



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

English Literature from 1900 to 1945

Postgraduate Programme in
English Language & Literature



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

COURSE CODE: M21EG06DC

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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.

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Course Code: M21EG06DC
Semester-II

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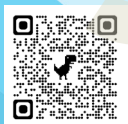
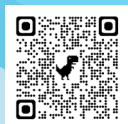
English Literature from 1900 to 1945



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Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual Modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities. The PG programme in English Language and Literature is benchmarked with similar programmes of other state universities in Kerala. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

The University is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The Self Learning Materials have been drawn up with a very clear prescription. It recognizes the autonomy of an adult learner and a journey through the treasures of the curriculum structured with provisions for interactive learning, interrogative reflections on the content and didactic discussion through illustrative scenarios. The University takes a strong position that the learner is to be engaged in a dialogue with the content and the materials are shaped to elicit reflections in the form of questions. The questions of the learner are considered to be the vital milestones in the pedagogy of the system of the University as well as the trajectory of the learner's progression. I would like to request you to bestow your personal attention in generating questions after having an intense dialogue with the content, as it has connection with the internal assessment.

Feel free to write to us about anything that seems relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,

Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

14.05.2023

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SGOU

Socio-political and Literary Contexts

BLOCK-01

Block Content

Unit 1 The Era of Transition: From Empire to Independence

Unit 2 From Edwardian Poets to New Apocalypse

Unit 3 Influences and Movements in Drama

Unit 4 Modern English Prose and Novels



Unit 1

The Era of Transition: From Empire to Independence

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ understand the socio-political and literary contexts of the Georgian and Edwardian periods
- ▶ analyse and evaluate the impact of the Depression Years on the socio-political landscape and the decline of political power during the period
- ▶ explore the diverse literary responses to the changing political and social climate of the Georgian and Edwardian periods
- ▶ gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contributed to the end of the empire and the implications for literature and society

Background

The history of Britain is a tapestry woven with diverse periods and remarkable events. One significant period is Ancient Britain, which dates back to prehistoric times. The island was inhabited by Celtic tribes and witnessed the construction of Stonehenge, a mystical monument that baffles archaeologists even today. However, Roman influence dramatically shifted the British Isles in 43 AD when Emperor Claudius ordered the Roman conquest. The Romans introduced advanced infrastructure, such as roads, aqueducts, and cities like Londinium (London), leaving an indelible mark on British history.

The medieval period in British history was a time of great upheaval and transformation. It began with the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, when William the Conqueror, a Norman Duke, defeated King Harold II at the Battle of Hastings. This event heralded a new era of Norman rule, which impacted England's social, political, and cultural landscape. During this period, the Magna Carta was signed in 1215, granting certain rights and liberties to the English people and laying the foundation for modern constitutional law.

The Tudor dynasty, from 1485 to 1603, was a pivotal era in British history.

It was characterised by the reigns of Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. This period witnessed religious upheaval, with the establishment of the Church of England during Henry VIII's reign, marking the separation from the Roman Catholic Church. Elizabeth I's reign, often called the "Golden Age," saw significant advancements in the arts, exploration, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The Tudor period also laid the groundwork for England's expansion into a global superpower with the establishment of the British Empire, which would shape the course of history for centuries to come.

In this unit, we will analyse the socio-political and literary contexts of the first half of the twentieth century. From the Georgian and Edwardian periods to the decline of political power and the end of the empire, we will explore a range of fascinating topics that will encourage you to explore deeper into the rest of the study material.

Keywords

Georgian, Edwardian, Irish, World Wars, Depression, Decline

Discussion

1.1.1 Georgian and Edwardian Periods

Step into the opulent world of the Georgian and Edwardian periods, where lavishness, innovation, and societal shifts defined an era of elegance and change. The Georgian era, spanning from 1714 to 1830, was marked by the reigns of four King Georges, leaving an indelible imprint on British culture. It was a time of soaring architecture, intricate fashion, and the birth of the Industrial Revolution. As the Georgian era gracefully gave way to the Edwardian period from 1901 to 1910, a new wave of progress and societal transformation took hold. This captivating era witnessed a fusion of tradition and modernity, with technological advancements, the rise of suffrage movements, and a burgeoning middle class seeking its place in the sun. Join us on a journey through these captivating periods and unravel the tales of power, elegance, and social change that shaped British history.

- Opulence and progress



► Influential monarchs

King George I, a German-born monarch, ascended to the throne in 1714, inaugurating the Georgian era. As a foreign king with limited English language skills, George I relied heavily on his ministers and advisors to analyse the centralised system of government. His son, George II, ruled from 1727 to 1760, during which the influence of the monarchy began to wane. Political power shifted towards Parliament and political factions, most notably the Whigs and the Tories. Despite this shift, George II played an essential role in stabilising the monarchy and the British political system.

► Georgian monarchs: Influence & legacy

However, it was King George III who left the most significant impact on the Georgian era. His sixty-year reign (1760-1820) witnessed important events, including the American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution. George III faced mental health challenges later in his reign, resulting in a regency led by his son, the future George IV. George IV's reign from 1820 to 1830 was marked by his extravagant lifestyle and interest in the arts. He patronised the neoclassical architectural style, seen in iconic structures like the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. George IV's reign also consolidated the British Empire, particularly in India. The influence of these Georgian monarchs extended beyond politics. They contributed significantly to the era's arts, architecture, and fashion. The neoclassical architectural style gained popularity during this period, with notable examples including the imposing structures of John Nash, such as Regent Street and Regent's Park in London.

► Elegant Georgian and transformative Edwardian

Georgian fashion was characterised by elegance and restraint, particularly during the reign of George III. Women favoured high-waisted gowns with simple lines, while men's fashion embraced waistcoats, knee breeches, and powdered wigs. The aristocracy set the trends in fashion, which trickled down to the middle classes. King Edward VII, also known as Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David, reigned over the United Kingdom and the British Empire from 1901 to 1910. His reign, called the Edwardian era, witnessed significant societal changes, particularly in class, gender, and politics. Let us explore this intriguing period and the transformative dynamics that unfold.

Class dynamics underwent a noticeable shift during King Edward VII's reign. The Edwardian era

► Shifting classes

was characterised by a growing middle class, with advancements in industrialisation and an expanding economy providing opportunities for social mobility. The rise of the middle class led to a reconfiguration of social hierarchies, challenging the traditional dominance of the aristocracy. This period saw the emergence of a wealthy and influential bourgeoisie that sought to assert their newfound status and influence in society.

► Gender shifts

The Edwardian era was also marked by a visible change in gender roles and expectations. While Victorian values still exerted influence, there was a growing recognition of women's rights and a burgeoning feminist movement. Women began actively participating in the public sphere, advocating for suffrage, education, and broader societal reforms. Prominent suffragettes, such as Emmeline Pankhurst, led campaigns for women's right to vote, sparking significant debates and societal transformations. Moreover, the political landscape of the Edwardian era witnessed a series of significant changes. King Edward VII was pivotal in fostering diplomatic relations and strengthening Britain's international position. His focus on forging alliances and maintaining a balance of power among European nations marked a departure from the aggressive approach of his predecessors.

1.1.2 The Irish Question

► Autonomy and independence

The Irish Question refers to the complex and contentious issue surrounding the relationship between Britain and Ireland during the Georgian and Edwardian periods and well into the 20th century. It primarily revolved around the demand for Irish self-governance and the pursuit of Irish independence. Ireland had been under British rule since the 12th century, with varying degrees of control and influence. The Irish population was predominantly Catholic, while the ruling British authorities, particularly during the Georgian and Edwardian periods, were Protestant. This religious divide and cultural and political differences contributed to the complexities of the Irish Question.

The Irish Question gained significant prominence during the late 19th and early 20th centuries due to various factors. Irish nationalism and calls for self-governance became increasingly vocal, driven by figures such as

► Home rule

Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party. Parnell and his party sought constitutional means to achieve Home Rule for Ireland, granting the country its parliament and a measure of self-determination while remaining within the United Kingdom. However, the issue of Home Rule was met with significant resistance from various quarters. Unionists, primarily located in the northern province of Ulster, opposed Home Rule and feared the potential loss of their ties to Britain. They argued that Home Rule would jeopardise their economic and political interests, potentially leading to discrimination against the Protestant minority in an overwhelmingly Catholic Ireland.

► War's impact on Irish question

The Irish Question became increasingly entangled with wider political events, such as the rise of the suffrage movement and the First World War. The outbreak of World War I temporarily put the Home Rule issue on hold as British and Irish political leaders prioritised the war effort. However, the war profoundly impacted Ireland, and it reignited the debate over its relationship with Britain.

► Easter Rising

The Easter Rising of 1916, a rebellion in Dublin led by Irish nationalists, further heightened tensions and shifted public opinion. The British government's response, marked by the execution of rebel leaders and subsequent nationalist sentiment, led to increased support for Irish independence. The Irish War of Independence, which lasted from 1919 to 1921, ultimately resulted in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921. The treaty established the Irish Free State, which was granted self-governance but remained a dominion of the British Empire. However, the treaty also partitioned Ireland, creating Northern Ireland, which remained part of the United Kingdom.

The Irish Question continued to have repercussions beyond this period. The division of Ireland into Northern Ireland and the independent Irish Free State led to ongoing conflicts and tensions between the two entities. The partition of Ireland and the subsequent Troubles in Northern Ireland, a period of ethno-nationalist conflict, further underscored the complexities and unresolved issues surrounding the Irish Question. It is important to note that the Irish Question's impact extended beyond political and constitutional matters. It also had significant

- Irish Question: Conflict and complexity

cultural, social, and economic implications for Ireland and its people. The struggle for Irish independence and the subsequent division of the island continue to shape the historical and political landscapes of both Ireland and the United Kingdom.

- Context and complexity

Overall, the Irish Question represents a crucial aspect of the socio-political and literary contexts of the Georgian and Edwardian periods. It reflects the complex relationships between Britain and Ireland, the aspirations of Irish nationalists, and the challenges and debates surrounding self-governance and independence.

1.1.2 First and Second World Wars and the Inter-War Years

- Transformative turmoil of world wars

World Wars I and II, along with the inter-war years, constitute a tumultuous and transformative period in global history, profoundly impacting socio-political dynamics, economies, and cultures worldwide. Let us explore this period's key aspects in the socio-political and literary contexts of the Georgian and Edwardian periods. World War I (1914-1918) emerged from a complex web of political alliances, territorial disputes, and rising nationalism. The war pitted major powers against each other, with Britain, France, and Russia forming the Allies, and Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire comprising the Central Powers. The conflict witnessed unprecedented destruction and loss of life, reshaping the geopolitical landscape and leading to significant socio-political changes.

- War's impact and inter-war transitions

During World War I, the British Empire substantially mobilised troops and resources to support the Allies. The war effort deeply affected society, as millions of men were conscripted into military service, leading to labour shortages and changes in gender dynamics. Women took on new roles in the workforce, contributing to the war effort and challenging traditional gender norms. The inter-war years, from the end of World War I to the outbreak of World War II, were characterised by political instability, economic turmoil, and attempts to establish a new global order. The Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, imposed heavy reparations on Germany, leading to economic hardships and political grievances. The period witnessed the rise of new political ideologies, such as fascism and communism, as well as a wave of

nationalist movements and anti-colonial struggles.

- Great Depression, extremism and league of nations

The Great Depression, which began with the Wall Street Crash of 1929, deepened the economic hardships faced by many nations. High unemployment rates, widespread poverty, and social unrest became defining features of the inter-war years. These conditions fueled political extremism with the rise of fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, and Spain, as well as the consolidation of power by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union. The inter-war years also saw efforts to establish international cooperation and prevent future conflicts. The League of Nations, formed in the aftermath of World War I, aimed to promote diplomacy and prevent war through collective security. However, its effectiveness was limited, and it failed to prevent the outbreak of World War II.

- Tensions and ambitions spark WWII

World War II (1939-1945) emerged as a result of unresolved tensions and territorial ambitions, particularly by Nazi Germany and its allies. The war involved global powers and witnessed devastating military campaigns, genocide, and the use of atomic weapons. It led to the deaths of millions of people and caused immense destruction across continents. World War II saw significant advancements in technology, including the use of tanks, aircraft, and submarines, as well as the development of nuclear weapons. The war also saw the mass mobilisation of societies, with women once again taking on crucial roles in the workforce while men were engaged in military service.

- Cold War re-shapes geopolitics

The aftermath of World War II brought about profound geopolitical shifts. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two dominant superpowers, leading to the beginning of the Cold War and an era of ideological conflict between capitalism and communism. The war also led to the dismantling of European colonial empires, as colonies sought independence and self-determination.

In the literary and artistic spheres, World Wars I and II and the inter-war years had a profound impact. Writers and artists responded to the horrors and disruptions of war, exploring themes of trauma, disillusionment, and the search for meaning. Modernist literature, characterised by experimentation and a break from traditional forms, emerged as a response to the shattered worldviews of the time. Notable authors such as T.S. Eliot,

- War's impact shapes art

Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway, and George Orwell captured the complexities and anxieties of the period in their works. The two World Wars and the inter-war years were transformative periods in global history. The wars and their aftermath shaped the socio-political landscape, triggered significant geopolitical changes, and influenced cultural expressions. Understanding these periods allows us to comprehend the far-reaching consequences of these conflicts and their enduring impact on subsequent historical events.

1.1.3 Depression Years

- Great Depression: Economic collapse

The Depression Years, also known as the Great Depression, refer to a period of severe economic downturn that occurred worldwide in the 1930s. It was a time of profound economic crisis, social upheaval, and widespread hardship. The Great Depression originated in the United States with the 1929 stock market crash, known as the Wall Street Crash. The crash triggered a domino effect, leading to the collapse of financial institutions, a sharp decline in industrial production, widespread unemployment, and a dramatic decrease in global trade.

- Economic devastation and inequality

The economic repercussions of the Depression were felt on a global scale. Many countries, including those in Europe and the British Empire, experienced a significant decline in economic activity and faced staggering levels of unemployment. Industries contracted, businesses shuttered, and families struggled to make ends meet. The Depression profoundly impacted society, leading to widespread poverty and social unrest. Unemployment rates soared, and people faced dire circumstances with limited access to food, shelter, and basic necessities. The economic hardships exacerbated existing social inequalities, with vulnerable groups such as the working class, farmers, and minorities disproportionately affected.

Governments and societies grappled with the immense challenges of the Depression. The government implemented various measures in the United Kingdom to address the economic crisis and relieve those affected. Programmes were initiated to create jobs, stimulate economic activity, and provide social assistance to the unemployed and impoverished. The Depression Years

- Government responses, radical ideologies

also had a significant influence on politics and ideologies. The economic hardships and social inequalities of the time fostered a sense of disillusionment with existing political systems and led to the rise of radical ideologies. In some countries, fascist and authoritarian movements gained support by promising economic recovery and national strength.

- Artistic expressions mirror Depression

Literature and art during the Depression Years reflected the experiences and struggles of the time. Writers, poets, and artists captured the sense of despair, frustration, and social upheaval. The works of authors like John Steinbeck, who portrayed the hardships faced by the working class in novels such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, shed light on the human toll of the economic crisis. The cultural output of this period often highlighted themes of social injustice, inequality, and the resilience of the human spirit.

- Movements for change persisted

The Depression Years also witnessed the emergence of social and political movements that sought to address the economic crisis and advocate for change. Labour unions and socialist organisations gained traction, demanding workers' rights, fair wages, and social reforms. These movements played a crucial role in shaping public discourse and pushing for policies to mitigate the effects of the Depression. It was not until the onset of World War II that the global economy began to recover from the Great Depression. The demands of war production stimulated economic activity and led to increased employment opportunities. However, the effects of the Depression lingered for years and had a lasting impact on societies, economies, and political ideologies.

- Depression's legacy

By examining the Depression Years, we gain insight into the profound social and economic consequences of the time and the resilience of individuals and societies in the face of adversity. Understanding this period enhances our understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts of the Georgian and Edwardian periods and their legacy in shaping the subsequent course of history.

1.1.3 Decline of Political Power – The End of the Empire

The decline of political power and the end of the British

► Power shift

Empire mark a significant turning point in the history of the Georgian and Edwardian periods. The decline of political power can be attributed to a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, the rise of new political ideologies, changing social attitudes, and demands for democratic reforms challenged the traditional power structures. The emergence of labour movements, socialist ideologies, and demands for greater political participation posed significant challenges to the existing political order.

► Wars, nationalism, colonial decline

Externally, the aftermath of World Wars I and II weakened the position of European powers, including Britain. The wars profoundly impacted the global balance of power, leading to a shift towards the United States and the Soviet Union as the dominant superpowers. The economic and military strains of the wars, coupled with the rise of nationalism in colonial territories, further eroded Britain's ability to maintain its colonial holdings.

► Decolonisation

The end of the British Empire was a gradual process that unfolded over several decades. Decolonisation began after World War II as colonies increasingly demanded independence and self-governance. Britain faced mounting pressure, both domestically and internationally, to grant independence to its colonies. Key events such as India's struggle for independence, led by figures like Mahatma Gandhi, played a pivotal role in the decolonisation process. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 resulted in the partition of India and the creation of two separate nations, India and Pakistan. This event marked a significant milestone in the dissolution of the empire and set the stage for the decolonisation of other territories.

► Decolonisation reshaped nations and identities

In the following years, a wave of decolonisation swept across Africa, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. Colonial territories gained independence through peaceful negotiations or, in some cases, through armed struggles. The process of decolonisation brought an end to formal British political control over vast territories and marked the emergence of new nation-states. The decline of political power and the end of the empire also had profound cultural and social implications. The dissolution of the empire challenged British national identity and reshaped perceptions of Britain's place in

the world. It led to re-evaluating the country's role, its relationships with former colonies, and the notion of British exceptionalism.

Literature and art reflected these changing dynamics and explored themes of post-colonialism, identity, and the legacy of empire. Writers such as Chinua Achebe, V.S. Naipaul, and Salman Rushdie examined the complexities of colonialism, the struggles of post-colonial societies, and the cultural and psychological impacts of imperialism. The decline of political power and the end of the empire represented a significant shift in global politics and the reconfiguration of international relations. Britain transitioned from being a dominant imperial power to a member of the Commonwealth, an association of independent nations with historical ties to the British Empire.

- Post-colonial literature examined the empire's impact

The legacy of the empire continues to influence contemporary discussions on imperialism, post-colonialism, and global power dynamics. The decline of political power and the end of the empire serve as important historical markers and shape our understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts of the Georgian and Edwardian periods and their lasting impact on the world.

- Empire's legacy shapes discourse

Summarised Overview

The decline of political power and the end of the empire marked a significant shift in the global landscape during the late Georgian and Edwardian periods. As the British Empire faced various challenges, both internal and external, its political influence and control over colonies began to diminish. The rise of nationalist movements and demands for self-governance in colonies such as India and Ireland highlighted the changing dynamics and aspirations of colonised people. Additionally, the devastation caused by the two World Wars and the economic strains of the Great Depression further weakened Britain's position as a global power. These factors, along with the emergence of new superpowers like the United States and the Soviet Union, ultimately led to the dismantling of the British Empire and the restructuring of global politics.

The decline of the empire had far-reaching implications for Britain's political, economic, and cultural spheres. Politically, it marked a transition from a dominant imperial power to a more modest role on the world stage.

Economically, Britain faced the challenges of rebuilding and restructuring its industries and trade relationships in the post-war era. Culturally, the end of the empire forced a reevaluation of British national identity and its relationship with former colonies. Overall, the decline of political power and the end of the empire represented a significant turning point in British history, with lasting effects that continue to shape the country and its relationships with the world today.

Assignments

1. How did the Georgian and Edwardian periods shape the socio-political and literary contexts of the time? Discuss with examples from literature.
2. Analyse the portrayal of the Irish Question in literature, focusing on the works of prominent Irish writers of the period.
3. Discuss the impact of World Wars I and II on literature, examining the ways in which writers responded to the realities of war and its aftermath.
4. Explore the theme of social and economic upheaval in literature during the inter-war years, analysing the ways in which writers reflected the changing world.
5. Discuss the decline of political power during the Georgian and Edwardian periods, considering the political, social, and cultural implications as depicted in literature.

Suggested Readings

1. Carter, Ronald, and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. 2nd ed, Routledge, 2001.
2. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol. 4, 2nd ed, Allied, 2005.
3. Poplawski, Paul. *English Literature in Context*. 2nd ed, CUP, 2017.
4. Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. 3rd ed, OUP, 2004.



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1. Gray, Richard J. *A Brief History of American Literature*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
2. Harris, Charles B. *Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd*. New Heaven, 1971.
3. Horton, Rod William and Herbert W. Edwards. *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*. Prentice Hall, 1974.
4. Ruland, Richard and Malcolm Bradbury. *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. Penguin, 1992.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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Unit 2

From Edwardian Poets to New Apocalypse

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ develop a comprehensive understanding of the major poets and movements of the Edwardian and early 20th-century periods
- ▶ analyse and interpret different poetic movements and styles
- ▶ engage in textual analysis and critical thinking by examining selected poems from the syllabus
- ▶ recognise the interconnectedness of literature and socio-political contexts

Background

The Edwardian period, named after King Edward VII, who reigned from 1901 to 1910, witnessed a vibrant and diverse literary scene in England. Edwardian poets, influenced by the preceding Victorian era, responded to the changing social, political, and cultural dynamics of the time. During the Edwardian period, the literary scene in England flourished with a diverse range of poets who were influenced by the poets of the preceding Victorian era. These poets responded to the shifting social, political, and cultural dynamics of the time through their works. They explored various themes and subject matters, showcasing the intellectual and artistic climate of early 20th-century England.

In terms of domestic politics, the era saw the continued growth of socialist and labour movements. Organisations such as the Fabian Society and trade unions gained prominence, advocating for workers' rights, social reforms, and economic equality. The Edwardian era was also characterised by a series of legislative reforms, including measures aimed at improving public health, education, and social welfare.

However, it is essential to note that societal changes during this period were not uniform. While certain sections of society experienced upward mobility and greater opportunities, others faced persistent poverty and

marginalisation. Issues such as income inequality, urban overcrowding, and labour unrest continued to be sources of societal tension.

The literary and cultural spheres of the Edwardian era also reflected these societal shifts. Writers and artists of the time, including figures like George Bernard Shaw, Virginia Woolf, and the Bloomsbury Group, explored themes of social critique, gender identity, and changing power dynamics through their works. Their writings captured the nuances of an evolving society, providing valuable insights into the complex realities of the Edwardian era.

Overall, the reign of King Edward VII witnessed a period of significant societal change. The shifting dynamics of class, gender, and politics during this time laid the groundwork for the transformative social, cultural, and political movements that followed. Exploring this era allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that shaped Edwardian society and set the stage for the subsequent socio-political developments in the 20th century.

Keywords

Poets, Edwardian, Georgians, World War, Imagism, Surrealism, Irish, Apocalypse

Discussion

1.2.1 Edwardian Era

Class dynamics during the Edwardian era witnessed both continuity and change. While the aristocracy still held significant influence, the rise of the middle class reshaped social hierarchies. Industrialisation and economic growth provided opportunities for social mobility, allowing individuals from humble backgrounds to climb the social ladder. The middle class expanded, comprising professionals, businessmen, and factory owners who accumulated wealth and sought to assert their status and influence. This shift challenged the traditional dominance of the aristocracy and led to a more diverse and complex social landscape. The increasing prosperity of the middle class also had an impact on consumer culture and leisure activities. With

- Class dynamics transformed the Edwardian era



disposable income, the middle class indulged in new forms of entertainment, such as theatre, music halls, and sports. The emergence of department stores catered to the growing demand for luxury goods and facilitated the consumption habits of the rising middle class.

However, it is important to note that economic disparities persisted during this period. Poverty and social inequality were still prevalent, particularly among the working class. Many labourers faced harsh working conditions, low wages, and inadequate living conditions. These disparities contributed to social tensions and the growth of socialist and labour movements, which advocated for workers' rights and better working conditions. In terms of gender dynamics, the Edwardian era witnessed notable changes and challenges to traditional gender roles. While Victorian values regarding gender roles still influenced society, there was a growing recognition of women's rights and aspirations. The suffragette movement gained momentum, with women demanding the right to vote and actively participating in political activism. Women's roles expanded beyond the domestic sphere, and they began seeking education and pursuing professional careers. Notable figures like Emmeline Pankhurst and Millicent Fawcett led the charge for women's suffrage, challenging societal norms and initiating important conversations about gender equality.

► Class shifts, gender challenges

Despite these advancements, gender inequalities persisted. Women still faced significant barriers to accessing education, employment, and equal opportunities. The struggle for gender equality continued beyond the Edwardian era, but the period marked a significant turning point in the fight for women's rights and set the stage for subsequent feminist movements. In terms of politics, the reign of King Edward VII witnessed a shift in diplomatic relations and a changing international landscape. Edward VII, known for his diplomatic skills, focused on forging alliances and maintaining a balance of power among European nations. His efforts aimed to secure Britain's position on the global stage and avoid conflicts that could disrupt peace and stability. Notable examples of his diplomatic endeavours include the Entente Cordiale with France and the Anglo-Russian Convention.

► Shifting diplomacy



- Reforming era, elite influence

On the domestic front, the Edwardian era saw the continuation of political reforms initiated during the late Victorian period. Legislative measures were introduced to address social issues and improve public health, education, and social welfare. For instance, reforms focused on housing, sanitation, and labour conditions aimed to alleviate the hardships faced by the working class. The introduction of the National Insurance Act in 1911 marked a significant step towards establishing a welfare state in Britain. However, political power remained concentrated in the hands of the elite. The House of Lords, dominated by hereditary aristocrats, still exerted significant influence over legislation, leading to debates about democratic reforms and the need for a more representative government.

- Challenging conventions

The literary and cultural spheres of the Edwardian era mirrored and responded to these societal changes. Writers and intellectuals of the time explored themes of social critique, questioning traditional values, and examining the complexities of class, gender, and politics. George Bernard Shaw, known for his plays and social commentaries, used his works to challenge conventional norms and advocate for social reform.

1.2.2 Edwardian Poets

- Diverse poetry

The Edwardian poets exhibited a wide range of styles and approaches to poetry. Some poets embraced traditional forms and themes, while others experimented with new poetic techniques and explored unconventional subject matters. Their works reflected the tensions and contradictions of the era, capturing both the lingering Victorian sensibilities and the emerging modernist tendencies. Many Edwardian poets grappled with themes of love, beauty, and the complexities of human relationships. They explored the inner workings of the human psyche, delving into themes of desire, passion, and existential questions. Their poems often contained rich imagery and evocative language, aiming to evoke deep emotions and provoke contemplation.

The poets of the Edwardian period also engaged with the social and political issues of their time. They addressed topics such as social inequality, class divisions, and the challenges of a rapidly changing society. Some poets reflected on the impact of industrialisation and

- Poetic engagement, societal reflections

urbanisation, lamenting the loss of rural traditions and the alienation of individuals in urban environments. Additionally, Edwardian poets were influenced by national and cultural identities. They explored themes of nationalism, patriotism, and the complexities of British imperialism. Some poets reflected on the tensions between England and its colonies, while others celebrated the diversity of cultures within the British Empire.

1.2.2.1 John Masefield

- Seafaring influence, adventurous poetry

John Masefield (1878-1967) was an influential English poet and writer who made significant contributions to the literary landscape of the Edwardian period and beyond. Known for his lyrical and narrative style, Masefield's works often explored themes of adventure, the sea, and the human spirit's resilience in the face of challenges. Masefield's early life significantly shaped his writing style and subject matter. Born in Ledbury, Herefordshire, Masefield had a deep connection with the sea from an early age. At 14, he left school to join the merchant navy, embarking on voyages that took him around the world. These experiences at sea profoundly influenced his poetry and prose, infusing them with a sense of adventure, exploration, and a deep understanding of maritime life.

- Masefield's notable works

One of Masefield's notable works is his long narrative poem, "Sea Fever." Published in 1902, this poem captures the allure and power of the sea, expressing a deep yearning for the open waters and the sense of freedom they represent. "Sea Fever" remains one of his most popular and enduring poems, admired for its evocative language and its ability to transport readers to the realm of the sea. Masefield's literary career also encompassed a range of other genres, including plays, novels, and non-fiction. His play "The Tragedy of Nan" (1908) showcased his dramatic skills and explored themes of love, desire, and societal expectations. His novel "The Box of Delights" (1935) is a beloved children's fantasy story that combines elements of magic, adventure, and Christmas spirit.

- Poet laureate, literary promoter

In addition to his creative works, Masefield held the position of Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1930 until he died in 1967. As Poet Laureate, Masefield composed poems for significant national occasions and events. He also worked to promote poetry and foster

literary engagement within the country.

1.2.2.2 Walter de la Mare

► Walter de la Mare:
Lyrical and imaginative writer

Walter de la Mare (1873-1956) was a renowned English poet, novelist, and short story writer, known for his lyrical and imaginative works. His literary career spanned several decades, and he made significant contributions to the literary landscape of the late Victorian, Edwardian, and early 20th-century periods. De la Mare's writing style was characterised by its lyrical beauty, introspective tone, and a deep sense of mystery and wonder. He possessed a remarkable ability to evoke a sense of enchantment and transport readers to ethereal landscapes through his poetic language and vivid imagery.

► De la Mare's Notable Works

One of de la Mare's notable works is his poetry collection, *Songs of Childhood* (1902). This collection showcased his ability to capture the innocent and imaginative world of children, exploring themes of childhood wonder, the magic of nature, and the power of the imagination. The poems in this collection are characterised by their musicality and evoke a sense of nostalgia and innocence. De la Mare's poetry extended beyond themes of childhood. His later works explored more complex and philosophical themes, delving into the nature of existence, the mysteries of the universe, and the enigmatic depths of the human mind. He often contemplated the metaphysical and supernatural aspects of life, blurring the boundaries between reality and the realm of the unknown.

► De la Mare's prose works

In addition to his poetry, De la Mare also wrote novels and short stories. His novel *Memoirs of a Midget* (1921) gained critical acclaim for exploring identity, loneliness, and the search for meaning in an often indifferent world. It displayed de la Mare's skill in crafting intricate narratives and delving into the psychological depths of his characters. De la Mare's short stories are particularly notable for their atmospheric quality and supernatural elements. His collection *The Connoisseur and Other Stories* (1926) featured tales that blended the mundane with the mystical, exploring themes of dreams, nightmares, and the uncanny. These stories displayed his mastery of the form, combining psychological insight with elements of the eerie and macabre.



1.2.2.3 A.E. Housman

A.E. Housman, born Alfred Edward Housman in 1859, was an English poet and classical scholar known for his deeply emotive and poignant poetry. He is considered one of the most significant and influential figures in English literature, particularly in the field of lyric poetry. Housman's works are characterised by their lyrical beauty, melancholic tone, and exploration of themes such as loss, unrequited love, mortality, and the fleeting nature of life. Housman's most renowned collection of poems, *A Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896, brought him widespread recognition and acclaim. The collection consists of 63 poems written in simple and direct language, often employing traditional ballad forms. Housman's poems in *A Shropshire Lad* capture the essence of rural England, evoking a sense of nostalgia and longing for an idealised pastoral world. They explore themes of youth, love, death, and the transient nature of human existence.

- A.E. Housman: Emotive and poignant lyricism

One of the distinguishing features of Housman's poetry is his ability to convey intense emotions and evoke a profound sense of melancholy. His poems often reflect on the fragility of life, the inevitability of mortality, and the pain of lost opportunities and unfulfilled desires. Housman's lyrical style, combined with his ability to create vivid imagery and capture the essence of human emotions, has resonated with readers throughout the years. In addition to his poetic achievements, Housman was also a renowned classical scholar. He held positions at the University of London and the University of Cambridge, specialising in studying Latin literature and ancient texts. Housman's deep knowledge of classical literature influenced his poetic style, as he often incorporated classical allusions and themes into his works.

- Intense emotions and classical allusions

1.2.3 Georgians

The Georgians, also known as the Georgian poets, were a group of British poets who emerged during the early 20th century and made a significant impact on the literary scene. The term "Georgian" derives from the reign of King George V, who ascended to the British throne in 1910 and ruled until 1936. The Georgian poets represented a distinct movement in English poetry,



- Return to classic forms

characterised by a return to traditional forms, a focus on lyrical beauty, and a celebration of nature, emotions, and the simple joys of life. They sought to break away from the complexities and experimentation of the preceding modernist movement and instead emphasised accessibility, clarity, and a revival of traditional poetic techniques. They embraced traditional verse forms such as sonnets, odes, and ballads, favouring rhythmic patterns and rhyming schemes that were familiar to readers.

- Escaping urbanisation, embracing nature

The Georgian poets celebrated the beauty of the English countryside, finding inspiration in rural landscapes, natural phenomena, and the changing seasons. They often depicted idyllic scenes, evoking a sense of nostalgia for a simpler and more harmonious world. The Georgian poets' focus on nature and the pastoral reflected a desire to escape the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of the time and to reconnect with the timeless rhythms of the natural world.

- Brooke, Yeats, Bridges, Masfield and de la Mare

One of the most prominent figures among the Georgian poets was Rupert Brooke, whose early death during World War I further elevated his poetic status. Brooke's poems, including his collection *1914 and Other Poems*, exemplified the romantic and patriotic spirit of the era. Other notable Georgian poets include W.B. Yeats, Robert Bridges, John Masfield, and Walter de la Mare. The Georgian movement had a significant impact on the literary landscape of the time and helped shape the direction of English poetry in the early 20th century. The movement brought a renewed emphasis on lyricism, a rejection of the overtly intellectual and abstract tendencies of modernism, and a return to more traditional and accessible poetic forms.

While the Georgian poets are often associated with a certain nostalgic sentimentality and a focus on the beauty of nature, their works also engaged with social and political themes of the time. Some poets explored themes of love, loss, and the transient nature of life, while others responded to the social and political upheavals of the era, including the impact of two world wars. Their influence extended beyond their own time, as their works continue to be studied and appreciated for their lyrical beauty and their contribution to the development

- Multifaceted expressions

of 20th-century poetry. Their revival of traditional forms, combined with their celebration of the natural world and the expression of heartfelt emotions, left an indelible mark on English literature and provided a counterpoint to the more experimental and avant-garde movements of the time.

1.2.4 Robert Bridges

- Poet Laureate and craftsmanship

Robert Bridges (1844-1930) was an English poet, physician, and literary figure who made significant contributions to English literature during the late Victorian and early modernist periods. He served as the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1913 until his death. Bridges' poetry, characterised by its meticulous craftsmanship and musicality, reflected his deep knowledge of poetic forms and his commitment to traditional verse. He often explored themes of love, nature, spirituality, and the human condition.

- Philosophical and transformative vision

One of Bridges' most notable works is his collection titled *The Testament of Beauty* (1929), a philosophical and introspective poem that reflects his contemplation on the nature of beauty and its importance in human life. In this work, Bridges sought to present his vision of a harmonious world governed by love and beauty, emphasising the transformative power of art and the pursuit of higher ideals. *The Testament of Beauty* showcases Bridges' skillful use of imagery and his ability to convey complex ideas through poetic language.

- Editor and promoter of poetry

Apart from his poetry, Bridges also played a crucial role in the preservation and promotion of English literature. He was instrumental in editing and publishing the works of his contemporary Gerard Manley Hopkins, helping to bring recognition to Hopkins' innovative and influential poetry. Bridges' dedication to preserving the literary heritage is evident in his work as the editor of the *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1900), a renowned anthology that includes a wide range of English poetry from the medieval period to the early 20th century.

1.2.5 Symbolist Movement

The Symbolist Movement emerged in the late 19th century as a response to the dominant literary and artistic trends of the time. It was a literary and artistic movement that sought to move away from realism and the rationality



- Subjectivity, symbolism and transcendence

of the Enlightenment period, embracing instead the realm of symbolism, subjectivity, and the subconscious mind. Symbolist writers and artists aimed to express elusive and abstract ideas through suggestive and often dreamlike imagery, creating a world that transcended the physical and material aspects of existence. They drew inspiration from various sources, including the works of poets such as Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, as well as from the visual arts and music. Symbolist poets sought to evoke emotions and sensations through their use of rich, vivid symbolism, often employing metaphors and allusions to explore profound themes such as spirituality, the mysteries of life and death, and the complexities of human experience.

- Literary and artistic impact

The Symbolist Movement greatly influenced the development of literature and art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It laid the groundwork for subsequent movements such as Surrealism and Expressionism, which further explored the realms of the unconscious and the irrational. Symbolist writers and artists challenged traditional forms and conventions, pushing the boundaries of artistic expression and paving the way for more experimental and avant-garde approaches.

- Power of symbolism

The legacy of the Symbolist Movement can be seen in the works of renowned writers such as Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, and Rainer Maria Rilke, as well as in the visual arts with artists like Gustav Klimt and Odilon Redon. Their exploration of symbolism and the power of suggestion continues to inspire and captivate audiences, reminding us of the richness and depth that can be found beyond the confines of literal representation.

1.2.6 Irish Literary Revival

The Irish Literary Revival, also known as the Irish Literary Renaissance, was a cultural and literary movement that took place in Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It sought to revive and promote Irish literature, language, and cultural traditions and played a significant role in shaping the modern Irish literary landscape. Poetry, in particular, emerged as a powerful and influential form of expression during this period. At the heart of the Irish Literary Revival was a group of talented poets who sought to redefine Irish poetry and explore themes of Irish identity, nationalism,

► Reviving Irish culture

and cultural heritage. These poets drew inspiration from both ancient Celtic mythology and the political climate of their time which was marked by a growing sense of Irish nationalism and a desire for independence from British rule.

► Poetry shaping Irish identity

One of the key figures in the Irish Literary Revival was William Butler Yeats, who is widely regarded as one of Ireland's greatest poets. Yeats' poetry played a pivotal role in shaping the movement and exploring Irish themes. His works often delved into Irish mythology, folklore, and the mystical, exploring themes of love, nature, and the search for spiritual and cultural identity. Yeats' poems, such as "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "Easter, 1916," and "The Second Coming," became iconic representations of the Irish Literary Revival and continue to be celebrated for their lyrical beauty and profound insights.

► Heaney and others revitalised Irish poetry

Another influential poet of the Irish Literary Revival was Seamus Heaney, who emerged in the latter half of the 20th century. Heaney's poetry reflects a deep connection to the Irish landscape, rural life, and the complex history of Ireland. His works, such as "Digging," "Mid-Term Break," and "The Tollund Man," explore themes of memory, identity, and the tension between the past and the present. Heaney's lyrical style and vivid imagery have had a profound impact on contemporary Irish poetry and continue to resonate with readers around the world. In addition to Yeats and Heaney, other notable poets associated with the Irish Literary Revival include Lady Augusta Gregory, Padraic Colum, and Thomas MacDonagh. These poets, each with their own unique styles and perspectives, contributed to the revival by celebrating Irish culture, history, and language through their poetry. Their works reflect a range of themes, from the struggles of the Irish people to the beauty of the Irish landscape, and their poems are characterised by their lyrical beauty, emotional depth, and exploration of the Irish experience.

► Revival's lasting influence

The Irish Literary Revival and its poetry had a profound and lasting impact on Irish literature and cultural identity. It helped to establish Irish poetry as a significant and respected genre and provided a platform for poets to express their unique Irish voices. The movement not only revived interest in the Irish language and traditional literary forms but also paved the way for modern and

contemporary Irish poetry, which continues to flourish and evolve to this day.

1.2.6.1 W.B. Yeats and Irish Literary Revival

William Butler Yeats played a pivotal role in the Irish Literary Revival, also known as the Irish Literary Renaissance, and his contributions had a profound impact on Irish literature, cultural identity, and the revival of Irish poetry. As one of Ireland's greatest poets, Yeats emerged as a central figure in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His poetry became a powerful vehicle for exploring Irish themes and redefining Irish poetry itself. Yeats sought to infuse his work with a sense of Irishness, drawing inspiration from Irish mythology, folklore, and the cultural heritage of his homeland.

- Irish literary pioneer

One of the notable aspects of Yeats' poetry was his exploration of Irish nationalism and the political climate of the time. His works reflected a growing sense of Irish identity and a desire for independence from British rule. Poems such as "Easter, 1916" and "September 1913" captured the spirit of the Irish struggle for freedom and resonated deeply with the Irish people. Yeats' engagement with Irish mythology and folklore was another defining characteristic of his poetry. He drew upon ancient Celtic myths and legends, infusing his verses with mystical and symbolic elements. This exploration of myth and symbolism allowed Yeats to delve into universal themes and create a rich tapestry of imagery in his poems.

- Irish nationalist poet

Moreover, Yeats' poetic style was marked by its lyrical beauty and musicality. He carefully crafted his verses, paying attention to rhythm, metre, and rhyme. This attention to form, combined with his evocative language and vivid imagery, resulted in poems that were both aesthetically pleasing and intellectually profound. Beyond his poetic contributions, Yeats was also involved in establishing institutions that promoted Irish literature and culture. He co-founded the Irish Literary Theatre, later known as the Abbey Theatre, which became a platform for showcasing Irish plays and nurturing Irish playwrights. Yeats also played a role in publishing literary journals, such as the *Irish Literary Revival* and *Samhain*, which provided a space for Irish writers to showcase their work.

- Poetic craftsmanship and cultural promoter



- Enduring literary legacy

Yeats' impact on the Irish Literary Revival extended far beyond his own lifetime. His influence on subsequent generations of poets and writers cannot be overstated. His innovative and exploratory approach to Irish poetry paved the way for developing modern and contemporary Irish literature. Many Irish poets who followed in his footsteps, such as Seamus Heaney, drew inspiration from Yeats' legacy and continued to explore themes of Irish identity, mythology, and cultural heritage.

1.2.7 Poets of World War I – Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke

- WWI: Cataclysm, impact and literature

World War I was a cataclysmic event that impacted countless lives and left an indelible mark on literature. Among the remarkable literary voices to emerge from this era were Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Rupert Brooke. These poets captured the horrors and complexities of war through their evocative verses, offering profound insights into the human condition amidst conflict.

- Wilfred Owen: War Poet, empathy and pacifism

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) is widely regarded as one of the greatest war poets in English literature. Inspired by his first-hand experience as a soldier in the trenches of World War I, Owen's poems vividly depict the grim realities of warfare. His work often delves into themes of suffering, sacrifice, and the psychological toll of combat. Owen's most celebrated poems include "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Anthem for Doomed Youth," and "Strange Meeting." Through powerful imagery and poignant language, he exposes the horrors and dehumanising nature of war, challenging the prevalent glorification of battle. Owen's poetry humanises the soldiers and conveys the futility of war, ultimately aiming to evoke empathy and promote pacifism.

- Siegfried Sassoon: Disillusionment and criticism

Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), another renowned World War I poet, initially embraced the patriotic fervour surrounding the war but soon became disillusioned by its senseless violence. Sassoon's early works conveyed the enthusiasm of a young soldier, but his experiences on the Western Front drastically altered his perspective. After witnessing the horrors of war, Sassoon's poems, such as "Suicide in the Trenches" and "The General," adopted a biting and satirical tone, sharply criticising the military leadership and the establishment. His poetry became a

searing indictment of the war and a call for justice and accountability. Sassoon's literary contributions were crucial in shaping public opinion and challenging the accepted narratives surrounding World War I.

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), unlike Owen and Sassoon, did not experience the same front-line horrors, having died of an infection before being deployed. Nonetheless, his poetic voice and idealistic portrayal of war had a significant impact on the literature of the time. Brooke's early war sonnets, such as "The Soldier," exalted the virtues of sacrifice and patriotism, embodying the sentiment prevalent during the early stages of the conflict. Brooke's poems epitomised the romanticised image of war and reflected the optimistic and nationalistic sentiments that were prevalent in the early days of World War I. While his perspective on war contrasts with that of Owen and Sassoon, his contribution lies in capturing the initial fervour and idealism that swept across nations, creating a stark contrast to the realities that were soon exposed.

- Rupert Brooke: Idealism and Romanticism

Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Rupert Brooke, each in their own unique way, provided invaluable insights into the human experience during World War I. Their poems not only capture the physical horrors and psychological impact of war but also challenge conventional narratives and ideals. These poets continue to shape our understanding of war, reminding us of its devastating consequences and prompting us to critically examine the human condition in times of conflict. Their contributions to literature ensure that the voices of those affected by war are never forgotten.

- WWI Poets: Insights, challenges and remembrance

1.2.8 Imagism: A Revolution in Poetry

Imagism was a groundbreaking poetic movement that emerged in the early 20th century, challenging traditional poetic forms and emphasising precise and vivid imagery. Led by poets such as Ezra Pound, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), and Richard Aldington, Imagism sought to create a new approach to poetry that focused on the direct presentation of images and the use of concise language. Imagism originated in the early 1900s as a reaction against the ornate language and complex metaphors of Victorian and Romantic poetry. Inspired by the concise and imagistic verses of ancient Greek and

- Imagism: groundbreaking, vivid imagery and concise



Chinese poetry, the movement sought to bring clarity, precision, and sensory impact back to poetry.

1.2.8.1 Principles of Imagism

Direct treatment of the subject: Imagist poets sought to present their subjects in a straightforward and unmediated manner. They aimed to avoid excessive commentary, explanation, or sentimentality that could distract from the immediacy of the subject itself. By employing a direct treatment, they aimed to create an intimate and intense experience for the reader, allowing them to engage directly with the subject of the poem. This approach enabled the poets to capture the essence of their subjects and convey their emotions and significance without relying on elaborate descriptions or explanations. For example, in Ezra Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro," he presents the subject of faces in a subway station with concise and direct language, avoiding embellishments or excessive analysis.

- Intimate and intense

Use of clear, concrete imagery: One of the fundamental principles of Imagism was the use of clear and concrete imagery. Imagist poets aimed to evoke vivid sensory experiences in their readers by employing precise and specific language. They focused on capturing the essence of a subject through visual, auditory, tactile, and even olfactory imagery. By using tangible and sensory details, they invited readers to actively participate in the poem, immersing themselves in the depicted world. This emphasis on concrete imagery allowed for a more immediate and visceral connection between the reader and the poem. By engaging the reader's senses, Imagist poets sought to create a more immersive and immediate experience. For instance, in H.D.'s poem "Oread," she uses clear and concrete imagery to describe the sea and the sea-nymph, allowing the reader to visualise and feel the power of the natural world.

- Tangible, sensory and immersive

Economy of language: Imagist poets valued the economy of language, choosing their words carefully to convey maximum meaning and impact. They sought to eliminate unnecessary words and avoid excessive ornamentation, preferring concise and precise language. Every word had to carry its weight, contributing to the overall effect of the poem. This emphasis on the economy of language allowed for a heightened intensity



- Concise, evocative and distilled

and concentration of meaning. By stripping away excess, Imagist poets aimed to create powerful and evocative poems that relied on the essence of language itself. Imagist poets employed spare and concise language, carefully selecting each word for its evocative power. They sought to eliminate unnecessary words and phrases, preferring a distilled and condensed style of writing. This emphasis on economy of language allowed for a heightened intensity and focus on the essence of the poem. For example, in Richard Aldington's poem "Images," he uses succinct and precise language to convey the emotional impact of the images he presents.

- Rhythm and flow

Musicality and rhythmic qualities: While Imagism prioritised clarity and directness, poets also recognised the importance of musicality and rhythmic qualities in their work. They paid attention to the rhythm, flow, and musical cadence of their poems. By carefully crafting the arrangement of words and utilising techniques such as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia, they created a melodic quality within their verses. This attention to musicality enhanced the sensory impact of the poems, inviting readers to engage in the rhythm and internal harmony of the language itself. It added another layer of aesthetic pleasure and heightened the emotional impact of the poems. This attention to musicality enhanced the aesthetic pleasure and emotional impact of the poems. For instance, in Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," the juxtaposition of the faces in the subway station and the petals on a wet black bough creates a musical and rhythmic quality, enhancing the sensory impact of the poem.

- Imagism's impact

By adhering to these principles, Imagist poets aimed to create a new poetic language that captured the essence of the subject matter in a direct, vivid, and evocative manner. The principles of direct treatment, clear imagery, economy of language, and attention to musicality collectively contributed to the distinct style and impact of Imagist poetry, revolutionising the way poets approached and conveyed their artistic visions.

1.2.8.2 Key Poets of Imagism

Ezra Pound: Pound was a central figure in the development of Imagism. His manifesto "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" outlined the principles of the movement.



His works, such as “In a Station of the Metro,” showcased his ability to condense complex emotions into vivid and concise images.

H.D. (Hilda Doolittle): H.D. was a pioneering female poet associated with Imagism. Her poems, such as “Sea Rose” and “Oread,” demonstrated her skill in creating sensual and visually striking images.

- Ezra Pound, H.D. and Richard Aldington

Richard Aldington: Aldington's poems, like “Images” and “Lament for the Sleepwalker,” exemplified the concise and precise style of Imagism, often drawing from nature and everyday objects.

1.2.9 Modernist Poetry

Modernist poetry emerged as a literary movement in the early 20th century, challenging traditional forms and exploring new ways of expression. It was characterised by experimentation, fragmentation, and a departure from conventional poetic structures. Modernist poets sought to capture the complexity, uncertainty, and rapid changes of the modern world through their works.

- Experimentation, fragmentation and departure

1.2.9.1 Key Characteristics of Modernist Poetry

Experimentation: Modernist poets pushed the boundaries of poetic conventions, experimenting with form, language, and imagery. They rejected traditional verse structures and explored new poetic techniques, such as free verse, stream of consciousness, and collage.

Fragmentation and Dislocation: Modernist poetry often embraced fragmentation and dislocation as a reflection of the fragmented nature of modern existence. Poems were composed of disjointed images, disconnected thoughts, and fragmented narratives, challenging the reader to make meaning from the fragments.

Subjectivity and Interiority: Modernist poets explored the inner lives and consciousness of their speakers. They explored subjective experiences, emotions, and psychological complexities, offering glimpses into the human psyche and questioning traditional notions of identity and self.

Ambiguity and Multiple Meanings: Modernist poetry thrived on ambiguity and multiple interpretations.

► Key features

Poems were often open-ended, leaving room for readers to bring their own perspectives and interpretations. Modernist poets embraced the idea that meaning could be subjective and elusive.

1.2.9.2 Themes in Modernist Poetry

Alienation and Isolation: Modernist poets portrayed the sense of alienation and disconnection experienced by individuals in the modern world. They explored themes of loneliness, isolation, and the breakdown of traditional social structures.

Loss and Fragmentation: Modernist poetry often grappled with themes of loss, both personal and collective. The poems reflected the disintegration of traditional values, the aftermath of World War I, and the uncertainty and disillusionment of the post-war era.

Time and Memory: Modernist poets were interested in the passage of time and how memory shapes our perception of the world. They explored themes of nostalgia, the fleeting nature of existence, and the fragmentation of memory.

► Alienation, Loss, Time and Perception

Perception and Reality: Modernist poets questioned the reliability of perception and the nature of reality. They challenged the idea of an objective reality, exploring how different perspectives and subjective experiences shape our understanding of the world.

1.2.10 T.S. Eliot

T.S. Eliot, born Thomas Stearns Eliot, was a highly influential and celebrated poet, playwright, and critic of the 20th century. His contributions to literature, particularly in the realm of Modernist poetry, have left an indelible mark on the literary landscape. T.S. Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, in the United States. He later moved to England, where he spent a significant portion of his life and established his literary career. Eliot's early works were influenced by his exposure to American and British literary traditions. He studied at Harvard University, where he developed an interest in literature, philosophy, and languages. During his time at Harvard, he also became acquainted with prominent poets such as Ezra Pound, who would later play a crucial role in Eliot's career.

► Influential, modernist and transatlantic



- *The Waste Land* and post-WWI disillusionment

In 1915, Eliot settled permanently in England and became a British citizen in 1927. He began publishing his poems and essays, gaining recognition for his innovative and intellectually challenging approach to poetry. His groundbreaking poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” published in 1915, marked the beginning of his literary success. Eliot’s most renowned work, *The Waste Land*, published in 1922, further solidified his position as a leading figure in Modernist poetry. This landmark poem, with its fragmented narrative, multiple voices, and allusions to various literary and cultural references, captured the disillusionment and cultural decay of the post-World War I era.

- Eliot’s enduring poetic exploration

Eliot continued to produce significant works throughout his career, including *Four Quartets* (1943), a series of interconnected poems reflecting the nature of time, spirituality, and human existence. His poetry often explored themes of alienation, disillusionment, the search for meaning, and the complexities of modern society. Alongside his poetry, Eliot wrote influential essays and criticism that played a vital role in shaping the literary landscape of his time.

1.2.10.1 Creativity and Literary Values

The following are some of the features of Eliot’s writings:

- Eliot’s intertextual tapestry

Fragmentation and Allusion: One of Eliot’s distinguishing features is his use of fragmentation and allusion in his works. He drew upon various literary, cultural, and religious references, incorporating them into his poetry. This intertextuality allowed him to create complex layers of meaning and enrich his works with multiple dimensions. By using fragments and allusions, Eliot captured the fragmented nature of modern existence and challenged readers to make connections across various texts and traditions.

- Eliot as modernist poet

Modernist Techniques: Eliot was at the forefront of the Modernist movement, and his works reflect the experimental and innovative spirit of the time. He employed techniques such as juxtaposition, multiple voices, stream of consciousness, and non-linear narratives to convey the complexities and uncertainties of modern life. These techniques allowed him to break away from traditional poetic forms and explore new

modes of expression.

- Eliot's exploration of consciousness

Introspection and Psychological Complexity: Eliot's poetry explored the depths of human consciousness and the complexities of the human psyche. His works often examined the inner lives of his characters, portraying their fears, doubts, and existential struggles. Through introspection and psychological depth, Eliot captured the nuances of human experience and provided profound insights into the human condition.

- Eliot's meticulous mastery

Language and Form: Eliot's meticulous attention to language and form is evident in his works. He crafted his poems precisely, carefully selecting each word for its evocative power. His poetry showcases a mastery of language, as he utilised rhythm, imagery, and diction to create a distinctive poetic voice. Eliot's commitment to form and craftsmanship demonstrates his belief in the importance of aesthetic excellence in poetry.

- Eliot's spiritual quest

Exploration of Spiritual and Religious Themes: Eliot's poetry often engaged with spiritual and religious themes, reflecting his own spiritual journey and quest for meaning. He explored themes of redemption, the search for transcendence, and the tension between the secular and the sacred. His works resonated with the spiritual and philosophical concerns of his time, offering profound reflections on faith, doubt, and the human relationship with the divine.

- Eliot's lasting legacy

T.S. Eliot's unique creativity and literary values have had a profound impact on the field of literature. His ability to merge tradition and innovation, his complex use of language and allusion, and his exploration of profound themes continue to inspire and challenge readers today. Eliot's contributions to modernist poetry and his commitment to artistic excellence have cemented his place as one of the most significant poets of the 20th century.

- Thirties' poets shaped era

1.2.11 Poets of the Thirties – Oxford Poets and Pylon Poets

The period of the thirties of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a vibrant group of poets in England who were collectively known as the Poets of the Thirties. This diverse group of writers, which included the Oxford Poets and the Pylon Poets, responded to the



social, political, and cultural climate of their time through their poetry.

- Intellect and tradition of Oxford poets

The Oxford Poets were a group of poets who were predominantly associated with the University of Oxford. They were known for their intellectual rigour, academic backgrounds, and engagement with complex ideas. They often embraced a more traditional poetic style and drew inspiration from literary traditions and classical references. Their poetry displayed a mastery of form and language, and they frequently explored themes of love, nature, and the complexities of human existence. They were known for their skillful use of metaphor and imagery, creating rich and evocative landscapes within their verses.

- Radical and provocative Pylon poets

On the other hand, the Pylon Poets were a group of poets who shared a more radical and politically engaged approach to their work. They sought to challenge societal norms, question established institutions, and address the pressing social issues of their time. The Pylon Poets often experimented with poetic form, incorporating elements of surrealism, free verse, and innovative language. Their poetry exhibited a sense of urgency, as they tackled themes such as social inequality, the rise of fascism, the impact of industrialization, and the experiences of the working class. The Pylon Poets aimed to give voice to the marginalised and expose the injustices of society through their powerful and provocative verses.

- Diverse legacies

Both the Oxford Poets and the Pylon Poets were significant contributors to the poetic landscape of the thirties. While they differed in their approaches and themes, they were united in their commitment to the power of poetry as a means of expressing social and political commentary. Their works captured the complexities of the human experience, grappled with the changing world around them, and offered profound insights into the challenges and aspirations of their generation. The poets of the thirties, thus, played a crucial role in shaping the literary and cultural climate of their time. Their poetry continues to be studied and appreciated for its artistic merit, intellectual depth, and social relevance. By exploring the human condition, engaging with political realities, and pushing the boundaries of poetic expression, these poets left a lasting legacy in the world of literature.



1.2.11.1 The Pylon Poets: W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice and Stephen Spender

The Pylon Poets, including W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, and others, were a group of influential British poets who emerged during the 1930s. They shared a common vision of poetry as a means to engage with the social and political issues of their time. They were influenced by the tumultuous political and social climate of the 1930s. The rise of fascism, the Spanish Civil War, and the growing unease before World War II provided fertile ground for their poetic expression. They were also influenced by earlier literary movements, such as modernism, and by the works of poets like T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats.

- The Pylon Poets of the 1930s

The Pylon Poets tackled a wide range of themes in their works. They explored the complexities of love, human relationships, and the individual's place in society. Additionally, they engaged with political and social issues, addressing topics like class struggle, the rise of totalitarianism, and the threat of war. These poets sought to connect the personal with the political, examining the impact of larger social forces on individual lives. They employed various stylistic techniques to convey their ideas effectively. They often used a conversational tone, combining the colloquial with the formal to create a distinct voice. Their poetry was characterised by accessible language and vivid imagery, allowing readers to connect emotionally with their works. They employed free verse, experimenting with rhythm and metre while avoiding strict poetic forms. The Pylon Poets also incorporated elements of surrealism and symbolism into their writing, adding depth and complexity to their poems.

- Engaging themes and innovative style

W. H. Auden, one of the most prominent Pylon Poets, wrote "September 1, 1939," a powerful reflection on the political turmoil of the time. Louis MacNeice's "Autumn Journal" explored themes of personal and national identity amidst the threat of war. Stephen Spender's "The Pylons" expressed a fascination with industrialisation while questioning its impact on humanity. The Pylon Poets collectively challenged the conventional notions of poetry and brought a fresh perspective to the literary landscape.

- Powerful reflections and fresh perspectives



► Enduring Impact

The Pylon Poets left an indelible mark on 20th-century poetry. Their works captured the zeitgeist of their time and inspired subsequent generations of poets. Their engagement with social and political issues paved the way for the emergence of politically charged poetry in the decades to come. They demonstrated that poetry could be both aesthetically pleasing and intellectually engaging, leading to a broader understanding of the power of poetic expression.

1.2.12 Surrealism in Poetry

► Unconscious poetry

Surrealism, an artistic movement that emerged in the early 20th century, aimed to unlock the power of the unconscious mind. Surrealist poetry pushes the boundaries of traditional poetic conventions, offering a unique and dreamlike experience to readers. In this learning material, we will delve into the world of surrealism in poetry, its key characteristics, prominent poets, and techniques.

Surrealist poetry embraces the irrational, the illogical, and the unexpected. Its key characteristics include:

Dreamlike Imagery: Surrealist poems often feature vivid and nonsensical imagery that disrupts conventional logic.

Automatic Writing: Poets employ stream-of-consciousness techniques, allowing thoughts and ideas to flow without censorship or rational control.

Juxtaposition: Surrealist poets juxtapose seemingly unrelated elements to create surprise and provoke emotional responses.

Disruption of Syntax: Traditional grammar and syntax are intentionally distorted or abandoned, fostering a sense of chaos and surprise.

► Irrational, illogical and unexpected poetry

Unconscious Exploration: Surrealist poets tap into the depths of the unconscious mind, accessing hidden desires, fears, and fantasies.

1.2.12.1 Prominent Surrealist Poets

Several poets have made significant contributions to surrealism:

André Breton: Known as the founder of surrealism,

Breton's manifestos and poems explored the automatic writing technique and emphasised the importance of the unconscious.

Paul Éluard: Éluard's work focused on love, dreams, and political themes, intertwining reality and the imaginary.

René Magritte: While primarily a painter, Magritte's poetic writing style mirrored the visual illusions in his artwork, challenging the boundaries of reality.

► Surrealist poets

Federico García Lorca: Lorca's surrealist poetry blended rural Andalusian culture with dreamlike imagery, exploring themes of love, death, and nature.

1.2.12.2 Techniques in Surrealist Poetry

Surrealist poets employ various techniques to create a surrealistic experience:

Metaphor and Symbolism: Surrealists use metaphorical language and rich symbolism to evoke powerful emotions and provoke unconventional interpretations.

Simile: Surrealist poems often employ unexpected or illogical comparisons to create a sense of surprise and disorientation.

Détournement: Poets appropriate existing texts or images, subverting their original meanings to generate new and unexpected associations.

Automatism: Automatic writing involves putting pen to paper and allowing thoughts and words to flow without conscious control, enabling direct access to the unconscious mind.

► Creating surrealistic experiences

Absurdity: Surrealist poets embrace absurdity by deliberately incorporating illogical or nonsensical elements into their work, challenging rational thinking.

1.2.13 Dylan Thomas

► Thomas: Lyrical, Experimental Poetry

Dylan Thomas was a Welsh poet and writer who contributed significantly during the 20th century. Known for his lyrical and experimental style, Thomas' work combined vivid imagery, musicality, and a deep exploration of the human condition. His literary



contributions, historical context, and unique style are outlined below:

► Dylan Thomas' poetic exploration

Dylan Thomas' poetic exploration is a cornerstone of his literary legacy. His poems are revered for their striking language, vibrant imagery, and intricate wordplay. Through his mastery of poetic techniques, Thomas explored a wide range of themes, offering profound insights into life, death, nature, and the complexities of human emotions. One of Thomas' most celebrated poems, "Do not go gentle into that good night," exemplifies his exploration of the human condition. This emotionally charged villanelle addresses the inevitability of death and the importance of living passionately until the end. Through vivid and evocative language, Thomas implores his readers to resist resignation and embrace the fullness of life.

► Nostalgic reflection and fleeting existence

"Fern Hill" is another remarkable poem that showcases Thomas' poetic prowess. It is a nostalgic and lyrical piece, reflecting on the loss of innocence and the passage of time. Thomas employs vivid imagery to vividly depict his childhood memories and the beauty of the natural world. The poem's contemplation of mortality and the fleeting nature of existence resonates with readers on a deeply emotional level.

► Multifaceted exploration

In addition to individual poems, Thomas' magnum opus, "Under Milk Wood" is a testament to his poetic exploration. This play for voices, written in richly descriptive language, paints a vivid picture of a fictional Welsh town and its inhabitants. Through a tapestry of interwoven voices and lyrical passages, Thomas captures the diverse range of human experiences, from joy and humour to longing and regret. Thomas' poetry often contains layers of meaning and intricate wordplay, inviting readers to engage deeply with his work. His rich language and vivid imagery create a sensory experience, drawing readers into the worlds he constructs within his verses. His poems can evoke strong emotions, provoke contemplation, and leave a lasting impact on those who encounter them.

Through his poetic exploration, Dylan Thomas brought a distinctive voice to the literary landscape. His profound understanding of the human condition, coupled with his mastery of poetic techniques, allowed him to create

- Distinctive voice and timeless resonance

works that resonate with readers across generations. Thomas' ability to capture the beauty, complexity, and fragility of life through his poetry solidifies his place as one of the most celebrated poets of the 20th century.

Thomas was known for his engaging and charismatic performances of his own works. His readings showcased his unique vocal delivery, with an emphasis on rhythm, musicality, and the sonic qualities of language. His dynamic performances contributed to the popularity and impact of his poetry. Dylan Thomas emerged during the mid-20th century, a time of great social, political, and cultural change. His literary career spanned the years leading up to and during World War II and the post-war period. Thomas was part of a generation of writers who responded to turbulent times with introspection, experimentation, and a renewed focus on the individual's experience.

- Turbulent times

1.2.14 New Apocalypse

The New Apocalypse was a literary movement that emerged in Britain during the mid-20th century, primarily in the 1940s and 1950s. It was a reaction against the disillusionment and despair caused by the devastation of World War II and sought to explore new forms of expression and a renewed sense of purpose in the aftermath of the war. The movement was characterised by its apocalyptic themes, existential questioning, and experimental writing styles. The New Apocalypse poets, including Dylan Thomas, Henry Treece, J.F. Hendry, and George Barker, among others, sought to confront the existential anxieties and moral dilemmas of their time. Their poetry reflected a sense of urgency and a desire for renewal, often employing bold and dramatic imagery to convey their apocalyptic visions.

- Renewal amidst devastation

The New Apocalypse poets rejected the prevailing literary trends of the time, such as the formalism of the Georgian poets and the politically engaged poetry of the 1930s. Instead, they embraced a more individualistic and subjective approach to poetry, exploring the depths of the human psyche and grappling with themes of alienation, death, and the precarious nature of existence. One of the defining characteristics of the New Apocalypse was its experimental use of language and form. The poets sought to push the boundaries of traditional poetic



► Rebellion and experimentation

conventions, often incorporating innovative techniques such as surrealism, stream-of-consciousness, and free verse. They experimented with fragmented narratives, disordered syntax, and unconventional imagery, aiming to capture the chaotic and fragmented nature of the post-war world. They also shared a sense of rebellion against the status quo, rejecting established societal norms and seeking to challenge and provoke their readers. Their works were often characterised by a raw and visceral energy, reflecting the turbulent times in which they were written.

► Individual voices and enduring influence

Despite their shared thematic concerns and experimental approach, the New Apocalypse poets had individual styles and poetic voices. Dylan Thomas, for example, infused his poetry with a rich musicality and intricate wordplay, while Henry Treece explored myth and history to explore themes of violence and regeneration. While the New Apocalypse movement did not achieve the same level of recognition as some of its contemporaries, it played a significant role in the evolution of British poetry in the mid-20th century. Its emphasis on individual expression, experimentation, and exploration of existential concerns paved the way for subsequent generations of poets to push the boundaries of poetic form and content. The New Apocalypse poets' engagement with the anxieties and uncertainties of their time continues to resonate with readers. It serves as a testament to the enduring power of poetry as a medium of social and personal reflection.

Summarised Overview

The Edwardian era witnessed significant changes in class dynamics, gender roles, diplomacy, politics, and literature. The rise of the middle class reshaped social hierarchies, challenging the dominance of the aristocracy. The suffragette movement gained momentum by advocating for women's rights and challenging traditional gender roles. Diplomatic efforts aimed to secure Britain's position on the global stage, while political reforms addressed social issues and improved public welfare. In literature, Edwardian poets expressed various styles and engaged with social and political issues. John Masefield's seafaring experiences influenced his adventurous poetry. Walter de la Mare evoked a sense of enchantment and explored childhood wonder,

and A.E. Housman captured intense emotions and incorporated classical allusions. The Georgian poets, including Rupert Brooke, celebrated nature and traditional poetic forms, shaping the direction of 20th-century poetry. Robert Bridges, as Poet Laureate, meticulously crafted poems and promoted English literature.

The Pylon Poets, including W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, and Stephen Spender, were a group of poets who emerged in the 1930s and shared a radical and politically engaged approach to their work. They sought to challenge societal norms and address pressing social issues through their poetry. W.H. Auden, known for his intellectual and highly crafted verse, explored themes of love, politics, and the complexities of human existence. Louis MacNeice, with his distinctive conversational style, tackled themes of social inequality, the rise of fascism, and the impact of industrialisation. Stephen Spender, influenced by surrealism and symbolism, explored themes of identity, war, and the power of art. Together, these poets used poetry as a means of expressing social and political commentary, leaving a lasting impact on the literary and cultural climate of their time.

Assignments

1. Discuss the characteristics of Edwardian poetry and its key themes.
2. Analyse the influence of the Irish Literary Revival on the works of W.B. Yeats.
3. Examine the impact of World War I on poetry, focusing on the works of Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Rupert Brooke.
4. Explore the key principles and characteristics of the Imagist movement in poetry.
5. Discuss the major themes and innovations in T.S. Eliot's modernist poetry.
6. Analyse the social and political concerns reflected in the works of the poets of the thirties, such as W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, and Stephen Spender.
7. Compare and contrast the poetic styles and themes of the Oxford Poets and the Pylon Poets.
8. Discuss the role of surrealism in the poetry of Dylan Thomas.



Suggested Readings

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1. Alexander, Michael. *A History of English Literature*. Macmillan, 2000.
2. Corcoran, Neil. *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry*. CUP, 2007.
3. Marcus, Laura and Peter Nicholls. *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*. CUP, 2004.
4. Yeats. William Butler, editor, *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892–1935*. OUP, 2008.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Unit 3

Influences and Movements in Drama

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ gain an understanding of the profound influence of Henrik Ibsen on the development of modern drama
- ▶ analyse the key characteristics and significance of the Problem Play genre
- ▶ examine the contributions of renowned playwrights such as Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, and James Barrie to the theatrical landscape
- ▶ understand the characteristics and significance of Poetic Drama as a genre
- ▶ recognise the impact of the Irish Dramatic Movement on the revitalisation of Irish theatre

Background

In this unit, our exploration of the dynamic world of drama takes us on a journey from the influential figure of Henrik Ibsen to the emergence of the Abbey Theatre and the Irish Dramatic Movement. We begin by closely examining Ibsen's lasting impact on the theatre, focusing on the development of the Problem Play. This genre brought social and political issues to the forefront of theatrical discourse, challenging traditional norms and stimulating critical thinking among audiences.

We will explore the works of renowned playwrights such as Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and James Barrie. These playwrights played a significant role in the tradition of the Well-Made play, characterised by its intricate plot structure and meticulously crafted dialogue. Through their works, they brought a sense of sophistication and refinement to the stage, captivating audiences with their expertly woven narratives.

As we move forward, we will discuss Poetic drama, where we will focus on the contributions of notable figures like T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry, among others. This form of drama introduced a novel fusion of poetry and dramatic

elements, adding a new dimension to the theatrical experience. Through their poetic language, symbolism, and exploration of complex themes, these playwrights challenged traditional theatrical conventions and pushed the boundaries of artistic expression. Furthermore, our exploration takes us to the transformative power of the Irish Dramatic Movement, centred around the renowned Abbey Theatre.

Keywords

New Drama, Well-Made Plays, Poetic Drama, Abbey Theatre, Irish Dramatic Movement

Discussion

1.3.1 The New Drama

The modern age has witnessed significant shift in the realm of drama, giving rise to a new form of theatrical expression. The age of modern drama is generally considered to have started in the late 19th century. It emerged as a reaction to the dominant theatrical styles and themes of previous eras, such as romanticism and melodrama. One significant milestone of the New Drama was the premiere of Henrik Ibsen's play *The Pillars of Society* in 1877. Ibsen is often regarded as the father of modern drama due to his groundbreaking works that challenged social conventions and explored psychological depth. The following are some of the features of the New Drama.

► Challenged conventions

Realism and Social Criticism: One of the defining features of the new drama of the modern age is its emphasis on realism and social criticism. Playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, and George Bernard Shaw broke away from the romantic and melodramatic conventions of the past, presenting stories that reflected the realities of everyday life. They tackled social issues, including gender inequality, class struggles and the hypocrisy of societal norms. These plays aimed to expose and critique the flaws



and injustices of society, provoking introspection and inspiring social change.

Expressionism and Psychological Exploration:

In the early 20th century, the new drama took a turn towards expressionism, a movement that sought to convey the inner emotional states of characters through the heightened and distorted theatrical techniques. Playwrights like August Strindberg and Eugene O'Neill delved into the depths of human psyche, exploring themes of alienation, despair, and the human condition. Expressionist dramas challenged traditional narrative structures and focused on subjective experiences, often employing symbolism and surreal elements to convey the characters' inner turmoil.

- Heightened emotions and symbolism

Absurdism and Existentialism:

The mid-20th century witnessed the emergence of absurdism, a dramatic movement that reflected the existential angst of the modern era. Playwrights like Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter presented plays where characters struggled to find meaning and purpose in a seemingly nonsensical world. Absurdist dramas featured fragmented narratives, ambiguous dialogue, and illogical situations, highlighting the futility of human existence. Through their unconventional approach, these plays invited audiences to question established norms and the nature of reality itself.

- Unconventional

Postmodernism and Meta-Theatricality:

In the latter half of the 20th century, postmodernism exerted a profound influence on the new drama. Playwrights such as Tom Stoppard and Caryl Churchill embraced meta-theatricality, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction and challenging the notion of a fixed and objective truth. Postmodern dramas incorporated self-referential elements, intertextuality, and fragmented narratives, encouraging the audience to actively engage with the performance and question established theatrical conventions. These plays often tackled themes of identity, power structures, and the construction of meaning in a complex and interconnected world.

- Postmodernism's impact

Diversity, Inclusivity, and Intersectionality:

The new drama of the modern age has also witnessed a greater emphasis on diversity, inclusivity, and intersectionality. Contemporary playwrights such as Lynn Nottage, Ayad

- Diverse narratives

Akhtar, and Sarah Ruhl have brought forth narratives that represent the experiences of marginalised communities, challenging the dominant cultural narratives. These plays address issues such as racism, gender identity, sexuality, and social inequality, amplifying voices that have historically been marginalised. By embracing a wider range of perspectives, the new drama of the modern age strives for a more inclusive and equitable theatrical landscape.

1.3.2 Influence of Ibsen

- Trailblazer of modern drama

The world of theatre was forever transformed by the groundbreaking works of Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright from the late 19th century. Henrik Ibsen was a trailblazer in the theatre world, revolutionising the art form with his plays. He is often called the “father of modern drama” due to his unique approach to storytelling. Ibsen’s works, such as *A Doll’s House*, *Ghosts*, and *Hedda Gabler*, tackled controversial themes and depicted complex characters facing moral and social dilemmas.

- Ibsen’s psychological realism

Psychological Realism: One of the most significant contributions of Ibsen to the new drama movement was his emphasis on psychological realism. Unlike the melodramatic conventions of his time, Ibsen portrayed characters with depth and complexity. Through his works, he explored the intricacies of human nature, revealing the inner conflicts, desires, and motivations that shape our lives. This psychological depth brought a new level of authenticity to the stage and influenced subsequent playwrights to delve into the human psyche.

- Challenging societal norms

Social Criticism: Ibsen’s plays were renowned for their sharp social criticism. He fearlessly addressed taboo subjects such as gender roles, marriage, and morality, inviting audiences to question prevailing societal norms. In *A Doll’s House*, for instance, he highlighted the oppression of women in Victorian society and sparked widespread debate on gender equality. By challenging established social conventions, Ibsen gave a voice to the marginalised and paved the way for social progress.

Symbolism and Metaphor: Another notable aspect of Ibsen’s writing was his use of symbolism and metaphor. Through carefully constructed imagery, he conveyed deeper meanings beyond the surface narrative. Objects,



- Ibsen's layered meanings

settings, and even weather patterns were employed to represent abstract concepts, adding layers of interpretation to his plays. This symbolism encouraged audiences to engage in intellectual discourse and contemplate the hidden messages within Ibsen's works.

1.3.3 Problem Play

- Thought-provoking drama

The Problem Play is a significant genre that emerged in the late 19th century, with Henrik Ibsen as one of its primary pioneers. This genre is characterised by exploring social, moral, and political issues through the lens of realistic and thought-provoking drama. The Problem Play seeks to confront the audience with complex and often controversial problems, challenging conventional beliefs and encouraging critical reflection.

- Complex characters

One of the key features of Problem Play is its engagement with societal concerns and examination of pressing issues of the time. Playwrights of this genre sought to shed light on problems that were often swept under the rug or ignored in polite society. These plays tackled topics such as gender roles, societal expectations, class divisions, the treatment of women, and the hypocrisies of the middle class. By confronting these issues head-on, the Problem Play aimed to provoke dialogue, challenge social norms, and inspire change. The protagonists in Problem Plays often find themselves caught in moral dilemmas or facing internal conflicts that mirror the larger issues. These characters struggle with the clash between their individual desires and the expectations and limitations imposed by society. They grapple with ethical decisions and confront the consequences of their actions. Through the nuanced portrayal of these characters, the Problem Play invites the audience to empathise, question their own beliefs, and consider alternative perspectives.

Moreover, the Problem Play challenges the notion of a clear resolution or a neat conclusion. Rather than providing easy answers, these plays often leave the audience with open-ended questions and moral ambiguities. The intention is not to provide a simple solution but to prompt critical thinking and foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human experience. The influence of the Problem Play extends beyond the works of Ibsen, as other playwrights of the

- Enduring relevance

time and subsequent generations embraced this genre. Playwrights such as George Bernard Shaw and Arthur Miller, among others, continued to explore social and moral issues through their own variations of the Problem Play. This genre remains relevant today as contemporary playwrights continue to tackle challenging subjects and present thought-provoking narratives that engage with the complexities of our society.

1.3.4 George Bernard Shaw

- Influential playwright and social critic

George Bernard Shaw, born in 1856, was an influential Irish playwright, critic, and social reformer who left an indelible mark on literary history. His contributions to theatre and his insightful critiques of society established him as one of the most prominent figures of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Shaw's literary history is characterised by his unique blend of wit, social commentary, and sharp intellect. He challenged the traditional norms of Victorian society, using his plays as a platform to critique and satirise various aspects of contemporary life. Through his biting humour and clever dialogue, Shaw fearlessly tackled issues such as class inequality, women's rights, religion, and the hypocrisy of the upper classes.

- Master of language and unconventional narratives

One of Shaw's most notable features is his masterful use of language. He crafted intricate dialogues that were known for their sharp wit, clever wordplay, and thought-provoking insights. His characters engaged in lively debates and discussions, often challenging societal conventions and exposing the flaws in prevailing ideologies. Shaw's plays, such as *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara*, showcased his linguistic prowess and his ability to use language as a tool for social critique. Another significant aspect of Shaw's literary history is his exploration of the concept of the "well-made play." He sought to break away from the predictable and formulaic structures of traditional theatre and instead presented complex narratives with unexpected twists and turns. Shaw's plays often defied conventional expectations, subverting dramatic conventions and surprising audiences with unconventional resolutions.

Furthermore, Shaw's writings were deeply rooted in his commitment to social reform and his belief in the power of art to effect change. He saw theatre as a means



- Advocate for reform

to challenge and inspire audiences to question the status quo. Shaw's plays frequently championed progressive ideas, advocating for social justice, equality, and the empowerment of the working class. Shaw's influence extended far beyond his works for the stage. He was a prolific essayist and critic, using his platform to share his views on various topics, from politics and economics to literature and theatre. His critical writings were known for their incisive analysis and ability to challenge established norms and receive wisdom.

- Enduring legacy

In recognition of his contributions to literature and drama, Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925. His legacy as a playwright, critic, and social reformer continues to resonate today. Shaw's works remain widely performed and studied, and his ideas continue to provoke thought and inspire generations of artists, intellectuals, and activists. In summary, Bernard Shaw's literary history is characterised by his wit, social critique, and linguistic brilliance. He challenged societal norms through his plays, using language as a tool for satire and social commentary. Shaw's commitment to social reform and his belief in the transformative power of art have cemented his place as a towering figure in literary history.

1.3.5 John Galsworthy

- Social commentator

John Galsworthy, a prominent English playwright of the early 20th century, left a lasting impact on the theatrical landscape with his insightful works and social commentary. As a playwright, Galsworthy's contributions and style offer valuable lessons and learning opportunities for students of literature and drama. One notable aspect of Galsworthy's work is his commitment to social realism. His plays, such as the renowned *The Forsyte Saga*, delve into the examination of societal issues and moral dilemmas. Galsworthy's exploration of topics such as class divisions, economic disparities, and the human condition gives learners an understanding of the social dynamics prevalent during his time.

Galsworthy's plays also serve as a reminder of the power of theatre to raise awareness and provoke critical thinking. Through his works, he sought to shed light on social injustices and question the prevailing norms and values of society. Learners can analyse the

► Complex characters

techniques employed by Galsworthy to effectively convey his messages, such as the use of dialogue, stagecraft, and symbolism. Moreover, his character development provides valuable learning opportunities. His characters often embody complex and conflicting traits, allowing learners to explore the depth of human nature and the nuances of human behaviour. One can examine the motives, dilemmas, and internal struggles faced by Galsworthy's characters, gaining insights into the complexities of human psychology and the choices individuals make when confronted with societal pressures. The exploration of these characters can foster empathy and critical thinking.

► Masterful storytelling

Galsworthy's craftsmanship in storytelling and structure is another aspect worth exploring. He used the narrative techniques of flashback, foreshadowing, and multiple storylines to enhance the dramatic tension and engage the audience. By analysing the structure of Galsworthy's plays, one can gain an understanding of how narrative choices affect the overall impact of the work and explore the concept of plot development in drama. Furthermore, Galsworthy's works provide insights into the evolution of theatrical conventions and the transition from late 19th-century melodrama to the realistic drama of the early 20th century. By examining his plays alongside the works of his contemporaries, such as Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw, the development of theatrical styles and thematic concerns during this period can be traced.

1.3.6 James Barrie

► Whimsical Scottish playwright

James Barrie, born on May 9, 1860, in Scotland, was a prolific Scottish playwright and novelist who left an indelible mark on literary history. His works, particularly his plays, captured the imagination of audiences and continue to be celebrated for their unique blend of whimsy, imagination, and insightful exploration of human nature. Barrie's literary career flourished during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when social and cultural changes reshaped the world. His writings reflect the transitional period, blending elements of Victorian sentimentality with a more modern sensibility. Barrie's works often explore themes of childhood, imagination, and the complexities of adult life, revealing a profound understanding of human emotions and relationships.



- Eternal youth in Neverland

One of Barrie's most enduring and beloved works is *Peter Pan*. This iconic play, first performed in 1904, tells the story of a boy who refuses to grow up and his adventures in the magical world of Neverland. *Peter Pan* captured the hearts of both children and adults, resonating with its themes of the loss of innocence, the power of imagination, and the longing for eternal youth. The character of Peter Pan has become an enduring symbol of eternal youth and the spirit of adventure.

- Whimsy, lyricism, and sentimentality

Barrie's writing style is characterised by a whimsical and lyrical quality with a touch of sentimentality. His use of language and vivid descriptions bring his characters and settings to life, evoking a sense of wonder and enchantment. He often infuses his works with a delicate balance of humour and pathos, creating a bittersweet tone that tugs at the heartstrings of his readers and audience. In addition to *Peter Pan*, Barrie wrote numerous other plays, including *The Admirable Crichton* and *What Every Woman Knows*. These works often explore themes of class, gender roles, and the complexities of relationships. Barrie's characters, while larger than life, are also relatable and flawed, allowing audiences to connect with their struggles and triumphs.

1.3.7 The Well-Made Play

- Intricate, suspenseful and tightly woven

The Well-Made play is a significant dramatic tradition that emerged in the 19th century and peaked in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This genre is characterised by its meticulously constructed plot structure, intricate twists and turns, and carefully crafted dialogue. The Well-Made play became a dominant form of theatre during this period, offering audiences a tightly woven narrative that engaged their intellect and heightened their sense of suspense. One of the key features of the Well-Made play is its emphasis on a tightly structured plot. Playwrights of this genre meticulously crafted their plays, ensuring that every detail is carefully orchestrated to create a sense of dramatic tension and intrigue. The plot often involves a series of complications, revelations, and reversals leading to a climactic resolution. The structure of the Well-Made play follows a clear trajectory, building suspense and holding the audience's attention until the final resolution.

In addition to the plot structure, the Well-Made play is

- Precise, natural and impactful dialogue

also characterised by its carefully constructed dialogue. Playwrights paid great attention to the language and dialogue, aiming for precision and naturalness. The dialogue in these plays serves multiple purposes - it provides exposition, reveals character motivations, and drives the plot forward. The carefully crafted dialogue adds to the overall theatrical experience, creating moments of wit, tension, and emotional impact.

- Intricate devices and suspenseful twists

Another hallmark of the Well-Made play is the use of dramatic devices such as secret pasts, mistaken identities, and hidden objects. These devices contribute to the intricacy of the plot and often lead to unexpected revelations and surprising twists. Playwrights skillfully deploy these devices to keep the audience engaged and guessing, heightening the sense of suspense and intrigue. The Well-Made play tradition reached its zenith in the works of playwrights such as Eugène Scribe, Victorien Sardou, and Alexandre Dumas. These playwrights were celebrated for their ability to construct intricate plots and create compelling theatrical experiences. They catered to the tastes of the middle-class audiences of the time, who sought escapism, entertainment, and a satisfying resolution.

- Evolution and enduring influence

However, as the 20th century progressed, the Well-Made play tradition began to wane in popularity. Playwrights like Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw challenged the formulaic nature of these plays, advocating for more realistic and socially conscious theatre. The rise of new theatrical movements, such as realism and naturalism, also pushed the Well-Made play into the background. Nonetheless, the legacy of the Well-Made play is significant. Its emphasis on structure, suspense, and meticulous craftsmanship influenced subsequent generations of playwrights. Elements of the Well-Made play can still be seen in contemporary theatre, as playwrights continue to utilise intricate plotting and skilled dialogue to captivate audiences.

1.3.8 Poetic Drama – T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry

Poetic Drama is a genre of theatre that combines the elements of poetry and drama to create a unique and evocative theatrical experience. It is characterised by its use of heightened language, rich imagery, and rhythmic



- Heightened language evokes emotions

patterns, allowing playwrights to explore profound themes and emotions through the power of poetic expression. T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry are two notable figures who significantly contributed to the genre.

T.S. Eliot, a renowned American-British poet and playwright, is widely regarded as one of the most influential literary figures of the 20th century. In the realm of Poetic drama, Eliot's notable work is *Murder in the Cathedral*, which was first performed in 1935. This play depicts the martyrdom of Thomas Becket and explores themes of power, spirituality, and the struggle between worldly and divine forces. Eliot's use of poetic language, symbolism, and religious imagery creates a deeply meditative and introspective atmosphere, elevating the dramatic experience. Eliot's poetic style, known for its fragmentation, allusions, and complex symbolism, is also evident in his other notable works, including *The Cocktail Party* and *The Family Reunion*. In these plays, he explores existential and psychological themes, utilising poetic language and unconventional narrative structures to express the depths of human consciousness and the complexities of human relationships. Eliot's Poetic drama represents a fusion of intellectual depth, linguistic beauty, and philosophical exploration.

- Eliot's poetic plays

Christopher Fry, an English poet and playwright, is another significant figure in the realm of Poetic Drama. His most celebrated work is *The Lady's Not for Burning*, first performed in 1948. This play combines elements of comedy, romance, and social commentary, portraying a world wearied by war and a longing for love and redemption. Fry's poetic language, wit, and lyrical dialogues infuse the play with a sense of enchantment and beauty, adding depth to its exploration of human desires and the pursuit of happiness. Fry's other notable works, such as *A Phoenix Too Frequent* and *Venus Observed*, also showcase his mastery of poetic language and ability to create vivid and memorable characters. His plays often explore themes of love, morality, and the human condition, presenting a delicate balance between humour and poignancy. Fry's Poetic Drama captures the essence of the human experience, combining the power of poetry with the immediacy of theatre.

- Enchanting poetry on stage

1.3.9 Irish Dramatic Movement and Abbey Theatre

- Revitalising Irish theatre and identity

The Irish Dramatic Movement, also known as the Irish Literary Theatre Movement, was a significant cultural and theatrical movement that emerged in Ireland during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It played a pivotal role in revitalising Irish theatre, contributing to developing a distinct Irish dramatic tradition and fostering a sense of national identity. The movement was closely associated with the founding of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1904. The theatre was established by William Butler Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, and other prominent figures in Irish literature and cultural circles. The Abbey Theatre became a platform for Irish playwrights to showcase their works and for actors to perform in a distinctly Irish theatrical environment.

- Exploring Irish culture and identity

At the core of the Irish Dramatic Movement was a desire to explore and express the unique cultural, political, and social experiences of Ireland. The movement aimed to break away from the dominance of British theatre and assert Irish identity through storytelling and dramatic representation. It sought to challenge and subvert the prevailing stereotypes and misrepresentations of Ireland and its people. One of the key figures of the Irish Dramatic Movement was W.B. Yeats, a renowned poet and playwright. Yeats's plays, such as *The Countess Cathleen*, were characterised by their poetic language, mythical elements, and exploration of Irish folklore and legends. Yeats drew inspiration from Celtic mythology and sought to infuse his works with a sense of Irish mysticism and spirituality.

- Challenging rural Irish norms

Another prominent playwright associated with the movement was J.M. Synge. His play *The Playboy of the Western World* caused significant controversy upon its debut but also marked a turning point in Irish theatre. Synge's works often depicted the lives and struggles of rural Irish communities, portraying the complexities and contradictions of Irish society.

Sean O'Casey was another influential playwright associated with the Irish Dramatic Movement. His plays, such as *The Plough and the Stars* and *Juno and the Paycock*, explored themes of poverty, political turmoil, and the impact of Irish nationalism on working-class



- Realistic portrayal and social issues

communities. O'Casey's works offered a gritty and realistic portrayal of Irish life, presenting a different perspective from the romanticised portrayals often found in earlier Irish literature.

The Irish Dramatic Movement not only produced remarkable plays but also contributed to the development of a strong community of actors, directors, and writers dedicated to the cause of Irish theatre. It provided a platform for emerging talents and fostered collaborations that nurtured the growth of Irish cultural and artistic expression. The legacy of the Irish Dramatic Movement continues to shape Irish theatre and its contribution to the broader theatrical landscape. It demonstrated the power of theatre as a means of cultural and political expression, paving the way for subsequent generations of Irish playwrights to explore and celebrate their unique heritage. The movement's influence extended beyond Ireland, inspiring theatre practitioners worldwide to embrace their own cultural identities and engage with the stories and experiences of their respective nations.

- Cultivating Irish talent

Summarised Overview

The modern age of drama, starting in the late 19th century, witnessed significant shifts in theatrical expression. Henrik Ibsen, often considered the father of modern drama, challenged conventional theatrical styles with his groundbreaking works. The New Drama emphasised realism, social criticism, and psychological exploration. Playwrights like Ibsen, Chekhov, and Shaw tackled social issues and exposed societal flaws, provoking introspection and inspiring social change. The movement evolved to include expressionism, absurdism, postmodernism, and a greater emphasis on diversity and inclusivity. Ibsen's psychological realism and social criticism left a lasting influence on modern drama, paving the way for subsequent playwrights to explore complex characters and societal issues through thought-provoking narratives.

Bernard Shaw, a prominent Irish playwright, critic, and social reformer, challenged Victorian society through his insightful works. Shaw's masterful use of language, wit, and clever dialogue brought social commentary to the forefront. He defied dramatic conventions and advocated for progressive ideas, using theatre as a platform for change. His legacy as an advocate for reform and his ability to challenge established norms cemented his place in literary history. John Galsworthy, an English playwright, contributed

to social realism by delving into societal issues and moral dilemmas. His exploration of character depth, storytelling techniques, and the transition from melodrama to realistic drama provides valuable learning opportunities. James Barrie, a whimsical Scottish playwright, captured the imagination with works like *Peter Pan*, which explored themes of childhood, imagination, and the complexities of adult life. Barrie's whimsical and lyrical style, along with his ability to evoke wonder and enchantment, made his works resonate with audiences of all ages.

Assignments

1. Discuss the influence of Henrik Ibsen on the development of drama, highlighting key elements of his dramatic style and themes.
2. Compare and contrast the characteristics of the Well-Made Play with the Problem Play, providing examples from plays and playwrights associated with each tradition.
3. Analyse the role of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry in developing Poetic Drama, examining their contributions and unique styles.
4. Discuss the significance of the Irish Dramatic Movement, focusing on the Abbey Theatre and its impact on Irish theatre and cultural identity.
5. Examine the contributions of W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, and Sean O'Casey to the Irish Dramatic Movement, discussing their notable plays and themes.
6. Explore the connection between the Irish Literary Revival and the Irish Dramatic Movement, highlighting the shared goals and influences.

Suggested Readings

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2. "Literature and Drama." *Japanese Language and Literature*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2011, pp. 561–691. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41440586>.



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4. Millward, Peter. "Drama as a Well-Made Play." *Language Arts*, vol. 67, no. 2, 1990, pp. 151–62. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41961716>.

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1. Ibsen, Henrik and Errol Durbach. *Ibsen and the Theatre: Essays in Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Henrik Ibsen's Birth*. Palgrave, 1980.
2. Taylor, John Russell. *The Rise and Fall of the Well-Made Play*, Taylor & Francis, 2013.
3. Weintraub, Stanley. *Modern British Dramatists, 1900-1945: M-Z*. Gale Research, 1982.
4. Mikhail, E. H. *English Drama, 1900-1950: A Guide to Information Sources*, Gale Research, 1977.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



Unit 4

Modern English Prose and Novels

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ develop a comprehensive understanding of the key figures in literary criticism
- ▶ explore the diversity of prose criticism through the examination of modern prose works
- ▶ examine the genre of biography as a form of prose writing
- ▶ gain insights into the role of periodicals in shaping literary movements and fostering intellectual discourse

Background

In the study of literature, understanding the socio-political and literary contexts in which works of prose criticism emerge is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the texts and their significance. Prose criticism, as a genre, encompasses various forms of critical analysis, commentary, and evaluation of literary works, authors, and movements. Exploring the socio-political and literary contexts surrounding prose criticism provides valuable insights into the historical, cultural, and intellectual climate in which these critical texts were produced.

The socio-political context of prose criticism reflects the prevailing social and political ideologies, movements, and debates of a particular time period. During different epochs, critics have responded to and engaged with the socio-political issues and movements of their time, shaping their approach to literary analysis and interpretation. For example, in the 19th century, when industrialisation, colonialism, and social reforms were significant forces, critics often grappled with issues of class, gender, nationalism, and social inequality in their literary commentaries. The socio-political context informs the perspectives and biases that critics bring to their analyses and offers valuable insights into the intellectual climate in which they operate.



Keywords

Modern, Prose, Critical, Periodicals, Stream of Consciousness, Novels, Detective

Discussion

Section 1: Prose

1.4.1 Aspects of Modern Critical Prose

Critical prose works in English literature between 1900 and 1945 encompassed various aspects and explored various dimensions of literature, art, culture, and society. This period was marked by significant intellectual and artistic movements, including modernism, which greatly influenced the development of literary criticism. Prominent critics and writers emerged during this time, producing influential essays and treatises that addressed different facets of literature and its interpretation. Here, we will read some key aspects of critical prose works during this period.

► Critical Prose:
1900-1945

Modernist Experimentation: One prominent aspect of critical prose works between 1900 and 1945 was the spirit of experimentation that characterised modernist literature. Critics such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound challenged traditional forms and conventions, pushing the boundaries of what literature could achieve. Their works explored new modes of expression, delved into the complexities of language, and examined the relationship between literature and the broader cultural and social landscape. Modernist critics sought to capture the fragmented nature of human experience and the profound shifts occurring in society, and their critical prose reflected these concerns.

► Experimental innovation

Literary Analysis and Interpretation: A central focus of critical prose works during this period was the analysis and interpretation of literary texts. Critics examined works of fiction, poetry, and drama from various angles, seeking to uncover hidden meanings, explore symbolism, and understand authors' intentions. Virginia Woolf's essays in *The Common Reader* (1925)



- Symbolism, interpretation, insights

offered insightful analyses of renowned authors such as Jane Austen, William Shakespeare, and Charles Dickens. Woolf explored themes, characterisations, and narrative techniques, shedding new light on these literary figures.

- Tradition and innovation balance

Role of Tradition: Another significant aspect of critical prose works during this time was the examination of the role of tradition in literature. Critics grappled with the tension between maintaining literary traditions and breaking free from them. T.S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* (1920) delved into this theme, emphasising the importance of a historical and cultural understanding of literature. Eliot argued for a balance between tradition and innovation, suggesting that a deep engagement with the past could inform and invigorate contemporary literary endeavours.

- Literature reflecting socio-political context

Socio-Political Context: Critical prose works between 1900 and 1945 often reflected the socio-political context of the time. Critics analysed literature in relation to broader social and political issues, examining the ways in which literature engaged with and responded to the tumultuous events of the era. For example, George Orwell's essays, such as "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) and "Politics and the English Language" (1946), offered incisive social commentary and critiqued the abuse of power and the degradation of language.

- Feminist critique challenging gender

Feminist Perspectives: The period between 1900 and 1945 saw the emergence of feminist perspectives in literary criticism. Critics like Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West challenged traditional gender roles and explored the representation of women in literature. Woolf's essays, in particular, addressed the limitations faced by women writers and sought to reclaim their place in literary history. Her works, including "A Room of One's Own" (1929), examined the social and economic conditions that shaped women's writing and advocated for greater gender equality.

Psychoanalytic Criticism: Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories had a profound impact on literary criticism during this period. The critics began to apply Freudian concepts to the literature analysis, exploring themes of sexuality, the unconscious mind, and the dynamics of human psychology. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) laid the groundwork

► Freudian influence

for this approach, which sought to uncover the hidden motivations and desires within literary texts. In the following section, we will discuss the key figures of critical prose writing in the Modern period:

1.4.1.1 T.S. Eliot

T.S. Eliot, the renowned poet and playwright, was also a prolific writer of critical prose. His essays and lectures provide a comprehensive exploration of various literary, cultural, and philosophical topics. Eliot's critical prose is characterised by its intellectual depth, erudition, and keen understanding of the complexities of literature and the human condition. One of Eliot's most notable works of critical prose is *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. Published in 1920, this collection of essays covers a wide range of topics, including the nature of poetry, the function of criticism, and the role of tradition in artistic creation. In these essays, Eliot challenges conventional notions of poetic expression and explores the relationship between poetry and society.

► Eliot's profound critical prose

In *The Sacred Wood*, Eliot introduces the concept of the "objective correlative," which suggests that emotions and experiences should be conveyed in literature through a set of external objects or events that evoke the same emotions in the reader. According to Eliot, this technique allows for a more precise and effective communication of emotions, avoiding the pitfalls of sentimentalism or excessive subjectivity. Eliot's critical prose also engages with literary figures from the past, such as Dante, Shakespeare, and the metaphysical poets. His essay "Hamlet and His Problems" offers a unique interpretation of Shakespeare's play, arguing that the central issue lies in the protagonist's inability to take decisive action. Eliot's analysis delves into the psychological complexities of Hamlet's character and explores the play's broader thematic implications. Furthermore, Eliot's critical prose often reflects his religious and philosophical beliefs. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he emphasises the importance of tradition in artistic creation and connects this idea to his own views on the necessity of religious and cultural continuity.

► Emotions conveyed objectively

1.4.1.2 Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was an English modernist writer who



- Innovative and conscious prose in Woolf

made significant contributions to the field of literature with her thought-provoking prose. Her works explored the complexities of human consciousness, the nature of reality, and the status of women in society. Here are some of her critical prose works:

“A Room of One’s Own” (1929): This seminal work examines the role of women in literature and society. Woolf argues that women need financial independence and a physical space of their own to fully engage in creative endeavours.

“Three Guineas” (1938): In this extended essay, Woolf addresses the issues of fascism, war, and women’s education. She challenges the prevailing ideologies of her time and explores the interconnectedness of gender, power and violence.

The Common Reader (1925, 1932): This collection of essays showcases Woolf’s literary criticism skills. She analyses the works of various authors, both famous and obscure, discussing their themes, techniques, and impact on literature.

“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1924): This essay is an important manifesto of Woolf’s literary theory. She critiques the rigid conventions of Edwardian fiction and argues for a more innovative and introspective approach to writing.

- Feminism and power in literary criticism

The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (1942): This posthumously published collection of essays delves into various subjects, including literature, art, and personal reflections. It showcases Woolf’s ability to combine astute observation with poetic language.

Thus, Virginia Woolf’s critical prose works are marked by her distinctive style, characterised by stream-of-consciousness narrative, lyrical language, and experimental structure. Through her writings, she challenged societal norms, questioned traditional forms of storytelling, and advocated for the emancipation of women. Woolf’s critical works continue to inspire readers and provide valuable insights into the complexities of human experience and the power of literature.

- Defying norms

1.4.1.3 I.A. Richards

I.A. Richards, born in 1893, was a prominent English



► Revolutionising literary analysis

literary critic, educator, and rhetorician who made significant contributions to the field of literary theory and criticism. His critical essays have had a lasting impact on our understanding and interpretation of literature. One of Richards' notable contributions was his development of the concept of "practical criticism." In his essay "Practical Criticism" (1929), he argued for a more focused, close reading approach to literary analysis, emphasising the importance of the reader's personal response and the inherent value of the text itself. This approach challenged traditional modes of criticism that heavily relied on historical and biographical contexts.

► Language, context and ethical communication

Richards also explored the role of language and its effect on communication and understanding. In his work *The Meaning of Meaning* (co-authored with C.K. Ogden, 1923), he delved into semantics and the complexities of language, emphasising the significance of context and the importance of clarity in expression. Richards' ideas in this regard laid the foundation for modern linguistic analysis and had a lasting impact on fields such as semiotics and linguistics. Furthermore, Richards was deeply concerned with the ethical dimensions of communication. In his work, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), he argued that rhetoric should be seen as a tool for ethical persuasion rather than manipulative or deceptive techniques. He emphasised the need for clarity, precision, and sincerity in language use, promoting effective communication as a means to create understanding and foster cooperation.

► Interpreting ambiguity and provocative analysis

1.4.1.3 William Empson

William Empson (1906-1984) was a highly influential literary critic and poet whose critical essays continue to be studied and revered today. Known for his analytical precision and provocative interpretations, Empson's works made significant contributions to the field of literary criticism. Empson's most renowned work, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), explores the notion of ambiguity in poetry. He argues that ambiguity is not a flaw but an essential aspect of poetic language, enabling multiple interpretations and enriching the reader's engagement. Empson examines different types of ambiguity, such as verbal, structural, and dramatic, and presents detailed analyses of various poems to illustrate his points.

Empson's notable essay is "The Structure of Complex



- Challenging conventions

- Empson: Wit, erudition and precision

Words" (1951), where Empson explores the intricate layers of meaning found in words with multiple connotations. He suggests that complex words often embody tensions and conflicts, allowing poets to convey complex emotions and ideas. Empson's focus on the interplay between different meanings within a single word challenged conventional approaches to language analysis. His critical essays also delve into the exploration of moral and political themes in literature. In *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), he examines pastoral poetry, revealing the underlying power dynamics and social commentary in seemingly idyllic depictions of nature. Empson's nuanced interpretations shed light on the complex relationship between literature and society.

Empson's writing style is characterised by wit, erudition, and meticulous attention to detail. His essays often display a keen eye for close reading and the ability to uncover layers of meaning that others might overlook. Empson's analytical approach, combined with his deep understanding of poetic craft, continues to inspire scholars and readers alike.

1.4.1.4 F.R. Leavis

- Leavis: Influential literary critic

F.R. Leavis (1895-1978) was a prominent British literary critic known for his incisive and influential critical essays. His work focused on the study of English literature, particularly the works of modernist writers, and he played a significant role in shaping the field of literary criticism in the 20th century. Leavis' most influential work is arguably *The Great Tradition* (1948), in which he argues for the superiority of the English novelists George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and D.H. Lawrence. Leavis championed the idea that these writers possessed a moral seriousness and a profound understanding of human nature that set them apart from their contemporaries. He emphasised the importance of moral values and social insight in literature, and he believed that these writers demonstrated a deep engagement with human experience.

Another significant aspect of Leavis' critical essays is his emphasis on close reading and textual analysis. He believed in the power of careful and attentive reading to uncover the complexities and subtleties of a literary work. Leavis' approach involved examining the language,

- Leavis: Close reading advocate

structure, and themes of a text to unveil its deeper meanings and explore the author's intentions. Leavis was also known for his polemical style and strong opinions on literature and culture. In his essays, he critiqued what he perceived as the decline of literary standards and the harmful influence of mass culture on society. Leavis argued for the importance of maintaining high literary standards and resisting the commercialisation and commodification of literature.

- Advocate for literature's transformative role

Furthermore, Leavis' essays often addressed broader cultural and educational issues. He was a vocal critic of the British education system, arguing for a more rigorous and intellectually stimulating approach. Leavis believed in the transformative power of literature and advocated for its central role in education, arguing that it could foster critical thinking, moral development, and a deeper understanding of the human condition.

1.4.1.4 Raymond Williams

- Williams: Cultural critic and theorist

Raymond Williams (1921-1988) was a highly influential cultural critic and theorist known for his insightful and groundbreaking critical essays. His work focused on the relationship between culture, society, and politics, and he made significant contributions to the field of cultural studies. One of Williams' seminal works is *Culture and Society* (1958), where he examines the complex interactions between culture and social structures. He argues against the notion that culture is separate from society, highlighting how cultural practices and forms are shaped by social, economic, and political forces. Williams emphasises the importance of studying popular culture and everyday life, challenging the traditional focus on elite or high culture.

- Deconstructing cultural discourse

Another significant aspect of Williams' essays is his exploration of the concept of "culture" itself. In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), he investigates the meanings and usages of various terms related to culture, such as art, ideology, and class. By tracing the historical development and contested meanings of these terms, Williams highlights the ideological underpinnings and power dynamics embedded in cultural discourse.

Williams was also concerned with the role of literature and the arts in society. In *The Long Revolution* (1961),



- Culture, transformation, and Marxism

he argues for the transformative potential of culture in challenging dominant social structures. He explores the idea of a “structure of feeling,” referring to the collective attitudes, values, and emotions of a particular historical period. Williams suggests that literature and the arts can reflect and shape these structures of feeling, contributing to social change. Furthermore, Williams was deeply engaged with Marxist theory and politics. He sought to integrate Marxist analysis with cultural studies, examining how economic relations and class struggles intersect with cultural practices and representations. Williams’ critical essays often addressed issues of class, power, and inequality, shedding light on the social and political dimensions of cultural production and reception.

1.4.1.5 Hilaire Belloc

- Belloc: Versatile and provocative critic

Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) was a versatile writer known for his critical essays, poetry, and political writings. His critical essays, characterised by wit, insight, and strong opinions, covered various topics and made notable contributions to various fields. Belloc’s critical essays often focused on literary figures and movements. In his collection *On Everything* (1909), he offered critical assessments of writers such as Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Belloc’s essays combined literary analysis with historical and biographical insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the writers and their works. He expressed strong preferences and dislikes, offering a distinct and often provocative perspective.

- Socio-political critique

One notable aspect of Belloc’s critical essays was his engagement with historical and political themes. In works such as *The French Revolution* (1911), he explored the impact of historical events on literature and culture. Belloc’s essays on history and politics were often intertwined with his literary criticism, allowing him to examine the social and ideological contexts that shaped literary works. Belloc was also known for his criticism of modernity and industrial capitalism. In essays such as “The Servile State” (1912), he argued against the detrimental effects of economic systems on society, highlighting the erosion of individual freedom and the rise of inequality. Belloc’s critique of modernity extended to literature and art, where he lamented the loss of traditional values and the rise of commercialism.

- Catholic and intellectual

Furthermore, Belloc's critical essays often reflected his Catholic faith and his defence of Catholicism. He wrote extensively on religious topics, including the history of the Catholic Church and the relationship between faith and reason. Belloc's essays on religion blended intellectual rigour with passionate advocacy for his beliefs, making them significant contributions to theological and philosophical discourse.

1.4.1.6 G.K. Chesterton

- Chesterton: Wit, paradox, and cultural commentary

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) was a prolific writer and literary critic known for his incisive and thought-provoking essays. His critical works covered various subjects, from literature and philosophy to social issues and religion. In this overview, we will explore some key aspects of G.K. Chesterton's critical essays. Chesterton's critical essays often displayed a unique blend of wit, paradox, and imaginative reasoning. He employed a distinctive style characterised by bold assertions, clever wordplay, and unexpected insights. Chesterton's essays were not confined to traditional literary criticism but encompassed broader cultural and social commentary, reflecting his multifaceted interests and an expansive intellect.

- Defender of tradition

One significant aspect of Chesterton's critical essays was his defence of traditional values and his critique of modernity. In works such as *Orthodoxy* (1908) and *Heretics* (1905), he challenged the prevailing intellectual and philosophical trends of his time, questioning the assumptions underlying modern thought. Chesterton championed the importance of tradition, faith, and common sense, arguing against the dehumanising effects of materialism, scepticism, and relativism.

- Chesterton's literary insight

Literary criticism was another major focus of Chesterton's essays. He wrote extensively on notable authors such as Charles Dickens, Robert Browning, and George Bernard Shaw. Chesterton's literary criticism often went beyond mere analysis of the texts, as he delved into the moral and philosophical implications of the authors' works. His essays revealed a deep appreciation for the imaginative power of literature and its ability to convey essential truths about the human condition. Furthermore, Chesterton's critical essays tackled social and political issues with a keen eye for irony and paradox. In works



like *What's Wrong with the World* (1910) and *Eugenics and Other Evils* (1922), he critiqued prevailing social and political ideologies, exposing their inconsistencies and unintended consequences. Chesterton's essays offered alternative perspectives and emphasised the importance of human dignity, individual freedom, and social justice.

1.4.1.7 Max Beerbohm

Max Beerbohm was a prominent English writer, essayist, and caricaturist of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Known for his wit, satire, and elegant prose style, Beerbohm produced several critical works that established him as a keen observer of society and an influential figure in literary circles. One of his most notable works is *The Works of Max Beerbohm* (1896), a collection of his essays and parodies. In this volume, Beerbohm demonstrates his mastery of satire and parody, offering incisive critiques of various aspects of contemporary society, including literature, art, and politics. His sharp wit and clever wordplay are evident throughout the collection, making it a delightfully entertaining and intellectually stimulating read.

- Beerbohm: Wit, satire, and parody

Another significant work by Beerbohm is *Seven Men* (1919), a collection of short stories that explore the complexities of human nature. Each story presents a unique character study, delving into the quirks, flaws, and aspirations of individuals from different walks of life. Beerbohm's characterisations are nuanced and insightful, and his prose captures the subtleties of human behaviour with elegance and precision. *Zuleika Dobson* (1911) is perhaps Beerbohm's most famous novel. It tells the story of Zuleika, a captivating and irresistible young woman who bewitched the men of Oxford University. Through this satirical novel, Beerbohm examines the absurdity of romantic infatuation, societal expectations, and the elusive nature of love. With its blend of humour, social commentary, and astute observations, *Zuleika Dobson* remains a classic in English literature.

- Complex character studies and satirical insights

In these and many other works, Max Beerbohm showcases his talent for blending humour, satire, and insightful commentary. His writings continue to captivate readers with their timeless relevance and literary craftsmanship.

- Humour and craftsmanship



1.4.1.8 Bertrand Russell

- Multifaceted critical thinker

Bertrand Russell, one of the most influential philosophers and logicians of the 20th century, wrote numerous critical works and essays that tackled a wide range of topics. In a brief overview, here are some of his notable works:

Principles of Mathematics (1903): Russell's landmark work in the philosophy of mathematics, where he aimed to reduce mathematics to purely logical and symbolic terms.

The Problems of Philosophy (1912): In this accessible introduction to philosophy, Russell explores the nature of knowledge, perception, and the limits of philosophical inquiry.

"On Denoting" (1905): This essay revolutionised the philosophy of language by challenging the way definite descriptions are used and interpreted, providing a logical analysis of denoting phrases.

"Why I Am Not a Christian" (1927): A collection of essays where Russell critically examines religious beliefs, the existence of God, and the moral implications of religious doctrines.

A History of Western Philosophy (1945): A comprehensive survey of Western philosophy from its ancient origins to the early 20th century, offering Russell's own interpretations and critiques.

The Impact of Science on Society (1952): Russell explores the social and political consequences of scientific progress, addressing concerns about the misuse of technology and the potential for global governance.

- Russell's diverse critical works

The Problems of Philosophy (1959): In this later work, Russell revisits and expands on the themes of his earlier book, examining the nature of reality, perception, and the limits of human knowledge.

- Challenging conventions, rationality, and knowledge

These works are just a fraction of Russell's vast and diverse body of work. Throughout his career, he sought to challenge conventional wisdom, critically analyse important philosophical questions, and advocate for rationality, logic, and the pursuit of knowledge.



1.4.1.9 A.G. Gardiner

A.G. Gardiner, born in Chelmsford, was the son of Henry James Gardiner and Susanna Taylor. His father, a cabinet maker and alcoholic, had a significant influence on his upbringing. During his youth, Gardiner worked at both the Chelmsford Chronicle and the Bournemouth Directory. In 1887, he became a member of the *Northern Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper founded the previous year by Thomas Purvis Ritzema. Later, in 1899, Gardiner assumed the role of editor at the *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*.

► Gardiner as editor

From 1915, Gardiner began contributing to *The Star*, using the pen name “Alpha of the Plough.” This publication featured multiple anonymous essayists who adopted star names as their pseudonyms. Gardiner, in choosing his pseudonym, opted for the name of the brightest star, “alpha,” in the constellation known as “the Plough.” His essays possessed a consistent elegance, gracefulness, and humour, effectively conveying fundamental truths about life in an engaging and accessible manner. Some of his most renowned works include *Pillars of Society*, *Pebbles on the Shore*, *Many Furrows*, and *Leaves in the Wind*.

► “Alpha of the Plough”

In a review of *Pebbles on the Shore*, one critic lauded Gardiner’s writing, describing it as fluent, skilled, light, graceful, and often sparkling. The conclusion of his essay titled “The Vanity of Old Age” exemplifies his characteristic finesse: “Nature, the crafty caretaker, offers us lollipops throughout our journey. And when the lollipops of hope and achievement are exhausted, she gently places the lollipop of remembrance into our toothless gums. With this delightful vanity, we are lulled into a peaceful slumber.”

► Fluent, skilful, and graceful prose

1.4.1.10 Aldous Huxley

Aldous Huxley, a prominent English writer and intellectual, is renowned for his profound contributions to critical literature. Born on July 26, 1894, in Godalming, Surrey, Huxley was part of a highly intellectual family, with his grandfather being the famous biologist Thomas Henry Huxley. Aldous Huxley’s writings encompass many genres, including novels, essays, poetry, and philosophical works, all of which showcase his remarkable insight and critical thinking.

► Multifaceted intellectual writer



- Dystopian visionary and social critic

Huxley's critical works explore diverse themes and subjects, but they consistently delve into the examination of human nature, society, and the complexities of the modern world. Perhaps his most celebrated work in this regard is his dystopian novel *Brave New World*, published in 1932. This influential masterpiece presents a chilling vision of a technologically advanced and dehumanised society, raising profound questions about the loss of individuality, the manipulation of human behaviour, and the price of a seemingly perfect utopia.

- Essays on Spirituality, science and culture

Beyond *Brave New World*, Huxley's critical essays tackle many topics, including spirituality, science, psychology, and cultural criticism. His collection of essays, *The Doors of Perception*, explores the realm of consciousness-altering substances and their potential to expand human perception and understanding. Huxley's exploration of mysticism and spirituality is also evident in his seminal work, *The Perennial Philosophy*, which examines the common underlying truths in various religious and philosophical traditions.

- Insightful critiques and foresight in writing

Huxley's critical writings exhibit a remarkable depth of knowledge, intellectual rigour, and a distinctive writing style characterised by clarity, wit, and a penchant for engaging philosophical ideas. His insightful critiques of society, combined with his foresight regarding the dangers of technological advancements, have continued to resonate with readers and scholars alike.

1.4.1.11 George Orwell

- Orwell warns against authoritarianism

George Orwell, one of the most influential writers of the 20th century, is renowned for his critical essays and works that examine the societal and political issues of his time. Orwell's penetrating analysis and lucid prose have left an indelible mark on the literary and intellectual landscape. In his seminal work, *1984*, Orwell presents a chilling dystopian vision of a totalitarian regime where Big Brother surveils every aspect of citizens' lives. Through this powerful critique of authoritarianism and the erosion of individual freedom, Orwell warns of the dangers of unchecked government control and the manipulation of truth. Similarly, in *Animal Farm*, Orwell employs allegory to expose the corruption and hypocrisy of the Soviet Union under Stalin's rule. By depicting animals overthrowing their human oppressors



only to become tyrants themselves, Orwell illuminates the pitfalls of revolution and the corruption of power.

Orwell's critical essays, such as "Shooting an Elephant" and "Politics and the English Language," further showcase his incisive analysis of political systems and the use of language as a manipulation tool. In these essays, he dissects the moral dilemmas faced by individuals caught in oppressive systems and emphasises the importance of clarity and honesty in communication. What sets Orwell apart is his unflinching commitment to truth and integrity. He exposes the machinations of power and the abuses that result from them while urging readers to question authority and maintain their autonomy.

- Truth, power, language and integrity

1.4.1.12 E.V. Lucas

E.V. Lucas, born Edward Verrall Lucas in 1868, was an English writer and essayist who made significant contributions to the literary world during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is known for his diverse body of work, which encompasses various genres such as essays, biographies, travelogues, and children's literature. Lucas began his literary career as a journalist, working for *The Globe* newspaper. He gained recognition for his engaging and insightful essays, which were published in leading publications of the time, including *The Saturday Review* and *Punch* magazine. His essays often explored everyday experiences, observations, and reflections on topics ranging from literature and art to social and cultural aspects of life.

- Versatile writer

Lucas' talent as a biographer was also noteworthy. He penned biographies of notable figures such as Charles Lamb, Thomas Gray, and Edmund Gosse. His biographical works were well-researched and presented his subjects in a compelling and accessible manner, shedding light on their lives, achievements, and contributions to literature and culture. In addition to his essays and biographies, Lucas also wrote extensively on travel. His travelogues took readers on journeys through various European countries, capturing the essence of different cultures, landscapes, and people. Lucas's travel writing was marked by vivid descriptions, a sense of adventure, and an appreciation for the beauty and diversity of the places he visited.

- Vivid travelogues

1.4.2 Features of Biographic Works in Modern English Age

Biographic works during the Modern English age, from 1900 to 1945, showcased distinct features that reflected the social, political, and cultural milieu of the time. Here are some key features:

► Psychological depth

Introspection and Psychological Exploration: Many biographical works of this era delved into the inner lives and psychological complexities of their subjects. Writers sought to understand the motivations, fears, and desires that drove individuals, often employing techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration. This introspective approach can be seen in works like Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916).

► War's impact and trauma portrayal

War and its Aftermath: The two World Wars had a profound impact on the biographical works of the period. Many writers, including Ernest Hemingway, Robert Graves, and Siegfried Sassoon, drew on their experiences as soldiers to depict the trauma, disillusionment, and loss caused by war. These works often highlighted the physical and emotional toll on individuals and explored the broader societal implications of the conflict.

► Challenging norms

Social Commentary: Biographies and memoirs from this era often served as platforms for social critique. The writers examined and challenged prevailing norms and values, addressing issues such as gender inequality, class divisions, and colonialism. They offered insights into the social dynamics of the time and called for change. Examples include George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942).

► Narrative experimentation

Experimental Narrative Techniques: Modernist writers of the period pushed the boundaries of traditional biographical storytelling. They experimented with non-linear narratives, fragmented structures, and unconventional perspectives. These techniques aim to capture the complexity and subjectivity of human experience. Works like Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936) and Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) exemplify this innovative approach.



1.4.2.1 Lytton Strachey

Lytton Strachey, an influential British writer and critic, is best known for his innovative approach to biographical writing. Born in 1880, Strachey was part of the Bloomsbury Group, a collective of artists and intellectuals in early 20th-century London who challenged conventional norms in literature, art, and society. Strachey's biographies were groundbreaking in their unconventional style and approach. He sought to reveal the complexities and contradictions of historical figures, moving away from the traditional hagiographic portrayals that dominated biographical writing at the time. His most famous work, *Eminent Victorians*, published in 1918, exemplified his distinctive approach.

- Innovative biographical approach

In *Eminent Victorians*, Strachey examined the lives of four prominent figures from the Victorian era: Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Arnold, and General Gordon. Rather than providing a straightforward and glorified account of their achievements, Strachey delved into their personal lives, exploring their flaws, contradictions, and the societal contexts in which they operated.

- Unveiling complexities

Strachey's biographical style emphasised psychological insight and a critical evaluation of his subjects. He relied on extensive research to challenge popular perceptions and reveal the human aspects of historical figures. By employing irony, wit, and satire, he exposed the hypocrisies and contradictions of the Victorian era, critiquing its moral and social values. His approach to biographic writing was revolutionary for its time. He paved the way for a more nuanced and subjective form of biography, which acknowledged the fallibility of historical figures and questioned the idea of a singular, heroic narrative. His work influenced subsequent generations of biographers, who sought to emulate his psychological depth and critical analysis.

- Insightful, revolutionary and influential biographer

1.4.3 Periodicals in the Modern English Age

The periodicals of the Modern English age were instrumental in capturing the spirit and evolution of literature, culture, and society during that transformative era. These publications reflected the changing times and

► Periodicals shaping literature

provided a platform for writers, intellectuals, and artists to express their ideas and engage in intellectual discourse. One notable periodical is *The Criterion*, founded in 1922 by T.S. Eliot. It played a crucial role in shaping the literary landscape of the time by publishing influential works of modernist literature and critical essays. *The Criterion* championed the works of writers like Eliot himself, Ezra Pound, and Virginia Woolf, contributing to the development of modernist aesthetics and themes.

► Shaping discourse

Another important publication was *The New Statesman*, established in 1913. It covered various political, social, and cultural topics, providing a platform for progressive voices and intellectuals. It featured articles by prominent figures such as George Orwell, Bertrand Russell, and H.G. Wells, making it a significant forum for political and cultural debates during the turbulent interwar period. Additionally, *The Times Literary Supplement (TLS)* emerged as a leading source of literary criticism and reviews during this period. Established in 1902, *TLS* provided a comprehensive overview of the literary scene, covering a wide range of genres and authors. It featured critical essays, book reviews, and cultural commentary, making it a valuable resource for scholars, writers, and readers.

► Reshaping literary and intellectual culture

These periodicals, along with others like *The Dial*, *The Egoist*, and *Punch*, shaped the literary and intellectual landscape of the Modern English age. They not only documented the cultural and societal changes of the time but also facilitated the exchange of ideas and fostered literary movements that continue to resonate today.

1.4.3.1 The Little Magazines

► Avant-garde, non-commercial literary publications

Little magazines were small periodicals focused on serious literary writings, often avant-garde and noncommercial. They thrived from around 1880 to the 20th century, primarily in the United States and England, though similar publications existed in France and influenced German literature in the 1920s. These magazines were characterised by noncommercial approaches to editing, management, and financing. Typically, little magazines aimed to publish literary works of artistic merit that were rejected by commercial magazines for reasons such as the writer's unknown status, unconventional or experimental form, or violation

of popular notions of morality, society, or aesthetics.

Prominent examples of little magazines included *Poetry: a Magazine of Verse* and the *Little Review* in the United States and the *Egoist* and *Blast* in England. Notable figures such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Ford Madox Ford, and Gustave Kahn played significant roles in these publications. Little magazines underwent four principal periods: the establishment of literary movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the vanguard of modern literature from 1915 to 1930 with an emphasis on literary form and theory, the rise of leftist magazines in the 1930s, and the emergence of critical reviews supported by academic critics around 1940, representing a more institutionalised approach.

- Influential little magazines

In this fourth period, little magazines were sustained by groups of critics, often affiliated with universities or colleges, such as *The Kenyon Review* in the United States and *Scrutiny* in Great Britain. This marked a departure from the earlier spontaneous and unpredictable nature of little magazines, showcasing a more structured and institutionalised form of support through reviews and miscellanies maintained by publishers.

- Institutionalised reviews

Section 2: Novel

1.4.4 Edwardian Novelists

The Edwardian period, which roughly spanned from 1901 to 1910, witnessed the flourishing of the novel as a literary form. Edwardian novelists emerged as important voices in British literature, reflecting the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the time. The Edwardian novelists, although diverse in style and subject matter, shared a common focus on the shifting values and tensions of the period.

- Reflecting values

One of the key characteristics of Edwardian novels is their exploration of the changing social fabric of British society. The Edwardian era was marked by significant social and cultural transformations, including the rise of the middle class, changing gender roles, and the impact of urbanisation. Novelists of the time captured these shifts and offered nuanced portrayals of the social dynamics and class tensions prevalent during this period. Edwardian novels often depicted the lives of

- Society's transformation is portrayed eloquently

the upper-middle class and the aristocracy, showcasing their lifestyles, aspirations, and dilemmas. These novels provided a window into the intricacies of social hierarchies, manners, and the expectations placed on individuals. Authors like E.M. Forster, Arnold Bennett, and Henry James explored themes of social mobility, marriage, and the clash between traditional values and modernity.

- Complexity in human relationships

Another significant feature of Edwardian novels is their engagement with the complexities of human relationships and the exploration of psychological depth. Authors explored the inner lives and motivations of their characters, portraying the intricacies of human emotions and the conflicts between personal desires and societal expectations. This psychological depth added richness and complexity to the narratives, making the novels more introspective and character-driven. Edwardian novelists also grappled with the changing political landscape of the time. The period witnessed the emergence of new political ideologies, social movements, and tensions between imperialism and the desire for greater democracy. Authors like H.G. Wells and Joseph Conrad used their novels to critique and engage with these political issues, examining power dynamics, colonialism, and the consequences of rapid societal change.

- Traditional and experimental styles

In terms of style, Edwardian novels displayed a range of approaches. Some writers embraced a more traditional and formal narrative style, while others experimented with innovative techniques. Novelists like Virginia Woolf and Ford Madox Ford pushed the boundaries of narrative structure and stream-of-consciousness, foreshadowing the modernist movement that would emerge in the following decades.

- Societal tensions

1.4.4.1 John Galsworthy

John Galsworthy, an English novelist and playwright, produced a substantial body of work throughout his career. While he wrote several novels, three of his most notable works are *The Forsyte Saga*, *The Man of Property*, and *A Modern Comedy*. *The Forsyte Saga* is a monumental series of novels that span several generations of the Forsyte family. It examines their lives, loves, and struggles against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society. The saga masterfully explores the themes of wealth, love, and



societal expectations, capturing the tensions between traditional values and the desire for personal freedom.

- Wealth, love, possessions: complex dynamics

The Man of Property is the first novel in *The Forsyte Saga* and introduces readers to the Forsyte family. It centres around Soames Forsyte, a wealthy and possessive man obsessed with his property and his beautiful wife, Irene. The novel delves into themes of marriage, love, and the impact of material possessions on personal happiness.

A Modern Comedy continues the story of the Forsyte family, picking up after the events of *The Forsyte Saga*. It follows the lives of the younger generation, focusing on the conflicts and complexities they face as they navigate their relationships, careers, and societal expectations. Galsworthy delves into themes of social change, women's rights, and the clash between tradition and progress. Galsworthy's novels are characterised by their meticulous attention to detail, rich characterisation, and thought-provoking exploration of social issues. His prose is elegant and insightful, capturing the essence of his characters' emotions and motivations. Through his novels, Galsworthy presents a panoramic view of British society, examining its strengths, flaws, and transformations over time.

- Societal complexities and panoramic insight

1.4.4.2 Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling, the renowned British author, is celebrated for his vast literary contributions, including novels that capture the essence of his time and offer timeless insights into human nature. Kipling's most famous novel, *The Jungle Book*, transports readers into the wilds of India, where the young protagonist, Mowgli, is raised by wolves and encounters a cast of captivating animal characters. Through their adventures and interactions, Kipling explores themes of identity, belonging, and the delicate balance between man and nature.

- Captivating tales

Another remarkable novel by Kipling is *Kim*, set against the backdrop of colonial India. The story follows the journey of Kimball O'Hara, an orphaned Irish boy who becomes a spy in the Great Game, a political rivalry between Britain and Russia. This coming-of-age tale explores the complexities of identity, loyalty, and the clash between Eastern and Western cultures. *The Man Who Would Be King* is a gripping novella that delves

- Colonial India's intricate tales

into the dark side of ambition and power. The narrative revolves around two British adventurers who set out to establish their kingdom in the remote mountains of Afghanistan. Kipling crafts a cautionary tale about the allure and consequences of unchecked ambition.

1.4.4.3 H. G. Wells

H.G. Wells, a visionary British author, is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of science fiction and a master storyteller. In his extensive work, he crafted novels that pushed the boundaries of imagination and explored various social, scientific, and philosophical themes. Wells' most renowned novel, *The Time Machine*, takes readers on a thrilling journey into the future. The protagonist, known simply as the Time Traveller, invents the machine that propels him to the year 802,701 AD. There, he encounters two distinct races: the gentle Eloi and the sinister Morlocks. Through this imaginative tale, Wells explores social class, evolution, and the potential consequences of human progress.

► Imaginative exploration: time and society

The War of the Worlds catapulted Wells to international fame. Set in Victorian England, it depicts a brutal Martian invasion that threatens humanity's survival. This gripping tale of extraterrestrial warfare examines the vulnerability of mankind and critiques imperialistic attitudes prevalent during Wells' time. In *The Invisible Man*, Wells explores the psychological and ethical ramifications of invisibility. The story follows Griffin, a scientist who discovers the means to render himself invisible but gradually descends into madness and megalomania. Through this thrilling narrative, Wells delves into themes of power, isolation, and the consequences of unchecked scientific progress. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* delves into the dark realms of vivisection and scientific experimentation. Shipwrecked on a remote island, Edward Prendick encounters the enigmatic Dr. Moreau, who has been conducting disturbing and unethical experiments, transforming animals into human-like creatures. This novel raises questions about morality, the boundaries of scientific exploration, and the nature of humanity.

► Intriguing tales

1.4.5 Psychological Novels

Psychological novels in the modern age emerged as a prominent literary genre, delving into the complex inner workings of the human mind and exploring the depths of



human consciousness. These novels were characterised by several key features that distinguished them from other forms of fiction during this period.

Firstly, psychological novels focus heavily on the interior lives of their characters, emphasising their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. Authors employed various narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness, inner monologues, and introspective reflections to provide readers with a deep understanding of the characters' psychological states. Secondly, these novels often delved into themes of identity, self-discovery, and the human condition. Authors sought to explore the complexities of human nature, including the subconscious, repressed desires, and the impact of past experiences on the present. Furthermore, psychological novels often depict characters amid internal conflicts, grappling with moral dilemmas, existential crises, or psychological disorders. This exploration of the human psyche allowed for a nuanced examination of the complexities and contradictions inherent in human behaviour.

- Interior exploration, identity and conflicts

Additionally, the settings of psychological novels were often portrayed as oppressive or stifling, reflecting the inner turmoil experienced by the characters. These settings served as a backdrop for exploring psychological themes and provided a symbolic representation of the character's internal struggles. In terms of style, psychological novels employ rich and descriptive language, focusing on sensory details and vivid imagery to evoke emotional responses in the reader. The prose often reflected the fragmented and subjective nature of human thought processes.

- Symbolic settings and evocative prose

1.4.5.1 D.H. Lawrence

D.H. Lawrence, the renowned British author of the early 20th century, is well-known for his psychologically rich and introspective novels. Lawrence's works exhibit distinct features that make them stand out in the realm of psychological fiction. Lawrence's novels often focus on the profound exploration of human relationships, sexuality, and the complexities of the human psyche. His characters are deeply introspective, grappling with their own desires, conflicts, and personal growth. Lawrence delves into the intricacies of the subconscious and the

- Introspective exploration of relationships

suppressed instincts that shape human behaviour.

One notable feature of Lawrence's psychological novels is his vivid portrayal of sensuality and the connection between sexuality and the human spirit. He fearlessly explores the erotic and emotional aspects of human relationships, challenging societal norms and conventions. His works, such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Women in Love*, depict intimate and passionate encounters that are gateways to self-discovery and liberation. Moreover, Lawrence's prose style is often characterised by its lyrical and evocative nature. He employs vivid and sensory language to create a vivid and immersive reading experience. His descriptive passages bring to life the natural world and the emotional landscapes of his characters, intensifying the psychological depth of his narratives.

- Sensual liberation and evocative prose

Lawrence's psychological novels also frequently address themes of alienation, individualism, and the conflict between societal expectations and personal freedom. He explores the tensions between the individual and society, highlighting the psychological toll of conformity and the yearning for authentic self-expression.

- Alienation, individualism, societal conflict

1.4.6 Stream of Consciousness

Stream of consciousness is a literary technique that captures the continuous flow of thoughts, feelings, and sensations experienced by a character's mind. It aims to mimic the unfiltered and often chaotic nature of human consciousness, presenting a narrative that closely mirrors the thought processes and inner workings of the character's mind. The origins of stream-of-consciousness can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with notable contributions from writers such as William James, Sigmund Freud, and Marcel Proust. However, it was through the pioneering works of modernist writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner that the technique gained prominence and became synonymous with their literary styles.

- Unfiltered minds and literary revolution

One of the defining features of stream-of-consciousness writing is the absence of a traditional narrative structure. Instead of following a linear plot, the narrative unfolds in a fragmented and often non-linear manner. It may



- Fragmented narratives and unconventional syntax

include sudden shifts in time, jumps between different perspectives, and blurred boundaries between reality and memory. The inner thoughts, associations, and impressions of the character take centre stage, with little regard for chronological order or external events. The language and syntax in stream-of-consciousness writing are key elements in conveying the character's mental state. Sentences can be disjointed, fragmented, and syntactically unconventional, mirroring the spontaneous and unstructured nature of thought. Repetition, free association, and interior monologues are common techniques employed to mimic the inner workings of the character's mind.

1.4.6.1 Dorothy Richardson

- Stream-of-consciousness pioneer

Dorothy Richardson was a British modernist writer known for her pioneering work in a stream-of-consciousness style. In her series of novels titled *Pilgrimage*, Richardson experimented with this narrative technique, exploring the inner thoughts and perceptions of her characters in great detail. The *Pilgrimage* novels, consisting of thirteen books published between 1915 and 1967, chronicle the protagonist's life, Miriam Henderson. Through her stream of consciousness, Richardson delves into Miriam's everyday experiences, thoughts, and emotions, providing a vivid and intimate portrayal of her inner world.

- Innovative storytelling

Richardson's stream-of-consciousness style is characterised by its free-flowing and fragmented nature, mimicking the ebb and flow of human thought. The narrative lacks a traditional plot structure and instead focuses on the subjective experience of the protagonist. Richardson's use of this technique allows her to delve into the complexities of human consciousness, exploring themes of identity, gender, and society. The *Pilgrimage* novels are often cited as important contributions to developing modernist literature. Richardson's innovative use of stream-of-consciousness writing influenced subsequent writers, such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, who further expanded and refined the technique.

1.4.6.2 James Joyce

James Joyce, an Irish modernist writer, is widely acclaimed for his groundbreaking use of stream of consciousness in his novels. His two most notable works,

- Joyce as literary innovator

Ulysses and *Finnegan's Wake*, exemplify the complexities and innovations of this narrative technique. In *Ulysses*, published in 1922, Joyce presents a day in the life of three characters in Dublin, intertwining their inner thoughts, perceptions, and memories. The novel employs a variety of narrative styles, including stream of consciousness, to capture the fragmented and shifting nature of human consciousness. Joyce's prose becomes a mosaic of different voices, languages, and literary styles, pushing the boundaries of traditional storytelling.

- Linguistic exploration

Joyce's other novel, *Finnegan's Wake*, published in 1939, takes his experimentation with the stream of consciousness to new heights. The narrative is a dense and multilayered dreamscape where language evolves and transforms, often defying conventional meaning and syntax. The novel explores the collective unconsciousness of the city of Dublin and delves into themes of history, mythology, and the human condition.

- Exploration of consciousness

Joyce's stream-of-consciousness writing is renowned for its intricate wordplay, rich symbolism, and complex narrative structures. His works revolutionised the possibilities of the novel form and influenced generations of writers. Joyce's exploration of the human mind through the stream of consciousness allows readers to immerse themselves in the labyrinthine depths of thought and perception, challenging traditional notions of storytelling and opening up new avenues for literary expression.

1.4.6.3 Virginia Woolf

- Thoughtful exploration of consciousness

Virginia Woolf, a prominent figure in the modernist literary movement, is renowned for her masterful use of stream of consciousness in her novels. Through this narrative technique, Woolf delves into the interior lives of her characters, providing a profound exploration of their thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, published in 1925, Woolf presents a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, a high-society woman in post-World War I London. The novel seamlessly shifts between different characters' consciousnesses, revealing their innermost desires, fears, and reflections. Woolf's stream of consciousness writing captures the fleeting nature of thought and the interconnectedness of human experience.



- Subjective introspection

Woolf further develops her innovative technique in *To the Lighthouse*, published in 1927. The novel is divided into three sections, each exploring the characters' minds and memories. Through the use of interior monologues, Woolf provides profound insights into their subjective experiences while also contemplating themes of art, time, and the complexities of human relationships.

1.4.7 Joseph Conrad's Novels

- Profound exploration of human nature

Joseph Conrad, born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, is a prominent figure in literary history known for his powerful and introspective works that explore themes of human nature, colonialism, and the moral struggles of individuals. His writings emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and continue to captivate readers with their psychological depth and evocative storytelling. Conrad's literary career was shaped by his own experiences as a seafarer and his encounters with different cultures and societies during his time as a merchant marine. These experiences heavily influenced his works, providing him with a unique perspective on the human condition and the complexities of colonialism.

- Layered narratives and nuanced meanings

One of the significant features of Conrad's writing is his masterful use of narrative technique and structure. He employed techniques such as framing narratives, shifting perspectives, and non-linear storytelling to create a sense of ambiguity and explore multiple layers of meaning. This complexity is evident in his most celebrated works, including *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and *Nostromo*.

- Human darkness and moral complexities

Heart of Darkness is perhaps Conrad's most renowned work, and it explores the darkness of the human psyche and the brutal realities of European colonialism in Africa. Through the character of Kurtz, Conrad explores themes of imperialism, power, and the destructive forces that can consume individuals and societies. In *Lord Jim*, Conrad examines the moral dilemmas faced by his protagonist, Jim, who grapples with guilt and redemption after abandoning a ship in distress. This novel explores the complexities of honour, cowardice, and the search for personal integrity. *Nostromo*, set in the fictional South American country of Costaguana, explores the effects of political instability, greed and corruption. It portrays the struggle for power and the moral compromises made by individuals in pursuing their ambitions.

- Evocative language and psychological landscapes

Conrad's writing is characterised by his mastery of language and the evocative imagery he employs. His prose is often dense and richly symbolic, capturing the nuances of the human psyche and the intricate landscapes he depicts. Through his vivid descriptions, he transports readers to remote and unfamiliar settings, immersing them in the physical and psychological environments of his characters. Another significant aspect of Conrad's work is his exploration of the tension between civilisation and the natural world. He often presents nature as a powerful force that can reveal the true nature of individuals and challenge the order imposed by human society. This theme can be seen in works such as *Heart of Darkness*, where the dense and impenetrable jungle is a metaphor for the darkness within the human heart.

1.4.8 E.M. Forster's Novels

- Social observer

E.M. Forster, born Edward Morgan Forster, was an influential British writer and novelist whose works had a significant impact on English literature in the early 20th century. He is renowned for his insightful exploration of social class, human relationships, and the clash between personal desires and societal expectations. Forster's literary career spanned several decades, and his works continue to be celebrated for their insightful commentary on the complexities of human nature and society.

- Breaking conventions

Forster's writing career began in the early 1900s, a time when Victorian ideals and traditions still held sway in British society. However, his works exhibited a distinct departure from the prevailing literary conventions of his time. Rather than conforming to rigid social expectations, Forster tackled themes such as love, homosexuality, and personal freedom with a nuanced and compassionate approach. One of Forster's most famous novels, *A Room with a View* (1908), explores the clash between social conventions and individual desires. Set in Italy and England, the novel centres around a young woman named Lucy Honeychurch, who must navigate the complexities of love, social expectations, and personal fulfillment. With its astute social commentary and memorable characters, *A Room with a View* established Forster as a keen observer of human relationships and societal norms.

Forster's novel *Howards End* (1910) further solidified



► Challenging norms

his reputation as a prominent literary figure. The novel explores the intersecting lives of three families from different social classes, highlighting the disparities and tensions that arise from their divergent experiences and values. With its exploration of class, gender, and the struggle for connection in a rapidly changing world, *Howards End* is considered one of Forster's masterpieces. Another significant work by Forster is *A Passage to India* (1924), which examines the complex dynamics between the British colonisers and the Indian population during the era of British colonial rule. Through the story of the young Englishwoman Adela Quested and her experiences in India, Forster confronts issues of racism, cultural misunderstanding, and the inherent power dynamics of imperialism.

► Complex characters

One of the notable features of Forster's writing is his subtle and empathetic portrayal of characters. He meticulously crafts his characters, exploring their inner thoughts, motivations, and conflicts. Forster's characters often grapple with the constraints imposed by society, highlighting the tension between personal desires and the expectations of a rigid social order.

1.4.9 George Orwell's Novels

► Dual phases

George Orwell, born Eric Arthur Blair, was a renowned English writer and journalist who made significant contributions to the literary world. His works, including novels, essays, and non-fiction, have had a profound impact on literature, politics, and social commentary. Orwell's literary career can be divided into two distinct phases: his early works, heavily influenced by his experiences in colonial Burma and the Spanish Civil War, and his later works, which focused on dystopian themes and totalitarian regimes.

► Social critique

In his early writings, Orwell displayed a keen sense of social injustice and a critical perspective on imperialism. His experiences as a colonial policeman in Burma inspired his novel *Burmese Days*, which explored the corrupt and oppressive nature of British colonialism. Orwell's first-hand observations of poverty and exploitation in the working class also influenced his non-fiction works, such as *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *The Road to Wigan Pier*, where he exposed the harsh realities of poverty and advocated for social reform.

- Dystopian masterpieces

However, it was Orwell's later works, particularly *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, that solidified his place as a literary giant. In these dystopian novels, he explored the themes of totalitarianism, propaganda, and the abuse of power. *Animal Farm*, an allegorical tale depicting a revolution of farm animals against their human oppressors, satirised the rise of Stalinism and the corruption of revolutionary ideals. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, often considered Orwell's magnum opus, depicted a nightmarish future where a totalitarian regime controlled every aspect of people's lives, introducing concepts such as Big Brother, Newspeak, and Thought Police that have become ingrained in popular culture.

- Clear and concise writing

Orwell's writing style was characterised by clarity, simplicity, and directness. He believed in the power of clear and accessible language to convey complex ideas and reach a wide audience. This style, often called "plain English," enabled him to effectively communicate his socio-political messages and engage readers in profound reflection.

1.4.10 Somerset Maugham's Novels

- Realistic narratives

W. Somerset Maugham was a British playwright, novelist, and short story writer who became one of the most popular and acclaimed authors of his time. He wrote numerous novels, and here is a brief overview of some of his notable works. Maugham's first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), is a realistic portrayal of working-class life in London. It explores themes of love, passion, and the constraints of societal norms. In *Of Human Bondage* (1915), Maugham draws from his experiences to create a semi-autobiographical story. It follows the life of Philip Carey, a young man with a clubfoot who struggles to find his place in the world and grapples with love, art, and religion.

- Artistic pursuits, moral dilemmas

The Moon and Sixpence (1919) is loosely based on the life of the artist Paul Gauguin. It delves into the life of Charles Strickland, a middle-aged stockbroker who abandons his family and conventional life to pursue his passion for painting in Paris and the South Pacific. *Up at the Villa* (1941) is a novella set in Florence, Italy, during the interwar period. It tells the story of Mary Panton, a young widow who becomes entangled in a scandalous affair and must confront the moral dilemmas that arise.



► Complex relationships

► Compelling narratives

► Thrilling mysteries

► Masterful mysteries

Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* (1944) is a novel that explores philosophical and spiritual themes. It follows the journey of Larry Darrell, a World War I veteran who rejects a conventional life and embarks on a quest for enlightenment and meaning. Another notable work is *The Painted Veil* (1925), which revolves around Kitty Fane, a young woman who marries for convenience but finds herself drawn to another man. Set in colonial Hong Kong and mainland China, the novel explores themes of love, betrayal and redemption.

Like the above novels, Maugham's works often explore themes of human nature, society, and the complexities of relationships, and they continue to be cherished for their insightful observations and compelling storytelling.

1.4.11 Detective Novels

The period between 1900 and 1945 witnessed the emergence and development of detective novels as a popular genre in literature. These gripping tales of crime, mystery, and investigation captivated readers with their intricate plots and compelling characters. One of the most iconic authors of the time was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose creation, Sherlock Holmes, became synonymous with the detective genre. Holmes' deductive reasoning and astute observations solved baffling cases in novels like *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and *The Valley of Fear* (1915).

Agatha Christie, another renowned author, made her debut in 1920 with "The Mysterious Affair at Styles," introducing her famous detective, Hercule Poirot. Christie's novels, such as "Murder on the Orient Express" (1934) and "And Then There Were None" (1939), showcased her intricate plotting and surprise endings. Dorothy L. Sayers, known for her aristocratic detective Lord Peter Wimsey, crafted intricate mysteries with a touch of social commentary. Her novels like "Strong Poison" (1930) and "Murder Must Advertise" (1933) featured complex characters and psychological depth.

During this period, Dashiell Hammett emerged as a prominent figure in hard-boiled detective fiction. His gritty novels, including *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) and *The Thin Man* (1934), portrayed morally ambiguous detectives navigating the dark underbelly of society. Raymond Chandler, another influential author, introduced



► Gritty detectives

the world to the iconic private detective Philip Marlowe. Chandler's novels like *The Big Sleep* (1939) and *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940) blended hard-boiled grit with poetic prose, defining the noir genre. Other notable detective novelists of the time included G.K. Chesterton with his Father Brown stories, featuring a humble Catholic priest solving mysteries, and Ngaio Marsh, whose novels like *Death in a White Tie* (1938) brought sophistication to the genre.

Summarised Overview

Between 1900 and 1945, critical prose works in English literature explored diverse aspects of art, culture, and society. Modernist experimentation thrived, with T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound challenging conventions and forging new modes of expression. Literary analysis, interpretation, and the role of tradition were central concerns, as exemplified by Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot. Critics also examined the literature's connection to the socio-political climate of the time. Feminist perspectives emerged, with Woolf questioning gender norms and female representation. Moreover, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories greatly influenced literary criticism. Notable figures such as Eliot, Woolf, Richards, Empson, Leavis, Williams, and Belloc significantly contributed to this critical period.

During the Modern English age, biographical works showcased introspection and psychological exploration, delving into the inner lives and motivations of individuals. They also reflected on the impact of war, critiqued social norms, and experimented with narrative techniques. Lytton Strachey revolutionised biographical writing by revealing the complexities of historical figures and challenging traditional portrayals. Periodicals played a crucial role in shaping the literary and intellectual landscape, providing platforms for literary movements, political debates, and cultural commentary. Edwardian novelists captured the social transformations of the era, explored human relationships and psychological depth, and employed both traditional and experimental styles. John Galsworthy's novels focused on societal tensions and panoramic insight, while Rudyard Kipling's works depicted captivating tales set in colonial India. H.G. Wells pioneered science fiction and examined social, scientific, and philosophical themes. Psychological novels of the time delved into the depths of the human mind, emphasising interior lives, identity, and internal conflicts.

George Orwell, a prominent English writer, is known for his significant contributions to literature, politics, and social commentary. His career can be divided into two phases: early works influenced by his experiences in



Burma and the Spanish Civil War and later works focusing on dystopian themes and totalitarian regimes. Orwell's later novels, including *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, became iconic dystopian masterpieces, critiquing totalitarianism and exploring the abuse of power. Somerset Maugham, another acclaimed British author, wrote realistic narratives that examined love, societal norms, and philosophical themes. His notable works include *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, and *The Razor's Edge*. The detective novel genre also flourished during this period, with authors like Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Dashiell Hammett, and Raymond Chandler captivating readers with thrilling mysteries and memorable characters.

Assignments

1. Explore the contributions of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound in pushing the boundaries of traditional forms and conventions.
2. Consider T.S. Eliot's views on tradition and innovation as presented in *The Sacred Wood*, and discuss how a historical and cultural understanding of literature influenced the development of critical discourse.
3. Focus on how critics, such as George Orwell, analysed literature in relation to broader social and political issues, providing insightful social commentary and critiques of power dynamics.
4. Discuss the contributions of Virginia Woolf in challenging traditional gender roles and examining the representation of women in literature.
5. Analyse the themes of knowledge, perception, and the limits of philosophical inquiry in Bertrand Russell's book *The Problems of Philosophy*.
6. Explain the significance of Russell's essay *On Denoting* in revolutionising the philosophy of language and provide a logical analysis of denoting phrases.
7. What are two notable works by James Joyce that exemplify his use of stream of consciousness?
8. How did George Orwell's works, such as *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, contribute to his literary legacy?



Suggested Readings

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3. O'Hara, Daniel. "'The Unsummoned Image': T. S. Eliot's Unclassic Criticism." *Boundary 2*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1980, pp. 91–124. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3087151>.
4. Soteriou, Matthew. "Content and the Stream of Consciousness." *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 21, 2007, pp. 543–68. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25177214>.
5. Wyatt, Bryant N. "John Updike: The Psychological Novel in Search of Structure." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1967, pp. 89–96. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/440749>.

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2. Das, Bijay Kumar. *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Atlantic, 2005.
3. Treble, Henry Arthur (editor). *The Threshold of English Prose*. CUP, 2014.
4. Trotter, David. *English Novel in History, 1895-1920*. Taylor & Francis, 2003.
5. Verdonk, Peter and Jean Jacques Weber (editors). *Twentieth-century Fiction From Text to Context*. Routledge, 1995.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Poetry and Drama

BLOCK-02

Block Content

- Unit 1 Poetry (Detailed)
- Unit 2 Drama (Detailed)
- Unit 3 Poetry (Non- detailed)
- Unit 4 Drama (Non- detailed)



Unit 1

Poetry

Detailed Study

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ locate the modern English poets and place them in their genres of writing
- ▶ develop an understanding of the different literary techniques used in modern literature
- ▶ get acquainted with the different factors that influenced modern poetry

Background

The unit aims at introducing the important poets and the different poetic movements that existed during the early 20th century. The age saw different movements in poetry like the imagist and symbolist movements that gave different dimensions to the genre of poetry.

Modernist poetry is defined as poetry created in the modernist literary tradition between 1890 and 1950, primarily in Europe and North America. However, the dates used to define the term vary depending on the country of origin, the relevant school, and the critic's personal biases. The goal of modernist poetry is to "make it new." The issues of objectivity and impersonality seem to be central to modernist poetry. Modernism emerged from a history of poetic expression that emphasised the poet's individual imagination, culture, feelings, and recollections. The modernists believed that poetry might make an intellectual statement about the world by moving away from the purely personal. Like T. S. Eliot in the *Four Quartets* and Ezra Pound in *The Cantos*, even when they returned to the intimate, they condensed the personal into a lyrical texture that claimed universal human importance.

Themes of disappointment, disintegration, and social alienation are common in modernist poetry. Many people think that these traits are reactions to the Industrial Revolution and the numerous social, political, and



economic changes that it brought about. Beginning in the late 19th century, this global cultural trend remained prevalent in art during World War I and the immediately following decades. Many of the speakers in modernist poems appear to be having difficulty defining themselves and finding their position in society.

The transition from a predominately agricultural to a predominately industrial economy contributed to the rapid urbanisation that occurred in the late 19th century. Major cities saw a massive influx of immigrants from Europe looking for employment prospects. As a result, many poets and artists felt lonely and alienated in the midst of crowded, active cities. Particularly in the poetry written after World War I, devastation, feelings of disillusionment, worry, and pessimism are reflected.

In addition to rejecting Romantic aesthetics and ideas, modernist poets are known for their fragmented sentence structures that come from their distrust of language. Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf are notable modernist poets. A new generation of poets aimed to undo the impersonal and objective efforts made by their forebearers after World War II. With the transition to confessional poetry in the works of writers like Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath, among others, modernism in the English language comes to an end.

Modern poets are inspired by trains, trams, telephones, snake charmers, and other everyday objects. Poetry can be written today on nearly any subject. Modern poets do not all fit into one identifiable category. The main tenets of twentieth century poetry were realism, elements of democracy, and humanitarianism, a spirit of romanticism, love for complexity, psychology, fondness for love, religion, mysticism, longingness, attraction towards nature, simplicity and directness in style and attraction towards Symbolist and Metaphysical movements.

Keywords

World Wars, Degradation of tradition, Fragmentation, Realism, Imagism, Symbolism



Section 1

Dulce et Decorum Est

- Wilfred Owen

Discussion

Wilfred Owen was one of the most celebrated British war poets, even though he only had a very brief poetic career. He was wounded in a war in 1917, and while he was admitted to the hospital, he met another patient, Siegfried Sassoon, also a poet, who served as a mentor and introduced Owen to literature and well-known literary figures like H. G. Wells. It was at this time that the poet in Owen started developing. He was entering the most creative period of his life. During this time, he published two of his most celebrated poems, "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and "Dulce et Decorum Est." Owen's poems generally revolve around the hardships of warfare, and hence he is considered a war poet. The major themes in Owen's poetry include the subjects of war, pity, tragic death, horrors, protests against war, etc. He has quoted C. S. Lewis in his speech, and the quote goes, "My subject is war and the pity of war".

- ▶ Owen was one of the greatest war poets of the 20th century
- ▶ Was greatly influenced by Siegfried Sassoon and the H. G. Wells

The graphical illustrations of the horrors of warfare, the physical landscapes that surrounded him and the human body in relation to those landscapes, enhanced the quality and might of Owen's poems. His verses stand in stark contrast to the patriotic poems that initiated the writing of war poetry in English. Camaraderie and male beauty are often celebrated in his poems. Another notable characteristic of his poetry is the usage of classic works as references in it. Homeric classic myths, the legends of the discourse between Odysseus and the ghost of Achilles and the imprisonment of the Titans after the Titanomachy are often found in his poems.

- ▶ The horrors of warfare, the terrifying images of death
- ▶ Owen uses classical references in his poems

Owen's sheer hatred towards patriotism is evident from his magnum opus "Dulce et Decorum Est", published in 1920. In this poem, Owen infers the details of the instant and direct effect of a gas attack. Night march, a gas attack, traumatic neurosis, etc are clearly discussed in the poem using the bloodied feet and the bloodied mouth of a soldier. Owen apparently wanted to warn



- ▶ “Dulce et Decorum Est” depicts his hatred towards patriotism
- ▶ Night march, a gas attack, traumatic neurosis

the public of the lie that, “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country”. The poem is narrated from a soldier’s point of view. The 28 lined poem can be separated into two sections where the first 14 lines describe the set of circumstances and the soldier’s situation. The next 14 lines display the effects of what happened and Owen’s serious thoughts and his echoes on them. In the last 4 lines, Owen particularly warns the readers to avoid similar miseries and sufferings in the future. It is at the same time a war poem and an anti-war poem. Owen has penned a handful of similar poems like “Futility”, “Strange Meeting,” etc.

- ▶ Depicts the horrors of war, as experienced by a soldier
- ▶ The first section presents the horrors of the war front by bringing in images that make the readers feel pity for the soldiers

“Dulce et Decorum Est” by Wilfred Owen is a poem that graphically depicts the horrors of war, as experienced by a soldier. As someone who has had first-hand experience with war, Owen’s war poetry is often considered more credible and reliable. The poem opens by taking the reader directly to the war field. The first line of the first stanza, “Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge” is so exceptional that the readers are taken out of their comfort zones and are placed into the horrific setting of war. As the poem progresses, Owen brings in images of soldiers trudging through the trenches, weakened by injuries and fatigue. These soldiers, bent due to the packs on their backs, remind the poet of beggars who are stooping and begging in order to make a living. It is ironic that the same men who were glorified for joining the army in order to protect their motherland are now resembling beggars who beg on the streets. The first section of the poem gives the reader a glimpse of the monstrosities of the war front.

- ▶ Poison gas attack that happened on the war front
- ▶ The soldier died due to the intake of the poisonous gas
- ▶ Post-traumatic stress after a few days in a hospital

In the second section, the writer describes a poison gas attack that happened on the war front. It all happened in a short period of time, so most of the soldiers were unable to get a proper hold of their gas masks. They somehow managed to put them on time, but one soldier could not do it. This man, who was running around the field in agony, reminded the poet of someone caught in fire or lime, which is a chemical weapon used in war. The speaker then compares the present scenario to something happening under the water and the soldier to someone who was drowning in the depths. The third section takes the readers a few days into the future, where the poet is going through post-traumatic stress disorder



and hence is deprived of sleep. He repeatedly sees the image of the lone soldier crying and advancing towards him in agony. The speaker jumps up in terror every time he sees this dream.

The final section of the poem is where the poet directly addresses the readers. He suggests that if there is any chance by which they get to experience the true realities of war, then there would not be many of them who would force their children into joining the army in the name of patriotism. The realities of war are so dark and disturbing that there is only a remote chance that a human would survive this kind of suffocation. It is the kind of dream that the writer had to go through. He also adds that when this truth is clearly understood, people will definitely put an end to the conventional way of sending young men to the war front, believing that it is the most glorious thing to do. This is where the title of the poem first appears. The Latin phrase “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori,” which translates to “it is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country,” is an old but familiar lie that has been passed on through generations. The poet believes that once the harsh realities of war are clearly understood, an end will be put to this absurdity.

- The poet directly addresses the readers and shatters the romantic idea of war
- War is not something to be praised

A shift in subject happens throughout the different sections of the poem as it advances. In the opening lines, the subject is “we,” the soldiers who are fighting for their country in unity, the soldiers of the regiment who keep moving forward no matter how hard the situation is. In the second section, “we” changes to “he,” the lone soldier who could not put on his gas mask in time. His fear and agony act as the central element in the second section. When the third section starts, the shift happens from “he,” the soldier, to “I,” the poet. It is in the third section that the readers get a proper look at the inner conflicts happening inside the poet’s mind. This is where the poem takes its turn from war poetry to anti-war poetry. A clear picture of the poet’s hatred of war is presented here. In the final section, “I,” the poet, changes to “you,” the reader. This is where the poet addresses his readers. He communicates directly to his audience and states that if they ever get to go through what he has been through, then they will not so eagerly push their loved ones into the war front because war is meaningful and full of glory.

- Shift in perspective



2.1.1 Analysis

“Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,

Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,

Till on the haunting flares, we turned our backs,

And towards our distant rest began to trudge.”

The poem begins with a description of marching soldiers. The young men, who were once full of spirit and joined the army in order to serve their country, now look like old beggars who have lost their youth. The poet further compares their health condition to that of a hag, which is a derogatory term for old woman. It is indeed clear in the first four lines that the poet is describing the soldiers' fatigue, their frustration, and the constant danger that surrounds them. The poet uses consonance, which is a stylistic literary device identified by the repetition of identical consonants in adjacent words, in order to enhance the harshness of the poem. For example, in the first line, the letter “b” appears in three words: “bend”, “double” and “beggars.” The poem is written in iambic pentameter. An iambic pentameter is a meter that consists of five iambs. An iamb is a metrical foot consisting of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

- The poem is written in iambic pentameter
- The poet also uses consonance
- The poem begins with the description of the warfront

“Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,

But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;

Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots

Of gas shells dropping softly behind.”

The poet continues the description of men marching on and on as if they were asleep. None of them bothered to take care of their bodies as they limped on their blood-shod feet. They were so consumed by fatigue that they even grew deaf to the noises of the gas shells and bombs around them. Owen continues the usage of consonance in these lines as well. Here he repeatedly uses the sound “l” in words like “lost”, “limped” and “blood”. The poet continues the usage of iambic pentameter in these lines as well.

- The second stanza also describes the men's fatigue
- The usage of consonance is also repeated in this stanza

“Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,



Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime. . ."

- Describes the sudden gas attack
- The soldier dies choking in the gas attack

From the third stanza, the poem suddenly gains pace with the sudden gas attack. The starting line is "Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!" Owen uses three exclamation marks in order to vividly portray the gravity of the situation the soldiers were in. The soldiers were caught in the frenzy and could not get a proper hold of their gas masks and helmets. Most of them fumbled while trying to fit those clumsy helmets into their heads, but there was one soldier who could not get a hold of his helmet in time. That lone soldier was seen yelling out in pain like a man on fire or lime (lime is a chemical weapon that burns live tissues).

The usage of "an ecstasy of fumbling" is ironic, as the situation was far from being ecstatic. The chaotic mess the gas shells created that followed their fatigue is presented as ecstasy here.

"Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning."

The speaker describes that the sight he saw through his gas mask was horrifying. The poet saw his comrade drowning in a green sea. He repeatedly uses the word "green" in order to paint a horrifying picture of the war front.

"In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning."

- Talks about how the soldier died, and how the poet has been repeatedly dreaming about this

In these lines, the poem makes a shift from the present to a few days in the future, where the poet is deprived of sleep as the same soldier painfully races towards the poet in his dream. The poet feels desperate to help him but as always, all he can do is stare at him helplessly. The guilt of not being able to help his comrade disturbs him and eats him away from the inside.

This stanza follows the same rhyme scheme as the previous one. Hence, it quite possibly highlights how the past is affecting his present.

“If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
 His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin;”

With this stanza, the poem enters its final stage, where the poet directly addresses the readers using the term “you.” This is where the poem changes from a war poem to an anti-war poem. The poet convinces his readers to actually see what war is like. Here again, the poem slows down to a regular pace as the whole stanza is a single complex sentence. The poet asks the readers to shift roles with him and actually experience the war in person and see the monstrosities of the war up close. He uses the conditional clause “if” to attain his motive of making the readers empathize with the poet’s agony if they were actually present on the battlefield and saw his comrade’s face hanging like a devil’s sick of sin, with his white eyes writhing on it. The poet uses the above-mentioned images like the “devil’s sick of sin”, “hanging face”, “writhing eyes,” etc. to express how horrifying the dreams could be.

- The poet directly addresses his audience as “you”
- Openly talks about the monstrosities of war

“If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood.
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est
 Pro Patria Mori.”

In this stanza, the poet concludes the poem by continuing the usage of the conditional clause “if.” If the readers were able to hear the soldier choking on blood and see how terrifying a gas attack is, they would stop glorifying the notion of fighting for their country. Owen clearly states that patriotism is not an excuse to fill the world with such atrocities. The high zest or enthusiasm with which people talk to children of war would be lost if

- The readers would not send their youth to sacrifice themselves in the name of patriotism
- The old lie, “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country,” will no longer be celebrated



they actually knew what was happening at the battlefield. In the closing lines of the poem, the poet uses the title “Dulce et Decorum Est” as it is in the Latin phrase, that is, “Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori” which he calls an old lie. He explains that this old lie, “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country,” will no longer be celebrated. Even if the citizens of a country are willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their country, Owen states that it would not be sweet or fitting, it would still be filled with pain and fear.

Summarised Overview

The poem begins with a description of marching soldiers. The young men, who were once full of spirit and joined the army in order to serve their country, now look like old beggars who have lost their youth. In the second section, the writer describes a poison gas attack that happened on the war front. One soldier could not get a proper hold of his gas mask, and he died due to the intake of the poisonous gas. The third section describes the poet as going through post-traumatic stress disorder and, hence, being deprived of sleep. He repeatedly sees the image of the lone soldier crying and advancing towards him in agony. The speaker jumps up in terror every time he sees this dream. The poem concludes by mentioning that dying for one’s own country is a patriotic act that will be looked down upon by the readers once they understand that it is a lie.

Assignments

1. Comment on the poet’s attitude towards war.
2. Do you believe the poet paints a truthful picture of his personal experiences? Why?
3. How does the final stanza alter the poem’s overall meaning?
4. Demonstrate your understanding of the writing style of the poet.
5. Consider “Dulce et Decorum Est” as an anti-war manifesto.

Suggested Readings

1. Abu Baker, A. *The Theme of Futility in War Poetry*. Nebula, 2007.

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3. Campbell, J. *Interpreting the War. Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*. (Ed.) Vincent Sherry. Cambridge UP, 2000.
4. Owen, W. *The Collected Poems*. (Ed.) Edmund Blunden. Twenty-Third, 1963.

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2. Kendall, T. *Modern English War Poetry*. Oxford UP, 2006.
3. Puissant, S.C. *Irony and the Poetry of the First World War*. Palgrave, 2009.
4. Reisman, R.M.C. *War Poets*. Salem, 2009.

Section 2 The Second Coming

- W. B. Yeats

Discussion

- Love, Nationalism, and Irish mysticism are the major themes

W. B. Yeats is one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. He was one of the few poets who could at the same time influence his contemporaries and also his successors, both in the fields of politics and literature. T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound considered the works of Yeats a great inspiration in shaping their literary careers. Also, the next generation of poets, including the most celebrated W. H. Auden, was one of those poets who saw Yeats as the torchbearer they had to follow. The common themes Yeats deals with in his poetry are love, Irish nationalism, and mysticism. Even though these three were the subjects he discussed, he never deviated from the track and style of modernism.

Yeats started his poetic career as a romantic poet, and



- Yeats had common features with T. S. Eliot

his journey to becoming a modern poet was gradual and eventful. He is also one of the typical modern poets who was pained to see all the misery the war left behind. He also stood in the middle of all the chaos and lamented the past. He is one of those poets who is often celebrated for his sense of the moral wholeness of humanity and history. Yeats was in many ways similar to his contemporary, T. S. Eliot. The use of myth, symbolism, juxtaposition, colloquial language, and literary allusions to express the anxiety of modernity was one of the few similarities between the two representative poets of the age. "The Second Coming" is a classic example of the above-mentioned similarity.

- Easter uprising and the Irish Civil War led to the creation of this poem

"The Second Coming," published in 1919, is one of the greatest poems composed by W. B. Yeats. Like many of his other poems, it was the Easter uprising of 1916, and the Irish civil war of 1919 that inspired Yeats to compose this poem. The monstrosities of the war took the people to a place where they no longer believed that there was even a remote chance that civilization would someday return to England. Dead soldiers fell into the arms of women, children, peasants, and peace-loving writers. The title "The Second Coming" is significant as it suggests a new manifestation of God to man. As the two thousand years of the Christian era are coming to a close, Yeats anticipates an impending terror-filled verse. He believed that the dark forces of the pre-Christian would return to us in new forms and shapes. The poem is a clear demonstration of Yeats' philosophy of history.

- The poem is written in blank verse

The poem is written in blank verse. It is filled with Yeatsian half-rhymes, along with Anglo - Irish rhymes like "gyre" and "falconer". The poet intends a certain kind of tension in this poem with the judicious use of repetitions and echoes. It consists of twenty-two lines in two verse paragraphs. The first is an octet of 8 lines, and the second is a sonnet of 14 lines. Without any sort of introduction, the poem opens as if it were in the midst of a vision. The poet sees a widening gyre moving at top speed. The deliberate repetition of "turning and turning" is once again happening in "falcon and falconer". This is just another way for the poet to make the reader feel the tension that he is intending. Here, the distance between the falconer and falcon is symbolic of the distance between the man at the periphery and his values at

- The poem has an abrupt opening as if it were in the middle of a vision

the centre. The connection is totally lost. Yeats is not happy about anarchy being loosened upon the world. The idea of anarchy is intensified by the image of the blood-dimmed tide. Anarchy leads to the destruction of all fine qualities. The lack of conviction best explains the pathetic situation where the centre can no longer hold. This results in the drowning of innocents in the blood-dimmed tide. These eight lines give a dark picture of the situation the world is in.

- The poet predicts the arrival of the “second coming”

In the second stanza, the poet thinks that the second coming is at hand. He believes that the “second comer” is perhaps a new “avatar” different from everything they have seen and experienced. This will be a new manifestation of the God we have believed in. The only difference is that instead of being an embodiment of love, the new manifestation would be demonic. The poet in his vision sees an image coming out of the *Spiritus Mundi*, or the spirit of the world. He sees a Sphinx-like image emerging out of it. The image of the Sphinx is used in order to tell the world about the coming back of Pre-Christian beasts. He ends the stanza with a cautionary note that something so dark and demonic is on its way to Bethlehem in order to be born.

2.1.2 Analysis

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.”

This poem conveys the terror of a coming antithetical civilization. It creates its effect by its images, by disgust at prevalent anarchy, by horror at the overcoming of innocence, and by its slow, remorseless revelation of the nature of what is to come, the image gradually glimpsed is finally appreciated for all its brutality. It is slouching towards Bethlehem, the holy place where



- Conveys the terror of an impending anti-thetical civilization

Jesus was born. The poem expresses the filthy modern tide of a botched civilisation. The deliberate repetition of “turning and turning” in the first line is half echoed by the falcon - falconer repetition. The image of the widening gyre moving at top speed symbolises loss of connection between the centre and the periphery. This is best explained with the image of the falcon and falconer. The falcon’s lost contact implies man’s separation from every ideal of himself that has enabled him to control his life, whether it comes from religion or philosophy. It represents man’s break from every traditional tie. It could also be the separation of the emotion from the intellect. Mere anarchy is what is seen in the world today. This gradually leads to the drowning of innocent lives in blood-dimmed tides. This is also a reference to the archetypal myth of floods destroying all human life on Earth. The blood-dimmed tide thus refers to the destructive forces that are unleashed at the end of an era, and has special reference to war. This blood-dimmed tide is loosed on the world to drown “the ceremony of innocence,” because in ceremonies alone lies the vestiges of order. The poet concludes the first stanza by telling the readers that frantic men have taken control of the world, and good men who have become sceptical about the values and norms now lack all conviction.

“Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

The first section is a prelude to the second section, which, by contrast, is deliberately pictorial. The anarchy of the world is a prelude, surely, to some revelation, "The Second Coming", but with mounting irony. The image that appears before him, out of the *Spiritus Mundi*, which is roughly equivalent to Jung's Collective Unconscious, is surely not Christ coming again to save the world. The image Yeats saw coming out of the *Spiritus Mundi* was that of the Sphinx. The mysterious Sphinx-like figure suggests evil, violence, and terror. Its gaze is blank and pitiless. The slight movement it shows demonstrates that anarchy has started to move to doom the civilization of the world. The shadows of the desert birds reel away from it in the giddiness of a nightmare. As the darkness drops over the desert of prophecy, we realise that every civilization chooses its executioner. And this executioner, perhaps a pre-Christian beast, is slouching towards Bethlehem to be born. The "rocking cradle" is that of Baby Jesus, from the Christian birth story. The primaevial Assyrian creature had been frozen by the Christian miracle into a stony sleep and vexed to nightmare by the new gospel of gentleness. But he is now being born to bring in horror and terror to the world.

- Ceremonies of innocence no longer prevail
- Predicts that the second coming is at our doorstep

While Yeats is not fond of Christianity and regards its suppression of individual personality as having led to the present anarchy, at the end of the poem he envisages something far worse. The final intimation that a new god will be born in Bethlehem, which Christianity associates with passive infancy and the tenderness of maternal love, makes its brutishness particularly frightful.

Summarised Overview

The poem consists of twenty-two lines in two verse paragraphs. The first is an octet of 8 lines, and the second is a sonnet of 14 lines. Without any sort of introduction, the poem opens as if it were in the midst of a vision. The first section explains the anarchy and destruction happening. In the second section, the poet envisions the arrival of the manifestation of God, the second coming, which is inevitable in the present scenario. The poet, in his vision, sees an image coming out of the *Spiritus Mundi* or the spirit of the world. The poet anticipates that this monster is waiting to take birth in Bethlehem.



Assignments

1. How does the poem reflect the political situation at the time?
2. How and why does “The Second Coming” depict the dawn of modernity through the use of mythology and age-old themes?
3. What is your perspective regarding the nature of the beast?
4. Comment on the poem’s connection to the Bible.
5. Do you believe the poem can be applied to everyone on the globe, or is Christian Europe its only intended audience?

Suggested Readings

1. Bloom, Harold. *Yeats*. Oxford UP, 1972.
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Section 3

Sailing to Byzantium

- W. B. Yeats

Discussion

“Sailing to Byzantium” is a poem that focuses on Yeats’ obsession to find a tranquil and serene place, where he could meditate and find ideal spirituality in both art and life. The poem depicts a metaphorical journey to Byzantium, his dream city. Yeats feels that the country he has left is not a place for old men like him. It is a country where young people lie in each other’s arms with sensual music around them. That is the kind of world, where the young totally neglect the old. The speaker refers to the old generation as “Monuments of unageing intellect”. Byzantium and Constantinople were two adjacent towns that merged later on into one city. The historic Byzantium was remarkable for the skill of its craftsmen and the beauty of its buildings. But Yeats is here writing about an ideal city. He is making Byzantium his utopia. The subject of Byzantium poems is a conflict between this world and that world. The poet is facing a dilemma, where he has to choose between this life, and the life in Byzantium. The poet sets sail from the world of sensual music to the world of ethereal music. But the poet is not ready to sail. This implies that no matter how good the destination is, it is a journey that you do not want to take. This implies that the poet is not just talking about some faraway land, but is referring to the spiritual journey after death.

- Talks about a spiritual journey to the city of Byzantium.
- Deals with the dilemma humans face while choosing between things

The poet uses the opening lines of the poem to talk about the world being a sensuous place, where old men like him are no longer needed. This is a world of passion, where young men and women love and have sex with each other, a world where sexual bliss is more important than anything else. The poet further says that an old man is not even a man, but only the shadow of a man, who is not capable of doing anything on his own. As a retired man is no longer welcomed in the office world, an old man is not welcomed in the real world. All he can do is sail to Byzantium and enjoy the liberty his soul has



gained. So, the poet is praying to the sages who stand in God's holy fire to consume his ignorant and passionate heart, as it is not possible for them to enter Byzantium in flesh and blood. Finally, the poet talks about a golden bird singing in Byzantium. The poet is using the singing bird as a metaphor for the knowledgeable soul. The poem can be read from different perspectives. It could be seen as a journey from life to the afterlife, or just another imaginary holy city Yeats has created, or as a transition from sensual art to intellectual art, or even the poet coming to terms with life and death.

2.1.3 Analysis

“That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.”

The poet is leaving this twentieth century world, the country of the young, where everything is sensuous, for a different world. He is leaving the world with regrets, but he strongly believes that he is too old for this world. The first line of the poem starts by telling the readers that the world is not a place for old men, but only to the passionate youth who only dance to sensual music and are filled with lust. He could also be talking about twentieth century Ireland. In this country, only the young can live their lives, as the things this country offers are suitable for youngsters alone. Here, only the young men can enjoy the honey of the sweet eves. As the old generation is shut out of the pleasures of life, the young generation is shut out of wisdom. Hence, he calls the old generation “monuments of unageing intellect”. He also used the image of the salmon and mackerel to talk about the temporary summer holidays. The poet fills the first stanza with enough images to add to the aesthetics of the poem and also fills it with his philosophical ideas.

- The poet is leaving his homeland for Byzantium



“An aged man is but a paltry thing,
 A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
 Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
 For every tatter in its mortal dress,
 Nor is there singing school but studying
 Monuments of its own magnificence;
 And therefore, I have sailed the seas and come
 To the holy city of Byzantium.”

- The poet believes that an aged man is nothing in this world

Rejected by the whole world, the poet decides to sail to Byzantium. He is sailing from a world of “sensual” music to a world of “hammered gold.” It is only his body that is deteriorating, whereas his soul is getting better with time. He finds Byzantium to be the perfect destination to mould his soul into perfection. It is the city of dreams that teaches your soul how to sing. Mere ageing is nothing to be proud of; it is what comes after that makes all the difference. Instead of being a scarecrow or a shadow in the real world, the poet chooses to be a singing bird free of all burdens in Byzantium. Therefore, he is breaking all ties with the young men and is sailing to Byzantium in search of emblems of unchanging things.

“O sages standing in God's holy fire
 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
 And be the singing-masters of my soul.
 Consume my heart away; sick with desire
 And fastened to a dying animal
 It knows not what it is; and gather me
 Into the artifice of eternity.”

- The poet is praying to the sages to consume his ageing body filled with desire

The old poet is praying to the sages who stand in God's holy fire and merely resemble images in gold mosaics. The poet has abandoned the sensual music of the dying generation and is asking the sages to come down and consume his heart, which is filled with false and useless desires. He requests that they take this



ageing body out of the way and embrace him from the inside to fill him with celestial music. Even Byzantium would not be enough for old men if they are in the flesh. He is planning on leaving his body behind and letting his soul experience liberty, or ultimate freedom, when he reaches Byzantium.

“Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor, awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.”

The poet believes that once he is dead, his ghost can choose to take any body shape. His choice would be a singing bird that never stops singing. It will be a beautiful bird designed by Byzantine craftsmen. This bird's beauty would be well acclaimed, and its voice would be sweet enough to keep the drowsy emperors awake. Once he is out of the natural world, he has complete freedom to get rid of all physical barriers like the ageing body. He will turn into a golden bird. The poet has used gold in order to design the bird as gold is the platonic symbol of perfection. This bird sitting on the golden bough will sing to the Lords and Ladies of Byzantium. This bird will be different from the birds who sing of the mortality of life.

- After death the poet wishes to turn into a golden bird that would sing all day long in a sweet voice

Summarised Overview

The modern world is meant for the youngsters, hence the poet wishes to leave this world. He is too old for this world. The things that are offered are only meant for the young. As the old generation is shut out of the pleasures of life, the young generation is shut out of wisdom. Hence, he calls the old generation “monuments of unageing intellect”. The poet decides to sail to Byzantium. He finds Byzantium as the perfect destination to mould his soul into perfection. He wishes to be a free bird. Even Byzantium would not be enough for old men

if they are in the flesh. He is planning on leaving his body behind and letting his soul experience liberty when he reaches Byzantium. He wishes to take the shape of a beautiful, golden bird designed by Byzantine craftsmen, after his death. This bird, sitting on the golden bough, will be different from the birds who sing of the mortality of life.

Assignments

1. Comment on the Utopian vision in "Sailing to Byzantium."
2. Is Byzantium in the poem a real place or just a state of mind? What justifications support your opinion?
3. What do you think is the speaker's attitude towards Nature?
4. Discuss the theme and tone of the poem.
5. One recurring theme in poetry is the yearning to survive death. How is this theme portrayed by Yeats in "Sailing to Byzantium"? How does he intend to transcend death?

Suggested Readings

1. O'Neill, M. (Ed.). *A Routledge Literary Sourcebook on the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Routledge, 2004.
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Section 4

The Waste Land

- T. S. Eliot

Discussion

- T.S. Eliot was greatly influenced by Ezra Pound and the “Imagist group”

Thomas Stearns Eliot, the greatest modern English poet, playwright, and critic, was an American by birth and an Englishman by adoption. T. S. Eliot was closely associated with the “Imagist group,” which had Ezra Pound as its head. A small part of his early poetry was influenced by this group, while the greater part of it largely depended on the intense knowledge he had of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists and the metaphysical poets of the 17th century. T.S. Eliot was a great scholar who had a clear understanding of almost all the ancient classics. This is another element that contributed to the greatness of T. S. Eliot’s poetry.

- Eliot’s literary career can be divided into three phases

The first half of the 20th century was a period full of complexity and contradiction, progress and retrogression, marvels and futility. The age saw the emergence of a brave new world. This was a period of transition. Eliot was one of the figures who took this transition seriously and brought into literature certain elements that later became the face of the age. Eliot’s career as a poet can be divided into three phases. The first phase consists of poems that he composed during his college days in Boston and Paris. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is the most celebrated poem of this phase of his literary career. Moving on, during the second phase, where the horrors of the First World War had affected him badly, Eliot wrote about the atrocities around him that pained him and affected the whole world adversely. *The Waste Land* is the signature creation of this phase. It also marked the end of this period. In the third phase of his literary career, Eliot discussed the economic depression caused by the two World Wars and the rise of Nazism. This phase ended with the publication of the “Four Quartets.”

The Waste Land, the magnum opus of T.S. Eliot was first published in *Criterion* in 1922. It was a magazine



edited by Eliot himself. A few days later, the poem was published in *The Dial*. Later that year, it got the privilege of being published as an independent book. The poem consists of five sections, "The Burial of the Dead", "A Game of Chess", "The Fire Sermon", "Death by Water", and "What the Thunder Said". Through these sections, the poet presents a bleak picture of the current scenario along with a historical understanding of the same. *The Waste Land* was dedicated to the Imagist poet Ezra Pound, for whom T.S. Eliot had great respect. He also acknowledged Ezra Pound as the better craftsman in one of the editions. The poem was edited by Ezra Pound also. Eliot himself once commented that "... it is not so much an important bit of social criticism, as the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling." The origin of *The Waste Land* was greatly influenced by two books: *The Golden Bough*, by James George Frazer, and *From Ritual to Romance*, by Miss Jessie L. Weston.

- *The Waste Land* is written in five sections, each with a title of its own

The Waste Land, written by T. S. Eliot is a phenomenal work that opened the doors to different realms in twentieth century literature. It is a poem worth re-reading, and reinterpreting as it is impossible to limit the work to one single perspective. It is a poem loaded with allusions from different ages and genres of literature, engulfing multiple semantic layers. This poem prompted T. S. Eliot to assume the position of the greatest poet of the era. Eliot and the other modernists were in a state of confusion. They were deeply affected by the brutality of war and the loss of values that led to sheer hatred and separation. It is this confusion and orderlessness that led to the creation of *The Waste Land*, which later became the face of twentieth century English Literature. In the poem, we have the blind prophet Tiresias as the major observer. T.S. Eliot himself once mentioned that Tiresias is the most important character in *The Waste Land*.

- *The Waste Land* is loaded with allusions

- *The Waste Land* starts with the narrative of an aristocratic woman recollecting some memories from her childhood

The Waste Land is written in five separately titled sections. The first section titled "The Burial of the Dead" consists of four speakers with four different perspectives. The section opens with an autobiographical episode from the childhood of an aristocratic woman. There, the woman claims that she is not Russian, but German. In the second narrative of the first section, the poet invites the readers on a journey into the apocalyptic future, where



- The writer introduces the readers to a tarot card reader called Madame Sosostriis

the readers are taken to a desert where the speaker shows them certain confusing images. Here, the poet brings in certain recollections from the past, which include the image of a “hyacinth girl” and a nihilistic epiphany the speaker has after an encounter with her. Here also, the poet brings in some allusions from ancient literature in order to make the poem aesthetically and structurally superior. The third person the poet introduces here is a tarot reader Madame Sosostriis, who predicts the future of everyone. What makes this complex is that it is totally imaginative, and there is actually no tarot card deck to read from. The final episode of this section is often considered the most surreal of the four narratives. Here, the poet describes an encounter with a comrade from the war. This is the first time Eliot brings in matters of war in this section. The poet also discusses some wars from the past that were futile but immensely destructive. The poet concludes the episode with a line from the preface to Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal*, accusing the reader of sharing in the poet’s sin.

- This section of the poem discusses the stories of four women

The second section is titled, “A Game of Chess”. The game of chess is something that repeatedly happens during significant scenes in literature. From the romantic scene between Ferdinand and Miranda in *The Tempest* to the play by Thomas Middleton, where the moves in chess denote the stages of seduction. In this section, almost all the characters are women. Eliot uses this section to describe the class difference that exists in society using women. The section consists of four women. The opening lines of the section talks about an aristocratic woman waiting for her lover but had to make other plans like an excursion or a game of chess as her lover does not come that day. The woman is seen crying out of her fantasies and neurotic thoughts. Then the scene shifts from the high-class background of this woman to a bar in London, where the representatives of the lower section of society are seen drinking. Here, two women are sitting together, drinking, and discussing a third woman. During the discussion, one of the two women recollects a conversation that she had with an old friend, Lil, who has not done anything to improve her looks after getting her good looks ravaged due to the intake of certain medicines for abortion. She nearly died giving birth to her fifth child and, hence, refused to

give birth to a sixth child. Her husband did not support this, and so she had to take medicines in order to abort the child. This medication ravaged her looks. The woman fears that if she does not replace her lost teeth with new ones, her husband might go in search of the company of other women.

The third section, titled “The Fire Sermon” is the longest section in *The Waste Land*. This is the first time Eliot uses Indian philosophy and mythology in the poem. It is taken from a sermon given by Lord Buddha to his followers, where he encourages them to free themselves from the shackles of earthly passion and materialistic living. Even though the section is titled “Fire Sermon,” the actual reference to Buddha’s fire sermon happens only in the beginning and then towards the end. In between, all that happens is a river song, which takes its origin from different river songs in literature. In this section, the poet describes a series of increasingly debased sexual encounters concluding in a river song. The poet uses the refrain from Spenser’s “Prothalamion,” which goes, “Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.” The poet also brings in various classical references, including that of the blind prophet Tiresias, who can see into the future. The poet once again brings in references to Madame Sosostris and the legend of Philomela. Later, he proclaims himself to be the blind prophet Tiresias, who is a character from classical mythology. Again, the poet randomly describes a clerk seducing his typist lover, who is only glad that the encounter is over. Towards the end of the section, the poet is once again seen referring to Spenser’s “Prothalamion.” But this time, the poet makes an abrupt shift from the initial river scene to the final scene, where he presents Queen Elizabeth I in an amorous, perhaps erotic encounter with the Earl of Leicester. Then suddenly, the poet ends the section by quoting lines from St. Augustine’s *Confessions*. Once again, the poet returns to describing the sermon of Lord Buddha and closes the section.

- The third section titled “Fire Sermon” is the longest section in *The Waste Land*

- The fourth section describes the death of Phlebas

The fourth section of the poem, titled “Death by Water,” is the shortest section in *The Wasteland*. Nothing, in particular, happens in this section except for a man, Phlebas, the Phoenician drowning to death. The poet continues by saying that, finally in his death, he has let

go of all his worldly cares and pleasures, as the creatures of the sea have pulled his body apart. This is the only section in the poem that consists of only one stanza.

The last section of the poem, titled “What the Thunder Said,” is the most dramatic and complex section in *The Waste Land*. It is complex both in terms of imagery and events.

In this section, the legend of the Holy Grail makes its first appearance. This section also includes various allusions from various pieces of literature from around the world. This section does not just stick to Europe. It clears all the boundaries of Europe and moves halfway across the world to the Ganges. It is in this section that Eliot uses the Vedas and the Upanishads to reinforce his philosophy. The first half of the section takes the readers on a journey into an apocalyptic climax, where everything is destroyed, rebuilt, and destroyed again. He talks the same about Alexandria, Athens, Vienne, London, etc. The image of a decaying chapel is used in this section to introduce the reader to the legend of the Holy Grail. After giving a brief description of the apocalyptic future and the Holy Grail, the poet takes the readers halfway around the universe to the Ganges in India. This is where the rumbling of the thunder happens for the first time. Here he uses the legend of thunder as used in the Upanishads. According to these Hindu fables, the thunder “gives”, “sympathises”, and “controls” through its “speech”. The speaker takes each of these aspects of the thunder and elucidates them with examples. Between the different roles of thunder, a meditation happens that brings about some sort of a recollection of the image of a fisherman sitting on the shore, preparing for his impending death. Towards the end of the section, a series of unrelated literary references happen out of the bloom. This includes the lines from a children’s song, to allusions from the Italian poet Dante Alighieri. It further extends to *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd. From here, the poet takes a leap to quote the Upanishads. He concludes *The Waste Land* with the lines “Datta, Dayathvam, Damyata, Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.” Thus, the poem ends in a particularly calm way, with the last lines representing ultimate bliss and peace of mind.

- The poem ends with “Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyadha, Shantih, Shantih, Shantih”



2.1.4 Analysis

- Symbols in *The Waste Land* are mainly adopted from Miss Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*

The basic symbol used in *The Waste Land* is taken from Miss Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. In the legends that she deals with, the land has been blighted by a curse. The crops do not grow, and the animals are cursed by sterility. The condition of the land is summed up by, and connected to the plight of the land that has been rendered important by sickness or injury. The curse can only be removed by the appearance of a Knight who will ask about the meanings of the various symbols which are displaced to him in the castle. The shift in meaning from physical to spiritual sterility is easily made. A knowledge of this symbol is, as Eliot himself points out, essential for an understanding of the poem. The presence of sterile degeneration and the necessity of regeneration and changes to this is the general truth behind the poem and its central theme.

- *The Waste Land* is also abundant in irony and paradox

The poem is built on a major contrast, a device which is a favourite of Eliot and used in many of his poems. In *The Waste Land*, the contrast is between two kinds of life and two kinds of death. A life devoid of meaning is death: sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, maybe life-giving, awakening to life. The poem occupies itself to a great extent with this paradox, and with a number of variations on it. The most obvious and ironically dramatic are the series of scenes from modern life, set against memories of the myths related in Miss Weston's book, and supported by suggestions evoked by Eliot's vast store of literary reminiscences. But interwoven with these, so that the two constantly merge, are passages of drama on the psychological level, the conflicts and contrasts of mood, which again, in their turn, interface. Eliot believed that what distinguishes the relations of man and woman from the copulation of beasts is the knowledge of moral good and evil. Having an imperfect, vague romantic conception of the good, he was at least capable of understanding that sex as evil, is more dignified and less boring, than the natural, life-giving cheery automatism of the modern world. As long as we exist as human beings, Eliot believes that it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do something. At least, that is proof of the existence of humans on Earth.

The last statement is a very significant guide to our



understanding of *The Waste Land*. The fact that men have lost the knowledge of good and evil keeps them from being alive and is the justification for considering the modern Wasteland as a kingdom in which people do not even exist. The people are hollow men, shapes without forms, shadows without substance. This theme is reflected in the epigraph taken from the "Satyricon" of Petronius, where a drunken scoffer is deriding the heroic past. He speaks of the Cumaean Sibyl, the most famous of prophetesses, to whom Apollo granted a life of as many years as she had grains of dust in her hand. But she forgot to ask for eternal youth, and so she shrivelled to nothing. Here, the speaker claims that he has seen her hanging in a jar and that when her acolytes asked, "What do you want?" She replied: "I want to die". The statement reflects both her scornful attitude toward the contemporary world and its traditions and her despairing personal wish for death, which is one aspect of the emotional pattern of the poem. She is saying what the people who inhabit the wasteland are saying. But the conclusion is just the opposite, the recognition of the peace which may be the result of the willing acceptance of symbolic death and a discipline of direct action. She may be saying what the speaker says in "The Journey of the Magi"

"..... this birth was

Hard and bitter agony for us.

Like death our death

I should be glad for another death."

► The epigraph describes the eternal life and suffering of Sibyl

This peace is not of course achieved in the poem, but its appearance as a possibility is its most important psychological content. The psychic drama of the whole is enclosed within these two conflicting visions.

Summarised Overview

The Waste Land is written in five sections, each with a title of its own. Tiresias is the chief observer in the poem. The first section, titled "The Burial of the Dead," consists of four speakers with four different perspectives. It opens with an autobiographical episode from the childhood of an aristocratic woman. In the second story, the readers are taken to a desert in an apocalyptic future, where they encounter a couple of confusing images. The speaker also brings in certain recollections from the past which include the image of a "hyacinth" girl and the effect it had on him. Then, the writer introduces the readers to a tarot card reader called Madame Sosostris, who is predicting the future using an imaginary tarot deck. In the final narrative of the first section, the writer describes his meeting with a comrade from the war. This is where the reference to war appears for the first time. The second section is titled, "A Game of Chess". The game of chess is something that repeatedly happens during significant scenes in literature. Almost all the characters in this section are women. It portrays different stages of seduction. The second section presents the class difference that exists in society. It contains the stories of four women. The third section, titled "The Fire Sermon" is the longest section in *The Waste Land*. Indian philosophy and mythology are introduced in this section. Tiresias is also introduced in the third section. The poet uses the refrain from Spenser's "Prothalamion", which goes "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song." The section begins and ends with Buddha's sermon. The fourth section of the poem, titled "Death by Water," is the shortest section in *The Wasteland*. Phlebas, the Phoenician drowns to death in this section. The last section of the poem, titled "What the Thunder Said," is the most dramatic and complex section in *The Waste Land*. The legend of the Holy Grail makes its first appearance in this section. The poet concludes the poem with the lines, "Datta, Dayathvam, Damyata, Shantih, Shantih, Shantih." Thus, the poem ends in a particularly calm way.

Assignments

1. Does Eliot think that the end of the world, or at least of Western civilization, is near? Does his tone imply that?
2. Why does Eliot employ references to holy texts in his poem? Comment.
3. How do Eliot's imagery choices-death, flooding, famine, and drought-suggest that the poem is about dying and a lack of rebirth?



4. How do the themes of sorrow and death in the poem signify resurrection and re-birth?
5. Demonstrate how, in its essence, *The Waste Land* is indicative of optimism.

Suggested Readings

1. Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land and Other Poems*. Faber, 2010.
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Section 5

In memory of W. B. Yeasts

- W. H. Auden

Discussion

Wystan Hugh Auden, an English poet, playwright, and critic, was one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. The parenting he received as a child helped immensely in shaping the poet in him. The combined parenting of a physician well-versed in folklore from the paternal side and a strict Anglican influence from the maternal side exerted enough inspiration from both the sides for the growth in the potential Auden had in him. He became a member of a literary group called the “Oxford Group” or the “Auden Generation,” which included poets like Stephen Spender, C. Day Lewis, and Louis MacNeice. This group of poets, with Auden as its head, wrote poems that made a strict commentary on the social setting and the workings of society. Auden was greatly influenced by the fragmented and terse nature of T.S. Eliot’s poems. He followed a similar pattern in his poems, along with bringing in elements that clearly depicted the political and psychological concerns he possessed. Auden was not entirely a social poet. He was definitely concerned about the religious and political happenings around him. Harold Bloom suggested in the *New Republic* that “Auden was accepted as not only a great poet but also a Christian humanist sage, not because of any conspiracy among moralising neo-Christian academicians, but because the age required such a figure.” Auden’s influence on literature was sufficient to add a new adjective to the English language. His linguistic innovations resulted in the formation of the adjective “Audenesque.” These linguistic innovations are often described as the modernisation of diction, or the enlarging of the diction to permit a more contemporary sounding speech. Auden is capable enough to argue, reflect, joke, gossip, sing, analyse, lecture, hector, and simply talk in his verses simultaneously. Auden was one of those writers who attempted to give an artistic voice to left wing politics.

- ▶ W. H. Auden belonged to a literary group called the “Oxford Group”
- ▶ Auden was influenced greatly by T. S. Eliot



- The poem gives a vague idea regarding various events that happened during the life and death of W.B. Yeats

“In Memory of W. B. Yeats” is an elegy written in three parts by the English poet W. H. Auden. It was written in 1939, following the death of the great English poet W. B. Yeats. The pioneer of the Irish National Movement, W. B. Yeats, succumbed in January 1939, and following his death, Auden’s “In Memory of W. B. Yeats” came out. Apart from being an elegy, this piece of poetry is also a meditation on the role and place of poetry in the modern world. Auden uses his unique writing style to describe various events regarding the life and death of Yeats. The poem explores the themes of life after death, the power poetry possesses, and the unpredictability of the human condition. Amidst the use of dark themes, the poem at times gives off a pleasant and uplifting aura. Auden uses various poetic techniques like enjambment, allusion, and alliteration in this poem. Enjambment is a poetic device that cuts off a line before its actual stopping point. Allusion is an indirect method of referring to something. It is considered indirect because something specific would be called to the mind without actually revealing what it is. Alliteration is one of the most common poetic devices used in English literature. It is the repetition of words starting with similar sounds. The judicious usage of the different poetic devices makes the poem aesthetically pleasing and stylistically superior.

- Auden explains how important a literary figure Yeats was.

“In Memory of W. B. Yeats” is an elegy written in three parts, with each part having a unique form and style. The first section of the poem opens with a discussion of the death of the world-renowned poet W. B. Yeats. Yeats died in January, in the midst of winter. It was a time when the streams were all frozen and the landscapes were covered in snow, making it difficult to distinguish the trees and public statues. The poet also brings in the image of mercury dropping in thermometers in order to describe the intensity of the winter. Further in this section, Auden analyses that even though Yeats was lying dead, nothing in the world, perhaps even in Ireland, has changed. Everything went on as usual, even though the backbone of the Irish Literary movement was lying motionless. This is nothing unusual, as Auden has always followed this mechanism while dealing with death. Even though Yeats was lying dead, his death was kept away from his poems; that is, the poetry Yeats wrote remains unaltered by the fact that Yeats himself is dead. As the poem progresses, Auden describes that with Yeats passing away, he has

become his admirer; Yeats, the man, has ceased to exist, and Yeats, the poet, will become whatever his readers and admirers decide he is.

Yeats' works are scattered all across the world, wherever people read them. It is surprising that people often find incredible things in his work that even Yeats himself would not have recognized. Auden further says that the words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living. The readers have no choice but to interpret what a poet wrote in a way that suits modern times. Auden concludes the first section of "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" by telling the readers that the death of W.B. Yeats would pass, as if it were nothing, and the world would go on tomorrow as it did today or yesterday. But there might be a few thousand who will think of the day Yeats died as one thinks of a day when something unusual happened. The poet concludes the section by reminding the readers that the day of his death was a dark, cold day.

- Death can never be fully comprehended

In the second section of the poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," Auden takes a more direct approach. He addresses the dead poet directly and even dares to call the dead Yeats "silly." In this section, the poet's interest shifts from the death of W. B. Yeats to poetry in general. It is in the second section of this poem that Auden makes his renowned statement, "Poetry makes nothing happen." Through this line, Auden is seeing poetry as an art form that immortalises beauty, feelings, emotions, etc., rather than a means of social reformation. Further in the poem, Auden makes this statement clearer with the line, "Ireland has her madness and her weather still." Here, he intends to convey to the reader that even though Yeats and many others have tried, nothing much has happened anywhere. Here, Auden clearly portrays the failure of poetry as a means of causing a revolution.

- Auden addresses Yeats directly and calls silly it for believing that poetry changes the social order

The last section of the poem takes on a different structure. Here the poem consists of six quatrains, written in trochaic tetrameter. Trochaic tetrameter is a metrical pattern used in poetry. A trochee is a metrical foot composed of two syllables in which a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable. A trochaic tetrameter consists of four such trochees. Auden opens the section by mentioning that the earth has received an honoured guest, W.B. Yeats, who is now laid to rest.



- Auden talks more about how pathetic the world has become after World War II, and how disturbed Yeats would be if he saw this

Further in this section, Auden starts using a rhyme scheme in the poem. All around him, he sees hatred and separation, which leads to conflicts, which he thinks of as an impending nightmare. He speaks of the intellectual disgrace this hatred causes. Auden uses the third stanza to write more about politics than Yeats. It could be due to the keen interest Yeats had in politics. In the fourth and fifth stanzas, Auden describes how pathetic the world has become and how disturbed Yeats would have become if he saw the world in this state. Auden uses certain dark images in this stanza to make his point clear. Auden concludes by asking the dead poet to “persuade us to rejoice” and to heal us with the “fountain” of his work. In the final stanza, the tone and imagery of the poem lighten. The poem has an optimistic ending, even though Auden uses a couple of dark images. He compares life to a prison where one can learn how to praise or be hopeful with the help of Yeats’ poetry.

2.1.5 Analysis

“He disappeared in the dead of winter:

The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;

The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.

What instruments we have agree

The day of his death was a dark cold day”

In the first stanza of “In Memory of W.B. Yeats”, the poet describes the death of the world-renowned poet W.B. Yeats happening in the midst of winter. This is a factual reference because Yeats actually died in January of 1939. The poet uses a double image of death here, as winter is usually associated with death. Almost everything in winter is frozen, dead, and deserted. Here the speaker describes a chilling scene where almost everything is covered in snow that it has become very hard to distinguish between different figures. Auden uses such a cold setting in order to bring in the readers to Yeats’ own death.

- The chill of Yeats’ death is reflected in the description

“Far from his illness

The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,

The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;

By mourning tongues

The death of the poet was kept from his poems.”

In the second stanza of the poem, the poet describes how nothing has changed despite the death of such a great person as W.B. Yeats. Things went on as usual, even though Yeats was lying motionless. The wolves kept running through the forest, and every other element of nature acted the same as before. By personifying nature, the poet here is alluding to the human reaction to the poet's death. The poet continues to emphasise the fact that the day continued as usual, which is a clear indication of how bothered the poet was by Yeats' death. He also adds towards the end of the stanza that death has only affected Yeats the man, not Yeats the poet, as his poetry will not perish with time. No matter what happens to the human behind the creation of poetry, it would not have much effect on it as long as it continues to be read.

- Yeats the poet, is still alive, as death has no effect on his poems

“But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,

An afternoon of nurses and rumours;

The provinces of his body revolted,

The squares of his mind were empty,

Silence invaded the suburbs,

The current of his feeling failed; he became his admirers”

The third stanza of the poem gives the readers a very grim picture of Yeats' death. There was nothing unusual about his death. He, like any other human, died in a hospital bed, surrounded by nurses. The poet continues by describing Yeats' body as being at war with itself. Yeats tried repeatedly to stay, and as a result, his body revolted against itself. In the midst of all this, silence was the only thing that existed in the suburbs. The poet concludes the stanza by mentioning that Yeats has become his admirer. He has turned into his admirers because what remains of him are his poems, which vary according to the interpretation of his readers. Here Auden is emphasising the immortality of poets and how

- What is left of Yeats is his poems



it depends on who reads them or does not read them.

“Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections,
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living”

Auden continues his description of how the poems of Yeats are scattered across the world, which makes it possible for his admirers to read and interpret the lines on their own, giving different dimensions to what Yeats has actually written. It no longer matters what Yeats has actually written because a poet is dead the moment he finishes off his poetry. What gives life to him or the works he has written are the meanings those words gain once they reach the reader. Here, the poet is prefiguring one of the key elements of 20th century literary criticism. Intentional fallacy or the problems of associating a work of art with the intent or purpose of the artist who created it are clearly anticipated in these lines. Moreover, he has also managed to anticipate the Foucauldian notion of “the author being dead” in these lines. Auden again brings in his philosophical view, where the words of the dead are “modified in the guts of the living.”

- Auden highlights the Foucauldian notion of the author being dead

“But in the importance and noise of to-morrow

When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor
of the bourse,

And the poor have the sufferings to which they are
fairly accustomed

And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of
his freedom

A few thousand will think of this day

As one thinks of a day when one did something
slightly unusual.”

Auden once again returns to describing how everything has been working the same as before, as

► Yeats' death

if the death of W.B. Yeats has not had any impact. The brokers are still running around, roaring like beasts. The poor still remain poor, and the sufferings of the world continue as they have always been. The day Yeats died was not in any way different from a regular day. The world is so full of misery that Yeats' death does not create much misery but only adds to what already exists. This day was just another day that passed like usual, even though there might be a few thousand who might think of this day as a day in which something out of the ordinary happened.

"What instruments we have agree

The day of his death was a dark cold day."

► The day was cold and disturbing

The last two lines of this section give closure to the first section of the poem, reminding the readers that the day was cold and disturbing, but the death remained as if it were nothing, as no human has ever managed to come up with an instrument that is capable of measuring the intensity of death.

"You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:

The parish of rich women, physical decay,

Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.

Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives

In the valley of its making were executives

Would never want to tamper, flows on south

From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,

Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,

A way of happening, a mouth."

The second section of the poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" consists of one long stanza. The poet opens the stanza by addressing the dead Yeats directly. He starts by calling Yeats silly. He believes that Yeats was no one but a silly human like himself, but he had a gift in him that helped him survive everything that came his way, including death. It was the atrocities in Ireland that



- “Poetry makes nothing happen”

led Yeats and other people like him to join political movements like the Irish National Movement. Yeats used his poetry as a means of reformation. W. H. Auden, on the other hand, is someone who does not believe in this criterion. It is in the second section of this poem that he makes his world renowned statement, “Poetry makes nothing happen”. Auden sees poetry for what it is. He believes in the immortality of art and the aesthetics it has. He does not think of poetry as a means of reforming society or causing a political revolution. The poet compares poetry to water because it is something that flows. It moves from place-to-place soothing its listeners, comforting disturbed minds, etc.

“Earth, receive an honoured guest:

William Yeats is laid to rest.

Let the Irish vessel lie

Emptied of its poetry.”

- The third section consists of six quatrains with the rhyme scheme “aabb”

In the third section, the poet follows a different structure. Here he brings in six quatrains. It is also noted that the poet has started using a rhyme scheme in this section. The lines follow a rhyme scheme “aabb” in this section. It is in this section that the poem again turns into an elegy. The poet opens the stanza by mentioning that Earth is fortunate, and she has now received an honoured guest. For the first time in the poem, the poet has mentioned the name “William Yeats.” The poet thinks of Yeats, the human, as a vessel for keeping his incredible talent safe and secure. He adds that now the vessel has perished, and the poetry is the only thing that still remains.

“In the nightmare of the dark

All the dogs of Europe bark,

And the living nations wait,

Each sequestered in its hate;”

- The poet addresses the hatred that exists between all the nations of the world

The poet thinks of the hatred that exists between different nations in the world as a scary nightmare. For some reason or another, countries across the world spread hatred in the name of separation. It is as if these nations are waiting for a chance to annihilate each other

if given the right opportunity.

“Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.”

Poetry has now lost the power to flow between worlds. He talks about the intellectual disgrace that exists on every face. Auden is so disappointed about the atrocities happening around him. In this stanza, Auden starts becoming a lot more political than he was in the previous stanzas. It could probably be due to the keen interest Yeats had in politics. It still has an elegiac tone, even though the lines sound more like a tribute to W. B. Yeats.

- Intellectual disgrace

“Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;”

In this stanza, the poet celebrates Yeats' ability to see clearly through things that usually go unnoticed and his ability to address anything with his unsettling voice. The poet talks more about the atrocities happening across the world. He adds that Yeats would be pained to see where the world has reached if he had been alive.

- The poet praises Yeats' abilities to see through things that otherwise go unnoticed

“With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;”

Auden, in the fifth stanza, uses certain dark images in the poem in order to depict how he would address the issue if he were here. The state of Ireland and the world in general has become so pathetic as a result of the World War. Auden suggests that Yeats would probably sing of how unsuccessful humans have been and would immediately be distressed about it.

- Yeats would definitely be sad about how unsuccessful humans have been in this case



“In the deserts of the heart

Let the healing fountain start,

In the prison of his days

Teach the free man how to praise.”

In the final stanza, the poet once again brings in the image of water. Here, the intensity of the lines and imagery lightens. The speaker says that the healing fountain must be there in the hearts of every human being. Even though the poet has presented a handful of dark images, he manages to end the poem on a positive note. The end of the poem is quite optimistic. The poet concludes the poem by telling the readers that life is a prison, but spending time with poetry, especially Yeats' poetry, would help them learn how to become better humans. It helps them become helpful and also teaches them how to praise.

- Even though our lives are prisons, poems by W.B. Yeats help the readers become better humans

Summarised Overview

“In Memory of W. B. Yeats” is an elegy written in three parts. The first section of the poem opens with a discussion of the death of the world-renowned poet W. B. Yeats. Auden argues that even though Yeats was lying dead, nothing in the world has changed. Even though Yeats was lying dead, his death was kept away from his poems. Auden concludes the first section of “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” by telling the readers that the death of W.B. Yeats would pass, as if it were nothing, and the world would go on tomorrow as it did today or yesterday. In the second section of the poem, the poet addresses the dead poet directly. The poet's interest shifts from the death of W. B. Yeats to poetry in general. It is in the second section of this poem that Auden makes his renowned statement, “Poetry makes nothing happen.” Auden opens the last section by mentioning that the earth has received an honoured guest, who is now laid to rest. Auden writes more about politics here. He describes how pathetic the world has become and how disturbed Yeats would have become if he saw the world in this state. The poem ends by comparing life to a prison where one can learn how to praise or be hopeful with the help of Yeats' poetry.

Assignments

1. How is W. B. Yeats portrayed by the poet in “In Memory of W. B. Yeats”?
2. What modernist ideas are reflected in “In Memory of W. B. Yeats”? Please cite examples to support your claims.
3. Discuss the prophetic features in “In Memory of W. B. Yeats.”
4. Comment on the relationship between poetry and politics as mentioned in the poem.
5. What is the central theme of the poem “In Memory of W.B. Yeats?”

Suggested Readings

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Section 6

Poem in October

- Dylan Thomas

Discussion

- Often associated with surrealist poetry

Dylan Thomas is perhaps the most notable Welsh writer and is often associated with surrealist poetry. Even though it is not evident, the love he has for Wales can sometimes be found in his literary works. He dealt with the unity of all life in his poems. Just as Dylan could not escape being influenced by the Welsh bardic tradition, he could not escape the influence of Welsh myth and legend, the Welsh belief in magic and witchcraft, and the supernatural terrors of the Welsh people. The poetry of the 20th century is a poetry of revolt, and this was largely due to the impact of science. Besides the influence of science, religion, and mysticism, many other influences are at work on him as well. It is common to find the use of startling, far-fetched imagery and the desire to surprise and startle.

Dylan Marlais Thomas was a Welsh poet and writer born on the 27th of October 1914 and died on 9 November 1953.

- Dylan Thomas observed and implemented 20th century poetry trends

To an extent, the 1940s were indeed the golden years for Dylan Thomas. In the 1920s, his fame was shadowed by the two greatest poets of the century, Yeats and Eliot. But the 1940s were totally his own. Dylan Thomas had a keen eye for the environment, and his surroundings. His poems are a clear manifestation of this reality. The poet in him blossomed during his early stay in London. He was influenced by the various currents and crosscurrents that marked the English literary scene at the time. Moreover, Dylan was steeped in the riches of the English language. But he has brought in considerable innovations in his rhythms and phrasings, the usage of metaphor, and the odd matching of words. Thomas was greatly influenced by James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, W.B. Yeats, etc., but the influence John Donne had on him was far beyond all these. It was the revival tradition T.S. Eliot followed in



his works, and criticism was what brought Thomas' attention to the poetry of the previous centuries. Dylan has so much to thank John Donne for the surprising juxtapositions, elaborate metaphors, puns, paradoxes, etc. The metaphysical poets had greatly influenced him in crafting his poetry.

- Flashback on the poet's beautiful childhood

"Poem in October" is an exquisite lyric that serves to illustrate Dylan Thomas' merit as a poet. It is a personal poem in the sense that it voices the poet's feelings on his 30th birthday, and also reflects his memories of his childhood. It is a poem that awakens the poet's introspective analysis of the present as contrasted with his past, and of his life as an adult with his life as a child. The contrast between his happy childhood and his disillusioned adulthood has been nicely brought out by the poet in this poem.

- The love for nature

The poet begins the poem by mentioning that it was his 30th birthday, and he is both happy and sad about the fact that he is a year close to the end of his life on Earth. Dylan Thomas, instead of celebrating his birthday grandly, feels like going for a walk to the calm and serene countryside. He walks for a few hours there, enjoying the beauty of nature and walking past the cold river, listening to the chirping of the birds. The love for nature the poet possesses is clear from his decision. Instead of resting in the comfort of his home, the poet chooses to go out into the woods so that he can have some alone time with the nature that he greatly admires. He felt that all nature, including the trees, the birds, and even the lifeless soil and water, were celebrating his birthday.

- Change in seasons

After a walk along the riverside, he felt like leaving the village and going to the mountains. He found a hill and started climbing it. The higher he went, the more he could feel the village shrinking before his eyes. He felt as if he were leaving the current world and entering a different realm. He also felt the change in seasons as he moved up. He could feel the different seasons moving past him. He started climbing during the autumn season, and after a while, he could feel the cool air of winter brushing past him. Suddenly this cool air shrank, and soon he could feel the heat of the summer. He could feel the rain on his skin as he advanced. He could also feel the presence of birds around him. These images of the



rain and the birds remind him of the beautiful childhood he had spent living in these hills.

When he finally got to the top of the hill, he felt that he had reached heaven. He could not believe that anything could be more beautiful than what he was looking at. He was far above the village or the changing weather. He has reached great heights. He remembered this place from his childhood. He could feel the energy he had felt as a child. He remembered running around on this hill, holding his mother's hand. The poet could also recall how important those occasional visits were. He wanted the joy he felt in that moment to remain for eternity. But that is impossible. As realisation dawned on him, the poet made up his mind that he would definitely return to the comfort this mountain offered at the same time next year, when he turns thirty-one.

► Remembering past memories

2.1.6 Analysis

It was my thirtieth year to heaven

Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood

And the mussel pooled and the heron

Priested shore

The morning beckon

With water praying and call of seagull and rook

And the knock of sailing boats on the net-webbed wall

Myself to set foot

That second

In the still sleeping town and set forth

The poem begins with a unique reference to the poet's thirtieth birthday. The poet calls his birthday his thirtieth year to heaven, implying that he had covered thirty milestones in his journey to heaven. Even though the whole town was sleeping, the poet was awakened by the call of nature. He could feel the sound of the shellfish, the sea birds, and the heron from the shore. He could also listen to the sound of the water made by the boats. The whole atmosphere was so lively that the poet

► The divinity of nature

wanted to join in this celebration so badly. The beauty of this stanza is also an indication of the divinity that nature possesses.

My birthday began with the water-

Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name

Above the farms and the white horses

And I rose

In rainy autumn

And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.

High tide and the heron dived when I took the road

Over the border

And the gates

Of the town closed as the town awoke

The poet's birthday began with celebrations by the sea birds, and other creatures carrying his name above the fields and waves like white horses. The poet woke up from his sleep and took a walk down memory lane. His walk could be from the present to the past, or it could also be from the real world to the world of imagination. He could see the sea making high tides, which is synonymous with his name "Dylan". The current personality he possesses was lost, and the poet was soon found in the realm of childhood. As he reached this imaginary world, the gates of the real world closed behind him so that he would not be able to return to the real world. Now he has entered the imaginary realm of his childhood.

► In the realm of childhood

A springful of larks in a rolling

Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling

Blackbirds and the sun of October

Summery

On the hill's shoulder,

Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly



*Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
To the rain wringing
Wind blow cold
In the wood faraway under me.*

► Imaginary realm
of childhood

The poet found a hill and decided to climb onto it so that he could have a panoramic view of the landscape below him. The atmosphere was so joyful around him. He could feel the birds around him singing and joining him in his happiness. A flock of skylarks were singing from up above him, and the black birds were whistling from the roadside bushes. The October sun was shining above him. The poet enjoyed the beauty of the moment, and he realised that the cold air around him had now been accompanied by rain.

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
And over the sea-wet church the size of a snail
With its horns through mist and the castle brown as
owls
But all the gardens of spring and summer
Were blooming in the tall tales beyond the border
And under the lark full cloud
There could I marvel my birthday away
But the weather turned around

► The eternal beauty
of nature

The poet has been in a joyful atmosphere from the lofty position he has on the hill. He could no longer feel the real world around him. The real objects became so small that they were nearly invisible. The harbour dwindled before his eyes, and the church was the size of a snail. The castle reminded him of brown owls. The scene below has changed so much, but still, he could feel the flowers blossoming. All the political and materialistic elements of the real world vanished before his eyes, and all that remained was the eternal beauty of nature. The imaginary world was so beautiful, but he knew that he had to snap out of it and into the real world. He had to go back to adulthood, after the sweetness of his childhood.

It turned away from the blithe country

And down the other air and the blue altered sky
Streamed again a wonder of summer
With apples, pears and red currants

And I saw in the turning, so clearly, a child's forgotten mornings

When he walked with his mother through the parables of sunlight

And the legends of the green chapels

The scene of the blessed world of the hill changed, and an altered sky with a different atmosphere replaced it. But on the hill, he could feel the continuation of the spring season. The poet could feel the flowers and fruits blossoming. This reminded him of his actual childhood, where he once saw a land abounding in apples and pears. He felt proud of his childhood, in which he was a lot closer to nature than he is or ever will be. He could feel that the greenery of the Earth was like a chapel from which he had learned a lot of legends. Nature had been a great teacher for him.

► Nature as a teacher

And the twice-told fields of infancy

That his tears burned my cheeks, and his heart moved in mine

These were the woods the river and the sea

Where a boy in the listening summertime of the dead

Whispered the truth of his joy to the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide And the mystery sang alive

Still in the water and singing birds

The poet remembers himself as a child. He was taken back to the good old days, when he learned so much from nature. This memory brought tears to his eyes, and he is haunted by it. He could feel himself blending with the child he had once been. He could find the same happiness he had felt before. All elements of nature that provided joy to the child are now making the poet happy as well. These feelings are echoed by the birds and the water. The poet could also feel his own happiness reflecting on various elements of nature.

► The memory of childhood



And there could I marvel my birthday away

But the weather turned around

And the true joy of the long dead child sang burning
in the sun

It was my thirtieth Year to heaven stood there then
in the summer noon Though the town below lay leaved
with October blood

O may my heart's truth

Still be sung

On this high hill in a year's turning

The poet says that he could have enjoyed this scene forever, but the scenes are gradually changing before his eyes. The joy that he once felt was melted by the heat of the sun. He is now thirty and he is no longer in the same position as when he stood on the hill years ago. He could feel the dirty world of adulthood reappearing before his eyes. He has had access to the different bitter experiences the adult world provides. He realises that it is impossible to stay on this beautiful land forever. He has to come back to the world of reality sooner or later. He decided to snap out of the imaginary world, hoping that he could do the exact same thing on his next birthday as well.

► The real and the
imaginary

Summarised Overview

"Poem in October" by Dylan Thomas is a seven stanza poem that discusses the life of the poet. He brings in complex images of life and death. It is the poet's thirtieth birthday. When the whole town's sleeping, the poet decides to leave the comfort of his house and go for a walk into the wild. He feels enchanted by nature. He could no longer see any of the worldly things. The poet could see the weather brushing past him and deep down he knew that he had to go back to the real world soon. The poet could feel his own happiness reflecting on various elements of nature. But he realises that everything has changed, and it is impossible to stay forever on this beautiful land.

Assignments

1. Discuss Dylan Thomas' imaginary world from "Poem in October."
2. What literary devices are employed in "Poem in October" to highlight its themes?
3. Give an account of the experience that inspired "Poem in October."
4. How is "The Unity of Man and Nature, of Past and Present, of Life and Death" celebrated in the poem?
5. Critically analyse the poem "Poem in October."

Suggested Readings

1. Thomas, Dylan. *Poems*. London: Hunter, 2004.

References

1. Ackerman, John. *Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work*. Macmillan, 1964.
2. Davies, Walford. *Dylan Thomas*. Viva, 2003.
3. Fraser, G.S. *Dylan Thomas*. British Council, 1957.
4. Lerner, Laurence. *The Uses of Nostalgia, Studies in Pastoral Poetry*, Chatto, 1972.
5. Tindall, William York. *A Reader's Guide to Dylan Thomas*. Thomas and Hudson, 1962.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ gain awareness on the features of modern drama
- ▶ understand the plays of G. B. Shaw, and the usage of satire in it
- ▶ become capable of using different critical apparatus while reading works of literature
- ▶ demonstrate knowledge of the major references made by Shaw in his plays and make a critical commentary on them

Background

According to popular belief, William B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J.M. Synge founded the Irish Literary Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, which is where 20th-century British theatre is generally credited with having its beginnings. Their goal was to create an environment that was distinctively Celtic and Irish and to make works that staged the deeper emotions of Ireland. Sean O'Casey, J.M. Synge, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Edward Martyn, to mention a few, were the playwrights of the Irish Literary Theatre, which later changed its name to the Abbey Theatre, as it is known today. In England, actors and directors who were dedicated to bringing reform and a serious audience to the theatre by appealing to the younger, socially concerned, and politically aware population were replacing the well-made play genre. Characters in the plays by John Galsworthy, Harley Granville Barker, W. Somerset Maugham, and George Bernard Shaw imitated this new throng, satirised the well-made theatrical characters, and established new standards and conventions.

Following many other European nations, the early twentieth century marked the division between “frocks and frills” drama and serious works. The conservative theatre establishment in Britain postponed the influence of these foreign developments until the counter-cultural revolution during the late 1950s and 1960s, when they combined to change the nature of English language theatre. While smaller theatres and Irish venues adopted

a fresh approach, the West End-Broadway of England-tended to create well-made plays and musical comedies. The new school was politically charged, humorous, and disobedient. Political themes-reflecting the discomfort or rebellion of the working class against the state; philosophical themes-exploring the who and why of human life and existence; and revolutionary themes-exploring colonisation and territorial loss-were common in innovative early 20th century play. They looked at typical societal commercial practices (factory conditions), fresh political beliefs (socialism), or the growth of a marginalised group of people (women).

Industrialisation had an effect on twentieth-century theatre as well, leading to plays that bemoaned how isolated humanity felt in a society that was becoming more and more mechanical. Aside from Industrialization, conflicts also contributed to alienation. Two types of theatre predominated the period between the wars. The middle class frequented the popular, traditional theatre in the West End that was dominated by Noel Coward and G.B. Shaw. After the conflicts, taboos were shattered, and new filmmakers, performers, and writers with diverse viewpoints arose. Many challenged the concept of reality, some adopted radical political positions, others rejected naturalism, and yet others questioned the veracity of long-held convictions. Due to the numerous plays conjuring the past in order to confront and embrace it, the term "theatre of exorcism" came into usage towards the end of the century. The following playwrights were active during the turn of the century: Tom Stoppard, Brian Friel, Caryl Churchill, Harold Pinter, and Samuel Beckett. The establishment of the first children's cultural centre in Europe and a return to realism were the final acts of the century.

The unit aims at making the students capable of reading and understanding G.B. Shaw's plays and the use of satire in them. It also makes a commentary on 20th century English society and the treatment of women in it. It also pays attention to the appropriate usage of myth in the play.

Keywords

Shavian plays, Language and Speech, Identity, Satire, Problem plays, Social class, Gender roles, Romance, Feminism

Section 1

Pygmalion

- George Bernard Shaw

Discussion

- G.B. Shaw is one of the greatest writers the world has ever seen.

George Bernard Shaw is one of the greatest playwrights of all time. Some critics consider his talent as a playwright only second to that of William Shakespeare, while others believe that his skills go even beyond the great Shakespeare. Keeping aside his expertise as a playwright, Shaw was one of the most interesting literary figures of the 20th century. The 1925 Nobel laureate is also the only person to have won a Nobel prize and a film Academy Award. Even though Shaw is acclaimed as a playwright, apart from the 60 plays he has penned, there are five novels, three volumes of music criticism, four volumes of dance and theatrical criticism, heaps of social commentary, political theory, and voluminous correspondence in his collection. It is sometimes said that not a single day passes without Shaw's play being performed somewhere around the world.

2.2.1 G.B. Shaw (1856 - 1950)

George Bernard Shaw, simply known as Bernard Shaw, was born on July 26, 1856, in Portobello, Dublin, Ireland.

He had dual citizenship. He was British from 1856 to 1950, but in between had a brief period of Irish citizenship from 1934 to 1950. He married Charlotte Payne Townshend in 1898. They were together until her death in 1943. George Bernard Shaw died at the age of 94 on November 2, 1950. He rests at Shaw's, Ayot St. Lawrence.

It was his failure as a novelist that led to the development of the playwright in him. He was a daring playwright, and it was the plays by Henrik Ibsen that helped Shaw come out of the cocoon and publish plays that are still relevant in society. The playwrights at that time were so scared to go against the flow. The previous generation of playwrights had already set a platform for them to write,



► Ibsen's inspiration

and they found stepping out of this platform and making one for themselves impossible. They were afraid that if they went against the needs and expectations of the theatergoers, it might lead to their failure as playwrights. Shaw was too tired of this scenario. That was when the public in London started appreciating the realistic plays by Henrik Ibsen, and this was indeed a wakeup call for Shaw, who had just entered the realm of writing plays. Shaw's first plays were *Widower's Houses* and *Mrs Warren's Profession*, which he himself called unpleasant plays. After this, he went on to write a few more plays, which he labelled "the pleasant plays". This list included plays like *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *You will Never Know*, etc. He has also written some great plays like *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *Saint Joan*, etc.

► Shaw's personal love life

Out of all his plays *Pygmalion* is indeed the most acclaimed, the most popular, and hence the most beloved play by G.B. Shaw. It is one of the most worked on plays, with a handful of critical studies and many film adaptations. The play deals with the class based English society. The play is subtitled "A Romance in Five Acts." It is observed by critics that it is Shaw's own personal love life that is being discussed in the play. Shaw had been in many unsuccessful romantic relationships with different women. The unsuccessful love relationship between Eliza Doolittle and Professor Higgins is considered a reflection of Shaw's own life. There were many ideas and confusions regarding the sexuality of G.B. Shaw, as it is well known that although he has had a long marriage, he has never touched his wife even once. The lack of passion Prof. Higgins has for women can also be considered as an example of this.

► Mythological significances

Like his plays, Shaw's personal life was also well crafted, so it had always been difficult for his readers and critics to come to a conclusion about anything regarding Shaw. The title *Pygmalion* has certain mythological significance as well. The title is adopted from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Pygmalion, the king, who lacked interest in women, like Professor Higgins, makes a statue and prays to God Venus to give her life. Once his wish is granted, he names her Galatea and loves her dearly. Another mythological significance is that of Pygmalion, the king of Copehauta, who one day finds a young



beggar girl whom he falls in love with, and educates her to be his queen. Similarly, Professor Higgins is trying to educate and civilise a cockney speaking young flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, in order to show off his achievements in the field of Phonetics.

2.2.2 Summary

Act I

The first act of the play deals with the introduction of all the main characters, except Mrs. Higgins. Even though all the characters are introduced, none of them are addressed by their names, and all of them seem like passers-by who happened to be together one night as a result of the heavy downpour. It is this heavy thunderstorm that happens in the middle of the night that leads to the meeting of almost all the characters in the play. The rain was so heavy that all the people there, from different sections of English society, got stuck at the portico of St. Paul's Church. The action starts when a boy knocks over a random flower girl who calls him by the name Freddy and asks to watch him in a strange accent. The girl is called by the boy's mother to find out how the girl knows her son's name. The flower girl, also the protagonist of the play, tells her, in a still strange accent, that Freddy is the name she uses to call any guy that comes her way. An elderly gentleman appears out of nowhere, to whom the girl tries to sell a flower. While talking to the gentleman, she is asked by a bystander to be careful as there is someone who resembles a cop and is taking notes about her.

- The play opens late at night in the middle of a thunderstorm where people from various parts of London gather

The poor girl is so frightened that she starts protesting in her strange accent. Then the mysterious note taker starts acting strangely, as every time someone speaks, the person starts telling them where they are from. As the rain clears, only a few people, including the gentleman, the notetaker, and the girl, remain. That is when they finally started addressing each other. The mysterious guy answers one of the gentleman's questions by telling him that all his knowledge came from Phonetics, the science of speech. He also brags that he will be able to transform the cockney speaking flower girl into a duchess. That is when the mysterious note taker and the gentleman finally reveal their identities as Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering, respectively, both of



whom are phoneticians who had wanted to meet each other for so long. The two gentlemen decide to go to dinner, and the girl convinces them to pay her some money. Higgins pays her generously, and this helps the girl take a taxi home—the same taxi that poor Freddy has brought back for his mother and sister, who were not patient enough to wait for him.

Act II

The second act opens with a friendly and intellectual talk between the two gentlemen, Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering. Their chat is interrupted by Eliza, who has come to take lessons about becoming a duchess from Professor Higgins. Her intention was not to become a duchess but to get a job at a decent flower shop. That is when he was reminded of his bragging last night. The professor, hearing her request, insults her mercilessly and beats her using a broomstick. For every slap, she howled, making the situation even worse. Pickering, being a kind and considerate person, treated her respectfully. He considers her request and tells Higgins that if he took her in and trained her, then he would definitely meet all the expenses of this little experiment. After so much discussion and argument, they came to the conclusion that Eliza would stay with the professor and learn everything about becoming a lady. The course started at that moment itself, when his maid, Mrs. Pearce, took Eliza upstairs for a shower. When the two gentlemen are left alone, Colonel Pickering asks Higgins whether his intentions towards the young girl are pure and honourable. Higgins took this question by surprise, as he had never had any bad encounters with women.

- Eliza approaches Higgins with a request to reform her into a duchess

Moreover, Higgins was someone who thought so lightly of women that Eliza or any other woman was nothing more than a log of wood to him. At this time, Mrs. Pearce, the maid, returns to remind the professor that he should be more careful with his swearing and table manners at home, as from today onwards they are having a beautiful young woman, a lady in the making, stay with them. This gives the readers an idea that the professor himself, who seems so civilised, is not very civilised at home. It is at this point that we are introduced to another important character, Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's

- Mr. Doolittle, Eliza's father, comes to the Professor's to ask for money.



father, who has learned from a neighbour that Eliza has come to the professor's house. He claims that he has come to protect his daughter's honour. The professor was so relieved to see him, as he thought that he would take his daughter away with him. But when Alfred heard this, he revealed that his true intentions were to threaten the professor and get some money out of him. He demands five pounds from the professor and tells him that he would definitely not save a single penny but would use it on something stupid. Higgins, who was amused by his rhetoric, decides to give him the money. This is when Eliza entered the room, all clean and pretty, wearing a blue kimono. Everyone was amused by her transformation. Even Alfred Doolittle failed to recognize his daughter. Eliza herself was mesmerised by her beauty and wanted to go around showing off. But Higgins was against this, and finally the act concludes with the two of them, Eliza and Higgins, agreeing to take on the difficult task.

Act III

Act Three happens after a few months, and here we are introduced to another important character, Mrs. Higgins, Professor Henry Higgins' mother. One day she finds Higgins at her place, and she is not at all pleased with this, as Higgins is not someone worthy of presenting before her respectable company. Higgins tells her that he has brought his experiment subject, which he has been working on for a while now. He also explains to her the bet he has with Colonel Pickering. Before Mrs. Higgins could actually oppose, Mrs. Eynsford Hill, along with her children Clara and Freddy, had entered. Following them, Colonel Pickering also entered the residence. Higgins was so frustrated with the company of so many people, and he was about to insult all of them when Eliza made her appearance. Eliza surprised everyone with her newly learned behaviour and speech. Freddy, the boy from Act One and also the son of Mrs. Eynsford Hill fell in love with Eliza the moment he saw her.

- We are introduced to Mrs. Higgins, the mother of Higgins

Everything was going so well, until Mrs. Eynsford Hill mentioned influenza. The topic of influenza reminded Eliza of her aunt, who died of influenza, and Eliza unknowingly slipped into her original accent and talked about the alcoholism of her father. She talks for a while and then gets up to leave. Freddy offers to walk



- The scene ends with Mrs. Higgins wondering about the stupidity of men

her home. At that time, instead of politely refusing the offer, she swears at him harshly and leaves. When all her guests leave, Mrs. Higgins chides Higgins and tells him that Eliza is not going to become a lady if she is going to live with two older bachelors who swear for no reason. She tells them that the two of them were nothing more than a pair of babies playing with their live doll. She insists that they have to figure something out, or else they will soon reach a place where they will not know what to do with Eliza. But the two men do not pay much attention to this and leave the place. Mrs. Higgins is left on the stage criticising the stupidity of men.

Act IV

The Fourth Act happens after a few more months, when Eliza has successfully presented herself as a lady during the ambassador's event. Both Higgins and Pickering were celebrating their victory of turning Eliza into a lady. Even though Pickering has lost his bet, he is proud of the combined effort they have put in, in the Eliza Doolittle experiment. Both of them were so preoccupied with celebrating their victory that they totally forgot about Eliza. When Eliza came in, Higgins had almost lost interest in the victory and was busy searching for his slippers. Eliza, who was also trained to do things that would make Higgins more comfortable, finds his slippers and keeps them in the hall for him to find out. Both Higgins and Pickering did not even notice Eliza and continued doing what they were doing. Eliza was pained to see this discrimination. As she continued listening to this insult, they started talking about the successful completion of the experiment. They talked about the good run they had had, and also about how boring the experiment turned out to be towards the end of the experiment.

- The fourth act is a very short act that deals with the problems that Higgins' mother had already predicted

- Both of them were celebrating the successful completion of their bet, but Eliza was pained to see that she no longer mattered to them

Eliza understood that they were talking about disowning her, as the two of them are done playing with her. The two men went to bed, leaving Eliza alone. Eliza was clearly hurt, and could not control herself. Higgins once again returns to the living room, having forgotten what he had done with the slippers. He went outside to find a furious Eliza, who threw the slippers at his face. Higgins was surprised and started shouting at her for being ungrateful. Eliza was equally angry, and



she charged at him, asking what she was supposed to do with herself now that the bet had been won. Higgins was confused and told her that she could do anything that she felt like doing. But Eliza had no idea what she wanted now. She could not even think about selling flowers. She asked if anything there had been her own. She continues by asking him if she can take anything from there as her own. Higgins was hurt when he heard this. She even returned a ring he had once given her. But he was so angry that he threw it at the fireplace, which she later found and put on the table.

Act V

Act V is the penultimate act of the play, where Eliza goes missing the next day after they had the quarrel. Both Higgins and Pickering go to Mrs. Higgins' house to tell her about this. Both men were distressed about her going away. Mr. Doolittle also comes to her place to complain about the misery Higgins has put him in. Alfred Doolittle has changed completely. He now looks like a reformed rich man. The reason for his sudden transformation is that Higgins once wrote a letter to a millionaire and jokingly mentioned that Doolittle was a perfect moralist. The millionaire at the time of his death had made a will that gave Doolittle a fortune of three thousand pounds a year, for preaching at a Moral Reform League. Alfred Doolittle has lost the genuinity of his character, his honesty etc. He thinks of the newly found fortune as a misfortune. Finally, the talk degenerates into a quarrel between Mr. Doolittle and Mr. Higgins over the ownership of Eliza. To stop this stupidity, Mrs. Higgins sends for Eliza, who had been upstairs all along. Eliza, who has now received the training to become a duchess, behaves in a very civilised manner. She even asks her dad to step aside, as she does not want to hear the story of her father becoming rich, and she strongly believes that there is no normal way for him to become civilised, at least in his looks. Pickering was the only person for whom she felt actual gratitude.

- The penultimate act opens with the two men in distress as Eliza has gone missing

Pickering was the one person who had treated Eliza as a duchess. While Higgins was trying hard to transform her into a duchess, Pickering already saw a duchess in her, even though she was just a cockney speaking flower girl. Everyone gathered there leaves the stage



- Shaw leaves the readers in confusion as to whether she would stay or leave

one by one, leaving Eliza and Higgins there. Higgins was offended and told her that it is true that he has been treating her badly, but that is how he behaves toward everyone. There is not even a single person he has treated nicely. He even makes suggestions for marriage to her. He asks her to marry Pickering so that she can stay with them as a doll, with whom the two of them can have fun. He even suggests that he is ready to adopt her as his daughter. But Eliza cries and tells him that there is no way she would marry any of them. She tells him that she has been receiving letters from Freddy, and is therefore going to marry him. Higgins condemns her decision and tells her that Freddy is a fool. This is not something that Eliza does not know, but she has decided to do it anyway. She also adds that they will make a living out of selling Higgins' phonetic ideas to his chief rival. Higgins was furious and impressed by the change that had happened in Eliza. She was about to leave when Higgins asked her to bring him his gloves, some ham, and cheese. Eliza was trained to be his servant as well, but the reply she gives is not clear, as the only thing we see here is her leaving the room. The readers are left with the decision of whether to bring her back or send her away with Freddy.

2.2.3 Analysis

Pygmalion by G.B. Shaw is one of the most widely read and widely worked upon plays to have been written in the history of plays. It is possible to look at *Pygmalion* from various angles. What might feel like a problem play in the first reading might seem like a feminist play in the second reading and might change with the number of times we read or watch the play. The adoption of myth and its restructuring in order to suit modern times is another key feature of the play. Shaw has brought in more realistic themes than the romanticisation and glorification of men being the sole authority to reform a woman. While the problems faced by the mythological characters concern the transformation of a statue into real life, the problems faced by the characters in Shaw's play are a lot more complex. This includes the availability of napkins, the difficulty to find a taxi in the middle of the night on a rainy day, etc. A proper re-reading of the Pygmalion myth is attempted by Shaw here, and he has without doubt succeeded in achieving his goal.

- The title of the play tells the readers about the mythological significance the play

Pygmalion can be considered a problem play as there are a handful of social problems that are depicted in it. A clear picture of the corrupted English class system can be found in this play. The difference in class can lead to a difference in opportunities and the availability of resources. This difference will always exist in their lives, no matter how hard they try to erase it. It is something similar to racism. Racism is something that we believe no longer exists in society, but it is still there with all its might. Shaw's *Pygmalion* can also be read from a feminist point of view, as the above-mentioned distinction may not always be in the name of class. It could also be in the name of gender. Gender roles have already been decided and set in society. But these gender roles often limit women to the inner circle. Shaw's *Pygmalion* presents a number of female characters who are suppressed into becoming the slaves of men, like Eliza, and those who are daring enough to come to the main strata of society and take up the roles of decision makers and entrepreneurs, like Mrs. Higgins. Like any other social critic, Shaw is also able to bring in some characters that create some kind of impact, but even Shaw, the revolutionary playwright, is unable to find a solution for the current political situation.

- The play can be read from three different perspectives, as a problem play, as a feminist play, and as an anti-romantic play

One of the dissimilarities between the myth and the play is indeed the lack of a happy ending. While the myth has a romantic happy ending that portrays the romantic union of the characters, Shaw's play presents the readers with an unromantic ending where the readers are left in confusion regarding the end of the play. While the myth was all according to the plan of the central main character, here Shaw provides complete freedom to the young woman character to decide for herself. In this particular scene, Shaw reduces the central male character to almost nothing. Thus, the play even takes the form of an anti-romantic play towards the end of it. A proper deconstruction of the myth is seen here. Thus, the play does not limit itself to any boundaries. It is at the same time a problem play, a feminist play, and an anti-romantic play. It is a play in five acts, subtitled as a romance in five acts. But it would not be surprising if the subtitle is rephrased into "An anti-romance in five acts"

- Finally, the play takes an anti-romantic theme which is a clear deviation from the myth that it follows



2.2.4 Characters

Eliza Doolittle

- Eliza Doolittle is the central character of the play.
- It is her transformation that the entire play is about.

Eliza Doolittle is the central character of the play, introduced in the first act itself. She breaks all the conventional norms associated with the heroine of a play. The transformation of Eliza is the central theme of the play. It is noteworthy that Eliza does not change much even after her education. She continues to be a sassy girl with a smart mouth, no matter what the transformation aims for. It was only after the incident at the ambassador's house that the viewers got a clear picture of her transformation. After this incident, Professor Higgins starts seeing her as an individual he admires, though he doesn't know what to do with her any more.

Professor Higgins

- Professor Higgins is the antiheroic hero of the play *Pygmalion*

Professor Higgins is the antiheroic hero of the play *Pygmalion*. He is the character that plays the role of Pygmalion from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Eliza. He thinks of himself as someone destined to transform Eliza into a lady. He is someone who lacks all sorts of social connections. All he cares about is his achievements in phonetics and the further changes he can bring to it. He even possesses a bullying nature at times. The only thing that keeps him from being hated by all is that he is a good man at heart.

Colonel Pickering

- Colonel Pickering is the elderly gentleman who had always loved and respected Eliza Doolittle

Colonel Pickering is a character who possesses all the necessary qualities a hero needs. He is also a passionate phonetician who is a little less obsessive when compared to Professor Higgins. It was a bet between him and Higgins that led to the transformation experiment on Eliza Doolittle. Even though it was Higgins who brought in all the phonetics in Eliza, it was Colonel Pickering who helped her discover herself and start respecting herself. He is a kind hearted gentleman who is loved and respected by all.

Alfred Doolittle

Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, is yet another interesting character in the play. He is so much like Eliza in that

- Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father is an open-minded person with no shame at all

he does not care about what people think of him. He just speaks his heart out, no matter where he is or how stupid he sounds. He is not in the least bothered about his accent. He has zero percent of shame in him. He is not at all ashamed about selling his own daughter for money. When he learned about Eliza staying with Professor Higgins, the first thing that came to his mind was to get some money out of Higgins' hands. He is unembarrassed and unhypocritical. He is honest and acts as Shaw's spokesperson in the play. Doolittle also undergoes a transformation where he turns into a rich middle-class man. He loses his honesty and becomes miserable in this state.

Mrs. Higgins

- Mrs. Higgins is the only one who is truly aware of the idiocy of the situation they were in

Mrs. Higgins, or Professor Higgins' mother is a very sensible character. He is the only person who is able to see the idiocy of the situation. She sees the Eliza Doolittle experiment as futile and also thinks of Higgins and Pickering as senseless children. Even though it was both the phoneticians who brought in the changes in Eliza, it was Mrs. Higgins that led to the transformation of all the characters. It was she who actually took Eliza under her wing. She is the pinnacle of elegance in the play.

Freddy Eynsford Hill

- Freddy Eynsford Hill is often referred to as a fool by all the other characters

Freddy Eynsford Hill is the son of Mrs. Eynsford Hill. He is a handsome young man who fell head over heels in love with Eliza Doolittle the moment he saw her. He seems like a fool in the beginning, which he actually is, but evolves gradually into a worthy suitor for Eliza. In the opening scenes of the play, he was a spineless and resourceless lackey who totally depended on his mother and sister for everything. He falls in love with Eliza, and this causes a change in him. He was one of the options for Eliza, but in the end, readers are left in confusion about the path Eliza is going to choose.



Summarised Overview

The unit deals with a detailed analysis of the play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw. The play revolves around the effort a phonetician makes in order to reform a girl named Eliza Doolittle. The major characters in the play are Eliza Doolittle, Prof. Henry Higgins, Colonel Pickering, Mrs. Higgins, Mrs. Pearce, Freddy Eynsford-Hill etc. The unit describes the evolution of drama from the 16th century to the 20th century. It also describes the exceptional growth of G.B. Shaw as a playwright. The play is at once a romance and a satire. The satiric elements also have the capability to turn this play into an anti-romance. The unit also looks at the possibilities of reading a single play from different perspectives. *Pygmalion* is only one of the many Shavian plays that satirises the society from different angles. The play discusses the themes of language and speech, identity, satire, social class, and gender roles.

Assignments

1. Describe the main changes Eliza Doolittle undergoes during the play. What hints does Shaw provide to show which transformation is the most significant?
2. Victorian society itself can be considered to be being unmade as Eliza Doolittle is being recreated. How does Shaw show how this higher society to which the flower girl aspires is prudish, hypocritical, and inconsistent? Does he seem to support the privileged or the underprivileged class?
3. Who deserves the most credit for turning Eliza from a flower girl into a duchess? Could Higgins have accomplished this achievement without Eliza's assistance?
4. Who would Eliza marry if a sixth act of *Pygmalion* were to be written by you? Or does she even get married? To support the new conclusion, draw on the dialogue and actions of the characters over the first five acts.
5. Take a close look at Higgins' treatment of other men. Can one view this form of socialism as admirable? Or does his absolutism make him less of a caring being?



Suggested Readings

1. Shaw, Bernard George. *Pygmalion: A Romance in Five Acts*. ICON, 2005.
2. Ovid. *The Metamorphoses*. Tr. Horace Gregory. Viking, 2009.

References

1. Chesterton, G.K. *George Bernard Shaw*. Bodley Head, 1948.
2. Crompton, L. *Shaw the Dramatist*. George Allen, 1971.
3. Frazer, J. G. *The Golden Bough*. Oxford UP, 1994.
4. Gibbs, A.M. *The Art and Mind of Shaw: Essays in Criticism*. Gill, 1983.
5. Hudson, William Henry. *An Outline History of English Literature*. V.B.I, 1996.
6. Mayne, F. *The Wit and Satire of Bernard Shaw*. St. Martin's, 1967.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

Unit 3

Poetry

Non-Detailed

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ locate the modern English poets and place them in their genres of writing
- ▶ develop an understanding of the different literary techniques used in modern poetry
- ▶ become capable of using different critical apparatuses while reading modern poetry

Background

The section aims at making the students aware of the poetry of the modern period that followed the early 20th century. The unit gives a brief description of “The Pylon Poets” and a few other poets of the 1930s.

Keywords

World Wars, Pylon poets, Imagism, Symbolism

Section 1 The Pylons

- Stephen Spender

Discussion

- ▶ Poems reflected current political scenario

Stephen Spender, a member of the prominent literary group known as the Oxford Poets, was born in 1909 in London. Stephen Spender was highly praised for sticking to the current political scenario and speaking



of the issues of the day, which made it easier for him to be understood by all.

► Spender's works

Being a member of the Oxford Poets, his name was often associated with that of W.H. Auden, who was the most celebrated poet of the age. Spender's existence as a poet was overshadowed by Auden's popularity and fame. Spender has written numerous books of poetry including, *Dolphins*, *Collected Poems*, *Generous Days*, *The Still Center*, and *Points of Dedication*.

Both Auden and Stephen Spender were considered members of a smaller poetic group called the "Pylon Poets". The term "Pylons Poets" was taken from *The Pylons* written by Stephen Spender. Spender was praised and criticised at the same time for his strict adherence to technology and industries. Even though the title "The Pylons" might mislead the readers into believing that it is also a poem regarding technology, as the word pylon literally means "a tower like structure used to support high voltage electricity cables," the poem takes on a different turn when the poet sees them as an intrusion into the peaceful countryside rather than the harbinger of electricity. The poem, "The Pylons," is written in five quatrains, where the perspective of the poet evolves gradually. What started with the glorification of nature ends up in the glorification of the village side, which is soon going to be fully electrified. Through this shift, the ambivalent attitude the poet has towards science and nature is exposed. The poem ends on an optimistic note, reconciling Nature and Science.

► Pylon poets

2.3.1 Summary

"The Pylons" by Stephen Spender is a poem written in five short quatrains that depicts the conflict between rural and urban landscapes. The word pylons literally translates to a tower-like structure used to support high voltage electric current. This translation makes it clear that it is brought here as a representative of technology. The title clearly works as a metaphor for technology here. Stephen Spender, who usually writes about technological advancements and the necessity of such advancements, takes on a more ambivalent perspective here, as he starts the poem by mentioning that the pylons are destroying the beauty of nature. He sees them as a threat to the purity of the countryside.

► The poem deals with the contrast between rural and urban landscapes



- The symbolic significance

The emblem of pylons is considerably symbolically significant here due to its size. The towering structure is used to depict the towering influence it has on society. The symbolic significance of pylons does not end there. The metallic nature of the pylons shows how frozen and stiff the hold they have on humanity is. While discussing the static nature of the pylons, it is also important that we do not forget to look into the dynamic motion of the kinetic energy that flows through them. Moreover, the universality of pylons is also noteworthy, as electricity has become a universal need and a life without electricity seems nearly impossible. It has truly become the symbol of technology.

- He sees both the static look and dynamic energy flow of the pylons as a threat to humanity in one way or the other

The poet begins the poem by describing the beauty of the village landscape, where the hills and the roads have a story of their own to tell. They are beautiful as well as mysterious. Their beauty and the mysteries they hide add to the beauty of all those images. He continues this description until he notices the extremely huge Pylons that stood there. The poet laments the making of the pylons in this village, as he believes that the wires attached to them would destroy the village completely. He compares these pylons to giant naked girls who have lost all their hopes of being beautiful because of being giants. He also mentions that they have no shame or secrets to hide. The figure of speech used here is "simile". In the past, the country was full of greenery and life, but now industrialisation has turned the country into a dry brook. The pylons in the village are gigantic and visible to all. It is presented by the poet as something hideous and evil. He also adds that the lighting it produces is dangerous, perhaps even deadly. The image of the pylons is a look into the developments that might occur in the village somewhere in the near future.

- He believes that the pylons anticipate the bright and developed future of the country with their presence.

The poet concludes the poem with this note that the countryside shall soon reach great heights. Even with the mere presence of the pylons, the country looks quite different. So, in the future, when more of these and other such things like skyscrapers and other humongous structures appear, the country will have an even more different look. Then, like these structures that touch the clouds, the country would also one day touch the clouds. This shows that the poet is not just sad that the place is



going to lose its beauty but also happy and optimistic about the heights the place may reach in the coming years. This is where the ambivalent attitude the poet has towards this is clearly exposed.

2.3.2 Analysis

The technological advancements happening in rural areas happen to be the central theme of the poem "The Pylons". The poem was so famous that it even contributed to the creation of a new literary group called "The Pylon Poets", which included celebrated poets like W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, etc. It is noteworthy that the poem not only suggests the advent of technology in rural areas but also acts as a harbinger of pseudomodernism in poetry. The coming of "The Pylon Poets" is proof for this. As the poem advances, the ambivalent attitude the poet has towards the pylons becomes evident. Similarly, the attitude of society towards modernism and pseudomodernism was ambivalent as well. Hence, the entire poem has a symbolic significance that is as clear as daylight.

► The central theme

In the first section of the poem, the poet is seen praising nature and the various images of nature, including the hills, landscapes, and brooks. This could be associated with the love that society had for the previous generation of poets and the poetry they created. As the poet loses his love for the destroyed village, the readers or society in general have lost their love for poetry due to the advent of modernism. Later in the poem, the poet refers to the village as a dry brook, which has great symbolic significance as modern poetry is often considered to be bleak and dry. The poet also talks about the pylons' metallic nature, which makes them frozen in human emotions. This is another symbol, or rather a metaphor, for the lack of emotions in modern poetry. The stark contrast between the Romantic age and the modern age can be seen in this metaphor.

► The technological advancements in society can be associated with the arrival of modernism in literature

► The poem ends on a positive note where both the poet and the readers are able to accept the reality and move forward

As the poem advances, a small but noticeable change is seen in the poet's attitude towards the pylons. The poet gradually acknowledges the importance of electricity in society. Likewise, the reader also experiences this change. The reader slowly but steadily understands the workings of society and is able to read and understand, if not enjoy, the poetry penned by modern poets. Towards



- The poem ends on a positive note where both the poet and the readers are able to accept the reality and move forward

the end of the poem, the poet understands the necessity of electricity and how important it is for society to develop in such a fast-moving world. Similarly, the readers also understand the importance of such bleak, fragmented poetry, which might seem dry at first. From this section of the poem, the poet starts seeing the bigger picture that this is only the start of a bright future waiting somewhere ahead. Similarly, the readers of poetry also start thinking from a wider perspective and soon realise that this sort of poetry is the need of the hour.

Summarised Overview

The struggle between rural and urban environments is portrayed in Stephen Spender's poem "The Pylons," which is composed of five short quatrains. A tower-like structure used to support high voltage electric current is what the word "pylons" refers to in its literal sense. Because of its size, the pylons' emblem has a lot of symbolism in this context. The tall building is used to represent the influence it exerts on society. The fact that the pylons are metallic demonstrates how rigid and ice-cold their grip on humanity is. The poem opens by emphasising the picturesqueness of the village's surroundings, where the hills and roads each have a unique tale to tell. They are both mysterious and gorgeous. The attractiveness of all those images is enhanced by their beauty and the mysteries they conceal. He keeps on with this description till he sees the enormous Pylons that were standing there. The poet regrets the installation of the pylons in this community since, in his opinion, the wires connected to them would entirely devastate it. The poem's conclusion promises that the countryside will soon soar to tremendous heights. The country already appears very different just from the pylons' presence. Therefore, the country will look even more different in the future when more of these and other similar items, such as skyscrapers and other enormous constructions, develop. The poem's conclusion amply demonstrates the poet's conflicted stance regarding this.

Assignments

1. How does the poem “The Pylons” foreshadow the coming together of two worlds and the terrible effects it will have on the innocent people?
2. The poet seems to be lamenting how the countryside has changed in the first two stanzas. Briefly describe the changes in your own words.
3. How does the poet present the advent of pseudo-modernism in “The Pylons?”

Suggested Readings

1. Spender, Stephen. *New Collected Poems of Stephen Spender*. Faber, 2015.
2. Southerland, John. *Stephen Spender: A Literary Life*. Oxford UP, 2004.

References

1. Evarts, Prescott. *The Struggle of a Poet :A Study of Stephen Spender's Development in the Thirties*. Columbia UP, 1968.
2. Leeming, David. *Stephen Spender:A Life in Modernism*. Henry Holt, 1999.
3. Sutherland, John. *Stephen Spender : The Authorized Biography*. Viking, 2004.
4. Thwaite, Anthony. *Twentieth-Century English Poetry: An Introduction*. Heinemann, 1978.
5. Weatherhead, A.K. *Stephen Spender and the Thirties*. Bucknell UP, 1975.
6. Williams, John. *Twentieth-Century British Poetry*. Edward Arnold, 1987.

Section 2

A Subaltern

- Siegfried Sasson

Discussion

One of the most acclaimed war poets of the time, Siegfried Sasson was an equally skilled novelist and also a political commentator. Sasson was one of the pioneers of the genre of war poetry in English. His contemporary Wilfred Owen was greatly influenced by Sasson.

- Sasson's poems generally dealt with the horrors and destruction of war

He was more of an anti-war poet than a war poet, like Wilfred Owen. Sasson's poems are filled with the grim realities of war. He was one of the war poets who had first-hand experience with the war. Even while being a soldier, he was always against war. In his works, he never forgot to satirise the patriots, and the clergymen who usually glorified wars, and fighting for one's country.

Sasson's poems are either fiercely lamenting, or harshly satirical. These poems either portray the verbal image of a bloody war field, or the inner conflicts happening in the minds of the soldiers on the war field. All through his poems, readers can find the lament and distress in the minds of young soldiers. Sasson has penned some other poems which are satirical where, he criticises society's attitude towards the idea of war. Certain members of the society including the older generation of patriots and the clergy believed that it is indeed an honour to die for one's country. He strongly believed that death is something that deserves better credit than all the political drama happening around them. He wrote poems that talked about the futility of war. His poems were criticised greatly for this attitude.

- Sasson's poems are either lamenting or satirical

"A Subaltern" is a poem written in the form of a sonnet. A sonnet is a short poem of 14 lines, with a certain rhyme scheme depending on the type of sonnet it is. This sonnet follows the structure of a Petrarchan sonnet, which consists of an "Octet" and a "Sestet", but the rhyme scheme the poem follows belongs to a Shakespearean sonnet. The word subaltern translates



- “A Subaltern” is a poem written in the form of a sonnet

to a second lieutenant, or a subordinate officer, usually below the ranks of the captain. The title is truly anonymous, and could be referring to anyone. It could be one of the war comrades of Sassoon, or Sassoon himself who was a subaltern in the army. The poem is written in the first person which makes it clear that the subaltern mentioned in this poem is definitely not Sassoon. As we read through the poem, the close relationship the poet had with the subaltern becomes evident. But as the poem enters the second section, or the sestet the poem becomes more philosophical than personal. It is considered that, the subaltern Sassoon talks about in the poem is his dearest friend, David Cuthbert Thomas, who was shot to death a month after the publication of this poem.

2.3.3 Summary

The poet opens the poem by talking about his subaltern friend looking at him with his sleepy eyes. Both the poet and his friends have known each other since childhood, and he mentions that the soldier's tired and sleepy face lit up the moment he saw the poet. The poet makes this statement to make the readers understand that even though war has almost consumed almost all the humanity they had in them, his handsome friend has not yet lost his kind smile. This smile took him back to their good old days, days before the war and all the misery when all they had to do was run around playing cricket. Those days were indeed beautiful. The poet, through this flash back into his childhood, is trying to enlighten the readers about the time before war. Before the war, everything was so normal and beautiful. All the youngsters were happy and carefree. But the situation has changed. The war has changed pretty much everything and everyone.

- The time before and after war

- This stanza talks about the personal relationship the poet had with the subaltern

The poet talks about himself, who was usually the last person on the team and was left with the humongous task of scoring 20 runs. From the good old days, the poet is once again brought back to the realities of the war, where they are still running, not to score runs, but to save themselves from rats in the trenches. The soldier also tells the poet that the tough time he is having inside the trenches is worsened by the effects of the grey palsy weather. With this description, the poet concludes the first octet, that is, the 8 lined stanza. Here, the poet

describes the personal relationship he had with the subaltern.

When it comes to the second stanza, the sestet, the tone of the poem changes completely. Here, both the poet and his comrade are brought back to reality, due to the intense weather. The weather is not letting them stay in their good memories for long. The ice-cold wind and the rain make them shiver. Painfully, they realise that this is their life. Somewhere in the middle of their journey, this has become their life. The life of a subaltern, who is not supposed to be happy. Even the feelings of love are off limits to them. They can no longer live, they can no longer love, and they can no longer feel happy. The poet tries to convince him with his ideas and beliefs of patriotism, which he called “stale philosophies”. Everyone around them, including their family, politicians and even the clergy talks about war, and glorifies the purpose of war, whereas it is all futile. Subalterns like the poet and his friend are expected to sacrifice their lives for the sake of higher officials. Towards the end, the poet and the friend realise that normal life is not meant for them. They have no other choice but to laugh at the face of this reality. They gradually accept this.

- The life of a subaltern

The language of the poem is noteworthy. The poem is written in simple colloquial language in order to establish the youthful nature of both men. Moreover, the intimacy they share can also be conveyed through the usage of this language. The poem that started with the smiling face of the subaltern ends with the laugh of both the soldiers. But this is ironic, because the initial smile was due to the false hope that came into the mind of the subaltern when he saw his friend, the poet. It was this hope that took the poet down memory lane to his beautiful childhood, where both of them had so much fun playing cricket. But as the poem progresses, the hope gradually reduces to despair. The subaltern thinks of his futile existence, where he has turned into a killing machine with no hope, devoid of all human emotions. When he comes back to his senses, he thinks of his lover and could not help but laugh. This laugh is not of joy, but of despair. It is the last resort of every human. The poet too thinks of all the misery they have been through, all the false preachings he had listened to. He recollects all the philosophies he had tried to impart into the mind

- The hopeful smile the two of them had at the beginning of the poem changed to a hopeless laugh at the end of the poem



of the subaltern. He finally understands that everything is futile and meaningless. All of them are stuck here for life, and this is the reality. It is this truth that makes the poet laugh. Hence, the laugh at the end of the poem is not a positive note, but only another sign of despair.

Summarised Overview

The poet begins the poem by describing how his subaltern companion was staring at him with tired eyes. The soldier's exhausted and drowsy face lighted up the instant he spotted the poet, and the poet and his fellow soldier have known each other since infancy. The poet says this to show the readers that his attractive friend still smiles with kindness, despite the fact that war has nearly completely destroyed what little humanity they ever had. Everything was so regular and lovely before the war. The children were all content and carefree. But things are different now. The war has essentially altered everyone and everything. The soldier also informs the poet that the consequences of the gloomy weather are making his difficult situation in the trenches worse. The poet ends the first octet, or the eight-line stanza, with this description. Here, the poet discusses his relationship with the subaltern on a human level. They are not able to stay in their pleasant memories for too long due to the weather. They tremble due to the freezing rain and wind. They realise with much pain that this is their life. Everyone around them including their family, politics, and even the clergy talks about war and exalts its goals, despite the fact that they are all ineffective, including war itself. The poet and his comrade were subalterns who were supposed to give their lives for the benefit of higher authority. The poet and his buddy come to the realisation towards the end that they are not suited for a typical life. They can do nothing except laugh in the face of this truth.

Assignments

1. How does "A Subaltern" express its fervent opposition to war?
2. Comment on how the poem's simple language adds to the way the theme of war is presented.
3. Discuss the multiple themes in the poem.
4. To what extent does the poem "A Subaltern" reflect Siegfried Sassoon's life?

Suggested Readings

1. Blunden, Edmund. *War Poets 1914-1918*. British Council, 1958.
2. Sassoon, Siegfried. *War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon*. Dover, 2004.

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1. Brooks, Cleanth. *Modern Poetry and Tradition*. Oxford U.P., 1965.
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Section 3 Sea Fever

- John Masefield

Discussion

- He is widely regarded for the usage of colloquial and coarse language in his poems.

John Masefield, the British poet who was the poet laureate of England from 1930 to 1967 is also well known for the use of colloquial language and phrases in his works. He was also a member of the English navy and it was his life in the ship that developed in him a passion for writing. Once during a voyage, he caught sea sickness, and it was during this time that first felt the urge to write. It was the events that he recorded in a notebook that he later used to write his autobiography. He was greatly influenced by the beauty of nature. He was a voracious reader, and his deep knowledge of the English classics developed a classical writing style in him. He has penned a number of works including poems, both short and long, adventurous novels, and classic children's novels.

Out of all his poems, including the long narrative



- The poem talks about the urge of a man to go back to being a sailor.

poem “The Everlasting Mercy,” it is his short poem “Sea Fever,” which brought him great fame. The poem is in a way autobiographical, as it talks about a sailor who wants to let go of all his responsibilities here in order to enjoy the happiness and liberty the sea offers. It is like the withdrawal symptoms shown by alcoholics. He is not ready to say goodbye to the sailor’s life. He has written an entire collection of poems titled “Saltwater Stories” about wanting to go back to a sailor’s life. But it was “Sea Fever” that became his identity. It is a poem of 12 lines written in three loosely structured stanzas. It is the speaker’s desire to roam free that acts as the central theme of the poem. The urge to go back to the sea can also be associated with a love for adventure and endless exploration. A ship is something that lets you go anywhere, and the poet is desperate to have that ship back as it would help him run away into the freedom of the sea leaving behind all his tiring responsibilities.

2.3.4 Summary

“Sea Fever”, a poem first published in the “Saltwater Stories” is the most celebrated poem by John Masefield. The poem begins by describing the speaker’s decision or desire to go back to the sea. He describes the sea as lonely, yet he feels like going back to it. The first two lines make the reader feel that the speaker is facing some kind of difficulties on the land so that he wants to go back to the sea so badly. He does not want the comfort of the land; all he cares about is the freedom the open sea and the sky offer. He is asking for a ship to take him and a lodestar to guide him through the tides. In the next lines, the poet talks about the different things associated with a journey through the ocean. As we move through the poem, the poet presents the readers with a detailed description of the attributes of a ship. The speaker in the poem wants to experience the strong pull of the helm, or the wheel used to steer a ship. He also wants to listen to the music of the wind, and the trembling of the sail above him, and also the silvery fog on the surface of the water on a white morning.

- The whole poem deals with the poet’s urge to leave the land and go enjoy the freedom of the sea.

In the second stanza too, he feels the same urge to go to the sea, as now he has started hearing the sea calling to him in a seductive voice. He feels that the call he got is so wild and so clear that he has no other choice but to accept it. There is no chance that he can deny the call.

- The poet says that the speaker can hear the ocean calling out to him in a seductive voice

- He badly wants to go back to the gypsy life he had in the ocean

- Philosophical quest for freedom

- It also highlights the deep connection between man and nature

His urge to go back to being a sailor is so intense that he feels that the sea is calling out to him. Now all he needs is a windy day to head into the foaming waters of the ocean. He wants to listen to the shrieks of the seagulls while he is making his way into the depths of the ocean.

He does the same thing in the third stanza as well. He is so desperate to go back to his life in the sea. He wants to get back to being a vagrant gypsy, devoid of all worldly responsibilities. He finds more happiness with the gulls and the whales. He wants to spend his life there with the gulls and the whales. He also adds that he would like to have his skin brush against the strong wind, which is almost similar to getting hit with a whetted knife. It is in this stanza that he first talks about the need for a fellow traveller. He wants someone cheerful to talk to him about the funny adventures he has had during his voyages. In the end, he desires to sleep peacefully, without being disturbed. When all the work of the ship and the sail is done, he hopes to have a peaceful sleep with a lot of beautiful dreams. With this note he ends the short poem "Sea Fever"

2.3.5 Analysis

Even though the poem might seem simple at first glance, it deals with man's philosophical quest for freedom. It is also a representation of the deep connection that man has with nature. When everything else seems out of place, man finds happiness in nature.

The solace that man is looking for in nature is the central theme of the poem "Sea Fever." Freedom is one of the major themes in the poem. The sea offers him a life of endless possibilities. The inspiration the sea provides and the adventurous voyages that come with it are blissful to the author. The sea will help the author become the master of his own life. In the beginning of the poem, not even the loneliness that comes with life in the sea frightens the author, but towards the end, the author is hoping for the company of a merry fellow traveller. It is an indication of the fear of loneliness that rests inside humans, no matter how badly they want to have a life for themselves. Keeping this aside, it is indeed man's ultimate quest for freedom that acts as the central theme of the poem "Sea Fever."



- Apart from freedom, adventure and wanderlust also act as major themes in this work.

Adventure and wanderlust are the other two elements explored in this poem. The pleasure with which the speaker describes the movement of water and wind when the ship moves, is a clear depiction of the love he has for travel. It is clear from the early lines that he has been to the sea before. His lust for adventures has not perished with one fine trip. He is so passionate about his adventurous life that he feels like adventure is calling out to him. The speaker's attitude shows that adventure is like a drug that eats you. If you have had the taste of it once, then you will not be able to stay away from it. Even though the poem is written in loosely structured stanzas with no rhyme or meter, the poet has used poetic devices like alliteration to enhance the rhythm of the poem. The world suffocates everyone with so many responsibilities that they feel like running away from it all. The poem is a clear demonstration of this running away. The writer wants to find peace and keep all his worldly responsibilities away for a while. He believes that immersing himself in a long voyage is the perfect solution for this. Man chooses to dump all the burdens that the material world has imposed on him into the natural world that always welcomes you wholeheartedly.

Summarised Overview

The wish of the speaker to return to the sea is described in the poem's opening lines. All he cares about is the freedom that the broad sea and sky provide; he has no desire for the comforts of land. He is requesting a ship to transport him and a lodestar to help him navigate the tides. The poet discusses several aspects of travelling across the ocean in the verses that follow. The author gives the audience a thorough description of a ship's characteristics as we go through the poem. He still has the same desire to go to the water in the second stanza since he can now hear the sea beckoning to him seductively. He believes that he has no choice but to take the call because it is so unexpected and crystal clear. The third stanza also contains the same action by him. He wants so badly to return to his life at sea. He wishes to resume his life as a wandering gypsy, free from any obligations to the outside world. With the gulls and the whale, he is happier. He first mentions the need for a fellow traveller in this poem. He wants someone cheerful to converse with him about the humorous experiences he has had while travelling. In the end, he wants to go to bed quietly and without being bothered.

Assignments

1. Discuss the theme of the poem, "Sea Fever."
2. Critically comment on the title of the poem "Sea Fever."
3. Comment on the poetic devices used in the poem, "Sea Fever."
4. Critically analyse the poem, "Sea Fever."

Suggested Readings

1. Masfield, John. *Sea Fever: Selected Poems*. Fyfield, 2005.

References

1. Babington Smith, Constance. *John Masfield: A Life*. Oxford UP. 1978.
2. Spark, Muriel. *John Masfield*. Hutchinson, 1992.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

Unit 4

Drama

Non-Detailed

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ understand the political and historical attributes of the play
- ▶ locate the symbols used by J. M. Synge, and decipher their meanings
- ▶ develop an understanding of the different literary techniques used by the playwright

Background

Irish patriotism to their cultural heritage and identity, as well as initiatives to preserve the Gaelic language, such as the establishment of the Gaelic League in 1893, served as catalysts for the Irish Literary Renaissance. There was a growing desire to “de-Anglicize” Ireland, which was still ruled by the British Empire, and writers and academics took a particular interest in the histories, mythology, and folktales of Ireland. Thus, in the years before 1919, when the Irish War of Independence against the reigning English officially began, the Irish Literary Revival stoked nationalist enthusiasm and propagated the desire for Irish independence from Britain. This unit aims at enlightening the students about the Irish Literary Renaissance, and its influence on major playwrights. It also analyses how the genre of plays evolved from the 16th century to the 20th century. The origin and development of J.M. Synge as a playwright, along with an analysis of the not so successful career of T.S. Eliot as a playwright is also done.

Keywords

Irish Literary Renaissance, Irony, Christianity, Fate, J.M. Synge



Section 1

Riders to the Sea

- J. M. Synge

Discussion

J.M. Synge, the founder member of the Abbey Theatre has authored nine plays including the controversial work *The Playboy of the Western World*. J.M. Synge writes mostly about the Irish gipsy culture and the traditions they followed. Even though he was born as a member of a privileged family, Synge found the peasant life and the culture and traditions associated with it fascinating. He is one of the most celebrated Irish playwrights. He has also been a major influence on many Irish writers, including Samuel Beckett. J.M. Synge is in many ways similar to Thomas Hardy, who has made it his life's mission to let fate play the villain in his works. In one way or another, Synge has also used this criterion to a great extent in his plays. Similarly, Hardy's style of writing about the village landscapes and the regular characters we see around is without a doubt adopted by Synge in his plays as well. He also follows Hardy's nature of universalisation. Synge's plays have stood the test of time and are still appealing due to their human nature. He portrays deep human emotions which might seem trivial from the outside, but are actually the reasons for anything to be appealing for such a long time.

- J. M. Synge is a key figure in the Irish literary movement.

Synge, taking into account his friend W. B. Yeats' suggestion, went to the Aran islands to learn about the lives of people there, and this is what led to the creation of his most famous play *Riders to the Sea*. The people of the Aran islands followed certain customs, in connection with the gypsy culture. There are two main themes in this play. One is without doubt the sea, which acts as the final destination for everyone in the family. The characters repeatedly talk about losing people to the sea. Then another important theme discussed in the play is destiny, or the omens that predict certain misfortunes. This is where the ideas and beliefs of the gypsy culture comes in. There are so many times when these omens become the driving force of action in the play.

- The destructive effect of the sea

2.4.1 Summary

The play is set on an island off the west coast of Ireland. Two female characters are introduced at the beginning of the play. The first one is a twenty-year-old woman sitting in a cottage kitchen baking cake, and the other is a younger girl who is entering the kitchen. The elder one is Cathleen, and the other one is Nora, her younger sister. Nora asks Cathleen where their mother is. Cathleen tells her that she is taking a nap. At this time, Nora enters silently, as if she were trying to hide something. She comes and sits near her elder sister and opens a bundle the priest had given her. It contains the clothes of some drowned man that washed up on the seashore. She has brought this to check whether it belonged to their brother Michael, who got lost in the sea nine days ago. As the girls were opening the package, their mother entered, and they hid the pack the moment they saw her. Their mother, Maurya, is an elderly woman who has suffered so much loss in this life. She is so tired and deeply distressed about this. She would be shattered if she finds out that her son Michael has died and they could not even give him a proper burial. Maurya asked Cathleen why she had made the extra cake. Cathleen replies that the extra ones are for Bartley, to take with him during his journey. Maurya was surprised about Bartley going to the sea, and she believed that the young priest would not let Bartley go to the sea. Nora tells her that the priest is not going to stop Bartley as Bartley has already made all the necessary arrangements for his business.

- The play opens in a cottage kitchen and the characters introduced in the first scene are two women, one of age 20 and the other one a little younger

This is when a young man appears, and it is clear to the viewers that he is Bartley, Maurya's youngest son. Bartley is all set for the trip, and he is searching for a rope. Maurya protests that he cannot have the rope because if Michael's body washes ashore, then they would need the rope to bury him deep. Bartley insists that he needs the rope for a halter for the horses that day, as there will not be any more boats that week. Maurya continues by saying that they are going to need a coffin for Michael. Maurya once again asks Bartley not to go to the sea, because the omens Maurya believed in say that, today is not a good day to go to the sea, and a horse is not worth losing a son. Bartley becomes more angry because his mother strongly believes that he is going to die. He pays no attention to her and asks his sisters

- Maurya is too scared to let him into the sea



to take care of the sheep. He waits at the door for his mother to bless him, but Maurya does not. Bartley leaves without being blessed by his mother. This is against Irish rural traditions, and Cathleen is furious at her mother for leaving her brother unblessed.

Bartley leaves the place with a mare and a pony. It is then that Cathleen notices that he has not taken his food with him. She thinks of an idea and asks Maurya to take the food to Bartley and bless him on his way to the fair. Maurya is hesitant at first, but then she agrees. Once Maurya leaves the cottage looking for Bartley, the girls open the bundle that the priest had given them. While looking through the stuff, Nora could recognize the stitching she had done for her brother's socks. Nora laments the fact that all that is left of a great sailor like her brother is only a pair of torn socks. They confirm that the bundle belonged to Michael, but they are at least relieved that Michael had had a Christian burial. They hide it again because they do not want to ruin the good mood Maurya would be in when she returns because she could bless Bartley. Suddenly, Maurya appears out of nowhere, totally distressed and terrified. The girls enquire what had happened, and Maurya replies that she had seen the most terrifying thing.

► Maurya returns terrified

She went to give the food to Bartley and bless him, but she did not do either of them, because she could not do anything out of shock. What caused the shock was that she had seen Michael riding the pony Bartley had taken with him. She was so scared that she did not know what to do at that moment.

The girls tell their mother that it is impossible because Michael has died, and they show her the bundle Nora had brought. Maurya again went into a state of distress and the girls console her by telling her that Michael had had a Christian burial, and that is indeed a blessing. Their lamenting is interrupted when a group of islanders bring in the body of Bartley. They inform the family that the grey pony he had with him knocked him over to the sea, and he drowned to death. The girls were so shocked because it is the same pony on which their mother claims that she had seen Michael. But Maurya gets up and puts the bundle of clothes that belonged to Michael near Bartley's body and sprinkles holy water on it. She

- Bartley was knocked over by the grey pony on which Maurya saw Michael earlier

finally thanks God for letting her out of her misery. She has lost every last male member of her family and there is nothing more for her to worry about. She does not have to be frightened about someone going to the sea anymore. Since Michael had a burial, the white boards she had kept ready for Michael's funeral can now be used for Bartley. Maurya is relieved that Michael has got a burial, Bartley has a coffin, and there is nothing more for people like her to dream about. She is finally able to rest with the belief that both her sons will rest in peace.

2.4.2 Analysis

Riders to the Sea is a tragic play by J.M.Synge, where tragedy happens not as the result of a tragic flaw, but due to the sacrifices a simple family has to make to the sea. It is a short play that has no great action or tremendous character developments. The play does not even have long dialogues that would create an impact in the hearts of the viewers, but it is still one of the greatest plays written in the English language. The play portrays a sharp contrast between the old and the new, man and nature, Christianity and Paganism, beliefs and superstition, etc. The play is also an analysis of the grim realities of the lives of people living in the Aran islands, and how life here is closely associated with the myths and superstitions that have existed in society from time immemorial. A sharp contrast between Christianity and Paganism is also found in *Riders to the Sea*. The play's central character Maurya and her superstitious beliefs are a representation of the pagan beliefs that exist in Irish society, while Cathleen, her eldest daughter's pragmatic beliefs and views can be seen as the representation of modern religion. Here, the play is evolving from the particular to the universal. This is similar to the kind of generalisation or universalisation that is common in works by Thomas Hardy. Everywhere in history, there will be a neutral third party who is stuck between the two power houses. In this play, the character Nora is one such character who is stuck between her elder sister Cathleen's pragmatism, and her mother Maurya's superstition. She wants to be a supportive daughter and a supportive sister at the same time. But no matter how pure her intentions are, she would not be able to make such an impact that would alter the perceptions of the power houses.

- There are a lot of myths and superstitions discussed in this play



- Maurya, the central character of the play

The central character of the play *Riders to the Sea*, Maurya has no character development. From the start until the end, her character has undergone zero percent change. She is portrayed as the suffering mother who has lost everything, from the very beginning, till the very end. Maurya is the representative of women, who are often considered creatures born to sacrifice. Women are generally expected to sacrifice things for others and here Maurya is losing everything to nature. The image of the suffering mother can be read in parallel to the image of the Virgin Mary. Maurya is a pessimist in all sorts. She has no sense of optimism.

It is true that she has lost her father in law, her husband, and four sons to the sea. Hence, she is not ready to accept even the remote possibility that her son will return safe and sound. At the start of the play, it seems that Maurya is certain that Michael is not going to return, and she feels the same about her youngest son, Bartley, as well.

There is a sharp contrast between Maurya and her children. Her children Cathleen, Bartley and Nora are more sceptical about her beliefs and practices. Therefore, the play also represents a clear generation gap that exists between the two generations. Cathleen, Bartley, and Nora were born into a more modern world, where they do not appreciate superstitious beliefs and practices. They refuse to limit their lives to the boundaries set by Maurya's beliefs. They do not see or pay attention to omens. All three of her children pay more attention to the fact that they need to survive, and their decisions are more practical. The young priest is another contrasting character. He is everything Maurya is not. His age and beliefs are closer to Maurya's children. Even though he is a priest, he does not pay much attention to superstitious beliefs. He is also a character who chooses to live in the present and do whatever he can when he can.

- A clear picture of generation gap is also portrayed in the work

There are an umpteen number of symbols and motifs in the play. From the white boards for the coffin to the rope that Bartley looks for, each of them has some symbolic significance to it. The white boards and the image of the coffin are repeatedly mentioned as an anticipation of Bartley's death. Moreover, the presence of water on the bodies of her fourth son Patch and Bartley suggests the direct influence the sea had on their deaths. Moreover,

the rope that Bartley took to tie the horses, which was supposed to put Michael's coffin into the grave was finally used to put Bartley's coffin into the grave. The play is loaded with such symbols and the more you read, the better you will understand the symbolic layers present in the play.

2.4.3 Characters

Maurya

Maurya is an old woman living in the Aran Islands. She is a firm believer of the myths and legends that existed in the Aran islands. She has lost all the men in her life to the sea. She had lost her husband, his father, and the four sons she had given birth to. Her fifth son Michael is also at sea, and every moment of her life she is worrying about losing him to the sea as well.

His youngest son, Bartley, is at home for now. But she fails miserably at keeping him home too as he is so stubborn that he wants to go to the fair to sell the horses. Both her daughters and Bartley himself believe that it is important for him to go, as they need money to survive. But Maurya, out of fear, fails to see the truth. All the motherly fear is portrayed clearly in Maurya.

- Maurya is a superstitious old woman

Cathleen

Cathleen is Maurya's eldest daughter. She, being a representative of the younger generation, is much more practical than her mother. Even though she has also lost all the men in her life including her father, grandfather, and her brothers, she is practical and is able to see life for what it actually is. She is a 20-year-old woman with a hatred towards her mother's superstitious beliefs. Unlike her younger sister Nora, Cathleen is a stark contrast to her mother. While Maurya acts upon omens and myths, Cathleen acts upon instincts and pragmatism.

- Cathleen is Maurya's eldest daughter

Bartley

Bartley is the youngest son of Maurya. He is a stubborn young boy who is similar to his elder sister Cathleen in so many aspects. When his elder brother Michael's death is confirmed, he takes up the responsibility of the family and decides to become the family's sole financial support. He is indeed a very prominent character as the

- Bartley is also a representative of the younger generation



ride mentioned in the title “Riders to the Sea” is Bartley’s final ride on his mare. Bartley had to leave the house without receiving his mother’s blessing.

Nora

Nora is the youngest member of the family. She is the only person in the play who is trying to empathise with her old mother. Nora may not be a strict believer in the traditions. But she tries to make her mother feel included, while all her siblings are very practical and are scornful of Maurya’s superstitious beliefs. She is also a good companion for her sister, Cathleen. Nora patiently listens to her ideas and beliefs too.

- Nora is the youngest member of the family

The Priest

The Priest is not someone who physically appears in the play, but his presence is felt at different instances. The priest is a younger person than Maurya and therefore his beliefs on life are also far more practical than Maurya’s. It is this priest who delivers all the important messages in the play. He is the one who tells Nora about Michael’s death. He is the one who consoles Maurya in the end with his wise words.

- The priest is one of the characters who is never seen on the stage, but his presence is repeatedly mentioned

Summarised Overview

The play is set on an island just off Ireland’s west coast. The play opens with an introduction of Cathleen and Nora. Nora arrives, sits down next to her older sister, and unwraps a bundle the priest had given her. It included some drowned man’s clothes that had washed up on the shore. She brought this to see if it belonged to their brother Michael, who went missing in the water nine days ago. Their mother Maurya enters at the moment, and the girls immediately hide it. If Maurya learned that her son Michael had passed away and they were unable to even give him a dignified funeral, she would be devastated. Bartley too enters the water over Maurya’s protests, and he too perishes. Finally having nothing else to worry about, Maurya is relieved.

Assignments

1. Comment on the symbols used in *Riders to the Sea*.

2. Discuss the role of Nora in *Riders to the Sea*.
3. Do you think that *Riders to the Sea* has a universal appeal? Substantiate your view.
4. Explain the role of death in *Riders to the Sea*.
5. Comment on the significance of the title *Riders to the Sea*.
6. Discuss the role of superstition in *Riders to the Sea*.

Suggested Readings

1. Synge, J. M. *The Playboy of the Western World and Other Plays*. Saga, 1904.

References

1. Benson, E. J. M. *Synge*. Macmillan, 1982.
2. Fermor, U. E. *The Irish Dramatic Movement*. Methuen, 1967.
3. Mattar, S.G. *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival*. Oxford UP, 2004.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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SGOU

Prose and Fiction

BLOCK-03

Block Content

Unit 1 Prose

Unit 2 Fiction

Unit 3 Short story

Unit 4 Short story



Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ critically and theoretically understand and analyse prose
- ▶ understand the themes of modern essays
- ▶ acquaint themselves with the writing style employed in modern prose
- ▶ create a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts

Background

Modernism is a series of radical movements in art, architecture, photography, music, literature, and the applied arts which emerged in the three decades before 1914. Modernism has philosophical antecedents that can be traced to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment but is rooted in the changes in Western society at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Modernism encompasses the works of artists who rebelled against nineteenth-century academic and historicist traditions, believing that earlier aesthetic conventions were becoming outdated. Modernist movements like Symbolism directly and indirectly explored the new economic, social, and political aspects of an emerging fully industrialised world.

The roots of Modernism emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century, in France, with Charles Baudelaire in literature and Édouard Manet in painting, and perhaps with Gustave Flaubert, in prose fiction. The “avant-garde” was what Modernism was called at first, and the term remained to describe movements which identify themselves as attempting to overthrow some aspect of tradition. Many modernists believed that by rejecting tradition they could discover radically new ways of making art. The most controversial aspect of the Modern movement was, and remains, its rejection of tradition. Modernism stresses on freedom of expression, experimentation, radicalism, and primitivism and disregards conventional expectations.

Keywords

Modernism, Nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Avante-garde

Section 1

When was Modernism?

- Raymond Williams

Discussion

Raymond Williams (1921-1988) is a very well-known writer, academician, cultural theorist, literary critic, public intellectual, socialist and a leading figure of the New Left. The New Left was a broad political movement mainly in the 1960s and 1970s consisting of activists in the Western world who campaigned for a broad range of social issues such as civil and political rights, environmentalism, feminism, gay rights, gender roles and drug policy reforms. Williams established a new kind of critical analysis known as cultural materialism, which is rooted in the concept of culture which identifies cultural practice as part of an active, dynamic, historical process. His work consistently draws attention to two strands within cultural forms: the contingent and the subjunctive. The former figures history as driven by human action while the latter looks for moments which ask what alternatives are possible and how. From here, Williams developed a number of enduring theoretical concepts: he identified a 'structure of feeling', what he described as 'the area of interaction between the official consciousness of an epoch and the whole process of actually living its consequences'; he insisted upon viewing culture as 'ordinary', as every day and democratic, being constantly made and remade; and he formulated three forces or tensions within the development of cultural form: the residual, the dominant (central and defining), and the emergent (new and challenging). All of these indicates his relevance and influence and provides a way of analysing and critiquing cultural transformation, placing a primary focus on culture as, what Williams

- ▶ Cultural materialism
- ▶ Developed a number of enduring theoretical concepts



notably called, 'a whole way of life', something made and lived.

Williams, in this essay that was delivered as a speech on 17 March 1987, at the University of Bristol, tries to disparagingly analyse the artistic movement called Modernism, which flourished in Europe between 1890 and 1940. According to literary historians, "modernism" is a blanket term for an explosion of new styles and approaches in the arts and aesthetics beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century. The central image that is associated with modernism is voidness, or emptiness. Various revolutionary changes were brought about in literature, painting, music, and so on. The main writers associated with modernism include T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and so on. Modernism also came to be considered an elite movement as it was restricted to a handful.

- ▶ Modernism in Europe
- ▶ A new trend in art
- ▶ Emptiness

Williams tries to correct or appropriate the romantic element of the modernist movement. One of the major negative aspects regarding the selective appropriation of the same is that it owes its credit only to a few writers who departed from conventional writing, i.e., the older ones are ignored. What is actually overlooked here is the fact that without the older writers, modernism could not have happened. According to him, "writers are much esteemed for their denaturalizing of language, their break with the prior view that language is clear, and for their making apparent in the narrative the awkward status of the author and his authority. Apart from the great realists, this version of modernism denies to see how they formulated and organised a whole vocabulary and its structure of figures of speech with which to grasp the unique social form of the industrial city."

- ▶ Romantic element of poetry
- ▶ Selective appropriation

The change in the medium of cultural production was one probable explanation given for this selective appropriation in the late nineteenth century and also for its ideological consequences. Photography, cinema, radio, and television acquired global importance during that time. The public was more and more drawn to these new media. Therefore, the sudden change in the field of arts and aesthetics was a reaction to the sudden progression of mass media as a struggle to protect their own interests. Therefore, innovations like the stream of

- ▶ Selective appropriation
- ▶ Cultural medium

consciousness, interior monologue, and the like gained wide acclaim.

Metropolitan cities were the centres of these cultural reformations, cities like Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London, New York. This could be due to the rapid migrations across borders. Writers like Joyce and Pound. were constantly moving in and around these cities. But with World War I and the introduction of passports, borders got sealed for the first time, thus constraining the free movements of writers and intellectuals. The writers thus felt estranged and alienated in their new homes, and therefore produced works which depicted this isolation from the society. That is, these works only signified their emotions and state of minds, and so these works cannot be seen as representative of the period. These works according to Williams “achieved comfortable integration into the new international capitalism”, the modernists as well as their works moved from being anti-bourgeois to bourgeois. Thus, the works got commodified and “its forms lent themselves to cultural competition and the commercial interplay of obsolescence.

- ▶ Cultural materialism
- ▶ Cultural reformation

Summarised Overview

Bearing in mind himself a ‘humanist Marxist,’ Williams contended against the theoretical grain of post-structuralism to insist upon a ‘cultural materialism’ that remains enmeshed in concrete social and political relations. In ‘When Was Modernism?’ (1987), Williams interprets modernism in historical terms, from the radical bohemianism of the 1840s to the present-day, and considers the state of modern art less ‘postmodern’ than the ‘next challenge’ in an enduring task to realise a more human modern culture.

Assignments

1. What are the chief arguments Raymond Williams put forth in the essay “When was Modernism?”
2. Analyse Raymond Williams as a modernist.



Suggested Readings

1. Nagarajan, M.S. *English Literary Criticism and Theory: An Introductory History*. Orient, 2006.
2. Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford UP, 2017.

References

1. Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of English Literature*. Wadsworth, 2014.
2. Selden, Raman. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Harvester, 1989.

Section 2 The Politics of the English Language

- George Orwell

Discussion

British writer George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair, 1903-1950) is generally known for his fiction. *Animal Farm* (1945) and his *1984* (1949) are the mainstays of his reputation as a writer of dystopian novels and are the novels in which he contributed the most. Originating in the 1980s, the idiom has become common to describe totalitarianism and dictatorship, for example, *Big Brother*, *Doublethink*, *Thought Police*. Although he professed to be a supporter of democratic socialism, Orwell's influence and respect meant that every expert of a political persuasion agreed with views that Orwell at least partially agreed with. In this two-part essay, the reader is introduced to Orwell's judgments on various subjects. Although his short stories are an enduring and brilliant contribution to 20th-century literature, the essays were Orwell's means of refining his fictional thought. As George Packer notes in his collection *Narrative Essays*, "Orwell's writing began with essays,



and his essays with experience.” It quotes Orwell’s novel from secular Burma. Before this came “Hanging” (1931), an essay about executions in Burma in which Orwell, then a member of the Indian Imperial Police, was forced to participate. His days in Burma influenced his cynicism and aversion to imperialism. “The Politics of the English Language” by George Orwell is exactly what its title describes. The essay deals with the relationship between politics and the use of language and the functioning of language as a tool. It makes an argument for a clear, simple and undemanding language that tries to represent its meaning, hence the unambiguous title.

Section One

Orwell begins his essay by discussing the need to combat the decline of the English language. Language is a tool, and when it decays, he argues, it is under human control, not just a natural process. Its decay is reversible. In pure terms, Orwell describes the cycle in which weak use of language is reinforced by its bad use. “I started drinking and I may fail more and more because of my drinking.” Like the alcoholic cycle, the bad writing-bad thinking and bad thinking-bad writing cycles are reversible. Failure may occur. According to him, clear, honest speech supports clear, independent thinking, which in turn supports clear speech.

- Decay of the English language

Here are some examples in different languages that reflect different ways of thinking. He selects examples from various scientific texts, political pamphlets, and letters to the Tribune’s editors. While each example is “ugly” in its own right (characteristics he says are modifiable), they all share two characteristics of his: “image staleness... [and] ... lack of precision”. As he explains, this is the result of the author of each example failing to express its meaning, or not caring at all about its accuracy. It is the most prominent feature of prose, especially political writing of all kinds,” says Orwell.

- Staleness in writing
- Political writing

According to him, “dying metaphor” is a banal, familiar and unoriginal metaphor, not the author’s own invention. Whereas the original trope works by presenting the reader with new images, the dying trope is redundant and fails to evoke new thoughts. He gives many famous examples, including “toe the line,” which is often misspelled as “tow the line,” and he does not even

- Dying metaphors are unoriginal metaphors



know the meaning of the metaphor he is trying to use.

- The writer tries to form a symmetrical sentence by demonstrating it with operators

“Operators” or “verbal pseudolimbs” have more vivid and accessible meanings. Examples include “disable, fight, prove unacceptable...”. These are used in place of other verbs. In his opinion, this is primarily of a stylistic and rhythmic nature, because the writer tries to form a symmetrical sentence by demonstrating it with operators. Other examples of this include using passive instead of active and substituting complex phrases like “with respect to; having regard to...” for simple ones.

- Bombastic phrasing is largely due to laziness

“*Pretentious diction*” is a key point in Orwell’s broad analysis. The use of big words has a specific political purpose. Certain bombastic words are meant to defend scientific neutrality. Arrogant adjectives are used to turn the ugly world’s political procedures into academic ones or to worship war. He argues that the only reason political writers use foreign languages is because it is easier than finding the exact English word. He suggests that the bombastic phrasing is largely due to laziness, the effect of which ultimately clouds the author’s meaning.

- Meaningless words
- General sloppiness

He lists some words that are often used in art, history and elsewhere that ultimately feel meaningless. However, his main targets in this section are fascism, which has been rendered meaningless because it is used as a general term to refer to the bad, and fascism, which is used as a reference to good politics so that all political terms such as democracy are used. Each regime should be marked as actively defending. He shows how other examples lead to general laziness and ambiguity. Orwell develops this pattern, paraphrasing passages from the Book of Ecclesiastes using surprisingly abstract language, demonstrating the avoidance effect of modern language. He concludes this section with a list of points he believes “A conscientious writer would ask himself in every sentence...”.

Section Two

- Common elements in political pamphlets and speeches

In the second section of the essay, Orwell moves away from the politics of writing and focuses specifically on political writing itself. He begins by arguing that political writing is bad writing. The reason is that writers are representatives of general political party lines and do not express autonomous “opinions.” He argues

- Speaker sometimes becomes a fool

that doing this in political writing is an act of defiance. Political pamphlets and speeches have one thing in common among different political parties, they are lively and never have a homely tone.

He develops the image of a political speaker pantomiming party lines. He argues that when certain political phrases are repeated, the speaker of those phrases turns himself into a kind of fool, a way to cut back on independent thinking, in order to repeat the policies of the accepted political party. He likens political speakers to church members who recite the litany.

- The indirection and ambiguity of political language

Orwell's political positions began to emerge at this point, and his political speech and writing became largely "a defense of the untenable." Here you can get his take on the meaning of the bad words he discussed (consistent with his paper, he does not reject obfuscation). A central argument arises when he explains the meaning of abstract, meaningless words. He argues that the indirection and ambiguity of political language make it possible to defend the following: All these can be defended, but they are also brutal, and only through arguments that are inconsistent with the stated aims of the political party are enumerated. By using abstract terms instead of concrete or descriptive terms, a political writer can obscure the reality of the cause he is defending. "Pacifizing; population movements or border adjustments; elimination of unreliable elements" is a rhetorical abstraction that can be used for political purposes without the user being held accountable for the often violent realities of the processes described.

"There is no such thing as 'staying away from politics,'" he argues. All problems are political problems, and politics itself is a mass of lies, deceit, stupidity, hate, and schizophrenia. A bad overall vibe spoils the language. The feedback loop between language and politics does not just exist at the level of individual authors. It permeates the entire political sphere. A depraved political "vibe" is dragged through the bad language. It even involves "people who should know better." The slightest adulteration and the use of familiar phrases are weaknesses that lead to further decomposition of the mind. Orwell does not avoid these exploits. His essays likely contain many of them, he says. It's not about

- Keeping out of politics
- Politics is a mass of lies

expecting some kind of pure transparency. Integrity is a process, a constant effort to question the meaning of one's own language, to think independently, to incorporate original ideas rather than just repeating them.

He argues that undoing the use of bad language is possible and worth fighting for. He gives several examples of clichéd use in political speeches that journalists have recently ridiculed. He suggests that certain corruptions, such as “doesn't happen”, can be ridiculed.

He then raises something that has nothing to do with the English defense, the preservation of archaic concepts. correct grammar; oversimplification. He says that efficiency and clarity are about making language as effective as possible at conveying meaning. He describes the process of thinking about an object or idea and trying to express that object. He explains how you can think without language when thinking about concrete things. To express this, there is usually a process of visualisation. But when you think of an abstract idea, language begins to overflow with thought, and you can easily squash and ruin that idea “unless you make a conscious effort” to soften or control the flow. Be responsible for that flow and the terms you use to express your thoughts, not the other way around.

- Oversimplification
- Process of visualisation

Orwell presents a list of rules to allow the writer to avoid imprecision:

- Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech that you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive when you can use the active.
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

- Rules to avoid imprecision

While these rules may seem simple, Orwell says, the change in attitude that they entail is not.

- The connection between “political chaos” and the “decay of language”

In concluding, he claims that he’s not arguing for a retreat from language or from political struggles. His main point is to draw attention to the connection between “political chaos” and the “decay of language”. His essay is also about resisting orthodoxies. “Political language” of all types, he concludes, “is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind” (258). He ends where he began, by arguing for the importance of the effort to resist corrupt language.

- Possibilities of using language and its discordant, ugly, or compelling resonances

At the beginning of his essay, Orwell expresses his view of English as a tool. This is arguably one of the most basic concepts of the essay. How language functions as a tool, or what kind of tool it is, seems to be an important question. Instruments can easily be condensed into fixed or concrete images of tools and disposable devices, but for language, it is more malleable and flexible, or musical. Logical as it may seem, this view also lends credence to Orwell’s arguments about the possibilities of using language and its discordant, ugly, or compelling resonances. To fully understand the following essay, it seems necessary to reconsider and further develop the meaning of the term “instrument.”

- Language is a “natural growth”
- The decline is natural and therefore inevitable

Related to this is the idea that Orwell attacks naturally. The idea is that language is a “natural growth” and that its apparent decline is natural and therefore inevitable. The implicit assumption underlying this view is that evolution is degenerate or negative. In other words, past experiences are better, higher, and purer. Therefore, even an outdated language becomes purer. Orwell’s denial is important to his disagreement, but it’s familiar. Orwell’s notion of “corruption” differs markedly if conservative linguistic critiques assess its “corruption” in terms of notions of pure origin and evolutionary degeneracy.

As he conducts his analysis of corrupt language, the politics of his subject become apparent. His focus is on the relationship between thought and language. His point is not that he has one correct or pure linguistic form that writers should use. That is, they must have complete freedom of choice in the way they use language. He shows how the language is generated, but the author does not seem to think about how or why it’s

- Relationship between thought and language

used. This separation corrupts language. Rather than using language to convey a specific intended meaning, political writers unconsciously repeat familiar patterns, use formulaic phrases, and express language in specific ways. He demonstrates the process of pantomime, imitation, or something that is essentially baby talk. When writers use dead metaphors, verbal false limbs, pretentious language, or nonsensical language, they seem to do so because they are fiddling with meaning rather than actually implying it. Corruption happens here: when the link between language and meaning is broken.

Orwell's list of habits to avoid is not exhaustive, but it is certainly not arbitrary. Selected examples he provides reveal aspects of his own political stance. It's no coincidence that Orwell used "stand out" as an example of a metaphor for death. This particular example shows people who are politically denounced and most often blindly follow the lines of a political party. So Orwell uses the example of a dead metaphor to refer to the very behavior he despises. His essay is also a critique of those who "stay in line" and those who use terms such as "stand in line." In this example, he alludes to the kind of politics he rejects while also showing how stupid writing relates to that kind of politics. In addition, he subtly demonstrates his ability to use new languages. When analysing politicians he despises, he never says he dislikes people who just "stay in line." His version, which contains bombastic language, reveals more of his politics in name itself. Through this essay, we understand that Orwell is against big politics in general. Where actual relevance, importance, or complexity does not exist, it must be presented against dishonesty, relevance, importance or complexity. But the criticism of his bombastic rhetoric seems to be a flimsy criticism of imperialist rhetoric. As he says, one of the main effects of big words is to glorify war. One of the things he definitely opposes politically here is to camouflage the violence of colonialism. A very important aspect of his political irony is his involvement with meaningless language. It is no coincidence that examples of his nonsensical language include two of the most important political terms in modern history: fascism and democracy. Saying these meaningless words may seem like sheer irony. But

- "Stay in line"
- "Stand in line."

this tone is integral to Orwell's politics. He questions the honesty of other politicians, arguing that their words are simply meaningless.

In the second part of his essay, Orwell reveals the politics of his argument. His linguistic critique is certainly a critique of all linguistic politics, but above all, it is a critique of partisan discourse. His arguments affect the use of all languages, including his own, but political language is the primary target. As it becomes clear, the essay is an indictment of explicit partisanship and party politics. However, in contrast to the well-known angles and identifiable political arguments, his positions are not easily recognisable as political. He does not target a single political opponent or declare a single party agenda. He follows party policy and political rhetoric as a whole. In his critique of dead, unoriginal, abstract language, there is an essential and general denunciation of the language of party politics. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to repeat familiar and identifiable "partisan lines" by using fresh and original language and thinking independently. When a person thinks independently and claims agency in articulating his ideas, his ideas become repetitions of pre-established party positions if he follows Orwell's guidelines. It would be difficult, therefore, to exempt from Orwell's critique words that are blunt, overtly partisan, or that are readily associated with common political ideals. Towards the end of his essay, Orwell states that he aspires to openly criticise political speaking and writing. But that does not mean that he thinks you cannot or should not write politically. On the contrary, as he explains, you cannot escape politics. Everything is political in some way. No one can remove it. But what matters most is how people write and speak politically.

► Connection with party policies

Adhering to standardised terms or common idioms, from the most political to the simplest, political language reflects laziness, lack of thought, and the sin of pantomiming the opinions of others. Uncompromising, clearly identifiable political party positions may be precluded by the guidelines, but disobedience to political doctrine does not mean that politicians are permanently opposed. Independent thinking is not opposite thinking. Similarities can easily exist between different articulations. But these articulations are fluid.



- Speaks about political irony and pretentious diction

There will be less “positions” and more evolving, ongoing dialectical exchanges rather than static political opposition. It is important to note the last point in this essay, namely that Orwell does not endorse perfectionism. His rule for independent thinking seems at first to be a silent effect, as it has few truly independent turns. But Orwell does not promote precision or accuracy. He does not claim that every sentence must be completely “original.” Instead, he asks his authors to validate their ideas and wording against a basic set of guidelines. Another important final condition he makes is that his argument has nothing to do with creative literary expression.

Summarised Overview

Through this essay, we understand that Orwell is against big politics in general. Where actual relevance, importance, or complexity does not exist, it must be presented against dishonesty, relevance, importance or complexity. But the criticism of his bombastic rhetoric seems to be a flimsy criticism of imperialist rhetoric. He questions the honesty of other politicians, arguing that their words are simply meaningless. In the second part of his essay, Orwell reveals the politics of his argument. The essay is an indictment of explicit partisanship and party politics. Orwell does not target a single political opponent or declare a single party agenda. He follows party policy and political rhetoric as a whole. Towards the end of his essay, Orwell states that he aspires to openly criticise political speaking and writing. But that does not mean that he thinks you cannot or should not write politically. On the contrary, as he explains, you cannot escape politics. Everything is political in some way. No one can remove it. But what matters most is how people write and speak politically. Adhering to standardised terms or common idioms, from the most political to the simplest, political language reflects laziness, lack of thought, and the sin of pantomiming the opinions of others. Uncompromising, clearly identifiable political party positions may be precluded by the guidelines, but disobedience to political doctrine does not mean that politicians are permanently opposed. Independent thinking is not opposite thinking. Orwell does not endorse perfectionism. He asks his authors to validate their ideas and wording against a basic set of guidelines. His argument has nothing to do with creative literary expression.

Assignments

1. Attempt a critique of George Orwell's essay, "The Politics of the English Language."
2. What are the major concerns Orwell shares regarding the politics of the English language?
3. According to you, how do the politics of a language work? Explain in the light of Orwell's essay.

Suggested Readings

1. Orwell, George. *Essays*. Penguin, 2000.

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2. Joan, Cutting. *Pragmatics and Discourse: A Resource Book for Students*. Taylor, 2002.
3. Marks, Peter. *George Orwell, the Essayist: Literature, Politics and the Periodical Culture*. Bloomsbury, 2015.
4. <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/>



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Unit 2

Fiction

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ critically and theoretically understand and analyse modern novels
- ▶ understand the themes of modern novels
- ▶ acquaint themselves with the writing style employed in early modern fiction
- ▶ create a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts

Background

James Joyce was born in Dublin to working-class Irish parents and was educated at Jesuit and Royal Colleges in preparation for a career in the Roman Catholic Church. However, he gave up his idea of taking his instructions and by chance of the century left Ireland for France. In Paris, he studied medicine and thought of becoming a professional singer. During the war of 1914-1918, he taught languages in Switzerland, and as he was medically unfit, he returned to Paris, where he devoted himself to a literary life, constantly fighting illness and public opposition to his work.

Joyce's later narrative techniques can be seen in his first work, *The Dubliners*, beginning in 1890 and published in 1914, and his short stories about the dirty slums of Dublin. The novel's research is powerfully written, and her simplified prose style has a unique personality. The same town is set in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). This is a powerful account of an aspiring writer torn between the morality of his ascetic and religious upbringing and his desire for sensuality. Although this work is largely autobiographical (Stephen Dedalus is Joyce), the author maintains a sober detachment in his precise analysis of the mental lives of his heroes. His treatment of relevant sexual issues is particularly direct. An earlier version, much more conventional in style, was *Stephen Hero*, which was published in 1944. Stephen-Joyce's artistic dilemma was again expressed in his unsuccessful play *The Exile* (1918). Stephen Dedalus reappears in *Ulysses* (1922), a study of Leopold and Mrs. Bloom's day-to-day actions and thoughts. Based on Homer's *Odyssey*, but set in the slums of Dublin, both works have similar characters and the structure is the same for each. These parallels are deliberately evoked to emphasize the filthy vulgarity of



modern life as opposed to life in heroic times. Bloom is described as “fiction’s most accomplished character”.

Joyce is a serious novelist whose main concern is human relations - the relationship between humans and themselves, society, and race as a whole. This is also true of his more recent work, but his fascination with language experiments makes its meaning difficult to understand. Well aware of the pettiness and meanness of modern society, and the ills that arise from it, he excels in his knowledge of the dark side of his life, and displays it with astonishing candour. He is an accomplished and sensitive analyst of the inner human consciousness, and like the psychoanalysts of his time, he is deeply concerned with sex.

Keywords

Morality, Humans and Society, Language experiment, Psychology

Discussion

Section -1

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

- James Joyce

3.2.1 Summary

- Stephen was attracted towards his neighbour Eileen and wished to marry her when he grows up

The childhood of the protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, is described in terms used by children. Along with instinctive images of his parents, the governor Dante, and uncle Charles, there is a bit of a baby story, and one of his neighbours is a little girl named Eileen, whom Stephen has announced will marry her when he grows up. His announcement enrages Dante since Eileen was a Protestant.

Stephen is transferred to Clongowes Boarding School, and the change in speech reflects Stephen's aging. He consoles himself by thinking about what it feels like to be home. He is also very devout and his nightly prayers are a mixture of the obsessive superstitions of a child and the Catholic faith he grew up in. On being pushed into a cesspool, Stephen develops a fever from the dirty water,

- His experience at boarding school makes him a matured person.

and he imagines how everyone would grieve if he died. Brother Michael and Athy take care of him at the school clinic. Brother Michael reads the newspaper to them. Stephen and Athy hear of the death of Charles Parnell, an Irish nationalist politician. Stephen is respected by the boys for his lack of interest in Wells.

- Theft of altar

Some of the boys involved in the theft of the altar were given the option of deportation or flogging. Corrigan was the only one who chose flogging. The other boys approve of his choice. A boy named Fleming added that Mr. Gleason would never flog Corrigan. Stephen then thinks of Mr. Gleason. He agrees that Gleason will not flog Corrigan severely, but tacitly disagrees with Fleming's verdict. Mr. Gleason would be merciful, but not for looks. He will be merciful because he is a kind person.

- Stephen gets punished by Father Doran

Stephen and the boys are in a Latin class led by the intimidating Father Arnal. A horrified Father Dolan walks in search of a boy to punish as a role model for the rest of the class. Stephen does not work because his glasses are broken. When Father Doran sees him, Stephen explains that his glasses are broken, but Father Doran berates him for breaking his glasses on purpose. He rows Stephen's hand.

- Stephen is eager even though fearful to raise his voice against injustice

Stephen is humiliated by the punishment and the injustice meted out to him. After class, his friends encourage him to complain to the principal. However, he is frightened when he is at home during the break and heads to the president's office. He walks through an intimidating hallway with sacred imagery and finally summons the courage to knock on Father Conmee's door. He nervously explains what happened to his father. Father Conmee promises to talk to Father Dolan about it and sends Stephen on his way. As Stephen heads to the playground, his friends surround him, eager for news. He tells them what happened and they lift him up in the air and scream with joy, they throw his hat into the air and celebrate Stephen like a hero.

Stephen spends his summers at his parents' house in Blackrock, a town near Dublin. His old uncle Charles is his constant companion. Uncle Charles smokes stinky cigarettes and takes Stephen on long walks. Stephen also spends part of the day with Mike Flynn, an old



- It is summer vacation and Stephen decides to spend it with his family

friend of Uncle Charles and Stephen's father. Mike Flynn has coached famous runners, and Stephen himself has been coached a bit. Stephen also goes to church every day with his Uncle Charles, where his uncle prayed fervently. Stephen respects his uncle's piety, but does not see what need or desire would make Uncle Charles pray so fervently. Stephen also takes weekly physical exams with his father and grandfather. Together he travels miles.

- Stephen is somewhat bored

He becomes fascinated by *The Count of Monte Cristo*, imagining living through the hero's adventures, culminating in him rejecting his old love, Mercedes. A neighbor boy named Stephen and Aubrey Mills lead a pack of boys and go on an adventure together. In the fall, Stephen is happy not to have to return to Clongowes. But he also knows that this change is due to his father's financial problems. The neighbourhood boys have broken up, but he and Aubrey still hang out together. Stephen still feels different from other children. Sometimes their games annoy him. He has a vague notion of his yearning image. He is also expecting some sort of transformation, but is not exactly sure what that will entail.

- The family shifts to Dublin

In the season of fall, the family moves into a run-down house in Dublin. Stephen understands that her father is in some trouble, but there is little he can do for Stephen. Uncle Charles is getting more and more absent-minded. Moving is depressing, and Dublin is a world of new urban experiences at the Christmas party. He is in love with his neighbour's girl. But he does not have the courage to kiss her. The next day, he tries to write a love poem for her. He is to be transferred to Belvedere School.

- Stephen was a good academic at Belvedere

As a teenager, Stephen was a reluctant leader, living in his own way, a successful essayist and actor at his school. Stephen talks to himself as he prepares to take the stage and play his part. Outside, he meets Wallis and Heron, two other boys at the Belvedere. Heron is both his rival and friend, as Stephen and Heron are the two smartest boys in the class. Herron and Wallis tease Stephen about the girls in the audience. He thinks of the girls sitting, recalling their shy touch and his unfulfilled desire to kiss her. A boy comes to tell Stephen to get dressed and ready for his part. As the curtain begins to rise, Stephen reflects on the stupidity of his role and



feels humiliated. After the play is over, he goes for a walk without a word, fidgety looking for something. The clear night air, occasionally heavy with the smell of the city, calms him down and he returns.

- Stephen wastes the money he got as a prize

Stephen won a large sum of money in an essay contest, and instead of saving the money, he started spending endlessly, pampering himself by buying useless presents for everyone. He was trying to create a sense of elegance and wealth with his money, but in reality they are as meagre as ever. He also hopes to use his gifts to get closer to his mother and many of his younger siblings. However, he still feels isolated from them. He wanders the streets of Dublin alone, struggling with his intense sexual desires. He accepts the prostitute's proposal. His time with her is his first sexual experience.

- Stephen indulges in all kinds of pleasures

Stephen continues to see prostitutes and enters a period of deep turmoil and mental paralysis. Though he considers his actions grossly sinful, the idea of his eternal ruin strikes him as strangely indifferent. He continues his studies and duties in the Society of the Blessed Virgin, strangely deaf to his own hypocrisy. He finds himself a totally uncomfortable person, as if breaking the rules has completely ruined his self-control. He started out with lust, and became tainted with all the seven deadly sins. Saint Francis Xavier's Feast is approaching, and every year the Belvedere boys go to the spirits three days before the feast. They were holding a retreat.

During each three-day meditation, Stephen hears a fiery sermon about the torments of hell and the punishments imposed by God, which is just but severe. The first day's sermon speaks of the inevitability of judgment. A God who has given many opportunities in life to repent will change from a merciful God to a just God. Stephen becomes scared and sick. The sermon seems to have been written especially for him. Facing his own sins, he is afraid to confess to God, who is too terrifying, and Our Lady, who is too pure. He envisions being returned to God through Emma, a girl who was trying to write poetry. She seems accessible enough. The second day's sermon is about the incredible physical pain of hell. Stephen feels he must confess, but he is too embarrassed to do so. The sermon on the third day speaks of the torments of hell. That night, Stephen



- Stephen recognises his sins

- Stephen tries hard to come back to the path of spirituality

- Stephen questions various aspects of religion

- Stephen understands that the life of a priest is entirely different from his desire for freedom

is haunted by a hellish nightmare. The dreams are so intense that he wakes up and throws up. He is looking for a true anonymous confessional church. Eventually he finds out and confesses everything. When he leaves the church, the world seems to be reborn. He decided to start a godly new life.

Stephen becomes almost fanatical and devotes his daily life to prayer and meditation on Catholic teachings. He dispels any doubts or concerns he may have with the idea that all will be revealed at a later stage of mental development. He prays fervently and attends Mass every day. He wishes to be possessed by a great spiritual love for God and His creatures.

However, Stephen's former independence soon begins to reassert itself. He finds it difficult to maintain a state of holy tranquility. His various methods of self-discipline make him quite irritating. He does not become more merciful or kind to his family and peers. He thinks of the various clerics he knows and how they seem to be as subject to human pettiness and irritability as anyone else. He also has some doubts about the rather strict Catholic compartmentalisation of various virtues and wisdom.

The school principal calls Stephen to his office. Noticing Stephen's piety and academic talent, the principal wants Stephen to consider the priesthood. The director tries to convince Stephen of the vocation by explaining the priest's incredible responsibilities and powers. The idea is not without appeal to Stephen. But even after he left the ministry, he continued to think about life as a priest. He thinks of a long life pondering vague questions of Catholic doctrine. More vividly, he imagines the old smell of Clongowes halls and how he spent his life wandering down corridors like this. Eventually, he finds such a life repulsive. A priest's life would conflict with Stephen's aspirations for freedom and independence. On his way home, he sees a neat shrine of Our Lady. As he walks down the path that leads to his house, he notices a faint smell of rotten cabbage coming from his riverside kitchen garden. He recognises that his own soul belongs not to the order of the Virgin Mary, but to this kind of disorder. He prefers the simple smells and sensations of life and dwellings.

- Stephen's family again shifts their home

At home, he looks at his brothers and sisters and reflects on how all they were denied was given in vain. Still, they do not hate him. No doubt another mistake made by Steven's father will see the Dedalus family move on again. The children begin to sing, and Stephen, behind the hope and innocence of their voices, feels tired and deeply saddened.

- Stephen thinks about the mythical character Dedalus

Stephen is then waiting for his father and a school teacher who went to the town building on Stephen's behalf to get information about the university. Stephen gets impatient and goes out for a walk. His idea of going to college excites him, but he is still unsure what his profession will be. He meets some schoolmates swimming in the sea. Seeing their scrawny teenage bodies makes him a little uneasy and reminds him of his discomfort with his adolescent body. They call him out to swim, but he does not go. When they mention his name, he thinks of the great builder of Greek mythology, Dedalus, who created a pair of wings that allowed him to escape from the island's prison. He thinks that he has it, and imagines himself floating in the air.

- The financial situation of the family worsens day by day

Years have passed. Stephen is studying in college. He is in the kitchen with his mother, who worries that college has changed him, looking at the pawn ticket he needed for his family's life. He is late for class, too. From upstairs, his father can be heard asking one of the sisters if the "lazy brother bitch" is still out. Stephen heads to class unscathed by his father's remarks. In another sense, he is deeply impoverished by his family's increasingly desperate financial situation.

It is an afternoon in the life of the college student: Stephen is going to lectures, typically bored. He meets his friends: Cranly, one of his high-quality friends; Lynch, an amazing natured boy who listens to Stephen's idea of aesthetics; Davin, an easy boy from the United States of America with a top notch love for Ireland; Temple, an extremely pretentious boy who admires Stephen; and McCann, a chum of Stephen's who tells Stephen he is delinquent and antidemocratic and who attempts to get Stephen to sign a petition for wide-spread peace. The college is a place for boys to agitate themselves over politics and Irish nationalism; Stephen desires not to be a part of it. He refuses to sign McCann's petition. He is

- Stephen had no interest in Irish politics

more and more absorbed in his thoughts, approximately aesthetics, thoughts encouraged with the aid of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the works of Thomas Aquinas. From his morning classes, we see that he has grown extremely annoyed with the recurring nature of university life. During the lecture, interest wanders back to his thoughts about artwork. Later, at some stage in a hurling match, his buddy Davin attempts to get Stephen to be extra sociable. He additionally attempts to get Stephen to be an extra patriotic Irishman. Stephen has a deep scepticism of Irish politics: he figures out that the Irish have by no means had a hero whom they failed to betray or depart for another. Davin continues to implore Stephen to be one of them. Later on in the match, Stephen explains his theories of aesthetics to an obliging Lynch. Highlights consist of Stephen's definitions of pity and terror; his delineation between static artwork (the elegant artwork that invites contemplation without spurring the viewer to action) and kinetic artwork (artwork that moves the viewer to do something); and his definitions of lyrical, epic, and dramatic shape. He hails the dramatic shape as advanced due to the fact that the artist refines his persona out of the work, leaving simply the item for the contemplation of the audience. As he walks to the library, he sees Emma. Stephen is speechless as always. He feels like going in her direction due to the fact that he thinks she flirted with a clergyman on the way and mocked him at his lower back. Even his anger appears like a form of homage.

- Stephen meets Cranly

But he dreams of her that night and is inspired to write her another poem. It had been ten years since he had managed to write his first poem to Emma. This time it works, but he does not send it. Later, Stephen sits on the steps of the library. He dreamily observes the birds flying in the air. Some guys nearby start arguing about politics. Stephen goes to find Cranly; he finds him in the library, playing chess with Dixon, a medical student. Stephen makes it clear that he wants to talk to Cranly, but Cranly does not seem to be in a hurry. The boys have a long conversation on the porch. The assembled boys include Temple, O'Keefe, Goggins, Dixon, Cranly and a few others. Stephen says nothing during the entire speech. The boys trade insults and boast; Stephen is distracted from their conversation when Emma walks by. Again he is between worship and cursing. In his

wake, he leaves Stephen to think about poetry and beauty. Meanwhile, Temple and Cranly engage in a war of insults, culminating in Cranly chasing Temple with a stick. Stephen asks Cranly to walk with him so that they can talk. This time Cranly obliges him.

Stephen asks Cranly for advice. He is in conflict with his mother, who wants him to participate in Easter rituals. Stephen no longer considers himself a Catholic. Cranly advises him to move on, believe it or not. He should do it because it costs him nothing and his mother likes it; but the proposal of Stephen and Cranly seems a compromise of his integrity. Stephen and Cranly talk at length about religion, politics, family and Ireland. Under Cranly's intelligent questioning, Stephen admits that he sometimes fears that the Roman Catholic Church is right and that he will be judged and sent to hell. But he still has to choose as he chooses. He realises with sadness that his friendship with Cranly will end when he leaves Ireland; he accepts that he can be alone. He must be independent. He is not afraid to be alone. He is not afraid to make a mistake, even if that mistake sends him to hell.

- Cranly advises him to be independent

The novel ends with a series of diary entries recounting Stephen's last days in Ireland. He describes a meeting with Emma where they actually talk; he is surprised that she liked him that night, which is a new feeling. Stephen is excited at the thought of leaving Ireland. Between their diaries, there are small writing tests. Before leaving, her mother tells her that she hopes she can learn something about the human heart; this is also his wish. He decides to "forge in the forge of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." He summons the world's mythical artist, Dedalus.

- The novel ends with a reference to the mythical Dedalus

3.2.2 Themes

3.2.2.1 Realisation of the Self

The story is about exploring the inner self. James Joyce used the Epiphany technique for this in the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. During childhood, the boy is unable to understand his abilities. Indeed, his thinking and manner are different from others, but he does not understand why he is different. In fact, he asks himself this question again and again and the answer he finds in the last days of his life. At the beginning of the novel, everyone criticises the child. His early life was



not good, but later he realises that he was made for a greater purpose, although the author does not say this directly, but using the technique of symbolism.

- From his childhood, he used to think differently from other kids

There are very few children who think as the boy thought in the early days of his life. For example, he thinks that words are of no use until the listener or reader has a picture of the symbols in his mind. The first part of the novel is about materialistic thinking, although the child keeps away from the crowd. From the beginning of this long story, the readers notice that Stephen's imagination is completely different from that of others. He creates extraordinary word pictures in his mind.

The Pandyrbat case is also one of the most important in this regard. The young boy grows up too soon. He understands that he must stand up to injustice. He prepares a verbal complaint and delivers it to the headmaster, persuading him to take action against the father, but he soon realises that he has been deceived. No action was taken against the father. It also creates hatred for the system in his heart. Stream of consciousness is a technique that allows a person to think about the events of the past. James Joyce uses this technique to show that when a boy thinks about these events at a young age, he realises the mistakes of his childhood. He realises that he is already an artist, even if he was not aware of it. The story is about Stephen's realisation, which seems sudden but is not; it is slower and takes time. Thus, self-realisation and self-knowledge are the two main themes of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

- Self-realisation

3.2.2.2 Religion and Politics

Religion and politics are the most important subjects in the novel. Every time we realise that politics surpasses religion. Stephen always has war in his mind when he commits sin. For example, he commits adultery and suddenly realises his mistake after listening to sermons. He imagines that he is in hell and decides to repent for his sin, so he goes to a nearby church and confesses his guilt. This gives him great relief and peace of mind now, and to make it permanent he begins to attend churches.

- Commits sins, confess the sin

There is also an incident in the novel when Stephen decides to become a priest. The manager calls Stephen into the office and offers him priesthood. He describes the priest's work in a way that really fascinates Stephen.

- Stephen decides to become a priest

- Religion and politics are the main themes

- Language play by James Joyce

The manager says that God chose Stephen to preach his sermons. He also tells him that it is the most desired duty and that everyone wants to be a priest; however, not everyone has this opportunity.

Stephen is drawn to the life of a priest. First, he agrees to become a priest. He wonders what powers and knowledge he would get after becoming a priest. Later, he realises that it is hard work because becoming a priest would mean he would lose his freedom. Religion is somehow related to politics, because when he thinks of becoming a priest, he imagines more power and less spiritual wisdom. Religion and politics are the two main themes of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that run through the whole story in parallel.

3.2.3 Analysis

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is a novel by Irish modernist writer James Joyce. It follows the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of a young Catholic Irishman, Stephen Dedalus, and his struggle against the limitations of his culture. The portrait can be placed in the tradition of bildungsroman, novels that trace the personal development of a protagonist, usually from childhood to adulthood. Joyce compares teenage rebellion and experimentation to the dark influence of Stephen's Catholic education. For example, his surprise sexual experience in Chapter Two is followed by the famous "hellfire sermon" in Chapter Three, which makes him fear for his soul. The name Dedalus refers to Ovid's mythological tale of Daedalus - "the old artist" - and his son Icarus, who flies too close to the sun. This image comes to mind when Stephen says to his friend Davin: "When a human soul is born on this earth, nets are thrown over him to prevent him from escaping. You talk to me about nation, language and religion. Those networks. Joyce traces the different stages of Stephen's development, changing the style of his language as the protagonist grows. Joyce's language play traces Stephen's phonetic, linguistic and intellectual growth from the beginning of the baby story to the aesthetic conversation at the end. By the end of the novel, Stephen has decided to follow his calling as an artist and leave Ireland "to forge my soul, the unmade conscience of my race."



- The novel represents Joyce's artistic development

The novel in many ways represents Joyce's own artistic development, and Stephen presents fictionalised versions of many of his author's experiences: the episode surrounding the death of Charles Stuart Parnell, the disgraced leader of Ireland, has many parallels to the plot of that incident caused in the Joyce household.

- Künstlerroman

James Joyce uses a technique called *Künstlerroman* in his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. *Künstlerroman* is a Greek expression meaning the novel of an artist (the *Bildungsroman* of an artist). Thus, while *Bildungsroman* refers to a special type of novel that focuses on the moral and psychological growth of a protagonist or hero, *Künstlerroman* refers to a type of novel that focuses on the moral and psychological growth of an artist.

- Semi-autobiographical

The novel is semi-autobiographical because the character, and way of thinking of the main character, Stephen, are quite similar to that of Joyce. In the novel, we find different stages of Stephen's life from early youth to becoming an artist. However, he is not a mature artist and lacks proper understanding. According to Cordell Yee, Stephen's lack of understanding shows that until the end of the portrait he is not fundamentally an artist. He is immature: a candidate for world artist is also a theorist.

- Stephen does not take things for granted

He further argues that Joyce deliberately misapplies the teachings of Aquinas when he puts them in Stephen's mouth. Stephen has an inquiring mind like a child, he wonders about the world and shows a philosophical bent. He does not take things for granted and seems to understand the difference between nature and convention. He often thinks about language and wonders why certain words are used, why they mean what they mean.

Summarised Overview

James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* charts the intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth of a young Catholic Irishman named Stephen Dedalus and his struggle against the limitations his culture places on him. *Portrait* fits into the tradition of the bildungsroman/ künstlerroman, which are books that follow the protagonist's personal growth from childhood to adulthood. The story mixes the rebelliousness and adventure of adolescence with the miserable outcome of Stephen's Catholic education through the use of the stream-of-consciousness writing style. By changing his style of writing as his protagonist matures, Joyce illustrates the various stages of Stephen's growth. Stephen's phonetic, linguistic, and mental growth are mirrored by Joyce's language play, which starts with baby gibberish and ends with a lofty artistic debate. Stephen, finally, makes up his mind to leave Ireland and pursue his destiny as an artist in order to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."

Assignments

1. Comment on the significance of the title *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*.
2. Discuss "stream of consciousness" in relation to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
3. Trace the psychological and creative development of Stephen Dedalus as an artist.
4. Find out the autobiographical elements in the novel.
5. Explore the themes of escape in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce.

Suggested Readings

1. Eliot, T.S. *Introducing James Joyce*. Faber, 1964.
2. Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Wordsworth, 1992.



References

1. Tindall, William York. *James Joyce: His Way of Interpreting the Modern World*. Grove, 1960.
2. Parrinder, Patrick. *James Joyce*. Cambridge UP, 1984.

Section 2 Howards End

- E. M. Forster

Discussion

E. M. Forster, a very famous English writer and literary critic, was born on New Year's Day 1879 in London. His father, an architect, died young, leaving Forster and his mother enough money to satisfy him for the rest of his life. In 1883, they moved into the Hertfordshire house that inspired *Howards End* (1910). Forster also visited India twice, in 1912 and again in 1921. The tour helped him begin and complete *A Passage to India* (1924). It has since been read as the most notable early text of postcolonialism. Differences between the two families, a highly evangelical father with a strong sense of moral responsibility and a more desperate and generous mother, provided enduring insight into the nature of domestic tensions. Tonbridge School in Kent was responsible for many of his later criticisms of the British public and private school system. *Howards End* was published in 1910 and was E. M. Forster's fourth novel, cementing his status as an honoured author. The novel tackles some of life's most serious questions, including how people treat each other and what values they should live by. The famous book about Forster and his life Lionel Trilling, author of *Howards End*, suggests that *Howards End* is a novel about who will inherit England, and that the title Home serves as a microcosm of Great Britain, young women of British and German descent who appreciate literature, art and personal connection, and the Bloomsbury Group to which Forster belonged to. Like Margaret and Helen Schlegel, Forster sought the inner life often referred to in his novels.

- The novel tackles some of life's most serious questions



3.2.4 Summary

► About Howards End

The young, beautiful Helen Schlegel left her London home to visit the Wilcox family estate in Howards End. Helen and her sister Margaret had earlier met Mr. Wilcox and his wife while traveling in Germany. Margaret was also invited to Howards End but stayed at home to look after her 16-year-old brother Tibby, who has hay fever. Helen sends several letters to Margaret of Howards End, describing the beautiful mansion and the energetic, materialistic Wilcoxes. Her last letter shocks Margaret when she reads it: Helen is in love with Paul, Wilcox's youngest son.

► The end of the love affair

Margaret reads a letter to Aunt Juley, who has come to help take care of Tibby. Aunt Juley is outraged and thinks the engagement should probably be called off. He convinces Margaret to let him explore Howards End. Margaret takes him to the train station and sees him on the way; returning home, however, Helen sends a telegram announcing that the love affair is over and asking not to tell anyone about what happened.

► The influence of Germany on the nieces

On the way to Howards End, Aunt Juley thinks about her quirky nieces who value art, idealism and relationships above everything else. Margaret and Helen, the children of her sister Emily and a German professor who moved to England, live alone since the death of their parents, but their house is constantly full of writers, artists, thinkers and friends. Girls are interested in forward-looking subjects like women's suffrage and socialism. Despite their ties to Germany and the growing tension between the English Imperial and German Imperial powers, Aunt Juley continues to consider the Schlegels "thoroughly English."

Aunt Juley meets Charles Wilcox, Paul's older brother, after the train arrives. Aunt Juley mistakes him for Paul and asks him about the engagement. This is the first time Charles hears about the engagement. Furious, she declares that Paul has no money, cannot marry, and must go to Nigeria to make his fortune. When Charles moves Aunt Juley to Howards End, they argue all the way over whether the Schlegels are good enough for the Wilcoxes and vice versa. At Howards End, Charles confronts Paul, but the ethereal Mrs. Wilcox ends the argument. Helen returns home to London with Aunt Juley. Margaret and



- Presents the two families

Helen discuss what happened-Helen and Paul simply kissed passionately one night, after Helen grew to love the Wilcox family-and the power of human emotion in general. Aunt Juley selectively remembers her role in the incident, so that in later years she thinks that the Wilcox case was the only time she could really help her sister's children.

- Incidents at Beethoven's Fifth Symphony

The Schlegels take Aunt Juley, their German cousin and suitor of a relative, to a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. There, Margaret meets and chats with a lower-class young man named Leonard Bast. Tibby watches the music on her knees, and Aunt Juley taps her foot. During the last two movements of the symphony, Helen imagines goblins dancing across the universe, implying that there is no bravery or heroism in the world. Moved, she runs out of the room and accidentally takes Leonard's umbrella. After the concert, Leonard sends Margaret back to the Schlegel house on Wickham Place to get an umbrella. In Wickham Place, Helen accidentally damages an umbrella, prompting Leonard to rush to his shame. The Schlegels continue to talk about art and literature but are a little worried about their meeting.

- Character of Leonard

Leonard, on the other hand, is poor, but not hopeless: he has just enough education and enough property to convince himself that he is no worse than the rich man. Walking away from the Schlegels, he passes a fellow clerk in the street and nods to him. He enters his dim basement apartment, accidentally breaks a picture frame surrounding a photograph of a smiling woman, and begins to read Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*, hoping to learn to understand English prose. His lover Jacky, the smiling woman in the photo, enters; thirty-three years old, she is chubby, flamboyant and vulgar and loudly demands to know when he will marry her. He repeats his promise to marry her on her 21st birthday. After a meagre dinner, Jacky goes to bed and Leonard ignores the voice calling him and continues reading Ruskin's book.

- The Wilcoxes have taken up residence in the Wickham Place

The day after the concert, Aunt Juley delivers what she thinks is terrible news to Margaret: the Wilcoxes have taken up residence in the Wickham Place building across the street from Schlegel. Margaret is shocked and says that Helen's feelings for Paul are long dead; Aunt Juley claims the presence of the Wilcoxes is a disaster.

When Helen comes in and learns what happened, she turns red with rage and believes Aunt Juley's theory. Fortunately, Helen is planning a trip with her German cousin Frieda and will be away after the New Year.

- Margaret apologizes for offending Mrs. Wilcox

Shortly after the Wilcoxes move into their new apartment, Mrs. Wilcox calls Margaret. Margaret, who is not at home when Mrs. Wilcox shows up, does not answer the phone but instead writes a letter to Mrs. Wilcox. Wilcox suggested that since Helen and Paul had put them in a difficult position, it would be better if they did not meet. Mrs. Wilcox writes that Margaret was rude - she just wanted to tell Margaret that Paul had gone to Nigeria. Feeling terribly guilty, Margaret rushes to the Wilcoxes, where she apologizes for offending Mrs. Wilcox.

- Mr. Wilcox plans to move to another house, and lends Schlegel his old house

Margaret is vacationing in Swanage with Aunt Julie, and receives a letter from Mr. Wilcox that he plans to move to another house and is willing to lend Schlegel his old house. He asks Margaret to come and examine it. Margaret has a sudden hunch that he is about to propose to her, but she dismisses the idea as ludicrous. Margaret is overwhelmed with her surprise delight. She promises to write him back the next day and returns to Swanage to discuss it with Helen.

- Leonard is the new name for the common poor

Helen is horrified. He thinks that Wilcox men are made of "panic and emptiness" under the guise of competence and confidence. The next day, Leonard visits the Schlegel family to apologize for their intrusion. He tries to comment, but Jackie refuses to explain why he thought he was in Wickham Place in the first place. Eventually, he gives up on his uncomfortable feelings and starts talking about trying to get back to nature by walking all night and most of the next day. The excited Schlegels believe they have made a heroic attempt to break through the boredom of everyday life and mentally connect with reality. That night, Margaret and Helen go to dinner, where they discuss giving money to the poor. They talk about Leonard so much that everyone at the party starts using his name as a sort of abbreviation for the common poor. They later decide to sell his fortune after Mrs. Wilcox's death. They meet Mr. Wilcox who tells them that he and Evie rented Howard's End to the disabled and moved into a much larger house. When they tell him about Leonard, he warns them that the



Porphyryon Fire Insurance Company, of which Leonard is an employee, is a weak company that will collapse before Christmas. Schlegel advises Leonard to find a new job.

They invited Leonard to the meeting, but the meeting was a disaster. He associates Schlegel with abstract concepts of wealth and romance and discusses business with them. When Mr. Wilcox and Evie suddenly arrive, Leonard loses his temper and accuses Margaret and Helen of trying to get the details from the insurance company and make money for themselves. He leaves, and the Schlegel brothers have to play with Wilcox's puppy. When the Schlegel family's lease at Wickham Place expires, Margaret begins a desperate search for a new home. He hopes to find it before his brother leaves for his annual visit to Aunt Julie, but is unsuccessful. She dines with Mr. Wilcox, Evie and Percy Cahill, Evie's fiancée, and she finds that she and Mr. Wilcox have become true friends. He and Tibby take him to a fancy restaurant where all the people are discussing psychic auras and astral planes, which he cheerfully tolerates. It is finally time to visit Aunt Julie in Swanage, but the Schlegel family has yet to find a new home. Determined to maintain her independence, she believes that love should strengthen friendships, not change them. Mr. Wilcox immediately takes her engagement ring to Swanage and walks near the sea with Margaret. Margaret realises that Mr. Wilcox is afraid of her feelings. His motto is "Focus" and hers is "Just connect." He suddenly kisses her and she thinks she can help him if she can teach him how to combine his passionate subconscious with a modest and moral exterior, but he is stubborn. When Helen informs him that she has received a letter from Leonard, on Mr. Wilcox's advice, he leaves Porphyryon for a much lower paying job at the bank. Helen is outraged: Mr. Wilcox had just said that porphyryon was doomed.

- Margaret begins a desperate search for a new home

- Charles blames Dolly for the engagement

When Charles receives his father's note announcing the engagement, he blames Dolly. If she had not introduced Evie to her fiancé, Mr. Wilcox would not have been lonely and would not have proposed to Margaret. Charles wants Margaret to get Howards End and says he will tolerate her behaviour.

Margaret and Helen discuss Margaret's and Henry's engagement. She admits that she does not like him,



► Margaret's anger

but she promises that she will try to be polite to him. Margaret moves with Henry to the Hilton, where Carlos and Dolly are married. After dinner, she moves to Howards End. When they reach there, they find they have forgotten her key, and when Henry returns to pick him up, Margaret is left alone on the porch in the rain. He tried to open the door and found it open. Looking out over the empty house, he thinks it is like England, like the giant elm tree outside, an England that neither Henry nor his artist friend could understand. When he opened the staircase door, he was surprised to see an elderly woman coming down. The local nurse, Ms. Avery, says Margaret surprised her. He thought Margaret was Mrs. Wilcox's ghost. Evie, frustrated and angry with her father's engagement, postpones her own wedding to August as a distraction.

► The car incidents

Margaret travels to Oniton with Henry and some friends from the Wilcox family. There, Wilcox has just rented an old mansion. After getting out of the train, they get in the car. Suddenly Margaret's car stops, and the men drop the women out and force them into another car. Margaret wants to know what is going on, and she finds out her car was hit by a dog. Margaret insists on going outside so she can return to the crime scene, but Charles condescendingly refuses to stop - he says she should not see anything. Angry Margaret jumps out of the car, injuring his left arm. As he approaches the scene, he finds that his car did not hit the dog. He hit a cat, she apologizes for jumping out of the car and tells Henry that she was an idiot because she knew to associate her actions with female tension.

After Evie's unforgettable wedding, the couple leave for their honeymoon, while Margaret and Henry return to Oniton to her manor. Here, they find three grumpy people waiting on the porch. Henry thinks they must be townspeople and Margaret promises to let them go. As he approaches, we see a shocked Helen with Leonard and Jacky Bast. Helen angrily claims that Leonard has lost his job at the bank and is destitute. He says it was their fault for advising him to leave Porfirio. Margaret, furious with Helen for dragging Bast into the country, agrees to talk to Henry about giving Leonard the job. He asks her out indirectly and she agrees to speak to Leonard. However, when he approaches, her drunk Jacky

- The revelation that Henry had an affair with Jacky

calls him “chicken” and asks if he loves her. Margaret is embarrassed, but Henry looks too humiliating and awkward. He angrily tells Margaret that his plan will work and she will be released from their engagement. Confused, Margaret brings up the subject and discovers that Jackie was Henry’s mistress ten years ago. Henry believes Margaret dragged Bast to Oniton to reveal their secret. He thinks it’s Mrs. Wilcox’s tragedy, not his own.

Helen and Leonard talk about Henry at the hotel while Jackie sleeps in another room. Helen theorises with him about the concept of “I.” Some people, she said, lack the central “I” in their brains. Mr. Wilcox is such a person, he says, and perhaps the world depends on such people. Leonard complains that life is about money, but argues it is not because the idea of death makes people understand its true meaning. You will receive his two bills one by one.

In Oniton, Margaret ponders how to react to the news of Henry’s decades-long love affair. He visits her in the morning. He tells her about an encounter with Jacky in Cyprus, where her affair took place and Margaret says she has forgiven him. However, he is surprised to learn that both Helen and Bast have left the hotel. He worries that he made a mistake in sending Helen a very critical letter about Leonard and Leonard, telling him that Henry has no job. Tibby, away from Oniton, is at her flat in Oxford, where they have been close friends for a year. Helen burst into tears and she told Margaret and Henry all about Rod. Tibby is tolerant, and she agrees to follow certain guidelines. Helen herself cannot bear to see Margaret and she embarks on a long journey to Germany. He asks Tibby to give Bast £5,000 of his own money, a significant portion of his fortune. However, Leonard refused the cheque and by the time Helen was able to text Tibby to try again, Bast was kicked out of the apartment. Helen reinvests his own money and becomes even wealthier than before. When the Wickham Place lease expires, the house falls into disrepair. All the furniture was sent to Howards End, and Henry generously provided storage. Henry and Margaret are married and are moving to London to live in the Wilcox house for a while, intending to find a bigger house soon. Time passes and Henry becomes more and more happy in choosing Margaret as her wife. He’s smart and obedient.

- Henry becomes happy in choosing Margaret as his wife



- Leonard decides to confess

After his indiscretion with Helen, Leonard is plagued with relentless remorse that eats into him. One day, seeing Margaret and Tibby in the cathedral, he decides to confess his own wrongdoings to her, hoping to save his conscience. But he knows nothing about Margaret, not even that she is married to Henry Wilcox. He finds out that she and Henry have gone to Howards End. It is the same day that Helen finds out she is pregnant while Henry and Margaret are having a terrible argument.

- Leonard dies

The next day, Leonard took a train to Hilton and walked to Howards End. Along the way, he falls into a kind of dazed state, and his life seems to turn into tragedy. His grief seems to awaken something greater within him. Meanwhile, Charles has gone to Howards End to force Margaret and Helen to leave. Seeing him, Charles repeats his father's desire to "beat him within an inch of his life," grabs Schlegel's large German sword, and begins attacking Leonard with the flat part of the blade. Leonard trips backwards on a bookshelf, which falls on top of him, covering him with books. Leonard suffers heart failure and dies. Charles leaves the police station and stops to tell them that Leonard has had a heart attack. The police tell him they need to investigate.

- The cause of death is revealed

Margaret answers a police officer's question, stating that Charles' actions may have hastened Leonard's death, but they cannot have caused it. She decides to go to Germany with Helen. Henry shocks her by telling her that the police have found that it was a murder. Charles will serve three years in prison. Henry is shocked. On the verge of a nervous breakdown, he asks Margaret to take care of him.

Fourteen months later, Margaret, Henry, Helen, and Helen's child are living happily in Howards End. Henry and Helen have grown to like each other and are now good friends. Helen's little boy is happily playing with the village children. London is barely visible on the horizon. Henry is still frail and exhausted due to the sudden confrontation with his inner weakness. He calls all the children to Howards End and tells them that Dolly will take Charles' place and leave the house to Margaret. The children accept the dictation, but are disdainful of Paul, who has returned from Nigeria and runs his father's business. As they leave, Dolly comments that it is strange that Mrs. Wilcox wanted Margaret to get Howard End,



- Mrs. Wilcox wishes Margaret to own Howards End

and now she intends to do it after all. Margaret asks Henry about Dolly's comments, and Henry reveals that his wife wants to leave Howard's End. She tells him that he did not do anything wrong to keep it away from her. Helen runs into her room with her baby and happily announces that the meadow has been mowed and there will be "more hay than ever before."

3.2.5 Themes

3.2.5.1 The rich and the poor

The theme of the rich and the poor, and the duty of the rich to the poor is a recurring theme in *Howards End*. It shows how we define different kinds of life. The Schlegel and Wilcox families represent two different sides of the English upper class. The Schlegel family was born with the privilege of being able to live comfortably without working. Each year, they receive a certain amount of money from their investment. When asked if she supported the rich or the poor, Margaret explained: "For wealth. Money forever!" She said that "wealth" meant freedom—the freedom to do what the Schlegels wanted to do with their time, including exploring the world of art and culture and traveling. One does not have to worry about where their rent or their next meal will come from. Just because she is wealthy does not mean Margaret is callous or inconsiderate. She is an empathetic and thoughtful person who wants to solve society's problems and strives to connect with others. But she is not always fully aware of how big the gap between the rich and the poor is.

- Margaret's character

The Wilcox, on the other hand, lack empathy for the suffering of others. Mr. Wilcox is a self-made businessman. For him and his family, money equals status and power. Their many cars and homes not only exude their privilege, but also give them a sense of superiority over others who are less fortunate. They see themselves as predators that they plan to convert, but they are actually predators themselves. They are like ruthless pragmatists who evaluate every person or event to see how it might improve or worsen their situation. Their money comes from a variety of sources, but provides both families with what Margaret calls the "Island of Gold," protecting them from the sea of poverty that so many others suffer.

- Luxurious life

- Different perspectives of different characters regarding wealth

- Significance of love

The true price of poverty is depicted in the novel of Mr. Bast, a scribe striving to better himself through music and literature. He quits the job on the advice of Mr. Wilcox, who turns out to be wrong in telling him that the company Mr. Bast works for will fail. This leads to a humiliating descent into extreme poverty. This poverty is a trap that robs Mr. Bast of his potential. Mr. Bast does not have the time or resources for the further education he most desires. Instead, he struggles to achieve his ends, eventually coming to believe himself to be helpless and hopeless. Bast agrees that the gap between rich and poor is inevitable and will eventually destroy him. The responsibility of the rich to the poor is often discussed in the novel. The Schlegel and Wilcox families are at odds. Mr. and Mrs. Schlegel consider it their duty to help Mr. Bast in any way they can by offering encouragement and advice. Helen tries to get him and his wife Jackie out of financial trouble by buying back his belongings after his eviction, offering them half of his fortune. Margaret is also in favor of giving a steady and reliable income to the poor rather than giving them small handouts. Mr. Wilcox, on the other hand, believes that the existence of the rich and the poor is inevitable, and therefore he thinks he has no responsibility to change things. He believes that “if wealth were distributed fairly, within a few years the rich and the poor would be alike.”

3.2.5.2 Love

This novel is all about love - love of all kinds: love between brothers, love between husband and wife, love between soul mates, love of motherland, and love for everything and everyone. Though there is absence of love among people generally and this novel challenges us to try to love others and ourselves more.

3.2.5.3 Connections

Connection is perhaps the most important theme of this novel. Because the words “just connect” form that epigraph. Connectivity is required on many levels. Connecting with yourself is so important, and it is most evident in Mr. Wilcox’s personal development. Margaret knows that Mr. Wilcox could be a better man if he could combine prose and passion within himself, instead of devoting his life to practical and business matters. It shows the importance of connecting with others in



- To maintain connectivity, we must contemplate on our inner life instead of relying on our outer life

meaningful, not superficial ways. To achieve this, we must contemplate on our inner life instead of relying on our outer life. For example, when Leonard Bast talks to the Schlegel family after an evening walk, he mentions many authors and books, but the Schlegel family are only interested in his personal take on what happened. Schlegel and Wilcox represent different approaches to life. The novel brings these two concepts together through the marriage of Margaret and Mr. Wilcox and the reconciliation of Howards End. The road to that ultimate connection is filled with drama and tragedy, but the end result is peace, happiness and stability. In this way, Margaret, Wilcox, and Helen learn to connect with each other and embrace their differences.

3.2.5.4 Inner Life Verses Outer Life

Margaret and Helen Schlegel celebrate their inner selves. In their opinion, the inner life is what defines and shapes a person. Therefore, accepting and understanding it is fundamental to building identity and trust. Embracing the inner life includes celebrating Margaret's efforts to understand Mr. Wilcox and grounding herself at home, as Margaret and Helen do when unpacking furniture in Howards End. Throughout the novel, outer life is often associated with "Telegram and Fury." Wilcox, and Charles, in particular, personify beings dominated by outside life. For example, after a brief romance with Helen, Paul quickly returns to the focus of his physical life and regrets that his emotions reflected in his actions. The entire Cox family is surprised and angry at Paul's impulsive behaviour. Helen and Margaret are reunited after eight months without speaking. In order to reconnect with each other, they need access to aspects of their inner lives. Eventually, seeing furniture unpacked in Howards End take them back to childhood.

- Accepting and understanding the inner life is fundamental to building identity and trust

At the end of the novel, the concepts of inner and outer life finally merge as Mr. Wilcox, Margaret and Helen live happily in Howards End. Margaret and Helen welcome the new Mr. Wilcox. Wilcox appreciates the inner life, and Helen, who once focused only on her inner existence, begins to understand the importance of her outer life. Always open to accepting different approaches to her life, Margaret serves as a link between her sister and Mr. Wilcox.

Summarised Overview

E.M. Forster released his book *Howards End* in 1910. The novel focuses on the bonds that form between Henry and Ruth Wilcox and their children Charles, Paul, and Evie and the seemingly cool, pragmatic Schlegel family, which includes Margaret, Helen, and Tibby, and their siblings. Ruth, who has been the family's connection for many generations, finds a soul mate in Margaret and writes a note before passing away that the family country estate, Howards End, should go to Margaret. Margaret eventually acquires ownership of the home after marrying Henry, despite her desires being disregarded by her survivors. Having been through numerous painful experiences that have left him a shattered man, Margaret returns Henry to Howards End in a symbolic end.

Assignments

1. Analyse *Howards End* as a depiction of modern English society.
2. Discuss the suitability of the title "Howards End."
3. Explain the symbolism associated with books that the writer tries to explain.

Suggested Readings

1. Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Branes, 1965.
2. Page, Norman. *E.M. Forster*. Bloomsbury, 1988.
3. Singh, Avtar. *The Novels of E.M. Forster*. Atlantic, 1996.

References

1. Forster, E.M. *Howards End*. Penguin, 1992.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Unit 3

Short Story

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ appreciate the short stories of D.H. Lawrence
- ▶ develop an understanding of the narrative technique used by D.H. Lawrence
- ▶ explore the relevant themes D. H. Lawrence's the short story
- ▶ gain an insight into the life and works of D.H. Lawrence

Background

A great modernist novelist, short-story writer, poet, critic, playwright, and essayist, D. H. Lawrence gave the world his own brand of creativity as well as his critical insights. Lawrence's life, art, criticism, poetry, and teaching were all so closely related that it is unusually difficult to distinguish one aspect of his achievement from all the others. His expository writings, until recently apologized for and embarrassedly passed over even by admirers of Lawrence the artist, are now being read with new respect. An ever increasing "fan club" the world over testifies to the evergreen memory of Lawrence. It was no exaggeration to say that the hallmark of Laurentian fiction is the exploration of women. Lawrence studied, loved, and understood the 'woman'. There was no aspect of the female psyche that escaped his notice. The Laurentian woman is all woman. He documented the delicate nuances of feminine beauty, her appeal, and her vulnerability. By the same token, there was no escape from his relentless exposition of the dominating, jealous, and frustrated woman. However, Lawrence stands singled out in his attempt to lay bare the naked passions of women. Further, there were four things that Lawrence did supremely well viz-a-viz writing about non-human nature, writing as a stranger about places and people he sees for the first time, criticizing books, and describing the states of irrational hostility between man and man or man and woman. He wrote about ten editions of poetry, several travel books, translations, plays, novels, and critical works. Most of Lawrence's works are marked by a similar structure of plot, narration, imagery, and theme selection. Important works of Lawrence include *The Captain's Doll*,



The Fox, The Ladybird, Odour of Chrysanthemums, The Princess, The Rocking-Horse Winner, St Mawr, The Virgin and the Gypsy and The Woman Who Rode Away.

D.H. Lawrence was aware of the fact that the world was suffering from withdrawal symptoms. There were so many facets of the reaction: male passivity, female masculine protest, mechanisation, egalitarianism and rationalism. Given that personal development is paramount, D.H. Lawrence's great novels feel like they revolve around emerging self-issues. Perhaps the primary factor influencing personal development is the sexual factor, and for Lawrence, sex is not just a biological function, but a "grand spiritual experience". The fiction of D.H. Lawrence is an attempt to present a thorough analysis of Lawrence's fiction in a simple and clear manner. Lawrence worked by all means to match his literary talent. However, his fictional works as a Symbolist can be divided into basic categories: Fiction with themes of death (including creation and destruction), rebirth (Lawrence and the trials of the Mexican Gods), and finally resurrection. Thus, D.H. Lawrence's fiction traces the development of Lawrence's thought, presents it as broadly as possible in terms of the assumptions common to his essays, and presents it through many contemporary crises.

Keywords

Marital relationship, symbols, death, isolation

Section 1

Odour of Chrysanthemums

- D. H. Lawrence

Discussion

3.3.1 Summary

D. H. Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums," first appearing in of 'English Review' in the July 1911 issue, tells the story of a wife and mother waiting for her husband to return from his daily work in a coal mine. The story was later adapted into a play titled *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*, written by Lawrence himself.

► *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*

- A sensory picture of the setting is presented

At the beginning of the story, Lawrence paints a sensory picture of the setting, describing the sound of the locomotive and the smell of dusk in England's coal country. As the coal miners leave for the day, Elizabeth works in a chicken coop next to her small cottage home. The property also includes a raspberry patch and an apple orchard. As the miners walk home down the railroad tracks, Elizabeth sees the locomotive engine that her father drives. Elizabeth's son, John, has torn the petals off the chrysanthemums in her garden, spreading them on the path. Wistfully, Elizabeth picks some of the more intact chrysanthemums, holds them to the cheek, then sticks on to her apron.

- Symbolic significance of chrysanthemum flowers

Because of the importance of symbolism in Lawrence's work, it's worth pointing out here that chrysanthemums are used for two purposes relevant to the storytelling: husbands give them to their wives on anniversaries, and mourners decorate with them the graves of their deceased departed loved ones. In both cases, they signify a kind of steadfast devotion that persists even after death.

- Elizabeth is waiting for her husband

Elizabeth meets her father at the gate with tea, bread and butter. He tells her that her husband, Walter, won't be coming home for a while, having gone to the pub after work. Even worse, the father says he overheard Walter boasting about how much of his weekly pay he is planning to spend tonight at the pub. Upon her father's departure, Elizabeth goes into the kitchen to stare at the table she set for her husband's post-work tea. Resigned to the fact that he won't return in time for tea, Elizabeth sets to work on dinner. She asks her daughter, Annie, if she knows of Walter's whereabouts, but she does not. Before long, dinner is ready. Elizabeth wants to continue waiting for Walter, but Annie urges the family to eat without him. The children eat, but Elizabeth is too agitated to consume more than a few crumbs.

- Elizabeth's anxiety

After putting out the fire, the room goes dark, revealing that it is getting quite late, and Walter still hasn't returned. When John complains, Elizabeth turns on a lamp. Here, the reader learns that, in addition to running a household and taking care of two kids and a drunkard husband, Elizabeth is pregnant. While Annie screams in delight at the sight of the chrysanthemums in



her mother's apron, Elizabeth's anxiety begins to grow into anger. She has a glimpse of what she can expect in a few hours. Walter's co-workers carry his soot-stained, frame into her home in the middle of the night.

It is now time for the children to go to bed, but Annie refuses because she wants to stay up until her father returns. Elizabeth bluntly tells her that Walter will be unconscious and won't even recognize any of them when he comes back. After John and Annie go to bed, Elizabeth tries to busy herself by sewing, but it is little use. Eventually, she resolves to find Walter herself. First, she goes to the house of a neighbour, Mrs. Rigley, whose husband is Walter's friend and is probably at the same pub. But when Mrs. Rigley returns from the pub with Mr. Rigley, he tells Elizabeth he has not seen Walter since work. Mr. Rigley walks Elizabeth home and promises to visit the other pubs in search of Walter. Elizabeth can see Mrs. Rigley frantically run to a neighbour's house; no doubt eager to share the latest gossip about Elizabeth's absent husband.

- Elizabeth runs to her neighbour Rigley who is Walter's pub mate to know about her missing husband

Forty-five minutes later, Walter's mother enters Elizabeth's home, crying about an accident at the mine and uncertain whether her son is alive or dead. While the two wait for word on Walter's condition, Walter's mother makes excuses for her son's drunkenness. Before long, a miner arrives to inform the women that Walter died in a cave hours ago. Instead of weeping, Elizabeth appears to be more concerned with silencing the wails of Walter's mother by fearing that the later might wake up the children. Rather than mourning Walter's death in any visible way, Elizabeth busies herself by arranging a spot in the parlour where Walter's body will be laid.

- The news of Walter's death arrives

When the pit manager and another man delivered the body foreshadowed by Elizabeth's vision of two men carrying Walter inside the house, they accidentally knocked over a vase of chrysanthemums. After calmly cleaning up the mess, Elizabeth sets upon the task of undressing and cleaning Walter's body. Although she can still feel some warmth from Walter's body, her attempts to embrace it leads her to the realization that the two of them never really knew one another. When the task is complete, Elizabeth tries to weep but cannot. Instead, she goes about tidying up the kitchen, disturbed and ashamed of the harsh truths she learned that night.

- Pregnant Elizabeth cleans her husband's body



3.3.2 Themes

In this story, Elizabeth seems to have a distorted view of reality. It almost seems that the darkness has blocked her vision. Elizabeth's anger has also changed her view of her husband and she has failed to notice the reality of his difference. Elizabeth's sense of smell has been changed by her associations with negative things that happened in her past. She has associated the odour of the chrysanthemums, a symbol of life and beauty even in the dark mining village, with the different stages of her life with her husband. After Elizabeth's husband dies in the mining accident, she recognizes that the smell of the chrysanthemums could be the smell of death. Elizabeth also seems to show more concern with appearances; she seems to ignore the body of her deceased husband to clean up the mess from the dropped vase of chrysanthemums. To Elizabeth, this may have been easier than facing the reality of death.

- Elizabeth seems to have a distorted view of reality

Lawrence also seems to refer to the roles of sex in his story. Lawrence shows the separation of all people, with a big focus on the separation of men and women. This is shown by Elizabeth Bates's emotional distance from people around her. The separation of men and women takes place for the most part in the dark, with all the men in the mine and the women in the village. The dimmed lighting and stuffy odours seem to have their own role in the story. Elizabeth Bates recognises the separation of her husband by looking on and touching his warm body. She recognises that they are now apart, forever separated by the world of death, just as in life they were apart.

- Gender roles in Lawrence's story

Death also plays a big role in "Odour of Chrysanthemums." The delivery of Walter's body at the Bates' home marks the beginning of the downward spiral in this story. Lawrence begins to show the relationships between death and life, which closely resemble the difference between darkness and light. From the beginning, darkness, gloom and a sense of dread seem to hang over Elizabeth Bates. In the beginning of the story, the mine and its train are shown as an uninvited and dark change that seems to scare animals and make life in the small village cramped. Knowing the dangers of working in a mine, Elizabeth and her neighbours seem to be aware that Walter Bates quite possibly died



- Death and the darkness in life

in the mine. These different situations show the reader that the focus is on death, and at the conclusion of the story, Lawrence will show how it will shape the future life of Elizabeth Bates.

Lawrence also writes about the difference in social class. "Odour of Chrysanthemums" is set in a small mining village, and there are many reasons to believe that Elizabeth Bates believes that she is socially superior to Walter and his working-class friends who labour in the mine. Even though Elizabeth may have thought highly of herself, by the end of the story her encounter with Walters' dead body seems to have taught her to cherish and value her husband, and to ignore his rank in the social class. Lawrence describes Elizabeth Bates as a woman of "imperious mien," who scolds her son when he tears up the flowers because it looks "nasty," this appears to refer to her father's decision to remarry even though he has been widowed for a short time. This act by Elizabeth's father, would have been socially demeaning in this period of history. Elizabeth does not use the local slang like her neighbours, showing an indication of social class. Elizabeth is not like the other miners' wives; she will not lower herself by entering the local pubs to convince her husband to come home. Elizabeth also seems to get upset whenever her children copy their father's bad habits, showing her desire to keep her family civilized.

- Elizabeth differs from the wives of other miners

Elizabeth Bates shows her need for social acceptance and her desire to keep her status in the community by fighting against Walter and his old-fashioned values. Elizabeth was probably lured into marrying Walter by his good looks and strong drive for life. Elizabeth now shows some resentment towards Walter for making her feel like a "fool" and for making her live in "this dirty hole." Elizabeth seems to dislike the nature of her husband's work as a miner, as shown by her unwillingness to wash off all the grime and dirt from Walter's body when he comes home from a long day of work in the mine. While Elizabeth is waiting for Walter's return, she begins to get upset, and out of anger, she says she will make Walter sleep on the floor. However, her attitude dramatically changes when she finds out about the accident that has taken place. She even has thoughts of being able to mould him and change the way he thinks while she



- Elizabeth does not like her husband's habits and job as a miner

nurses him back to health, but her thoughts dissolve when the body of her deceased husband is brought into her home by miners and the pit manager. After Elizabeth views the body, she is confused and dishevelled at what appears to be a new definition of distance between her and Walter.

- The irony in Elizabeth's life

Elizabeth starts to understand the connection between her and Walter was not solely based on pure attraction and was much larger than the need of acceptance in the social world. Elizabeth now accepts that her and Walter's relationship was part of a much different experience, an experience that belongs in a separate dimension. It is a dimension which includes back breaking work in the cold and dark mine, and long dark lonely nights alone. The story ends with the fate of this new and mysterious dimension replacing Elizabeth Bates's former worries about social class. The irony of these two worlds is uncanny as the separate life that Walter and Elizabeth lived will continue in death as well.

3.3.3 Characters

Elizabeth Bates

Elizabeth, the protagonist of the story, is stern, cold, and pragmatic. She is deeply resentful of finding herself married to an alcoholic and living in a coal community. As a good mother, she feels she cannot afford to indulge in emotional weakness or sentimentality but must be strong for the sake of her children. Elizabeth attains a deep understanding of her life, husband, and marriage only when Walter is dead and she is forced to confront her circumstances and her own role in her fate. Though Elizabeth initially emerges as a long-suffering wife who deserves sympathy, her response to Walter's death reveals that she is not as blameless for her unhappiness as she first appears. At first, Walter seems to be the clear cause of Elizabeth's difficult life. He regularly comes home drunk after working in the mine, making the local pub more of a home than his actual home. Elizabeth is accustomed to the dull, dreary routine of waiting for him, but she still feels anger and annoyance when dinner must be delayed. Every comment she makes is said "bitterly," and she herself is described as "bitter." At times, she seems so harsh that we may wonder whether she is capable of any other form of emotion.



- ▶ The protagonist of the story
- ▶ Highly resentful of the life she lives with Walter

However, early in the story, Lawrence shows Elizabeth giving tea and bread to her father, which suggests that she is capable of nurturing. On the day on which the story takes place, her anger and annoyance change to anxiety as the night wears on with no sign of Walter. He seems to be a recognizable brand of “bad husband,” and Elizabeth, the put-upon wife and mother, seems to be a clear victim. Her frustration and harsh words about Walter seem fully justifiable. Elizabeth clearly sees herself as having wasted her life with Walter, missing out on a better life she could have had with someone else.

- ▶ Elizabeth’s new perspective after her husband’s death

Elizabeth’s dismal view of her fate changes once Walter’s corpse is brought home. When she looks at the corpse, she realises that for years, she has not really seen Walter. He was her husband, but chronically distant from her, and she feels “ashamed” because she had not allowed him to be himself. Instead of feeling anger and resentment, she recognizes that her own expectations and refusals helped tear them apart. The pity she feels for Walter sharply contrasts with her earlier harsh view of him, serving as an epiphany she suddenly recognizes Walter as a human being, rather than simply a difficult burden. Elizabeth realises that she has been culpable in her own unhappiness. At the end of the story, she submits to both life and death as her “masters,” humbled by her own mistakes and, we may assume, about to carry on with a new perspective.

Walter Bates

- ▶ Elizabeth’s husband who is a drunkard

Walter Bates is Elizabeth’s alcoholic husband, who died in a cave-in. Walter was a handsome man, blond and fleshy, with strong limbs and a moustache. Although he never appears in the story alive, he casts a dark shadow over the story’s proceedings. He emerges as a caricature, the monstrous drunken husband, who is gradually redeemed by Elizabeth’s growing recognition of the ways she has denied or ignored his essential humanity.

Although Walter never appears alive in the story, he plays an essential role in shaping the Bates family’s life and bringing about Elizabeth’s revelation. From the comments made by Elizabeth, her father, and Walter’s mother, we get the sense that Walter is little more than an insensitive drunkard who opts to spend his evenings



- The insensitive character of Walter

at a bar rather than with his wife and children. Even his mother says, "I don't know why he got to be such a trouble." His long absences mean that his children must wait for dinner and that Elizabeth must struggle with both anger and anxiety, facing gossip from the neighbours. The only kind words spoken about Walter come from his mother when she fondly remembers him as a child, calling him "a good lad." When Walter's body is brought home, however, a different side of Walter reveals itself. Dead, he is naked and vulnerable, and Elizabeth is stunned by his stark humanity. Because she can no longer blame him for her unhappiness, she turns inward and acknowledges her role in their marriage's demise. First absent and then inanimate, Walter nevertheless proves to be a catalyst for change in Elizabeth and her vision for the future.

3.3.4 Symbols

Chrysanthemums

- Symbols of transition

Clearly, the flowers of the title are intended to be the primary symbol of the story. Their presence hangs over the entire narrative and their thematic frame of reference is directly addressed within the story. Elizabeth's wry recollection that chrysanthemums accompanied so many of the major turning points of her life from marriage to births to the first time her husband got so drunk he had to be helped home indicate that the flowers are, above all else, symbols of transition and change.

Locomotive

- Symbols of progress

While trains are typically symbols of progress in stories written during the era in which Lawrence produced this story, the opening scene that pits it in a race against a colt and traps a woman between it and a hedge indicates that this train is more symbolic of the negative aspects of progress than the positive. The startling of the young horse and the train's incursion into the natural world in a way that cramps humanity are clearly not typical utilisations of the power of the locomotive to forge new frontiers, transport humanity, and expand economic possibilities.

Darkness

Throughout the story, various characters are presented as trying to find their way around in the dark or trying

- Appears in almost all parts of the story

find a way out altogether. John is described as being lost in the hidden darkness of the shadows. The mine is, of course, a hellish vision of darkness as ever-present danger. Even the timeline of the story leads inevitably from the light of the afternoon to the creeping darkness of evening and the tragic outcome that it brings.

Summarised Overview

D. H. Lawrence examines the idea of human solitude as well as the nature of love and relationships in his short story, "Odour of Chrysanthemums." Elizabeth is forced to reevaluate her ideas and opinions as a result of her husband's unexpected death, which sheds light on a marriage she had long since abandoned.

Assignments

1. Comment on the significance of the title, "Odour of Chrysanthemums."
2. How does the novel address the subject of societal stratification?
3. Critically analyse Elizabeth Bates's character as a wife.
4. Analyse "Odour of Chrysanthemums" as an aftermath of industrialisation.
5. Analyse D H Lawrence' "Odour of Chrysanthemums" as a modernist novel.
6. Do you believe Lawrence favours Elizabeth's perceptions and consciousness above those of other characters?

Suggested Readings

1. Harrison, Andrew. *The Life of D. H. Lawrence*. Wiley, 2016.
2. Meyers, Jeffrey. *D. H. Lawrence: A Biography*. Cooper, 2002.

References

1. Lawrence, D. H. *Complete Works of D. H. Lawrence*. Delphi, 2013.
2. Lawrence, D. H. 'Odour of Chrysanthemums'. Harperperennial, 2013.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Unit 4

Short Story

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ become familiar with the short fiction of the modern era
- ▶ appreciate the short stories written by modern writer
- ▶ to gain insight into the significance of the themes presented by the writer
- ▶ acquire knowledge on the writing style of the writer

Background

Katherine Mansfield is a New Zealand-born English master of the short story, who evolved a distinctive prose style with many overtones of poetry. Her delicate stories, focused upon psychological conflicts, have an obliqueness of narration and a subtlety of observation that reveal the influence of Anton Chekhov. She, in turn, had much influence on the development of the short story as a form of literature. Following her brother's death, she drew upon the memories of New Zealand and discussed with her brother in writing some of her most well-known works, including *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920), *The Garden Party, and Other Stories* (1922), and her novel *The Aloe* (1930). Mansfield has consistently been praised for the compression and understatement of her writing, as well as for her capacity to pack complex emotion and thought into the deceptively simple and direct outlines of her work. "The Dove's Nest" (1923) and "Something Childish" (1923), *Poems* (1923) along with *The Journal of Katherine Mansfield* (1927) and *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (1928, 1929), were her well known works.

"Prelude" is one of Katherine Mansfield's longest and finest short stories, with 12 parts. Centring on the Burnell family as they move house in New Zealand, 'Prelude' is the opening story in Katherine Mansfield's first 'mature' collection of fiction, *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920), although the story had first been published two years earlier.



Keywords

Children's story, Psychological, Women, Relationships, Freedom

Section 1 Prelude

- Katherine Mansfield

Discussion

3.4.1 Summary

Part I

"Prelude" begins with the third-person narrator telling us there is not enough room left on the removal buggy for the two sisters, Lottie and Kezia. The buggy is full of luggage packed up ready for the house-move. Their mother, Linda Burnell, jokes that the sisters will have to be left behind. A neighbour, Mrs. Samuel Josephs, who has been watching them pack up from behind her drawing-room blind, comes out and offers to look after the sisters until another cart comes in the evening to pick up the rest of the luggage. When the buggy departs, leaving the sisters behind, Kezia bites her lip to stop herself from crying, but Lottie cries out after her mother and her grandma, who is also on the buggy. The sisters go into the Josephs' house, and have tea with them. Kezia cannot suppress a tear as she eats her bread, but hides her crying more successfully than her sister.

- Kezia and Lottie are unhappy with their house shift

Part II

After tea, Kezia goes back into their old house and looks around. It is largely empty now, but she looks out at the lawn and finds a pillbox in her parents' room, which she decides to keep. She goes and stands at the window as day gives way to evening and the light fades. She becomes a little unsettled, frightened that something which she calls as 'IT' is just behind her, waiting at the door. But it is only Lottie, who comes in and shouts that the storeman is there to pick them up. They leave, with Kezia sitting close up to the storeman, who smells of nuts and new wooden boxes.

- The storeman arrives to pick them up



Part III

- ▶ The children sleep
- ▶ Aunt Beryl and Stanley have argued over the fact that he was at work while she was left alone to deal with the removal

As they travel with the storeman, the sisters notice that everything looks different late at night (this is the latest they have ever been allowed out). Kezia says that their uncle and aunt live close by the new house they are moving to. When they arrive at their new house in the dark, they are greeted by their grandma. Their mother, Linda, has a headache; she and their Aunt Beryl are having tea, and Isabel, Lottie and Kezia's sister, is looking at their mother's hair. The girls' father, Stanley, is also present. Isabel tells her sisters she had a whole chop for dinner and is berated by her mother for 'boasting'. Stanley tells the grandma (his mother) to go and get the storeman, Fred, some food before he goes. Stanley takes exception to his sister-in-law, Beryl, chiding him for being at work during the day of the house move, meaning he was not on hand to help with the practical matters. Isabel realises Kezia is drinking her tea out of Aunt Beryl's cup.

Part IV

- ▶ Aunt Beryl and Stanley have argued over the fact that he was at work while she was left alone to deal with the shift

The grandmother tucks the children into bed. Lottie and Isabel are in a room by themselves, while Kezia is to sleep in her grandmother's bed with her. As Kezia lies awake in the bed, without any bedsheets, she hears noises coming from downstairs and imagines there are hundreds of black cats in the sky outside, watching her. Lottie says a prayer in bed, and she and Isabel go to sleep. Meanwhile, Aunt Beryl undresses for bed and fantasises about having financial independence from her brother, Stanley. She then fantasises about a young, wealthy man from England turning up and sweeping her off her feet. Stanley brags to Linda about buying the new house so cheap. They then go to bed. The handyman, Pat, and the servant girl also go to bed in their rooms behind the kitchen. The grandmother is the last to turn in, finding Kezia still awake and waiting for her.

Part V

Morning brings the new day – their first morning in their new home. Linda dreams about birds: a chick hatches, which then turns into a baby. This is the first sign that makes us aware that Linda is pregnant. Her husband, Stanley, wakes up and starts to do his exercises, boasting about how lean he is. Linda reassures him that



- ▶ Linda wakes up to sunny weather and her husband boasts about his physique

- ▶ The grandmother remembers how they lived in their old house in Tasmania

- ▶ Stanley comes back delighted from work

- ▶ The girls play at grown-ups, until Pip and Rags, their cousins arrive

- ▶ Kezia is shocked by the episode of Pat chopping off a duck's head

he is lean and firm, and we get the impression she is used to reassuring him like this (and that he needs it). Linda's thoughts are preoccupied by ideas of things coming to life.

Part VI

The grandmother does the dishes in the kitchen and thinks of the previous house she lived in. She remembers how, when they lived in Tasmania, her daughter Beryl was stung by a red ant. Aunt Beryl comes in with some paintings which she does not like but knows she has to display somewhere. Beryl, bitter about something but unable to put it into words, leaves and Linda comes into the kitchen and the grandmother tells her to go into the garden to look after her children. Kezia, exploring the garden, comes upon a mysterious large plant with thorny leaves; her mother arrives and tells her it is an aloe.

Part VII

On his way back from work, Stanley, in good spirits, buys some oysters, a pineapple, and some cherries and Pat drives him home in the buggy. Stanley reflects on how nice it is to leave the town behind after work and to go home to a house in the country; he starts eating the cherries and throws the stones out of the buggy. When he gets home, the family have dinner together and the children go up to bed. Beryl plays the guitar by herself, feeling restless, lonely, and unloved.

Part VIII

This section begins with supposedly new characters, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones, until we realise that the girls are playing at being grown-ups. Their game is interrupted when Pip and Rags, their cousins (the Trout boys), arrive with their mongrel dog, named Snooker. Together, the children try to decide what game they should play.

Part IX

Armed with a tomahawk, Pat tells the children to come and watch him chop off a duck's head. They all scream at the sight of the headless duck as it walks around for a few moments without a head. The children's reactions differ, but Kezia is clearly shocked and upset, demanding that Pat 'Put head back!' As Pat tries to comfort her, she



notices that he's wearing earrings and reflects that she never knew men could wear earrings.

Part X

In the kitchen, Alice, the servant girl, is making watercress sandwiches, and as she does so, she is reading a book on dreams. Aunt Beryl comes in, spots the book, and starts bossing Alice about, telling her to remember to put out doyleys with the tea things. Singing, she leaves. Alice does not like the fact that Beryl talks to her in a tone of voice that makes her feel common and working-class.

- ▶ Alice is reading a book on dreams

Part XI

For their tea, they eat the duck Pat beheaded in front of the children. Stanley and Beryl play a game of cribbage, which Stanley wins. Linda and her mother go into the garden and look at the aloe. Linda realises, as she gazes upon the aloe, that she hates her husband and that life is laughable. Her mother thinks Linda is shivering from the cold, so she suggests they go back inside.

- ▶ Linda realises that she hates her husband

Part XII

This last section begins with a letter Aunt Beryl is writing to her friend, Nan Pym, saying she is bored with living in the country with no friends to come and visit, and that she does not like the neighbours, or Stanley's friends. Beryl stops writing and reflects that what she is written both does and does not capture how she really feels. Kezia calls for her to come to lunch. "Prelude" ends with Kezia playing in the room with her toy calico cat; she takes the top off a pot of moisturising cream and gets her toy cat to look at itself in the lid of the cream (a sort of makeshift looking-glass); the calico cat loses its balance (as if 'overcome by the sight' of its own reflection) and topples off the dressing table. The lid of the cream jar falls to the floor and even though it does not break, Kezia, hot with shame, tiptoes away.

- ▶ Aunt Beryl is bored with living in the countryside

Summarised Overview

Many characteristics of Mansfield's unique style can be found in "Prelude." There was not enough space for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy. The reader gradually realises that the middle-class Burnell family is relocating to the countryside in order to start a fresh life. But the plot never held as much significance for Mansfield. Instead of using conventional plot devices and narrative conclusion, her goal was to create a novel literary style that focused on character psychology. 'Prelude', which is divided into twelve scenes, deftly switches between the many points of view of an extensive cast of characters. Mansfield carefully uncovers the tensions lurking behind the surface of family life by using overheard conversations and emerging thoughts to illustrate the common event of moving house. This creates a rich psychological landscape.

Assignments

1. Analyse "Prelude" as a children's story
2. "Mansfield's stories are typical reflections of the human psyche." Discuss this statement on the basis of "Prelude."

Suggested Readings

1. Berkman, Sylvia. *Katherine Mansfield: A Critical Study*. Archon, 1971.
2. Morrow, Patrick D. *Katherine Mansfield's Fiction*. Bowling Green, 1993.
3. Nadhan, Rhoda B. *Katherine Mansfield*. Continuum, 1988.

References

1. Mansfield, Katherine. *Prelude and Other Stories*. Macmillan, 2021.



Section 2

Rain

- Somerset Maugham

Discussion

English novelist, playwright, and short-story writer, William Somerset Maugham's work is characterized by a clear unadorned style, cosmopolitan settings, and a shrewd understanding of human nature. His reputation as a novelist rests primarily on four books: *Of Human Bondage* (1915), a semi-autobiographical account of a young medical student's painful progress towards maturity; *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), an account of an unconventional artist, suggested by the life of Paul Gauguin; *Cakes and Ale* (1930), the story of a famous novelist, which is thought to contain caricatures of Thomas Hardy and Hugh Walpole; and *The Razor's Edge* (1944), the story of a young American war veteran's quest for a satisfying way of life.

► Maugham's work

Published in 1921, W. Somerset Maugham's "Rain" is a short story about a fanatical Christian missionary who commits suicide after trying to save the soul of a defiant sex worker. Set in Pago Pago Harbor in American Samoa, the story is told from the point of view of Dr. Macphail, a Scottish WWI veteran. In December 1916 during a tour of the Pacific, Maugham and his secretary/companion Gerald Haxton, on the steamer *Sonoma*, visited Pago Pago, the capital of American Samoa. Delayed by a quarantine inspection, Maugham, Haxton and others took lodgings there. Other passengers on the *Sonoma* included a "Miss Thompson", and a medical missionary and his wife, who were models for the characters in "Rain". Near Pago Pago is Rainmaker Mountain, which gives Pago Pago Harbor an unusually high rainfall.

► Story about a fanatical Christian missionary

The port of Pago Pago, where "Rain" is set, receives an unusual amount of rainfall because of the shape of the mountains above it. For the characters in the story, the persistent rain creates an ominous, "maddening" atmosphere. At one point, Dr. Macphail thinks of the rain as possessing its own "fury" that it is unleashing on the stranded travellers. The inhospitable weather forces

► Set in Pago Pago



the characters to stay inside most of the time, where interpersonal tensions intensify with the rain pounding all day on the corrugated metal roof.

3.4.2 Summary

Narrated by an unnamed third-person limited omniscient narrator, “Rain” is set on a steamer ship headed for Apia, the capital of American Samoa in the Pacific Ocean. The story is told from the point of view of Dr. Macphail, a forty-year-old Scottish doctor and WWI veteran who looks forward to staying in Apia for twelve months. He and his wife have made friends with a Christian missionary named Davidson and his wife. They bond over their disapproval of the passengers who gamble and binge drink on the ship. Mrs. Macphail is flattered to know they are the only people the missionary couple have any desire to associate with. She could not imagine them engaging with rough people on board. Dr. Macphail teases her and jokes that Jesus Christ was not exclusive in the way the Davidsons are.

- Dr. Macphail and Mrs. Macphail are on the way to Apia

The ship stops at the harbour of Pago Pago. Dr. Macphail stands at the ship rail with Mrs. Davidson, who stares ruthlessly at the silver shore. She says she is grateful she and her husband are not stationed at Pago Pago, where the natives do not behave like they do in the Davidsons’ district of widely separated Northern Samoan islands. With discomfort, Dr. Macphail recalls how Mrs. Davidson earlier expressed her horror at the local marriage customs. In her district, she put an end to the traditional dancing the Samoans enjoyed because she believed it led to immorality.

- Mrs. Davidson has disregard for the local marriage customs

The ship docks in the harbour, which is bustling with American sailors and Samoan locals there to sell goods. The passengers’ luggage is moved to the schooner that will take them on to Apia. Mrs. Davidson comments to Dr. Macphail and his wife about the immodesty of the lavalava (fabric skirt-like garments worn around the waist) the local women and men wear. Dr. Macphail says it suits the hot climate. With pride, Mrs. Davidson says the lavalava is eradicated in her district; the locals would not be thoroughly Christianized until every boy is made to wear trousers.

- Mrs. Davidson is very orthodox

The couples seek shelter in a large corrugated iron shed when heavy rains begin to fall. Davidson brings



- It is raining heavily and a case of measles was discovered among the schooner crew

the news that a case of measles was discovered among the schooner crew. Because the disease can be fatal for the Kanakas, the schooner crew has to quarantine for ten days before moving to Apia, meaning the Macphails and Davidsons have to stay on Pago Pago. The couples rent rooms from a half-white, half-Samoan trader named Mr. Horn in a modest house near the wharf. Mrs. Davidson advises the Macphails to repair the torn mosquito net over their old bed, and says the rains **never** stop because of the microclimate created by the mountains.

- Miss.Thompson is introduced.

While checking on his luggage, Dr. Macphail meets the ship quartermaster at the door of Mr. Horn's house. The quartermaster introduces Miss Thompson, a plump twenty-seven-year-old woman in a white dress and white hat. She had been on the same ship as a second-class passenger. Dr. Macphail admires Miss Thompson's boldness as she haggles down the price of the room to a dollar a day. She invites him to have a shot of liquor with her and the quartermaster, but Dr. Macphail declines, going to check on the luggage.

- Davidson expresses his worries regarding his district he has left an year before

Dr. Macphail returns at lunchtime. Dr. Macphail discusses Miss Thompson with his wife and Mrs. Davidson. They learn that she is taking her meals in her room. Davidson returns from arguing with the governor and says they may be stuck there for two weeks. Davidson speaks of his worry that he has been away from his district for a year, having left it in the hands of a native missionary, who will inevitably have "let abuses creep in." With flashing eyes, Davidson says he will have a lot of work to do to set things right, and that "if the tree is rotten it shall be cut down and cast into the flames."

- The missionary says that his natives does not believe in sins and he has to therefore instill it in them

Later, during the last meal of the day, the missionary says more about his work in the islands. He says the natives had no sense of sin, so he had to instill it in them. Dr. Macphail finds that Davidson's unflinching courage stands out in his stories: Davidson often has had to journey by canoe in dangerous waters to give medical assistance to people on remote islands. Davidson asks aloud how he could ask the natives to trust the Lord if he is afraid to do so himself. Dr. Macphail remembers the fear he felt in the trenches, and says he wishes he could say he has never been afraid. Davidson says he wishes Dr. Macphail could say he believed in God.

- Davidson imposed severe restrictions and fines

Davidson recalls the endless work of the early days in the district, eight years earlier. His wife would read the Bible to him at night to soothe him. Almost everything they did bore no results. But eventually he made the natives understand that their natural actions were sins. It became sinful to commit adultery, to lie, to steal, to expose their bodies, to dance, and to not attend church. Davidson achieved this by imposing fines, paid for in money or work. Davidson had the power to exclude them from the church, ostracizing them from the community.

- Mrs. Davidson encourages her husband to tell the story of Fred Ohlson

Mrs. Davidson encourages her husband to tell the story of Fred Ohlson, a Danish trader who had been living on the islands before the missionaries came. Davidson says the man had things his way, paying the natives for their coconuts in goods and whiskey. Ohlson was a drunkard and was unfaithful to his native wife. After the man refused to mend his ways, Davidson saw that he had become ruined. In two years, the man's wealth was gone, he becomes skinny, and he comes to beg Davidson to pay for a voyage back to Sydney.

- Dr. Macphail and Mrs. Macphail get some cards to play

The couples hear gramophone music, men's voices, and corks popping in Miss Thompson's room. Dr. Macphail suggests the woman is giving a farewell party to her friends on the steamer ship, which sets sail the next day at noon. The Davidsons make no remark and then go to bed early, prepared to read the Bible and discuss it. Alone, Dr. Macphail gets some cards so he and his wife can play. His wife expresses concern that the Davidsons might come back and see them with the cards. Dr. Macphail lays out the cards anyway. She watches with a vague sense of guilt. The sounds of revelry from Miss Thompson's room continue.

- Mrs. Macphail disregards everything that she feels as common

Out walking the next day, the Macphails pass Miss Thompson, whose leg fat bulges over the tops of her white high-heeled boots. Mrs. Macphail expresses disapproval and says Miss Thompson looks "extremely common." Later, the doctor encourages his wife to say something to Miss Thompson, saying it is unkind to ignore her. Miss Thompson says the island ought to have a hotel. Later that night, the couples hear Miss Thompson hosting guests in her room again. Suddenly Davidson rises to his feet and says Miss Thompson joined the ship at Honolulu and must be from the Iwelei red-light district.



With horror and indignation, he says she is “carrying on her trade here.” The missionary explains that the district was finally brought down by legal authorities the day they arrived in Honolulu.

- Davidson decides to stop what is going on in Miss Thomson’s room

Davidson says he is going to go down and stop what is going on in Miss Thompson’s room. The others listen as he clatters down the stairs and opens the door. He hurls the gramophone on the floor. There are sounds of a scuffle, then Davidson returns upstairs and goes to his room. When Davidson’s wife goes after him, Dr. Macphail asks why Davidson could not mind his own business. The gramophone and voices start up again.

The next day Mrs. Davidson tells the Macphails of how Davidson could not sleep that night; how the men had poured beer on him. Out on the street, Miss Thompson greets them cheerily. Mrs. Davidson delights at the thought that Miss Thompson’s finery will be ruined in the rain. She speaks of how she would not want to be the poor creature who crosses her husband. Over a meal, while Mrs. Davidson discusses whether they should ask Horn to throw Miss Thompson out, Davidson tells a girl serving them to bring a message to Miss Thompson. He speaks of how it is his duty to talk to Miss Thompson. He says, “She has an immortal soul, and I must do all that is in my power to save it.” The girl returns and says Miss Thompson will speak to Reverend Davidson any time, as long as he does not come during business hours. Dr. Macphail tries to hide his amusement at Miss Thompson’s cheekiness.

- Davidson expresses his wish to talk to Miss Thompson

After dinner, Davidson goes to Miss Thompson’s room for an hour. Dr. Macphail reflects on how the rain, flowing unmercifully in a deluge from the heavens, is getting on his nerves. It is maddening in its persistence. Davidson returns and says he gave her a chance to repent, but Miss Thompson is an evil woman. He will now pursue her with “the whips with which the Lord Jesus drove the usurers and the money changers out of the Temple of the Most High.”

Dr. Macphail learns the next day from Horn that Davidson asked him not to allow Miss Thompson any visitors. When Horn told Miss Thompson, she gave him hell. Davidson suggests she will want to leave, but Horn says no native will take her in now that the missionaries

- Davidson succeeds in not allowing any visitors to Miss Thomson

“have got their knife in her.” That night, Miss Thompson plays her gramophone alone. In bed, the Macphails can hear Davidson praying aloud. A few days pass. Miss Thompson no longer greets them in the street. She sulks and has a hunted look. The doctor learns she failed to find lodging elsewhere. On Sunday, Davidson asks Horn to make her stop playing music. She does. On Monday, Horn tells Dr. Macphail that Miss Thompson is getting worked up because she does not know what Davidson is up to and she is scared. Dr. Macphail also has the impression Davidson is weaving a net around Miss Thompson, waiting to pull the strings tight.

Time passes. Dr. Macphail scratches at his mosquito bites and grows irritable in the persistent rains and hot-house sun. He distrusts the unfamiliar and ancient-seeming natives walking by him when he is out. One day, he learns that Davidson has been speaking with the island’s governor about Miss Thompson. Miss Thompson confronts Davidson about it while the two couples are sitting after a meal. When she bursts into the room, Davidson offers her a chair and says that he wants to talk to her.

- Miss. Thompson asks Davidson to leave her alone, and why does he interfere in her life since she is to be deported because of his interference

Miss Thompson calls him a poor, low-life bastard. She says a man has told her she has to leave on the next boat. Her face is puffy and red from crying. Davidson admits he told the governor about her prostitution and urged the governor “to take the only possible step consistent with his obligations.” Miss Thompson asks why he could not leave her alone, saying she did him no harm. When she leaves the room, Davidson says it is a relief that the governor finally acted. The governor had said Apia was under British authority, and so it would be their problem. He calls the governor weak and says it is terrible when men in authority seek to evade their responsibility. Davidson says he resorted to threatening the governor by telling the federal government in Washington about the way he manages things in Pago Pago. Davidson says Miss Thompson will have to leave on a boat next Tuesday, in five days.

The next day Dr. Macphail is returning from the local hospital, where he has been spending mornings, when Mr. Horn tells him that Miss. Thompson is sick. Miss. Thompson’s skin looks yellow, but she says she is not actually sick, she just wanted to speak with Dr. Macphail.



- Dr. Macphail tells Davidson that Miss Thompson is sick and calls him harsh and tyrannical for his attitude towards her

She says it is inconvenient for her to return to San Francisco, and that the governor told her she could go to Sydney in another two weeks instead, if Davidson will accept it. She asks Dr. Macphail to convince Davidson on her behalf. She says she can get a lawful job in Sydney. However, Davidson tells Dr. Macphail that the governor has ordered Miss Thompson to be deported on the next boat. He says he would not stand in the way of the order, and that Miss Thompson's "presence is a peril here." He asks why she does not want to go to San Francisco and Dr. Macphail says he did not ask because it was not his business. Dr. Macphail says he thinks Davidson is harsh and tyrannical. Davidson replies that his heart bleeds for Miss Thompson, but he is only doing his duty.

- Macphail advocates Miss Thompson in front of the governor

At a break in the rain, Dr. Macphail leaves for a walk. Miss Thompson stops him and asks how it went with Davidson. Dr. Macphail tells her he would not change his mind. She sobs. Macphail tells her it is a shame the way she is being treated and that he will go speak to the governor himself. She brightens and becomes optimistic. On the way to the governor's, Macphail wonders why he agreed to advocate for her. He tells the governor he will guarantee Miss Thompson's good behaviour while she waits to go to Sydney. The governor insists he must stand by his order. Macphail grows frustrated, remembers Davidson's threats to the governor, and says Davidson is a busybody. The governor says he has not formed a favourable opinion of Davidson either, but the man was right to point out the danger of a woman like Miss Thompson being among enlisted men stationed among a native population.

- Even though Miss Thompson repents before Davidson, he insists that she must accept her punishment.

Dr. Macphail returns to the house, crestfallen. Dr. Macphail avoids Miss Thompson but conveys the disappointing news to Horn, who says he knew the governor would not dare go against the missionaries. Later, Miss Thompson comes to the parlor, where the couples sit after meals. No longer the "flaunting hussy who had jeered at them in the road," Miss Thompson appears broken and frightened. She tells Davidson he has her beat and begs him not to send her to San Francisco. Davidson stares at her and then gasps. He says, "The penitentiary." Miss Thompson falls to his feet and clasps his legs. She swears to God that she will be a good woman. She admits she escaped before she could



be locked up; if she returns, she will be imprisoned for three years. Dr. Macphail says Davidson must change his mind now that he knows she will be locked up. Davidson insists she must accept her punishment.

Davidson leads the distraught Miss. Thompson down to her room. She is sobbing and requires restraint as Dr. Macphail administers an injection to calm her down. When he returns to the parlor, Davidson opens a Bible and says they must pray for Miss. Thompson's erring soul. Surprised and sheepish, Dr. Macphail kneels with the others. The missionary prays in a loud, loquacious manner. Afterward, Dr. Macphail goes to check on Miss. Thompson. She is in a rocking chair. Dr. Macphail tells her to lie down. She asks for Davidson, who comes down. Miss. Thompson says she has been a bad woman and wants to repent. Davidson turns to Horn and Dr. Macphail. He says God has answered their prayers, then tells them to leave him alone with Miss. Thompson. The doctor lies awake until two, listening to prayers through the walls.

► Prayers

In the morning, Davidson's eyes shine with an inhuman fire. He is filled with joy. He says he was with Sadie Thompson so late because she could not bear to have him leave her. He brought a lost soul to the arms of Jesus. Dr. Macphail goes to see Miss. Thompson, who is dishevelled-looking in the rocking chair. She asks when Davidson is coming again, telling Dr. Macphail that it does not feel as terrible when Davidson is with her. She says she is still sailing to San Francisco on Tuesday. She tells Dr. Macphail that there is nothing he can do for her now, only Davidson can help her.

► Miss. Thompson looks dishevelled

Over the next three days, Davidson spends all his time, aside from meals, with Miss. Thompson. He is visibly exhausted but exuberant. He tells the others over dinner one evening how Miss. Thompson's soul, once black as night, is now pure and white like fresh snow. He says her remorse for her sins is beautiful. Dr. Macphail mentions again that Davidson might want to save her from three years in prison, but Davidson says it is necessary: he says his heart bleeds for her and that all the years she is in pain, he will be in pain for her. Dr. Macphail calls this "bunkum." Davidson says he does not understand: he wants her to suffer as a sacrifice to God and to accept it joyfully. Davidson's lips tremble with excitement.



- Everyone awaits the inevitable
- Davidson dies

Days pass slowly. Miss. Thompson's terror numbs her. She can not let Davidson out of her sight. They pray together, she cries, she reads the Bible. She looks forward to Tuesday as an escape from her current anguish. The other people in the house look forward to the day as well. Dr. Macphail feels he will breathe more easily once the inevitable happens and Miss. Thompson is gone. The Monday night before, Davidson says he plans to walk on board with her to see her off. That night, Dr. Macphail wakes to Horn touching his arm and beckoning him to come with him. Usually dressed in more covering clothing, Horn is barefoot and wearing the lava-lava. Dr. Macphail sees that Horn is heavily tattooed. Horn leads him outside, where six natives are gathered. Together they all go to the shore, where Davidson's body lies. Dr. Macphail turns the body over and sees Davidson's throat is cut from ear to ear. In Davidson's right hand is a razor. Dr. Macphail says he is cold and so must have been dead for some time.

- The police arrive

Horn says one of the boys found Davidson on his way to work and came to tell Horn. He asks if Dr. Macphail thinks Davidson killed himself. Dr. Macphail says yes and tells Horn to send someone to the police. Horn sends the youths away. Dr. Macphail stands by the body and smokes cigarettes while they wait for the police. Horn asks why Davidson did it. Dr. Macphail shrugs. Soon police arrive with a marine and put the body on a stretcher. Dr. Macphail returns to the house, where his wife is dressed. She says Mrs. Davidson is worried about her husband, who left Miss. Thompson's room at two and has not returned. Dr. Macphail tells her Davidson is dead and asks his wife to tell Davidson's wife.

Dr. Macphail's wife goes to tell Mrs. Davidson while Dr. Macphail shaves. His wife tells him Mrs. Davidson wants to see the body at the morgue and that she is trembling like a leaf. The couple accompany Mrs. Davidson to the morgue. Mrs. Davidson is dry-eyed. She views the body alone, then says she is ready to go back, her voice hard and steady. At the house, ragtime music plays loudly and harshly from Miss. Thompson's gramophone, causing Mrs. Davidson to gasp. Inside, Miss. Thompson chats with a sailor in her open doorway. No longer broken-looking, she is dressed in her white finery again, and her face is made-up. She looks like "the flaunting quean that they had known at first."

- The ending shows Miss. Thompson's hatred

Miss. Thompson breaks into a jeering laugh when they come in. She collects spit in her mouth and spits at Mrs. Davidson, who blushes and runs upstairs with her face covered. Outraged, Dr. Macphail pushes into Miss. Thompson's room and tears the record off the gramophone. Miss Thompson asks what the hell he is doing in her room. She gathers herself, indescribable scorn in her face. With contemptuous hatred, she says, "You men! You filthy, dirty pigs! You're all the same, all of you. Pigs! Pigs!" The story ends with Dr. Macphail gasping as he understands the implication behind her words.

- Answer to why Davidson killed himself

The final paragraphs of "Rain" provide a cryptic answer to the question of why Davidson killed himself. After the Macphails accompany Mrs. Davidson to the morgue to identify Davidson's body, they return to the boarding house to find Miss. Thompson has returned to her former self, and is no longer the meek, repentant, God-fearing, broken woman she had briefly become. She again wears her attention-grabbing clothing and is playing ragtime music from her gramophone, a symbol for her shamelessness. When Dr. Macphail confronts Miss Thompson about her disrespectful attitude, Miss Thompson accuses him of being a pig, like all men. The story ends with Dr. Macphail gasping at the realization that Miss Thompson is referring to Davidson. With this cryptic line, Maugham suggests that for all his Christian righteousness, Davidson revealed himself to be a hypocrite when he tried to commit the sin of adultery with Miss Thompson. Having likely been rejected by Miss Thompson in disillusionment and disgust, Davidson ended his life in shame. With this ironic reversal of the power balance between Davidson and Miss Thompson, Maugham shows how Davidson's disregard for Miss Thompson's privacy and obsessive need to impose his will on her results in his demise.

3.4.3 Themes

3.4.3.1 Righteousness

Righteousness- the quality of being correct and justified in one's morality- is a dominant theme in "Rain." Early in the story, the narrator comments on how the Macphails and the Davidsons found agreeable company in each other on the steamer ship because they shared a



- Moral code and sense of righteousness

moral aversion to the passengers gambling and drinking onboard. As missionaries, the Davidsons' righteousness informs their aim to convert indigenous Samoans to Christianity. When Davidson learns of Miss Thompson's sinful life as a sex worker, he assumes authority over her "lost soul" and endeavours to make her repent. He also wishes for her to suffer, believing it a necessary punishment for her sinful behaviour. However, the strict moral code Davidson lives by is what leads him to commit suicide after attempting the sin of adultery.

3.4.3.2 Privacy

In contrast to the missionary couple's belief that it is their duty to dictate what others do, Dr. Macphail is a proponent of an individual's right to privacy. Upon first hearing the gramophone and male voices coming from Miss Thompson's room, Dr. Macphail unsuccessfully attempts to head off Davidson's inquisition by talking "rather prosily" about his time serving as a medic in Flanders. When Davidson realizes that Miss Thompson is a sex worker and announces he will stop her, Macphail tries to dissuade him. Later, after the men in the woman's room push Davidson out, Macphail remarks to his wife, "Why couldn't he mind his own business?" The theme of privacy arises again when Macphail advocates for Miss Thompson despite a desire to stay out of the matter and leave her alone. When she expresses a fear of returning to San Francisco, Macphail doesn't ask why. When Davidson wants to know, Macphail bluntly replies: "I didn't inquire. ... And I think one does better to mind one's own business." Ultimately, Davidson's disregard for privacy leads to his peril: If he had never involved himself in Miss Thompson's business, he would not have transgressed against his own moral code and might have left Pago Pago alive.

- Dr. Macphail represents individual right to privacy

3.4.3.3 Condescension

Condescension a patronizing attitude of superiority is another key theme in "Rain." Along with a righteousness informed by their religious convictions, the Davidsons adopt an insulting attitude of superiority towards the native inhabitants of Samoa. The theme first arises when Dr. Macphail and Mrs. Davidson stand at the boat railing together and Mrs. Davidson criticises the traditional lavalava garments the Samoans wear and speaks proudly

- Love for superiority

of how she and her husband have outlawed traditional dancing in their district of islands, arguing that it leads to immorality. Implicit in her condescending attitude is a disregard for Samoan culture that is informed by racism and colonialism. Having known only her own subjective experience of the world, Mrs. Davidson assumes the white Christian culture she was raised in is superior to all others.

3.4.3.4 Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy-the practice of not conforming to the moral standards one claims to have is another major theme in "Rain." From the outset of the story, the Davidsons brag with passionate conviction about their accomplishments as missionaries who have successfully instilled a sense of sin into the local Samoan culture in their district. Having been horrified by what they saw as immoral behaviour (and what the Samoans merely understood as natural), the Davidsons sought to extinguish the comfort and freedom from Samoans' lives and kindle a new fear of a punishing Christian God. Davidson takes the same approach with Miss. Thompson, grinding down her will by isolating her in the boarding house and threatening to send her back to San Francisco to serve the prison sentence she evaded. Even though she repents, Davidson insists that suffering punishment is necessary for the salvation of her soul. The theme of hypocrisy arises suddenly at the end of the story when Dr. Macphail understands that Davidson killed himself because he tried to have sex with Miss Thompson, his obsession with her having proved to be about more than her saving soul. After realizing the hypocrisy of breaking his own moral code, Davidson sought to punish himself for his sin by ending his life in disgrace.

- The Davidsons represent hypocrisy



Summarised Overview

The events that took place over a two-week period between a small group of English and American tourists on the South Pacific island of Tutuila are described in the short story, "Rain." The main plot follows the efforts of one of the protagonists, a conceited and self-righteous Christian missionary, to convert another, whom he believes to be a common prostitute. The missionary eventually spends many days alone with the suspected prostitute, purging her soul of sin, using his tremendous political influence to control the situation. Ultimately, the woman seduces the missionary, who later chooses suicide rather than having to face an abruptly unclear future.

Assignments

1. Comment on the significance of the story "Rain."
2. Attempt a character sketch of Reverend Davidson.
3. Discuss the main conflict in "Rain."
4. Examine the elaborate use of symbols in the short story.
5. What is the central idea of W. Somerset Maugham's short story "Rain"?

Suggested Readings

1. Barnes, Ronald Edgar. *The Dramatic Comedy of William Somerset Maugham*. De Gruyter, 2015.
2. Rogal, Samuel J. *A William Somerset Maugham Encyclopedia*. Greenwood, 1997.

References

1. Maugham, Somerset W. *Rain and Other Sea Stories*. Dover, 2012.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Critical Responses

BLOCK-04

Block Content

Unit 1 English Literature in the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1945)

Unit 2 Early Twentieth Century Poetry (1900-1945)

Unit 3 English Drama in the Early Twentieth Century

Unit 4 Fiction

Unit 1

English Literature in the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1945)

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ acquire a general understanding about the socio-political background of the literary era
- ▶ possess familiarity with relevant critical perspectives for reviewing the literary works of the era
- ▶ contextualise the predominance and evolution of certain literary genres in the selected period
- ▶ comprehend the emergence and significance of certain stylistic features and themes in the selected period

Background

Virginia Woolf, the English novelist, once famously declared that human nature transformed drastically “on or about December 1910.” This perception that the world had completely changed was not unique to Woolf among the literary figures of her age. Rather, it was an overarching theme in the literature of the period. In a sense, the era from the 1900s to 1945 had seen its share of social and political upheavals. These years witnessed widespread industrialisation and technological advancements, as well as the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The works of thinkers such as Darwin, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and Einstein brought people’s understandings of science, economy, history, psychology, and religion under scrutiny.

In a similar vein, the literature of the era, too, saw fundamental changes in language, form, and content. English language writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century began to express themselves in more experimental ways. They emphasised their literature as a break from existing tradition. These literary patterns came to be recognised as a movement known as ‘modernism’. The early twentieth century saw strong indicators of modernism in English language literature in Britain and America. Diverse writers, ranging from D.H. Lawrence, Franz Kafka, Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot,



Ezra Pound, and Virginia Woolf, to William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and Katherine Mansfield, made up the canon of the movement.

While modernism constituted the most significant literary mood of the early twentieth century, there were other parallel and interrelated trends in the literature of the time. It is possible to trace different literary strains in the period, some with close ties to modernism and others that deviated from the movement. The history of English literature in the first part of the twentieth century was, thus, an amalgamation of different movements and philosophies, many of which had roots in the later parts of the preceding ages. Each of these have some commonalities as well as points of divergence. Their features were shaped in a particular manner, depending on the writers, genres, literary traditions, and socio-cultural forces involved.

Keywords

Literary era, Change, Modernism, Literary movements, Genres, Features

Discussion

► Layers of understanding

Among the different periods in English literature, the first half of the twentieth century has always been associated with novelty, particularly in British and American canons. It is often located in a radical, deliberate break from the literary and aesthetic culture of the preceding eras. Yet, a more nuanced exploration is necessary to understand the different elements that played a role in shaping this literary age.

► Duality

The dawning of the 20th century (1900s-1990s) inspired great hope, but also precipitated a sense of anxiety. Approaching the new millennium, there was an emergent belief in the power of science and human advancement to better the world. At the same time, for many, this passage into a new age was full of uncertainty.

Early signs of a cultural transformation were underway by the late 1880s. The transition into the new century came with a celebration of new discoveries, inventions, and technological progress. Yet, this did not upheave core socio-cultural values overnight. Certain customs

► Multiple strands

and practices remained intact, while others morphed into alternative forms more suited for changing ethos of the new age. So, modernity and tradition intermingled in social and culture spheres in different senses.

► Higher degree of functioning

The incorporation of new inventions into everyday life was not without consequence. Electricity, the combustion engine, the incandescent light bulb, the automobile, the airplane, radio, X-rays, fertilizers and so forth, transformed the very experience of life. A person could extend the scope of their activities through the workings of machines and science.

► Authenticity

However, while technology and science rendered the life convenient and efficient in many ways, many felt that they represented an 'inorganic' or 'inauthentic' way of living. The focus on 'machines' during this period was criticised as symbolic of the acceptance of materialism. The monotonous and repetitive functioning of machines was sometimes cast as a metaphor for modern life; the perceived insignificance of sentiments and emotions in such a 'machine' mode of living was frequently pointed out.

► Pros and Cons

Industrialisation progressed on a larger canvass, creating both a thriving economy and new levels of urban squalor. While certain sections of the society, such as the upper and middle-classes benefitted, others were pushed into exploitation, poor standards of living, and social discrimination. While an air of optimism about economic and national progress was projected, the factory assembly-lines, capitalist operations, and faceless labour forces also generated a sense of depersonalisation and social alienation.

► Religious and Economic dogma

Alongside the changes in material living conditions, the period from the 1850s onwards saw serious shifts in intellectual and artistic philosophies. In 1859, Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species* which refuted prevalent religious beliefs. A few years later, Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1864) reinterpreted prevailing conceptions about class and economic systems.

Another crucial contribution in this regard was made by Sigmund Freud, whose work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1901) reframed popular understandings of the human mind. Popularising a technique called psychoanalysis, he argued that human behaviour and perception are



► Unstable selfhood

controlled by an unconscious, unknowable part of the human mind. So, the idea of a reasoning, rational self began to face scrutiny.

► Spirit of contestation

The change in the intellectual climate precipitated the questioning of foundational theories about religion, class hierarchies, and reality itself. Since many conventional beliefs and practices were, in turn, sustained by existing ideologies, they came under scrutiny as well.

► Literary and aesthetic changes

In many ways, these transformations began to inspire and provoke the exploration of selfhood, experiences, and the world in a new light. These endeavours were visible to a great extent in the literature and arts of the period. There were noticeable shifts in language, form, and themes in the literature of the age.

► Shift in perception

By the end of the nineteenth century itself, there seemed to be a push towards rejecting old norms and traditions in the arts and literature. Often, changes in one field came to be reflected in another, over time. For instance, artists of the Impressionist school of painting demonstrated that people saw the changing qualities light, and that this coloured their perception of objects. This represented a sea-change in technique and presentation.

► Influence

The emphasis given to *how* a person sees, and not *what* they see, within Impressionism, has parallels in the literature of the period. Writers in the first half of the twentieth century emphasised the subjectivity of realities, giving significance to various perspectives and experiences. In short, these changes corresponded to the broader atmosphere of the era.

► Changed literary scene

This general tone gave the literature of the period, the adjective 'rebellious'. There was a sense that the practitioners of the different genres sought to cast aside the technical and thematic features of the previous era. Writers such as D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, Henrik Ibsen, Franz Kafka, and Gertrude Stein broke away from the conventions of the time to introduce revolutionary subjects and innovative styles of writing.

While exact dates are impossible to fix for this literary attitude, we may consider the period between the 1900s and 1930s as its high-water mark. Further, the body of works that bore out a radical break from existing



► Diversity

aesthetic norms, was remarkable for its diversity. It included fiction, poetry, drama, and essays, and a range of authors from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

► Commonalities

In later years, the works that emphasised these principles were contextualised under the literary movement known as 'modernism'. The most striking elements of these texts were their experimentations in form and style, and the novel, open-ended nature of their themes. Typically, they expressed a sense of disillusionment with or outright rejected moral and social dictats, stressing the need for individualism.

► Lament

Modernist writers often considered themselves to be part of an 'avant-garde' movement. They decried commercialism and middle-class values, both of which they considered as key influences on conventional literature and art. As opposed to the optimism which was associated with progress in the era, modernist literature articulated a sense of pessimism and loss.

► Miscellaneous features

Crucially, modernism subsumed a collection of different movements under its title. A range of different sub-genres such as Imagism, Symbolism, Surrealism, Dadaism, and Expressionism were part of the broader modernist movement. Specific features of these movements intermixed in different ways, creating a diverse array of literary works.

► Anxieties

At the centre of modernism is a contradiction. Even as it appeared to champion novelty, experimentation, and innovation, its themes remained 'anti-modern'. It condemned the loss or replacement of the religious, cultural, and social values of an earlier period. The breakdown of these elements was read to have fragmented the experience of life in the modern era.

► Representative

While the early parts of the twentieth century saw the development of these tendencies, it was after the advent of the First World War (1914-1918) that modernist literature came into its own. The year 1922 marks the pinnacle of this movement with the publication of three significant modernist works, with all of them epitomising the spirit of the modern era. These are T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*.



► Deliberate rejection

The works that formed part of the modernist movement shared some common characteristics. This included a deliberate movement away from conventional literary forms and subjects. There was also more emphasis on how we perceive things, rather than what we see. This led to a fresh interest in the interior workings of the human mind.

► Multiplicity

The concept of objective and absolute truths or perspectives was challenged. This came to be reflected in themes and formal techniques that reflected the multiplicity of viewpoints and realities. Objectivity and universality came to be contested, while the subjectivity of experience, perception, and expression was highlighted.

► Intermixed forms

Another key dimension of modernism lies in its intermixing of genres. The boundaries between various types and styles of writings were blurred to produce new literary experiences. This meant that poetry could take on the characteristics of prose or could be akin to a patchwork of different texts; the features of different genres were often utilised within the same work.

► Viewpoints

Fragmented or broken styles of writing, particularly evidenced in the use of unconventional punctuation, syntax, and language, were encouraged. Instead of sequential and linear plot constructions, the narratives were discontinuous or non-linear. Techniques such as 'stream of consciousness' and limited omniscient narrators put forward unreliable, subjective perspectives.

► Reflexivity

Often, modernist characters and narratives display an awareness of their fictional nature. Works include comments about their own status as a poem, play, or work of fiction. These meta-narrative qualities often provoke further questions about our construction of meaning or reality.

► Representing change

A vital element in the understanding of modernism is experimentation. Innovations in terms of language, form, and writing were significant in illustrating the modernist motto of 'make it new'. In a bid to emphasise the perception of transformation, modernists and many twentieth century writers broke away from the conventional and the traditional in literature.

The language of modernist texts was often deliberately

► Elusive language

obscure, with open-ended, multiple meanings. Texts typically sustained possibilities of alternative, contradictory readings. New textual meanings could be explored through the subjective interpretations of the readers, with several understandings possible.

► Reflections of the milieu

In this sense, modernism sought to use dissonance and the effect of shock to pull readers away from complacency. Working against the principles of the 'aesthetic movement' and its motto of Art for Art's Sake, the era showed a clear drive towards the political and the controversial in modernist literature. While there was a shared sense of rootlessness among modernists and other early twentieth century writers, this condition was amplified in the post-war WWI era. Typical themes of the period conveyed the psychological and societal devastation caused by the conflict, as well as an enduring sense of grief and disillusionment. Some of the most important literary contributions of the time revolved around themes such as estrangement, death, despair, and disarray.

► Pylon Poets

After the period of high modernism, the 1930s saw the rise of a younger group of left-wing poets: W. H. Auden, Louise MacNeice, C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and John Betjeman. They were referred to as 'Pylon Poets'. Unlike modernist borrowings from Greek and Roman myths, they self-consciously utilised imagery from their own times. Their poetry incorporated the rise of technological modernity, and frequently employed images of machines, factories, modes of transport and power.

► Paradigm shift

The period from 1939 to 1945 witnessed the outbreak of the Second World War. The imagination of war once again became prominent in era's literature. Writers such as Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green, Patrick Hamilton, Elizabeth Bowen, and Dylan Thomas constituted the literary canon of the age. Many of the modernists and Pylon poets remained active, continuing to produce significant works.



Summarised Overview

Reviewing the broad period from the 1900 to 1945, we can see the historical and socio-cultural factors that forged the art and literature of the period. Rather than a singular trajectory, the literature of the first half of the twentieth century shows a complicated path of evolution. Beginning with the gradual transition from the late nineteenth century to the 1910s, certain widespread formal changes began to be expressed in English-language literature. In the postwar period, these transformations were pronounced, and later came to be classified under the title of 'modernism'. The latter period (mid-1930s to 1945) culminated in the rise of a new host of writers whose works conflicted with several modernist tenets. It is in this diverse literary landscape that some of the most significant works of the century were born.

Assignments

1. Briefly explain the historical background in which English literature of the twentieth century developed?
2. How did the transformation of the intellectual climate of the twentieth century come about?
3. What are the features of the modernist movement in English literature?
4. What themes were typically explored in modernist literature?
5. Explain the significance of the year 1922 with relation to the modernist movement.
6. Briefly examine the literature of the 1930s and 1940s in English literature?
7. Which artistic and literary sub-genres formed a part of the larger modernist movement?
8. What broad changes were effected in writing style as a part of the modernist movement?
9. Why was modernist literature often given the adjective 'rebellious'?
10. Discuss the salient characteristics of early twentieth century English literature with special reference to the evolution of the modernist movement.



Suggested Readings

1. Levenson, Michael H. *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922*. Cambridge UP, 1984.
2. Levenson, Michael H. A. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
3. Perkins, David. *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*. Harvard UP, 1976.

References

1. Levenson, Michael H. *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922*. Cambridge UP, 1984.
2. Levenson, Michael H. A. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

Unit 2

Early Twentieth Century Poetry (1900-1945)

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ contextualise the historical evolution of English poetry in the twentieth century
- ▶ possess an insight into the socio-cultural background of the selected literary period
- ▶ acquire an understanding of some of the major features of the selected texts
- ▶ critically analyse the selected texts with reference to relevant critical perspectives

Background

In 1913, the British poet, Ezra Pound published a two-line poem titled “In a Station of the Metro” in the literary magazine *Poetry*. It describes the experience of a moment, in an underground metro in Paris, as follows: *The apparition of these faces in the crowd:/ Petals on a wet, black bough*. At the time, it was unique for its radically different treatment of subject, and briefness of form.

The poem symbolises a departure from the literary values of the preceding Victorian (1837-1901) and Edwardian (1901-1912) periods. While the publication of Pound’s poem does not signify an abrupt conclusion to the conventions and norms of previous literary eras, it does represent certain new impulses. These new features would come to be understood as part and parcel of an emerging movement known as ‘modernism’. While the poetry of the earlier eras certainly formed the literary background of those writers who would constitute ‘high modernism’ in British and American poetry, these writers also responded to and rejected earlier poetic traditions.

A widely perceived change in modernist poetry is its ‘difficulty’, especially in terms of language. T.S. Eliot, one of the most significant poets of the movement, felt that his own time was one of great variety and complexity. Therefore, he



argued, that the poetic works of his period must be difficult, various, and complex. This attitude was reflected in the works of many English-language poets who began to develop experimental approaches to capture what they saw to be the essence and conditions of their times.

In this sense, innovations in language, form, and technique came to be viewed as the hallmarks of modernist poetry. Poets used avant-garde styles and modes of expression, typically creating the effect of fragmentation and alienation in their works. Open form, free verse, unconventional diction and punctuation, along with uncusomary use of poetic devices and styles were usual in their poetry.

Modernist poets strove for artistic novelty, as emphasised by the motto popularised by Ezra Pound — ‘make it new’. True to this idea, the subject of modernist poetry was drawn from non-traditional sources. Their works were replete with borrowings from other cultures and languages, and references to existing texts. Further, they also covered aspects of life that were deemed to be inappropriate or unwieldy for the poetic art in earlier times.

Despite these shared features, it is impossible to uniformly classify ‘modernist poets’. Apart from individual differences, modernist poets grouped themselves under various banners. These included smaller movements such as Futurism, Imagism, Symbolism, and Dadaism to name a few. While these poetic schools had their own declared philosophy and principles, there were instances of overlap in many elements.

In short, modernism in poetry represents an enlargement of the scope of poetry itself. The movement sought to reinvent various aspects of the genre, creating a new poetic diction and language. It was an intermingling of diverse forms, styles, and themes through which the poets of the modernist movement attempted to convey their experiences of the modern world.

Keywords

Genres, Modernism, Sub-movements, Mood of rebellion, Poetic techniques

Discussion

Section 1

Dulce et Decorum Est

The poem “Dulce et Decorum Est” was written by Wilfred Owen, between August 1917 and September 1918, while he was serving in World War I. Owen is renowned for his heart-breaking accounts of suffering in battle. He depicts the gruelling daily battle of a company of troops in “Dulce et Decorum Est,” focusing on the account of one soldier’s horrible death. The poem discusses about the anguish this incident left behind. In order to emphasise the contrast between the perception of war as ‘noble’ (as propagated by those who are not actually engaged in it) and the terrifying reality of war, he quotes the Roman poet Horace. The speaker begins by depicting soldiers who are hunched over with their packs, like beggars. Their legs are wobbly, and they cough like helpless and ill, old women, while slogging painfully through a muddy countryside. They turn away from the light flares, which the Germans had used to illuminate the area briefly so that they could detect and kill British soldiers.

► Reality of warfare

They, then, start marching in the direction of their faraway camp. The men appear to be sleeping as they walk because they are so exhausted. Many people carry on despite having naked, bleeding feet since they lost their battle boots. The men are so exhausted that they are practically blind; they cannot see anything. They fail to hear the sound of the deadly poison gas rounds falling behind them.

► Emotional and physical toll

The soldiers scramble to put on their gas masks in time, as someone yells out an urgent warning about the toxic gas. However, one man is left straining and yelling, unable to put his mask on. The speaker claims that this man resembles someone who has been caught in a lime or fire (an ancient chemical weapon used to effectively blind opponents). The speaker then imagines the soldier to be drowning, just as a person might be submerged underwater.

► Experience reinterpreted

The speaker jumps forward to the present time, where he is haunted by a recurring dream. The dying soldier



- Illusions of patriotism

runs toward him in anguish in the dream. The speaker addresses the audience directly now. The speaker implies that if the readers could have their own similar stifling dreams, they feel differently about war. If they had to march behind a waggon in which the other soldiers had placed the dying soldier; if they had witnessed the writhing of the dying soldier's eyes in an otherwise slack and wrecked face; and heard him cough up blood from his broken lungs at every bump in the path, they wouldn't be so keen to spread the ancient falsehood that "it is pleasant and suitable to die for one's country" to young people yearning for a sense of heroism.

- Abstract idea vs. reality

"Dulce et Decorum Est" alludes generally to the tragedies of all wars, while also vividly and bitterly depicting the horrors of a particular battle. The poem's description of these atrocities is devastating in its precision. Owen makes it obvious that such misery permeates all parts of war, despite the fact that it is easy to comment on the "horror of war" in the abstract. Even surviving a battle after witnessing others die invites anguish. The mundane daily existence of a soldier is excruciating, and the stark truth of death is an unbearable agony. Owen's use of language envelops readers in his unique experience of war, as opposed to its idealised portrayal.

- Shift in focus

"Dulce et Decorum Est" provides a view of war—and World War I in particular—that is wholly cruel, bitter, and gloomy in its first three stanzas. A change is evident in the fourth and final stanza. The fourth stanza concentrates on the "you" of the reader, as opposed to the earlier stanzas' emphasis on the "we" of the regiment, the "he" of the dying soldier, and the "I" of the traumatised speaker.

- Spirit of contestation

The speaker attempts to convey the harsh realities of battle to the reader in this stanza by speaking directly to them. This is an attempt to refute what the speaker refers to as the "old Lie," the widely believed notion that war, especially dying in battle, is significant and full of glory. This notion is transmitted in the Latin lines composed by the poet Horace, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" - it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country.

So "Dulce et Decorum Est" is not solely seeking to make the public aware of the horrors of war. The poem also criticises historical institutions and political/social

- Agency of reader

systems that, since the beginning of time, have sent young men to their deaths based on romanticised accounts of valour. However, even as it does so, the poem appears to cruelly sense that nothing will change since nothing ever has. The poem insists that the reader confront reality and stop participating in that old Lie.

Section 2

The Second Coming

- Idea of salvation

W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" is one of his most well-known works. It depicts an enigmatic alternative to the Christian notion of the Second Coming—Jesus's anticipated return to Earth as a saviour, heralding the Kingdom of Heaven. This is significant since the poem was written in 1919, not long after the end of World War I.

- Sense of uncertainty

The opening stanza of the poem paints a picture of a chaotic, confusing, and painful world. The second, lengthier stanza imagines the speaker being given a glimpse of the future, but this vision substitutes Jesus's 'glorious' return with the appearance of a hideous beast. "The Second Coming" seems to reflect on society's breakdown, in this sense.

- Rapid transformation

A violent and chaotic world that is swiftly altering is the subject of "The Second Coming." The opening line of the poem, which refers to a "widening gyre," alludes to Yeats' idea, which he developed in a later work titled *A Vision*. In Yeats's view, the universe was formed by a collection of interlocking rings that spun into one another and wound around one another to spark creation.

- Poetic effect

The opening line of the poem suggests that the cosmos is rotating and changing. This poem's first line, which is cryptic, withholds any information about what may be happening. This helps to establish a feeling of mystery from the very beginning. Additionally, it broadens the scope of the poem, emphasising that it is addressing happenings on a cosmic scale.

The second line of the poem furthers this ambiguity. It appears to be lamenting the separation of the "falcon," or humanity, from its falconer—from God, ethics, or morals. Although, Yeats himself was interested in tradition and order, he did depart from his Christian background to



► Disruption of order

follow esoteric interests. The separation of the falcon from the falconer would be an illustration of a similar breakdown. “The Second Coming”, in this way, could be seen as lamenting the loss of order. The line could also be interpreted as implying that the falcon is now free. The world has broken from its former traditions of convention and restriction, and it can advance into a new period when it will find new freedoms and new possibilities.

► Caution

The third line’s use of the term “the centre cannot hold” suggests that something formerly considered to be central to the world is altering permanently. When describing the beginning of the dramatic changes taking place, Yeats uses the term “loosed” twice, conjuring the sense of an unrestrained outburst of rage. Yeats classifies the entire sequence of events as a “Second Coming.” Instead of a second coming of Christ, however, this event will see the birth of a being just as significant; one who will fundamentally alter the nature of the world. But the poem leaves the reader with the sense that this transformation is entirely distant from the principles of Christianity.

► Shared consciousness and symbolism

Yeats uses esoteric and mythological imagery in the poem’s second half. According to him, all humans are part of a vast, shared archive of memories filled with stories and archetypes common to all. The strange, apocalyptic imagery that drives the poem to its end comes from this collective awareness, or Spiritus Mundi. The speaker enters a bizarre vision in which he sees a sphinx in the middle of a desert, staring at him cruelly while moving its thighs slowly and almost sexually. This sphinx may provide answers to how the world is changing, while also embodying primal ways of being.

► Prophetic tone

The speaker completely leaves reality for a moment before returning when he exits the vision. The poem finishes where it started: in a cloud of foreboding foreshadowing, with the threat of a lurking monster of the future drawing near, and the cosmos expanding and changing into something new. It is unclear whether that future will be a horrible, chaotic disaster or whether it would provide a kind of freedom and opportunity. Indeed, despite its complex metaphors and symbolism, “The Second Coming” has a relatively simple message. It takes on the function of a literary prophesy for humanity, predicting its undoing. It paints a bleak picture,

suggesting that civilization's sense of progress and order is only an illusion.

"The Second Coming" is an illustration of a modernist poetry. Generally speaking, modernist poetry expresses discontent with the aesthetic and cultural standards of the past, and aims to depart from them. This is visually expressed in Yeats' poem through the employment of peculiar imagery that could startle or even shock the reader. In addition, "The Second Coming" is based on ideas of disenchantment with modern society and culture. A significant driver for the growth of modernist literature was World War I (1914–18). As a result of the war's destruction of pre-war cultural and societal norms, new perspectives about the world were made possible through art.

- Modernist Disillusionment

The fact that "The Second Coming" relies on the reader's interpretation in order to comprehend its references and meaning is another example of modernism in action. A figurative remark in the opening stanza describes how human ideals are being derailed. Yeats predicts that a terrifying second coming will occur in the future in the second stanza. It is left to the readers to piece together the significance of this dual imagery. The poem has a rather simple form and structure, with just two stanzas. Although there is a faint suggestion of iambic pentameter, the metres occur quite loosely, giving the poem a feel more akin to free verse with strong stresses than anything else.

- Open-ended conclusion and Formal freedom

Section 3

Sailing to Byzantium

If "The Second Coming" depicts civilisational collapse, then "Sailing to Byzantium" reflects on the challenge of maintaining one's soul in a frail, deteriorating human body. An elderly man, who is the speaker, departs from his own land to embark on a visionary journey. His destination is Byzantium, a historic city that served as the primary centre of early Christianity. In order to become more like an everlasting piece of art, he hopes to discover how to transcend his mortality there.

- Mortality and art

Readers are introduced to a world in which there is no place for the old. In this universe, young couples kiss



► Body-Soul Duality

beneath trees teeming with singing birds (who appear unconscious of their own mortality), fish abound in the waterways, and all living things—humans, fish, and birds alike—are born and then pass away. Everything in that world is so focused on the here and now, that they are unable to consider things that could survive the body.

► Metaphor of journey

Unless he can maintain his spirit alive, lively, and singing within his fading, worn-out body, in this world, an old man is nothing but a scrawny, old scarecrow. The individual who wishes to keep their soul alive must learn how to accomplish this through their own study, since no one can teach the soul how to do it. The speaker has travelled to the historic holy city of Byzantium to learn this.

► Concept of eternity

The speaker addresses the great men and saints of Byzantium, long dead, who are now caught up in the dazzling fire of God, compared to the lovely golden tiling that adorns Byzantine buildings. He requests that they help him educate his soul to sing by emerging from this fire, which is swirling in spirals like the 'bobbin' of a spinning wheel. To enter their eternal realm of art, he wants them to burn off his mortal, fleshly heart, which is bound to his deteriorating body and incapable of understanding or accepting its own mortality.

► Transformation

The speaker claims that after leaving his body behind, he won't ever again assume a mortal bodily shape. Instead, he'll resemble a stunning work of golden art, the kind that ancient Greek metalworkers would have created to decorate an emperor's bedroom. Alternatively, he'll be a golden bird perched in a golden tree, where, like the sages, he'll be able to impart his transcendent knowledge of the past, present, and future to humans.

► Wisdom and ageing

"Sailing to Byzantium," is Yeats' enduring description of the agony of ageing, and the creative and spiritual work needed to maintain one's vitality even when the heart is "fastened to a dying animal" (the body). The answer, according to Yeats, is to leave the land of the youth and go to Byzantium, where the wise men depicted in the city's renowned gold mosaics—which were mostly finished in the sixth and seventh centuries—might become the "singing-masters" of his soul.

He believes that the sages would manifest in flames and transport him out of his physical form into "the



- Natural youth and artificial eternity

artifice of eternity,” where he will be able to exist like a magnificent piece of art. The poem’s astounding last line makes the startling claim that once he has left his body, he will no longer manifest as a natural object but will instead transform into a golden bird perched on a golden tree, singing of the past, present, and what is “to come”.

- Construct

One of Yeats’ most recurring themes is the idea that the ‘artificial’ or manufactured is superior to the natural. The speaker’s body is regarded as subject to ugliness and deterioration, whereas the manufactured objects are rendered flawless and unchanging. Furthermore, the speaker believes that his assumption of artificiality has profound spiritual truth rather than merely being an aesthetic fantasy. He wants his soul to be able to sing and believes that changing into a golden bird will enable him to do so.

- Contradictions

In keeping with the modernist line of thought, ‘age’ or ‘oldness’ becomes a tyrannical development that individuals must strive to escape. However, it is also presented as something that one must raise above by transforming one’s soul. Here, the soul or the spirit is viewed as a way for transcending the human condition of mortality. In other words, the poem brings together a curious mix of modernist philosophy and ancient mysticism.

- Figure of Ireland

The poem charts the speaker’s development from childhood to old age, as well as the accompanying geographic shift from Ireland—a nation that, according to Yeats, was only coming into being—to Byzantium. As the young were engrossed with what he refers to as “sensual music,” Yeats felt as though he no longer belonged in Ireland. Thus, the poem captures Yeats’s engagement with his land just as much as his negotiations with ageing.

Section 4

The Waste Land

- Setting

The Waste Land, a classic modernist poem by T. S. Eliot, was first published in 1922. The poem, which is broken up into five sections, examines living in post-First World War London while also incorporating images of the ocean, the desert, and the busy city. The poem stands out for its novel approach, which combines several literary styles and structures.



► Intermixing

Eliot also makes references to a wide range of literary works, such as the *Bible*, Shakespeare's dramas and poetry, the treatises of St. Augustine, holy writings from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, French poetry, Wagnerian opera, and Arthurian tales around the Holy Grail. The poem also makes current allusions to tinned food, gramophones, motor vehicles, jazz music, and gramophones.

► Different View-points

In essence, it is a dramatic monologue that switches between speakers, locations, and time. This technique allows it to portray the terror, futility, and alienation of modern life in the wake of World War I, through a wide array of perspectives. It thus permits the reader to experience the perception of post-war life as fluidic and often unstable.

► Feeling of loss and breakdown

The isolation and brokenness of modern existence are themes in the poem "*The Waste Land*." The poem captures the generational anguish brought on by the conflict, both on the battlefield and at home. Modern culture, painted in the poem as shallow, alienating, and devoid of spiritual direction or cultural wealth, is represented by the "waste land" in the title. Even if the inhabitants of "The Waste Land" are merely going about their daily lives, their lack of interaction or communication is a sign of the dysfunctional society in which they all reside. Speaking solely in terms of their common, traumatic background, the speaker and Stetson stand in for the disillusioned World War I survivors.

► Alienation

Intimacy and love have been reduced to a physical event in the disjointed world of the poem. In the third section of the poem, "The Fire Sermon," a typist cleans her flat before her lover arrives. Yet their sexual encounter is anything but tender. The lady plainly dislikes the man; once he departs, she is happy that he is no longer there. The encounter falls just short of a sexual violation. This scene highlights the poem's overall theme—that contemporary living isolates individuals from one another.

However, Eliot departs from realistic settings in the poem's last section. Instead, he portrays the contemporary world as a veritable wasteland: a stony, desolate place, devoid of food or water, where even communicating with God is difficult. The poem implies

► Religious authority

that this is the greatest estrangement from which all contemporary individuals suffer and the root of the ugliness of contemporary existence.

► Modernist theme of death

In "*The Waste Land*," death is present both literally and figuratively. The poem is littered with corpses, and several kinds of endings serve to portray various types of death. Even the characters in the poem are like the living dead, leading lonesome, depressing existence. Even though "*The Waste Land*" discusses death, which it portrays as inevitable and unavoidable, the poem **does** include a sense of optimism. In fact, the poem's conclusion implies that, despite how terrible it may be, death is a necessary step toward rebirth and regeneration. New beginnings can only be built from the ruins of a wasteland.

► Inevitability of Death

In the poem's shortest section, "Death by Water," the universality of this experience is most clearly demonstrated. Its conciseness highlights the poem's main point, which is that everyone will eventually meet the destiny of Phlebas, the drowned sailor "who was once gorgeous and tall as you." This is undoubtedly true in the literal sense, since everyone dies, but it is also true symbolically since, as the poem shows, life is full of endings.

► Void of faith and modern life

Eliot himself included footnotes to "*The Waste Land*", since the poem is so full of references to other authors' and thinkers' concepts. Particularly important to the poem are references to religion and spirituality as well as representations of nihilism. This is generally tied, in the poem's narrative, to a crisis of spirituality that can only be resolved by reinvigorating faith.

In "*The Waste Land*," sex is shown as an immoral activity that represents the decline of contemporary civilisation. The poem portrays passion and casual sexual behaviour as signs of moral decay. The poem makes the argument that since true love and connection are so difficult to come by in the current world, sex has turned immoral and powerless, resulting in waste, emptiness, and decay. Even the "thunder" that resounds over the wasteland is "sterile," incapable of bringing the water that would hydrate the soil and foster the ideal conditions for the emergence of new life. Eliot's references to the Fisher King are connected to the poem's overarching themes of sex, love, and power in this way. Similar to the kingdom

- Lust and the inability to act

of the Fisher King, the present world is desolate and fading away. All of the speakers experience impotence or helplessness, exactly like the fabled monarch did.

- Absence of romance

The loss of romantic love and real connection, the poem contends, is one of the metaphorical wounds to blame for this impotence and the ensuing wasteland. The poem is overshadowed by the weight of unfulfilled passion, failed love affairs, and unfortunate marriages, which alludes to the desolation of the Fisher King's realm. For instance, references to tragic heroines, like Shakespeare's Ophelia and Cleopatra, express the utter futility of any attempts at romance.

- Memory

There are several historical allusions in "*The Waste Land*." Some of these are references to actual, noteworthy historical occurrences or individuals, while others are just simple personal recollections connected to various speakers and characters in the poem. The poem serves as a kind of elegy for the past, lamenting the collapse of society and culture. But much as it laments lost past, the poem itself works to preserve those memories by layering on a staggering number of historical allusions. The poem finally implies that the present is only a continuation of that past in this way.

- Blurring of time as literary effect

The references to the past vary as the poem progresses and the speakers start to move and alter. The past and present eventually blend into one another. For instance, the speaker refers to World War I as "Mylae", an ancient Roman battle, in Line 70. This blending illustrates how conflict occurs everywhere, in all times, in both the past and the present. Using modernist techniques, "*The Waste Land*" discusses the pervasive sense of disillusionment that characterises modern life. The use of multiple speakers, fragments from other texts, and the non-linear narrative are indicative of this spirit. Further, using allusions from the legends and myths of various cultures and times, the poem creates a pastiche.

The poem's style and structure are purposefully disjointed throughout, forgoing standard verse forms in favour of free verse. The text juxtaposes monologues or overheard snippets of dialogue with references, religious doctrine, and myth. The ensuing "heap of broken images" deepens the portrayal of spiritual decay while also suggesting a chance for restoration. Other prevalent

- Language and Modernist concerns

themes of the modernist literary tradition are embodied in *'The Waste Land'*, including the fragmented character of time, the importance of culture vs nationalism, and the search for universality during a moment of political instability. Themes such as sight/blindness, resurrection/death, fertility/impotence, civilization/decline, and voice/silence are repeated in the poem. The majority of these pairs of binary oppositions are found in the poem. Thus, the poem is both a representative example of Modernist literary heritage and a window into the post-World War I collective psyche.

Section 5

In Memory of W. B. Yeats

A poignant elegy by W.H. Auden, "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" is a powerful work that taps into themes of life after death, the power of poetry, and the human condition. Its central theme is the passing of the poet William Butler Yeats in 1939, a pivotal year for both Auden and the world at large (the dawn of WW2). The poem, which is divided into three sections, is a meditation on the nature of great poetry, its function in times of great tragedy, as well as in everyday battles. The first, sombre part reiterates that "The day of his death was a gloomy frigid day," describing the icy nature of death. Death's chill is reflected in the surroundings, which is characterised by frozen rivers, restricted air traffic, and the now, iced-over sculptures of famous people. These happenings remind the reader of Yeats' cold absence in the world.

- Commemoration and Metaphor

In the backdrop, wolves howl and "the peasant river" runs outside of the rest of civilization, sustaining the poetry. The suggestion is that even though the poet is deceased, the poetry he put out into the world continues to exist. But the issue is that the poet can't speak for himself anymore. In a sense, since his death, "he became his fans." His poems are misunderstood, "scattered" everywhere like ashes, with "unfamiliar affections" introduced into them. The poetry is altered in "the guts of the living."

- Afterlife of poetry

The events of a typical day continue—a trader screams on the floor, the underprivileged suffer—for the majority, the day is unremarkable. A unique spirit is required to recognise the significance of a great poet's passing, and only "a few thousand" people possess this soul. The



► Paradoxical death of the poet

paradox between the casting of the poet's death as a great cultural crisis, on the one hand, and as an entirely inconsequential, everyday event, on the other hand, marks a tension within the current poem.

► Function of poetry

The speaker briefly discusses the capacity of Yeats' poetry for generative power, in the second section. He was "hurt" by "Mad Ireland" and used poetry as a means of coping. Poetry was a "gift" that survives everything other than itself for Yeats, who was "silly" like other poets or, more broadly, like other Irishmen or humans. Yeats' poetry could be said to have withstood his own bodily decline, the incorrect interpretations of "wealthy ladies," and Yeats' own shortcomings. According to this viewpoint, poetry itself endures in the middle of everything, emerging from a place of safety and giving voice to that profound level of humanity.

► Shift in Form

The third and final section, which consists of six stanzas of AABB, returns the reader to more comfortable ground. The third and last section returns the reader to more comfortable ground with six stanzas in AABB poetry, each with a seven-syllable trochaic line (three long-short feet followed by a seventh stressed syllable).

► Happiness

As Yeats' corpse ("the Irish vessel") lies in the ground, warring nations clash, and his writing is misinterpreted by readers and intellectuals. Yet, his poetry still has a place in the world. The genuine poet, like Yeats, will "follow right / To the bottom of the night", to that essential human freedom where an "unconstraining voice" may "persuade us to delight" in our existence.

► Reclaiming humanity

Despite the "curse" of humanity, the poet might transform the misfortune of the human condition into a vineyard from which sweet poetic drink may be brewed. On the one hand, there are "deserts of the heart" and human suffering, but on the other, a "healing spring" can let a man out of "the prison of his [mortal] days" with the help of this wine. Despite everything, a poet like Yeats may "teach the free man how to admire" that essential aspect of reality that endures in poetry.

"In Memory of W.B. Yeats" has a three-part structure that is further broken down into stanzas of varying lengths. The poem's first section has six stanzas, followed by one in the second and six more in the third. In the first

► Form and structure

two portions of the poem, Auden does not utilise a rhyme scheme, but in the third, he does. Given the elegiac style of the final lines in the poem, this makes sense. They rhyme in the following order: AABB CCDD, with different end sounds as he deemed fit. Each section's aim was distinct in Auden's perspective. The first describes what Yeats' final days were like, the second is addressed to the poet, and the third is a much more conventional elegy.

► Deviation

In his poem "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," Auden employs a variety of literary devices. These include alliteration, allusion, and enjambment. W.H. Auden's poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" is a modernist poetry due to its imagery, concept, and versification. As the poem's title suggests, it is an elegy written to grieve the passing of W.B. Yeats, although it differs from other elegy forms. Unlike the traditional elegy, when nature is depicted as lamenting the loss, nature is shown here continuing on with no ill will or emotion.

► Complexities

The poem, itself, is open-ended, providing no single idea that might be considered central to it (other than the tone of grief). It brings forth a conflict between many interpretations of what poetry is, and what it ought to be. Doing so requires that the poem is technically and conceptually complex. Further, it stands testimony to Auden's modernist craftsmanship that the work does not reduce complex topics to singular ideas.

Section 6

Poem in October

► Neo-romantic poem

"Poem in October" was published in 1946 as part of Dylan Thomas's anthology *Deaths and Entrances*. The work is a celebratory reflection on the "rhythms of life" wherein the poem's speaker ruminates on the mysteries and beauty of life, as on the "heart's truth" that discovered in childhood. The speaker of the poem goes on a walk to celebrate his 30th birthday on a soft October morning and climbs a hill to enjoy the scenic view. An unexpected flood of sunshine transports him to his childhood. Associated with the neo-romantic movement in British poetry, Dylan Thomas uses themes such as nature, beauty, spiritual connection, and the innocence of childhood.



► Overview of poem

The poem narrates the speaker's journey out of the Autumn of his life and his subsequent attempt to reclaim the joys of childhood, summer season, and his spirituality. It opens with speaker stating that he was thirty years old when he wrote this; he chose to go on walk along the water's edge, listening to the seabirds and woods, on his birthday. Leaving the town behind, he began a climb up a hill nearby. As he went upwards, the town shrank and the seasons seemed to change. The cool air of Autumn faded and the summer returned. It continued to rain amidst the presence of many birds. Reaching the top of the hill felt as if he had reached heaven and he became absorbed with memories of his childhood. He recalls special visits to this place with his mother. He hopes that the joy that he currently experiences on the hill will stay with him throughout the year. Perhaps, he will return to reclaim it on his next birthday.

► Beginning

The first stanza of the poem states the speaker's age and reveals that he is thirty years old. His age is described as a progression towards death, or towards heaven. Dylan Thomas utilises nouns and adjectives creatively in this section, as displayed in his being "priested" by herons. Similarly, the speaker in the poem makes note of the various sights and sounds of the morning including the sounds of the rustling leaves, small animals, the harbour, and the woods. They seem to be beckoning him out into the world to take in its beauty. Lured by the possibility of exploring the morning, the speaker sets "foot" in that "moment" – the town is still sleeping while nature is not. There is no clue as to where the speaker is headed.

► Shift

It is in the second stanza that the context of the journey is made clear. The speaker has turned thirty and he is going on a walk to celebrate his birthday. Throughout the way, he notes "water-birds" that seem to be flying his "name". He weaves an imagery of a farm and white horses, intermingling different landscapes at this point. Everything seems to be centred on his self and movement. He goes on to leave the town behind, speaking of a "border" he has to cross and a "gate" that has to be opened. These metaphorical imagery could refer to a psychological shift that is experienced by the speaker.

The next stanza discusses the aliveness of the area that he finds himself in. The speaker, in a personification, refers to the "sun of October" as sitting on the "hill's shoulder".

► Description of the hill

This is one of many instances of personification which is used to present the entire, natural world as 'alive' to the reader. The area has "fond climates and sweet singers", as well as rain, images that come up again and again. Further, the wind that brings rain and cold weather in the faraway woods are also noted here. The poem seems to acquire a 'dream-like' or fantastical quality here.

► Dream-like

The following stanza moves to the image of 'rain', describing it as "pale" and looming over the "dwindling harbour". This refers to the way that things fade into the distance as he climbs up the hill and goes further away from the port and its docks. Being far outside the boundaries of the town, he has stepped into a space where he can worship nature – he marvels at the gardens of spring and summer. The poem also provides the clue that this is a "tall tale" or a figment of imagination rather than a real place.

► Reflections on the past

In the fifth stanza, there is yet another reference to the season changing from Autumn to Summer. The speaker experiences the 'joy of the day' amidst the beauty of the landscape. The wonders of summertime brings back memories of his childhood when the world was made of colour and vivid images. Further, he remembers visiting this hill with his mother, listening to moral stories. The sixth stanza brings in a sense of regret that he is no longer the same person as that boy in the past. He yearns for the relationship that he possessed with the world around him in his boyhood. Everything around him was shrouded in beauty and mystery.

► Pursuit of happiness

Though the poem seems to comment on the losses suffered by the speaker in adulthood, the final stanza is uplifting and celebratory. It discusses the reclaiming of this childhood joy on his thirtieth birthday. Under the sun, he discovers the "Joy of the long dead child" and hopes to continue it throughout the year. He concludes by wishing that his happiness should remain on the hill and still be expressed in the turning of an year.

"Poem in October" comprises of seven stanzas, separated into sets of ten lines. It does not follow one particular rhyme scheme. But the use of half-rhymes, as seen in words such as "rolling" and "whistling", "summer" and "mother", provide a rhythmic unity to the work. There are also moments of assonance as with the



► Stylistic elements

words “heron” and “beckon” in the first stanza. Formal cohesion can also be seen in the lines and indentation of similar lengths used in the poem. As observed by many critics, “There are three long lines, then two very short ones. These are followed by two more long lines, two more short, and one final long line in each stanza.” This movement on the page seems to imitate the rise and fall of waves, the pouring of rain, or indeed, the speaker’s climb up the hill.

Summarised Overview

The unit explores a wide range of poetry across the early 1900s to the later years of the 1940s. Beginning with the war poetry of Wilfred Owen, the unit contextualises the different stylistic modes and literary principles that defined British poetry over this period. While the World Wars destabilised established ways of living, the poetry of the period sought to address the uncertainty of the age. This is seen in the themes of doubt, anxiety, and death taken up by high modernist poets such as W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. With the poetry of W.H. Auden, in the 1930s, it is possible to see a shift from the obscure and philosophical roots of modernism towards a more socially oriented poetry. Dylan Thomas’s poetic style heralded the return of romanticism in language and themes, incorporating a diverse poetic array in the period.

Assignments

1. Examine “Dulce Et Decorum Est” as a poem that challenges established perceptions about the glory and nobility of warfare.
2. Discuss the use of mythological and fantastical elements in the poem “The Second Coming”?
3. Elaborate on W.B. Yeats’ use of ageing as an overarching theme in “Sailing to Byzantium”?
4. Provide a critical account of the philosophical and spiritual concepts used in the poetry of W.B. Yeats, with special reference to “The Second Coming” and “Sailing to Byzantium”.
5. Can we view “*The Waste Land*” as a representative poem of the modernist movement? Support your answer with appropriate arguments.
6. Reflect on “*The Waste Land*” as a dramatic monologue which examines the complexities of modern life.



8. Discuss the poem “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” as an elegy.
9. Examine the use of nature as a foil for the individual’s emotions in “Poem in October”.
10. Write a critical appreciation of British poetry from the 1900s to the 1940s, highlighting the significant movements and styles that characterised the period.

Suggested Readings

1. Levenson, Michael H. editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
2. Persoon, James and Robert R Watson. *Encyclopedia of British Poetry, 1900 to the Present*. Facts on File. 2015.

References

1. Levenson, Michael H. editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
2. Perkins, David. *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*. Harvard UP, 1976.
3. Persoon, James and Robert R Watson. *Encyclopedia of British Poetry, 1900 to the Present*. Facts on File. 2015.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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Unit 3

English Drama in the Early Twentieth Century

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ contextualise the historical evolution of drama in the twentieth century
- ▶ possess an insight into the socio-cultural background of the selected literary period
- ▶ acquire an understanding of some of the major features of the selected texts
- ▶ critically analyse the selected texts with reference to relevant perspectives

Background

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the English theatre was a combination of ideas, social commentary, and technical experimentation. One of the earliest strands of difference from the dramatic culture of the Victorian period arrived with G.B. Shaw and John Galsworthy. Modelled after the European playwright Ibsen, their dramas powerfully incorporated social issues and didacticism.

While both these writers followed the form of the well-made play, the later generation of dramatists employed a different aesthetic. They produced plays that were experimental in language, and theme. Even as they continued to draw inspiration from realism, their plays often used symbolist techniques. The plays of the Celtic revival, which sought to revive Irish legends, folklores, and spirituality, are prime examples of the same.

Nearing the 1920s, a dramatic movement called expressionism emerged. Playwrights of the school used minimal scenery, telegraphic dialogues, animate machines, and character-types (instead of individuals) to portray the dehumanising, brutality of society, technology, and capitalism. Another poignant trajectory seen in the period is the reinvention of the verse drama or poetic drama on the English stage. A reference to the classical Greco-Roman theatres and to the Elizabethan stage, this genre incorporated dialogues in powerful poetic style. It was a key formal experiment in modernist drama. The



three plays that are included in this block represents three distinct trajectories taken up by the dramatic arts in the first half of the twentieth century. Herein, we explore various critical perspectives through which the selected dramatic texts can be read and contextualised.

Keywords

Themes, Narrative mode, Dramatic devices, Language, Form

Section 1 Pygmalion

Discussion

Written by George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* debuted theatrically in England in 1913. In it, the playwright skilfully conveys his theory that social standing is determined by manners and accent refinement rather than inherited wealth and aristocracy. The title of the play refers to a well-known passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Pygmalion, repulsed by the immoral and carefree behaviour of the ladies of his time, chooses to live alone and unmarried. He, with his artistic talent, crafts a magnificent statue (Galatea) that is more perfect than any living woman. He grows to love his creation, more and more, until he wishes she were alive. Stricken with love for his statue, Pygmalion goes to the temple of Venus and begs the goddess to grant him a lover just like his statue. When Venus senses Pygmalion's devotion, she breathes life into his creation. Pygmalion is ecstatic to discover that his statue is alive when he embraces her, upon returning from the temple.

- The artist and his creation in mythology

Shaw translates the allegory of Ovid's story into early twentieth century England. By doing so, he demonstrates the fallacy of myth and romance in various ways. Indeed, he purposefully alters the myth so that the play ends in unorthodox ambiguity, as opposed to the euphoric conclusion of the Greek myth. Henry Higgins,

► Counterparts to Greek myth

an English-speech expert stands in as Shaw's Pygmalion. His Galatea is Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl, whom Higgins transforms into an apparent English lady by training her to speak cultured English. Their interactions serve to emphasise the central message of the plot.

► Social class

Higgins permanently alters a person's life by turning a disadvantaged, illiterate girl into a lady. By elevating her beyond her own class and giving her nothing more than the accoutrements of another, Higgins renders Eliza unsuited for both. Shaw bases his play on this transition and Higgins' obstinate resistance to recognise its truth and repercussions. Eliza is depicted as a proud, obstinate young lady, despite only having the circumstances of her upbringing and poverty to train her in life. Higgins notices her dialectical aberrations, well before noticing the individual producing them. Her directness and courage are evidenced in her summoning Higgins and offering to hire him for elocution lessons. She challenges him to live up to his boast that he can fool people into thinking that she is a duchess.

► Complicated personality

Higgins, on the other hand, breaks down individuals and their accents into what he feels are easily comprehensible pieces. He is an unorthodox person who, in most cases, deviates from society's norms. The only reason the world has not turned against him is because he, at his core, intends no harm. He is impatient with high society, forgetful in his public manners, and inadequately aware of conventional social niceties. His tendency to bully is his major failing.

► Language and class

Bernard Shaw uses the relationship between Higgins and Eliza to portray the subject of socioeconomic class and social mobility. His decision to train her accent and elevate her to another social class is the result of a wager with Colonel Pickering. The fact that sophisticated language and manners are associated with the elite class, while the cockney accent is attributed to the lower classes, illustrates the importance of language in social mobility.

► Defining identity

Linguistic superiority is a perceived theme, throughout the play. Higgins tells the audience that beautiful speech is a heavenly gift, and that the Bible, Shakespeare, and Milton's eloquent words form the foundation of their native tongue in Act 1. Further, when he correctly identifies the



numerous persons who are taking cover from the rain, the defining nature of language is demonstrated.

Eliza's spectacular performance at the ambassador's reception perfectly illustrates the ability of language to overcome social barriers. She tricks everyone into thinking of her as a duchess. But this comes at a cost. She compares herself to a child who has just moved to a strange country, who "picks up the language in a few weeks, and forgets its own" in Act 5. Now that she can only communicate in his language, she is cut off from her previous existence. She claims that she felt abandoned by Higgins and was facing an uncertain future: "Oh! if I only COULD go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world!"

► Individual liberty

Shaw demonstrates how a destitute flower girl can be transformed into a magnificent, independent lady, both externally and psychologically. The seeds of her metamorphosis begins when Higgins informs Pickering in Act I that he might educate "this creature" to talk like a duchess. When she receives a bath in Act 2, it goes a step further, cleaning her up so thoroughly that even her father cannot recognise her. Finally, in Act 3, Mrs. Higgins tells her son: "She's a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker's."

► Stages of change

In many senses, Higgins views his student as a "a piece of wood," something to be sculpted, and experimented on. Higgins frequently refers to Eliza as a "creature," working to "create" her in the same way that Pygmalion, the Greek sculptor, made his sculpture. The professor is unaware that a more profound and significant transformation is occurring in Eliza, which he cannot claim credit for. It is the reawakening of Eliza's spirit. The necessary traits have always been present in her. In Act 5, she asks Colonel Pickering, "But do you know what began my real education? ... Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street. That was the beginning of self-respect for me." She goes onto add: "The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she is treated."

► Social reception

It is at this point that Shaw's Galatea, Eliza, deviates from the Greek model. Her transformation is complete only when she breaks free of her creator, Higgins. She asserts her independence as a person by choosing to

► Dignity

value her self-worth and leaving the professor.

Victorian ideals firmly set boundaries for femininity within the social classes while defining the position and roles of women. Shaw depicts these social distinctions in *Pygmalion* through a variety of characters. Eliza, the flower girl, is a working-class impoverished person at the bottom of the social order. Higgins' housekeeper Mrs. Pearce is a prime example of the servile class. Mrs. Higgins, a wealthy upper-class woman who has raised a family and maintains a house, is in the top tier.

► Illustrations

The ideal lady, according to Victorian society, inhabited the domestic sphere. She transformed the 'home' in to a refuge for him from the moral squalor of the world. She was meant to be a morally superior wife and mother. Shaw attempts to demonstrate that such categories, with their rigid conceptions of gender, are unnatural and open to contestation. In *Eliza*, he presents a new ideal of a woman who is independent, educated, and career-oriented.

► Ideals

Eliza and Higgins are unquestionably the play's central characters, and the play goes into some detail about their relationship. However, they do not share typically romantic sentiments, and the play doesn't have a typical happy conclusion. Shaw opposed plots in which the hero weds the heroine, and sought to steer clear of them in all of his plays.

► Unconventional

Section 2

Riders to the Sea

Riders to the Sea by J.M. Synge, written in 1904, is a brief, single act play that has a fairly straightforward plot. The work is intimate and enigmatic, much like a fairy tale. It asks the reader to think about how factors like historical change and sorrow, which are both very personal and powerful, impact people and families. It follows the story of a family who depends on the sea for their livelihood. The mother, Maurya, has lost her husband and six boys to the sea; thus, the sea also delivers death. It offers a glimpse into the life of the Aran islanders, whose way of life is closely associated with the ocean.

► Regional setting

The Irish Literary Renaissance, in which Synge, William



► Self-identity

Butler Yeats, and Sean O'Casey were all key players, was in full swing when *Riders to the Sea* was written. Irish pride in their identity and culture, as well as initiatives to preserve the Gaelic language, served as catalysts for the Renaissance. There was a growing desire to “de-Anglicize” Ireland, which was still ruled by the British Empire. Writers and academics took a particular interest in the histories, mythology, and folktales of Ireland.

► Conflict

In the play's prologue, Nora and Cathleen can be seen attempting to conceal the clothing belonging to their allegedly drowned brother, Michael. They are trying to temporarily save Maurya the pain of losing yet another son. Despite his mother's wistful gloom and the bad weather, the final son, Bartley, emerges to say that he will be travelling to a horse festival in Connemara. Finally, Bartley leaves without his mother's approval.

► Symbolism and Destiny

Soon after, the two sisters persuade their mother to give Bartley a cake as a sign of her blessings. Maurya agrees, but upon her return, she confesses that she had seen Michael's spirit behind Bartley. She had been so horrified that she had forgotten to give him the cake. Both sisters agree that the vision is a sign or an unlucky omen. And in fact, when they later hear someone wailing, they run to the beach in search of Michael's body. But what they actually discover is Bartley's lifeless body. Maurya resigns to her fate, accepting that she would now be able to sleep well at night because she no longer had any of her sons to worry about.

► Motif

The sea plays an important part in the play; it is both the vulnerable islanders' main source of income and a frequent source of sudden and tragic death. Bartley sets out in a desperate bid, knowing full well that the sea has taken the lives of his brothers. The sea, itself, acts as destiny in deciding the islanders' future.

The many characteristics of the main character, Maurya, beautifully convey Synge's assessment of the acute inclination of the Aran islands towards Celtic paganism. Despite being Catholic, she places greater trust in the sea, and she interprets the natural events as signs of approaching catastrophe. Yet, she often mentions her “almighty god” and prays for the sake of her sons. Having given up everything, except her daughters, to

► Religion

the sea, Maurya seems to represent the hold of paganism while the rest of the country appears to be transitioning towards Christianity.

► Universality of theme

In many ways, *Riders to the Sea* imitates classical Greek tragedies. In particular, its central narrative revolves around the Maurya's never-ending misery as a result of the ruthless sea. This closely references the traditional Greek tragic premise of emphasising human suffering against a backdrop of unyielding fate. This sorrowful play takes on a timeless tone because of Maurya's stoic outlook on life as she accepts her fatal situation.

► Structure

Secondly, it follows the three unities of action, time, and location in its structure. The sole action taking place, the deaths of Michael and Bartley, aid in developing the unity of action. Due to the fact that everything happens on a single day and Maurya's cottage is the main location, the unities of space and time are clearly evident.

► Foreshadowing

Cathleen and Nora serve as the Greek chorus by offering commentary on the plot's events. Contrarily, Irish superstitions such as the "pig with the black feet" and the "star up against the moon" contribute to the tragic sense of foreboding that is a key element of Greek drama.

► Realism

It is noteworthy how powerful and efficient the language is in the play. Before composing it, Synge spent time observing and documenting the different speech patterns of the Aran Islands. The play's pace is determined by the speech, which gives it a distinct feeling of location, time, and community. To the modern reader, the characters' peculiar word choices may sound bizarre. Audiences in Dublin and London in 1904 would have thought them to be equally strange. The language used in *Riders to the Sea* is unique to the Aran fishing villages.

The play could be viewed as a tragedy that revolves around a single family and the sacrifices that they have made to a powerful figure in their lives – the sea. This throws light on the harsh reality of living in the Aran Islands and the way that a family copes with it in their everyday life. Throughout the play, the sea is at once acknowledged as the main source of livelihood and a great danger. The brothers of the family must risk their



- Destiny and circumstance

lives against the will of the sea, braving its unpredictable behaviour. Thus *Riders to the Sea* showcases the downfall of a family brought on by the circumstances of their lives and their destiny.

Summarised Overview

This unit presents the critical analysis of two plays that represent diverging strands of twentieth century modernism. Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, in true comic style, is a work that captures the rebellious mood of the era. It critiques the class structure and social hierarchies of early twentieth century England. Deviating from the aestheticism of Victorian drama, the play invites attention to class issues, questions of cultural identity, and to the notion of social bias. On the other hand, J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* revolves around a family caught in a tragedy of circumstance and destiny. It provokes reflection on the harsh nature of life in the Aran Islands of Ireland, incorporating the local myths and language into the story. The plot, even as it delineates a region, provides a deep analysis of the human condition and the difficult struggle for survival in a hostile world.

Assignments

1. Explore Shaw's *Pygmalion* as a revisiting of the Greek myth of Pygmalion.
2. Comment on Eliza Dolittle's transformation throughout the course of the play.
3. Can Shaw's *Pygmalion* be understood as a scathing critique of the British class system? Support your answer with examples from the play.
4. Detail and critically analyse the central conflict of G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*.
5. How does the play *Riders to the Sea* imitate the structure of classical Greek tragedy?
6. Critically explore the underlying themes of the play *Riders to the Sea*.
7. Write a short note on J. M. Synge's innovative use of language in *Riders to the Sea*.
8. Explore *Riders to the Sea* as a tragic play that presents the circumstances of a single family.

Suggested Readings

1. Shepherd-Barr, Kirsten. *Modern Drama: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2016.

References

1. Shepherd-Barr, Kirsten. *Modern Drama: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2016.
2. Levenson, Michael H. editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.

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SGOU

Unit 4

Fiction

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ contextualise the historical evolution of fiction in the twentieth century
- ▶ possess an insight into the socio-cultural background of the selected literary period
- ▶ acquire an understanding of some of the major features of the selected texts
- ▶ critically analyse the selected texts with reference to relevant perspectives

Background

Early twentieth century literature also evolved its own idiosyncrasies within genres, responding to the diverse historical events and social attitudes of the time. The novel was the one of the most popular, and most frequently innovated-on of literary forms in the period. Many writers of the Edwardian period drew heavily upon naturalism and realism, inspired by European novelists such as Balzac, Turgenev, Flaubert, and Zola. They sought to present reality with extreme fidelity, choosing to depict the world in all its brutality and ugliness. This style subverted Victorian aesthetics in many ways.

Another set of fiction writers, led by the likes of Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, experimented with their works' presentation of reality; this had ties to a gradual change in the general perception of reality. Their works recorded individual perceptions in the line of art movements such as perspectivism and impressionism.

The linear storyline was frequently abandoned. Instead, their narratives were disjointed, similar to the functioning of human memory and perception. In addition, the endings frequently lacked a clear resolution, or were open-ended. The modern novel had a number of recurring themes, including the reality of experience, the quest for meaning, the loss of religious faith, a lack of values, and pessimism.



The current unit explores two works that best exemplify the literary direction of twentieth century fiction. Both *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Howard's End* inspire explorations into the styles and themes of the age. Yet, they also illustrate the individual artists' engagement with the overarching aesthetic and literary politics of the period.

Keywords

Themes, Narrative mode, Dramatic devices, Language, Form

Discussion

Section 1

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce, a towering figure in the modernist movement in English, published his first novel in 1916. It was titled *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. With an autobiographical core, the work hinted at the modernist style and 'stream of consciousness' mode which would later become Joyce's hallmarks.

► Early model

The novel was finished in several different stages: it was first composed as a short story entitled "A Portrait of the Artist" (1904). This would later become redrafted as a longer fictional text, with the title, *Stephen Hero*. It was in 1908 that he began to rework this second text into the form it would take as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. It was finished in 1914.

► Multiple Drafts

Between February 1914 and September 1915, the novel was serialised in the *Egoist*. The version contained multiple deletions which the printers made to prevent prosecution or legal action under the obscenity laws. It was only in 1964 that most authentic version of the manuscript was printed as the Viking Compass Edition.

► Censorship

The narrative revolves around Stephen Dedalus, a young boy growing up in Ireland at the end of the

► Relationships

nineteenth century. He comes to the conclusion that he must gradually liberate himself from all social, domestic, and religious ties to devote himself to a life of writing.

► Finding oneself

Throughout Stephen's childhood, his catholicity and Irish nationality define him. He is a student at a strict religious boarding school where he is lonely and isolated at first. Soon, he finds his place amongst his peers. This trajectory gives the reader a sense of Stephen exploring his selfhood.

► Domestic life

His family life, though, appears to be filled with tension. Such an instance is witnessed, after the death of Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish political leader. This taboo subject becomes the cause of a bitter, political argument at his family's Christmas dinner. Deep in debt due to his father, Simon's inefficient handling of money, the family can no longer afford to send him to boarding school.

► Conflicting impulses

Stephen starts attending Belvedere, a renowned day school that offers him an opportunity to grow as a writer and theatre actor. It is during this time that he experiences a sexual awakening with a young Dublin prostitute. This brings the rigid Catholic morality of his upbringing and circumstances into conflict with the desires of his flesh.

► Material and Spiritual life

For a while, he chooses the path of abandon, chasing the pleasures of life. He loses himself in masturbation, gluttony, and soliciting prostitutes, all of which are viewed as sins. Upon listening to three intense sermons about sin, judgment, and hell on a religious retreat, Stephen is shaken up. He decides to embark on a life of piety.

► Incompatibility

Stephen's absolute rededication to a life of piety and self-denial leads the director of his school to ask him to consider priesthood. He realises that priestly life is incompatible with the deep sense of love and appreciation that he has for sensual beauty.

► Epiphany

Stephen anxiously awaits news about his acceptance to the university. He goes for a walk on the beach, where he observes a girl playing in the tide. In that instant, he is stricken by her beauty. This is also a point of great epiphany for him — he comes to the understanding that love and desire of beauty should not be a source of shame.



► Self-assertion

This newfound resolution leads Stephen to commit to living his life to the fullest. He vows that the limits set by the influence of his family, nation, and religion would not hold him back. The disavowal of such boundaries is a significant step in Stephen's personal growth.

► Concept of independence

At the university, Stephen develops a number of close, strong friendships. He feels particularly connected with a young man named Cranly. His conversations with his friends allow him to formulate theories about art. Despite his ties to his friends, being dependent on them as listeners, he strives to create an independent existence.

► Artist and society

Wishing to be freed from the weight of expectations, both of his friends and family, he becomes more and more determined in the path to adopt. He resolves to leave Ireland to escape these limiting influences. Like the mythical Daedalus, whose namesake he is, Stephen wishes to build wings for himself that would carry him above all obstacles and shortcomings. Thus, he hopes to achieve a fulfilling life as an artist.

► Alienated writer

The common thread that directs the novel is the painful social alienation experienced by the artist. Stephen's perceptions of the world often conflict with the acceptable prescriptions made by religion, family, and nation. This leads him to be distanced from the world.

► Technique

This sense of alienation is compounded by the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique employed by Joyce. The reader is taken into Stephen's conscious and subconscious mind, revealing the subjective nature of the realities depicted in the work. Everything from the protagonist's keen intelligence to his urgent insecurities are laid bare in the narration.

► Narrative modes

The style of narration used, for the most part, is the limited omniscient point of view. Herein, the narration is all-knowing in terms of the outer workings of a host of characters, but it is only Stephen's emotions and feelings that are made known. The text develops in form from lyrical, epic modes and moves ultimately into a dramatic mode of expression.

The primary references for the readers are Stephen's experiences, religious, sexual, and everyday in nature. The themes of the novel are conveyed through their

► Enlightenment

progress and interconnections. His aesthetic experiences often become moments of profound revelations, or epiphanies. They reflect his discovery of the essential nature of objects, people, ideas, or situations.

► Language

The language of the text mimics the various stages of Stephen's growth. His phonetic, linguistic, and intellectual progress is traced through the baby-talk of the opening passages, to the complex discussions towards the end. The form, thus, aids the reader in contextualising Stephen.

► Dual symbols

The name of the protagonist offers a wide range of readings, as to the thematic focus of the novel. 'Stephen Dedalus' is a poignant allusion to elements of Christian and Greek mythology. 'Stephen' was the first Christian martyr who was persecuted for his faith. Dedalus, of course, refers to the unfortunate Greek inventor whose cunning invention leads to tragedy.

► Motifs

Stephen, like his Catholic-martyr namesake, feels ostracised and alienated from his peers and older people. As with Daedalus who crafts wax wings to escape King Minos's labyrinth, Stephen symbolically feels compelled to escape the spiritual, cultural, and artistic bonds that he finds himself in.

► Parallels

Perhaps, the most telling parallel between Stephen and the mythical Daedalus, is his final decision to leave Ireland. This is depicted as an imaginative soaring away towards unrestrained creative liberty and individual expression in the novel. Yet, unlike the tragic story of Daedalus, the ending is left non-conclusive.

► Psychological adulthood

In terms of narrative technique, one of the most discussed aspects of the novel is its use of the 'stream of consciousness' mode to depict the awakening of the protagonist's self-identity. The reader follows Stephen's mind as it progresses to emotional, intellectual, and artistic maturity.

► Negating the hold of ideologies

The dangers of extremism, either in following a hedonistic lifestyle or in adhering to religious zealotry, are discussed in the text. The two phases of Stephen's life are a commentary on the same. His personal philosophy about love and human desire for beauty are formed only when he breaks free of either extreme lifestyle.

Throughout the novel, the figure of the 'artist' is a point

- ▶ Voicing a community

of debate. Through Stephen, the readers are introduced to the question of the role of the artist. As the protagonist realises the need to be free from the shackles of religion, family, and country, he also comes upon another epiphany: that it is his mission to recreate through his works, “the uncreated conscience of my race”.

- ▶ Writing as duty

In other words, the role of the artist is in providing a voice to an unrepresented community. Stephen rejects traditional forms of participation, instead choosing to write as an act of service to his people and country. In this sense, he recognises the formative role of his community and culture in shaping his self-identity.

Section 2

Howard's End

- ▶ Class and social life

Written in 1910, *Howard's End* by E. M. Forster is a symbolic exploration of the socio-economic and philosophical elements that were predominant in England, particularly during the early years of the twentieth century. It dwells on English life in the pre-war years, focusing on questions of social class.

- ▶ Elites

The work follows the lives of three different families, each representing a particular class or features associated with a particular class. The Schlegel family, who are literary-minded and culturally elite, stand for the idealistic and intellectual bend of the upper classes.

- ▶ Upper and lower middle classes

The Wilcox family are representatives of the middle-class, with a foundational English work ethic and conventional moral principles. The Bast family, headed by an insurance clerk, is impoverished. The head of the family hopes that books would save him from socio-economic pitfalls.

- ▶ Hierarchy

These families offer foils for each other, illuminating the other by contrast. Gradually, as their stories intertwine, their existence becomes inextricably connected. They symbolise the nation as a whole, opening out the question: which class shall achieve social success?

The novel opens with letters written from Howard's End, a country house located in an area called Hilton. The rich and privileged Schlegel sisters, Helen and

► Relationships

Margaret, befriend Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox, the house's owners, on a European journey. Later, Helen visits the home and enters into a quick romance with Paul Wilcox, the youngest son of the couple. This ends disastrously with embarrassment and hurt sentiments. Both families go their separate ways.

► Class structure

Helen later recovers from the failure of the relationship. Along with her sister, Aunt, and cousin, Frieda, she attends a concert. There, Margaret tries to befriend Leonard Bast, who enjoys stimulating conversations about culture. However, he is deeply aware of his lack of money and social station. He flees upon being embarrassed by Helen who casually comments on the tattered look of his umbrella.

► Transcending pain

The Schlegel's aunt discovers that the Wilcoxes have taken a house across their street. Margaret does not approve of starting a relationship with them, but Helen declares that she has forgotten about Paul and is going to Germany with Frieda.

► Friendship

Soon, it turns out that Mrs. Wilcox is living there all alone. Her sons have travelled out for various reasons, while her youngest child is motoring around the countryside with her husband. Margaret develops a strong relationship with Mrs. Wilcox, and they almost visit Howard's End together. But they never embark on the trip and Mrs. Wilcox passes away.

► Property

Mrs. Wilcox leaves behind a handwritten note asking that Howards End be bequeathed given to Margaret Schlegel, having learnt that the Schlegels have to look for a new home when their current lease expires. Not understanding the reasons behind her wish, the rest of the family feel betrayed. They do not directly mention this to Margaret and ignore Mrs. Wilcox's request.

► Reintroduction

Two years later, the sisters begin their search for a new home. One day, abruptly, they receive a woman who is looking for her husband. The following day, Leonard Bast arrives and reveals that the woman is his wife. He had read a book which inspired him to go on a walk through the country until dawn. His wife, a former sex-worker named Jacky, had mistakenly assumed that he was at the sisters' house. Jacky had found a calling card that Margaret had given him at the concert.



► Class differences

While the sisters do not remember meeting Leonard at the concert, they find his company enjoyable. However, they do feel that his financial situation is wholly inadequate. They discuss his situation with their friends at a gathering.

► Obligation

They run across Mr. Wilcox on their way home from the event. They bring up Leonard Bast because he is still on their mind. Mr. Wilcox tells the Schlegels that the firm Bast works for is going bankrupt. The sisters feel that it is their duty to tell him.

► Reaction

They invite him to tea, intending to break the news to him. Leonard anticipates another thought-provoking discussion as he shows up. However, he is terribly upset at the news that they shared and storms out, enraged. Mr. Wilcox and Evie, who arrive in the middle of their exchange, are entertained by the whole situation.

► Choice of partner

Afterwards, Mr. Wilcox invites Margaret to rent out his house at Ducie Street. She goes to London and takes a tour of the house. While she is there, he proposes to her. Margaret accepts, much to Helen's dismay.

► Circumstances

Helen disapproves of Mr. Wilcox's condescending attitude towards the poor. She is further incensed because, despite his warning, Leonard's company did not go bankrupt after all. But Leonard took a lower paid job elsewhere.

► Intertwined lives

After Evie's wedding, where Margaret appears in her role as Mr. Wilcox's fiancée, Helen appears with Leonard and Jacky. She states that they were living in an impoverished state and Mr. Wilcox is responsible for this. Margaret attempts to soothe the situation; Leonard and Helen go to find hotel rooms for themselves, leaving Jacky behind. Later, it turns out that Mr. Wilcox had had an affair with Jacky when she was a sex-worker in Cyprus.

► Transgression

While Margaret forgives her fiancé for his past sins, Helen is upset. She has an intimate conversation with Leonard, which eventually leads to her pregnancy. She resolves to go abroad. Once she has left, Margaret and Mr. Wilcox marry and move into the house at Ducie Street.

Helen returns to England upon hearing the news that her aunt had fallen ill. She refuses to see her sister. However, Margaret intercepts her at Howard's End and

► Double Standards

discovers that she is pregnant. Mr. Wilcox considers the situation inappropriate and wants Helen to be sent away from Margaret's presence. Margaret pleads to spend one night with her sister before her eventual return to Germany. In a heated argument, she reminds him of his own transgressions. In the end, Margaret decides she might accompany her sister to Germany.

► Dishonour

Leonard Bast, on the other hand, has been living a life of misery and guilt. He goes to Howard's End to confess to Margaret and to enquire about Helen. Unfortunately, he encounters a livid Charles Wilcox, the eldest son of Mr. Wilcox, there. He assumes that Leonard has spent the night in the company of Helen and is enraged. Before Leonard can explain his presence, Charles strikes him with the blunt end of a sword. A bookshelf falls on him, crushing him. Moments later, he passes away of a heart attack.

► Resolution

Charles is convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to jail for three years. Mr. Wilcox is broken by this development and goes to his wife for consolation. Margaret accepts both Mr. Wilcox and Helen, taking them both to Howard's End. Later, Helen gives birth to a baby boy. Mr. Wilcox announces, following his first wife's wishes, that Margaret will inherit Howard's End. In turn, Margaret would leave the house to Helen's son.

► Interconnection

A vital theme conveyed in *Howard's End* is the idea of connections. Its epigraph, "Only connect", emphasises the entangled nature of the lives of the three families. Further, it makes evident the importance of connecting with one's inner self. This is best seen in the character development of Mr. Wilcox.

► Pursuit of intellectual growth and wealth

As representatives of two distinct ways of living, the Schlegels and Wilcoxes value different things. The sisters consider the inner, intellectual life to be crucial, they celebrate its enrichment through discussions, culture, art, and literature. The Wilcoxes, on the other hand, celebrate outer life — these differences often make it difficult for them to find the necessary connections between each other.

Their respective perception of everyday experience is also, likewise, coloured by their class. For Helen in particular, daily life is boring without romance, passion,



► Everyday life

or novelty. Mrs. Wilcox, on the other hand, finds magic in performing everyday activities. She appears to take pleasure in compromising and sacrificing where she can.

► Core idea

The novel is built around the question of class structure, specifically in early twentieth century England. Each of the families, epitomising the ways of different classes, are interwoven into the others' stories. Their connection drives the plot forward. The central message of the story seems to be that of coexistence among the classes, much like the concluding scene at Howard's End.

Section 3

Odour of Chrysanthemums

► Overview

D.H. Lawrence's short stories have been widely viewed as some of his greatest literary accomplishments, with "Odour of Chrysanthemums" (1909) among his most highly regarded works. It was variously published in *English Review* and *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (1914). In the current short story, as in many of his prose literature, Lawrence writes about a world that he was familiar with – mining. He particularly emphasises the harsh and brutal lives led by the miners to support their families. Following the pattern of Lawrence's fiction, in this story too, a life-altering event forces the protagonist to reassess their life choices. The protagonist comes away with a new understanding of human relations and life.

► Opening passage

As the story opens, a locomotive engine runs up along the tracks on a late afternoon in Autumn. The setting is the coal country of England, a place where coal mining is rampant. It is the time of day when various miners are on their way home. From a nearby cottage, Elizabeth Bates emerges and calls for her son to come home. The locomotive that is driven by her father can be seen in the distance. Elizabeth scolds John for tearing off the petals of the chrysanthemums and scattering them on the path. She picks up a few of the flowers and holds them against her cheek, placing a sprig in her apron.

When the train stops, she brings food to her father who says that it is time for him to remarry. Further, he lets her know that Walter, her husband, has gone on a drinking

► Gender role

binge. He was bragging about spending a lot of money. She goes back to her house to wait for Walter so that he can join for tea. Her daughter, Annie joins her. When Walter does not show up, they began to have the meal. However, Elizabeth is becoming increasingly anxious.

► Community

Elizabeth accidentally snuffs out the fire in the room, and John complains about the near darkness. Annie is enthralled by the flowers in her mother's apron. It becomes apparent that Walter must be intoxicated and therefore would have to be carried in by his friends. Elizabeth is angry at the thought; she vows to leave him as he is on the floor, without cleaning him up. The children are ordered to go to bed, which they obey reluctantly. When there is no sign of Walter by 8.00 pm, she goes to her neighbour, the Ringleys. Mrs. Rigley, who was at home, brings Mr. Rigley back from a pub he was at. Mr. Rigley had last seen Walter in the coal pit, finishing up his job. Elizabeth thinks that Walter might simply have gone to another pub, upon which Mr. Rigley volunteers to search for him. Mrs. Rigley goes out to spread the fresh gossip.

► Death

After 45 minutes, Elizabeth's mother-in-law walks into the house tearfully; she conveys that Walter has been in a serious accident. A miner soon informs that Walter has been the victim of a cave-in at the mine and has been dead for many hours. Elizabeth clears a small space in the parlour where the body can be laid, putting down clothes over the floor to protect the carpet. She also picks out a clean shirt to dress the body and waits in the pantry. Soon, two men bring back the lifeless body of Walter on a stretcher. One of them accidentally tip over a jar of chrysanthemums, which wakes Annie up.

► Truthful understanding of relationship

The final section of the story shows Elizabeth faced with a series of harsh realizations. She embraces the body, trying to make an emotional connection her husband's corpse. She, along with Walter's mother, washes the body – but she seems to be repulsed by the idea of dead flesh. She understands the role that she played in the failure of her marriage. Unable to weep or express sadness, Elizabeth goes to fetch a shirt for the dead Walter. She dresses him and covers him with a sheet. Afraid and ashamed of the truthful reflections that she has achieved, she begins to tidy up the kitchen.



Section 4

Prelude

“Prelude”, the first story of Katherine Mansfield’s 1920 collection titled *Bliss and Other Stories*, is a stellar example of modernist fiction. Its meaning, subtle use of symbolism, and other narrative strategies are not evident; rather, they become apparent only on multiple readings. The emphasis is on character than plot. The Burnells, the protagonists of the story, are captured at a point when their lives are changing. Their moving into a new house and settling down is converted into a situation wherein observations can be drawn about family, women, and class.

► Context

‘Prelude’ is written in Mansfield’s distinctive style, opening in the middle of unexplained and confusing action: “There was not an inch of room for Lottie and Kezia in the buggy”. The readers come to understand the significance of the scene slowly as they realise that the middle-class Burnell family are in the process of moving to a new town in the country. They consist of the husband Stanley, wife Linda, the daughters Isabel, Lottie, and Kezia, and Linda’s sister Beryl and their mother, Mrs. Fairchild. In twelve scenes, the story shifts between the perspectives of the characters, deviating from the traditional idea of a plot and narrative. The routine action of moving to a new place is converted, by the narrative into a psychological exploration of three days in the life of this family.

► Style of writing

The story uses the ‘stream of consciousness’ style in depicting the interior life of the characters. Entering the minds of the characters, the story moves from one mental turmoil to another. This is part of the reason why the plot does not have a formalised ending. There is no linear storyline that offers a conclusion or a dénouement to the issues raised in the inner thoughts and outward actions of the character.

► Technique

The story is a reflection on family relationships and the way in which the dynamics of family life might alter. Its main subject is the lives of women in a patriarchal family. Through several epiphanic moments, the various attitudes and behaviours that the women display are explored. For instance, Linda’s treatment of her children calls into question the assumption that all women have

► Examination of behaviour

a natural, maternal instinct. Beryl's restless nature and commanding of the servants point to a great desire to be free from her brother-in-law. In the absence of the mother and the grandmother, Lottie assumes the role of the 'important' one or the one in charge. This points to the perception of Kezia, the younger sister, that Lottie enjoys having power within the family. It explores the way this changes relationships.

► Conversation and truthfulness

Another theme that becomes apparent here is the way that women speak to one another. Alice, the house help, dislikes Beryl's demeaning manner of speaker to her. However, Beryl uses a flippant and silly' tone in the letters to her friend Nan Pym. In other words, the manner of speaking reflects class and social station. It might also convey an emotional connection as when Linda speaks to her mother in "the special voice that women use at night to each other as though they spoke in their sleep or from some hollow cave". There is also the greater question of truthfulness, and the pressure that falls on women to hide their true feelings and thoughts. Often, the women of 'Prelude' are forced to modify their communications to each other as well as to keep things to themselves. This can be evidenced in Beryl's confession that she is "always acting a part".

► Opening scenes

When the story begins, it describes a crowded buggy packed with Lottie and Kezia, as well as all the items from the house-moving. A neighbour is charged with looking after them until another van arrives to pick up the remaining items. The girls are left to play with the neighbour's children and given some tea. In the second scene, Kezia goes back into the old house and is scared by something behind her. In the meantime, Lottie announces that the storeman has arrived to pick them up. They leave the house.

► Arrival at new house

They arrive at their new house and are greeted by the grandmother; their mother, Linda, is in bed with a headache. Their father and aunt Beryl have argued over the fact that she was left to supervise the move while he way away at work. In the next scene, the children are tucked into bed by the grandmother. Beryl dreams of being independent from Stanley while Stanley brags about having bought the house so cheap. He goes to bed as well. The servants turn in, with the grandmother being the last to go to bed.



► Family settling down

The weather is sunny when Linda wakes up. Her husband boasts of his physique and is ridiculed by her. She thinks about a dream she has had about birds. The sixth scene opens with the grandmother reminiscing about their life in Tasmania where Beryl was stung by a red ant. Linda and Kezia look at an aloe plant in the blooming garden. Later, in the next scene, we find Stanley returning from work with cherries, oysters, and pineapples. He appears happy to see Linda, while she does not appear to be very pleased. Beryl is restless for some reason.

► Routine life

The girls pretend to be grown-ups until their cousins, Pip and Rags, arrive. Pat, the servant, chops off a duck's head to show the children that the duck can walk around for a while after being decapitated. Kezia, who is shocked by the brutality, demands that Pat put the duck's head back on. Meanwhile, Beryl speaks in a demeaning way to Alice, the house help, so that she can feel better about herself. The family eat the duck for tea. Stanley and Beryl play a game of cribbage which he wins. Linda thinks about how she loathes Stanley and wishes to leave the house. The grandmother meanwhile thinks about making jam out of the berries in the vegetable garden.

► Moment of truth

The final scene portrays Aunt Beryl writing a letter to her friend Nan Pym. This is one of the first instances of a truth being communicated outright. Beryl reveals her unhappiness and boredom with living in the country. She also thinks to herself about how false she is with her own self. Then, Kezia calls her down for dinner.

Section 5

Rain

► Shared bias

The story "Rain" is set on a steamer bound for American Samoa, on which Dr. Macphail, the story's protagonist and narrator, is travelling with his wife. They befriend the Davidsons, a missionary couple who have been stationed in one of the island districts of Samoa. They disapprove of the other passengers who have been spending their time in drinking and gambling.

As they reach the port of Pago Pago, Dr. Macphail and Mrs. Davidson are talking to each other. Mrs. Davidson expresses her condemnation of the native customs and

► Perception

clothing in the region, stating that the traditional Samoan dance form led to immortality. She also boasts about completely eradicating the practice of banning. Dr. Macphail notes the medical problems that affect the native traders such as elephantiasis. The difference in attitudes towards the land and its culture is evident in their respective observations.

► Colonial control

Mr. Davidson soon conveys the bad news that one of the crew members of schooner that was supposed to transport them to Apia, the capital, has contracted measles. As a result, the passengers are restricted from entering the harbour until it is certain that no one else is ill. The couples have no choice but to rent out poorly furnished rooms owned by Mr. Horn, a mixed-race trader. Spending time together, Mr. Davidson speaks about the hard work he has done as a missionary. His greatest achievement is revealed to be instilling the sense of sin in the natives; they had previously considered their customs to be natural human behaviour. Herein, it is possible to see the role of missionaries in the spread of imperialism and colonial domination.

► Lack of mercy

The encounter with Miss Thompson, a sex-worker from Iwelei, changes the course of their travel. The missionary decides to force the lady to repent and is repeatedly ignored. In fact, despite continually speaking to Miss Thompson and trying to prevent her trade, Mr. Davidson is thwarted. Angry, he finally takes the matter up to the governor who orders that Miss Thompson be deported. This forces the young woman to request help from Dr. Macphail who attempts to ask the governor for clemency; however, this proves futile as the governor refuses to take back his order and is worried that Mr. Davidson would complain to authorities in Washington.

► Act of waiting

Miss Thompson turns into an emotional wreck; she spends her days praying with the missionary and reading the Bible. It seems as though she was looking forward to her deportation rather than endure the punishment of waiting in anguish. The weather also becomes horrid with continuous rains. On a Monday, Miss Thomson receives a call asking her to be ready by 11 the next day.

In the middle of the night, however, Mr. Davidson's body is found; his throat has been cut from ear to ear, with the razor found in the missionary's right hand. Dr.



► Hypocrisy

Macphail concludes that it was a suicide. Mrs. Macphail breaks the news to Mrs. Davidson, who is beyond consolation. When they return to the house, they see Miss Thompson chatting to a sailor. She seems to have taken up her old profession. She spits in the direction of Mrs. Davidson who runs into her room. Dr. Macphail goes to Miss Thompson's room where she exclaims that all men are the same, they are all pigs. The doctor is shocked, understanding that she is referring to Mr. Davidson.

► Difference in empathy

Through the simple contrasting of the couples and their attitudes to the culture they encounter, Maugham is able to set up questions about righteousness, religious condescension, and moral hypocrisy. While the couples initially seem to share certain values and biases, their sense of empathy differs quite dramatically. In the first conversation between Dr. Macphail and Mrs. Davidson, their basic observations are pitted against each other. Mr. Davidson's reaction to Miss Thompson's profession further highlights a lack of understanding of the human condition and the socio-economic factors that might have contributed to her life choices.

► Hollow beliefs

In fact, the religious fervour displayed by Mr. Davidson is revealed to be lust; he commits suicide as he has betrayed his own beliefs by attempting to have sex with Miss Thompson. In other words, the drive for repentance and the will to keep away from sin, both of which are frequently declared by the Davidsons, are exposed as hollow and manipulative. The moral superiority to which they lay claim is completely dismantled in their exercising of power and in the hypocrisy of their actions.

Summarised Overview

The current unit explores critical perspectives on English fiction between the 1900s and 1940s, including selected representative novels and short stories. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a significant modernist novel, captures the struggle of the individual for self-identity and purpose within the folds of a society that seeks to force conformity. *Howard's End*, on the other hand, examines the role played by social perception of class in forging connections and relationships between individuals. The three short stories included in this unit, "Odour of Chrysanthemums", "Prelude", and "Rain", provoke a revisiting of the human condition along different perspectives. While the first two delineate the problematic dynamics that drive the idea of family, the last one rethinks the idea of morality and religion as the centrepiece of encounters between strangers.

Assignments

1. Chart the transformation of Stephen Dedalus as an individual over the course of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
2. Examine the narrative techniques used in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
3. What role does class and social hierarchy play in E.M. Forster's *Howard's End*?
4. Critically explore the theme of 'connection' as presented in *Howard's End*?
5. Write an essay on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Howard's End* as examples of modernist fiction.
6. How does D.H. Lawrence's "Odour of Chrysanthemums" explore the theme of familial relations?
7. Write a short note on the characterisation of Elizabeth in "Odour of Chrysanthemums".
8. Comment on "Prelude" as a powerful exploration of the lives of women in a patriarchal setting.
9. What aspects of the patriarchal family does the "Prelude" emphasise in the interactions between Stanley and Beryl?
10. Examine the narrative of "Rain" as a study of the human tendency towards moral hypocrisy.



Suggested Readings

1. Levenson, Michael H. editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
2. Stevenson, Randall. *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*. Kentucky UP, 1992.

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1. Levenson, Michael H. editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge UP, 1999.
2. Stevenson, Randall. *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*. Kentucky UP, 1992.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



**M.A. English
Language and Literature
Second Semester
Model Question Paper Sets**



QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II
DISCIPLINE CORE - 1- M21EG05DC- ROMANTICS AND VICTORIANS

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- A

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. Define aestheticism
2. What is an elegy?
3. Who were part of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood?
4. What do you mean by Wessex novels?
5. What does the epigram of "Dejection: An Ode" deal with?
6. Why does the poet introduce the Grecian Urn as a "sylvan historian"?
7. Which is the setting of the first Act of *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
8. Who was the missing baby in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. Discuss the significance of the setting in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.
10. What is romantic revival?
11. How does Wordsworth deal with the concept of immortality and childhood in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"?



12. How is Jane's journey towards self-discovery described in *Jane Eyre*
13. How does the poet employ the technique of dramatic monologue in "My Last Duchess"?
14. Comment on the theme and form of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem "Pied Beauty"
15. What does the poem "She Walks in Beauty" suggest about the relationship between physical beauty and inner beauty?
16. What is the central idea of "Blessed Damozel"?
17. Analyse the character of Beatrice in *The Cenci* and her significant role in the play.
18. How does Charles Lamb portray Oxford during the vacation?

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. How does John Keats convey the idea of art and permanence in "Ode on a Grecian Urn"?
20. How does *The Importance of Being Earnest* critique the values and conventions of Victorian society regarding class and social hierarchy?
21. Elaborate on Victorian poetry focusing on poems of Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, and D.G Rossetti.
22. Analyse the moral ambiguity and ethical dilemmas presented in *Great Expectations*.



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II

DISCIPLINE CORE - 1- M21EG05DC- ROMANTICS AND VICTORIANS

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- B

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. State two features of decadent poetry
2. What is a Problem Play?
3. Define Comedy of Manners
4. What is a Gothic Novel?
5. Why does Wordsworth call the shepherd boy a “child of joy”?
6. Which rhyme scheme is used in “Ode to a Skylark”?
7. What is portrayed on the wall in Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess”?
8. Why is Lady Bracknell not interested in Jack marrying Gwendolen?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. Detail on the Oxford Movement.
10. What is the impact of *Lyrical Ballads* on romanticism in literature?
11. Explore Pip’s character development in the novel?
12. Elaborate on the role of childhood in shaping the speaker’s understanding of immortality in “Ode: Intimations of Immortality”

13. Discuss Walter Pater's views on art and aesthetics.
14. How does sea work as a central metaphor in "Dover Beach" to convey the central theme of uncertainty and loss of faith in the poem?
15. What literary devices are used in the poem "No Coward Soul Is Mine"?
16. How does the speaker warn against conditional love in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnet 14"?
17. What does William Hazlitt mean by 'familiar style'?
18. What is the metaphoric significance of "sweetness" and "light" in Matthew Arnold's essay?

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. How do romantic poets address the themes of memory, despair, and art?
20. Compare and contrast the attitudes towards duty and responsibility in "The Lotus-Eaters" By Alfred Tennyson.
21. How does Oscar Wilde deal with the ideas of identity and deception in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
22. How does Victorian poetry reflect and engage with the social and moral dilemmas of the era?



QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II
DISCIPLINE CORE - M21EG06DC- ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM 1900 TO
1945

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- A

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. Name two Edwardian poets.
2. What is Imagism?
3. What is a Problem play?
4. What is the central conflict in G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*?
5. What does falcon symbolise in the poem W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming"?
6. Which are the major sections in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*?
7. What are the main themes in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*?
8. What does Chrysanthemum symbolise in D.H. Lawrence's "The Odour of Chrysanthemums"?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. What was the Irish Question and how did it impact the political and social landscape?
10. Discuss the role of superstition in J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.
11. How does Eliot explore the theme of disillusionment and the loss of meaning in *The Waste Land*?
12. Discuss the role of memory and nostalgia in Dylan Thomas' "Poem in October."



13. What were the significant impacts of the Depression Years on global economies?
14. Discuss the role of social class and the portrayal of the upper-middle class in E.M Forster's *Howards End*.
15. Discuss Somerset Maugham's "Rain's" ambiguous ending.
16. Comment on the major themes in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.
17. What is the significance of the title "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" and how does it relate to the poem's content?
18. Discuss the role of surrealism in the poetry of Dylan Thomas.

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. What are the major arguments in Raymond Williams' "When was Modernism?"
20. Is it possible to interpret Shaw's *Pygmalion* as a sharp critique of the British social structure? Give examples from the play to back up your claim.
21. Discuss the salient characteristics of early twentieth century English poetry.
22. Discuss the theme of societal collapse and the loss of moral order in "The Second Coming," and its relevance to the historical context in which Yeats wrote the poem.



QP CODE:

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Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II
DISCIPLINE CORE - M21EG06DC- ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM 1900 TO
1945

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- B

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. What is a Well-Made play?
2. Name two Pylon poets?
3. What is the main theme in J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*?
4. Name two Edwardian playwrights.
5. Why does the poet decide to go to Byzantium in W.B. Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium"?
6. What sentiments does the speaker in Dylan Thomas' "Poem in October" have regarding his thirty-first birthday?
7. What are the major conflicts in James Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*?
8. What is the major theme in Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude"?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. How does Somerset Maugham explore the theme of judgement and forgiveness in



“Rain.”

10. Explore the key principles of the Imagist movement in poetry.
11. Comment on the character of Elizabeth in D.H. Lawrence’s “Odour of Chrysanthemums.”
12. Analyse the portrayal of women and their impact on Stephen Dedalus’s artistic and personal growth in James Joyce’s novel *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*.
13. Comment on the role of death in J.M. Synge’s *Riders to the Sea*.
14. How did the inter-war years shape literature and society?
15. Discuss the theme of inheritance in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*.
16. Analyse the theme of social class and the critique of the British class system in George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*.
17. What is the central theme of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*?
18. Do you feel that Wilfred Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est” is an anti-war poem? Discuss.

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. What role does class and social hierarchy play in E.M. Forster’s *Howards End*?
20. Examine the impact of World War I on poetry.
21. How does Dylan Thomas’ “Poem in October” convey a sense of celebration and appreciation for life despite the contemplation of mortality?
22. Discuss the ways in which Orwell criticises the degradation of language in his essay, “Politics and the English Language,” particularly in relation to political and public discourse.



QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II

DISCIPLINE CORE - M21EG07DC- AMERICAN LITERATURE

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- A

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. Which was the first permanent English settlement in North America?
2. What does Dark Romanticism explore?
3. Who was Captain John Smith and what did he refer to as America?
4. When was *Lyrical Ballads* published? Who were the contributors?
5. Who is "The Sage of Concord" referred to as? What was the individual known for?
6. What is the narrative style of Edgar Allan Poe?
7. Define 'anaphora.'
8. Which are the four realms the poem, "I am Afraid to Own a Body" traverses?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. Give a brief account of Protestantism in England.
10. Explain the characteristic features of Puritans.
11. Elucidate how the term 'Africanism' is used by Toni Morrison.
12. Write a short critical appreciation of the poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."
13. How does the author use symbolism in the poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" to devel-



op its primary theme?

14. Briefly describe Captain John Smith's contribution to the founding of American colonies.

15. How does "Phenomenal Woman" challenge societal stereotypes?

16. Define Transcendentalism.

17. Briefly explain historical novels.

18. Briefly explain Lost Generation in American literature.

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. Explain Emerson's view, that individuals must depend on their own self, and not seek answers outside themselves.

20. Give a comprehensive description of modern American theatre.

21. Provide a detailed account of 20th-century American prose.

22. Provide a detailed account of the confessionalism and symbolisms used in "Daddy."



QP CODE:

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Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II

DISCIPLINE CORE - M21EG07DC- AMERICAN LITERATURE

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- B

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. What were the common narrative techniques used by Toni Morrison in her works?
2. Whose work formed the basis of American literature and what was it about?
3. Who were considered the three pillars of 20th century American Drama?
4. What is Transcendentalism?
5. What inspired the works of Eugene O'Neill?
6. Who wrote *The Contrast*? To which genre the play belongs?
7. Who said these words: "the proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it." and what are the characteristics of his poetry?
8. In which anthology did Wallace Stevens publish "The Emperor of Ice cream"? When was it published?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. Write short notes on Provincetown players.
10. What are exploration narratives? Explain.



11. Briefly explain historical writings.
12. Provide a brief note on slave narratives with examples.
13. Write a short note on Harlem Renaissance.
14. Briefly explain Helen Vendler's criticism of the poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."
15. What is the life lesson that Frost tries to convey through the swinging of the birch trees?
16. Write a short critical appreciation of the poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"
17. Briefly describe how death is personified in the poem "There is Something Quieter than Sleep."
18. How does Adrienne Rich define motherhood?

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. Explore the major themes in the novel *Scarlet Letter*.
20. Evaluate Harold Bloom's and Virginia Woolf's observations on Emerson's *Self Reliance*.
21. Attempt a comprehensive account of Romanticism in America.
22. Explain how Puritanism influenced American literature?



QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II

**DISCIPLINE CORE - M21EG08DC- ENGLISH CRITICAL TRADITION FROM
ARISTOTLE TO F.R. LEAVIS**

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- A

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. What is the significant shift that the Middle Age witnessed?
2. How does William Wordsworth define poetry?
3. Who are the philosophers in Plato's *The Republic*?
4. What does Chapter VIII of *On the Sublime* mainly discuss?
5. Write any one duty that Matthew Arnold attributes to a critic.
6. What is T.S. Eliot's observation on the structure of poetry in his essay "Philip Massinger"?
7. What is S.N. Dasgupta's essay "The Theory of Rasa" about?
8. What are the three elements of poetry that Abhinavagupta identifies in the realisation of rasa?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. Explain the projecting features of art and literature during Roman Classicism.
10. How did the concept of the sublime play a significant role in German Romanticism, particularly in literature and art?
11. Briefly explain some of the key features of modernist literature.
12. Explain the concept of *mimesis* theorised by Plato in Book 2 of *The Republic*.



13. What were the main criticisms of poetry and other art forms levelled by Stephen Gosson in his treatise *The School of Abuse*, and how did Sir Philip Sidney respond to these criticisms in his work *Defence of Poesie*?
14. What is Wordsworth's view on the interplay between poetry, science, and pleasure as explained in "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"?
15. Briefly explain Matthew Arnold's perspective on the relationship between criticism and creativity.
16. How did T.S. Eliot's poetry and literary criticism contribute to 20th-century literature and the modernist movement?
17. How do Bharata's Rasa theory and T.S. Eliot's Objective Correlative concept align in terms of their emphasis on the production of emotions in poetry?
18. What is the ongoing debate regarding imitation in dramatic performance as explained in S.N. Dasgupta's essay "The Theory of Rasa"?

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each.. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. Analyse the characteristics of Classical and Neoclassical criticism by mentioning its major theoreticians.
20. Discuss *Book 2* of Plato's *The Republic* and explore the concept of mimesis.
21. How does Matthew Arnold discuss the elements of creativity, ideas, disinterestedness and self-complacency in the essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"?
22. Discuss the historical development and key concepts of the rasa theory as presented in S.N. Dasgupta's essay "The Theory of Rasa."



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M.A. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE EXAMINATION- SEMESTER II

**DISCIPLINE CORE - M21EG08DC- ENGLISH CRITICAL TRADITION FROM
ARISTOTLE TO F.R. LEAVIS**

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- B

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences each. Each question carries 2 marks. (5x2=10)

1. What is meant by formalism in literature?
2. Define the term *Alankara*.
3. What is Aristotle's theory of tragedy?
4. Write any one charge Gosson levelled against poetry in *The School of Abuse*
5. How does Matthew Arnold define criticism in his "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"?
6. With what remark does T.S. Eliot conclude the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"?
7. What are the three elements by the fusion of which *Rasa* is created?
8. What are the two *vachyas* into which Dhvani can be divided?

Section B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each. Each question carries 5 marks. (6x5=30)

9. How did the Neoclassical period in English literature differ from the Renaissance period?
10. What were the key differences between British and American New Criticism in the early 20th century?
11. How did Kuntaka's theory of *vakrokti* contribute to Indian aesthetics and influence later writers and critics?



12. Briefly explain the evolution of thoughts in Plato's *The Republic*.
13. What are Sir Philip Sidney's views on contemporary drama?
14. What are the main points of disagreement that Wordsworth expresses with regard to Eighteenth-Century poetry in his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"?
15. How does T.S. Eliot respond to Matthew Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"?
16. Briefly explain the concept of *dhvani* in Indian aesthetics, as discussed by Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta.
17. How does Bharata's emphasis on intonation and the differentiation of accents in Indian aesthetics contribute to the conveyance of meaning in speech?
18. What are the different types of *vibhavas* in the context of evoking emotions, and how do they contribute to creating a specific emotion?

Section C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each. Each question carries 15 marks. (2x15= 30 Marks)

19. Write a detailed note on Formalism and Modernism in literary criticism.
20. Examine Sidney's response to the charges levelled against poetry along with his view on contemporary poetry.
21. How does Eliot analyse the idea of tradition in the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"?
22. Discuss briefly each of the following elements in relation to Dhvani: AvivakshitaVachya, Abhidamula, Rasa, Anumana, Arthapatti, Lakshana, Abhidha, Tatparyavrtti, and Vakrokti.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കുരിശിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരിപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

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English Literature from 1900 to 1945

COURSE CODE: M21EG06DC

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