European Fiction

COURSE CODE: B21EG02DE

Undergraduate Programme in English

Discipline Specific Elective Course

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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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.

European Fiction

Course Code: B21EG02DE

Semester - IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course
BA English Language and Literature
Self Learning Material

(With Model Question Paper Sets)

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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The undergraduate programme in English Language and Literature has been designed to be on par with the high-quality academic programmes offered at state universities throughout the country. Considerable emphasis has been placed on incorporating the latest trends in the delivery of programmes focused on English Language and Literature. Our aspiration is that this programme will augment your aptitude for comprehending both the language itself and its accompanying literary works. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-06-2024

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BLOCK - 01

Literary Contexts 1

Unit 1

Literary Contexts I

Learning Outcomes

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

- analyse the various contexts that influenced the development of literary movements in Europe.
- evaluate the impact and significance of influential European writers on the evolution of literature.
- understand the historical context and key features of the Enlightenment, Realism, and Naturalism movements.
- examine how these literary movements reflected and influenced social changes

Prerequisites

Literature has been a mirror reflecting the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of humanity throughout the ages. We need to understand the literary contexts that have shaped the evolution of fiction in Europe, as it has been a producer of many great pieces in English literature. We have to explore the vibrant era of the Italian Renaissance, where the pioneering works of Boccaccio, Rabelais, and Cervantes laid the foundations for modern fiction. While you read about the Romantic Movement, you will witness how writers embraced emotion, imagination, and individuality, breathing new life into their narratives. From the picturesque landscapes of the Picturesque Novel to the eerie atmospheres of the Gothic Novel, you will discover how authors masterfully manipulated setting and mood to captivate their readers. The Historical Romance genre will transport you to bygone eras, where fact and fiction intertwine in tales of adventure, intrigue, and romance.

In the currents of Enlightenment and Rationalism, you will meet how writers challenged traditional beliefs and championed reason and individualism, paving the way for the

rise of the novel as a literary form. The gritty realism of Naturalism and the provocative ideas of Biological Determinism will confront you with unflinching portrayals of human nature and the role of heredity and environment in shaping our destinies.

Keywords

Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Realism, Fiction, Naturalism, Movements

Discussion

1.1.1 The Beginnings of Fiction in Europe

1.1.1.1 Greek Literature

In Europe, the Greeks were pioneers in many forms of literature, including fiction. Their epic poems like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Homer contained myths and stories that blended reality with imagination. These sweeping narratives revolved around the Trojan War and the adventures of Odysseus, developing together factual events with deeply imaginative plotlines involving gods, monsters, and superhuman feats. The vibrant descriptions and fantastical elements in these epics showcased the Greek talent for fictional world-building.

Greek playwrights such as *Aeschylus, Sophocles,* and *Euripides* wrote tragedies and comedies that incorporated fictional plots and characters, though based on mythological themes. While drawing from legends, they crafted original narratives with imaginary protagonists like Oedipus and Medea. Their plays explored profound human experiences through the lens of fiction. Philosophers like Plato explored the concept of fiction through thought-provoking dialogues like *The Republic,* which contained the Allegory of the Cave - an imaginary scenario used to illustrate complex ideas about reality and perception.

The Greeks were the originators, driving forces, and indeed the namers behind numerous well-known genres of global literature. Epic poetry, lyric verse, pastoral compositions, tragedies and comedies for the stage, historical writings in prose form, philosophical texts, and even the novel genre, all trace their deep origins to the literary achievements of ancient Greece.

1.1.1.2 Roman Literature

The Romans carried forward the Greek literary traditions, giving their own spin to fiction writing. Virgil's *Aeneid* is a famous epic poem that weaves together history, mythology, and imaginative storytelling. It follows the fictional journey of Aeneas, a Trojan hero, as he escapes the fallen city and travels to Italy, where Rome's origins are rooted. This blend of real and imagined elements made the *Aeneid* a pioneering work of historical fiction.

Playwrights like Plautus and Terence wrote

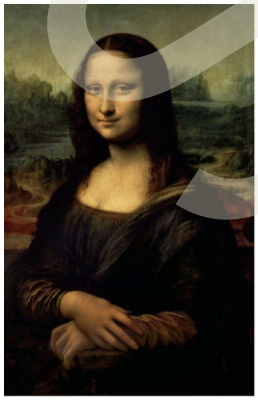
comedic plays with fictional plots and characters inspired by Greek models. However, they often incorporated contemporary Roman society's nuances, giving their works a unique flavour. Poets like Ovid used imaginative narratives to recount myths and legends from a fresh perspective in works like *Metamorphoses*. This collection of mythological tales featured wildly imaginative transformations and original storylines.

1.1.2 Italian Renaissance

The Italian Renaissance was one of the most important periods in the history of art. It lasted for nearly three centuries, from the 1300s to the late 1500s. During this time, artists revolutionised painting, sculpture, and architecture through a new focus on observing human nature and the real world. In the medieval era before the Renaissance, most artworks portrayed religious figures and scenes from the *Bible*. The paintings and sculptures looked very flat and stylised, without attempting to create realistic human forms. But starting in the 1300s, a new generation of Italian artists began to break away from this medieval tradition.

One of the earliest Renaissance innovators was the Florentine painter (those influenced by the naturalistic style developed in Florence, Italy) Giotto. His painting started to look more lifelike and natural compared to the stiff and symbolic medieval style. Giotto's humanised paintings showed the beginnings of depth, perspective, and emotionally expressive characters. As the Renaissance picked up momentum in the 1400s, artists became obsessed with studying reality through close observations. Renaissance painters learned the rules of perspective to create believable depth and space in their paintings. They meticulously studied human anatomy and proportions to paint stunningly lifelike human forms.

The city of Florence quickly became the leading centre of Renaissance art. As a wealthy trading hub, Florence's merchant elite had plenty of money to commission artworks. The city produced artistic geniuses like Botticelli, who painted the famous mythological scene "The Birth of Venus." For the first time, classical myths and secular subjects became widely accepted themes alongside religious art. In the early 1500s, the Italian Renaissance reached a brilliant high point. The towering masters of this period were Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian. Their works embodied the Renaissance ideals of realism, human emotion, graceful beauty, and classical influences.



The Mona Lisa is an oil painting by the renowned artist Leonardo da Vinci, likely the most iconic and celebrated artwork globally. Created between 1503 and 1519 during Da Vinci's residence in Florence, this masterpiece on a poplar wood panel currently resides at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Even in the 21st century, it remains a revered destination for countless visitors and art enthusiasts worldwide. The enigmatic smile of the portrayed woman and the uncertainty surrounding her true identity have fueled continuous inquiry, analysis, and an enduring captivation with this painting over the centuries.

Fig.1.1.1 *Mona Lisa*
by Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo's justly renowned masterpiece *The Last Supper* is a powerful, naturalistic depiction of Jesus's final meal with his apostles. With dramatic lighting, intense emotional expressions, and stunningly lifelike figures, it exemplifies the Renaissance's mastery of representing the human form and capturing human psychology through art. Raphael's *School of Athens* portrays the great philosophers of ancient Greece gathered in an idealised Renaissance setting. The huge painting realistically shows each figure's personality and interactions. At the same time, it expresses the classical spirit of philosophical inquiry that the Renaissance excelled.

Michelangelo was an artistic intellect celebrated for his sculptures and frescoes like the Sistine Chapel ceiling. He imbued his contorted figures with intense emotional and spiritual energy. His mastery of the human form was unparalleled.

Renaissance artworks displayed realism, the visible effects of light and shade, perspective for three-dimensional settings, accurate anatomy, classical themes, and human emotional expressions. In these ways, Renaissance artists connected their work to the real and observable world rather than treating art as symbolic Biblical illustrations. At the same time, Renaissance artists also sought to portray ideals of human beauty, intellect, and virtue. They glorified human potential and capability through their artworks' graceful naturalism and classical allusions. So while grounded in observations of the real, Renaissance art also aspired to convey human perfection.

In part, this philosophical approach stemmed from the Renaissance fascination with resurrecting the wisdom and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. Renaissance artists closely studied the math, science, and art from history. This reverence for classical learning

Fig. 1.1.2 *School of Athens* by Raphael

blended with the new artistic naturalism. But the Renaissance also witnessed a shift from the dominance of religious subjects to greater explorations of secular themes - from portraits and mythological scenes to depictions of everyday life. As the merchant class grew wealthier, they gained the ability to commission artworks beyond just Biblical tales and saints.

1.1.3 Giovanni Boccacci

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) was an influential Italian writer and scholar. He is considered a forerunner to the Renaissance through his works reviving the study of ancient texts and raising vernacular literature to new heights of artistry. As a youth in Naples, he fell in love with a woman nicknamed Fiammetta who inspired much of his early romantic writing.

Fig. 1.1.3 Giovanni Boccaccio

Some of Boccaccio's first major works drew on medieval themes of chivalry and courtly love tales, but treated them with a newfound refinement and display of learning. His novel *Il Filocolo* and the epic poem "Teseida" reworked familiar romance stories in an elevated style worthy of comparison to classical works. Notably, the poem"Teseida" was one of the first major works written in the ottava rima verse form (Italian stanza form composed of eight 11-syllable lines, rhyming *abababcc*) usually used by folk poets and minstrels. Boccaccio helped dignify this meter for more serious literature. His tales inspired later writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare.

Between 1341 and 1345, Boccaccio experimented with different genres like the allegorical prose and verse narratives "Il Ninfale d'Ameto" and "L'Amorosa Visione". However, his masterpiece was the innovative story collection *Decameron*, likely written around 1348-1353. The *Decameron* framed 100 tales as stories shared over 10 days by a group of young people escaping the Black Plague ravaging Florence. With tones ranging from tragic to comic, the tales presented a sweeping portrait of all facets of love and human life in Boccaccio's time. While inspired by medieval storytelling traditions, *Decameron* raised prose fiction to literary heights through Boccaccio's sophisticated language, structure, and characterisations. It became one of the first truly "modern" masterworks of Italian literature and classical prose style.

After this career-defining achievement, Boccaccio turned more towards scholarly Latin works. This was partly inspired by his close friendship with the humanist writer Petrarch, whom Boccaccio greatly admired. Major books from this period included the encyclopedic *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, highlighting Boccaccio's humanist drive to study and understand ancient culture. He also wrote influential biographies like *Famous Women* and *Fates of Illustrious Men*. Through such works, as well as promoting the recovery of lost classical texts, Boccaccio became a pioneering figure in the Italian Renaissance humanist movement. He helped revive the study

of ancient Greek and Latin literature alongside his contemporary Petrarch.

In his final years, impoverished but still devoted to literature, Boccaccio lectured publicly on Dante's *Divine Comedy* in Florence. This highlighted his admiration for the other supreme early master of Italian poetry and prose. While grounded in medieval traditions and genres, Boccaccio brought a Renaissance mindset through his works - revering the cultural achievements of antiquity, while seeking to produce equally great art exalting human experience and the modern vernacular. The *Decameron* in particular exemplified this new direction. Its vivid portrayal of all facets of daily life, with a mix of high and low subjects, reflected the Renaissance era's increased engagement with humanist philosophy and realism in art.

After Boccaccio, there was no turning back for Italian literature. His writings set new standards and possibilities that flourished in subsequent generations through Renaissance masters like Ariosto and Machiavelli. Boccaccio's unique balance of medieval sources and pioneering Renaissance spirit made him a pivotal transformative figure.

1.1.4 Miguel de Cervantes

Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) was a Spanish novelist, playwright and poet whose literary works had a profound and lasting impact on the development of European fiction. His masterpiece, the novel *Don Quixote*, is considered one of the greatest books ever written and a founding work of modern literature. Published in two parts in 1605 and 1615, *Don Quixote* tells the story of Alonso Quixano, an elderly Spanish gentleman from La Mancha who becomes so obsessed with tales of chivalric romance that he loses his grip on reality. Renaming himself Don Quixote, he sets out to revive the traditions of knight-errantry, involved in a series of adventures accompa-

Fig. 1.1.4 Statue of Cervantes in Madrid, Spain

nied by his pragmatic peasant squire Sancho Panza.

On one level, *Don Quixote* satirises the outdated romantic literature that had captured the protagonist's imagination. Cervantes mocks the idealised codes of chivalry through Don Quixote's foolish quests and delusions, such as mistaking windmills for giants. However, the novel operates on multiple deeper levels as well, exploring profound questions about truth versus fiction, idealism versus reality, and the nature of identity. The characters of Don Quixote and Sancho represent opposing worldviews and value systems. The"knight" Don Quixote embodies romantic idealism, chivalric principles and the power of the individual's imagination to shape their perceived reality. In contrast, the down-to-earth Sancho symbolises earthy pragmatism, materialism and folk wisdom. Their relationship forms the crux of the novel, with Cervantes framing a complex dialogue between these clashing perspectives.

First published in 1605, *Don Quixote* was an immediate popular success across Europe in languages like English, French and Italian. Its iconic characters seemed to take on a life outside the book in visual arts and popular culture. The story's realism, humour and philosophical depth inspired generations of later European novelists. Writers from Fielding and Sterne to Flaubert and Dostoevsky were heavily influenced by Cervantes's narrative strategies and exploration of the paradoxes of truth and fiction.

In addition to the novel, Cervantes made other major contributions to European prose fiction. His collection of short novellas titled *Exemplary Novels* (1613) is considered a pioneering work that helped establish short fiction as a respected literary form. Stories like "The Dialogue of the Dogs" displayed Cervantes's gift for satire and taste for experimentation. His posthumous romance novel *The Labours of Persiles and Sigismunda* also won great acclaim.

Cervantes drew deeply on his own dramatic life experiences in shaping his literary works. As a young man, he was severely wounded in battle against the Ottoman Turks. He spent

Fig. 1.1.5 A scene from the movie *Don Quixote* (2000) adapted from Cervantes' novel

five years as a captive slave in Algiers before being ransomed. These ordeals clearly influenced his perspectives on idealism confronting harsh realities. His struggles as a civil servant, playwright and novelist facing poverty and jail time gave him a keen outsider's eye on society. His fiction embraced a polyphony of diverse voices and viewpoints. Female characters like Marcela and Dorotea in *Don Quixote* were given unusually empowered roles to defend women's rights for the era. Such complexities have fueled endless scholarly analysis and debate over the interpretations of his prose.

After rescuing the novel in its infancy from the outdated conventions of chivalric romances and pastoral tales, Cervantes transformed European fiction into a self-aware art form examining the unstable boundaries between reality and imagination, truth and illusion. His metafictional techniques, philosophical depths, and empathetic humanism permanently expanded the creative possibilities of the novel genre going forward.

The influence of Cervantes's groundbreaking achievements in *Don Quixote* and his other works has only grown over the centuries since he died in 1616. The novel is available in translations into over 60 languages. Its protagonist and his associates are visual icons recognised globally in art, film, and popular culture. Literary critics of every era have found new riches to unearth in Cervantes's narratives.

1.1.5 François Rabelais

François Rabelais was a brilliant French writer who lived from around 1494 to 1553. He was a priest, doctor and scholar, but is most famous today for his comic masterpiece the novels of the series *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, published between 1532 and 1564. The four connected novels from the series tell the story of two giants - Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. They go on many adventures and travels, accompanied by friends like the trickster Panurge. On the surface, the books are wildly entertaining comedies, full of crude humour, satire, and imaginative stories. However, underneath the laughter, Rabelais used the novels to mock the institutions and follies of his day. He poked fun at bad teachers and outdated ways of learning. He satirised greedy lawyers who would prolong legal cases for their own profit. He ridiculed ignorant doctors who knew little about real medicine. And he frequently made jokes about lazy, greedy and corrupt monks and priests.

One of Rabelais' biggest targets was the church itself and its often hypocritical attitudes. He had been a Franciscan (a group of mendicant religious orders of the Catholic Church) friar himself for many years before leaving to study medicine. So he knew the inside workings of monasteries well. In the novels, the giant Gargantua finds his own ideal abbey called Theleme, which rejects the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience observed by monks. Despite containing much vulgar and obscene humour, Rabelais' novels display incredible wordplay and mastery of the French language during its Renaissance peak. His books draw from sources across the ancient world, the Middle Ages, and the new humanist learning.

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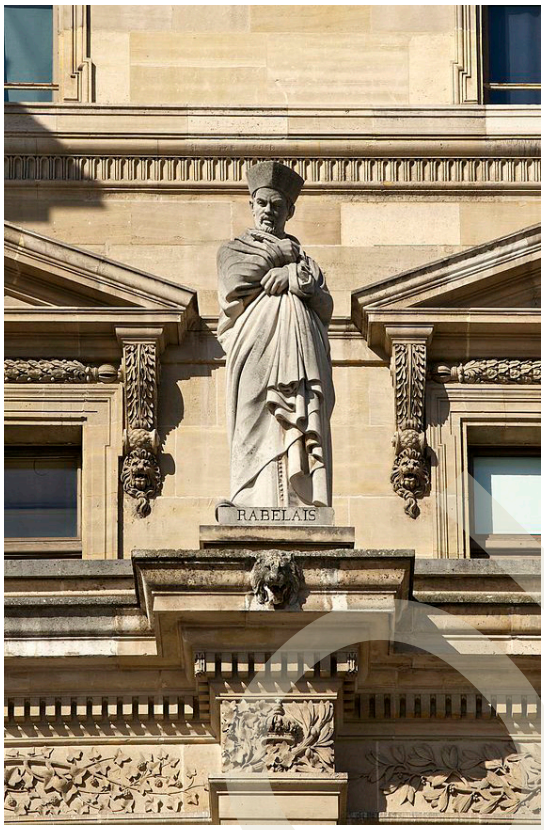

Fig. 1.1.6 Statue of Francois Rabelais
at the facade of The Louvre Museum, Paris

of poverty, chastity and obedience observed by monks. Despite containing much vulgar and obscene humour, Rabelais' novels display incredible wordplay and mastery of the French language during its Renaissance peak. His books draw from sources across the ancient world, the Middle Ages, and the new humanist learning.

Rabelais' novels are not just anti-religious satires though. They contain sincere praise for education, culture and the pursuit of knowledge - causes dear to the humanist scholars of his era. The quest undertaken by Panurge and friends is ultimately about the search for truth and wisdom itself. For all the popular comedies, Rabelais aimed to address the biggest philosophical questions. Rabelais' books frequently ran into trouble with censors and critics during his lifetime. Portions were banned in Paris and he had to rely on the patronage of powerful nobles to avoid more serious punishment.

Rabelais drew inspiration from his own curious life experiences for the novels. He was born into a prosperous family of lawyers in the region of Poitou. As a youngster, he seemed destined for a career in law before suddenly becoming a Franciscan monk around 1510. For reasons unknown, Rabelais abandoned the Franciscan order around 1520 to join the Benedictine monks instead. This move proved equally unsuitable, and by 1530 he had shed his religious vows entirely to study medicine at the University of Montpellier. Over the next two decades, Rabelais published books about medicine while practising as a doctor in cit-

ies like Lyon and Montpellier. It was during this period in the 1530s that he burst onto the literary scene with his first two comic novels about Pantagruel and Gargantua.

The immediate success and controversy of these books shaped the rest of Rabelais' career and travels. He became dependent on wealthy patrons to protect him from accusations of heresy or immorality levelled by critics. This constant search for new benefactors took him on a wandering journey across Renaissance France, Italy and even brief stays in Rome. *Gargantua and Pantagruel* ultimately contain some of the most linguistically creative writing of the entire Renaissance period. It blends high and low culture, philosophical insight with gross vulgarity, and brutal satire with sincere idealism about education and human potential.

1.1.6 Romantic Movement

The Romantic Movement was a major literary and cultural shift that took place across Europe between around 1800 and 1850. It emerged as a reaction against the ideas of the Enlightenment period, as well as the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation happening at the time. While Romanticism started in the German and English literary traditions, its influence soon spread to Russia, Italy, France and other countries too. This era is considered the golden age of Russian literature.

The key ideas driving the Romantic Movement were a celebration of individualism, emotions and subjective feelings. This contrasted with the Enlightenment focus on rationality, science and objective truth. The French Revolution of 1789 was a major inspiration for many early Romantic writers and poets. Figures like William Wordsworth wrote about the Revolution representing a new dawn and an exciting era of possibility. Central to Romanticism was the idea of the Romantic hero - an anti-establishment, rebellious character standing up against authority. The playwright Percy Bysshe Shelley depicted this idea in his work *Prometheus Unbound,* where the hero Prometheus defies the gods. The Byronic hero, named after the poet Lord Byron, offered a more cynical and brooding take on the Romantic hero archetype, as seen in Byron's epic *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

In Russian literature, the "superfluous man" became an important Romantic concept. Writers like Alexander Pushkin and Ivan Turgenev explored the idea of individuals perceived as misfits who did not belong in society. As a backlash against industrialisation and urbanisation, many Romantic artists and poets idealised rural country life and unspoiled nature. They saw the natural world as sublime - a source of powerful, heightened emotions and sensations. Much Romantic poetry focused on the subjective and personal responses nature could provoke in the poet's mind and imagination. The lyric form, with its introspective perspective, was a preferred style.

The British poet William Wordsworth defined poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquillity." This quote exemplifies the Romantic emphasis on individual feeling over reason. Imagination was viewed as hugely important by the Romantics, allowing the inner vision and creativity of the poet's mind to be expressed. As well as looking to nature for inspiration, the Romantic Movement also turned to the past - medieval history, folklore, traditions and ruins. This fed into a growing sense of nationalism and established cultural identities across Europe. The historical novels of Walter Scott, set in medieval Scotland, became hugely popular at this time as they evoked a romanticised

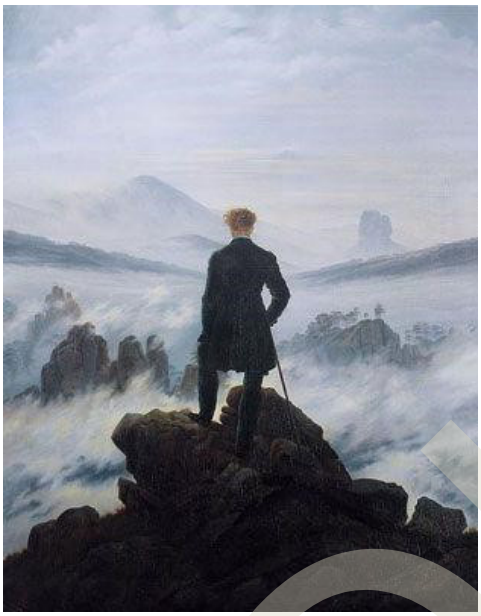

Fig. 1.1.7 *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*
by Caspar David Friedrich

The painting "*Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*" by Caspar David Friedrich is a quintessential example of the Romantic movement in art. The Romantics celebrated the power and sublimity of nature, emphasizing the awe-inspiring and sublime qualities found in landscapes.

In this work, Friedrich portrays a lone figure standing atop a rocky precipice, gazing out over a vast, misty landscape. The wanderer's small stature contrasts with the overwhelming grandeur of the surrounding scenery, highlighting humanity's insignificance compared to the overwhelming might of nature. The swirling mists, towering peaks, and boundless vistas evoke a sense of the infinite and unknowable, reflecting the Romantic fascination with the sublime and transcendental aspects of the natural world.

The painting captures the Romantic spirit of introspection and contemplation, with the solitary wanderer embodying the Byronic hero – a figure who confronts the world's mysteries and seeks emotional connection with the sublime forces of nature. Friedrich's masterful depiction of this iconic Romantic theme solidified his status as a pioneering artist of the movement.

version of the past.

An even darker fascination with the medieval world emerged in Gothic fiction - a distinctly Romantic literary genre. These stories dealt with dark, immoral themes like terror, death, the supernatural and forbidden desires. Classic Gothic novels from the period include Horace

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Goethe's *Faust* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Mysterious castles, chilling monsters and persecuted heroines were common motifs. While hugely influential in England, Russia and Germany, the Gothic genre was less popular in southern European countries like Italy and France, likely due to its anti-Catholic prejudices. Overall, the Romantic Movement represented a shift in art and literature away from the ideals of formality, rationality and restraint that had defined the previous age.

In place of the highly artificial style of neoclassicism, Romanticism unleashed a new wave of works brimming with imagination, intense emotions, fascination with the past, and engagement with the mysteries of nature and the self. This profound transition was anticipated by several "pre-Romantic" poets in the 18th century. Writers such as James Thomson, Thomas Gray and William Collins moved poetry in a new direction by exploring innovative themes and styles. Thomson's poems like "The Seasons" embraced nature and natural imagery in a way that contrasted with the didactic, urban focus of earlier Augustan Age literature. Concepts of mortality, sorrow and the sublime were central preoccupations.

Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" depicted humble, ordinary people in simple but profound language. This was revolutionary at a time when literary works typically only represented the lives of aristocrats and heroes. William Blake was perhaps the most radical precursor of Romanticism through his visionary, mystical poetry collections *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* in the 1790s. Their spontaneity, symbolism and childlike wonder opened up new creative vistas.

These pioneers helped pave the way for the great Romantic poets of the early 19th century like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats, who took the embrace of emotion, nature and individuality to even greater heights. Romanticism celebrated human feeling, vulnerability and the beauty of the wild, untamed world in an age of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation. Its radical ideas challenged the status quo and limitations of the previous era. Literature, art, music and culture would never be the same again after the creative revolution unleashed by the Romantic Movement across Europe and beyond.

1.1.7 Picaresque Novel

The picaresque novel is one of the earliest forms of novel writing. It originated in Spain during the 16th century and went on to influence literature across Europe and the world. The word "picaresque" comes from the Spanish word "picaro" meaning a rogue, rascal or cheeky adventurer. At the heart of every picaresque story is the picaro - the central anti-hero or roguish character. Picaresque tales follow the random travels and misadventures of this picaro character as they drift between different places and social classes. The picaro does not follow normal rules or morals of society. Instead, they survive by their wits and cunning alone, often resorting to trickery or dishonest means.

Although not a criminal exactly, the picaro lives outside respectable society on the fringes. They have a cynical, satirical view of the world around them. Through their adventures and encounters, the novels expose hypocrisy, corruption and vices at different levels of society. Despite their roguish ways, the Picaro characters have a certain charm or lovable quality that gains the reader's sympathy as they struggle to get by. The stories are usually comedic in tone and narrated in

an informal, first-person perspective by the picaro themselves. While highly entertaining, the picaresque novel served as one of the first realistic counterpoints to the fanciful chivalric romances that came before. Through their satirical lens, they exposed the gritty realities and corruptions of everyday life in a way never seen before in literature.

1.1.7.1 Origins and Spread

The first true picaresque novel is considered to be the anonymously published *Lazarillo de Tormes* from 1554. This short Spanish novel relates the story of the young Lazaro and his struggles serving a succession of hypocritical masters from various social classes. It proved hugely popular and influential, with the next major picaresque work being *Guzman de Alfarache* in 1599 by Mateo Aleman. This longer and richer tale of a picaro narrator recounting his misspent youth cemented the picaresque style. Other influential Spanish examples included Miguel de Cervantes' short story "Rinconete y Cortadillo" and the novel *The Illustrious Scullery-Maid* within his masterpiece *Don Quixote*. This iconic novel about delusional dreams of chivalry itself contained strong picaresque elements and satire.

While most picaresque novels featured a male picaro, there were notable exceptions with female perspectives too, such as the story of the deceptive picara heroine in *La Picara Justina* from 1605. After becoming a major publishing phenomenon in Spain, the picaresque style spread across Europe as the novels were translated into French, Dutch and English from the late 1500s onwards. In England, some of the earliest picaresque works included Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* from 1594 and Henry Fielding's comic novels like *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* in the 1740s. Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* revived the female picara narrator. France's most renowned picaresque novel was Alain-Renee Lesage's *Gil Blas* in the early 1700s, while Germany saw its own version of the genre with *Grimmelshausen's Simplicissimus* in 1669.

In the centuries that followed, despite fading somewhat from direct imitation, the picaresque spirit and influence lived on within many works of realistic fiction across the Western world. Examples of elements or perspectives inspired by the picaresque style can be seen in novels by Charles Dickens, Nikolai Gogol, Mark Twain, Thomas Mann and many others.

1.1.7.2 Characteristics of the Picaresque Novel

Some of the most common characteristics and features found in classic picaresque novels include:

- A roguish picaro protagonist from the lower classes of society
- First-person autobiographical narrative style
- Satirical and realistic depiction of the picaro's adventures and scams
- Episodic plot structure without much overall cohesion
- Social criticism and exposure of hypocrisy in different classes
- Comedic and entertaining tone and spirit
- Little moral or psychological character growth of the picaro
- Plain and vernacular language reflecting the narrator's perspective
- Drawing from Spanish folklore,

medieval tales and chivalric romances

Most picaresque novels stayed true to this pattern established by the earliest Spanish novel examples like *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzman de Alfarache*. The first-person perspective directly from the dishonest picaro narrator was a defining feature, allowing the story to be told in a grounded and irreverent vernacular voice. The loose structure of disconnected episodes was another convention, with the picaro getting into one scrape after another as they drifted between locations and social classes.

1.1.7.3 Influence on the Novel

While the golden age of direct picaresque novels faded by the end of the 17th century, their profound influence on the development of longer realistic fiction cannot be overstated. The existence of longer and more structured narratives offering satirical social criticism from unconventional perspectives broke new literary ground. The Spanish novelist Juan Martí argues the picaresque novel was "the most natural expression of the transitional Renaissance-Baroque period" in its time. The mixing of high and low characters from across the social spectrum within one tale was pivotal. These picaresque hallmarks paved the way for the rise of the great realist and satirical novelists who flourished in the following centuries, like Henry Fielding, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. Their novels contained many familiar episodic structures, anti-heroes and subversive critiques which remind of the picaresque.

So while the classic picaresque form faded from fashion over time, its spirit lived on. It helped democratise literature and dragged it out of solely depicting idealised worlds. Traces of the picaresque narratives - from first-person unreliable narrators to satirical takedowns of social injustice - can still be felt across all forms of storytelling even today.

1.1.8 Gothic Novels

In the late 18th century, a new literary movement began to emerge in Europe that allowed readers to escape into realms of fear, the supernatural, and the darkest workings of the human mind. The gothic novel opened doors to haunted spaces of decay, channelled the allure of brooding romantic heroes, and gave voice to nightmarish experiences that lurked in the cultural psyche. This unique aesthetic arose as a reaction against the tidy rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment.

The origins of the Gothic can be traced back to earlier artistic influences that narrated themes of horror, the uncanny, and the terrifying consequences of violent human acts. The tragedies of William Shakespeare, with their ghosts, witches, and brooding aura of inescapable doom, were highly influential precursors. John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* introduced the archetypal Byronic figure of the charismatic yet morally ambiguous anti-hero in the form of Satan.

It was Horace Walpole, the 18th-century aristocrat and writer, who is credited with crafting the first true Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Set in a medieval castle haunted by supernatural occurrences, the novel established tropes like ghosts, gloomy architecture, and an aura of looming terror that would define the genre for generations. Other pioneers like Ann Radcliffe further popularised Gothic archetypes of haunted ruins, persecuted virtuous heroines, and the creeping intrusion of the supernatural into the everyday world.

Fig. 1.1.8 An artistic representation of the Castle of Otranto

As the 19th century dawned, the Gothic novel rapidly evolved and merged with the Romantic literary movement. Mary Shelley's masterpiece *Frankenstein* took the Gothic into new speculative realms, using a chilling tale of a scientist's monstrous creation to explore questions of ethics, ambition, and the very nature of human existence. John Polidori's short story "The Vampyre" ignited an obsession with vampire fiction and mythology across Europe. In Europe, Gothic authors began adapting and reshaping the genre through distinct cultural lenses. In Germany, influential writers like E.T.A. Hoffmann blended Gothic narration with folklore and a fascination with the psychological dimensions of horror and madness. In Russia, authors like Aleksandr Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol evoked haunting and Slavic atmospheres drawing from Eastern Orthodox Christianity and pagan folklore.

Meanwhile in Britain, the Gothic influence persisted across the Victorian era in works by writers as diverse as the Brontë sisters, Wilkie Collins, and even Charles Dickens, who incorporated sinister undercurrents of the supernatural into his depictions of urban life. Gothic tales relished in overt supernatural manifestations that shattered the boundaries of the rational world, featuring ghosts, vampires, animated corpses, demonic spirits, and man-made monsters.

The persecuted heroine was a common figure - a virtuous young woman facing evil forces and male oppression trying to imprison, control, or destroy her. Vengeful persecution, live burial, and violent acts like murder frequently drove Gothic stories' plots. The Gothic form was often discontinuous and complex, incorporating sub-plots, discovered manuscripts, and other framing devices that heightened the sense of the uncanny. The Gothic novel explored the dark, irrational, supernatural aspects of existence that 18th-century rationalism had tried to suppress and control. By giving imaginative form to fears, haunted minds, and the uneasy intersections of the past with the present, Gothic fiction powerfully resonated with a culture undergoing revolutionary

upheaval and existential questioning.

The late 19th century witnessed a revival of Gothic fiction fused with the era's fascination with the scientific, the monstrous, and the morally degenerate. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* became enduring classics of urban Gothic. In Ireland, a distinct Anglo-Irish Protestant strain of Gothic emerged with authors like Charles Maturin, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Bram Stoker. Their works featured undead aristocratic figures ruling over a mythologised landscape and oppressed Catholic peasants, reflecting deeper anxieties around the troubled political realities of the country.

From its earliest forms, the European Gothic novel proved to be an extraordinarily adaptable and long-lasting tradition, constantly evolving to incorporate new cultural perspectives and preoccupations. Yet it remained connected to its core aesthetic of giving imaginative form to the psychological dimensions of fear, desire, violence, and the supernatural that lurk beneath the rational and mundane veneer.

1.1.9 Historical Romance

A historical romance novel is a type of fiction that focuses on romantic relationships set in past periods. These stories take readers back to different eras and locations in history while following the love story between two central characters. Historical romances emerged as a popular genre in the early 1800s, pioneered by authors like Walter Scott. They grew tremendously in the late 20th century, especially in the United States after novels like *The Flame and the Flower* by Kathleen Woodiwiss found major success.

Fig. 1.1.9 Kathleen Woodiwiss

While the romantic plot is always central, historical backdrops add extra layers of drama, adventure and realism to these love stories. Historical settings transport readers to fascinating worlds from knights and ladies of medieval times to pirates on the high seas or cowboys. Rather than being limited to just one era, the historical romance genre encompasses many different subgenres set across a wide range of periods and locations around the globe.

1.1.9.1 Popular Historical Romance Subgenres

Here are some of the most common types of historical romance novels based on their particular settings:

Viking Romances - These are set during the Dark Ages or Middle Ages and often feature rugged Norse warrior heroes who are eventually "tamed" by strong heroines. Travel and adventure are common plot elements.

Mediaeval Romances - Taking place roughly between 938-1485, these romances involve heroines using courage and wits to find an independent-minded husband amid the restrictions on women of the time.

Tudor/Elizabethan/Stuart Romances - These are all set in England spanning the 1485-1714 era, encompassing reigns of monarchs like Elizabeth I.

Georgian/Regency Romances - Highly popular subgenres set in England between 1714 and 1820, including when the future King George IV ruled as Prince Regent.

Victorian Romances - Stories from 1832 to 1901 in Victorian England, sometimes expanding to British colonies and the Raj in India.

Pirate Romances - Novels featuring daring pirates, privateers and high seas adventures, often with a captor or captive scenario leading to romance between The hero and The heroine.

Colonial/Revolution Romances - These take place in America during the 1600s and 1700s, sometimes involving the Revolutionary War period.

Western Romances - Set in the frontier wilderness of North America, Australia or other territorial frontiers, frequently featuring adventure mixed with romance.

Native American Romances - A subgenre focused on the cultures, beliefs and romantic lives of indigenous American peoples and tribes.

Beyond these main categories, there is still more diversity with historical romances also being set in other eras like the Italian Renaissance or Napoleonic Wars. Regardless of the specific period, all historical romances aim to immerse readers in the drama, dangers and social realities of the past through the lens of the central love story.

1.1.9.2 Common Features of Historical Romances

Some typical features and character archetypes that frequently appear across the historical romances are the following:

- Beautiful and independent heroines overcoming adversity and restrictive social rules of their era
- Dashing and brooding yet caring heroes who win over the heroine over time
- Age-gap romances with heroes often older than the youthful heroines
- Virginal heroines losing their innocence to more experienced and masculine heroes
- Lords, nobles, rogues, pirates or other daring masculine archetypes as heroes
- Descriptive realism capturing the customs, dress and social structures of the time
- Dramatic historical events like wars creating challenges for the couple's union
- Adventure, action and travel to exotic locales often featured in the plot
- Eventual happily-ever-after ending for the couple overcoming obstacles

Popular historical romance authors like Johanna Lindsey, Julie Garwood, Amanda Quick and Diana Gabaldon have all mastered blending accurate period details with compelling love stories. At their core, these novels allow both independent feminist characters and romantic fantasies to co-exist within the richly-realised backdrops of the past.

1.1.9.3 The Rise and Impact of Historical Romances

While tales of chivalric romance stretch back to medieval times, historical romances did not fully emerge as a popular literary genre until the 19th-century works of authors like Sir Walter Scott. However, it was in the 1970s when the historical romance novel market truly exploded through the success of novels by writers like Kathleen Woodiwiss, Rosemary Rogers and Laurie McBain. After the release of Woodiwiss' *The Flame and the Flower* in 1972, these new hugely popular historical romances focused on the developing intimate relationships of their characters in sexual and sensual detail alongside the external period drama.

This new uninhibited style of romance writing directly contrasted with more chaste contemporary romance novels of the era. It caused a surge in mass-market publishing of historical romance paperbacks throughout the 1970s as readers read these juicy romantic tales from the past. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the historical romance genre continued growing in popularity and broadening its diversity across many periods. At its commercial peak in 2001, over 770 new historical romance books were published.

1.1.10 The Age of Enlightenment/ The Age of Reason

The period from 1700 to 1789, before the French Revolution of 1789, is generally known as the Age of Enlightenment in European history. The Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, can be defined as an intellectual movement that dominated Europe in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. It centred around the notion of reason, nature, and humanity, which shaped modern European society. It can also be recognised as a period of remarkable scientific, political, and philosophical discourse. These ideas were integrated into a worldview that changed the use of reason and thought as the power for human understanding of the universe. In the words of historian Roy Porter, it was "decisive in the making of modernity." Centuries-old customs and traditions were seized away, and importance was given to individualism, exploration, and scientific endeavour, which initiated developments in the fields of industry and politics. Along with this, it witnessed the emergence of the "modern world." The aim was to achieve knowledge, freedom, and happiness - a time when the full scope of human existence was carefully examined to build a perfect human society as much as possible.

1.1.10.1 Background of the Movement

One of the clearest cases that drove the Enlightenment was the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), which prompted German writers to pen harsh criticisms regarding the ideas of nationalism and warfare. Authors like Hugo Grotius and John Comenius were early Enlightenment thinkers who went against tradition and proposed many better solutions. In Europe, thinkers' interest shifted toward scientific study and exploration, which exposed Europe to other cultures and philosophies. The result brought a breaking point for common people to speak out against the monarchy and church because it altered their faith in religion and authority. French historians place the Enlightenment

between 1715 (the year Louis XIV died) and 1789 (the beginning of the French Revolution), and it also paved the way for many political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. The ideas of the Enlightenment can be best seen in the works of philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire, who proposed detailed interpretations of human nature and the role of government in society through their essays and other writings.

After the Renaissance, the scientific revolution grew, and human knowledge had been growing at an exponential rate. The Enlightenment thought that to improve the human condition, it was equally significant to develop the quality of institutions like government and society. The Age of Reason also altered people's views of religion. It was believed that human events were controlled by divinity and that the truth could be acquired only through divine revelation. This idea was discarded and modified into a belief system based on the idea that the world is a rational place and could be controlled through rational processes.

However, the path opened by the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment paved the way for more independent thoughts in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, physics, politics, economics, philosophy, and medicine. The new knowledge that emerged during this period brought more enthusiasm to the people, and the result was: intellectual gatherings popped up in France, philosophical discussions were held, and the population of literate people increased drastically. Reading and passing books around among the literate happened feverishly. Every facet of civilized life was updated and expanded significantly. Though in rural areas nothing had changed, the Industrial Revolution offered rural inhabitants jobs and new cities to live in.

From an intellectual, political, or social standpoint, the developments that happened in the Enlightenment period altered the view of the Western world into an intelligent and self-aware civilization. The noticeable fact is that it encouraged the creation of the world's first great democracy, the United States of America. The new freedoms and ideas might have

Fig. 1.1.10 Portraits of philosophers Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. (From left to right)

led to abuses, for example, the decline of the French Revolution from a positive and productive coup into autocracy and chaos. The critics saw this tyranny as due to a lack of self-restraint and believed that common folks were not fit to govern themselves. However, it took time for people to overcome this negative opinion and appreciate the beneficial effects. The effects soon flooded into the everyday lives of both European and American people-from improved women's rights to more efficient steam engines, from fairer judicial systems to increased educational opportunities, and from revolutionary economic theories to a rich array of literature and music.

The thinkers of the Scientific Revolution generated the concepts of inductive and deductive reasoning and the idea of the general observe, hypothesize, or experiment methodology, which was later known as the scientific method. Eventually, these movements yielded the work of Sir Isaac Newton, who is respected as one of the most influential scientists of all time. His approach to the world encouraged the concepts of observation and the realisation not on causes, but effects. He also showed that scientific thought and methods could be applied to non-scientific topics, a development that paved the way for numerous later thinkers of the Enlightenment.

Along with the scientific achievements, political and cultural changes also occurred because of the exploration and the extension of Europe overseas. It was moreover like a barter system, transporting new technologies and importing cultural ideas. The explorers returned with stories of lesser-known peoples and cultures, which made the Europeans more enthusiastic and willing to follow their different lifestyles and beliefs. The Orient mystified Europeans through its religions and familial relationships. This worldlier perspective provided Enlightenment thinkers with inspiration and motivation for change.

Another major change in the lives of Europeans before the Enlightenment was the declining influence of the Church. The questioning of religion itself can largely be traced to the tensions created by the Protestant Reformation, which split the Catholic Church and caused it to lose religious authority. But the Church's influence remained strong, especially among the lower classes. The advances in thought coincided with anti-church sentiments and the philosophical approach crushed the sentiments that were already growing among European commoners. By the time the Catholic Church became corrupted, the commoners had become violently intolerant towards dissenters or heretics who often exploited the faith with false knowledge. Afterward, when Enlightenment philosophers came along praising liberty and self-empowerment, they found a willing ear among the commoners.

1.1.10.2 Causes and Effects of Enlightenment

The following points can be viewed as some causes and effects of the Enlightenment:

Causes:

1. Renaissance humanism, which rediscovered Classical literature and culture.
2. Methods and ways of thinking developed during the scientific revolution of the 15th through 17th centuries
3. The Reformation and its undermining of the Roman Catholic Church's authority

Effects:

1. The belief that human history is a record of progress
2. The emergence of Romanticism in the late 18th century
3. The first modern secularized theories of psychology and ethics
4. The idea of society as a social contract
5. The understanding of the universe as a mechanism governed by discoverable laws
6. The use and celebration of reason

1.1.10.3 European Renaissance and Reformation 1300-1600

The Renaissance was a cultural movement that spanned between the 14th and 17th centuries. Renaissance means 'rebirth'. It began in Italy and later flourished over various parts of Europe, and the term Renaissance is mostly used to refer to that historic and cultural era. The usage of the word extends to the representation of other cultural movements too. The Renaissance paved the way for advancements in art and architecture.

Whereas, the Reformation was the European Christian reform movement, which established Protestantism as a branch of Christianity. Therefore, it is also called the Protestant Reformation or the Protestant Revolt. The Reformation was mainly spread only in Northern Europe. During the Reformation, the reformers opposed the practices, doctrines, and ecclesiastical structure of the Roman Catholic Church and formed new national Protestant churches. It is interesting to note that the Catholics too responded to the Reformation made by the reformers by means of their Counter-Reformation. The Reformation paved the way for religious fragmentation.

1.1.10.4 The Enlightenment in England

Thomas Hobbes, one of the prominent figures of the Enlightenment, brought controversy with the release of his provocative treatise *Leviathan* (1651). From a sociological per-

	Renaissance	Reformation
Definition	It was a cultural movement that began in Italy and spread across Europe.	It was the Northern Europe Christian Movement.
Result	Paved the way for the advancement in art and architecture.	Paved the way for religious fragmentation, establishing Protestantism.
Spread	Started in Florence, Italy, and ended in different parts of Europe.	Spread only in Northern Europe.
Features	The use of linear perspective in their artworks.	Showed doctrinal differences among the reformers that led to the factions such as Puritans, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, and the Reformed.

spective, Hobbes felt that civil peace and social unity are best achieved by the formation of a commonwealth or a perfect government. Hobbes believed that the true and ideal form of government is an absolute monarchy. A half-century later, John Locke put forward the importance of a representative government in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690). He believed in the concept of the right of revolution; the selfishness of human nature, and one's rights. Although Hobbes's idea was more influential among his contemporaries, it was clear that Locke's message was closer to the English people's hearts and minds. Just before the turn of the century, in 1688, English Protestants helped overthrow the Catholic King James II and installed the Protestant monarchs William and Mary. The English government approved a new Bill of Rights that granted more personal freedoms as a result of the Glorious Revolution, a sequence of events that led to the deposition of James II and VII in November 1688.

1.1.10.5 The Enlightenment in France

The French Enlightenment started in the mid-1700s, after the Glorious Revolution. The philosophers and thinkers emphasised the power of reason and believed in the natural laws governing human society. Baron de Montesquieu attempted to look upon politics by elaborating upon Locke's work and emphasising the concept of the separation of powers or divisions in the government. Voltaire took a more caustic approach, choosing to incite social and political change through satire and criticism. Although Voltaire's satires arguably sparked very little change, he was skillful at exposing injustices, and it appealed to a wide range of readers. His short novel *Candide* is regarded as one of the seminal works in literature. Unlike Montesquieu and Voltaire, Denis Diderot had no revolutionary aspirations, and he was merely interested in collecting as much knowledge as possible for his work *Encyclopédie*. The *Encyclopédie*, which ultimately weighed in at thirty-five volumes, would go on to spread Enlightenment knowledge to other countries around the world.

1.1.10.6 The Enlightenment in Germany

The 18th century Germany had inhibited the political, social, and cultural developments that took place in France. The country was divided into several small states, which restrained intellectual development. Another reason was that the literary language in the country was Latin, which made the spread of other Enlightened works difficult. The German intellectuals refused the idea that a simple set of laws can dictate the operations of human society. The German Enlightenment, often known as the Aufklärung, was introduced by King Frederick of Prussia and went in a different direction from the English or French movements. The German Enlightenment never subjected religion to the same review as in other countries. The Aufklärung retained a mystical view of the world, with some of Germany's leading writers adhering to the idea of combining reason with religion.

1.1.10.7 The End of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment faced competition from other ideas. Romanticism appealed more to common people, pulling them away from the scientific ideas of earlier Enlightenment thinkers. Skepticism also contradicted the reason-based ideas of the Enlightenment and gained followers. The French Revolution, inspired by Enlightenment thought but descending into violence, abruptly ended the Enlightenment. Many blamed the Enlightenment's questioning of traditions for the unrest,

taking the violence as evidence that common people were unfit for self-governance. However, Enlightenment discoveries and theories continued influencing Western societies for centuries.

1.1.10.8 Individualism, Relativism, and Rationalism

During the 16th and 17th centuries, three crucial ideas emerged that the Enlightenment stood for: Individualism, Relativism, and Rationalism. These three ideas represented the core concepts of the Enlightenment: individual reasoning, questioning traditions, and self-determination. Furthermore, these ideas signified the separation of human intellect from religious authority. Simply put, these ideas opened doors to new discoveries and ideas that could challenge Europe's powerful, long-established institutions. The following chart shows the differences between the three concepts:

1.1.11 Individualism

Individualism is a philosophical and social concept that has profoundly influenced the way we understand and organise human societies. At its core, individualism emphasises the moral worth and independence of the individual, upholding the belief that the interests and rights of the individual should take precedence over those of the collective or the state. This notion has sparked debates and discussions across various disciplines, shaping our understanding of personal freedom, social responsibilities, and the balance between individual autonomy and communal values.

The origins of individualism can be traced back to the Renaissance period, a time of immense cultural and intellectual transformation in Europe. During this era, the focus shifted from the collective to the individual, as thinkers and artists celebrated the concept of individual uniqueness and self-realisation. The cult of individual genius flourished, and the Renaissance artists and scholars were celebrated for their personal achievements and contributions to the arts and sciences. In England, individualism involved rejecting the established church and supporting free market economics, with views ranging from no government intervention to some government

Individualism	Relativism	Rationalism
The basis of the Enlightenment.	The fundamental philosophy of the Enlightenment.	The main principle of the Enlightenment.
It highlighted the importance of the individual and their inborn rights.	The concept that different cultures, beliefs, ideas, and value systems had equal merit.	The conviction is that with the power of reason, humans could arrive at truth and improve the quality of human life.
	It emerged as a response to the age of exploration when the European experience of a variety of people and cultures across the world increased.	

involvement in the economy. The rejection of the established church and the embrace of individual interpretations of religious texts marked a significant departure from the prevailing orthodoxy. Concurrently, economic liberalism championed the rights of individuals to participate freely in the market and accumulate wealth, challenging the traditional constraints imposed by the aristocracy and the state.

Individualism became an integral part of the core American ideology by the 19th century. The young nation's embrace of individualism was heavily influenced by the ideals of New England Puritanism, which emphasised personal responsibility, self-reliance, and the pursuit of individual salvation. Additionally, the philosophy of natural rights by thinkers like John Locke and Thomas Jefferson contributed significantly to the development of American individualism. The concept of inalienable individual rights, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, became a cornerstone of the American ethos, shaping the nation's political and social fabric.

1.1.11.1 Different Perspectives of Individualism

One of the most insightful analyses of individualism was provided by the French aristocratic political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville in his seminal work *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville, who traveled extensively in the United States in the early 19th century, offered a nuanced perspective on the concept. He described individualism as a form of moderate selfishness that disposed individuals to be primarily concerned with their own small circles

Fig 1.1.11 Portrait of Alexis de Tocqueville

of family and friends, potentially leading to disengagement from broader social concerns. While acknowledging the personal freedoms fostered by individualism, Tocqueville also warned against the potential erosion of civic virtues and public engagement. He believed that associations and active civic participation were essential remedies to counterbalance the isolating tendencies of individualism.

Individualism has been interpreted and understood in various ways by different thinkers and scholars throughout history. The Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt associated individualism with the cult of privacy and the growth of self-assertion, which he believed contributed to the highest individual development during the European Renaissance. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim identified two distinct types of individualism: the utilitarian egoism championed by Herbert Spencer, which reduced society to a mere apparatus of production and exchange, and the rationalism of thinkers like Immanuel Kant, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the ideals enshrined in the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. The latter form of individualism emphasized the autonomy of reason and the doctrine of free inquiry, promoting the idea that individuals should be free to think and reason independently, without the constraints of traditional authorities or dogmas.

Debates surrounding individualism often revolve around questions of how to conceive the relationship between individuals and collectivities, and how to reconcile individual interests with social needs. Methodological individualism, advocated by the Austrian-born British philosopher Karl Popper, argues that any explanation of social or historical phenomena must ultimately appeal to facts about individuals - their beliefs, desires, and actions. This perspective precludes explanations that rely solely on social factors or collective entities, as it maintains that such factors can only be understood and analyzed through the lens of individual behavior and decision-making. Closely related is the concept of ontological individualism, which asserts that social groups, processes, and events are nothing more than complexes of individuals and their actions, rejecting the notion that collective entities possess an independent existence or agency.

Another aspect of individualism is related to how objects of worth or value are conceived in moral and political life. Some theorists, known as atomists, argue that there are no intrinsically common or communal goods, and that morality and politics are merely instruments through which individuals attempt to secure individual goods for themselves. This view is shown in the idea that political authority comes from an imagined "agreement" between individuals, as suggested by the philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Similarly, in economics and related fields influenced by economic ideas, there is an assumption that people's actions are mainly driven by self-interest, and that social institutions and relationships are best understood through the perspective of individuals rationally pursuing their own interests.

1.1.11.2 Criticism against Individualism

Critics of individualism, particularly advocates of communitarianism, have long lamented and criticised the potential negative consequences of an excessive focus on individual interests at the expense of communal values and social responsibilities. From both religious and secular perspectives, individu-

alism has been equated with narcissism and selfishness, as it is perceived to prioritise personal gratification over the greater good of the community. Thinkers who believe in dividing and balancing power to prevent too much authority in one place have worried that individualism causes citizens to disengage from the state, thereby weakening democracy and its institutions.

Moreover, individualism has been contrasted with the traditional values and social structures of premodern and non-Western societies, where the community or the nation was often valued above the individual. In many of these societies, an individual's role in the political and economic life of their community was largely predetermined by their membership in a specific class, caste, or social group, rather than being a matter of personal choice or self-determination. The emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, which is central to the concept of individualism, was seen as a departure from these deeply rooted communal structures and hierarchies.

1.1.12 The Rise of the Novel

The 18th century marked the period when the demand for novels arose tremendously among English readers. This demand was also due to people's desire for reading about everyday events that went on to shape the lives and actions of fictional characters. Some of the earliest novels include *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe and *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding. This happened because the 18th century was stuffed with literature in all its forms: poetry, drama, satire, and especially novels. This period saw the development of the modern novel as a major literary genre. The reason behind this was that the theatre as an art form was not available to every member of the population.

The etymology of the word 'novel' comes from the French word 'nouvelle', which means 'new'. Due to the novelty of what this term represented, the word '*Novel'* was coined to refer to it. It is an elongated form of fictional narrative written in prose format. Until the 18th century, only shorter fictional forms were used to depict love and life in their rawest forms than romance, which was mostly about stories with adventure, laughter, and joy. The birth of the novel in the 18th century garnered features of old romance and became one of the most preferred literary genres. After the challenges faced by the novel to make its mark, it later became a primary source of entertainment in the 19th century.

Novel became a popular genre because it could reach a larger audience, even those who could not afford a ticket into a theatre. It is also important to note that during this period, drama had begun to decline in England. The growth of the novel can also be attributed to the need of individuals to create something new and something different. The social and intellectual circle longed for something completely new yet individualised. People wanted stories that mirrored their own lives, stories that had a recognisable nature, and this need birthed the novel. Moreover, the rise of the middle class in the 18th century had a direct effect on the rise of novels. David Daiches, a historian, said, "The novel was in a large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behavior from agreed public attitudes."

Another factor responsible for the spread of novel is the popularity of newspapers in the 17th century and the growth of periodicals. For example, the novel *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson was originally proposed to be written

Fig. 1.1.12 Robinson Crusoe Island, Chile

The story of *Robinson Crusoe* is widely believed to have drawn inspiration from the real-life experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a Scotsman who found himself stranded and lived alone for four years on a Pacific island known as Más a Tierra, which is currently part of Chile and was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island in 1966.

as a series of letters, but instead, it was made into a novel. The newspapers helped foster a reading culture among the lower class. The democratic movement that gripped England after the Glorious Revolution of 1689 could also be regarded as one factor that gave rise to the novel in the 18th century. This is because the democratic system emphasised commoners' stories, who were the subjects in many of the novels written during this period. Also, the novels by Richardson, Sterne, Smollett, and Fielding centered around commoners' lives, rather than that of the ruling class or the upper class.

Conclusively, the rise of realism in the 18th century also affected the growth of the novel. Factors such as reason, intellect, and satirical spirit were all adopted into the novel form and were principal subjects in the realist movement. The rise of the English novel was affected by several factors: one of the most significant is the medieval romance and the courtly tales of Italy and France. Translations from classical Greek materials also gave rise to the English novel.

The authors preferred to write about regular and everyday life of people. Since the theatre as an art form was not available to every member of the population, the novel became a consolation. As stated earlier, *Robinson Crusoe* is one novel that spun the evolution of the English novel to a greater dimension. In line with this, other novels sprouted more confidently, exploring creativity, genres, and

themes. The features that helped to the spread of the novel are:

- Novelty: The originality of the works attracted many people. People's curiosity increased, and each work satisfied the reader.
- The Printing Press: The popularity of newspapers and the growth of periodicals gave people something to look forward to. One result of the printing press was the novel *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson, which was meant to be a collection of letters. The continuous increase in literacy rates created a demand for more written text. Thus, the popularity of English novels grew tremendously in the 18th century.
- The Glorious Revolution: The Glorious Revolution of 1689 was another reason for the rise of the novel. The democratic system emphasised stories about commoners, who were the subjects of many novels written during this period, stirring people's emotions. The novels of Richardson, Sterne, Smollett and Fielding centered around the lives of commoners rather than the ruling class.
- The Middle Class: The rise of the middle class aided the development of the novel. The 18th century middle class became quite liberated in thought and began challenging existing laws. As a result, the common man, whose opinions were highly regarded, easily became prominent in society, whether they were part of the upper class or not.
- Literacy: Literacy rates grew highly during the 18th century. Novels could only attain status through being read and discussed. They always showed a way of life, leaving no characters out.
- Leisure: A factor aiding the growth of English novel came from the leisure 18th century people started experiencing. Industrialisation that gave rise to the middle class's economic status also afforded them options. The middle class could afford luxuries like candles and oil lamps to read at night after work.

1.1.12.1 Characteristics of Novel

The main characteristics of the novel are the relatable characters who are from different walks of life, different social statuses, and settings, and the complexity of plots that tries to illustrate how complex life can be. Most of the themes are usually centered around real-life issues. Unlike romance novels, the English novels of the 18th century depicted a lot of reason and logical projection of thoughts and facts. As literacy grew, the people began to question the social norms and it was marked in the writings also. Some novels seek to enlighten, others inform, a generous amount seems to entertain and conclusively there were some novels which were the mixture of all these.

The English novels showed the rise of the middle class. Therefore, its theme, subject matter, style, characters, and setting were focused on the lifestyle of the middle class. Unlike romance, the characters were not kings, queens, knights, or nobles. Instead, they are

created using characters that are the typical everyday middle-class people of many different professions. It was no wonder that readers found the strengths, weaknesses, and travails of these characters quite relatable. The setting and plot of novels also reflect realism. The setting became the conventional realistic world we live in, rather than an imaginative kingdom or place. This was a magical aspect of the English novel, that every reader at different times and in different places can experience a certain reality. Their voice was being heard, and they were not alone in their plight. The middle class gained a new power through writing and publishing. Anything expressed in writing could be discussed openly and dealt with more easily. Although English novels aimed to present ideas logically, their unique aspect was their simple choice of words and writing style. They avoided grandiose or exaggerated language and used words effectively to convey logical reasoning on the topic.

1.1.13 Realism (1861- 1914)

Realism or Literary Realism is an era when authors described things as they are, without exaggeration or unrealistic plots. Realist literature is best represented through novels. Realist writers aimed to narrate their novels from an objective and unbiased perspective that represents the factual elements of the story. The works of literary realism avoided flowery language, exotic settings and characters, and epic stories of love and heroism. The focus was on the everyday lives and people of ordinary times and places.

Realism was a popular movement in European art and literature between the late 18th and the mid-19th century. The main centre was France, and it later flourished all over Europe. Artists and writers attempted a detailed, realistic, and factual description of the characters, plot and setting. They tried to represent events and social conditions as they are, without idealization or dramatization. This form of literature believes in authenticity to actuality in its representation and recreated actual lifestyles in literature. Realism opposed the concepts of Idealism and Nominalism. Idealism believes in writing about everything in its ideal form. Nominalism believes that ideas are only names and have no practical application.

As mentioned, Realism happened in the late 18th to mid-19th century, the first art movement of the modern period. Realism is a technique that denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. It began as a shift against the exotic and poetic conventions of Romanticism. The Romantic movement stressed nature over culture and the individual over society, the artificial, irrelevant, and overly dramatic. Thus, Realism emerged as a reaction against Romanticism, an interest in the scientific method, the systematizing of the study of documentary history, and the influence of rational philosophy.

Realism focuses on the truthful treatment of the ordinary, average, everyday life and explains the immediate, the here and now, the specific actions and their verifiable consequences. It preferred a one-to-one relationship between representation and the subject. This form is also known as mimesis. Realists are concerned with the effect of the work on their readers and the reader's life, a pragmatic view. Pragmatism demands the reading of work to have some logical outcome for the reader, and thus, they can lead a better life. It advanced an ethical affinity to Realism while focusing on everyday actions and minor catastrophes of middle-class society.

The main goal of Literary Realism was to

depict the positives and negatives of the everyday life of the middle class, free from subjective prejudice, idealism, or romantic colour. This emphasis brought social changes in the aftermath of the Civil War in the United States and the emergence of Darwin's Theory of Evolution and its effect on biblical interpretation. The realist writers preferred groups of people and wrote about regular folks to show how ordinary lives are meaningful and full of drama. They tried to show the big picture: a panorama of a village or society. Thus, Realism tends to be associated with the genre Novel, which is vast and flexible. The Realist writers like Tolstoy and Dickens wrote their works in straightforward language.

1.1.13.1 Nineteenth-Century Realism

Realism began as a cultural movement in reaction to both Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Gustave Courbet, the leader of the realism movement, defined Realism as "a human conclusion which awakened the very forces of man against paganism, Greco-Roman art, the Renaissance, Catholicism, and the gods and demigods, in short, against the conventional ideal." The Realists were inspired by the Dutch and Flemish naturalists of the seventeenth century and were passionately devoted to establishing a foundation based on justice for the working class, the ordinary citizens of society. All the artists, politicians, economists, and critics assembled at the Andler Keller, a type of restaurant serving food at all hours, which eventually became known as the temple of Realism. In 1863, after being excluded from the Universal Exposition of 1855 by Count Nieuwerkerke, Courbet and his fellow artists organized their own exhibition called the Salon des Refusés, which showcased works by leading painters of the time. Remarkably, the two greatest Realist masters, Daumier and Courbet, were imprisoned for rebelling against the artistic establishment and rejecting conformity.

1.1.13.2 The Components of Realism

- Genre: The novel is closely linked to the rise of Realism. It is central to the Realist tradition. Realism focuses on details, and the novel form allows writers to depict everyday life better than poetry or sonnets.
- Detail: Attention to detail is a key feature of Realist writing. Writers provide so much detail that it feels realistic. The settings are authentic. Realist writers specified environments and their impact meticulously. Their settings tend to be sobering or stark, focusing on smaller locations.
- Transparent Language: Realist novels use straightforward language. They avoid fancy phrases. Realist writers prioritised ordinary language over style. This was a bold new approach. Dialogue is vernacular, reflecting the characters' time and place.
- Labour: A character's job is significant in literary realism. It is an important part of their identity, for better or worse. Practical concerns like earning a living precede romantic matters or grand heroics.
- Omniscient Narrator: Realist narrators were seen as all-knowing. They move between characters, scenes and places easily. However, not all Realist writers used omniscient or first-person narration. Many great 19th cen-

tury Realists like Tolstoy, Balzac, Eliot, Flaubert, and Dickens used the omniscient perspective.

- Characterisation: Realist writers focused on deeply exploring character psychology, motivations, and inner lives. Characters were portrayed as complex with both positive and negative traits, driven more by internal desires than external forces.
- Social Critique: Realist works provided commentary and criticism on social and economic inequalities and political conditions of the time. Authors like Dickens and Tolstoy depicted the plight of the poor.
- Class Conflict: The rise of the middle class was reflected in Realist literature, which often centred on middle-class concerns and values, a departure from the aristocratic focus of earlier movements.
- Rising Literature: As literacy rates rose, Realist works were published in journals and serials, making literature more accessible to a wider public audience.
- Verisimilitude: Realist writers aimed to create a sense of realism by attending carefully to facts and details, and depicting the mundane dramas of daily life believably.
- Linear Narrative: Most Realist works followed a straightforward and linear narrative structure, telling the story chronologically without flashbacks or distortions of time.

1.1.13.3 Subgenres of Realism

Social Realism

The focus of social realism lies in the lives and living conditions of the working class and the poor. *Les Misérables* (1862) by Victor Hugo is a social novel about class and politics in France in the early 1800s. This literary technique involves telling stories about the poor and working classes. Social realism investigates the socio-economic and political conditions to which these groups are subjected daily. This emphasis allows the author to comment on the political and social power structures that manufacture the challenges unique to the characters' demographics. An example of this subgenre is Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953).

Socialist Realism

Socialist Realism was created by Joseph Stalin and adopted by the Communists. It wanted to glorify the struggles of the public. Cement (1925) by Fyodor Gladkov is a socialist-realist novel, which discusses the struggles of reconstructing the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution. These works adored the struggles of the working classes to support larger socialist ideals. It was the official literary style in the socialist Soviet Union. An important work in this subgenre is *How Steel Was Tempered* (1934) by Nikolai Ostrovsky.

Magical Realism

Magical Realism is a type of realism that hides the lines between fantasy and reality. Magical realism portrays the world truthfully and adds magical elements that are not found in our reality but are still considered normal in the world where the story takes place. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by Gabriel García Márquez is a magical realism novel about a man who invents a town according to

his perceptions. In magical realism, the author integrates mystical or fantastical elements into a realistic setting and gives a worldview. These elements not only alter the story's logic and rationality, instead, but they also add another dimension of reality that gently pushes the boundaries of the possible. As a result, works of magical realism unearth magic every day and celebrate the potential for transcendence amid the ordinary. *Midnight's Children* (1984) by Salman Rushdie is another example of a magical realist work.

Naturalism

Naturalism was influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. It was founded by French novelist and journalist Émile Zola (1840-1902). He detailed the term with the belief that science can explain all social and environmental phenomena. The short story "A Rose for Emily" (1930) by William Faulkner is the perfect example of Naturalism. It is a short story about a hermit with a mental illness whose fate is already determined. Naturalism utilises scientific thought, especially the theories of Charles Darwin, to illustrate the inescapable influences that shape characters and their experiences. At the heart of all works of literary naturalism is the belief that science explains the conditions of reality and that metaphorical and supernatural elements have no credibility or presence in a story's trajectory. *Madame Bovary* (1856) by Gustave Flaubert is a popular naturalist work.

Psychological Realism

Psychological realism focuses on the character and emphasises the psyche in decision-making. It sometimes uses the characters to express commentary on social or political issues. *Crime and Punishment* (1866) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky is a psychological realist novel about a man who hatches a plan to kill a man and take his money to get out of poverty but feels immense guilt and paranoia after he does it. Works of this genre take an interest in characters' motivation. Rooted in psychological thought, authors examine characters' interior lives-their thoughts, emotions, and mental processes--to provide a fuller understanding of human behavior. One of the best-known works is *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) by Henry James.

Kitchen Sink Realism

Kitchen Sink Realism is a branch of social realism that focuses on the lives of young working-class British men who spend their free time drinking in pubs. *Room at the Top* (1957) by John Braine is a kitchen sink realist novel about a young man with big ambitions who struggles to realise his dreams in post-war Britain. *The Lost Flying Boat: A Novel* (1984) by Alan Sillitoe is another example for the novel of Kitchen Sink Realism.

Theatrical Realism

Theatrical realism applies to dramatic works written for the stage. Plays in this style aim to make stories true to life. Theatrical realism might employ any of the above-mentioned subgenres to provide a more authentic grounding for the drama, the characters, and their choices. One prominent play in the theatrical realist style is *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen.

The themes that differentiate naturalism from realist works are: -

- Grim and animalistic environment
- Antisocial behavior and rough language of characters belonging to lower class

Difference between Realism and Naturalism

Realism	Naturalism
An Artistic movement between the mid-18th century and lasted till 20th century.	A post-Darwinian movement of the late 19th century.
Realism came into being as a response against 18th century Romanticism.	The subcategory of realism is influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.
The writers that pioneered the realist movement created complex and relatable characters while presenting detailed and realistic observations of society.	The writers extended the objective presentation of the details of everyday life as an insistence that literary works should reflect a deterministic universe in which a character is a biological entity controlled by environment and heredity.
Realism encouraged the writers to adopt a more truthful voice and address conditions of real life, including the realities of war, poverty, etc.	Naturalism attempted to apply the "laws" of scientific determinism to fiction. This movement upheld the belief that science explains social and environmental phenomena.

- Themes of survival
- Deterministic theory that genetic endowment is inescapable
- Lack of ability to impose individual will
- Pessimistic and tragic view of life

1.1.14 Naturalism

Naturalism was a movement in theatre, film, art, and literature in the late nineteenth century. The goal was to depict the common values of the average person. It arose as a reaction to movements such as Romanticism, in which characters were depicted as highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural. Naturalism was a reaction to Romanticism and an outgrowth of Realism. Realism focused on the description of the details of everyday existence as an expression of the characters' social milieu, while Romanticism focused on the individual's inner life. Realist literature shifted the focus away from society's upper crust and toward the working class. The filth of society and the labors of the lower classes were the focal points of Naturalist literature.

Though Naturalism and Realism are related, Realism is primarily a writing style, whereas Naturalism is a writing philosophy. Both Marxism and Darwin's Theory of Evolution had a strong influence on Naturalism. It attempted to apply the scientific rigor and insights of those two theories to the artistic representation of society to criticise the late-nineteenth-century social organisation. The term "naturalism" was coined by French author Émile Zola to describe a specific type of literature. Naturalism's popularity faded around the turn of the twentieth century, but it continues to have an impact today, as many modern writers incorporate naturalist elements into their work.

According to naturalist thinkers, human beings, like rocks, plants, and animals, are sub-

ject to the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology, which govern human behaviour. Naturalism is thus anti-idealist and materialist, denying the existence of non-material or non-observable phenomena. It is also anti-humanist in that it accords no special status to humans. Every human action is completely determined by the laws of cause and effect in the physical world.

The French critic Jules-Antonin Castagnary introduced the term “Naturalism” to describe a popular style of realistic painting in the early 1860s. The term was then applied to literature by Émile Zola. In 1880, Zola published his seminal essay "The Experimental Novel," which examines the novel as the preeminent naturalistic literary art form. In the essay, Zola makes three main points: (1) a writer could use characters as phenomena, similar to experimenting in science, (2) Naturalism is distinguished from realism and romanticism using this experimental method, and (3) he made a counter-argument to critics' claims that his work was immoral and offensive. The great protagonists of Romanticism were likened by Zola to kings and princes, who were out of place in the modern world. For Zola, Naturalism, like democracy, was a reflection of the common people.

Around 1900, naturalism as a literary movement came to an end, and the American magazine *The Outlook* published a mock obituary for it. The publication even declared Zola's efforts to create a new type of scientific literature a complete failure. Like Zola, the American novelist Frank Norris, a pioneer of naturalism in the United States, treated characters as scientific experiments. He exposed them to various situations and recorded their reactions. This approach combined literary storytelling with scientific observation and analysis. Similarly, Stephen Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*, contributed significantly to American naturalist literature by using this experimental method with characters. Naturalism continued into the 20th century through writers like Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, John Steinbeck, and Jack London.

1.1.14.1 Features and Characteristics

In literature, Naturalism refers to fiction that magnifies realism's techniques while sacrificing prose style and descriptive characterisation through observation of the world. Though literary critics agreed with this assessment, they added a few more characteristics to distinguish the naturalist novel:

- The limited plot structure, where the characters are crushed by the forces of the universe which they can neither understand nor control.
- Lessening of exceptional or heroic characters, so that each character can be shown as a balance of merits and flaws; the critic Philippe Hamon calls this an "aesthetic of normative neutralisation".
- Attention to the explicit or dirty subject matter particularly focused on the aspects of human experience which were regarded as innate, and the main characters are often degenerated by uncontrollable drives or lusts.
- The characters are drawn from the working class.
- A modern or contemporary setting, often urban or industrial.

The major features of naturalist works are

determinism, objectivity, pessimism, setting, and plot twists.

- Determinism: This belief holds that all events in a person's life are the result of external causes. Fate, nature, or heredity all play a role in how a character's journey unfolds. Everything is predetermined by forces beyond one's control and will. The circumstances determine a character's fate.
- Objectivity: Naturalist writers keep their stories objective. They detach themselves from the story's emotional elements and work more as independent observers of what happens.
- Pessimism: Naturalist authors tend to have a cynical or fatalistic worldview, in which their characters don't have much control over their lives or decisions. These authors see life as a half-empty prospect.
- Setting: Because naturalist works place a strong emphasis on the environment's impact, setting often plays a key role. The setting frequently takes on the role of a character.
- Plot Twists: At the end of many naturalist works, there is a plot twist or some type of intense gut-punch. This emphasises the futility of the characters' struggle and the unchangeable nature of their fate.

1.1.14.2 Naturalism in Theatre

In theatre, Naturalism's attempt was to create a perfect illusion of reality through detailed sets, an unpoetic literary style that reflected the way ordinary people speak, and an acting style that attempted to recreate reality. Konstantin Stanislavski was a well-known Russian naturalist, theatre practitioner and the co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre. He went out of his way to disprove traditional notions of the dramatic process. The "Stanislavski Method" is a technique for developing characters that paved the way for method acting. It is the most influential acting system used in modern theater and film. Konstantin Stanislavski coined the term "stage direction." In the mid-nineteenth century, Bertolt Brecht and others criticised Naturalism, arguing that instead of shattering the illusion of reality, the plays could encourage detachment. Despite its enduring popularity, Western theatres now take a semi-naturalistic approach, with naturalistic acting but less realistic design elements. While performing other styles of theatre, particularly older styles, naturalistic performance is incompatible. Films, on the other hand, allow for a wider range of illusion than is possible on stage.

1.1.14.3 Naturalism in Literature

Naturalism is a genre of literature that tries to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to the study of human beings. Naturalism involves a philosophical position, unlike realism, which focuses on literary techniques. Naturalistic writers can study characters' relationships to their surroundings. They were also influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, believing that one's character is determined by one's heredity and social environment. While Realism only seeks to describe subjects as they are, Naturalism attempts to determine "scientifically" the underlying forces that influence these subjects' actions. They are both in opposition to Romanticism, which treats such characters' relationships to their surroundings in a supernatural way. Naturalistic works frequently depict

uncivilised or repulsive subjects. They expose poverty, racism, prejudice, disease, prostitution, filth, and other dark aspects of life. They were frequently criticised for being overly pessimistic and blunt.

1.1.15 Emily Zola's Understanding of Naturalism

Emile Zola (1840-1902), the French novelist and critic, employed Naturalism as a method of writing novels that used naturalist philosophy as a foundation for character creation. Hippolyte Taine, the French historian and critic, wished to develop a scientific method for analysing literature as well as to understand a nation through its literary output. Zola concluded that the novel is a laboratory for the study of human behaviour under the influence of heredity and the environment by combining Taine's theories. The essay "The Experimental Novel" (1880) by Zola is essentially a paraphrase of the influential 1865 work *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* by the physician Claude Bernard.

Fig. 1.1.13 Emile Zola

However, it would be a grave mistake to consider this essay as representative of Zola's entire thinking on naturalism. Zola was more interested in keeping the heated debates about naturalism alive than in providing a final definition. As a literary critic, theatre critic, and essayist, he was a provocateur, which meant he was persuasive, scathing, and prone to drama and sensationalist gestures. He recognised and exploited the value of provocation early in his career. His first volleys of criticism were collected under the title *My Hatreds* in 1866, and his unrepentant slogan "I am here to live out loud" is still quoted by artists and activists on occasion.

While Zola's criticism was more argumentative than systematic, a closer look at his writings on naturalism reveals some key themes. First, Zola claimed the erotic or shocking subject matter in many of his novels was not essential to naturalism - what mattered was the naturalist method itself. Second, an underappreciated aspect was Zola's repeated linking of naturalism to democracy. Scholars found this connection paradoxical, as 19th-century theories of biological determinism seemed at odds with Enlightenment ideals of individual liberty. But for Zola, naturalism in literature and democracy in politics were logical and evolutionary developments. In his view, naturalism, like democracy, represented and gave voice to ordinary people.

1.1.16 Biological Determinism

Biological determinism is the most powerful force at work in Naturalism. It is the belief that most physical and mental characteristics of humans are determined at conception by hereditary factors passed down from parents to offspring. Although all human traits are ultimately based on material nature, biological determinism has come to mean a rigid interconnection that is largely unaffected by environmental factors. The Austrian biologist and meteorologist Gregor Mendel's work on

heredity in the early twentieth century stated that hereditary traits are influenced by a wide range of factors. Following the rediscovery of Mendel's work, biological determinism theories began to be expressed in terms of the then-new science of genetics. As a result, biological determinism became synonymous with genetic determinism, even though some researchers later distinguished the two. Biological determinism theories were based on nebulous and often contentious ideas about the nature of heredity. As Mendelian genetics became more widely accepted in the first half of the twentieth century, most theories of biological determinism viewed undesirable traits as originating in defective genes.

Biological determinism has had a profound impact on various disciplines, including literature, shaping the way authors portray characters and explore themes related to human nature, heredity, and social issues. The roots of biological determinism in literature can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries, when theories about heredity were based on vague and often controversial ideas. During this time, biologists and anthropologists attempted to associate mental and personality traits with physical features, such as facial angles or head shapes. Certain physical characteristics were believed to be indicative of criminal tendencies or undesirable traits.

1.1.16.1 Biological Determinism in Literature

As Mendelian genetics gained acceptance in the early 20th century, many literary works portrayed undesirable traits as originating from defective genes. With the advent of molecular genetics in the latter half of the century, these defective genes were identified with alterations in the DNA molecule. One of the most prominent applications of biological determinism in literature has been in the portrayal of disabilities, both physical and psychological. Many literary works from various periods have explored the idea that conditions such as cleft palate, clubfoot, dwarfism, criminality, intellectual disabilities, and mental disorders are inherited and determined by an individual's genetic makeup.

For instance, in the 19th-century novel *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, the main character, Prince Myshkin, is portrayed as an individual with a developmental disability, which was believed to be caused by his genetic makeup. Similarly, in the 20th-century play *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance, the protagonist, John Merrick, suffers from a severe physical deformity, which was portrayed as a result of a genetic condition.

One of the most notorious applications of biological determinism in literature was through the eugenics movement, which originated in the late 19th century. Proponents of eugenics, such as Francis Galton and Charles B. Davenport, believed that social problems were caused by the accumulation of genetic defects, leading to a "degenerate" population. Literary works from this period often reflected these beliefs, portraying individuals with perceived genetic deficiencies as a burden on society and advocating for selective breeding or sterilization to prevent the propagation of undesirable traits. For example, in the novel *The Black Stork* (2000) by Martin S. Pernick, the author explores the idea of eugenics and portrays individuals with disabilities as a threat to the genetic purity of the human race.

As our understanding of genetics and the interplay between nature and nurture has evolved, many authors have challenged the notion of biological determinism in their works. They have explored the complexities of human nature and the role of environmental and social

factors in shaping an individual's character and destiny. For instance, in the novel *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, the author challenges the idea of biological determinism by presenting the creature as a product of both nature and nurture. Despite being created from various body parts, the creature's descent into violence and loneliness is portrayed as a result of societal rejection and lack of nurturing, rather than solely due to his physical appearance or genetic makeup.

Similarly, in the novel *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley, the author critiques the concept of biological determinism by depicting a society that uses genetic engineering and conditioning to create a rigid caste system. Through the protagonist's journey, Huxley explores the importance of individual freedom and the dangers of reducing human beings to mere genetic blueprints.

Recap

- Greek and Roman literature pioneers of fiction
- Italian Renaissance revived art and culture
- Boccaccio's *Decameron* masterpiece of early modern prose
- Cervantes' *Don Quixote* transformed European fiction
- Rabelais' satirical novels mocked institutions
- Romantic Movement celebrated emotion, nature, individuality
- Picaresque, Gothic, and Historical novels emerged
- Historical romance subgenres based on setting
- Common features of historical romances
- Rise and impact of historical romances
- Characteristics of novels
- Realism as a literary movement
- Subgenres of Realism
- Naturalism as a literary philosophy
- Biological determinism in literature
- Emile Zola’s contributions

Objective Questions

1. Which Italian author wrote the groundbreaking story collection Decameron?
2. Who is considered the author of the first Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto?

3. The iconic novel Don Quixote was written by which Spanish author?
4. Which literary movement emerged as a reaction against the Enlightenment's rationality?
5. The "Picaresque" novel genre featured which type of roguish central character?
6. Which famous French satirical novel series featured the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel?
7. The subgenre of "Regency Romances" is typically set in which era of English history?
8. What is the most common type of historical romance novel featuring Norse warrior heroes?
9. Which author's work is considered a seminal magical realist novel?
10. Who introduced the term "Naturalism" to describe a realistic painting style?
11. What is the belief that physical and mental characteristics are determined at conception by heredity called?
12. Which novel by Mary Shelley challenges the idea of biological determinism?
13. In which era did historical romances gain popularity and commercial success?

Answers

1. Giovanni Boccaccio
2. Horace Walpole
3. Miguel de Cervantes
4. Romanticism
5. The picaro
6. Gargantua and Pantagruel
7. Georgian/Regency
8. Viking Romances
9. Gabriel García Márquez (One Hundred Years of Solitude)
10. Jules-Antonin Castagnary
11. Biological determinism
12. Frankenstein
13. 1970s

Assignments

1. Discuss the influence of Greek and Roman literature on the development of early European fiction.
2. Analyze how the Italian Renaissance and its revival of classical learning impacted the evolution of fiction writing.
3. Examine the role of satire and social criticism in works by authors like Cervantes and Rabelais.
4. Explore the major themes, ideas and literary techniques that defined the Romantic Movement across different nations and art forms.
5. Compare and contrast the Gothic novel tradition with other emerging genres like the Picaresque novel and Historical Romance during the 18th-19th centuries.
6. Discuss the common features and character archetypes found in historical romance novels. How do these elements contribute to the popularity and appeal of the genre?
7. Analyse the rise of the novel in the 18th century and the factors that contributed to its growth as a literary form.
8. Compare and contrast the literary movements of Realism and Naturalism.
9. Examine the concept of biological determinism and its influence on literary works.
10. Evaluate the impact of the Age of Enlightenment on literature and intellectual discourse.

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BLOCK - 02

Literary Context II

Unit 1

Literary Context II

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the emergence and characteristics of Modernism in European Fiction.
- analyse the key themes and styles of 20th-century German, French, Italian, and Contemporary Greek novels.
- comprehend the concepts of Absurdism, Existentialism, and their influence on literature.
- recognise the contributions of writers like Beckett, Camus, and their impact on absurd and existential literature.

Prerequisites

It was the opening night of a new play in Paris in 1953, and the audience had no idea what they were in for. As the curtain rose, two scruffy tramps appeared on stage, exchanging seemingly nonsensical banter as they waited for someone named Godot to arrive. But Godot never showed up. In fact, nothing much happened at all over the course of the play's two acts. There was no real plot, climax or resolution - just two men idling, making aimless conversation and contemplating whether to leave or keep waiting. The audience was baffled and restless during this unconventional theatrical experience. Some people even left out of confusion and frustration. When the final curtain fell, the reactions were mixed - some booed loudly while others applauded hesitantly, not quite sure what they had just witnessed.

This controversial opening night performance was of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, which would go on to become a landmark of the "Theatre of the Absurd" movement. By stripping away conventional dramatic elements like plot, character arcs and clear meanings, Beckett aimed to depict the fundamental absurdity, purposelessness and

paradoxes inherent to the human condition. Beckett's unique dramatic style was rooted in the Absurdist philosophy that life has no truth, value or purpose beyond what we arbitrarily impose on it.

While incredibly divisive and bewildering at first, *Waiting for Godot*'s radical departure from traditional storytelling conventions paved the way for a new era of experimental theatre that used surrealism and illogical plots to convey larger existential themes. Beckett had sparked a revolution in the very idea of what drama could be.

Such innovative literary currents opened up new ways of expressing the individual's alienation, dislocation and search for purpose in an increasingly secular and industrialised Western world. The experimental styles and philosophical questioning of meaning paved the way for further boundary-pushing in postmodern literature that emerged after World War II.

Keywords

Modernism, Existentialism, Absurdism, Metafiction, Fragmentation, Intertextuality, Stream-of-consciousness, Alienation, Symbolism, Disillusionment

Discussion

2.1.1 Modernism in European Fiction

Modernism was a groundbreaking literary movement that emerged in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It marked a dramatic shift from traditional writing fiction styles towards more experimental and innovative forms. Modernist writers sought to capture the rapidly changing world around them and the complexities of modern life. It reflected an exciting and unsettling sense of cultural crisis, in that it opened up a whole new world of human possibilities while also calling into question any previously accepted means of grounding and evaluating new ideas. Experimentation and the realisation that knowledge is not absolute are hallmarks of modernism.

2.1.1.1 The Origins of Modernism

The rise of modernism in European fiction can be traced back to several key factors. Firstly, the late 19th century witnessed rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and technological advancements. Cities grew larger, and societies became increasingly industrialised. This transformation led to a sense of alienation and disillusionment among many writers and artists. They felt that traditional literary styles could no longer accurately depict the realities of modern existence. The world was changing at an unprecedented pace, and they needed new ways to represent these changes in their works.

Secondly, scientific theories and philosophical ideas challenged long-held beliefs about reality, time, and human consciousness. Sigmund

Freud's ideas about the unconscious mind, and Albert Einstein's theory of relativity shattered conventional understandings. Modernist writers were inspired to incorporate these new perspectives into innovative literary forms.

Thirdly, the devastation of World War I had a profound impact on modernist writers. The immense loss of life and the horrors of warfare left many disillusioned with traditional institutions and values. The war seemed to expose the fragility of human civilisation. This fueled a sense of moral questioning and experimentation in fiction.

2.1.1.2 Key Characteristics

Modernist fiction is characterised by several features:

1) Experimentation with Form and Narrative Structure

Perhaps the most defining aspect of modernist fiction is its radical departure from conventional linear storytelling. Modernist writers abandoned traditional plot structures in favour of fragmented and non-chronological narratives. For example, James Joyce's seminal novel *Ulysses* follows the wanderings of protagonist Leopold Bloom through Dublin over a single day. However, the story is told in a stream-of-consciousness style, jumping between different characters' perspectives and interior thoughts. Another influential modernist work, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, similarly experiments with narrative technique. The story is centred around the preparations for a party by the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway, but the narrative constantly shifts between different characters' points of view and their inner mental states.

2) Use of Stream of Consciousness

The stream-of-consciousness literary technique was pioneered by modernist writers. It aims to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings that pass through the human mind. Writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner were masters of this style. Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury* famously opens with a section written entirely in the free-flowing interior monologue of the mentally disabled character Benjy Compson. The narrative jumps between different periods

Fig. 2.1.1 (Left to Right) James Joyce and Virginia Woolf

and settings according to Benjy's meandering impressions and memories.

3) Symbolism, Myth, and Allusion

Modernist writers frequently used symbols, mythology, and cultural allusions to convey deeper layers of meaning. The use of these devices created intricate and multi-layered works open to various interpretations by readers. T.S. Eliot's poetic work *The Waste Land* is perhaps the classic modernist text in its dense layering of literary and mythological references. It incorporates everything from Hindu and Buddhist symbolism to quotes from the plays of Shakespeare.

4) Subjective Point of View and Ambiguity

Rather than striving for objective realism, modernist writers embraced subjectivity and ambiguity in their depictions of reality. They rejected absolute truth in favour of a multiplicity of perspectives. This aspect is exemplified by works like Franz Kafka's novella *The Metamorphosis*, in which the protagonist Gregor Samsa turns into a giant insect. The story is left open to lots of symbolic interpretations by readers.

5) Inner Consciousness and Alienation

Many modernist writers were fascinated by depicting the inner mental lives and alienation of their characters. There was a shift in focus from outward events towards introspection

Fig. 2.1.2 T.S. Eliot

T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* is about a spiritually empty, modern Western world. It shows this emptiness through broken verses. But in the end, Eliot looks to ancient Indian philosophies for answers. He uses the Sanskrit words "Shanti Shanti Shanti" which means "peace" in Hindu teachings. By ending with this sacred chant, Eliot suggests the modern soul can find true peace and redemption from the spiritual wasteland by embracing Eastern wisdom. The "Shanti" chant offers a glimmer of hope - that this inner peace from Indian philosophy can heal the barren modern landscape.

and psychology. Marcel Proust's multi-volume masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time* uses the free-associative memories and impressions of the narrator to explore themes of time, memory, and the nature of art and identity. The Italian novelist Luigi Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* exemplifies modernist experimentation and the focus on subjective consciousness. The play's unusual premise has six fictional characters interrupting a play rehearsal in search of an author to complete their story.

2.1.1.3 Influential Modernist Writers

Some of the most significant and influential modernist writers of fiction from across Europe are the following:

James Joyce (Irish): Joyce was the foremost member of the modernist movement with novels like *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. His innovative use of stream-of-consciousness narrative, allusions, and unconventional prose captures the essence of modernism.

Virginia Woolf (English): A pioneer of modernist fiction and the stream-of-consciousness technique, Woolf produced novels like *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. Her experimental styles and poetic language shaped generations of writers.

Franz Kafka (Czech): Though Kafka's work was largely unappreciated during his lifetime, stories like *The Metamorphosis* went on to exemplify modernist explorations of existentialism, alienation and absurdity.

Marcel Proust (French): Proust's seven-volume work *In Search of Lost Time* is celebrated as an early modernist masterpiece for its pioneering use of themes like memory, consciousness, and the disintegration of social conventions.

Thomas Mann (German): Mann's novels like *The Magic Mountain* and *Death in Venice* employ modernist techniques like multiple perspectives and symbolic storylines to explore philosophical questions about civilisation and the human condition.

Samuel Beckett (Irish): One of the key literary figures in the Theatre of the Absurd, Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* epitomises modernist themes of existentialism and humanity's inability to find certainty or truth.

Miguel de Unamuno (Spanish): The Spanish writer and philosopher explored questions of faith, identity, and human existence through novels like *Abel Sánchez: The History of a Passion* that employed modernist elements like interior monologues and symbolic allegories.

2.1.1.4 Influence of Modernism

The innovations and experimentations of European modernist writers had a profound and lasting influence on subsequent literary movements like postmodernism, magical realism, and metafiction. Novelists like Gabriel García Márquez, Milan Kundera, and Italo Calvino incorporated many modernist techniques like shifting perspectives, fragmentation, and self-referential narratives in their works. Moreover, the modernist writers' usages of themes like alienation, the search for meaning, and subjective experience remain highly relevant in our modern age of uncertainty.

Even today's bestselling literary fiction continues to demonstrate the imprint of modernism through its tendency towards ambiguity and self-conscious narration. While the Modernist works initially caused controversy for

their difficult and avant-garde nature, the pioneering artistic visions of the European modernists like Joyce, Woolf and Kafka provided an influential new lens through which to depict an increasingly complex modern world.

2.1.2 Twentieth-Century German Novel

German literature experienced a remarkable flourishing in the 20th century, producing some of the most influential and celebrated novels of the age. This creative outpouring occurred against the backdrop of immense social and political upheaval in Germany two world wars, the rise and fall of the Nazi regime, and the division and reunification of the nation. Many of the great German novelists grappled with these disruptive events and their impact on the human condition.

One of the great writers of the time was Robert Musil, whose unfinished novel *The Man Without Qualities* is widely considered a modernist masterpiece. Published in three volumes between 1930-1943, it offers a portrait of the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire through the lives of its characters in Vienna on the eve of World War I. With its daring experimental style and cultural critique, it captured the waning days of an entire social order.

No discussion of 20th-century German fiction is complete without Franz Kafka, whose nightmarish and comedic tales redefined the boundaries of the novel form. His two most famous works were *The Trial* (1925) and *The Castle* (1926). *The Trial* depicts a man unexpectedly arrested and subjected to an incomprehensible legal process, while *The Castle* follows a land surveyor continually frustrated in his attempts to gain access to the bureaucrats of a castle. Both novels evoke the absurdity, alienation and impersonal exercise of authority that became trademarks of Kafka's composition.

Thomas Mann was another German novelist celebrated worldwide. In 1924, he published one of his most acclaimed works, *The Magic*

Fig. 2.1.3 (Left to Right) Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann

Mountain. This philosophically rich novel is set in a sanatorium in the Swiss Alps before World War I. Over its 700+ pages, it explores profound questions of sickness, health, life and spirituality through the experiences and reflections of its young protagonist. Mann drew upon his own sanatorium stay while writing this intricate tale. Thomas Mann achieved additional fame with his 1901 novel *Buddenbrooks*, an epic family saga tracing the decline of a wealthy German merchant clan over four generations. It was a groundbreaking work of literary realism that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe praised as "one of the most important works to come out in this millennium." Thomas Mann wrote his final and most significant novel, *Doctor Faustus*, in 1947. This masterpiece explores the philosophical and cultural aspects of evil through a fictional story about a composer, which mirrors Germany's role in enabling the evil Nazi regime. *Doctor Faustus* is regarded as one of the greatest novels of the 20th century.

The writer Alfred Döblin brought a modernist sensibility to urban Berlin in his 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. With its rhythms and cinematic techniques, the novel portrays the gritty reality of life for the working poor in the city through the story of a murderer released from prison. It was an experimental landmark that influenced generations of German writers, artists and filmmakers.

In the aftermath of World War II, German authors responded with novels that grappled with the barbarity and suffering of the Nazi era in new ways. Günter Grass's 1959 novel *The Tin Drum* was a landmark work that deployed magical realism and black humour to capture the horrors experienced by Germans under Hitler's rule. It centres on a young man named Oskar who decides to stop growing after his third birthday in protest of the authoritarian insanity consuming his homeland.

Another acclaimed post-war novel was Uwe Johnson's four-volume work *Anniversaries*, published between 1970-1983. Spanning over 1,600 pages, it traces two centuries in the lives of ordinary East Prussian families from the 18th to 20th centuries. Johnson interweaves past and present, historical facts and personal stories to examine how historical forces shape individual destinies over generations.

The Radetzky March by Joseph Roth was another highly influential novel depicting the dissolution of an aristocratic family within the fading Austro-Hungarian Empire of the early 20th century. Published in 1932, it used lapidary prose to dramatise the generational rise and fall of the von Trotta dynasty, whose fortunes were tied to the imperial regime.

2.1.3 Twentieth-Century French Novel

The novel genre in France underwent significant transformations and innovations throughout the 20th century. This period witnessed a diverse array of literary movements, styles, and themes that reflected the social, political, and cultural landscapes of the time. Following are the key developments and prominent works that shaped the landscape of the 20th-century French novel.

2.1.3.1 The Early Years (1900-1939)

In the early decades of the 20th century, the French novel continued to explore and build upon the traditional form while also pushing boundaries and experimenting with new narrative techniques. One notable work from this period is Alain-Fournier's *The Wanderer* (1913), a poetic and introspective novel that examines the themes of adolescence, memory, and the fleeting nature of youth. Another

significant novel is Marcel Proust's seven-volume masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time*" (1913-1927), which revolutionised the concept of time and memory in literature through its innovative use of stream of consciousness and intricate character development. World War I had a profound impact on French literature, and writers like Henri Barbusse (*Under Fire*, 1916) and Roland Dorgelès (*The Wooden Crosses*, 1919) captured the harsh realities and emotional toll of the war through their novels.

Fig. 2.1.4 Marcel Proust

The period between the two world wars saw a growing interest in psychological exploration and experimentation with narrative techniques. François Mauriac's novels, such as *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (1927), explored the complexities of the human psyche and moral dilemmas. André Gide's *The Counterfeiters* (1925) employed multiple perspectives and a complex narrative structure, challenging traditional storytelling conventions.

2.1.3.2 The Existentialist Novel

The tumultuous events of World War II and the German Occupation had a profound impact on French literature and intellectual thought. Existentialism, which emphasised individual freedom, choice, and the absurdity of human existence, emerged as a dominant philosophical movement. Albert Camus's *The Stranger* (1942) and *The Plague* (1947) are celebrated existentialist novels that explore themes of alienation, mortality, and the human condition. Jean-Paul Sartre's novels, such as *Nausea* (1938) and *The Age of Reason* (1945), also discussed the existential questions and the complexities of human relationships.

2.1.3.3 The "New Novel" (Nouveau Roman)

In the 1950s and 1960s, a group of writers

Fig. 2.1.5 (Right to left) Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus

known as the nouveaux romanciers (new novelists) challenged traditional narrative conventions and pushed the boundaries of the novel form. Key figures included Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, and Claude Simon. These writers rejected traditional plot structures, chronological narratives, and character development in favour of a more experimental and subjective approach. Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* (1957) and Sarraute's *The Planetarium* (1959) exemplified this movement, focusing on the ambiguity of perception and the fragmentation of experience. The "New Novel" aimed to dismantle the conventions of the traditional novel and explore the materiality of language itself, often incorporating influences from cinema and other art forms.

2.1.3.4 Feminist Perspectives and Autobiography

Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking work *The Second Sex* (1949) played a pivotal role in shaping feminist thought and the exploration of women's experiences in literature. Her autobiographical novels, such as *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1958), blurred the lines between fiction and autobiography, offering a deep portrayal of women's lives and social conditions. Other writers, such as Marguerite Duras (*The Lover*, 1984) and Annie Ernaux (*The Place,* 1983), also contributed to the genre of autofiction, combining autobiographical elements with fictional techniques to create deeply personal and introspective works.

2.1.3.5 Postmodernism and Experimental Forms

Towards the end of the 20th century, French literature embraced postmodern tendencies, characterised by a playful approach to language, narrative fragmentation, and a blurring of genre boundaries. Writers like Georges Perec (*Life: A User's Manual*, 1978) and Michel Houellebecq (*Atomised*, 1998) explored experimental forms and unconventional nar-

Fig.2.1.6 Simone de Beauvoir

In her work *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir explained how society treated women as less important than men. De Beauvoir also believed in existentialism, like her partner Jean-Paul Sartre. The two had an open relationship for over 50 years. After she died in 1986, De Beauvoir was buried in the same grave as Sartre.

rative structures, challenging readers' expectations and questioning the nature of reality and fiction itself.

2.1.3.6 The Popular Novel

Alongside these literary trends, the 20th century also witnessed a flourishing of popular fiction genres in France, including crime and detective fiction, historical novels, science fiction, and fantasy. Georges Simenon's *Inspector Maigret* series, Jean-Patrick Manchette's noir thrillers (a category of modern crime fiction), and Jean-Christophe Grangé's crime novels contributed to the rich tradition of French crime fiction. Historical novels by authors like Maurice Druon (*The Accursed Kings* series) and Robert Merle (*Fortune de France* series) captivated readers with their depictions of bygone eras.

In the realm of science fiction and fantasy, writers such as René Barjavel (*Ravage*, 1943) and Michel Jeury (*The Last Days*, 1976) explored imaginative worlds and futuristic scenarios.

2.1.4 Modern Italian Fiction

The 20th century was a rich and diverse period for Italian fiction, producing acclaimed novels that explored philosophical ideas, social realities, and experimental literary forms. This era witnessed the emergence of literary movements like neorealism and avant-garde styles, while also continuing the traditions of the historical novel and regional storytelling. The following are some of the most influential works and writers that shaped the landscape of modern Italian fiction.

2.1.4.1 The Early 20th Century

In the early 1900s, Italy was focused on practical issues like improving living standards, promoting social unity, and resolving tensions between church and state. In this environment, the middle classes began wanting something new and exciting. It was during this time that the personality of Gabriele D'Annunzio captured people's imaginations across the political spectrum. D'Annunzio was an adventurous nationalist, and a gifted writer. His life and writings seemed to represent the ideals of being a well-rounded "complete man" and Nietzsche's vision of the "superman." While critics disagree on the quality of his writings overall, D'Annunzio is widely praised for his autobiographical novel *The Child of Pleasure*

Fig. 2.1.7 (Right to left) Gabriele D'Annunzio and Luigi Pirandello

(1889), his poetic works *Praises of the Sky, Sea, Earth and Heroes* written between 1904-1912 (especially the *Halcyon* collection in 1903), and the memoirs he wrote later in life. The beginning of the 20th century saw writers like Italo Svevo and Luigi Pirandello break new ground with their innovative approaches to fiction. Svevo's novel *The Confessions of Zeno* (1923) is considered a pioneering work of modern Italian literature, exploring psychological depth and human nature through its introspective narrator. Luigi Pirandello, winner of the 1934 Nobel Prize in Literature, is renowned for his play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) and novels that blurred the lines between reality and illusion. His works challenged traditional dramatic structures and questioned the nature of truth and identity.

2.1.4.2 The Emergence of Neorealism

In the aftermath of World War II, a literary movement known as Neorealism emerged, reflecting the social and political realities of post-war Italy. Writers like Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini, and Alberto Moravia were at the forefront of this movement, depicting the lives of ordinary people and the struggles of the working class. Pavese's novel *The Moon and the Bonfires*" (1949) is a poignant exploration of homecoming and memory, while Vittorini's *Conversation in Sicily* (1941) offers a portrayal of life in rural Sicily. Moravia's *The Conformist* (1951) examines the psychological complexity of an individual caught up in the fascist regime.

2.1.4.3 Anti-Fascist and War Literature

The experience of World War II and resistance against fascism left an indelible mark on Italian literature. Writers like Primo Levi, Carlo Levi, and Curzio Malaparte documented the horrors of war and the fight against oppression.

Primo Levi's memoir *If This Is a Man* (1947) is a powerful account of his time in Auschwitz, bearing witness to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable cruelty. Carlo Levi's memoir *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945) recounts his years of political exile in a remote village, offering insights into the lives of Southern Italian peasants. Malaparte's novels *Kaputt* (1944) and *The Skin* (1949) provide depictions of the Eastern Front during World War II and the aftermath of the Allied invasion of Naples.

2.1.4.4 Experimental and Avant-Garde Fiction

The mid-to-late 20th century saw Italian writers pushing the boundaries of traditional narrative forms, experimenting with structure, language, and storytelling techniques. Writers like Italo Calvino, Carlo Emilio Gadda, and Dino Buzzati explored the realms of fantasy, allegory, and metafiction.

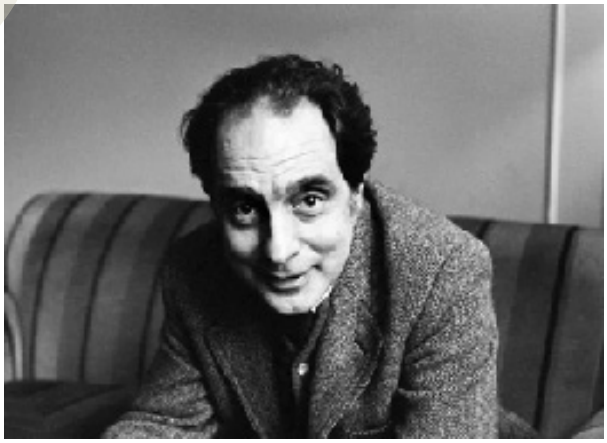

Fig. 2.1.8 Italo Calvino

Calvino's novel *If on a Winter's Night a Trav-*

eler (1979) is a postmodern masterpiece that playfully blurs the lines between fiction and reality, challenging readers' expectations of what a novel can be. Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities* examines the connections between memory, physical places/cities, and human desires. It looks at how these connections are altered by travelling (whether actual travel or just through imagination) and the passage of time. The transformative nature of travel and time's effect on our perceptions of places and the memories/desires associated with them are central to the work.

Carlo Emilio Gadda's *That Awful Mess on Via Merulana* (1957) is a complex and unconventional work that defies easy categorization. Buzzati's novels, such as *The Tartar Steppe* (1940) and *The Bears' Famous Invasion of Sicily* (1945) which is a children's literature, combine elements of fable, allegory, and surrealism, creating imaginative worlds that explore human existence and the nature of reality.

2.1.4.5 Regional and Historical Fiction

Italian literature has a rich tradition of regional storytelling and historical fiction, with writers often drawing inspiration from their local landscapes, cultures, and histories. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel *The Leopard* (1958) is a renowned work that captures the decline of the Sicilian aristocracy during the Risorgimento period.

Leonardo Sciascia's novels, including *The Day of the Owl* (1961), shed light on the influence of the Mafia in Sicilian society, blending crime fiction with social commentary. Grazia Deledda, the first Italian woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (1926), depicted the customs and traditions of her native Sardinia in works like *Reeds in the Wind* (1913).

2.1.4.6 Feminist and Women's Voices

The latter half of the 20th century witnessed a surge of feminist and women's voices in Italian literature, exploring themes of gender, identity, and societal expectations. Writers like Elsa Morante, Natalia Ginzburg, and Dacia Maraini challenged patriarchal norms and gave voice to women's experiences. Morante's novel *History* (1974) interweaves personal stories with historical events, offering a powerful commentary on the human condition. Ginzburg's semi-autobiographical novel *Family Sayings* (1963) captures the intricacies of family relationships and domestic life. Dacia Maraini's works, such as *The Silent Duchess* (1990) and *Bagheria* (1993), explore issues of gender, sexuality, and the complexities of female identity in contemporary Italian society.

2.1.4.7 Contemporary Voices

Fig. 2.1.9 Umberto Eco

As the 20th century drew a close, Italian fiction continued to evolve and embrace new voices and perspectives. Writers like Umberto Eco, Alessandro Baricco, and Niccolo Ammaniti gained international acclaim for their innovative and thought-provoking works. Eco's *The*

Name of the Rose (1980) is a seminal work that blends historical fiction, mystery, and philosophical inquiry, exploring the power of knowledge and the role of the intellectual. Baricco's *Silk* (1996) and *Ocean Sea* (1993) are lyrical and sensory explorations of love, desire, and human connections. Ammaniti's novels, like *I'm Not Scared* (2001) and *Me and You* (2010), handled the complexities of childhood, family dynamics, and the darker corners of human nature, often with a touch of magical realism.

2.1.5 Neo-Romanticism

2.1.5.1 Origins and Definition

In the period between the two devastating World Wars, a distinctive artistic and literary sensibility emerged in Britain known as Neo-Romanticism. It developed as a response to the harsh realities of modern industrialised society and the lasting trauma caused by the violence and destruction of World War I. Seeking refuge from such difficult circumstances, the Neo-Romantic artists and writers turned to idealised visions of the natural world as a source of inspiration and subject matter.

Fig. 2.1.10 Raymond Mortimer, who coined the term “Neo-Romantic”

The term "Neo-Romantic" was first coined in 1942 by the writer and editor Raymond Mortimer. He defined it as "an expression of an identification with nature" that he saw uniting the work of several British artists from the 1930s and early 1940s. However, Neo-Romanticism was not a tightly organised movement with a cohesive philosophy or unified aesthetic approach. Rather, it described a shared sensibility and reverence for nature that manifested across diverse artists, poets, novelists and other creatives.

The Neo-Romantics looked back to the original Romantic movement from around a century earlier, taking inspiration from artists and poets like William Blake, Samuel Palmer, John Constable and others. These earlier Romantics had emphasised the sublime power and spiritual qualities of the natural world through their art and writings. The neo-Romantics sought to capture a similar reverence for landscapes and pastoral scenes. They were also significantly influenced by the early 20th-century avant-garde art movements emerging in Europe, such as Surrealism. The Surrealists like Salvador Dali and René Magritte used strange and dream-like imagery to depict the subconscious mind, which impacted the Neo-Romantics' symbolic and imaginative approach to depicting nature. Techniques from the Expressionist painters, who used distorted forms and exaggerated colours to convey intense emotional experiences, were another major influence.

2.1.5.2 Landscapes and Symbolism in Neo-Romantic Art

At their core, the Neo-Romantic painters and printmakers were preoccupied with depicting the British landscape - the rolling hills, fields, woodlands, winding country lanes and rugged coastlines. However, their approach was

far from straightforward realism or pictorial documentation. Instead, the Neo-Romantics imbued their landscape scenes with intense emotion, personal symbolism and a sense of the sublime or mystical. They manipulated scale and distorted natural forms, using bold contrast, dramatic lighting, and exaggeration. This created semi-abstract, dreamlike compositions with deeper symbolic meanings. Mundane elements of the British landscape, like trees, plants, rocks, or ruins, took on an animated and living quality, suggesting the landscape itself possessed a spiritual essence or life force. Key Neo-Romantic artists were Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash, John Piper, and Henry Moore. Sutherland's works depicting Pembrokeshire exemplified the movement's blend of landscape and symbolism. In "Three Headed Rock", rocky coastal formations were distorted into contorted and biomorphic shapes suggesting human or creature-like forms.

Fig. 2.1.11 *Kilcolman Castle* oil on board by Rigby Graham

The extreme angles and edges created an unsettling and primitive atmosphere suggesting ancient pagan rituals in the rock and landscape. Sutherland's tangled roots and branches looked animated and grotesque like agonised figures or fantastical beasts. John Piper's works blended romantic and avant-garde cubist/abstract styles. In "Kilcolman Castle", the

Fig. 2.1.12 *Three Headed Rock*, lithograph by Sutherland

Fig.2.1.13 John Piper's painting *Shelter Experiments*, near Woburn,Bedfordshire

British artist Rigby Graham fragmented an ancient fortified house into bold geometric shapes with vivid artificial colours. Instead of documenting the scene, Graham transformed the ruin into a symbolic modernist form combining manmade and natural elements.

2.1.5.3 Poetry, Literature and the Neo-Romantic Spirit

While best known for its achievements in painting and printmaking, the neo-Romantic sensibility and ethos also manifested in British poetry and literature of the 1930s, 40s and beyond. Writers embraced a similar escapist tendency, turning to lushly rendered pastoral depictions of the English countryside as an idealised refuge from industrialised modern life. Poets like Dylan Thomas evoked the primal, elemental imagery and landscapes of his Welsh birthplace. There is an earthy sensuousness to his verse, filled with fertile descriptions of seascapes, cliffs, fields and primal natural cycles. Thomas' poems also contained mystical and dream-like passages of near-supernatural grandeur. This tension between depicting rural life's simple realities and finding symbolic resonance or sublime significance in nature embodied the Neo-Romantic spirit.

Novelist John Cowper Powys and writers like Henry Treece and J.C. Middleton were other prominent figures associated with the Neo-Romantic literary movement. Their works similarly engage with the symbolic and folkloric associations surrounding the landscapes of rural Britain - its forests, moors, mountains and weathered ancient sites. They aimed to reconnect with the ancient pagan animistic beliefs about these places. Writers combined supernatural elements with pastoral scenes, suggesting they found personal meaning by identifying with nature.

Neo-Romantics' depictions of nature went beyond just descriptions. They used landscapes to explore deeper concepts like humanity's relationship with the cosmos, the interconnectedness of all life, and symbolic meanings underlying the tangible world. Associated thinkers sought spiritual renewal by intimately experiencing unspoiled natural settings.

2.1.6 Absurd Literature

Absurdism is a philosophy that believes the universe is irrational and meaningless, and that human attempts to find order and meaning clash with this. Therefore, absurdism refers to something that is humanly and logically impossible. People searching for inherent values and meaning in life will inevitably fail because of this impossible certainty. Absurdism grew during the World Wars when the mass killings of millions convinced writers of the time that the world had no meaning. Everyone has their own way of deriving meaning. If we apply absurdism to war, it suggests nations go to war to achieve things for themselves, despite the brutality going against humanity.

According to absurdism, it is natural for humans to seek meaning in their lives. However, a conflict arises when we try to do this and find the universe to be extremely cold, chaotic and devoid of meaning. The French philosopher Albert Camus, the founder of absurdism, called this contradiction between our search for meaning and nature's reality "The Absurd". Unfortunately, we must face reality and find a solution to this problem. In the works *The Sickness unto Death* by Soren Kierkegaard and *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, the writers tried to provide solutions. Camus said absurdism has three solutions: (1) Adopting or developing a conceptual framework (2) Death by suicide (3) Acknowledging the Absurd.

In literature, the absurd is a writing style in-

fluenced by humanity's isolation and the lack of logic in the universe. Since the latter is defined as meaningless, events and actions are not linked to logical sequences. Absurdist fiction became popular in the 1950s and 1960s because people were disillusioned with war and the state of the world, like other modern art movements. The characters drift aimlessly, aware that the universe is chaotic, instead of finding their purpose. The stories frequently lack a conventional plot structure, reflecting the lack of structure in the characters' lives. Often, a character makes nonsensical choices throughout the story and faces unintended results.

Absurdist literature has roots in Romanticism, Existentialism and a general disregard for old societal norms and religious traditions. Like existentialism, absurdism is concerned with the futility of life. The "absurd" occurs when someone tries to make sense of a meaningless life. It's an exploration of human behaviour. The writers most often associated with absurdism are Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, Donald Barthelme and Eugène Ionesco. These authors were influenced by writers like Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe and Friedrich Nietzsche. Here are the key characteristics of Absurd literature:

- It believed language is an ineffective means of communication.
- It uses distorted and parodied clichés, slogans, and technical jargon that break down.
- Hidden and implied meanings of words take precedence over literal meanings.
- It subverts and abandons logical reasoning.
- Loss of logical language is seen as bringing unity with living things.
- It is anti-rationalist, viewing rationalism as only dealing with superficial aspects.
- It offers freedom and connection with life's essence through absurdity/comedy.
- There is no dramatic conflict or clash of personalities/values.
- The plays are lyrical statements communicating atmospheres/archetypal situations.
- Poetic imagery takes precedence over language in conveying meaning.

2.1.7.1 Theatre of the Absurd

The works of certain European and American dramatists of the 1950s and early 1960s agreed with the Existentialist philosopher Albert Camus's essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942), which says that the human situation is essentially absurd and devoid of purpose. The term is also loosely applied to those dramatists and the production of those works. In this view, humankind is left feeling hopeless, bewildered, and anxious. The concepts and themes explored in the absurdist plays also determined the structural form those plays took. Absurdist playwrights, therefore, did away with most of the logical structures of traditional theatre. The plays do not have much dramatic action happening like normal plays. Even though the characters are very busy and active, all their busyness just shows that nothing is really changing or happening to their lives. In the play *Waiting for Godot* (1953) by Samuel Beckett, there is no real story plot. Instead, the play feels timeless and just goes in a circle. Two poor tramp-like characters, Vlad-

Fig. 2.1.14 A scene from the 2018 production of *Waiting For Godot*. (Photo by Getty Images)

imir and Estragon, spend all their time just waiting, but they don't know who or what they are waiting for. They are not sure if whoever they are waiting for will ever actually come.

Language in an Absurdist play is often dislocated, full of cliches, puns, repetitions, and non-sequiturs. The characters in Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950) sit and talk, repeating the obvious until it sounds like nonsense, thus revealing the inadequacies of verbal communication. The silly and purposeless behaviour and dialogue in the plays give them a funny surface level. But underneath, there is a serious message about the metaphysical distress of human existence. This style was influenced by comedic traditions like commedia dell'arte, vaudeville, and music halls, combined with theatrical arts like mime and acrobatics. At the same time, you can see the impact of ideas from the Surrealist, Existentialist, and Expressionist movements, as well as the writings of Franz Kafka in the plays.

At first, going against normal theatre conventions was shocking. But the absurdist plays became popular because they captured the concerns of people in the mid-20th century. By the mid-1960s, the Theatre of the Absurd declined a bit. Some of its innovative techniques were absorbed into mainstream theatre. At the same time, it inspired new experimental theatre. Some of the major absurdist playwrights started exploring new artistic directions. Others kept working in the same absurdist style.

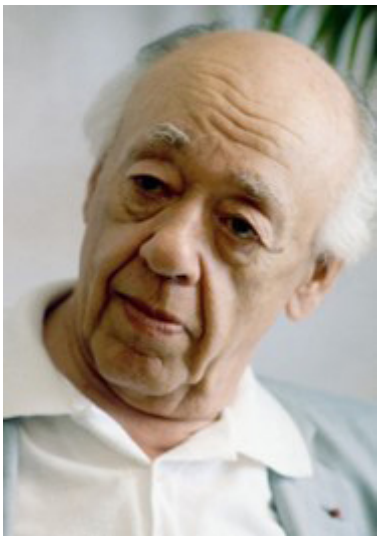

Fig. 2.1.15 Eugene Ionesco

Absurdist Theatre was heavily influenced by Existential philosophy. The existential view posits that the struggle of simply living life should bring happiness. We can find meaning in just being alive, even if we don't know the ultimate reason for existing. However, the absurdist dramatists did not resolve the problem of life's meaninglessness as positively as the philosopher Camus did. They typically offered no solution at all, suggesting there is no ultimate answer to the question of meaning. Two recurring themes in absurdist dramas are: 1. The world is meaningless. 2. The individual is isolated. Other common themes are unconventional form, lack of plot structure, and devaluing and distorting language.

The main absurdist literature themes are:

- **Irrational logic**: Elements may not make immediate sense, with surreal, out-of-order or inscrutable events/scenes.
- **Existential topics:** Exploring ideas like life after death, what it means to be human, complexities of good and evil, etc.
- **Dark humour**: Making light of vulgar or taboo subjects like violence, sex, and death to provoke the reader.
- **Satire:** Using comedy to criticise and poke fun at society, government, types of people, and corporations.
- **Nihilism**: Characters find no purpose in human life, debating the meaninglessness of religion and morality.

2.1.7.2 Nihilism

As the modern world grew in the 1800s and 1900s, the old religious views started to go

Some notable writers and their prominent works in absurd literature are the following:

- **Samuel Beckett**- *Waiting for Godot*
- **Franz Kafka-** *The Metamorphosis*
- **Tom Stoppard**-*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*
- **Eugène Ionesco**- *The Bald Soprano*
- **Albert Camus-** *The Plague*
- **Albert Camus**- *The Stranger*
- **Lewis Carroll**-*Through the Looking-Glass*
- **Haruki Murakami-** *Kafka on the Shore*
- **Flann O'Brien-** *The Third Policeman*
- **Ralph Ellison**- *Invisible Man*
- **Edward Albee- Who's** *Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
- **Harold Pinter**- *The Birthday Party*

away. This showed a crisis of meaning that we now call Nihilism. The rise of Nihilism made philosophers ask the overused question, "What is the meaning of life?". For Danish theologian and philosopher Kierkegaard, being aware of God's paradoxical presence was a philosophical problem about existence. For Nietzsche, the phrase "God is dead" and the challenge of nihilism was the philosophical problem about existence.

Fig. 2.1.16 Friedrich Nietzsche

The belief that life has no real meaning or value is called existential nihilism. It means that each person, or maybe the whole human race, is unimportant and will not change anything in the big picture. A German philosopher and socialite named Friedrich Jacobi first used the term "nihilism." It is most linked to Friedrich Nietzsche, and it appeared a lot in his philosophical works. Nietzsche wrote about how the decline of Christianity had led to a state of nihilism in Europe that needed to be resolved. People used to get the meaning and purpose of life from the church and God, but now that God is dead, Nietzsche said people may feel hopeless because it seems they are like meaningless animals in a meaningless universe. In works like *Human, All Too Human*, he talked about how harsh nihilism can be and how living without religious beliefs can be depressing. Maybe people have felt lost, powerless, and like nothing mattered sometimes. However, he believed nihilism could be overcome and wanted it to end soon. In his writings, he made a difference between active and passive nihilism.

2.1.8 Existentialism

Existentialists believe that the world has no inherent objective meaning, but that we can

2.1.7.3 Difference between Nihilism and Absurdism

Nihilism	Absurdism
Passive nihilists believe that there is no intrinsic meaning in life.	Absurdists allow the possibility for some meaning or value in life.
It is futile to seek or to affirm meaning where none can be found.	But it's a logical possibility that we can find subjective meaning in life, even if it's ephemeral and eventually nullified by death.
Active nihilism is more like the existentialism of Sartre, as it pushes us to create our meaning and essence in life that could live on.	We need to understand any meaning we create may eventually become meaningless during our lifetime and will become meaningless when we die.

2.1.8.1 Difference between Existentialism and Absurdism

Existentialism	Absurdism
Existentialism is set on the value of meaning in one's life.	Absurdism isn't an asset on the value of meaning in one's life
The pursuit of created meaning is possible with Existentialism, and that is its goal.	For Absurdists, meaning is more transient, and that meaning is always nullified by death.
While Existentialism's goal is the creation of one's essence.	Absurdism is just about embracing the absurd or meaningless in life and simultaneously rebelling against it and embracing what life can offer us.
Existentialists believed in free will and that we must pursue freedom.	Absurdists aren't so set on the concept of free will and for that, they should try hard for it.

create our subjective meaning through a combination of free will, awareness, and personal responsibility. The phrase "existence precedes essence" is the foundation of Sartre's Existentialism, which means that no general account of what it means to be human can be given, and that meaning can only be decided and constructed through existence itself. Nobody but us, at the end of the day, is responsible for this meaning. According to Sartre, we are 'condemned to be free', because of the overwhelming, near-infinite choices we can make to give our lives meaning.

2.1.8.2 Existential Themes

The main existential themes are:

- The basic view - existence comes before essence. A person is a conscious subject, not something predictable or controllable. Human beings exist as conscious individuals, not as a set of definitions, essences, generalisations or systems.
- Anxiety or a feeling of dread. A sense of apprehension, fear or dread with no specific cause. Dread is the terror of life's emptiness. Existentialism claims anguish is the underlying and universal condition of human existence.
- Expression of absurdity: Being human is inexplicable and completely absurd. The irrationality of everyday life. French mathematician and physicist Blaise Pascal said: "The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing… Human life is thus only an endless illusion."
- Nothingness or the void: As an existentialist, one can reject any philosophies, sciences, political theories and religions that fail to reflect existence as a conscious being because no essence can

Fig. 2.1.17 The painting *The Scream* (1893), by Edvard Munch, is a classic example of existential art forms.

Existential art reflects the philosophy that human existence precedes any defined essence or meaning. It expresses feelings of anxiety, alienation and the absurdity of life. Works often convey a sense of emptiness, isolation and the human condition's lack of purpose. Existential artists may use distortion, surreal imagery or abstract forms to depict the irrational or subjective experience of being. The art rejects traditional ideas of beauty and reason, instead aiming to authentically capture the raw realities of existing as a conscious individual in an indifferent universe.

define what one is. If you impose a specific nature on yourself and your world, you will find nothing structures it.

- Nothingness or death: The unaware person tries to live like death doesn't exist, attempting to avoid its reality. To Sartre, death is total non-existence - the eradication of a conscious being's existence. It is another example of life's absurdity.
- Alienation or estrangement: Hegel brought attention to the idea of alienation in the modern world in many different ways. The Absolute (Hegel's conception of ultimate reality) is separated from itself because it only exists through a gradual process of development over time. In society as well, there is alienation of individual people who pursue their personal desires in isolation from the actual workings and institutions of the society they live in.

2.1.9 Samuel Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) was an Irish novelist, playwright and poet whose work had a profound impact on the Theatre of the Absurd movement. His most famous play, the 1953 work *Waiting for Godot*, practically invented the term "Theatre of the Absurd" with its unconventional, bizarre and seemingly meaningless plot. The play depicts two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, who spend the entire duration waiting endlessly for someone named Godot, who never arrives. This cyclical, repetitive storyline with no resolution or point embodied the core premise of absurdist philosophy - that human existence is fundamentally meaningless and paradoxical in an irrational universe.

Fig. 2.1.18 Samuel Beckett

Beckett was heavily influenced by the existential philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre. The existentialist movement rejected the idea of an objective, inherent meaning or purpose to life decreed by God or societal norms. Instead, existence precedes essence - meaning each individual must create their own subjective values and find meaning through lived experience, free will, and personal choice and responsibility.

The absurdists like Beckett went beyond the existentialists' belief in a meaningless universe without God. They emphasized the contradictions and apparent pointlessness of human life in an indifferent and nonsensical universe that has no inherent purpose or importance for us. In *Waiting for Godot* and *other absurdist plays* like *Endgame* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett explores these existential polarities through the relationships and contrasts between his characters, such as:

- Sight vs blindness
- Life vs death
- Present vs past
- Body vs mind
- Waiting vs not waiting
- Going vs not going

By pairing up characters to represent these opposing extremes and entrapments of existence, Beckett aimed to characterise the absurd nature of human experience. His disjointed and dream-like dialogue and strange settings evoke a surreal and phantasmagoric realm completely divorced from rationality or meaning. Beckett's plays suggest that language itself is a barrier preventing true human communication and understanding. His mysterious and puzzling characters remain open to subjective interpretation by each viewer or reader. There are no straightforward meanings or representations, reflecting the ambiguous nature of objective truth in an absurd universe. Thus, the influence of absurdist and existentialist thought is clear throughout Beckett's experimental dramatic works. By stripping away conventional dramatic structure, plot, and language, he dramatized the existential

paradoxes and anxieties of individual subjective experience in a meaningless world.

2.1.10 Albert Camus and Philosophical Absurdism

While the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett explored the philosophy of absurdism through experimental and avant-garde theatre plays, the French thinker Albert Camus (1913-1960) examined and expanded on the ideas of the absurdist philosophy more directly through essays and novels written in a conventional narrative style. His philosophical views on absurdism were most famously laid out in his 1942 essay called "The Myth of Sisyphus."

Camus defined absurdist philosophy as the paradoxical conflict between human beings' continual search to find meaning, order and happiness in their lives, and the cold and uncaring silence of the natural universe which provides none of those things. This led to a sense of absurdity - the futility of pursuing any inherent purpose or value in an objectively meaningless world divorced from human existence and consciousness. Like the existentialist philosophers, Camus rejected any objective system of ethics or meaning imposed by divine command from God or by secular ideologies. Each individual had to create their own subjective system of values and purpose through personal choice, effort and revolt against the absurdity of existence.

In "The Myth of Sisyphus," Camus raises the central question of absurdism - does the absurd and meaningless nature of life mean it is not worth living, to the point that suicide is a legitimate philosophical choice? He uses the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus as an allegory for the human condition of continually striving to achieve a sense of purpose, only to ultimately fail and face the futility of our efforts. However, Camus argued that one should not simply accept a life of despair or kill oneself when confronted with the absurd meaninglessness of existence. Rather, he advocated embracing and even rejoicing in the struggle and hardship itself as a form of defiant revolt against the meaninglessness of the universe.

Fig . 2.1.19 The painting of *Sisyphus* by the Renaissance painter Titian made in 1548 or 1549

For Camus, Sisyphus is rendered heroic and happy precisely because he finds value and meaning through the very act of eternally pushing the boulder up the hill, not by ever actually achieving the ultimately futile goal of putting it on top permanently. It is the subjective effort and struggle against absurdity's limitations that creates meaning, not the promise of some contrived, preordained purpose or salvation bestowed from on high.

In this way, Camus' philosophy of absurdism has similarities with existentialist ideas about radical freedom, individuality and personal choice being the only way to authentically create meaning and values for one's life. His nov-

els like *The Stranger* (1942) and The *Plague* (1947) also explore these absurdist themes through their alienated main characters.

While Beckett and Camus were united by their explorations of existential philosophy and the futility of finding objective meaning in an absurd cosmos, their styles and approaches to depicting absurdism differed significantly. Beckett revolutionised theatrical form by stripping away conventional elements like coherent plots, linear storylines, psychologically consistent characters, etc. The opaque symbolism, lack of resolution, bizarre dialogue and dreamlike settings of his plays aimed to provoke feelings of confusion, entrapment and disorientation in the viewer that mirrored the themes of his work.

In contrast, Camus' essays and novels maintained relatively traditional structures, straightforward language and narrative cohesion. While still engaging with absurdist philosophy, Camus communicated his ideas more

Fig. 2.1.20 The artwork *Marilyn Diptych* by Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol's artwork *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) is a good example of postmodern art. It shows the famous Pop artist Marilyn Monroe's face in two sides- one side in colour and one in black and white. Warhol used styles from advertising and newspapers, which was unusual for art at that time. By repeating Marilyn's picture in a different way each time, Warhol was making fun of how famous people become like products. His artwork challenged traditional ideas about what art should look like.

didactically through explicit arguments and allegories rather than pure abstraction.

2.1.11 Postmodernism in Literature

Have you ever read a book that made you scratch your head and wonder, "What on earth is going on here?" Well, that's probably because you were reading a postmodern literary work! Postmodern literature is all about breaking the traditional rules of storytelling and challenging our understanding of what literature should be.

Postmodern literature is a style of writing that became popular after World War II. It's like a rebellious teenager who doesn't want to follow the rules set by their parents (in this case, the rules of traditional literature). The authors of postmodern works want to shake things up and challenge the way we think about stories. They do this by playing around with common literary techniques and turning them on their head. For example, in a traditional novel, you would expect the story to have a clear beginning, middle, and end. In a postmodern book, the writer might mix up the order of events or leave out key information, so you have to figure out parts of the story yourself.

Another thing postmodern authors like to do is to make the reader aware that they are reading a fictional story. This is called "metafiction," and it is like the author winking at you from the pages, saying, "Hey, remember this is all made up!"

2.1.11.1 Origin of Postmodern Literature

Postmodern literature emerged as a reaction to the modernist literary movement that came before it. Modernist authors, like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, were all about exploring the inner workings of the human mind and trying to find meaning in a chaotic world. But after the horrific events of World War II, many writers felt that the quest for meaning was pointless. The world had become too absurd and meaningless. That is when postmodern literature stepped in, embracing the chaos and meaninglessness of life. Postmodern authors did not want to pretend that there was some grand and universal truth to be found. Instead, they wanted to celebrate the randomness and complexity of the human experience.

2.1.11.2 Key Features of Postmodern Literature

The following are some of the key features of postmodern literature:

Metafiction: As we mentioned earlier, metafiction is when a work of fiction draws attention to itself as a fictional creation. The author might directly address the reader or comment on the process of writing the story. For example, in the novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979) by Italo Calvino, the book starts by talking about you, the reader, reading the book. It is like the story is aware of its own existence!

Unreliable Narration: In traditional literature, the narrator is usually a trustworthy guide who leads us through the story. But in postmodern works, the narrator is often unreliable, meaning we cannot always trust what they are telling us. This adds an extra layer of mystery and uncertainty to the story. It also encourages readers to question everything they are being told and to think critically about the information they are receiving.

Self-Reflexivity: Postmodern literature is often self-reflexive, meaning it reflects on its own nature as a work of fiction. The author might comment on the process of writing or draw attention to the conventions and tech-

niques they are using. This self-reflexivity reminds readers that they are reading a constructed narrative, not a reflection of reality. It challenges our assumptions about what literature is supposed to be and how it should be interpreted.

Intertextuality: Intertextuality is when a literary work references or borrows from other texts. This could be anything from quoting famous lines to rewriting entire narratives from a different perspective. Postmodern authors love to play with intertextuality, creating complex webs of references and allusions that require readers to be familiar with other works of literature.

Fragmentation: In postmodern literature, the traditional linear narrative is often fragmented or broken up into non-chronological pieces. The story might jump around in time or space, or it might be told from multiple perspectives. This fragmentation reflects the postmodern view that reality is not a cohesive, easily understood whole, but rather a collection of disparate fragments that resist simple interpretation.

Parody and Pastiche: Postmodern authors frequently use parody (making fun of something by imitating it) and pastiche (combining or imitating multiple styles or genres) to comment on and subvert literary traditions. For example, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance* (1969) is a pastiche of science fiction and historical fiction, while also parodying the conventions of war novels.

Blurring of High and Low Culture: Postmodern literature often blurs the lines between "high" and "low" culture, mixing elements of popular culture (like television, advertising, and pop music) with literary references and philosophical ideas. This reflects the postmodern view that all forms of culture are worthy of analysis and exploration and that the traditional hierarchies of culture are artificial constructs.

Magical Realism: Some postmodern works incorporate elements of magical realism, which is a style that presents magical or supernatural events as if they were ordinary and everyday occurrences. This blurring of the lines between reality and fantasy is another way that postmodern literature challenges our assumptions and encourages us to question our perceptions of the world.

Absurdism and Black Humor: Postmodern literature often employs absurdism (the exploration of the meaninglessness of human existence) and black humour (a type of comedy that deals with the dark, disturbing, or taboo subject matter. These elements reflect the postmodern view that life is inherently absurd and that traditional sources of meaning (like religion or ideology) are no longer sufficient to make sense of the world.

Experimentation with Form: Finally, postmodern authors are known for their willingness to experiment with literary form and structure. They might incorporate non-traditional elements like graphics, diagrams, or even blank pages into their works. This experimentation with form is another way that postmodern literature challenges our expectations and pushes the boundaries of what literature can be.

2.1.12 Contemporary Greek Fiction

Contemporary Greek fiction refers to novels, short stories, and other prose works written by Greek authors in recent decades, generally from the 1980s onwards. This vibrant period

in Greek literature has seen the emergence of many talented writers who have taken Greek prose in new stylistic and thematic directions while also achieving both critical acclaim and commercial success. Throughout much of the 20th century, poetry was considered the most prestigious literary form in Greece. However, the 1980s witnessed a remarkable shift towards prose fiction, with readers and publishers increasingly favouring novels and short story collections over poetry volumes. This "prose boom" paved the way for a new generation of Greek novelists and short story writers to make their mark.

2.1.12.1 Key Writers from the 1980s

Several writers who debuted in the 1980s went on to have significant impacts on contemporary Greek fiction:

Giannis Xanthoulis: Giannis Xanthoulis became one of Greece's most popular novelists, known for using everyday language and exploring themes of sexual liberation in books like *The Christmas Tango* (2011)

Eugenia Fakinou: Eugenia Fakinou (b. 1945) reinvigorated the historical novel genre with works like *Astradeni* (1982) and *The Seventh Garment* (1983) that reexamined history through a modern lens.

Zyranna Zateli: Zyranna Zateli (b.1951) won over critics and readers alike with magical realist novels like *At Twilight They Return: A Novel in Ten Tales* (1993) establishing herself as one of Greece's most exciting contemporary authors.

2.1.12.2 The 1990s: A Flourishing of Greek Prose

The trend towards prose intensified in the 1990s, with Greek fiction becoming a "colorful mosaic" of diverse themes, styles, and genres. Minimalism, parody, blending of storytelling modes, and other experimental techniques became increasingly prevalent.

Notable Authors from the 1990s are the following:

Andreas Mitsou: Andreas Mitsios cemented his reputation with acclaimed short story collections and novels like *The Feeble Lies of Orestes Chalkiopoulos.*

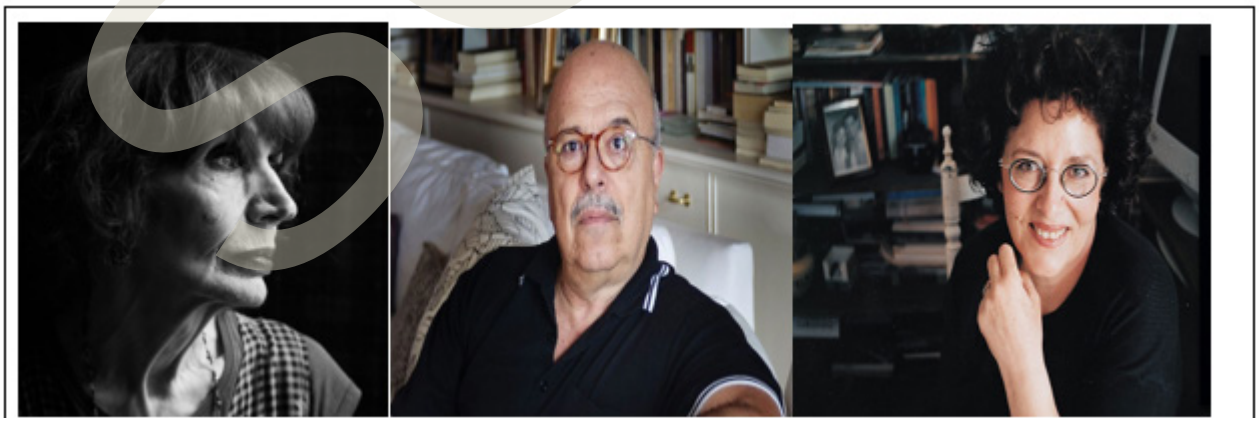

Fig. 2.1.21 (From left to right) Zyranna Zateli, Giannis Xanthoulis and Eugenia Fakinou

Ersi Sotiropoulos: Ersi Sotiropoulou's novel *Zigzag through the Bitter Orange Trees* (1999) brought her international recognition for fiction exploring modern Greek identity.

Rhea Galanaki: Rhea Galanaki transformed the historical novel genre by emphasizing psychology in acclaimed works like *The Life of Ismail Ferik Pasha* (1989).

Petros Markaris: Petros Markaris launched a successful second career as a crime novelist with detective stories featuring his series protagonist Costas Haritos.

2.1.12.3 The 2000s and Beyond

In the new millennium, Greek prose fiction continued to evolve and mature, with authors tackling an ever-broader range of subjects through innovative narrative techniques. Several contemporary Greek writers achieved both national and international followings:

Christos Chomenidis: Christos Chomenidis made a huge impact with subversive, stylistically daring novels like *Niki: A Novel* (2014), which won the European Book Prize.

Ioanna Karystiani: Ioanna Karystiani displayed remarkable consistency with critically lauded works like *The Jasmine Island* (2006).

Dimitris Lyacos: Dimitris Lyacos found global success with his poetic yet visceral *Poena Damni* series of novels , now among Europe's most translated works.

2.1.12.4 Themes and Styles

While Greek prose writers have explored myriad themes and adopted diverse styles, some common threads can be discerned in contemporary Greek fiction:

A shift away from overtly political themes towards more personal, intimate subjects related to identity, relationships, and the self. An embrace of innovative techniques like stream-of-consciousness, intertextuality, fragmented narratives, and blending of genres. A recurrent fascination with Greece's complicated history and cultural identity, often reexamined from modern perspectives. Use of both literary and everyday vernacular Greek language registers to depict contemporary Greek experience and psychology.

Recap

- Modernism emerged in late 19th and early 20th centuries, rejecting traditional styles.
- It aimed to capture complexities of modern life and a sense of cultural crisis.
- Experimentation, stream-of-consciousness, and challenging conventional forms were hallmarks of Modernist fiction.
- 20th-century German novels explored themes of alienation, existentialism, and cultural decline.

- French novels embraced avant-garde styles, existentialism, and feminist perspectives.
- Italian fiction saw neorealism, anti-fascist literature, and experimental forms.
- Contemporary Greek fiction emerged in the 1980s, with a focus on personal themes.
- Absurdist literature explored the meaninglessness of human existence and irrational logic.
- Existentialist writers emphasized creating subjective meaning through free will and personal responsibility.
- Beckett and Camus were prominent figures in Absurdist and Existentialist literature.
- Postmodern literature challenged traditional forms, embraced metafiction, and blurred boundaries.
- Neo-Romanticism celebrated nature, symbolism, and offered an escape from modern industrialization.
- Nihilism and the Theatre of the Absurd reflected the futility of human existence.

Objective Questions

1. Which writer's novel is considered a pioneering work of modern Italian literature?
2. Which philosophical movement emphasized creating subjective meaning through free will?
3. Which literary technique aims to depict the multitudinous thoughts passing through the human mind?
4. Which movement rejected traditional narrative conventions and focused on the absurdity of human existence?
5. Which writer's novel explored the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War I?
6. Which French novelist won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1926?
7. Which philosophical concept refers to the paradoxical conflict between humans seeking meaning and the universe's lack of inherent meaning?
8. Which writer's novel portrayed the gritty reality of working-class life in Berlin?

9. Which philosophical movement believed in the futility of finding objective meaning in an absurd cosmos?
10. Which literary style emerged as a reaction to modernism and challenged traditional storytelling conventions?

Answers

1. Italo Svevo
2. Existentialism
3. Stream-of-consciousness
4. Theatre of the Absurd
5. Robert Musil
6. Grazia Deledda
7. Absurdism
8. Alfred Döblin
9. Existentialism
10. Postmodernism

Assignments

1. Discuss the key characteristics of Modernist fiction and how it aimed to capture the complexities of modern life.
2. Analyse the influence of existentialist philosophy on the works of writers like Camus and Sartre.
3. Explore the concept of Absurdism and how it was depicted in the plays of Samuel Beckett.
4. Examine the themes and narrative techniques employed in 20th-century German novels.
5. Discuss the impact of the Theatre of the Absurd on contemporary drama and its departure from traditional conventions.
6. Analyse the role of Neo-Romanticism in literature and its celebration of nature as an escape from industrialization.
7. Explore the themes and styles of Contemporary Greek fiction and its shift towards personal, intimate subjects.

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BLOCK - 03

Short Story

Unit 1

The Lottery Ticket

- Antony Chekhov

Learning Outcomes

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

- recognise through the story how anticipation of wealth can corrupt relationships
- analyse the human tendency to indulge in wishful daydreaming.
- understand the satirical portrayal of greed and suspicion.
- appreciate Chekhov's mastery in depicting complex human psychology.

Prerequisites

The short story is a literary genre that has been around for centuries, evolving and adapting over time. While tales and anecdotal narratives have existed since ancient times, the modern short story as we know it today began taking shape in the 16th century. During this period, a rising middle class developed an interest in realistic stories depicting everyday life and exotic foreign lands. Writers began moving away from pure fantasy tales toward more grounded sketches exploring different subcultures and regions.

In the 19th century, certain pioneering authors further developed the short story form, blending elements of the traditional tale with the modern sketch. Writers like Nikolai Gogol, Nathaniel Hawthorne, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Edgar Allan Poe are considered the "fathers" of the contemporary short story. Each worked in their own unique style, but collectively they mitigated some of the fantasy and conventionality of the tale and, at the same time, liberated the sketch from its bondage to strict factuality.

The modern short story can range between the imaginative tale on one end, and the photographic factual sketch on the other. Acclaimed authors like Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner exemplify this spectrum. Hemingway's stories often retain a veneer

of realism that could pass as journalism, while weaving in symbolic mythic elements. Faulkner's tales, meanwhile, embrace a more heightened Southern gothic style rich in tradition and local flavour.

Despite its long history, the short story genre received relatively little scholarly attention until the mid-20th century. Early criticism tended to be limited in scope, focusing on particular regions or eras. The Irish writer Frank O'Connor's 1962 study *The Lonely Voice* was one of the first major works to analyse the short story form more broadly. O'Connor viewed stories as a voice for submerged population groups to share their narratives with a dominant community. The terms "sketch" and "tale" were prevalent descriptors for short fiction in 19th century book titles, highlighting the tension between realistic and fantastical story styles. This dichotomy established the polarities of the milieu out of which the modern short story grew.

Overall, while short narratives have ancient roots across cultures, the short story as a distinct literary art form crystallised in the 16th century and rapidly evolved over the following centuries. Masterful authors like Chaucer, Boccaccio, Poe, and Chekhov experimented with and advanced the genre, blending realism with imaginative elements to create timeless, impactful works of short fiction.

Keywords

Lottery ticket, sceptical, daydream, disillusion, reality, imagination

Discussion

3.1.1 About the Author

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was a Russian playwright and short story writer who is widely regarded as one of the masters of modern literature. His works are known for their simplicity, subtlety, and profound insights into the complexities of human nature and the Russian society of his time. Born in Taganrog, Russia, Chekhov came from a family of modest means. His father was a grocer, and Chekhov had to work from a young age to support his family. Despite the hardships, he pursued his education and eventually graduated as a doctor from the University of Moscow in 1884.

Fig. 3.1.1 Anton Chekhov

Notable Works

Some of the notable works written by Chekhov include "The Lady with the Little Dog", "In Exile", "The Chorus Girl", *The Seagull* (Play), "Peasant Wives", "The Black Monk", "Rothschild's Fiddle", "The Schoolmistress", "The Grasshopper", "Oysters", "The Orator", "Oh! The Public", "Hush!", "A Nervous Breakdown", *Uncle Vanya* (Play), *The Cherry Orchard* (Play) and "The Bet."

Chekhov's literary journey began with writing humorous sketches and anecdotes for popular magazines, but he soon transitioned to more serious and introspective works. His short stories, written after 1888, are considered his most significant contributions to literature. These stories are marked by their underrated style, lack of grandiose plots, and a focus on the seemingly insignificant moments of life that reveal greater truths about human existence.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Chekhov's writing is his ability to capture the nuances of human behaviour and emotions. His characters are often ordinary people grappling with the mundane realities of life, yet their struggles and aspirations are portrayed with depth and poignancy. Chekhov's stories are not driven by dramatic events but by his characters' inner lives, hopes, fears, and the complexities of their relationships.

Chekhov's plays, such as *The Seagull*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*, are considered masterpieces of modern drama. They broke away from the traditional dramatic structures and introduced a new form of realism to the stage. Chekhov's plays often lack a clear climax or resolution, mirroring the ambiguities and uncertainties of life itself. While Chekhov's works were not immediately celebrated during his lifetime, they gained worldwide recognition and acclaim in the years following his death. His influence on subsequent generations of writers has been profound, and his stories and plays continue to be studied and performed across the globe.

As you read "The Lottery Ticket," one of Chekhov's most celebrated short stories, you will encounter the depth of human experiences and emotions. This story exemplifies Chekhov's ability to unveil the depths of human nature through seemingly mundane circumstances. It is a poignant reminder of the universal human tendency to dream and imagine a different life, and the impact such dreams can have on our perceptions and relationships.

3.1.2 "The Lottery Ticket": Summary

A middle-class man named Ivan Dmitritch could be seen sitting on a sofa and reading the newspaper at his home. When his wife came there, they started discussing the lottery ticket. Dmitritch's wife disclosed her lottery number at her husband's request. Ivan Dmitritch usually disapproved of lottery luck, but now, as he was free and the newspaper was in his hands, he just went through the column to check it.

Though he appeared skeptical, within seconds, his eyes caught the number 9499. Wonderstruck by the sight, Dmitritch dropped the paper to his knees. In a hollow voice, he

informed his wife, "Masha, 9,499 is there!" Looking at her husband, out of her astonishment, Dmitritch's wife realised that her husband was not joking. The wife asked, "Is there the number 9,499?" The husband responded that the number was there.

Glancing at his wife, Dmitritch produced a broad smile, and his wife also smiled. Dmitritch entered into the worlds of dreams and hopes. He said that their series number was right and that they would probably win the lottery. Still, they had to check whether the number 26 was there. Both the husband and wife stared at each other and laughed.

Ivan Dmitritch started walking from one side of the house to the other and began dreaming about the lottery. He thought that if they won the lottery, they might be transported to a new way of life. Now he thought that the ticket belonged to his wife, but he imagined what he might have done if it were his. Dmitritch thought that if the ticket were his, he would have bought an estate worth twenty thousand, and he would use it for immediate expenses, furnishing, paying debts, and travelling. The remaining cash would be deposited in the bank.

His wife also entered into wild daydreams. She dreamed of buying an estate, and her appearance demonstrated how engrossed she was in her thoughts. Dmitritch then said to his wife that he planned to go to foreign countries like France, Italy, and India. His wife also informed him of her interest in going abroad. But before finalising their plan, they needed to check their ticket number completely.

Still, without looking at the ticket number, Dmitritch plunged into further dreams, walking around the room. He imagined what would happen if his wife went abroad. He thought that it would be better if he travelled alone so that, throughout the journey, he could avoid listening to her boring conversations about their children and depressing matters. He imagined his wife travelling on a train full of parcels, bags, and baskets. During the journey, she would be complaining about the headache that the travel on the train brought her. If he travelled with his wife, he would have to run for boiling water, bread, and butter. Glancing at his wife, he thought that she would distress him over any silly matter. A second thought came to his mind that the lottery ticket was hers, and he had no ownership of it. So there was no use in going abroad, and even if he did go abroad, she would not let him go outside as she would shut herself in a room at the hotel. Dmitritch was worried about his wife going abroad because he thought he would have to financially depend on her. He believed that like other women, she would save money for herself and her relatives, rather than spending it on him, which would cause him distress over trivial matters.

Dmitritch's displeasure towards her family relations was explicit in his thoughts: "All those wretched brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles would come crawling about as soon as they heard of the winning ticket. Wretched, detestable people! " He thought that they would appear like beggars with their hypocritical smiles. For him, they were detestable people, and if they were given anything, they would ask for more, and if they were refused, they would wish misfortune upon them. Dmitritch now remembered his own relations, and he felt hatred towards them as their faces flashed through his mind.

When he looked at his wife's face, he felt repulsive. Anger filled up his mind, and he thought that his wife did not know anything about money, so she would just give away a

hundred roubles and lock up the rest of the money. Instead of having a smile on his face, he looked at her with hatred.

Similar to the husband's thought process, the wife also indulged in her own wild imagination and dreams. She could perfectly imagine what her husband might be thinking now. She knew who would possibly take her money if she won the lottery. He read her mind from her eyes as if she was thinking: "It's nice daydreaming at someone else's expense!", "No, don't you dare!". As he realised her possible thoughts, his hatred and annoyance increased but he soon read from the fourth page of the newspaper victoriously: "Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!".

Soon their feelings of both hope and hatred disappeared and their room appeared small and dark. The supper they had did not seem good and the evening appeared long and weary. Dmitritch became ill-humoured so he complained about the untidy room and went outside, scolding and cursing, and expressing his anger towards his wife.

3.1.3 Critical Analysis

"The Lottery Ticket", authored by Anton Chekhov, deals with the anticipation of a middle class couple that they have won a lottery ticket. They become excited when the first series of letters matches. Even before verifying the remaining numbers, they start daydreaming about their future richness and transformations. At its core, the story is a cutting satire on how the prospect of sudden wealth can corrupt even those who outwardly seem modest and content. Chekhov uses the lottery ticket as a device to lay bare the greed, suspicion, and resentment that can fester underneath the surface of human relationships.

Engrossed in the thought of lottery fund management, Ivan Dmitritch plans the allocation of the amount $75,000 to meet his various needs such as paying off his debts, depositing in the bank and buying an estate. Before long, his pleasures vanish and Ivan becomes obsessed with the thought that the lottery actually belongs to his wife. A fear grapples him when he thinks that his wife would offer him only a meager amount of cash, she may go abroad and control him.

These negative thoughts make him angry and he looks at his wife with an intent. Chekhov's subtle descriptions effectively convey the growing chasm between the couple - what began as shared excitement curdles into distrust and imagined betrayal on both sides. A similar thought also progresses in the mind of Ivan's wife. Both of them understand the meaning of their partner's glances with mysterious intentions.

The author's writing is particularly masterful in depicting the couple's dueling interior monologues as their modest living room becomes a battleground of competing greed and suspicion. Their relationship dynamic devolves from relatively happy partners into adversaries vying for control of the imagined windfall.

Coming out of their dreams, they look for the remaining numbers. With much irony, putting an end to their fancies and imaginations, they realise that though the first numbers match, the remaining numbers do not match. This deflating conclusion serves to underscore the story's underlying message - that money, or even just the illusion of money, has the power to pervert and distort human nature.

Chekhov's talent shines in crafting a deceptively simple tale that acts as a biting commentary on greed, class, and the fragility of

relationships when faced with the siren song of wealth. "The Lottery Ticket" remains one of his most renowned short stories for its brilliant satire and insight into the darker complexities of the human psyche.

Recap

- "Anton Chekhov was a Russian playwright and short story writer.
- His works are known for simplicity, subtlety, and insights into human nature.
- "The Lottery Ticket" is one of his most celebrated short stories.
- It satirizes how the prospect of wealth can corrupt even modest people.
- The story follows a middle-class couple who think they've won the lottery.
- Before verifying, they indulge in dreams of newfound riches.
- Greed, suspicion, and resentment arise between the couple.
- Their relationship dynamic devolves into adversaries vying for control.
- In the end, they realize they didn't actually win the lottery.
- It underscores how wealth illusions can distort human nature.

Objective Questions

1. What was Anton Chekhov's nationality?
2. What literary form is "The Lottery Ticket"?
3. What did the couple think they had won?
4. What emotion arose between the couple?
5. What did their relationship dynamic become?
6. Did they actually win the lottery?
7. What did the story satirise?
8. What did the story provide insights into?
9. What did the couple indulge in before verifying?
10. What did the story underscore about wealth illusions?

Answers

1. Russian
2. Story
3. Lottery
4. Suspicion
5. Adversaries
6. No
7. Greed
8. Nature
9. Dreams
10. Distorting

Assignments

1. Analyse how Chekhov uses the lottery ticket as a device to explore the complexities of human nature and relationships in the story.
2. Discuss the symbolism and significance of the couple's contrasting interior monologues and how they reflect the story's central themes.
3. Examine the role of class and social status in the story, and how the prospect of wealth exposes the underlying greed and resentment within the couple's seemingly modest lives.
4. Evaluate Chekhov's writing style and techniques in "The Lottery Ticket," particularly his use of understatement, subtlety, and lack of grandiose plots to convey deeper truths.
5. Compare and contrast "The Lottery Ticket" with other works by Chekhov or other writers exploring similar themes of human nature, relationships, and the pursuit of wealth or social mobility.

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Unit 2

A Report to an Academy - Franz Kafka

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the complexity of identity formation in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy."
- analyse societal pressures for conformity.
- recognise the struggle between nature and civilisation.
- appreciate Kafka's unique storytelling style.

Prerequisites

Before analysing Kafka's thought-provoking short story "A Report to an Academy," it is essential to understand the historical and cultural context in which it was written. The early 20th century saw significant societal changes and upheavals, particularly in Europe, which led to a sense of alienation and anxiety among many individuals. Kafka, a German-Jewish writer living in Prague, was deeply influenced by these societal shifts and his own personal struggles with identity, conformity, and belonging. As a member of a marginalised community, Kafka's experiences and observations likely shaped his unique perspective on the human condition and the complex relationship between nature and civilisation. Additionally, the emerging scientific theories and discussions around evolution and the cognitive abilities of animals during that time period may have also influenced Kafka's exploration of these themes in his writing.

Keywords

Ape, confinement, trained animal, identity, conformity, nature, civilization

Discussion

3.2.1 About the Author

Franz Kafka was a renowned German-language writer born in Prague in 1883. His works, like the famous works *The Trial* and *The Metamorphosis*, captured the feelings of anxiety and alienation that many people experienced in 20th-century Europe and North America.

Kafka came from a prosperous Jewish family, with his father being a merchant. Although he grew up in a well-off household, his relationship with his domineering father was strained and had a significant impact on his life and writing. In his semi-autobiographical work called *Letter to Father*, Kafka said his difficulties in forming relationships with others and his retreat into writing literature were because his father was too controlling and domineering.

Fig. 3.2.1. Franz Kafka

Despite excelling in school and being respected by his teachers, Kafka rebelled against the authoritarian education system and its emphasis on rote learning. As a young adult, he declared himself a socialist and an atheist, reflecting his opposition to established society. He studied law at the University of Prague and worked as an insurance clerk for most of his life. Although considered hardworking and ambitious by his colleagues, he found his routine office job and the double life it forced him into working during the day and writing at night to be torturous.

His personal relationships were often troubled, with his inhibitions causing difficulties in his engagement to Felice Bauer and his later love for Milena Jesenská Pollak. Kafka's poor health, exacerbated by tuberculosis from 1917 onwards, added to his struggles. During his lifetime, he reluctantly published a few works, including stories like “The Judgment” and *The Metamorphosis*. However, it was his friend Max Brod who defied Kafka's wishes to have his unpublished manuscripts destroyed and instead published his novels *The Trial*, *The Castle*, and *Amerika* after his death in 1924.

Kafka's works are known for their surreal and dreamlike qualities, often featuring characters who fail to communicate effectively, follow a hidden logic, and find themselves in grotesque or violent situations. His narratives explore themes of isolation, the quest for understanding, and the struggle against overwhelming forces or authorities. In *The Metamorphosis*, for example, the protagonist Gregor Samsa wakes up transformed into a monstrous insect, highlighting the absurd and the literal interpretation of metaphors. *The Trial* follows Joseph K., a man arrested and put on trial without ever being told the charges against him, symbolising the individual's helplessness against opaque and oppressive systems.

Kafka's works have been interpreted in various ways, from allegories of divine grace to critiques of totalitarianism and social injustice. Although largely unknown during his lifetime, Kafka's works gained global acclaim after World War II, becoming influential in

literature and intellectual circles worldwide. His ability to capture the human experience of alienation and the absurdities of modern life has made his works enduring classics in 20th-century literature. His works received public attention only after his death and none of his novels were published before his death. Before his death, Kafka wrote to his friend Max Brod: "Dearest Max, my last request: Everything I leave behind me ... in the way of diaries, manuscripts, letters (my own and others'), sketches, and so on, [is] to be burned unread."

3.2.2 A Report to an Academy

"A Report to an Academy" is a short story by Franz Kafka which was published in 1917. The story appeared in the German magazine *Der Jude* and was later included in his short story collection *A Country Doctor*.

3.2.2.1 Summary of the Story

Red Peter, who is fundamentally an ape, sees himself as a human being. During his presentation to the academy, Peter recounts his earlier life in Africa when he was an ape. He has forgotten some of the details from when he was an ape because that experience was five years ago. In his effort to become human, he had tried very hard to remove all traces of being an ape. He also informs the academic audience that they too restrained from apes. He remembers how he learned to shake hands, which was an instance of him being forced into the human world. Originally, he is from the Gold Coast of Africa, and he was captured by a European hunting expedition team. As he does not recall the background, he relies on some statements from strangers.

Once Red Peter was shot in his cheek, leading to a scar on his face which inspired others to call him Red Peter. There is a reason behind his dissatisfaction with his name Red Peter, which refers to another ape named Peter who died recently. A limp is noticeable when he walks, and it resulted from another shot he received on his hip. Peter hates the gossip writers in newspapers who claim that Peter's ape-like appearance is still evident in his character. To support their claim, they argue that Peter still pulls down his trousers to show people his scars. Enraged by this statement, Peter believes the writer's fingers should all be shot off.

When Peter regained consciousness after being shot, he realised he was caged on Hagenbeck's steamship. He was confined in a tight space, causing his flesh to be injured and hit by the cage bars when he tried to escape and run away. Now he acknowledges that it was a milestone event in taming his wildness. In this confinement, he realised for the first time that he was in a situation with no way out. People thought he would soon die as he always appeared quiet.

Though he is not content, he is proud of his achievement, development and attainment of goals. Just like human beings, while at home, he drinks wine, rocks himself in his chair, and looks through the window. When he returns home after serious intellectual and social programmes, he engages in sexual intercourse with his half-trained female chimpanzee companion. But he cannot look into her eyes in daylight as they contain a bewildered look of a half-trained animal.

Peter continued his inquiry to find an escape from this confinement and finally realised that the only 'way out' was to become human. But Peter never misconceived or associated being human with freedom; he understood that human beings considered themselves free subjects. Looking back on his past, he now real-

ised that it was his calmness which brought him all the accomplishments in his life. Though he had some problems with the ship's crew, Peter believed they were good and worthy of a calm and quiet relationship.

From his cell life, he realised that the 'way out' could not be attained through escaping the cell. If he attempted escape, he may be put in an even worse cage. Peter understands that becoming human is better to escape confinement. He observed the captors' behaviour and found it easy to imitate human beings. He studied some human gestures such as spitting, smoking and drinking alcohol, though the smell was horrible to him.

During a celebration on the ship one night, Red Peter grabbed an unattended bottle from his cage and consumed alcohol like an expert drinker. In this drunken moment, he could articulate 'hello', and this could be considered his entrance into the human realm. Peter did not find imitating humans a pleasurable moment; instead, he considered it a necessary step to the 'way out' or escape from confinement. When he was in Hamburg, he had two choices: either adoption by a zoo or music. Peter was not interested in living like an animal in the zoo, so he chose music and dedicated himself to it. Peter had many trainers, helping him lose the features of an ape, and he rapidly emerged as an educated European man.

In general, Peter was able to achieve what he desired. He believes all his hardships have been paid off through his present status. He does not like to be judged by any human beings; instead, he wants to keep expanding his knowledge.

3.2.2.2 Analysis of the Story

In the short story "A Report to an Academy", Franz Kafka explores themes of identity, conformity, and the struggle between nature and civilization through the perspective of an ape named Red Peter. The story is presented as a monologue delivered by Red Peter to members of an academy, recounting his journey from living as a wild ape in Africa to becoming almost fully assimilated into human society.

Red Peter begins by describing his traumatic capture by hunters and subsequent caging and transport across the sea to Europe. This harrowing experience left him injured and confined in an unbearable situation, desperate for a way out. He realised that the only path forward was to abandon his ape-like nature and behaviours. Through careful observation and imitation of the human crew members, Red Peter gradually mastered human habits and gestures like spitting, smoking a pipe, and drinking schnapps. His breakthrough moment came when he successfully uncorked and drank an entire bottle, transcending his animal instincts. The crew's shocked reaction of "Listen, he's talking!" marked his first speech and entry into the human world.

Red Peter makes it clear that his motivation was purely pragmatic - he imitated humans not out of admiration but because "I wanted a way out and for no other reason." His assimilation was an act of survival, not authentic transformation. As he describes his "progress" and desperate effort to reach the cultural level of an average European, Red Peter seems to take pride in his achievements. However, he also acknowledges that complete understanding and belonging are ultimately unattainable, whether among humans or his former ape community.

One interpretation is that Red Peter's assimilation into human civilisation represents the experience of marginalised groups forced to

conform to dominant cultural norms, suppressing their true identities for survival. His mixed feelings of both accomplishment and alienation mirror this uneasy cultural negotiation. Throughout the tale, Kafka contrasts human and animal natures, blurring the lines between the two. Red Peter credits his cognitive leaps to thinking "with my belly" rather than pure rationality, connecting emotion and instinct to higher consciousness: “I had to stop being an ape. A fine, clear train of thought, which I must have constructed somehow with my belly since apes think with their bellies.”

Red Peter also critiques humans' unnatural physical constraints. He sees freedom differently from both human society's constructs and apes' pure instinct, finding both limiting in their own way. The story can be read as questioning human superiority over animals and the natural world. Red Peter's complex internal life and intellectual journey undermine the idea of apes as unthinking beasts driven purely by instinct.

Kafka seems to suggest that human language, behaviour, and "civilization" are themselves mere superficial performances that do not necessarily indicate higher consciousness or truth. Red Peter outwardly excels at these human traits while inwardly remaining detached from their deeper meaning. Additionally, the story invites consideration of the ethical implications of displaying captive animals and forcing them to perform human behaviours against their nature, as Red Peter was made to do. His tale humanises his experience and frames it as a violation and act of desperation. Overall, in "A Report to an Academy", Kafka questions the strict separations we make between humans and animals. As Red Peter evolves and has mixed feelings about becoming more human-like, Kafka wants readers to re-think what really makes human civilized life different from the natural world of animals. The story's famous first line “HONORED MEMBERS of the Academy,” right away pulls the reader into Red Peter's strange and imaginary perspective as an ape. Kafka mixes together normal and out-of-the-ordinary elements in an intriguing way. And he explores deep questions about identity without fully resolving them.

Recap

- Kafka explores identity, conformity, and nature vs. civilization through Red Peter's story.
- Red Peter is an ape who becomes assimilated into human society.
- His traumatic capture and captivity left him desperate for a "way out."
- He learned human behaviours like spitting, smoking, and drinking through observation.
- His first speech marked his entry into the human world.
- His assimilation was an act of survival, not authentic transformation.
- He acknowledges the ultimate unattainability of complete belonging.
- The story represents the experience of marginalized groups conforming for survival.

- Kafka blurs the lines between human and animal natures.
- Red Peter credits instinct and emotion for his cognitive leaps.
- The story questions human superiority over animals and nature.
- Human civilization is portrayed as a superficial performance.
- Ethical implications of displaying and forcing captive animals to perform are raised.

Objective Questions

1. What is the name of the ape in the story?
2. What prompted Red Peter's desire to become human?
3. How did Red Peter learn human behaviors?
4. What marked Red Peter's first speech?
5. Was Red Peter's assimilation authentic?
6. What does Red Peter credit for his cognitive leaps?
7. What theme does the story explore?
8. What does the story question?
9. What does the story portray human civilization as?
10. What ethical issue does the story raise?

Answers

1. Red Peter
2. His captivity
3. Observation and imitation
4. Drinking from a bottle
5. No
6. His "belly" (instinct/emotion)
7. Identity and conformity
8. Human superiority over animals
9. A performance
10. Displaying captive animals

Assignments

1. Analyse how Kafka uses Red Peter's perspective to challenge the strict boundaries between human and animal identities.
2. Discuss the significance of Red Peter's mixed feelings about his assimilation into human society and what it represents.
3. Explore the ways Kafka contrasts human and animal natures throughout the story and the implications of this blurring of lines.
4. Examine the ethical issues raised by the story regarding the treatment and display of captive animals like Red Peter.
5. Evaluate Kafka's unique storytelling style in "A Report to an Academy" and how it contributes to the themes and ideas explored.
6. Write a note on the thematic and stylistic innovations of Kafka

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BLOCK - 04

Novella

Unit 1

The Death of Ivan Ilyich

-Leo Tolstoy

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the life and works of Leo Tolstoy.
- appreciate the subtleties of Tolstoy's moral philosophy as viewed through Ivan Ilyich.
- analyse the themes and characters in Tolstoy's novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*
- explore the concept of psychological realism in literature.
- identify the significance of Tolstoy's philosophical and spiritual ideas.

Prerequisites

A novella is a fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a full novel but longer than a short story. The word 'novella' comes from the Italian word 'novella', meaning 'little new thing'. Novellas are typically between 15,000 to 40,000 words in length. They allow writers to develop a story with more depth and complexity than a short story while still maintaining a tight, focused narrative. Unlike novels, which can be hundreds of pages long, novellas are usually able to be read in one or two sittings.

The novella genre has existed for centuries, with early examples including works by Medieval Italian writers like Giovanni Boccaccio and his famous Decameron collection in the 1300s. Novellas became very popular during the 19th-century literary movement of Realism and Naturalism, with acclaimed works by great authors like Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Melville, James, and others. Some well-known and influential novellas include *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. More recent popular novellas include *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption* by Stephen King.

While less commercially lucrative than full novels, novellas are valued by many writers as an art form allowing concise yet profound storytelling. The condensed length encourages economic prose and tight plotting and characterisation. At the same time, novellas offer more room for nuance, symbolism and thematic exploration compared to short stories. Due to their shorter and, thus, more accessible length, novellas can be ideal introductions to an author's style and themes. Their compact narratives also make them a good option for book club discussions.

Keywords

Death, inevitability, society, norms, psychological realism, spirituality authenticity

Discussion

4.1.1 About the Author- Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy was a famous Russian author who lived from 1828 to 1910. He is regarded as one of the greatest novelists of all time, known for his masterpieces *War and Peace* (1865–69) and *Anna Karenina* (1875–77). Tolstoy was born into an aristocratic family at their estate of Yasnaya Polyana, about 130 miles south of Moscow. He lost his mother when he was just two years old, and his father passed away a few years later. After a somewhat troubled youth spent drinking, gambling and carousing, Tolstoy joined the army and fought in the Crimean War. His experiences inspired some of his earliest published works, including the three short stories- "Sevastopol Sketches" which were praised for their realistic depiction of battle.

In the 1860s, Tolstoy reached the peak of his creative powers. He wrote his epic novel *War and Peace* over several years, blending fictional characters with historical events from the Napoleonic era. The novel is divided into three strands - the historical narrative of the wars, the lives of the fictional characters, and Tolstoy's philosophical essays on the nature of history itself. He controversially portrays historical figures like Napoleon as vain and ineffectual while glorifying the resilience and moral fibre of ordinary Russians. Tolstoy argues that great events are not shaped by the decisions of leaders, but by the countless small actions of ordinary people.

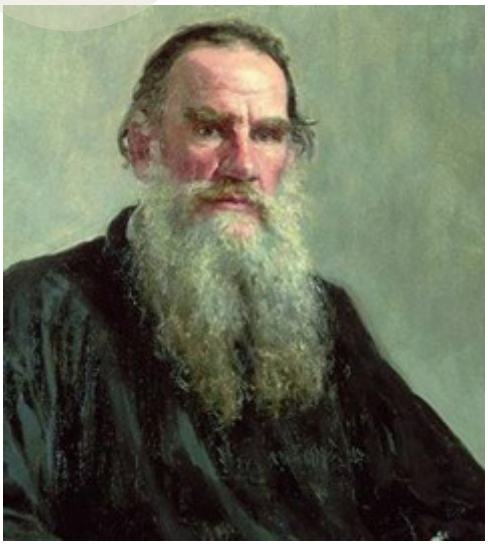

Fig. 4.1.1 Leo Tolstoy

His next masterwork, the novel *Anna Karenina*, applies a similar philosophy to family life. It tells the intertwined stories of two aristocratic Russian families - the Oblonskys and

Karenins. The opening line "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" has become one of the most famous in literature. The novel's tragic heroine Anna Karenina, unhappy in her marriage, has an affair that leads to her ruin and eventual suicide. In contrast, the novel's positive hero Konstantin Levin finds purpose and happiness through his devotion to his family and life's simple virtues.

In the late 1870s, Tolstoy underwent a profound spiritual crisis and religious conversion. He rejected the organised church and formulated his own brand of Christian anarchist philosophy based on concepts like non-violence, abstinence and refusing to participate in civil society. His teachings had a major influence on figures like Mahatma Gandhi. Tolstoy's late fiction such as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and "Father Sergius" expounded his moral ideas in story form. However, his extreme beliefs caused major tensions with his wife Sonya, who rejected Tolstoy's calls for celibacy within marriage.

Towards the end of his life, the conflicts between Tolstoy's principles and his life as a wealthy aristocrat became unbearable to him. In 1910, at age 82, he secretly fled from his estate in the middle of the night, seeking to leave his possessions behind. He fell ill shortly after and died of pneumonia at a remote train station. Tolstoy left behind not just his incredible novels, but also a philosophy of leading an authentic life dedicated to love and truth.

4.1.2 *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

The Death of Ivan Ilyich is a famous novella by the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. Published in 1886, it is considered a great work of psychological realism, providing deep insights into the human mind and experience.

Psychological realism became popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is a genre of fiction writing that focuses heavily on characters' inner thoughts, motivations and psychological states. A psychological realist writer aims to show what characters do and explain why they take such actions. These novels often explore larger societal or political themes through the choices and experiences of the characters. However, psychological realism should not be confused with psychoanalytic writing or surrealism, other artistic movements in the 20th century that depicted psychology in unique ways.

The story of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is divided into two parts. The first shows the reactions of the protagonist Ivan's colleagues and family after his death. They care more about how it impacts their own careers and finances rather than feeling real sadness. The second part reveals details of Ivan's life, portrayed as very simple, ordinary and therefore terrible. The crisis Ivan faces at the end mirrors Tolstoy's own spiritual crisis described in his earlier non-fiction work *My Confession* (1882). The novella explores the meaninglessness that can consume a person's life if they do not question daily routines and pursue more meaningful purposes.

4.1.2.1 Summary of the Novella

The Death of Ivan Ilych begins at the chronological end of the story. When Ivan's friend Peter, a judge, tells a group of other judges that Ivan has died, they are more concerned about the job promotions and transfers that will result rather than feeling sad. Later, Peter visits Ivan's home and is disturbed by the warning look on Ivan's dead face. Ivan's wife Praskovya asks Peter about maximising her late husband's pension. Their servant Gerasim shocks Peter by saying everyone dies eventually.

The narrative then goes back over 30 years to describe Ivan's life. Ivan was an ordinary and everyday man. He studied law and adopted the values of high society. Ivan became an investigating magistrate and his career went well until Praskovya's pregnancy. He became distant from his family as Praskovya's behaviour clashed with the respectable lifestyle he valued. Over time, Ivan advanced in his career but missed out on an expected promotion, leaving him angry. He took a higher-paying job in another city. While decorating his new home, Ivan fell and injured his side, though it seemed minor at first.

Fig. 4.1.2 A scene from the drama film *A Simple Death* (1985), based on the work *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

Ivan gradually developed a strange taste in his mouth and pain in his side that worsened. The doctors could not agree on what was wrong with him, which made Ivan feel very worried. His health deteriorated and he became terrified of death, though unable to fully comprehend it. Only the servant Gerasim showed true kindness by caring for the dying Ivan. Ivan's family pretended he was just ill, not dying, which angered him. He had a recurring dream of being forced into a black sack. Ivan realised that his life became emptier as his death neared. He felt his immoral life caused his senseless suffering.

On his deathbed, looking at his servant Gerasim, Ivan questioned if he lived rightly. Envisioning the black sack again, he resisted leaving his life behind. But a force struck him, propelling him through the sack towards a bright light. Feeling unexpected joy and remorse for his family, Ivan accepted his professional and personal lives were false. With a sigh, he stretched out and died.

4.1.2.2 Analysis

The Death of Ivan Ilyich is an exploration of the meaninglessness and shallowness that can pervade a person's life if they do not question their daily routines and prioritise deeper purposes. Through the story of Ivan Ilyich, a middle-aged judge, Tolstoy provides a scathing critique of 19th-century Russian middle-class society and its fixation on artificial proprieties over genuine human connections. The novella begins unusually by depicting Ivan's death and funeral, showing how his colleagues and family react with more concern for their own self-interests than sincere grief for the man himself. We see that Ivan's life seems trivial and inconsequential to those around him.

Tolstoy then goes back to relate the story of Ivan's life uniquely. He covers Ivan's first 45 years rapidly in just a couple of chapters, before slowing down immensely to focus intensely on Ivan's final weeks and days leading up to his death. The author's technique of making the story's timeline get shorter and shorter mirrors Ivan's own experience. As Ivan got closer to death, his entire world and perspective shrank until all he could focus on was his suffering and the fact that he was dying.

In the novella, we learn that Ivan pursued a respectable bureaucratic career and succeeded in attaining a comfortable middle-class lifestyle in line with society's expectations. However, he became increasingly disconnect-

ed from his wife and family as his priorities centred on maintaining a veneer of propriety. Tolstoy paints Ivan as artificial and inauthentic, just going through the motions of living without any deeper self-reflection. It is only when Ivan falls terminally sick that the hollow nature of his existence is shockingly laid bare. As his physical suffering intensifies, Ivan realises that his entire life's achievements ring hollow in the face of his mortality. The more recent his memories, the emptier and more meaningless they appear to him.

Ivan had always just conformed to societal norms about having a prestigious job, wife, family, and material comforts.But now Ivan sees that his busy life lacks any deep meaning or purpose. As he lays dying, his comfortable middle-class lifestyle feels empty and false. Ivan's agonising process is captured through the recurring image of him struggling through a "black sack" - a metaphor for the painful falsehoods of the life he had blindly accepted. At the sack's bottom lies the terrifying yet liberating unknown that Ivan must confront: self-examination and death.

For most of the novella, Ivan remains in tormented denial, rejecting his impending death and lashing out at his family. It is only in his final moments that a spiritual awakening occurs. When Ivan sees the simple kindness of the servant Gerasim, it causes a huge shift in Ivan's perspective. He realises Gerasim's plain and ordinary life is more right and true compared to Ivan's own artificial life obsessed with social status. At that moment, Ivan suddenly understands deeper truths. He feels unexpected joy and compassion for his family that he never felt before.

With deep insight, Tolstoy suggests that Ivan's efforts to advance his career and social standing were deeply misguided and meaningless compared to living an honest, moral life like Gerasim. Ivan's supposedly "good" life of prestigious achievements is revealed to be fundamentally false and empty inside. In his last breaths, Ivan gains a clarity that evaded him during his lifetime of chasing hollow and worldly pursuits. By stripping away pretensions, Tolstoy illustrates how even a peasant possesses more truth than the sophisticated elite. The novella reminds of death's inevitability and the importance of genuine purpose. Through the uniquely condensed structure and vivid metaphysical imagery like the black sack, Tolstoy creates an almost mystical exploration of life's biggest questions. Why do we live as we do? What constitutes a life well-lived? How can we find meaning amidst suffering and death? Ultimately, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* operates on multiple levels - as a slice-of-life drama portraying an ordinary man's final days, as satire of hollow bourgeois culture, and as a metaphysical meditation on authenticity, mortality, and our quest for purpose.

4.1.2.3 Character Analysis

Ivan Ilych: Ivan's biggest flaw was following other people's rules instead of using his own judgment. He naively accepted the ideals of high society rather than relying on his own reasoning. Ivan was attracted to people with high social standing, like a moth to a flame. He thought his life would go smoothly and he would find purpose by copying their behaviour and lifestyle. He became obsessed with proper etiquette and manners. He started acting how someone in his position was expected to behave. He got married because it was customary for a successful young professional. To appear wealthy, he bought a luxurious mansion with fancy furnishings as a status symbol.

As Ivan got used to propriety, he became in-

tolerant of anything threatening his happiness. He distanced himself from unsettling influences. When his wife became pregnant, he found it unattractive, so he distanced himself from her and put all his attention into his job. Ivan developed a formal and detached approach towards family when married life got difficult.

Ivan's job of simplifying complex issues into paperwork influenced every part of his life, including his intimate relationships, which he viewed objectively. He minimised personal connections, trying to escape discomfort. Instead of determining what's truly valuable, he isolated himself by embracing aristocratic ideals. But this led only to suffering and discontent, not purpose.

Ivan represents the inadequacy of the bourgeois way of life with materialism and self-interest. His story cautions that lacking compassion and human connection leads to an unfulfilling end, like his realisation of his life's folly on his deathbed. However, his illness proved a blessing. Facing mortality, he acknowledged loneliness and contemplated his existence deeply. He realised his life wasn't as it should have been. Through suffering, Ivan learned compassion and love are vital principles, bringing him inexplicable joy in the end.

Gerasim - The servant who becomes Ivan's nurse. He is strong, vigorous and straightforward, the opposite of Ivan. Gerasim possesses the qualities that lead to a fulfilling life more than anyone else - compassion and caring for others. Unlike the other characters, Gerasim interacts with people authentically and thoughtfully. His concern for the well-being of others allows him to connect deeply with them, reducing loneliness. Unsurprisingly, Gerasim is the only one able to face death calmly and bravely. He accepts that life includes death, filth and sickness. He views assisting the dying Ivan, including with his bodily functions and soothing him at night, as simply helping him.

Praskovya or Lisa's self-absorbed behaviour can only make Ivan's illness worse, but Gerasim can both comfort and heal the dying man. When Gerasim holds up Ivan's legs, he physically and spiritually bridges Ivan to the outside world. It is no accident that Ivan first recognises the mistake of his previous life while gazing into Gerasim's face, as Gerasim is a truly spiritual person. His friendship guides Ivan towards spiritual well-being. Gerasim sets a good example for others to follow.

Gerasim's status as an impoverished peasant also reveals Tolstoy's broader point. In the novella, a healthy way of living is obstructed by consumerism and social aspiration. The pursuit of social status depersonalises human connection, while possessions and decorations prevent real human touch. However, since Gerasim is content with his social standing and financial assets, he is able to form the deep connections that are essential for leading a fulfilling life. The unconditionally soothing bonds Gerasim has built bring immense joy to his life, giving him the strength and peace of mind to face death calmly and bravely. Gerasim feels at ease with himself.

Praskovya Fedorovna Golovina - Praskovya, Ivan's wife and the mother of his children, behaves unnaturally and self-centeredly towards everyone. She pretends to feel sorry for Ivan and care about him, but in reality, she is hostile and eager for him to die.

Peter Ivanovich- Ivan's best friend and co-worker, briefly mentioned in the opening chapter. However, the narrator spends a lot of time discussing his thoughts and actions, as Peter's perspective on Ivan's life and soci-

ety plays a significant role in establishing the background and morals of the story.

Peter represents Ivan's social environment. His interactions with people are short-lived and self-centred. Even though he has known Ivan his entire life, he feels no sadness when Ivan dies. Instead, his thoughts are mostly focused on potential career advancements made possible by Ivan's absence. Similar to the other people in the society he symbolises, Peter views interpersonal relationships as merely a means to achieve his goals. Peter's reaction to Ivan's death shows the lack of caring and empathetic connections. In addition to being self-absorbed and self-interested, Peter also strongly desires to avoid uncomfortable situations. He avoids discussing Ivan's death, attends the funeral reluctantly, and avoids talking about his own eventual death in general.

If Peter is meant to represent Ivan's social circle, he emerges as being unusual. Peter demonstrates compassion and sincerity, which are uncommon among people in his society. He was the first of Ivan's acquaintances to realise that Ivan was dying. In the first chapter, Peter seems to be on the verge of understanding the significance of Ivan's death many times. He also appears to be ready to abandon the socially acceptable perspective and face death and the purpose of his own existence.

The expression on Ivan's corpse's face conveys a message of caution, and Peter fully accepts it. He notices the contentment and "decency" of Ivan's face, which are signs of his realisation of the proper way of living. Peter is deeply moved by the idea of Ivan's suffering as he tells Praskovya about his last moments. After the funeral, as he is leaving, Peter quotes Gerasim, saying that it is God's will that everyone dies eventually. Although he never quite grasps the true meaning of life, Peter's sensitivity and awareness set him apart from the other characters. His last name, Ivanovich, which means "son of Ivan," seems to imply that he may one day experience enlightenment similar to Ivan.

Schwartz - Schwartz is Ivan's colleague and companion. He is a smart, amusing and utterly proper man. Schwartz disregards the suffering in life. He resists all gloomy feelings and maintains a cheerful and upbeat personality even at Ivan's funeral. It is clear that Schwartz is a kind of double for Ivan, as Ivan says Schwartz reminds him a lot of his former self. The fact that "Schwartz" is German for "black" suggests Tolstoy's belief that such an outlook on life is empty and doomed to fail.

Vladimir Ivanich - Ivan's son. Vasya is the youngest in the Golovin family. Modest and compassionate, Vasya has not yet been negatively influenced by the morals and principles of his parents' social circle. Vasya can form caring relationships with others, and apart from Gerasim, he is the only one who fully understands Ivan's situation.

Lisa - Ivan's daughter, and very similar to her mother. Lisa is self-absorbed and gets annoyed easily; she dislikes anything that distracts from her own happiness. Most of all, she finds her father's suffering inconvenient.

Fedor Petrovich - Lisa's husband. Fedor fits the typical mold of people in his society. There is nothing exceptional or remarkable about his character.

4.1.2.4 Themes

The Certainty of Death

The story of Ivan's disciplined approach to death also tells of his acceptance of death and

quest to find meaning in the face of its terrifying and negating force. It explores the questions of how one can make sense of ending one's life, relationships, endeavours, goals, and very existence. Tolstoy makes it clear throughout that having the right perspective on life is the first step in preparing for death. Ivan's perspective shifts due to suffering and the prospect of death, and his feelings move from absolute horror to complete delight.

Ivan's social circle avoids difficult truths by using deception to shield themselves from the reality of death. This leads only to grief, discontent, and a sense of nothingness. However, if you embrace death and understand life's uncertainty, you can die with confidence, calm, and even joy. The novel can, therefore, be seen as a lesson on how to live rightly in order to make sense of death itself primarily.

The Real Life

From the beginning, Ivan, Praskovya, Peter, and most people in Ivan's social circle and profession represent the "artificial life" that Tolstoy sees as distinct from the "true life" embodied by Gerasim. Artificial life is characterised by superficial relationships, selfishness, and greed for material wealth. It is exclusive, unsatisfying, and ultimately unable to provide answers to life's big questions. The artificial life is a deception that obscures life's real meaning and leaves people afraid and alone at death.

In contrast, true life is defined by empathy and compassion. It views people as individuals with their own perspectives, beliefs, and goals rather than means to an end. Cultivating mutually supportive human connections enables genuine personal bonds that reduce isolation. True life develops comfort through compassion and strength through unity, while artificial life leaves one isolated and empty. It forges connections and prepares one for death.

Only Gerasim is unafraid of dying. Self-assured in the rightness of his existence through his selfless compassion for others that gives life meaning, Gerasim does not fear direct involvement. Even more important than the physical aid of supporting Ivan's legs is the spiritual help Gerasim provides by understanding his plight and alleviating his loneliness. By sharing in Ivan's suffering, Gerasim lessens it. The beauty of living a true life is that while Gerasim aids Ivan, he also benefits from the connection. Love and compassion are reciprocal, and living a true life means doing what is right.

Contrasting Inner and Outer Lives

Tolstoy presents the conflict between the inner/spiritual life and the outer/bodily life, similar to the artificial versus true life dichotomy. Until Chapter IX, Ivan is purely a physical being, showing no signs of a spiritual life. He interacts with people only insofar as they further his aims, living solely for the benefit of his own body. Tragically, Ivan mistakes his bodily life for his true spiritual existence. He refuses to acknowledge the flaw in his way of living because he thinks his existence is the "right" one. Unable to overcome worldly affairs because he rejects the spiritual, Ivan suffers immense anguish, sadness and dread.

However, as Ivan faces the prospect of death, he gradually begins to realise the value of living a spiritual life. As he progresses in wisdom, replacing the material world with the spiritual, he overcomes death and finds unparalleled delight. Tolstoy's message is clear: it is each person's duty to recognise their own inherent duality and behave in a way that allows their lesser physical lives to harmonise with their greater spiritual lives.

Recap

- Leo Tolstoy was a famous Russian author known for his masterpieces.
- His works, like War and Peace and Anna Karenina, explored philosophical themes.
- "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" is a novella about the meaninglessness of life.
- It follows Ivan Ilyich, a middle-class judge, as he faces his mortality.
- The novella critiques the shallow pursuit of social status and material possessions.
- Ivan's life lacks deeper meaning and purpose until his spiritual awakening.
- Psychological realism focuses on characters' inner thoughts and motivations.
- Tolstoy's writing often explores societal themes through characters' experiences.
- The novella contrasts Ivan's artificial life with the servant Gerasim's authentic one.
- Gerasim represents the importance of compassion and human connections.
- Ivan learns that true life comes from genuine relationships, not societal expectations.
- The story explores the certainty of death and the quest for meaning.
- Tolstoy encourages living an authentic life dedicated to love and truth.
- Character analysis and thematic discussion

Objective Questions

1. Who is the author of The Death of Ivan Ilyich?
2. What was Tolstoy's masterpiece about the Napoleonic era?
3. What literary genre focuses on characters' psychological states?
4. Who represents the importance of compassion in the novella?
5. What did Ivan's recurring dream symbolise?
6. What caused Ivan's spiritual awakening?
7. What did Ivan's comfortable middle-class life lack?
8. Who did Ivan contrast his life with?
9. What did Ivan feel at the end of the novella?

Answers

1. Tolstoy
2. War and Peace
3. Psychological realism
4. Gerasim
5. Black sack
6. Facing mortality
7. Meaning
8. Gerasim
9. Joy and remorse

Assignments

1. Discuss the theme of authenticity and its significance in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*
2. Analyse the contrast between Ivan Ilyich's artificial life and Gerasim's authentic life.
3. Examine the role of psychological realism in Tolstoy's writing, particularly in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.
4. Evaluate Tolstoy's critique of the shallow pursuit of social status and material possessions in 19th-century Russian society, as portrayed in the novella.
5. Discuss the significance of Ivan Ilyich's spiritual awakening.

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BLOCK - 05

Novel

Unit 1

Siddhartha
-Hermann Hesse

Learning Outcomes

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

- analyse the protagonist Siddhartha's spiritual journey and his quest for self-discovery.
- examine the influence of Eastern and Western philosophies on the novel *Siddhartha.*
- evaluate the portrayal of dualities and contrasts in human nature and experience.
- interpret the symbolic significance of characters and their roles.

Prerequisites

Indian philosophy, spirituality, and culture have had a big influence on Western literature over the years. However, this influence is complex because many Indian words and concepts do not directly translate into English. Words like dharma, karma, nirvana, and avatar have deep contextual meanings that are hard to fully capture when brought into the Western context.

However, several famous Western writers have been drawn to Indian ideas and incorporated elements into their works. Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of the first to write poems inspired by Hindu scriptures while putting his own spin on the ideas. The poet W.B. Yeats spent years exploring Indian thought through people like the monk Mohini Chatterjee, though he maintained a Western romantic view of love. T.S. Eliot wove Indian cultural references and spiritual motifs into works like *The Waste Land,* but filtered them through his Christian worldview. The Beatles helped popularise Indian music by using instruments like the sitar, and George Harrison further examined Hindu spirituality in albums like *Living in the Material World*. However, their engagement stemmed more from counterculture curiosity than a full understanding of the traditions.

These examples show how Indian ideas have inspired many Western artists, but the process is complex. Words, concepts and symbols often get reshaped or reinterpreted through the Western cultural lens. For artists and audiences, this cross-cultural exchange raises profound questions about authenticity, understanding and creative license when engaging with another culture's traditions. While illuminating, the process also highlights the inherent difficulties of fully understanding another person's worldview and context. The journey of influence flows both ways, creating new connections but also barriers between the intellectual and spiritual ideas of East and West.

Keywords

Enlightenment, Self-Discovery, Spirituality, Dualities, Symbolism, Eastern Philosophy, Influence

Discussion

5.1.1 About the Author: Hermann Hesse

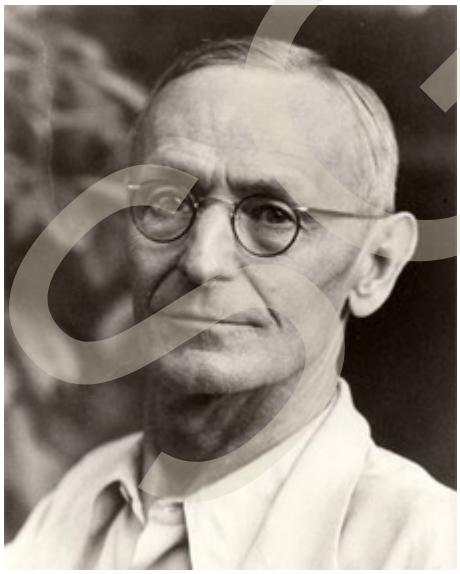

Fig. 5.1.1 Hermann Hesse

Hermann Hesse was a famous German-Swiss novelist, poet and painter who lived from 1877 to 1962. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946. The main theme explored in Hesse's works is an individual's journey to break free from the constraints of society and conventional ways of living in order to discover their true inner self and spiritual identity.

Hesse was born on July 2, 1877, in the village of Calw in Germany. From a young age, he struggled to conform to the strict religious education and left the seminary school after less than a year, unable to adapt to that environment. This experience shaped his scepticism towards traditional schooling, which he portrayed cynically in his first novel, *Beneath the Wheel.* After working briefly in a bookstore, Hesse became a freelance writer and published his first collection of poems in 1899. His early novels, like *Peter Camenzind* and *Gertrud,* centred around the inward and outward quest of an artist or writer to find meaning. His 1922 novel *Siddhartha*, set in India during Buddha's times, poetically explores the search for spiritual enlightenment.

During World War I, Hesse lived in Switzerland and wrote against militarism and nationalism. He permanently settled in Switzerland after the war. A personal crisis led him to undergo psychoanalysis, the influence of which can be seen in his seminal 1919 novel *Demian*, about a troubled youth's journey towards self-awareness. Hesse became deeply interested in concepts from Jungian psychology, such as the unconscious mind, symbolism, and the contrasting attitudes of introversion and extroversion within an individual. This idea of dualities in human nature formed a recurring exploration in his later works.

His 1927 novel *Steppenwolf* is a profound examination of a middle-aged man's struggle between his tamed and outward bourgeois self and his spiritual and uninhibited inner self. His novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* contrasts two friends - one an ascetic intellectual, the other a sensual artist - both seeking their own paths of self-realisation. Hesse's final novel *The Glass Bead Game*, published in 1943, is set in the 23rd century and further examines the dualities of the contemplative versus the active life through the protagonist - an exceptional intellectual and scholar.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Hesse's works gained a cult following among the Anglo youth drawn to his philosophical perspectives on self-discovery, spirituality, and rejection of conformist society. Novels like *Siddhartha*, *Steppenwolf*, and *Demian* resonated deeply with this generation's quest for meaning beyond material pursuits. Throughout his writing, Hesse advocated the necessity for individuals to challenge norms, look inward, and undertake an inner pilgrimage to realise their true selves beyond socially imposed identities. His works seamlessly blended Western and Eastern philosophical thoughts, making him one of the most influential voices for spiritual self-exploration in modern literature.

5.1.2 *Siddhartha*

Siddhartha, published in 1922, is Hermann Hesse's celebrated novel about a man's spiritual journey of self-discovery during the time of the Buddha. Written in a lyrical style, it follows the protagonist, Siddhartha, as he experiences life's dualities - success and failure, love and loss, renunciation and indulgence. Hesse draws parallels between Siddhartha's path and that of Gautama Buddha, referred to as Gotama in the novel. An exploration of finding one's authentic self and life's true meaning, *Siddhartha* greatly influenced the 1960s counterculture generation seeking alternative philosophies beyond materialism. It remains Hesse's most influential work.

The novel portrays the character Siddhartha through life's dualities. The first part is dedicated to French writer Romain Rolland, as Hesse draws parallels between Siddhartha's path and that of Gautama Buddha. An influential exploration of self-discovery, it impacted 1960s youth. The second part is dedicated to Hesse's cousin Wilhelm Gundert. Siddhartha remains Hesse's seminal work, guiding the protagonist and readers toward finding one's authentic self and life's meaning beyond social constraints.

5.1.2.1 Summary: Part 1

Siddhartha was the son of a Hindu priest Brahmin. He and his best friend Govinda grew up learning the customs of the Brahmins. Everyone in their village loved Siddhartha. But even though he brought joy to others' lives, Siddhartha himself did not feel happy. He had restless dreams and started questioning if he had learned all that his father and the other Brahmins could teach him.

Siddhartha felt disappointed with the Brahmins because despite being enlightened, they kept seeking Nirvana, the calm state of oneness

with the Divine within, but never achieved it. He thought that if the Divine is within, one must look inwards to attain oneness with it. "It had to be found, the pristine source in one's own self, it had to be possessed! Everything else was searching, was a detour, was getting lost."

Fig. 5.1.2 A Scene from the movie *Siddhartha* (1972), based on the novel by Hermann Hesse

When Siddhartha revealed his decision to join the Samanas, a group of ascetic wanderers, his father got very angry and forbade him from going. His upset father abandoned him, occasionally peeking out the window to check on his son. But the stubborn young man sat still all night. Finally, Siddhartha's father gave in and allowed him to go, reminding him that he could return home if he became disillusioned with the Samanas. Govinda followed Siddhartha into the forest to join the Samanas. After some time with the Samanas, Siddhartha felt concerned that he was no closer to his goal than before joining them. Govinda said they had progressed spiritually but still had more to learn. In response, Siddhartha mocked the Samanas' lifestyle, comparing it to a drunkard having brief relief from life's pains. Ultimately, Siddhartha concluded one cannot learn anything from teachers or the beliefs they promote. His realisations disturbed him, but he felt convinced the Samanas had nothing more to teach him. So, Siddhartha stated he would leave the Samanas soon.

Three years after joining, Siddhartha and Govinda heard about the Buddha, an enlightened great man who taught the path to peace. Govinda immediately wanted to find the Buddha. The Samana chiefs scolded them for leaving. To show his mastery, Siddhartha hypnotised the elderly Samana teacher. Siddhartha and Govinda travelled to meet the Buddha residing at Jetavana, a place gifted by a merchant devotee. While not interested in the Buddha's teachings, Siddhartha was impressed by his presence. Govinda decided to become the Buddha's student. The next day, Govinda became a monk and bid farewell to Siddhartha. As Siddhartha was preparing to leave, he met the Buddha in the woods and questioned his teachings. Siddhartha praised the Buddha's ideas about the oneness of creation and the continuous cycle of causes and effects. But he pointed out that the Buddha's concept of transcending this cycle of causes to achieve salvation seemed contradictory.

Siddhartha reiterated his respect for the Buddha's holiness but expressed concern that no teaching could ever provide the actual experience of Nirvana. While the Buddha's path may work for some, Siddhartha insisted on finding his own way to avoid deceiving himself and attaining Nirvana before truly being ready for it. The Buddha cautioned Siddhartha to be wary of his own intellect before wishing him well on his journey.

As Siddhartha departed from the Buddha, he realised he had outgrown needing teachers. Teachers had helped him uncover the secret of his own identity. But by vigorously pursuing this sense of Self, Siddhartha had actually succeeded in losing sight of it. He had become

so preoccupied with destroying this notion of Self that he lost track of it entirely. The path to self-knowledge and understanding the Divine could not progress by listening to others' voices.

This realisation changed how Siddhartha viewed the world. Previously, he had despised the world as a terrible illusion distracting from an underlying unified truth. But now, he recognised the value of the sensory world around him. Unlike the Brahmins and Samanas, who ignored the wondrous variety of shapes and colours to reduce everything to a common essence, Siddhartha came to believe truth lay in nature's diversity rather than commonality. This understanding set Siddhartha apart from all his past associations. He was no longer a Brahmin or a Samana, nor did he wish to follow his friend Govinda as a Buddha disciple. Siddhartha was more truly himself than ever before, free from those groups and ways of thinking.

5.1.2.2 Analysis: Part 1

Siddhartha's conflicts are not easy to comprehend. Hesse does not always explain these concepts very well. In general, Siddhartha and Buddhism have Hinduism as their starting point or foundation. The image of the protagonist drawn in the novel is intended to provide the reader with enough context to understand the situation: Siddhartha is the son of a Hindu priest, a Brahmin.

Siddhartha's mission or goal in life is to work extremely hard and relentlessly toward achieving Nirvana. If Nirvana is the union with Brahman, and Brahman is the same as Atman, then the path or way to reach Nirvana must be found inside oneself or within. Siddhartha's rejection of Brahminism seems to be more than just an acknowledgement that the Brahmin way does not exactly work or suit him personally. Such universal statements or assertions may be in line with Hesse's overall message of attaining self-awareness. However, they do not accurately reflect the point of view or perspective of Hinduism.

The life story of Siddhartha is designed or structured to resemble or mirror the life of the Buddha, who is only referred to by his surname, Gotama, throughout the narrative. The Buddha was born into a royal family rather than a Brahmin family, yet he possessed exceptional brilliance, intelligence and an excellent physical form or appearance.

Siddhartha, as an ascetic, gives up or renounces everything, all of his belongings and practises mortification or severe self-discipline of the flesh or body. He abandons or leaves the Brahmins because he believes their path or way would not take him to Atman. Being free from or devoid of thirst, wants, desires, pleasure, and sadness involves disassociating oneself from the ego. Siddhartha's view or perspective of ordinary human existence is that everything lies, is deceitful, stinks of falsehoods, and is bound to rot or decay. According to Siddhartha, the road or path to the Self must be self-directed or guided by oneself.

The question arises of whether we construct or build an existence outside the ego in order to avoid pain. The Buddha emerges or appears on the scene in the middle of this disillusionment or feeling of dissatisfaction with teachers. Hesse used this example from the novel's moral framework to emphasise or highlight Siddhartha's distinguishing or unique characteristics. At the end of the chapter, Siddhartha hypnotises the elderly Samana master, emphasising his supremacy or superiority over his teachers. At every point in the text, Siddhartha is defined by his conflict between two opposing forces: sensation and cognition or intellect.

Siddhartha's quick recognition of the Buddha highlights his distinctiveness, especially compared to Govinda, who only identifies the Buddha after being told. According to Hesse, the Buddha's tranquil visage or expression was neither pleased nor sad, implying that the experience of Nirvana cannot be translated to an emotion like gladness or happiness. The Buddha's real discourse or teaching is a condensed or shortened version of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. This emphasis on pain, suffering, and the achievement of peace, as well as the removal of suffering, is crucial or essential to the novel. Siddhartha informs the Buddha that his metaphysics, or understanding of the cosmos or universe as cause and consequence, is reliable or flawless.

Siddhartha's response to the Buddha is more of a metaphysical argument about the nature of reality than an ethical argument about right and wrong. According to Hindu philosophy, the Self, which is the same as Atman, will guide us through an inner voice or intuition from within. However, the Buddha does not hold the same belief in Atman as the Hindus do. Instead, he seems to believe that human beings can be trained through certain practices and teachings to attain the state of Nirvana.
In this part of the novel, Siddhartha thinks or considers the Self to be a solitary unity distinct from the Atman substratum or foundation. He has sought or looked for that which connects him with all things rather than that which distinguishes or sets him apart. The belief that the Self is Atman requires one to identify with a reality that is wider, broader and more objective than one's personality. After this "realisation," Siddhartha resolves to learn from himself rather than searching for Atman only. This preoccupation with authenticity, with remaining loyal or true to one's uniqueness, stems from or originates from a distinctively Western perspective.

Hesse does not make things any clearer by being ambiguous or unclear about the meaning of the term "Self." Siddhartha in Hesse's novel is on a different path, as shown by the way the chapter ends. The final two paragraphs of this chapter foreshadow or hint at the ideas of European Existentialism, which came later. The feeling of terrifying isolation or loneliness goes against the deepest spiritual beliefs of Indian philosophers. It highlights how much Hesse is incorporating Western concepts and ideas into an Eastern cultural context.

5.1.2.3 Summary: Part 2

Siddhartha spends the night alone in a ferryman's cabin and dreams of suckling a woman's bosom. He will no longer place or prioritise any component or part of his existence, his mind, or his senses above the promptings or guidance of his inner voice from within. The delightful and intoxicating consequences of this dream foreshadow Siddhartha's transition to a sensual life centred on physical pleasures. Kamala, the great female archetype in the novel, symbolises the best and highest the world offers. Siddhartha can only fully appreciate this after accumulating other worldly possessions. This connection with Kamala reflects the Buddha's assertion that if anything were stronger than sexual desire, he would not have attained Nirvana.

Siddhartha goes to meet Kamaswami at Kamala's suggestion or recommendation. After some philosophical wordplay or banter, Kamaswami discovers that Siddhartha can read and write and gives him a job. Siddhartha moves into the merchant's home and learns the ins and outs and the intricate details of the business trade. Siddhartha is now a prosperous trader, yet he is uninterested in the business itself or anything else except being with Kamala. This lack of passion or enthusiasm aris-

es from a conclusion or realisation Siddhartha makes about his interpersonal relationships; the only element or aspect of his life in which he felt fully immersed or consumed was with Kamala, whom he confesses knows him better than anybody else.

The more time Siddhartha spent in the town, the more he grew distracted from his spiritual goal or path. Kamala observes that Siddhartha's frequent recollections or memories of the Buddha show that he is still a Samana at heart, which hinders or prevents him from completely enjoying his current situation or circumstances. Siddhartha eventually becomes hooked or addicted to everyday sensual life. While stimulating his senses and aligning his true Self with his everyday actions, Siddhartha lacks the sense of significance or meaning that ordinary people have, and he envies them for it.

Siddhartha eventually succumbed to or fell victim to the soul illness or spiritual sickness of the affluent, and he surrendered completely to his greed and insatiable drive to consume and possess material things. Siddhartha began gambling to demonstrate his disdain or contempt for material wealth, but the pleasure of the game itself eventually became its own reward. The stronger the drunkenness or addiction, the bigger the stakes he gambled. Siddhartha's downward spiral was eventually halted or stopped by a dream.

Earlier in the dream, Siddhartha witnesses Kamala's face showing the first signs of ageing or getting old, which triggers Siddhartha's fear of mortality and death. After waking up, Siddhartha walks to his pleasure garden and reflects on his life up to that point. Siddhartha departs the town towards the river, where he had met the ferryman earlier. He considers suicide because he is disillusioned and has lost faith in himself and the world around him. However, just before he succumbs to or gives in to a watery death by drowning, he hears the sound "Om" originating from within him. Although he ceases his attempt at self-destruction, his dilemma or inner turmoil intensifies as he realises how miserable his life has been.

When Siddhartha awakens from his slumber or sleep, he wonders if he truly died and was reborn or came back to life. He soon realises that his old friend Govinda is nearby. Govinda informs him that he pauses to watch over his slumber, and the two friends exchange a few words before Govinda returns to follow the Buddha again. Siddhartha sits by the river for a time, reflecting on his life and deciding that he was fortunate to have lived it in the way he had so far.

Siddhartha comes across Vasudeva, the ferryman who had taken him over the river at the start of Part II. As Siddhartha begins to gain the wisdom of the river, the two men grow close together over time. Years go by, and one day, the two ferrymen, Siddhartha and Vasudeva, learn that the Buddha is dying. After hearing this news, Kamala sets off with her child to be by Gotama's side as he passes away into eternity. She gets bitten by a snake when she settles down to rest in the jungle, and the neighbouring Vasudeva comes to her rescue. Kamala, who is dying, introduces Siddhartha to his son. She dies feeling peaceful after realising that Siddhartha has finally achieved the inner calm he desired.

Siddhartha keeps his son by the river after Kamala's death. Months pass, but the boy remains stubbornly defiant and refuses to acknowledge Siddhartha as his father. Eventually, the boy runs away, leaving Siddhartha devastated. Over time, Siddhartha accepts that he cannot prevent his son from living his own life.

One day, Siddhartha's anguish becomes so unbearable that he sets out on a desperate search for his son. However, he halts when he hears the river mocking him. Gazing into the river, he sees his own father, whom he had abandoned long ago, and realises that unresolved suffering will inevitably recur. Initially, Siddhartha hears only voices of sadness, but they are soon joined by voices of joy. Eventually, all the voices merge into the tremendous primordial sound of "Om." Siddhartha's suffering subsides as he realises the oneness of all these voices, and his individual Self blends into this unity. Recognising Siddhartha's great spiritual accomplishment, Vasudeva retreats into the woods to pass away, joining the oneness he had helped Siddhartha attain after his long journey.

Govinda, still feeling restless and unsatisfied after all his years of searching, seeks to meet with the ferryman, who is said to be a wise guru. The ferryman, who is Siddhartha, recognises Govinda right away, while Govinda does not recognise him at first. Govinda informs Siddhartha about his failure to locate what he has been looking for so long. Siddhartha tells Govinda that he does not discover it because he focuses too intensely on the quest itself. When Siddhartha eventually calls out Govinda's name, Govinda finally recognises his old friend. Relieved to be reunited after such a long time apart, Govinda spends the night at Siddhartha's hut.

The following day, Govinda asks Siddhartha to explain the beliefs and principles by which he now lives. Siddhartha shares that he has learned from the interconnectedness of all things in the universe that everything is good. Everything is essential and requires only his acceptance, consent, and loving understanding. Although much of what Siddhartha says perplexes Govinda, he is convinced that his old friend has become a truly spiritual man. As Govinda prepares to depart, he requests assistance and guidance from Siddhartha. Siddhartha instructs him to kiss his forehead. When Govinda does so, he does not see Siddhartha's face but instead witnesses a continuous stream of various faces replacing Siddhartha's.

5.1.2.4 Analysis: Part II

According to Hesse, Siddhartha envies ordinary people because he lacks the sense of importance or significance with which they live their lives, the depth of their pleasures and sufferings, and the worried but sweet contentment that comes from their never-ending ability to love. This appears to suggest, in an ironic way, that his flaw or shortcoming in this aspect was that he did not allow himself enough time to live and truly experience this worldly life. While he tried to indulge his senses, Siddhartha retained enough of his detached and reflective self to feel guilty about his actions. What might be harmless or good for others felt awful and unpleasant to Siddhartha. His fascination with the game of dice symbolises the Hindu cycle of death and rebirth known as Samsara.

Siddhartha's sickening involvement in the "senseless loop" of Samsara signals his readiness to leave it behind and attain Nirvana. In Hindu cosmology, Samsara is not entirely evil; it is a phase through which humans pass until they recognise their true essence. Siddhartha's dream about the bird foreshadows the chapter's conclusion when Kamala releases the bird. However, the dream and reality differ significantly. In the dream, the bird dies and is discarded by Siddhartha, symbolising his surrender to the force of death. In reality, Kamala, symbolising the material world, must free Siddhartha; he cannot liberate himself from its constraints.

Interestingly, despite his strong dislike or antipathy to teachers and instructors, Siddhartha feels a strong desire or urge to learn from the river. This learning process is shown early in the chapter when Siddhartha recalls the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus' observations on never being able to walk into the same river twice. It is fascinating that Siddhartha feels such a deep connection with and respect for Vasudeva, especially considering the latter's shyness and overall inability to express himself verbally or through words. Vasudeva serves as a counterpoint or contrast to the river's many voices, showing the inability or limitation of individuals and words to educate or impart wisdom truly.

Siddhartha comes to appreciate the oneness or unity of all things in the universe in a way he never has before while meditating on the river. Soon, Siddhartha is overpowered by the serenity of timelessness and perfect existence, which Vasudeva experiences and embodies. The juxtaposition or placing side-by-side of these occurrences emphasises Siddhartha's resemblance or similarities to the Buddha himself. Additionally, Kamala's death triggers memories of the first time Siddhartha noticed signs of ageing on her face.

Siddhartha's meeting with a younger and more fiery or stormier version of himself is represented by his son, Young Siddhartha. He senses the boy's power but realises that it is aimed for or directed towards a worldly material life, the same kind of life that nearly drove Siddhartha himself to suicide earlier. Siddhartha was taught as a child the folly or futility of a worldly life driven by possessions. Still, he needed to actually live that kind of life himself in order to understand the lesson properly. The same could be said or stated about his son's life experiences as well.

Apart from that, the emergence or appearance of Siddhartha's son is significant because it allows Siddhartha to experience the one essential component of worldly human life that has escaped him until now - the emotion of love. And because this feeling of love appears to come from the very depths of his soul, Siddhartha feels compelled to listen to it and follow its guidance. Siddhartha's encounter with genuine love is essential because it marks Siddhartha's final stumbling block or hurdle on the path to Nirvana's unbreakable serenity and inner peace. The boy's flight across the river and to the nearby town also highlights his resemblance or similarities to his father, who took the same physical and metaphorical voyage to the material world before him years earlier.

Personal desires cause suffering and can only be removed by expanding our awareness beyond desire. Siddhartha was able to connect with the oneness of humans through suffering. He did not understand or share their beliefs and opinions, but he did share their basic desires and impulses of existence. Ironically, the frustration of desire made him very aware of its power. The river seemed to laugh at Siddhartha because he was still resisting his pain and had not yet accepted suffering as part of life's oneness.

Focusing solely on either sadness or joy misses the whole that created the perfect unity of "Om," which represents perfection. This is a complex idea, as you would expect for any path to salvation. This leads to his fourth lesson: everything that exists is good since it is all part of Brahman's perfect oneness. Siddhartha's fifth lesson is ethical, stemming from his belief that everything exists for a reason: love everything.

Govinda notes the similarities between Buddha and Siddhartha after hearing Siddhartha's teachings, and we are definitely meant to see

the two as almost identical at this point. (It raises the question of why Hesse chose Siddhartha as his main character instead of Gotama) When Govinda kisses Siddhartha, he has a similar experience to Siddhartha at the river. Govinda sees in Siddhartha's face what Siddhartha heard from the river: the diversity of the world shown as a vast oneness.

In the end, the question remains: how interconnected are Siddhartha's metaphysical and ethical arguments? Must we embrace reincarnation, the oneness of all Being, and the illusion of time to accept Siddhartha's ethics of self-determination and love? Perhaps we should follow Siddhartha's example and determine for ourselves the significance of Indian religion and philosophy in the story: everyone should reach their own conclusion.

5.1.2.5 Character Analysis

Siddhartha

The protagonist of the novel is Siddhartha, portrayed as a restless spirit on a quest for learning and enlightenment. Initially, he believes that a life of spiritual practice and introspection will lead him to Nirvana. However, realising the limitations of this path, he turns to a worldly and hedonistic existence, only to find it unsatisfying as well. Ultimately, Siddhartha achieves enlightenment by skillfully synthesising the teachings of cognition with the lessons of the senses.

Govinda

Govinda is depicted as Siddhartha's loyal friend who unquestioningly follows him. Unlike Siddhartha, he does not question life or its conditions. Govinda believes that following Siddhartha will lead to sainthood. Initially choosing to stay as a disciple to Gotama, the Buddha, when Siddhartha departs, Govinda later becomes Siddhartha's disciple after Siddhartha attains Nirvana. He sees Siddhartha as a source of wisdom and guidance. While Siddhartha is portrayed as a trailblazer and leader, Govinda is portrayed as a blind follower lacking creativity. Ultimately, Govinda expresses gratitude to Siddhartha for persuading him to pursue enlightenment.

Gotama, the Buddha

Gotama, the fictional version of Buddha, is indeed the historical founder of Buddhism. He was initially followed by Siddhartha and Govinda. However, Siddhartha later decides that Gotama's path is not suitable for him. He believes there is a world beyond Gotama's conception of Nirvana. Siddhartha rejects Gotama's teachings based on his belief that attaining Nirvana does not always necessitate abandoning everything. He sees Gotama's idea of renunciation as unnecessary for achieving enlightenment.

Kamala

Kamala is the courtesan Siddhartha meets on his life journey. She teaches him the art of love and embodies the enlightening aspect of a sensual existence. While she embraces the material world, Kamala also possesses a spiritual side that draws her to Buddha. Even after her passing, she leaves behind a symbol of her love: her son, little Siddhartha, named after his father, who serves as a reminder of her affection.

Vasudeva

Vasudeva works as a ferry driver, and Siddhartha is drawn to him by his calm demeanour and mastery over the water. Despite being shy and illiterate, Vasudeva is a great listener and teaches Siddhartha through his actions. He guides Siddhartha to listen to the wisdom of the river, which ultimately leads both Vasudeva and Siddhartha to enlightenment.

Kamaswami

Kamaswami is the merchant for whom Siddhartha works while in town. Under Kamaswami's guidance, Siddhartha learned business methods and became acquainted with the importance of money and material possessions. Kamaswami is astute but impatient, and Siddhartha gains valuable insights into the world of commerce through his interactions with him.

Young Siddhartha

Young Siddhartha is Siddhartha's son, and after his mother Kamala's death, he goes to live with his father beside the river. However, like his father, he is obstinate and arrogant, refusing to accept the humble life of a ferryman. Despite his flaws, Siddhartha deeply loves his son and is devastated when he runs away. This love becomes Siddhartha's final obstacle on his path to enlightenment.

Recap

- Siddhartha rejects societal norms for spiritual quest
- Explores paths of Brahmins, Samanas, and Buddha
- Juxtaposes spiritual and material pursuits
- Kamala represents sensual and spiritual aspects
- Govinda's unwavering friendship and discipleship
- Siddhartha's son - embodiment of worldly desires
- River as a teacher and symbol
- Synthesis of Eastern and Western thought
- Personal and philosophical growth through experiences
- Dualities of mind and body, asceticism and indulgence
- Acceptance of life's diverse experiences for enlightenment
- Symbolism of characters representing different paths
- Influence of Hindu, Buddhist, and Western philosophies
- Siddhartha's ultimate self-realisation and oneness with nature
- Hesse's portrayal of an individual's journey towards self-discovery

Objective Questions

1. Who is the author of the novel *Siddhartha*?
2. What was Siddhartha's initial aim in life?
3. What was Govinda's relationship with Siddhartha?
4. Which character represents the spiritual and sensual aspects of life?

5. What does the river symbolise in the novel?
6. Which character does Siddhartha's son represent?
7. What philosophical concept does the novel explore through dualities?
8. Which Eastern philosophies are prominent in the novel?
9. What is the significance of Siddhartha's name?
10. Which Western philosophical influence is evident in the novel?

Answers

1. Herman Hesse
2. Enlightenment
3. Friend
4. Kamala
5. Teacher
6. Worldliness
7. Self-discovery
8. Hinduism/Buddhism
9. Protagonist
10. Existentialism

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BLOCK - 06

Novel

Unit 1

Zorba the Greek
- Nikos Kazantzakis

Learning Outcomes

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

- analyse the themes of existentialism, masculinity, and the human condition in *Zorba the Greek*.
- compare and contrast the characters of Zorba and the narrator in terms of their philosophies and approaches to life.
- evaluate the use of symbolism and archetypes in the novel, particularly regarding women and religion.
- examine the novel's exploration of friendship, ageing, and the search for meaning in life.

Prerequisites

Modern Greek literature has emerged as a dynamic and multifaceted artistic expression, combining together Greece's rich cultural heritage with contemporary perspectives and global influences. This literary tradition stands as a testament to the resilience and creativity of the Greek people, reflecting their struggles, aspirations, and ever-evolving identity.

At its core, modern Greek literature is deeply rooted in the nation's ancient literary legacy, drawing inspiration from the timeless works of Homer, Sophocles, and other classical greats. This connection to the past is not merely a nostalgic homage but a continuous dialogue with the enduring themes and storytelling traditions that have shaped Greek culture for millennia. However, modern Greek writers have not been content to echo the voices of the past merely; instead, they have boldly forged new paths, addressing the complexities and challenges of the modern world. From the upheavals of the Greek War of Independence to the tumultuous events of the 20th century, these authors have explored the profound social, political, and existential questions that have defined the Greek experience.

One of the most celebrated figures in modern Greek literature is Nikos Kazantzakis, whose masterpiece *Zorba the Greek* has become a global phenomenon. Kazantzakis' work seamlessly blends philosophical depth with a celebration of life's sensual pleasures, embodying the Greek spirit's duality. Other notable authors, such as Odysseas Elytis, Giorgos Seferis, and Constantine P. Cavafy, have contributed to the richness of this literary tradition, each bringing their unique perspectives and styles to the fore.

What distinguishes modern Greek literature is its ability to transcend borders and resonate with universal human experiences. While deeply rooted in Greek culture, these works explore themes of identity, love, loss, and the search for meaning – themes that resonate across cultures and generations. This universality has allowed modern Greek literature to find a global audience, with translations and adaptations introducing these works to readers around the world.

Moreover, modern Greek literature has embraced a diversity of voices and perspectives, reflecting the multifaceted nature of Greek society. From urban narratives to rural tales, from feminist explorations to LGBTQ+ perspectives, this literary tradition has combined threads of various experiences and identities.

In recent decades, a new generation of Greek writers has emerged, pushing the boundaries of literary expression and tackling contemporary issues with boldness and creativity. These authors are not only shaping the literary landscape within Greece but also contributing to the global literary discourse, ensuring that the voice of modern Greek literature continues to be heard and celebrated.

As Greece navigates the complexities of the 21st century, its literary tradition remains a vital force, serving as a mirror to the nation's evolving identity and a window to its rich cultural heritage.

Keywords

Existentialism, masculinity, friendship, ageing, symbolism, archetypes, philosophy, human condition.

Discussion

6.1.1 About the Author: Nikos Kazantzakis

Nikos Kazantzakis was a brilliant and prolific Greek writer whose works have had a profound impact on modern literature. Born in 1883 in Crete, which was still part of the Ottoman Empire, Kazantzakis' early life was shaped by the struggle for Greek independence on the island. This experience fed his passionate beliefs in liberty and the exploration of the human spirit, which became central themes throughout his writing.

Kazantzakis was a true Renaissance man, producing an incredible range of literary forms over his career. His works include deep philosophical essays that grapple with life's biggest questions, travelogues from his global adventures, tragedies in the classic Greek style, and modern Greek translations of immortal works like Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust*. He even took on the epic form itself, crafting the 33,333-line *Odyssey* as a sequel to Homer's original.

Fig. 6.1.1 Níkos Kazantzákis

However, Kazantzakis is most renowned for his stirring and life-affirming novels that have become 20th-century classics. Principal among these is the beloved *Zorba the Greek* (1946), which introduces one of literature's most vibrant and memorable characters. The roguish yet profound Zorba opens the narrator's eyes to the beauty and passion of truly living life to the fullest. Their deep friendship and philosophical musings make for an unforgettable tale.

Other signature Kazantzakis novels include the historical saga *Freedom or Death* (1950), which portrays the Cretan revolt against Ottoman oppression. *The Greek Passion* (1954) is a fictionalised account of Christ's final days and last temptation. His most controversial work, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1955), offered a brilliant but disturbing psychological study of Jesus' internal struggles as a human deity.

Kazantzakis' talents extended beyond the written word. Many of his extraordinary novels, like *Zorba the Greek* and *The Greek Passion*, have been adapted into critically acclaimed films that introduced his humane and life-embracing worldview to global audiences. His simple yet richly profound stories connect with readers and viewers across cultures. Radical for his era yet deeply rooted in Greek traditions, Kazantzakis was truly a Renaissance man who revolutionised 20th-century literature with his daring philosophical novels and epics bursting with boundless vitality.

6.1.2 *Zorba the Greek*

Zorba the Greek, published in 1946, is one of the most beloved and celebrated novels of the 20th century. Written by the Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis, it tells the unforgettable story of an unlikely friendship between two very different men. The narrator is an un-

named young Greek intellectual and writer. Although highly educated, the narrator lives a reserved and sheltered life disconnected from the earthy realities of the world. All this changes when he meets the elderly Alexis Zorba, a crude yet magnetic man who embraces every moment with passion and zest for living.

The narrator hires the lively Zorba to be his foreman as he tries to reopen an old mine on the island of Crete. What starts as a simple business deal becomes something much deeper. Zorba, with his wisdom and life experiences, helps the narrator, who is quite bookish, to appreciate the simple joys and truths he has been missing. Through his unique personality and unconventional philosophies, Zorba teaches the reserved intellectual narrator how to live truly. He encourages the latter to seize opportunities for adventure, enjoy life's pleasures, and face challenges with enthusiasm and determination. Their journey together, filled with romances, encounters, and lively celebrations, transforms both men.

In *Zorba the Greek*, Kazantzakis created one of fiction's great characters - a charismatic figure whose intense zest for life inspires us to break free from our self-imposed limitations. It's a joyful, touching, and life-affirming story about the beauty and importance of following your passions.

6.1.2.1 Detailed Summary

Zorba the Greek is narrated by a young Greek man, an intellectual who sets out on a journey of self-discovery. The novel is told in 26 chapters using a first-person point of view, following the experiences and perspectives of its narrator. Like the original work, this summary also uses first-person narration.

Chapters 1-5

The first time I met Zorba was in a cafe near the port of Piraeus, Greece. It was early morning, and I was waiting for a ship to Crete. I was leaving behind my life as a writer to live in Crete among workers and peasants, running a lignite mine. I was reminded of the time I parted ways with an old friend. We had an emotionally charged conversation and promised to telepathically alert the other if one of us was in danger of death. My friend called me a "bookworm" as he went on his way. This upset me at the moment.

An older man interrupted me as I was trying to read Dante, and asked whether he could accompany me to Crete. He offered to cook for me. The man, named Alexis Zorba, was charming and quite straightforward. He began to speak quite passionately about his love for playing the string instrument known as Santuri. He emphasised that he could only play when he desired so, and not for the sake of obligation.

Aboard the ship, Zorba recounted his free-spirited and adventurous life. He appeared to take pleasure in the many joys around him, including drinking, eating, and dancing. I noticed that a part of his index finger was missing. Zorba explained that he willingly cut it off because it got in the way of making pottery. He argued that anything that interfered with a man's choice to do what he wants should be removed. We had a philosophical conversation about the true nature of freedom.

Upon arriving at Crete, Zorba interacted with all kinds of people, including beggars. We had a drink at a cafe and decided to stay at the lodge of a widow named Madame Hortense. She wore thick makeup and garish attire and was eccentric-looking. The lodge itself was rather strange and dingy. We turned in for the night there.

I woke up refreshed and headed for a walk by

the sea. Some girls there seemed intimidated by my sight. I sat down and began to read Dante. Zorba announced his arrival with a laugh. He advised me to eat and not neglect my body. We returned to the hotel, where the Madame had made them a big meal. They invited her to dine with them and insisted on the same. Upon becoming more and more drunk, we began to find that the Madame was extremely beautiful. Zorba even began to act flirtatiously towards her. She spoke openly about her past as a young woman who journeyed on a ship with Cretan revolutionaries and her job as a cabaret singer. We continued to talk well into the day until I took leave of their company. Zorba and the madame slept together that night.

The next morning, we spoke about the Madame. Zorba had realised that she was fretful, and we needed to be careful not to hurt her feelings and self-esteem. Despite being 65, he admitted to being crazy after women and wanting to pursue them. I thought back to a time when I was at an art gallery and met a young woman. We bonded over one of Rodin's sculptures, "The Hand of God". However, she walked away abruptly when I became too philosophical in my discussion. This is a regret of mine to this date.

Over the course of a short time, Zorba assumed charge of directing the work at the mine. I began to pay him for this. This reminds me of the way that my Cretan grandfather would take in strangers and feed them in exchange for their adventurous and colourful stories. In a similar manner, Zorba regaled me with his life stories over dinner. Zorba became upset with me for spending my time talking with the workers at the mine. He felt that this was distracting their progress. In reality, I had a utopian vision of a spiritual community of workers supported by their work in the mine. I had not revealed this to Zorba yet.

Fig. 6.1.2 A scene from the movie *Zorba the Greek* (1964), directed by Michael Cacoyannis, based on the novel by Kazantzakis

Every Sunday, we continued to dine with Madame Hortense. On one of these occasions, I told Zorba about my plan. He found it to be quite ridiculous and warned me that encouraging equality among workers would only lead them to take advantage of me. He proclaimed that he believed in nothing, not men or God. I was offended and concluded that I must become more engaged in the world of men rather than with metaphysical concerns.

One day, Zorba and I went to visit Uncle Anagnosti, a village elder. He told us a story about his birth. His father had gone to a relic of the Virgin Mary and cursed her for the difficult childbirth his mother was experiencing. The relic, then, shook. Anagnosti's father returned home to find his wife delivering the child, Anagnosti. But, as punishment for his father's disrespect towards the Virgin Mary, Anagnosti had been born half-deaf.

Zorba was horrified to learn that they were castrating pigs because they were considered a delicacy. Later, after we left, Zorba complained about the poor way Anagnosti treated his wife. He was also bothered by the fact that they were harming an animal to satisfy themselves. He pointed out that this was an

example of how futile it was to try to open people's eyes. Zorba considered people to be set in their ways and unable to change. But he held out the possibility that they could be changed by being offered a better way of life, as opposed to the darkness to which they are used. I knew that they could be shown a better way, but I could not express how.

We went back to the hut and watched the stars in silence. I felt that Zorba was wise because he is attuned to the Earth and his own body. He went to sleep while I meditated by the sea. After I returned to the hut, I wrote passionately about the philosophical revelations that I had drawn from the Buddha. I fell asleep atop my own manuscript.

Chapters 6-10

I woke up in the morning feeling uninterested in the manuscript. I spent the day in a relaxed and meditative state. As time went on, it became Zorba's duty to work in the mine, come home, and prepare dinner for the two of us. One evening, Zorba appeared to be quite upset about something. So, I asked him, and he revealed that he wanted encouragement that they were proceeding in the right direction with the work. I submitted that it was not about the mine but about the enjoyment of life and the carrying of "ideas into effect". This gave Zorba such relief and happiness that he started to dance maniacally. The next morning, Zorba came up with a new plan to set up an overhead cable to transport wood to sell.

He worked whilst I read a Buddhist work. By the time he came back home, he was excited about the planned improvement. In his happiness, he tried to play the Santuri, but it wouldn't cooperate with him. He didn't want to force the instrument. Zorba and I began to talk and joke about Madame Hortense and Zorba's women-loving grandfather. He refused to reveal how many times he had been married. Instead, he spoke about several affairs he had with women and how committed relationships were a bore to him.

Zorba talked about his affairs with two different Russian women. The second of these is with a woman named Noussa, with whom he spent six months. He recounts this time as a significant part of his life. However, the relationship came to an end when Noussa eloped with a handsome soldier. It left him heartbroken. However, the experience also encouraged and strengthened Zorba, as it taught him to fear nothing. I noticed how touched and passionate Zorba seemed when he spoke.

The next day was rainy. I sat outside my hut and felt an unexplained sorrow rising from the earth. I wrote a letter to my old friend who was exiled in the Caucasus, the same one who had called me a 'bookworm'. In the letter, I told him about my project in Crete, where I played the role of a capitalist. I also acknowledged the fact that his calling me a 'bookworm' insulted me and that it was the reason for my decision to live a more grounded and practical life. I conveyed that I saw life in a new way, given my new locale and settings. Afterwards, Zorba commented that I should burn all of my books. I agreed with him but felt unable to act on this. We went out in the heavy rainfall to the village cafe. There, we met Anagnosti and others. A man named Sfakianonikoli was narrating the story of his recent trip to Candia.

During this time, Mimiko, the village 'simpleton', brought the news that Sourmelina had lost one of her ewes. Soon, we saw her run by. The widow was an attractive woman who caught the attention of both Zorba and me. The rain stopped, and Zorba seemed anxious about leaving. We followed Mimiko to the widow's house, where he was to dine. Upon

our asking, Mimiko began to speak about his life. His days went by, and he did odd jobs, and he had no desire to marry and settle down.

Zorba advised me to pursue Sourmelina, as she was certainly a blessing from the 'god-devil'. Though I too felt attracted to her, I would much prefer to read a love story than fall in love. Once we approached the widow's house, I walked past without going inside. This annoyed Zorba greatly. Once we got home, he played his Santuri. The story he told was about how he did not sleep with a woman when he had the chance. This, in his opinion, was a bigger sin than adultery or robbery.

Over the next few days, Zorba dedicated himself to the work in the mine and to planning the cable railway. He felt that this would bring great wealth. Once, he worked overtime and came back home late at night. He was in a strange mood and asked whether god was real. Zorba considered God to be similar to him, only stronger and crazier. He imagined God holding a sponge, cleansing the sins of souls, instead of wielding a sword. He revealed that he has been going at night to the widow's house to see if she has been meeting up with any men. This was not because he wanted to be in a relationship with her but rather because he was concerned that she might be lonely.

I felt a sense that something was happening and showed up earlier than usual at the mine. Zorba himself was feeling uneasy because the props leading into the mine did not seem to be steady. He was bothered by my presence. I watched him become absorbed in his tasks. However, he suddenly asked everybody to get out of the gallery as it was about to collapse. Everyone got out just in time, just before its collapse, and were grateful not to have died. Yet, Zorba was angry that the men had left their instruments inside.

After the collapse, I was haunted by thoughts about the widow and her beautiful form. She was the 'evil one' whose thoughts needed to be kept away. So, I focused on my Buddhist texts without much success. Once again, on Christmas Eve, Zorba suggested that I pursue the widow, but I refused. He argued that sleeping alone was bad for the 'energy'. Instead, we attended the church service and had dinner at Madame Hortense's home. Throughout the week, as the festivities continued, I felt melancholic and began to consider the purpose of my life as well as the wrongs I had committed. Particularly, I thought back to a time when I tried to help a butterfly hatch. Instead, I ended up making its wings deformed, eventually killing it. This moment has been on my conscience ever since, and it made me realise that it is sinful to force my will on nature.

Chapters 11-15

I woke up on New Year's Day feeling happy, but this changed as I walked around the village. I saw the widow suddenly and was mesmerised by her appearance. Yet, I was frozen with fear at the thought of talking to her. I felt inadequate as a man because I could not sleep with her, which is what a true man would do. Later on, thinking about the spring season coming after the winter scenes made me feel joyful.

Zorba came and invited me to lunch at Madame Hortense's house. We chatted about the widow on the way there. He presented her with a gift — a drawing of her as a beautiful siren surrounded by four battleships. They sat down to eat, but the madame was in a dark mood. She reflected on the ups and downs of her life. Zorba, to encourage her to eat, made a toast to her good health. He told her of a doctor who could provide a medicine that would restore her youth, and she became intrigued. She spoke about her earlier days of adventure

and slowly went off to sleep. Zorba and I left, discussing how women were created as a devilish temptation in the Garden of Eden. We returned to our hut and fell asleep.

I spent the next day discovering that a book of poetry by Mallarme, which once touched me deeply, felt cold and lifeless for the first time. I recognised how intellectual the art of this age is. Even Buddha, whom I studied so deeply, is the emblem of the pure but lifeless 'last man' leading people into an absence of being. I began to write aggressively.

Zorba returned, claiming to have found a new angle in the mine. This was good news as our funds were becoming low. He said he would go to Candia to purchase more supplies. I told him not to be away for more than three days, while Madame asked him not to forget about her as he rode off on a mule.

Later that day, I received mails from Karayannis, an old student of mine, and my exiled friend in the Caucasus. Karayannis, who had moved to Northern Africa, scolded me for not visiting him and for becoming a typical cafe intellectual. Reading it, I felt the desire to immediately leave Crete and explore as much of the world as possible. The second letter from my old friend told me that he was quite busy attempting to help refugees in the Caucasus. It was a dangerous situation, and my friend felt that this may be his last letter. He went on to say that he loves me.

Days went by without news from Zorba. On the sixth day, I received a hastily written letter from him. In it, he discussed his carefree attitude and suggested that the only thing that mattered to him was the fact that he was alive. He was afraid of old age but not death. He described this as an inner battle between two sides of himself. Zorba went into a long story. He had met a woman in a bar in Candia. That was the reason for his long absence. He had spent a large amount of my money on his new lover. But he promised to make up for it. He assured me that business would still be taken care of.

I felt a mixture of anger, amusement, and admiration for Zorba's untiring pursuit of life's substance. I sent a hurried telegram asking him to return at once. Then I went to Madame Hortense. She was becoming quite dejected in Zorba's absence. I told her an alternative story. I told her that Zorba misses her and wants to marry her. Madame Hortense was consoled by my words. She began to plan the wedding. This made me feel great pity for her. Suddenly, there was a great commotion. Mimiko informed me that Pavli, son of Mavradoni, had drowned himself out of heartbreak. It was apparently the widow who had caused this. I asked the people around Pavli's corpse how they could blame the widow for his actions, but no one answered. Uncle Anagnosti thought the suicide was fortunate for Pavli, sparing him a miserable life with the widow. I was surprised by his insensitivity. Later, Mimiko brought me oranges from the widow, who wanted to thank me for defending her. I felt joyful.

One day, I ran into an old couple and their daughter. They were making their way to church. The old man and I spoke about many things, including the lignite business. He advised me not to be too concerned about my profits. He said my soul would go to paradise no matter what. At the church, I listened to the hymns. Later, as I walked around in darkness, I began to reflect. I reflected on the temporality of life on Earth. It was important to embrace worldly life. Everything else was only distractions and empty promises. As a schoolboy, I once read a story about a beautiful world that

exists inside a well. After reading it, I tried to dive headfirst into a well. But I was caught by my mother. This was exactly like the other times when I was on the verge of falling into the ideology of Buddhism, but I was rescued by my meeting with Zorba.

Chapters 16 - 21

Zorba ultimately left Candia after spending twelve days there. I attempted to portray anger. I wanted to chastise Zorba for his negligence. But in reality, I was delighted to see the man. Both Madame Hortense and I received the instruments and presents that Zorba had brought. However, he was not pleased with the deception that I pulled on Madame Hortense. He warned me not to play with women's emotions. After this, I felt regretful about my actions. Later, outside under the starlight, Zorba performed his santuri for them. The following day at the mine, Zorba's rekindled passion invigorated the other workers. In the meantime, I lost myself in a book on strong Tibetan monks. Afterwards, I felt once more as though I was being swallowed by the phantoms of ideas. At the end of the day, I told Zorba that he needed to concentrate more on his work, as the monks do.

This enraged Zorba, who felt like his recent actions were being scrutinised. After a brief argument, we cooked dinner together. Madame Hortense was on her way to meet Zorba. I heard her approach and sneaked away. We also decided that we must get authorisation from the monks to use their land to prepare our cable railway. The following morning, Zorba forced me to get up early to visit the monastery. On the way there, we met Zaharia, who was haunted by the voice of Christ. He had a split personality, a devil named Joseph who lived inside him. We stopped to eat. Zaharia ate vegetarian food as himself and meat and alcohol as Joseph. He declared that he became a monk because of poverty, not saintliness.

Upon reaching the monastery, we met Father Demetrios. He was obsessed with a small statuette of a half-naked nun and believed there might be a diamond hidden inside it. Zorba and I were taken aback by the monks' worldliness and competitiveness. Zorba suggested their abstinence was the main reason for their obsession.

Zorba had a scheme to get the monks' land at half price. He intended to make up for his careless spending in Candia with the lowered price. We stayed there for the night but were woken by a revolver shot. We met the bishop, who shared three theories about flowers, ideas and eternity. Later, Zaharia took them to the cemetery and showed them the young monk shot by Father Demetrios. He talked about his desire to burn down the monastery. Afterwards, we got their papers signed and left feeling shaken.

Returning home, we met Madame Hortense, who was rather unhappy. She enquired about when Zorba would marry her. Feeling bad for her, Zorba lied about having made wedding preparations. She presented him with rings. Feeling under pressure, he agreed to the engagement. Zorba joked about feeling like the God Zeus in his quest to ensure no woman is disappointed. Later, reminiscing about his war service in Macedonia, Zorba denounced the animal behaviour of fellow men. He expressed regret about the cruelty he inflicted on others. I realised that these were the issues that I had been struggling with indirectly.

We prepared for a ritual to bless the new cable railway project. The priest, mine workers, and locals would attend. Then, Zorba spent the whole day working without pause.

On Easter day, we arranged a grand reception for Madame Hortense at the beach. However, since she had a cold, we ended up eating and

drinking alone. Afterwards, an excited Zorba went off to town for dancing. But I felt compelled to go elsewhere by my body. I arrived at the widow's door, and she let me into her house. I returned home at dawn and went to sleep. In my dream, I tried to enter the cave of a giant goddess. Thinking about the pleasures of the previous night, I concluded that the soul is also made up of flesh. I went for a swim in the sea and then finished reading my Buddhist manuscript. I felt as though a chapter of my life was over.

Later, as I went to Madame Hortense's house, she was more ill than earlier. I ordered Mimiko to call a doctor.

Chapters 22-26

Later, I headed out to a village dance. When the widow arrived, the lively scene came to a halt. Everyone surrounded the widow and started to curse at her. She was soon cornered by people and begged for mercy. I tried to intervene but fell over. A group of men, led by Mavrandoni and Manolakas, surrounded the widow with knives out. Suddenly, Zorba appeared and tried to stop the murder, calling them disgraceful. A terrible fight ensued between Zorba and Manolakas. Zorba tried to help the widow escape, but Mavrandoni cut off her head with his knife. Zorba and I fled from the scene, feeling shock and sorrow.

Zorba came to the conclusion that there is no justice in the world and that God's ways are unfair. He left for a walk in the mountains while I attempted to deal with my emotions. Zorba focused entirely on his work, in a dark mood, for the next few days. He refused to talk about the widow. When he received news of Madame Hortense's serious illness, he visited her briefly. He told me that she was going to die. One night, he went out. I followed him, only to break up a fight between him and Manolakas. I convinced both men to forgive each other.

Madame Hortense was on her deathbed. She was in a bad state, moaning with pain. She exclaimed that she did not want to die. The villagers had already gathered in her yard so they could plunder her belongings. The madame found a cross and began praying to Christ, upon which she felt her burdens and fears lifting. Upon her death, the entire village made a feast outside her house whilst people kept coming in and trying to steal whatever they could from her house. Zorba, too, said his final goodbye to the Madame and took her pet parrot with him. I tried to comfort him, saying that death is universal, but Zorba was not consoled by this.

We went home but were unable to sleep. Zorba asked me why people die, a question to which I was ashamed not to know the answer. He demanded to know where people came from and where they were going. I managed to say that the point of life is "sacred awe". Zorba admitted that he thinks of death all the time and that he doesn't fear it but does not like it either. I felt a transformation within me as I began to drift off to sleep.

The following days, Zorba worked at the mine and finished installing the cable railway. There was a great silence, in which I started to ask questions about the human soul. Later, I visited Madame Hortense's hostel and found her old shoe still holding the shape of her foot. This sight moved me. I accused Zorba of forgetting Madame Hortense. Zorba went on to explain that he doesn't dwell on the past but exists fully in the present.

On the eve of the first of May, the cable railway was completed and unveiled to the public. Zorba told everyone that he was assisted

by the Holy Virgin in this feat. Suddenly, six monks from the monastery appeared and told everyone of Zaharia's burning down of the building. They were astonished to find his body at the foot of the Virgin icon, with blood on her lance. It was clear to me that this was Zorba's work.

Disaster struck as the railway was about to be unveiled at last. The entire structure swayed, setting fire to the first pine tree. Zorba tried to assure everyone that this was an accident. But this kept repeating. The fourth trunk released a shower of sparks that injured a few villagers and scared everyone away. Soon, Zorba and I were the only people left on the beach. We had lamb and wine and talked to lighten our mood after this massive failure. Suddenly, I asked Zorba to teach me to dance, and Zorba happily obliged; he taught me a military dance. I felt my spirit soar. Watching my friend dance, I felt great admiration for his endurance and agility. We were able to laugh about the cable railway and fall asleep on the beach in each other's arms.

I arose at dawn and went for a walk on the beach, feeling happy. Even though I had lost everything my money and business prospects I felt more joy than ever. I received a letter from my friend Stavridaki, who found his own happiness through duty. Later, having climbed the top of a mountain and fallen asleep there, I had a disturbing dream of Stavridaki dying. Remembering our pact to inform each other telepathically if one has died, I was sure something had happened to my friend and ran down the mountain in a panic. However, by the time I reached the bottom, I recognised these fears as my own inner anxiety encroaching on my happiness.

The day came when Zorba and I went our separate ways. I was going out of the country to work on my writing. I promised that we would reunite to build a monastery, but Zorba felt that this was only a lie. This hurt my feelings, and Zorba apologised. We saw a shooting star, which prompted Zorba to launch into an old song. I left the following day and never saw Zorba again. I found out shortly afterwards that Stavridaki had died from pneumonia. Zorba and I exchanged a few letters over the years. Once, Zorba invited me to join him on a journey. But I listened to human logic, and not impulse, and declined. That night, I was haunted by the presence of Stavridaki, who visited me at night.

Zorba, too, visited me in my dreams. I sensed that perhaps he was soon to leave this world behind. I was thus inspired to retell the full history of my time with Zorba. As I finished the manuscript, I received a letter informing me of the passing of Zorba. Zorba had requested that I inherit his santuri.

6.1.2.2 Critical Analysis

If there is a broad philosophy that this narrative emphasises, it is existentialism. Existentialism holds that life has no predetermined and intrinsic meaning that must be followed. The narrator and Zorba converse almost continuously throughout the book about morality, God, and the nature of life.

While Zorba, an uneducated and agnostic man, chooses to spend his time fervently savouring the present moment by revelling in dance, singing, playing the santuri, sleeping with women, and drinking wine, the narrator, an educated Buddhist, spends most of his days studying ideas and abstaining from his vices. The narrator is initially shocked by the apparent immoralities that Zorba engages in. However, as the narrative progresses, he eventually learns that Zorba's spirit is even more powerful than his own. It is demonstrat-

ed that Zorba acquires the necessary knowledge to live a very fulfilling life on his own by placing his attention on bodily experience and worldly things.

Zorba frequently questions the narrator's loyalty to his morals and implores him to let go of his rigid convictions and live a more realistic life. In this way, Zorba believes that man has power within himself and is independent of both religious institutions and a supreme being.

The scenes at the monastery illustrate the fallibility of belief systems. They demonstrate that those who are most attempting to live a pure and holy life are also those who are most perplexed and divided from within. We repeatedly observe that nobody possesses the full and ideal solution for navigating the tragedy and confusion of modern life. The narrator's ongoing battle with his desire to be happy is one of the book's most recurrent themes. He is astounded by Zorba's unceasing joy that appears to come naturally. The narrator and Zorba, two characters who are inherently at odds with one another, are frequently contrasted.

Despite being a well-read and pious young man, the narrator frequently expresses melancholy. In contrast, Zorba is uneducated, elderly, impoverished, and cognitively illiterate; he claims that *Sinbad the Sailor* is the only book he has ever read. Zorba, though, amazes the narrator with his excitement and zest for life. Zorba acknowledges himself on multiple occasions as an ordinary man. Yet he has developed a profound connection to the environment that escapes the narrator, a traditionally intelligent man. The interaction between these two characters highlights how easy it is to become entrapped in one's own thoughts and worries. It also highlights how the only way to escape this state of mind completely is to live in the present.

The author makes it clear that one's possessions or level of education do not determine one's level of happiness. This is especially clear in light of the protagonists' disastrous business venture. After losing everything, Zorba and the narrator actually had one of their happiest evenings together. During this, the narrator finally asks Zorba to teach him how to dance. Their joy implies that happiness is a choice rather than the result of good circumstances because it persists even in the face of worldly loss.

The persona of Madame Hortense is the one who most openly addresses the subject of life's transience. She was once a mistress and sex icon. As she becomes older, she is learning to accept ageing. She frequently makes references to her fear of dying and her yearning to go back to her carefree and youthful days in her interactions with Zorba and the narrator. She is not in a good mood as the New Year approaches because the beginning of a new cycle simply serves to remind her of her own death. As she passes into the mystery of death on her deathbed, she finally lets go of her terror and enjoys a little reprieve from every day worries.

No matter how high the aspirations are, we realise that no one has an explanation for what happens beyond death and that this shared ignorance also draws people closer together. After the deaths of the widow and the Madame, Zorba and the narrator are forced to admit to one another that they have no idea how to deal with death. They decide to live their lives to the fullest while they can because they know they will eventually arrive at the same place.

The main theme of *Zorba the Greek* is male friendship. Zorba and the narrator get close during their months-long labour and living together on the island of Crete. This interaction changes the narrator, a reclusive scholar. He

learns that his excessively cerebral outlook prevents him from experiencing true human connection. By the story's end, Zorba and the narrator resemble brothers. Despite failing in their mining business, they are content with their time together. Although Kazantzakis highlights the fleeting nature of earthly pleasures like lust, wealth, and beauty, he also portrays the joy of friendship as one of the few things that have a permanent influence on the characters' lives.

In the novel, the repeated references to Mother Mary iconography highlight the difference between the virgin and whore: real women are essentially evil and should never be trusted, but women in archetypal, saintly forms are non-threatening and desired by males. The early Adam and Eve allusion also alludes to the source of this demeaning attitude toward women.

The narrator, an educated man, decides to settle in a traditional Cretan community to eschew cerebral pursuits for a simpler and natural life. Through inner monologue, he frequently criticizes modernity as a lifeless civilization disconnected from higher ideals. His unrelenting search for the ultimate philosophy seems rooted in alienation from modern society. Zorba and the narrator like discussing true freedom's meaning. For Zorba, freedom means following passion and being unencumbered by limiting obligations. Freedom is more elusive for the narrator, who seeks understanding through studying old philosophies. Buddhist writings say achieving freedom requires separating from the material world to a higher plane.

Eventually, the narrator concludes that transcendentalist ideas, lacking empathy and care for the human condition, guide mankind not toward freedom but an impossibly idealised utopia. Through experience, he demonstrates that obsessive study produced not a freer and richer life but an isolated one, fearing to step outside his intellectual bubble. Drawing inspiration from Zorba, the narrator develops a new concept of freedom that accounts for physical existence, emotions, and even sexuality.

6.1.2.3 Character Sketch

Alexis Zorba

Zorba is the titular character and embodiment of the lust for life. Despite being in his sixties, he embraces sensual pleasures like wine, women, and hard work with youthful vigour. Originally from Macedonia, Zorba has travelled widely and collected a vast array of experiences that fuel his constant storytelling. His agnostic views reject traditional notions of God in favour of finding meaning through living authentically. Hired by the narrator to assist with a business venture, Zorba becomes his friend and confidante, encouraging the narrator to shed his intellectual detachment and connect with the visceral side of life.

The Narrator

The unnamed narrator hires Zorba and is transformed by their friendship. Initially, the narrator is consumed by spiritual literature and philosophising, working on a manuscript about Buddha's life. Through Zorba's influence, he recognises how his idealism negates the human experience. By the novel's end, while not fully committed to Zorba's philosophy, the narrator's perspective has been indelibly altered by Zorba's guidance towards embracing earthly passions.

Madame Hortense

An ageing Frenchwoman who owns a hotel, Madame Hortense represents the fear of losing beauty and identity with age. She clings to her fading youth through gaudy dressings and an attempted romantic pursuit of Zorba. Her life as a courtesan has left her insecure and

searching for fulfilment beyond her status as a sex symbol. Zorba's cheerfulness allows her to find peace before her death.

The Widow

Though a pivotal force driving the plot, the beautiful widow remains an underdeveloped archetype of seduction and temptation. Ruthlessly pursued yet rejecting all men, she is demonised after one suitor takes his life, ultimately meeting a brutal death herself at the hands of an enraged villager.

Other Characters

Supporting characters like Stavridaki (the narrator's idealistic friend), Father Zaharia (a monk embodying good and evil), and village elders like Uncle Anagnosti and Mavrandoni further explore themes of morality, tradition, and human complexities throughout the novel.

Recap

- Explores the philosophy of existentialism through the contrasting characters of Zorba and the narrator.
- Examines themes of masculinity, friendship, ageing, and the search for meaning in life.
- Utilises symbolism and archetypes, particularly regarding women and religion.
- Zorba represents a life-affirming, sensual approach to existence.
- The narrator embodies a cerebral, philosophical, and detached perspective initially.
- Their friendship transforms the narrator's outlook on life.
- Madame Hortense symbolises the fear of ageing and loss of beauty.
- The widow represents temptation and the demonisation of female sexuality.
- Monastery scenes critique the fallibility of religious institutions.
- Celebrates the raw vitality and sensuality of Greek culture.
- Explores the complexities of morality and the human condition.
- Highlights the transience of life and the mystery of death.
- Contrasts the pursuit of happiness through material possessions and intellectual pursuits.
- Affirms the power of friendship and shared experiences.
- Draws inspiration from classical Greek thought and mythology.
- Reflects the struggle for identity and authenticity in the modern world.
- Captures the essence of the Greek spirit and its cultural heritage.

Objective Questions

1. Who is the author of the celebrated novel Zorba the Greek?
2. Which ancient Greek literary works have had a significant influence on modern Greek literature?
3. What major historical event did modern Greek literature emerge from?
4. Name one of the Nobel Prize winners in Literature from Greece.
5. Which Greek poet is known for exploring themes of urban life and modernity?
6. True or False: Modern Greek literature exclusively focuses on traditional Greek themes and does not embrace diverse perspectives.
7. Which literary form has seen a resurgence in modern Greek literature?
8. What is a common theme explored in modern Greek literature?
9. Name one contemporary Greek author who is pushing the boundaries of literary expression.
10. True or False: Modern Greek literature has found a global audience through translations and adaptations.

Answers

1. Nikos Kazantzakis
2. The works of Homer, Sophocles, and other classical Greek writers
3. The Greek War of Independence
4. Giorgos Seferis or Odysseas Elytis
5. Constantine P. Cavafy
6. False
7. Poetry
8. Identity, love, loss, and the search for meaning
9. Christos Ikonomou/ Amanda Michalopoulou/ or Ersi Sotiropoulos.
10. True

Assignments

1. Analyse the contrasting philosophies and approaches to life represented by Zorba and the narrator.
2. Evaluate the use of symbolism and archetypes in the novel, particularly regarding the portrayal of women and religion.
3. Discuss the novel's exploration of existentialism and the human condition. How does the narrative challenge traditional notions of meaning and authenticity?
4. Examine the role of friendship in the novel.
5. Analyse the novel's portrayal of Greek culture, traditions, and mythology. How does Kazantzakis incorporate these elements to create a vivid representation of the Greek experience?

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1. Kazantzakis, Nikos. *Zorba the Greek*. Scribner, 1996.
2. Kim, Wook-Dong. *Kazantzakis's Zorba the Greek: Five Readings*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.
3. Nelson, Bonnie E.. *Zorba the Greek: A Critical Commentary.* Monarch Press, 1974.
4. "Níkos Kazantzákis | Greek Writer." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/biography/Nikos-Kazantzakis.

Suggested Reading

1. Kaldelli, Pauline Furniss. *Archetypal Criticism of Nikos Kazantzakis's Fiction.* California State UP, 1996.
2. Kim, Wook-Dong. *Kazantzakis's Zorba the Greek: Five Readings.* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.
3. Bien, Peter. "Zorba the Greek, Nietzsche, and the Perennial Greek Predicament." *The Antioch Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1965, pp. 147–63. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/4610670.
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5. Van Hook, La Rue. "The Modernity of Greek Literature." *The Classical Weekly*, vol. 21, no. 9, 1927, pp. 66–71. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/4389052.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- I

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ……

Reg. No : .....

**Name : ……..... **

BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION- FOURTH SEMESTER

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

B21EG02DE - EUROPEAN FICTION

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

(CBCS - UG)

Time: 3 Hours **Max Marks: 70**

Section A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence. (10×1= 10)

1. Which city became the leading centre of Renaissance art?
2. Who is the author of "Decameron"?
3. Name the epic poem written by Virgil.
4. What is the literary movement focused on depicting the absurdity and purposelessness of human life known as?
5. Who is the author of *Waiting for Godot*?
6. Which was Anton Chekhov's nationality?
7. In "The Lottery Ticket," what is the protagonist's wife's name?
8. What caused Ivan's spiritual awakening?
9. What is the primary theme of *Siddhartha*?
10. What does Siddhartha seek throughout the novel?
11. Which character represents the ideal of sensual love in *Siddhartha*?
12. What is the name of the main character in *Zorba the Greek*?

13. In which country does the novel *Zorba the Greek* primarily take place?
14. What instrument does Zorba love to play?
15. What is the occupation of the narrator in *Zorba the Greek*?

Section B

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences. (5×2=10)

16. How did Greek epic poems like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* contribute to fiction?
17. What did Renaissance artists study to improve their realistic depictions in art?
18. Describe one key characteristic of modernist fiction.
19. What is the core theme of "The Lottery Ticket" by Anton Chekhov?
20. How does Kafka's personal background influence his writing style and themes?
21. How does Gerasim represent the theme of authenticity in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*?
22. How does Tolstoy use Ivan's physical suffering to convey a deeper message?
23. How does Siddhartha's view of the world change after meeting the Buddha?
24. Why does Siddhartha leave his life of wealth and luxury?
25. Describe the initial meeting between the narrator and Zorba.

Section C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6×5=30)

26. Explain the significance of Boccaccio's *Decameron* in the context of medieval and Renaissance literature.
27. Describe the contributions of Greek playwrights to the development of fictional narratives.
28. Explain the emergence of Modernism in European fiction and its key characteristics.
29. Analyze the themes and styles in the works of Virginia Woolf and their contribution to Modernism.
30. Analyze how the theme of greed is depicted in Chekhov's "The Lottery Ticket."
31. Evaluate the role of societal pressure in the transformation of the ape in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy."
32. Discuss the role of psychological realism in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*

33. How does Tolstoy use symbolism to enhance the themes of the novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*?

34. Discuss the significance of dualities in *Siddhartha* and how they shape the protagonist's journey.

35. How do Eastern and Western philosophies influence the themes and characters in *Siddhartha*?

36. Discuss the role of Madame Hortense in the development of the novel's themes.

37. Evaluate the use of symbolism in the novel *Zorba the Greek*, particularly with respect to women and religion.

Section D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2×10 = 20)

38. Evaluate the impact of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* on the evolution of the modern novel.

39. Examine the influence of Modernism on 20th-century European fiction and its lasting impact on contemporary literature.

40. Analyze the transformation of Ivan Ilyich from the beginning to the end of the novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*

41. Explore the theme of friendship in *Zorba the Greek* and how it contributes to the overall message of the novel.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER- SET- II

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ……

Reg. No : .....

**Name : ……..... **

BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION- FOURTH SEMESTER

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

B21EG02DE - EUROPEAN FICTION

(CBCS - UG)

2023-24 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours **Max Marks: 70**

Section A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence. (10×1= 10)

1. What type of scenes were most artworks focused on before the Renaissance?
2. Who painted the "Mona Lisa"?
3. Which modernist technique involves the depiction of the flow of thoughts in a character's mind?
4. Name the novel by James Joyce that follows the wanderings of Leopold Bloom.
5. What is the term for a novel that emphasizes multiple perspectives and fragmentation?
6. What is the primary emotion explored in Chekhov's "The Lottery Ticket"?
7. To whom did Kafka write a semi-autobiographical letter?
8. What is the literary genre that focuses on the characters' psychological states in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*?
9. Who is Ivan's daughter?
10. What is the symbolic object in Ivan's recurring dream?
11. What is the name of Siddhartha's best friend?

12. Name the ageing Frenchwoman who owns a hotel in *Zorba the Greek*.
13. Who is the protagonist's friend who embodies the existential philosophy in *Zorba the Greek*?
14. What is the main philosophical theme explored through the characters of Zorba and the narrator?
15. What is the narrator working on when he meets Zorba?

Section B

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences. (5×2=10)

16. What thematic shift occurred in Renaissance art compared to the medieval period?
17. How did Cervantes' life experiences influence *Don Quixote*?
18. What was the impact of World War I on modernist writers?
19. What societal issues does Kafka explore in "A Report to an Academy"?
20. Summarise the relationship between Ivan Dmitritch and his wife before and after the anticipation of the lottery in "The Lottery Ticket."
21. What does Ivan realize about his life as he faces death in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*?
22. What role does the river play in Siddhartha's journey?
23. How does Kamala contribute to Siddhartha's understanding of love and life?
24. How does Zorba view the concept of freedom?
25. Explain the significance of the mine in *Zorba the Greek.*

Section C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6×5=30)

26. Discuss the role of perspective in Renaissance art and its impact on realism.
27. How did Virgil's *Aeneid* blend historical and imaginative elements in its narrative?
28. Discuss the influence of World War II on French existentialist literature, with reference to Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre.
29. Evaluate the role of Simone de Beauvoir in shaping feminist perspectives in literature through her works.
30. Discuss the significance of the contrasting interior monologues of Ivan and his wife in "The Lottery Ticket."

31. Compare and contrast the literary techniques used by Chekhov and Kafka to depict the human condition in their respective stories.

32. Compare and contrast Ivan Ilyich's life with that of Gerasim in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*

33. Evaluate Tolstoy's critique of 19th-century Russian society in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

34. Compare and contrast Siddhartha's life as a Samana and his life as a wealthy merchant.

35. Evaluate Siddhartha's final realisation and its implications on his spiritual journey.

36. Analyze the contrast between Zorba's and the narrator's philosophies of life in *Zorba the Greek.*

37. Examine how the themes of existentialism are portrayed through the characters in the novel.

Section D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2×10 = 20)

38. Analyze the philosophical and cultural shifts reflected in the transition from medieval to Renaissance literature.

39. Examine the psychological and relational transformations experienced by Ivan and his wife in "The Lottery Ticket" and how Chekhov uses these to critique human nature.

40. Analyze the development of Siddhartha's character from the beginning to the end of the novel, focusing on his quest for enlightenment.

41. Discuss the themes in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

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