bond has a powerful message. In the narrative, two blind people converse with one another while riding a train without being aware that they are both blind. The narrator, a blind guy, tries to hide his blindness from the girl at first because he feels ashamed of it. The significance of the story's title lies in how it questions the reader's perceptions of sight and vision. The girl and the narrator can see each other in a way that sighted individuals are frequently unable to. They are able to recognise each other's generosity and inner beauty. The tale serves as a warning about making snap judgements about others based solely on their appearance. Due to their shared blindness, the narrator and the girl initially had prejudices towards one another. But after getting to know one another, they discovered they had a lot in common.

4.3.4 Themes

The importance of inner sight: Although both the girl and the narrator are blind, they can perceive each other in a way that sighted people are frequently unable to. They can recognise each other's generosity and inner beauty.

The dangers of prejudice: Due to their shared blindness, the narrator and the girl initially had prejudices towards one another. But after getting to know one another, they discovered they had a lot in common.

The importance of communication: Because they are both willing to open up and share their tales, the narrator and the girl are able to connect deeply with one another.

Beautifully crafted and thought-provoking, "The Eyes Are Not Here" is a narrative that will be with you long after you have finished reading it. It serves as a reminder that we should not base our opinions of others solely on how they seem and that we should be receptive to interacting with people from diverse backgrounds.

Recap

- How wrong assumptions can deceive perception
- Two passengers in a train who are both blind realise that the other is also blind
- The narrator was trying to hide his blindness from the girl in front of him.
- It was too late when he realised that his companion was also blind- that too from another passenger who entered the compartment after she got down in her station.
- Human limitations in perceiving things
- Ironic and humorous ending
- Tricking turns into fooling oneself

Objective Questions

1. Where was the narrator going?
2. Why was the narrator unable to tell what the girl looked like?
3. What did the narrator like about the girl?
4. Where was the girl going by train?
5. What happened to the girl when she heard the voice of narrator?
6. What was the girl tired of?
7. Who would be meeting the girl at her destination?
8. What did the girl like about Mussoorie?

Answers

1. Dehra
2. Blind
3. Voice – sound of slippers
4. Saharanpur
5. Shocked
6. People talking about her pretty face
7. Aunt
8. Beautiful hills – October

Assignments

1. How does the narrator of "The Eyes Are Not Here" try to impress the girl who travels with him in the compartment?
2. Comment on the appropriateness of the title.
3. How does the story "The Eyes Are Not Here" present the issue of failed perceptiveness and misjudgements?
4. Explain the irony and humor in the short story "The Eyes Are Not Here"?

Suggested Reading

1. Bandyopadhyay, Debashis. *Locating the Anglo-Indian Self in Ruskin Bond*. Anthem, 2011.
2. Bond, Ruskin. *Notes From a Small Room*. Penguin, 2009.
3. Khorana, Meena. *The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond*. Greenwood, 2003.
4. Sinha, M. P., et al. *Ruskin Bond: A Critical Evaluation*. Atlantic, 2012.

BLOCK - 05

Introduction to Novel-1

Unit 1

Aspects of the Novel

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- gain insight into the main aspects of the novel
- explore various narrative techniques used in novels
- become aware that different types of characters shape the plot and themes of the novel
- explore the cultural or historical context of the novel and its relevance to the story

Prerequisites

The modern novel emerged when ordinary readers first gained the time, the money and the literacy to follow long stories written in prose. In eighteenth-century Europe a growing middle class—clerks, merchants, teachers—wanted entertainment that spoke to their own hopes and worries, not to the distant adventures of kings and knights. Publishers answered with affordable books and lending libraries, and writers quickly discovered that a life-sized story told in instalments could keep thousands of readers returning week after week. Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719) showed one man's practical battle for survival; Samuel Richardson's Pamela (1740) used a bundle of letters to capture a servant-girl's anxieties; and Henry Fielding's Tom Jones (1749) supplied humour and social comment in equal measure. Because chapters appeared monthly, authors learned to plant questions, pause at tense moments and describe settings so clearly that readers felt present in the scene. The form travelled fast. By the mid-nineteenth century presses in Calcutta and Madras were serialising novels in Indian languages, and by 1889 the Malayalam classic Indulekha placed the life of a Nair heroine at the heart of printed fiction. Today the same narrative rhythm drives blog series, graphic novels and streaming dramas: introduce a situation, build tension, pause, resume.

Beneath this variety lie four solid elements. Plot is the chain of events—arranged by time, space and cause—whose movement keeps pages turning. Characters are invented people given enough inner life for readers to care about what happens next. Setting provides location and historical moment, guiding what the characters can credibly do. Point of view decides who tells the story and how much they know: change the viewpoint and the same actions appear generous or selfish, safe or risky. Other devices—dialogue, imagery, symbols,

pacing—work around these core elements to increase clarity or suspense. The lessons that follow explore each part in turn. Learning to recognise them will sharpen your reading of classic and contemporary novels and also help you analyse any modern narrative, whether it appears in a marketing campaign, a political speech or a social-media thread. For undergraduate students in Kerala this knowledge is more than literary appreciation; it is preparation to judge stories critically, to understand the motives behind them and to construct clear, persuasive stories of your own.

Keywords

Aspects, Plot, Character, Characterisation, Settings, Points of View

Discussion

5.1.1 Aspects of the Novel - Introduction

The novel refers to a work of "fictional nature" written in prose. The fundamental edifice on which a novel is built is the narrative. Narrative is a structure in which there is the act of narration. To narrate means to tell or describe at length an event or a set of events. A "narrative", in other words, is a spoken or written account of connected events: a story. In a literary or artistic sense, narrative can be defined as a linguistic or visual representation of a particular world where there are many characters who are fixed in a spatial and temporal realm. However, this narrative is not an exclusive aspect of literary works. It is seen everywhere when someone talks about something. Each human being is a narrator in their daily lives, both in their professional and personal lives. A newsreader, a teacher, a doctor, and a journalist-all are all narrators in their professional lives, whereas the same persons become narrators in their personal lives when they speak to their relatives or friends. Narrating or storytelling is an essential activity in the everyday lives of human beings. Narrative is thus closely related to the speech act of storytelling and, therefore, to the appearance of the narrator. Therefore, everything the narrator says can be defined as a story.

Human beings are always involved in the act of narration; they are natural storytellers, and they possess a huge liking for and talent for telling interesting and captivating stories. The story is the most important part of a narrative.

As a novel is built on a narrative structure, and this narrative essentially includes the telling of a story, the central feature of a novel is its storytelling aspect. The story is a narrative arranged in a time sequence, and it is the backbone of a novel. It transports a reader into another realm of experience that is very different from the ordinary and mundane. It is the story that makes the audience want to know 'what happens next'.

5.1.1.1 Plot

It is the element of plot that gives structure to the story of the novel. The plot is the most significant aspect of a novel. In simple terms, plot means what happens in a story. It comprises the events and actions in a work of narrative. The author selects and organises these events and actions in a logical order to attain certain emotional and aesthetic effects.

Story and plot have been used interchangeably in a broader sense. However, present day critics distinguish between a work's plot and its story with greater precision. Plot refers to

the sequence and duration of events as presented to the reader or audience. The story is then the 'raw material' of events that can be pieced together from the plot's final product. The English novelist and critic E.M. Forster, in his work *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), distinguishes between a 'plot' and 'story'.

The king died, and the queen died. -This is a story

The king died, and the queen died of grief. This is a plot.

The first sentence gives a broad overview, while the second explains the cause-and-effect relationship.

Aristotle was the first critic to introduce the concept of plot. He used the term 'mythos' in his work *Poetics* (4th century B.C.). Aristotle considers a plot to be more than just a collection of events. He assigns plot, the most important function in a drama. He views the plot as a governing principle of progress and consistency to which other elements, such as characters, are subordinate. He insists that a plot should have a beginning, middle, and end, and the events narrated in it should form a coherent whole. The beginning lays the foundation for the main action in such a way that we anticipate what is to come; the middle assumes what has come before and calls for a continuation; and the conclusion builds on what has come before but needs no further action. A beginning need not be a beginning in the actual sense, for in narrative works like epics, the actions begin in the middle.

A narrative's plot creates a unique world in a specific time and space. Spatial means it creates a world rooted in a specific spatial realm, and temporal means the space has its own sense of time in which the events take place.

The effects that a plot has on the reader can vary. Different types of plots produce different types of end products, like comedy, tragedy, satire, horror, suspense, and many others. Novels usually have complex plots. The plot is intricately related to another aspect of the novel, which is character. A strong plot starts with an interesting lead character.

It is the plot that gives the readers a good reading experience of the work, and it is the plot that acts as a powerful tool to connect the readers to the novel or story. The plot of a novel should be structured in sequential order. The sequence should be according to time, space, and cause and effect. The plot of a novel deals with the questions:

1. What is this story about?
2. What happens in a story?
3. Why should it be read?

In his work *Technique of the Drama* (1863), the German critic Gustav Freytag introduced a model for the analysis of plot that is known as Freytag's Pyramid. A traditional plot has the following five stages: exposition, complication, climax or turning point, and resolution.

1. Exposition: Characters, the setting, and the central conflict are usually introduced at the start of the story. The opening scene of *Hamlet* has been regarded as an example of highly effective exposition.
2. Rising Action: The protagonist finds himself in a precarious position, and the events leading up to the climax begin to unfold. Things get more complicated as the story progresses.
3. Climax: At the peak of the story, the main event occurs in which the main character faces conflict. Most of the action, drama, and excitement occur here.

4. Falling Action: The story begins to slow down and work towards its end, tying up loose ends in the plot.
5. Resolution: Also known as the dénouement, the resolution occurs when conflicts are resolved and the story concludes.

These five phases in a plot can be explained with the example of Shakespeare's famous play *Romeo and Juliet*. In Act I, the initial situation or exposition is presented. There are two warring families. Romeo belongs to one, and Juliet to another. The complications arise when Romeo and Juliet from these rival families fall in love with each other. The climax includes the Murder of Mercutio, which triggers a chain of events that includes the deaths of both Romeo and Juliet. Resolution happens when the two families put an end to the hostilities between them.

The term "climax" denotes a point of no return' that causes all the following actions, not a 'final event'.

In certain plots, particularly in dramatic ones, the dénouement involves a reversal of the protagonist's fortunes, which is failure or destruction in tragedy and success in comedy. Aristotle termed this reversal as Peripeteia.

5.1.1.2 Character

In storytelling, what happens to people in specific settings and what they do are described. A story is an account that a narrator tells the audience about an event that happened to someone. This someone or somebody in the story world is the character the person within the story world to whom something has happened. Or it may also be the character who has caused something. Characters exist within the story world; they play either a minor or major role in the events that are described in the narrative. Characters are participants in a story's universe.

A character in a narrative work can be viewed as a representation of a set of qualities. Characters emulate certain emotional and intellectual qualities from the human world. Characters in a narrative work are entities that bear resemblance to humans whom the readers know in the real world. Within the story world, these human counterparts are called "characters".

An author creates a character by describing them, giving them characteristics, attitudes, and abilities, and having them perform certain actions. Their conversations form the dialogue of the narrative. So Harry Potter as a character comes into being only when J.K. Rowling creates a boy with a certain appearance and attitude who performs specific actions. As a character, Harry exists within the story world. His existence becomes real to the readers when they read the words that are used to describe him—his looks, behaviour or actions.

In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle defines character as "that element which gives the readers qualities.". But he regards action as being more important than character. According to him, action is the true purpose of all narratives. It is through action that the character is revealed, and also the fact that whether a character is good or bad depends on the actions of the character. A character in a narrative is an entity, which is capable of performing actions, and which also has the capacity to influence the course of the events. This ability is called "agency".

The importance of agency in getting to know the characters cannot be overstated. It's difficult to get to know a character if they don't act. It is impossible for readers to form relationships with them. This is how the idea of agency becomes important for a character in a narrative. However, all the characters cannot

have agency in a narrative. For example, supporting characters in a novel or drama. These characters do things, but their actions have no impact on the narrative. On the other hand, even animals in fables and other stories can be considered characters as they possess a certain kind of agency.

It is significant to note that characters must be recognisable as humans. Readers must be able to recognise in fictional characters those characteristics that they associate with real people. So, in order to develop a character, the writer must make it the type of person who can be identified with real life counterparts, because the character represents a common set of characteristics. The reader must understand what is represented as a character in a story world. The reader is the one who brings the character to life.

The following is an example of a description of a character by J.K. Rowling in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1998).

"He was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours."

Rowling describes Mr. Dursley as a very fat man with a large moustache and Mrs. Dursley as a thin lady with blonde hair and a long neck, which is useful for her to poke in other people's affairs. Readers can easily recognise both of these characters because both of them are very similar to real life humans with whom we might be familiar. As a result, a character is created through the interaction between the readers' minds and textual representations.

There can be, however, characters who are not similar to real life figures. Fantasy and science fiction have such characters. In such novels, fantastic and non-human creatures obey laws that differ from those with which we are familiar. *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Harry Potter* series, and *The Lord of the Rings* are examples of fantasy fiction.

Another similar term that is used to refer to characters is 'persona'. Persona refers to characters in drama or fiction. In lyric poetry, the same term is used to distinguish between the speaker and the author of the poem. The "I" who speaks in a poem is implied to be a character and not the author by the use of persona in the poem. Furthermore, in a play, 'dramatis personae' is a list of all the characters who appear in it.

Different Types of Characters

Confidant

A confidant is a character in a play who serves as the protagonist's trusted friend and to whom the protagonist confides his or her most private views, problems, and feelings. In drama, the confidant enables the playwright to communicate to the audience about the characters' thoughts, feelings, and intentions without the use of stage devices like the soliloquy or the sideways. A famous example of a confidant in a fictional work is Dr. Watson in Arthur Conan Doyle's work: *Sherlock Holmes*. The confidant can have a very deep relationship with the protagonist

Protagonist

The protagonist is the main character in a literary narrative, and all the other characters are described in relation to the protagonist. The protagonist is almost always the narrator in stories written in the first person, but this is not always the case. The narrator can also be someone close to the main character

or someone not very close. The protagonist is also called the hero or heroine. Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes, and Hercule Poirot are all famous protagonists. Elizabeth Bennet is the protagonist in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.*

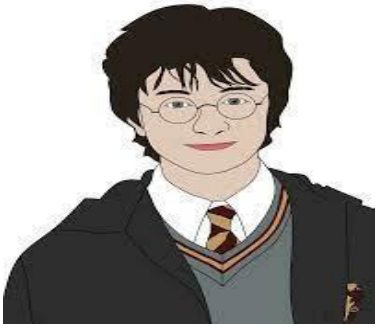


Figure 4.1.1 Harry Potter

Figure 4.1.2 Hercule Poirot

Figure 4.1.3 Sherlock Holmes

Antagonist

The antagonist is the most prominent of the characters who oppose the protagonist. In most stories, the protagonist is on the side of good and the antagonist is on the side of evil, which is the root of their conflict. But this can vary sometimes. The protagonist can be an anti-hero, lacking typical heroic characteristics and possessing bad traits, and the antagonist can be an anti-villain, having many upright qualities. An antagonist plays a very important role in the narrative as the protagonist, and the relationship between them is one of conflict. Hamlet is the protagonist, and King Claudius is the antagonist, of Shakespeare's play *Hamlet.* Professor Moriarty, is a famous antagonist in the story "The Final Proble," by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. An antagonist is also called a villain. Lord Voldemort is the antagonist in *The Harry Potter* series.

In works in which the protagonist is shown as evil, the adversary is generally a good or sympathetic character, such as Macduff in *Macbeth*.

Tertiary Characters

Apart from antagonists and protagonists, there can be tertiary characters in a work. They are unimportant characters who enter and leave the main characters' lives unnoticeably and appear only in a scene or two. Padma and Parvati Patil in *Harry Potter* and Madame Stahl in *Anna Karenina* are examples of tertiary characters.

Foil

Foil is a character in novels and dramas who contrasts sharply with the protagonist's personality and serves to emphasise and highlight their temperament. Though these two often have an antagonistic relationship, they can also come to see eye-to-eye and work together to help each other out.

The foil's exact position in relation to the protagonist will be determined by their differences. For example, if the protagonist is introverted, their foil could be extremely extroverted. But they can still become friends. If the protagonist is kind and selfless and their foil is extremely self-serving, they are unlikely to get along. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, the gentle and submissive Jane Bennet functions as a foil to her strong-minded sister Elizabeth. In Detective stories, the dim and slow witted police inspector serves to intensify the intelligence of the amateur detective, who is the hero of the story. Also in *Pride and Prejudice,* Mr. Wickham is portrayed as a foil to the character of Mr. Darcy. In *Hamlet*, Claudius is a foil to the prince. Hamlet despises deception, but Claudius is a master of it.

Choral Character

Choral Character is a term used to describe a character in a play who, despite being involved in the action to some extent, is nevertheless an active participant too while making ironic commentary on the action, thus performing a function similar to that of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Two examples are Thersites in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and Wong in Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*

Techniques of Characterisation

It is through applying different techniques of characterisation that a character is developed in fiction. The author describes the person or persons who are characters, gives them certain features, abilities, and qualities, and assigns to them certain actions that they can perform.

Two commonly used techniques for presenting characters are telling and showing.

Telling Method

Telling is the most common method of introducing a character, in which a direct description of the character is given by the author. The characters are described in great detail, including how they look and act as well as their traits and attitudes. When the telling mode is used, the author tells the reader everything they need to know about a character, so they don't have to rely on their own imaginations to learn about them.

In George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* Eliot uses the telling method to portray the character of Dorothea: The description of Dorothea in the tale is given as follows:

"Her whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her: she was a neophyte about to enter a grade of initiation. She felt that Casaubon was a living Boussuet whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety. A modern Augustine, who united the glories of doctor and saint."

The depiction of Mr. Rochester by the protagonist in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* (1847):

"Mr. Rochester, as he sat in his damask-covered chair, looked different to what I had seen him look before; not quite so stern much less gloomy. There was a smile on his lips, and his eyes sparkled, whether with wine or not, I am not sure; but I think it very probable. He was, in short, in his after dinner mood…"

In both of these examples from two Victorian novels, the characters are represented through the filter of a selective and judging narrator. The narrator functions as a mediator between the character and the reader.

Showing Method

In the showing method, the reader becomes a part of the story world, and they experience matters about the characters as nothing is told

to them directly. The traits of the character are to be discovered from their thoughts and actions described by the author. An obvious intervening narrator is absent in this mode. The reader is made to feel as if he or she is seeing a dramatic play through this technique of presenting, without any intervening agency. In order to convey an objective view, a person's image is presented purely through their actions and words, leaving interpretation and evaluation entirely up to the reader. Ernest Hemingway often uses this technique in his works to provide an objective outcome through a drama-like presentation.

"Will you have lime juice or lemon squash?"

Macomber asked.

"I'll have a gimlet," Robert Wilson told him.

"I'll have a gimlet too. I need something,"

Macomber's wife said.

"I suppose it's the thing to do," Macomber

agreed. "Tell him to make three gimlets."

This extract from *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* (1938) illustrates this technique, a distinctive feature of Hemingway's works, which offers only clues about his characters by providing exterior aspects of dialogue and actions without further commentary or evaluation.

In Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the reader gets to know the character of Tom through his own dialogue.

"It must be sold…. let me be sold. I's pose I Can b'ar it as well as any of 'em. Mas'r always found me on the spot, -he always will/ I never have broke trust, nor used my pass no ways contrary to my word, and I never will."

From his dialogues, Tom is revealed to be an honest slave who is ready to undergo any hardship. Readers form their own unbiased opinion without the (mis)leading comments of an intervening narrator.

In *Middlemarch,* Eliot presents the character of Dorothea by using a narrator. Later, through her own dialogue, Eliot reinforces the characteristics of Dorothea.

"I have a belief of my own, and it comforts me…. That by desiring perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil-widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower.:

Here the readers come to know that Dorothea believes in the power of good and evil, and they get this idea without the help of a mediator, but from within the dialogue of the character herself.

Another example of a more recent novel is *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976) by Argentinian author Manuel Puig. The entire novel is written in direct speech, script-like. Drama-like dialogues create an objective view of the characters' actions and their external aspects, and interpretation is left to the readers.

A dramatic or showing presentation, though pretending to represent objectively, always inevitably remains biased and perspectival.

Types of Characterisation

Flat and Round Characters

E.M. Forster, in his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), distinguishes between two types of characters; Flat and Round. E. M. Forster says that flat or static characters are types or stock

characters who never undergo any kind of development throughout the story. Forster cites Mrs. Micawber in *David Copperfield* and the Countess in *Evan Harrington* as examples of flat characters.

Flat characters are there to help the protagonist. They do not go through substantial growth or transformation in the course of the narrative. They appear stereotypical because of their easily recognisable traits. They're commonly referred to as "one-dimensional" or "two-dimensional" characters because they just have one point of view on the world.

Flat characters in Fiction

Good examples of flat characters are Crabbe and Goyle in the *Harry Potter* series. J.K. Rowling makes them two-dimensional, or flat. They are dull and sycophantic, but crucial to the storyline. A more standard example is the character of Mr. Collins in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. With his pompous, egotistical, and class-conscious personality, he plays an important role in the tale. An important point in the storyline, where Elizabeth and Darcy meet, is facilitated by Mr. Collins' presence, which furthermore serves as a vital comic element. However, his character stays essentially unchanged throughout the novel.

Flat Characters in Drama

Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare is an example of a flat character. Benvolio remains unchanged throughout the play. He is a calm, dependable, and steadfast man who works tirelessly to keep peace between the two families. Benvolio's mission is to assist Romeo in his marriage to Juliet and make him happy. Yet the irony is that other people have been quick to accuse him of having a violent temper and a crazy demeanour.

Round Characters

Round or dynamic characters are more true-to-life individuals and are more complex, and they undergo transformation as the story evolves. New aspects arise, and the character at the end of the story changes significantly from what he or she was at the onset of the play or novel.

According to Forster, round characters are tacitly the opposite of flat characters. Only round characters, Forster argues, “are fit to perform tragically for any length of time,” and only they are “capable of surprising in a convincing way.” Forster also regards Jane Austen as a writer whose characters are almost always round.

Round Characters in Fiction

In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the main character, Elizabeth Bennett, is a round character. Through the course of the novel, all her thoughts and emotions change, and finally, despite her initial dislike of him, she falls in love with Mr. Darcy.

According to Forster, all characters in *War and Peace*, many of the characters of Dostoevsky, and some of the characters of Proust, Charlotte Bronte, and Fielding are examples of round characters.

In Mark Twain’s *A True Story (1874),* the author introduces typified or flat characters for several reasons. He uses flat characters as part of the story's stylistic element because, in short, in stories, lengthy descriptions are not possible. He also uses them as a meaningful frame within which the story evolves and to highlight the patterns of oppression in their most extreme forms.

Round Characters in Drama

All of Shakespeare's protagonists in his tragedies are examples of round characters. In the classic tragedy *Hamlet,* Hamlet is bound to avenge his father's death, but he is caught up in a philosophical dilemma. In his famous soliloquy, beginning with the lines "To be or not to be, that is the question", Hamlet vacillates between philosophical issues. It is then revealed from these difficult moral and existential problems that Hamlet is an immensely complex figure.

Use of both Flat and Round Characters

Novels become successful only if both flat and round characters are used in them. A few characters must be flat in order to emphasise the main characters. They are called "supporting characters", as the story isn't about them, and therefore making them round would diminish the complexity, the "roundness," of the main character. Hamlet's roundness of character is revealed only in contrast to a flat Laertes, a flat Fortinbras, a flat Horatio, and a flat Polonius, all of whom serve as character foils to Hamlet in different ways. Many modern fictional texts introduce both modes of representation simultaneously. Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* combines allegorical and individual elements in the depiction of its main character, the mysterious Captain Ahab. Both typified and individualised characters can be rendered in a text through showing and telling, two different modes of presentation.

Stock Characters

A stock character is one whose features are already known to the reader. They are perceived as "stereotypes". The readers expect their actions, speech, and clothing to be of a particular kind. They are similar to flat characters.

Stock characters were the main features of classical comedy in ancient Rome and Greece. In contemporary plays like Commedia dell'arte and Farce, stock characters also make their presence felt. Classical Roman comedy presented a whole cast of stock characters, as in *Miles Gloriosus* (*The Boastful Soldier*), the grumpy old man, or the cunning servant. The most famous example of a stock character in English drama is Shakespeare's Falstaff.

Stock characters are also used in medieval allegorical depictions to personify vices, virtues, or philosophical and religious positions. In *Piers Plowman* (a 14th century long poem) by William Langland - most characters depict one specific feature. Examples are the allegorical figures Do-well, Do-better, Do-best and the Everyman figure—the symbol of a sinful Christian.

Typified or stock characters re-emerge in today's advertisements, films, posters and television.

Major and Minor Characters

Then, based on the significance of characters in a fictional narrative, there can be major and minor characters. Major characters are those whose actions influence and affect the course of the story. Major characters have central roles in the story, and they will be portrayed as round characters, whereas minor characters occupy an inconspicuous position and will most often be represented as flat or stock characters.

5.1.1.3 Narrative Point of View

Another important element of fiction is the narrative point of view. It is the perspective through which the events of the story, the characters, and their actions are narrated. It also points out the position of the narrator in the story.

As the novel is a narrative, a narrator is an essential aspect of it. A narrator is the one who

tells the story and is the 'voice' of the novel but is not the author of the novel. For example, in the novel *David Copperfield*, David is the narrator, but Dickens is the author of the work. The two important aspects in a narrative point of view are

1. Who sees and narrates the events. (The narrator)

2. To whom are the events narrated. (The narratee).

There are three varieties of narrative points of view.

If the narrator is a character within the story and the narration is done in the first person pronoun 'I," that narrative is called a first person narrative. In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick,* the narrator is Ishmael, who is a character within the story. The events in the story are narrated as Ishmael has experienced them. The novel begins thus:

"Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world."

In *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly Dean is the narrator, and she is also a character in the story. *David Copperfield* is another masterly work by Charles Dickens in which the first person narrative has been used ingeniously.

In certain narratives, the person who is narrating is not a character in the story but seems to know everything and everyone. Such narratives are called third person narratives. The narrator here is an omniscient, external one, and they use the third person pronouns he/she/it or they in their narration. Most novels are written in this form because it allows the author greater freedom to make comments about characters. A famous example of third person narrative is taken from Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of someone or other of their daughters."

A few novels also use the second person narrative. In this method, the author directly addresses the reader, who is regarded as the protagonist of the novel, as "you". The following passage from Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* is a famous example of this form of narration. The text opens thus:

"You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's novel, *If on A Winter's Night A Traveller*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, 'No, I don't want to watch TV'. Raise your voice- they won't hear you otherwise- 'I'm reading'. I don't want to be disturbed."

In this kind of narrative situation, the reader is made a character in the story that is narrated.

Austrian narratologist Franz Karl Stanzel distinguished three typical narrative situations that are variations of these three basic narrative forms.

1. Authorial narrative situation

2. First person narrative situation

3. Figural narrative situation

In an Authorial narrative situation, there is an

external narrator with an omniscient point of view. In First person narrative situation, the story is narrated either by the protagonist or by a minor character.

In a Figural narrative situation, the story is narrated through figures, most often in the third person.

In an Authorial narrative situation, the characters are referred to in the third person. The action is presented from an omniscient (all knowing - god-like) perspective. The narrator is not an acting figure in the story and provides information beyond the knowledge of the characters. The omniscient narrator can go back in time, knows the content of personal letters, and possesses exact information about all the figures in the novel.

Eg., *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy.

First Person Narrative Situation

In this narrative situation, the story is narrated through a participating figure who refers to themselves in the first person. The narrator adopts the point of view of either the protagonist or a minor character. The majority of novels use the protagonist for first person narratives.

Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne, Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield,* and J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* are instances. These narrations give supposedly authentic representations of the subjective experiences and feelings of the narrator. In autobiographies, this technique is used. *Confessions* by St. Augustine and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* are examples of this type of narrative.

Minor characters are also introduced by the first person narrator. In this way, the protagonist's disposition remains less transparent and mystified, as in *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, in which the minor character Ishmael describes the mysterious protagonist Captain Ahab. In *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nick Carraway relates the events surrounding the enigmatic Gatsby from the periphery of action.

Figural Narrative Situation

In this narrative situation, the narrator moves to the background, suggesting that the plot is revealed through the actions of the characters in the text. It is a relatively recent technique that was developed with the rise of the modern novel. This technique encourages the author to interpret without an intervening commentator.

In Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment,* the author chooses a third person narrator and disrupts the reader's proximity to the characters. Still, the figural situation provides an intense reading. Mental reflections, inner thoughts, and worries are artfully employed to reveal the action.

In the novels of Franz Kafka, he employs the limited perspective of the protagonist to highlight a high degree of alienation of his characters and gives only restricted access to the information that is conveyed, e.g., *The Trial.*

The French literary theorist Gerard Genette introduced heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration.

A homodiegetic narrator is a character in the story with only limited knowledge about the actions and thoughts of other characters. All first person narrative situations include homodiegetic narrators.

A heterodiegetic narrator is not a part of the story world and has unlimited knowledge and authority. Both authorial and figural narrative situations are examples.

The narratological situations vary on the basis of how the presence of the narrator is indicated in the text.

The overt narrator provides explanations of and comments on the action and the characters. All first person and authorial narratives use this technique.

Eg: The narrator in *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger.

Covert narrators are used in figural narrative situations and require internal focalisation.

Focalisation is a term coined by Genette, and the concept deals with who sees rather than who speaks. The character through whose eyes the reader sees the action is called the focaliser or reflector.

A narrative with internal focalisation adopts a character's point of view and has the same or partial knowledge of the character.

In externally focalised narratives, the narrator is less informed than the characters.

Zero Focalisation offers an omniscient point of view. The narrator knows more than the characters.

Modernist and Postmodernist novels experiment with changing narrative situations in one text.

In the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* by the Dominican novelist, Jean Rhys, the first section is narrated by the protagonist Antoinette. Part 2 is narrated by Antoinette's husband, Mr. Rochester. The last part is again narrated by Antoinette. Readers get perspectives from different angles, and there is no single ultimate truth. The novel is an example of how thematic aspects of a text can be emphasised on a structural level by means of narrative techniques here, points of view.

This technique is also used by Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood. She changes the narrative situation. In her novel The *Edible Woman,* the first section is in first person narration by the protagonist. In the second part, figural narrative is used to emphasise the character's alienation. Towards the end, again, it switches to first person narration.

5.1.1.4 Setting

Setting denotes the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops. Using the setting, the author situates the lives of the characters in a history, a community, or a particular group of people, all of which are located and connected within a physical and social space.

This is how Raja Rao uses the setting in his novel *Kanthapura*.

"The village of Kanthapura is in the province of Kara. High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains, that face the cool Arabian Seas, up the Malabar Coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur, and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane….."

This is the physical setting of the novel. He gives a historical setting:

"The village traded cardamom and coffee with 'Red-men' (Europeans), who are, we are told, the 'rulers'.

In James Joyce's *Ulysses, the* setting is given as Dublin, June 16, 1904. In William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* the period is medieval Denmark. In Dante's Italian *Divine Comedy,* the setting of a labyrinth is used to express the agonies of hell. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, a maze like structure is used for the journeys of Aeneas. In Gothic novels, setting is very important.

In the opening section of *The Fall of the House of the Usher* Edgar Allen Poe gives a detailed description of the uncanny house. It resembles the lord of the house, Roderick Usher. Poe juxtaposes death of Usher with the collapse of the house, thereby creating an interdependence between setting, characters, and plot. This is

how Poe gives a description of the house and the atmosphere surrounding it.

"During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I do not know how it was-but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable, for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, poetic sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me-upon the mere house and the bleak walls-upon the vacant eye-like windows-upon a few rank sedges-and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees-with an utter depression of soul, which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium-the bitter lapse of everyday life-the hideous dropping of the veil."

The various aspects of fiction, including plot, setting, points of view, and characters, tend to receive full meaning through their interaction with one another.

Recap

- A novel is a work of fiction that has a narrative structure
- Narrative includes the telling of a story, and this story in turn gets its structure from the presence of plot
- The plot is the most significant element in a novel
- Plot creates a unique world in a specific time and space and also plot creates different types of end products like tragedy, comedy, etc.
- A traditional plot has the following five stages - exposition, complication, climax or turning point, and resolution
- This was introduced by the German critic Gustav Freytag, and is known as Freytag's Pyramid
- A character is the person within the story world to whom something has happened
- There are different types of characters, like protagonists, antagonists, confidants, and foils
- Two methods of characterisation are telling and showing
- Two types of characterisation are flat and round
- There will be both major and minor characters in novels
- Narrative point of view: the perspective from which the story is told
- The three narrative points of view are first person, second person and third person
- The different narrative situations are authorial, first person and figural
- Other elements of narratives in novels are heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrations, overt and covert narrators and focalisation
- Setting denotes the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops

Objective Questions

1. Who is the narrator?
2. Who introduced the concept of plot for the first time?
3. Name the model for the analysis of the plot introduced by Gustav Freytag.
4. Which are the five stages of a traditional plot?
5. Give an example of fantasy fiction.
6. What is a "persona"?
7. What is the name given to the protagonist who lacks typical heroic characteristics?
8. Who is the foil character to Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*?
9. Give an example of a flat character in a novel.
10. Who introduced the concepts of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration?

Answers

1. A structure in which there is an act of narration
2. Aristotle
3. Freytag's Pyramid
4. Exposition, complication, climax or turning point, and resolution
5. *The Lord of the Rings*
6. A character in drama or fiction
7. Anti-hero
8. Mr.Wickham
9. Mr.Micawber
10. Gerard Genette

Assignments

1. How do the relationships between characters shape the plot and themes of the novel?
2. Examine the narrative structure of the novel. How does it contribute to the reader's understanding of the story?
3. Discuss the use of point of view in the novel.
4. How does the setting of the novel contribute to its overall mood and atmosphere?

Suggested Reading

1. Bulson, Eric. *The Cambridge Companion to the Novel.* Cambridge UP, 2018.
2. Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Studying the Novel*. Bloomsbury, 2016.
3. Wilbur, L. Perry. *The Seven Key Elements of Fiction*. Robert Hale, 2001.

Unit 2

Techniques in Narrative Fiction

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- analyse and deconstruct narrative structures in fiction
- gain a deep insight into the narrative perspectives used in novels
- become aware of the different types of characters in novels
- explore how writers establish and immerse readers in fictional worlds through vivid descriptions, cultural details, and settings

Prerequisites

Telling a story is never a neutral act; the writer decides what to show first, what to hold back and when to change speed. Several standard techniques make those choices visible. A flashback shifts briefly into the past to explain a character's current behaviour, while a flash-forward hints at future consequences before returning to the present. Foreshadowing plants small clues—an overheard warning, an object left on a table—that prepare the reader for coming events; a deliberate red herring sends attention in the wrong direction, useful in crime and mystery fiction. A cliff-hanger ends a section just as a decision or discovery is about to occur, encouraging the reader to continue, whereas an epiphany slows the action so that a character suddenly grasps a new idea or truth. Finally, hyperbole, or calculated exaggeration, can lighten the tone or underline the seriousness of a point. Studying these devices reveals how authors manage curiosity and emotion: when to create doubt, when to deliver certainty and when to leave space for the reader's own interpretation. The same tools appear outside printed fiction—in news features, documentaries, advertising and classroom presentations—so understanding them strengthens both critical reading and effective writing.

Keywords

Narrative techniques, Flashbacks, Flash Forwards, Foreshadowing, Red Herring

Discussion

5.2.1 Narrative Techniques

Narrative techniques are the strategies used by the writer to communicate easily what he/she wants to say to his/her readers and the methods that he/she uses to develop a story. The following are some of the commonly used techniques in narrative fiction. Some of the most frequently used ones are flashback, flash-forward and foreshadowing. There are other techniques as well, like suspense, red

herrings, and cliffhangers, which are all used to create eagerness in the reader and add vitality to the narrative.

5.2.1.1 Flashback

A flashback is a narrative device in which the author takes the reader out of the present plot and transports them to a previous time period in the life of a character. In novels, a flashback is a scene that occurs before the beginning of the story. Flashbacks disrupt the main narrative's chronological order to transport the reader back in time to the events in a character's life. This technique is used by a writer to help readers better understand the present-day components of the story or to discover more about a character.

Example of a flashback:

"In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my head ever since". This is an example of a flashback from *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. He uses flashback to begin the story.

5.2.1.2 Flash Forward

Taking the reader out of an otherwise chronological story, a flashback or flash forward will show events that happened in the past or future that impact the characters in the present day of the story timeline.

Example of Flash Forward:

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is one of the most notable examples of flash forward in classic literature.

5.2.1.3 Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a figure of speech in which a speaker might refer to something that is going to be talked about later in the conversation, after he/she has delivered the initial information. The writer mainly uses this technique to give the reader insights about the story that is going to unfold. Foreshadowing creates excitement and suspense in the readers, as they have hints that something notable might happen which they do not know precisely.

In *Great Expectations,* written by Charles Dickens, there is an excellent example of foreshadowing as is seen from the following excerpt:

"Wet and stormy, wet and stormy and so much mud, mud, the streets so deep in mud. Day after day there had been a large and heavy veil which was being driven over London from the East, and still, it drove, as though there were an eternity of clouds in the East, the gusts of wind had been so furious that the higher buildings in town had the lead torn right off and over in the country, the trees had been ripped up and the windmills' sails carried away, and accounts of death and shipwrecks had been sent in from the coast. Accompanying these winds has been violent blasts in rain and as the day ended, I sat down to read the worst of all."

Foreshadowing is a means by which elements of suspense can be created in a work. Strong foreshadowing techniques include:

Presenting a significant object or character that returns later in the plot,

Seeming to reveal a secret but neglecting the context or other key details,

Unusually vague or puzzling turns of phrase.

In literature, foreshadowing is used in a number of ways, such as through the dialogue between characters, a hint in the title, or in the text itself.

5.2.1.4 Red Herring

Red Herring is commonly used in crime and mystery writings in particular, where writers

divert the attention of the reader onto another character or element of the story in order to distract them from the truth.

Examples of Red Herring:

In a crucial work of the mystery genre, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle readers can see Sherlock Holmes coming across numerous red herrings while solving a murder.

However, as with many books of this type, the foreshadowing becomes misleading and actually provides information to divert the reader away from what is actually going to happen. So this kind of foreshadowing can also be regarded as a red herring. In Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, one of the characters, the Bishop, is seen to be behaving in a suspicious manner, which would have the reader believe that he has something to hide. These actions would appear to foreshadow his future, but in reality, this is a 'red herring.'

5.2.1.5 Epiphany

A kind of sudden realisation by a character is known as an epiphany. It can have a dramatic impact on the story. This is usually in relation to a problem that a character has been facing. Later on, a solution or different perspective emerges.

Example of Epiphany:

In *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, the title character suddenly realises that he must take revenge for his father's murder while he is sailing to England.

5.2.1.6 Suspense

Suspense is the tension readers feel when they are not sure what will happen in a story either during a single scene/chapter or throughout its overall sweep. Suspense can be created around anything that fuels readers' curiosity, whether it's a love triangle or a killer on the loose.

The writer makes use of a series of events or points in the plot that make the reader feel excitement, anxiety, and nervousness. This is known as suspense. As the plot progresses, the reader develops expectations about the future course of events and actions, as well as about the way characters respond to them.

Suspense and surprise are two elements that give vitality to a traditional plot.

5.2.1.7 Hyperbole

The use of exaggeration to emphasise a point or be humorous is known as hyperbole. Whatever the writer says may not be literally true.

Another figure of speech that is associated with and similar to hyperbole is overstatement. Overstatement and hyperbole, though used interchangeably, have subtle differences in their use and intended effect. Overstatement is defined as an exaggeration or a statement that goes beyond what most people would consider sensible. Though hyperbole is an exaggeration, its effect is often greater than an overstatement. Both overstatement and hyperbole are figures of speech and are not meant to be understood literally. Hyperbole, however, is used as a device in literature and rhetoric, not just as a form of figurative language.

Here are a few examples of hyperbole often used in everyday conversation:

Example 1

She's going to die of humiliation.

This does not mean that the girl is going to get sick or that her heart will stop due to humiliation. Instead, the speaker is using hyperbole to emphasise just how humiliated she's going to feel.

"If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand

times!" is another example of hyperbole in everyday speech.

Hyperbole is also seen in song lyrics and poems.

"But thy eternal summer shall not fade, / Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,"- William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 18*.

A famous example of hyperbole in literature can be taken from Shakespeare's *Othello, where* Iago says gloatingly of Othello (Act III, Scene iii):

Not poppy nor mandragora,

Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world

Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep

Which thou ow'dst yesterday.

In many ways, hyperbole is a very suitable literary device. Hyperbole can capture a reader's attention by exaggerating something to an extreme, whether it is a character's qualities, a writer's attitude, a theme, or an idea. Furthermore, it can cause the reader to doubt the reliability of a narrator, ponder the writer's true intention, or provide a level of absurd humour for entertainment.

Another famous example of hyperbole can be found in *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift.

"I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust."

In the essay, Smith suggests selling or eating Irish children to alleviate poverty among the Irish. This is, of course, hyperbole, because his solution is not meant to be taken factually, and it is an unrealistic and odd proposal The hyperbole here achieves two things: it draws more attention to the predicament of the Irish people of the time, and it scorns the people in higher society who offered solutions to the problem that may not have been as extreme but were about as helpful.

5.2.1.8 Cliffhanger

Cliffhangers are stories or plotlines that come to an abrupt end or have a major plot twist and are left unanswered. It is a device that is used to cause suspense, but most importantly, it leaves unanswered questions that make the reader or viewer want to come back to learn what will happen. The phrase comes from the idea of "hanging off a cliff" whatever happens will determine the character's future and the story's plot, leaving audiences "on the edge" of knowing. Cliffhangers are a particularly popular and widely used device in television, whose success relies heavily on audiences returning to watch week after week with episodes that are "to be continued."

Cliffhangers are crucial tools for storytelling because they encourage people to come back for each new segment, for example, in a TV show's weekly episode. A show or book series is successful if the audience is interested in the plotline, because then they will want to keep watching or reading. Thus, as long as a cliffhanger creates questions, fans will want answers.

Example of Cliffhanger:

The Pickwick Papers by Charles Dickens has plenty of examples of cliffhangers throughout the story. It was originally released in weekly newspapers, and chapter endings were deliberately left open ended to encourage readers to purchase the next week's issue.

Recap

- Narrative techniques are the strategies used by the writer to communicate easily
- Some of the narrative techniques in narrative fiction are flashback, flash forwarding, foreshadowing, red herring, epiphany, suspense, hyperbole and cliffhanger
- A flashback is a narrative device in which the author takes the reader out of the present plot and transports them to a previous time period in the life of a character
- Flash forward shows the events that happened in the future
- Red herring is commonly used in crime and mystery novels by the writer to divert the attention of the readers
- Epiphany is a sudden realisation by a character
- Suspense is used by the writer to create anxiety, excitement, and nervousness
- The use of exaggeration to emphasise a point or to be humorous is hyperbole

Objective Questions

1. What is a narrative device that takes the reader to a previous time period in the character's life?
2. What technique involves showing events that happened in the past or future that impact the characters in the present?
3. What literary device gives readers insights about the story that is going to unfold?
4. What technique is commonly used in crime and mystery writing to divert the reader's attention?
5. In *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, what technique is used to show events from the past and future?
6. What term describes a sudden realisation by a character that can have a dramatic impact on the story?
7. What is the tension readers feel when they are unsure about what will happen in a story?
8. What figure of speech involves the use of exaggeration to emphasise a point?
9. In which genre is the use of red herrings common to distract readers from the truth?
10. What technique involves presenting something that will be talked about later in the narrative?

Answers

1. Flashback
2. Flash Forward
3. Foreshadowing
4. Red Herring
5. Flash Forward
6. Epiphany
7. Suspense
8. Hyperbole
9. Mystery
10. Foreshadowing

Assignments

1. Analyse the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards in literature, using examples from classic and contemporary works.
2. Explore the role of foreshadowing in literature, focusing on its ability to create suspense and anticipation.
3. How do authors use red herrings to mislead readers and keep them engaged in the plot?
4. Investigate the concept of suspense in narrative fiction.
5. How does exaggeration serve various purposes in storytelling, such as humor, emphasis, or satire?

Suggested Reading

1. Bulson, Eric. *The Cambridge Companion to the Novel*. Cambridge UP, 2018.
2. Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Studying the Novel*. Bloomsbury, 2016.
3. Kettle, Arnold. *An Introduction to the English Novel*. Unwin, 1967.
4. Wilbur, L. Perry. *The Seven Key Elements of Fiction*. Robert Hale, 2001.

Unit 3

Pride and Prejudice

-Jane Austen

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- recognise and appreciate satire as a literary technique
- foster a deeper understanding of character development in literature
- become aware of the class structure and societal norms of the early 19th century
- gain insight into how themes and characters are treated in different contexts

Prerequisites

Jane Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* at a time when social standing in rural England depended heavily on income, connections and the choice of spouse. Landed property was usually inherited by male relatives, and a single rumour could limit a young woman's future. Within that framework Austen studies the Bennet family and their neighbours, using light conversation to highlight serious questions about class, gender and personal judgement. The novel's lasting appeal comes from its balanced construction. Dialogue moves the plot settings,—village lanes, drawing rooms, assembly halls—are described quickly yet precisely; and a flexible narrative voice slides in and out of Elizabeth Bennet's thoughts, letting readers share her first impressions and later corrections. By the end of the story, misunderstandings about pride, prejudice and genuine worth have been tested from several angles, making the outcome feel earned rather than accidental. Many of these pressures:—inheritance disputes, public opinion, the conflict between emotion and social expectation,remain recognisable today, which is why Austen's work still invites fresh discussion in modern classrooms and adaptations on screen.

Keywords

Social Class, Marriage, Courtship, Satire, Manners and Etiquette

Discussion

Jane Austen, an acclaimed English novelist (1775-1817), is celebrated as one of the most renowned figures in the literary world. Her works, characterised by wit, social commentary, and keen insight into human nature, have left an indelible mark on English literature. Austen's novels, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma*, are cherished for their exploration of themes like love, class, and the role of women in so-

ciety during the Regency era. Through her astute character portrayals and biting social satire, she offered a window into the social norms and values of her time. Her enduring legacy extends beyond the written word, as her novels have been adapted into numerous films, television series, and stage productions, ensuring her continued influence on literature and popular culture. Jane Austen's enduring appeal lies in her ability to capture the complexities of human relationships and the timeless struggles of individuals against the constraints of society.

5.3.1 Summary

The news that Charles Bingley, a wealthy young man, has rented the mansion of Netherfield Park in Longbourn, causes a sensation in the village, particularly in the Bennet household. The Bennets have five unmarried daughters, and Mrs. Bennet hopes that each of her five daughters will soon find a suitable husband. She believes that Bingley's presence will provide an opportunity for one of the daughters to marry a wealthy man, so she persuades her husband to visit Bingley right away. Mr. Bennet at first pretends that he has no interest in doing so, but he meets Mr. Bingley without their knowledge. After he visits Mr. Bingley, the Bennets attend a ball where Mr. Bingley is present. Bingley, smitten by Jane, spends most of the night dancing around her. His close friend, Mr. Darcy, is also present at the ball. When he refuses to dance with Elizabeth, everyone regards him as arrogant and haughty. Elizabeth also hears the comment he makes about her: She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me." He then goes on to say that he has no interest in women who are "slighted by other men." Elizabeth takes an instant dislike for Darcy. Darcy's words and refusal to dance with anyone who isn't wealthy and well-bred have sparked a comparable disdain among the neighbourhood, while Bingley, on the other hand, is deemed "amiable."

At social functions over the following week, Mr. Darcy becomes more enamoured with Elizabeth's wit and beauty. Mr. Bingley's friendship with Jane also grows stronger. One day, Jane decides to pay a visit to the Bingley mansion. She becomes unwell while travelling to the house as she is caught in a heavy rainfall and has to spend several days at Netherfield. Elizabeth travels through muddy fields in order to tend to Jane, and she arrives with wet and soiled clothes. Miss Bingley, Charles Bingley's snobbish sister, is so contemptuous to see Elizabeth like that. Her hatred for Elizabeth only increases when Darcy, shows an interest in her.

Upon their return to their home, Elizabeth and Jane discover that Mr. Collins has paid a visit. Mr. Collins is a young clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property, because it can only be passed down to male heirs. Mr. Collins is a conceited snob, but he is enamoured with the Bennet sisters. Shortly after his arrival, he makes a marriage proposal to Elizabeth. She rejects him, hurting his ego. In the meantime, the Bennet girls develop a friendship with the local militia officers. Wickham, a handsome young soldier who is friendly with Elizabeth, is one of them. He tells her how Darcy unjustly defrauded him of an inheritance.

The Bingleys and Darcy depart Netherfield at the beginning of winter, much to Jane's displeasure. Another shock is on its way with the news that Mr. Collins has become engaged to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend. Charlotte reveals to Elizabeth that she's in need of the marriage for financial reasons and that she is also getting older. They get married, and Elizabeth promises to visit them. Jane travels to the city during the winter to see her friends. She also hopes that she might see Mr. Bingley. Miss Bingley visits her and behaves nastily,

while Mr. Bingley does not even visit her. It now seems that they are unlikely to find a suitable groom for themselves.

That spring, Elizabeth pays Charlotte a visit near the home of Mr. Collins' patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who is now Charlotte's new neighbour. Lady Catherine de Bourgh is also Darcy's aunt. Mr. Darcy makes a few visits to the home of the Collins family, where he encounters Elizabeth and learns that she is a guest there. One day, he surprisingly makes a proposal for marriage, which Elizabeth quickly rejects. She tells Darcy that she considers him arrogant and unpleasant, then reprimands him for forcing Bingley to stay away from Jane and disinheriting Wickham. Darcy departs, but he returns with a letter soon after. In this letter, he admits to pushing Bingley away from Jane. He says he only did so because he thought they didn't take their courtship seriously. He also tells Elizabeth that Wickham lied about their dispute and that the real issue was Wickham's attempt to elope with his young sister, Georgiana Darcy.

After reading this letter, Elizabeth begins to reassess her feelings toward Darcy. Upon her return, she shows an unsympathetic attitude toward Wickham. The militia is leaving town, and the younger Bennet girls are distressed. Next, Wickham's regiment is stationed in Brighton. Lydia somehow manages to get permission from her father to spend the summer with an old colonel there. Elizabeth and the Gardiners, who are family members of the Bennets, embark on a new journey in June. After travelling to the north, she reaches Darcy's estate neighbourhood, Pemberley. After ensuring that Darcy is not present, she makes her way to Pemberley, where she is enchanted by the house and grounds and learns from Darcy's servants that he is a kind and generous master. Suddenly, Darcy shows up and treats her with the utmost courtesy. He hosts the Gardiners and invites Elizabeth to meet his sister, making no mention of his proposal.

Soon after, Elizabeth receives a letter from home stating that Wickham and Lydia have eloped and that they are no longer in the area. Elizabeth rushes back to her house, worried about the disgrace this incident will bring to her entire family. Mr. Bennet and Mr. Gardiner set out to find Lydia, but Mr. Bennet eventually comes home empty-handed. A letter from Mr. Gardiner reveals that Wickham and Lydia have been found and that Wickham has agreed to marry Lydia in exchange for an annual income. It is widely assumed that Gardiner paid off Wickham, but Elizabeth discovers that the money has been given by Mr. Darcy.

Wickham and Lydia return to Longbourn briefly after their wedding. Mr. Bennet greets them with a lack of warmth and affection. Later, they head to the North of England, where Wickham has been assigned to a new job. A little time later, Bingley returns to Netherfield and reaffirms his love for Jane. Darcy goes to stay with him and pays visits to the Bennets but makes no mention of his desire to marry Elizabeth. Everyone except Bingley's snobbish sister is delighted when Bingley makes a move and proposes to Jane. Lady Catherine de Bourgh visits Longbourn while the family celebrates. She tells Elizabeth that she has heard that Darcy, her nephew, is intending to marry Elizabeth. And also she adds that she considers a Bennet an unsuitable match for a Darcy. Lady Catherine then demands Elizabeth to promise to reject him. Elizabeth vigorously refuses and says that she is not engaged to Darcy, but she will not promise anything against her own happiness. Later, Elizabeth and Darcy go out for a walk together and Darcy informs Elizabeth that his sentiments have not changed since the spring. Elizabeth graciously accepts his proposal. Both she and Jane get married to Darcy and Bingley respectively.

Recap

- The novel is set in the early 19th century
- Revolves around the Bennet family
- Social class distinction plays a significant role in the story
- The novel explores the societal pressure to secure advantageous marriages
- The story's main character, Elizabeth, is intelligent, independent, and has a strong sense of self
- She is initially prejudiced against Mr. Darcy
- Mr. Darcy is a wealthy, aristocratic landowner who initially appears proud and aloof
- He becomes Elizabeth's love interest
- Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy form negative opinions of each other based on first impressions
- Despite their initial prejudices, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's feelings for each other gradually evolve
- Lydia, the youngest Bennet sister, elopes with Mr. Wickham
- Mr. Bingley, a wealthy and amiable gentleman, falls in love with Jane Bennet, Elizabeth's eldest sister
- His friend, Mr. Darcy, initially separates them due to concerns about Jane's social status
- Misunderstandings and prejudices are gradually resolved, leading to a deeper understanding between characters
- Mr. Darcy eventually declares his love for Elizabeth
- Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy find happiness together, as do Jane and Mr. Bingley

Objective Questions

1. Who rents Netherfield Park in Longbourn?
2. How does Mrs. Bennet react to the news of Bingley's arrival in the neighborhood?
3. What is Mr. Darcy's initial impression of Elizabeth Bennet at the ball?
4. Why does Jane Bennet spend several days at Netherfield?
5. Who is Mr. Collins?
6. What does Wickham tell Elizabeth about Mr. Darcy?
7. Why do Jane and Elizabeth visit Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas?

8. Who unexpectedly proposes to Elizabeth?
9. Where do Lydia and Wickham elope?
10. How does Elizabeth respond to Lady Catherine's demands?

Answers

1. Charles Bingley
2. She hopes that one of her daughters will marry him
3. "Tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt"
4. She becomes unwell
5. Mr. Collins is a clergyman who stands to inherit Mr. Bennet's property
6. Wickham claims that Mr. Darcy unjustly defrauded him of an inheritance.
7. To see their friends and also hope to see Mr. Bingley.
8. Mr. Darcy
9. They elope to an undisclosed location
10. Elizabeth refuses to promise anything against her own happiness.

Assignments

1. Explore the role of social class in the novel.
2. Analyse the transformation of Elizabeth Bennet's character throughout the novel.
3. Discuss the theme of prejudice in the novel.
4. Examine the different types of love and relationships depicted in the novel.
5. Discuss the role of women in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Suggested Reading

1. Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. CreateSpace, 2013.
2. Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms,* OUP, 2001.
3. Bode, Christoph. *The Novel:An Introduction.* Wiley-Blackwell.2011
4. Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Rosetta, 2002.
5. Klarer, Mario. *An Introduction to Literary Studies*. Routledge, 2013.

Unit 4

Victorian Novels and their Characteristics

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- deepen understanding of the socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts of the 19th century
- gain insight into issues like class struggle, gender roles, industrialisation, and imperialism
- think critically about complex issues and consider different viewpoints
- get exposure to the creativity and storytelling techniques of Victorian authors

Prerequisites

Victorian Britain (1837-1901) changed rapidly under industrial growth, expanding cities and new political debates, and its novelists turned those changes into detailed narratives. Writers such as Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot combined wide plots with sharp observation, aiming to entertain readers and to expose the consequences of poverty, limited education and unequal law. A typical Victorian novel follows several households, guided by an omniscient narrator who comments openly on motives and morals. Settings range from London streets thick with coal smoke to quiet country parishes, each described in careful detail so that social forces feel concrete. Publication in monthly or weekly parts encouraged regular suspense: chapters end at turning points and sub-plots intersect to sustain interest across many pages. The period also produced specialised branches. Sensation novels (for example, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*) used secrets and mistaken identity to question everyday respectability, while early science-fiction works by H. G. Wells asked how technology might alter society. Studying these features clarifies why the Victorian model—multiple storylines, moral engagement, clear setting, controlled suspense—continues to influence film, television and long-form journalism, and why the social questions raised then still echo in contemporary debates about housing, labour rights and equitable access to new technology.

Keywords

Society, Industrialisation, Religion, Science, Gender, Class, Novelists, Novels

Discussion

5.5.1 Victorian Society: Characteristics

The period of Queen Victoria's Reign (1837-1901) has been regarded as the Victorian Era. It was a glorious period in the history of Britain because British Imperialism expanded at this time. Generally, it was a peaceful and prosperous period, however, there were certain problems within the social structure.

5.5.1.1 Industrialisation

Industrialisation is the process of transitioning from an agricultural and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine production. The process began in England in the 18th century and spread to other parts of the world later. Until this time, England's population was predominantly rural. Industrialisation hastened the process of people moving from the countryside to urban areas. As a result of this movement, cities became overcrowded and slums and tiny row houses were developed by 1900, when 80 percent of the population lived in cities. Industrialisation opened up more possibilities for employment in urban areas, and people migrated from the countryside to cities in search of jobs. There were significant developments in science too, and it also improved the economy of the land.

In response to this transition, writers produced a large number of essays, novels, poems, plays and memoirs. Realist fiction dealing with the consequences of industrialisation and social criticism were at their peak in the 1830s and 1850s, and many writers strove to confront machine culture as an important social force and a literary matter. Almost all of the Victorian writers exhibited an ambivalent attitude towards contemporary life's expanding urban, economic, and industrial facets.

5.5.1.2 Religion

Religion had a great influence on Victorian society. An evangelical wing developed within the Church of England during this period. Missionary communities prospered under the evangelical wing. In literature, evangelicals are presented as people imposing restrictions on amusement and entertainment. Most of the high profile female writers of this period were committed Christians. The Brontës, Mrs. Gaskell, and George Eliot made use of their faith in their works. The male writers were also devout Christians.

5.5.1.3 Science

The field of science developed considerably during the Victorian era. The major scientific invention was Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Science became a part of the curriculum at many of the universities. Science was recognised as a profession, and the government also rendered greater support to scientific endeavors.

5.5.1.4 Gender and Class

Victorian society was hierarchically constructed. Apart from religion and race, it was gender and class that were the two decisive factors in society. During this time, men and women had clearly defined gender roles to perform. Men worked for wages, whereas women looked after households. Men were involved in the public sphere and were independent. Women, on the other hand, confined themselves to the private sphere of home and were dependent on men.

Victorian society was divided into different classes. Although class division was based on economic factors, cultural aspects were also important. Each class had its own occupations, educational qualifications, familial values and politics. The majority of the population belonged to the working class. They

mostly did daily wage jobs. A strong working class culture developed during this time. The middle class also grew rapidly at this time and also acquired political power to a certain degree.

A significant political event of the time was the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Working class political movement, namely Chartism, also grew. Another feature of the Victorian era was the reforms that happened with regard to the role of women. Women were actively involved in social activities, and one of the means through which they drew attention to their plight was writing.

Publishing became a very lucrative business during this era. A large number of publishing houses emerged during this time. It was the books of Walter Scott that got tremendous sales. The railways, which transformed the whole land and the lives of its people, also greatly aided the business of publishing. Journals and books published could now be carried across the nation. The publishers had a decisive role in determining the particular topic. Industrialisation was a key event in England during this period. But poor living conditions for people, diseases like cholera resulting from it, unemployment and the exploitation of cheap labor, particularly child labor, all followed industrialisation. The society followed a rigid hierarchical structure. People belonged to the upper class, the lower class and the middle class. The upper class people were landowners, lords, important officials and rich businessmen. They hired lower class workers to work for them. The middle class, also known as the "bourgeoisie, also prospered during this time because of the growth of cities and economies. They had skilled jobs. Most of them worked as merchants and shopkeepers, as well as in banks, railways and government offices.

Almost every facet of life changed dramatically throughout the Victorian Era. There were immense developments in medical, scientific and technological fields. Industrialisation and urbanisation provided better opportunities for men, but they also made life difficult. Thus, though the age began with a note of optimism, it eventually gave way to insecurity, doubt and deplorable conditions for the common people.

5.5.2 Victorian Literature

After the Romantic Revival, a new phase was ushered into the domain of English literature during the Victorian Era. The novel had become an established literary form long before Queen Victoria ascended the throne. During the Victorian era, the novel form evolved into a dominant literary genre, and the number of readers also increased immensely. There were many factors that led to the growth of novels during that time. Cities that evolved as a result of urbanisation became lucrative markets for books. Oversees readership also increased in colonies. Publication costs, both in terms of paper and printing, became cheaper. The distribution network also became stronger with the advent of railways. Being the most popular literary form during the period, Victorian novels enjoyed cultural dominance and significantly contributed to the formation of individual and national identities. Also, they created powerful ideologies regarding sexuality, race and gender.

The popularity of Victorian novels was so huge that even in the twentieth century, there were many television and movie adaptations of the novels. Even in the latter part of the twentieth century, Victorian novels were incorporated into the curriculum of English and American schools and colleges.

There were a number of reasons for the growth of the novel during the Victorian Era. A few among them are:

- Growth of print culture
- Growth in literacy
- Dominance of Middle class

There was a growing demand for novels from middle class readers. Many writers turned from journalism and poetry writing to novel writing. Along with the growth of the publishing industry, lending libraries also grew in number as the literacy rate grew.

Serialisation was a major feature of Victorian novels. As print culture developed with the advancement of printing technology and the lowered cost of paper, serialisation became a trend. And it still continues to have a significant role in popular culture. There was also a sharp increase in the number of periodicals in the mid nineteenth century. Publishing novels in serialised form provided the authors with a larger number of readers. Serialised formats cost less, so even a poor reader could afford them.

Charles Dickens was the first writer to adopt the strategy of serialisation. His work, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, or more popularly known as the *Pickwick Papers,* was published over 19 issues. Dickens published *The Great Expectations* and *Little Dorrit* also in serialised form. Apart from Dickens, Willkie Collins also published his novel Women in White in serialised form.

Many other Victorian novelists followed this craze of serialisation. William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes,* too, materialised first as serialised versions. The Victorian era is also considered a golden age of Children's Literature.

Another major characteristic of the Victorian novels was their representation of the social conditions in England. The novels, which were realistic in nature, dealt with problems caused by industrialisation and utilitarianism. Such novels were called social novels, and they dealt with the problems encountered by a newly industrialised and urbanised community.

5.5.3 Victorian Novels: Characteristics

5.5.3.1 Plot, Theme and Characters

The novels were mostly multiplotted. Some critics regarded the complexly plotted novels as a metaphor for the intricate scientific theories propounded during the period by scientists like Darwin. It was also suggested that the complexities of the plot referred to complex human nature too. Cliffhangers were a common feature as a result of the trend toward serialisation. The interrelationship between self and society was a major thematic concern in Victorian novels. Regarding characterisation, Victorian novels were mostly crowded with characters, as there was a vast panorama of characters.

5.5.3.2 Tone

Many Victorian novels were didactic in tone. Thackeray was a novelist whose novels mainly had moralistic purposes. Evangelical writers too wrote children's works that were didactic in nature. Realism mixed with romanticism is also found in many novels.

5.5.3.3 Genres

The Bronte sisters mainly wrote bildungsroman, or novels of education (a type of novel that describes the development of a protagonist from childhood to maturity.). The novels dealt with the problems women faced, like educational and occupational setbacks. The novels were 'social problem' novels that addressed social, economic and political conditions that restricted women in Victorian society. Psychological realism was a feature of novels

like *Jane Eyre, Agnes Grey* and *Villet.* Supernaturalism is a notable trait in many novels. A famous example is *Wuthering Heights*.

5.5.3.4 Social Realism

Social realism was a feature of the novels written by writers like Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Eliot portrayed ordinary and mundane life realistically in her novels. Their novels were about the common man. The struggles of the lower class people who wanted to ascend the social ladder were portrayed truthfully. Many novels featured people of the working class and the middle class.

Those novels that realistically portrayed the social problems of contemporary society were also known as social novels or "the condition of England' novels. Many of the social concerns that arose as a result of industrialisation were realistically portrayed in the novels of the time. For example, Elizabeth Gaskell in North and South raises the issue of the conflict between two towns; the south is the cultural centre of London, and the north is the growing industrial town. Dickens's *Hard Times* is about the tougher side of factory life and deals with issues like the rights of the workers.

Realistic novels accurately portrayed and interpreted reality. Realism was characterised by attention to details, and instead of plot, importance was given to characterisation. Realism was against the idealism of romanticism. It was the first time that readers read about characters and situations with which they could identify themselves.

5.5.3.5 Detective Fiction

The Victorian era also saw a growth in detective novels. Detective novels are popular works in which a crime is introduced, investigated and the culprit is revealed. Wilkie Collins wrote famous detective novels at the time. His novels, *The Woman in White* (1859) and *The Moonstone* (1868), have been regarded as the first modern English detective novels.

5.5.3.6 Major Victorian Novelists and their Works

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was one of the most famous and successful writers in 19th-century England. Apart from being a novelist, he also produced a body of work as a reporter, essayist, correspondent, and editor. His writings chiefly focused on the aspects of Victorian life as he knew them. Most of his works open a window to his attitudes and preoccupations as a human being and as a writer.

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, Hampshire. His father, John Dickens, was a clerk in the naval pay office. He was unable to live and look after the family within his means and amassed debt, which led to his arrest and being sent to Marshalsea debtor's prison. Just two days past his 12th birthday, Dickens was sent to work in a warehouse to look after his family. When his family's fortunes fell, he was forced to live a life of hardship and disgrace. Although his father was freed from Marshalsea after three months and Dickens had to work at the warehouse only for four months, the sense of insecurity and injustice these events instilled lasted a lifetime. However, it was a learning opportunity for him as well, as it helped him develop a wider perspective and a more nuanced understanding of the world in which he lived. And eventually, the lessons he learned aided him in improving his craft.

Dickens was later enrolled as a day student at the Wellington House Academy in London. His first foray into professional writing began at the age of 12 or 15, when he was already experimenting with a variety of genres. While working as a clerk in a law office for several years, he set out to learn shorthand so that

he could choose a career as a journalist. In 1828, when he was sixteen years old, he became a freelance reporter in the London law courts. In his 20th year, Dickens secured a job as a parliamentary reporter for the 'Mirror of Parliament', founded by his uncle John Henry Barrow. He worked there from 1832 to 1834.

It was at this time that Dickens started writing Sketches by "Boz". It was a series of collected sketches and short tales by Dickens, under the pseudonym Boz, published in the *Monthly Magazine*, *Bell's Weekly Magazine*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Evening Chronicle*, and *Bell's Life in London* and *Sporting Chronicle*. He later collected these pieces in two hardcover volumes titled *Sketches by Boz* (1836), adding additional material and revising the originals. Many of the sketches are, in fact, essays that vividly capture the lower- and middle-class street life he observed firsthand. In them, Dickens introduced many of the scenes and much of the subject matter that later appeared in his fiction.

His first novel was *The Pickwick Papers*, whose full title was *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. This too was first published serially from 1836 to 1837 under the pseudonym Boz. In book form, it was published in 1837. The book, which depicted the doings of the kind and naive Samuel Pickwick at the Pickwick Club, became so successful that Dickens' popularity increased rapidly. *Pickwick Papers*, a comic, easy to read novel, is still extensively enjoyed by readers.

Dickens resigned his job at the newspaper in 1836 and started working as an editor for a monthly magazine, *Bentley's Miscellany*. His next novel, *Oliver Twist,* was serialised in this magazine from 1837 to 1839. In 1838, it was published as a three volume book. The novel, which is a kind of bildungsroman, realistically depicts the seedy side of London, and Dickens seems to express a viewpoint in the novel that poverty often leads to crime. Through the novel, Dickens also criticised the Poor Law of 1834, which prohibited the government from paying the able-bodied poor unless they entered workhouses. The novel is still popular and widely read. Novels like *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41), and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) followed *Oliver Twist*. *A Christmas Carol* (1843) was his next significant novel, which inaugurated a new literary genre of Christmas books. The main character is Ebenezer Scrooge, an old man who is a miser. The attitude of the Victorian upper class is portrayed through the character of Ebenezer Scrooge, whose name has become a synonym for a miser in the English language. He symbolises greed, the lack of Christian values, and the opposite of all that Christmas stands for. Scrooge is visited by a number of ghosts on Christmas Eve, beginning with his former business partner, Jacob Marley. The three spirits who follow, the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come, demonstrate to Scrooge how his cruel behaviour has harmed those around him. At the end of the novel, he realises that there is still time for him to change, and he changes into a kind-hearted human being.

Dombey and Son, his other novel, which also appeared first in serialised form from 1846 to 1848, brings out Dickens' sharp criticism of many of the social injustices. *David Copperfield,* which contains many of Dickens' own personal experiences, is considered by many critics to be his masterpiece. He has been termed his "favourite child". The novel is again written in the tradition of the Bildungsroman. It is semi-autobiographical and Dickens uses first person narration for the first time. Dickens' own experiences with child labour and debtor's prison, where his father was imprisoned, have been narrated in the novel. The experiences of poverty at the shoe polish-

ing warehouse during his childhood, following the imprisonment of his father, had a great psychological impact on the life of Dickens, and this has been depicted in the novel.

The main theme of the work is the deplorable condition of the poor working class people in industrial society and the way they are exploited by the rich. Dickens has also explored gender roles and the issues women encountered in Victorian society through the characters in the novel, like the servant Pegotty, Agnes Wickfield and Miss Betsey Trotwood. Mr. Micawber in the novel is regarded as a typical Dickensian character.

Hard Times (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1860–61) followed *David Copperfield*. *A Tale of Two Cities*, a hugely popular novel, is set in the late 18th century against the background of the French Revolution. *Great Expectations* is written against the backdrop of the technological innovations that gave rise to the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. *Bleak House* (1852–53), Hard Times (1854), and *Little Dorrit* (1855–57) all focus on dark themes, presenting a gloomy and sombre picture of English society during Dickens' time. *Edwin Drood* (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*) was his final novel that was left unfinished due to Dickens's death in 1870.

Dickens' aim in writing the kind of novels that he wrote was to bring about social reform, for he believed that novels had a moral purpose to perform. His novels are still known for their social concerns, and he has been regarded as the first writer to have written novels belonging to the tradition of social realism. His works are reliable documents on the social and cultural characteristics of nineteenth century England. Dickens was the first novelist to write from the point of view of lower class people. Through his novels, Dickens always protests against the social ill of child abuse. In novels like *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* and, *Little Dorrit*, Dickens attacks many evils within English society. He exposes the problems within boarding schools in *Nicholas Nickleby* , the work houses in *Oliver Twist*, the new manufacturing system in *Hard Times*, and the court of Chancery in *Bleak House*. A notable feature of Dickens' writing style is his use of humour. There is a long lasting quality to his portrayal of humorous characters like Mr.Pickwick, Mrs.Gamp and Mr.Micawber. Dickens' style has given rise to terms like 'dickensian' and 'pickwickian'.

William Makepeace Thackeray

Next to Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray is another noteworthy novelist of the Victorian Era. He was born in Calcutta, where his father Richmond Thackeray was an administrator in the East India Company. His father died in 1815, and in 1816 Thackeray was sent home to England as his mother got married again. He studied at several grammar schools and finally in 1822 he reached Charterhouse, the London public school. From 1828 to 1830 he studied at Trinity College, Cambridge. After experimenting with a number of professions, Thackeray finally turned to professional journalism. *Vanity Fair*, published in serial form from 1847 to '48, brought Thackeray both fame and prosperity, and made him a recognised author on the English scene.

Vanity Fair is a novel that reflects the English society of the time. As a book, it was published in the year 1848. The novel which is subtitled, *A Novel without a Hero* takes its main title from John Bunyan's allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*. For Bunyan, *Vanity Fair* is where all activities which corrupts humans and take them away from Christian values and salvation happen. Thackeray in his work portrays human frailties and weaknesses, and the work is a brilliant satire of the Victorian

society. The novel focuses on the intertwined fortunes of two different women, Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp.

The most notable feature of the novel is the character, Becky Sharp, who has been chosen by E.M Forster as a perfect example for a 'round character'. She is one of the most memorable characters in English Literature too. Becky's fortune gets intertwined with that of Amelia Sedley. Amelia Sedley is, affluent, well-bred and quiet and Becky Sharp is ambitious, active, cunning, provocative, and amoral.

Thackeray has shown great skill in narrating, and his character portrayal is subtle and vivid. However, he does not attempt a deep psychological study of the characters. The plot is a complex one and it focuses on all aspects of human life from birth to death, from poverty to richness. The setting of the novel covers a vast area from London to Brighton, then to Paris and other continents. The social setting includes the residences and the situations of the landed gentry and their lives. His honest portrayal of the 19th century society in the novel makes it his greatest achievement. With his great skill in narration and characterisation, Thackeray ponders over the ambivalence in human behaviour in the novel. These are the many qualities which have made the book one among the most outstanding one of the era.

The History of Henry Esmond(1852), is a historical novel by Thackeray. This long and complex novel is a portrayal of the period of Queen Ann. His other novels are *The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family* (1854) and *The Virginians: A Tale of the Last Century* (1857–59) a historical novel which is a sequel to *Henry Esmond.*

George Eliot

George Eliot, born as Mary Ann Evans, on November 22, 1819, in Warwickshire, England as the daughter of a land agent. With her appointment in 1851 as the editor of *The Westminster Review*, she became a member of the literary circle. Her major works include *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Middlemarch* (1871–72), and *Daniel Deronda (*1876).

Adam Bede focuses on two pairs of opposing characters, one male and one female. The title character Adam Bede is a carpenter. He is in love with Hetty Sorrel, an unmarried woman who bears a child by another man. Although Bede tries to help her it is of no use. And finally Adam marries Dinah Morris, the Methodist preacher. The work realistically portrays a picture of English country life. It also has a number of outstanding characters like, Mrs. Poyser, Hetty, and Adam Bede himself.

The Mill on the Floss, was published in three volumes in 1860. It depicts in a sympathetic manner, Maggie Tulliver's futile attempts to adjust to her rustic surroundings. Her efforts turn tragic because her brother Tom, who has a strong sense of family honour, forbids her from interacting with the only person who recognises her brains and imagination. When she is caught in a compromising situation, Tom forsakes her altogether. In the end Tom and his sister are reconciled as they try in vain to survive a flood. The novel which is partly autobiographical unravels the inner recesses of human mind deftly.

Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe (1861) is a short novel which also presents a fine picture of village life. The story's title character is a friendless weaver who cares only for money. He is ultimately transformed through his love for Eppie, an abandoned baby girl, whom he

finds and rears as his own child. Eliot skillfully blends humour with tragedy. The publication of *Romola* in (1863) opened a new phase in the writing career of George Eliot.

Elizabeth Gaskell

The majority of her novels deal with the industrialisation of Manchester. It was after her marriage to William Gaskell that she moved to Manchester. Manchester was a vibrant city, but mainly an industrial one. Class divisions were prevalent in the city of Manchester. A major theme of her work is class conflict.

Elizabeth Gaskell's first novel is *Mary Barton* (1848). The novel centres on a working class family. It was to escape the depression caused by the death of her son that she started writing *Mary Barton*. The work was first published anonymously in 1848. In 1853, she published the novel *Ruth,* which became controversial. *Cranford*, her next work, was serialised in the magazine *Household Words*. In 1855, *North and South* were published. Gaskell was a great friend of Charlotte Bronte and also wrote a carefully researched biography of her.

A reliable social document of the Victorian Era, *Mary Barton* deals with the deplorable condition of the people living in the industrial towns. Gaskell was looked upon as a spokesperson for the working class during her time. The novel features characters—men, women and children belonging to the working class. They lived in abject poverty, and children died when their rich masters lived in prosperity.

Her next work, *Ruth,* is a social novel, and it has become controversial after its publication. The themes are seduction and illegitimacy. The novel exemplifies Victorian morality. The protagonist is a poor, orphan girl named Ruth, whose innocence and naivety put her into many troubles. She is seduced by a rich man who deserts her later. Ruth is depicted as a fallen woman, and the work is in many ways similar to *The Scarlet Letter* of Nathaniel Hawthorne and anticipates Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

Her other work, *Cranford* (1853), also appeared in serialised form in the magazine *Household Words*. It is again a social novel, set in a village in Victorian England, where the characters are common men and women who find it hard to change according to the changing society. Cranford lacks a well-structured plot. Instead, it is in the form of a number of sketches about the lives of numerous characters. *North and South* was also first published in *Household Words* in 22 parts. This novel, like her earlier ones, is a social novel set against the background of industrialisation. The sufferings of the working class have been portrayed by Gaskell in this novel, set in the fictional industrial town of Milton. The contrast between the industrial north and rural south, class divisions and the injustices faced by the working class are the other themes of the novel.

Like many other Victorian novels, Gaskell's novels are also too long and consist of numerous characters. All her novels belong to the genre of 'social realism'. Sometimes her novels also have a moralistic tone, yet her style is simple and lucid.

The Brontës

Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë was a great writer of the early 19th century. She was born on April 21, 1816, at the parsonage on Market Street in Thornton, near the town of Bradford. Her father was Reverend Patrick Brontë.

In the early 19th century, the Industrial Revolution was transforming life in Britain. In the north of England, industrial towns were booming. However, in 1820, Charlotte Bronte's family moved to a moorland village called Haworth. In 1824, Charlotte Bronte and her

sister Emily were sent to join two older sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, at the Clergy Daughters School in Cowan Bridge, Lancashire. In 1825, Maria and Elizabeth Bronte both died of tuberculosis. Charlotte and Emily Bronte returned home. Afterward, they were educated at home for some years. In 1831-32 Charlotte Bronte went to Margaret Wooler's school near Dewsbury. Charlotte loved writing and painting. Later in 1839, she accepted a position as governess in the Sidgewick family, but left after three months and returned to Haworth. In 1841, she became governess of the White family but left once again after nine months.

After she returned to Haworth, the three sisters, led by Charlotte, decided to open their own school once the necessary preparations were completed. But this project proved to be a colossal failure, for their advertisements elicited no response from the public. Charlotte discovered Emily's poems the following year and decided to publish a collection of all three sisters' poetry. In 1846, she published their poems, written under the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Charlotte also completed *The Professor*, which was rejected for publication. The next year, however, Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, and Ann's *Agnes Grey* were all published, still under the Bell pseudonyms.

Charlotte and Ann paid a visit to their publishers in London in 1848 and revealed the true identities of the "Bells." In the same year, Branwell Bronte, her brother, who had become an alcoholic and a drug addict by then, died, and Emily also died soon after. Ann died the following year.

During a visit to London in 1849, Charlotte became acquainted with literary figures such as Thackeray. Charlotte met Mrs. Gaskell in 1850 while editing her sister's various works. By 1854, Charlotte and Rev. A. B. Nicholls, curate of Haworth, had become engaged. They got married later. In 1854, Charlotte, expecting a child, caught pneumonia, and after a lengthy and painful illness, she died.

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë was first published in 1847 as *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*. At the time of its publication, the novel was regarded as a classic as it gave a new dimension to the Victorian novel with its realistic portrayal of a woman's inner life, highlighting her struggles with her natural desires and social situation. The book, which was originally published in three volumes, is, in some aspects, based on Charlotte Brontë's own life. The work is written in first person narrative, and a most notable feature of it is that the reader is often addressed in the course of the narrative. The novel belongs to multiple genres; it is a realistic novel and also a gothic one.

The title character is a 10-year-old orphan living with her uncle's family when the novel begins, as her parents had died of typhus. Jane is shunned by the family, with the exception of the nursemaid. Later, she is sent to the austere Lowood Institution, a charity school, where she and the other girls are mistreated; "Lowood," as the name implies, is the "low" point in Jane's young life. However, in the face of such adversity, she gathers strength and confidence.

After leaving Lowood, she found work as a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she fell in love with Edward Fairfax Rochester. Rochester eventually reciprocates Jane's feelings and proposes marriage. However, she discovers he already has a wife, Bertha Mason, who has gone mad and is locked away on the third floor of their mansion. Believing that he was tricked into that marriage, Rochester feels justified in pursuing his relationship with Jane. He pleads with her to join him in France, where they can live as husband and wife despite the legal prohibitions, but Jane refuses on principle and flees Thornfield.

Jane is taken in by people she later discovers are her cousins. One of them is St. John, a principled clergyman. He gives her a job and soon proposes marriage, suggesting that she join him as a missionary in India. Jane initially agrees to leave with him, but not as his wife. However, St. John pressures her to reconsider, and Jane is so confused that she is unable to make a clear decision as to what to do. Just then, she hears from Rochester, who has been blinded by his wife's arson attack.

The narrative is in first person. The events and characters are seen from the narrator's point of view, which also establishes a very intimate link between the narrator and the reader and draws the latter into a closer involvement with the story. These requests to the reader or thoughts shared with them are always delivered at times of high intensity or action, such as when Rochester asks Jane to forgive him after their first wedding day. 'Reader, I forgave him' (Vol. III, Ch. 1, p. 336). The novel is set in five different locales: Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House, and Ferndean Manor. Each time Jane moves from one locale to another, the narrative breaks to set the scene and stress that this setting will form a new stage in Jane's life.

The use of supernatural elements is a prevalent feature in *Jane Eyre*. Brontë uses many themes of Gothic novels to add drama and suspense. Religion is another major theme in the novel. Religion and spirituality are key factors in the development of characters in the novel. The main character matures as she learns to follow Christian values and resist temptation. As Jane develops her relationship with God, Mr. Rochester must also reform his pride, pray, and become humble. Love, family, and independence are other themes explored through the story of Jane. Along with these, there is the theme of gender roles in nineteenth century England.

Shirley (1849) is different from *Jane Eyre,* and it is a social novel. The novel, which is set in 1812, deals with two major themes that were still pertinent in 1848, i.e., working-class uprisings and the condition of women. The book tracks the lives of two women from very different social circles who show their communities what women are capable of. The book is generally regarded as Brontë's most feminist novel, and it is still widely read today. In a broad scene, Brontë includes a variety of characters perceived in real life and has also added traces of humour. *Shirley* is told in the third person. However, many traits of Brontë are strongly present in the narrative voice, and the tone is one of anger, rebellion, suffering, and doubt.

The novel has a well-defined plot. Brontë shifts focus among characters and uses reported conversations to violate the time sequence so that she can arrange events in the most effective dramatic order.

Villette is another novel by Charlotte Brontë, published in three volumes in 1853. Though less well-known than *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* is considered her best work. One of Brontë 's most difficult works, this account of an impoverished young woman's emotional trial-by-fire while teaching in a Belgian girl's school is an excellent example of psychological realism interwoven with Gothic romance. The autobiographical nature of *Villette* deviates slightly from the biographical form, usual in classic Victorian writing. As in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë has used supernatural elements in this work too.

In 1857, *The Professor*, which had been written in 1845-46, and, in the same year, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, were also published.

Emily Brontë

Emily Brontë the sister of Charlotte Brontë, was also a great writer of the early 19th centu-

ry. Emily was born on July 30, 1818, in Market Street, Thornton, near the rapidly growing town of Bradford in Yorkshire.

Emily Brontë, was sent to a clergy daughter's school in Cowan Bridge, Lancashire, in 1824, at the age of eighteen. However, two of her sisters, Maria Brontë, and Elizabeth Brontë, died of tuberculosis while attending the same school. Emily Brontë, then returned home to be cared for by her aunt. After that, Emily got education at home.

Emily and her sister, Charlotte Brontë, were sent to Brussels in 1842. However, they both returned home in January 1844, and Emily became a housekeeper. In the meantime, Emily wrote poems, and a book of poems by Emily Brontë, and her two sisters, Charlotte and Anne, was published in 1846. The famous novel by Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* was published in December 1847.

Emily fell ill in November 1848 and died on December 19, 1848. She was only 30 years old. Emily was buried at Haworth Church on December 22, 1848.

Though she wrote less than Charlotte, Emily is regarded as the greatest of the three sisters. Her single novel, *Wuthering Heights,* has a unique place in English literature. The novel was published under the pseudonym Ellis Bell. It is different from the other novels of the period in its poetic presentation and uncommon structure. The story is narrated by Lockwood, and within his narrative there are a series of retrospective short anecdotes by Ellen Dean, the housekeeper. The focus of the whole narrative is on the impact of the orphan Heathcliff on the two families of Earnshaw and Linton in a remote Yorkshire district at the end of the 18th century. Heathcliff becomes disillusioned by the marriage of Catherine Earnshaw, whom he loves, to the kind and affluent Edgar Linton, Heathcliff then plans revenge on both families, which lasts until the second generation. Cathy's death in childbirth does not liberate him from his obsession with her until his death. The marriage of the surviving heirs of Earnshaw and Linton restores peace later. The novel reflects the true spirit of the English moors, where it is set in stark, unflinching realism and has a powerful poetic quality.

Anne Brontë

Anne was the youngest of the Brontë siblings. She began working as a governess for the wealthy Ingham family in 1839 after completing her education. She had a hard time keeping the Ingham children under control and educating them. She was fired after enduring a lot of criticism. Her first novel, *Agnes Grey,* is based on these difficult experiences she faced during her stay in the Ingham household. She rejoined her siblings at the Haworth parsonage in 1839.

She started writing poems during this time. Her poetry became part of a volume of poems, along with Emily and Charlotte's, and was published in 1846, titled *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*. Anne was "Acton" in this pseudonymous group. Anne Brontë, published two novels during her short lifetime *Agnes Grey* (1847) and *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall* (1848).

During the winter of 1848, Anne Bronte was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Over time, her health deteriorated. She died while staying in Scarborough on May 28, 1849.

Anne Bronte portrays the prejudices of Victorian society in her second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall,* published in June 1848. The novel challenged the patriarchy of existing social norms. This novel's protagonist is a free-spirited, independent lady who tries to protect herself and her children from her husband's horrific influence.

Helen Graham's disastrous marriage to the dashing drunkard Arthur Huntingdon. In order to escape from him, she goes to the seclusion of Wildfell Hall. She is followed by Gilbert Markham, who is in love with her. Helen refuses him, and as an explanation for this, she gives him her journal. There he reads of her troubled married life. Eventually, after Huntingdon's death, they marry.

This novel was a clear defiance of the English law until 1870, which said that a married woman's income was her husband's property, and it was legal for him to live off of it. This novel, which upheld the rights of women, became an instant success, and Anne was hailed as a writer with true feminist concerns.

Agnes Grey, the next novel by Anne Brontë, was published in 1847. She weaves into the rather negative autobiographical narrative, her real-life experiences as a governess, first with the unruly Bloomfield children and then with the callous Murrays. The natural surroundings and her budding friendship with the local clergyman, Weston, provide her with the only consolation in an otherwise drab and constrained existence.

George Meredith

George Meredith was another notable Victorian poet and novelist. His novels focus more on the psychological features of characters. A remarkable feature of his work is that he portrays women as having equal status with men. His first work is *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1856). But his first significant work is *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). His masterpiece is *The Egoist*. Subtitled as *A Comedy in Narrative, The Egoist* is a comic novel that was published in three volumes in 1879.

Lesser Known Novelists

Edward George Earle Bulwer-Lytton

Edward George Earle Bulwer-Lytton was a British politician, poet, and critic. He is chiefly remembered as a prolific novelist. His first published novels are *Falkland* (1827), *Pelham* (1828), and *Eugene Aram* (1832). In 1862, Bulwer-Lytton produced an occult novel entitled *A Strange Story*. He began to work on another story, *Kenelm Chillingly* but could not complete it as his health declined.

Anthony Trollope

Anthony Trollope was an English novelist who remained unknown to readers until long after his death. His best-known and most popular work is a series of novels set in the fictional English county of Barsetshire. He also wrote convincing novels about political life as well as studies that show great psychological penetration. One of his greatest merits was that he had a clear vision of the society of Victorian England, which he re-created in his books in an honest way.

The Warden (1855), his first novel, is an in-depth study of the warden of an old people's home who is chastised for profiteering excessively on a charity venture. Later, Trollope published five other books set in Barsetshire: *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867)

Charles Reade

Charles Reade attacks, through his novels, the social injustices of his times. *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1856). *Hard Cash* (1863), *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870) are his significant novels.

Recap

- The period of Queen Victoria's reign has been regarded as Victorian era
- British Imperialism expanded
- As a result of industrialisation, people started migrating to cities
- Rapid urbanisation also occurred
- One thing that had great influence on Victorian society was religion
- Many writers, particularly females, were devout Christians and made use of their faith in their work
- A notable feature of Victorian society was the coexistence of two conflicting ideals; scientific temper and religious beliefs
- Gender and class were decisive factors in Victorian society
- Slavery was abolished in British Empire
- Many working class movements were initiated, and the middle class also became socially and economically powerful
- Publishing became a lucrative industry, and there was a huge demand for books among the middle class people
- There were immense developments in medical, scientific and technological fields
- Though industrialisation and urbanisation provided better opportunities for men, it also made life difficult for the common people
- The Novel became the dominant literary genre
- The reasons for the development of novels as the most popular literary genre was the growth of print culture, growth of literacy, and dominance of Middle class
- Serialisation was a major feature of Victorian novels
- Charles Dickens wrote many of his novels in serialised form
- Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* were other famous novels which were first published in serialised versions
- Victorian novels were multiplotted and reflected the complexity of human lives
- Bildungsroman, novels of psychological realism, and "conditions of England novels" were the popular
- The first modern English detective novels, *The Woman in White* (1859), and *The Moonstone* (1868), were published during that time
- Charles Dickens was a master craftsman during the Victorian era who intended to bring about social reform through his novels
- William Makepeace Thackeray is another noteworthy novelist of the Victorian Era

- George Eliot has been recognised as one of the important writers of nineteenth century
- Elizabeth Gaskell was an immensely popular and critically acclaimed novelist of her time
- The Brontës left indelible mark on Victorian literature in their own unique way
- George Meredith, Anthony Trollope and Charles Reade were other notable writers of Victorian age

Objective Questions

1. What is industrialisation?
2. What was the major scientific invention during the Victorian era?
3. What was Chartism?
4. How were middle class people known during Victorian era?
5. Which literary genre became dominant during the Victorian era?
6. What was a major feature of Victorian novels?
7. Which novel by Wilkie Collins was published in serialised form?
8. Which novels have been regarded as the first modern English detective novels?
9. Which was the first novel written by Dickens?
10. In which novel does the character Becky Sharp appear?
11. Which novel by Elizabeth Barton centers on a working class family?
12. Which novel by Emile Bronte has Gothic elements in it?

Answers

1. The process of transitioning from an agricultural and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine production
2. The theory of evolution
3. A working class political movement
4. Bourgeoisie
5. Novel
6. Serialisation
7. Woman in White
8. *The Woman in White* (1859), and *The Moonstone* (1868)

9. The Pickwick Papers
10. Vanity Fair
11. Mary Barton
12. *Wuthering Heights*

Assignments

1. Explore how Victorian novelists used their works to critique the social and moral issues of their time.
2. Discuss the theme of class and class conflict in Victorian novels.
3. Explore the Bildungsroman genre in Victorian literature.
4. Analyse the impact of the Industrial Revolution on Victorian literature.
5. Discuss the role of religion and spirituality in Victorian novels.

Suggested Reading

1. Bloom, Harold. *The Victorian Novel.* Chelsea, 2004.
2. Sutherland, John. *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction*. Taylor, 2014.
3. Wheeler, Michael. *English Fiction of the Victorian Period*. Taylor, 2014.

BLOCK - 06

Introduction to Novel-2

Unit 1

A Brief Survey of the Important Novels of the 20th Century

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- get awareness on the different movements that shaped the themes, styles, and narratives of novels during this period
- gain an appreciation for diverse perspectives and cultural contexts that shaped the novels of the century
- examine contemporary issues through a historical lens
- become familiar with influential authors such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Salman Rushdie, and Gabriel García Márquez

Prerequisites

A crowded London street hums with life in the opening pages of *Mrs. Dalloway*; elsewhere, a man named Leopold Bloom wanders the city in *Ulysses*, his thoughts leaping across time and memory. These scenes, fragmented and fluid, mark the dawn of a literary revolution. Welcome to the dynamic and transformative world of 20th-century English literature!

In this unit, we will explore one of the most inventive and provocative periods in literary history. The 20th century witnessed seismic shifts in style, structure, and subject matter as writers broke away from tradition and reimagined what literature could be. Movements like Modernism introduced bold experimentation, exemplified in the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, where inner consciousness took center stage and narratives fractured conventional form.

The postwar decades brought new voices and concerns to the fore. The gritty realism of the Angry Young Men, with figures like Kingsley Amis, reflected disillusionment in postwar Britain. Dystopian visions like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* mirrored deep social anxieties. Existentialist themes emerged through the influence of thinkers like Camus and Sartre, while postcolonial literature flourished in the hands of Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie. Magical realism captivated readers in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and postmodern critique found expression in Don DeLillo's *White Noise*. As you explore these works and the cultural contexts behind them, prepare to uncover how the 20th century forever reshaped the literary landscape.

Keywords

Modernism, Stream of Consciousness, Social Realism, Dystopian Fiction, Existentialism, Angry Young Men, Postcolonial Literature, Magical Realism

Discussion

6.1.1 Important Novels of the 20th Century

The 20th century marked a profound transformation in the landscape of English literature, thanks in large part to the advent of Modernism. This literary movement had a seismic impact on the English novel, pushing the boundaries of storytelling and redefining the very essence of narrative itself. At its core, Modernism sought to capture the fragmented and disorienting nature of modern life, a period characterised by rapid technological advancements, social upheaval, and the lingering scars of two world wars. In this era, authors grappled with how to represent the complexities of human consciousness and society in a world that seemed increasingly fragmented and chaotic.

One of the most iconic and enduring works of Modernism is James Joyce's *Ulysses*, published in 1922. This novel stands as a quintessential example of the movement's principles. Joyce, with meticulous attention to detail and a relentless commitment to innovation, employed a stream of consciousness narrative style that allowed readers to explore the inner thoughts, memories, and experiences of its characters. Set in a single day in Dublin, *Ulysses* not only chronicles the events of its characters but also unearths the vast reservoirs of their subconscious minds. The novel's intricate structure and experimental prose challenged conventional literary norms and transformed the act of reading into a challenging yet deeply rewarding experience. *Ulysses* remains a towering achievement in twentieth century literature and a testament to the power of Modernist storytelling.

Virginia Woolf, another luminary of the Modernist movement, made significant contributions to the genre with her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925. This novel, set in post-World War I London, masterfully embraced the stream of consciousness technique, inviting readers into the consciousness of its protagonist, Clarissa Dalloway. As Clarissa prepares for a party, Woolf explores the intricate web of her thoughts, memories, and emotions. Through this intimate exploration, Woolf illuminates the inner lives of her characters, revealing the profound impact of personal and social experiences. *Mrs. Dalloway* not only challenges traditional narrative structures but also presents a poignant reflection on the effects of war and the complexities of human existence.

Between the two World Wars, the literary landscape of English novels underwent a significant shift as the world grappled with the aftermath of the First World War and the looming threat of another global conflict. This period saw the rise of social realism as a prominent literary movement, along with a renewed interest in dystopian fiction that reflected the anxieties and uncertainties of the era.

One of the most notable authors to emerge during this time was George Orwell, whose works *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Coming Up for Air* (1939) offered incisive examinations of the impact of economic and social conditions on ordinary individuals. Orwell, drawing from his own experiences, explores the lives of characters struggling to maintain their dignity and values amidst the economic hardships and social pressures of the interwar years. These novels stood as stark critiques of the capitalist system and consum-

er culture, emphasising the importance of personal integrity and individualism in a world marked by conformity.

Meanwhile, the 1930s also witnessed a resurgence of interest in dystopian fiction, a genre that had gained prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but found renewed relevance in the face of the looming global crisis. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) emerged as a seminal work in this regard. Huxley's novel envisioned a future society driven by pleasure and conformity, where individuality was suppressed in the pursuit of stability and happiness. Through the lens of speculative fiction, *Brave New World* served as a thought-provoking critique of the direction in which contemporary society seemed to be headed.

Similarly, H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), though penned in the late 19th century, gained renewed attention during this period. Wells' tale of an extraterrestrial invasion of Earth tapped into the collective anxiety about the possibility of a devastating conflict looming on the horizon. The novel's themes of invasion, survival, and the fragility of civilisation resonated deeply with readers in the 1930s, serving as a stark reminder of the consequences of unchecked technological progress.

The aftermath of World War II marked a profound shift in the landscape of English literature, as existentialist themes emerged as a dominant and influential force. Existentialism, a philosophical movement that emphasised the individual's freedom and responsibility in creating meaning in an otherwise absurd and indifferent world, found its way into literature, notably in works by Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Their writings, particularly Camus' *The Stranger* (1942) and Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), had a significant impact on English novelists and set the stage for a new wave of literary exploration.

Albert Camus' *The Stranger* stands as a seminal work of existentialist literature. The novel tells the story of Meursault, an emotionally detached and morally ambiguous protagonist who becomes embroiled in a murder trial. Meursault's apathy and refusal to conform to societal norms serve as a stark representation of existentialist principles, challenging conventional notions of morality and meaning. The novel's exploration of the absurdity of existence, the indifference of the universe, and the consequences of individual choices left a lasting impression on English literature, inspiring a generation of writers to explore similar existential inquiries.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, although published before World War II, continued to exert a profound influence on post-war English literature. The novel follows Antoine Roquentin, a French writer who experiences a profound sense of existential nausea and alienation as he grapples with the emptiness and meaninglessness of existence. Sartre's portrayal of Roquentin's inner turmoil and philosophical introspection laid the groundwork for English authors to explore the human condition in the post-war context.

These existentialist themes resonated deeply with a group of English novelists who emerged in the 1950s and early 1960s and were collectively labelled the "Angry Young Men." Authors like Colin Wilson, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain, among others, expressed the disillusionment and alienation experienced by the post-war generation. Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), in particular, is often cited as a quintessential work of this movement. The novel humourously explores the life of Jim Dixon, a university lecturer who grapples with the absurdity of his academic world and seeks authenticity amidst the stifling conventions of post-war British society.

The novels of the Angry Young Men not only examined the alienation and disillusionment of their characters but also reflected a broader social questioning of traditional values in the aftermath of the war. As the world grappled with the trauma and consequences of conflict, these writers captured the essence of a generation's search for meaning, authenticity, and identity in a world that appeared increasingly fragmented and uncertain.

The mid-20th century was a pivotal period in the evolution of English literature, marked by the emergence of postcolonial literature and the rise of magical realism, both of which played a significant role in reshaping the literary landscape.

Postcolonial literature, as exemplified by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), became a potent force in English literature. Achebe's novel is a landmark work that explores the complexities of identity and the legacy of colonialism in Africa. Set in pre-colonial Nigeria, *Things Fall Apart* vividly portrays the clash between Igbo tradition and the encroaching forces of British colonialism. Through the tragic story of Okonkwo, Achebe challenges Eurocentric narratives and offers a powerful counter-narrative that emphasises the dignity, complexity, and agency of African cultures. The novel marked a turning point in the representation of African literature and continues to be a seminal work in the postcolonial canon.

Another luminary of postcolonial literature is Salman Rushdie, whose novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) stands as a monumental achievement. Rushdie's novel weaves a rich tapestry of India's history, politics, and culture, using the magical realist style to explore the complex identity of post-independence India. The novel's protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is born at the stroke of midnight on the day of India's independence, and his life is intertwined with the nation's tumultuous journey. Through a blend of historical fact and imaginative storytelling, Rushdie explores the intricate relationship between personal and national identities in a postcolonial context.

In parallel to the rise of postcolonial literature, the mid-20th century also witnessed the emergence of magical realism as a distinct literary genre, with Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) serving as a pioneering work. Márquez's novel, set in the fictional town of Macondo in Colombia, introduced the world to the enchanting and enigmatic realm of magical realism. In this genre, the everyday is interwoven with the fantastical, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* tells the multi-generational saga of the Buendía family, blending elements of myth, folklore, and surrealism to create a narrative that transcends conventional realism. The novel's success not only brought Latin American literature to global prominence but also influenced writers worldwide, encouraging them to explore the fusion of the ordinary and the extraordinary.

The late 20th century was a period of remarkable diversity and innovation in English novels, marked by the exploration of complex themes, narrative experimentation, and the challenging of conventional storytelling norms. This era brought forth works that not only engaged with contemporary issues but also redefined the boundaries of literature itself.

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) was a groundbreaking novel that pushed the boundaries of literary discourse. It ignited a global controversy due to its exploration of sensitive themes such as religion and cultural identity. The novel weaves together elements of magical realism, myth, and postcolonialism to tell the story of two Indian immigrants,

Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, who undergo a surreal transformation. Rushdie's narrative is a complex and multi-layered exploration of faith, identity, and the clash between East and West. While it sparked heated debates and even led to a fatwa against the author, *The Satanic Verses* remains a powerful example of how literature can provoke deep reflection on contentious issues.

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) is another noteworthy novel of the late 20th century. It exemplifies McEwan's meticulous attention to narrative structure and his exploration of themes such as memory, guilt, and the consequences of one's actions. The novel is set in both pre- and post-World War II England and revolves around the consequences of a young girl's false accusation against her sister's lover. McEwan uses multiple perspectives and narrative voices to explore the intricate and often unreliable nature of memory. *Atonement* challenges readers to grapple with the idea that storytelling itself can be an act of atonement for the past.

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is a poignant and thought-provoking work that explores themes of memory, identity, and the ethics of science and society. The novel is set in an alternate England where cloned individuals are raised to be organ donors. Ishiguro's restrained prose and evocative storytelling create a haunting atmosphere as the characters come to terms with their predetermined fates. *Never Let Me Go* raises profound ethical questions about the value of human life and the consequences of scientific advancement.

Postmodernism was a dominant literary trend during this period, challenging conventional storytelling and embracing experimentation. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) is a quintessential example of postmodern fiction. The novel satirises contemporary American culture and the omnipresence of consumerism, media, and technology. DeLillo employs a fragmented narrative style and dark humour to explore the disorienting effects of modern life. *White Noise* serves as a critique of the commodification of knowledge and the loss of authenticity in a hyper-mediated society.

Recap

- The advent of Modernism
- Modernism aimed to capture the fragmented and disorienting nature of modern life
- James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* exemplify Modernist principles
- Stream of consciousness narrative was a key feature
- Challenged traditional narrative structures and ushered in an era of experimentation
- George Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and *Coming Up for Air* examined social and economic conditions
- Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* gained renewed attention for their dystopian themes

- These novels used speculative fiction to critique contemporary society
- Existentialist themes became prevalent after World War II
- Albert Camus' *The Stranger* and Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* influenced English novelists
- The Angry Young Men, like Kingsley Amis, explored alienation and disillusionment in works like *Lucky Jim*
- These novels reflected questioning of traditional values in the post-war era
- Postcolonial literature emerged with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
- They introduced magical realism, blending the everyday with the fantastical
- These works explored complex themes of identity, colonialism, and the fusion of reality and fantasy
- Late twentieth century English novels witnessed diverse and innovative storytelling
- Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* explored religion and cultural identity, igniting global controversy
- Ian McEwan's *Atonement* examined memory, guilt, and narrative atonement
- Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* explores identity and ethics in a cloned society
- Postmodernism, represented by Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, challenged conventional storytelling and critiqued modern consumer culture

Objective Questions

1. What literary movement had a profound impact on English literature in the 20th century?
2. Who is the author of the quintessential Modernist novel *Ulysses*?
3. In *Ulysses*, what narrative style did James Joyce employ?
4. Who wrote *Mrs. Dalloway*, a Modernist novel set in post-World War I London?
5. What literary movement gained prominence between the World Wars, examining the impact of economic and social conditions?
6. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is an example of what genre of fiction?
7. Which philosophical movement became prevalent in English literature after World War II?
8. What is the central theme of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*?

9. What group of English novelists emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, known as the “Angry Young Men"?
10. What novel by Kingsley Amis is often cited as a quintessential work of the Angry Young Men movement?
11. What literary style blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy, as seen in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*?
12. Which author challenged conventional storytelling norms with *The Satanic Verses*?

Answers

1. Modernism
2. James Joyce
3. Stream of consciousness
4. Virginia Woolf
5. Social realism
6. Dystopian fiction
7. Existentialism
8. Existential alienation
9. Authors like Colin Wilson, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain
10. Lucky Jim
11. Magical realism
12. Salman Rushdie

Assignments

1. How did Modernism challenge traditional narrative structures and redefine the essence of storytelling in the 20th century English novel?
2. How does Virginia Woolf employ the stream of consciousness technique to convey her narrative?
3. How did postcolonial literature contribute to the representation of cultural identity and the legacy of colonialism in English literature?
4. To what extent did George Orwell's novels serve as critiques of the capitalist system and consumer culture in the interwar period?
5. How does magical realism blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy, and what impact has it had on the global literary landscape?

Suggested Reading

1. Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Novel Today: Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*. Manchester UP, 1977.
2. Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Vintage, 1990.
3. Warner, Charles Dudley. *Modern Fiction*. CreateSpace, 2016.

Unit 2

Main Features of Twentieth Century Novels

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- appreciate how novels reflect the fragmented nature of twentieth century experiences
- analyse how twentieth century novels challenged traditional linear storytelling
- recognise how changes in society influenced the treatment of time in literature
- become aware of the implications of transnationalism on literature and identity

Prerequisites

A man walks the war-torn streets of postwar London, lost in thought. A young woman contemplates the weight of her past while navigating the surreal edges of memory. A narrator suddenly interrupts a story to question whether the story itself is even real. These aren't just scenes from novels, they are windows into the twentieth century's ever-shifting emotional and philosophical terrain.

Having explored the major novels of the twentieth century, we now turn our attention to the defining features that make these works so compelling and enduring. More than narratives, these novels functioned as both mirrors and lenses, reflecting the cultural, historical, and psychological landscapes of their time while pushing the boundaries of literary form.

In a century marked by war, rapid modernisation, decolonisation, and global upheaval, writers responded with innovation. Techniques like stream of consciousness unraveled the complexities of thought and time, while magical realism, seen in the works of Gabriel García Márquez, blurred the lines between fantasy and reality. Metafiction challenged the structure of storytelling itself, mirroring society's growing skepticism and fragmentation.

Existentialist ideas coursed through many of these novels, asking urgent questions about morality, meaning, and identity in a disoriented world. Postcolonial voices like Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie reshaped literary narratives to confront colonial legacies and celebrate cultural multiplicity. As the century progressed, the theme of global interconnectedness grew stronger, reflecting our increasingly shared, yet complex, human experience.

Get ready to explore a century's worth of literary experimentation, deep inquiry, and emotional depth—each page a journey into the evolving soul of modern literature.

Keywords

Fragmented Experiences, Spiritualism, Philosophy, Reason, Scientism, Existential Angst, Stream of Consciousness, Magical Realism, Metafiction, Modernism ,Existentialism

Discussion

6.2.1 Main Features of Twentieth Century Novels

The landscape of twentieth century novels is extraordinarily diverse, reflecting the fragmented nature of experiences in a world that was once perceived as interconnected and undivided. This era was characterised by a deep yearning to find a solid foundation for life, whether in spiritual or religious experiences, or in philosophy. It was marked by a growing disbelief in reason and scientism, existential angst, a tendency to challenge established moral concepts, and a creative determination to push literary writing into the realms of absurdity. Additionally, there was a passionate commitment to giving voice to the experiences of marginalised individuals, an awareness of ecological issues, and a renewed energy in depicting the complexities of transnational life.

Each decade of the 20th century brought the novel to new frontiers of human experience and awareness. What set this era apart was its willingness to experiment with narrative forms, which were often a reflection of the new themes and philosophical perspectives of the time.

Before the 20th century, novels typically adhered to linear, chronological storytelling. However, many twentieth century novels defied this convention. Techniques like stream of consciousness, magical realism, metafiction, and others disrupted linear narration. When authors tried to explore the depths of human experience, they found that the traditional concept of time didn't apply. In the realm of the mind, time is fluid. Memory allows individuals to move backward, linger at any point, return to the present, or leap into the future without adhering to linear time. Metafiction, in particular, offered authors the freedom to choose any point in their characters' lives and reflect on it, allowing time to flow in any direction.

This treatment of time became common in twentieth century novels because it mirrored the changing sense of time in society. The past began to coexist with the present in various aspects of life. People started reading the past through the lens of present knowledge. Life itself has accelerated due to advancements in travel and communication. The concept of distance was diminished by globalisation, turning the idea of a "Global Village" into a reality. These societal changes naturally found their way into literature.

During the modernist period, many writers embraced the idea of automatic writing. They rejected realism, socialist realism, and planned writing, arguing that writing should be free in every sense. Modernists believed that beauty, social commitment, and reason-based writing were outdated. Existentialist philosophy, which posits that life lacks predetermined meaning and that history is unpredictable, strongly influenced English novels of the 20th century. Works like J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* were shaped by existentialist themes.

In the 20th century, the novel transformed from mere storytelling to a distinct discourse documenting the social changes of the era. Various socio-historical factors, including the shift from agrarian feudalism to industrial capitalism, developments in printing technol-

ogy, and political revolutions, led intellectuals and readers to believe that an egalitarian society was emerging. This perspective influenced novelists to view life from different angles and address the concerns of marginalised segments of society. Novels began to carry the ethos of ideological shifts, scientific advances, technological progress, political realities, and evolving understandings of human psychology.

With the rise of postmodernism in philosophy and literary theory, thematic and stylistic changes became prominent features of new literature. Postmodernists shared the view that realities on all levels were fragmented, but they didn't believe in finding stable meanings in religion, philosophy, or politics. They expressed skepticism toward grand narratives and championed micropolitics, arguing that each problem required its own solution. They contended that in the postmodern era, reality had been replaced by virtual reality.

In literature, postmodernism manifested itself through a strong rejection of linear narration and techniques designed to make readers empathise with the experiences depicted. Postmodern novels freely move the plot and characters' inner lives forward and backward in time. Narration questioned itself; introspection occurred regarding the reality of the description; and readers were frequently reminded that what they saw on the page was a consciously created artifact, not life itself. These narrative techniques are collectively known as metafiction.

In the final decades of the 20th century, novels began to reflect the profound changes brought about by globalisation. Globalisation has led a significant number of people to move across the world for education, employment, and other opportunities. Travel and tourism became major industries, and technological advancements brought global events to screens everywhere. As the world became more interconnected, characters in postmodern novels moved to various parts of the world, leading to diverse and unfamiliar experiences. These novels presented new challenges and invited readers to engage with fresh experiences, thoughts, and philosophical inquiries across all levels of human existence.

6.2.2 Major Socio-historical and Cultural Contexts of the 20th Century

Although works of literature often claim to possess transcendent and universal significance, they are fundamentally products of their respective eras. The expansive canvas of the novel, with its ability to offer multiple perspectives, enabled the genre to serve as a mirror reflecting the socio-historical and cultural values of different periods.

The 20th century was marked by transformative events that profoundly shaped its character. These included the two World Wars, the use of nuclear weapons, the advent of nuclear power, space exploration, the growth of nationalism, decolonisation, the Cold War, post-Cold War conflicts, and remarkable technological advancements in fields such as medical science, engineering, information technology, transportation, and more. These events left their imprint on all forms of literature, including the novel.

This century bore witness to the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, which prompted global contemplation of societal reconstruction based on egalitarian principles. Many countries liberated themselves from imperialistic rule, often through prolonged struggles involving significant loss of life. Additionally, several revolutions unfolded without resorting to violence.

Advancements in technology, science, and

medicine altered humanity's perception of time and space. Previously incurable diseases succumbed to newly developed vaccines and medicines, leading to improved living standards and increased life expectancy worldwide. The rise of multinational corporations and the phenomenon of globalisation, facilitated by the flow of capital across national borders, transformed the way people lived. These shifts reshaped concepts of sexual freedom, increased awareness of the rights of differently-abled individuals and transgender communities, and bolstered the tourism industry.

However, the 20th century also witnessed an alarming rise in the human capacity for violence. The advent of concentration camps during the Boer War in South Africa and the tragic genocide in the German colony of South-West Africa in 1904 foreshadowed the horrific events of the century. The Holocaust, orchestrated by Adolf Hitler during World War II, remains one of the most devastating events in human history, with millions of Jews and other victims falling prey to racially motivated genocide.

In the aftermath of World Wars and amid economic depression and ideological uncertainty, a sense of disillusionment pervaded the younger generation. They questioned the validity of science, technology, and the ideals promoted by world leaders. This existential crisis gave rise to the countercultural movement known as Hippism, which emerged in America and spread to other nations.

The Cold War, which lasted from 1947 to 1991, defined the political landscape of the latter half of the 20th century. Characterised by geopolitical tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and a period of ideological and geopolitical struggle for global influence. Although direct large-scale warfare between superpowers was avoided, the Cold War played out through psychological warfare, propaganda, espionage, sports rivalries, and the Space Race.

The late 20th century saw ideological conflicts within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In December 1991, the formal dissolution of the USSR occurred, accompanied by the declaration of independence by its constituent republics. This event had a profound impact globally, leading to discussions about internal democracy within communist parties.

Despite the United States' rise as a singular global power after the Cold War, the growth of multinational capitalism, remarkable economic progress in China and Japan, and internal unrest in the U.S. created uncertainty about the concept of global dominance.

The 1960s marked the emergence of positive social movements, including civil rights activism, opposition to the Vietnam War, feminism, Mexican American activism, environmentalism, and the beginnings of the gay rights movement. These movements played vital roles in promoting social justice and equality.

The 1968 student protests in France, which opposed capitalism, consumerism, American imperialism, and traditional institutions, had a global impact. They triggered sympathy strikes and inspired protest art, songs, graffiti, posters, and slogans, indicating that students might lead future protests alongside the working class.

While 19th-century novels emphasised lucid storytelling and entertainment, twentieth century English novels explored characters entangled in intricate webs of thought influenced by diverse philosophical and political concerns, intellectual inquiries, and emotional complexities.

Modernism, the dominant early twentieth cen-

tury literary trend, reflected the belief that the world was disintegrating and human mental experiences were fragmented. Existentialist philosophy, which posits that life lacks inherent meaning, left individuals with the burden of creating their own purpose. Postmodernism, which emerged later, rejected grand narratives and embraced incredulity toward all metanarratives, including religious and political ideologies.

Recap

- Extraordinary diversity, reflecting the fragmented nature of experiences
- Yearning for a solid foundation in spiritual, religious, or philosophical experiences
- Growing disbelief in reason and scientism
- Existential angst and a tendency to challenge established moral concepts
- Creative determination to push literary writing into the realms of absurdity
- Passionate commitment to giving voice to marginalised individuals
- Awareness of ecological issues
- Renewed energy in depicting transnational life
- Frequent experimentation with narrative forms
- Emergence of techniques like stream of consciousness and metafiction
- Fluid treatment of time, reflecting changing societal concepts
- Influence of existentialist philosophy on many twentieth century novels
- Transformation of the novel into a distinct discourse documenting social changes
- Two World Wars
- Use of nuclear weapons and nuclear power
- Space exploration
- Growth of nationalism and decolonisation
- The Cold War and post-Cold War conflicts
- Technological advancements in various fields
- Russian and Chinese Revolutions and their global impact
- Advancements in technology, science, and medicine
- Rise of multinational corporations and globalization
- Increased awareness of rights for differently-abled and transgender individuals
- Growth of the tourism industry
- Alarming increase in human capacity for violence, including genocide
- Emergence of the countercultural movement known as Hippism
- Cold War geopolitical tensions
- Dissolution of the Soviet Union and discussions on internal democracy

- Uncertainty about global dominance
- Emergence of positive social movements, including civil rights activism
- Environmentalism and the beginnings of the gay rights movement
- Impact of 1968 student protests in France
- Philosophical and political shifts influencing twentieth century novels, including existentialism, modernism, and postmodernism

Objective Questions

1. What narrative techniques disrupted linear narration in many twentieth century novels?
2. What philosophical movement influenced many twentieth century English novels?
3. Which major global events left their imprint on twentieth century literature, including the novel?
4. What was the countercultural movement that emerged in response to disillusionment in the 20th century?
5. What were the major characteristics of the Cold War?
6. What significant event occurred in December 1991 that reshaped global politics?
7. Which philosophical trend rejected grand narratives and questioned established ideologies in the 20th century?
8. What characterised the 1960s in terms of social movements?
9. How long did the Cold War last?
10. How did social changes, such as globalisation, influence the treatment of time in twentieth century novels?

Answers

1. Stream of consciousness, magical realism, metafiction
2. Existentialism
3. Two World Wars, the Cold War, and technological advancements
4. Hippism
5. Geopolitical tensions, ideological struggles, and indirect conflicts
6. The formal dissolution of the USSR
7. Postmodernism
8. Emergence of civil rights activism, opposition to the Vietnam War, feminism, and

environmentalism

9. 1945 to1991
10. They allowed for a non-linear approach to time in literature

Assignments

1. How did the twentieth century novel challenge traditional linear narrative structures, and what narrative techniques emerged as a result?
2. Explore the influence of existentialist philosophy on twentieth century English novels.
3. Discuss the role of social and cultural movements, such as civil rights activism, feminism, and environmentalism, in shaping the themes and narratives of twentieth century novels.
4. Analyse the impact of postmodernism on twentieth century literature, particularly in terms of narrative techniques and the rejection of grand narratives.
5. Examine the portrayal of time in twentieth century novels and its reflection of changing societal perceptions of time and history.

Suggested Reading

1. Kern, Stephen. *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction*. Bloomsbury, 2011.
2. McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction.* Routledge, 2002.
3. Beatty, Arthur E. *Literature of the 20th Century: A Study of Values.* Ronald, 1951.

Unit 3

The Old Man and the Sea

-Ernest Hemingway

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- become acquainted with the distinctive writing style of Ernest Hemingway
- discuss the central themes of the novella
- gain insights into the characters of Santiago and Manolin
- interpret and discuss the symbolic elements present in the novella

Prerequisites

Let us now make a literary journey into the heart of twentieth century American literature with Ernest Hemingway's timeless novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*. Published in 1952, this classic work stands as a testament to Hemingway's distinctive writing style, characterised by its concise prose and profound focus on understatement. The novella's impact is undeniable, having earned Hemingway both the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1953 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. It remains one of his most celebrated and accomplished works, known for its exploration of enduring themes such as perseverance and the human struggle against the forces of nature. As we explore this gripping tale of Santiago, the elderly Cuban fisherman, and his epic battle with a giant marlin, we will uncover the profound insights it offers into the human spirit's capacity to confront and conquer adversity. This novella continues to resonate with readers worldwide, making it not only a literary masterpiece but also a timeless reflection on the indomitable will that defines us as individuals. So, let us set sail into the pages of *The Old Man and the Sea* and discover the enduring power of its narrative.

Keywords

Endurance, Resilience, Human struggle, Nature, Loyalty, Human condition, Valiant struggle

Discussion

6.3.1 Summary

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway is a novella that tells the gripping story of Santiago, an elderly Cuban fisherman who has gone 84 days without catching a fish. Set in the Gulf Stream waters near Havana, the story is a meditation on the themes of endurance, resilience, and the human spirit's capacity to confront and conquer adversity.

Santiago is depicted as a humble and seasoned fisherman who has experienced both

success and disappointment in his long career. He is determined to catch a fish and restore his reputation, as he has become somewhat of an outcast among the local fishermen due to his recent run of bad luck. Santiago's young and devoted apprentice, Manolin, is no longer allowed to fish with him but continues to care for the old man and bring him food. Manolin's loyalty is a testament to the deep respect he holds for Santiago.

Santiago sets out alone in his small skiff far into the Gulf Stream, where he hooks a giant marlin, the fish of his dreams. The battle between man and fish is fierce and enduring. Santiago's physical and mental strength are put to the test as he struggles to reel in the marlin. The novella vividly describes the grueling nature of this epic struggle, during which Santiago's hands are cut and bleeding, and his body aches from exhaustion.

Santiago's relationship with the marlin becomes a central theme of the novella. He admires the fish's strength and determination, referring to it as a noble adversary. Despite his desire to catch the marlin, Santiago also respects the creature's tenacity. As the battle continues, Santiago's isolation at sea and his relentless determination to land the marlin reveal his deep connection to the natural world and his understanding of the cycle of life and death.

Days pass, and Santiago's fatigue intensifies. He knows he must bring the marlin in soon, but sharks begin to attack his prize. Santiago fights off the sharks with all the tools he has, but they devour most of the marlin, leaving only its skeleton by the time Santiago returns to shore. His epic struggle with the marlin and the subsequent battle with the sharks serve as a metaphor for the human condition, highlighting the relentless nature of life's challenges and the resilience required to face them.

Upon returning to the shore, Santiago's ordeal had not gone unnoticed. Manolin, who has been worried about him, is amazed by the size of the marlin's skeleton and the evidence of Santiago's valiant struggle. The novella ends with Santiago falling into a deep, exhausted sleep while Manolin continues to look after him, demonstrating the enduring bond between the old man and the young boy.

The Old Man and the Sea is a profound exploration of the human spirit's capacity to endure suffering and strive for greatness. Hemingway's spare and economical prose style lends itself to the story's themes of stoicism, resilience, and the indomitable will to face life's challenges head-on. Santiago's battle with the marlin and the sharks becomes a timeless allegory for the universal human experience, making this novella a celebrated work of American literature.

Recap

- The novella explores themes of perseverance and the human struggle against nature
- Santiago is an elderly Cuban fisherman who faces a long streak of bad luck
- Goes 84 days without catching a fish
- Set in the Gulf Stream waters near Havana

- The story reflects on endurance, resilience, and the human spirit's ability to confront adversity
- Manolin, continues to support him despite being unable to fish with him due to his bad luck
- Santiago's determination to catch a fish and restore his reputation drives him to venture alone into the Gulf Stream
- He hooks a giant marlin, and a fierce and enduring battle between man and fish ensues
- Santiago's physical and mental strength are tested as he struggles to reel in the marlin
- Santiago's deep connection to the marlin and the natural world highlights his understanding of life and death
- Sharks attack Santiago's prized marlin, leading to another intense battle at sea as he tries to protect his catch
- Despite his efforts, most of the marlin is devoured by the sharks, leaving only its skeleton
- The novella serves as a metaphor for the human condition, emphasising the relentless nature of life's challenges and the resilience required to face them
- Santiago's triumphant return to shore is noted by Manolin, who recognises the evidence of his valiant struggle
- The novella ends with Santiago falling into a deep sleep while Manolin continues to care for him, emphasising their enduring bond
- The novel remains a timeless exploration of the human spirit's capacity to endure suffering and pursue greatness

Objective Questions

1. Who is the main character of *The Old Man and the Sea*?
2. What is Santiago's profession?
3. How many days has Santiago gone without catching a fish at the beginning of the story?
4. Where is the novella set?
5. Who is Santiago's young and devoted apprentice?
6. What is the central theme of the novella?
7. What type of fish does Santiago hook during his fishing expedition?
8. What major literary award did *The Old Man and the Sea* win in 1953?

9. Which prestigious literary award did Ernest Hemingway receive in 1954, partly due to this novella?
10. How does the novella end?

Answers

1. Santiago
2. A fisherman
3. 84 days
4. In the Gulf Stream waters near Havana, Cuba
5. Manolin
6. Endurance and resilience
7. A giant marlin
8. The Pulitzer Prize for Fiction
9. The Nobel Prize in Literature
10. Santiago falls into a deep, exhausted sleep while Manolin continues to care for him, symbolising their enduring bond

Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of the novella's title, *The Old Man and the Sea*.
2. Hemingway's writing style is known for its brevity and understatement. Explore how this style contributes to the novella's themes and overall impact.
3. Santiago's relationship with the marlin is central to the story. Analyse the symbolism of the marlin and its significance in Santiago's life.
4. *The Old Man and the Sea* has been interpreted as an allegory for the human struggle against nature and adversity. Explain how Santiago's journey represents the human condition and the qualities of resilience and perseverance.
5. Discuss the role of isolation in The *Old Man and the Sea*.

Suggested Reading

1. Bloom, Harold. Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea. Chelsea, 2001.
2. Murphy, Brenda. *Understanding The Old Man and the Sea: A Student Casebook to Issues,*
3. *Sources, and Historical Documents.* Greenwood, 1998.
4. Rubin, Robert E. *The Old Man and the Sea: A True Story of Triumph and Tragedy*. Penguin, 2007.

5. Strychacz, Thomas. *Hemingway's Theaters of Masculinity*. Louisiana State UP, 2003.
6. Young, Philip. *Hemingway's Heroic Code*. North Carolina UP, 1963.

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ……

Reg. No : …….....
Name : ……...

FYUG BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION – THIRD SEMESTER
MAJOR COURSE **- SGB24EG203MC**
Introduction to Literary Genres II- Prose and Fiction (CBCS – UG)
2024–25 Admission Onwards **(SET - A)**

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any eight of the following questions in one word or sentence (8 x 1 = 8)

1. What is the root meaning of the term "essay"?
2. Name one famous autobiographer from India.
3. What is the pseudonym used by Charles Lamb for his essays?
4. What is the setting of Ruskin Bond's "The Eyes Are Not Here"?
5. Name two types of essays.
6. Who is the central character in *The Old Man and the Sea*?
7. What does the term "first-person narrative" mean?
8. What kind of essay is Francis Bacon's "Of Studies"?
9. Which autobiography is written by Jawaharlal Nehru?
10. Who is credited as the Father of the English Essay?

SECTION B

Answer any six of the following questions in one or two sentences (6 x 2 = 12)

11. What are the basic parts of an essay?
12. How is autobiography different from biography?

13. What role does social class play in *Pride and Prejudice*?
14. What is the twist in the plot of "The Eyes Are Not Here"?
15. Why is Dickens considered a realist writer?
16. What is the significance of the O. Henry twist in "The Gift of the Magi"?
17. What is an unreliable narrator?
18. What is the main conflict in R. K. Narayan's "Misguided Guide"?

SECTION C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6 x 5 = 30)

19. Describe the purpose and structure of a reflective essay.
20. Discuss how Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography reflects his moral values.
21. Examine the theme of pride in *Pride and Prejudice*.
22. How does Ruskin Bond create suspense in "The Eyes Are Not Here"?
23. Discuss the main theme in Anton Chekov's "the Bet"
24. Explore the theme of isolation in *The Old Man and the Sea*.
25. Describe the function of dialogue in storytelling.
26. How does Edgar Allen Poe weave horror into the narration of "The Tell-Tale Heart"

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2 x 10 = 20)

27. Explore the evolution of fiction in the twentieth century.
28. How does Jane Austen portray social realism in *Pride and Prejudice*?
29. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated". Elucidate with reference to *The Old Man and the Sea.*

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ……

Reg. No : …….....
Name : ……...

FYUG BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION – THIRD SEMESTER
MAJOR COURSE **- SGB24EG203MC**
Introduction to Literary Genres II- Prose and Fiction (CBCS – UG)
2024 – 25 Admission Onwards **(SET - B)**

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any eight of the following questions in one word or sentence (8 x 1 = 8)

1. What is a thesis statement in an essay?
2. Who was known as the "Prince of Essayists"?
3. When was *Pride and Prejudice* published?
4. What is the name of the narrator in "The Eyes Are Not Here"?
5. Name one famous nineteenth-century English novelist.
6. What is the name of the boy who helps Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*?
7. What is meant by "narrative pace"?
8. Who popularised the personal essay in English?
9. Who wrote *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*?
10. Which essay by Bacon discusses the value of learning?

SECTION B

Answer any six of the following questions in one or two sentences (6 x 2 = 12)

11. What is the structure of a descriptive essay?
12. What role does memory play in autobiographical writing?

13. How does Austen present marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*?
14. How does the ending of "The Eyes Are Not Here" create irony?
15. Mention two social issues reflected in nineteenth-century fiction.
16. What is the significance of the marlin in *The Old Man and the Sea*?
17. What is the difference between linear and non-linear narrative structures?
18. Define the term "flashback" in fiction.

SECTION C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6 x 5 = 30)

19. Explain the difference between expository and persuasive essays.
20. What are the defining features of postmodern fiction?
21. Analyse the importance of the opening sentence in *Pride and Prejudice*.
22. Discuss how Ruskin Bond develops character through conversation in "The Eyes Are Not Here."
23. Explain how Charles Dickens used fiction to reflect the hardships of urban life.
24. What does Santiago's struggle with the marlin reveal about his character?
25. Discuss the key narrative techniques of Charles Dickens.
26. Discuss the use of foreshadowing in modern fiction.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2 x 10 = 20)

27. Explore the significance of female agency in *Pride and Prejudice*.
28. Discuss "The Gift of the Magi" as a typical O'Henry story.
29. Discuss the evolution of the English essay as a literary genre.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Regional Centres

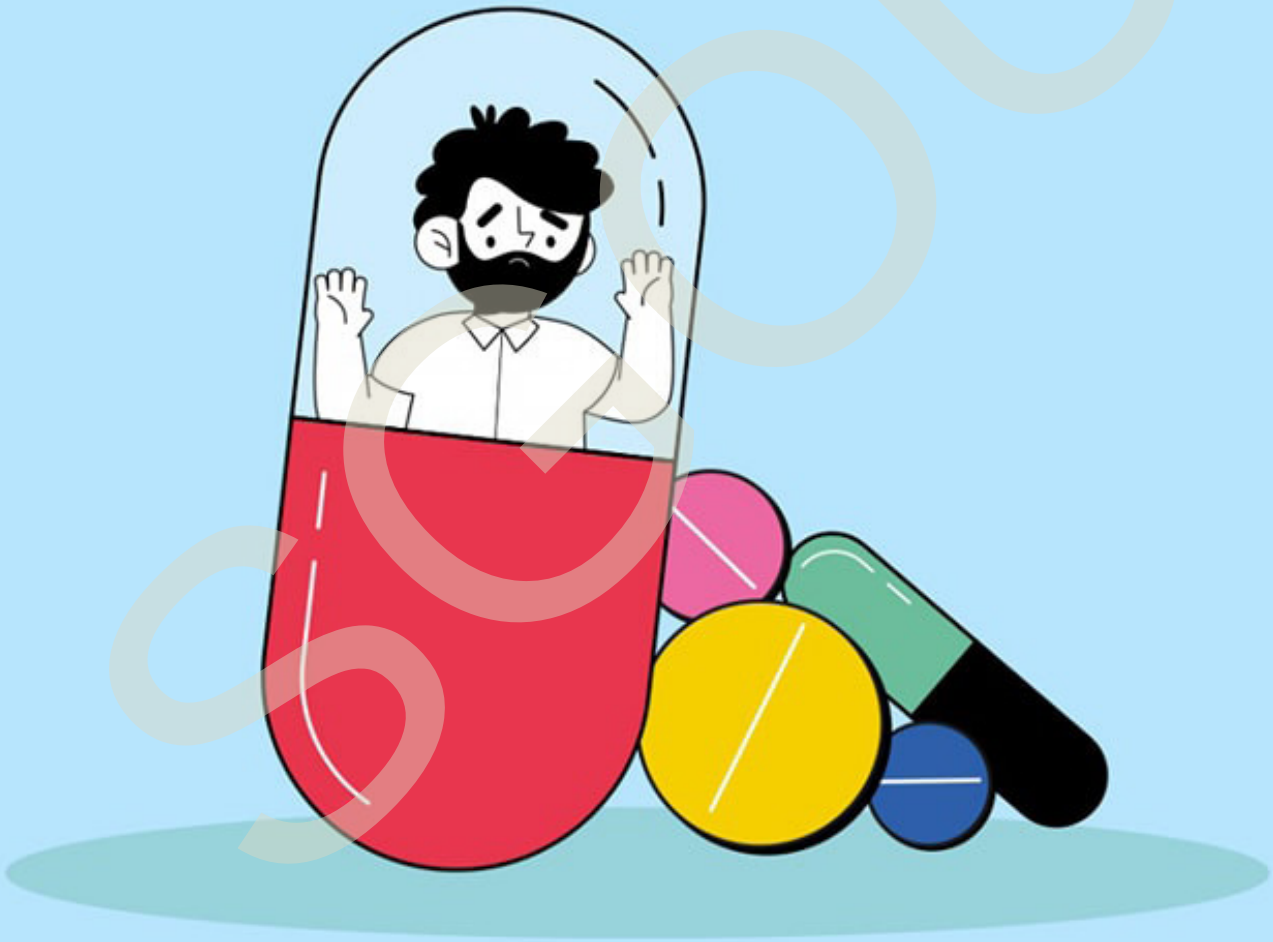
Kozhikode
Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery
Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura
Govt. College
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi
Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

NO TO DRUGS തിരിച്ചിറങ്ങാൻ പ്രയാസമാണ്



ആരോഗ്യ കുടുംബക്ഷേമ വകുപ്പ്, കേരള സർക്കാർ

Introduction to Literary Genres II: Prose & Fiction

COURSE CODE: SGB24EG203MC

Sreenarayanaguru Open University
Kollam, Kerala Pin- 691601, email: info@sgou.ac.in, www.sgou.ac.in Ph: +91 474 2966841

ISBN 978-81-986991-2-1