

# UNIT-1

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## MILTON'S: LYCIDAS

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### Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 His Works
- 1.3 The poem : Lycidas
- 1.4 Glossary
- 1.5 Notes
- 1.6 Critical Essays
  - 1.6.1 'Lycidas' as a Pastoral Elgy
  - 1.6.2 Nature of Grief in 'Lycidas'-Edward King as the Nominal Subject
  - 1.6.3 The Autobiographical Element
  - 1.6.4 Lycidas as a Work of Art-Diction and Versification
- 1.7 Let us Sum up
- 1.8 Review Questions
- 1.9 Bibliography

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### **1.0 Objectives**

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In this unit you are going to :

- Study one of the prominent poets of the puritan age : Milton.
- Understand the poem 'Lycidas' and its various features through a copious glossary and notes,

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### **1.1 Introduction**

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John Milton was born in London in 1608 (seven and a half years before the death of Shakespeare). His grandfather was a Roman Catholic who had disowned Milton's father when the latter turned Protestant. The boy was sent to St Paul's school, perhaps when twelve, perhaps earlier. From the beginning, Milton was an eager student (he tells us that from the time he was twelve, he seldom stopped reading before midnight), and he learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and began to try to write verse. In 1625 he enrolled at Christ's College, Cambridge, clashed with his tutor the following year and was suspended, returned and was given another tutor, and graduated on schedule. The University in those days still undertook to teach largely by rote memorization, and Milton thought his training was of little value. He undertook to give himself a liberal education by wide reading. His father had hoped to make a lawyer of him, but took it very well when his son announced that he intended to make the writing of poetry his life's work.

In 1629 (when he was 21 years old) he wrote a short poem, “On the morning of Christ’s Nativity,” his first memorable work, still widely read at Christmas. A few years later, he wrote a masque (or mask), which was presented in 1634, at Ludlow Castle, near the Welsh border, in honor of the Earl of Bridgewater. In August 1637, a classmate of Milton’s, Edward King, who had written some poetry himself, was drowned, and several of his friends resolved to write poems in his memory and publish a collection of them. Milton was asked to contribute. His poem was called ‘Lycidas’.

Between 1641 and 1660, Milton wrote almost no poetry. This was the time when the English Puritans were setting out to overthrow the English monarchy on the grounds that it was levying taxes unlawfully (and was, moreover, in league with the wicked English Church), and to overthrow the English Church on the grounds that, while nominally breaking with Rome, it had retained many Roman customs, such as white gowns for the clergy (instead of the black gowns worn by Puritan clergy, which were obviously more seemly) and that the English Church was therefore just as bad as the Church of Rome (and was, moreover, in league with the wicked English monarchy). Milton believed wholeheartedly in the Puritan cause, and set aside his poetry to write pamphlets in defense of various aspects of liberty as he saw it.

One work that Milton wrote but never published was a theological treatise called *De Doctrina Christina* (“On Christian Doctrine”). It is for the most part straightforward Protestant theology, but includes some departures from the mainstream position, and Milton carefully labels them as such. First, and most seriously, Milton was an Arian. That is, he believed that the Father exists eternally, and that He begot the Son and that the Son then created the physical universe. Thus, the Son is far from being a mere human. He is the second greatest of all things. But he is not co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and is not, in the fullest sense, God. Since the publication of the *Doctrina* in 1825, critics have looked for indications of heretical beliefs in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and other published works. Such indications, if they are there, are few, minor, obscure, and doubtful. It is not even certain that Arianism was Milton’s settled view. A man writing a paper for his own eyes, to clarify or examine his views, may very well set forth in it the case for a position that he does not hold, simply to see what can be said for it.

In 1642, at the age of 33, Milton married Mary Powell, a girl of 16 from a royalist family. Her family had been large and sociable. Milton’s was small and studious. In a few months, she went home to her family. Milton reacted by writing a treatise, “On the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,” in which he argued that incompatibility of temperament and personality was a sufficient reason for dissolving a marriage. Both Royalists and Puritans found the idea disgraceful, and the pamphlet had no discernible effect in Milton’s day. However, it is noteworthy for the importance that Milton here attaches to friendship and companionship and the meeting of minds (as opposed to the mere meeting of bodies) as an essential ingredient in a successful marriage. In 1645 friends brought about a reconciliation, and Mary returned to her husband. In 1646, when the Civil War had gone against the Royalists and the Powells were homeless, he took the ten of them into his own home for a year. Mary bore John three daughters, and died in 1652.

In 1644, Milton published two pamphlets much admired today. The first was called “Of Education,” and outlines a course of study for producing an enlightened citizenry. Studies are to include the Bible, the classics, and science. He also published in 1644 his most famous pamphlet, *Areopagetica*. Those who have read the Book of Acts in the King James translation will remember that while in Athens, Paul is said to have preached on Mars’ Hill. In fact, he spoke before the Areopagus, a council

of citizens that got its name from its meeting place, a temple of Ares (or Mars), and that was responsible for censorship and the safeguarding of public morals. Milton's pamphlet was written in protest against the setting up by the Cromwell government a board of Censorship for all printed works. It is an eloquent and forceful argument for freedom of the press.

Milton's dismay on finding that the new revolutionary government, undertaken in the name of liberty, could be just as intolerant of dissent as the monarchy it replaced, found expression not only in the 'Areopagetica,' but also in poetry. He wrote a 24-line poem titled, "On the New forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament," ending with the line, "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ Large."

In February 1649, just after the beheading of King Charles I, Milton published a pamphlet called "The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," arguing that power resides in the people, who may give it to governors, but are free to withdraw it again. He was invited to become Secretary for Foreign Languages in Cromwell's Council of State. As such, he continued to write pamphlets defending the Republic, the killing of the King, and the rule of Cromwell. He was no mere server of those in power. He was still publishing a month before Charles II was brought back from exile to take the throne, at a time when it must have been obvious that the cause was lost, when every consideration of personal safety demanded that he adopt a policy of silence, if not of outright reversal of position.

After 1660, with the monarchy restored, Milton's political dreams lay in ruins under the double blow of the collapse of the Puritan Republic and the failure of the said republic to uphold freedom while it lasted. Milton retired to private life and returned to his true vocation, the writing of poetry. He had gone blind while serving as secretary to Cromwell, and now sat composing his poems in his head, and dictating each day to his daughters the portion that he had composed. It was in this retirement that he produced his three long poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. He died on 8 November 1674.

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## 1.2 His Works

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### *Paradise Lost: Milton's Long Epic*

By far his best-known poem is *Paradise Lost*, an epic in twelve books in the tradition of Virgil's *Aeneid*, recounting the story of Satan's rebellion against God, and of the disobedience and fall of Adam and Eve, led astray by Satan's lies. The story of Satan's rebellion is not found in the Bible, except in passing allusions capable of more than one interpretation. The story as it was generally accepted in Milton's day goes like this:

Satan, originally called Lucifer ("light-bearer") was one of the greatest of the angelic beings who serve God in Heaven. However, every created being with intellect and will has a choice whether to put God first or to put himself first, and Satan chose to put himself first. He was not content to be a subordinate. He proposed to be equal to the Most High. He rebelled against God, and persuaded one third of the angels to join him. (The number is based on Revelation 12:4, where a dragon is said to draw one third of the stars out of heaven. If we take the dragon to be Satan, and the stars to be angels, we get the result. However, there are numerous references on the book of Revelation to the destruction of one third of something or other). The event that rouses Satan to rebellion is God's proclamation of His only Son as the ruler of all created things, to whom all angels and the whole universe must pay homage. God says in this connection:

This day have I begot whom I declare,

My only Son....

This is a quotation from Psalm 2:7, which in some manuscripts is quoted in connection with the Baptism of Christ. If we take “beget” as “bring into existence,” this would mean that the Son is created after the angels, which is not possible, since Milton makes it explicit that it is only through the Son that the angels and all other things are created. However, the Hebrew verb “yalad”, translated “beget”, also has the meaning of “to publicly acknowledge as one’s heir.” Thus, when we are told that Joseph’s great-grandchildren were begotten on Joseph’s knees it means that soon after the child was born, Joseph, in his capacity as head of the family, took the child on his knees and accepted it before witnesses as a member of the family.

So, God the Father proclaims the glory of the Son and commands all the angels to worship Him. At this Satan rebels, and leads other angels into rebellion with him. They fight against the loyal angels, led by Michael, and are defeated and cast out of Heaven. Satan, who has heard rumors that God intends to create a race of humans, then plots to obtain his revenge by destroying their happiness and their delighted obedience to God. And the rest of the story is found in Genesis chapters 2 and 3, except that these chapters make no mention of Satan, and say simply that the serpent deceived Eve. Milton tells us that the serpent was really Satan disguised as a serpent.

#### *Comus: Milton’s Masque*

A masque is a particular kind of theatrical performance, traditionally performed before royalty or other distinguished persons, in which the characters of the drama usually wear masks and represent abstract qualities.

Milton’s play (to which he gave no title except “A Masque”) was performed at Ludlow Castle near the Welsh border, before the lord of that castle, the Earl of Bridgewater. The roles of the humans in the play were performed by the Earl’s 15-year-old daughter and her brothers, 9 and 11. (Their tutor, Mr. Lawes, was a friend of Milton’s.) The play concerns a young lady who is travelling through the forest with her brothers to reach her father’s castle. She meets an evil spirit called Comus (the son of Circe and Bacchus) who is disguised as a simple shepherd and offers her the hospitality of his humble cottage for the night. He thus traps her and tries to persuade her to drink from a magic chalice, which turns all who drink from it into beasts. (It probably symbolizes unchastity.) He argues that Nature has filled the world with pleasures, and that it is ungrateful to refuse the gifts of Nature. The Lady replies that gluttony and starvation are not the only options, and that the right choice is the temperate and wise use of Nature’s gifts in accordance with the ends for which Nature’s God created them. The evil spirit is defeated, the Lady freed, and she and her brothers are led safely to the castle, their goal (whether Ludlow Castle, or Heaven, or both).

#### *Lycidas: Milton’s Pastoral Elegy*

Edward King was a fellow student of Milton’s, a Puritan youth who had written some poetry and was intending to become a preacher. He was on a ship in the Irish Sea when it sank, and he was drowned. Several of his friends decided to write poems in his memory and publish the collection. Milton’s contribution, *Lycidas*, belongs to a tradition going back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is a pastoral. That is, the poet and the persons he writes about are all treated as shepherds (or shepherdesses) living in the hillsides and pastures of ancient Greece. Edward King is renamed *Lycidas*,

and Milton mourns his death.

For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:  
Who would not sing for Lycidas?  
He knew himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
He must not float upon his watery bier unwept,  
and welter to the parching wind without the meed of some melodious tear....  
Now thou art gone, and never must return!  
Thee, shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves  
with wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,  
and all their echoes mourn....

The mourner goes on to ask the proper response to the knowledge that anyone can die at any time, with all his goals unachieved. Ought we to seek pleasure and forget all else? Is fame worth pursuing, and does it really convey a kind of immortality? And so through many like questions, hinted at rather than stated explicitly, so that much of the poem is not so much an examination of Milton's uncertainties as a device to bring to the forefront some of the uncertainties lurking in the mind of the reader. It is worth knowing, for example, that the site of King's drowning was overlooked (from a distance) by a mountain with a statue of the Archangel Michael—hence the reference to the “guarded mount” and the plea, “Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth.” Finally, the poet compares Lycidas to the sun, which sinks only to rise again, and then concludes on an explicitly Christian note of comfort.

So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
Through the dear might of him that walked the waves

He speaks of Lycidas in Heaven, where all tears are wiped from his eyes, and closes with the image of the shepherd, his mourning for Lycidas ended, arising and going on his way comforted.

One critic has said: “It may be the most beautiful short poem in the language.”

#### *Paradise Regained: Milton's Short Epic*

After writing about the fall of the human race through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, Milton undertook to write about the restoration of the human race through the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ. His short epic, *Paradise Regained*, does not deal with the Crucifixion, but with the Temptation in the wilderness, and the epic features a debate between Christ and Satan, just as *Paradise Lost* features a debate between Abdiel and Satan, and another between Eve and Satan, and the Masque a debate between Comus and the Lady, and the twin poems *L'allegro* and *IL Penseroso* a debate between merriment and thoughtfulness, and *Lycidas* between competing possible responses to life and death, and *Samson Agonistes* debates between Samson and the Danites, Samson and Manoah, Samson and Delilah, and Samson and Harapha. The alert reader may detect a pattern here.

Christ triumphs over Satan, rejecting his temptations and refuting his arguments. When Satan

withdraws defeated, the angels hail the triumph of Christ, and bid him now begin his work of reconciling and redeeming mankind.

Some critics think the poem an inferior sequel to *Paradise Lost*. Others think that it is even better than its predecessor. It is a different kind of poem, and thus perhaps neither better nor worse.

### *Samson Agonistes: Milton's Tragedy*

While *Paradise Lost* is written in the manner of Virgil's epic poem, the Aeneid, the story of the events leading up to the founding of the city of Rome, *Samson Agonistes* is written in the manner of the Greek tragedies. The story of Samson is found in the Book of Judges, 13-16. Milton's drama covers only the last few hours of Samson's life, when, after a lifetime of being undefeatable in battle and irresistible in strength, and a lifetime of misusing and wasting the powers that God had given him for the deliverance of his people from the Philistines, he has lost everything, and is a blinded captive and slave. In his captivity, he is visited by his father Manoah, by spokesmen for his tribe, by his wife Dalila (Delilah), and by a Philistine warrior Harapha. By his dialogue with each in turn he moves slowly from self-pity and despair to renewed trust that God has accepted his repentance and has work for him to do. Finally, acting in accordance with what he takes to be the will of God, he sacrifices his own life in destroying the chief oppressors of his people, and so achieves in death more than he had in life.

Some critics think this Milton's best work. Almost all are agreed that it is by far the best English tragedy ever written on the Greek model. No other work comes close.

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## **1.3 Lycidas**

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*In this Monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height*

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forc'd fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
Compels me to disturb your season due;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
He must not float upon his wat'ry bier  
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,

Without the meed of some melodious tear.  
Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;  
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.  
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse!  
So may some gentle muse  
With lucky words favour my destin'd urn,  
And as he passes turn  
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;  
Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,  
We drove afield, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star that rose at ev'ning bright  
Toward heav'n's descent had slop'd his westering wheel.  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Temper'd to th'oaten flute;  
Rough Satyrs danc'd, and Fauns with clov'n heel,  
From the glad sound would not be absent long;  
And old Damætas lov'd to hear our song.

But O the heavy change now thou art gone,  
Now thou art gone, and never must return!  
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,  
And all their echoes mourn.  
The willows and the hazel copses green

Shall now no more be seen  
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
As killing as the canker to the rose,  
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear  
When first the white thorn blows:  
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep  
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?  
For neither were ye playing on the steep  
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.  
Ay me! I fondly dream  
'Had ye bin there'—for what could that have done?  
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,  
Whom universal nature did lament,  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar  
His gory visage down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)

To scorn delights and live laborious days;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,  
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"  
Phoebus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears;  
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to th'world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed."

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,  
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.  
But now my oat proceeds,  
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,  
That came in Neptune's plea.  
He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,  
"What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?"  
And question'd every gust of rugged wings  
That blows from off each beaked promontory.  
They knew not of his story;  
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,  
That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd;  
The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd.  
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,  
Built in th'eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,

That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,  
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge  
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.  
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"  
Last came, and last did go,  
The Pilot of the Galilean lake;  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain  
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).  
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:  
"How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain,  
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake  
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold?  
Of other care they little reck'ning make  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least  
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!  
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;  
And when they list their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw,  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But, swoll'n with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing said,  
But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more".

Return, Alpheus: the dread voice is past  
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,  
And call the vales and bid them hither cast  
Their bells and flow'rets of a thousand hues.  
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enamel'd eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honied showers  
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,  
The glowing violet,  
The musk-rose, and the well attir'd woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
For so to interpose a little ease,  
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.  
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd;  
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world,

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## 1.4 Glossary

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The name "Lycidas" is fairly common in pastoral poetry (e.g., in Theocritus, *Idyl* I, Virgil, *Eclogues* VII and IX). The note under the title was added in *Poems*, 1645.

By plucking laurel, myrtle, and ivy, constituents of the poet's crowning, is symbolized Milton's return to the writing of verse (after the interval of four years since *Comus*); the reference to this enforced and premature action indicates Milton's unwillingness to write poetry at this time while still preparing himself for his *magnum opus*.

Lycidas. The name Lycidas is common in ancient Greek pastorals, establishing the style Milton imitates for this poem. William Collins Watterson notes that in Theocritus' pastoral, Lycidas loses a singing competition. Watterson asserts that Milton is aligning King with Lycidas in an attempt to portray himself as victorious over King. Virgil's ninth Eclogue is spoken in part by the shepherd Lycidas, a scene that includes, as Balachandra Rajan points out, a reference to social injustice. Lucan's Civil Wars 3.657-58 also tells the story of a Lycidas pulled to pieces during a sea battle by a grappling hook.

Height. The headnote – "In this Monody ... height." – does not appear in 1638 (Justa Edouardo King). This addition might be due to the less strict laws regarding published texts. The Trinity MS has the headnote but without the final sentence. "And by occasion height." The clergy Milton refers to is the clergy of the English Church as ruled by William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury. A champion of traditional liturgy and the bane of reformist Puritans. Bishops fell out of power in 1642, between the two editions.

Friend. Edward King, a schoolmate of Milton's at Cambridge who drowned when his ship sank off the coast of Wales in August, 1637. King entered Christ's College in 1626 when he was 14 years old. Upon finishing his studies, King was made a Fellow of Christ's thanks to his patron King Charles I. The Trinity MS of Lycidas is dated Nov. 1637, three months after King's death.

Never-sear. Never withered. 1638 has "never-seere". Laurel was considered the emblem of Apollo, myrtle of Venus, and ivy of Bacchus.

crude : unripe.

shatter : scatter.

dear : grievous, but with overtones from other meanings of the word.

Milton treats Edward King as at once priest and poet. Like others with a humanistic education, King could, and on occasion did, write Latin verses.

welter: roll about.

meed: token of honour; tear: commonly used as a poetic synonym for elegy (as in Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*).

One of the haunts sacred to the Muses was the spring Aganippe on Mount Helicon, near which was a temple to Zeus.

my destin'd urn. The urn, used by the ancients for burial (cf. Sir Thomas Brown, *Urn Burial*), here stands for the poet's death.

Say, *Requiescat in pace*; shroud (burial cloth) here stands for the dead.

lawns: grass lands.

gray-fly: so called from its colour, and also the trumpet-cry from the noise it makes.

battening: making fat.

Though some inexactness in the description has been noticed, Milton probably intends the Evening Star (Hesperus).

Satyrs in Greek myth were human figures, but with pointed ears and clad in skins' beasts. By the Romans they were identified with their fauns and represented with goat's horn, tail, and cloven hoof (hence cloven heel). Here they stand for Milton and King's fellow students.

Damœtas: presumably standing for some fellow of the college.

gadding: wandering, that is, growing naturally, not subjected to control.

canker: canker-worm, which by feeding on it produces canker in the blossom.

taint-worm: a worm thought to taint or infect cattle.

white thorn: the common hawthorn.

An appeal to the nymphs was one of the conventions of pastoral elegy. The places named in Greek and Latin pastoral belonged to the ancient world and were selected with some reference to the subject. As is appropriate in *Eclogue X*, the lament for Gallus, a poet, Virgil appeals to the Naiads in association with places sacred to the Muses, and may suggest that by Naiads he really means the Muses. Milton appropriately substitutes British places in the vicinity of King's fatal journey; and by Nymphs he probably means the Muses, since he associates them with bards, and the Bards formed a division of the Druids, the priests of the Britons, while traditions accessible to Milton traced a connection between ancient Greek and ancient British religion and culture. His first allusion refers vaguely to some burial place of the Druids in the Welsh mountains (the steep); the second, and more specific, is to the island of Anglesey, which the Romans called Mona; the third is to the river Dee, marking the border of England and Wales and supposed to possess magic powers by which it predicted the fortunes of the hostile nations; over the Dee stood Chester, whence travellers took ship for Ireland.

Orpheus, the mythical originator of poetry and song, was reputed to be the son of the Muse Calliope, and gifted with the power of charming by his music all animate and inanimate things, which subsequently united in lamenting his death. After his final loss of his wife, Eurydice, he wandered through Thrace mourning for her, where he was encountered by the wild female worshippers of Bacchus. Enraged by his repelling of their advances, they hurled their spears at him, but these, charmed by his music, fell harmless to the ground, whereupon the women set up a loud cry, drowning the music, and the spears took effect. They cast the head of Orpheus and his lyre into the river Hebrus which bore them out to sea and cast them up on the island of Lesbos.

Amaryllis and Neaera are names which occur in erotic pastoral poetry. Milton is perhaps thinking of the amatory court poets of his own day.

clear: noble (Lat. *clarus*).

Alluding to the saying of Tacitus, *Histories*, IV, VI, that "for even the wise man the desire of glory is the last to be put aside."

Milton alludes to Atropos, the one of the three Fates who cut the thread of life. Thinking of her inexorable character and the fear she inspires, Milton deliberately calls her not a Fate, but a Fury.

Phoebus, god of poetry, intervenes with the counterstatement that praise is not ended by death. It can be shown from the Latin poets that touching the ear was a way of reminding one of something forgotten (Virgil, *Eclogue*, VI, 3 ); trembling here is a transferred epithet, signifying: “touch’d my ears, I trembling the while.”

foil: a thin leaf of metal placed behind a gem to enhance its brightness.

True fame depends on merit in the sight of God and will be enjoyed in heaven. (Jove here stands for God, as often in Christian humanist poetry.)

Arethusa, the spring Arethusa, in the island of Ortygia, off the coast of Sicily, here symbolizes Greek pastoral poetry, and especially the Idyls of Theocritus, born in nearby Syracuse. Mincius, the river flowing round Mantua, claimed by Virgil as his birth, symbolizes Latin pastoral poetry, and especially the *Eclogues* of Virgil. The vocal reeds are the stems used for making the shepherd’s pipes. The words of the preceding paragraph were of a higher order and transcended the pastoral mood, to which the poet returns, as suggested in *Now my oat* [another synonym for the shepherd’s pipes] *proceeds*.

herald of the sea: Triton.

in Neptune’s plea: that is, to exonerate Neptune (the sea) from blame for the death of Lycidas, by calling witnesses to the calm weather.

Hippotades: Aeolus, son of Hippotes and guardian of the winds.

Panope: one of the Nereids or sea-nymphs, who was associated with calm weather and invoked by Roman sailors.

An eclipse was proverbially of evil omen.

Camus, thought of as the genius of the Cam, and the representative here of Cambridge University, built on its banks. His appearance suggests the slow-flowing, weed-grown river. The *sanguine flower inscribed with woe* is the hyacinth as it is accounted for in the myth of Hyacinthus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X, 174-217) accidentally slain while at play with Apollo: his blood fell on a lily, staining it purple, and on the petals the god wrote ai, ai (ahs, ahs). The implication is that the sedge of the Cam bears a like sign of woe.

pledge: child (Lat. *pignus*).

As a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, and leader of the Disciples, St. Peter is here called the Pilot of the Galilean lake.

The starting point of these lines is Christ’s words to St. Peter, “And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19), read perhaps in the light of, “he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (Isaiah 22:22).

mitred, referring to the crown of the bishop, St. Peter being presented in the role of ideal bishop.

Commencing with an indictment of the clergy as entering the ministry from worldly motives and excluding those with a true vocation, Milton describes their neglect of their duties and the consequences to the flock. Lines 123-25 are usually explained as an allusion to their infrequent and valueless sermons

which do nothing to nourish the flock; but quite possibly it is a reference (couched in the language of shepherd life) to their neglect of their duty while they give themselves to song and other secular recreations.

sped: provided for.

flashy: destitute of meaning, trifling.

scrannel pipes. Virgil has the phrase *stridenti stipula* (*Eclogues*, III, 27). Milton's scrannel appears to be his invention, though possibly based on some dialect word meaning thin; its sound suits well with his verb *Grate*.

allude to the corrupting effect of the false doctrines taught them.

allude to conversions to the Roman Catholic Church (here symbolized by the wolf), at which, as the Puritans erroneously believed, Archbishop Laud connived.

This is the most disputed passage in Milton's poetry. It seems evident from the context that the two-handed engine is some heavy weapon, ready at the door of the sheepfold, to be used against the wolf. This must be the starting point for any interpretation of meaning.

Alpheus, a river god in Arcadia, pursued the nymph Arethusa (see above, lines 85-87 n.) and when she, to escape his pursuit, was transformed to a spring by Diana and passed beneath the sea to Ortygia, the river Alpheus followed her and reached the same island. Here the association with Arethusa makes Alpheus likewise a symbol for Sicily and pastoral poetry. To ensure that the meaning is not missed, Milton adds an invocation to the muse of pastoral verse, "Return Sicilian Muse."

use: are accustomed (to dwell).

swart star: Sirius, the star whose rising in August was said to burn the fields swart or dark.

rathe: early.

freakt: spotted or streaked.

amaranthus: an imaginary everlasting flower.

laureate hearse. The hearse, or frame supporting the bier, here stands for the bier itself; laureate (by its association with the laurel of the poet's crown) signifies that the bier is a poet's.

stormy Hebrides: islands off the northwest coast of Scotland subject to Atlantic storms.

Reference is to the monsters of the deep.

moist vows: tearful prayers.

Bellerus old. Milton appears to have invented the person from *Bellerium*, the Roman name for Cornwall.

Milton appears to refer to a tradition that on St. Michael's Mount, a rock off the south coast of Cornwall, the archangel Michael, one of England's two patron saints, had been seen standing on guard against the traditional enemy Spain, here represented by the district of Namancos and the castle of Bayona.

Angel: i.e., St. Michael.

A reference either to the rescue of the poet Arion by a dolphin, which bore him safely ashore, or to Melicertes, whose body was brought to shore by a dolphin, and who was deified as the god of harbours (as Lycidas was to become “the Genius of the shore” below line 183 ).

day-star: probably the sun.

ore: i.e., gold.

“And ... Jesus went unto them walking on the sea” (Matthew 14:25).

nectar: in classical mythology, the drink of the gods.

The saints may refer either to the blessed dead in heaven, and *entertain* mean receive into their company, or to the angelic host, and *entertain* mean receive as a guest. The unexpressive (i.e., inexpressible) nuptial song may refer either to the song of rejoicing of the former group (Revelation 14:1-4) or to that of the latter group (Revelation 19:6-7).

Genius of the shore. Among its various meanings in Latin, genius betokened a local deity or guardian spirit.

The song proper ends at 185, and is followed by this brief narrative passage. The uncouth swain is Milton in his guise of shepherd poet. The quills are the shepherd’s pipe. Doric, the dialect used by Theocritus, hence denotes the simple language of pastoral poetry.

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## 1.5 Notes

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**Background and Text.** Lycidas first appeared in a 1638 collection of elegies entitled *Justa Edouardo King Naufrago*. This collection commemorated the death of Edward King, a collegemate of Milton’s at Cambridge who drowned when his ship sank off the coast of Wales in August, 1637. Milton volunteered or was asked to make a contribution to the collection. The present edition follows the copy of *Poems of Mr. Jhon Milton* (1645) in the Rauner Collection at Dartmouth College Known as Hickmott 172. Milton made a few significant revision to Lycidas after 1638. These revisions are noted as they occur.

**Form and Structure** – The Structure of Lycidas remains somewhat mysterious. *J. Martin Evans* argues that there are two movements with six sections each that seem to mirror each other. Arthur Barker believes that the body of Lycidas is composed of three movements that run parallel in pattern. That is ,each movement begins with an invocation, then explores the conventions of the pastoral, and ends with a conclusion to Milton’s “emotional problem” (quoted in Womack).

**Voice** Milton’s epigram labels Lycidas a “monody”: a lyrical lament for one voice. But the poem has several voices or personae. Including the “uncouth swain” (the main narrator who is “interrupted” first by Phoebus (Apollo), then Camus (the river Cam. And thus Cambridge University personified), and the “Pilot of the Galilean lake” (St. Peter). Finally, a second narrator appears for only the last eight lines to bring a conclusion in ottava rima ( see F.T. Prince). Before the second narrator enters, the poem contains the irregular rhyme and meter characteristic of the Italian canzone form. Canzone is essentially a polyphonic lyrical form, hence creating a serious conflict with the “monody.” Milton may have meant “monody” in the sense that the poem should be regarded more as a story told completely by one person as opposed to a chorus. This person would presumably be the final narrator, who seemingly masks himself as the “uncouth swain.” This concept of story-telling ties Lycidas closer to the genre of pastoral

elegy.

**Genre.** Lycidas is a pastoral elegy, a genre initiated by Theocritus, also put famous use by Virgil and Spenser. Christopher Kendrick asserts that one's reading of Lycidas would be improved by treating the poem anachronistically, that is, as if it was one of the most original pastoral elegies. Also, as already stated, it employs the irregular rhyme and meter of an Italian canzone. Stella Revard suggests arrangement in verse paragraphs and its introduction of various voices and personae are also features that anticipate epic structures. Like the form, structure, and voice of Lycidas, its genre is deeply complex. James Sitar.

**Monody.** A lyrical lament for one voice.

**Lycidas?** An echo of Virgil; "Who would not sing for gallus? (Eclogue 10.5)"

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## 1.6 Critical Essays

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### 1.6.1 'Lycidas' as a Pastoral Elgy

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy and, as John Bailey stresses, it out distances all previous English elegies almost as easily as Comus out instances all previous English masques. The word 'pastrol' is derived from the Greek word 'pastor' which means to "gaze". Hence pastoral poetry is a poetry which deals with the life and doings, loves, joys and sorrows of shepherds and shepherdesses and other humble dwellers of the country side. In a pastoral elegy the poet mourns the death of some friend or relative in the guise of a shepherd mourning the death of another shepherd. Theodritus, Bions, Moschus and virgil were the great writers of pastoral elegies among the ancients. Their pastorals are characterized by a rare freshness and first hand observation of Nature. They capture the real beauty and charm of rural life. With the Renaissance, the pastoral was widely practiced in Italy and other European countries, and from Europe the vogue of the pastoral reached England. Spenser and Sidney were the pioneers of this tradition in England. In their hands, the pastoral has much of the freshness of the early Greek masters, but in the hands of the imitators of Spenser and Sidney, pastoralism became a mere convention, something merely bookish and artificial.

In Lycidas, Milton has followed the pastoral tradition. It is a pastoral elegy. The very name 'Lycidas' is the conventional name for a shepherd and it frequently occurs in the pastoral elegies of Theocritus and Bions. The pastoral machinery has been made full use of by the poet. He speaks of himself as a shepherd and of Edward King as another shepherd both of whom were nursed together and who fed their flocks together :

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade and rill :  
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared  
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,  
We drove a-field, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battering our flocks with the fresh dews of night,

Of till the star that rose at evening bright  
Toward Heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Tempered to the oaten flute;  
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long;  
And old Damoetas loved to hear our song.

Further, in the pastoral tradition there are charming descriptions of the idyllic beauty of the countryside. A thousand flowers bloom and beautify the landscape:

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
The tufted crow-toe, and pale Jessamine,  
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,  
The glowing violent,  
The musk rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;  
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffodillies full their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.

The passage is characterized by first hand observation and its freshness and charm are beyond question.

Again true to the convention of the pastoral elegy, Milton introduces a procession of mourners mourning the death of their beloved Lycidas. All Nature—the woods, the caves, the echoes—mourns the death of Lycidas. Triton, “the herald of the sea”, Camus, ‘reverend Sire’, St. Peter, ‘the Pilot of the Galilean Lake’, are other mourners introduced by the poet. The introduction of St. Peter, also provides the poet with an occasion for a fierce invective against the corruption and degeneration of contemporary Church. Such denunciation is also a part of the usual machinery of the pastoral elegy. We find such denunciations in Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calender* and in the elegies of a number of Italian poets.

The elegy ends according to accepted tradition on a note of hope and consolation. For Lycidas is not really dead, and “the woeful shepherds” should weep no more. Like the sun, he would rise out of the sea in which he has been drowned, and having reached in the blessed kingdom of Heaven would be entertained by all the saints. Or he would become the, “Genius of the shore”, near which he was drowned:

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;  
Hence forth thou art the Genius of the shore,

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good

To all that wander in that perilous flood.

In short, Milton in *Lycidas* has followed the pastoral tradition in its entirety. It is a pastoral dedicated to the purposes of elegy and lament. Milton might have owed much to the pastorals of Spenser and other writers, but by his lament he revived and enriched the pastoral tradition. A number of modern works have been inspired by Milton's elegy. The authors of *Adonais* and *Thyrsis* "fed on the self-same hill" as the author of *Lycidas*; they too revive echoes of the Sicilian shepherd-music; and apart from such general similarities as we should expect where writers have chosen the same vehicle of expression, each has at least one point of contact with Milton. *Thyrsis*, like *Lycidas*, presents an idealized picture of university-life, and perhaps of sincerity and true feeling begotten of love for the scenes described, the advantage rests with Arnold. In *Adonais*, Shelley's invective against the enemies of Keats recalls Milton's onslaught on the church; a subsidiary theme has kindled the fire of personal feeling in each poem, and neither can be regarded as the consecration of perfect friendship. – (Verity).

### **1.6.2 Nature of Grief in 'Lycidas' – Edward King as the Nominal Subject**

As regards the charge of artificiality, it is a mistake to suppose that *Lycidas* is an expression of intense personal grief on the death of a close friend. Milton and Edward King were never very intimate friends, and Milton was not deeply grieved at King's death. Says John Bailey in this connection, "Milton had liked and respected him, no doubt, but had certainly not been so intimate with him as with young Charles Diodati who died almost exactly a year later, and was lamented by his great friend in the *Epitaphium Damonis* which is the finest of the Latin poems. Those who read Latin will enjoy its close parallelism with *Lycidas* and its touches of a still closer bond of affection and its expression of intense personal sorrow. But if the death of Diodati aroused the deeper sorrow in Milton, that of King produced unquestionably the greater poem. It is a common mistake to think that to write a great elegy, a man must have suffered a great sorrow. That is not the case. The poet's real subject is not the death of King; it is the death of all who have been or will be loved in all the world, and the sorrow of all the survivors, the tragic destiny of youth and hope and fame, the doom of frailty and transience which has been eternally pronounced on so many of the fairest gifts of nature and all the noblest works of man. The death of *Lycidas* is not merely a personal loss, it is a loss to the university and to religion.

As both Dr. Tillyard and Cazamian agree, Edward King is not the real, but merely the nominal subject of *Lycidas*. "Fundamentally "*Lycidas*" concerns Milton himself. King is but the excuse for one of Milton's most personal poems." It does contain deep feeling, but the deep feeling is not about King, but about his own possible fate. A brief critical review of the poem would fully bring out the truth of the assertion that Milton and not King is the real subject of the Elegy.

### **1.6.3 The Autobiographical Element**

*Lycidas* can fittingly be divided into six parts – the introduction, the Epilogue and four main sections. The introduction, lines 1-25, does not concern *Lycidas* at all, but is concerned with Milton's own reluctance to write a poem before his powers have matured. But he must write, for *Lycidas* died prematurely and for a premature death he must be willing to risk premature poetry. Moreover, if he writes an elegy for *Lycidas*, some other poet may honour him, when he dies, with an elegy :

So may soon gentle Muse  
 With lucky words favour my destin'd Urn,  
 And as he passes turn,  
 And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud,  
 For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,  
 Fed the some flock, by fountain, shade, and vill.

Why should Milton think of the possibility of his own death, even though at the time he was young and in the fullness of health? As **Dr. Tillyard** points out for one thing during the years 1636-37, plague was bad in England and many people had died of it in Horton itself. Naturally, Milton's thoughts turn to the possibility of his own death. Secondly, when Milton wrote *Lycidas* in 1637 he was twenty-nine years of age, and early in the next year he set out for Italy with perhaps the intention of going on to Greece. The last line of the poem,

*To morrow to fresh Wood, and pasture new,*

might well refer to this intended journey. "Anyhow at the time of writing *Lycidas* Milton must have had the Italian and possibly the Greek journey in his mind. When he heard of King's death, and still more when by consenting to write the elegy he had to make his mind dwell on it, he could not but have felt the analogy between King and himself. Milton and King had been at the same college in the same University. Their careers and interests had been similar there. Milton was a poet, King had written verse too. King had made a voyage on the sea, Milton was about to make voyages. How could Milton have missed the idea that he might make the analogy complete by getting drowned, like King, also? At a time when, through plagues and what no, life was less secure than in modern times of peace, Milton, having sacrificed so much to his great ambition, must anyhow, at the time of preparation draw to an end, have dwelt on the thought that it might be all for nothing. Not that he was a coward: but the fear that his ambitions might be ruined at the last moment must have been at times difficult to endure."

*The first main section*, beginning 'Together both, ere the high Lawns appear 'd', consists of line 25 to 84. It contains a lament for the death of Lycidas, regret that the muse could not protect her son, and leads up to the first great cause of pain in Milton's own mind: the risk of death before his great work is completed. What has been the use of all his laborious preparation, his careful chastity (for doubtless he means this by his reference to Amaryllis and Neaera), if fame, for whose sake he has denied himself, is to escape him, anticipated by death? Earthly fame, he replies to himself in the person of Phoebus, has nothing to do with heavenly fame: it depends on deeds, not on what those deeds effect. "So he argues, but one does not get the impression of emotional conviction yet: the final impression of the first section is that it would be a cruel shame and a wicked waste, if he were to die. It should be noted with what consummate skill Milton in this section works the subject from King to its climax in himself."- (**Tillyard**)

In the second main section, lines 85 to 131, beginning. '*O Fountain Arethuse*', he does the same thing. In the elegiac tradition various mourners come to visit the dead body of Edward King. It is perfectly natural that St. Peter should come to visit a priest, and equally natural that he should proceed from lamenting the death of a good priest to denouncing the bad. "but this denunciation reveals

the second great cause of mental pain in Milton : his quarrel with contemporary England, typified the rottenness of the clergy. *Thus St. Peter's outburst is not an irrelevant digression but strictly parallel with Milton earlier outburst about the blind Fury.* One can even see a close connection of ideas between the two grievances. One grievance is that 'the hungry sheep look up and are not fed'; England has bad or useless teachers: the other is that he, Milton, whose ambition was to teach by writing a great epic, to feed the hungry sheep of England, may easily be cut off before it can be realized. It should be noted, too, that the second grievance, like the first, is answered at the end of the second movement. Punishment is waiting; the two-handed engine stands ready to smite. But even less than at the end of the first section has mental calm been attained. The end of the second section marks the climax of the poem. Milton has stated his quarrel with Life: we await the conclusion." – (Tillyard).

*The third section, lines 132 to 164, beginning Return 'Alpheus' forms a kind of transition to the final note of hope and consolation. "Some quieter interlude is clearly necessary between St. Peter's bitter outburst and the heavenly triumph of the final movement. The sudden change from the terror of the two-handed engine to the incredible beauty of the description of the flowers contains and implication that somehow the 'dorique delicay', of which the description of the flowers is the highest example in Milton, is not irreconcilable with the sterner mood, and hence is able to insinuate some comfort. So too from the dallying with a false surmise, the escape into a region of pure romance,*

*Where the great vision of the Guarded Mount*

*Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold,*

Some comfort is allowed." – (Tillyard) these sources of minor comfort, lead up to the greater comfort at the end.

*The fourth section describes the resurrection of Lycidas and his entry into heaven "More truly it solves the whole poem by describing the resurrection into a new kind of life of Milton's hopes, should they be ruined by premature death or by the moral collapses of his country. The loss or possible loss of human fame is made good by fame in heaven; the corrupt clergy are balanced by,*

*All the saints above*

*In solemn troops and sweet Societies,*

and the harsh forebodings of Peter, "the pilot of the Galilean lake", are forgotten,

*Through the dear might of him who walk'd the waves*

But above all the fourth section describes the renunciation of earthly fame, the abnegation of self by the great egotist, and the spiritual purgation of gaining one's life after losing it. As **Dr. Tillyard** stresses, "death or the fear of death is not the whole subject of the elegy. The real subject is the resolving of those fears (and of his bitter scorn of the clergy) into an exalted state of mental calm. The apotheosis of Lycidas in the penultimate paragraph has a deeper meaning: It symbolizes Milton's own balanced state of mind to which he won after the strength of *Lycidas* and the reason why it is a greater poem than *Comus* : in the one calm after struggle, in the other calm of a kind but without the preliminary struggle. If the above idea is accepted, it is possible to see in *Lycidas* a unity of purpose which cannot be seen in it if the death of King is taken as the real subject of the poem. In particular the less elegiac significance of the whole."

*In the Epilogue consisting of the last eight lines of the poem, Milton "speaks directly, criticizes*

what he has just written in his imaginary character, and intimate that he has stepped out of that character, and is about to turn to other occupations. Still the close is ideal, and studied from other pastoral poems:"

*To- marrow to fresh woods and pastures new*

*As pointed out above, this might be a hint of Milton's intended voyage to Italy and Greece.*

#### **1.6.4 Lycidas as a Work of Art-Diction and Versification**

As a work of art, *Lycidas*, in spite of the disparagement of Johnson, who was offended by its pastoralism, has received almost universal praise. **Mark Pattison** says that it is the high-water mark of English poetry and its full enjoyment a final fruit of consummate scholarship. '*Lycidas*' is the finest of the early poems of Milton and so it illustrates some of the best features of his early poetry as well as gives an indication of Milton's maturer style, the style of the great epics. According to **Legouis** and **Cazamain**, it is, "*an example of supreme perfection of style, imagery and versification.*" Milton's learning is revealed at every step and the elegy is heavy with a host of allusions, both classical and Biblical. For example there are references to '*the seat of Jove*' '*Sister of the sacred well*' and, '*rough Satyres and Fawns*', Milton alludes to the 'nuptial song' at the marriage of the Lamb as given in 'Revelation'. References to 'the stormy Hebrides', Alpheus, and 'fountain Arethuse' all reflect the learning of the poet.

Milton has a rich evocative imagination and with the help of melody and magic of words he can make things vivid and appealing. He makes skilful use of poetic devices like alliteration, personification, similes and metaphors. Alliteration can be noted in expression like, '*Swart star sparly looks*' and '*flames in the forehead*', The Cowslips are personified and described as flowers drooping their heads in a pensive mood. A living pictorial image is to be noted in the lines:

*The air was calm and on the level brine*

*Sleek Penope with all her sister played,*

*Lycidas* being a pastoral poem provides Milton enough scope for the use of evocative images. The poem presents throughout a number of images of water. Cambridge is represented by the river Camus. St. Peter is the 'Pilot of the Galilean lake'; Christ is one who walked the waves. The apt use of sonorous proper names not only imparts music and melody but also dignity and stateliness to the style as in the following ;

*Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold*

*Latin construction and words in their origin Latin sense are frequently used and this imparts epigrammatic terseness, brevity and density to Milton's diction. A number of fine memorable passages are scattered all up and down the poem, as, for example,*

(1) *Without the meed of some melodious tear.*

(2) *Ready to smite once, and smite no more.*

(3) *To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.*

The style is skillfully varied in keeping with the requirements of thought and emotion. It has a poeticalness of manner that fits its pastoral mode, but it is also biting satiric, especially in stanzas where

the poet criticizes the contemporary clergy. It is passionately exultant. The style varies with the variety of poem's themes and the poet's moods. The harshly satiric St. Peter passage, the lyrical flower passage, the tragic vision of the drowned man in the sea, the severely assured close, are all skillfully varied in style and all together make up a varied and dramatic pattern. The style varies, rises and falls, in accordance with the fluctuations in Milton's moods.

As regards the versification of *Lycidas*, we can do no better than quote the views of **Hendord**; "*Meterically Lycidas* is a combination of regularity and freedom. The verse is prevaingly iambic pentameter varied occasionally by the introduction of three-foot lines. The rhyme varies from the couplet from to intricate stanzaic arrangements, with a sprinkling of unrymed lines. The poem closes with a stanza in *ottava rima*. In general Milton's formal models here are to be found in the metrical practice of contemporary Italian poetry. A more essential feature than the rhymescheme, however, is Milton's handling of the metrical pauses and his tendency to prolong his cadence through a succession of lines in what **Masson** calls a series of free rhythmic paragraphs. It is in *Lycidas* that Milton's verse first takes on the characteristic qualities of rich and sonorous harmony for which we have no other word than Miltonic."

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## 1.7 Let us Sum Up

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In this unit we have tried to gloss the poem *Lycidas* for you with copious notes, annotations and explanation of the devices used in the poem.

We have also tried to briefly sum up Milton's life and works so that you are able to assess the writer as a whole.

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## 1.8 Review Questions

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1. Write an essay on 'Lycidas' as a pastoral clegy.
2. Comment on the versification of Milton with reference to *Lycidas*.

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## 1.9 Bibliography

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3. W. Bell (ed.) : *Milton's Nativity Ode, Lycidas, Sonnets etc.*
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## UNIT-2

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### JOHN MILTON : PARADISE LOST-I

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#### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Paradise Lost Book I.
  - 2.2.1 About the Author
  - 2.2.2 Introduction to the Epic : Paradise Lost
  - 2.2.3 Summary of the Epic : Paradise Lost Book-1
  - 2.2.4 Extracts from Book-1
  - 2.2.5 Glossary
  - 2.2.6 Literary Terms
  - 2.2.7 Commentary on the Extracts
  - 2.2.8 Model Explanations
- 2.3 Self-Assessment Questions
- 2.4 Answers to SAQs
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Review Questions
- 2.7 Bibliography

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#### **2.0 Objectives**

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This Unit will help you to learn

1. About the life and works of John Milton.
2. What the main elements of an epic are.
3. How Milton has begun his epic in epic tradition and has used Latinized syntax.
4. How Milton's epic is full of supernatural characters and how they are interested in the affairs of parents of mankind.
5. How epic theme needs a grand style.
6. What happens in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* & how it is related with the complete story of *Paradise lost*.
7. About the main characters in *Paradise Lost*.
8. About the religious allegory in this epic.

9. Why some of the critics call Satan the hero of *Paradise Lost*.

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## 2.1 Introduction

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In this Unit we have given you important extracts from Book 1 of Milton's renowned epic *Paradise Lost*. But you cannot understand these extracts of Book 1 in isolation. In order to understand Book 1 in a better way, you have been given summary of the whole epic. Before studying the extracts, you should study the part given about the life of Milton and introduction to the epic. The glossary and the literary terms explained for you concern the epic and you must read them very carefully so as to have an idea about epic genre in general and *Paradise Lost* in particular. The next Unit on *Paradise Lost* is in continuation of this Unit.

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## 2.2 Paradise Lost Book 1

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### 2.2.1. About the Author

John Milton (1608-1674) was born in Bread Street and was educated at St. Paul's School and later went to Christ's College, Cambridge where he acquired the nickname 'the Lady of Christ's'. He got his B.A. in 1629 and M.A. in 1632. He started writing poetry in Latin and Italian, and also in English, on both sacred and secular themes. His first distinct work "on the morning of Christ's Nativity" shows his mastery of stanza and structure, his love of resounding proper names. In 1635 he moved to Horton, Buckinghamshire, where he studied in Greek, Latin and Italian. His elegy *Lycidas* dwells on the fears of premature death & unfulfilled ambition. From 1637 to 1639 Milton traveled abroad. On his return, he established himself in London. He became tutor to his nephews Edward & John Phillips. In 1641 he published a series of five pamphlets against episcopacy. He engaged himself in political activity and a tireless defense of religious, civil & domestic liberties. In June 1642 Milton married Mary Powell. He wrote *Areopagitica* in his great defense of the liberty of the press. At this junction he became aware of his growing blindness. By 1651 he became completely blind. His wife who had gone to her parents at Forest Hill near Oxford (the royalist stronghold) rejoined him in 1645. After the execution of Charles I, Milton argued that a nation free by nature had a right to remove and punish tyrants and attacking the Presbyterians who were in his view a growing threat to freedom. He was appointed Latin Secretary to the newly formed Council of State. He retained this post as Latin Secretary until the Restoration. He lived most of this period at Petty France, Westminster. At the Restoration he went into hiding, was arrested, fined, and released. After that he returned to poetry and started composition of *Paradise Lost*.

Milton died from 'gout struck in' & was buried beside his father in St. Giles' Cripplegate.

His personality and his works arouse much discussion. Critics have discussed him as a sociable, good natured, serene, a domestic tyrant, a strict Puritan, a misogynist, a libertine and a radical heretic. As a writer he is famous for his towering structure and as a master of polemical prose. Dryden described his *Paradise Lost* as one of the greatest, most noble and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced. Milton's use of blank verse has profoundly influenced many of the important writers.

But on the other hand, Dr. Johnson complained that Milton used 'English words with a foreign idiom'. Addison criticized Milton by saying 'Our language sank under him'. Blake's famous dictum against Milton is that Milton was a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it'. The Romantics, especially Shelley, considered that Milton had represented Satan the Arch-Rebel as the true hero of *Paradise*

*Lost*; and God as either dull or wicked. T.S. Eliot was of the opinion that Milton's sensuousness was 'withered by book learning' and was further impaired by blindness.

Some of the famous works of Milton:

<i>Comus</i>	-	1637
<i>Lycidas</i>	-	1637
<i>The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce</i>	-	1643
<i>Areopagitica</i>	-	1644
<i>The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates</i>	-	1649
<i>The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth</i>	-	1660
<i>Paradise Lost</i>	-	1667
<i>History of Britain</i>	-	1670
<i>Paradise Regained</i>	-	1671
<i>Samson Agonistes</i>	-	1671

### 2.2.2 Introduction to the Epic : *Paradise Lost*

*Paradise Lost* is a famous epic poem written by John Milton and first printed in 1667.

It was initially in 10 books & later rearranged in 12.

The book opens with an invocation to the "Heavenly Muse" where the poet states the aim of the book i.e. to justify the ways of God to men. In the first scene the defeated Archangel Satan with his subordinate Beelzebub & other rebellious angels lies on the burning lake of Hell. He then summons a council for which a palace Pandemonium is built. In the council there are various suggestions – both in favour of and against waging a war against God. Then Beelzebub hints at the new world which could be the means of revenge. Satan then undertakes a journey to this 'new world' through Chaos. Milton then describes God looking at Satan's journey and foretelling his success. He then hints to the fall and punishment of man but man will be ultimately saved as he finds a savior in God's son.

Satan meanwhile disguises himself as a young angel from Heaven and enquires from Uriel, the Sun Spirit the way to Earth. On reaching the earth he overhears the discourse between Adam and Eve about the tree of knowledge and resolves to tempt them to disobey God. But he is discovered by Gabriel, the commander, & expelled from the Garden of Eden. Then Raphael comes to warn Man of the impending danger. He also gives an account of the rebellion in Heaven at the end of which Satan & his followers are cast into Hell. He further describes the creation of the new world as accomplished by the Son of God. Adam further enquires about the penalty for eating the fruit of knowledge.

Adam further enquires about the stars & Heavenly bodies which Raphael answers with a doubt. Adam then relates what he remembers since his own creation. Raphael then departs after renewing the warning to Adam that the penalty for eating the fruit of knowledge will be Death.

Satan, meanwhile, enters into the body of a serpent tempts Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of

Knowledge. Eve is persuaded by Satan to eat the fruit and when she tells this to Adam, he also eats it as to perish with her. A sense of guilt & shame overcome them. The Son of God comes to Eden to pronounce the doom of Adam, Eve and Satan. Sin & Death ascend to Eden from Hell whereupon Adam & Eve seek mercy from the Son of God.

Satan on the other hand returns to Pandemonium where he & his angels are transformed into serpents.

God sends Michael to reveal the banishment of Adam & Eve from Eden & the hope of redemption. He also tells about the impending miseries of mankind which will end with the Flood. He further relates the coming of the Messiah (Christ) and the progress of Christianity. With a renewed promise of Redemption Adam & Eve are finally let out of the Garden of Eden.

### **2.2.3 Summary of the Epic : *Paradise Lost* Book 1**

At the very beginning, in the epic tradition, John Milton invokes Heavenly Muse to help him to achieve his end of writing an epic poem to justify the ways of God to man. He has hinted how Adam could not follow the instructions given by God and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, which resulted into his fall. In this book Milton has shown the defeated Archangel Satan, with Beelzebub who is second in command. Satan & his rebellious angles are depicted lying on the burning lake of hell where there is continuous supply of sulphur and only darkness is visible. Satan like an enthusiastic leader provokes following, rouses their spirits and summons a council. Various staunch flowers of Satan namely Moloch, Chemos, Astoreth, Thammuz, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus and Belial are described in allegorical terms. The meeting is called to decide the line of future action, intrigues, war open or understood against God. The palace of Satan, Pandemonium, is described in detail.

### **2.2.4 Extracts from Book 1**

#### **Extract I (ll. 1-49)**

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning how Heavens and earth  
Rose out of Chaos : or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence

Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle fight intends to soar  
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for Thou know'st ; Thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,  
And mad'st it pregnant : what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support :  
That, to the highth of this great argument:  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.  
Say first – for Heaven hides nothing from the view,  
Nor the deep tract of Hell – say first what cause  
Moved our grant parents, in that happy state,  
Favoured of Heaven so highly, to fall off  
From their Creator, and transgress his will  
For one restraint, lords of the World besides.  
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt ?  
The infernal Serpent ; he it was whose guile,  
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived  
The mother of mankind, what time his pride  
Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host  
Of rebel Angels, by shoes aid, aspiring  
To set himself in glory above his peers,  
He trusted to have equaled the Most-High,  
If he opposed, and, with ambitious aim  
Against the throne and monarchy of God,  
Raised impious war in Heaven and battle proud,

With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power  
Hurled head long flaming from the ethereal sky,  
With hideous ruin and combustion, down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
In adamant chains and penal fire,  
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

**Extract II (ll. 84-124)**

“If thou beest he – but Oh how fallen ! how changed  
From him ! – who, in the happy realms of light,  
Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine  
Myriads, though bright – if he whom mutual league,  
United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
And hazard in the glorious enterprise,  
Joined with me once, now misery hath joined  
In equal ruin ; into what pit thou seest  
From what highth fallen : so much the stronger proved  
He with his thunder : and till then who knew  
The force of those dire arms ? yet not for those,  
Nor what the potent victor in his rage  
Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,  
Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind,  
And high disdain from sense of injured merit,  
That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,  
And to the fierce contention brought along  
Innumerable force of Spirits armed,  
That durst dislike his reign. And, me preferring,  
His utmost power with adverse power opposed  
In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,  
And shook his throne. What though the field be lost ?  
All is not lost, unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield :  
And what is else not to be overcome ?  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
With suppliant knee, and deify his power  
Who, from the terror of this arm, so late  
Doubted his empire – that were low indeed.  
That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
This downfall ; since by fate, the strength of Gods,  
And this empyreal substance, cannot fail;  
Since, through experience of this great event,  
In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
We may with more successful hope resolve  
To wage by force or guile eternal war.  
Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,  
Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy  
Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.”

**Extract III (ll. 242–270)**

“Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,”  
Said then the lost Archangel, “This the seat  
That we must change for Heaven ? – this mournful gloom  
For that celestial light ? Be it so, since He  
Who now is sovran can dispose and bid  
What shall be right : farthest from Him is best,  
Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme  
Above his equals. Farewell happy fields,  
Where joy for ever dwells ! Hail, horrors ! hail,  
Infernal World ! and thou, profoundest Hell,  
Receive thy new possessor – one who brings  
A mind not to be changed by place or time  
The mind is its own place, I and in itself

Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.  
What matter where, if I be still the same,  
And what I should be, all but less than he  
Whom thunder hath made greater ? Here at least  
We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built  
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:  
Here we may reign secure ; and, in my choice,  
To reign is worth ambition; though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.  
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
The associates and co-partners of our loss,  
Lie thus astonished on the oblivious pool,  
And call them not to share with us their part  
In this unhappy mansion, or once more  
With rallied arms to try what may be yet  
Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell ?”

**Extract IV ( ll. 622-662)**

“O myriads of immortal Spirits ! O Powers  
Matchless, but with the Almighty ! – and that strife  
Was not inglorious, though the event was dire,  
As this place testifies, and this dire change,  
Hateful to utter. But what power of mind,  
Foreseeing our presaging, from the depth  
Of knowledge past or present, could have feared  
How such united force of gods, how such  
As stood like these, could ever know repulse?  
For who can yet believe, though after loss,  
That all these puissant legions, whose exile  
Hath emptied Heaven, shall fail to re-ascend,  
Self-raised, and re-possess their native seat ?  
For me, be witness all the host of Heaven,

If counsels different or dangers shunned  
 By me have lost our hopes. But he who reigns  
 Monarch in Heaven till then as one secure  
 Sat on his throne, upheld by old repute,  
 Consent or custom, and his regal state  
 Put forth at full, but still his strength concealed –  
 Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall.  
 Henceforth his might we know, and know our own.  
 So as not either to provoke, or dread  
 New war provoked: our better part remains  
 To work in close design, by fraud or guile,  
 What force effected not; that he no less  
 As length from us may find, Who overcomes  
 By force hath overcome but half for foe.  
 Space may produce new Worlds; whereof so rife  
 There went a fame in Heaven that He ere long  
 Intended to create, and therein plant  
 A generation whom his choice regard  
 Should favour equal to the Sons of Heaven.  
 Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps  
 Our first eruption, thither, or elsewhere;  
 For this infernal pit shall never hold  
 Celestial Spirits in bondage, nor the abyss  
 Long under darkness cover, But these thoughts  
 Full counsel must mature. Peace is despised:  
 For who can think submission? War, then, war  
 Open or understood, must be resolved”

### **2.2.5 Glossary**

#### **Extract I**

- Line 1. First disobedience – man’s first act of disobedience to God.
2. That forbidden tree – the Tree of knowledge

4. Loss of Eden \_ as a punishment tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge Adam & Eve & driven out of the Garden of Eden.  
One greater Man – Christ
5. Sing Heavenly Muse – Milton asks for inspiration from the Muse of poetry.
7. Horeb or Sinai – Name of a mountain on which Moses more than once received inspiration from God
- 8 That shepherd – Moses , the great law giver  
Chosen seed – The Israelites who were the chosen people of God.
9. Beginning – First words of Genesis
10. Chaos – abyss  
Sion – Mountain Zion where the temple stood in Jerusalem.
11. Siloa’s brook – the stream flowing near the Temple of Jerusalem.
12. Fast by – close by  
The oracle of God – the temple of God in Jerusalem.
15. Above the Aonian Mount – Mount Helicon sacred to the Muses. It means to write poetry upon a higher theme than chosen by Homer or other Greek poets.
17. O Spirit – Holy spirit which is a part of the Trinity ( with Father & Son )
19. From the first – from the beginning of the world.
22. Dark – Milton was blind by 1652
23. Illumine – Milton seeks spiritual enlightenment.
25. Assert – Prove  
Providence – the wisdom of foresight with which God governs the world.
- 29 Grand Parents – Adam & Eve, the parents of mankind
30. Fall off from : Revolt against
31. For one restraint – the restraint was that they were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
34. The infernal serpent – Satan
35. Envy & revenge – Envy for mans happy state in Eden and revenge for his foul defeat in the war against God.
36. The mother of mankind – Eve.
- 39 Peers – equals
40. Trusted – Hoped

The most High – the Almighty

- 45. Flaming – because they were burnt with the Messiah's thunders
- 46. Ruin – A fall with violence combustion – conflagration
- 47. To bottomless perdition – to unfathomable depths of endless misery.
- 48. Adamantine chains – chains made of impenetrable hard metal.

Penal fire – fire of hell

- 49. Who durst – because he dared to oppose God.

### **Extract II**

- 84. Beest – Obsolete form of II person present indicative of the substantive verb.
- 85. Him – The Beelzebub of Heaven
- 86. Transcendent – Limitless.
- 87. If he – if ( thou beest ) he
- 89. The glorious enterprise – The war against God.
- 94. Those – those dire arms.
- 95. Potent victor – Mighty conqueror ; used by Satan for God.
- 97. Though changed in my outward luster – through I have lost much of my angelic brilliance by my fall.
- 98. High disdain from sense of injured merit – My great contempt of God. Arising from the feeling that he has injured my merit.
- 103. His utmost power – God's power surpasses everything.
- 104. In dubious battle – according to Satan the result of the battle was uncertain till the end.
- 107. Study – Constant thought
- 111. Grace – God's favor
- 112. Deify his Power – worship him as God.
- 115. Ignominy – Dishonour
- 116. By fate – Gods are subject to the decrees of destiny
- 117. Empyrean substance – The bodies of angels consist of a nobler substance and not dust of the earth as of men.  
Cannot fail is not subject to decay
- 119. In arms not worse – our strength has not diminished
- 122. Grand Foe – God
- 124. Tyranny – monarchy usurped

### **Extract III**

- 242 Clime – climate; used in the sense of country
- 243 The lost Archangel – Satan
- 244 Change for Heaven - instead of Heaven
- 246 Sovran – Sovereign  
Dispose & bid – arrange & command
- 248 Whom reason hath equaled – not superior to us in reason, has gained the superiority over us by force
- 249 Happy fields : The Elysian fields are Heavenly abode as described in Homer.
- 250 Horror Hail – Greetings to
- 257-58 All but less than he whom thunder hath made greater ? – This is repetition of the idea expressed earlier that God has been equaled in reason and is able to maintain. His supremacy only by force.  
All but less than – A combination of ‘only less than’ and ‘all but equal to’
- 259-60 The Almighty hath not built here for his enemy – God would certainly not grudge Satan and his crew the possession of such a place.
- 266 Oblivious – Causing forgetfulness; Satan attributes the insensibility of the angels to the effect of the fiery lake. Milton may have in mind the Lethe.
- 269 Rallied – Reassembled.
- 268-270 Why do we not call them here on dry land to try once again, by reassembling our routed forces , what of lost heaven may yet be regained or what more we stand to lose in Hell ?

### **Extract IV**

- 622 Myriads – Thousands.
- 623 Matchless, but with the Almighty – Only the Almighty could be a match for them
- 624 Inglorious – Dishonourable, humiliating.  
Event – Result, defeat of the fallen angels.
- 625 Dire Change – Disastrous condition ; change or banishment from heaven and damnation in hell.
- 624-626 Though the event . . . hateful to utter – Though the outcome of the battle was disastrous, as it proved by our expulsion to this gloomy place and by the horrible change that has come over us, which is hateful to describe.
- 626-630 What power of mind . . . ever know repulse – What power of mind could, from its past or present experience, predict, and therefore fear, that a united force of angels like ours, that stood firm like the angels here, could ever know defeat?
- 627 Presaging – Foreseeing or predicting.
- 628-629 Could have feared how – Who could have entertained the fear that such an army could be

defeated ?

629 Feared how - “We should expect ‘feared that.’ The poet uses foreseen or presaged’. Here, what power of mind could have foreseen or presaged’. Here, as in many other passages of Milton, the end of a sentence fits on to the sense rather than to the words of the previous part of the sentence. Thus here ‘what power of mind foreseeing could have feared how such force could meet repulse, is a shorter equivalent for ‘what power of mind could have foreseen how such force could meet repulse, and so have come to fear that it ever would meet repulse.’”

631 Though after loss – Even after our defeat

632 Puissant – Powerful. Legions – Forces

633 Re-ascend – Rise again to Heaven

634 Self-raised – Having risen y their own effort

Native seat – Heaven.

635 For me – As for me, I swear before all angels that our defeat was not due to my failing to take advice or avoiding danger.

635 Host of Heaven – Heavenly spirits

636 Counsels different – Difference of counsel with you ; may having personal motives and following a course of action to serve my ends at your expense.

635-637 For me, be witness... lost our hopes – As far as I am concerned, all of you, angels of Heaven, will bear witness whether our hopes were defeated by my acting contrary to your advice or by my shrinking any danger.

638 Monarch in Heaven – Sovereign ruler of heaven, God

Till then – Till we revolted against them.

As one secure – Like one safe against all attack

639 Old repute – (Resting on) old reputation of being good and powerful ( but now exposed)

639-640 Upheld by old repute consent or custom – Supported in his sovereignty by his reputation as sovereign, or by the consent of those over whom he ruled, or by sheer tradition and custom.

640 Content – Agreement.

Stale – Pomp as opposed to power.

641 Put forth – Displayed

Strength concealed – Power unknown (to the angels) and hence a source of misunderstanding and causer of miscalculation on the part of His enemies.

642 Tempted our attempt – The Divine glory and regal splendor of God excited jealousy and revolt on the part of Satan and his associates.

643 Henceforth his might we know, and known our own – Satan wants to convince them that they are now in a better position to fight because they know also their own relative strength.

- 644 Provoke – We knew enough about his power and ours not to provoke him, or if he provokes us, dread him.
- 645 Better part – Safe policy.
- 646 Close design – Secret scheme.
- Guile – Deceit
- 647 Effected – Achieved
- 648-649 Who overcomes by force hath overcome but half his foe – God has overpowered us by physical force and has subjugated our bodies only. He has failed to win our minds.
- 650 Rife – Rampant.
- Whereof – About which
- Space may produce new Worlds – New worlds may evolve from space. Satan seems to take a scientific view, and deny God's act of creation.
- 651 Fame – Report ; fame.
- 652 Create – New worlds.
- Plant – Settle
- 653 Generation – Race.
- Choice regard – Preferential treatment.
- 654 Should favour equal to – Should favour equally with
- The Sons of Heaven – Angels
- 655 Thither – Referring to such a new world
- If but to pry – Even if it is only to have a sly glimpse at the new world
- 656 Our first eruption – Our first bursting out of the place.
- 658-659 Nor the Abyss long under darkness cover – The bottomless abyss shall not cover us for long in darkness.
- 659-660 These thoughts full counsel must mature – These are merely suggestions, Satan says, which should be carefully discussed and elaborated before they are put into execution.
- 660 Peace is despaired – No question or hope arises and there is therefore no hope or peace. 'Despair' is here used in the passive, as if it were a transitive verb, although it is properly followed by the preposition 'of'.
- 661 Think submission – Think of submission ; regard submission as a possible course.
- 662 Understood – Not openly declared, but recognized as the existing state of affairs without formal declaration. cold war.

## 2.2.6 Literary Terms

1. **Epic**- It is a long narrative poem exalted in style written on a grand / serious subject and centered on a heroic figure. The “primary” or the “traditional epics” are the written versions of the oral legends of a nation or tribe. *Iliad*, *Odyssey* & *Beowulf* belong to this category. The “literary” or “secondary epics” are the deliberate imitation of the traditional form. These include *The Aeneid*, *Paradise Lost*, *Hyperion* etc.

The epics are written in convention style with some common features of grand style, supernatural deeds, deus ex machina, invocation to the muse etc.

2. **Epic Simile** : It is an extended simile in which one or both of the objects compared are elaborately described. This device is regularly used in epic poetry to enhance the ceremonial quality of the epic e.g. Milton in *Paradise Lost* Book 1 ( ll 768 ff) describes the fallen angels thronging towards their new built palace i.e. Pandemonium by an elaborate comparison to the swarming of bees.
3. **Dues ex machine** – It is Latin for ‘god out of the machine’ It describes the practice of some Greek playwrights to lower gods by mechanism of some art on to the stage for the rescue of the hero or to untangle the plot. It is not used for any forced or improbable device e.g. a telltale birthmark by which a hard pressed author to resolve his plot. Examples of the occur in Hardy’s *Tess* & Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*. In *Paradise Lost* most of the characters have supernatural powers. They are gods or goddesses, or semi-gods. Some critics say that human interest is lost due to overuse of supernatural machinery.
4. **In medias res** – “It means in the middle of the things”. It is that critical point from where the narrative of an epic starts e.g. *Paradise Lost* opens with the fallen angels in hell resolving to revenge and not until Book V does Raphael relate to Adam the events which lead to this situation. This kind of opening arrests the interest of the reader.
5. **Pun** – It is play on words that are identical in sound but sharply diverse in meaning. Latin gave Milton an opportunity to make his words do double duty.
6. **Allegory** : It is an extended narrative which carries a second meaning along with its surface story. There are two main types of Allegory –
  - a) Historical & psolitical allegory in which the characters and the action represent historical personages and events.
  - b) The allegory of ideas in which the characters represent abstract concepts and the plot serves to communicate a doctrine for example in *Paradise Lost*.
7. **Episode** : An incident within a longer narrative, sometimes closely related to the plot, sometimes a digression. Epics have many episodes e.g. In *Paradise Lost* the meeting in Pandemonium, the comparison with Leviathan are good examples of Episodes.

## 2.2.7 Commentary on the Extracts

Extract I It is the beginning of *Paradise Lost*. In this extract Milton invokes Heavenly Muse to inspire him to write and complete an epic poem on the theme of Eternal Providence and justification of the ways of God to men. The Holy Spirit knows all the things from the very beginning of the

creations of this universe. Milton hints at the disobedience to God done by Adam and Eve by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree in the garden of Eden. Satan tempted Eve, mother of mankind to do so. That brought death and suffering in this world. Satan had been badly punished for raising his voice against the authority of God and was hurled down from Heaven into the bottomless pit i.e. hell. Satan was to live in hell in unbreakable chains. Because of his proxy war against God, Satan tempted Eve and caused loss of Eden. The invocation, the theme and the epic style of Milton are note-worthy from the very beginning. Syntax of these lines is Latinized.

Extract II It depicts Satan as a heroic figure. Satan speaks to Beelzebub who was his close associate in Heaven to challenge the authority of God ; and now both feel the equal misery & pain in hell. Satan regrets the lost outer glory of his companion. Satan does not repent for his fall because he has changed in outward brightness only. His hatred against God, his resolution, his unconquerable determination , thought of revenge and courage will never change. Moreover, Satan inspires the fallen angels as they are immortal. Asking for mercy from God will be worse than the downfall and defeat for Satan. Satan along with his followers conspires to wage eternal war either by force or fraud.

Extract III Satan describes the differences between Heaven & Hell. He accepts Hell and argues that there are many advantages in remaining away from Heaven. Satan considers that his bent of mind is not going to change with the change of place or time. Mind can make Hell of Heaven & Heaven of Hell. Here in Hell the fallen angels will be more free and secure. It is better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven. Satan intends to rally his forces once more to wage war against God.

Extract IV Satan in Pandemonium calls a meeting of the fallen angels to review the situation and provoke the spirits. He exhorts his followers to work against God. He talks about the disaster as a result of their opposition of God, their expulsion from Heaven, the horrible change that takes place to them in Hell. He explains why they lost their battle against God and exhorts them to nullify the half victory of their enemy. He talks about God's intension to establish a new world and place in it a race of beings who will enjoy God's special favor. Satan hopes to get rid of Hell and can no more live in slavery along with his followers. He calls a meeting of the fallen angels to decide upon the issue of war against God, either open or secret, to depose God.

### 2.2.8 Model Explanations

(a) *Of Man's first disobedience ... Sing, Heavenly Muse.*

These are the opening lines of *Paradise Lost* Book 1. It is a great epic poem written by John Milton.

In the very opening the poet invokes in the tradition of epic writing. Heavenly Muse must help him so that he may write an epic poem on the desired theme. The writer intends to write about man's first disobedience i.e. how Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Death and Misery came into this world because of Adam's disobedience of God. Blissful seat, the Garden of Eden was restored to mankind by the sacrifice to Christ.

This is invocation to the Muse. The epic writer has plunged directly into the middle of the story at the very beginning. The syntax is Latinized for which Milton is criticized badly.

(b) *What through the field be lost..... not to be overcome ?*

This extract is the part of the first speech made by Satan to Beelzebub in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost*, Satan is the Arch Enemy of God and Beelzebub is his staunch follower. Satan and his followers revolt against God in Heaven and are, thus, thrown down into Hell by God. Satan is not ready to accept his defeat.

According to Satan, they have lost the field but not all things. Satan has an unconquerable will immortal, hatred towards God, study of revenge and unyielding courage. He is not going to accept the authority of God in any case.

This speech of Satan exhorts the fallen angels to have courage even in Hell because the fellow angels are made of empyreal substance that will never fail, therefore they cannot be destroyed completely. The lines can be interpreted in an allegorical way and the struggle is between good and evil in the heart of man. Many critics say that Milton has glorified Satan and he himself belongs to Devil's party. But God needs a worthy enemy, and Milton has the epic theme in his mind.

(c) *Here at least we shall before ... same in Heaven.*

These lines have been extracted from BOOK 1 of *Paradise Lost* written by John Milton. Milton has depicted Satan on an epic scale. In these lines Satan justifies his stay in Hell where he along with his fellows has been thrown after his revolt against God for supreme authority in Heaven.

Satan thinks that he and his followers are more free in Hell. They are far away from the eyes of the Almighty. He is ambitious and he wants to reign. He is of the opinion that ruling in Hell is better than serving God in Heaven.

The complete story is an allegory and can be interpreted as an internal fight between good and evil in this world. Both are immortal and evil is never ready to accept defeat against good. The lines can be interpreted for autobiographical details and many critics think that Satan is Milton himself and that is why he has glorified Satan to such an extent. But at the very beginning Milton in invocation says that he wants to justify ways of God to mankind. Perhaps God needs a huge worthy opponent and Satan has been given epic dimensions.

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## 2.3 Self-assessment Questions

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### Extract I

1. What is invocation in an epic ?

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2. How did loss of Garden of Edam happen?

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3. What is the theme of *Paradise Lost*?

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4. Who deceived Eve and why ?

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**Extract II**

1. Who speaks this extract and to whom?

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2. How is Beelzebub associated with Satan?

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3. Why does Satan consider the fallen angels immortal?

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4. What are the traits of Satan which are not changed even after the fall?

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**Extract III**

1. How does Satan justify living in Hell?

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2. How does Satan compare and contrast himself with God?

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3. What is the hint given at the end of Satan's speech?

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#### Extract IV

1. What, according to Satan, is the cause of their defeat against God?

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2. What is God's plan of a new world referred by Satan?

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- 
3. Why is the meeting of the fallen angels called by Satan?
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### 2.4 Answers To SAQs

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#### Extract I

1. The epic writer invokes to his deity to help him in his plan of writing an epic. Here Milton invokes Heavenly Muse in the tradition of epic writing.
2. Adam & Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. This was an act of disobedience to God. That disobedience brought Death & misery into the world. The characters, incidents & places have religious, allegorical meanings.
3. According to the author the theme of *Paradise Lost* is to assert Eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to mankind.
4. Satan in-form of a serpent deceived Eve in order to take revenge against God. Satan was expelled from Heaven along with his followers because he challenged the authority of God in Heaven.

#### Extract II

1. The extract is the spoken by Satan, the Arch-Enemy of God to Beelzebub in Hell.
2. Beelzebub is the most powerful companion of Satan who fought with Satan against God in Heaven.

They and their followers are thrown down into Hell by the Almighty. Beelzebub suffers with Satan in misery & equal ruin in Hell also.

3. Satan considers that the fallen angels are immortal because they are made of ether which can't be destroyed. Their substance cannot fail. All this has allegorical meaning.
4. Satan still has unconquerable will, thought of revenge, undying hatred towards God and the courage which never yields. The speech has religious, allegorical interpretations.

### **Extract III**

1. Satan justifies living in Hell on the ground that it is far away from the authority in Heaven. Moreover it is a strong mind which can make Hell of Heaven and Heaven of Hell. The fallen angels will have more freedom and security in Hell than in Heaven and it is better to rule in Hell than to serve in Heaven.
2. Satan considers that he is equal to God in reason. Only His thunder has made God better than Satan in strength.
3. Satan and his followers are going to wage war against God in order to gain Heaven once again. It may be a direct or proxy war. Satan is going to call a meeting in this regard.

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## **2.5 Let Us Sum Up**

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By now you must have understood the salient features of epic as a genre. It has invocation, epic similes, divisions & episodes, supernatural characters, grand theme and grand style. With the help of literary terms, commentary on the extracts, glossary and the explanations you must be able to interpret Book 1 in the appropriate manner. You have been introduced to various characters and their allegorical representations of this unending struggle in this world.

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## **2.6 Review Questions**

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1. Discuss the use of epic similes in *Paradise Lost* Bk 1
2. Discuss Satan as the hero of Bk1, especially on the basis of his speeches made to Beelzebub
3. Describe Hell as depicted in Bk1
4. Comment on the use of allegory in Bk1
5. Comment upon the speeches made by Satan in Bk1
6. Discuss the Epic style on the basis of Bk1
7. Comment on the use of supernatural characters by Milton in Bk1
8. Discuss the autobiographical element in Bk1.

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## **2.7 Bibliography**

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## UNIT-3

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### JOHN MILTON : *PARADISE LOST* BOOK-II

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#### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives.
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 John Milton : *Paradise Lost* Book II.
  - 3.2.1 Summary of the Epic : *Paradise Lost* Book II
  - 3.2.2 Extracts from Book II
  - 3.2.3 Glossary
  - 3.2.4 Commentary on the Extracts
  - 3.2.5 Model Explanations
- 3.3 Self-Assessment Questions
- 3.4 Answers to SAQs
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Review Questions
- 3.7 Bibliography

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### 3.0 Objectives

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In this unit you will learn:

1. How Milton's epic is full of supernatural characters and how they are interested in the affairs of parents of mankind.
2. How epic theme needs a grand style.
3. What happens in Book II of *Paradise Lost* & how it is related with the complete story of *Paradise lost*.
4. About the main speeches in *Paradise Lost* Book II.
5. About the religious allegory in this epic.
6. Why some of the critics call Satan the hero of *Paradise Lost*.
7. How the question of waging war against God is discussed in the meeting held in Pandemonium.
8. The salient features due to which Satan comes out as the leader of fallen angels.

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### 3.1 Introduction

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In this Unit we have given you important extracts from Book II of Milton's renowned epic *Paradise Lost*. But you cannot understand these extracts of Book II in isolation. In order to understand Book

II in a better way, you have been given summary of the whole epic in the earlier Unit. Before studying the extracts, you should study the part given about the life of Milton and introduction to the epic in the earlier Unit. The literary terms explained for you in the earlier Unit concern the whole epic and you must read them very carefully so as to have an idea about epic genre in general and *Paradise Lost* in particular.

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## **3.2 John Milton : *Paradise Lost* Book II**

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### **3.2.1 Summary of the Epic : *Paradise Lost* Book II**

The Book 1 of the epic ends with coming of various followers of Satan along with their followers in Pandemonium to discuss what is to be done against God. Book II of *Paradise Lost* begins in continuation of the earlier incidents and the debate against God is depicted at the very beginning. Various followers of Satan along with their trains discuss the issue of waging another battle for the recovery of Heaven. Moloch recommends open war against God. Belial and Mammon are in favor of peace in order to avoid worse torments. Beelzebub is in favor of corrupting ‘another world, the happy seat / of some new race called Man’. In this way by corrupting Man, they may take revenge against God. As a leader of the fallow spirits, Satan plans to visit this ‘another world’ alone. He passes through Hell gates which are constant guarded by Sin & Death. He goes upward in search of this new world ( where Adam and Eve dwell) through the realm of Chaos. Milton has used allegorical manner to depict characters as well as territories. Following epic traditions Milton writes in grand epic style using episodes and epic similes.

At the very beginning, in the epic tradition, John Milton invokes the Heavenly muse to help him to achieve his end of writing an epic poem to justify the ways of God to men. He has hinted how Adam could not follow the instructions given by God and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree, which resulted into his fall. In this book Milton has shown the defeated Archangel Satan, with Beelzebub who is second in command. Satan & his rebellious angles are depicted lying on the burning lake of Hell where there is continuous supply of sulphur and only darkness is visible. Satan like an enthusiastic leader provokes his followers, rouses their spirits and summons a council. Various staunch followers of Satan namely Moloch, Chemos, Astoreth, Thammuz, Dagon, Rimmon, Osiris, Isis, Orus and Belial are described in allegorical terms. The meeting is called to decide the line of future action, intrigues, war-open or understood against God. The palace of Satan, Pandemonium, is described in detail.

### **3.2.2 Extracts from Book II :**

#### **Extract I (ll. 51-105)**

My sentence is for open war, Of wiles,  
More unexpert, I boast not them let those  
Contrive who need, or when they need ; not now.  
For, while they sit contriving, shall the rest –  
Millions that stand in arms, and longing wait  
The signal to ascend – sit lingering here,  
Heaven’s fugitives, and for their dwelling-place  
Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,

The prison of His tyranny who reigns  
By our delay ? No ! let us rather choose,  
Armed with Hell-flames and fury, all at once  
O'er Heaven's high towers to force resistless way,  
Turning our tortures into horrid arms  
Against the Torturer ; when, to meet the noise  
Of his Almighty engine, he shall hear  
Infernal thunder, and, for lightning, see  
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage  
Among his angels, and his throne itself  
Mixed with Tartarean sulphur and strange fire,  
His own invented torments. But perhaps  
The way seems difficult, and steep to scale  
With upright wing against a higher foe !  
Let such bethink them, if the sleepy drench  
Of that forgetful lake benumb not still,  
That in our proper motion we ascend  
Up to our native seat; descent and fall  
To us is adverse. Who but felt to late,  
When the fierce foe hung on our broken rear  
Insulting, and pursued us through the Deep,  
With what compulsion and laborious flight  
We sunk thus low ? The ascent is easy, then ;  
The event is feared ! Should we again provoke  
Our stronger, some worse way his wrath may find  
To our destruction, if there be in Hell  
Fear to be worse destroyed ! What can be worse  
That to dwell here, driven out from bliss, condemned  
In this abhorred deep to utter woe ;  
Where pain of inextinguishable fire  
Must exercise us without hope of end,

The vassals of his anger, when the scourge  
 Inexorably, and the torturing hour,  
 Calls us to penance ? More destroyed than thus,  
 We should be quite abolished, and expire.  
 What fear we then ? what doubt we to incense  
 His utmost ire ? which, to the highth enraged,  
 Will either quite consume us, and reduce  
 To nothing this essential – happier far  
 Than miserable to have eternal being: -  
 Or, if our substance be indeed divine,  
 And can not cease to be, we are at worst  
 On this side nothing; and by proof we feel  
 Our power sufficient to disturb his Heaven,  
 And with perpetual inroads to alarm,  
 Though inaccessible, his fatal throne:  
 Which, if not victory, is yet revenge.”

**Extract II (ll. 310-378)**

“Thrones and Imperials Powers, Offspring of Heaven.  
 Ethereal Virtues ! or these titles now  
 Must we renounce, and, changing style, be called  
 Prince of Hell ? for so the popular vote  
 Inclines – here to continue, and build up here  
 A growing empire; doubtless ! while we dream,  
 And know not the King of Heaven hath doomed  
 This place our dungeon – no our safe retreat  
 Beyond his potent arm, to live exempt  
 From Heaven’s high jurisdiction, in new league  
 Banded against his throne, but to remain  
 In strictest bondage, though thus far removed,  
 Under the inevitable curb, reserved  
 His captive multitude. For He, be sure,

In highth or depth, still first and last will reign  
Sole king, and of his kingdom lose no part  
By our revolt, but over Hell extend  
His empire, and with iron sceptre rule  
Us here, as with his golden those in Heaven.  
What sit we then projecting peace and war ?  
War hath determined us and foiled with loss  
Irreparable ; terms of peace yet none  
Vouchsafed or sought; for what peace will be given  
To us enslaved, but custody severe,  
And stripes and arbitrary punishment  
Inflicted ? and what peace can we return,  
But to our power, hostility and hate,  
Untamed reluctance, and revenge, though slow,  
Yet ever plotting how the Conqueror least  
May reap his conquest, and may least rejoice  
In doing what we most in suffering feel ?  
Nor will occasion want, nor shall we need  
With dangerous expedition to invade  
Heaven, whose high walls fear no assault or siege,  
Or ambush from the Deep. What if we find  
Some easier enterprise ? There is a place  
(If ancient and prophetic fame in Heaven  
Err not ) – another World, the happy seat  
Of some new race, called Man, about this time  
To be created like to us, though less  
In power and excellence, but favoured more  
Of Him who rules above; so was His will  
Pronounced among the gods, and by an oath  
That shook Heaven's whole circumference confirmed.  
Thither let us bend all our thoughts, to learn

What creatures there inhabit, of what mould  
Or substance, how endued, and what their power  
And where their weakness: how attempted best,  
By force or subtlety. Though Heaven be shut,  
And Heaven's high Arbitrator sit secure  
In his own strength, this place may lie exposed  
The utmost border of his kingdom, left  
To their defense who hold it: here, perhaps,  
Some advantageous act may be achieved  
By sudden onset – either with Hell fire  
To waste his whole creation, or possess  
All as our own, and drive, as we are driven,  
The puny habitants ; or, if not drive,  
Seduce them to our party, that their God  
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand  
Abolish his own works, This would surpass  
Common revenge, and interrupt His joy  
In our confusion, and our joy upraise  
In His disturbance; when his darling sons,  
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us, shall curse  
Their frail original, and faded bliss –  
Faded so soon ! Advise if this be worth  
Attempting, or to sit in darkness here

**Extract III (ll. 430-485)**

“O Progency of Heaven ! Empyrean Thrones !  
With reason hath deep silence and demur  
Seized us, though undismayed. Long is the way  
And hard, that out of Hell leads up to Light.  
Our prison strong, this huge convex of fire,  
Outrageous to devour, immures us round  
Ninefold ; and gates of burning adamant,

Barred over us, prohibit all egress.  
 These passed, if any pass, the void profound  
 Of unessential Night receives him next,  
 Wide-gaping, and with utter loss of being  
 Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf,  
 In thence he scape, into whatever world,  
 Of unknown region, what remains him less  
 Than unknown dangers, and as hard escape ?  
 But I should ill become this throne, O Peers,  
 And this imperial Sovranty, adorned  
 With splendour, armed with power ; if aught proposed  
 And judged of public moment in the shape  
 Of difficulty or danger, could deter  
 Me from attempting. Wherefore do I assume  
 These royalties, and not refuse to reign,  
 Refusing to accept as great a share  
 Of hazard as of honour, due alike  
 To him who reigns, and so much to him due  
 Of hazard more as he above the rest  
 High hounoured sits ? Go, therefore, mighty Powers,  
 Terror of Heaven, though fallen ; intend at home,  
 While here shall be our home, what best may ease  
 The present misery, and render Hell  
 More tolerable ; if there be cure or charm  
 To respite, or deceive, or slack the pain  
 Of this ill mansion : intermit no watch  
 Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad  
 Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek  
 Deliverance for us all. This enterprise  
 Non shall partake with me." Thus saying, rose  
 The Monarch, and prevented all reply ;

Prudent lest, from his resolution raised  
Others among the chief might offer now,  
Certain to be refused, what erst they feared,  
And, so refused, might in opinion stand  
His rivals winning cheap the high repute  
Which he through hazard huge must earn. But they  
Dreaded not more the adventure than his voice  
Forbidding; and at once with him they rose.  
Their rising all at once was as the sound  
Of thunder heard remote. Towards him they bend  
With awful reverence prone, and as a God  
Extol him equal to the Highest in Heaven.  
Nor failed they to express how much they praised  
That for the general safety he despised  
His own: for neither do the Spirits damned  
Lose all their virtue; lest bad men should boast  
Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,  
Or close ambition varnished o'er with zeal.

**Extract IV ( ll. 629 – 680)**

Meanwhile the Adversary of God and Man,  
Satan, with thoughts inflamed of highest design,  
Puts on swift wings, and toward the gates of Hell  
Explores his solitary flight: sometimes  
He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the left;  
Now shaves with level wing the deep, then soars  
Up to the fiery concave towering high.  
As when far off at sea a fleet descried  
Hangs in the clouds, by Equinoctial winds  
Close sailing from Bangala, or the isles  
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants brig  
Their spicy drugs; they on the trading flood,

Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape,  
Ply stemming nightly toward the pole: so seemed  
Far off the lying Fiend. At last appear  
Hell-bounds, high reaching to the horrid roof,  
And thrice threefold the gates ; three folds were brass,  
Three iron, three of adamantine rock,  
Impenetrable, impaled with circling fire,  
Yet unconsumed. Before the gates there sat  
On either side a formidable Shape.  
The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,  
But ended foul in many a scaly fold,  
Voluminous and vast – a serpent armed  
With mortal sting. About her middle round  
A cry of Hell hounds never-ceasing barked  
With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung  
A hideous peal ; yet, when they list, would creep,  
If aught disturbed their noise, into her womb,  
And kennel there; yet there still barked and howled  
Within unseen. Far less abhorred than these  
Vexed Scylla, bathing in the sea that part.  
Calabria from the hoarse Trinacrian shore;  
Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when, called  
In secret, riding through the air she comes,  
Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance  
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon  
Eclipses at their charms. The other Shape –  
If shape it might be called that shape had none  
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;  
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,  
For each seemed either – black it stood as Night  
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,

And shook a dreadful dart : what seemed his head

The likeness of a kingly crown had on.

Satan was now at hand, and from his seat

The monster moving onward came as fast

With horrid strides; Hell trembled as he strode.

The undaunted Fiend what this might be admired –

Admired, not feared ( God and his son except,

Created thing naught valued he nor shunned ) ,

And with disdainful look thus first began:-

**Extract V (ll. 1035 – 1055)**

But now at last the sacred influence

Of light appears, and from the walls of Heaven

Shots far into the bosom of dim Night

A glimmering dawn. Here Nature first begins

Her farthest verge, and Chaos to retire,

As from her outmost works, a broken foe,

With tumult less and with less hostile din

That Satan with less toil, and now with ease,

Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light,

And lie a weather-beaten vessel, holds

Gladly the port though shrouds and tackle torn;

Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,

Weighs his spread wings at leisure to behold

Far off the empyreal Heaven, extended wide

In circuit, undetermined square on round,

With opal towers and battlements adorned

Of living sapphire, once his native seat.

And, fast by, hanging in a golden chain,

This pendent World, in bigness as a star

Of smallest magnitude close by the moon.

Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge,

Accurst, and in a cursed hour, he hies.

### 3.2.3 Glossary

#### Extract I

Line 51 Sentence – opinion

Wiles – tricks

52 More unexpert – less experienced ( in wiles than in war)

52-53 Them let those ... not now – let those who need wiles employ them, and let them use them when necessary, not now.

54 Contriving – scheming. Said ironically, meaning doing nothing

Longing wait – Wait eagerly.

56 The signal of ascend – the order to move up again to attack Heaven.

Lingering here – Waiting uneasily

57 Heaven's fugitives – refugees from Heaven

58 Opprobrious – disgraceful.

59 The prison of his Tyranny – the prison assigned by his (God's ) tyranny.

59-60 Who reigns by our delay – He rules over us because we are delaying the attack.

61 Armed with fury – With hell-fire and fury as our weapons of war.

62 Over Heaven's... resistless way – to storm and capture the citadel of Heaven.

63 Turning... Torturer – make the instruments of tortures to be turned against God himself.

Horrid – frightful.

65 His Almighty Engine – thunder

66 Infernal Thunder : thunder from Hell ( not, like God's from Heaven).

For – instead of

67 Equal rage – rage equal of that of their enemies

69 Tartarean – Tartarus was the classical Latin name for the underworld

70 His own invented torments – the torments he has himself invented

72 Upright wing – upward flight

73 Let such – people who think it difficult should remember that as spirits rising is nature to us, falling not.

73 Such – Those who make the above objection.

Sleepy drench – the draught which gives sleep.

- 74 That forgetful Lake – The ‘fiery lake’ on which the fallen angels lay prostrate in Book I.
- 73-74 If the sleepy ... not still – if the angels now bent upon war against God are in their senses and the sleepy drench has not benumbed their minds and senses.
- 75 Our proper motion – the motion natural to us
- 76-77 Descent ... adverse – it is unnatural for angels to fall downward ; adverse means contrary to the nature of angel’s nature.  
Who but felt – who did not feel
- 78 On our broken rear – In pursuit of our defeated forces
- 79 The deep – Chaos  
Even – result  
Insulting – triumphing over us
- 82-84 Th’ event.... Destruction – The outcome may be disastrous : if we provoke God again.  
Event – outcome
- 83 Our stronger – one who is stronger than we ; God
- 84-85 If there be ... destroyed – if there be a worse way of our destruction to be feared in Hell.
- 86 Driven out from bliss – Expelled hopelessly from the bliss of Heaven
- 87 Abhorred deep – hateful abyss  
Utter woe – unrelieved misery. Utter also has here its primary sense of outer, and has reference to the Scripture expressing outer darkness
- 88 Inextinguishable – unquenchable
- 89 Exercise – Harass, or vex : a meaning of the Latin *exerceo*. Religious discipline : he talks of hell as if it were a monastery.
- 90 Vassals of his anger – subjected to his anger.  
Scourge – a type of a whip, taken of punishment
- 92 Penance – punishment
- 93 More destroyed than thus – if we are more tortured than we by a specific decision of the Creator.  
More destroyed ... expire – we cannot be tortured or destroyed more without being annihilated together.
- 94 What doubt we – why do we hesitate to.
- 95 To the highth – to the limit.
- 96 Quite consume us – destroy us utterly
- 97 This essential – this essence, I our being ; angelic essence.
- 96-98 And reduce ... eternal being – if we are reduced noting we shall be happier than if we re living for

ever in a miserable condition. Everlasting life of misery is worse than death.

99-100 The doubt implied – ‘if’ reminds us that the repeated claim to immortality, hardly distinguishable from divinity, is only one of the pretensions of the rebel angels, never confirmed by God.

101 On this side nothing – on this side of Chaos. “in the worst state we can be without being reduced to nothing, (F. T. Prince)

By proof – by past experience.

102 Sufficient to disturb his Heaven – strong enough to be a source of annoyance to the Almighty.

103 Perpetual inroads – repeated attacks against Heaven.

Alarm – disturb

104 Fatal Throne – preordained, unchangeable in the order of things.

### **Extract II**

312 Must we renounce – a sharp rebuke to Belial and to Mammon.

Style – appellation, title

314 Inclines – favours

Here – sarcastic

315 Doubtless – Said sarcastically, how very likely

316 Doomed – decreed

Dream – deceive ourselves; indulge in fancies

319 League – conspiracy

322 Th’ inevitable curb – the yoke or chain from which there is no escape reserved – reserved to be.

324 Highth or depth – Heaven or Hell

First and last – for ever, as from the first, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; the beginning and the end.”

325 Loose – lose

326 Extend – exert his rule

327 Expire – rule

328 As with his Golden – cf. P.L. V.886-8

The golden scepter which thou didst reject

Is now an Iron Rod to bruise and break

Thy disobedience,

329 What – to what purpose ? why Projecting – debating between.

- 330 Determin'd – settled our condition, fixed our fate, Foiled defeated.  
Irreparable – past hope of recovery
- 332 Vouchsaf'd – granted
- 333 Custody severe – rigorous imprisonment.
- 334 Stripes – lashes.
- 336 To our power – to the utmost of our ability.
- 337 Untam'd – untameable  
Reluctance – struggling against, resistance
- 341 Occasion want – nor will we lack opportunities
- 344 The Deep – Chaos.
- 346 Fame – rumours “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalm VIII, 5)
- 347 Seat – Place of residence
- 350 Favoured more – To receive some special distinction of favour, redemption not to be provided in the case of angelic apostasy.
- 352 That shook circumference : which caused upheaval throughout Heaven
- 352 The gods – the angels in heaven
- 355 Mould – shape , forms  
Endu'd – with what qualities endowed
- 357 How attempted best – how it might be assailed
- 358 By force or subtlety – whether by force or cunning.
- 359 Arbitrator : ruler Judge
- 360 This place . . . exposed – the new world may be open to easy attack
- 361 The utmost border – Discounting Hell, it is within Chaos, the further extent of God's expression through his Son as Creator.
- 362 To their defense – Man is free to defend himself
- 365 Waste – lay waste
- 366 Drive – drive out
- 367 Puny – The inhabitants are puny to the fallen angels both in the sense that they are for smaller, and also in that of their later creation.
- 367-70 Or if not drive own . . . Works – or if we do not expel them from the Earth, we shall tempt them away from the path of God to become followers of Satan so that God will become their enemy and destroy them Himself.

- 368 Seduce them – The first two suggestions made by Beelzebub come to placate Moloch and the warriors who want action but they are only spoken to lead up to the third counsel of craft.
- 369 With repenting hand – “And it repenteth the Lord that he had made man... And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created.”
- 371 Interrupt – make a hole in his enjoyment of our confusion ; and confuse him by sticking our enjoyment of his confusion into the hole
- 371-72 His joy In our Confusion – the joy he takes in our downfall
- 372-73 Our Joy in his disturbance – the joy we may take in molesting or threatening him
- Joy upraise – elate our hearts with joy
- 373 Darling Sons – favourite children, mankind
- 374 To partake with us – to share our lot
- 375 Originals – ancestors ( Adam and Eve) (F.T.Prince)
- 376 Advise – consider whether
- 377 Or to sit – or if it is better to sit
- 378 Hatching – brooding over, plotting. The conclusion is triumphantly sarcastic, with the ludicrous image of the rebels ‘hatching’ plots, like eggs, in darkness.
- 370-378 Thrones and Imperial Powers... Hatching vain Empires “Beelzebub dismisses by rational argument all the proposals made so far : but his own, though new, taken account of some of the objects proposed by previous speakers, and is acceptable to the mood of the council as a whole. First he pours scorn on the suggestion put forward in different ways by Belial and Mammon, that they could hope to live in peace, unmolested by God, and build up a powerful and comfortable state Beelzebub recognizes that this proposal has found favour (313-14) but regards it is impracticable. Since God has not consigned them to Hell with the intention of leaving them to make the best of it and enjoy themselves (315-23). God will rule them as before, but now in a state of punishment (323-8). They have no choice between peace and war (329-40). On the other hand, in order to carry on war against God, it is not necessary to make a direct assault, as Moloch had proposed (341-4) (Beelzebub has recognized the reluctance of the rebels to risk another defeat). He then produces the plan he has agreed upon with Satan (378-80) they should seek to take their revenge by striking at Man, God’s latest creation dwelling in the newly created universe. They may hope either to lay the universe waste and take Man captive (364-7), or to bring him over to their side; God may then decide to destroy his new creation ( 366-70). In either case they will disturb God’s plans, and get a spiteful satisfaction ( 370-3)”
- (F.T.Prince)
- Beelzebub’s scorn and sarcasm are far more apparent than Belial’s. But he speaks well, bringing in none of the atmosphere of defeat on which the others had harped. They had been vivid on their misfortunes ; he is vivid on their revenge.

### **Extract III**

- 430 Progeny of Heaven – Sons of Heaven

- 431 Demur – doubt, hesitation
- 432-33 Long is the way. . . . up to light – “These lines echo the words of the Sibyl in *Aeneid VI* when she tells Aeneas that the way down to Hell is easy, but the way up from Hell to earth is immensely difficult : Milton’s slow monosyllables mimic the effort required”. F. T. Prince
- 434 Convex of fire – Vault of fire ; the sphere of Hell seen from without ; In *P.L.I* 298 ‘vaulted with fire.’
- 435 Immures – walls.  
 Outrageous – furious
- 436 Adamant – irresistible  
 Ninefold – thrice threefold the gates. Of the gates three folds were brass, three iron, three of adamantine rock  
 Burning adamant – hot with over spreading flames
- 437 Barred over us – which remains shut on us  
 Egress – exit
- 438 These pass’d – these having been passed  
 If any pass – If any one can pass these gates at all  
 The void profound – the empty abyss i.e. Chaos.
- 439 Unessential – insubstantial, without real existence ( since it consists in the absence of light )
- 441 Abortive gulf – gulf which makes all abortive, but which is also itself abortive in the sense of shapeless, and monstrous; unfruitful.
- 443 What remains him less than – What remains for him, none the less. Except
- 444 As hard escape – departure as hard as his coming was
- 445 Ill become – be unworthy of
- 447 Aught – anything  
 If aught proposed and judged – First proposed to consideration, and then decided upon.
- 448 Judg’d of public moment – considered of public importance.
- 449 Deter – keep back from
- 450 Attempting – attempting it .
- 450 Wherefore – how could I accept kingship if I refused to accept hazard
- 451 Assume royalties – wear regal powers.
- 455 Of hazard more – the more honour he gets, the more hazard he should face
- 457 Intend – apply yourself to, attend to, concentrate upon.  
 Terror of Heaven – A dread to those in Heaven

- 458 While here shall be our home – Hell is, in the hopes of all, soon to be left
- 460 Charms – means to soothe as beguile ( deceive)
- 461 To respite – to obtain relief from  
Deceive – evade ( by distracting attention from it)  
Slack – slacken , diminish
- 462 Ill – hateful, Mansion – dwelling place.  
Intermit – omit.
- 463 Wakeful foe – Satan is not yet certain what is to be their fate in Hell, where they have just arrived.  
Satan will later find Sin and Death set to watch against him
- 464 Coasts – Outlying regions
- 467 Prevented – hindered, or anticipated, forestalled.
- 468 From his resolution rais'd – encouraged by his decision of courage
- 470 Erst – superlative of ere, earlier.
- 471 Opinion – reputation, public opinion
- 472 Cheap – Cheaply.  
Stand – Have the standing of.
- 474 His voice forbidding – His peremptory words debarring all others from partaking the enterprise with him.
- 478 With awful reverence prone – bowing in awe before him  
Awful – full of awe, reverent  
Prone – face downwards
- 479 Equal to the Highest – Another example of Hell as the blasphemous reflection of Heaven.
- 480 Nor failed they – the caution of a courtier
- 480 Praised – praised him or approved of him
- 481 Despised – had no regard for.
- 482 Neither – contains the idea that neither ‘ bad men’ nor ‘spirit damned’ lost all virtue
- 483 Least – last  
Lose all their virtue – “This has been mistaken to signify that the fallen angels are not without some remains of goodness : a doctrine not likely to be brought forward by Milton. It really means that such merits as any of them may show is not slighted or unappreciated by the others. This interpretations supported by the argument that immediately follows.” John Hunter
- 484 Specious – good in appearance ( but not in reality)

Glory – love of glory

Excites – incites, stirs up to

485 Close – secret, keeping the motive secret.

Close ambition – Secretly cherished ambition

Varnished – glossed over, given an attractive appearance.

Zeal – love of virtue

#### **Extract IV**

630 Of highest design of most ambitions design

631 Puts on swift wings – flies swiftly

632 Explores – Flies exploring the region

Flight – the region of his flight

633 Scours – passes swiftly over, scuds

Coast – border, frontier

634 Shaves – skims, almost or just touches

With level wing : his wings held unmoving and parallel to the surface of she deep.

The Deep – the bottom or floor of Hell ; or possibly, the surface of the burning lake.

635 Concave - vault. In line 434 the flaming sphere bounding Hell was imagined, seen from outside, convex of fire.' Here it is seen from inside. Hence, rightly, concave, towering – soaring . The expression comes from falconry.

637 Hangs in the clouds – seems to the distant spectator to be above the line of the horizon. “Out on the high sea, and apparently among clouds that are behind the ships and seems resting on the horizon” John Hunter.

Equinoctial winds – Trade winds, near the equator

638 Close – Either close together or sailing close to the wind.

640 Trading flood – the sea frequented by merchant ships. Ply through the Indian ocean, on that of it over which the trade winds blow.

641 Ethiopian – The Indian Ocean

642 Ply stemming – Keep on with their prows, pushing forward

645 Three threefold – In Book VI of the *Aenied* Virgil depicts the damned imprisoned by the Styx, with her ninefold barrier.

647 Impaled – Paled in, fenced with surrounding fire yet not being. Consumed, fenced round.

648 Before the gates – These words introduce as forming a kind of paraphrase of that metaphorical passage in Jas. 1.15 ‘When Lust hath conceived it bringeth forth Sin, and Sin when it is finished,

- bringeth forth Death’.
- 649 either – each
- Formidable shape – this description of Sin is partly copied from one by Spenser, *Faerie Queene* : Book I
- 652 Voluminous – wound up in rolls, or twisting.
- 653 Mortal – deadly
- about her middle round – all round her middle i.e. waist
- 654 Cry – pack. In Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* “you common cry of curs”
- 655-6 Rung a hideous Peal – the cry of hounds was often compared to the pealing of bells.
- List – wished
- Cerberean – from Cerberus, the monster dog with three heads, who guarded the entrance to the classical under world.
- peal – din of line
- ‘nor was his care less peal’d with noises loud
- 658 Kennel – make their kennel
- 659 Abhor’d – detestable
- 660 Vex’d – tormented
- Parts – divides
- Scylla – the sorceress Circe, jealous of the lovely Nymph Scylla, changed her into a loathsome monster : “Scylla comes ; and she has now gone in up to the middle of her stomach, when she beholds her loins grow hideous with barking monsters ; and, at first believing they are no part of her own body, she flies from them and drives them off, and is in dread of the annoying mouths of the dogs, but those that she flies from, she carries along with herself; and as she examines the substance of her thighs, her legs, and her feet, she meets with cerberean jaws in place of those parts. The fury of the dogs still continues, and the backs of savage monsters lying beneath her groin, cut short, and her prominent stomach, still adhere to them. The marine god Glancus then transformed his favourite Scylla into a dangerous rock on the shore of that part of Italy called Calabria nearly opposite the Sicilian Charybdis.
- 661 hoarsen – harsh-sounding ( from the waves breaking on rocks), Trinacrian – Sicily was called Trinacria, on account of its triangular form.
- Calabria – the coast opposite Sicily.
- 662 Night hag – After a classical simile, here is one from Scandinavian mythology, which boasts of witches riding through the air, seeking Children’s flood for their incantation, performed in Lapland, where they meet.
- 663 Call’d in secret – Secretly invoked ( by witch craft)

- 664 Lured – Infant’s blood was potent ingredient in the composition of the charms employed by witches.
- 665 Labouring Moon – the moon in eclipse. In Virgil’s *Georgics* (II478) “The sun’s eclipses and the labouring moons.”
- 666 Eclipses – goes into eclipse.
- 667 That shape had none – Milton will, all through this passage, heighten the mystery and horror of Sin and Death by being as little precise as possible.
- 668 Member – part
- 670 each seem’d either – shadow seemed substance, and substance shadow
- 672 What seem’d his head – In the words seemed and likeness we have a specimen of Milton’s wonderful, idealizing and suggestive poet.
- 675 Came as fast – i.e. as fast as Satan approached
- 677 admir’d – wondered
- 678-9 God and his son – shunn’d – he had no respect for fear of anything in the Universe except God and the son of God.
- 679 Shunned – Not afraid to meet, did not shrink in fear

**Extract V**

- 1035 Light – See the beginning of Book III  
 Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven firstborn.  
 Or of the Eternal coeternal beam.
- 1037-38 Here the farthest outpost or frontier of the created universe first appears
- 1038 To retire – begins to retire
- 1042 Dubious – dim light ( just piercing the darkness)  
 That – so that.  
 Wafts – sails, floats
- 1043 Holds – makes for
- 1044 Though shrouds and tackle torn – though sails and rigging are damaged
- 1045 Resembling Air – Resembles air, because it is now less dense. Air is only to be found within the Primum Mobile.
- 1045 Emptier – than Chaos was
- 1046 weighs – balances, keeps even, as a bird hovering or gliding; stretches motionless ( as birds do, rests on )
- 1048 In circuit – in outward boundaries.  
 Undetermined square or round – Not seen clearly to be square or round.

1050 Saph're – The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second; sapphire., ( Revelation xxi, 19)

Seat – residence.

1051 “In Homer Zeus has a golden chain which hangs down from Heaven, and with which he can draw up all things to himself though they cannot draw him down ( II, VIII. 18-27) the allegorical possibilities of the idea are obvious : they were taken up by Plato, and Renaissance poets and thinkers applied them in many different ways. Milton himself used the image in one of his Latin works (Prolusion II) as a symbol of divine design running through the universe. Here it signified also the utter dependence of his creation on God’s will, and the as yet unbroken connection between God and Man” F.T. Prince

fast by – nearby.

1052 As a star – Seeming as small to Satan as a star, near the moon, seems to us.

This pendant world – This is not, of course, the earth, but the whole created universe, of which the Earth is the centre. The universe is itself a sphere, enclosed in a spherical shell.

1053 Close by the moon – whose light makes stars that are near to her look smaller.

### **3.2.4 Commentary on the Extracts**

#### **Extract I**

In the council which Satan had invited in Pandemonium, Moloch was the second to speak after Satan. He advised an open war against God, instead of just sitting and scheming, they should attack Heaven using Hell fire and fury as weapons. God himself would see black fire and horrors shot in return of his thunder and lightning. He then says that for some angels people it will be would be difficult to fight against an enemy above them. Such angels must realize that it is natural for them to rise and not fall. They should also not fear that God might inflict them with greater punishment if they provoke him again, because that punishment can’t be worse than Hell. Even if his anger is infuriated to the highest pitch he would destroy them or reduce them to nothing. This, he says, would be better than living in Hell. At last he said that by past experience he felt that they, together have sufficient power to disturb his throne & take revenge, if not achieve victory.

#### **Extract II**

This extract describes how Beelzebub spoke in the council. He says that Hell in which they are living should not be considered as a safe hiding place where they could conspire against God but it is a place where they are living as slaves. He will rule them with an iron rod here as He rules with a golden rod in Heaven. They should not debate between peace & war – because war has lashed all their hopes and no terms of peace have been offered by God to them. He suggests that waging a war against God would be a futile activity. Instead they should take up an easier way to take revenge and that would be to assail the new world made by God for a new race called Man. This, he says, would be an easy attack and they can either destroy this new creation or reduce them to our party, so that God may himself destroy them. This, according to him, will be the best form of revenge as God’s own creation would be driven to Hell by Him.

### **Extract III**

This is an extract from Book II of *Paradise Lost* where Satan exalts himself once again by taking the task of crossing Chaos in order to find the newly established world. When Beelzebub hints at the dangers that are involved in going to the new world, nobody presents himself for the task. It is then that Satan stands up and speaks. He says that the prison in which they are living is quite strong and difficult to pass through. If anybody does that he will find himself lost in the empty abyss of the darkness. But he says that he will be unworthy of the throne on which he is sitting if he does not offer himself for the great hazard. While he decides to go, he suggests the other angels to find out ways and means to make Hell more tolerable. After speaking, Satan rises immediately from his throne so as to prevent the possibility of anybody else rising and offering himself for the endeavor and thus gaining easy recognition.

As soon as Satan rises, all the other angels also rise in his honour and this makes a loud sound like that of a thunder.

### **Extract IV**

After the meeting in Pandemonium and the matter resolved, Satan takes a flight in order to get out of Hell, cross Chaos and reach the Garden of Eden. He has thought about a treacherous plan to tempt Adam so that he may disobey God and invite wrath of God. This is a proxy war against God as advised by Satan's council. Satan has to prove his leadership that is why he wants to accomplish this task himself. He takes a flight in the burning lake of Hell and is compared with the tossing of ships in the waters of Bengal, Ternate or Tidore. Hell gates have nine folds – three folds of brass, three of iron three of adamant rock. They are impenetrable, fenced with circling fire and are guarded by Sin & Death. Milton gives an epic description of Sin & Death. Sin is very attractive and a beautiful woman upon the waist but the other part of Sin is a serpent with a deadly sting. Round the middle of her body there is a pack of hell-hounds with constant barking which creates horrible noise. When their noise is disturbed they creep into her womb. This epic simile describes the horrible atmosphere as if compares the fate of mythological Scylla when she bathes in the sea. The other figure guarding at the gates of Hell is Death. She is not distinguishable as she appears sometimes like a substance and sometimes like a shadow. She is more frightening than the ten Furies. She is blacker than night itself. The movements of Satan resound in Hell but he is not afraid. He approaches near the gates of Hell.

Sin and Death are personified, described in epic dimensions. It is allegorical description. The episode has religious connotations.

### **Extract V**

This extract describes the last moments of Satan's journey as he aspires to reach the new world after crossing the dark abyss out of Hell. After a treacherous and long journey through the abyss he reaches near the new world created by God for man. After a long journey through the dark he now sees light appearing from Heaven's walls and shooting downwards. This seems to be the end of Chaos and the beginning of Nature. He now has to apply less efforts for his flight becomes smoother. He can also see Heaven, his original seat. He hastens to reach his target, full of mischievous thoughts. The poet compares Satan with defeated enemy who begins to retire from Nature's most fortification with less clamour & less horrible noise. He is again compared with a weather beaten

ship reaching the shore gladly though damaged and shattered. Heaven is still not visible in distinguishable shape. Satan as well as the hour of his approach is accursed because Satan is going to tempt Adam to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree which will invite wrath of God for Satan as well as Adam.

### 3.2.5 Model Explanations

a) My sentence is ..... not now.

These lines have been extracted from Book II of *Paradise Lost*, a famous epic poem written by John Milton. In Pandemonium Satan has collected all his followers to discuss what should be done against God. First of all Satan makes a speech and invites suggestions. Moloch who is very close to Satan in power makes this speech to the fallen angels in Pandemonium.

Moloch says that his advice is for open war against God. He does not stand for treachery and wile technique to wage war against God. According to him, he is inexperienced in such tricky business and neither it is appropriate at this time to do some kind of indirect, proxy war.

The council has been called for suggestions and Moloch is the first one to speak. Later on, all the important fallen angels speak out their views against God. In the end it is decided to make the newly formed world of Adam corrupt so that Adam will be punished for eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Most of the characters in *Paradise Lost* are supernatural. The war or the struggle has epic dimension & religious connotations. The description is done in allegorical manner.

b) But now at last ..... a glimmering dawn.

These lines are an extract from Book II of *Paradise Lost*, a famous epic poem written by John Milton. After the council in Pandemonium it is decided that a brave fallen angel should take the task of locating the new world meant for Adam. As the leader of the fallen angels Satan takes this tough task. He has to face Sin and Death guarding the gates of Hell. Then he was to cross Chaos. These lines appear at the end of Book II when Satan sees light coming out of Heaven.

There is a complete contrast between the atmosphere crossed by Satan and what appears from Heaven. Satan has come out of Hell where only darkness is visible. But here sacred influence of light coming from Heaven is quite visible. The light of Heaven causes dawn even far into the darkness.

That poet has marked the contrast with the use of a strong connective. Even the adverb 'now' is appropriately placed to mark the sharp contrast between Hell and Heaven. The influence is sacred as the light is coming from Heaven. Dim light is contrasted against the glimmering dawn & light of Heaven. The journey of Satan, light of Heaven & the dim Night have allegorical meanings and religious connotations.

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## 3.3 Self-assessment Questions

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### Extract I

1. What according to Moloch should the fallen angels do and why?

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2. What is Moloch's suggestion to the fearful angels ?

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3. What is Moloch's answer to the angels who fear that God might inflict greater punishment if they invoke him again ?

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4. What does Moloch suggest at last ?

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5. What are the three main arguments of Moloch ?

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**Extract II**

1. What does Beelzebub think about their stay in Hell and Why ?

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2. Why is Beelzebub not in favour of war against God ?

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3. What easier target does Beelzebub suggest ?

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4. Why, according to him, will an attack on the new world be a better idea of Revenge?

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**Extract III**

1. How difficult, according to Satan, is the journey outside Hell ?

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2. What reason does Satan give for his attempting the dangerous flight. ?

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3. What suggestion does he give to the angels ?

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4. Why does Satan rise all of a sudden, after his speech ?

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**Extract IV**

1. Who is the enemy of God and Man ? Why ?

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2. Why are the gates of Hell impenetrable ?

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3. Describe Sin.

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4. Describe Death.

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**Extract V**

1. What does Satan see as he approaches the new world ?

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2. What difference does Satan feel in his journey through the abyss and his journey when he can see Heaven?

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3. What effect does the poet convey by using similes ?

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### 3.4 Answers To SAQs

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#### Extract I

1. According to Moloch the fallen angels should rage open war against God because if they spend time scheming the rest of the angels would waste their energies in waiting inactively and suffer the tyrannies of Hell.
2. Moloch suggests to such fearful angels that it is natural for them to rise and unnatural to fall as they might have felt while descending to Hell.
3. Moloch's answer to them is that nothing can be worse than dwelling in Hell where they are condemned to everlasting misery and agony. Here they are subject to His anger and inevitable torture. If he still destroys them to annihilate them altogether – it would even be better than living in Hell.
4. Moloch suggests that by past experience they feel a power to disturb his throne. And by repeated attacks they can disturb his throne if not achieve victory.
5. Three main arguments of Moloch are
  - i. It is natural for spirits to ascend.
  - ii. It is better to be destroyed in struggle than to suffer extreme agony passively. No further punishment can now be expected.
  - iii. If victory is impossible, revenge at least is certain. Moloch is anxious to fight, for the sake of fighting. He must have warlike action. Whatever the result.

#### Extract II

1. Beelzebub thinks that the fallen angels should not consider Hell as a place of hiding from the God's wrath, start thinking of growing an empire there. Rather it is a place where they are serving as slaves under the rigorous control of God from which there is no escape.
2. Beelzebub is not in favor of war because war has already lashed all their hopes and besides Heaven's lofty walls make it a safe place against attack or siege.
3. Beelzebub suggests the 'new world' as the new target. This he says would be an easy attack for them since this place is away from the influence of God and open for attack.
4. According to Beelzebub an attack on the new world will be a better idea of revenge since this way if they corrupt Man to their party God will have to destroy and repent his own creation. And thus he would be most disturbed to see the downfall of his beloved Man.

### **Extract III**

1. Satan says that the way outside Hell is very difficult. The way that leads out of Hell itself is very arduous- there are gates of nine fold strength spread over which are hot flames. Outside Hell is an empty abyss of darkness threatening to make one feel lost.
2. Satan reasons that if he is sitting on the throne he should also be ready to sacrifice comfort. He says that he will be unworthy of imperial supremacy if he does not accept this difficult task with dignity.
3. He suggests and advises other angels to find out ways to ease the agony of living in Hell. They should not relax their watchfulness and should find means to charm the sufferings of Hell.
4. Satan rises all of a sudden from his throne and is ready to start the journey because he does not want to give anyone else a chance to gain recognition by offering himself for the difficult task. He wants to show his worth and thus establishes himself once again the leader of the fallen angels.

### **Extract IV**

1. Satan is the enemy of God and Man. He does not accept the authority of God in Heaven and thus is hurled down into Hell where he conspires against God. He and his fallen angels have waged a war, direct or proxy, against God. Satan is going to tempt Adam so that he may eat the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge & invite God's wrath.
2. The gates of Hell are impenetrable because there are nine folds – three folds of brass, three of iron and three of adamant rock. They are fenced with circling fire where there is continuous supply of sulphur. The gates are guarded by Sin & Death.
3. Sin personified is like a charming woman in the upper part but the other part of her body is a serpent with a terrible sting. Round the middle part of her body there is a pack of Hell hounds with constant barking. Sin is further described with the help of an epic simile concerning the fate of mythological Scylla. It has allegorical meaning leading to religious connotations.
4. Death personified is described in allegorical terms having religious meaning. Death spares none. She has no fixed form or shape. She appears sometimes like a substance and sometimes like a shadow. She is more dangerous & frightening than the ten Furies. She is blacker than night itself.

### **Extract V**

1. Satan sees light coming out of Heaven's walls and falling downward. Heaven is undistinguishable in its size & shape but is adorned with opal towers. Nearer to Heaven is the world hanging in a golden chain.
2. While his journey through the darkness and abyss is tough and treacherous but it becomes very smooth as he reaches near the new world. He can float easily without any effort and though he is tired, he is enjoying the new found calm and light. He is compared with a weather-beaten ship reaching near the shore gladly, though damaged and shattered.
3. The similes used to describe the shattered condition of Satan are much appropriate. They are necessary for the epic style. Moreover the objects compared are also taken from the world of this universe which makes them more heroic and heightens their effect.

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### 3.5 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit you have studied how Milton uses digressions and episodes as a part of epic style. The poet has used epic similes to heighten the effect of the war between God and the fallen angels. You must have noticed the speeches made by Satan and his followers at the council in Pandemonium help Satan to emerge out as the leader of the fallen angels once again. You have seen how Satan is given an epic status, glorified for which Milton is criticized. This leads to autobiographical interpretation of Satan's character. You have studied how most of the characters are supernatural and have interference in the affairs of mankind. The characters like Sin and Death are personified. You have studied how we can interpret most of the story and characters in allegorical terms, having religious connotations.

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### 3.6 Review Questions

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1. What are Moloch's arguments in favour of his plan against God ?
2. What are Belial's arguments in favour of his plan against God ?
3. Describe the plan of Beelzebub against God. What are his arguments in this regard?
4. Who offers himself to visit the new world and why?
5. How does Satan pass through Hell gates?
6. Describe Sin and Death.
7. Describe Chaos as given in Book II.
8. How does Satan emerge out as the leader of the fallen angels in Book II?

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## UNIT-4

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### MARVELL, HERBERT, HERRICK : POEMS

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#### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Andrew Marvell : *To His Coy Mistress*  
*An Horatian Ode*
- 4.3 George Herbert: *Virtue*  
*The Collar*
- 4.4 Robert Herrick : *To Daffodils*
- 4.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 4.6 Answers SAQs
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Review Questions
- 4.9 Bibliography

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#### 4.0 Objectives

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The following three poets and their poems are being given to you to read and understand so as to develop your skill of reading, understanding, comparing and critically analysing the given pieces of texts and poems. Here you might need to refer to dictionary for some words it to understand the meanings of the words used by the poets.

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#### 4.1 Introduction

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The metaphysical poets were a group of writers, chiefly of a courtly or religious character, who flourished during the reign of Charles I. The term “metaphysical” means “more than physical”, that is “dealing with the mind or intellect. It is the “intellectual” or “non-obvious” treatment of the subject that gives their poetry its peculiar quality. The poet of the metaphysical school of poetry are Abram Cowley, Robert Herrick, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Thomas Carew, and Richard Lovelace.

Johnson says about these poets: “They were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour. . . . Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural: they are not obvious, neither are they just, and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.”

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#### 4.2 Andrew Marvell : To His Coy Mistress

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Marvell was the son of a clergyman and got education at Cambridge. He was an able man of

affairs and an accomplished poet. As a literary man, his chief characteristic is his versatility. He wrote beautiful lyrics and odes, pungent satires and telling political pamphlets. Majority of his poems were published only after his death.

Marvell's well known poem "*TO HIS COY MISTRESS*" indicates the metaphysical instinct of the poet that has a blend of passion and fantastic conceit, handled by his distinctive control and poise. In this poem the poet describes the typical quality of coyness as a luxury meant for those lovers who have an ample time to qualify it and thus considers him as a true lover.

### **Introduction of Poem:**

It is a love-lyric. It is an address to the poet's beloved who is very shy. He asks his beloved to shake off her shyness and enjoy the moments of youthful love. The poem is full of his philosophical thoughts about love, time, humanity and transitoriness of life and this world. It is an effective persuasion on the part of the poet to get favourable response from his beloved. It is characterised as ratiocination which is used by the metaphysical poets to bring forth total reality.

### **Summary of Poem:**

There are three steps in the poem. The poet tells his shy beloved that if he had enough time he would wait and wait for her favourable response. He would spend hundreds of years in praising her beauty.

In the next section of the poem the poet tells his beloved that everything in this world is transitory. Time moves like an inevitable monster to devour everything – the beauty the Virginitly and the Vanity of his beloved, and the love and lust of the lovers.

In the last section the poet asks his beloved to shake off shyness and enjoy love to and sex. He says that it is the only way to conquer the impersonal force of time.

### **TO HIS COY MISTRESS**

ANDREW MARVELL

Had we but World enough, and Time,  
This coyness Lady were no crime.  
We would sit down, and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long Loves Day.  
Thou by the Indian Ganges side.  
Should'st Rubies find: I by the Tide  
Of Humber would complain, I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood:  
And you should if you please refuse  
Till the Conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable Love should grow

Vaster then Empires, and more slow.  
And hundred years should go to praise  
Thine Eyes, and on the Forehead Gaze.  
Two hundred to adore each Breast:  
But thirty thousand to the rest.  
An Age at least to every part,  
And the last Age should show your Heart.  
For Lady you deserve this State;  
Nor would I love at lower rate.  
But at my back I always hear  
Times winged Charriot hurrying near:  
And yonder all before us lye  
Deserts of vast Eternity.  
Thy Beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble Vault, shall sound  
My echoing Song: then Worms shall try  
That long preserv'd Virginity:  
And your quaint Honour turn to dust;  
And into ashes all my Lust.  
The Grave's a fine and private place.  
But none I think do there embrace.  
Now therefore, while the youthful hew  
Sits on the skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing Soul transpires  
At every pore with instant Fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may;  
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our Time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapt pow'r.  
Let us roll all our Strength, and all  
Our sweetness, up into one Ball:

And tear our Pleasures with rough strife,  
Through the Iron gates of Life.  
Thus, though we cannot make our Sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

**ANNOTATIONS :**

- 1.5 Indian Ganges : river flowing in India
- 1.7 Humber : the mouth of the river Trent in England where it meets the sea. The two rivers denote the distance.
- 1.8 Flood : the universal deluge, referred to in the Bible and recorded as having occurred during the days of Noah.
- 1.10 Conversion of the Jews: the reference is to something unlikely – the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.
- 1.22 Times winged chariot : time which passes very quickly
- 1.26 Vault : burial place
- 1.27 Conceit : Hyperbolic exaggeration

**ANDREW MARVELL : “To His Coy Mistress”**

Although Palgrave excluded it from his Golden Treasury on the grounds that it was out of harmony with Victorian manners, “To his Coy Mistress” has been recognized for the past hundred years as one of the finest love-poems in the English language. Its date of composition is unknown : one authority on Marvell believes that it was written in 1653; another that it dates from 1646. We do not know the identity of the coy mistress, or even whether she existed outside the poet’s imagination. While some critics are convinced that Marvell wrote this poem as an aid to the seduction of a woman whom he desired, others regard the poem as a meditation on love and time. We should not permit such speculations to distract us from a careful study of the words on the page.

The poem is composed in three paragraphs, and appears to be in the form of a syllogism, which can be reduced to the following bare statements. If we had world enough and time we need not hasten to consummate our love : but time and death threaten us constantly: therefore coyness is a crime and we must enjoy the pleasures of love.

Yet any such account of the poem is inadequate, since the tone of the poem is not that of a syllogism, nor is the poem a simple variation of the old commonplace that we must take our pleasures while we can. It is a poem of great emotional intensity, and of an intellectual complexity which becomes more baffling the more closely one studies it.

The first section of the poem is witty, fanciful, gay and swifty-moving :

Had we but World enough, and Time,

This coyness Lady were no crime.

Marvell would stay at home in Hull, which stands on the river Humber, while his mistress would

roam the world :

Thou by the *Indian Ganges* side  
Should'st Rubies find : I by the Tide  
Of Humber would complain.  
Extravagance is piled upon extravagance :

I would

Love you ten years before the Flood :  
And you should if you please refuse  
Till the Conversion of the *Jews*.  
My vegetable Love should grow  
Vaster than Empires, and more slow.

In reading these lines we should remember that, according to the belief of the times, the conversion of the Jews would take place immediately before the end of the world. Moreover, we ought not to regard the phrase 'vegetable Love' as a merely comical expression: the vegetable soul (the third in the scale of rational, sentient and vegetable) was supposed to be the only one possessed by plants, and was thought to be the principle of generation and of corruption.

Marvell continues in this vein of witty extravagance until, suddenly, the poem takes a new turn. The second section of the poem may indeed be a logical development of the first, but the tone, the rhythm, the mood are transformed. For, after the playful tenderness of the opening twenty lines, we are reminded of our mortality in a passage of sombre magnificence:

But at my back I alwaies hear  
Times winged Charriot hurrying near:  
And yonder all before us lye  
Desarts of vast Eternity.  
Thy Beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble Vault, shall sound  
My ecchoing Song ...

The poet's mastery of the octosyllabic couplet is superb. Although, metrically, the lines had we but World enough, and Time, and Desarts of vast Eternity are identical, the second of these lines appears to be much longer and more solemn than the first. The effect of desolation is even more marked if we remember that, in XVII-century pronunciation, the line has a threefold long 'ah' sound: Desarts of vast Eternity.

The lines that follow are brutally direct :

... then Worms shall try

That long preserv'd Virginitie:  
And your quaint Honour turn to dust:  
And into ashes all my Lust.

We should not be deceived by the use of such apparently abstract words as Virginitie, quaint Honour and Lust, for Marvell almost certainly is referring to the sexual organs of woman and man.

The second section of the poem ends on a quieter note, which partly recalls the conceits of the first section, although the mockery is more sardonic, the wit more deadly:

The Grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.

This conclusion leads to the final section of the poem, which can be read simply as a demand that the lovers should consummate their love. But the violence of the imagery, the fierceness of the passion, and the note of triumph on which the poem ends, forbid any such straightforward interpretation.

The images succeed one another with bewildering rapidity for, after comparing himself and his mistress with 'am'rous birds of prey' who will devour Time, Marvell introduces a new and splendid range of imagery:

Let us roll all our Strength, and all Our sweetness, up into one Ball: And tear our Pleasures with rough strife, Thorough the Iron gates of Life. Thus, though we cannot make our SunStand still, yet we will make him run.

It is possible that the reference is to a cannon ball crashing through the gates of a beleaguered city. It is more likely that Marvell is alluding to the narrow reach of the river Danube known as the Iron Gates; certainly his friend Lovelace employs the word 'gates' in a similar physiological sense.

What is the significance of this sexual passion whose urgency and desperation Marvell so vividly depicts? Marvell may be saying that sexual union is a kind of death which destroys the lovers' strength and sweetness, and that their ecstasy leads them out of life into death. He may, however, be asserting that the united lovers are the perfect figure of a ball or a sphere. They speed the sun on its way, are consumed by it and, like that mythical bird, the phoenix, rise again from their ashes. Thus the phrase 'into ashes all my Lust' and the references to 'morning lew' (lew: warmth) and to 'instant Fires' become intelligible in the light of the phoenix imagery. We may hesitate to choose between these two interpretations and yet acknowledge that this closing passage conveys the joy and the anguish of sexual passion with an intensity unexcelled by any lines in our literature.

#### **ANDREW MARVELL : "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland"**

After subjugating the Irish, Cromwell returned from Ireland at the end of May 1650 in order to take part in the proposed campaign against the Scots. When Fairfax, who was appointed commander-in-chief on 12 June, resigned his post because he was unwilling to attack Scotland unless the Scots first invaded England, Cromwell was made commander-in-chief on 26 June and invaded Scotland on 22 July. It therefore seems probable that Marvell wrote this Ode in the early summer of 1650, since in it he looks backwards at the conquest of Ireland and forwards to the coming triumph over the Scots.

Marvell calls this poem an Horatian Ode for two reasons. Like Horace, who wrote odes in

praise of Augustus, Marvell is celebrating the achievements of the man who may bring peace to a country torn by civil war. Secondly, the metre of the poem is an attempt to reproduce in English the measured gravity of the Roman poet, and the Ode's diction and tone may also be called Horatian. The metre is not Marvell's own invention: a MS in the British Museum, almost certainly written by Sir Richard Fanshawe between 1626 and 1631, has eighteen stanzas, of which the first eleven are in the metre of this ode.

We must not overlook another model for this Ode. It is virtually certain that Marvell is drawing upon Lucan's Pharsalia, both in the original Latin and in the translation by Tom May. Lucan's Pharsalia is contemptuous of the usurper, Julius Caesar, and favourable to Pompey, who is regarded as in some measure the upholder of ancient rights. In some passages of his Ode Marvell seems to equate Cromwell with Caesar and Charles I with the vanquished Pompey. The Ode is, therefore, by no means a panegyric of Cromwell: it is an exceptionally complex poem in which Marvell balances his hopes against his fears, the resulting tension giving the poem its peculiar tone and fascination.

Marvell appears to regard Cromwell as primarily a terrible instrument of Heaven's wrath, destined to overturn the old order, his private character being only of secondary importance:

'Tis Madness to resist or blame

The force of angry Heavens flame:

And, if we would speak true,

Much to the Man is due.

Cromwell is a destructive force, a man who

Could by industrious Valour climbe

To ruine the great Work of Time,

And cast the Kingdome old

Into another Mold.

Though Justice against Fate complain,

And plead the antient Rights in vain.

Marvell believes that Cromwell deliberately trapped Charles into fleeing from Hampton Court to Carisbrooke, although modern historians consider this view erroneous :

And Hampton shows what part

He had of wiser Art.

Where, twining subtile fears with hope,

He wove a Net of such a scope,

That Charles himself might chase

To Caresbrooks narrow case.

When Marvell turns to consider the fate of Charles I, his admiration for the King unmistakably

informs the verse :

He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable Scene :  
But with his keener Eye  
The Axes edge did try :  
Nor call'd the Gods with vulgar spight  
To vindicate his helpless Right,  
But bow'd his comely Head,  
Down as upon a Bed.

The Ode is notable for its subtle puns : thus in reading the lines  
But with his keener Eye  
The Axes edge did try

we ought to remember that the Latin word acies means both eyesight and blade and, in neo-Platonic terminology, denotes the intent inward gaze of the mind.

Yet, whatever sympathy Marvell may feel for Charles, he reiterates his belief that the tragic execution of the King is a necessary prelude to the new order of things, illustrating his belief with a parallel drawn from Roman history :

So when they did design  
The Capitols first Line,  
A bleeding Head where they begun,  
Did fright the Architects to run;  
And yet in that the State  
Foresaw it's happy Fate

The ambiguity of Marvell's attitude to Cromwell comes out in four lines which, at first glance, seem to be entirely laudatory:

Not yet grown stiffer with Command,  
But still in the Republick's hand :  
How fit he is to sway  
That can so well obey.

But the words 'not yet' point to an underlying fear that Cromwell may in the future disobey the civil power, even though now, like a falcon, he obeys England, the falconer.

Even in the final lines the ambiguity is not fully resolved :

But thou the Wars and Fortunes Son

March indefatigably on;  
And for the last effect  
Still keep thy Sword erect :  
Besides the force it has to fright  
The Spirits of the shady Night,  
The same Arts that did gain  
A Pow'r must it maintain.

Cromwell is again envisaged as the instrument of destiny, and his sword has a double function: because its hilt is in the shape of a Christian cross it will keep evil spirits away; but it is also the sole guarantee of Cromwell's ability to maintain order.

Modern critics have tended to stress the doubts and reservations which Marvell seems to have felt about Cromwell, and elements of uncertainty and of foreboding are present in the poem. Yet in all but two surviving copies of Marvell's Miscellaneous Poems published in 1681 the Ode has been cancelled by the printer, who obviously feared that the triumphant Royalists would regard the poem as a treasonable eulogy of a detestable regicide. It is a tribute to the greatness of Marvell's Ode that, three centuries later, we still admire the superb poise and balance which he maintained despite the strength of the hopes and fears that stirred him so deeply.

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### 4.3 George Herbert : Virtue

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George Herbert (1593-1633) one of the greatest writers of poems on sacred subjects. He was a secular minded personality. He had a full share in the prevailing faults of the metaphysical age and had quaintness and extravagance in his literary works. His characteristics are rather unaffected, serene piety and human sympathy, leavened with humour. He uses many lyrical forms and often shows considerable artistry. Probably the poem which best shows his spirit of his poetic gift is *Virtue*. His poetry is sensitive to the most delicate changes of feeling.

In his poem "*Virtue*", the poet endows the elements of nature with the qualities of human behavior. Here he compares a day, a rose, spring season etc with the transitoriness of life which has an ephemeral quality.

#### Introduction of the Poem

George Herbert's poem entitled "*Virtue*" is a poem from his collection of poems under the title of the "*Death and Mutability*". The poems of this collection convey the idea that all beautiful, sweet, pleasant and good looking things in the world are mortal and it is certain that they will come to an end. Our lives are short and they are not going to please us for long. "*Virtue*" is a beautiful short lyric containing sixteen lines only ranged in four stanzas of four lines each. In this poem Herbert gives expression to his belief that everything in this world – days, life or even spring is subject to destruction. But a virtuous soul is mortal and ever lasting.

#### Summary of the Poem

The poem deals with the theme of ever beginning nature of this world. All things which appear

beautiful and pleasant in the nature do not remain so, for every; they die very soon. The day is very cool, sweet, bright and symbol of the earth's marriage with the sky; but it is destined to die as soon as the night approaches. Dew drops express sorrow and grief on day's death. Just like the fate of the day, the fate of rose is also in its ultimate death. Rose is a beautiful flower with bold and attractive colour even a passer by is forced to wipe his eyes and have a careful glance of it and admire its beauty. But it is also short lived and soon its roots would become its grave when it sheds its petal to the ground. A day lasts for only eight – ten hours only and a rose may last for two-three days but the spring season seems to last for longer period. In this season the days are very sweet; beautiful flowers bloom everywhere. But even this pleasant season also is not long-lasting and soon it would give way to the cold, harsh and unruly winter. IT is a bitter truth that this pleasant spring too would come to its end like all other things.

The poet is quite annoyed with the mortality of all natural things and thinks over it – then what lives in the world for ever. He concludes in the last stanza that all things in the world are destined to die but only sweet and virtuous soul would never die. Though the whole world may come to an end, yet the virtue would survive for ever and would never decay.

## **VIRTUE**

### **GEORGE HERBERT**

SWEET Day! So cool, so calm, so bright,

The bridal of the earth and sky.

The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;

For thou must die.

Sweet rose! Whose angry hue and brave

Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,

Thy root is ever in the grave,

And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,

A box where sweets compacted lie,

My music shows ye have your closes,

And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,

Like season'd timber, never gives;

But though the whole world turn to coal,

Then chiefly lives.

## **ANNOTATIONS:**

1.2 bridal : connected with the festivity and joy of a wedding.

1.6 gazer : one who gazes

## ANDREW MARVELL : “The Collar”

by John Press

Although no English poems by George Herbert were printed in his lifetime, some of them must have been circulated in manuscript, since he was known as a poet before his death. Herbert seems to have been true to the resolve, expressed in the sonnets sent to his mother on New Year’s Day 1610, when he was not yet seventeen, that he would dedicate himself to sacred poetry. The Temple, a collection of poems which appeared in 1633, a few months after his death, reveals both the nature of the inner conflicts that tormented him for so long, and the peace which he attained in the closing years of his life, after he had become the rector of Bemerton, a village near Salisbury. In his last message to his friend, the saintly Nicholas Ferrar, he explained that Ferrar would find in his poems a picture of the many spiritual Conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom.

There is no better introduction to the work of Herbert than “The Collar”.

As so often in Herbert, the title of the poem refers to the general theme, and there is no specific reference to the collar in the poem itself. The word collar was, however, commonly used as a figure of speech to describe the restraint of conscience, and Herbert is employing the word in that sense. “The Collar” helps us to understand the nature of the conflicts within Herbert’s nature and to gauge the force of the selfish passions against which he had to strive. In all probability he was tempted not so much by the lusts of the flesh as by the dazzling prospects of worldly success and affluence, which had allured him from his early youth until his ordination in or about the year 1626, when he was thirty-three.

Herbert was fine craftsman who delighted in inventing new stanzaic patterns, and who seldom used the same metrical and stanzaic patterns more than once or twice. “The Collar” is remarkable for the boldness and skill with which Herbert employs lines of differing lengths, for the cunning devices by which he varies the pace and momentum of the verse, and for the mastery with which he uses rhyme. Typical of his audacity and technical assurance is the long gap of ten lines between the rhyme ‘to me’ (line 13) and ‘to thee’ (line 23).

The poem opens with an emphatic gesture of protest, followed by a defiant proclamation of the poet’s resolve to free himself from the hampering collar :

I struck the board, and cry’d, No more.

I will abroad.

What? shall I ever sigh and pine?

My lines and life are free; free as the rode,

Loose as the winde, as large as store.

We notice, as the poem develops, that there is very little abstract reasoning, or discussion of moral principles. Herbert makes his point by employing two sets of images to illustrate the conflict in his soul :

Have I no harvest but a thorn

To let me bloud, and not restore  
What I have lost with cordiall fruit?  
Sure there was wine  
Before my sighs did drie it : there was corn  
Before my tears did drown it.

On the one hand we have images of fertility, standing for the abundant life of the senses : fruit, wine, corn. On the other hand we are shown an image of sharp negation, the thorn; an image of suffering, blood; and, in contrast to the wine, the sterile salt of tears. Then Herbert laments the absence of all fruitfulness :

Is the yeare onely lost to me?  
Have I no bayes to crown it?  
No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?  
All wasted?

One notices with admiration the desolate effect produced by the pause after blasted, and by the short, despairing line All wasted, an effect reinforced by the imperfect rhyme of blasted and wasted.

Herbert is trying to convince himself that he is the prisoner of his own morbid conscience, which has turned ropes of sand into thick cable, powerful enough to drag him along. Again, the restraining forces of conscience are envisaged as merely negative and barren.

Herbert reiterates his decision to follow the prompting of his desires, the rhythm of the verse emphasizing the storm of anger and resentment which is rising within him :

Away; take heed :  
I will abroad.  
Call in thy deaths head there : tie up thy fears;  
He that forbears  
To suit and serve his need,  
Deserves his load.

Then, suddenly, when his rebellious passion has reached its climax, Herbert submits completely to the will of God :

But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wilde  
At every worde,  
Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child!  
And I reply'd, My Lord.

In this submission there is no trace of fear, or weakness, or hysteria. Herbert obeys the divine voice because of his intuitive moral delicacy, candour and tenderness, and because he trusts in the

loving-kindness of God the Father. Although “The Collar” is a beautiful example of XVII-century Anglican piety it is also, like every great religious poem, universal in its scope and relevance.

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#### **4.4 Robert Herrick : To Daffodils**

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Robert Herrick (1591-1674) was born in London and was an Anglican priest. His epigrammatic couplets and rhetorical structure won him praise. His images are conventional. The poem ‘Daffodils’ conveys the idea of Mortality through various images in comparison to nature.

##### **Introduction of The Poem:**

This poem is addressed to Daffodils by Robert Herrick. This poem tells us how soon all beautiful things in this world die away and disappear. Addressing the daffodils the poet says that this very beautiful flower has a very short life. When the sun rises the flower blossoms but within a few hours even when it is not mid-noon daffodils get decaying. The poet here compares man’s life with that of Daffodils; both die very soon. Man like a Daffodil has a very short period of youth. We grow very soon and begin to perish in the end. When a man reaches in mid-period of his life, he grows old quickly and his decay begins. His youth, power, beauty and enthusiasm remains no longer.

##### **Summary of The Poem:**

The poet is very sad to see that daffodils are very beautiful but their lives come to an end very soon. Their life is very short spread over a period of a few hours – starts from the early rising of the sun and ends even when the sun has not reached the noon time. The poet entreats them to stay on and survive at least till evening when evening prayers and ringing of bells in the Church start. The poet wishes that he would sing his evening prayer together with daffodils and then both of them will go to end their lives. The life of daffodils is very short but very beautiful, so the life of a man may be short but it also should be beautiful, pleasant and full of pleasures. The poet compares the lives of man and the daffodils and says that their lives are very short, yet they are beautiful and charming as the spring. The daffodils and the spring grow and die quickly so do they decay and die very soon. Same is the case with the fate of poets. Poets’ fame and honour grows very quickly but it also fades out very soon. Poets’ life is compared with summer’s rain which does not last long and with dew drops which are evaporated with the rising sun. The poet concludes that long life is meaningless if it is not beautiful and purposeful. A short but beautiful and meaningful life is preferable. The daffodils, the spring, the dew drops, the summer rain are meaningful and pleasant, though their lives are short yet their life is better than a long but useless life.

##### **TO DAFFODILS**

ROBERT HERRICK

Fair daffodils, we weep to see

You haste away so soon;

As yet the early-rising sun

Has not attained its noon.

Stay, stay

Until the hasting day

Has run  
But to the even-song;  
And having prayed together, we  
Will go with you along.  
We have short time to stay as you,  
We have as short a spring;  
As quick a growth to meet decay.  
As you or anything.  
We die  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away,  
Like to the summer's rain,  
Or as the pearls of morning dew,  
Ne'er to be found again.

**Annotations:**

- 1 even-song : evening prayer.
- 2 Daffodils : beautiful flowers found abroad.
- 3 Hasting days : a day is attributed the quality of a hastily running horse.

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**4.5 Self Assessment Questions**

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1. What is the intention of the poet in “*TO HIS COY MISTRESS*”?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why does the poet desire that his mistress should shed her coyness?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What role does time play in the relationship of love?  
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4. Explain:

(a) Deserts of vast eternity ?

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(b) Iron gates of life?

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5. Write a critical appreciation of the poem “*TO HIS COY MISTRESS*” .?

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6. What are the common features between the day, the flower and the season.?

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7. Describe the manner in which life and death are juxtaposed in Herbert’s poem “*Virtue*”?

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8. Describe the characteristic of *Virtue*?

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9. Explain the following lines in your words:

(a) 'The bridal of the earth and sky'?

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(b) 'Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye'?

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10. Write a critical appreciation of the poem?

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11. What is the Central Idea of Poem?

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12. What are the flowers that the poet talks about?

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13. Do you feel the similarity between the life of daffodils and human life in the poem Daffodils?

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14. In what manner does seasonal cycle reflect the passage of human life?

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15. Explain 'hasting day', 'even-song', 'summer's rain'.?

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16. Analyse the poem critically?

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#### **4.6 Answers to SAQs**

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1. The intention of the poet in the poem "*TO HIS COY MISTRESS*" is to shed her Coyness.
2. The poet desires that his mistress should shed her coyness because he justifies that time does not wait and spare anyone and passes on faster. He therefore wishes to make love to her as soon as possible.
3. Time is like a horse that runs fast and hastely. It does not spare anyone from stampede. When the writer says, "*Times winged Charriot hurrying near*". The poet wants to run forward and he admits that though we cannot "make our sun stand still, yet we will make him run". Meaning thereby that time can be befooled by doing things faster.
4. (a) Desert of vast Eternity refers to the long day life where the destination is unclear and

time spares no one, and we too do not know anything what may happen.

(b) “Iron gates of life” refers to the circumstances, bonds and boundations of time and convictions.

5. A general survey of the poems of Marvell shows that he takes up traditional themes of love, religion, nature and morality etc. But he transforms the old and conventional themes and makes them look original. He presents these themes in the context of human existence. It is the perennial theme of all literature.

The theme of his poem ‘*To His Coy Mistress*’ is the time old theme of ‘Carpe diem’ or ‘Gather ye Rasebuds while ya may.’ In the poem he asks his beloved to shake off her shyness. It too is a conventional theme. But he gives the traditional theme a new look. The use of the conditional sentence in the very beginning of the poem shows its new aspect. The hyperbolic praise of his beloved is not a romantic effusion. It is merely a supposition. It evokes humour and irony. He rejects the supposition and comes to the reality of the human situation. He says that they must act at the present moment when they have the chance, the inclination and the vitality to enjoy themselves. All this shows that his theme is transitional. But this gives the theme a new perspective and makes it look original. The lover in the poem seeks to outwit the impersonal forces such as fate, natural necessity and individuating reality. He wants to put a given circumstance to the best use. Thus the poet makes an original contribution to the theme. The Peterorchan Strain of the fantastic praise of the beauty of the beloved ultimately takes an anti-Petrarchan turn in this poem. The lover knows that soon the beauty of the beloved and his own passion and sexual urge will turn into dust. So he asks his beloved to enjoy it all before it is too late to do so. Here are two Critical Appreciations of Marvell’s poems ‘To His Coy Mistress’ and ‘An Horatian Ode’ by John Press. They will help you to understand the writer better.

- 6 The common features between the day the flower and the season is the ephemeral quality of their existence. All the things in nature and human behaviour and subject to change or subject to die. They all have a short life or transitory existence as time does not spare anyone.
7. Herbert describes that a sweet day, which is so calm and bright and a baby of the earth and sky, soon dies with the time, is the same way life of a rose is full of hue and brave and touching to the eyes yet it is subject to death with the time, Even the spring season, a box of sweets’, closes and dies with time and what really remain is a sweet and virtuous soul like a season’d timber after all things die
8. Virtue lies in doing good and generous things and behaviour. It is like a season’d timber meaning as eternal and it never dies. Even though the whole world turns to coal, it chiefly lives as an attribute sufficient to identify its beholder.
9. (a) The poet terms the ‘Sweet Day’ as cool, calm and bright which is born out of the bridal / marriage of the earth and the sky.
- (b) It means that the sweet rose its sweet smell ad colour, steps the passes bys and gaze at its beauty.
10. George Herbert was the saint of the Metaphysical School. Most of his poems are religious in character and were composed during his short career as a priest. His verse including the poem

entitled 'Virtue' is collected in a collection of 160 poems entitled "The Temple" (1663). Like most of his poems 'Virtue' is also connected with practical theology. This poem is an intimate, sincere, honest and modest effort of Herbert and main qualities of this poem are its simplicity, quietness and earnestness. The simplicity of the poem is the power behind it.

The lyric 'Virtue' is an excellent, musical and beautiful composition full of strange, surprising and strong images. The poem is mainly concerned with the theme of ever changing nature of his world. The poet conveys the idea that all fair, lovely and beautiful things of the world – the day, the rose, the spring – are ephemeral and will come to an end very soon. But a soul with moral qualities, that is virtue, will never die and remains for ever. Emphasis is given to moral qualities which are innate and will always remain unchanged. Physical and outward beauty and qualities may attract and charm us, but such qualities are temporary in nature and will soon come to an end. Physical beauty is ephemeral and will die but the virtue lives though the whole world may burn and die.

The poet says that the day is cool, bright, calm and charming. It seems like wedding of the earth with sky. But as the evening approaches the day surrenders to the night and weeps over its death. The day may be very attractive and charming but it would meet its death. Same is the case with the rose who attracts everyone who wipes his eyes in order to have a glance at it and admire its beauty. But the tragedy is that the roots of the rose become its grave in the evening when its petals fall on the ground. The brightness and red colour of the rose is not long-lasting and soon it dies. The spring also follows the same path. The spring season is very pleasant with its cool and happy days and rose flowers blossom everywhere, there are so many lovely and charming things in this season, but the poet conveys through his musical poem the idea that the spring season will also not remain for ever and its end is very near. The poet comes to a conclusion that the day, the rose and the spring will die soon. Then what is to remain in this world for ever? What would never die? The poet says that every thing in this world is transitory and ephemeral except a soul having innate moral qualities – virtue—that is permanent, everlasting and will never die.

In this poem the poet has made excellent and beautiful use of images, simile and metaphors. He draws a beautiful image when he says that during the day it seems that the wedding of the earth and sky is taking place. Tears shed by dew on death of the day is a beautiful image. Poet calls the hue of rose being angry and brave. Freshness of rose is compared with brevity and its bright colour is symbolic of its anger. This image is quite surprising, uncommon and generally not used by other poets. It is very tragic when the birth of the rose is associated with the grave. The tragedy is involved that in spite of its matchless beauty the rose's fate is to die very soon. A significant metaphor is used when poet calls spring – "a box where sweets compacted lie". A beautiful and unique simile has been used by comparing the virtuous soul with seasoned timber, though it is not literally true.

It is a short lyric of sixteen lines arranged in four stanzas of four lines each. The cadence of the quatrains is perfect. The rhymic scheme is —ab ab, cb cd, db db, ef. The diction is very simple, selective and dignified. Old spellings of words don't pose any difficulty before the reader in its comprehension. It may be concluded firmly that the lyric 'Virtue' is a simple, straight composition full of artistic skills and successful in conveying the poet's ideas.

11. The central idea of the poem is the theme of everchanging nature of this world. The poet

conveys the idea that all fair, lovely and beautiful things of the world – the day, the rose, the spring – are ephemeral will come to an end very soon. But a soul with moral qualities, i.e. ‘*Virtue*’ will never die and remains forever. Physical beauty is ephemeral and will die but the ‘*Virtue*’ lives though the whole world may burn and die.

- 12 The flowers about which the poet talks about in his poem “*To daffodils*” is the rare flower of fragrance called “*daffodils*”.
- 13 There is a similarity between the life of daffodils and human life as when the poet talks about the mortality of nature objects and human existence. Here the poet compares the short life of the daffodils by saying that “We have short time to stay as you” “as quick a growth to meet. Decay”, meaning thereby that. Time does not spare anyone whether it is the object of nature of man. All have to meet their decay.
- 14 Just as the spring season is short, human life is also short and sweet. Just as the season grows it meets its decay, similarly human life is the short lived and has its hours and dries away. It is like the transitory quality of the dewdrops and summer’s rain, never to be found again.
- 15 (a) “Hasting Day” refers to the bright and calm day which comes to an end very soon like a hasty horse whom time drives away.
- (b) Even-song refers to the evening prayers and hymn. It suggests the transitoriness of the passing time and events.
- (c) Summer’s rain refers to the time bound cool rains which are short lived.
- 16 Robert Herrick was a Cavalier Lyrist. During the age of Milton some poets followed the example of Ben Jonson and wrote lyrics which have been called Cavalier Lyrics and such poets were given the name of Cavalier Lyrists. The lyrical spirit of Elizabethan period can be seen in Cavalier Lyrists, but certain characteristics of this period – spontaneity, abundant strain of unpreplanned thought are lacking in them. Their lyrical composition is not spontaneous and they produced it as a piece of art with deliberate efforts. The songs of their forerunners were natural and came out from the depth of their hearts but the poems of Cavalier Lyrists are not so natural. Their lyrics disclose conscious poetic craftsmanship. We feel that while they composed their lyric they were aware that their piece of poetry should be of an artistic value. Making their lyric an artistic piece they made it unnatural too. Main characteristics of Cavalier Lyrics are – graciousness, elegance, polish and conscious effort. These qualities are also found in Robert Herrick’s lyrics. He followed the example of Ben Jonson and lacks naturalness in his lyrics.

Critical Appreciation of the Poem – “*To Daffodils*” is an excellent piece of poetry composed by Herrick. It holds an important place in the whole English poetry. The poet laments in his lyric that the daffodil is a very beautiful flower but its beauty is not long lasting, even its life is shorter than a period of a whole day. The daffodil dies away within a period of few hours. They do not survive till the sun reaches its noon-time. The daffodils do not live till the evening prayers are sung in the church. The poet feels very melancholy knowing the fact and asks the daffodils to stay till evening, as he wants to say his evening prayers together with them. And then he would accompany them on their journey towards heaven.

The poet says that daffodils should not feel too much sorrow that their life is short. The poets also have equally a short period of fame and honour in their lives. Their fame and honour decay

as quickly as they grow. Their lives too are short like spring, summer rain and the morning dew-drops. They would dry out and die so soon. In this way the poet wants to console the daffodils that they should not mind their short life. The poet stresses on the idea that length of life is not significant, the life itself should be full of honour, fame, worthiness and virtues. A short but worthily and meaningful life is preferable to a longer but meaningless and purposeless life.

On the artistic side – The lyric is artistically wrought out and excellent, befitting and apt similes are used very carefully. Similes by comparing daffodils' life with the poet's life and comparison of both poet's and daffodil's lives with the spring, summer rain, and morning dew – drops is very beautiful. Very simple but graceful and polished language and diction is used. The poem is full of musical rhythm and cadence and has been presented in conversational style. Rhymic scheme of the poem being – ab cd dd ce ae; fg hg ii hj kj; creates a fine pattern. The poem is very sweet in singing due to a rise and fall in the tone. The poet has used old spellings of certain words, but they do not pose any difficulty in understanding the poem.

Robert Herrick's lyric "*To Daffodils*" has every characteristic of Cavalier Lyric – it is graceful, polished, elegant and composed as a great work of poetic craftsmanship. We can conclude that this lyric is one of the most interesting, musical artistic and elegant lyrics written in English poetry. Great skill and craftsmanship of Cavalier Lyrics is obvious.

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#### 4.7 Let Us Sum Up

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After going through these poems and their meanings, you will now be able to study the poems with reference to their context.

- You realize what metaphysical poetry is about.
- The various images and conceits brought about by the poets.
- Mentality of creativity of the poets of the said age.

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#### 4.8 Review Questions

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1. Discuss *To Daffodils* as a typical cavalier Lyric.
2. Comment on the theme of 'Virtue'.
3. Critically analyse '*To His Coy Mistress*' as a metaphysical poem.

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#### 4.9 Bibliography

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## UNIT-5

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### SWIFT : THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

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#### Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Age And Author
  - 5.2.1 About the Age
  - 5.2.2. About the Author
- 5.3 Reading The Text
  - 5.3.1 Text (Selected Extracts)
  - 5.3.2 Glossary (Full Text)
  - 5.3.3 Summary (Full Text)
- 5.4 Analysis
  - 5.4.1 Critical Analysis (Full Text)
  - 5.4.2 Satire
  - 5.4.3 Irony
  - 5.4.4 Humour
  - 5.4.5 Style
- 5.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 5.6 Answers to SAQs
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Review Questions
- 5.9 Bibliography

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#### 5.0 Objectives

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In this unit we are going to make you understand the special significance of prose written during eighteenth century. We will also introduce you to the prose of Swift. With the help of meanings of difficult words and phrases of Swift's lively squib in simple English and its critical analysis we will let you practice to appreciate prose of Swift. We will also be providing you with :

- (i) detailed summary of Jonathan Swift's most famous work 'The Battle of the Books,
- (ii) literary devices used in the squib alongwith its critical analysis and
- (iii) selected important extracts from the text.

We will also discuss literary genius and life of Swift, literary trends of eighteenth century and impact of Swift's writings on other writers. After reading Swift as per directions, you would be able to :

- (i) appreciate, analyse and understand the hidden meanings in the prose of Swift,
- (ii) develop insight to understand satire and irony and justify their use for the benefit of people and
- (iii) have ample knowledge about the period and poet and be able to answer questions based on text and the period in your own words.

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## 5.1 Introduction

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The beginnings of modern prose are to be sought in the early years of Renaissance. Above all others it was Lyly and Sidney who supplied to the succeeding writers for about a quarter of a century two attractive models of prose. Lyly has been credited with being the first English writer who consciously and persistently used an artistic style.

There are two distinct elements in this style. The first is a principle of counter point and symmetry in sentences, a way of balancing clauses. This tendency was already widespread and had been popularised among others by Roger Ascham, who had modelled himself on the antithetical style of Seneca. But Lyly makes a habit of what occurred only by fits and starts. Moreover, he refines on their accomplishments. He doubles their simple alliterations making his either direct or crossed. A prose thus constituted is almost as regulated and measured as verse. Manifestly it suffers from excesses. Yet the innovation it presented was of service at a time when there was need to cast the formless in a mould to impart art to the inartistic.

The second element in Lyly's style is his fondness for decorating writing with allusions from ancient history and mythology and the fantastic, so called, natural history. Yet what shocks us today, gave pure enjoyment at that time. Lyly's ingenuity was admired and his followers were pleased that they could imitate him without much difficulty. So plain was the receipt for this style of mechanical graces. Subsequently, it was true that the word euphuism lost the exact meaning and became synonymous with every kind of affectation and preciosity. The epithet stretched to include the various artifices of Sydney, Shakespeare and Donne.

Yet we have but to open Euphues and open a single sentence in order to discover the distinctive qualities. Much of the succeeding prose is the tradition of poetic prose. Robert Greene was a conscious follower of this style. The drama also contributed to the advancement of prose. In Shakespeare's plays prose is employed for a variety of purposes. Ben Jonson in his play employs a much larger proportion of prose. For about twenty years (1641-1660) John Milton wrote a number of prose pamphlets which form the most extraordinary movement of the prose of the middle seventeenth century.

The prose of Restoration is marked by a desire for lucidity and order. It is a product of rational thought. John Dryden's prose is much closer to the perfect and stripped simplicity in which the literature of didactic exposition is to find its uniform type. The emergence of a modern prose style in English is the contribution of Restoration age. Swift's prose creations easily fall into line with and augment the best achievements of Restoration Prose.

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## 5.2 Age And Author

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### 5.2.1 About the Age

The revolution of 1688, when William of Orange and his wife Mary, in a movement largely engineered by the middle class acceded to the throne of England, the Protestant heart of England represented a victory of the town over the court. But if the town had defeated the Court and had rejected the Court's standards in manners and morals, it had now to find its own standards, to root itself in a social and ethical code.

In the social field this period was marked by a great increase in trade and commerce and the rise of the prosperous middle class. The coffee houses were a fit emblem of the gay life rich classes and the wits. They had become the centres of social life. The literary ideals of the age were those of neo classicism, restraint rationality, the emphasis on form and a distrust of emotion and exuberance. Addison and Steele, the great educators of the English middle class at the beginning the eighteenth century, were at the same time concerned to bridge the gap between town and country, represented at the Restoration by the courtly Fashion of sneering at the uncouthness and simplicities of visiting squires and also to unite past and present to re-establish the continuity of English History.

The pleasure of being able to understand the easy sense of simple orderliness, a smooth balance in ideas as in forms, such was the and pursued in those days by great majority of those who think and write. It was pre-eminently the age of prose. It was in prose that it had been most inventive of form, it created the journalistic essay, the leading article, the cultured magazine and above all, the novel. In these important fields it had given birth to writers whose thought is still our own : in poetry to Pope, in prose to Swift and in philosophy to Berkley. In this age poetry came very near to prose, since it pursued an aim very much similar.

Both in poetry and prose it was an age peculiarly suited to the flourishing of satire. One of the factors responsible for it was the close connection between politics and literature. Also that the writers were aware of the falling away from moral standards. A true satirist is engaged in measuring the monstrous aberrations from the ideal, whereas a comedian is concerned only with aberrations from current social norms. Conditions in the early eighteenth century were especially favourable for the satiric kind of treatment.

### 5.2.2 About the Author

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was the reputed son of a Jonathan Swift who had followed a more prosperous older brother, Godwin, from Yorkshire to Ireland. Jonathan obtained a small legal post in Dublin and died after sometime. Some months later a son, Jonathan, was born in Dublin. The child was nursed by his mother, and when he was three, his mother went back to her relatives in England, leaving him in the care of his uncle Godwin. Thus, Swift was both fatherless and motherless.

He was sent to Kilkenny School, where he met Congreve, and, at fourteen, was entered as a pensioner to Trinity College, Dublin. In 1688 Godwin, who had lost his fortune, died, and young Swift was left without resources. He joined his mother at Leicester, and sought for other connections. The most obvious was the celebrated diplomatist Sir William Temple, then living in retirement at Moor Park in Surrey about forty miles from London. Temple's father had been a friend of Godwin Swift. Temple himself had known the Swifts in Ireland; and Lady Temple (Dorothy Osborne) was a relative of Swift's

mother. Swift, therefore, entered the service of Temple. Life at Moor Park proved to be of immense value to Swift.

In 1696, Temple obtained for him the Prebend of Kilroot, near Belfast in Ireland. He remained there for two years and returned to Moor Park in 1698. He had his first love affair with one Miss Jane Waring, whom he addresses as 'Varina'. He proposed to her through a letter in 1696. The correspondence went on till it ended finally in 1700.

Temple died in 1699 and Swift returned to Ireland with Lord. Berkeley as his secretary and Chaplain. Returning to England in 1701 with Berkeley, he got in the midst of political crisis. But on not getting any encouragement in the field he left politics in disgust and went back to Ireland in 1709. In 1711 he again came back to London, joined Tories and produced a good deal of propaganda on behalf of the Tories. Swift possessed position of great importance and authority.

In April 1713 he was appointed as Dean of ST. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. In Dublin, he was in regular contact with Esther Johnson, who too had now settled there. Their relations got strained due to his friendship in 1708 with Hester Vanhomrigh, whom Esther called Vanessa, Swift felt acutely the change from the rush of politics and congenial companionship in London to the loneliness and obscurity of his life in Dublin. His good was not so good. Although he carried out his duties efficiently and improved the lot of many by his charity, he did not get any promotion or better placement. He had now deafness, brain trouble, violent fits and physical pain. By 1742 his mental condition became very bad. The end came, at last, on the 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1745. He left fortune to establish a hospital for idiots and lunatics. He was buried in his own Cathedral.

Swift wrote the perfection of plain prose, with easy rhythm and exquisite cadence. He has no indiosyncrasy yet the sheer force of personality is overwhelming. Earnestness, satire, cynicism, invective, all proceed with the same decorum of outward gravity. In intellectual energy and penetrating force of style he was the greatest writer of his age.

You are advised to read the full text of Swift's 'The Battle of the Books'. Some important extracts from the original text are given to below to give you practice in reading the text.

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## 5.3 Reading The Text

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### 5.3.1 Text (Selected Extracts)

Meanwhile those books that were advocates for the moderns, chose out one from among them to make a progress through the whole library, examine the number and strength of their party, and concert their affairs. (Paragraph : 7)

I am glad, answered the bee, to hear you grant at least that I am come honestly by my wings and my voice ; for then, it seems, I am obliged to Heaven alone for my flights and my music ; Providence would never have bestowed on me two such gifts, without designing them for the noblest ends. (Paragraph : 12)

But there the tender cares of a mother began to fill her thoughts, and move in her breast: for, at the head of a troop of modern bowmen, she cast her eyes upon her son Wotton; to whom the fates had assigned a very short thread. Wotton ; to whom the fates had assigned a very short thread. Wotton, a young hero, whom an unknown father of mortal race begot by stolen embraces with this goddess.

He was the darling of his mother above all her children, and she resolved to go and comfort him. (Paragraph : 22)

Lucan appeared upon a fiery horse of admirable shape, but headstrong, bearing the rider where the list over the field ; he made a mighty slaughter among the enemy's horse ; which destruction to stop, Blackmore, a famous modern, (but one of the mercenaries), strenuously opposed himself, and darted a javelin with a strong hand, which, falling short of its mark, struck deep in the Earth. (Paragraph : 26)

He, in the meantime, had wandered long in search of some enterprize, till at length he arrived at a small rivuler, that issued from a fountain hard by, called, in the language of mortal men, Helicon. Here he stopped, and, parched with thirst, resolved to allay it in this limpid stream. Thrice with profane hands he essayed to raise the water to his lips, and thrice it slipped all through his fingers. (Paragraph : 30)

Then Boyle, observing well his time, took a lance of wondrous length and sharpness; and, as this pair of friends compacted, stood close side to side, he wheeled him to the right, and with unusual force, darted the weapon. (Paragraph : 31)

### 5.3.2 Glossary

annual Records of Time	:	yearly almanacs
collateral branches of time	:	lust and greed
oligarchy	:	government by a few
parnassus	:	a mountain in north of Delphi (Greece) where Apollo and God of learning Muses lived
towards the east	:	abode of ancients where sun shines
shortened the prospect	:	restricted the view
virulence	:	energy and vigour
wont	:	accustomed, in the habit of
set up trophies	:	to instal marks of victory
polemics	:	controversies, debates, discussions
by this expedient	:	by this device of keeping books
broils	:	quarrels and disputes
he had a humour	:	he had an inclination or desire
perturbation of both	:	disturbance in both spleen and head
heavy armed foot	:	historians
ferment	:	state of excitement
denied the premises	:	moderns refused to believe this hypothesis
renounced them all	:	moderns refused to owe any debt to ancients
material accident fell out	:	an important incident occurred

his castle	: the spider's web
turnpikies	: gates
expatiating a while	: flying freely without any aim
Beelzebub	: lord of flies, patron and protector of flies.
a plague split you	: may a terrible disease destroy you
your kennel	: your dirty abode (i.e.e the cob web)
scurrilous	: abusive, vituperative language
providence	: the God
four inches round	: small circumference of the cob web
fly bane	: the poison which kills flies
what would be the issue	: what the result of discussion be
vermin	: insects which cause great harm to books
the engineers	: the mathematicians
infinite swarms	: large number of undisciplined moderns
who had frequented	: fame paid frequent visits to the royal library
the senate assembled	: the meeting of the Gods was held
momus	: the God of merciless criticism and jealous mockery
Pallas	: the Goddess of wisdom, industry and war
the book of fate	: the heavenly book containing account of all past events
second causes	: which is made to happen by the supreme power
a malignant deity	: a spiteful goddess called criticism
hoodwinked	: cheated, deceived
pedantry	: making a show of one's learning
sophisters	: students of junior classes at a university
coffee house wits	: idle gossipers who presume themselves to be critics
seminaries	: institutions of learning
Gresham	: Gresham College, where Royal society held meetings
full glutted	: fully fed, greatly swollen
dragoons	: medical writers and physicians
Ingens hiatus in MS	: there is another gap in manuscript
exchange of armour	: a compromise, a mark of friendship

Paucis desunt	:	a few words missing
Kite	:	the bird which eats dead bodies of animals
Grazier	:	one who looks after and feeds his cattle
aged sier	:	old father
philomela	:	the girl changed into nightingale by God.
which had been given him	:	the blessings and the support of all the gods given to him

### 5.3.3 Summary

Swift gives the origin of the dispute between the two parties of books in the very beginning in allegorical terms. He regards the ancient authors and the modern authors as the occupants of two summits of a mountain called Paranssus (which was sacred to Apollo and the Muses), the summit occupied by the Ancients being higher than the one occupied by the Moderns. A feeling of jealousy leads the Moderns to challenge the right of the Ancients to occupy the higher summit. The quarrel between the occupants of the two summits, says Swift, then spread to the books lying on the shelves of St. James's Library.

Before describing the actual battle fought by the books, Swift takes the opportunity to attack Richard Bentley who was the keeper of the aforesaid library and a champion of the Ancients, Swift satirizes Bentley for his discourtesy towards those who wanted to borrow books or manuscripts from the library and for his inability to think clearly or to keep the library books in a proper order.

Swift then turns to the books themselves and the dispute which was taking place between them. One of the Ancients, says Swift, had tried to settle the matter by arbitration but had failed in his effort to assuage the tempers. This ancient author had pointed out that the writers belonging to his side were really wiser than those of the modern times and that they were entitled to greater respect because of their antiquity. But the Moderns did not accept this argument and went so far as to claim that of the two parties the Moderns were the more ancient.

Swift then proceeds to describe an important event which occurred at this juncture. A bee, finding a hole in a broken window-pane of the library, came inside and landed upon a spider's cobweb. This invasion by the bee led to a dispute between the two (the spider and the bee). The spider spoke to the bee in a contemptuous tone, pointing out that while he himself owned an impressive palace (namely, his cobweb) the bee had no property or substance at all except a pair of wings and a drone-pipe. The bee in reply said that heaven had given to him the power to fly and the power to sing, and that he visited all the flowers and the blossoms of the field and the garden, gathering the required materials for his use. The bee also alleged that the spider's palace, while exhibiting "method and art", was absolutely devoid of "duration and matter". The bee went on to say that all that the spider produced was poison while the bee produced honey and wax.

Aesop now speaks and states that whatever the bee had said in favour of himself could be applied to the ancient authors and that whatever the bee had alleged against the spider could be applied to the Moderns. According to Aesop, the Moderns have no real grounds for boasting of their genius or their inventions because, even if they possess method and skill, they have only produced works which will soon be forgotten because the materials of which those works are made have come out of

the authors themselves and are therefore no better than dirt. The Moderns cannot claim to any genuine productions of real value. Much in their work can be described as mere wrangling and satire which may be compared to the spider's poison. As for the Ancients, they have their imaginative flights and their language. The Ancients collected their materials from every corner of Nature and they have produced works full of honey and wax which have contributed to mankind two of the noblest things, which are sweetness and light.

Swift then goes on to mention the books which took part in the battle. However, instead of naming the books by their titles, he names the authors of the books which took part in the fight. When the two armies of warriors had thus got ready for the battle, Fame, who had at one time an important position in the library, flew up straight to the chief god, Jupiter, and gave him a faithful account of what was happening below on the earth. Jupiter immediately called a meeting of the gods and goddesses in order to decide upon a course of action. However, there being a difference of opinion among the gods and goddesses, Jupiter privately consulted the Book of Fate and gave appropriate orders to his agents to go down to the library and manipulate events in accordance with those orders.

Momus, the god of jealous mockery, who at the conference of the gods and goddesses had taken the side of the Moderns, now enlisted the support of a goddess known as Criticism. This goddess was very malignant and she lent her full support of the Moderns.

Swift then goes on to describe the battle itself. He tells us that the first to start the offensive was Paracelus who attacked Galen with a javelin but who was himself wounded by Galen's counter attack. Then Aristotle shot an arrow at Bacon, but Bacon escaped being injured and the arrow hit and killed another modern philosopher whose name was Descartes. Now it was Homer's turn to launch an attack upon the modern epic poets. Next came Virgil, another ancient epic poet. He found himself face to face with the modern poet, Dryden who also had attempted epic poetry (by writing a translation of Virgil's Aeneid). Dryden, however, acknowledged Virgil's superiority to himself as an epic poet, and sought a compromise with the enemy.

Yet another ancient epic poet, by the name of Lucan, now attacked two Moderns who also had attempted epic poetry. These Moderns were Richard Blackmore and Thomas Creech. Then the ancient poet, Pindar, the famous writer of Odes came forward and killed such modern writers of Pindaric Odes as John Oldham and Afra Behn, and Abraham Cowley. The comes the last episode in *The Battle of the Books*. The central figures in this last episode are Bentley and Wotton (who were the champions of the Moderns), and Temple and Boyle (the champions of the Ancients). Swift pours all his scorn and ridicule upon Bentley and Wotton. These moderns see Phalaris and Aesop lying fast asleep in the distance, but they do not have the courage to attack them. Wotton even fails in his attempt to quench his thirst at the spring known as Helicon. The two friends then encounter Charles Boyle who attacks them with a lance and kills both of them at one stroke. According to Swift's satirical account, then, Temple and Boyle had been victorious in their support of the Ancients as against Bentley and Wotton who had opposed the Ancients and given all their support to the Moderns.

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## 5.4 Analysis

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### 5.4.1 Critical Analysis

*The Battle of the Books* contains a satirical account of the controversy that had been going

on for some time in England with regard to the comparative merits of the ancient authors and modern authors. In this controversy Sir William Temple and Charles Boyle had emerged as the champions of the ancient writers and ancient learning, while William Wotton and Richard Bentley had taken up the opposite stand and had argued that the Moderns were by no means inferior to the ancients and that in fact the Letters attributed to Phalaris had not been written by Phalaris and that, likewise, the fables attributed to Aesop had been written not by Aesop but by somebody else belonging to later times.

Swift wrote *The Battle of the Books* in order to support the thesis which had been put forward by his patron, Sir William Temple, who had claimed that the ancient authors were superior in wisdom and learning to the modern authors. Swift imagines that a dispute started among the books lying on the shelves of St. James's Library in London. In this dispute the books written by modern authors claimed that they were superior to those written by ancient author, made a counter claim. Thus Swift gives a comic turn to the controversy. To imagine that a quarrel has occurred between books belonging to two different parties is certainly very amusing. Swift further imagines that the dispute between the two groups of books led to a regular battle, and so he proceeds to describe that battle. As Swift uses war-like phraseology in describing the combatants and the battle, we have here what is known as a mock-epic. In a serious or true epic, a real battle between heroes is described but here an imaginary battle between books is described in the kind of language which an epic writer would employ in connection with a battle between warriors.

Swift begins with the view that disputes and wars are generally started by those who are needy and poor against those who are prosperous and well-to-do. He illustrates this remark from what he describes as the republic of dogs. He wants indirectly to convey to us the idea that the Moderns started a war against the Ancients on the ground that the former were lacking in those treasures of the mind which were in the possession of the Ancients.

The very notion that books can fight a battle has a mock-epic suggestion about it). Now Swift uses some military terms such as "light-horse", "heavy-armed foot" and "mercenaries". "Light-horse" refers to the non-epic poets. "Heavy-armed foot" refers to historians. And "mercenaries" refer to those who had no interest in the actual fight but who were supporting the Moderns. Not only that ; the Moderns talk of their horses whom they have themselves reared and of their weapons which they have themselves manufactured. The mention of arms, weapons, and horses in the context of books certainly contributes to the mock-epic effect.

The famous spider-and-bee episode which, in an allegorical form, establishes a contrast between the Ancient and the Moderns. The allegorical significance of the debate between the spider and the bee is clearly brought out by the speech which is made by Aesop. The chief point of contrast is that the so-called originality of the Moderns merely means narrow-mindedness and superficiality while the Ancients show a wider range and a larger vision by their readiness and their keenness to collect their materials from all Nature and all life. another point of contrast is that while the books of the Moderns contain only wrangling and satire the books of the Ancients are instrumental in spreading sweetness and light.

Jove or Jupiter gave certain appropriate orders to his subordinates to determine the issue of the battle which was about to begin. Momus, the god of jealous criticism, got into touch with the goddess Criticism and urged her to go to the help of the Moderns. the intervention of gods and goddesses is an epic device which was used by Homer and Virgil. Swift, however, makes use of it as

a mock-epic device.

The battle is so described that the Ancients clearly have the upper hand even when a particular encounter ends in a compromise like the one between Virgil and Dryden. The superiority of the Ancients is nowhere in doubt. The most remarkable features of this account of the battle are, of course, its mock-epic character and its satirical quality. Authors (or the books written by these authors) are treated as warriors wielding weapons and arms and attacking one another. Now, to use the martial language for a literary dispute gives to this account a mock-epic character.

Swift makes fun of Wotton for his inability to drink the water of Helicon. What Swift means to say here is that Wotton did not have any genuine literary talent and that it was for this reason that Apollo disallowed him to drink the water from a spring which was sacred to Apollo and to the Muses. Then Swift goes on to make fun of both the friends or collaborators, Wotton and Bentley. The final paragraph ends with some very amusing lines in which Swift says that Charon, the ferryman of Hades, would mistake the two friends, Wotton and Bentley, as one person.

### **5.4.2 Satire**

Swift is, rightly enough, regarded as one of the world's greatest satirists. The age of Swift was most conducive to the spirit of satire. He was a man of piercing intellect and this intellect could not be blind to the chaos and confusion and corruption of the age. Swift's sharp intellect was able to perceive evil in all its forms and areas of existence. He could not tolerate unreason in any form. Thus he attacks all false ideas, absurdities in thought and action, corruption of language and pedantry, moral laxity in religion specially. Swift satirises individuals, groups, tendencies, institutions, professions and ideologies. He satirises humanity in general as well.

As a satirist, Swift was a master, and he used the various weapons at his disposal with an effortless ease, as well as an admirable appropriateness. His methods are as varied as his targets. He can cut, he can thrust, or he can hit with a bludgeon, and all with the same skill. He is able to use wit, raillery, allegory, irony, sarcasm with equal skill in his satirical writings.

### **5.4.3 Irony**

The irony takes the form of a dispassionate, matter-of-fact tone in Swift. This tone covers the most blatantly outrageous statements and the grossly exaggerated observation, and because these are given in the smooth, dispassionate tone, they take on an appearance of truth.

His ironic device is that of the praise-blame-inversion. In this form of irony, the victim of the satire is praised for qualities which are in reality bad or contemptuous, and a person is blamed for qualities which are generally considered to be good. Thus, there is irony because the opposite of what is intended is said. The language is that of praise but the meaning conveyed is that of blame. At other times the manner adopted is that of rebuke and blame but the meaning, clearly conveyed, is that of implying praise. Swift uses this device with great ease and effect. Thus we see Bentley seemingly praised for his humanity whereas he is in reality being blamed for his inhumanity and discourtesy. Another important device of irony adopted by Swift, is the ironic mask. Assuming this mask or "persona" helps Swift to satirise with ease. These assumed identities help the satirist to be detached and to lessen the "emotional intensity".

Swift's irony is an integral part of his technique and is often mixed with parody. He is a master of dramatic irony. He is supreme at the art of persuading his reader to his point of view.

#### **5.4.4 Humour**

Swift is generally regarded as a misanthropic, gloomy and morbid person. As such, many people tend to regard humour as being out of his province. Yet the very fact that he is a satirist implies that there should be humour in his writings, for, without humour satire degenerates into mere invective. Swift's satire never becomes mere invective even when it is at its most bitter. Swiftian humour is an integral part of his work like his satire and irony. Many a time he attacks a vice or folly with an apparent air of playfulness. His simulated adoption of another's point of view for the purposes of satire is not without its touch of humour. The Battle of the Books has a number of instances which speak for his humour. The battles are surely described in a humorous vein, specially the encounter between Virgil and Dryden.

#### **5.4.5 Style**

Swift said regarding style that "when a man's thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first, and his own judgement will direct him in what order to place, so as they may be best understood. Where men err against this method, it is usually on purpose, and to show their learning, their oratory, their politeness, or their knowledge of the word. In short, that simplicity, without which no human performance can arrive to any great perfection, is nowhere more eminently useful than in this. Swift's own style followed the dictum he laid down. In this, it was typical of the age which demanded a simple and plain style, unadorned with extravagant similes and figures of speech.

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### **5.5 Self Assessment Questions**

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#### **Exercise : 1**

Choose the correct answer from amongst the three alternatives given :

1. The beginnings of modern prose are to be sought :
  - (a) in eighteenth century
  - (b) in the early years of Renaissance
  - (c) in the Restoration age.
2. The second element in Lyly's style is :
  - (a) symmetry of sentences
  - (b) regulated and measured prose
  - (c) fondness for decorating writing with allusions
3. Lyly was praised and admired for his :
  - (a) ingenuity
  - (b) mild approach

- (c) intelligence
4. Milton wrote pamphlets :
- (a) for twenty years
  - (b) during his last days
  - (c) during his early days
5. The prose of Restoration is marked by :
- (a) brevity and regularity
  - (b) correctness
  - (c) desire for lucidity
6. This age is marked in social field by :
- (a) rise of the prosperous middle class
  - (b) supremacy of aristocracy
  - (c) dominance of church
7. Great educators of the English middle class were :
- (a) Pope and Swift
  - (b) Swift and Lyly
  - (c) Addison and Stede
8. Both prose and poetry were :
- (a) popular amongst common people
  - (b) suited to the flourishing of satire
  - (c) followed classical model
9. Swift's first service for livelihood was with :
- (a) Church
  - (b) Lyly
  - (c) Sir William Temple
10. In 1713 Swift was appointed as :
- (a) the Prebend of Kilroot
  - (b) secretary to Lord Berkeley
  - (c) Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral

**Exercise – 2**

Choose the correct answer from the given alternatives :

1. The Battle of the Books is a :
  - (a) satirical account
  - (b) allegory
  - (c) epic poem
2. The champions of the battle were
  - (a) moderns
  - (b) Dryden and Swift
  - (c) Temple and Boyle
3. Swift ridicules and scorns :
  - (a) Wotton and Bentley
  - (b) Dryden
  - (c) Cowley and Homer
4. Moderns have no real ground for boasting of their genius according to :
  - (a) Homer
  - (b) Swift
  - (c) Aesop
5. Jupiter was informed about happenings of the Earth by :
  - (a) Momus
  - (b) Aesop
  - (c) Fame

**Exercise – 3**

Answer the following questions in your own words :

1. Discuss the social background of Swift's age.

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2. Why did Swift write "The Battle of the Books"?

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3. Comment on the allegorical element in this text.

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4. Is the 'Battle' limited to the occasion of its origin?

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5. Discuss main features of Swift's prose.

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## 5.6 Answers to SAQs

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### Exercise : 1

1. (b) in the early years of renaissance
2. (c) fondness for decorating writings with allusions
3. (a) ingenuity
4. (a) for twenty years
5. (c) desire for lucidity
6. (a) rise in the prosperous middle class
7. (c) Addison and Steele
8. (b) suited to the flourishing of satire
9. (c) Sir William Temple
10. (c) Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

### Exercise : 2

1. (a) satirical account
2. (c) Temple and Boyle
3. (a) Wotton and Bentley
4. (c) Aesop
5. (c) Fame

### Exercise:3

1. In the social field this period was marked by a great increase in trade and commerce and the rise of the prosperity in middle class.
2. Swift wrote this satirical mock-epic to lend support to his patron, Sir William Temple, in the position which Temple had taken up with regard to the controversy about ancient and modern learning.
3. The episode of the spider and the bee is a piece of allegory. The spider symbolises the moderns and modern learning, while the bee symbolises the ancients and ancient learning.

4. Though 'The Battle of the Books' was written basically to support the cause of ancients at the time of controversy but it is of interest to read even after centuries as the issues involved are of perennial interest.
5. Swift's manner of writing carries in it the character of one who rests altogether upon his sense, and aims at no more than giving his meaning in a clear and concise manner. His prose has elements of satire, irony, humour, allegory, directness, vigour and simplicity.

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## 5.7 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit we have given you practice in the study of :

- Jonathan Swift's mock epic 'The Battle of the Books'
- Literary and social atmosphere of early eighteenth century.
- English prose style of the classical age
- mock-epic elements and word pictures created by Swift.
- the satiric, ironic and humorous use of words and phrases, and
- critical analysing and appreciating prose writings.

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## 5.8 Review Questions

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1. Discuss 'The Battle of Books' as a satire.
2. Discuss 'The Battle of Books' as a mock epic in prose.

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## 5.9 Bibliography

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## UNIT-6

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### POPE:THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

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#### Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Age And Author
  - 6.2.1 About The Age
  - 6.2.2 About The Author
- 6.3 Reading Text
  - 6.3.1 Text (Selected Extracts From Canto I To Canto V )
  - 6.3.2 Glossary (Full Text)
  - 6.3.3 Summary (Full Text)
- 6.4 Analysis
  - 6.4.1 Critical Analysis (Full Text)
  - 6.4.2 Mock-epic
  - 6.4.3 The Machinery
  - 6.4.4 Satire
- 6.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 6.6 Answers to SAQs
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 Review Questions
- 6.9 Books Suggested

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#### **6.0 Objectives**

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In this unit we wish to acquaint you with the Augustan Age. We will give you practice to understand and appreciate poetry through Pope's masterpiece satire 'The Rape of the Lock', by giving you:

- (a) theme, story and detailed summary of the mock-epic.
- (b) critical analysis and literary devices used in the poem.
- (c) selected portions of the text from all the five Cantos of the poem.
- (d) self assessment questions to evaluate your understanding.

We will also let you know about the social conditions of Augustan Age and political conditions

alongwith their socio-economic impact and the literary trends prevalent during the age. We will also discuss Pope's life, his poetic genius and his contribution to society and literature at large.

After reading and understanding 'The Rape of the Lock' as directed in the unit, you will surely be able to:

- (i) appreciate and evaluate a mock-epic.
- (ii) develop insight to understand satire and other hidden meanings in the text of the poem given to you.
- (iii) have ample knowledge about the age and Alexander Pope, the poet.

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## 6.1 Introduction

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The literature of the Elizabethan Age was inspired by passion and imagination. With authors of that age the "form" was less important than the unrestrained expression of thought and feeling. But with the passing of time, passion and emotion cooled down; spontaneity and abandon were replaced by reserve and introspection. Thus in the eighteenth century, chief attention came to be directed to correctness and neatness of expression and the critical rules of art. The Age of Dryden marked the beginning of a prolonged critical period, and all the tendencies developed in that age became more pronounced in the Augustan Age.

The literature of eighteenth century comprises two ages – the Augustan Age or the age of Pope and the age of Dr. Johnson. As the conflicts and enthusiasms of the mid seventeenth century receded into the past and English society and culture settled down into a period of relative stability until political revolution in France and industrial revolution at England helped to produce another era of more rapid change and more violent conflict of ideas, it became possible to distinguish the view of life and letters, which those who held it liked to consider 'Augustan'.

In respect of social changes, London became more and more the centre of the literary and social fashionable life of the country and writers came to look upon 'polite' London society as their chief, if not their sole, audience. Aristocracy in the old sense had been transmuted into generality, and wealth became main motivations force in society. The old idealisms, by which men had lived and over which they had lived and died, appears to have forever. During this period, coffee houses take the place of court as the meeting place of men of culture. The journalists make their appearance. Poetry became social and familiar.

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## 6.2 Age And Author

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In this section we will discuss the position, gravity and importance of Augustan Age, which is also called as classical age. The life and working genius of Alexander Pope, who was the main poet of this age, and on whose name this period is also known as the age of Pope, would be discussed in detail.

### 6.2.1 About the Age

The atmosphere of the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14) was congenial to the genius of such a poet as Pope. It encouraged poets to write for a civilized urban group whose education they could take for granted, whose attitudes they understood, and whose standards of wit and elegance coincided

with their own. The limitation of the audience and of subject matter, and the careful assignment of the proper kind of diction to each kind of poetry, did not necessarily mean that a body of poetry inferior to that of the previous century would be produced. Limitations and conventions of this kind are a challenge to art, and art thrives on these challenges. The delicate satire and wisdom developed by Pope in "The Rape of the Lock" shows that perfect poetic achievements were possible, were in fact encouraged by a social atmosphere of this kind.

Poetry in such a period worked within relatively narrow limits. It was a civilized activity, and civilization demanded a certain kind of perspective in looking at things, a certain polish and elegance and consciousness of good society, wit, restraint, good taste, and the subordination of personal idiosyncrasy to a social norm. The heroic couplet becomes the standard. At times there seems to be a feeling that it is virtually the only verse technique, partly because it is the best form for conveying that combination of wit and elegance, of ease and polish, which the age demanded, but also because it lent itself to the utterance was so well expressed and thus encouraged a nice balance between insight of individual and the rhetoric of social belief.

If we say that gentility was replacing aristocracy as an ideal of the governing classes in early eighteenth century in England we must be clear about what was actually involved, because it affects the whole texture of the culture of the age. Throughout the century the merchants and tradesmen of the town came to play a more and more important part in the life of the century.

The Augustan literature is a combination of the utmost brilliance of form and a sheer banality of matter. The principal traits of this literature are a noble language, an oratorical pomp and a classical correctness. Good sense was the leading principle of this age, and good sense meant a love of the reasonable and the useful, and a dislike of the extravagant, the mystical and the visionary.

It was to the reason and to the good sense of their listeners that the greatest preachers of this age appealed. The literature produced had wit, intelligence, fancy, elegance, correctness, drew more of its material from politics and social systems of its time, had more interest in towns, had a grasp of essential human qualities and was faithful to the character of age.

### **6.2.2 About the Author**

Alexander Pope was born at Lambard Street, London, on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1688. His parents were both Catholic. His father was a linen draper in Broad Street, London. His father was successful in business and moved to Binfield in Windsor forest. The poet's childhood was passed there. Pope was precocious and in his infancy, healthy. He was called the 'little nightingale' from the beauty of his voice.

In those days Roman Catholicism was a great handicap and the child was, therefore, denied the privilege of education at a first class school. He was sent to Roman Catholic school at Twyford, near Winchester, and afterwards to a school kept by one Thomas Deane at Hyde Park.

He was withdrawn from the school for some reason or the other, and placed under a priest. After that he was left to his own devices and plunged into miscellaneous reading of French, Italian, Latin and Greek literatures. He met John Dryden at the age of twelve and this determined his career as a poet. He had written thousands of lines before he was sixteen.

His religion made it impossible for him to enter any of the professions, while a business life was out of the question for one who was not only weak in health, but actually deformed. He resolved to

make literature his vocation. Encouraged by Sir William Trumbull, a neighbour and farmer secretary of state, Pope made a translation of ‘Statius’, when he was fourteen and later composed ‘Pastorals’ when he was seventeen. The publication of these made him famous. His ‘Essay on criticism, a didactic poem on the canons of literary taste and style made him well known and introduced him to Addison and his circle. It was published in 1711.

In 1712 he published “The Rape of the Lock”. It was warmly advised by Addison, who called it ‘merum sal’ and advised Pope not to risk spoiling it by introducing the new machinery of sylphs in further revised editions. But Pope instead greatly enlarged and altered the poem. In 1713 he published “Windsor forest” which appealed to the tonics by its references to the peace of Utrecht and won the friendship of Swift and Gay. He became a member of the Scriblerus Club, an association that included Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, Atterbasy and others.

In 1713 he took the task of translating Homer into rhyming pentameter (heroic couplets). The “Iliad” appeared in parts from 1715 to 1720 and the “Odyssey” in 1725. He received some eight thousand pounds for this work. He invested this securely and established himself comfortably with his mother in a villa on the banks of the Thames at Twickenham. In 1725 his edition of Shakespeare’s plays in six volumes was also published. It was followed by “Dunciad” in 1728 and “Essay on Man” in 1732. An edition of Pope’s letters was published in 1737.

Early in his life Pope became acquainted with Mr. Lister Blount’s family. He had two daughters, Teresa and Martha. Both these ladies received education in Paris which heightened the natural vivacity of their disposition and charm of their manners received an additional poignancy. Pope admired them both, later Martha became object of his love. Martha remained throughout his life.

At Twickenham he died in 1744. He was a polished literary artist, the type of the restraint considered classical. He represents a reaction against artificiality and a return to nature. Pope is the most correct of the English poets.

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## 6.3 Reading the Text

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The mock-epic poem ‘The Rape of the Lock’ has five Cantos. This 794 lines poem is one of the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful of all Pope’s compositions. We are giving here some of the important extracts from all these 5 Cantos. You are advised to read, study and paraphrase the full text of ‘The Rape of the Lock’ and understand it with the help of the summary and glossary given by us in this section.

### 6.3.1 Text

Given below are extracts of important portions from all the five Cantos of the poem.

#### Canto I

“Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care  
Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!  
If e’er one vision touched thy infant thought,  
Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught;

Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,  
The silver token, and the circled green,  
Or virgins visited by angel-powers,  
With golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers;  
Hear and believe! Thy own importance know,  
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below. (Lines 27-36)  
And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed,  
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.  
First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,  
With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.  
A heavenly image in the glass appears,  
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;  
The inferior priestess, at her altar's side,  
Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.  
Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and here  
The various offerings of the world appear;  
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,  
And decks the Goddess with the glittering spoil,  
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,  
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.  
The tortoise here and elephant unite,  
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white. (Lines 121-136)

### **Canto : II**

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,  
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind  
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck  
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.  
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,  
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains. (Lines 167-172)  
The adventurous baron the bright locks admired:  
He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.

Resolved to win he meditates the way,  
By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;  
For when success a lover's toil attends,  
Few ask, if fraud or force attained his ends. (Lines 177-182)

**Canto : III**

But when to mischief mortals bend their will.  
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!  
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace  
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:  
So ladies in romance assist their knight,  
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight. (Lines 415-420)  
The peer now spreads the glittering forfex wide,  
To inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.  
Even then, before the fatal engine closed,  
A wretched sylph too fondly interposed;  
Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain,  
(But airy substance soon unites again)  
The meeting points the sacred hair disserver  
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever! (Lines 437-444)

**Canto : IV**

Sunk in Thalestris arms the nymph he found,  
Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.  
Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,  
And all the Furies issued at the vent.  
Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,  
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire. (Lines 555-560)  
'For ever cursed be this detested day,  
Which snatched by best, my favourite curl away!  
Happy! Ah ten times happy had I been,  
If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen!  
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,

By love of courts to numerous ills betrayed. (Lines 613-618)

### **Canto : V**

Now meet thy fate, incensed Belinda cried,

And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.

(The same, his ancient personage to deck,

Her great great grandsire wore about his neck,

In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,

Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown:

Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,

The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew,

Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,

Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears). (Lines 729-738)

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,

Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!

Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,

Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.

For, after all the murders of your eye. (Lines 783-787)

### **6.3.2 Glossary**

#### **Canto : I**

I sing	: I write a poem
Caryll	: John Caryll (1666-1738), poet and friend of Pope
Muse	: The Goddess of poetry
Vouchsafe to view	: Candescend to witness or to read
belle	: Beautiful girl, Belinda, Miss Arabella fermor
sol	: The sun (a latin term)
downey pillow	: Pillow stuffed with feathers
equipage	: Escort, retinue, attendants
we	: The sylphs
transient breath	: Short span of life
vanities	: Follies, interest in foolish things

Ombre	: A game of cards played by three players
its but their sylph	: The guardian-sylph of a lady who guides her
wise celestials	: Wise spirits living in heavenly rigions
Florio, Damon	: Names of two imaginary lovers or wooers
sword-knot	: Tassel of silk thread tied to the sword-hilt.
thy ruling star	: The star that governs Belinda's destiny
thy guardian	: Ariel, the guardian-sylph of Belinda
ardours	: Burning passions of love
nicely culls	: Choosens skillfully or tastefully
glittering spoils	: Armour captured from the enemy
keener lightnings	: Belinda employs juice of belladonna to enlarge the pupils of her eyes and darken the surrounding skin.

### **Canto : II**

eternal plain	: The sky, the airy plain
purpled main	: Ocean looking red in morning sun's rays
rival of his beams	: Belinda whose beauty equaled the glory of sun.
nourished two locks	: Maintained two locks of hair
labyrinths	: Mazy or bewildering paths and passages.
slight line of hair	: A line of horse-hair to catch fish
painted vessel	: The brightly painted boat of Belinda
lucid squadrons	: Groups of bright spirits of the air.
transparent forms	: Transparent sylph invisible to human eye
purple pinions	: Crimson coloured wings of sylphs.
distil the kindly rain	: Cause the beneficial rain to fall.

### **Canto : III**

instructive hours	: Hours spent in instinctive talk
thirst of fame	: A strong desire to become famous as anombare player
swells her breast	: Her heart expands with pleasure
velvet plain	: A card table with a velvety surface
the board	: The card table

mills	:	Machines for reducing the roasted seeds to powder
the little engine	:	The pair of scissors
then flashed the living lightning	:	When the baron had cut off a lock of Belinda's hair. She felt enraged. Her eyes flashed lightning. She screamed.
Atlantis	:	The new atalantis, a book of dirty scandals published in 1709 by MTS. Manley.

#### **Canto: IV**

Umbriel	:	The coarse and crude spirit of earth.
sullied	:	Stained, marred, disgraced.
the gloomy care of spleen	:	The dark and melancholy abode of the goddess of ill temper and sullenness.
Megrim	:	Personification of severe headache
lampoons	:	Satires in which victims are abused and ridiculed.
Affectation	:	The second maid servant of spleen
with becoming woe	:	Artificial sorrow which suits her and makes her more elegant
Glaring friends	:	Devils with a fierce look in their eyes
Angels in machines	:	Angels descending from heaven to render help .

#### **Canto : V**

The Trojan	:	Aeneas, the Trojan prince
Anna and Dido	:	Dido was the queen of carthage and anna was her sister.
Clarissa	:	Clarissa is the lady who gave scissors to Baron and gone speech in Canto V.
Thalestris called her prude	:	Thalestris, the quarrelsome woman disapproved clarissa's speech
Pallas	:	The goddess of wisdom
Latona	:	The mistress of Jupiter and mother of Apollo and Diana
Hermes	:	Mercury, the messenger of gods
Jove	:	Jupiter the supreme god.

sconce	:	Acandel hung against or attached to a wall
witling	:	A man of poor or inferior wit
titillating	:	Causing a tickling sensation, irritating
Cupid's flame	:	the fire of love (Cupid: god of love)
tomes	:	Bulky books
bespangling	:	Decorating with stars
disheveled light	:	Light looking like the spread out hair of a woman
the Muse shall consecrate to fame	:	The Muse of poetry will bring fame to her lock of hair and will immortalize it.

### 6.3.3 Summary

The opening lines of the poem state its theme which is that affairs of love may lead to serious resentments, and that insignificant events may cause great conflicts. There is invocation to the Muse of poetry. The poet tells the Muse that John Caryll suggested this poem and that Belinda inspired it.

Alexander Pope wrote his masterpiece *The Rape of the Lock* with a certain definite object. In the summer of 1711, a quarrel arose between the two Catholic families of Petre and Fermor. Robert, seventh Lord Petre, a young man of twenty-two, had offended Miss Arabella Fermor by cutting off a lock of her hair. Caryll, a friend of both parties, suggested to the young poet that he should write “a poem to make a jest of it and laugh them together again”. It was with this view, as Pope told Spence, “that I wrote *The Rape of the Lock* which was well received and had its effect in the two families”.

Belinda is a lady moving in the fashionable circles of the time. One morning, she is sleeping late as usual. In a dream that she has, she sees a handsome youth, who is really her guardian sylph, whispering in her ears some sage advice. Ariel, the guardian sylph, explains to Belinda that there are four kinds of spirits. Young women are subjected to many temptations in this world, and the sylphs play an important role in guarding the purity of such women. By their machinations, the sylphs contrive counter-attractions, and though women may be accused of levity, they are protected by the sylphs. The world, not understanding this, calls this a sense of honour among womankind.

Ariel also warns his charge Belinda of some impending disaster to her that day. He is not in a position to know how exactly this will come about. He wants Belinda to be careful that day, particularly to beware of man. It is twelve o' clock by now, and Shock, the lap-dog of Belinda, wakes his mistress up. As soon as Belinda gets up, she forgets all about her dream and Ariel's warning. She starts her toilet and makes use of various articles to make herself fairer. The sylphs are assisting Betty, her maid, to make Belinda very attractive.

Toilet over, Belinda sets out on her voyage on the River Thames. She looks very attractive and many lovers crowd around her. She smiles on all these, and though sometimes she rejects the advances of some of them, she does not offend any. Ariel, her guardian sylph, is particularly vigilant on that day. He collects around him his followers and gives each one of them a task in guarding Belinda from any danger. The fan of Belinda is consigned to the charge of Zephyretta, the ear-drops to Brillante, the

watch to Momentilla, the favourite lock of Belinda is under the special charge of Crispissa, and Ariel himself takes charge of Shock, the lap-dog. Fifty chosen sylphs are placed in charge of Belinda's petticoat.

The Baron has always coveted the locks of Belinda. Long before the sun rose on that day, he had built an altar to Love, and conducted a ceremonial offering to Love to favour him in getting the lock. Belinda after her voyage on the Thames arrives at Hampton Court, the palace of Queen Anne. The fashionable ladies spend the time gossiping about current affairs. As afternoon draws on, Belinda is anxious to have a game of Ombre. She plays against two gentlemen, one of whom is the Baron. In the beginning, Belinda wins, but after that, success goes to the Baron. But by winning the last trick, Belinda becomes victorious and feels elated.

After the game, the party sit down for a coffee-party. The coffee suggests new stratagems to the Baron. Clarissa presents the Baron with a pair of scissors. The Baron cleverly gets behind Belinda and is about to cut the lock. Just then, the sylphs try their best to make Belinda turn back. Ariel, who was looking into the thoughts coursing in Belinda's mind, is surprised to find an earthly lover lurking in her heart, and retires confused. Meanwhile the Baron has spared the scissors over the lock and severs the lock from the head. A sylph who tried to stop this, is cut into two, though airy substance has the power of re-uniting.

The Baron is greatly elated at his success. He gloats over it, and the 'conquering force of unresisted steel'. Belinda, on the other hand, is feeling much depressed. Returning to where Belinda lies in the arms of Thalestris, Umbriel opens the bag on her. The effect of this is to make both the ladies furious. Thalestris persuades her beau Sir Plume to ask the Baron to return the lock, but the Baron refuses and spreads in triumph the prize that he has won.

Belinda bewails her lot in fashionable, sophisticated society and wishes that she had lived as a country girl. She accuses the Baron of sacrilege in cutting off her lock. When Thalestris and Belinda are furious, Clarissa appeals for good humour, which can make all our troubles seem as nought. But the offended Belinda and Thalestris are in no mood for such counsel. Nothing but a fight would suit their purpose, and all the ladies and gentlemen present there take sides and fight it out. The spirits of the air, too, take part in the fight. Many casualties are sustained on both sides. Meanwhile Jove weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair and the 'wits mount up and the hairs subside.'

In the fight, many personal encounters take place; but the chief of them is that between Belinda and the Baron. Belinda throws some snuff into the nostrils of the Baron and makes him prostrate. The Baron admits defeat and prays that he be allowed to burn in Cupid's flames. Belinda wants him to restore the lock to her, but the lock is nowhere to be found. Heaven has decreed that no mortal must be blest with such a prize. Some think that the lock ascended to the sphere of the Moon, but the Muse is of opinion that the lock was converted into a star. This star can be seen from the earth. Belinda, hence, has no cause to feel sorry, for even after she is dead, her lock will live in the form of a star.

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## 6.4 Analysis

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In this section we will let you practice to analyse and appreciate poetic devices in a poem and understand the hidden meanings in the poem prescribed for study.

### 6.4.1 Critical Analysis

The Rape of the Lock was written with the object of bringing about a reconciliation between two families which had fallen out with each other over a trivial incident. One Lord Petre had offended a Miss Arabella Fermor by clipping a lock of her hair, and bitter feeling resulted between the two families. Pope's friend, John Caryll, thought that the unpleasantness might be ended if the young poet would turn the whole affair into friendly ridicule. Pope accordingly set to work at a dainty little mock-heroic, in which he playfully and mockingly describes the fatal coffee-drinking at Hampton, in which the too daring peer cut off Miss Fermor's lock and took possession of it.

The poem received the praise which it will deserved, for certainly the young poet had executed his task with the greatest skill. "No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious a trifle is to be found in English literature than The Rape of the Lock, even in its early form. Pope received Fermor's permission to publish the poem in a London Miscellany in 1712, and a wider circle of persons were able to read and admire it, though it seems that the lady and her family began to think that the poet was taking too much liberty with her name.

The Rape of the Lock is a masterpiece of its kind, and comes nearer to being a "creation" than anything else that Pope wrote. The poem is modeled after two foreign satires: Boileau's *Le Lutrin* (reading desk), a satire on the French clergy who raised a huge quarrel over the location of a lectern; and *La Secchia Raptia* (stolen bucket), a famous Italian satire on the petty causes of the endless Italian wars.

The poem has justly been regarded as the finest example of witty mock-epic ever written. There is in it a deft combination of the serious and the non-serious. According to some, its greatest achievement is the invention of the sylphs who lend to the poem tones of lightness and delicacy unique in English poetry. Its burlesque mockery of supposedly vicious aspects of high society is never altogether serious.

As an expression of the artificial life of the age – of its card-playing parties, toilets, lap-dogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking and idle-vanities – The Rape of the Lock is as perfect in its way as *Tamburlaine*, which reflects the boundless ambition of the Elizabethans. The poem is not only a satire on society; it is also a witty parody of the heroic style in poetry.

The satire in the poem is general and, on the whole, good humoured. Every part of the poem is excellently done, but notably fine are the descriptions of Belinda's toilet of the game of cards, of the cutting of the lock as Belinda bends over the coffee-pot, and of the gnome's visit to the Cave of Spleen. The poem is a dainty little gem and Pope's most perfect piece.

### 6.4.2 Mock-Epic

The mock-epic is a poetic form which uses the epic structure but on a miniature scale and with a subject that is mean or trivial. Its purpose is satirical: to make the subject look ridiculous by placing it in a framework entirely inappropriate to its importance. Both *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) and *MacFlecknoe* (1682) have epic features, though written on a much smaller scale than real epic. But the best-known and most brilliant example of the form came in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). The central incident in the poem is the theft of a lock of hair and the ensuing quarrel between two families. All the main features of epic surround this incident. The style is elevated, there is the celestial

machinery in the form of the sylphs a voyage (though only in Belinda's barge on the Thames), a visit to the underworld, and battles (though one is only at cards). By placing this incident in such a framework, Pope hoped to show the rape as trivial and so to reconcile the two families. He failed in this purpose, but he has given lasting pleasure to his readers ever since.

### **6.4.3 The Machinery**

The myth of the sylphs is of the utmost utility to Pope: it allows him to show his lawfulness of the absurdities of a point of view which, nevertheless, is charming, delightful, and filled with a real poetry. Most important of all, the myth allows him to suggest that the charm, in part at least, springs from the very absurdity. The two elements can hardly be separated in *Belinda*: in her guardian, Ariel, they cannot be separated at all.

Probably the largest single way in which Pope imparted qualities of splendour and wonder to his actors and actions was through his brilliant adaptation of epic machinery. His success in producing the 'marvellous' needs little comment. Like Homer's gods, Pope's sylphs move easily in and out of the lower world, they surprise without offending our sense of the probable, and they give ordinary human impulses a sensuous form. What they really stand for – feminine honour, flirtation, courtship, the necessary rivalry of man and woman and a human impulse seen in its essence is always beautiful.

### **6.4.4 Satire**

The Rape of the Lock is a masterpiece of satirical poetry. The satirist uses such weapons as humour, wit, irony, mockery, ridicule, innuendo. A satire is an exposure of human weaknesses, shortcomings, follies, and absurdities. The Rape of the Lock is a satire on the aristocratic ladies of the eighteenth century. It exposes to ridicule their laziness, idleness, frivolities, vanities, follies, shams, shallowness, superficiality, prudery, hypocrisy, false ideas of honour, excessive interest in toilet and self-embellishment, high matrimonial aspirations, etc. It also exposes to ridicule the foppery, the amorous proclivities, the bravado, the snuff-taking, of the aristocratic gentlemen of the time. Apart from that, the poet mocks at certain other aspects of the life of the eighteenth century.

The satire in *The Rape of the Lock* on aristocratic manners makes a comment on polite society at large, and on fashionable women in particular. It exposes all values, especially trifling and artificial ones, by showing how small any world observing those values would have to be. Pope composed his poem with a long tradition of satires on women in mind. Belinda at her dressing-table is the heiress of a whole race of previous lady charmers. To an even greater degree than her predecessors, Belinda moves in a filigree world, a fairyland adorned with jewels, China, lap-dogs, and snuff-boxes. Her moves are seen to correspond to the glorious and bright light of Sol, the pervasive supernatural divinity of the poem. Indeed, Belinda herself is a sort of goddess and as such is truly divine: 'Belinda smiled and all the world was gay'.

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## **6.5 Self Assessment Questions:**

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### **Exercise – 1**

Choose the correct answer from the three alternatives given below each question:

1. The Elizabethan age was inspired by :

- (a) passion and imagination
  - (b) passion and satire
  - (c) thought and feeling
2. During Queen Anne the poets were encouraged to write:
- (a) about urban group
  - (b) about national prosperity
  - (c) about country life
3. Poetry in Queen Anne's time worked with:
- (a) broader limits
  - (b) social circles
  - (c) narrow limits
4. Augustan literature is a combination of:
- (a) form and matter
  - (b) mystical and visionary
  - (c) reason and extravagant
5. Pope tops the list of English poets in:
- (a) correctness
  - (b) mock-epic
  - (c) satire

### **Exercise – 2**

Choose the correct answer from the three alternatives:

1. Belinda was sleeping :
- (a) late as usual
  - (b) in her bedroom
  - (c) after mid night
2. Though women may be accused of levity, they are:
- (a) bold in character
  - (b) protected by the sylphs
  - (c) assisted by their lovers
3. Ariel whispered in Belinda's ear about :
- (a) the bad dream

- (b) taking precaution against lovers
  - (c) four kinds of spirits
4. The ultimate winner in the game of Ombre was :
- (a) The baron
  - (b) Belinda
  - (c) Ariel
5. The raped lock was converted into:
- (a) a Muse
  - (b) a sylph
  - (c) a star

### **Exercise – 3**

Answer the following questions in your own words:

1. How was the rape performed?
2. What was the result of the fight?
3. Why did the Baron cut the lock?
4. How did Baron feel?
5. What did happen to the lock?

### **Exercise – 4**

Choose the correct answer from the three alternatives given at the end of each question:

1. Belinda was a typical fashionable belle and moved :
  - (a) in a filigree world
  - (b) in modern world
  - (c) in a romantic world
2. Satire uses the following as tools :
  - (a) amorous advances of the Baron
  - (b) actions and presence of sylphs
  - (c) humour, wit and irony
3. For Pope the ultimate utility was in :
  - (a) myth of the sylphs
  - (b) mock-epic style
  - (c) upper class living style

4. The celestial machinery is in the form of:
  - (a) marital symphony
  - (b) use of wit and humour
  - (c) sylph
5. The rope of the lock is as perfect in its way, as :
  - (a) Mock-epic poem
  - (b) social satire on fashionable ladies
  - (c) Tamburlaine

#### **Exercise – 5**

Answer the following questions in your own words:

1. Which aspects of eighteenth century are satirized by Pope?
2. Why is it called a mock-epic poem?
3. Was Pope successful with his machinery?
4. Why did Pope write this poem?
5. Comment on the use of satire in this poem.

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## **6.6 Answers to SAQs**

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#### **Exercise – 1**

1. (a) Passion and imagination
2. (a) About urban group
3. (c) Narrow limits
4. (a) Form and matter
5. (a) Correctness

#### **Exercise – 2**

1. (a) late as usual
2. (b) protected by the sylphs
3. (c) four kinds of spirits
4. (b) Belinda
5. (c) a star

#### **Exercise – 3**

1. While Belinda was enjoying the coffee party, the Baron came close to her, he was at that point given a pair of scissors by Clarissa. When Belinda moved her face on the other side, the Baron

did cut off a lock of hair.

2. The fight is described in mock-epic style. At first the Baron wins but in the last it is Belinda who wins and makes the Baron surrender before her.
3. The Baron declares that the winning of this prize will bring him immortality.
4. The Baron felt very happy and victorious. He through this act, fulfilled his long cherished desire.
5. The lock would become a star and be immortal.

#### **Exercise – 4**

- 1.(a) in a filigree world
- 2.(c) humour, wit and irony
- 3.(a) myth of the sylphs
- 4.(c) sylph
- 5.(c) Tamburlaine

#### **Exercise – 5**

1. Pope satirises the fashionable social structure of eighteenth century England in general and aristocratic behaviour of ladies in particular.
2. The poem uses the epic structure and machinery but on a miniature scale and with a subject which is mean or trivial. These make it a mock-epic.
3. Pope very successfully uses the supernatural tiny and invisible spirits as his machinery.
4. Pope was suggested by his friend John Caryll to write a satirical poem on Lord Petre – Miss Fermore episode to end unpleasantness amongst the two families through friendly ridicule.
5. This poem is a first rate social satire. It in a very subtle way satirises eighteenth century urban social life. In particular he satirises the laziness, idleness, frivolities, vanities, follies, shams, false ideas of honour, superficiality and hypocrisy of ladies of his time.

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### **6.7 Let Us Sum Up**

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In this unit you have acquired practice in:

- (i) Understanding trends and movements of literature in the Augustan Age.
- (ii) Analyzing and appreciating a poetic text.
- (iii) Understanding classical literary devices used by Pope.

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### **6.8 Review Questions**

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1. Discuss ‘The Rape of the Lock’ as a mock epic poem.
2. Discuss ‘The Rape of the Lock’ as a social satire.

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## 6.8 Bibliography

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## UNIT – 7

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### HENRY FIELDING : TOM JONES

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#### Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Age And Author
  - 7.2.1 About the Age
  - 7.2.2 About the Author
- 7.3 Reading The Text
  - 7.3.1 Text (Selected Extracts)
  - 7.3.2 Summary (Full Text)
- 7.4 Analysis
  - 7.4.1 Critical Analysis
  - 7.4.2 Plot Construction
  - 7.4.3 Comic Epic in Prose
  - 7.4.4 Irony, Humour and Satire
  - 7.4.5 Morality
- 7.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 7.6 Answers to SAQs
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Review Questions
- 7.9 Bibliography

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#### 7.0 Objectives

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In this unit we plan to initiate you to read and understand the development of English the novel. You will be given to read especially about eighteenth century scenario of novel. Henry Fielding is considered the father of Modern English novel. His most famous novel Tom Jones is prescribed for your study here. You are advised to develop a capability to :

- (i) read about the age of eighteen century scenario of novel.
- (ii) understand Henry Fielding's novel **Tom Jones**.
- (iii) learn about main characteristics of Fielding's novel.
- (iv) critically analyse and appreciate **Tom Jones**.

(v) learn and understand various concepts and qualities of Fielding as a novelist.

(vi) answer the questions in your own words.

You have been given detailed summary and critical analysis of the novel. We will also discuss, irony, humour, satire and plot construction of the novel. We have given you self assessment questions to evaluate your understanding of the contents which you read in this unit. After reading and understanding various sections of this unit, you will be able to:

(i) understand the development of English novel.

(ii) understand Fielding's **Tom Jones** in a better way

(iii) appreciate and evaluate the given text.

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## 7.1 Introduction

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The novel as distinct from fiction, is a very new genre of literature as compared to poetry, essay, drama and histories. It came into its own with the turn of seventeenth century and blossomed in eighteenth century for the first time with the distinction of individuality in the works of Richardson and Henry Fielding. In just two centuries novel became the most popular and prolific of all English literary forms. It was in large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to the middle class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behaviour from agreed public attitudes.

Many currents came together to produce the English novel. Medieval romances and collection of ballads, especially those concerned with the legends of King Arthur, were the germinal sources of the modern novel. They were fiction of a picturesque and lively kind, though rambling in story. They were peopled by stock characters such as the wicked wizard and the damsel in distress. But they catered to the human longing for fiction and imaginative stimulation.

Elizabethan prose romances, picaresque stories, and accounts of the urban underworld represented one; the character-writers of the seventeenth century developed a technique of psychological portraiture which was available to Addison and Steele in their creation of Sir Roger Coverley, Sir Andrew Freeport, Will Honeycomb and the rest of the portrait gallery in 'The Spectator' and which led to the anecdote illustrative of character; the straight forward narrative style used by Bunyan in 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and somewhat similar factual style of Defoe's journalistic writings also helped to make the fully realised novel possible.

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## 7.2 Age And Author

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### 7.2.1 About the Age

To such an extent had reached the taste for reading in the 18<sup>th</sup> century England that novel-writing, besides, drama assumed great importance and became a regular business of writers who had experience of writing and knew the public taste so that they found novel-writing to be remunerative beyond contemporary expectations. This resulted in multiplication of authors in line with readers that over-flooded the book-stalls.

By this time (But before the end of the century) a clear distinction had emerged between Novel

and romance and rogue stories. Here the Novel as such owes very much to that over flowing stream of authors who plodden on in the path without deviation and sudden brilliant advance. In fact the credit must go to them for making readers so adept to this new form of amusement where they could find the descriptions from their own lives. This depiction of reality seemed unwanted botheration for the playwright of the age. Hence there was an unimaginably brisk demand for Lily's 'Euphues' and Lodge's 'Rosalynde', though these works, compared to later developed novel, give a very poor impression and have not much of what we expect from the novel of today. But, for them they appeared carriages to new horizons.

Side by side, there were developments prejudicial to the interests of such romances and there began to take form an atmosphere of anti-romances in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Readers, both in France and England could not, in fact, escape the hallucinating effects of romance and whatever idealism it seemed to contain. Even a great romance like 'Don Quixote' did not extinguish the latter-chivalery which had sprung up in such an abundance, either in or outside Spain although Cervantes was hailed as a saint to a whole series of crusades resulting in extension of the realm of common-sense, restraint in extravagance, and in rendering art a more faithful servant of life.

To the dreams of beauty and innocence are opposed ugliness and rebaldry found at its worst in life. Unaffected and unconcerned with anything else, the English reader found ample amusement but did not bother to learn any lesson from it. In fact, the contemporary reader in England was in no mood to see fiction more sane and less romantic because of their changed attitude towards existence. As a result, the Intelligentsia of the time came forward to activise itself, but to this chaotic romantic fire, the year of the Restoration brought the incorporation of the Royal Society. The whole lot of Philosophers, Thinkers, Dignitaries and Divine and Holy personage found a place, in the Royal Society, fit for them where they could think, discuss, review and resolve the entire problem of society's deteriorating conditions, undergoing rapid changes, unrestrained after a 'sinister blockade of the flow and thus assume leadership in this enlightenment.' With the beginning of the eighteenth century, the realistic novel came into being in England with some really great names in the field like Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and, Sterne.

Henry Fielding is justly called the Father of the English Novel. The English Novel existed before him in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. But in the hands of the novelists of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, fiction is hardly a realistic portrayal of life. Even Defoe, in Robinson Crusoe, does not give a realistic portrayal of life, but only an illusion of reality. Nobody can believe that a single man without the help of anybody else, could develop such a perfect way of life on a lonely island as Crusoe did. Richardson, the great contemporary of Fielding, too is interested more in probing the faminine heart than in giving a realistic picture of life. It is Fielding who gives us a realistic picture of life on a vast scale. 'Prose-epic' is the picture of the age to which he belonged. Different sections of society, from the lowest to the highest, are presented in it. Never before was life painted on such a vast scale by any English Novelist. The novelists of the eighteenth century commonly follow the pattern of the 'Picaresque' novel. Fielding also follows this picaresque tradition and so does Smollett.

### **7.2.2.About the Author**

Henry Fielding was born at Sharpham Park near Glastonbury in 1707. He was the eldest son of Sarah and Edmund. His father, Edmund Fielding had served in the wars under Marlborough. Sarah, his wife was the daughter of Sir Henry Gould, a Judge of the King's bench. She died when the son,

Henry Fielding was barely eleven years old. On her death Edmund Fielding married another woman. The father of Fielding was given to certain vices. He was educated at Eton for his higher education. His first tutor was Oliver, a parson whom he had drawn as Parson Trulliber in JOSEPH ANDREWS, a novel parodying Pamela of Richardson. At Eton Henry Fielding found the atmosphere much more bracing than at the place of his step mother. At her place he had attained a sound proficiency of Latin through not so much of Greek. At his alma mater O Eton he picked up friendship with George Lyttleton whom he draws as Mr. Allworthy in TOM JONES. For sometime the novelist lived with his grandmother called Lady Gould. It was at her place that he acquired a taste for literature and law. At first he tried his hand at a play entitled LOVE IN SEVERAL MASQUES, and finding the profession of a dramatist not so paying he joined the University of Leyden for studying law, but he had to leave it soon because his father withdrew allowance set on him. Then he was compelled to write certain plays, comedies which, however were gnat-bitten by the critics. He wrote plays for about a decade or so. After this he entered upon the career of a journalist.

He associated with a journal called Champion. The political journalism made him sore, but then it brought him a reward in the form of an assignment of Justice of the Peace for Westminster. In 1752 he embarked upon another journal called THE COVENT GARDEN JOURNAL and he wrote under a pen-name. Perhaps the last activity of this kind appears in the form of JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE TO LISBON which got published after his death. In November 1745 Fielding launched another journal called THE TRUE PATRIOT which jerked the nation to cast off the torpor and do something to make a purge of the corruption rampant in his age.

Henry Fielding married Charlotte Craddock in 1734. She was a charming woman. It was also a case of elopement. The character of Sohia has been drawn on this model. She died in 1744. Fielding went into a paroxysm of frenzied mourning at the said demise. Ultimately Mary Daniel, his cook-maid, made up for the loss of his wife. She married him after four years of the death of Charlotte Craddock, the wife of Fielding. This wedlock created furore in the family so much so that Fielding's sister left house in considerable rage. Being kind and gentle Mary Daniel proved to be a good housewife.

The gout had gripped him. 1753 saw a considerable deterioration in his health. It became exceedingly difficult for him to discharge the magisterial duties. The doctors recommended him some 'milder climate' and for that reason he left the country for Liston in Portugal. He expired there. Fielding breathed his last in October 1754.

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### 7.3 Reading The Text

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The full title of the text is 'The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling', and the choice of a common English name together with the description of the hero as "a foundling" indicate with belligerent clarity that Fielding will deal with English society as it is. It was written between 1746 and 1749. It is a novel written in 18 books after the pattern of an epic. There is a preface chapter appended to each book giving Fielding's views on different aspects of art. These 18 books can be broadly divided into three parts.

You are advised to go through the whole text very carefully. While reading the full novel you will understand the story of the novel, Fielding's views, structure, nature of characterization and realistic portrayal of children.

### 7.3.1 Text (Selected Extracts)

One of the handsomest young fellows in the world. His face ..... had the most apparent marks of sweetness and good-nature. These qualities were indeed so characteristic in his countenance, that, while the spirit and sensibility in his eyes, though they must have been perceived by an accurate observer, might have escaped the notice of the less discerning, so strong was this good-nature painted in his look, that it was remarked by almost every one who saw him. (Book IX, Chapter 5)

‘Upon my word, Mrs. Miller’, said Allworthy, ‘I do not take this behaviour of yours to my nephew kindly; and I do assure you, as any reflections which you cast upon him must come only from that wickedest of men, they would only serve, if that were possible, to heighten my resentment against him.’ (Book XVII, Chapter 2)

Mr. Allworthy was not one of those men whose hearts flutter at any unexpected and sudden tiding of worldly profit .. He received therefore, Mr. Western’s proposal without any visible emotion, or without any alteration of countenance. (Book VI, Chapter 3)

For this last, any many other good reasons, Western at length heartily hated his wife; and as he never concealed this hatred before her death, so he never forgot it afterwards, but when anything in the least soured him, bad scenting day, or a distemper among his hounds, or any other such misfortune, he constantly vented his spleen by invectives against the deceased, saying, “if my wife was alive now, she would be glad of this.” (Book VII Chapter 4)

..... bedecked with beauty, youth, sprightliness, innocence, modesty, and tenderness, breathing sweetness from her rosy lips, and darting brightness from her sparkling eyes, the lovely Sophia comes ! (Book IV, Chap. 2)

There is indeed, in perfect beauty a power which none can understand : for my landlady, though she was not pleased at the negative given to the supper, declared she had never seen so lovely a creature. (Book VII, Chapter 5)

### 7.3.2 Summary (Full Text)

*Mr. Thomas Allworthy the rich and benevolent owner of one of the largest estates in Somersetshire, and his oddly assorted household. In the Squire’s bed was discovered, one May evening, a mysterious infant, whom the good man determined to rear as his own, and who was afterwards named Tom Jones. With Allworthy lived his sister Bridget – a hypocritical prude of between thirty and forty, singularly destitute of personal charms. Her wealth, however, attracted a fortune-hunting captain of dragoons on half-pay named John Blifil, who married her, and quarrelled with her incessantly for two years, but at last made amends by dying suddenly of an apoplexy. Meanwhile eight months after the marriage, Bridget gave birth to young Blifil, destined to be the villain of the story. The two boys, Tom and Blifil, grew up together under Allworthy’s protection.*

In the village, a mile distant from the Allworthy mansion, dwelt the *Seagrim Family*, consisting of ‘Black’ George the gamekeeper his wife, and his five children. His second child was a strikingly handsome, but ‘bold and forward’ girl named Moly ; and with her Tom, when he was about nineteen, commenced an intrigue. Upwards of three miles from Mr. Allworthy’s house was the abode of a well-to-do, sporting squire, named Western, whose manor was contiguous to the Allworthy estate. This

gentleman, who was a widower, had an only child, Sophia, whom he loved very nearly as much as he loved his dogs and horses.

In the village of Little Baddington (i.e. perhaps, Little Badminton), fifteen miles from Allworthy's house, lived *Benjamin Partridge*, the oddly humorous *schoolmaster; clerk, and barber; with his jealous and shrewish wife, Anne*. They had as servant – a plain but extremely intelligent girl Jenny Jones; but Mrs. Partridge had dismissed her in a fit of jealousy, and she had returned to her home in Allworthy's parish. Soon afterwards, she was summoned to the Hall to nurse Miss Bridget through an illness. When the unknown infant was found in Allworthy's bed, Jenny was accused of having placed it there, and she confessed to the fact. Partridge, the girl's former master, was then suspected of being the father.

The narrative is then suspended for a period of twelve years. When the story is resumed, illustrations are afforded of the characters of the two boys – of the reckless good-nature of Tom and the malicious hypocrisy of Blifil – and the manner of their education by Thwackum and Square is described. In due course, as the lads grow to manhood, we hear of Tom's intrigue with Molly Seagrim, and of the gradual development of love between him and Sophia. Finally, there is a report of a series of incidents which resulted in the following situation – Tom, in love with Sophia, has been cast out of his home by the wickedly deceived Allworthy, with a parting gift of £500 in bank bills ; Sophia, in love with Tom, has been informed of her father's unalterable resolve to force her into marriage with Blifil, whom she detests; Blifil, in love only with himself, is well satisfied with the success of his artful manoeuvres to effect Tom's expulsion, and with the prospect of obtaining speedy possession of the beautiful young heiress.

The Second Part relates the separate adventures of Tom and Sophia, from their departure from their respective homes in the country to their arrival in London. The action takes place over a period of ten days. The central point in the narrative is the eventful night at Upton-on-Seven. Before this point, Sophia pursues Tom ; after it, Tom pursues Sophia. In this section many new characters are introduced.

Jones set out on his travels, but before he walked above a mile, he threw himself down by the side of a brook, wrote a letter to Sophia and another to Allworthy, asking Sophia to forget him and promising Allworthy that he had bound himself to quit all thoughts of his love. When he put his hands in his pockets for wax to seal the letter to Sophia, he discovered that he had lost the packet he had received from Allworthy.

Tom did not know where to go, but he at last decided upon going to sea and for that purpose started for Bristol. In the meanwhile the obstinacy of her guardians in compelling her to marry against her will, suggested to Sophia the idea of escaping from her house at night and going to London in the company of Mrs. Honour to Lady Bellaston whom she had known through Mrs. Western and she carried out the idea so far as to leave her father's house immediately.

Mr. Jones and Partridge now travelled on to Gloucester and here Mr. Dowling, the Salisbury attorney who had taken the news of Mrs. Blifil's death to Allworthy, had the chance of first meeting him. Proceedings, then, they came across the Man of the Hill whom Jones saved from some robbers and from whom they heard the interesting account of his life, which, however, has no connection with the story. While on the top of the hill, they heard some violent shrieks which brought Jones to the bushes from which the shrieks proceeded, leading to the rescue of one Mrs. Waters from the clutches of Ensign Northerton. Ensign Northerton managed to escape and Jones took, on the advice of the man of the

Hill, Mrs. Waters to an inn in Upton.

In the meanwhile, Sophia and Mrs. Honour had also come there. Mrs. Honour learned from Partridge, who was by no means reserved about any of Tom's affairs, that Tom Jones was there, and on intimate terms with Mrs. Waters. She left the inn without delay, yet not without arranging to have the muff, which Tom had kissed, placed in Tom's bed. Noticing the muff and hearing from Partridge the broken bits of information which he gave to Jones, Jones ordered Partridge to run down and hire him horses. Jones could not bring himself even to take leave of Mrs. Waters : he set forward that very moment in quest of Sophia, and Mrs. Waters found in Mr. Fitzpatrick a good companion to Bath.

Mrs. Fitzpatrick changed her original plans of going to Bath and she went the same way as Sophia. On the way they met and recognised each other. Sophia and Mrs. Fitzpatrick now proceeded to London. Or arriving in London, Sophia went to Lady Bellaston's and Mrs. Fitzpatrick lived in a house frequently visited by the Irish Peer.

Jones happened to follow Sophia by the same path as that by which she had gone to the inn where the Irish Peer had met Mrs. Fitzpatrick. Hence, he succeeded in recovering a pocket-book of Sophia's which contained a bank-bill of £100, and which Sophia had lost on the way.

The Third Part relates the adventures of Tom and Sophia in London. The scene, for the most part, is laid in that 'very good part of the town, which included Bond Street, Hanover Square, Piccadilly, the Haymarket, and Pall Mall. Several new characters are introduced. The period covered is rather less than a month – from 4th December, the day after the arrival of Tom and Sophia in town, to 29<sup>th</sup> December, the day of their marriage. Arriving in London, after some difficulties, he could meet Mrs. Fitzpatrick who would give him no information of Sophia but who, on the contrary, tried to put Lady Bellaston on her guard and thus prevent him from meeting her. Lady Bellaston thought it necessary to see him so that she could recognise him and thus make arrangements to prevent his entrance into her house. This could be easily arranged because Jones paid, as he had promised to do, a second visit to Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

One night she contrived to send Sophia and Mrs. Honour to the theatre and asked Jones to meet her during the period they were expected to be at the theatre. Accident turned everything topsy-turvy. Sophia did not like the play and therefore returned after the first act. Lady Bellaston was detained longer at dinner than she expected and hence Tom Jones could meet Sophia all alone. After some explanations and Tom's returning the pocket-book with the bank bills to Sophia, when they had begun to be tender, Lady Bellaston entered. Sophia indicated that she did not know Jones who had only come to return the pocket-book.

Throughout this course Jones had been staying with one Mrs. Miller who had two daughters, Nancy and Betty by name. Mrs. Miller had one other lodger, viz., Mr. Nightingale. He had contracted undue intimacy with Miss Nancy and had promised marriage to her. Lady Bellaston's coming to Tom at Mrs. Miller's one night and staying about four hours, scandalised Mrs. Miller and yet she felt great obligation to Jones.

Mrs. Miller had come to know through Partridge about the relationship between Tom and Allworthy, and Mrs. Miller owed her all to Allworthy. She, therefore, put her ideas before Tom as mildly as possible, but there was no mistake about her desire; if Tom did not stop having disreputable company at her house, he must seek other lodgings. Nightingale had sincere love for the girl, but was

afraid of his father. Tom undertook to bring round the father. He did not succeed, but the lie that Nightingale and Nancy were already married, brought Nightingale's uncle in favour of the marriage and he came to Mrs. Miller's where Nightingale had preceded him.

In the meanwhile, Lady Bellaston had laid a very black design against Sophia. She contrived to get the willing consent of one Lord Fellamar to attempt to win Sophia by force and Sophia was saved only by the appearance of Squire Western in the nick of the time.

Here, however, Partridge came to his help. He had met Black George, and through Black George, in an ingenious manner, some correspondence was carried on between Tom and Sophia. Elsewhere a scheme for the ruin of Jones had been set on foot. At the instance of Lady Bellaston, Lord Fellamar had engaged a gang to kidnap Jones to some far-off country. Lord Fellamar's gang, which had dogged Jones into the house of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, now rushed in and seized Jones and wisely concluded that its business now was to deliver him into the hands of a civil magistrate. While Mrs. Western and Lady Bellaston were contriving in several ways, to procure the consent of Sophia to the match with Lord Fellamar, Mrs. Miller was softening the heart of Allworthy towards Jones. She and Nightingale tried to relieve Jones from his present distress.

When Partridge saw Mrs. Waters going out from Tom's chambers, he recognised her to be Jenny Jones who had admitted to being the mother of Tom. Naturally, Tom's shock was a great as Partridge's. Mrs. Waters, however, cleared the matter and disclosed for the first time that Miss Bridget Allworthy was the mother of Tom, and one Mr. Summer, who had been a very good man and who had been kept at the University by Allworthy, was his father. Mrs. Blifil had indeed communicated the whole in a letter to Allworthy, which, however, Mr. Blifil never allowed him the chance to read. All the hypocrisy of Blifil having been discovered and the innate goodness of Tom's heart having appeared, Allworthy was reconciled to Jones.

No sooner did Squire Western learn that Tom was the nephew of Allworthy and that Allworthy was completely reconciled to him, he was a strongly in favour of Sophia's marrying Tom as he was before in favour of her marriage with Blifil. It was more difficult to win over Sophia, but the difficulties were not insuperable and Tom and Squire Western, between themselves, successfully managed the business and Tom and Sophia were duly married. Fielding concludes the story with some account of each of the characters of the novel, who have made any considerable figure in it.

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## **7.4 Analysis**

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### **7.4.1 Critical Analysis**

Tom Jones may claim to be the first novel written to a theory. It was epic in structure or rather an alternation of epic and dramatic; the narrative complicating itself so as to bring various conflicting interests and rival intrigues to a close encounter, and then, by means of a sudden disclosure, unravelling the complications. In other words, Tom has a series of involved adventures, which are shaped towards their climax by the hand of a dramatist.

In Tom Jones, the narrator of the story is the omniscient author. The novelist himself describes the world he has created. He knows all the events of the story, and has full knowledge of the psychology of his characters. He can reveal their thoughts to us, for the inner working of their mind is not hidden from his view.

The novel is divided into eighteen Books. Six are devoted to life in the country, six to the adventures on the road, and the last six to life in London. The story is conducted with artistic finish by Fielding. Fielding has hardly created a really complex character, who in his nature combined contradictory traits. Tom Jones is a good man, but has his own weaknesses. But because of those weaknesses, he does not become a genuinely complex character. In Tom Jones, for the first time in the history of English fiction, we have a realistic portrayal of children. The little Sophia and Tom and Blifil, as they play about the talk, are the first convincing pictures of childhood given by a novelist.

Fielding calls Tom Jones a comic epic in prose. All through the novel, the spirit of the comic Muse pervades. The rigid linking of cause and effect lies partly in the nature of comedy and is partly the direct result of Fielding's philosophy. Taking a point of vantage outside the story, the author is inspired by the Comic Spirit; his analytical intelligence reaches the point where the planes of 'Being' and 'Seeming' intercept, and reverberates with thunderous laughter at the contradictions and hypocrisies suddenly revealed.

The art of Fielding is realistic. But it is a special kind of realism – selective realism – that we find in Tom Jones. We note that, though the eighteenth century life presented in the novel is a vivid picture, Fielding's interest is not in atmosphere for its own sake. He deals with what is necessary to his purpose. Tom Jones is a masterpiece, and certainly one of the greatest novels written in the eighteenth century. It was not too well received by some of Fielding's contemporaries. Time has, however, vindicated its value and merits. It is not without faults, but its significance outweighs its shortcomings. Above all, we remember the "comic spirit" which pervades the novel. Indeed, Tom Jones is a great achievement for its richness and complexity: "the world of Tom Jones is dynamic charged with the energy of sunshine and laughter and love.

#### **7.4.2 Plot Construction**

Tom Jones remains one of the masterpieces of architectural construction of plot. The masterly skill with which the suspense of Tom's real birth is kept up, is remarkable. Yet, all preceding details before the disclosure are consistent with and even suggestive of the correct conclusion. The plot of Tom Jones, then, is well-constructed, as far as possible in keeping with limits of probability. It is unified, complete and, if not as perfect as Coleridge's praise seems to indicate, good enough to be called a plot of rigorous construction. Fielding was quite a successful artist as far as plot-construction is concerned.

In reading Tom Jones, one is delighted with the swiftness of the narration, the economy, the nimble and inexhaustible invention. Fielding had learnt much from his experience in the theatre, especially how to break up the narrative, set his scene in a minimum of words, and carry on the action in short, swift passages of dialogue.

#### **7.4.3 Comic Epic in Prose**

The comic epic in prose, as Fielding styles the new genre of literature which he evolved, admits a variety of characters and incidents. Its scale is epic, comprehensive and large. The tone, however, is light, comical, mildly satirical and ironical, often verging on the frivolous. It concerns itself with the ridiculous aspects of life. It is realistic, concerning itself with what happens on this earth, and hence different from the romances. The comic epic does not indulge in distortion as does the burlesque. It deals with the universals, unlike history. Behind the apparently frivolous and comic tone of the author,

there is a serious moral purpose. The writer's moral purpose is similar to that of the serious epic writer. It was a new province of writing that Fielding was attempting to explore. It was a combination of the comical elements with the epic scale to produce a new species of literature, the kind of which had not been hitherto attempted in the English language. We see a very successful mixture of the comic with the epic elements in Tom Jones. The comic tone is sustained throughout the novel, while the scale is epic. Epic devices such as invocations, unity of action, time-scheme, are combined with mock-heroic style and a consistently comic tone.

#### **7.4.4 Irony, Humour and Satire**

Irony is the chief and most effective source of humour in the numerous situations pictured in Tom Jones. The scene in Molly Seagrim's bedroom is a piece of remarkable irony. With tears streaming down her cheeks, Molly in a loud voice declares her undying love for Tom. She swears that she cannot live without him. Suddenly the rug curtain falls to reveal the grave philosopher Square in a most undignified position. What is more ironical is that Square is a great upholder and champion of the "unalterable rule of right and the eternal fitness of things". The wicked intentions, which are really at the heart of Blifil in releasing Sophia's bird, are hidden under the piously professed concern for the captive bird. His appeals to the most cherished Christian doctrines of freedom and mercy are ironical. Irony pervades every chapter and every page of the novel.

Fielding does indulge in satire in Tom Jones and wherever it is present, it is most effective. But it is not the vituperative satire of Swift. Fielding seldom uses invective. His satire is discreet and general, directed at large sections of humanity, at groups and classes rather than at individuals. He makes use of satirical humour against parsons, fine ladies and gentlemen, doctors and lawyers, wailing maids and simpering ladies, at religious groups such as the Methodists and the Jacobites. His satirical humour is also directed at the manners and morals of the age.

Fielding's humour is spontaneous, tolerant, exuberant and based on realities. He exhibits an inexhaustible source of humour. Laughter springs from practically each page of Tom Jones. He shows his capacity for a variety and range of humour. What is more noteworthy is that his humour is not contrived but ready and spontaneous. His laughter is never bitter and cynical. He shows a tolerant and benign attitude towards humanity.

#### **7.4.5 Morality**

Fielding tries to give a broad moral perspective in Tom Jones. He does not believe in punitive operations against licentious behaviour. His morality is connected with his broad and tolerant view of humanity in general. It is healthy as well as liberal, but Fielding does not at any time become "immoral".

Fielding's intention in Tom Jones is three-fold. He wanted to show the loveliness of virtue, convince men that they should pursue virtue and avoid vice, and make people realise that virtue or goodness of heart should be guided by discretion or prudence. Fielding manifests this three-fold purpose well enough in Tom Jones.

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### **7.5 Self Assessment Questions**

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#### **Exercise-1**

Choose the correct answer from amongst the alternatives given here :

1. The novel blossomed with distinction of individuality in
  - (a) seventeenth century
  - (b) sixteenth century
  - (c) eighteenth century
2. English novel is a product of :
  - (a) many currents coming together
  - (b) biblical stories
  - (c) classical friction
3. An atmosphere of anti romanticism began to develop in :
  - (a) Elizabethan age
  - (b) later eighteenth century
  - (c) early eighteenth century
4. The Royal Society was incorporated in :
  - (a) the year of Restoration
  - (b) Renaissance
  - (c) in the reign of Queen Mary
5. Defoe in Robinson Crusoe depicts a life which is :
  - (a) an illusion of reality
  - (b) realistic portrayal of life
  - (c) probing the feminine heart

**Exercise : 2**

Answer the following questions in your own words :

1. What is the dimension of Tome Jones ?

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2. Who were the parents of Tom Jones ?

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3. Who was Jenny Jones?

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4. Who did steal 500 from Tom Jones?

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5. Whom did Miss Nancy Marry at last?

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**Exercise : 3**

Answer the following question in your own words :

1. Comment on the structure of this novel.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the quality of narrator of the story?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you find the world of Tom Jone ?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Comment on the characters in Tom Jones.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Comment on the realism in Tom Jones.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7.6 Answers to SAQs**

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**Exercise : 1**

1. (c) eighteenth century
2. (a) many currents coming together
3. (c) early eighteenth century
4. (a) the year of Restoration
5. (a) an illusion of reality

**Exercise : 2**

1. Tom Jones is the first novel written to a theory. It is epical in structure with a series of involved adventures which are shaped well towards their climax.
2. Miss Bridget Allworthy was the mother of Tom and one Mr. Summer, who had been kept at University by Mr. Allworthy was his father.
3. Miss Jenny Jones was actually Mrs. Waters, who disclosed information about Tom's parents.
4. It was Black George who actually had stolen the £500 from Tom.
5. Miss Nancy married Mr. Nightingale.

**Exercise : 3**

1. The plot of Tom Jones is perfect and well planned. It is epical in structure and has been divided into three parts containing 18 books in all.

2. The narrator is omnipresent and himself describes the world which he has created.
3. The world of Tom Jones is dynamic, charged with the energy of sunshine and laughter and love.
4. fielding has created realistic characters for the first time in the history of English fiction.
5. Art of Fielding is realistic. He is selective in presenting the eighteenth century society in his novel. He has drawn characters from all the classes of English society and presents them in simple and normal situations.

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## **7.7 Let Us Sum Up**

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Once you have fully read and understood the Tom Jones and studied the qualities of Fielding as a novelist, you will be able to :

- (i) appreciate and critically analyse a novel.
- (ii) understand the plot, structure, theme and characters of a given novel.
- (iii) evaluate Henry Fielding's position as a novelist.
- (iv) discuss qualities of a novel.
- (v) discuss and evaluate social moral and religious influences and reflections of the Age in Tom Jones.
- (vi) evaluate and appreciate theories and concepts of Henry Fielding.

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## **7.8 Review Questions**

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1. Comment on the plot constinction of 'Tom Jones'.
2. Discuss Tom Jones as a comic epic in prose.
3. Fielding give a broad moral perspective in 'Tom Jones'. Discuss.
4. Draw a character sketch of Tom Jones.

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## **7.9 Bibliography**

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## UNIT-8

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### ABSALOM & ACHITOPHEL: JOHN DRYDEN

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#### Structure

- 8.0 Objective
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Textual Analysis
- 8.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.4 Review Questions
- 8.5 Bibliography

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#### 8.0 Objective

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*Absalom and Achitophel* is the best known example of political satire in English poetry. But at the same time it is a difficult poem to understand, particularly for Indian students, because:

- (i) the persons described are long dead and forgotten;
- (ii) the political and social conditions that inspired it have thoroughly changed, and the satire seems to lose its point ;
- (iii) there are far too many biblical allusions with which they are not familiar.

The objective of this unit is to make the poem easily comprehensible by:

- (i) bringing the characters back to life by giving their brief biographical sketches;
- (ii) very briefly recounting the relevant political developments of Restoration England so that the actions and reactions of the contemporary politicians are understood;
- (iii) by retelling the biblical stories and relating them to the characters concerned; and
- (iv) by glossing words which have a different meaning now.

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#### 8.1 Introduction

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##### Historical Background

Charles II, the English king, was nearing the end of his life. He was very worried about his successor, for though he had a number of illegitimate children he had no legal issue; his wife was barren. His cousin James was the next natural choice. But he was a Roman Catholic and so unacceptable to the parliament and the people. Charles' favourite illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth was at this stage egged on by the Earl of Shaftesbury to stake his claim to the Crown. Shaftesbury promised that the people would support him, though he was a bastard. The king could not accept this proposal. So here was a king faced with the rebellion of his son at the instigation of politician, a former minister. The whole poem is about this situation. Such a situation had arisen in the biblical times also when Absalom, son of David, had risen in revolt against his father at the behest of Achitophel, an evil counsellor. Dryden

has used this allegory for his poem. It is believed he was requested by the king himself to write this poem.

The invention by Titus Oates of the Popish Plot provided an outlet for the accumulated uneasiness and suspicion of the previous twenty years.

He is not now as when on, Jordan's Sand

The Joyful People throng'd to see him Land,

Says Achitophel of David (A.A. 270-t), and the mood of the country had certainly changed since Charles had been welcomed from exile with national rejoicing. In 1660 the country as a whole was thoroughly disillusioned with life in a militant Puritan republic and the Cavalier Parliament set to work to destroy the influence of Protestant dissent by the repressive measures known as the Clarendon Code. But the unpopularity of the Puritans had far from effaced the ingrained suspicion of Roman Catholicism in England. As early as 1666 it was the Papists and not the discontented Roundheads who were rumoured to have started the Fire of London. There were more solid grounds for disquiet. The rising power in Europe was France, and, with its autocratic monarchy in close alliance with the Roman Church, France was assuming in English eyes something of the role that Spain had played for the Elizabethans. Charles had the closest connections both with the Catholic Church and with France. His French mother had tried hard to convert her children to Catholicism, his favourite sister was now Duchesse d'Orleans, and his reigning mistress from 1671 was the French Louise de Keroualle. More over, his brother - James, Duke of York - was secretly a Catholic and seemed certain to succeed to the throne, Charles having no legitimate children. The Catholics had been among the most loyal supporters of the crown during the Civil War, and Charles had owed his escape to them after the battle of Worcester. Thus when he attempted to mitigate the laws against both Catholic and Protestant dissent by the Declaration of Indulgence in 1662 it was widely believed that he was moved more by sympathy with the Catholics than by his genuine tolerance. It is possible, too, that even so easygoing a monarch might have envied Louis XIV's freedom from constitutional control and noticed during his exile in France how accommodating the Roman Church could be to an absolute monarch. However loyal his own Anglican Parliament, it had shown that it meant to have the last word by refusing to grant him a permanent income adequate for the business of government.

Dependent on annual grants from Parliament and with the government in the hands of the staunchly Anglican Earl of Clarendon, Charles had little opportunity to favour the Catholics, even if he wished to. But the fall of Clarendon in 1667 made possible more adventurous policies which further excited Protestant hostility as their details became known or suspected. Charles now ruled through a miscellaneous Cabal of ministers, including Clifford, who was a Catholic, the dissolute Buckingham, and Ashley Cooper, the champion of Protestant dissent, who was to be created Earl of Shaftesbury and appointed Lord Chancellor in 1672. At first it seemed that English foreign policy might be directed to face the real Continental danger, and Sir William Temple negotiated the Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden against France in 1668 (A.A. 175-7). Already, however, Charles was secretly negotiating the Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV, by which he was to join Louis in destroying the Protestant stronghold of Holland, announce his own conversion to Catholicism, and work for the conversion of England, assisted by 6,000 French troops and £66,000 a year from Louis. A strong inducement on Charles was the hope of sharing in the partition of the Spanish dominions that Louis was planning with the Emperor in the expectation that Charles II of Spain would die childless, but the

religious clauses of the treaty had more alarming implications and were kept secret from all his ministers except Clifford and Arlington. The military alliance was approved by all the Cabal and the Treaty concluded in 1670, although it was not made public until just before war was declared in 1672. Charles had raised funds for the war by stopping the payment of interest on government debts - the 'Stop on the Exchequer' - and made a tentative move towards fulfilling his other obligations to Louis by promulgating the second Declaration of Indulgence. The reaction in- Parliament and the country was emphatic. Even the Protestant Dissenters refused to accept an indulgence that included the Catholics. The war with Holland, our chief trading rival, was not unpopular, but it was suspected that there were secret clauses in the treaty and money was voted only on condition that the Declaration was revoked. The Clarendon Code was even more rigorously enforced and a new Test Act in 1673 made the acceptance of the Anglican sacrament compulsory for all office-holders. Clifford had to resign from the Government and the Duke of York from the Admiralty, for the first time bringing his religion to public notice. The Cabal finally disintegrated a few months later when Shaftesbury was dismissed for supporting the Test Act. Charles's policy had also collapsed : he had shown that even with Louis's support he was not prepared to override Parliament. Hence forward the hopes of the Catholics were centred on the heir to the throne, the Duke of York.

Charles now governed with the assistance of the Earl of Danby, whose policy was based on the popular principles of Anglicanism at home and hostility to France abroad, and who managed the Commons by the judicious distribution of bribes and places. The king still received occasional allowances from Louis, although the latter now had only the limited aim of restricting the alliance that Danby was concluding with Holland, and found it as easy to achieve this by bribing the English opposition, which was being organized by Shaftesbury.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury (1621 1683) was the first politician to see the need for the political organization that is the basis of power in a democracy, and which in the early stages of democratic development is barely distinguishable from faction and mob violence. Like that of many politicians his career seems to have been directed by a mixture of personal ambition and political principle. In the Civil War he had first supported the king, but changed sides in January 1644, perhaps because he saw that Parliament was going to win, perhaps, as he said, because he recognized that the king was endangering the Protestant religion. He was prominent in the Commonwealth governments, supporting Cromwell for a time, but became one of Richard Cromwell's chief opponents. He was one of the twelve commissioners sent to Breda to invite Charles II to return, and in 1661 was made Baron Ashley and appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Throughout the rest of his life he consistently advocated toleration for the Protestant Dissenters, supporting Charles's first Declaration of Indulgence and opposing the measures of the Clarendon Code. The genuineness of his beliefs is confirmed by his association with John Locke, who was physician and tutor to his son from 1666 to 1675. Locke's Two Treatises of Government (1690) and Letters Concerning Toleration (1689-92) set out the principles of the Revolution Settlement of 1688, and their seeds are contained in the unfinished Essay Concerning Toleration, written in close association with Ashley in 1667, and in the Fundamental Constitutions for the Government of Carolina, drawn up at Ashley's request in 1669. The same principles are to be found in the paper on religious liberty written by Ashley for the king, in which he stresses in particular its advantages for trade. Commerce was his other main interest, and from 1670 to 1676 he was a member of the council for trade and plantations.

When dismissed from office Shaftesbury turned all his efforts against the Duke of York and the

Catholics. He was aware that the mood of the country was very different from that which had sent the Cavalier Parliament to Westminster in 1661 and tried to force its dissolution, but his attempt resulted only in his being imprisoned in the Tower, with Buckingham and other opposition leaders, until February 1 678. Then, in August of that year, Titus Oates announced his discovery of the Popish Plot and the ‘wish’d occasion’ had come (A.A. 208).

### **The Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill**

Oates had fled to the Continent in 1675 to escape a charge of perjury, and in 1677 was reconciled to Rome. Expelled from the English Jesuit college at St. Omer, he returned to England declaring that he had information of a plot to murder the king and overthrow the Protestant religion by French and Irish armies. Coleman, the Duchess of York’s secretary, was arrested and was found to possess treasonable correspondence with the Papal Nuncio and Louis XIV’s confessor : James was seriously implicated. The nation was further stirred by the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the magistrate before whom Oates had made his original depositions. Godfrey had been unwilling to receive them, so the Catholics blamed Oates for the murder, but the Protestants were convinced that it was the prelude to a Papist insurrection. Panic spread through London : thousands filed past Godfrey’s “ body as it lay in state, sober Protestant tradesmen went about armed, the train-bands paraded the streets, guards were placed in the vaults of Parliament and cannon around Whitehall. Catholics were excluded from sitting in Parliament and forbidden to come within ten miles of London. Hundreds were arrested and many condemned on the false evidence of Oates and his associates. Oates, himself, was granted a pension and lodged in Whitehall with a personal guard.

The alarm was fostered by the opposition politicians and lawyers, who perhaps half-shared the popular fear, and Shaftesbury was the organizing genius. During the next three years pamphlets were distributed and demonstrations arranged all over England, but Shaftesbury’s stronghold was the City and its garrison was the mob. The City of London had been a Puritan centre from the beginning of the century, and as the Protestant Dissenters were excluded from national and local government they turned increasingly to industry and commerce. The energy, self-denial, and self-reliance of the Puritan are also the virtues of the successful capitalist and self-made man : frugality may become indistinguishable from avarice (A.A. 501-8, 535-6, 585-629; M. 4I, 167-204; R.L. 407-8). Moreover, although the balance of financial power was shifting from the landed gentry to the merchants and bankers of the City, political power remained in the hands of the former; so the wealthy financiers, aggrieved at being prevented from exercising their due weight in government, were the more ready to support a party that promised to reduce the influence of the squires and the Court. Dryden often opposes the political claims of ‘property’ (or wealth) to the ‘inherent right’ to rule (M. 114) that the Tories claimed for the king (A.A. 499-5003 777-8; M. 117-18, 311-12). Shaftesbury moved to Aldersgate and in the Green Ribbon Club created the first organized political party in England (A.A. 49I-542), shortly to be known as the Whigs.

The strength of the Whigs was that they were directly attacking not the king, but his brother; indeed, ostensibly their sole object was to protect Charles (A.A. 749-50). They could propose pious resolutions vowing vengeance on all Catholics should he be harmed, and Monmouth could claim, as he did in the Parliament of October 1680, that filial piety alone compelled him to oppose his uncle (A.A. 419, 707-16). This increased the demoralization of the Court party. Its members, too, were concerned about ‘property’ and had as good reason as the Whigs to fear a Popish plot, for it was the country squires and the Anglican Church - the backbone of the party - who had inherited the lands appropriated from the Roman Church at the Reformation. There was evidence of some sort of plotting, as Dryden

acknowledges (A.A. 108-9, 132-3, 209, 654), and their disquiet at the king's manoeuvres in favour of the Catholics was suddenly increased in December 1678 when Montagu, the former ambassador to France, revealed that Charles had continued to receive money from Louis during the ministry of Danby. In an attempt to save Danby from impeachment Charles dissolved Parliament, and Shaftesbury had achieved his first object.

He was determined now that James should be excluded from the succession to the throne. Early in 1679 James was compelled to withdraw to Flanders, and when the Whigs were returned to power in May with a huge majority they at once introduced the Exclusion Bill. Preserving his facade of good humour, Charles followed the only course open to him, to play for time (A.A. 1018-21). He prevented the passage of the bill by dissolving Parliament, hoping to avoid the necessity of recalling it until the temper of the country had changed. Shaftesbury, however, relied on the king's being compelled to resort to Parliament for money, which would certainly not be granted until he had accepted the Bill (A.A. 390-6, 405-8). The response of even the Cavalier members to Montagu's disclosures had shown how dangerous it would be for Charles to accept any offer from France at this juncture (A.A. 281-8). Meanwhile, having decided that Monmouth should be substituted -for James as heir to the throne, Shaftesbury set about building him up as a popular hero.

James Scott, Duke of Monmouth and Buccleugh (1649-1685) was probably the son of Charles and his first recorded mistress, Lucy Walter. The Whigs circulated rumours that his parents had actually married, but there seems in fact to have been some doubt whether he was Charles's son at all. However, he was the king's favourite among his numerous natural children (A.A. 31-40), and his ambition and self-esteem were inflated by the honours and wealth showered on him. Profligate and rather stupid, but with an attractive appearance and manner, he was already a popular figure and had gained a considerable reputation in both love and war. But his popularity was not the only reason for the choice of Monmouth. The next legitimate heir after James was his daughter Mary, but she had married William of Orange, and Shaftesbury had no intention of introducing an independent foreign monarch into England. On the contrary, he hoped that the weakness of Monmouth's title to the throne would keep him dependent on the popular support that only Shaftesbury could ensure for him, so that the monarchy would become 'a cipher' (A.A. 220-7).

In the summer of 1679 the Covenanters in south-west Scotland rebelled against Lauderdale's oppressive government, and it seemed that Charles would be forced to summon Parliament. Shaftesbury agreed to their suppression only if his protegee were made commander-in-chief, and Monmouth returned from his victory at Bothwell Brig with his military reputation and popularity greatly enhanced. The Whigs now had control of the army, just when Charles fell so dangerously ill that James was summoned back from Brussels. However, the alarm of the Tories at the prospect of civil war had stiffened their opposition to Shaftesbury, so that on his recovery Charles felt himself to be in a sufficiently strong position to exile Monmouth to Holland (A.A. 400) - as well as sending James to Scotland - and to prorogue the second Whig Parliament that had been elected in September.

Scorning victory, the Whigs intensified their campaign. Monmouth was welcomed exultantly back to London in November and in the summer of 1680 made his triumphant progress through the counties of Somerset and Devon (A.A. 729-52). In June the Duke of York was presented to the Grand Jury as a Popish recusant, and Essex and Sunderland deserted the king. When at last Parliament reassembled in November the Exclusion Bill was quickly passed through the Commons and in the Lords only the Earl of Halifax remained among the political leaders to oppose it. Halifax was an old opponent

of James and had supported Shaftesbury from 11674, but as he respected the principle of hereditary succession, and wished only to limit James's powers when he became king, he had parted from the Whigs in 1680. Now, with remarkable determination and skill, he challenged the Whig orators and carried the day (A.A. 882-7). The furious Whigs impeached him, but they could do nothing against the resistance of the House of Lords.

Parliament was dissolved and the Whigs were returned yet again to power, determined to force the issue. To remove them from the protection of the London mob and the train-bands Charles summoned Parliament at Oxford, but the Exchequer was exhausted and it seemed that he must capitulate. However, when the triumphant Commons were called to the Lords on 7 April, instead of capitulating Charles tersely dissolved Parliament : Louis had secretly promised to pay him ,C400,000 over the next three years.

In this final crisis the Whigs had shown that they were not prepared to use openly unconstitutional methods, and their militant threats merely strengthened support for the king by arousing fear of civil war. Their collapse was as rapid as their rise to power : Parliament dispersed and soon the informers who had been swearing away the lives of Catholics were preparing to give evidence against their former employers (A.A. IOIO-I7, M. 149-55). Shaftesbury was arrested in July, but he had to be tried in London, where a jury of his own sympathizers acquitted him in November. A year later the election of Tory sheriffs in the City drove him into exile in Holland, only a few weeks before his death early in 1683.

Of the other main actors, Monmouth was arrested in September 1682 during another progress through the West. He was released on bail, but became involved in the investigations that followed the betrayal of the Rye House Plot in 1683 and retired to Holland, where he lived until his foolish rebellion at the beginning of James's reign led to his execution. Oates was allowed to live quietly on his pension until James brought a civil action against him in 1684 and he was imprisoned. On James's accession he was tried again for perjury and sentenced to be fined, perpetually imprisoned, flogged, and annually exhibited in the pillory; but after the Revolution he was pardoned and given another pension..

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## 8.2 Textual Analysis

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### **Absalom and Achitophel**

Absalom and Achitophel begins in the world of Old Testament history. The vague biblical past of the opening lines lets the narrative to be set from 2 Samuel in a wide historical frame that hopes to legitimize the king's promiscuity by associating the king as father of the land:

The second line of the couplet alludes to Samson and suggests the description, from Milton, of Samson being blind among his enemies:

Betray'd, Captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,  
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;

.....  
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,  
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age! (Samson Agonisties ll. 33-34,  
68-69)

There are two ways of reading this allusion back into Achitophel's portrait of David. The most obvious is that Achitophel unknowingly predicts the final triumph of David as a Samson figure who wreaks havoc on his enemies and asserts the force of God's law.

especially Christ among enemies and false friends. That relationship also suggests the final victory of God over Satan and all antichrists.

Moreover, David as paralleled with Samson, given the typical relationship that both Old Testament figures bear to Christ, plays off nicely against David's own reference to Absalom as a false Samson, a pretend Messiah:

If my young Samson will pretend a call

To shake the column, let him share the fall. (1955-56)

The couplet works in two ways, characterizing Absalom's revolt and messianic claim as a 'fall' and ironically opposing it to the true messianic 'call' and 'fall' to sacrifice and death which Samson, as type of Christ, exemplifies. The words of Achitophel and the drama of his temptation of Absalom characterize the two figures and confirm the original relationship that has been established between David and God. Throughout the poem that relationship is reconfirmed by association, by direct assertion, and by the fallen characters' version of what is asserted to be the true order of things. Those reconfirmations of David's relationship with God - especially the increasing emphasis on David's kingly role - work to transform David from private father to public king.

Once more the godlike David was restored,

And willing nations knew their lawful lord. (l. 1030-31)

### **Critical Analysis**

"Absalom and Achitophel" is one of Dryden's great political satires. Dryden's satire is a poem written in *heroic couplets*. Heroic couplets signal to the reader that the poem deals with an epic theme.

They also indicate the writer's authority.

In "Absalom and Achitophel," Dryden comments on the Popish Plot (1678: an alleged plot by Catholics to kill the king and make England Catholic again), the Exclusion Crisis (to keep Charles' Catholic brother, James, from inheriting the throne after Charles' death), and the Monmouth Rebellion (1685: an attempt to put the king's illegitimate son James, Duke of Monmouth on the throne). He frames these contemporary events in terms of the biblical story of King David and his rebellious son Absalom. Biblical narratives would have been very familiar to contemporary audiences.

Here is a "table of equivalents" of the main characters:

David = King Charles II

Achitophel = Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, who encouraged Monmouth to rebel

Absalom = James, Duke of Monmouth, Charles II's illegitimate son

Israel, Jews = England

Jebusites = Roman Catholics

Jerusalem = London

Dryden supported the monarchy, but he was also critical of Charles II. Note how the poem manages to negotiate between support and criticism.

1-18: The beginning of the poem introduces King David. It suggests that in his day polygamy was perfectly acceptable, even sanctioned by God. David has many "wives and slaves" and as a result, many children. But he has no children with his queen, Michal, therefore he has no legitimate heir. Of all his children, there is none so beautiful and brave as his son Absalom. Absalom is a great warrior, but he is also a courtier, very charming. He is naturally pleasing to all. David sees in him an image of himself in former days, and indulges him in everything he desires. He "could not" or "would not" see his faults. Instead, Absalom's faults are put down to "warm excesses."

In pious times, e'r priestcraft did begin,  
Before polygamy was made a sin;  
When one man on many multiplied his kind,  
Ere one to one was cursedly confined;  
When nature prompted and no law denied  
Promiscuous use of concubine and bride;  
Then Israel's monarch after Heaven's own heart,  
His vigorous warmth did variously impart  
To wives and slaves; and, wide as his command,  
Scattered his Maker's image through the land. (l. 1-10)

The association between God and David is made through the clever comparison of divine and human fertility. There is some irony in seeing God's abundant creation reflected in the king's sexual extravagances, but the irony doesn't reduce the status of the king. It serves, at the beginning of the poem, to separate the person of the king from the office of the king.

The opening scenes emphasize David as an indulgent father, not as head of the country. David's pleasure in Absalom parallels God's attitude toward Adam in the Garden:

All of Absalom's motions are accompanied with grace,  
And paradise was opened in his face.  
With secret joy indulgent David viewed  
His youthful image in his son renewed:  
To all his wishes nothing he denied;  
And made the charming Annabel his bride. (l. 29-34)

The easy going nature of Absalom, put together with the specific reference to paradise, help establish him as the figure from Eden that will be seen again in the temptation. The characterization of David emphasizes a combination of divine and human paternity. Like God, David takes great joy in his creation; like God, he supplies Absalom with a worthwhile bride. This serious presentation of David in his fatherly joy and indulgence, as compared to the divine model, cannot be taken as criticism of the king. It strengthens the casual relationship between God and David established at the opening of the poem. When attention is called to indulgence or weakness in David's character, it is in a context that shows David's indulgence to be a reflection of his paternal, rather than kingly, capacity:

What faults he had (for whom from faults if free?)  
His father could not, or he would not see. (l. 35-36)

The emphasis is on David's paternal indulgence. The initial presentation of David and Absalom closes with a declaration of the calm of David's reign:

Thus praised and lived the noble youth remained,  
While David, undisturbed, in Sion reigned. (l. 41-42)

33-52: Dryden supplies an axiom here: there is always going to be something wrong - but this is in order for the good to triumph: "God punishes the bad, and proves the best."

53-84: The Jews have shown themselves to be very wayward and disloyal, as they have created and destroyed rulers (a reference to the recent turbulence in England). In fact, they had asked David to come back to rule them after they had banished him. Dryden notes, however, that the Jews are unorganized and he also suggests that not ALL Jews are intent on changing the regime easily. These latter ones "know the value of a peaceful reign" (70) and they "curse the memory of civil wars" (73). The existence of these more moderate people and "David's mildness" have meant that rebellion has been avoided so far, but trouble is looming. . . . "Plots, true or false, are necessary things, /To raise up commonwealths and ruin kings" (83-84).

85-149: Dryden next introduces the Jebusites, who represent the Roman Catholic population. They had been the “chosen people” once, but now they are “worn and weakened” and have submitted to David’s government. Dryden is ambiguous in his attitude to “that Plot, the nation’s curse” (108) (the Popish plot): he suggests that it was “bad in itself, though represented worse” (109). He doesn’t deny its existence, but suggests that it was exaggerated. The plot failed to put a Roman Catholic on the throne, but it succeeded in encouraging other factions to “bubble[] o’er” (139) to “threat the [present] government” (141). Dryden lists the history of people in various factions, using a repetition of “some”: some of them have never been powerful; some of them have been powerful and have been “thrown” down; the worst, suggests Dryden, are those who have been rebellious once but have been pardoned by “their monarch’s fatal mercy” and have been given honours. Achitophel is one of these latter.

158-229: Dryden suggests that Achitophel walks the line between greatness and madness (and has tipped over toward the latter). He should be enjoying his “wealth and honour,” but instead, he courts danger. Achitophel has a son who is also represented as deformed (compare with David’s son). Achitophel has been a poor advisor to Israel, but his crimes have been forgotten in the wake of the patriotism he has assumed. As Dryden suggests: “So easy still it proves in factious times,/With public zeal to cancel private crimes” (180-81) (something relevant to our current world of politics). Achitophel is very ambitious. He used the Popish plot to make the Jews scared, and he even accused the King himself of being a Jebusite (Catholic). But he needs a “chief” to do his bidding, and so he settles on Absalom. He thinks that because Absalom is illegitimate, he will depend more upon the will of the people, and Israel might be more “drawn to the dregs of a democracy” (227).

230-269: Achitophel’s is the first direct speech we hear in the poem. He flatters Absalom, telling him he is an “auspicious prince” and his country’s “second Moses” (234). Notice the parallel to Eve in the garden, with Achitophel playing the snake. Achitophel’s words suggest that Absalom is ordained by Heaven and by Fate to rise against David. He also tells him that David also faced such a decision when he was in exile. In other words, if Absalom fails to rebel against his father, he will be defying Heaven and his ordained role as well as proving himself “unnatural” (eg. unlike his father). Notice that “human will” is a factor in one’s Fate, according to Achitophel. You have to read the signs correctly and act.

In the temptation, Achitophel uses biblical language to persuade Absalom of the kingship to which he is destined:

Auspicious prince, at whose nativity  
Some royal planet ruled the southern sky;  
Thy longing country’s darling and desire  
Their cloudy pillar and their guardian fire:  
Their second Moses, whose extended wand  
Divides the seas, and shows the promised land;  
Whose dawning day in every distant age  
Has exercised the sacred prophet’s rage:  
The people’s prayer, the glad diviners’ theme,  
The young men’s vision, and the old men’s dream!

Thee, savior, thee, the nation's vow's confess,

And, never satisfied with seeing, bless. (l. 230-241)

The use of typology in the biblical context of the poem suggests a fine distinction between Absalom's response to the temptation, and to Achitophel's well-spoken words. By using types to persuade Absalom of his role as savior, Achitophel becomes an ironic Gospel prophet, and Absalom a false messiah. Achitophel is not slow to offer specific examples of his predictions. He first claims that Absalom's nativity was marked by some royal planet that ruled the southern sky - a favorable omen. The astronomical sign, which is one of the messianic allusions of the temptation scene, is not the correct nativity sign! The star of the real Messiah rises in the east, not the south (Matt. 2:2, 9-11).

Next, Achitophel calls Absalom the country's cloudy pillar, guardian fire, and second Moses (ll. 233-35). All three are familiar biblical signs; and the pillar and fire are promised in Isaiah as signs of god's renewed presence among the Israelites (Isaiah 4:5). The typical signs that Achitophel mentions have general biblical meaning and would have been persuasive for Absalom, the biblical prince.

In convincing Absalom of his messianic role, Achitophel portrays David as an old man with declining powers and as a fallen Lucifer:

Had thus old David, from whose loins you spring,

Not dared, when Fortune called him, to be king,

At Gath an exile he might still remain,

And heaven's anointing oil had been in vain.

Let his successful youth your hopes engage;

But shun the example of declining age;

Behold him setting in western skies,

The shadows lengthening as the vapors rise.

He is not now, as when on Jordan's sand

The joyful people thronged to see him land,

Covering the beach, and blackening all the strand;

But, like the Prince of Angels, from his height,

Comes tumbling downward with diminished light. (ll. 262-274)

There is a great deal of irony in this, warning of Achitophel's deceptive persuasion. Hoping to convince Absalom of the practicality of a "pleasing rape upon the crown" (l. 1474), Achitophel associates David's old age with his supposed political impotence. Achitophel attempts to remove the kingship and the question of secession from the authority of Heaven and the law of God by falsifying the account of David's return from exile.

According to Achitophel, David was called from Gath by fortune; according to the Bible, he was called from exile by god and anointed by Heaven. Achitophel's argument makes the sanctity of heaven dependent on the arbitrary role of fortune's wheel, whose prizes must be grabbed. In the context of biblical

history, that ethic obviously contradicts the moral code and world order implied by God's written law.

The end of Achitophel's description is the simile "like the Prince of Angels," used to epitomize David's decline. Achitophel chooses this image to overthrow that king if they like. Dryden rhetorically makes us see this position as ludicrous. If this were the case, there would be chaos. Achitophel also suggests that Absalom should fear David's brother: when he comes to the throne, he will have no love for Absalom. He notes that Absalom could fall back on the fact that he can be seen as rescuing David from the dangers around him.

As the picture of David comes to a close, Achitophel characterizes David's impotence more subtly. Asserting that David is powerless to resist Absalom's claim to the throne, Achitophel asks, "What strength can he to your designs oppose, / Naked of friends, and round beset with foes?" (l. 279-80).

270-302: Achitophel also suggests that David's moment of greatness has passed. He is now like Satan, a rebel angel. (This is of course a weird reversal, because it is really Absalom - pushed by Achitophel - who is the rebel.) Achitophel suggests that the Popish plot has been the undoing of David, because now, all sorts of people have changed their allegiances and "'tis the general cry, / Religion, commonwealth and liberty'" (291-92). Achitophel suggests that Absalom would do better to join sides with them. At least he would get a "limited command" that way, instead of being relegated to the sidelines as he is now.

303-314: Dryden comments on the effect of Achitophel's words on Absalom: "What cannot praise effect in mighty minds, / When flattery soothes, and when ambition blinds!" (303-04). Although the desire for power is all right for the deity, on earth it is a "vicious weed" (305). Dryden thus still presents Absalom in a fairly positive light: his problem is that he has too much of that spark from heaven, desire for power. He is half convinced, and half not convinced to rebel.

315-372: Absalom counters Achitophel's words by pointing out the positive things about David, not the least of which is the fact that he is ordained by Heaven to be king. Absalom notes that even if David were a tyrant (which he's not), the people might rise against him, but Absalom could not justify doing that as David has been very kind to him. Absalom also justifies the royal succession, if not through David's lawful children, then through his brother. As Absalom thinks about this, he asks himself what cause he has to "repine at heaven's decree" (361). But this thought raises doubts, as in the next line (362) he wishes that either he had not been given a higher standing in life or less ambition. He is presented as split here into his "mother's mold" and "David's part." He rages against this, suggesting that his "soul" was made for greatness and that "Desire for greatness is a godlike sin" (372). And thus his fate is sealed.

373-476: Achitophel is likened here to "hell's dire agent" (no mincing words here!), pouring in fresh troops to assail "fainting Virtue" (note the suggestions here of rape). He suggests to Absalom that Heaven has given him his gifts for a reason. He also indicates that he thinks that David is too weak, giving into his people too much. Instead, the crown needs "manly force" (382). Achitophel's arguments here slip and slide around, indicating that he is not committed to rebellion out of any higher purpose; rather, he wants power and will do anything to get it. He indicates that he has been successful in turning the people against David's brother. He presents an argument for the will of the people to decide who shall be their king, then to overthrow that king if they like. Dryden rhetorically makes us see this position as ludicrous. If this were the case, there would be chaos. Achitophel also suggests that Absalom should fear David's brother: when he comes to the throne, he will have no love for Absalom. He notes that Absalom could fall back on the fact that he can be seen as rescuing David from the dangers around him.

477-681: Absalom is persuaded. Dryden represents Absalom again in a positive light: he is to be lamented instead of condemned. Achitophel manages to unite all the “malcontents” in the land: princes who think the monarchy has too much power, people who wish to profit by getting rid of the king, those who want to raise their own station, those who don’t want a monarchy, those who wish to restore their religion to power (Presbyterians and Puritans). And those who follow by “instinct,” not really thinking about it. Of these, there was one called Zimri (the Duke of Buckingham, with whom Dryden had been having a literary feud). He is satirized brutally here, as are a number of other particular people, including Corah (Titus Oates, famous “witness” against those involved in the Popish plot).

682-810: Absalom leaves the court, and spends his time telling people what they want to hear and pretending that he is on the side of the people. His next speech differs from his former in that it is contrived and insincere. He says his father is grown powerless and is giving away his power to friends and foreign nations. Absalom travels throughout the land, and Achitophel uses the opportunity to test those who have joined with them. Dryden presents a long section of the poem (753-810) defending the monarchy and condemning the idea that people should be able to change a king.

811-932: Here Dryden praises those individuals who support the king. They point out to David that certain events — his brother has been banished from the court and the Plot thickened - are due to the machinations of Absalom, masterminded by Achitophel.

933-end: This is David speaking (for the first time in the poem). He has the last word here, and he sets to right what has been happening. He is speaking as the word of God, as Dryden wants to emphasize the divine right of kings. He says he has been very patient and merciful until now, not punishing those who have done wrong. But now the “offenders” even question his right to forgive. They suggest that “one was made for many” (in other words, that the king is made for the people), but David says he was made to rule them, as that is what kings do. He notes that his offenders think he has not punished anyone because he is weak, but in fact this mildness is a sign of his manliness. Although he is naturally forgiving, he suggests that he has been pushed from his natural course: “Tis time to show I am not good by force.” He suggests that if Absalom wants to shake things up, he must suffer the punishment. But then he wishes that he would “repent and live.” It is natural for parents to want to protect their children. Moreover, he suggests that Absalom was born into a situation that set him up to fail. David suggests that “patriotism” is a hollow word, usually disguising other motives. Absalom has been taken on as the “people’s saint.” But even though the people want him as their heir, it is not up to them to decide. If the people decide on the heir in the future, that means in effect they can depose their king. His subjects say they want to protect him, but in fact they are taking away his power. He falls back on the law and removes their power. He regrets the fact that he has to assert his power, but suggests that those who have plotted against him deserve their fate. He notes that he is going to let his foes fight each other, then “rise upon them with redoubled might.” The Almighty (God) gives his “consent” to these words, and “a series of new time began,” a new time in which nations are “willing” to acknowledge their “lawful lord.”

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### **8.3 Let Us Sum Up**

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Thus we see that Absalom and Achitophel is a significant Biblical and Allegorical satire in the history of English literature. Besides it is a marvellous gallery of pen portraits of the major political figures of the age and a reliable mirror of the period it deal with.

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## 8.4 Review Questions

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1. Discuss the poem as a gallery of pen portraits.
2. Comment on Dryden's use of the Bible in this poem.
3. Do you think that Absalom and Achitophel is a reliable mirror of the period it deals with ?
4. What devices does Dryden use to raise a political satire to the level of the epic ?

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## 8.5 Bibliography

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1. Dryden and his Poetry : A. Nicoll.
  2. Augustan Satire : Ian Jack.
  3. From Dryden to Johnson : Boris Ford.
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## UNIT-9

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# THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL : RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

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### Structure

- 9.0 Objective
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 The Play : An Actwise and Scenewise Summary
- 9.3 The Major Themes Discussed in the Play
- 9.4 Critical Overview
- 9.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.6 Review Questions
- 9.7 Bibliography

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## 9.0 Objective

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After going through this unit you will be able to

- \* understand the society which inspired such satirical plays ;
- \* understand what a Comedy of Manners is and how its characters are mere types;
- \* understand how this artificial comedy differs from the Romantic and Sentimental Comedies.

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## 9.1 Introduction

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Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin, Ireland, and was christened on November 4, 1751. His father was an actor and author, a path that Sheridan himself would choose for his vocation. He was educated at Harrow School in London, England. After the family moved to Bath in 1770, Sheridan met and eloped with a young singer, Eliza Linley. Their marriage contract was invalid due to a lack of parental consent, however. Sheridan fought two duels on her behalf, nearly dying in the second, and finally, after three years, the couple's families withdrew their opposition and the pair were legally married in 1773.

Sheridan had begun to study the law the year before, and, in 1773, he entered as a barrister in the Middle Temple. When the law failed to provide him with adequate financial means, Sheridan turned his attention to writing drama. His first play, *The Rivals* was completed in a few weeks and opened in 1775 at the Covent Garden Theatre. The production closed the same day; Sheridan revised the work, shortening the structure and recasting his actors. The play reopened to great success only ten days later. A few months later his second work, *St. Patrick's Day*, opened. Sheridan next collaborated on an operatic play, *The Duenna*, with his father-in-law. Both of these works were popular with audiences.

After writing and producing three successful plays in 1775, Sheridan and some partners bought the Drury Lane Theatre in 1776, and he became its manager. In 1777, his play *A Trip to Scarborough* was presented at the Drury Lane, and, three months later, *School For Scandal* became his most popular play. In 1779, Sheridan became the sole owner of the theatre, and his last play for another twenty years, *The Critic*, opened to the same success as his earlier works.

Despite critical and popular success, Sheridan had accumulated a huge amount of debt. On the surface, he appeared a success. By his late twenties he was the owner of the most famous theatre in England and was a well-known, successful playwright, yet his finances were in ruins.

In 1780, Sheridan was elected to Parliament. By all reports, Sheridan was a brilliant orator, but he never achieved the kind of success he desired, due in part to British prejudices against his Irish birth. Sheridan's wife died in 1792; she had left him years earlier because of his drinking and infidelity. The same year, the Drury Lane Theatre was condemned and torn down. Sheridan went even further into debt but managed to rebuild the theatre. Three years after his wife's death, he married Hester Jane Ogle, the nineteen-year-old daughter of the Dean of Winchester. Sheridan wrote his last play, *Pizarro*, in 1799. The income from this last successful production only slightly reduced his mountain of debt. Finally, Sheridan was ousted from Drury Lane's management due to his mishandling of funds. When he lost his Parliament seat, he also lost protection against arrest for his debts. Sheridan was imprisoned several times for failure to pay his debts; his furniture was sold, and he was living in filth at the time of his death in 1816. Although he died in financial ruin and ignominy, the work that he produced for the stage in the years 1773-1779 earned Sheridan a place among the great writers of drama

The age of Sheridan is neither the Restoration Age nor the Age of Queen Anne but the Age of Transition which stretches from 1740 to 1800. In the comedy of this period you find a touch of the Restoration comedy, but there is also an inclination for romanticism. The plot is complicated, as in a Restoration comedy, but it is free from its immorality. And it has all the wit, humour and repartee of the Comedy of Manners.

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## 9.2 The Play: An Actwise And Scenewise Summary

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### Act 1, Scene 1 Summary

Lady Sneerwell and Snake are discussing a recent success they had in assassinating someone's character, and they are very pleased with their efforts. In their plot, Snake sent a few lines of a letter to a Miss Clackitt. Someone soon had his life destroyed. However, Snake notes that Miss Clackitt, while certainly very capable of destroying reputations, does not have the subtle abilities of Lady Sneerwell when it comes to bringing people down.

With Lady Sneerwell's talents out in the open, she admits that she is proud of her abilities and she wants to use them on her next project. In this project, she is going to use Snake to break off the affections between Charles Surface, a drunk who is throwing away his money, and Maria, the ward of Sir Peter Teazle. Once the couple is split up, Sneerwell wants to move Maria's affections toward Charles's brother Joseph, a man of good standing in the eyes of many. Finally, after creating this match, she wants to have Charles for herself.

Snake is surprised to hear about this plan, since he is under the impression that Lady Sneerwell and Joseph Surface are an item. However, Lady Sneerwell explains that this is not the case. In fact,

Joseph Surface is a sneaky, underhanded weasel who only seems to be an upstanding gentleman. Thus, she wants Charles, who seems to be a miserable drunk, because she knows him to be a very noble soul underneath his shell of decrepit morals and dissipation.

At this point, Joseph Surface enters and he learns of Snake's employment in their matter. Of course, he is pleased to hear that they have such a capable agent for their plans and he looks forward to their successful execution.

Once Snake leaves, Maria enters, worrying about one of her suitors, Mr. Benjamin Backbite, and his uncle Crabtree. Backbite has been following her around and annoying her, so she had to sneak away from him in order to free herself from his incessant blather. Though Sneerwell defends Backbite and describes him as a witty poet, Maria holds no love for him and would rather stay away from him and his brand of wit and poetry.

At this point, Mrs. Candour arrives. She immediately begins her long-winded gossiping about anyone and everyone she knows or has heard about, which annoys Maria to no end. Then, to top things off, Backbite and Crabtree join the party and Crabtree regales everyone with tales of Backbite's witty remarks. Though Crabtree cannot remember anything Backbite actually said, he assures everyone in the room that Backbite was quite witty and very impressive.

Once this company is assembled, everyone begins gossiping about various people and their indiscretions until they begin talking about Charles. Of course, Maria cannot take hearing these people discuss her love in such unflattering terms. So, she makes an excuse and leaves in order to get away from them. However, Mrs. Candour follows her in order to ensure that she is well.

### **Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis**

The names of the characters in this play are symbolic of the roles they play. For instance, Lady Sneerwell sneers at all of society, Snake is as underhanded and sneaky as the animal he is named for, and the Surface brothers are judged by their surface appearance, instead of what lies beneath. Though Mrs. Candour is named for forthrightness and kindness, she is actually ironically named for the fact that she thinks that she is forthright and kindly. However, candor is also a sort of willingness to speak privately and she tends to share all the stories that she hears privately, so candor is no protection.

When Mrs. Candour says, "tale-bearers are as bad as the tale-makers," she is showing that she is a hypocrite. Though she claims that it is terrible that people pass along gossip, she is more than happy to gossip about other people and she continues to do so immediately after making this observation.

When Joseph Surface says that Snake is such a villain that he cannot even stay true to his own villainy, it foreshadows his willingness to betray Sneerwell and Joseph later in the play. Because Snake is so willing to sell his services, Joseph sees that he will sell off the people who hired him if the money is right and will have no compunctions about leaving others holding the bag.

Crabtree lauds his nephew's stellar wit, yet he cannot actually remember anything that his nephew said. This shows that Crabtree is so lacking in intelligence that he cannot even remember simple epigrams, which are designed to be so witty that they are memorable. Thus, Crabtree's assessment of Backbite is highly suspect and is, according to the needs of the play, entirely false.

Maria is unwilling to listen to people speak badly about Charles, showing that she is both honest and very much in love with him. Thus, when she hears these people speak ill of Charles, her face

actually changes color, leaving her looking unwell. This lends further weight to her honesty and love, since it actually damages her.

### **Act 1, Scene 2 Summary**

Sir Peter Teazle, an old man, married a young woman six months ago and his life has been terrible since then. The once shy, innocent, poor young woman Sir Peter wedded has become a greedy shrew who argues with everything he says and demands everything that he has to give and more. Thus, rather than getting a beautiful, retiring woman, he is tied to an absolute beast.

Rowley arrives to speak with Sir Peter and Sir Peter tells him about his troubles with Lady Teazle. In fact, Sir Peter believes that much of her shrewish behavior is due to her spending so much time with Lady Sneerwell and her gang of character assassins. To add to his worries, Maria is still intent on marrying Charles, despite the fact that he has tried to get his ward to move her affections elsewhere. Thus, he finds himself confounded at every turn and he does not know how to fix any of these problems.

Hearing Sir Peter's worries about Maria, Rowley assures him that Charles is a very upright man and Maria would do well to marry him. However, Sir Peter cannot believe that a free-spending profligate such as Charles can be anything but a disappointment to himself and others. Sir Peter believes that his friend and Charles's uncle, Sir Oliver, was too liberal with Charles and his brother and that his willingness to give them money has led to Charles's decline.

This conversation reminds Rowley of the news that he has for Sir Peter: Sir Oliver has arrived from India and is due to visit. This news concerns Sir Peter because he and Sir Oliver used to sit together and make fun of marriage; now Sir Peter finds himself married and miserable. Thus, he tells Rowley not to tell Sir Oliver about his marital strife so that Sir Oliver will not be amused by the misfortunes of an old bachelor marrying a young woman.

### **Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis**

The fact that Sir Peter could not see that his wife would turn into a greedy shrew shows that he is easily duped by surface appearances. Of course, this point is furthered by the fact that he, much like almost everyone else, thinks that Charles is worthless and Joseph is an upright man. Thus, when he says that old bachelors should not marry young women, it shows that his assessment of the situation may not be entirely accurate, as is shown when he and Lady Teazle sort out their differences. However, the fact that even Sir Peter knows that Sneerwell and her companions are lying, backstabbing cretins shows that this is a widely known fact that cannot be covered up. In fact, the gossips may not be making any effort to prevent people from getting this impression, since it does lend them a certain power over the affairs of other people.

### **Act 2, Scene 1 Summary**

Sir Peter and Lady Teazle are having another argument, this time about the fact that Lady Teazle wants some expensive new fashions and Sir Peter is not willing to spend the money. Sir Peter tries to convince her that she should be happy just to get a few things from him, since she grew up poor. She, however, insists that she deserves everything any other woman has and more. After all, Sir Peter showed her how rich people live and it is his fault that she wants to live the best life possible.

The couple argue until Lady Teazle finally tells Sir Peter that she has to be at her appointment at Lady Sneerwell's and, to make matters worse, Sir Peter promised to join her. So, once Sir Peter

offers one final complaint about his wife to the audience, the two of them go to Lady Sneerwell's.

### **Act 2, Scene 1 Analysis**

This scene shows that, no matter what a man may do to try to find a good wife, wives may turn out bad anyway. Though Sir Peter tried to find a poor girl of little accomplishment who would not need much money, the girl he chose was merely impressed with his money and now she demands as much of it as she can get. Thus, Sheridan shows that marrying someone and changing their circumstances, while hoping that they stay as they were, is a sure way to be disappointed.

### **Act 2, Scene 2 Summary**

Lady Teazle and Maria enter the gathering at Sneerwell's. While everyone else sits down to a good session of talking behind others' backs, Joseph Surface and Maria move off to speak to each other privately. When Sir Peter enters, he is shocked at the gossip and slander he hears. He dislikes everyone there, especially their incessant gossiping, and he cannot abide the fact that they enjoy tearing other people down. Thus, as he listens to the party assassinate the looks, qualities, and characters of people they claim to be friends with, he grows more disgusted by the minute. After listening to them, he finally walks out with the words, "I leave my character behind me." (2, 2, 220)

With Sir Peter gone, the rest of the party eavesdrops on Maria and Joseph Surface. Of course, Joseph is pretending to be a kind friend who does not enjoy the others' gossiping and sniping and Maria warms to him for that. However, Lady Teazle barges in on the two of them and, seeing the intruder, Maria immediately runs out.

Now that Maria is gone, Lady Teazle and Joseph discuss their plans. Joseph wants Sir Peter's wife to come to his house so they can spend some time together, but Lady Teazle is not so easily placated. She wants to know why Joseph was so earnestly entreating Maria to listen to him. However, he manages to calm her down and they arrange for a tryst at Joseph's house.

### **Act 2, Scene 2 Analysis**

When Backbite finally tells the company his poem about Lady Betty Curricl's horses, he spouts off some of the worst doggerel possible, showing that Backbite is not nearly the excellent poet that Crabtree makes him out to be. However, the company gives the poem high praise, showing that they are not the fine judges of poetry that they seem to consider themselves. Rather, they are incapable of determining good poetry from bad and, in fact, they have very low tastes. Thus, they are shown to be simpletons who cannot even judge poetry, much less the worth of the people they gossip about.

When Maria and Lady Teazle enter, Joseph Surface immediately takes Maria aside to speak with her. Lady Teazle is upset by this because she was hoping Joseph would talk to her so they could share some private words while they wait for Sir Peter. This shows that there is something going on between Lady Teazle and Joseph, as she wants to be able to speak to him before her husband arrives, showing that she has things to say to him that she cannot say in front of her husband. Thus, though they may not have consummated their affair, they certainly intend to do so at some point.

### **Act 2, Scene 3 Summary**

Rowley and Sir Oliver enter as Sir Oliver is laughing at the news that Sir Peter has married a shrew. However, Rowley admonishes him not to bring up the subject with Sir Peter, as it is a very sore point with him. In addition, it will prevent Sir Peter from learning that Rowley has told Sir Oliver all

about his marital strife.

Eventually, the subject turns to Sir Peter's estrangement from Charles Surface. It seems that Sir Peter thinks Lady Teazle has her eyes on Charles. Rowley sees she is after Joseph, but Sir Peter does not believe him. Of course, Sir Oliver knows the sort of gossiping and character destruction that goes on in some circles and he wants nothing to do with it. Thus, rather than listen to the stories told by others, Sir Oliver wishes to judge Charles for himself.

Sir Peter enters and he and Sir Oliver warmly greet each other. However, when Sir Oliver asks Sir Peter about the Surface brothers, Sir Peter contradicts Rowley's words in every way. In fact, he is under the impression that Joseph is the most upstanding of men and Charles is nothing but a dissipated, immoral drunkard. Hearing Sir Peter's words, Sir Oliver admits that he had his wild days and the young man may still have some nobility beneath his unimpressive exterior.

### **Act 2, Scene 3 Analysis**

When Sir Oliver admits that he has had his wild days, it shows that he is a man of the world who can understand that some young people will make mistakes and they can be mended. Thus, Sir Oliver shows that he can be an impartial judge of character and can look beneath the surface to find the worth of a man. This point is furthered by Sir Oliver's observation that any man of worth will have enemies, and thus he does not entirely trust Joseph, who does not have any enemies.

### **Act 3, Scene 1 Summary**

Sir Oliver, Sir Peter, and Rowley hatch a plan that will allow Sir Oliver to judge Charles and Joseph Surface on their relative merits. A man by the name of Stanley has appealed to both men for financial help. However, neither man has ever seen either Stanley or Sir Oliver, so Sir Oliver can pretend to be Stanley in order to see how his nephews will treat him. The plan changes slightly when Mr. Moses, a money-lender, informs Sir Oliver that Charles has asked to borrow money from a Mr. Premium. Sir Oliver can actually pretend to be a money-lender when he meets with Charles.

After Sir Oliver and Moses leave to check on Oliver's two nephews, Maria arrives to speak with Sir Peter about her engagement to Charles. Of course, Sir Peter tries to convince Maria to turn her attentions from Charles to Joseph, but Maria will not hear of it. Rather, she insists on her love for Charles, as well as her judgment of his worth, and she leaves angrily.

At this point, Lady Teazle enters and Sir Peter attempts to soften her heart. Though Lady Teazle seems, at first, to be amenable to the idea, things rapidly deteriorate. Once again, the two of them are unable to reach any kind of common ground and their conversation devolves into arguing and name-calling before Lady Teazle storms off.

### **Act 3, Scene 1 Analysis**

In many works of literature around this time, most Jewish characters are money-lenders, as Mr. Moses is in this play. This is not so much a stereotype as a reflection of the fact that Jews in most European countries were legally prevented from entering into more acceptable businesses. Thus, they were often forced to turn to the money-lending practice in order to survive. However, the fact that money-lenders were so widely despised and Jews were normally money-lenders, it was generally considered that Jews were dishonest. Thus, Sheridan is actually attempting to fly against the prevailing anti-Semitism by creating the "honest Israelite" (3, 1, 51) of Mr. Moses.

### **Act 3, Scene 2 Summary**

Mr. Moses and Sir Oliver arrive at Charles Surface's house, but Charles's butler, Trip, forces them to wait. Then, while the men are waiting, Trip asks Moses for a loan. Since Trip's credit is no good, Mr. Moses refuses to give it to him without collateral, so Trip offers to provide Mr. Moses with some clothes from Charles's own wardrobe.

### **Act 3, Scene 2 Analysis**

When Sir Oliver and Mr. Moses arrive, they find the butler very well dressed, but he asks Mr. Moses for a loan. This shows that Charles is, indeed, quite a spendthrift, since he gives his own butler plenty of money, yet the butler still wants more. This latter point shows that the butler is learning bad habits from his master and Charles must be quite a disaster if even his butler is begging for a loan and will give Mr. Moses stolen goods in order to secure it.

### **Act 3, Scene 3 Summary**

Charles Surface, Careless, and several other men are sitting at the table drinking as Mr. Moses and Sir Oliver enter. Of course, everyone there is drunk and obnoxious and they sing bawdy songs while they empty and refill their glasses. However, when Trip announces Sir Oliver (as Mr. Premium) and Mr. Moses, everyone there sits down to listen to the two money-lenders.

Though Charles is impudent, he is very honest and straightforward in his business dealings. However, Sir Oliver wants to know first if Charles has anything he can sell in order to raise capital on his own. Unfortunately, Charles has already sold off almost all of the family heirlooms and all he has left are the family portraits. Then, thinking about this, he offers to auction them to Sir Oliver. Of course, Sir Oliver is shocked, but he also realizes that he has an opportunity to save the family portraits, so he agrees to the plan.

### **Act 3, Scene 3 Analysis**

Charles Surface is accompanied by a man named Careless, which symbolizes the way in which Charles is heading down the road to complete ruin. He keeps company with Careless, much as carelessness is Charles's most distinct trait. Thus, as Charles continues to keep carelessness in his house, much as he keeps Careless in his house, he continues to destroy himself.

### **Act 4, Scene 1 Summary**

Charles, Careless, Mr. Moses, and Sir Oliver enter the portrait room in Charles's house and Charles holds a sham auction to sell off the paintings that it holds. After listing off the names and accomplishments of a few of his illustrious forebears and selling the paintings to Sir Oliver, Charles finally decides to just sell off the rest of the lot for 300 pounds. However, when Sir Oliver points to his own portrait and asks how much it will cost, Charles refuses to sell it. In fact, even when Sir Oliver offers to purchase his own painting for over 400 pounds, Charles still refuses to sell it, since Sir Oliver was very good to him. Of course, Sir Oliver is very pleased to hear that his nephew holds him in such high regard, so he is finally convinced that Charles does have some worth after all.

After Sir Oliver and Mr. Moses leave, Rowley enters. Then, since Charles has someone there to give him some assistance, Charles tells Rowley to cash the check that Sir Oliver has given him and give 100 pounds to Stanley in order to help him out of his troubles.

### **Act 4, Scene 1 Analysis**

Though Charles is more than willing to sell off the portraits of his departed family members, he refuses to sell Sir Oliver's portrait, since Sir Oliver has often helped him. Thus, Charles finally shows that he does have some courage and honesty in his veins. While it is bad that Charles would so easily dispose of his family portraits, those family members are dead and gone. However, Sir Oliver has actually helped Charles and he is noble enough to honor his uncle by keeping his portrait. Then, after Charles finally shows some worth in his uncle's eyes, he shows the audience that he does, in fact, have a very good heart, since he tells Rowley to dispatch 100 pounds to Stanley, who needs the money more than he does.

### **Act 4, Scene 2 Summary**

Mr. Moses and Sir Oliver are in Charles's parlor and Mr. Moses points out that all the stories about Charles are true. However, Sir Oliver is impressed that Charles refused to sell the portrait of Sir Oliver, which Sir Oliver appreciates greatly. Then, when Rowley enters and reports that Charles has dispatched him to give money to Stanley, Sir Oliver is even more impressed with his nephew, since the 100 pounds could be used to placate the creditors who are waiting to speak with Charles. Thus, Sir Oliver says that he will pay off Charles's debts himself.

### **Act 4, Scene 2 Analysis**

Though Sir Oliver has seen Charles at his worst, he has also seen that Charles is still noble beneath the surface. Thus, Sir Oliver is shown to be a good judge of character, since he can look past Charles's roguishness and find the good in him.

### **Act 4, Scene 3 Summary**

Lady Teazle meets Joseph Surface at his house in order to consummate their affair and make plans for the future. Lady Teazle is, of course, angry at her husband for his unwillingness to give her money. She wishes that he would finally allow Maria to marry Charles, if for no other reason than that it would mean that Sir Peter would stop complaining about it. However, Joseph plays the part of the concerned man and pretends that his worries about Maria and Charles are simply worries about her own well-being.

Lady Teazle and Joseph are interrupted when Sir Peter arrives to meet with Joseph. Unfortunately for Lady Teazle, she is trapped, since she does not want her husband to know that she is visiting with Joseph. Joseph hides her behind a screen so that Sir Peter will be none the wiser.

Sir Peter comes into the room and sits down to discuss Lady Teazle with Joseph. In fact, Sir Peter is there to tell Joseph that he suspects that Lady Teazle is attracted to another man, though Sir Peter actually believes it is Charles and not Joseph to whom she has turned her affections. Of course, Joseph pretends that this cannot be true and he speaks highly of Lady Teazle and her fidelity. However, Sir Peter admits that it probably is true and he realizes that it is inevitable that she, a young woman, would fall for a man who is much younger. Thus, rather than continue to make both his life and his wife's life miserable, he has decided to allow her to live independently until his death, when she will receive the bulk of his estate.

With this said, Joseph's servant announces that Charles is there and wishes to speak with his brother. Of course, Sir Peter wants to eavesdrop on Charles and see what he has to say, so he makes

for the screen that Lady Teazle is hiding behind. He is surprised when he sees a lady's petticoats behind the screen and he wonders who she is and what she is doing there. Joseph explains that it is a French milliner he has been seeing and he begs Sir Peter not to look at her. Then, he hides Sir Peter in the closet.

Charles comes into the room and Joseph asks him about Lady Teazle. Of course, Charles has had nothing to do with her and he says so, but he also notes that he has some suspicions about Lady Teazle and her attentions to Joseph. Joseph quickly hushes him and explains that Sir Peter is hiding in the closet and can hear everything they are saying.

When Charles hears this, he immediately commands Sir Peter to come out into the open. With everything clear, Sir Peter is placated and he no longer distrusts Charles. However, when Joseph is called away by his servant, Sir Peter hatches a plan to embarrass Joseph. Since Joseph has been quietly seeing a young woman and she is in the room, Sir Peter and Charles should pull aside the screen and see who she is. Of course, when Charles pulls the screen aside, he is astounded to find Lady Teazle behind it.

When Joseph enters, Sir Peter demands to know what is going on between the Joseph and his wife. Joseph concocts an elaborate but believable lie that convinces Sir Peter that his wife's visit was benign. However, Lady Teazle will not hear of it and she comes clean to her husband. She also admits she was surprised to hear that Sir Peter loves her enough to give her independence now and a healthy inheritance upon his death and she realizes that she is very happy with her husband. She hopes Sir Peter will forgive her and take her back.

#### **Act 4, Scene 3 Analysis**

When Sir Peter tells Charles that Joseph has a young woman hiding behind the screen, Charles is surprised that his overly moral brother would do such a thing. This shows that Joseph's image as the moral and upright young man is so complete that even his own brother cannot see behind it.

In this scene, several things are made clear to the characters, including Sir Peter's love for his wife and Joseph's hypocrisy. Thus, this scene shows that events are working toward a satisfactory conclusion so that everything will be made clear and all wounds will be healed. This foreshadows Sir Oliver's ability to look behind Joseph's outward morality and see the rotten core in his nephew, thus allowing Sir Oliver to make the right choice and give his inheritance to Charles.

#### **Act 5, Scene 1 Summary**

Sir Oliver has arrived at Joseph's house pretending to be Stanley, but Joseph does not want to see him. In fact, Joseph is in a vile mood after Sir Peter discovered his wife behind the screen, because now he has lost Lady Teazle and the rumors of the event will ruin his chances with Maria. Thus, just as Sir Oliver and Rowley enter the room, Joseph walks out. Needless to say, this leaves Sir Oliver with a bad first impression of his nephew.

When Joseph returns, Sir Oliver explains that he (i.e. Stanley) is in dire straits and he is forced to ask Joseph for money. However, Joseph explains that he has no money to give him, since he is in very straitened circumstances himself. Though Sir Oliver points out that he has heard that Joseph's uncle (i.e. himself) has sent plenty of money to him, Joseph says that it is false. In fact, Joseph says that he has received nothing from his uncle and, furthermore, his uncle is a greedy miser. Though Sir Oliver is

none too happy with this assessment of himself and he curses his nephew for his lies on the inside, he graciously offers his best wishes and leaves.

After Sir Oliver leaves, Rowley enters and informs Joseph that Sir Oliver has arrived in London. Of course, Joseph is not happy to hear this, since he has just finished speaking ill of his uncle, but he promises to meet with Sir Oliver.

### **Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis**

In this scene Joseph first curses at his servant and then refuses to help a relation - Stanley - who is in bad circumstances. Thus, Joseph is showing his true colors by badly treating people who are of lower social station. This is indicative of the idea that people are best judged not by their attitudes toward their equals or betters, but by their attitudes toward people lower than them.

### **Act 5, Scene 2 Summary**

Candour, Sneerwell, Backbite, and Crabtree are all at Sir Peter's house, discussing the events that so recently transpired at Joseph Surface's house. However, their information is all wrong, since some of them think that it was actually Charles and not Joseph who was caught with Lady Teazle. Furthermore, they seem to think that Sir Peter was wounded in a duel with either swords or pistols and is at death's door. Thus, when Sir Oliver enters, everyone seems to think that he is a physician who is there to treat Sir Peter's wounds.

However, the whole affair is cleared up when Sir Peter walks in, quite healthy and hearty, and he explains that it was Joseph who had designs on his wife. Then, sick to death of all their talking and gossiping, he orders them to leave.

Once Sneerwell and her companions are finally gone, Sir Oliver and Rowley, wishing to bait Sir Peter, tell him that Sir Oliver has decided to give his inheritance to Joseph. Of course, Sir Peter is infuriated by the idea and demands that Sir Oliver do no such thing. However, Sir Oliver and Rowley cannot keep up the pretence and they laugh about the whole affair. However, Sir Peter does not find anything funny in the events of the day, since the news will be all over the papers and he will never be able to show his face in public again.

Despite the disaster at Joseph's house, things do seem to be looking better for Sir Peter's home life, as it seems that Lady Teazle is eager to make up with her husband. Sir Oliver leaves them alone so that Sir Peter and his wife can make amends. However, Sir Peter is still too angry with his wife to go to her, so he and Rowley leave her in order to allow her to suffer in solitude.

### **Act 5, Scene 2 Analysis**

When the news of Joseph and Lady Teazle reaches Sneerwell and her cohorts, they put together an account that is not only misguided, it is entirely wrong. This shows that spreading scandal is not only morally wrong, but the story itself is often so far from the mark that it is completely worthless. Thus, rather than spreading rumors, people should simply accept the fact that the rumors are empty and they should ignore them.

### **Act 5, Scene 3 Summary**

Joseph and Lady Sneerwell are discussing their ability to save the situation with themselves and Maria and Charles, but there does not seem to be any solution that would cure the situation quickly.

Joseph hopes there might still be a way out of their troubles, but Lady Sneerwell does not share his optimistic appraisal of the situation and she leaves in order to sulk about this recent disaster.

At this point, Sir Oliver arrives, but Joseph is still under the impression that he is Stanley and he wants his uncle to leave. Sir Oliver has no desire to correct his wayward nephew, so he pretends he is there to speak with Sir Oliver and hopefully get some money from him. Joseph will have no part of it and he attempts to physically push Sir Oliver out of his house.

While Joseph is attempting to forcibly remove Sir Oliver, Charles arrives and wonders why Joseph is manhandling his broker, Mr. Premium, in such a manner. Of course, Joseph wonders what he is talking about, since he is under the impression that Sir Oliver is Stanley. Thus, the two brothers disagree about Sir Oliver's real name, but they do agree that, no matter what his name is, they don't want him there when they finally meet Sir Oliver. Thus, they both attempt to shove Sir Oliver out the door so they can cover up their respective crimes.

As this is going on, Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Rowley, and Maria arrive and they are all surprised to see Sir Oliver being treated in this way. However, it is not until Sir Peter mentions who Sir Oliver is that Joseph and Charles finally understand everything. Needless to say, they are both flabbergasted, but only Joseph attempts to explain away his actions. In fact, Charles makes scant apology for selling the family portraits, but he does say that he is simply happy to finally see his benefactor. However, the biggest shock comes when Maria says that she has given up on Charles, since she believes Charles has been trying to have an affair with Lady Teazle.

Fortunately, Snake and Lady Sneerwell enter and the entire situation is cleared up. As Snake explains it, Sir Oliver has paid him to admit he forged letters that seem to have been sent between Lady Teazle and Charles. Thus, Maria's concerns about Charles are both explained and wiped away, while Joseph and Sneerwell's villainies have been exposed. Thus, everything is clear, Charles is named as Sir Oliver's heir, Lady Teazle and Sir Peter are reconciled, and Charles tells Maria that he will try to reform his ways, if only so that he can be worthy of her.

### **Act 5, Scene 3 Analysis**

The fact that Snake is willing to do a good deed, but he does not want people to know it, shows that he is, in some sense, reformed. Though he admits that he has a distinct interest in maintaining his reputation as a swindler, he is also somewhat noble in his willingness to not take credit for his good deed. Rather than seeking praise for his improvement, he is content to do a good deed. Thus, walking on the right path for once is something of a private reward for him that does not need to be recognized by other peoples' accolades in order to make it worthwhile.

### **Epilogue Summary**

Lady Teazle admits she is not eager to leave London for the country, but she understands that it is for the best. After all, London is a place of many temptations and she can reform her ways more effectively by living a quiet life of contentment away from the bustling streets.

### **Epilogue Analysis**

The epilogue, which is spoken by Lady Teazle, shows that she is ready to reform her ways after diving into the vile cesspool of London society. In fact, the very idea that she enjoys the excitement of the city shows that she is eager to better herself. This is because she is giving up something

she enjoys so she can learn how to be a better person. After all, vices are tempting because they are enjoyable. Thus, rather than enjoy her vices, Lady Teazle is willing to put them aside so that she can live a life of contentment as she attempts to make her life and the life of her husband into pleasures instead of curses.

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### **9.3 The Major Themes Discussed In The Play**

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#### **Honor**

Initially honor seems to be in short supply in *School for Scandal*: The gossips are completely without honor; Lady Teazle is considering abandoning the lessons about honor that she learned growing up in the country; Joseph is ready to betray his brother to secure a wealthy wife; and Charles is hopelessly in debt to moneylenders. Even Sir Oliver, whose honor should be above question, is ready to assume a disguise to test his nephews' honor.

By the conclusion of the play, however, it is clear that only the gossips have no true honor. Lady Teazle realizes that she values her husband and that she has more honor than her friends had supposed. Charles, though foolish and intemperate with gambling and money, is honorable. He pays his debts, if slowly, and he is willing to help a poor relation without being asked. Sir Oliver's deception unmasks Joseph's hypocrisy. And the moneylender, Moses, is a man of so much honor that he assists Charles in managing his debts.

#### **Morality**

Sheridan asks his audience to question the morality of society in this play. Slandering one's neighbors, acquaintances, and friends is an entertainment. There is no real interest in the truth—and even less consideration is given to the damage that such gossip causes.

In the early acts of *School for Scandal*, the subjects of such gossip are not known to the audience, who cannot determine the truth of Lady Sneerwell and Mrs. Candour's observations. But by the last act, it becomes clear that these gossips need absolutely no element of truth to fuel their stories. The felling of the screen in Joseph's library—and the confrontation that took place immediately after—are fresh in the audience's mind. This earlier scene serves as a nice contrast to the speculation and innuendo that engages the gossips. Although it is all comedy, it is comedy that teaches a lesson to the audience.

#### **Sentiment**

*School for Scandal* is generally regarded as a refutation of the sentimental drama that was prevalent on the London stage prior to and during Sheridan's era. Sentiment was much admired as a replacement for the debauchery of Restoration comedy, but it often proved bland and boring. Often the protagonists were pure to the point of generic bland-ness. In Sheridan's play, Joseph Surface is much admired for his sentiment. Conversely, his brother Charles is chastised because he is not the man of sentiment that his brother is: "He is a man of sentiment... there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment." That Joseph is really not at all noble or admirable makes Sir Peter's compliment more damning and more a mockery of this eighteenth-century convention.

#### **Truth and Falsehood**

Trying to determine the truth occupies much of Sheridan's play. Lady Sneerwell and Snake are

engaged in deception and falsehood, and Joseph is willing to bend the truth to get what he wants. When Sir Oliver, disguised as old Stanley, approaches Joseph to ask for money, Joseph easily lies that he has no money. He even blames his brother, Charles, stating that Charles's free-spending has left Joseph without funds. Of course the gossips have no interest in the truth; their goal is to entertain one another with wild speculation. When compared to such exciting exaggerations as theirs, reality—and the truth—is boring.

### **Wealth**

This is certainly a play about wealth. The poor in London were much too busy trying to find shelter and food to engage in such idle distractions as gossip or gaming. Wealth really sets the characters in this play apart from the rest of society. For instance, Sir Peter complains that his wife spends too much on silk dresses and fresh out-of-season flowers. Charles spends his money gaming and drinking with his friends, and the moneylenders are on their way to being wealthy, thanks to idle young men such as Charles. Maria is the object of Joseph's plotting only because she is wealthy, and Sir Oliver is primarily interested in the morals of his nephews because he plans to leave them his wealth.

### **Style**

#### **Act**

A major division in a drama. In Greek plays the sections of the drama signified by the appearance of the chorus were usually divided into five acts. This is the formula for most serious drama from the Greeks to the Romans and to Elizabethan playwrights like William Shakespeare. The five acts denote the structure of dramatic action. They are exposition, complication, climax, falling action, and catastrophe. The five act structure was followed until the nineteenth century when Henrik Ibsen (*A Doll's House*) revolutionized dramatic structure by combining elements into fewer acts.

*School for Scandal* is a five act play. The exposition occurs in the first act when the audience learns of Lady Sneerwell and Joseph's plan to break up the romance between Charles and Maria; the audience also meets the gossips. By the end of Act U, the complication, the audience has met Sir Oliver and knows that he plans to test his nephews' morality. The climax occurs in the third act when Charles meets his uncle disguised as a moneylender and agrees to sell him the family portraits.

The conflict between Maria and her guardian, Sir Peter, is revealed when she refuses his request to allow Joseph to court her. There are several near misses as a series of visits, Lady Teazle and her husband, Charles, and Lady Sneerwell all arrive at Joseph's. As Lady Teazle and her husband each hide in separate areas and each peek to see what is occurring, the screen finally provides the falling action, and the catastrophe occurs in the last act when Sir Oliver's arrival restores order and Sir Peter is reconciled with Maria and Charles.

### **Plot**

This term refers to the pattern of events. Generally plots should have a beginning, a middle, and a conclusion, but they may also be a series of episodes connected together. Basically, the plot provides the author with the means to explore primary themes. Students are often confused by the two terms; but themes explore ideas and plots simply relate what happens in a very obvious manner.

Thus the plot of *School for Scandal* is the story of how Joseph and Lady Sneerwell each try to lie their way to getting what they want, while its parallel plot is how Sir Oliver attempts to discover

the truth about his nephews. But the themes are those of falsehood (in the form of malicious gossip), honesty, true love, and a rejection of sentiment as a virtue.

### **Setting**

The time, place, and culture in which the action of the play takes place is called the setting. The elements of setting may include geographic location, physical or mental environments, prevailing cultural attitudes, or the historical time in which the action takes place. The location for Sheridan's play is London during the eighteenth century—more specifically, it is set in London's richer quarters. No exact time markers are provided, but the action takes place during a short period of time.

### **Character**

A person in a dramatic work. The actions of each character are what constitute the story. Character can also include the idea of a particular individual's morality. Characters can range from simple stereotypical figures to more complex multi-faceted ones. Characters may also be defined by personality traits, such as the rogue or the damsel in distress. "Characterization" is the process of creating a lifelike person from an author's imagination. To accomplish this the author provides the character with personality traits that help define who he will be and how he will behave in a given situation.

School for Scandal provides two types of characters. There are traditional heroes and villains and a vulnerable young woman. But some characters are also denned by his or her name. Lady Sneerwell clearly does a good job of sneering contemptuously at everyone else. And Backbiter lives up to his name as well. Charles and Joseph's natures are revealed in their surname, Surface, indicating that they are somewhat superficial characters interested in appearances.

### **Genre**

Genres are a way of categorizing literature Genre is a French term that means "kind" or "type." Genre can refer to both the category of literature such as tragedy, comedy, epic, poetry, or pastoral. It can also include modern forms of literature such as drama novels or short stories. This term can also refer to types of literature such as mystery, science fiction, comedy, or romance.

School for Scandal is most frequently classified as a comedy of manners, although it has also been accurately described as social satire and anti-sentimental drama

### **Comedy of Manners**

"Comedy of manners" is a term applied to a type of play that provides a depiction of the very artificial manners and conventions of society. Characters are usually types and not individuals Their names reflect their "type." The dialogue in these plays is witty and is of more interest to the audience than the plot, which serves more as an excuse to deliver humorous lines. The comedy of manners is associated most closely with the Restoration of the late-seventeenth century. But the illicit love affairs and lack of morality that denned the genre eventually resulted in their disappearing from the stage. Shendan revived this genre in the late eighteenth century.

### **Satire**

Satire attempts to blend social commentary with comedy and humor. Satire does not usually attack any individual but rather the institution he or she represents. The intent is to expose

problems and create debate that will lead to a correction of the problem. In *School for Scandal*, Sheridan satirizes a society that is so shallow that gossip and slander—and the destruction of a reputation—are forms of entertainment.

### **Historical Context**

Sheridan's England was a very different one than that of earlier British playwrights. The mid-seventeenth century had brought the German House of Hanover to the English throne. The first two King Georges spoke little English and had no interest in patronizing the arts. Royal patronage, which had supported so many writers in the past, ended. By the time George III became king in 1760, England was more concerned with colonization and reform than with supporting the arts.

While the British were cementing their control over Canada and India, the American colonists were proving themselves restless with Britain's rule. England had always seen itself as a military power; when the discontent in the colonies developed into the American Revolutionary War, which the British ultimately lost, George III took the news badly. But George III, who had always been popular with his subjects, was ill and at the mercy of his son who constantly plotted to seize the throne.

At the same time, the industrialization of England had resulted in an even sharper division between classes. Industrialization brought a great deal of wealth to England but little of it found its way to the working class or the poor. What the poor had, instead, was even less than before. With the Enclosure Act, the lower class were shifted from the country, losing a simple existence that permitted them to grow some of their food and trade for their needs.

With no where else to go, these displaced people moved into London. There was little shelter and even fewer jobs to greet them. But there was cheap gin, and public drunkenness became a serious problem. But there were also public executions to entertain the poor and prisons for those who could not pay their debts. For those with money, there was tobacco and opium. There were coffeehouses, where tea was served more frequently than coffee, and men met there to drink and talk and read the newspapers.

Women were usually excluded from these social activities, but they did make attempts at social integration and suffrage (the right to vote). Gambling was a proper occupation for gentlemen, as was the visiting of brothels. While paying a prostitute for sex or having a mistress was acceptable for men, the same behavior was not permitted for women.

Ladies of the eighteenth century were to be chaste and early marriage was encouraged to ensure this; girls could wed at twelve years-of-age. Still, no such high standard interfered with men's behavior.

By the last half of the eighteenth century, drama had almost disappeared from the theatre. There were many great actors, but few playwrights were creating memorable work. There was little incentive for good writing. The playwright collected only the third, sixth, and sometimes (if the play lasted), ninth nights' profits. Theatre owners and actors, however, made a great deal of money. Still, theatre flourished, and several of London's more notable drama houses (including Sheridan's own Drury Lane Theatre) were established in the 1700s.

Surrounding the theatres were brothels, and this reflected the dual nature of the city. London was a complex city, and, in many ways, it reflected the chaos of the royal family. There were huge stores

that imported the finest objects from around the world, and the city was crowded with artisans and street singers. The municipality tried to keep the streets cleaned and sewers were being built. But coal dust turned the buildings black and covered everything in its path. And on the edge of all this civility the slums existed. Sewage was dumped into the river Thames, and the poor made use with outside privies and slept in the doorways. Whole families shared one room—if they could afford it.

The city overflowed with life and vitality, but there were two distinct worlds present. One of the rigidly defined life of society, where social convention ruled behavior. This is the world of Sheridan's *School for Scandal*. The other world lay just outside the theatre's doors. Those dark, depressed, and often twisted lives would not be the subject of plays until the next century.

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## 9.4 Critical Overview

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*School for Scandal* opened in May 1777 to enthusiastic audiences. Since it appeared at the end of the London theatre season, it played only twenty performances before the season closed, but Sheridan's play reappeared the following season for an additional forty-five performances. Since few plays enjoyed runs of more than fifteen performances, *School for Scandal* was, by prevailing standards, a success.

In the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Mark S. Auburn noted that “the play engendered wildly enthusiastic support. Passing by the outer walls of Drury Lane just as the famous screen fell and the audience exploded in laughter and applause, a journalist of that day claimed to have run for his life in fear that the building was collapsing.”

The reason for the play's success, stated Auburn, is “the witty repartee of fashionable society, the Cain-and-Abel motif, and the delightful recitation of the May-and-December theme.” Richard C. Taylor, writing in *Sheridan Studies*, noted a different reason for the play's success. Taylor stated that critics overlooked the play's faults because they “recognized the topicality of Sheridan's moral concern and that Sheridan was targeting hypocrisy.” Still, both Auburn and Taylor felt that *School for Scandal* was very popular with audiences and with reviewers. The audience appreciated the plot, especially since gossip had become an important feature in newspapers of the time (a foreshadowing of the gossip-frenzy that dominates many forms of multimedia information in the twentieth century).

But besides plot, Sheridan himself had ensured the play's success by opening it after a popular revival of William Congreve's comedies at Drury Lane. Sheridan eliminated some of the more offensive sexuality, and Congreve's work, which had been unpopular in recent years, received generally good reviews. When Sheridan opened *School for Scandal* immediately after showcasing three of Congreve's comedies, the critics quickly drew comparisons between the two dramatists. Suddenly Sheridan was the new comedic playwright of his generation, just as Congreve had been in his era.

Several critics, who made the intended connection between Congreve and Sheridan, pronounced Sheridan's work the superior while additionally congratulating him on resurrecting Congreve's reputation. In an examination of Sheridan's ties to Congreve, Eric Rump included several of the 1777 reviews of *School for Scandal* in an essay for *Sheridan Studies*. For instance, the reviewer for *The Gazetter* applauded Sheridan's “Manly sentiments, entirely divested of affectation, and which are conveyed to the heart through the purest channels of wit” But an even more important compliment follows when the same reviewer stated that Sheridan's work presents a real challenge to Congreve's “royal supremacy.”

The reviewer for the *London Evening Post* celebrated *School for Scandal*'s “wit and fancy...

decency and morals.” Sheridan, stated the same reviewer, demonstrates that “the standard of real comedy is once more unfurled.” Seven years later, the connection to Congreve was not forgotten; a critic for the *Universal Magazine* wrote that Sheridan’s play “has indeed the beauties of Congreve’s comedies, without their faults; its plot is deeply enough perplexed, without forcing one to labour to unravel it; its incidents sufficient without being too numerous; its wit pure; its situations truly dramatic.”

*School for Scandal* has endured as a popular play worthy of revival. The work was produced in England in 1990, and while the language, dress, and behavior appear alien to modern audiences, the revival still found appreciative viewers. The 1990 London production’s director, Peter Woods, stated in *Sheridan Studies* that the characters are difficult, since “Nobody’s fond of anybody.”

The play is more difficult to stage in the contemporary dramatic era because audiences are too far removed from the issues presented in the play. The falling screen is still considered funny, but the context is not as filled with tension. Adultery and divorce are simply not as scandalous to a twentieth-century audience. Whereas a 1777 London audience would be tense with anticipation that Lady Teazle might be discovered, with the falling screen providing an explosion of laughter and release, a modern audience might only appreciate the slapstick nature of the scene. Woods described *School for Scandal* as “an artificial comedy about an artificial society in an artificial city.”

An additional reason for the difficulty in staging the play is the anti-Semitism in its references to moneylending. Contemporary audiences are not comfortable with this, said Taylor, and the sections cannot be cut without compromising an important part of the play. Still, many of the societal malignancies that Sheridan sought to criticize are just as prevalent in modern society as they were during the playwright’s lifetime. Combined with its distinction as a model comedy of manners, these touchstones to contemporary life allow *School for Scandal* to be appreciated by generations of audiences.

### **Critical Essay #1**

In this essay, Metzger discusses the merits of viewing a production of *School for Scandal* as opposed to merely reading the play. She also discusses the cultural problems—notably the anti-Semitism that is woven throughout the drama—that prevents a wider contemporary audience from embracing and fully appreciating Sheridan’s work.

I often tell my students that a play needs to be seen and heard to be properly appreciated. Reading a play requires an ability to visualize, and it is very difficult to manage this visualization without a careful scrutiny of the stage directions and some experience reading drama. This notion is especially true for Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s, *School for Scandal*, which makes the reader wish for a fine production to view.

In the fourth act when Lady Teazle and Sir Peter are each peeking out of their respective hiding places, and Joseph is cautioning each to retreat, the reader can only imagine the fun occurring on stage. But when the screen falls later in that same act and Lady Teazle is exposed, this bit of slapstick demands to be seen. Mark S. Auburn related in *Sheridan Studies* that anyone passing by the theatre during that scene would have heard the riotous laughter of the audience that erupted from the theatre. This type of comedy was an early inspiration for the silly situation comedies that are a staple of television viewing; but if this play is so funny, why is it so infrequently staged?

Some critics suggest that the language is stilted or the subject matter not topical. When Peter Wood was interviewed about his 1990 production of *School for Scandal*, he expressed the opinion that

the public might be developing a new appreciation for the rhythm and tone of language such as Sheridan's. And while it is true that the comedy of manners motif might be of less interest to twentieth-century audiences, it is certain that with tabloid journalism an especially hot topic on television and in mainstream newspapers, the public's interest in gossip, or in a play that satirizes gossip, should be apparent.

But if language and topic do not limit the play's reception, what other reasons might? One possibility is offered by Richard Taylor, who suggested in *Sheridan Studies* that the play's anti-Semitism may present a problem for audiences. Taylor asserted that "the anti-Semitism that runs through *School for Scandal* produces palpable discomfort in contemporary audiences, and no amount of directorial cutting easily eliminates it."

Anti-Semitism was a part of eighteenth-century English life. An act that would have permitted Jews to become naturalized citizens was repealed immediately when anti-Semitic street mobs loudly protested the law. When Moses is introduced in Act III of *School for Scandal*, his name is prefaced with the character descriptor "Honest." Since it was Moses who led the Jews from Egypt to their salvation during the Biblical Exodus, the audience should expect that this Moses will help Charles to his reward. But as important as his name is the qualifier that comes before it. Sheridan places great emphasis on "honest," using the word many times to describe Moses. The obvious inference is that Moses is an exception: moneylenders are stereotyped as dishonest.

The same is true for the overly used "friend" or "friendly." If descriptions of Moses must note his friendliness, then the point is made that most moneylenders are not their client's friends. Historically Jews have been identified with usury or moneylending, and in *School for Scandal*, Sheridan also identifies Jews as dishonest and unfriendly—proven by the fact that Moses's honesty and friendship are repeatedly inferred as anomalous to both his race and occupation.

In *School for Scandal*, to be a moneylender is to be a cheat. Sir Oliver is told that to be successful in his disguise, he must demand 50% interest. And if the subject seems especially desperate, then 100% interest would be appropriate. Thus, to be a successful moneylender, one must also be greedy, unfeeling, and unsympathetic. In Sheridan's play, Jews must even look different from other men. Sir Oliver asks if he shall be able to pass for a Jew. The response is that this moneylender is a broker—a step up socially, and since he is also a Christian, Sir Oliver's appearance will be satisfactory.

The text never explains what a Jew should look like, but Sir Oliver's "smart dress" is in keeping for a broker though not a moneylender. Sir Oliver is even told that moneylenders talk differently than other men. All of these points create an image of Jews that sets them apart from other businessmen. The implication is that Jewish businessmen are different—in clothing, in speech, and in morality. While this depiction would have raised little concern in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, twentieth-century audiences have the example of the Holocaust. The realization that anti-Semitism is never harmless and never acceptable intrudes on the otherwise light-themed *School for Scandal*. It cannot and should not be forgotten, and since the scenes with Moses and the disguised Sir Oliver form an important section of the text, their deletion would be nearly impossible.

If its portrayal of moneylenders detracts from *School for Scandal*, Sheridan's glimpse at the morals and social manners of the period do offer much for an audience to appreciate. As Louis Kronenberger observed, this is a play with a "sense of naughtiness"; this "play is concerned with the imputation of sinning; of sin itself there is absolutely nothing. No one ever actually commits a sin. The

actors only talk about sin.”

Of course, it could be argued that slander and gossip is in itself a sin, and Sheridan might have agreed; but for the audience, gossip is the subject of satire, and satire’s result is laughter. All this talk about sin, accompanied by its absence, is a departure from Restoration theatre. The comedy of manners of the earlier century emphasized sexuality and sexual situations, and the writers relied on the titillation of the audience as a necessary component of comedy. But Sheridan’s play offered a fresh voice. There is a mystery associated with what is hidden by shadow.

As Kronenberger noted, “sin now seems far more wicked and important than it used to.” All of this absence of sex might be as equally refreshing to modern audiences who have become jaded by the explicit sexuality portrayed in film and drama. When Kronenberger stated that with *School for Scandal*, “we are back in an age when sex has become glamorous through being illicit,” I am reminded of the popularity of Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s. The audience could anticipate a happy resolution. Romance ended in weddings, but only after one of the stars had resisted illicit temptation. This is also the happy ending of *School for Scandal*

Although romance provides the play’s happy ending, very little of the play is actually concerned with the romance that ends the play. Maria has a very small part, and there is little interaction on stage between her and Charles, little to exemplify the devotion they profess for one another. The romance between Lady Teazle and Sir Peter is given greater emphasis. And although they are married, it is their discovery of romance that offers much entertainment for the audience.

Auburn related that Sheridan rejected the stock depiction of May-December romance. How to recreate a new approach to a familiar story was a challenge, and Auburn said that “in an early version [Sheridan] toyed with a harsh cuckolding story like Chaucer’s “Miller’s Tale” and Wycherley’s *Country Wife* (1675), but in the final version he sought and achieved the amiable tone of Georgian comedy.” The couple’s happy resolution is based on an awareness of their love for one another. Lady Teazle’s country origins, which led her to believe that Lady Sneerwell represented fashion, help remind the young bride of why she chose to marry. And Sir Peter, who had too often focused on his age, recognized that although he might be old enough to be Lady Teazle’s father, he was, instead, her husband.

Sheridan’s decision to soften the relationship between Lady Teazle and her husband was also noted by Rose Snider, who compared Sheridan’s handling of May-December romance to that of Wycherley and Congreve. Snider stated that Sir Peter “reacts in a more gentlemanly fashion” than Wycherley or Congreve’s similarly challenged husbands. Accordingly, “Sir Peter Teazle is a far pleasanter person than the earlier prototypes.” Snider pointed out that the Teazles introduce some sentiment into the comedy; thus, Sheridan’s play is more pleasant for the audience, as well.

Lady Teazle and Sir Peter are, as Aubrey de Selincourt noted, stock characters. The task for Sheridan was to make these familiar characters interesting. Sheridan does succeed, says de Selincourt, “with unsurpassed brilliance and precision.” In *School for Scandal*, Sheridan creates a genuinely comic moment with the falling screen; it is sincerely funny because the audience likes these two characters. A cuckold husband and an unfaithful wife do not invite the audience’s loyalty, but Sheridan creates two characters the audience can like. Their discovery of one another’s value provides a more genuine appreciation of romance than the too brief framing of Maria and Charles’s courtship.

Source: ShenMetzger for *Drama for Students*, Gale, 1998

## Critical Essay #2

Copeland reviews a Stratford Festival production of Sheridan's play. While finding the text as theatrical and resilient as ever, the critic was less than impressed with the production.

As conceived by Robin Phillips, *The School for Scandal* displays a harsh and glittering world of exquisite beauty and viciousness, where sentimental sobriety—when genuine—is the only refuge from the savagery that lies in wait for vitality and virtue. Phillips has read the play as a piece of senous social criticism, with decidedly mixed results- his version of this classic comedy of manners is thought-provoking, visually stunning, but finally a failure.

Sheridan wittily exhibits the machinations of the hypocritical Joseph Surface, who joins with the malicious Lady Sneerwell in a campaign of slander originally designed to obtain his uncle Oliver's fortune and the hand of the wealthy Maria by the destruction of his brother Charles's reputation, but which eventually expands to threaten the marriage of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. In his program note, Phillips emphasizes the importance of reputation in a mercantile society, where to lose respectability is literally to lose "credit." In such an environment, the power of Lady Sneerwell and her "scandalous college" of gossips is no laughing matter, and Phillips's production takes its tone from the seriousness of their crime. The characterizations are subdued, the comedy is underplayed: the audience is never allowed to forget that the events it is witnessing could end as easily in suffering as in happiness.

Flamboyant performances are therefore the rare exception in this School. As that victim of a May-September marriage, Sir Peter Teazle, William Hurt is a sober, tender husband, whose very irascibility is restrained. He is seen at his most characteristic in his Act III scene with his young wife, where his childlike delight in her affection succumbs with reluctance to her attacks, to be replaced by deeply felt hurt, rather than rage, when her wounding remarks struck home. His violent emotions are reserved for his ward Maria, whom he reduces to tears with his attempt to bully her into accepting Joseph as her husband. Douglas Campbell's excellent Sir Oliver is almost equally grave, although he is captivatingly comic during the debt-ridden Charles's private auction of the family portraits and in his encounter with the slanderers who gather at Sir Peter's door to gloat over Lady Teazle's apparent indiscretion with Joseph. Susan Wright's Mrs. Candour typifies the treatment of Sheridan's wit in this production, delivering her catalogue of scandal in a matter-of-fact tone that underlines the speech's audacity while it almost eradicates its humor. Only Richard Curnock and Keith Dinicol, as the arriviste gossips Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite, are allowed to fully exploit the comedy of their roles, to the considerable delight of the audience.

Sheila McCarthy combines these two approaches to delineate this production's central action: the maturation of Lady Teazle. In her first scene McCarthy emphasizes the broad comedy of her role, playing a squeaky-voiced caricature of an empty-headed flirt as she tantalizes and torments her hapless spouse with her childlike longings for fashionable extravagancies. But in the course of her trials at the hands of Colm Feore's lascivious Joseph and the chorus of scandalmongers, she gradually adopts the subdued style of the more experienced characters, as the enthusiastic girl dwindles into the sedate—but safe—wife. The diminished Lady Teazle of the last act is the poignant symbol of the price to be paid for social security in Phillip's London.

This autumnal drama is played out most clearly in the visual aspect of the production. Michael Eagan's set is a vision of geometric opulence: a long, narrow thrust covered in white tile with a metallic border, terminated upstage by an enormous moveable three-tiered cage, in white and silver, that

perfectly balances the proportions of the playing area. The spare luxury of the set is matched by an enormous silver rocking horse that appears, surrounded by a chorus of dancers and a fireworks display, in a spectacular entr'acte representing the temptations of fashionable London. Anne Curtis's equally lavish costumes provide an emblematic commentary on the action through a general movement from white and beige in the early scenes, punctuated dramatically by Lady Teazle's orange hair and gown and the complete blackness of Snake's costume, toward more sombre colors, as the circumstances of Charles and the Teazles became more precarious. Matters are at their darkest when the vultures descend on the house of the supposedly cuckolded Sir Peter dressed in deep brown and carrying black umbrellas. The arrival of Sir Oliver in fawn and Sir Peter in an oatmeal-colored coat prepared the way for the denouement, in which the blacks and dark browns of the evil characters are ranged against the sensibly muted buffs and beiges of the virtuous. Maria arrives for her happy ending dressed in realistic beige and brown stripes, while the chastened Lady Teazle appears in very pale peach.

The emblematic quality of the costuming is echoed in Phillips's use of tableaux. The prologue is set against a spectacle of voyeurism: while Sir Peter describes the evils of slanderous newspaper paragraphs, upstage, inside the cage, Lady Teazle exhibits herself in a state of undress to a crowd of scandalized gawkers. Once again surrounded by an attendant crowd, she delivers the epilogue from the back of the silver rocking horse amid darkness and dry ice, the spotlight image of her wistful lament for her lost pleasures. The prologue tableau is preceded by a mysterious sound effect—a prop-driven airplane—but the use of sound is generally more straightforward, indeed, prosaic: music underlines moment of turmoil and sentiment; Snake is accompanied by a synthesized rattle and hiss. Even the lighting design functions symbolically, reinforcing the theme of relentless social scrutiny by the frequent use of spotlights.

By taking Sheridan seriously, Phillips discovers in *The School for Scandal* a critique of urban consumer culture that has unexpected resonance, but his approach is finally self-defeating. His reliance on schematic visual effects betrays the conflict between his interpretation and the text, which promulgates its ethics by means of blatantly theatrical comedy. In the service of his solemn interpretation, Phillips attacks the play's comic structure, retarding its rhythms, evading its comic builds, and eschewing its invitations to physical comedy and broad characterizations. Drained of comic energy, Phillips' *Scandal* is ultimately a lackluster performance, despite its considerable intelligence and beauty, and, as such, a misrepresentation of Sheridan's work.

Source: Nancy Copeland, review of *The School for Scandal* in *Theatre Journal*, Volume 40, no 3, October, 1988, pp. 420-21.

### **Critical Essay #3**

Clifford expresses disappointment at being denied the full pleasure of Sheridan's play. Complaining of poor technical values and a general lack of enthusiasm, the critic feels that the play deserves better attention.

To a writer a theatre like the Royal Lyceum is a magic box full of enticing possibilities—to all of which, almost invariably, you are denied access. To an Artistic Director, on the other hand, such a place must more often feel like a black hole—with row after row of empty seats that somehow, night after night, have got to be filled.

The theatre's understandable response to this has been to mount two classic comedies in

repertory—a revival of their immensely successful production of *Tartuffe* in tandem with a new production of Sheridan's *School for Scandal*.

This opened recently to an almost uniformly hostile press, which the production did not really deserve. The Lyceum tends to open with a cheerful free preview and follow it with a press night that almost always falls flat; a strongly self-destructive process to which this in many respects perfectly acceptable show has also fallen victim.

Colin MacNeil's set is an elegant and serviceable rectangular box, fronted by a row of footlights, that neatly and effectively conjures up a feeling of the period; the cast are splendidly bewigged and crinolined; the show looks good, and by the end had enough basic buoyancy to it to ensure that the very special magic exerted by so beautifully structured a comedy would work on its audience.

The basic groundwork was all in place; the show's problems arose because somehow hardly anyone seemed to be working quite as hard or quite as sharply as they could.

One soon began to long, for instance, for a more elegant and imaginative solution to the problems of scene changing than the inevitably shame-faced lackeys embarrassedly shoving bits of false bookshelf off and on the stage, or collapsing and re-erecting chmese screens; and particularly in the first half, when so much of the comedy depends on the words, one could often not stop longing for a cast more totally and incisively in command of the language. In fact it was hard, sometimes, to escape the feeling that most of them, given the chance, would probably have been happier doing something else.

The much stronger theatrical possibilities of the second half seemed to bring out much stronger and more lively performances. The cast's timing picked up, as did their capacity for inventiveness, and they began to approach the whole play with a delightfully infectious relish.

Garry Stewart, for instance, who had been looking wretchedly uncomfortable in wig and rouge as die foppish Benjamin Backbite, approached the part of the dissolute but good-hearted Charles with exactly the right kind of swagger; and Andrew Dallmeyer, who had produced a rather somnabulistically grotesque Crabtree, came into his own as the nameless but wonderfully malevolent lackey to Billy McElhaney's haplessly hypocritical Surface.

Sarah Collier's splendidly piratical Lady Sneer-well—complete with eye-patch—David McKail's pop-eyed and genial Sir Oliver, Gerda Stevenson's bubbly and charming Lady Teazle, all turned out consistent and skilfull performances which were a pleasure to watch. It all added up to a pleasant, entertaining, undemanding sort of evening, which did not quite do justice to the skills and talents of everyone concerned. With stronger direction, a greater sense of commitment and purposefulness, it could easily have added up to a very great deal more.

Source: John Clifford, review of *The School for Scandal* in *Plays and Players*, Number 407, August, 1987, pp. 33-34

#### **Critical Essay #4**

In this uncredited review, a 1963 production of *School for Scandal* receives a favorable appraisal. The critic terms the play as “iridescently enchanting, contagiously amusing.”

The Shoofor Scandal, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, is a kind of dramatic harpsichord. It has surface vivacity rather than inner strength. It has elegance of style rather than profundity of substance. Thumped by realism's heavy hand, it would jangle and go mute; stroked with exquisite artifice, it

enchants and amuses. The present import from Britain, top-star- ‘ ring Sir John Gielgud and Sir Ralph Richardson, is iridescently enchanting, contagiously amusing.

Gielgud is Joseph Surface, the hypocrite as moral snob, a kind of holier-than-thou heel. Richardson is Sir Peter Teazle, a crusty, crestfallen bridegroom in his 50s, loving, but not loved by, young Lady Teazle (Geraldine McEwan), a predatory country kitten so sure of her city ways that her voice seems to be crunching canary-brittle. The ostensible question is: Will Lady Teazle cuckold Sir Peter with Joseph? But Sheridan is less concerned with virtue in peril than with vice masquerading as virtue. In the famously comic screen scene, when Lady Teazle is finally discovered by Sir Peter in Joseph’s library, it is not her folly that is impugned and exposed but Joseph’s bad character. All high comedy is a deliberately moral unmasking of moral pretense, the ultimate poseur being Society itself.

What Gielgud the director brings to *The School for Scandal* is a sense of how the play traps constancy of man’s frivolity in its high-polish comic veneer. Gielgud the actor evokes an entire social structure with the delicate flourish of a snuffbox. Richardson et al. are similarly and superlatively good. The cast is sumptuously costumed, but its kingliest array is English speech, heard with the ringing clarity of fine crystal on a U.S. stage too long debased by caveman playwrights and actors who are masters of the grunt, the mumble and the slur.

Source: “Elegantly on the Harpsichord” in *Time*, Volume LXXXI, no 5, February 1, 1963, p 65.

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## 9.5 Let Us Sum Up

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Thus we study ‘*The School for Scandal*’ as a significant comedy of manners, an artificial comedy and anti-sentimental comedy. The happy combination of the two plots successfully brings out the vices of the contemporary society.

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## 9.6 Review Questions

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1. There are two plots in *The School for Scandal* which finally combine into one. Show how.
2. Assess *The School for Scandal* as a Comedy of Manners.
3. How does Sheridan expose the vices of his contemporary society ?
4. Write an essay on *The School for Scandal* as an artificial comedy.
5. Discuss the play as an anti-Sentimental Comedy.
6. Describe the character of Lady Teazle.

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## 9.7 Bibliography

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2. English Drama of the Restoration and the 18th Century : G. Nettleton.
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## UNIT-10

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### SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER : OLIVER GOLDSMITH

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#### Structure

- 10.0 Objective
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 The Play : An Actwise and Scenewise Summary
- 10.3 Themes Discussed in the Play
- 10.4 Critical Overview
- 10.5 Critical Essays
- 10.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.7 Review Questions
- 10.8 Bibliography

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#### 10.0 Objective

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After going through this unit you will be able to :

- \* understand how humour can arise out of misunderstanding, how a pure comedy is different from a Sentimental Comedy.
- \* how it is possible to link a sub-plot with the main plot without making it excessively complicated, as in the case of a Comedy of Manners.

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#### 10.1 Introduction

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Born November 10, 1728, in Ballymahon, Ireland, Goldsmith was from a poor but not needy family, supported by his father's position as a minister. The family had expected that Goldsmith would attend university, but the marriage of an older sister required his tuition money as part of her sizable dowry. In 1745, Goldsmith entered Trinity College in Dublin under the sizar system, which allowed poor students to study in exchange for work. Perhaps because of his tenuous economic circumstances, Goldsmith did not distinguish himself academically. He failed to take his studies entirely seriously, violated college rules, and even took part in a riot in which several people died.

Completing his B.A. in 1749, Goldsmith attempted various careers, including the ministry and medicine. From 1753-56, he wandered across the British continent before arriving in London. There, Goldsmith embarked on a career writing reviews and essays for such periodicals as Ralph Griffith's *Monthly Review* and Tobias Smollett's *Critical Review*, as well as proofreading for the novelist and printer Samuel Richardson.

The first book to appear under Goldsmith's name proved a notable success. Entitled *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to His Friends in the East*, it began as a series of essays in the *Publick Ledger*. Goldsmith, masquerading under the

identity of an Asian visitor, satirized the faults and foibles of fashionable London society. The work brought Goldsmith to the attention of the city's literary elite, particularly members of The Club, which included writers like Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, Edmund Burke, and Thomas Percy, the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the actor David Garrick. The work also brought Goldsmith literary opportunities, but poor money management drove him to hack writing for survival, a pattern that unfortunately continued throughout his life.

In addition to periodical prose, Goldsmith wrote in various styles and genres. One of his most famous works, *The Deserted Village: A Poem*, laments the loss of Britain's rural lifestyle. Though politically a conservative Tory, Goldsmith condemned the enclosure of public land by wealthy landowners and the agricultural revolution, which drove small farmers off their land. Published in 1770, critics term the work a "loco-descriptive" poem, in which the narrator walks through and describes various natural and rustic settings, setting down in verse the thoughts these travels inspire.

Two of Goldsmith's other famous works stem from his aversion for Sentimentalism. According to Oscar James Campbell, Sentimentalism "was founded on the belief that man is innately good and that he can be softened into virtue through tears which are made to flow from contemplation of undeserved suffering." In Goldsmith's 1766 novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*, the excessive sufferings of the deserving Vicar and his family call to mind the sufferings of Job, and critics today read the work as a parody of Sentimental fiction.

In his plays, Goldsmith challenged the Sentimental comedy, which had developed in response to the perceived immorality of Restoration theatre. Goldsmith articulated his position in an "Essay on the Theatre; or, A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy." The article differentiates between Sentimental comedy, called so only because it like Dante's *Divine Comedy* has a happy ending, and the more modern, humorous "laughing" comedy. In 1768, a Sentimental comedy by Hugh Kelly opened the same night as *The Good Natur'd Man: A Comedy*, Goldsmith's first play. These competing productions offered theatre audiences two completely different forms of comic entertainment. According to Campbell, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* proved innovative and "opened the door" to a new kind of comedy.

In 1773, Goldsmith presented *She Stoops to Conquer*. Though generally well-received, not everyone applauded Goldsmith's comedy; advocates of Sentimental comedy like Horace Walpole attacked the play for lacking a moral lesson. Still, audiences in general approved and today it remains Goldsmith's most popular work.

## **10.2 The Play : An Actwise And Scenewise Summary**

### **Act 1, Scene 1 Summary**

In a comic prologue, one of the actors sadly proclaims that the comic muse is dying. He announces that a doctor has created medicine in the form of a comic play, and if the audience finds the play to be funny, then the muse will be healed. If the play is not found to be humorous, he will be paid no fee and the audience will be free to call him a quack. He steps aside, and the play begins.

Mrs. Hardcastle enters complaining to Mr. Hardcastle about the lack of excitement that life in the country affords, about how the mansion they live in looks like an inn rather than a home, and about how he keeps her from going into town to meet new people. She claims she is forced to make do with

his old stories for entertainment. Mr. Hardcastle tells her that he prefers simple and old things such as his stories, and teases Mrs. Hardcastle about her age. She protests that she is still young, and claims that she was only twenty when she had her son, and that her son has not yet reached “the age of discretion.” Mr. Hardcastle makes a pun on the word discretion and suggests that her son, Tony, never will reach the age of discretion, and complains about Tony’s bad behavior. Mrs. Hardcastle tells him that Tony’s just high-spirited. At that moment Tony runs through on his way to the pub to meet friends. Mrs. Hardcastle tries to stop him but he refuses listen. Mrs. Hardcastle follows Tony as he runs out, just as Mr. Hardcastle is joined by his daughter, Kate.

Kate is dressed in expensive clothes. Mr. Hardcastle reminds her of his wish that she dress more modestly in the evening when he is at home. He tells her that she is going to have to remember her duty to be obedient to him since Marlow, the man he has chosen for her to marry, is arriving that evening. Mr. Hardcastle lists all Marlow’s good qualities: looks, manners, and modesty. Kate approves of all the qualities except for modesty, and says she likes a man to have spirit. Mr. Hardcastle reminds her that the fellow may not find her outspokenness to his taste. Kate replies saying that if that is the case, then she will just go out and find someone more suited to her. Mr. Hardcastle exits to prepare the servants for the arrival of visitors.

Kate’s friend Miss Neville comes in. Kate asks whether Miss Neville thinks Kate looks beautiful. After Miss Neville reassures her, Kate reveals what her father just told her about Marlow. When she hears the name Marlow, Miss Neville reveals that he is the best friend and traveling companion of her beloved, Hastings. She reveals that she and Hastings hope to become married but will remain unable to until Mrs. Hardcastle, who is Miss Neville’s aunt, gives her the jewels that are her inheritance. Finally, Miss Neville states that Mrs. Hardcastle will only give her the jewels once Kate has married Tony, something that neither Kate nor Tony wants. With their lives at an excitingly critical phase, Miss Neville and Kate go for a walk to calm themselves.

### **Act 1, Scene 1 Analysis**

A prologue such as the one at the beginning of this play was common in plays of this period. Often such prologues had some thematic or dramatic connection to the action of the play, but just as often they made comments on the nature of drama or of comedy in general. In the case of this play, the prologue is the set up for a single joke. When the prologue refers to a doctor having written a comedy to heal the comic muse, it is referring to the playwright, Oliver Goldsmith, who was a medical doctor as well as a playwright.

Several plot elements are foreshadowed in this scene. Mrs. Hardcastle’s reference to the mansion looking like an inn, Tony’s high spiritedness, Mr. Hardcastle’s comment about Tony not being at the age of discretion, Marlow’s modesty, and Miss Neville’s love for Hastings and desire for her jewels all play important roles in the comic action to come.

The term “age of discretion” refers to the belief that a young person was not able to make decisions for themselves until they reached a certain age. The particular age varied from historical period to historical period, but was most often set at twenty-one. In terms of this play, none of the young people (Marlow, Kate, Tony or Miss Neville) have reached the age of discretion, which is why Marlow and Kate’s parents have decided who they will marry and why Miss Neville is not free to marry whom she wishes. This also explains Tony’s frustration at not being free to live in the manner in which he prefers.

The discussion of Kate's clothes in relation to Mr. Hardcastle's desire for her to dress modestly, as well as Kate's vanity, make the first statement in the development of the play's theme. Kate comes across as overly concerned about how she looks. Because what she looks like and how she is dressed leads to the complications of the main plot, one can see even at this early stage that both thematically and dramatically, the play will deal with issues related to appearances and acting on assumptions based on those appearances as opposed to acting on true understanding.

### **Act 1, Scene 2 Summary**

In the neighborhood pub, Tony and his drinking companions sing a rowdy song. When they are done, the Landlord comes in and says there are two lost travelers outside looking for directions to get to Mr. Hardcastle's residence. Tony tells the Landlord to send them in to him. Tony then tells his friends to go away so they will not ruin the joke he is planning.

The Landlord shows Marlow and Hastings in and comments on how lost the two travelers are. Hastings reminds Marlow that if he had not been so shy they would have stopped for directions and arrived at their destination much sooner. Tony approaches Marlow and Hastings. He says that he has heard they are looking for Mr. Hardcastle. When they confirm his assumption, he gives them an artificially complicated set of directions. When Marlow and Hastings comment that it will be impossible to find the place that night, Tony directs them to what he says is a friendly inn and warns them that the innkeeper will try to convince them he is a gentleman. He volunteers to show Marlow and Hastings at least part of the way. Marlow and Hastings exit, and the Landlord laughs with Tony at the success of the joke.

### **Act 1, Scene 2 Analysis**

This brief scene introduces us to the male romantic interests, Marlow and Hastings. Hastings' comments suggest that Marlow is more than just modest, as Mr. Hardcastle had suggested, and is actually quite shy. The truth of Marlow's nature is revealed later, while the depth of his shyness manifests in the following scene.

The foreshadowing provided by Mrs. Hardcastle's reference to the mansion looking like an inn in Scene 1 is followed through in this scene as Tony sends Marlow and Hastings to an "inn" that one understands is actually the Hardcastle home. When Tony essentially describes Mr. Hardcastle as being pretentious and somewhat pushy, this description influences both Hastings and particularly Marlow to treat Mr. Hardcastle with the disrespect that plays a key role in the comic and dramatic complications to follow. This, in turn, relates to the play's theme since Marlow and Hastings base their choices on what have been told. In other words, they act based on assumptions and false appearances.

### **Act 2, Part 1 Summary**

Mr. Hardcastle instructs his yard servants on how to work in the house. They seem willing enough, but are easily confused and have difficulty remembering his instructions. Mr. Hardcastle becomes frustrated, but hears a coach driving into the yard and realizes he does not have a choice but to make do with what he has. He tells the servants to go to their posts and goes out to meet the coach. The servants go off, confused about where they are supposed to be going.

Marlow and Hastings come in and observe how nice the furnishings are. Marlow comments that he has been in inns all over the world, good ones and bad ones, and knows how to judge. Hastings

suggests that having traveled so much Marlow should be more self-assured, particularly among women. Marlow replies that he has plenty of assurance, but only with lower class women like barmaids and serving wenches. Upper class women leave him completely tongue-tied and nervous. Hastings asks how he plans to behave with the woman he has come to meet and to whom he will presumably propose marriage. Marlow says he has no real intention of following through with the proposal, and adds that his main reason for being there is to help Hastings follow through on his relationship with Miss Neville.

Mr. Hardcastle enters, greets Marlow and Hastings, and welcomes them by saying they are free to do anything they wish. He begins to tell one of the stories that Tony referred to in the pub earlier. Marlow and Hastings order him about, telling him to bring them something to drink, asking him what is available for supper, and when does not know, they demand that he call a servant to give them a menu. In a series of asides, Mr. Hardcastle protests that Marlow's modesty is a strange sort, and calls Marlow and Hastings "brazen." Nevertheless, he calls for a menu.

Marlow reads the menu, sees that the food is expensive and fancy, and tells Mr. Hardcastle to bring them plain food instead. He then goes out to make sure the beds are properly aired. Mr. Hardcastle goes with him, saying in one last aside that Marlow's behavior may be modern modesty, but it looks a great deal like old-fashioned rudeness.

Miss Neville appears, and she and Hastings have a happy reunion. She explains to him that this is actually the Hardcastle home, and surmises that Tony must have played a joke on them. Hastings states that all that matters to him is seeing her. He shares with her that he has made plans for them to elope to France that night. She says she is not prepared to leave without her jewels. They plot to get the jewels, and Hastings tells her that they also have to pretend that Hastings does not know he is in the Hardcastle home. Hastings says that if Marlow finds out he is in the Hardcastle home, he will be so embarrassed that he will immediately leave. Miss Neville sees Marlow returning, and pulls Hastings into a corner so they can confer.

Marlow muses to himself on how both Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle have attached themselves to him and plan to join them for supper. Hastings comes forward and introduces Miss Neville, whom he says just happened to be dining in the neighborhood. He also says that Miss Hardcastle (Kate) will be joining them shortly. Marlow immediately starts to panic and tries to leave, but Hastings makes him stay.

Miss Neville watches as Kate comes in and Hastings introduces her to Marlow. They try to make small talk, but Marlow becomes more and more uncomfortable in spite of the assurances that Hastings whispers in his ear. After a while Hastings and Miss Neville leave, and Kate and Marlow are alone. Marlow becomes unable to even complete a sentence, and Kate repeatedly finishes his thoughts for him. He suggests that they go into the next room and join Hastings and Miss Neville. Kate refuses, saying she is being very agreeably entertained. Marlow says that Miss Neville is beckoning them to her and runs off.

Left alone, Kate muses about his shyness and suggests that if she could teach him some confidence it might do him good. She goes out just as Tony and Miss Neville come in.

### **Act 2, Part 1 Analysis**

The scene with the servants illuminates another aspect of the play's theme. Mr. Hardcastle is anxious to make a good impression on Marlow and tries to create the appearance that his is an upper class home. This charade does not work, as his servants are too accustomed to the ways of working

outside. Thus, as is the case with all the characters when they try to create an artificial appearance, there is a clear sense that Mr. Hardcastle's efforts will result in failure and confusion.

This scene reveals more aspects of Marlow's shyness. His conversation with Hastings reveals his ease with lower class women and his discomfort with higher class women, and foreshadows the comic conflict to come when he meets Kate in her high class clothes and in her disguise as a barmaid. Hastings' later conversation with Miss Neville reveals that Marlow is actually deeply sensitive to embarrassment. This suggests that the core of his difficulties with women is his consciousness of not only of the appearances of others, but also how he appears to others. This means that the journey of the play takes him from being too reliant upon appearances to living more according to true understanding and honest communication. This is the play's thematic lesson.

The differences between Marlow and Kate illustrate the play's theme. While Marlow represents the difficulties associated with judgment of appearances and making assumptions, in spite of her vanity, Kate represents the wisdom of true knowledge, of making the effort to get to know and understand a person instead of making assumptions based on their behavior. To be specific, she sees how Marlow behaves but still wants to know more, and to help him once she does know more. Marlow, on the other hand, sees Kate in either of her guises, immediately makes assumptions about who she is, and reacts according to those assumptions. Kate's switch of identity later in the play and the eventual revelation of the truth prove him wrong, and he learns the value of not making assumptions.

A number of "asides" are used in this scene. An aside is a theatrical device common in plays of this period, and refers to a line of dialogue that a character speaks directly to an audience in which he reveals his thoughts. The difference between asides and soliloquies, which are also used in this scene, is that a soliloquy is spoken by a character who is alone, while an aside is spoken in a manner such that the other characters, who are still active in the scene, are unable to hear. Marlow's musings about Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle and Kate's musings about Marlow are soliloquies, while Mr. Hardcastle's reactions to Marlow's rudeness are asides.

In spite of Marlow's rudeness, Mr. Hardcastle says nothing about his behavior and meets his demands about food and drink because he still intends for Marlow to marry Kate. This illustrates how Mr. Hardcastle is determined to be on his best behavior and not upset Marlow in any way.

### **Act 2, Part 2 Summary**

Tony tells Miss Neville to stop pursuing him, but Miss Neville says she just wants to talk to him. They withdraw and converse further as Mrs. Hardcastle comes in, chatting with Hastings. He pays her compliments on the stylishness of her clothes and hair, which leads her to complain about how hard it is to be stylish while married to someone old like Mr. Hardcastle. She interrupts the conversation between Tony and Miss Neville, and asks Tony what sweet things he has been saying. He replies that he has not been saying sweet things at all, and they argue about his lack of good manners. Hastings intervenes, telling Mrs. Hardcastle to leave him alone with Tony so he can have a word about Tony's manners in private. Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss Neville leave.

Tony complains about the meanness of his mother and the nastiness of Miss Neville. Hastings offers to take Miss Neville off his hands, and Tony promises to help him by getting Miss Neville's jewels and by making arrangements for her and Hastings to be taken away. Hastings is delighted to find an ally, and the two of them go off together.

## **Act 2, Part 2 Analysis**

The theme of appearances occurs again in this brief scene as it becomes clear just how obsessed Mrs. Hardcastle is with fashion. This creates an effective and illuminating contrast between Mrs. Hardcastle and Kate, who is more interested in who a person actually is rather than in what they wear.

This is also a contrast with Tony, who is perhaps the only character in the play who lives purely and happily as his own self without either believing or putting on any kind of pretension. He manages this in spite of his mother treating him as she assumes him to be: precious, delicate, and refined. Tony does engage in subterfuge to help Hastings and Miss Neville wed, but his intent in doing so is to help the two is so he can be able to live his life freely and truthfully.

## **Act 3, Part 1 Summary**

Mr. Hardcastle appears alone. In a brief soliloquy, he complains again about Marlow's rudeness and wonders how Kate will react to Marlow. Kate then appears, dressed more plainly as her father asked her to do in Act 1, Scene 1. They talk about how they each found Marlow exceptional, but soon discover they mean exceptional in two different ways - Mr. Hardcastle is referring to his rudeness while Kate is referring to his shyness. They agree, however, that Kate should reject him but only if they discover he is unable to change. Mr. Hardcastle says he is doubtful that change is possible, and that he is seldom wrong when it comes to judgment based upon first appearances. Kate firmly suggests that Mr. Hardcastle trust her judgment. Mr. Hardcastle agrees, and they go out.

Tony runs in with a jewel box containing Miss Neville's jewels. Hastings soon joins him, and tells him in a panic that Miss Neville is at that moment trying to convince Mrs. Hardcastle to give her the jewels. Tony reassures Hastings that there is no way that Mrs. Hardcastle will hand the jewels over. Tony tells Hastings to let him worry about how to handle Mrs. Hardcastle. He then sees Miss Neville and Mrs. Hardcastle coming, and Hastings runs off.

Miss Neville and Mrs. Hardcastle enter, with Mrs. Hardcastle refusing to give Miss Neville the jewels. Tony whispers to Mrs. Hardcastle that she should say the jewels are lost. When she does, Miss Neville refuses to believe her. Tony says that he saw the jewels taken. Mrs. Hardcastle says that Miss Neville can borrow some of hers, and goes out to fetch them. Tony reveals to Miss Neville that he has taken the jewels and is about to say more but he sees Mrs. Hardcastle coming back. He tells Miss Neville to disappear. Miss Neville leaves just as Mrs. Hardcastle comes back in shouting that she has been robbed. Tony tells her that she has been very convincing, but Mrs. Hardcastle insists she has truly been robbed. She becomes more and more frustrated with Tony, and finally chases him off.

## **Act 3, Part 1 Analysis**

In the first part of this scene it is clear that Kate and Mr. Hardcastle have opposite perspectives, and not just as father and daughter speaking of Marlow. They also have different perspectives as representative or symbolic characters. As has been discussed, Kate represents the desire and value of looking beyond appearances and into the truth. On the other hand, Mr. Hardcastle states outright that he bases his judgment on first appearances. The action of the play bears out that Kate's perspective is the more valid and valuable, which makes her the embodiment of the play's central theme.

The play's secondary plot, which focuses on Hastings and Miss Neville, moves into higher gear

with the revelation that Tony has taken the jewels. The jewels represent the embodiment of the desire both Tony and Miss Neville have to live according to their true selves, as opposed to the way Mrs. Hardcastle wants them to live. Tony's theft of the jewels dramatizes the way he and Miss Neville are trying to take control of their lives away from Mrs. Hardcastle.

### **Act 3, Part 2 Summary**

Kate returns speaking with a maid, who has just told her about the misunderstanding that Marlow has about the mansion being an inn and her father being an innkeeper. The maid also says that Marlow mistook Kate for a barmaid, and Kate resolves to keep him thinking that way. She shouts like an angry barmaid and Marlow comes in, complaining to himself about the noise. Kate tries to get his attention but he is too wrapped up in his own thoughts and keeps dismissing her. Finally, she puts herself in front of his face; he looks at her, and decides to have a chat.

He speaks to her charmingly, saying that he wants to get to know her better. At first Kate refuses, saying she heard how badly he spoke to "Miss Hardcastle" earlier and how she does not think he is a nice man. He argues that he is actually very nice and is in fact a great favorite with the ladies of the town. She comments that the ladies must have a great deal of time available to them to spend so much time with him, and he asks what she does with her time. When she says that she spends all her time taking care of the carpets and tapestries, he grabs her hand and demands to see her embroidery. She protests and struggles, but Marlow does not let go until he sees Mr. Hardcastle approaching. Marlow then runs off.

Mr. Hardcastle is unable to believe what he just saw, and questions Kate's opinion of her "modest" lover. Kate tells him that by the end of the evening he will be as convinced of his modesty as is she. Mr. Hardcastle tells her that she will have less than that amount of time to convince him, since he is prepared to kick Marlow out of the house that minute. Kate pleads for more time and Mr. Hardcastle gives it to her, warning her that there had better be no trickery. Kate promises to be honest, and they both go out.

### **Act 3, Part 2 Analysis**

This section of the act reveals the characters of both Marlow and Kate in new ways. In Marlow's case, it is the first time he has been alone with the kind of woman he has always said he was more comfortable with, and it quickly becomes very clear that he is a good deal more than comfortable — he is downright aggressive. Kate's actions illustrate her cleverness, but the more interesting revelations about her emerge through her conversation with Mr. Hardcastle.

Not only do her words and insistence illustrate how eager she is to know the truth, her determination to convince Mr. Hardcastle that Marlow's true nature is modesty suggests that she has already begun to love Marlow. Her determination also suggests that she is the character in the play most able to see past the masks and appearances around her and into the true hearts of people. This reinforces the idea that she represents true understanding, since she has already seen the truth in Marlow, and she knows that underneath all her father's anger, he truly wants her to be happy.

### **Act 4, Part 1 Summary**

Miss Neville tells Hastings that she has just seen a letter from Marlow's father, Sir Charles, saying that he will be arriving for a visit. Hastings becomes concerned, and says that Sir Charles might

reveal his (Hastings) plans to the rest of the family. He also tells Miss Neville that he gave the jewels to Marlow for safekeeping. He goes off to get the horses ready for their departure, while Miss Neville goes off to keep Mrs. Hardcastle busy with more conversation about Tony.

Marlow comes in with a Servant, and asks him whether he handed the jewels over to “the landlady” (Mrs. Hardcastle) for safekeeping. The Servant tells him he did, and then leaves. Hastings comes in, and Marlow tells him about his enthusiasm for the barmaid. Hastings protests that the girl may be a barmaid but still has virtue and honor. Marlow says that women like the barmaid have no virtue that cannot be paid for. Hastings then asks whether Marlow received the jewels, and Marlow tells him he gave it to “the landlady” for safekeeping. He sees that Hastings is suddenly uneasy. Hastings reassures him that nothing is wrong. In an aside, however, he says that all his and Miss Neville’s hopes for fortune and a happy life are finished. He says ironically that he hopes he can be as good a friend to Marlow as Marlow was to him, and goes out.

Mr. Hardcastle comes in and complains that Marlow’s servants have all gotten drunk. Marlow tells him that he told his servants to take advantage of the inn’s hospitality as fully as possible. Mr. Hardcastle has had enough of Marlow’s rudeness, and orders him and his servants to leave. Marlow refuses. Mr. Hardcastle shouts that it is his house and he will host whom he chooses. Marlow quickly has enough of the argument and tells Mr. Hardcastle to bring the bill. Mr. Hardcastle ignores him, and says that when Sir Charles comes he will hear the whole story of Marlow’s behavior, and goes out. In a soliloquy, Marlow wonders whether he has made a mistake. When he sees the barmaid coming, he resolves to ask her to clear the matter up for him.

Kate appears, still wearing her “barmaid’s” clothes. Marlow asks what her business is in the house; she says she’s a relative of the family. He asks whether she works as barmaid “of the inn.” Kate laughs and tells Marlow that it is in fact the family home of the Hardcastles. Marlow suddenly becomes deeply embarrassed and resolves to leave. Kate apologizes for whatever she might have done to offend him and pretends to cry. Marlow is moved by her tears, and apologizes to her for being so aggressive earlier. Kate tells him she has a strong regard for him, but he tells her that he cannot risk offending the world or his father by marrying someone of which neither approves, and leaves. Kate, in a soliloquy, reveals that she thinks even more of him than ever and becomes resolved to marry him.

#### **Act 4, Part 1 Analysis**

In just a few lines, the secondary plot becomes much more complicated with the impending arrival of Sir Charles and the discovery that Marlow has sent the jewels back to Mrs. Hardcastle. This is, of course, ironically comic, since it was Mrs. Hardcastle from whom the jewels were stolen in the first place.

More importantly, the play’s overall theme, assumptions versus understanding, comes into clear focus starting with Marlow’s assumption to Hastings that the “barmaid’s” virtue can be bought and paid for. Because she looks the way she looks and behaves the way she behaves, he assumes that she, like other members of the lower or working classes, has lower morality. Hastings speaks for understanding in this scene when he says that even a barmaid might have honor she wants to protect, an understanding Marlow comes to in his later conversation with Kate.

In that conversation, as a result of Marlow’s discovery of the truth about the “inn,” and how he has been boorish and inconsiderate as a result his assumptions, Marlow realizes he has acted in the

same way in terms of “the barmaid.” He has made an assumption and acted badly. These parallel dramatic actions play out the play’s theme, and suggest that jumping to conclusions because of assumptions based on appearances leads to humiliation.

#### **Act 4, Part 2 Summary**

Tony and Miss Neville come in as Tony is telling Miss Neville that the next time she wants the jewels stolen she can do it herself. She tries to convince him to take the jewels again, but he says he has done enough, that the horses are ready to take her and Hastings away. He sees Mrs. Hardcastle coming and he and Miss Neville go off into a corner and pretend to be in loving conversation.

Mrs. Hardcastle comes in to speak with Miss Neville. Miss Neville and Tony pretend to be very fond of each other, and Mrs. Hardcastle approves happily, proclaiming that they will be married the next day and Miss Neville will have her jewels.

A servant appears with a note for Tony. Miss Neville realizes the note is from Hastings and tries to distract Mrs. Hardcastle. Tony has difficulty reading the handwriting and tries to hand it to Mrs. Hardcastle to have her read the note. Miss Neville grabs it and pretends to read it aloud, but is actually making up its contents. Tony disbelieves what she says and hands the letter to Mrs. Hardcastle, who reads it aloud. In the note, Hastings says he is waiting for Tony and Miss Neville at the foot of the garden, and is ready to elope. Mrs. Hardcastle angrily accuses both Tony and Miss Neville of betraying her, tells Miss Neville that she is to be sent into the care of an old aunt in the city. She adds that she, Mrs. Hardcastle, will go with Miss Neville to make sure she gets there, and that they will leave immediately. She goes out to prepare.

Miss Neville blames Tony for what happened, and Tony blames Miss Neville. Hastings comes in, saying that the servants have told him what happened. Just as he is getting angry with Tony, Marlow enters. He is also angry with Tony for playing the joke on them earlier and at Hastings for continuing the joke later. Tony gets ready to fight with them both but Miss Neville comes between them all and tries to calm them.

A servant comes in and tells Miss Neville to prepare to leave. She goes out, nervous about what will happen with everyone acting so angry. Marlow asks her forgiveness, while Hastings asks for Marlow and Miss Neville’s forgiveness. Miss Neville leaves. Hastings falls into despair and Marlow becomes angry with Tony again. Tony tells Hastings and Miss Neville to meet him at the foot of the garden in two hours. He states that they will find that he has made everything right again.

#### **Act 4, Part 2 Analysis**

This scene is almost entirely focused on moving the secondary plot forward, involving the elopement of Hastings and Miss Neville. The complications at this stage become almost farcical with the introduction of the letter from Hastings and Miss Neville’s desperate attempts to keep Mrs. Hardcastle from the letter. The subtext for all these complications, as well as of Marlow’s angry appearance later in the scene, is that all these characters have been lying and creating falsehoods of one kind or another, thereby creating circumstances in which other people have made false assumptions. Because of this subterfuge, they get into trouble when the truth comes out, which reinforces the play’s thematic statement that making choices based on assumptions rather than simply living from one’s own truth or genuinely understanding another’s truth leads to trouble.

### **Act 5, Scene 1 Summary**

A brief conversation between Hastings and a servant reveals that Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss Neville have driven off, and that Sir Charles has arrived. Hastings leaves for his meeting with Tony in the garden.

Mr. Hardcastle comes in with Sir Charles, and jokes about Marlow's behavior. Mr. Hardcastle tells Sir Charles how happy he is about the upcoming union of their two families. Sir Charles is more cautious, and says that Kate may not like Marlow. Mr. Hardcastle says she has already told him that she does, and that he has seen them happy together.

Marlow comes in and apologizes again for his rudeness to Mr. Hardcastle. Mr. Hardcastle replies that everything is fine, and a couple of hours of spending time with Kate will make him less uneasy over Marlow's past behavior. Marlow says he would be grateful for her approval. Mr. Hardcastle states that he has seen Marlow receive far more from Kate than her approval. Marlow protests that nothing more than polite conversation has passed between them, but Mr. Hardcastle insists he has seen them exchange much more than conversation. Marlow continues to protest that nothing has happened with Kate and angrily leaves, saying that he does not want to stay in a place where he is continually humiliated. Mr. Hardcastle sees Kate coming, and says she will clear everything up.

Kate tells Sir Charles and Mr. Hardcastle that she has had several pleasant conversations with Marlow, and that he spoke with great feeling. Sir Charles is unable to believe Kate is talking about his son, whom he believes to have difficulty talking with women. Kate asks him to listen to one of their conversations and she will prove the truth of what she is saying. Sir Charles agrees. Mr. Hardcastle agrees to join him, and Kate leaves.

### **Act 5, Scene 1 Analysis**

The conversation between Hastings and the Servant is pure exposition for the sake of the audience, talking about what has happened and what is about to happen in order to create a sense of suspense. Momentum is clearly being built throughout this scene, with the pace of dialogue and movement of scenes both becoming faster, leading to the parallel climaxes.

Once again the result of reacting to assumptions as opposed to the truth creates complications in the plot. Both Mr. Hardcastle and Sir Charles base their reactions to Marlow and Kate upon what they think they know as opposed to the truth of the current situation. At this point, Kate is somewhat guilty of perpetuating both the confusion and the complications because she simply does not explain everything. It seems possible that she is trying to teach everyone a lesson about making assumptions.

### **Act 5, Scene 2 Summary**

Hastings appears, waiting for Tony who then appears, covered in mud. He explains to Hastings that he took over the driving of Mrs. Hardcastle's coach from the regular driver and drove round in circles, through every bog and swamp, until Mrs. Hardcastle was sick of the journey and quite frightened. He tells Hastings that he will keep Mrs. Hardcastle busy so Hastings can get the horses that were left ready, grab Miss Neville, and make a run for it. Hastings expresses his gratitude, and runs out.

Mrs. Hardcastle appears, bedraggled and frightened that a highway robber will come along. Tony teases her by telling her that all the robbers in the neighborhood have been hanged. Mrs.

Hardcastle sees a man approaching, and Tony tells her to go hide behind a tree.

Mr. Hardcastle appears, saying he heard voices and came out to investigate. Tony tries to convince him that he was just talking out loud to himself. Mr. Hardcastle says he is sure he heard two voices, and is determined to find out who the other speaker was. Mrs. Hardcastle panics and runs out from her hiding place, determined to save her beloved Tony from the robber. She realizes that the robber is Mr. Hardcastle, who tells her that she is only a few steps from her home. He and Mrs. Hardcastle shout at Tony. Tony shouts back, yelling that everyone will think Mrs. Hardcastle got what she deserved for spoiling him all his life. Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony exit shouting at each other. Mr. Hardcastle follows, but only after commenting that Tony has a point.

Miss Neville and Hastings come in. Miss Neville claims that she is too frightened for any other adventures. Hastings pleads with her to leave while it is still possible. Miss Neville tells him that she intends to appeal to Mr. Hardcastle's sense of compassion and justice. Hastings has doubts that her pleas will be heard, but goes along with her.

### **Act 5, Scene 2 Analysis**

The theme of assumption versus reality plays out again on several levels in this scene. In the first part of the scene, the theme shows up in three ways: in the manner in which Tony deceives Mrs. Hardcastle into assuming that she is miles from home; in the way Mrs. Hardcastle assumes that the approaching male figure is a robber; and, most importantly, in the anger displayed between Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony. He refers to how he has been spoiled, but the subtext of what he really is referring to is that Mrs. Hardcastle has never seen him for who and what he is, and has treated him as she has because of what she wants and believes him to be.

During the brief conversation between Miss Neville and Hastings in the second half of the scene, it is clear that Miss Neville has, like Tony, decided that the time has come to dispel Mrs. Hardcastle's assumptions and reveal the truth about her affections for Hastings. Hastings has yet to see the value in living honestly and clearly believes that lies and subterfuge provide safety. In this scene Miss Neville, like her friend Kate, speaks and acts in the name of honesty and integrity.

### **Act 5, Scene 3 Summary**

Kate, still dressed as "the barmaid," comes in with Sir Charles. Kate sends him into hiding so he can hear the conversation between her and Marlow. Sir Charles disappears just as Marlow comes in. Marlow says goodbye to Kate, and says that although he never believed he could be so upset at the thought of separation from someone, because of the circumstances of his family, status and education, he feels he has to go. Kate protests that she is his equal in all of those things, but says that if he does not love her enough, then none of those things matter and that he is free to leave. Mr. Hardcastle joins Sir Charles in the hiding place as Marlow tells Kate he finds her beautiful, honest, and innocent. Kate tells Marlow that she cannot agree to a relationship that will make her look as if she is after his money and make him look reckless in the name of love. He goes one knee and passionately proclaims his deepest affection.

Sir Charles and Mr. Hardcastle come out from their hiding places. Sir Charles is unable to believe that this passionate man is his reserved son, while Mr. Hardcastle is unable to believe that the arrogant boy who treated him so poorly is this passionate man. Kate reveals her deception, to which Marlow reacts with anger, upset at being what he sees as humiliated and embarrassed. Mr. Hardcastle

assures him that there is nothing to be angry about and that everyone forgives and understands him, Kate in particular. Kate and Marlow withdraw to talk further as Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony come in.

Mrs. Hardcastle angrily says she does not care what happens to Miss Neville and Hastings. Sir Charles describes Hastings to her as being prudent and responsible, but Mrs. Hardcastle does not care. She is just glad that she still possesses the jewels.

Hastings and Miss Neville come in and ask for forgiveness as well as permission to marry. Mrs. Hardcastle says they are just whining, and that it does not matter - Miss Neville cannot become full owner of the jewels until Tony is actually at the age of discretion and can therefore refuse her of his own free will. At this point Mr. Hardcastle reveals that Tony really is at the legal age of discretion, saying that he pretended that Tony was not because Mrs. Hardcastle wanted to keep Tony a child and under her control.

Tony immediately frees Miss Neville from her obligations to him, which means that she can have her jewels, thereby allowing her the freedom to marry Hastings. Marlow comes forward to offer his congratulations on the condition that Hastings offers his, since he and Kate have agreed to marry. Hastings congratulates them and Mr. Hardcastle gives everyone his blessing. He invites everyone to supper so they can all forget the mistakes of the night and prepare for wedding celebrations in the morning.

An epilogue spoken by one of the actors compares life in general to a barmaid's life and to a play, quoting the phrase "we have our exits and our entrances." He describes a barmaid's life in terms of acts: youth, coquetry (or flirting), marriage, and retirement. He says the fifth act still belongs to him (the writer of the prologue) and humbly asks for applause.

### **Act 5, Scene 3 Analysis**

All the games come to an end in this scene, along with all the assumptions and misunderstandings they have given rise to. The decisions of Kate, Miss Neville and Mr. Hardcastle to be completely honest result in happiness, which clearly expresses the play's thematic statement that living with honesty is better than living according to assumption and appearance. Tony and Kate, as the symbolic embodiments of honest living, have triumphed in achieving their goals, even though Kate has to resort to dishonesty to make her point. The result is that everyone will live "happily ever after." The possible exception to this is Mrs. Hardcastle, who has lost the control over both her son and Miss Neville, and her possession of the jewels that she fought so hard to maintain.

The quote in the epilogue is from William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, from the famous speech beginning "All the world's a stage." The speech describes life as a play, describes human beings as actors, and describes life as playing out in stages. The epilogue here follows a similar structure, but instead suggests that human beings are like barmaids. Because the action of the play is built around Kate's disguising herself as a barmaid, the image of the barmaid in the epilogue and the comparison between a barmaid's life and life in general suggests that, like Kate, human beings are often mistaken for what they appear to be, as opposed to what they truly are.

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## **10.3 Themes Discussed In The Play**

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### **Appearances and Reality**

Much of the comedy of Goldsmith's play depends on confusion between appearance and

reality. After all, Marlow's misperception of Mr. Hardcastle's house as an inn drives the narrative action in the first place. Ironically, Goldsmith's comedy allows appearance to lead to the discovery of reality, Kate's deception leads her to discover Marlow's true nature. Falling in love when he thinks her a barmaid, he declares his decision to defy society and marry her in spite of the differences in their social class. Her falsehood allows him to relax with her and reveal his true self.

### **Truth and Falsehood**

Thematically related to the theme of Appearance and Reality, Goldsmith uses falsehood to reveal the truth. Most obviously Tony's lie about Mr. Hardcastle's mansion being an inn produces the truth of the lovers' affections. Lying also leads to poetic justice. When Constance asks to wear her jewels, Mrs. Hardcastle lies and tells her they have been lost. Tony takes the jewels to give to Hastings, and when Mrs. Hardcastle goes to find them, they have been lost. Her lie has become true.

### **Sex Roles**

In many ways, Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* satirizes the ways the eighteenth-century society believed that proper men and women ought to behave. While the play shows the traditional pattern of male-female relations in Hastings's wooing of Constance, it also reverses the era's sexual etiquette by having Kate pursue Marlow.

Goldsmith's comedy raises serious issues, however. On the eighteenth century's "marriage market," many people married for money, land, or title. This practice often turned women into commodities, to be exchanged between fathers and prospective husbands more for economic than emotional reasons. In *She Stoops to Conquer*, the relationship between Mrs. Hardcastle and Constance depends entirely on her inheritance of colonial jewels, which provide Mrs. Hardcastle's sole reason for pressing Tony and Constance to wed. In this sense, Constance's jewels can be seen to symbolize the marketing of the female on the marriage market.

Though explored comically, the play also illustrates the tenuous status of contemporary working women and their constant danger of sexual harassment and the predatory nature of men. Goldsmith's comedy depends on our laughing because Marlow respects middle-and upper-class women but treats working class women as sexual objects. Historically, however, the situation for working women proved quite serious. During the eighteenth century, with more and more women entering domestic service, problems arose in which young female servants were vulnerable to unwelcome sexual advances from their employers and their families. Rape and sexual violence became common problems and figure prominently in eighteenth-century plays and novels. Novels by Austen, Burney, and Richardson treat the assault and seduction of young servants by their masters, in part to serve as a warning to those entering domestic service.

### **Culture Clash**

As the play opens, Mr. Hardcastle associates his traditional attitudes with his life in the country. The comedy develops with the arrival of visitors from the city, Marlow and Hastings. Their lives of fashion represent innovation and change, though not necessarily for the better, as Mr. Hardcastle exclaims: "Is the whole age in a combination to drive sense and discretion out of doors?" The conflict between city and country values becomes clearer in light of countrified Tony's practical joke on supposedly sophisticated city residents like Marlow and Hastings. Mrs. Hardcastle also associates the urban with the fashionable and pretends to more urbanity than she actually possesses.

## **Obedience**

The theme of obedience focuses primarily on the hierarchical relationship between parents and children, though Goldsmith's play suggests that obedience consists of more than blind servility. Children should obey their parents. Parents, however, should earn their respect and deserve to be obeyed by acting in their children's best interest. Kate obeys Mr. Hardcastle, but while they may not agree entirely on fashion and boyfriends, he acts as he does for what he believes to be her own good. Tony does not obey Mrs. Hardcastle and stymies her scheme to set him up with Constance. Greed, rather than paternal duty, motivates her actions, however, for she concerns herself primarily with maintaining possession of Constance's jewels, not with selecting a suitable mate for Tony. She does not deserve obedience, and no one condemns Tony for resisting her.

## **Style**

### **Age of Sensibility**

Many works written between 1750 and 1798 emphasized emotion and pathos, instead of drama and humor. The Sentimental comedy, called a comedy not because of its humor but because it had a happy ending, ruled the stage. *She Stoops to Conquer* reacts against this tradition, for Goldsmith's comedy actually evokes laughter. The prologue by Garrick and the epilogue by Goldsmith clearly situate the play as a challenge to sensibility, and positive audience response initiated a new age in stage comedy.

### **Comedy of Manners**

While *She Stoops to Conquer* contains elements of farce, its comedy also stems from poking fun at the manners and conventions of aristocratic, sophisticated society.

### **Epilogue**

In the concluding statement of *She Stoops to Conquer*, Goldsmith summarizes the plot and hopes that the comedy has conquered his audience as Kate has conquered Marlow's heart.

### **Farce**

Many critics have described *She Stoops to Conquer*; a comedy characterized by broad humor and outlandish incidents, as a farce.

### **Prologue**

David Garrick, the most famous actor and theatre producer of his time, wrote the introductory section of *She Stoops to Conquer*. Garrick claims that the "Comic muse, long sick, is now a-dying." He hopes that Goldsmith's play, with its humor, will challenge the traditional sentimental comedy and thus revive the muse.

### **Foreshadowing**

Goldsmith uses foreshadowing to create expectations and explain subsequent developments. For example, Mrs. Hardcastle in act one describes their house as "an old rumbling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn." This helps the audience understand what gave Tony the idea for his practical joke and explains how the travelers' could mistake the Hardcastle's house for an inn.

Later, when Marlow indicates his anxiety speaking with ladies, but comfort fluting with wenches, this foreshadows his comical interludes with Kate. Kate's discussion with Mr. Hardcastle about desiring

an outgoing husband leads the audience to anticipate her disappointment with the formal Marlow. Her statement that Marlow's shyness during their first meeting prevented him from even looking at her face makes us expect some comical treatment of identity and gives Kate's disguise as a barmaid credibility.

### **Irony**

When Mrs. Hardcastle and Hastings discuss London's high society, she intends the conversation to show her sophistication and knowledge of city Me. Instead, the conversation has exactly the opposite effect. Her confusion between fashionable and unfashionable neighborhoods shows her ignorance of high society, making her comments ironic.

### **Poetic Justice**

Throughout the play, Mrs. Hardcastle tries maintain control over Constance's jewels. It is poetic justice that when Mrs. Hardcastle has hidden the jewels from Constance, claiming they've been stolen, they have in fact been stolen by Tony.

### **Historical Context**

The late 18th century marked a period of great transition for England. Between 1640 and 1688, the nation fought a civil war, executed its king, and restored its monarchy; it then established a government which balanced power between monarch and parliament. England had also fought a series of wars with the United Dutch Provinces and France, setting the stage for English dominance as a colonial power. The American Revolution loomed on the horizon, but most historians agree that the loss of the colonies had limited political or economic impact. England became an increasingly prosperous nation occupying a central position on the world stage.

### **The Shift to Industrialism**

That said, not everything in this transition went smoothly. The agricultural revolution had begun in the 16th century with developments in farming and animal husbandry. By the 18th century, these improvements resulted in generally greater supplies of higher-quality, lower-priced food. Still, hunger persisted because bad harvests, war, and inflation caused food supplies and prices to vary from region to region. Further, the change from a system of many small farms to fewer large farms drove many farmers off their land and into the factories created by the industrial revolution. Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village* eulogizes one such village that became vacant as England shifted from an economy largely rural and agricultural to one more urban, based on manufacturing and trade.

England's mercantile economy provided the impetus needed to drive the industrial revolution, just as surely as inventions like James Watt's steam engine drove the factories themselves. Still, new, largely unplanned cities sprung up around these factories. Rural migrants found they had left farm life behind for factory work that often offered lower wages and a diminished quality of life for themselves and their families.

### **England's Changing Economy**

Changes in England's industrial, agricultural, and colonial economies translated into a demand for English goods and services. While some became impoverished, others flourished, as these changes stimulated the rise of the middle class. This led, among things, to the increasingly literate population which supported a new generation of writers like Goldsmith.

In general, these changes decreased the wealth among those landed and titled, and increased the wealth among those connected with commerce. As a result, children from old, titled, landed families married with those of untitled, cash-rich, but land-poor commercial families. It is this “marriage market” which provides the backdrop for Goldsmith’s examination of the various motives for marriage in *She Stoops to Conquer*;

### **Sentimental Times and Goldsmith’s Comedy**

Finally, an explanation of the tone of Goldsmith’s play, a comedy rooted in things quite serious. The 18th century’s validation of empiricism offered a challenge to religious belief based solely on faith. Many people sought an accommodation between reason and faith. One such accommodation was Deism, which accepted as true certain observable “facts”\_for example, the world had been created, so there must be a creator\_but resisted specifics about the nature of religious doctrine. Such beliefs posed a problems, however: how can society develop a code for ethical conduct independent of the ten commandments? Sentimentalism, pioneered by Lord Kames, Francis Hutchinson, and Adam Smith, offered a psychological solution. They suggested that ethics arise from human sentiments, from sympathy and empathy.

Sentimental ethics work like this. A person contemplates an action\_murder, for example\_ and wonders if it is wrong. To decide, one imagines the crime, first placing oneself in the victim’s position, empathizing with the person’s suffering. Then, one takes the objective position of an observer, attempting to feel sympathy for the person killed, for their family and loved ones. These two perspectives lead one to understand the emotions (the sentiments) involved and to condemn the action as evil,

Sentimentalism became a powerful force during the 18th century. It provided the philosophical underpinning for the American Revolution, which substituted the more Sentimental right to “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” for John Locke’s “Life, Liberty, and Property.” It also motivated reform of the slave trade, prisons, and insane asylums. In the theatre, however, this philosophy led to the creation of the Sentimental Comedy, called so not because it provoked laughter, but because it ended happily. (For the same reason, Dante titled his poem *The Divine Comedy*). The Sentimental Comedy provided Goldsmith’s target in *She Stoops to Conquer*; as he attempted\_and succeeded\_in writing a comedy that provokes not sympathetic tears but actual laughter.

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## **10.4 Critical Overview**

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In “An Essay on the Theatre; or, A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy,” Goldsmith distinguishes between “hard” and “soft” comedy. Instead of the “Weeping Sentimental Comedy” which gratified audience sympathies at injustice suffered by innocent worthies, Goldsmith’s 1773 essay advocated the “laughing comedy,” which offered a “natural portrait of Human Folly and Frailty.” *She Stoops to Conquer* opens with a prologue by actor and impresario David Garrick declaiming on the state of the theatre and sentimental comedy. Mr. Woodward, who speaks the monologue, weeps, saying, “Would you know the reason why I’m crying?/The Comic Muse, long sick, is now a-dying!” In *She Stoops to Conquer* and his earlier play *The Good-Natur’d Man*, Goldsmith sought to rescue that muse. His writing, according to Louis Kronenberger in an introduction to the 1964 Heritage Press edition of the play, led “an assault on the sentimental comedy that had held the boards for upwards of fifty years.” No mere iconoclast, Goldsmith does more than critique the past. In fact, according to Oscar James Campbell in his introduction to *Chief Plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan; The School*

*for Scandal, She Stoops to Conquer*; *The Rivals, She Stoops to Conquer* is “a virtual School for Comedy.” Goldsmith’s play incorporates and transforms elements of both the earlier Restoration Comedy of Manners and contemporary Sentimental Comedy and “opened the door” to a new kind of comedy.

Goldsmith’s comedy has its roots in serious philosophical debate. In his 1651 *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes describes original human nature as a constant state of war, with minimal social cohesion and strong dominating weak. Hobbes’s ideas influenced the Restoration comedy, an urban comedy of manners in which power and polish led to social manipulation and dominance. By the 1690s, Locke and others argued that people’s innate moral sense made them naturally good and happy. This led to the “soft,” “sentimental,” or “reform” comedy, which lacked laughter and attempted to teach virtue by making audiences feel sympathy and empathy for the suffering of the innocent. These were comedies only in having a happy ending, for the same reason that Dante named his poem *The Divine Comedy*.

*In She Stoops to Conquer* Goldsmith tries to correct both the rakish mannerism of the Restoration comedy and the pathos of the Sentimental comedy. For example, while Restoration comedy privileged urban sophistication over rural simplicity, Goldsmith reverses the trend. “In Restoration comedies countrymen appeared as fools in London drawing rooms,” noted Campbell. In *She Stoops to Conquer*, “Tony, on his own turf, easily hoodwinks the city dudes into mistaking an old house for an inn.” For Goldsmith, country life seems not unfashionable exile but the repository of the traditional English virtues he portrayed in *The Deserted Village*. In his portraits of Mr. Hardcastle and Kate, Goldsmith validates the familial warmth of country life. In the multiple marriages that mark its ending, the play shows the triumph of idealistic love instead of merely manners, all the while creating laughter and even “low” humor.

Goldsmith undermines Sentimentalism in ways which J. L. Styan, writing in an issue of *Costerus*, noted may be missed by contemporary audiences. For example, when Constance find Kate alone in the first act, she judges by her complexion that something emotional has happened. Constance asks, “has the last novel been too moving?” She wonders if Kate’s sensibilities have been engaged by a Sentimental novel\_of the kind Goldsmith satirizes in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. We quickly learn that Kate’s emotional state has been heightened, not by a novel but by the imminent arrival of her suitor, an action that will initiate actual, not Sentimental comedy.

Goldsmith’s play does more than simply respond to the past, however. By striking a balance between situation and characterization, *She Stoops to Conquer* proved innovative. What makes the play work for Styan are its “madcap situations” which resembles a farce in seeming “exaggerated, impossible, absurd, and ridiculous.” According to Louis Kronenberger, the “farce idea that galvanizes it [is] the idea of having two young men directed to a private house\_the very house they have been invited to visit\_under the impression that it is an inn.” The subtitle of the play, “The Mistakes of a Night,” suggests the plot’s farcical beginnings, though the play’s success as a comedy, for Kronenberger, comes from the ways Goldsmith “ingeniously keeps exploring and extracting.. .the possibilities in his hoax.”

Still, most critics see the play not as pure farce but as something more, largely due to its strong characterization. Styan observed that the “important farcical ingredient in Goldsmith’s comedy depends upon the invention of a situation absurd enough to admit an exaggeration of character.” True, “Marlow’s being altogether at his ease with wenches and hopelessly shy with young ladies scores best as an amusing plot device.” Further, “The spirit of this comedy is made to turn on ... a marriage of convenience

... inverted so that the lady takes the initiative, Miss Hardcastle becomes Kate, and the genteel heroine a barmaid who sets about seducing the genteel hero.” But it is the character of Kate, not merely her predicament, that makes the comedy work. According to Campbell, “Miss Hardcastle is the first heroine for many decades who has no taste for sentimental aphorism and tender hearts.” This becomes clear in her response to Marlow’s formal wooing during their initial meeting. She desires authentic emotional involvement, not sentimental claptrap and goes about getting it with her scheme to impersonate a barmaid.

In this, Goldsmith demands versatility of his characters, forcing them to present themselves in more than one way, as Styan noted. For example, compare the stiff, sentimental wooing scene in which Marlow first encounters Kate with later scenes between the more libertine Marlow and the “low” barmaid Kate, which provides comical counterpoint. For Campbell, characters like Mrs. Hardcastle and Tony Lumpkin, with his “pot house tastes and prankster ways... is a booby who lays booby traps for others,” make the play “not farce, but comedy of continuous incident”

Two other elements of technical stagecraft enhance Goldsmith’s comedy. One is his use of asides, in which a character makes a comment meant to be heard by the audience but not by other characters on stage. During Marlow’s initial meeting with Kate, for example, Styan believes the characters’ asides invite the audience into their thought processes and offer perspective on their actions.’ “The fact that the discussion here purports to be about hypocrisy makes the asides to pertinent that the farce shifts into a realm of social satire,” Goldsmith also creates comic tension by the ways he orchestrates the stage action. The scene in which Marlow agrees to accept Kate despite their class differences resembles those in the typical sentimental comedy. But, according to Mark Anthony Houllahan in the *International Dictionary of Theatre-1: Plays*, Goldsmith “invigorates the cliches of sentiment by placing... [the characters] in an absurdly contrived and complex setting” in which the lovers\_ with Kate in disguise\_ can be observed by Mr Hardcastle and Sir Charles Marlow.

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## 10.5 Critical Essays

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### Critical Essay #1

*A member of the English department at California State University, Stanislaus, Schmidt focuses his essay on how the advances of Goldsmith’s era affected and enriched his comedy.*

Not accidentally, ages of great social change frequently leave behind great comedy. Oliver Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer* provokes laughter\_ often at situations that are quite serious. Parentchild relationships and marriage stand at the center of Goldsmith’s play, as the characters attempt to strike some balance between authority and freedom, obedience and independence. While Goldsmith treats these themes lightheartedly, the play’s humor conceals a somber undercurrent. By the time Goldsmith’s play debuted in the late 18th century, England had undergone great political, economic, and social transformations. These changes created what came to be know as the “marriage market,” which provides the backdrop for *She Stoops to Conquer*. Simply put, the comedy asks how, at a time when many people married for money rather than love, can marriage join people who are both economically and emotionally compatible?

During the 17th century, England’s Civil War moved the nation from a government by strong monarchy to one which balanced power between king and parliament. A series of wars with the United Dutch Provinces and France positioned England’s ascent as a colonial power. The agricultural and

industrial revolution had brought progress. By the mid-18th century, England had become an increasingly prosperous nation occupying a central position on the world stage.

These changes did not occur without costs, however. The agricultural revolution resulted in generally greater supplies of higher quality, lower priced food but drove many farmers off their land and into the factories created by the industrial revolution. England's mercantile economy provided the impetus needed to drive industrialization, but rural migrants often found that urban life and factory work compared unfavorably with agricultural work in the country. While some became impoverished, others prospered and rose to join England's growing middle class.

In general, these changes decreased the wealth among old, rural, titled families, and increased that of the newly rich commercial urbanites. As a result, children from old families, who were titled, married with those of untitled, cash-rich but land-poor commercial families. Such marriages created unions with money, land, and title. In *She Stoops to Conquer*, Goldsmith examines this "marriage market," seeking some balance between love and money,

The play's opening scene introduces the conflict between old and new, between country and city. Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle discuss people who take trips to London, as they do not. Mr. Hardcastle remembers the days when rural life kept away the follies of town but no longer, for today, follies "travel faster than a stagecoach." Significantly, Tony's practical jokes reflects the long-standing comic jousting between the country bumpkin and the city slicker that goes back at least to the playwright Juvenal's satires of the late Roman empire. Mr. Hardcastle identifies himself as a barrier against the changing times, saying, "I love everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine," and even his "old wife." As the times change, human relationships like marriage change with them, though not necessarily for the better. While traditional, Mr. Hardcastle seeks for his daughter a marriage with both financial and emotional security; Mrs. Hardcastle's mercenary attitudes resemble those of fashionable London society's marriage market. This conflict between husband and wife represents a conflict between traditional and colonial value systems.

Different styles of parenting have produced different kinds of children. By spoiling Tony, Mrs. Hardcastle prevented him from growing up. Tony is disobedient. On his way out to the Three Pigeons alehouse, he refuses Mrs. Hardcastle's request that he stay home "for one night at least." More legitimately, he also refuses to obey her command that he marry Constance. Mrs. Hardcastle conceals from Tony the fact that he's come of age. She uses deceit to manipulate him into a loveless marriage to Constance which permits Mrs. Hardcastle to keep controls of the Constance's jewels. While Mr. Hardcastle wants the best for his daughter in marriage, Mrs. Hardcastle concerns herself not with Tony's happiness but with the money and status the jewels might bring.

Mr. Hardcastle, on the other hand, seems honest, if stuffy, and his daughter Kate behaves honestly toward him (she may not tell him everything, but at least she never lies to him). Where Tony is obstinate, Kate is accommodating. While Kate wants to dress fashionably, Mr. Hardcastle wants her attire to be simple. They compromise: she dresses as she pleases during the day, when she receives visitors, and as he likes in the evening.

The play's action advances when Mr. Hardcastle announces, "I expect the young gentleman I have chosen to be your husband from town this very day." Kate's father assures her that he would never control her choice, but she responds anxiously, worried at the formality of their meeting will prevent her from feeling "friendship or esteem." During the 18th century, entirely arranged marriages were unusual,

though a young women rarely had the right to select a husband entirely on her own. More customarily, a women's parents—primarily her father—selected a prospective husband, whom the daughter had the right to accept or reject. The young man Hardcastle has in mind, Marlow, is the son of an old friend, Sir Charles Marlow, but Hardcastle assures Kate he would never control her choice.

This exchange establishes the parameters of a successful parent-child relationship. The good father, Mr. Hardcastle offers guidance without being tyrannical, while Kate, the good daughter, seems willing to be compliant—but not at the price of marrying without emotional attachment. Here, we realize another difference between Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle, While he selects an appropriate husband for his daughter, according to what he believes will make her happy, his wife has selected a zero (her own son) for Constance's fiancé, a decision dictated not by concern for her own good, but by a selfish desire for gain.

*She Stoops to Confer* portrays three strategies for parent-child relationships. In Tony's attitude toward his mother, Mrs. Hardcastle, we see resistance and deception. Likewise, deception characterizes her treatment of both Tony and Constance, Finally, the play offers the preferred option of compromise, as exemplified by Mr. Hardcastle's attitude toward his daughter Kate. This seems the best way for families to cope with decisions: insight and empathy on the part of the parents, intelligence and compromise on that of the child.

The play also offers three types of marriage. One possibility: a loveless, parentally-enforced marriage, as that arranged by Mrs. Hardcastle between Tony and Constance, Another option: marriage for love, but against parental wishes, as seen in Hastings's plans for eloping with Constance. Finally, the best solution, compromise between parent and child, as in Kate's marriage with Marlow—a marriage based on affection but also sanctioned by paternal authority.

The compromise solutions in *She Stoops to Conquer* reflect the 18th century's general validation of reasonable compromise and balance of power. During the 17th century, traditional writers like Robert Filmer argued for the divine right of kings based on *the Great Chain of Being*. According to nature, God ruled over man, kings over peasants, men over women, and fathers over families. Natural hierarchies justified both monarchy and patriarchy. In *She Stoops to Conquer*, the viewer sees a model of private sphere compromise between Kate and Mr. Hardcastle in regard to her clothing (and more importantly, her marriage). This attitude echoes the public sphere power-sharing arranged between king and parliament after the Restoration of 1660 and Glorious Revolution of 1688. Goldsmith's play balances tradition and structure with freedom and innovation.

Goldsmith's attitude toward marriage reflects other aspects of his social moment, however. While Marlow and Kate's wedding unites two old money families, Mrs. Hardcastle's efforts to wed Tony and Constance are an attempt to link traditional and colonial wealth. In effect, Mrs. Hardcastle attempts to colonize Tony and Constance in marriage, simultaneously extracting his Submission (playing the good son) and her jewels. The play's action makes this impossible but does not reject colonial wealth. It merely aligns colonial wealth in a marriage for love rather than in a forced, arranged marriage. Constance marries Hastings instead of Tony, Marriage itself still serves the same economic function of combining landed and colonial wealth.

In *She Stoops to Conquer*, comedy is serious business with serious social and monetary consequences. While raising legitimate issues about the responsibilities between parents and children, it also calls to mind the cultural and historical moment which produced it.

**Source:** Arnold Schmidt, in an essay for *Drama for Students*, Gale 1997

## **Critical Essay #2**

*In this introduction to Goldsmith's play, Kronenberger proposes that *She Stoops to Conquer* is a prime example of the theatre era from which it emerged, as well as evidence of the playwright's disdain for Sentimental comedy.*

*Kronenberger served as a drama critic for Time magazine from 1938 to 1961, and was regarded as an expert on eighteenth-century English literature and history.*

Oliver Goldsmith stands quite high in English literature, and a little apart, by reason of his three-pronged claims to recognition. There is his extremely famous poem, *The Deserted Village*; his extremely famous novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*; his extremely famous play, *She Stoops to Conquer*. To have achieved three unquestioned classics that jointly run to about the length of an average-sized book is a notable example of how to travel down the ages with the lightest of luggage.

But though all three remain unquestioned classics, they no longer—if we are to be honest—enjoy a quite equal esteem or popularity. *The Deserted Village* has come to be a bit of a deserted poem. Certain of its lines and couplets have passed into the language, their authorship rather obscured; but the poem itself seems to be gradually passing out of circulation. Even as a high-school standby I suspect it is being replaced by something less pastoral and more vibrant. *The Vicar of Wakefield* has fared better, as it deserves to have done. For it has much of Goldsmith's kindliness and charm; and in any at all exhaustive journey through the English novel, one that stops at picturesque towns as well as populous cities, it must always have a place; it must, indeed—like *Cranford*, like *Our Village*—survive as the kind of minor work whose value rests on its being minor. Its voice may not carry far, or instantly rivet attention, but it is a genuinely individual one.

But of Goldsmith's three classics, it seems pretty certain that *She Stoops to Conquer* is much the best entrenched. It has so unequivocally survived as to seem, again and again, worth reviving; only a short time ago the Phoenix Theatre revived it in New York, so long as actors eye juicy character parts, they must glance at Tony Lumpkin; so long as producers eye time-tried comic plots, they must give thought to Goldsmith's; and in any journey through the English comic theatre, even one confined to Principal Points of Interest, it must surely have a place. Between 1728 and the 1870's, which is to say between *The Beggar's Opera* and *Gilbert and Sullivan*, *The School for Scandal* and *The Rivals* are its only rivals; and *The Rivals*, to my mind, is its inferior. *She Stoops to Conquer* is an extraordinary work on a very odd basis: that, without mere being anything the least bit extraordinary about it, it stands alone of its kind among the comic classics of the English stage. Surely there should be at least a dozen *She Stoops to Conquer*s, a dozen farce comedies written between the age of Anne and the age of Victoria that, without ever seeming brilliant, are almost consistently lively; that, without ever turning bawdy, are not simpering or prim; that, with no great claim to wit, have a robust sense of fun; that, without being satirical, can spoof certain human weaknesses; and that, without being sentimental, remain friendly and good-natured.

Yet, unless they are moldering in unopened books on dust-covered shelves, far from there being a dozen such plays, where unmistakably is there another? What others manage (which is the crucial point) to sustain their good qualities throughout an entire evening? What others don't creep through a first act or crumble during the last, or don't plague us with a deadly subplot, or weary us with dialect

jokes, or pelt us with petrified epigrams, or try our patience with spoonfuls of morality<sup>9</sup> The Rivals, for example, besides belonging to a different category or\_what with mixing the satirical, the farcical, and the romantic\_-belonging to no category at all, makes us put up with Faulkland and Julia, who are decidedly bores. Goldsmith's lovers keep us far from breathless, but, by virtue of the uses Goldsmith puts them to, they are seldom boring.

Hence, instead of being recurrent in the English classic theatre, *She Stoops to Conquer* verges on the anomalous\_a full evening's worth of good clean fun. It chiefly owes its vivacity, of course, to the farce idea that galvanizes it, the idea of having two young men directed to a private house\_the very house they have been invited to visit\_under the impression that it is an inn. The original title and surviving subtitle of the play, "The Mistakes of a Night," suggests the quick, cumulative nature of the plotting, and the frank nature of the farcicality. Goldsmith sticks to the possibilities in his hoax, which means that he ingeniously keeps exploring and extracting them. (pp. v-viii)

[The central incident] had particular stage value by virtue of its comic reversal of values. To mistake a private house for an inn, as against mistaking one private house for another, starts off with confusion on one side that can quickly spread to the other, and that creates not just personal misunderstandings but social "situations" and gaffes. ... The plot thickens, of course, and the fun fattens by having the "landlord" stand aghast at the behavior of his guests; and the practical joke is kept going by the lubricating propinquity of the practical joker. Tony Lumpkin always stands ready to deceive or abet deception; no farce ever had more of a misleading man, whether at one moment by pretending to be in love with Miss Neville, or at another by driving Miss Neville and his mother over hill and dale in virtually their own backyard.

Tony, in the end, is much less a great character creation than a fat character part with pothouse tastes and prankster ways. But what is so lumpish in Tony is the more misleading thing about him: it conceals, it half denies, what is so sharp-witted. His mind must not be inferred from his manners. He is a booby who lays booby traps for others; he is the card-table simpleton who walks off with the winnings. The scene where he pretends to think his mother is shamming about the stolen jewels reveals how little of a fool he is and how greatly (in the theatre, above all) he can contribute to the fun.

Goldsmith does very well by Tony, and by us, in giving him Mrs. Hardcastle for a doting mother; theirs is perhaps the most enjoyable relationship in the play. The two pairs of lovers are to be praised, I think, not so much for qualities of character as for so lightly and bnskly advancing the plot. Even Marlow's being altogether at his ease with wenches and hopelessly shy with young ladies scores best as an amusing plot device. Plot, as it must be in farce, is the real motive power of the play. But it proves the saving grace of the play as well, in that the plot, really, always calls the tune, always sets the level, refusing to halt for any detailed picture of manners or for more than a surface coat of romance.

Nothing is better known than that in *She Stoops to Conquer*\_as earlier in *The Good-Natur'd Man*\_Goldsmith was waging an assault on the sentimental comedy that had held the boards for upwards of fifty years. And the comedy of *She Stoops to Conquer* quite escapes being sentimental. But this, it seems to me, is chiefly through favoring plot situations over personal ones; which means, in the end, through scamping flesh and blood no less than sighs and tears. And if *She Stoops to Conquer* also escapes seeming genteel, it is chiefly from a certain air of the bucolic and rowdy\_a sort of taproom indecorum that conceals the total absence of boudoir indecency. Where, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, George Farquhar had let the hero of *The Constant Couple* mistake a private house

for a bordello, Goldsmith scarcely suggests that his private house has bedrooms. But Farquhar's racier amusement lasts for only a scene of two (which is all the situation proves worth) and his play, as a whole, is decidedly mixed and uneven; whereas Goldsmith's situation does last out a whole play; and his effect, if on occasion tame, is never jumbled.

What in the long run has so much helped *She Stoops to Conquer* must at the outset have seemed destined to harm it—its old-fashioned countryfied look, its genial humorist's good nature, its lack of something very new that must come to seem dated, of something very chic that in time must seem tacky. *She Stoops to Conquer* has its incidental merits: its best dialogue is thoroughly bright, it makes observations not just sound but astute, it contains social details that are revealing and vivid. But such things are just frequent enough to remind us that Goldsmith was a real writer, a man of real parts and cultivation. At the same time they are unobtrusive enough not to halt the flow of the fun— that immemorial fun born of human beings at cross-purposes and of situations gone askew and awry, (pp. viii-xi)

**Source:** Louis Kronenberger, introduction to *She Stoops to Conquer: or The Mistakes of a Night*, by Oliver Goldsmith, Heritage Press, 1964, pp. v-xi

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## 10.6 Let Us Sum Up

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Thus we see that 'She Stoops to Conquer' speaks volumes of the genius of Oliver Goldsmith as an excellent writer of Comedy of Intrigue and Comedy of Errors.

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## 10.7 Questions

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1. Write a note on the plot construction of *She Stoops to Conquer*. How are the main plot and the sub plot linked ?
2. Write an essay on the improbabilities in the play that have been made credible by the genius of Goldsmith.
3. Discuss *She Stoops to Conquer* as a Comedy of Intrigue.
4. Discuss *She Stoops to Conquer* as a Comedy of Errors.
5. Compare and contrast the characters of (i) Kate and Constance; and (ii) Marlow and Hastings.
6. Write a critical appreciation of (i) The casket scene and (ii) The garden scene.

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## 10.8 Bibliography

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## UNIT-11

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### TRISTRAM SHANDY BY STERNE

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#### Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Tristram Shandy
  - 11.2.1 The Life of Sterne
  - 11.2.2 Critical Introduction of the Novel
  - 11.2.3 The Point of the story
  - 11.2.4 The Digressions in the Novel
  - 11.2.5 List of Characters
  - 11.2.6 Outline Story of Tristram Shandy
  - 11.2.7 A Note on the Text
- 11.3 Key Words
- 11.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.5 Review Questions
- 11.6 Bibliography

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#### **11.0 Objectives**

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In this unit you are going to study about the Novel. After going through this unit, you will be able to

- \* Understand the background of the Novel
- \* Understand about the life, background and ideas of the Novelist
- \* Understand the story, structure and characters of the Novel
- \* Write in your own words about any aspect of the Novel.

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#### **11.1 Introduction**

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In this unit you will study about the Novelist, the Novel, the background and context of the Novel. Through key words and exercises given, you will reinforce your understanding of the unit.

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#### **11.2 Tristram Shandy**

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##### **11.2.1 The Life of Sterne**

Laurence Sterne was born in Ireland in 1713, and he died in London in 1768. He might have

died much earlier because of his weak lungs, especially considering how much he laughed, but he managed to live long enough to give his countrymen and the world two great books, *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*.

The influence of these two books went beyond the country and century in which they were written. French, German, Italian, and English sentimental journeys were a glut on the literary market, and *Tristram--Shandeism* not only engendered hundreds of imitations in Sterne's own time, but it also influence\_ great writers down to the present -- Goethe, Mann, Gide, Joyce, to "mention a few.

Sterne was an unimportant person who suddenly became important -- for many people, notorious -- in 1759. His background was undistinguished. The son of an army ensign, he grew up in army garrisons. There he learned about soldiers, and without that knowledge and experience, he could not have made *Uncle Toby* and *Corporal Trim* as convincing as they are."

With the help of relatives, he went to Cambridge. After graduating (1737), he entered the Church of England and, again with the help of relatives, became vicar of Sutton (and subsequently, of Stillington) in Yorkshire. It was a comfortable enough way to make a living, and it did not require great effort or special piety. Several years later, he married a woman with whom he never got along, Elizabeth Lumley, and they had a child whom he adored, Lydia. It is quite unlikely that he could have gotten along with any woman who didn't match him in imagination, ingenuity, and capriciousness; as it was, Mrs. Sterne went officially mad for a period of time and was probably unofficially mad for most of her life. Sterne and his wife agreed not to disagree, but his happiest moments were those when they lived apart.

During his time of country living -- pre - *Tristram Shandy* days -- he consoled himself with the pleasure available in York. It was not London, but neither was it the backwoods. In addition, he had a special group of friends, a mens club, called the "Demoniacks," chief among whom was John Hall-Stevenson, the proprietor of a crazy castle named "Crazy Castle." Most likely they gathered to get away from their wives, to drink and carouse, and to pretend to be rakes; without doubt, they read to each other bawdy passages from their favorite books. One of the important consequences of this Symposium was the irreverent attitude toward literature, the willingness to poke fun at "important" authors and important people, that permeates *Tristram Shandy*. Imagining an ideal, appreciative audience is important to an author; whimsy that is directed toward a group of friends who understand and laugh in response has a greater chance of success.

When the first two books of *Tristram Shandy* were published in 1759, most readers were delighted. Some of them ceased to laugh, however, when they discovered that the writer was a parson of the church. At any rate, Sterne became a celebrity overnight, and many famous people -- literati and nobility -- received him and applauded him; they called him "Tristram" or "Parson Yorick," identifying him completely with his book. Samuel Johnson thought him smutty and too peculiar in his writing, but when Oliver Goldsmith suggested that Sterne was dull, Johnson replied, "Why, no, Sir." Sterne reveled in his popularity and prosperity, and he commuted between York and London, reaping the fruits of fame.

The years between 1759 and 1768 were intensely busy ones for him. He wrote his five installments of *Tristram*, several volumes of *Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, and at the end of the period, *A Sentimental Journey*. He struggled very hard to enjoy his life, having adequate proofs that it was not to last for very long he hoped to find in relationships with women some recompense for the emptiness of his marriage. No doubt he did, since whatever was ideal in those relationships came in large part from his imagination.

Looking for a climate that would deal more gently with his damaged lungs, he spent a good deal of time between 1762 and 1765 in France. His wife and daughter were happy there, and he finally settled them there permanently. His time in France furnished him with the material for Bk. 7 of *Tristram* as well as for the charming and successful *Sentimental Journey*.

This latter volume, a slim one, has won the hearts of readers and critics consistently during its 200 years of existence (February, 1768). The delicacy of the book pleases everyone, but there is still a lot of Sternean muscle rippling robustly under the skin. The complexity of life throbs beneath the surface of *Tristram Shandy*; *A Sentimental Journey* gives us Sterne, warm and gentle farewell to a life that gave him much satisfaction and delight. He died less than a month after it was published, at the pinnacle of his fame.

### **11.2.2 Critical Introduction Of The Novel**

In many ways and for various reasons, *Tristram Shandy* is one of the great books of prose fiction. In its humor, universality, and insight into humanity, it reminds one of Petronius, Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, and Joyce. In its concern with motives and with the psychology of the individual, in the writer's approach to the problems of novel writing, it makes great sense to the twentieth-century reader.

Perhaps the key to the enjoyment of *Tristram Shandy* is Literalness. If we believe everything we are told in the book, understand it in the way we are told to understand it, we will not become angry and frustrated the way most readers have for the past 200 years. The secret is not to bring usual attitudes or traditional judgments to the book, but rather to surrender to the writer. As the author himself says,

I would go fifty miles on foot, for I have not a horse worth riding on, to kiss the hand of that man whose generous heart will give up the reins, of his imagination into his author's hands, -- be pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore.

There is great good fun in *Tristram Shandy*, but it comes from being in harmony with the author rather than from being contrary and rebellious. Most eighteenth and nineteenth-century readers loved the tender, sentimental passages in the book, but they disliked the fun. They lost their tempers at the many calculated twistings and turnings of the story, at the many jokes (bawdy and shaggy-dog types) -- in short, they disliked the author because he didn't write the kind of book they wanted. Many twentieth-century readers have felt the same.

There are certain problems in reading this novel, but they present a kind of complexity that can be pleasurable for the modern reader. The problems are these: the identity of the author, the point of the story, and many, many digressions from the apparent story.

#### **The Identity Of The Author**

The full title of this book is *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. In spite of this very explicit title, most people have taken for granted that it is really the story of Laurence Sterne, the author of the book. Sterne complained that the world considered him more Shandean than he actually was, and conversely the world has considered *Tristram Shandy* more Sternean than it actually is. In most people's minds, author and book have interpenetrated to such an extent that one is considered

an extension of the other. Nothing but confusion is gained from this idea about the book: if we think that were sometimes reading autobiography, sometimes fiction, and sometimes a blend of the two, we cannot help but be uncertain and nervous about it.

The fullest and deepest meaning is gotten from the book only by assuming that Sterne created a fictional character named Tristram Shandy and that he made him a writer. He gave him a mind that knows of all the happenings in the book, and this mind is independent of the artist Sterne's mind. It is an artistic mind, somewhat like Sterne's, and it is a lucid and consistent one in spite of all the inconsistencies it shows; For the purposes of the reader, it is the mind of an individual named Tristram Shandy, not Laurence Sterne.

The thoughts and the opinions of Tristram Shandy, however much they may coincide with what we know of Laurence Sterne, belong primarily to the man who is the legitimate offspring of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Shandy and the nephew of Captain Toby Shandy. One could even say that Sterne created no other characters. Tristram, once his mind has been set in motion, creates the rest of the individuals who people his world, meaning that all of them come through to the reader through the unfolding of Tristram's consciousness. This creation by Tristram is one of the most important of the dynamic processes of the novel. Sterne writes about a man who is writing a book, and this man presents for the reader's inspection the people who had significance in his life; all of their stories are told to us directly or indirectly by this man. His life is tied up with theirs before he is born because he is presented to us as remembering this relationship. Thus, the first point to be taken literally in the title is that the author within the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* is Tristram Shandy. Whenever the term "author" is used hereafter, it will refer to, Tristram and not to Laurence Sterne.

### **11.2.3 The Point Of The Story**

About 10 years before the publication of *Tristram Shandy* (1759), Henry Fielding published his *History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749). Tom Jones has always been the archetype of the "well-made novel," and for many readers and critics *Tristram Shandy* suffers by comparison with it. Tom Jones presents the "life and adventures" of its hero; everything happens in an orderly, progressive way. The hero appears as an infant in the third chapter, and the major part of the book deals with his adventures as a young man. But there is no such orderliness in *Tristram Shandy*: Tristram is born a third of the way through the book, and the last 45 chapters of the book (many of them short) deal with the events that took place five years before his birth. The stories of Mr. and Mrs. Shandy, of Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, of Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman, and the story of Tristram's childhood and young manhood itself, are all picked up, dropped, and picked up again and again. The author unhesitatingly tells the end of a story first, then the beginning, and then the middle; sometimes he tells the beginning and then drops it for a hundred pages. He manipulates the years and the events; he places, displaces, and replaces the people of his family (including himself) as he likes, taking them from the context of their actions and putting them back according to the way they figure in his reflections about them. Their stories give way for his opinions -- the opinions of an author at work -- and, they are picked up according to his will and inserted into the pattern of his history as illustrations of his opinions. Everything, individuals and events, moves in direct response to the controlling consciousness of the author. He makes them move or he makes them stop in their tracks in mid -- sentence; and when he thinks that it is time to go back to them, they start moving and they finish their sentence. The affairs of the lovable Shandy family and the goings -- on at Shandy Hall are given to us piecemeal and topsy-turvy: now

we see them, now we don't; we see them here, and suddenly we see, them there.

But one person we always see and hear, no matter what happens to the Shandy family story, is Tristram, whose "life and opinions" continue unbroken. Whether or not anyone else is present, he is in every scene by means of his "my uncle Toby," "my father," "my mother." His presence is not merely a storytellers point of view; writing of the components of his life at a distance as a mature man -- and as a writer he has the advantages of a mature man's outlook. Only he is alive at the time of writing; all the others have been long dead. The fact that he is able to conjure them up in all their vividness and move them backward and forward in "time" without impairing that vividness, demonstrates and proves the reality and depth of the character that Sterne created for him: he belongs to the Shandy family and he is also a clever writer. The Shandy manages are important, but they are not more important than the thoughts they give rise to in the mind of this clever writer. And when these thoughts provoke a stream of thought which does not concern any Shandy other than Tristram the writer, goodbye to the Shandys for a while. And the Shandys whom the writer bids goodbye to every so often include even little Tristram himself, the writer is willing to tell (with a calculated attempt to frustrate the reader) about his own conception, his birth, his childhood accidents, his first breeches, and a couple of trips to the Continent, but nothing else. It is big Tristram he is concerned with, and the opinions (i.e., ideas, fancies, prejudices, caprices) of this Tristram. He himself is the subject of his book, and his inner life and his opinions are the material that interests him most. So, the next point to be taken literally in the title is that the book is about the life and opinions of Tristram Shandy -- just as it says. The title is a clue to Sterne's intentions. Tristram views his life through the medium of his opinions, and his opinions control the presentation of his reminiscences.

#### **11.2.4 The Digressions In The Novel**

The solution to the problem of the digressions follows from the above discussion of the problems of the identity of the author and the point of the story. Writing about his own life and his opinions, the author, Tristram frees himself from the standard "life and adventures" approach. He is introspective about himself and his background and equally about the techniques of the book he is writing. He is the narrator of the "story," but he is also the conscious artist who is concerned with his ideas, with the ordering and significance of those ideas, and with the impact of those ideas both upon himself as artist and upon his "public." The digressions of Tristram Shandy are of two distinct types: the first take the reader from the immediate part of the story to antecedent or subsequent events that supposedly clarify or amplify the story; the second take the reader from the immediate story to the private views of the author, either on that story or on completely diverse subjects. But all of these digressions finally have unity in the creative consciousness of Tristram. No matter how digressive he may get, his constant effort--he tells us regularly -- is aimed at the harmonizing of these digressions with the "main work"; and no matter how vague the connection is between "digression" and "story," he always finally brings the two together. In the meantime, how do you organize opinions? Unlike straight -- line adventures, they resist coming to attention and forming orderly ranks. Further, how many opinions can fit into the book? As someone once said, "... the fragments of the narrative have the appearance of interruptions to digressions!" But this is Tristrams book, and thats the form he gave to it. We finally understand all about Tristram Shandy not only or primarily from the events of his life -- his story" -- but from the book whose very structure reflects his mind and his character. Tristram says near the end of the book, "--All I wish is; that it may be a lesson to the world, to let people tell their stories in their own way." The best thing of all, in reading his book, is to take his advice.

## 11.2.5 List of Characters in The Novel

### The Shandy Household

**Waiter Shandy**, father of Tristram. A man who loves hypotheses, theories, and erudition, and hates interruptions. He is an easily disappointed man.

**Mrs. Shandy** (Elizabeth), mother of Tristram. A singularly down--to--earth woman whose outstanding traits--if she has any--are her lack of imagination and her inability to ask an interesting question.

**Captain Toby Shandy** (retired), uncle of Tristram and brother of Walter. His main interest in life is fortifications, and military history, and his character is one of gentleness and amiability.

**Corporal Trim** (James Butler), loyal servant and former companion-at-arms of Toby Shandy. An eloquent orator who shares his masters enthusiasm for past battles.

**Susannah**, the Shandy maidservant. A young woman who bustles about. She is the unwitting tool of various small disasters that strike the Shandy household.

**Obadiah**, the manservant. Another bustler, distinguished by frequent maladroitness and poor sense of timing.

**The Scullion**. A fat, simple kitchen servant.

**Bobby Shandy**, the older son of the Shandy family. Although he never appears in the book, his death is discussed in Bk. 4, Chap. 31.

**Tristram Shandy No.1**. The "hero," who is born in Bk. 3, Chap. 23. Victim of small misfortunes that seem great ones to his father. We see him rarely; all there is to him is the series of Accidents, the question of whether his; parents should put him into trousers, and the mention of a trip he took to France with his father and his Uncle Toby.

### Friends, Neighbors, and Obstetricians

**Parson Yorick**, the village parson. Friend and level--headed adviser of the Shandy family, his iconoclastic wit makes many enemies.

**Widlow Wadman**. A woman who has cold feet in bed. Disappointed in her first husband, she hopes to find a better one in Captain Toby Shandy.

**Bridget**, her maidservant. Sometime paramour of Corporal Trim.

**Eugenius**, a man of the world. Friend of Parson Yorick, he tries unsuccessfully to teach him caution and prudence.

**Dr. Slop**, the man--midwife. A very short, very fat obstetrician who attaches great importance to obstetrical instruments.

**The Midwife**. An old woman who assists at the delivery of Tristram.

**The Curate** (named "Tristram") An officious person who baptizes Tristram.

### Others

**Aunt Dinah**. The Shandy family scandal.

**Lieutenant Le Fever.** An unfortunate soldier, sustained in his last moments of life by Mr. Toby Shandy.

**Billy Le Fever.** Son of the above and recipient, of the generous bounty of Mr. Toby Shandy.

<b>Kysarcus</b>	}	<b>Learned men and acquaintances of Parson Yorick</b>
<b>Phutatorius</b>		
<b>Didius</b>		
<b>Gastripheres</b>		
		<b>And</b>

**Tristram Shandy**, No. 2, the Author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Laurence Sterne's chief Character, he tells the story of the people listed above, makes judgment about the events of their lives, and he gives us the step--by--step details of the problems and difficulties involved in writing this sort of book.

**Jenny.** A casually mentioned young lady friend of the author.

### 11.2.6 Outline Story of Tristram Shandy

#### BOOK 1

(1) The author reflects upon the sad circumstances of his conception. (2) The author bemoans the vitiated homunculus and animal spirits. (3) How the prece-ding has been told to the author by his Uncle Toby. (4) Formal statement of the above for the benefit of readers who "find themselves ill at ease, unless they are let into the whole secret from first to last:" (5) The author says he was born on November 5, 1718. (6) The author prepares the reader for his donning the "fools--cap." (7) The installation of the midwife by the parsons wife. (8) A statement on hobby--horses, plus a Dedication. (9) Remarks on the preceding Dedication, its virginity and its value. (10) Fruitless return to the midwife; the story of Yoricks fine horses. (11) Yorick the jester and Yorick the parson. (12) Yoricks humor, its consequences, and his sad death (1748). (13) Second fruitless return to the midwife. (14) Difficulties of an author; despair at ever catching up: "I have been at it these six weeks...and am not yet born." (15) Mrs. Shandys marriage settlement; her right to lie--in in London. (16) False--alarm and the return from London. (17) Consolation for Walter Shandy: Lying--in in the country. (18) Anticipations of Walter Shandy On his wifes lying--in in the country; his measures against careless delivery. (19) Walter Shandy on names good and evil; his unconquerable aversion for "Tristram." (20) The author on careless readers; "Les Docteurs de Sorbonne" on baptism. (21) First chapter on Tristrams birth; Uncle Toby knocks out his ashes, and says "I think--"; Uncle Toby's modesty concerning Aunt Dinah. (22) The authors statement on his work: "In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too,--and at the same time." (23) Reasons for drawing Uncle Toby's character from his hobby-horse. (24) The fact that Uncle Toby had a strange hobby-horse. (25) Uncle Toby's wound; the ease gained through telling about it. The author says that the reader cannot guess what he is about to say.

#### BOOK 2

(1) King Williams Wars; Uncle Toby's idea of a map of Namur. (2) The author answers his critics; he says that his book, like Lockes is a "history - book...of what passes in a mans mind." (3) Uncle Toby's map; the broadening of his knowledge of fortifications. (4) The author explains why he ended the previous chapter at "the last spirited apostrophe"; how Uncle Toby mightily desires his health.

(5) Trim incites Uncle Toby to go down to the country to build fortifications. (6) The end of Uncle Toby's sentence, "I think-" which began in Bk. 1, Chap. 21; a talk on modesty as a reason for Mrs. Shandys preferring the midwife to Dr. Slop. (7) Modesty, cont'd; the right and wrong ends of a woman; Uncle Toby mentions his unfortunate experience with the Widow Wadman. (8) Concerning time ("an hour and a half's tolerable good reading"), and the hypercritics pendulum. (9) Obadiah's collision with Dr. Slop. (10) Enter Dr. Slop; on Uncle Toby's train of thought (connecting Stevinus with the ring of the bell). (11) "Writing...is but a different name for conversation"; Dr. Slop has forgotten his bag. (12) why Stevinus came into Uncle Toby's mind; patience and placidity of Uncle Toby shown by the episode of the fly; Walter repents his baiting of Uncle Toby and is forgiven. (13) "Tis not worth talking of." (14) Stevinus, contd. (15) The discovery of the Sermon upon Conscience. (16) How Conscience is upon neither side -- neither Catholic nor Protestant. (17) Trims stance and posture; the Sermon, with many interruptions; Trims brother, Tom. (18) Obadiah's entrance with the bag; Uncle Toby's "I wish...you had seen what prodigious armies we had in Flanders." (19) "I have dropped the curtain over this scene for a minute." Mr. Shandy's nicety in reasoning; the center of the brain is the medulla oblongata -- proved at length.

### BOOK 3

(1) Uncle Toby's wish, contd; Dr. Slops "confusion." (2) Walters challenging of the wish, and the reaching for a handkerchief. (3) Reaching for the handkerchief, contd. (4) The author on the relation of body and mind. (5) Reaching for the handkerchief, contd. (6) Walters challenging of the wish cont'd; Uncle Toby whistles Lillabullero. (7) How the green bag was knotted because Obadiah could not hear himself whistle. (8) The knotting of the green bag, contd; how this was a link in the concatenation of events against the fortunes of Tristram Shandy. (9) The knotted bag, contd. (10) The cutting of the knots; on curses. (11) The curse of Ernulphus. (12) On exactitude, illustrated by Garrick's Hamlet; the inclusiveness of Ernulphus curse--how all others derive from it. (13) In which Tristram Shandy begins to be born; the midwives accident; Slops "the subordination of fingers and thumbs to \*\*\*\*." (14) A discussion of Dr. Slops "singular stroke of eloquence" compared to one of Cicero's. (15) Dr. Slop draws from his bag forceps and squirt; Uncle Toby's advantage. (16) Demonstration of the forceps on Uncle Toby. (17) Danger of the forceps mistaking the hip for the head. (18) Lecture on Duration: Walter to Uncle Toby; the chagrin of Walter. (19) The author regrets that the lecture was ended by Walters petulance. (20) Sleep descends on Walter and Uncle Toby, whereupon the author finds time to write his Preface; the Preface: concerning Locke's favoring Judgment over Wit and how he was "bubbled:" (21) How the parlor door hinge has squeaked for 10 years. (22) Rude awakening by squeaking hinges; how heirloom boots became mortars. (23) Tristram Shandy has been born, and Dr. Slop builds a bridge. (24) How this bridge is mistaken for the one destroyed by Trim and Bridget. (25) How the destroyed bridge was to be rebuilt. (26) Return to the "present"; Uncle Toby sends thanks to Dr. Slop for rebuilding the bridge. (27) The enlightenment about the bridge; Walter is led to his room by Uncle Toby. (28) The author shows respect for the tribulations of his father. (29) Man bears pain and sorrow best in a horizontal position. (30) Why Walters affliction was extravagant: "To explain this, I must leave him upon the bed for half an hour." (31) Discussion between Tristrams great--grandfather and great-grandmother on noses. (32) The same, contd. (33) Discussion between Tristrams grandfather and grandmother on noses. (34) Walters concern with the literature on noses. (35) Walters collection of this literature. (36) A warning by the author to the female reader. (37) Noses, contd. (38) In praise of Hafen Slawkenbergius. (39) Conflict between Walter and Uncle Toby on noses. (40) Locke and noses. (41) Noses, contd. (42) Further praise of Slawkenbergius by the author.

## BOOK 4

The ninth tale of the tenth decade of *Slawkenbergius*, translated from the original Latin by the author. (1) Cautious hints concerning the "untranslated tenth tale of the tenth decade. (2) Back to Walter Shandy, who is still prostrate. (3) Lashes, metaphorical and literal: Walter, Shandy vs. "A grenadier...in Makay's Regiment." (4) Trims memory and his brother in Portugal. (5) A very short aside by Walter. (6) How Walter Shandy rises from his bed of grief. (7) Walter on misfortune. (8) How "Trismegistus" will counteract a crushed nose. (9), Walter on the laws of chance. (10) The author writes a chapter on "Chapters," while his father and uncle are still on the stairs. (11) The greatness of "Trismegistus": antiphon by Walter and Uncle Toby. (12) How husbands are ignored during childbirth. (13) How the author gets his father and uncle off the stairs at last, as he despairs of ever catching up with the story of his life. (14) Time has truly passed; Walter is awakened by the maid; the leaky vessel carries away "Trismegistus," part of which seeps out. (15) The author writes his chapter on sleep. (16) Walter remains calm. (17) The authors explanation of this calmness. (18) Uncle Toby and Trim regret the misnaming, musing however upon the uselessness of names in battle. (19) The belated Lamentation of Walter. (20) The author on the dangerous and devious turnings, of his book. (21) Digression upon kings: how Francis I solved a knotty problem satisfactorily. (22) The author explains that his book is written against nothing but spleen. (23) Walter and Yorick discuss un--naming; Yorick suggests a dinner with learned men. (24 and 25) A chapter has been torn out, and the author explains what was in that chapter: the coach with the erroneous bend sinister in the Shandy arms. (26) The dinner of learned men (The "Visitation Dinner").. (27) The same, cont'd; a misplaced chestnut. (28) Treatment of a chestnut burn. (29) Discussion by the learned men on the naming of a child: how a mother has no relation to her child. (30) On the latter point, between Uncle Toby and Yorick. (31) Walter Shandys legacy--the ox--moor or Bobby's "grand tour"; how the matter is settled by the death of Bobby. (32) The author: how true Shandeism opens the heart and the lungs.

## BOOK 5

(1) The author inveighs against plagiarism; his digression on Whiskers with the story of the Lady Baussiere. (2) Walter is informed of the death of his son Bobby. (3) How Walter carried on: consolation in rhetoric. (4) Containing a choice anecdote: a culmination of Walters carryings on. (5) How the author leaves his mother standing outside the parlor door. (6) In the kitchen: a parallel to the parlor declamation. (7) Trim the orator: on Death. (8) In which the author remembers his debt of a chapter on chambermaids and buttonholes. (9) Trim continues: on Death. (10) The same, contd. (11) The author remembers his mother outside the parlor door. (12) The author returns to his mother-- but does not. (13) What Mrs. Shandy had heard. (14) The matter of Socrates children cleared up. (15) The author digresses with "Had this volume been a farce" (16) Walter writes a *Tristra--paedia*. (17) Tristram has an accident, at the age of five. (18) Susannah confides in Trim. (19) Digression: Uncle Toby wishes for more cannon; Trim removes the window sashes. (20) Trim champions Susannah. (21) How Trims succoring Susannah suggests the Battle of Steenkirk to Uncle Toby. (22) The Battle of Steenkirk, contd. (23) Susannah, Trim, Uncle Toby, and Yorick advance on Shandy Hall. (24) The author on his fathers variousness. (25) The author mentions his right to go backward. (26) Walter is informed of the accident. (27) Walter finds a certain good in the accident; on circumcision. (28) Walter Shandy: On the Good. (29) A story by Yorick: the battle between Gymnast and Tripet. (30) Walter on the merits of the *Tristra-paedia*. (31) *Tristra-paedia*: the origins of society and the rights of the parents (an echo of Bk. 4, Chap. 29): (32) Trim is catechized. (33) *Tristra-paedia*: Walter Shandy on radical heat and radical moisture. (34) The

same, contd. (35) The same, contd. (36) The same, contd. (37) Uncle Toby and Trim on radical heat and radical moisture. (38) The same, contd. (39) Dr, Slop delivers a prognosis on the results of the accident. (40) Radical heat and moisture, resumed. (41) The author shouts encouragement and patience to the reader. (42) Another chapter of the Tristra-paedia, on the value of the auxiliary verbs. (43) Auxiliary verbs, contd.

## **BOOK 6**

(1) The author looks back at his work and marvels at the quantity of jackasses in the world. (2) The value of the Tristra-paedia: famous prodigies. (3) An altercation between Dr. Slop and Susannah at the dressing of Tristram's wound. (4) A brief statement of events. (5) Walters conception of the right kind of tutor. (6) The story of Le Fever. (7) The same, cont'd. (8) The same, cont'd. (9) Uncle Toby goes to bed (part of the story of Le Fever). (10) Le Fever dies. (11) The author is impatient to return to his story; however, he takes time to discourse upon sermons. (12) Uncle Toby and young Le Fever. (13) Young Le Fevers military misfortunes; Uncle Toby recommends him as Tristrams tutor. (14) Dr Slop has exaggerated in public about Tristrams accident. (15) A line on Walters determination to put Tristram into breeches. (16) On resolutions and Walters "beds of justice." (17) A historical precedent for the beds of justice. (18) The consideration of breeches in the beds of justice. (19) "Breeches" in the literature of antiquity. (20) The author leaves his characters safely occupied and moves on to another "scene of events." (21) Uncle Toby's battlefield, and (22) the battlefield and the sentry box (several years are telescoped). (23) A town is built for the sake of verisimilitude. (24) About :Trims Montero-cap. (25) The authors encomium to Uncle Toby and Trim; he anticipates Uncle Toby's death. (26) How Trim made the cannons smoke. (27) Uncle Toby's appreciation of Trims genius. (28) Uncle Toby fights the temptation of the ivory pipe. (29) The author prepares the reader for love. (30) How all, great and small, have loved (31) How the peace of Utrecht brings unemployment to Uncle Toby. (32) Uncle Toby's "apologetical oration": in defense of his wishing the war to continue. (33) The author mentions again that he is obliged to go backward and forward. (34) Uncle Toby concludes the peace on his battlefield. (35) A restless peace for Uncle Toby. (36) Disquisition upon love, to be applied to Uncle Toby. (37) "Let love therefore be what it will,-- my uncle Toby fell into it." (38) In which the reader himself draws a likeness of Widow Wadman. (39) Mr. and Mrs. Shandy discuss Uncle Toby's amours. (40) The author begins to get "fairly into" his work; lines are drawn to show the reader how he has traveled so far.

## **BOOK 7**

(1) The author prepares to flee from Death; on the low character of Death. (2) The flight: the Channel boat. (3) The choice of three roads to Paris. (4) Should one describe Calais? (5) The author describes Calais, (6) On to Boulogne. (7) Delays on the road; the passengers speculations on the author. (8) On to Montreuil; the authors patience with French coaches and drivers. (9) Montreuil: Janatone, the innkeepers daughter, and the transience of her beauty. (10) French post roads and distances (11) "One gets heated traveling." (12) Abbeville and the inn not fit to die in. (13) On wagon wheels. (14) On Lessius and Ribberas estimates of the size of the soul; the authors sense of his death. (15) En route. (16) Reflections on how to pay the post charges and still sleep; the author sees Chantilly (hurriedly). (17) First view of Paris: "So this is Paris! quoth I." (18) Enumeration of the streets of Paris, quarter by quarter. (19) En route. (20) How French post--horses are urged on. (21) The above illustrated by the story of the Abbess of Andouilletts. (22) The same, contd. (23) The same, contd. (24) The same, contd. (25) The same, concluded. (26) The author looks back upon the distance he has

covered. (27) Trips are interchanged Tristrams grand tour with his father and his uncle; their visit to the mummies at Auxerre. (28) The author comes to his senses and resumes the first journey. (29.) The wrecked coach is sold in Lyons; "Every thing is good for something. (30) "VEXATION upon VEXATION" in Lyons. (31) The story of Amandus and Amanda. (32) The interlude with the ass of Lyons: thy author gives "Honesty" a macaroon. (33) Tristram and the Commissary. (34) The same, contd. (35) Tristram scores on the Commissary but pays nonetheless. (36) The loss of the "remarks." (37) Back to the coach--purchaser. (38) The "remarks," used as curl--papers, "will be worse twisted still." (39) Sight--seeing in Lyons: "Lippiuss clock" and the "Chinese history." (40) No tomb to drop tears on. (41) At Avignon: Its windiness and its nobility. (42) En route: the author begins to believe that he has outrun Death. (43) The author, while en route, promises the continuation of the story of Uncle Toby's amours; he stops to dance with happy country people; Nannette.

## BOOK 8

(1) Further statement on the necessity of going forward and backward. (2) The author expresses confidence in his method of writing a book. (3) The effect of velvet masks on the Shandy lineage. (4) How Uncle Toby finally heard that he was in love. (5) On drinking water. (6) How Uncle Toby's being a water--drinker would have explained Mrs. Wadman's feelings toward him; the author expresses difficulty with this chapter. (7) The author, impatient, points out the care required in telling his story. (8) How Uncle Toby lacked a bed when he first came down to Shandy Hall; how he accepted a bed at the Widow Wadman's. (9) Widow Wadman's nightgowns and cold feet. (10) How Uncle Toby did not learn of her love for him until eleven years later, at the demolition of Dunkirk. (11) The author curses women who don't care whether he eats his breakfast or not; he also curses furred caps. (12) He is struck by his extravagant metaphor. (13) An alphabetical damning of love. (14) How the position of Widow Wadman's house enabled her to attack. (15) The author prefers to be burned from the top down; on the "blind gut." (16) The Attack: Mrs. Wadman and Uncle Toby look at maps in the sentry box. (17) The author treasures a map with their thumbprints. (18) "Dunkirk" is finally destroyed: a continuation of the action first mentioned in Bk. 6, Chap. 34; Uncle Toby is sad. (19) To divert him, Trim essays the story of the King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles; Uncle Toby's argumentativeness. (20) Trims tale of the wound on his knee and of the fair Beguine who nursed him. (21) The same contd. (22) The same, cont'd; Uncle Toby finishes Trims story for him. (23) Widow Wadman attacks again. (24) How she gets something in her eye. (25) How Uncle Toby does not get it out; a description of Widow Wadman's eye. (26) Uncle Toby breaks a blister and realizes that his wound is not merely skin--deep. (27) Uncle Toby announces to Trim that he is in love. (28) Discussion between Mrs. Wadman and Bridget about Uncle Toby's wound. (29) How a sword gets in ones way. (30) Plans of action by Uncle Toby and Trim. (31) Preparations for Walter Shandy's laugh. (32) Walter laughs; Uncle Toby's blister and Hilarion's ass. (33) Altercations in the Shandy family concerning love. (34) The same, cont'd; Trims wager; Walters letter of advice to Uncle Toby. (35) Uncle Toby and Trim are ready to attack; Mr. and Mrs. Shandy stroll down to observe the campaign.

## BOOK 9

(1) Mr. and Mrs. Shandy; her placidity and lack of prurience. (2) Uncle Toby's battle array: how his tarnished gold--laced hat became him. (3) Uncle Toby's fear of the attack. (4) Trim assures Uncle Toby that the Widow Wadman will accept him as readily as the Jews widow accepted Tom, Trims brother. (5) The story of Tom and the widow, told outside Mrs. Wadman's house. (6) The same, contd. (7) The same, contd. (8) Trim and Uncle Toby are seen by Mr. and Mrs. Shandy still standing

and talking; the authors sense of the speed of time. (9) The authors comment on the readers reaction to "that ejaculation." (10) Mr. and Mrs. Shandy await events, as Trim tells his story to Uncle Toby. (11) They agree about the nonsense of fortifications; Mrs. Shandys agreeableness and Walters chagrin about the date. (12) The author pauses to balance folly with wisdom to assure the success of his book. (13) The authors method of overcoming dullness while writing; how his laundry bills will prove the cleanness of his writing. (14) The author continues killing time, waiting for Chap. 15. (15) The author realizes that in talking about his digression he has actually made it; his surprise at this fact. (16) Trim and Uncle Toby finally knock at the front door. (17) The front door is opened with great dispatch; the author on finances. (18) [BLANK] (19) [BLANK] (20) Uncle Toby assures Mrs. Wadman that she shall see and touch the very spot where he received his wound. (21) How a woman chooses a husband, illustrated from Slawkenbergius. (22) How all Uncle Toby's virtues are nothing to Mrs. Wadman. (23) Bridgets determination to get the truth out of Trim. (24) The author feels his "want of powers" to continue the story; the Invocation to the gentle imbecile, Maria. (25) In which the author explains the necessity of having written Chap. 25 before he could write Chaps. 18 and 19, which he now presents: 18. Uncle Toby informs Mrs. Wadman that he loves her; the thanklessness of children and the burden. 19. Mrs. Wadman's "fiddlestick"; Uncle Toby's confusion and the siege of Jericho. (26) Mrs. Wadman's past concern about Uncle Toby's wound; she asks him where he received the sad blow; Uncle Toby sends for the map. (27) After Mrs. Wadman has put her hand on the spot where Uncle Toby was wounded, the map is sent to the kitchen. (28) Trim explains the siege of Namur to Bridget; her charge and his refutation. (29) Trim learns the story of Mrs. Wadman's concern from Bridget. (30) How Uncle Toby and Trim had carried on separate attacks. (31) Trim tells Uncle Toby of the widows concern, apropos of her "HUMANITY"; Uncle Toby is disillusioned. (32) The Shandy family convenes; Walter Shandy on womens lust. (33) Walter on the "provision...for continuing the race"; Obadiahs child and the Shandy bull; the story about a cock and a bull.

### 11.2.7 A Note On The Text

*Tristram Shandy* was written in five installments and published in these segments:

Book 1 and Book 2    December, 1759

Book 3 and Book 4    January, 1761

Book 5 and Book 6    December, 1761

Book 7 and Book 8    January, 1765

Book 9                    January, 1767

The following notes are based on this first London edition, considered the most authoritative. The quotes preserve the punctuation of this edition, an important matter because the great use Sterne makes of dashes gives us a good idea of how *Tristram Shandy* should sound. These dashes are more effective for his purposes than the standard use of periods, commas, and semicolons, for as he says, "Writing, when I properly managed,... is but a different name for conversation."

The best edition available to the student is that done by James Aiken Work (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1940). Works edition has a lengthy and perceptive introduction (pp. ix--Ixxv), but its most useful feature for the student- for any reader-- is the completeness, of the foot, notes, which translate the many foreign expressions, identify the many references that the writer makes to esoteric

knowledge and little-known authors of erudite and specialized texts, provide cross--references to related matters in the book itself, and function generally as a complete encyclopedia to Tristram Shandy.

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### 11.3 Key Words

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Lockean theory of Associationism - When two or more ideas become associated in someone's mind; when one of these ideas occurs to him, the other occurs with it automatically. They are inseparably linked.

King Solomon - is mentioned in the Bible. He was blessed by God, and is known as the wisest of men.

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### 11.4 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have studied

- \* About the novelist
- \* About the novel, its background and the characters.
- \* About the critical interpretations of the text.

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### 11.5 Review Questions

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1. Write a brief note on Sterne
2. Give a brief background of the novel
3. Write a note on the "digressions" in the novel
4. Write briefly about Tristram Shandy
5. Write some lines about Captain Toby Shandy
6. Write some lines on Corporal Trim

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## UNIT-12

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### DEFOE : MOLL FLANDERS

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#### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Moll Flanders
  - 12.2.1 Life of Daniel Defoe
  - 12.2.2 Introduction to the Novel
  - 12.2.3 The Story of the Novel
  - 12.2.4 Significance of the Title
- 12.3 Key Words
- 12.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.5 Review Questions
- 12.6 Bibliography

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#### **12.0 Obejectives**

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In this unit you are going to study about the Novel. After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the background of the Novel
- Understand about the life, background and ideas of the Novelist
- Understand the story, structure and characters of the Novel
- Write in your own words about any aspect of the Novel.

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#### **12.1 Introduction**

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In this unit you will study about the Novelist, the Novel, the background and context of the Novel. Through key words and exercises given, you will reinforce your understanding of the unit.

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#### **12.2 Moll Flanders**

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##### **12.2.1 Life of Daniel Defoe**

Daniel Defoe was born in the year 1660. He was the son of a tallow-chandler by the name of James Foe who lived in the parish of Cripplegate in the city of London. This was the time when Cromwell's Commonwealth had just ended, and monarchy in England had just been restored with Charles II ascending the throne. James Foe I was a Dissenter so far as his religious faith was concerned. The times were dangerous for Dissenters, because the religious beliefs of these people were associated

with the beliefs of the Commonwealth which had recently ended and to which the new king was firmly opposed. It seemed that everything, which the Puritans under Cromwell had stood for, was now crumbling. In fact, the Puritans, or the Dissenters (also called the Non-Conformists) had become a persecuted minority. The only religious worship by law was that according to the prayer-book of the Church of England. Therefore, men like James Foe had to perform their duties of religious worship in secret.

James Foe was a fairly well-to-do tradesman who at one stage in his life gave up his business of tallow-chandling and became a butcher. He became a member of the Butchers' Company. He was prosperous enough to be able to give his son a good education. The children of Dissenters were not admitted to the grammar schools and to universities, thus making it "necessary for the Dissenters to provide their own private schools for their children. One such school was Morton's Academy at Stoke Newington; and to this academy was the boy Daniel Foe sent at the age of twelve or thirteen. Here he learnt French, Dutch, Italian, and Spanish, besides studying natural sciences, geography, astronomy and short-hand. Most of the boys at such schools were destined to become dissenting ministers or clergymen. Thus Daniel Foe was also intended for the same vocation. However, he himself had no taste for that kind of work, even though he was a sincere Dissenter, and remained one all his life. He went into business. According to one version, he became a hosier or a haberdasher". But it is more likely that he became a middleman in the stocking trade, buying from the manufacturers and selling to retailers. But he also dealt in such goods as tobacco and liquor. By this time it is also probable that he travelled in Europe. He got married in 1684, and married well, getting a fairly rich dowry.

Daniel Foe now began to take an active interest in politics. It is said that he took up arms under the Duke of Monmouth who was an illegitimate son of the late King Charles II, and who had risen against his uncle, James II, who was now the king. How far, Daniel was actively involved in this rebellion is not known; but, if he was, he proved lucky to have escaped scot-free whereas three of his old school-fellows were hanged for their part in it. By 1688 King James II had so antagonized the large majority of his subjects that William of Orange was invited to come from Holland to England and ascend the throne as joint sovereign with his wife Mary (who was James's sister). When William landed in England in response to this invitation, Daniel- Foe was one of the many Englishmen who rode out of London to greet him.

Daniel now doing quite well in life as a trader. Indeed, he was rising in life; and perhaps it was at this time that he prefixed the aristocratic "de" to his name "Foe", thus becoming "Defoe". And he seemed to be perfectly satisfied with the way in which events were moving in the world around him. Although he remained loyal to his religious beliefs all his life, he was not at all a fanatical sort of man. He was essentially a middle-of-the- road man who hated extremes; and in William he saw a king after his own heart. However, he has often been regarded as an opportunist, because later in his life he worked as the paid agent of both Whig and Tory governments. Yet he never betrayed his own belief in the virtues of compromise. He -always aimed at diminishing party differences between those with whom he came into contact.

The year 1692 was one of disaster for Defoe. Perhaps he was just unlucky. Or, perhaps, he was crooked and dishonest in his financial dealings. Perhaps, he was both unlucky and dishonest. In any case, he got involved in litigation over his business dealings, and got more and more deeply into debt. In the end, circumstances proved too much for him to cope with; and he became a bankrupt. However, within the next two years, he was able to recover some of his losses; and in 1694 he managed to

establish a contact with Queen Mary (wife of King William). He seems to have met even the king himself more than once. It is believed that he now began to serve King William as one of his private spies, and almost as a member of the secret police. Soon afterwards he began to write pamphlets in support of the King's policies. One such pamphlet was a long poem entitled *The True-Born Englishman*. If Defoe had written nothing except this poem, he would yet have deserved the respect and gratitude of the English people because this poem was a strong plea for tolerance and for a civilized attitude towards people of all nationalities. The poem brought him its own rewards: the favour of the King, and probably fame. It went into nine editions in the very year of its publication, 1701.

Then came another misfortune in Defoe's life. One day in February 1702, King William was killed by a fall from his horse while out riding. William was succeeded by Queen Anne; and the persecution of Dissenters began all over again. Defoe, who was now in the opposition, wrote and published a pamphlet entitled *The Shortest Way With Dissenters* which was an ironical attack on Dissenters but which was taken literally, and therefore misunderstood by both the Dissenters and their opponents. The consequence of this misunderstanding was most unhappy from Defoe's point of view. The pamphlet had appeared on the 1st December, 1702; and on the 3rd January 1703 a warrant for its author's arrest was issued. Defoe tried to go into hiding, but he was ultimately arrested, on the 20th May. Imprisoned in Newgate, he threw himself on the mercy of Queen Anne. But he received no mercy, and was sentenced to stand on three consecutive days in the pillory and also to pay a heavy fine. But that was not all. He was further condemned to imprisonment during the Queen's pleasure. On the 29th July, 1703, Defoe appeared in the pillory for the first time. He had already written a poem for this sad occasion. The poem was entitled *A Hymn to the Pillory*; and it was an attack on those who had sentenced him. The poem, which had already been put on sale, brought him much sympathy and support. As he stood in the pillory, with his face a ready target for all sorts of missiles from the mob, he was met not with the usual shower of stones and mud, but with garlands. This friendly and warm reception was repeated on the second day; and on the third day it proved to be even more enthusiastic. The mob drank to his health, and applauded him. From the pillory, Defoe was taken to Newgate prison, where he remained for three months, after which he was released on the recommendation of the politician Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford.

In this way Defoe became Robert Harley's supporter and follower. He had now no means of supporting himself and his large family except by his pen. Under the patronage of Harley; he started a newspaper which proved a great success and which continued to be published for nine years. To the public, this newspaper seemed to be the expression of Defoe's own opinions on politics and other matters, but in fact it was a vehicle of propaganda in support of Harley's policies. Harley kept supporting, Defoe, though not liberally. Defoe was now writing not only for this newspaper but also publishing pamphlets, one after the other. And, besides being a writer who supported the government, he was also working as a government spy or secret agent.

Thus life went on. for Defoe. He had yet to go through many ups and downs. If he had a patron. in Harley, he had also made many enemies. Materially he was successful enough, having a decent house and a garden at Stoke Newington; but life had its difficulties for him also. He was now aging; and he was beginning to feel disillusioned with politics. In 1713, his enemies got the better of him; he was arrested and taken to prison. He was soon released on bail; but there were other difficulties which now arose for him. The Queen died, and, the Elector of Flanover ascended the throne as King George I. Harley fell from power; and Defoe was in trouble again. The newspaper which he had been

editing had come to an end, and he was now managing another newspaper the role of which was somewhat dubious. In 1718, a rival newspaper published a long poem which was a blunt and undisguised attack on Defoe and his political activities.

Despite his active participation in politics, Defoe had never ceased writing. Much of his writing was of course political, but he found time also for writings of a non-political nature. And now in 1719 appeared his most famous book, *Robinson Crusoe*. This was followed, during the next five years, by a handful of novels scarcely less remarkable: *Captain Singleton*; *Moll Flanders*; *A Journal of the Plague Year*; and *Roxana*. In these novels one prominent theme was simulation and dissimulation, which had been part of Defoe's own life. Into these novels went all he had learnt of the art of writing and the art of persuasion in his twenty years of miscellaneous journalism and pamphleteering.

Defoe had now retired from politics, and was living in his house at Stoke Newington. He kept himself busy by writing. But he also took part in some business activities, having started a brick-and-tile business in which he is believed to have cheated his partner. At the same time, his novels were pouring from the presses, and the same was the case with his other miscellaneous writings. In fact, he proved to be one of the most prolific of writers. Some of his miscellaneous writings showed how far ahead of the opinions of his time he was, with his plans for a university in London and a foundling hospital, his scheme for the proper supervision of lunatic asylums, and his plea for the control of the sale of gin. His old age was by no means peaceful. In 1730, at the age of seventy, he one day disappeared from Stoke Newington. He went into hiding somewhere near Greenwich, because he was being sued by a woman for the debts which he had been owing to her during the past twenty-five years. From his hiding-place, where he was isolated from his wife and family, he wrote pathetic letters to his son-in-law. And at the end he was all alone. He died in April 1731 in a lodging house, not far from where he was born.

### **12.2.2 An Introduction To The Novel**

*Moll Flanders* was Written by Defoe in the year 1722. It was his third novel, the first two having been *Robinson Crusoe*, written in 1719, and *Captain Singleton*, written in 1720. Though it was his third novel, it ranks next only to *Robinson Crusoe* which is, by general consent, his best. The full title of the novel is: "The Fortune and Misfortune of the Famous Moll Flanders who was born in Newgate and, during a life of continued variety for Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve Years a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own brother), Twelve years a Thief, Eight Years a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew rich, lived honestly, and died a Penitent". In the full title all the principal stages of the career of the woman known as Moll Flanders have clearly been indicated. The full title shows also that the protagonist here is no ordinary person but one hardened in whoredom and in crime, and also one who ultimately repents of her sins and misdeeds. The full title is surely one which would arouse a reader's curiosity and whet his desire to read through the book. The name "Moll Flanders" is also significant because the name itself shows what kind of a woman the protagonist is. The name "Flanders" had in those days suggestions of immorality. Many women from Holland used in those days to go over to England and live there as prostitutes in an area close to London Bridge, which was notorious for its brothels and prostitutes. The name "Moll" also suggests a woman of loose morals.

The novel *Moll Flanders* has been written in the form of an autobiography. This is how the novel begins:

My true name is so well known in the records, or registers at Newgate, and in the Old-Baily, and there are some things of such consequence still depending there, relating to my particular conduct, that it is not to be expected I should set my name, or the account of my family to this work; perhaps, after my death it may be better known; at present it would not be proper.

From this opening it is clear that the protagonist herself is writing her story. This mode of narration establishes a direct contact between the protagonist and the readers. Actually, of course, it is Defoe who is writing the story; but, by adopting this technique of narration, Defoe removes himself from the picture altogether and allows his protagonist to speak to the reader directly. The real author of the novel is thus distanced from the reader, while the reader feels that the protagonist is talking” to him face to face. Some of the greatest novels have been written in ‘this autobiographical mode. Most notable among them is *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens.

The novel *Moll Flanders* has been the subject of considerable critical debate and discussion. One reason for the abundance of the critical discussion of this novel is its many-sidedness. This novel may be viewed from many angles because it has several facets. It may be regarded as a picaresque novel. It may be regarded as a fictional version of the Puritan spiritual autobiography. It may be treated as a bourgeois romance or anti-romance; and it may also be studied as a work of irony. Of all these aspects of this novel, the most striking is its picaresque facet. A picaresque novel is one in which the protagonist wanders from place to place and has adventures of various kinds. The protagonist in such a novel is generally a rogue who at the same time is able to excite some admiration or at least some sympathy in the readers. Here the protagonist is an adulteress, a whore, a thief, and a pickpocket; she wanders from place to place; and she does excite our sympathy because of the pangs of the conscience which she experiences at various times and because of the sincere repentance which she experiences at the end.

Defoe’s preface to his novel is very significant. In the preface, Defoe points out the purpose behind his writing of this novel. In fact, the preface is a reply to any objections which some narrow-minded readers might have raised after reading the novel to the freedom with which the author has dealt with the sex-life of his protagonist. It seemed to Defoe that some people might accuse him of having appealed to the base instincts of the readers and excited their sensual instincts. And so, in the preface, Defoe writes that he has taken all possible care to communicate no lewd ideas to the readers, that he has given no immodest turns to his story, and that the vicious part of the protagonist’s story has carefully been left out while certain other parts have been shortened in order not to offend the delicate sensibilities and tastes of his readers. Defoe also says that he wants his readers to concern themselves more with the moral of his story than with the particular incidents of it. Furthermore, says Defoe, every wicked action which finds a mention in the story has been shown to have unhappy and unfortunate consequences, and every villain, who is introduced in the story, has been brought to an unhappy end or been shown to have become a penitent. It is upon these foundations that Defoe recommends his novel to the readers as a work from every part of which something may be learned, and some just and religious inference can be drawn. In short, Defoe intended this novel to be a moral and didactic work. Whether Defoe has achieved his purpose or whether the novel appeals mainly to the purient instincts has to be decided by every reader for himself.

So far as Defoe’s portrayal of the protagonist is concerned, she is far from being an admirable woman. Moll Flanders has been many times married, not always legally; she is a thief and a pickpocket; she tells lies, or at least, does not take care to tell the exact truth; she is also promiscuous and is,

therefore, likely to excite the disgust and abhorrence of most readers. But, in spite of these drawbacks, she is one of the most vibrantly living creatures in English fiction. As for her sinfulness, she has partly inherited her propensity to evil from her mother, and has partly been made what she is by circumstances over which she has no control. In a sense, *Moll Flanders* is a sociological novel, that is, a novel in which the protagonist has been shown as having been influenced, largely by the social environment in which she lives, and by the social conditions in which she has been brought up. We are certainly repelled by this woman because of her many faults and misdeeds but we also feel attracted towards her because of her exuberance, her zest for life, and her inexhaustible energy. She certainly has frequent fits of depression and despondency but she always emerges victorious from those fits, and gets ready to face the ordeal of life again and again. It is her optimism, despite her moods of dejection, which makes her a formidable person having indomitable courage.

Those were the days when the country now known as the United States of America had not yet come into existence. The origin of this country is to be traced to the colonists, chiefly English and Dutch, who settled on the Atlantic seaboard in the 16th and 17th centuries. Virginia was the name of a colony founded by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1585; and later Maryland was established. Still later other colonies including New York came into existence. It was much later, in 1776, that these colonies achieved independence from British rule after a war known as the American War of Independence. Defoe wrote *Moll Flanders* during the first quarter of the 18th century, in the year (1722). In his time English convicts guilty of serious crimes, and even of small crimes like theft, were either hanged or transported to Virginia just as Indian convicts during British rule in this country were transported to the Andaman Islands. Land in Virginia had only then begun to be cultivated and the colonists were beginning to make a good living. The transported English convicts had also a good chance of acquiring small estates in course of time and earning their livelihood after a spell of slavery. Thus Moll Flanders and her Lancashire husband are transported to Virginia though they move away from there and settle down in Maryland.

The moral of the story is that a life of sin can never provide any stability to a human being, and that a life of crime can never bring any real satisfaction to anybody. If at all a human being has fallen into a life of sinfulness or crime, then the earliest possible opportunity should be taken for self-reform; but self-reform can come only through remorse and repentance over one's past sins and crimes.

It is somewhat surprising that the characters in this novel have not been given any names. Even the name "Moll Flanders" is not the real name of the protagonist. We are told this is an assumed name. The other characters have no names at all. Moll's first husband certainly has a name, Robin. But even this is not a full name. One of Moll's husbands is only called her Lancashire husband. One of her friends and her teacher in crime is merely called the Governess.

Another surprising feature of this novel is that it has not been divided into chapters or parts or sections. From beginning to end we have one continuous, unbroken narrative. This kind of narration, without a pause, becomes somewhat taxing for the reader to go through.

### **12.2.3 The Story Of The Novel**

The novel called *Moll Flanders* tells the life-story of a woman who was known to her comrades as Moll Flanders though this was not her real name. The story is told by Moll Flanders herself in her own person. The novel is therefore a kind of autobiography. At the very outset, she tells us that

she is not in a position to reveal her real name or her family background, and that she is telling the story of her life under a false name which is Moll Flanders and which was given to her by those persons in the midst of whom she had been moving for a number. of years.

Moll was born in Newgate prison in London where her mother was living as a convicted felon. under a sentence of transportation to Virginia. If the woman, who gave birth to her, had not been pregnant at the time, she would have been transported to Virginia immediately after the sentence was pronounced by the court. But, being pregnant, the woman had been permitted to stay on in the prison called Newgate prison till the child was born; and this child was a girl who afterwards came to be known as Moll Flanders. The mother was then transported to Virginia, while the child was handed over to a relative of her mother's, to be brought up by her. For several years, the child remained under the care of that female relative of her mother's, but subsequently she ran away from home and joined a band of gypsies. She remained with them for a time but subsequently she left them also, though she did not know whither she was going. It was in the town of Colchester (in the County of Essex) that she ran away from the gypsies. Being too young to know where she should go, she was taken into custody by the Parish Officers of the town, and was then handed over to a poor woman to be brought up by her at the expense of the town authorities. This woman was also running a school where she taught children to read and to work. Here the child continued till she attained the age of fourteen. At this point of time the old woman, who had been a kind of mother to her, fell sick and died.

Having once again no place to go to, and nobody to take care of her, the girl found herself in a strange predicament. At this stage a gentlewoman, in whose house the girl had stayed for about a month in the company of the gentlewoman's daughters, took her away to her own house (in the same town, namely Colchester). Here, in this aristocratic home, the girl attended the private lessons which the daughters of the family were receiving from private tutors. Here she learnt how to dance, how to write, how to speak French, and how to sing. She was now a young girl of seventeen or so, and very beautiful. She was far more attractive than the daughters of the family under whose care she was now living. She was not only more attractive than the daughters of the family but could sing better than any of them because she had a sweeter voice than all of them. She began to be praised not only for her beauty but also for her modesty, her sobriety, and her virtue.

Now it so happened that the elder son of the family began to feel interested in this girl. Being a very cunning fellow, he was able, in course of time, to seduce her and to establish a sexual intimacy with her. He had been able to trap her by flattery and by a promise that he would marry her in due course though actually he had no such intention. Then the younger son of the family also fell in love with the girl; and he went so far as to declare openly that he was ready to marry the girl if she agreed to his proposal. The elder gentleman, who had been having a sexual relationship with the girl for the past six months or so, now pressed her to agree to his younger brother's proposal of marriage. Although the girl was in love with the elder gentleman and was feeling genuinely devoted to him, yet he pressed her so hard that she had to submit to his entreaties and his exhortation. Under his pressure, she gave her consent; and so she got married to the younger son of the family. She lived with her husband for five years, after which he died. During this period she had given birth to two children by him. The parents of her dead husband took away the two children in order to bring them up at their own cost so that the girl herself was now free to do whatever she liked and go wherever she liked. Actually there was no place to which she could go and, having very little money, she did not know how to maintain herself.

The girl, who was now a widow, wanted to find a suitable man whom she could marry and thus establish herself once again in the world to be able to lead a decent life. In due course, the girl, who later came to be known as Moll Flanders, got-married to a linen-drafter who, however, soon incurred a heavy debt and found himself in the custody of the town-bailiff. He privately instructed her to quit the house where they had been living, and to remove from there all the costly goods and the valuable articles because he had decided to make good his escape from the bailiff's custody, and because their house would immediately afterwards be raided by the bailiff's men who would take into their possession all the assets of the linen-drafter, as was the law. Accordingly, Moll took away all the valuable goods from the house and shifted to another lodging, at the same time assuming a false name so that the bailiff's men should not be able to trace her. Her husband escaped from the bailiff's custody and crossed over to France; and Moll thereafter did not come to know anything about him. In fact, she was now once again left to her own resources and to make shift for herself. Once again she became a kind of widow because, although her husband, the linen-drafter, was still alive, she was now separated from him beyond any hope of being claimed by him as his wife.

Moll was now on the look-out for somebody else whom she could marry. Marriage was not an easy proposition for a woman in those days because every eligible bachelor was fortune-hunter, while Moll had only a small amount of money in her possession at this time. However, she soon came across a man who seemed to be very rich and who had been given an impression by someone that Moll was a very wealthy widow. The man showed himself to be very keen to marry Moll; and Moll, on her side, felt greatly attracted by this man who was apparently very rich. Moll did not try to tell the actual facts of her financial position to this man but allowed him to believe that she was a rich woman. Soon she got married to him but, not long afterwards, they both discovered that neither of them was rich enough to maintain both of them decently. This husband of Moll's said that he owned a few plantations in Virginia where his mother lived and looked after the property. He now proposed to Moll that they should migrate to Virginia where he could maintain her in a good style because he owned considerable property there. Moll had no choice but to agree to the proposal. So, to Virginia they both went.

In Virginia, Moll became very friendly with her mother-in-law who soon became very free in her talk with Moll. Moll's husband really was the owner of a few plantations there; and the mother-in-law too had a share in that property. Moll felt quite cheerful in this new place because she was now free from all economic hardship. However, in the course of her conversation with her mother-in-law one day, she was shocked to learn that her mother-in-law was her own mother who had spent some time in Newgate prison as a convicted felon and who had given birth to her (Moll) there. This revelation destroyed Moll's peace of mind completely because it meant that she was married to her own brother: When she told her mother-in-law this fact; the mother-in-law, who turned out to be Moll's mother also, wept and wept. But there was no remedy against this situation. Moll had by now spent several years here as her brother's wife and had given birth to three children though only one had survived. Finding it impossible to continue with this relationship with her brother, who had by mistake become her husband, Moll left both him and her mother, and returned to England.

Moll had spent eight long years in Virginia. After returning to England, she went to the holiday resort of Bath where she spent a whole season, trying to forget her nightmarish discovery that she had, by mistake, got married to her own brother. Here, in Bath, she formed a friendship with a gentleman who was married but whose wife had lost her sanity. This gentleman at first maintained only a kind of

Platonic relationship with Moll. He would spend much of his time in Moll's company and would often give her money too. However, he never demanded anything from her in return. Once he even went to the extent of sleeping with her in the same bed, both lying naked, without his taking any liberty with her. He spent the whole night with her in this manner without even once asking her to gratify his sexual desire. Later, it was only on Moll's own initiative that he developed sexual intimacy with her. Thereafter he became her steady lover. He lodged her in a private house in the village of Hammersmith where she lived for six years as his mistress and where he kept visiting her regularly at intervals. During this period she gave birth to three children, though only one of them survived. Then her lover had an attack of illness; and his condition became critical. However, he did not die. But Moll's luck did not continue to favour her. Her lover, now feeling repentant of his extra-marital relationship with Moll, decided to terminate the relationship. He wrote a letter to Moll, informing her of his decision and also informing her that he would take charge of the surviving child of their illicit union and would bring him up at his own expense. Moll once again found herself alone and friendless in life.

Moll now happened to come into contact with a bank official who was a very nice man and who told her that he was a married man with a wife and with no wife. He explained this riddle to her by saying that he certainly had a wife in the legal sense but that his wife was a loose woman who had been having a series of lovers, one after the other, and from whom he was seeking a divorce. He asked Moll if she would marry him. She replied that he should first obtain a divorce from his existing wife, and then propose marriage to her. However, she promised to wait for him to get a divorce from his wife.

Although Moll would have waited for the bank official to get a divorce from his existing wife and would have preferred to marry him, yet there were immediate requirements to be attended to. In this state of uncertainty, she happened to meet a woman who painted a very bright picture of life in the northern region of the country. Feeling tempted by this woman's assurances and promises, Moll went with her to Lancashire. There she was introduced by the same woman to a young and handsome man of a very good nature. This man said that he belonged to Ireland. Moll felt greatly attracted by him, especially because he was supposed to be very rich. On his side, the gentleman also thought that he had met a rich widow. This was the same misunderstanding on both sides which had previously led Moll to marry a man who had turned out to be her own brother. Now, under a similar wrong impression on both sides, Moll got married to this gentleman. When subsequently the true state of affairs became known to both of them, they felt disillusioned and disappointed. However, they both liked each other very well, and lived together for a few days. Then the gentleman said that he would go away to Ireland and try his luck there. He said that, if he became prosperous, he would write to Moll who could then join him in Ireland. Under these circumstances, Moll parted company with her Lancashire husband who went as far with her as the town of Dunstable.

Moll now came to London. Soon she found that she had become pregnant by her Lancashire husband who had gone away to try his luck elsewhere. She now needed a suitable place where she could spend the time of her confinement and where she could have a safe and comfortable delivery. She was introduced by a landlady to a certain midwife who was an expert in her profession and who was an expert in several other trades also. With her, Moll formed a friendship which lasted for the rest of her life. Moll addressed this midwife as her Governess. Under the care of this midwife, Moll gave birth to her child, and a handsome boy it was. Soon afterwards Moll, who had kept up a correspondence with her friend, the bank official, received a communication from him, informing her that he had succeeded in obtaining a divorce from his wife. He now conveyed to her once again his ardent desire

to marry her (Moll). Moll was in some difficulty about immediately agreeing to the bank official's proposal of marriage because she had a child on her hands and because she could not disclose to the bank official the fact that, after promising to wait for him to get a divorce, she had gone and got married to another man and had even become pregnant by him. She consulted the Governess in this predicament of hers. The Governess told her that the problem was very easy to solve. She then arranged for a woman from the countryside to come and take away the child on the understanding that, in return for the payment of a certain amount of money to her, she would bring up the child properly. The child having thus been disposed of, Moll was now free to marry the bank official. She now replied to the bank official's proposal in the affirmative.

It was in the small town of Brickill that the bank official met Moll with his divorce papers to prove that he was now really free to marry again. Feeling perfectly satisfied, Moll got married to him. The marriage ceremony was performed by a village priest in the inn where Moll was staying, with the landlord and the members of his family as the witnesses and as the wedding guests. In the same inn Moll's marriage with the bank official was consummated. But, while here, Moll was stunned to see her Lancashire husband in the company of a couple of other men. This husband of hers was supposed to have gone away to Ireland but he was here in Brickill. This was something which Moll could not understand. Later she discovered that her Lancashire husband was actually a professional highwayman who lived on the proceeds of the robberies which he committed.

Moll lived happily with her new husband, the bank official, for a period of five years during which she gave birth to two children. She was now forty-eight. Then her husband died of sheer depression and melancholia because of a financial misfortune which befell him. Moll cried, and wept, and raved like a mad woman. The five years of married happiness were now followed by two years of mourning and misery. Then a new development took place in her life. One day, going through a street and feeling desperate, she passed a chemist's shop where she saw a little bundle lying on a stool. Not knowing what she did, she walked into the shop and, picking up the bundle, walked out. She then returned to her lodging. On opening the bundle, she found some clothing, a small silver mug, six silver spoons, three silk handkerchiefs, and a few other articles. Then she realized that she had committed a theft. When this realization came to her, she experienced a deep sense of guilt. She sat down and wept most vehemently. When she went to bed that night, she slept very little because of the horror of the crime which she had committed.

If this feeling of guilt had persisted in her, Moll would probably have become a different kind of woman. But there was an evil counsellor within her; and this counsellor prompted her once again to go out of doors and try to 'see what might happen. Going through Aldersgate Street, she saw a pretty little girl returning home from her lessons at a dancing school. The girl was all alone. Moll's evil counsellor, now acting like a true devil, urged her to a wicked impulse under which she entered into a conversation with the little girl and soon afterwards quietly removed from her neck the necklace of gold beads which she was wearing. This was Moll's second excursion into the world of crime. Now the matter did not end here. It was poverty which had driven her to commit the first crime, and now she found that her heart had already become hard under the same necessity. The string of beads was worth about twelve or fourteen pounds. After this incident, Moll had many adventures of the same kind. One day, going through Lombard Street she saw a fellow running by her as swift as lightning, and throwing a bundle which he had been holding in his hand. He was being pursued by a crowd which was shouting: "Stop thief". The crowd did not see the bundle which had been flung into the street by the thief who was running away fast. After the thief and the crowd had disappeared, Moll quietly picked

up the bundle and went home. The bundle contained plenty of costly clothing.

Now Moll started going out into the streets almost daily in search of some prey or the other. Sometimes she walked into the villages near the city in order to pick up something which might come her way. On one occasion, while passing a house, she saw on the window-board two rings, one a small diamond ring and the other a plain gold ring. Seeing nobody around, she thrust her hand against the window-pane and broke it. She then took out the two rings, and walked away with them, feeling quite safe because nobody had seen her stealing them.

Now Moll wanted to find a buyer for the goods which she had stolen and which had accumulated. In order not to arouse any suspicion, she thought of going to her old Governess and seeking her help. Accordingly, she went and contacted the old woman who had now become a pawn-broker in addition to whatever else she had been doing. The Governess said that, being a pawn-broker, she could easily sell any goods which Moll wanted to dispose of because she could say that the persons, who had pawned the goods with her, had failed to redeem them within the prescribed time. From now on, the old Governess became Moll's helper and guide in this line also.

Moll continued with her thieving and stealing. On one occasion, she picked up a silver tankard from an ale-house and took it home. But soon afterwards, she felt like going back to the ale-house and replacing it on the table from where she had stolen it; but her Governess urged her not to do so and to keep the tankard in order to sell it. Moll now started living in the same house with her Governess. In order to make Moll an expert in the line, the Governess now engaged a teacher for Moll. This person was not a school-teacher, but a teacher of criminal activity and an instructor in crime. This teacher taught many tricks to Moll and, on one occasion, took Moll with herself in order to give her a practical demonstration of how a theft should be committed. In her teacher's company Moll became much bolder than before. In fact, now she grew audacious to the last degree. She and her teacher went out together so many times, without being ever detected, that Moll not only grew altogether fearless but also quite rich enough. She had, at one time, twenty-one gold watches in her possession.

Moll now thought of giving up this criminal activity because she was, no longer poor and needy. But just as poverty had driven to crime, so avarice kept her in it till there was no going back. She became more and more entangled in crime, and sank deeper and deeper into the mire. Soon afterwards, however, both Moll and her instructor were caught by a vigilant employee of a cloth-shop, and both were sent to Newgate prison. Fortunately, Moll was acquitted at the trial because of lack of evidence against her, while her instructor and companion in crime was convicted, sentenced to death, and hanged. After this, Moll made no excursions for quite a long time. But one night a house in her neighborhood caught fire, and her Governess taught her a trick by means of which Moll could get hold of a large bundle of valuables from that house and bring it home. Moll, feeling tempted, acted upon her Governess's instructions and brought home a large bundle containing a considerable quantity of clothing and ornaments.

Success in criminal activity, combined with avarice, continued to prompt Moll to further adventures of the same kind; and now stealing and thieving became a habit with her. Sometimes she did experience a sense of guilt and a feeling of remorse; but such feelings always proved to be shallow and fleeting. In fact, she became more and more hardened as a criminal. On one occasion, she had a very narrow escape from being caught; but even the feeling of fear, which overwhelmed her for a time as a result of this, did not dissuade her from committing further crimes. It was at this time her life that other criminals, who were as hardened in their life of crime as she was, gave her the name of Moll Flanders.

Actually Moll Flanders was the name of a woman who had earned a lot of notoriety as a pickpocket and a thief; but now this name was given to our heroine as a tribute to her skill and dexterity in her trade. On one occasion, her Governess dressed Moll in men's clothing and sent her out in the company of a male criminal. Moll and her new companion had many adventures and gathered a lot of booty but subsequently her companion was caught and sent to prison. Luckily she had not revealed the secret of her real sex to this companion of hers. Therefore, when he was questioned about who his companion was, he could only say that another man had been collaborating with him in this kind of activity. The police looked for the other man but Moll felt safe because she had quickly discarded her male disguise and reverted to her normal way of dressing herself. This companion of hers was then tried and, being convicted, was hanged, while Moll had escaped from that sad fate narrowly once again. On another occasion Moll worked with a female partner. This partner was also caught, and tried in a court. She was transported but Moll again remained safe. Many prisoners in Newgate now began to say that Moll was being protected by some devil, and that she always escaped when so many others had been hanged or transported.

Once Moll met a rich gentleman who later turned out to be a baronet. She robbed him all his personal belongings when he had got a little drunk after having made love to her. Subsequently she became quite friendly with the baronet who always paid her some money every time she slept with him. Thus at this time she was working both as a thief and as a prostitute. Her friendship with the baronet came to an end after a time when the baronet began to feel tired of her.

On one occasion, Moll was falsely accused of having committed a theft in a mercer's shop when the theft had actually been committed by another woman. This time Moll, urged by her Governess, claimed compensation from the mercer for having been falsely implicated by him, and for having been defamed. She was able to make a hundred and fifty pounds from this case. On another occasion, she went out in the disguise of a beggar-woman but could only lay her hands on a horse which she brought to her Governess but which could not be sold. Her whole effort in bringing the horse to her Governess's home, therefore, proved to be a waste of time and energy. Thereafter, she committed several more thefts, getting some booty each time. On one occasion, she visited a gambling-house, and gambled with the money given to her by a gentleman who did not himself want to participate in gambling. As a result of this adventure, she brought home seventy-three guineas. Subsequently, Moll travelled to various places away from London in search of more victims but did not make much money.

Back in London, Moll resumed her life of stealing and pickpocketing. On one occasion she was caught committing a theft but, after a good deal of fuss, was let off because of the intervention of an Alderman of the city, who was also a Justice of Peace. The Alderman accepted her plea that she had entered the silversmith's shop in order to buy a couple of rings but had been caught as a thief when she was merely examining the rings. The Alderman believed Moll's version and asked the silversmith to let her go. However, the Alderman invited her to buy the rings in which she had felt interested and, having enough money with her just by sheer chance, she was able to buy the rings and satisfy the Alderman's curiosity.

At last the time came when Moll's luck ran out. Only three days after she had been saved from prosecution by the Alderman, she went into a merchant's godown and was about to come out with two bundles of expensive silk, when she was caught by two wenches who were the merchant's employees. This time Moll could not get out of her predicament in spite of all her protests and denials. She was sent to Newgate prison to await her trial. These days of waiting proved to be a time of great mental

and physical suffering for Moll. She now found herself in, the place where she was born. Her mother had been confined to this prison before being transported to Virginia; and it was here that she had given birth to a child who, on growing up, became known in the criminal world as Moll Flanders. Moll's mental torment was now indescribable. She experienced a lot of repentance but, somehow, she also felt that this repentance was not genuine or deep. Her Governess felt as miserable as Moll herself because the Governess had become genuinely attached to Moll and had developed a good deal of affection for her. Moll was at this time above fifty years old. The Governess sent a clergyman to give some effort to Moll. The clergyman urged Moll to repent of her crimes, and to repent sincerely. Moll fell under the influence of the clergyman; and then began a period of sincere repentance for her. However, on being tried in a court of law, she was convicted of theft. She was sentenced to death by hanging. The clergyman exhorted her to continue to repent of her sins. Then, through the clergyman's efforts, Moll was granted a reprieve. Subsequently Moll submitted a petition asking for the sentence of death to be changed into one of transportation. Accordingly, Moll was ordered to be transported to Virginia.

During her stay in Newgate prison, Moll had by chance come to know that her Lancashire husband had also been brought to the same prison on a charge of having committed many robberies on the highways. Soon she contacted him and learnt his whole history. She told him that they were both in the same boat because he too was going to be sentenced to death. She now suggested to him that like her, he should submit a petition and have the sentence of death changed to one of transportation so that they could be together in Virginia. At first the man was unwilling to go to Virginia and be sold as a slave there. But, under Moll's pressure, he agreed; and subsequently the impending sentence of death in his case was also changed to that of transportation.

Moll and her Lancashire husband, with whom she had been reunited just by chance, were now transported to Virginia. There Moll learnt that her mother had died some years back, and that her brother, who had also been her husband for several years, was living on his plantation with his son who was Moll's son also. Moll did not want to meet her brother, who was her ex-husband also, because the circumstances under which she had left him did not justify her meeting him again. His reaction to meeting her once again in life might have been a violent one. She had, however, a secret meeting with her son who took the initiative in this case by himself coming to see her on learning that she was his mother. It was a poignant meeting between a son and his long-lost mother. From him, Moll learnt that her mother had, by her will, left one plantation to her as a legacy.

Moll and her husband had enough money with them at this time to be able to buy some property of their own in a different part of America. While Moll's brother and her son were living in Virginia, she and her husband bought a plantation in Maryland and settled down there. In course of time, they became quite prosperous. Of course, they had gone through the usual procedure of having been sold as slaves to a local land-owner and had then obtained a certificate of discharge from him. This they had been able to do with the help of the captain of the ship by which they had been transported to America as convicts. After a time, Moll's brother died; and now she could openly meet her son whenever she liked. She was also now able to inform her son that she had got married, and was living with her husband. Furthermore, she was able to tell her husband about her unfortunate marriage with her own brother. Her husband said that it did not matter because, after all, the marriage had taken place as a result of a sheer mistake on both sides.

After having lived in America for several years, in fact for a longer period than was necessary

under the English law, Moll returned to England, now a rich woman. Soon afterwards, her husband also followed her. They began now to live in England happily, and they spent most of their time repenting of their past sins. Moll had been a whore, a thief, a pickpocket and an adulteress; while her husband had been a seasoned highwayman and robber. But both were now reformed persons, and both were now true penitents. Moll was at this time seventy years old, and her husband was sixty-five.

*Moll Flanders* is one of the earliest attempts at writing a full-fledged novel; and as such it deserves high praise because it already fulfils some of the expectations of novel-readers. The story in this novel moves at a brisk pace. There are certainly interruptions in the narration in the shape of moralizing and sermonizing but still the plot keeps progressing most of the time and there is not much of irrelevant matter in it. Episode follows episode in quick succession. The author shows a lively inventive power and much ingenuity in building up the plot and leading it to several climaxes in the course of the narration. There is plenty of suspense; and the characters have been touched with life, and even endowed with considerable vitality; The variety of incident and the animated narration impart great interest to the novel.

The title “Moll Flanders” is most appropriate for Defoe’s novel of that name. It is a very significant title. It is a title which gives us a clue to the character of the protagonist and also a clue to the kind of the story which the novel tells. Some indication of the nature of the story in this novel is provided to us by the author on the very title-page where the title is given to us in an elaborate form. This is how Defoe describes the character of his protagonist by giving us the elaborate title: “The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, who was born in Newgate and, during a life of continued variety for threescore years, besides her childhood, was twelve years a whore, five times a wife (whereof once to her own brother), twelve years a thief, eight years a transported felon in Virginia, at last grew rich, lived honestly, and died a penitent”. But let us see what exactly is the significance of the name Moll Flanders.

Most contemporary readers, from the very moment they picked up this novel, would have been able to guess the nature of Moll’s character and life simply from her name. As Moll tells us at the very outset, Moll Flanders is not her real name but only a nickname. By hiding her real name, Moll increases the air of mystery about the name Moll Flanders. But the fact, that we are to know her only through an acquired name, is also significant. Nicknames are more indicative of reputation than real names; and both Moll and Flanders are highly suggestive from this point of view. The name Moll is often used for a woman of low repute. This name is often used also for a girl-friend of a professional criminal. Furthermore, Moll was the nickname of a notorious female thief who was called Moll Cut-Purse. The name “Moll Cut-Purse” occurs prominently in two plays of the early seventeenth century. At one point in this novel Moll tells us that, in course of time, she became as impudent and dexterous a thief as ever Moll Cut-Purse was. Thus the name “Moll” has a certain sexual connotation, and also a criminal connotation because of its association with the name of Cut-Purse.

The surname “Flanders” also has a double connotation, so that the full name “Moll Flanders” comes to have a two-fold significance as the name of the protagonist of this novel. The full name precisely defines the protagonist’s dual career as a whore and as a thief. In fact, the word “Flanders” has even greater sexual connotations than the name “Moll”. The women of Flanders” had, since the Middle Ages, acquired a reputation in England as the best prostitutes. Many brothels on the south bank of the river Thames in Defoe’s time were full of Flemish” women. In making use of the surname “Flanders” therefore, our author is evidently referring to the connection of the women of Flanders with

prostitution. So strong had the association of prostitution with Flanders become that many of the whores, even those who were English by birth, gave themselves false names such as Mrs. Flanders. Whores also used the name, Mrs Holland. In fact the words “Flanders” and “Holland” were used interchangeably in this context. The most notorious, and also the most luxurious, London brothel in the seventeenth century was operated by a woman who called herself Mrs. Holland, also known as Madame Britannica Hollandia.

The word “Flanders” was also commonly used in those days for certain kinds of cloth, a variety of fine cloth was known as “Holland”, a word which is still used in that sense. Since the Middle Ages; Flemish women (that is, women belonging to Flanders) had been renowned for their cloth-making abilities, both in weaving fine Flanders-linen and for making highly prized Flanders-lace. When Chaucer’s Wife of Bath wants to boast of her own skill as a weaver, she tell her fellow-pilgrims that she surpassed even the Flemish women in this respect. Now, our protagonist’s association with lace and lace-mending begins in the town of Colchester when she tells the matron of her school that she is determined not to take up any job as a household servant but to become a gentlewoman by mending laces and doing similar other work. For the protagonist in this novel, the ability to earn money by her skill with a needle means becoming a gentlewoman though, ironically, the woman whom she so admires for this skill is actually the town-whore. As a little girl, our protagonist admires a certain woman who carries on needle-work no doubt, but is actually a whore. The matron points out to the little girl that the gentlewoman, whom she admires, is actually a person of ill-fame and has had two or three bastards. This remark by the matron proves to be prophetic so far as Moll herself is concerned, though the matron is not, of course, aware of future developments. In later life our protagonist’s interest in fine cloth becomes even greater.

The protagonist in this novel assumes the name of Mrs. Flanders when she takes shelter in the Mint after the bankruptcy of her second husband, the linen-draper. In this connection, she writes that, at this time, she found herself a strong kind of widow because she had a husband and yet had no husband. Her second husband, the linen-draper, had fled to France because of the fear of his creditors and the danger of his being put into prison for insolvency. Her husband having gone away to a different country, Moll has in a sense become a widow with her husband still alive. It is in this situation that she begins to call herself Mrs. Flanders. She takes this name in order to hide her real identity from the bailiff’s men who are sure to raid the runaway linen-draper’s house. Moll at this time takes shelter in the Mint which was a place located on the south bank of the river Thames near London Bridge. The Mint was a refuge for debtors; and it was located in an area which had become notorious for its brothels and its prostitutes. Moll is at this time not a whore at all; and, therefore, she now begins to fear that, by living in the Mint, she might be thought to be a whore. If by living there she gets a bad name, she would achieve, as she says, only the scandal of a whore, without enjoying the pleasure of it. Having been forsaken by the linen-draper, Moll now wants to marry another man who might prove to be a better type of husband. In other words, Moll is now interested in “matrimonial whoredom” which means marrying a rich husband or marrying for financial gain rather than for love. Thus Moll now moves towards becoming a whore, but not a whore in the ordinary sense of the word. As love for her is now out of the question, her experience of it having been very disappointing, she wants marry for the sake of financial prosperity only. This is the meaning of the phrase “matrimonial whoredom”. Ordinary whoredom means having customers who pay a woman her fee for her sexual favours; but matrimonial whoredom means a woman’s acquiring a husband for the sake of the wealth which he owns even though the woman may feel no love for him at all. Defoe was opposed to such prudential matches,

as they were the result of monetary calculations rather than of any sentimental attachment Defoe regarded such matrimonial alliances as the cause of the greatest misery in life; and, in fact, he regarded them as utterly unlawful. According to Defoe, the female partners of such alliances, formed without any love on the woman's side, were little more than legal prostitutes. In Defoe's eyes, a marriage without love was a curse upon both the parties. But this is precisely the kind of Marriage which Moll now seeks (after she has been forsaken by the linen-draper).

It does not take Moll a long time to find out how the London Marriage-market of the time operated. Marriages were business propositions, and were the result of "politick schemes". Love had either no share in these propositions or a very little share. In some respects, these conditions in the marriage-market suit Moll's own state of mind at this time; and it is in this market that Moll happens to meet a woman who is a widow like herself and who succeeds in trapping a ship's captain as her husband. Moll takes this woman's advice and begins husband-hunting in all seriousness. Moll now forgets all her scruples and looks for a man who is rich enough and who would be prepared to marry her. The man, who catches her attention, and whom she now marries, is later found by her to be her own brother. Moll's first two marriages were, from Defoe's point of view, immoral because Moll had never been in love with either of those two husbands. But both those marriages had been at least legal. Her third marriage, which lasts as long as eight years, turns out to be an incestuous marriage. Being incestuous, this marriage is not legal; it is also not legal because her second husband is still alive though he has forsaken her. In the light of all these three marriages, we can say that Moll is actually becoming the kind of woman her name suggests. After leaving the husband, who has turned out to be her own brother, and with whom she has already spent eight long years, she becomes the mistress of a man whom she meets in the town of Bath; and she continues to be his hired mistress for a number of years. By now Moll's moral decline and moral degradation have become fully established. She has now lost all moral sense and all moral discrimination. In fact, she seems to have bidden good-bye to all moral values and to all the recognized moral principles. After being forsaken by this lover, Moll marries a Lancashire man; and here again Moll meets disappointment because she had thought this, man to be very rich while actually he proves to be almost penniless. She separates from him at his own suggestion but she soon finds that she has become pregnant by him. She is able to make the necessary arrangements for her lying-in (that is, for her confinement and delivery). She begins to stay at the house of a woman who is generally called the Governess. Once again Moll's name provides to us the clue to her real situation. The Governess tells the Parish Officers that Moll is the wife of Sir Walter Cleave. Now, the name "Lady Cleave" in those days meant an immoral woman. When Moll has given birth to her child and the whole affair ends, Moll leaves us in no doubt about her own guilt in the affair. On this occasion, she writes that she was not blind to her own crime, adding: "I had been no less than a whore and an adulteress all this while." Having given birth to a child by her Lancashire husband, Moll goes on to marry the banker who has obtained a divorce from his wife. This proves to be the happiest marriage for Moll in the series of five marriages; and it proves also to be her last marriage. This husband dies five years after the marriage. Moll is now forty-eight years old. Now the question of her getting married again does not arise because she has lost her youth and her physical attractions. Her whoredom too has ended, or almost ended.

Now Moll becomes a thief and, from this point onwards, the predominant allusion of her name is to Flanders-lace and linen. One of Moll's most successful jobs is to take advantage of some information about a large quantity of smuggled Flanders-lace. By reporting this matter to a customs officer, she is able to earn a substantial amount of money. The import of Flanders-lace in those days

was forbidden. This ban existed for the protection of the English home market. The ban on the import of this item gave rise to much smuggling because high prices could be charged by the smugglers for the imported commodity. Later, Moll manages to steal a large quantity of lace, and makes some more money out of it. Here the name "Flanders" becomes connected with the lace out of which Moll makes some money. In fact, Moll soon becomes an adept at stealing all kinds of fine cloth, such as silk, Holland-linen, Flanders-lace, and Indian damask. After many years of success, she is finally arrested in a house inhabited by a man who sells goods to the mercers. She is caught stealing two pieces of flowered silk, and a variety of brocaded silk, very rich. Committed to Newgate, she is gleefully received by the inmates of the prison, among whom she had become something of a legend. She is well aware that the thieves' knowledge of her name "Moll Flanders" shows the success she had achieved in her profession and the fame it had brought her. But their spiteful repetition of her name is also a reminder to us of Moll's two-fold reputation as a whore and as a thief.

Thus the name "Moll Flanders" for the protagonist of this novel is an indication to us that we are reading the story of a woman who is a whore and a thief. But her name is also associated with Flanders-lace and with other varieties of fine cloth which she is able to steal successfully for a long time. She used to mend laces as a growing girl; and she becomes an expert in stealing laces in the years of her maturity. She is caught in the act of stealing brocaded silk, and is taken to Newgate prison where she was born.

#### **12.2.4 Significance Of The Novel**

The novel *Moll Flanders* does not have an organic plot. This novel is full of unrelated episodes and loose ends. Since, however, the novel is a supposed autobiography, that is excuse enough for its lack of architecture. Besides, it is a largely picaresque novel and its form is therefore determined by its picaresque character. A picaresque novel has, by its very nature, an episodic plot. The only unity in such a novel is 'to be found in the fact that all the episodes happen to the protagonist who in this case is Moll Flanders. Moll remains the focus of our attention throughout, from beginning to end. All the other persons in the story appear briefly before us and then depart, with the exception of the Governess who is the most important subsidiary figure in the novel.

It is unfortunate that this novel has not been divided by the author into chapters. It is one long continuous, uninterrupted narrative and has therefore a rather discouraging effect on the reader who picks it up to go through it. However, after reading the novel, we find that it easily falls into five well-defined divisions. The first part of the novel covers Moll's life from the time of her birth to the age of seventeen or eighteen. The early years of her life are unfortunate but at the age of fourteen years, favoured by luck, she is taken by a rich family under its care. Here she receives some education in the company of the daughters of the family and becomes an accomplished girl who can speak French and who can play music. However, misfortune does not take long to come. At the age of seventeen or eighteen years, she is seduced by the elder son of this family and, what is worse, is compelled by him to marry his younger brother, much against her own will. This is the first phase of her life. The second phase begins when, after five years of her marriage, her husband dies. Now begins a period which may be regarded as the period of whoredom and several successive marriages, all ending miserably. She first marries a linen-draper who flees to France because he finds it impossible to repay his creditors, so that Moll now finds it necessary to look about her for some means of livelihood. Next, she marries a man who turns out to be her own brother. But the discovery, that he is her brother, is made by her six years

after the marriage during which period she has already given birth to three children by him. This discovery darkens her life and makes her feel almost heart-broken. She gets some relief only after she leaves this husband who is also her brother. Then she marries a man from Lancashire; but she separates from him soon afterwards when they both find themselves cheated of their hopes. Finally, she marries a banker with whom she spends five happy years but who too dies at the end of that period. Now Moll is forty-eight years old. During this period Moll has not only been the wife of five husbands but also the mistress of several men. Next comes the period of her life as a thief and a pickpocket. This phase of her life also lasts for several years. The novel contains a long account of the many adventures which Moll encounters in the course of this life of crime. As a criminal, she has good luck, and she has bad luck. She becomes such a dexterous and skilful thief that she acquires the name "Moll Flanders". But every criminal ultimately lands in prison; and here begins the fourth phase of Moll's life. The time which she spends in Newgate prison is the darkest period of the history of her life. Here she almost loses her sanity but somehow manages to escape that disaster. After passing through several fluctuations in 'the state of her mind, she ultimately achieves a reconciliation with God by means of her genuine repentance over her misdeeds, sins, and crimes. After having passed through the dark periods of whoredom and crime she at last becomes a penitent, thus achieving her spiritual regeneration. Finally, she goes to Virginia in the company of her Lancashire husband where, by means of hard work and honest labour, they both become fairly prosperous. This is the period of Moll's spiritual rebirth and spiritual maturity. The point to note in the above survey is that Moll remains the central figure in each part of the novel. Thus it is her personality which inter-links the various episodes of which we have a long series in the story; and it is by virtue of her being the centre of our attention throughout that the novel achieves whatever unity it has got. And this unity can by no means be called organic unity.

But this novel suffers from certain other structural defects also. The narration in the novel is continuous only in the sense that it has not been divided into chapters. Apart from this continuity, the narration is discontinuous in a most glaring manner. The narration is interrupted frequently by moralizing and by a running commentary on the events. The abundance of moralizing and commentary on the happenings constitutes a serious defect in the structure of this novel. As Moll is supposed to be telling her story in her own person, the moralizing and the commentary also come directly from her. In the course of the narration, she pauses suddenly at many points to lecture to the reader and to exhort him. For instance, after having described the friendship which she forms with a man who wants her as a paid mistress, she stops to draw a moral lesson from this experience and to convey a moral lesson to the reader. She here says that from this experience she came to know that men, who *keep* paid mistresses, often change them, grow weary of them and jealous of them, and that something or the other happens to make such men withdraw their patronage. Those women who are kept as mistresses should know beforehand what their fate is going to be. Another lesson which Moll here teaches the reader is that one should be cautious in gratifying one's inclination to loose and lewd conduct. At another point in the novel, after Moll has married a banker, she again stops to draw a moral lesson from her experience. Here she says that she found a life of virtue and sobriety to be much happier than a life of sexual pleasure and licence. In the same connection she also says that a woman's beauty often proves to be a pimp to vice. Poverty, says Moll, is the worst of devils because it compels an individual to take to a life of evil practices. After Moll has committed her first theft, she tells us that she sat down and cried most vehemently. Here again she tends to preach a moral to us by pointing out the feeling of self-reproach which one experiences on such occasions. During her stay in the prison, Moll becomes even more of a preacher. Now, all this moralizing is not only an interruption in the progress of the story but

is otherwise objectionable also. A novel or any literary work should not be blatantly didactic. We cannot genuinely enjoy a literary work which has a palpable design upon us. Didacticism was not only Shelley's abhorrence; it is the abhorrence of every true lover of literature. Moral lessons should always be conveyed to the reader, if at all, in an indirect and veiled manner. A reader should be encouraged to draw moral lessons from the story by inference only. A moral, which is directly preached to us, comes as a hard knock on our heads, and therefore annoys us greatly. What particularly annoys us in the case of this novel is the repetition of the same moral lessons again and again. Moll repeatedly urges us to lead a life of self-restraint and sobriety. Again and again, she exhorts us to abstain from crime at all costs. This kind of thing becomes not only monotonous but also jarring. A novel is no place for this kind of sermonizing.

In addition to these moralizing passages in the book are the many comments which, Moll makes upon the happenings in the story. To take a more glaring example of this kind of thing, there is a whole episode in the book which does not concern Moll herself much and which concerns another woman. This episode extends over as many as six pages of the novel and is largely irrelevant. Here Moll's only purpose is to prove that a woman, who has been rebuffed by a man whom she had hoped to marry, can always take her revenge upon that man. Similarly, Moll comments, without there being any need, on the conduct of men like the baronet who have extra-marital relationships or casual sex with other women. Some unnecessary comments are made by Moll in connection with other episodes also. This kind of thing is called "padding" of which we find a good deal later in the novels of Charles Dickens too. There are very often purely commercial motives behind making a story longer by this device. This kind of thing has an almost fatal effect on a novel's structure. However, we are inclined to take a lenient view of the moralizing and the commentaries in the present case because the novel as a literary genre was just coming into existence when Defoe wrote this novel. It would be unfair to apply today's tests of excellence to a novel written in 1722.

One critic is of the opinion that, in spite of the rambling, episodic progression of events in the story, Defoe is able to make a unified whole of the novel. Defoe is able to do so by winning our sympathy for his heroine. He wins this sympathy by telling us about the misfortunes in her life so that we want to know what is going to become of her at the end. As Moll becomes more and more habituated to sin and to crime, the events of her life gradually but steadily accumulate until the storm breaks, and she is finally caught and taken to prison. Through her return to the place where she was born, Defoe shows how providence ultimately brings about the spiritual regeneration of a woman whose vices had brought her to the lowest possible point of human degradation and hopelessness. The development and the final shape of the novel are governed by Defoe's intention of showing the gradual but inevitable moral degeneration of his heroine until the moment of her conversion in Newgate prison and the subsequent spiritual rebirth that flows from her repentance. The concave shape of the story follows the moral history of mankind as we see it in the Bible, and as this history has been interpreted by Christian theologians and poets, particularly Milton. *Moll Flanders* is a novel which tells a story of moral wickedness and degradation and of ultimate moral recovery.

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### 12.3 Key Words

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Picaresque Novel - is one in which the protagonist wanders from place to place and has adventures of various kinds. The protagonist in such a novel is generally a rogue who at the same time is able to excite some admiration or at least some sympathy in the readers. Here the protagonist is an

adulteress, a whore, a thief, and a pickpocket; she wanders from place to place.

Moll - The name Moll is often used for a woman of low repute. This name is often used also for a girl-friend of a professional criminal. Furthermore, Moll was the nickname of a notorious female thief who was called Moll Cut-Purse

Flanders - In fact, the word “Flanders” has even greater sexual connotations than the name “Moll”. The women of Flanders” had, since the Middle Ages, acquired a reputation in England as the best prostitutes.

Matrimonial Whoredom - Marrying not for love, but for the sake of financial prosperity only.

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## 12.4 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have studied

- About the novelist
- About the novelist, its background and the characters.
- About the critical interpretations of the text

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## 12.5 Review Questions

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1. Briefly give the life of Defoe
2. Give a brief introduction to the Novel
3. Give the significance of the title
4. Write about the character of Moll Flanders

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## 12.6 Bibliography

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1. *Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study* by James Sutherland
2. *The Elusive Daniel Defoe* by Laura A. Curtis
3. *Defoe's Art of Fiction* by David Blewett
4. *Daniel Defoe: A Collection of Critical Essays* edited by Max Byrd
5. *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* by Maximillian E. Novak
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7. *The Rise of the Novel* by Ian Watt
8. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Moll Flanders* edited by Robert C. Elliott
9. *The English Novel: Form and Function* by Dorothy Van Ghent
10. *The Shaping Vision* by Robert' Alan Donovan
11. *Moll Flanders (Penguin Classics)* edited by David Blewett

## UNIT–13

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### THOMAS GRAY

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#### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives.
- 13.1 Introduction.
- 13.2 Thomas Gray: ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’.
- 13.3 Thomas Gray: ‘The Progress of Poesy’: A Pindaric Ode’
- 13.4 Self Assessment Questions
- 13.5 Answers to SAQs
- 13.6 Let us sum up.
- 13.7 Review Question
- 13.8 Bibliography

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### 13.0 Objectives

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After going through the unit you will be able to

- understand the theme and content of the poems
- understand the ode form of poetry the Pindaric Ode and the literary features of the age.
- comprehend the Romantic features and the (Neo) classical elements of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in Gray’s poetry.
- explain and interpret the text in your own words.
- use a dictionary to find out the meanings of the words .Understand definitions of literary devices and their function in poetry.

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### 13.1 Introduction

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#### Age

Characteristics of the Classical School

i. **Respect for Rules**

Nothing that violated the law of its particular kind was good art .Perfect form was the ideal; the substance was of minor importance.

ii. **Intellectual Quality**

The leading writers of this period (Pope and Dryden) shrank from all extravagance and emotionalism .They were governed by a spirit of reason and good sense.

iii. **Insistence on a set Poetic Style**

The preoccupation with form encouraged and an artificial style .Every day speech and novel expressions were unacceptable and in the work of all but the greatest masters, the language tended to be stilted and standardized.

iv. **Emergence of the Heroic Couplet**

The drama, epic and the satire were the three most widely practiced literary forms of the age and the best medium for realizing the poetic ideals of the time proved to be the heroic couplet.

v. **Treatment of Town Life**

London was a magnet for writers. Satire came to be practiced more and more as London life and current passions and controversies offered it almost unlimited scope.

For over a century classical conventions were applied to English poetry with, striking success, but with limitations. They established the rule of law in literature .A literary technique was evolved, which, in the words of Pope was ‘Nature methodized’ .But just as the Metaphysicals had abused the Elizabethan ideal of liberty, the followers of Dryden and Pope abused the classical ideal of order and restraint. Art degenerated into artifice. It became clear that the classical mode had had its day and needed to be replaced. Signs of revolt (unconscious perhaps)became visible as early as 1726, when James Thomson published the first part of ‘The Seasons’, a poem different both in matter and manner from any written in during the previous hundred years. In ‘The Castle of Indolence’, which followed later he revived the Spenserian stanza after an interval of nearly two centuries. Collins and Gray continued the movement, one in his Odes and the other in the superb ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’; though the classical spirit was strong in both authors. Goldsmith and Burns contributed greatly to the incipient revolt their realism and humour in the treatment of scenes of humble rustic life. With Cowper and Crabbe and the much more revolutionary Blake, who are in a real sense ‘Transition poets,’ the old order was at the point of death and the new impatient to be born. In 1798 the publication of the ‘Lyrical Ballads’ of Wordsworth and Coleridge made the cleavage between the two modes of writing final and irrevocable. This work was one of the landmarks in English literature

**Age of Transition**

**General characteristics of the Age**

Although Dr. Samuel Johnson is the representative writer of the second half of the eighteenth century, the age under discussion is better known as a transitional period, an era of change from pseudo-classicism to romanticism. The decline of party spirit and the democratic upsurge exercised great influence both on life and literature. The main characteristics of this period are given below.

- i. **Decline of the Party Feud :**The rivalry between the Whigs and Tories still continues, but it had lost its previous bitterness This naturally led to a considerable decline of the activity in political pamphleteering. The institution of patronage by which the writers depended for their success on the favours of noble men gradually crumbled and men of letters learned to depend entirely on their public.
- ii. **The French Revolution :** During the second half of the eighteenth new ideas were germinating. The French revolution of 1789 was the climax to a long unrest. Revolutionary ideas gave birth to democratic and humanitarian feelings, and influenced literature greatly.

- iii. **Renaissance of Learning:** This period is characterised by a kind of mild renaissance of learning. In literature this renaissance revealed in the study and editing of old authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, and research into archaic literary forms like the ballad.
- iv. **The New Realism:** The birth of a new spirit of enquiry was at the root of realism which is conspicuous in the literature of the last decades of the century.
- v. **The Rise Of The Middle Class:** The rise of the middle class did not negate the authority of the aristocracy but it was modified and continually made more supple by the bourgeois element which were co-mingling with it, The middle class appropriated classicism with it's moralising needs. The emergence of the middle class led to the rise of sentimentalism, feelings an emotions A mighty tide of spiritual energy poured out into the church and the masses. The emotions, long repressed, were now reinstated and all life was modified in consequence.  
  
The fusion of aristocracy and middle class which began in the age of pope was complete in the age of Johnson .

- vi. **The Humanitarian Spirit:** This period is caricaturised by the rapid growth of democracy. Stress was laid on the individual worth of man. People became familiar with notion of equality, liberty and brotherhood. They recognised their rights and became aware of the evils in the existing social states. The philosophy of Rousseau and the French revolution popularised the democratic ideals.

- vii. **An Age of Transition:** In the domain of poetry this period was clearly an age of transition. On the period hand we have poets like Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith who followed the Augustan tradition and emulate Pope n their writings. And the other extreme, we find, during the closing years of the century, poets like Blake and Burns who herald the new age of romanticism and have nothing gin common with Augustan school of poetry. Between these two extremes we have poets like Gray and Collins who are true transitional poets in the sense that they share both the romantic and classic characters. The double tendency- the adherence to the classical tradition and the search for a new romanticism- is the most important characteristic of the age of transition. W. H Hudson writes “Looking at this literature from the more purely point of view, we may also expect to find that it exhibits a struggle between the powerful traditions of the Augustan Age and various opposed theories and, with the gradual failure in prestige of the classical school, the establishment of a literature essential different from this in respect alike of matter, spirit and form.”

The history of the later eighteenth century poetry is the history of a struggle between old and new and of the gradual triumph of the new. The new poetry marks the beginning of a reaction against the rational, intellectual, formal, artificial poetry of the earlier age. The cardinal characteristics of the transitional poetry are give below :

- i. **Reaction Against Rules:** Transitional poetry was marked by a stromng reaction against stereotype rules. The new poetry was the expression of individual genius. Spencer, Shakespeare and Milton were the inspiration of the Romantic revival.
- ii. **The Return to Nature:** The beginning of romanticism is marked by a return to nature and to plain humanity for it's material. The growth of the love of real nature, rejection of the bookish nature of the artificial pastoral and a feeling for the picturesque characterise English poetry

between Pope and Wordsworth.

- iii. **Humanism:** Romanticism was marked by intense human sympathy and the enlightened understanding of the human heart. The poems of Cowper, Crabbe, Gray and Burns characterise this.
- iv. **Revolt Against the Conventional Literary Technique:** The poets discarded the heroic couplet and artificial poetic diction of the age of Pope and strived for simplicity of expression and diction.
- v. **Fresh Treatment of Old Themes:** Writers turned to supernatural stories, legends and the middle ages of history.
- vi. **Search For Idealism:** W.J Long writes “ It brought gain the dream of a golden age in which the stern realities of life were forgotten and the ideals of youth were established as the only permanent realities. The romantic movement emphasised the eternal ideals of youth.
- vii. **The Development of Naturalism:** Naturalism implies something more than an interesting feeling for the picturesque and for the charms of the country. This resulted in poetry in the quest of more elementary themes, greater simplicity in subject matter and language employed. The poets of this period tried to bring poetry back to Nature.

In this unit you are going to study two odes written by Thomas Gray (1716-1771). Thomas Gray was born in London on 26<sup>th</sup> December, 1716. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge. A few months after leaving Cambridge, he accompanied his friend Horace Walpole on a tour through France and Italy. Gray saw and observed much on this journey which resulted in a remarkable spell of creative activity. He wrote the ‘Ode on the Spring’ followed by the ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’, ‘Hymn to Adversity’, and the ‘Sonnet on the Death of Richard West’. After writing an ambitious philosophical poem, he wrote an elegy, ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ which was an instant success and made his reputation. He later wrote two Pindaric Odes – ‘The Progress of Poesy’ and ‘The Bard’ which were published in 1757. In 1771 he fell ill of gout and died on 30th July, 1771.

Gray’s characteristic excellences lie in the following:

- 1) musical sweetness of versification.
- 2) exquisite felicity of expression.
- 3) love of nature.
- 4) accuracy and care for detail.
- 5) originality of themes.
- 6) meditative/philosophic as opposed to human pathos.

He is criticized for obscurity (language and subject) and highly artificial poetic diction. An ‘Ode’ is originally a Greek word, which means a choric song, usually accompanied by a dance. But in the modern context it includes any ceremonious poem dealing with a dignified theme. It is in the form of an address or invocation, the subject is eulogized and the tone is serious and meditative. It may be addressed to some person or entity.

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## 13.2 Thomas Gray: 'Ode On A Distant Prospect Of Eton College'

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This ode was published in 1747 and is the first poem of Gray to appear in print. Educated at Eton College this ode is about his life and friends at Eton. Gray had been happy at Eton; all the high spirits and most of the happiness he was ever to know was experienced there; but Gray has also expressed his belief, that, happiness enjoyed in childhood, would inevitably be lost in later life.

This ode falls into four distinct parts:

The poet describes in -

(Verses 1-20): the scene of Eton College in the form of an invocation;

(Verses 21-50): the activities, pursuits and pleasures of Eton boys;

(Verses 51-90): the contrast that the passions and sorrows of mankind present to the carefree innocence of childhood;

(Verses 91-100): the moral – “Where ignorance is bliss ‘Tis folly to be wise”.

Read the following poem and answer the questions. You can check your answers with those, given at the end of the unit.

### **Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College**

Ye distant spires, ye antique towers,  
That crown the watery glade,  
Where grateful Science still adores  
Her Henry's holy Shade;  
And ye, that from the stately brow  
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below  
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,  
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flower, among  
Wanders the hoary Thames along  
His sliver-winding way.

Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,  
Ah fields beloved in vain.  
Where once my careless childhood stray'd  
A stranger yet to pain !  
I feel the gales, that from ye blow,  
A momentary bliss bestow.

As waving fresh their gladsome wing.  
My weary soul they seem to sooth,  
And, redolent of joy and youth,  
To breathe a second spring.

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen  
Full many a sprightly race  
Disporting on thy margent green  
The paths of pleasure trace,  
Who foremost now delight to cleave  
With pliant arm the glassy wave ?  
The captive linnet which enthrall ?  
What idle progeny succeed  
To chase the rolling circle's speed,  
Or urge the flying ball ?

While some on earnest business bent  
Their murm'ring labours ply  
Gainst graver hours that bring constraint  
To sweeten liberty :  
Some bold adventurers disdain  
The limits of their little reign,  
And unknown regions dare descry:  
Still as they run they look behind.  
They hear a voice in every wind,  
And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed  
Less pleasing when possest;  
The tear forgot as soon as shed,  
The sunshine of the breast.

Theirs buxom health of rosy hue  
Wild wit, invention ever new.  
And lively cheer of vigour born.  
The thoughtless day, the easy night  
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,  
That fly th' approach of morn.

Alas, regardless of their doom,  
The little victims play.  
No sense have they of ill to come,  
Nor care beyond to-day :  
Yet see how all around'em wait  
The Ministers of human fate,  
And black Misfortune's baleful train !  
Ah, shew them where in ambush stand  
To seize their prey the murth'rous band !  
Ah, tell them, they are men.

These shall the fury passions tear,  
The vultures of the mind,  
Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,  
And Shame that sculks behind;  
Or pineing Love shall waste their youth,  
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth,  
That inly gnaws the secret heart,  
And Envy wan, and faded Care,  
Grim-visag'd comfortless Despair,  
And Sorrow's piercing dart.

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,  
Then whirl the wretch from high,

To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,  
And grinning Infamy,  
The stings of Falsehood those shall try,  
And hard Unkindness' alter'd eye ;  
And keen Remorse with blood defil'd,  
And moody Madness laughing wild  
Amid severest woe.

Lo, in the vale of years beneath  
A griesly troop are seen,  
The painful family of Death.  
More hideous than their Queen,  
This racks the joints, this fires the veins,  
That every labouring sinew strains,  
These in the deeper vitals rage :  
Lo, Poverty, to fill the band,  
That numbs the soul with icy hand,  
And slow-consuming Age,

To each his suff'rings: all are men,  
Condemn'd alike to groan,  
The tender for another's pain,  
Th' unfeeling for his own,  
Yet ah ! why should they know their fate ?  
Since sorrow never comes too late,  
And happiness too swiftly flies.  
Thought would destroy their paradise.  
No more, where ignorance is bliss,  
'Tis folly to be wise.

**Notes and Annotations:**

L.1 Distant spires : remote far off spires of Eton College

L.1 antique towers : old towers

L.2	Watery glade	:	clear space in a forest through which the river water is flowing
L.3	grateful Science	:	scholars, men devoted to learning who are thankful to the founder of the College.
L.4	Henry's .....shade.	:	King Henry VI of England who founded Eton in 1441.
L.6	Windsor heights.	:	Windsor palace is situated at a height
L.9	Thames	:	river in London.
L.12	beloved .....vain.	:	Gray alludes in particular to the death of his friend Richard West who shared Gray's love for Eton.
L.13	careless childhood	:	carefree boyhood days.
L.17	gladsome wing	:	happy breeze
L.19	redolent	:	suggestive of, reminiscent of
L.20	second spring	:	a revisiting of the happy childhood days.
L.22	sprightly race	:	lively race, energetic running
L.23	Disporting	:	playing, frolicking
L.23	margent	:	green margin of the river Thames
L.24	trace	:	traverse
L.25	cleave	:	cut through the water
L.26	pliant arm	:	flexible arm ; swimming
L.26	glassy wave	:	clean, transparent water
L.27	captive Linnet	:	captured/imprisoned linnet (singing bird)
L.28	idle progeny	:	lazy offspring
L.31	earnest business	:	sincere studies
L.34	To sweeten liberty	:	hours of toil make leisure time more welcome and desirable
L.36	limits, reign	:	boundaries within which they reside (Eton college compound)
L.37	descry	:	catch sight of, discern (new places)
L.42	Less pleasing when possest	:	aspirations/desire are more attractive till possessed.
L.43	tear forgot	:	sadness is soon forgotten in childhood
L.44	sunshine	:	optimism.
L.51	doom	:	fate, misfortune
L.52	little victims	:	boys at Eton

L.56 Ministers .....	fate	:	negative human passions
L.57 Misfortune's .....	train	:	tragedy's sad accompaniments
L.60 Ah, tell .....	men	:	they have grown into adults and will now face miseries of life
L.63 Disdainful; pallid		:	scornful ; pale
L.65 pineing; waste		:	languishing; destroy
L.66 rankling		:	painful
L.67 inly gnaws		:	bite inside, corrode, torment
L.69 Grim visag'd		:	sad faced
L.72 whirl		:	throw down from a height
L.78 keen Remorse, defil'd		:	sharp pain of regret, made impure
L.85 rack the joints, fires veins		:	rheumatism, high fever
L.87 deeper vitals		:	internal organs
L.89 icy hand		:	merciless hand
L.91-92 To each ....	groan	:	each and everyone is cursed to suffer.
L.93 tender		:	sympathetic, compassionate
L.99 No more		:	the poet says "no more is to be said other than ....."
L.99 ignorance is bliss		:	unawareness of our impending misfortunes is a blessing
L.100 Tis folly to be wise		:	awareness of the inevitable fact of our share of suffering is foolishness as it only advances our sorrows.

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### 13.3 Thomas Gray: 'The Progress Of Poesy', A Pindaric Ode

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'The Progress of Poesy' was published in 1757. It is a Pindaric Ode. A Pindaric ode is a specific form of the ode, named after the Greek lyric poet, Pindar. It is also called choric ode, or triumphal ode for it was recited in honour of gods. It consists of groups of three stanzas, each, group being called the triad. The first stanza is called a 'Strophe', the second 'anti-strophe' and the third 'epode'. These correspond to the movement of the dancers in different directions. There can be variations in the metrical length of individual lines. Horace Walpole referred to this ode as an ode "on the power and progress of poetry".

Read the following poem and answer the questions. You can check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

#### Progress of Poesy

1.1

Awake, Aeolian lyre, awake,

And give to rapture all thy trembling strings,  
From Helicon's harmonious springs  
A thousand rills their mazy progress take:  
The laughing flowers, that round them blow,  
Drink life and fragrance as they flow.  
Now the rich stream of music winds along  
Deep, majestic, smooth and strong,  
Through verdant vales, and Ceres' golden reign:  
Now rolling down the steep amain,  
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour;  
The rocks and nodding groves rebellow to the roar.

### 1.2

O Sovereign of the willing soul,  
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,  
Enchanting shell ! the sullen Cares  
And frantic Passions hear thy soft control.  
On Thracia's hills the Lord of War  
Has curbed the fury of his car,  
And dropped his thirsty lance at thy command.  
Perching on the sceptred hand  
Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feathered king  
With ruffled plumes and flagging wing:  
Quenched in dark clouds of slumber lie  
The terror of his beak, and lightnings of his eye.

### 1.3

Thee the voice, the dance, obey,  
Tempered to the warbled lay.  
O'er Idalia's velvet-green  
The rosy-crowned Loves are seen  
On Cytherea's day  
With antic Sports, and blue-eyed Pleasures,

Frisking light in frolic measures;  
Now pursuing, now retreating,  
Now in circling troops they meet:  
To brisk notes in cadence beating,  
Glance their many-twinkling feet.  
Slow melting strains their Queen's approach declare:  
Where'er she turns the Graces homage pay.  
With arms sublime, that float upon the air,  
In gliding state she wins her easy way :  
O'er her warm cheek and rising bosom move  
The bloom of young Desire and purple light of Love.

## II.1

Man's feeble race what ills await,  
Labour, and Penury, the racks of Pain,  
Disease and Sorrow's weeping train,  
And Death, sad refuge from the storms of Fate!  
The fond complaint, my song, disprove,  
And justify the laws of Jove,  
Say, has he giv'n in vain the heav'nly Muse ?  
Night, and all her sickly dews,  
Her spectres wan, and birds of boding cry,  
He gives to range the dreary sky:  
Till down the eastern cliffs afar  
Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war.

## II.2

In climes beyond the solar road,  
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,  
The Muse has broke the twilight gloom  
To cheer the shiv'ring native's dull abode,  
And oft, beneath the odorous shade  
Of Chili's boundless forests laid,

She deigns to hear the savage youth repeat  
 In loose numbers wildly sweet  
 Their feather-cinctured-chiefs, and dusky loves.  
 Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,  
 Glory pursue and generous Shame,  
 Th' unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame

### II.3

Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's steep,  
 Isles, that crown th' Aegean deep,  
 Fields, that cool Ilissus laves,  
 Or where Maeander's amber waves  
 In lingering lab'rinth creep,  
 How do your tuneful echoes languish,  
 Mute, but to the voice of anguish ?  
 Where each old poetic mountain  
 Inspiration breathed around :  
 Every shade and hallowed fountain  
 Murmured deep a solemn sound :  
 Till the sad Nine, in Greece's evil hour,  
 Left their Parnassus for the Latian plains.  
 Alike they scorn the pomp of tyrant Power,  
 And coward Vice, that revels in her chains.  
 When Latium had her lofty spirit lost,  
 They sought, O Albion ! next thy sea-encircled coast.

#### Notes and Annotations:

- L.1 Aeolian lyre : singing lyre belonging to the Muse of Poetry  
 L.2 rapture : ecstasy, transport  
 L.3. harmonious : musical, sweet  
 L.3 helicon : fountain sacred to the Muses/Poets  
 L.4 rills : streams  
 L.5 mazy : zigzag

L.5	progress	:	journey
L.7	winds along	:	follows a winding course
L.9	verdant; Ceres	:	green; Goddess of Earth
L.9	vales	:	valleys
L.10	amain	:	violently, fiercely
L.11	impetuous	:	forceful
L.12	rebellow	:	echo
L.15	shell	:	lyre
L.17	thracia, Lord of War	:	home of Mars, Mars
L.18	curbed	:	controlled, restrained
L.20	perching	:	sitting
L.20	sceptred hand	:	hand holding the rod of authority- the sceptre
L.21	feathered king	:	eagle
L.22	flagging	:	slowing down
L.26	Tempered to	:	answering to, corresponding to
L.26	lay	:	song
L.27	Idalia	:	place in Cyprus
L.28	rosy crowned Loves	:	winged cupids
L.29	Cytherea's day	:	sacred day of Venus (Goddess of Beauty)
L.30	antic	:	fantastic
L.31	Frisking	:	jumping
L.31	frolic	:	merry
L.31	measures	:	rhythmic dance steps
L.33	troops	:	large numbers
L.34	brisk	:	quick
L.34	cadence	:	rhythm
L.36	strains	:	notes of music
L.37	Graces	:	three daughters of Zeus .They were sweet and gentle and were believed to add refinement to life .They were Euphrosyne, Aglaia and Thalia .
L.38	sublime	:	aloft
L.42	ills	:	evils

L.43 racks	: torture, torment
L.46 fond	: foolish
L.48 he	: Providence, Fate
L.50 spectres	: ghostly figures
L.50 birds of boding	: birds of ill omen
L.51 He	: Providence
L.53 shafts	: arrows
L.54 climes	: climates
L.55 shaggy	: covered with fur
L.56 gloom	: darkness
L.58 odourous	: fragrant
L.60 deigns	: condescends
L.62 feather-cinctured	: chiefs wearing girdles made of feather chiefs
L.62 dusky loves	: dark complexioned mistresses
L.63 the Goddess	: the muse
L.64 Shame	: fear of disgrace
L.67 Delphi's	: The oracular shrine of Apollo on Mount Parnassus (Greece)
L.68 Isles	: Islands of Aegean sea (Greece)
L.69 laves, Illissus	: bathes, river in Greece
L.70 amber	: yellow
L.71 lab'rinth	: mazy courses
L.72 languish	: fade away
L.73 Mute	: silent
L.76 hallowed	: sacred
L.79 Latian	: Roman
L.81 revels in	: takes pleasure in
L.82 Latium	: Rome
L.82 Albion	: Britain

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### 13.4 Self Assessment Questions

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1. How does the poet introduce the subject of the Ode?
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2. What is meant by “grateful Science” and “Henry’s holy Shade”?

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3. Why does the poet call Thames ‘hoary’?

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4. Comment on the course of the river.

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5. Why are the hills, shade and fields beloved in vain?

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6. Why is childhood “careless” according to the poet?

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7. What do the “gales” blowing from Eton do to the poet?

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8. What sporting activities do the boys at Eton engage in?

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9. What is meant by “earnest business” here?

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10. a) Why are some boys called “bold adventurers”?

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b) Why is their joy “fearful”?

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11. Explain “Gay hopes is theirs .....possest”. ll (41-42)

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12. What are the children unaware of?

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13. Name the “vultures of the Mind”. Why does the poet call them “vultures”?

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14. a) Why is “Ambition” bad?

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b) What does the poet mean by “unkindness alter’d eye”?

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c) Pick out an alliterative phrase from the poem.

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d) Why does the poet call Madness “moody”?

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15. a) What does the poet mean by “A griesly troop”?

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b) Who all constitute the “family of Death”?

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c) Why is the family of Death ‘painful’?

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16. a) What does “Poverty” do?

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b) Why does the poet call Age “slow – consuming”?

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17. Why should the boys not know their fate according to the poet?

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18. Explain the last two lines of the poem?

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19. a) What is the 'Aeolian lyre'?

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b) How is the poet invoking the Aeolian lyre?

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c) What originates from Helicon?

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20 Explain these two phrases:

a) "laughing flowers"

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b) "Drink life"

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21. a) What are the two ways in which the streams flow?

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b) What does the poet mean by the flow of streams?

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c) What literary device has the poet used here?

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22. Why does Gray call the Muse “Sovereign”?

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23. a) On what does poetry exercise “soft control”?

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b) Explain “Enchanting shell”.

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24. a) What magical influence does poetry have on Mars-the lord of War? and Jove?

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b) Explain “ruffled plumes and “flagging wing”.

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25. Who obeys the Muse and how?

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26. a) Who wear crowns of roses?

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b) What do they do on Cytherea's day?

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27. a) Who is the "Queen"?

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b) Who are the "Graces"? What are they doing?

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c) How does the Queen walk?

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28. What are the "ills" that await Man?

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29. a) What does the poet mean by "fond"? Do you agree with the poet?

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b) How is "Night" described?

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c) Who wages war against Night and from where?

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30. a) How does the poet describe the cold regions

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b) What does the Muse do there?

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31. Who tracks the path of “the Goddess” or the Muse.

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32. Where did poetry flourish in Greece?

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33. a) Where did poetry travel to from Greece and why?

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b) Where did it ultimately seek refuge?

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34. What does the poet want to say about poetry in this stanza?

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35. Bring out the Neoclassical and Romantic qualities Gray's poetry.

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### 13.5 Answers to SAQs

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1. The poet introduces the subject by invoking the distant spires and ancient towers of Eton College. These spires and towers are the crowning glory of the picturesque landscape through which the river Thames is flowing.
2. "grateful Science" refers to the scholars and men of learning who are ever thankful to the benevolent founder of Eton, King Henry VI of England. "Henry's holy Shade" alludes to the founder, King Henry VI of England who is held in sacred regard by the poet.
3. The poet calls Thames "hoary" because it is an ancient old river. The river takes a meandering course alongside the green lawns, shade of the trees and flowers at its margins.
4. The poet invokes the happy hills, shady haunts and the fields loved in vain because they could not save his loved ones from death, particularly his friend Richard West who shared Gray's love for Eton.
5. Childhood is "careless" because it is free of cares and miseries which inevitably follow in later life.
6. The gales blowing from Eton feel like a blessing to the poet and rejuvenate and comfort his tired soul. They are reminiscent of his happy youthful times.
7. Some boys playfully run along the sides of the river Thames, others swim in its waters, or hunt for linnets. Still others pursue the rolling hoop or play a ball game perhaps, cricket.
8. "Earnest Business" means the hours of toil put in by studious boys who are sincerely preparing their lessons.
9. a) Some boys are "bold adventurers" because they are breaking the rules of the college

and venturing beyond.

- b) Their delight is mixed with the fear of being caught.
- 10 Young boys are full of optimism and happily cherish a bright future fuelled by a youthful imagination.
- 11 The children are unaware of their ill fated destiny, the tragedies and sorrows that are waiting in ambush to attack and destroy them.
- 12 The Vultures of mind are:  
“Anger”,  
“Fear”  
“Shame”,  
“pining love”,  
“Jealousy”,  
“Envy”,  
“Care”,  
and “Sorrow”.

They are called “vultures of the mind” because they are negative emotions which destroy the heart, mind, body and soul of a human being and feed upon death like vultures do.

- 13 a) Ambition is bad because first it fuels unchecked greed for power and position and then hurls man down to be mocked and ridiculed in ignominy.
- b) “Unkindness’ altered eye” means that his friends who were once kind and helpful are no longer so, and have a changed attitude of unconcern.
- c) “moody Madness”
- d) The poet calls madness “moody” because an insane person is likely to be unpredictable or irrational and laugh even in times of deepest sorrow.
14. a) The poet by “A griesly troop” means Death and the ghastly family of Death comprising of rheumatism, high fever and diseases of the vital internal organs.
- b) Various diseases that affect mankind with the onset of old age constitute the family of death.
- c) The family of Death is “painful” because the diseases attack various parts of the body and cause intense agony which ultimately brings about “death”.
- 15 a) “Poverty” benumbs the soul with its cruel, merciless hand.
- b) “Age” is slow consuming because it gradually saps the strength and vitality of the mind and body of man who ultimately dies. Old age itself becomes a cause for death even if he is spared the onslaught of diseases and penury.

- 16 The poet says that the boys should not know their fate because sorrow is inevitable and would soon come while joy is short-lived and the thought of death in happy times would destroy their 'Heaven'.
- 17 The poet abruptly ends the poem claiming that "ignorance" or unawareness of one's future ills or impending tragic destiny is a blessing. While, being "wise" or aware of future sorrows is foolishness because it will only advance our misery.
- 18 a) The Aeolian lyre is the singing lyre (musical instrument) belonging to the Muse of poetry.  
 b) The poet is asking the lyre to wake up, play upon her delicate, quivering strings and create ecstatic and delightful harmonies.  
 c) A thousand streams originate from Helicon, the fountain sacred to the poets.
19. a) "laughing flowers" mean the flowers growing alongside the streams – they are in full bloom and smiling as they listen to the music of the flowing waters.  
 b) "Drink life" means that the flowers are drawing sustenance from the water of the brooks/streams (metaphorically, of harmonious flowing melodies).
- 20 a) Some streams of profound depth meander along smoothly and powerfully with splendour through the green valleys and fields of ripe corn over which Ceres the goddess of earth reigns. Some other streams rush down the mountain slopes with such speed and force that surrounding rocks and swaying trees reply to the roaring sound in the form of echoes.  
 b) The poet means that poetry is like a stream. Just as a stream sometimes quietly passes through valleys and fields and sometimes swiftly rolls down mountains so is poetry sometimes meditative and majestic, and sometimes tumultuous and emphatic. He specifies two distinct types of poetry.  
 c) The poet has used metaphorical language. Poetry is spoken of in terms of flowing streams.
21. a) Gray calls the Muse 'Sovereign' because the Muse is the creator of lilting and somber harmonies and has the rightful dominion over that human heart which willingly surrenders to the power of poetry.
22. a) Poetry checks and gently controls the troublesome worries and wild passions of the human heart.  
 b) The lyre on which the Muse plays is the "Enchanting shell". It is so because its captivating sounds produce a magical effect.
- 23 a) Under the magical influence of poetry Mars – the lord of War stops his racing chariot, drops his blood – thirsty sword as ordered to do and abandons the idea of war. The magical influence of poetry on Jove is such that it sedates the wild eagle of Jove into timidly subduing the terror of his beak and glitter of his eyes and going off to sleep. It renders the eagle inactive.  
 b) 'ruffled plumes' and "flagging wing" mean drooping feathers and halting wing.

24. The human voice and dancing movements of the human body obey the Muse of poetry. They do so by attuning themselves to the directions of the Muse.
25. a) The winged cupids who attend upon Venus wear crowns of roses.  
 b) The winged cupids on Cytherea's day celebrate and revel in the company of quaint Sports, and blue-eyed Pleasures (Both personified). They playfully leap about in carefree nimble steps, moving forward and backwards and sometimes in a circle moving in tune with swift rhythmic steps.
26. a) The "Queen" is Venus .  
 b) The Graces are the three daughters of Zeus. They are paying tributes to the Queen.  
 c) The Queen is walking with such poise and grace that it appears that she is gliding. Her arms are aloft and swaying gently in the air.
27. The ills that await man are hard toil, extreme poverty, agony of pain, afflictions, sorrows and finally death which is probably an escape from the misfortunes of life.
28. a) By "fond" the poet means those foolish men who complain of the vicissitudes/troubles of life and do not seek respite from them through poetry. It is difficult to accept the idea that poetry is an adequate compensation of the ills of life. It is rather exaggerated.  
 b) When "Night" comes she brings along all her unwholesome vapours, pale ghosts and birds of ill omen, all of which are allowed to roam freely in the gloomy sky by Providence.  
 c) "Hyperion" – the sun with its radiant beams wages war against "Night". It rises in the East over the distant mountains. What the sun is to the terrors of night, so is poetry to the evils of human life.
29. a) In the colder climates where the warmth of the sun's rays do not reach; fur-wrapped natives wander over the ice-covered mountains.  
 b) The Muse brings joy to the gloomy dwellings of these natives shivering under the melancholic twilight.
30. Where ever the Muse of poetry goes, she is followed by glory, the sense of righteousness which is afraid of disgrace, the mind that cannot be enslaved and the sacred flame of liberty.
31. Poetry flourished in the forests around the oracular shrine of Apollo at Delphi on Mount Parnassus. It flourished in the islands of the Aegean Sea, and in the fields which are watered by the cool Ilissus river and the place where the amber waves of "river Maeander" flow in a meandering course.
32. a) From Greece, poetry traveled to the plains of Italy. Poetry left Greece when Greece was enslaved and its nine great poets fled to escape to a new country.  
 b) When Rome lost its noble spirit and reveled in slavery, the Muses sought the British Isles as refuge.
33. The poet wants to emphasise that poetry can flourish only in a civilized atmosphere of freedom, and goodness. Poetry cannot grow in a dictatorship because poetic imagination and creativity

would suffocate under such conditions

- 34 Thomas Gray belongs to the group of poets who mark the transition from the neo-classical poetry of the eighteenth century to the romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century. In other words, his work shows the relation between the poetry of the new age and that of the eighteenth century. Several aspects of his poetry show the trends in the direction of romanticism, but he could never really escape from the spirit of the age in which he lived.

Both the ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’ and ‘The Progress of Poesy’ show neo-classical characteristics. The former abounds in personifications like Misfortune, Anger, Fear, Love, Jealousy, Envy, Ambition, Scorn and Infamy. The moralizing tone is equally prominent:

To each his sufferings: all are men,  
Condemned alike to groan,  
The tender for another’s pain;  
The unfeeling for his own.

This poem expresses generalized description, meditation, and moralizing in a way calculated to please contemporary taste. The use of apostrophe was very much in the rhetorical mode of the time. Mid-18th century verse is a forest of exclamation marks, and apostrophe and personifications abound in Gray’s poems. The early odes of his have been regarded as “elegant compounds of platitudes, inert conventions, and poetic diction.” The neo-classical influence in ‘The Progress of Poesy’ shows itself chiefly in the stylistic devices employed by Gray. There are a large number of personifications in the true 18th century manner—Desire, Love, Labour, Penury, Pain, Death etc. There is the use of capital letters—Song, Native, Chief, Mind, Mountain, etc. The apostrophe too is here:

Oh! Sovereign of the willing soul,  
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs.

The tone of the poem repeatedly becomes rhetorical:

- i) On Thracia’s hills the Lord of War,  
Has curbed the fury of his car,  
And drop’d his thirsty lance at thy command.
- ii) Say, has he given in vain the heavenly Muse?
- iii) How do your tuneful Echoes languish,  
Mute, but to the voice of Anguish?

These are a few of the examples of rhetorical or theatrical manner of writing.

Gray’s letters show that he was deeply interested in questions of poetic technique and diction. In one letter, for instance, he wrote: “The language of the age is never the language of poetry”. He was especially targeted by Wordsworth and Dr. Johnson for this. Dr. Johnson attacked the “cumbrous splendour” of Gray’s Pindaric odes. And, indeed, Gray tends to avoid the normal

way of putting down things here. Concrete things are to a large extent turned into abstractions: the cornfields, for example, become “Ceres’ golden reign”. In ‘The Progress of Poesy’, many of the images remain unrealized. For, instance, there is a reference in the poem to the “arms sublime” of Venus. Gray here uses the word “sublime” in a Latin sense to mean, not “magnificent”, but “uplifted” or upraised. Gray’s use of mythological, historical names in this ode suggests a rather mechanically applied ornament, and not something functional as seen in Milton’s poems whom he tried to imitate. A similar defect is seen in his handling of metaphor. In the opening stanza of the poem he has confounded the images of spreading sound and running water. He has failed to fuse the two contrary ideas into a single image.

Gray’s poetry divides itself naturally into periods in which it is possible to trace the progress of his liberation from the classic rules, which has so long governed English literature. His early poems — ‘Hymn to Adversity’, ‘Ode on the Spring’, and ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’, reveal two suggestive features; first the appearance of melancholy and second the study of nature as suitable background for the play of human emotions. The second period shows the same tendencies more strongly developed. To this period belong the ‘Elegy’, ‘The Progress of Poesy’ and ‘The Bard’. In the third period, Gray reveals a new field of romantic interest in two Norse poems, ‘The Fatal Sisters’ and the ‘Descent of Odin’. As a critic puts it “Gray’s work has much of the precision and polish of the classical school; but he also shares the re-awakened interest in Nature, in common man, and in medieval culture...”

The ‘Progress of Poesy’, the Pindaric ode dealing with the ‘progress’ of poetry has several characteristics which link it with the romantic movement that produced its finest poetical fruits in the first thirty years or so of the nineteenth century. In the first place, the treatment of the subject shows a certain degree of imagination and emotion not generally found in the neoclassical poets of the eighteenth century. The opening stanza has that quality. Here, despite Dr Johnson’s criticism, we have evidence of a fanciful visualizing of natural scenes. Helicon’s harmonious springs, a thousand rills, the laughing flowers, the rich stream of music, the verdant vales, the steep, the rocks, the nodding groves - all these call up a pleasant scene suggestive of the abundance and fertility of Nature. The picture of the young lovers dancing around Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, is quite sensuous. The following picture despite its personifications has a romantic quality:

Over her warm cheek, and rising bosom, move

The bloom of young Desire, and purple light of Love

Indeed, the whole poem develops by means of a succession of pictures which have an imaginative quality. The pictorial description creates images which carry their own meaning. Such is the image of the eagle on Jove’s wrist soothed to sleep by music. Such also is the image of the influence of poetry over the remotest places. The “climbs beyond the solar road”, the “ice-built mountains”, and “Chili’s boundless forests” have the romantic appeal of far-off and inaccessible regions. The linking of the spirit of poetry with the spirit of freedom is also romantic in way, even though this concept was quite a familiar one in the eighteenth century.

We may conclude by saying that Gray’s poems are an early symptom of discontent with the Augustan (neo-classical) orthodoxy. They are an early attempt to establish a more liberated and wider use of poetic language.

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## 13.6 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have given you practice in the study of

- poetry (Pindaric Ode)
- meaning, references and explanation
- literary devices, Greek mythology

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## 13.7 Review Questions

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1. Attempt a critical appreciation of ‘Ode On A Distant Prospect Of Eton College’
2. Discuss ‘The Progress of Poesy’ as a pindaric ode.
3. Discuss Thomas Gray as a transitional poet.

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## 13.8 Bibliography

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1. Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s Dictionary
2. Oxford Companion to English Literature edit. Margaret Drabble Sixth edition
3. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary terms and Literary Theory by J.A Coddon
4. Compare ‘The Progress of Poesy’ with Dryden’s ‘ST Cecilia’s Day & ‘Alexander’s Feast’
5. Read the ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’

## UNIT-14

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### WILLIAM COLLINS

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#### Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 William Collins: 'Ode to Evening'
- 14.3 William Collins: 'Ode to Simplicity'
- 14.4 Self Assessment Questions
- 14.5 Answers to SAQs
- 14.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.7 Review Questions
- 14.8 Bibliography

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#### 14.0 Objectives

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After going through the unit you will be able to

- understand the ideas contained in the poem
- understand the 'Ode' form of poetry
- explain and interpret the text in your own words
- use a dictionary to find out the meanings of words and definition of literary terms.

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#### 14.1 Introduction

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In this unit you are going to study two odes written by William Collins (1721-1759). There are two distinct traits in the poetry of Collins. One is the Classical and the other Romantic. The classical traits are found in his earlier works ('The Persian Eclogues') and the romantic traits in his 'Odes'. One might say that Collins was a transition poet as he began as a classicist and ended as a romanticist.

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#### 14.2 William Collins : 'Ode To Evening'

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An ode is a long lyric poem beginning with an invocation. It is in the form of an address, dignified and elaborate in stanzaic structure with a serious subject matter. The ode itself is a product of Greek genius and while Collins wrote the Odes, he brought to his poetry a freshness of thought and simplicity of language. The 'Ode to Evening' shows Collins at his best. Written in the year 1747, it was published in Collins second poetic anthology under the title of 'Odes of Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects'. The poem is a tribute to Evening.

Although odes are always written in rhymed verse, this ode is an exception. Collins chose the unrhymed form because probably the rhymed form would disturb the gentle, peaceful and transitory

effect of the evening, which the poet seeks to produce. The poet imbibes the spirit of the evening in his soul and expresses his admiration for its sublime beauty; the evening is personified here as a solemn maiden.

The poet in all humility wants to learn to compose poetry from Evening. Poetry that would compliment her sublime and serene self as are her springs and gales. Thus the poem acquires a prayer like quality. The poet describes the beauty and glory of evening against the radiant setting sun .He describes the evening ambience, the activities, sights and sound and the gradual transition of the evening into night .

Evening is charming in every season, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter PENSIVE PLEASURES give her company and they along with scented Hours, Elves and other Nymphs prepare and draw her chariot. All men love and recognise her influence and chant the name of their adorable one – the Evening.

‘Ode to Evening’ foreshadows the coming of Romanticism with its lyricism, its subjectivity, its melancholy and its love of nature. But Collins is unable to free himself from the classicism of his age. He makes abundant use of the device of personification– a common feature of the classical poetry of the eighteenth century.

Read the following poem and answer the given questions .Check your answers with those given by us at the end of the unit.

### **Ode to Evening**

If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song,  
May hope, chaste Eve, to smooth thy modest ear,  
Like thy solemn springs,  
Thy springs, and dying gales,  
O NYMPH reserv'd while now the bright hair'd sun  
Sits in you western tent, whose cloudy skirts,  
With brede ethereal wove,  
O'erhang his wavy bed:  
Now air is hush'd save where the weak-ey'd bat,  
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,  
Or, where the Beetle winds  
His small but sullen horn,  
As oft he rises, midst the twilight path  
Against the pilgrim born in heedless hum:  
Now teach me, maid compos'd,  
To breathe some soften'd strain,

Whose numbers stealing thro' thy darkening vale,  
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,  
As musing slow, I hail  
Thy genial lov'd return!  
For when thy folding star arising shews  
His pale circlet, at his warning lamp.  
The fragrant Hours, and Elves  
Who slept in flow'rs the day,  
And many a Nymph, who wreaths her brows with sedge,  
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and lovelier still,  
The PENSIVE PLEASURES sweet  
Prepare thy shadowy car.  
Then lead, calm Vot'ress, whose some sheety lake  
Cheers the lone heath, or some time hallow'd pile,  
Or up-land fallows grey  
Reflect it's last cool gleam.  
But when chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,  
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut.  
That from the mountain's side,  
Views wilds, and swelling floods,  
And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires,  
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all  
Thy dewy fingers draw.  
The gradual dusky veil.  
While Spring shall pour his show'rs, as oft he wont,  
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve!  
While Summer loves to sport  
Beneath thy ling'ring light;  
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;  
Or Winter yelling thro' the troublous air,  
Affrights thy shrinking train,

And rudely rends thy robes;  
 So long, sure-found beneath the Sylvan shed,  
 Shall fancy, friendship, science, rose-lip'd health  
 Thy gentlest influence own,  
 And hymn thy fav'rite name!

**Notes and Annotations :**

The characteristic features of the Classical School are:

- 1) use of heroic couplet
- 2) artificial poetic diction
- 3) conventional presentation of nature
- 4) excessive use of personification.

The characteristic features of the Romantic Period are –

- 1) simplicity in theme and language.
- 2) subjectivity.
- 3) nature imagery.
- 4) freedom of imagination.
- 5) interest in the supernatural.
- 6) lyricism and melody.

L.1 oaten : adjective of oat

pastoral : rural.

L.2 hope : wish, desire;

Chaste : pure;

Sooth : comfort

modest. : humble

L.4 dying gales : light wind

L.6 cloudy skirts : a border of clouds.

L.10 shrill; : high pitched sound;

leathern : leathery.

L.14 heedless hum : unnoticed humming.

L.16 softend'd strain : gentle melody.

L.19 musing : contemplation.

- L.20 genial : good, welcoming.
- L.25 wreaths : makes a crown.
- L.27 pensive pleasures : melancholic or somber pleasures.
- L.28 shadowy car : dusky chariot of Evening.
- L.29 Vot'ress : person dedicated to service of God or cult.
- L.30 time hallowed pile: ruins made holy by time.
- L.37 hamlet : village.
- L.37 dim discover'd : faintly visible
- L.43 sport : play.
- L.44 ling'ring light : the sun sets late in summers.
- L.45 sallow : yellowish.
- L.47 shrinking train : fearful group
- L.47 affrights : scares.

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### 14.3 William Collins : 'Ode To Simplicity'

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Written in 1747 and published along with his other Odes, this is perhaps the most regularly constructed of Collin's Odes. It contains nine stanzas of six lines each.

In this poem the poet pays tribute to the virtue of simplicity in an age of artificial diction. Simplicity has been personified as a pure, truthful and humble maiden devoid of all artifice and pomp. Although Collins hailed simplicity in theme and language, yet, he could not completely ignore the traditions of his age. We thus find that his odes not only have freshness, simplicity and imaginative nature imagery which connects them to the poets of the Romantic School but also traces of classicism, like, the use of personified abstractions and classical mythology.

Read the following poem and attempt the questions given here. You can check your answers with those given by us at the end of the unit.

#### **Ode to Simplicity**

O thou by Nature taught,  
 To breathe her genuine Thought,  
 In numbers warmly pure, and sweetly strong:  
 Who first on Mountains wild,  
 In Fancy loveliest Child,  
 Thy Babe, or Pleasure's nurs'd the Pow'rs of Song!  
 Thou who with Hermit Heart  
 Disdains't the Wealth of Art,

And Gauds and pageant Weeds, and trailing pall:  
But Com'st a decent Maid  
In Attic Robe array'd,  
O chaste unboastful Nymph, to Thee I call!  
By all the honey'd Store  
On Hybla's Thymy Shore,  
By all her Blooms, and ming'ed Murmurs dear  
By Her, whose Love-lorn Woe  
In Ev'ning Musings slow  
Sooth'd sweetly and Electra's Poet's Ear!  
By old Cephisus deep,  
Who spread his wavy Sweep  
In warbled Wand'rings round the green Retreat,  
On whose enamel'd Side  
When holy Freedom died  
No equal Haunt allur'd they future Feet.  
O Sister meek of Truth,  
To my admiring Youth,  
Thy sober Aid and native Charms infuse!  
The flowr's that sweetest breathe,  
Tho' Beauty cull'd the Wreath,  
Still ask thy Hand to range their order'd Hues.  
While Rome could none esteem  
But Virtue's Patriot Theme,  
You lov'd her Hills, and led her Laureate Band:  
But staid to sing alone  
To one distinguish'd Throne.  
And turn'd thy Face, and fled her alter'd Land.  
No more, in Hall or Bow'r,  
The Passions own thy Power,  
Love, only Love her forceless Numbers mean :

For Thou hast left her Shrine,  
 Nor Olive more, nor Vine,  
 Shall gain thy Feet to bless the servile Scene.  
 Tho' Taste, tho' Genius bless,  
 To some divine Excess,  
 Faints the cold Work till Thou inspire the whole;  
 What each, what all supply,  
 May court, may charm, our Eye,  
 Thou, only Thou can'st raise the meeting soul !  
 Of These let others ask.  
 To aid some mighty Task.  
 I only seek to find thy temp'rate Vale:  
 Where oft my Reed might sound  
 To maids and Shepherds round.  
 And all thy Sons, O Nature, learn my Tale.

**Notes and Annotations**

- L.6 nurs'd Pow'rs of Song : Fostered or composed the force of Melodies.
- L.7 Hermyty Heart. : Simple, sublime heart of simplicity.
- L.8 Disdain'st the wealth : simplicity scorns the pompous treasure of of Art artificiality.
- L.9 Gaud : gaudy, showy, over bright.
- L.9 Pageant : show, parade
- L.11 Attic Robe : Athenian garments.
- L.14 Hybla's Thymy Shore : Hybla is a district in Sicily known for honey and its shore appear green because of thyme (a green plant).
- L.16 Her : Nightingale – Philomela was the daughter of Pandion, king of Athens. She had a very melodious voice and according to legend was transformed into a nightingale.
- L.17 Ev'ning Musing : gradual thoughts of evening
- L.18 'Electra's Poet's Ear : Sophocles .The writer of Electra
- L.19 Cephisus : a river in Athens (Greece). It represents ancient Greek poetry.

L20	warbled Wanderings	:	journey of Music carried along with the waters of Cephisus.
L.20	green Retreat	:	green/verdant dwelling.
L.23	When Holy Freedom Died	:	When Athens lost her freedom.
L.27	Sober Aid	:	Virtue of sobriety. The poet wants his youth/Poetry to be sober and natural
L.27	native charms	:	natural charms/attractions.
L.31	Rome	:	poetry moved from Greece to Rome.
L.33	Laureate Band	:	group of great poets patronized by Emperor Augustus.
L.37	Hall or Bow'r	:	Courtly poetry.
L.39	forceless Numbers	:	Poetry without merit or substance.
L.48	Meeting soul	:	Soul of the poet
L.51	temp'rate Vale	:	valley of simplicity, sincerity, moderation like the valley in mediterranean region.
L.52	Reed	:	Wooden musical instrument.

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#### 14.4 Self Assessment Questions

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1. The poet addresses 'Evening' by many names .What are they?

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2. Pick out the adjectives used by the poet to describe 'Evening'.

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3. What does the poet desire to do in the opening lines of the poem?

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4 a) Who is in the "Western tent"? Why?

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b) What are the clouds like?

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5 a) How does the poet describe the bat and the beetle?

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6. What does the poet want 'Evening' to do?

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7 a) What does the poet mean by -"thy folding star"

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b) Why does it call its light "his warning lamp"?

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8 Who sleeps in the flowers all day? Why?

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9. a) Explain "PENSIVE PLEASURES".

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b) What is meant by "thy shadowy car"?

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10. Explain the following phrases:

a) "Sheety lake".

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b) "Lone heath."

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c) "time hallowed pile".

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d) "Up-land fallows."

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11. Who would lead the chariot of 'Evening'?

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12 a) When would the poet like to sit in a hut?

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b) What would he like to view?

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18. What feature of an 'Ode' do you find in the opening lines of the poem?

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19. Who and what has been taught by Nature?

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20. How does the poet personify poetry?

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21. What qualities of simplicity does the poet highlight in the second? Stanza ?

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22. The poet invokes simplicity in many ways in the third stanza. Illustrate.

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23. What is the significance of "Cephisus"?

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24. Explain "When holy Freedom ... Feet".

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25 a) Simplicity is the meek sister of .....

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b) What does the poet want his youth to be influenced by?

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c) What does the poet mean by “flowr’s”, “Wreath”, “Hand and Hues”.

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26. a) What was Roman poetry like?

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b) Whose throne does “one distinguished Throne” refer to?

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c) When did Poetry flee from Rome?

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27. Explain “Nor Olive more .....servile Scene”.

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28. a) What does the poet say about “Taste” and”Genius” in poetry?

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b) Why is simplicity important?

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29. Pick out six personifications from the poem.

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30. One finds both classical and romantic features in this ode. Give two examples of each with quotations from the poem.

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31. Find words from the poem which mean the following:

(1) honest, sincere.

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(2) Chaste.

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(3) Most beautiful.

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(4) Gown.

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(5) Modest.

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(6) Sorrow.

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(7) Sacred.

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(8) Highly respected.

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(9) Temple.

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(10) Slavish.

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(11) Valley.

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32 Write a critical appreciation of Collin's Ode to Simplicity.

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- b) The pale sphere of light of the star acts as an alarm call to wake up the sleeping “Hours” “Elves” and Fairies. The evening star heralds the arrival of the Evening and departure of the day.
8. The scented “Hours” (personified) and “Elves” and “Nymphs” sleep in the flowers all day. The fragrant aromas and scents of the “Hours” remain captive in the flowers during the day time and are released only at the onset of evening. A truly pictorial and graphic description of the evening ambience.
9. “PENSIVE PLEASURES” are the lyrical melancholic comforts of the Evening (personified). The shadowy car refers to the dusky chariot of the poised Evening Goddess.
10. (a) glistening pond or stream.  
(b) deserted barren land.  
(c) ruins or dilapidated remains  
(d) untilled land on the slopes of hills
11. The fairies who wear crowns of sedge and shed fresh, moist dew drops will lead the chariot of Evening.
12. (a) the poet would like to sit in a hut when he is unable to go outdoors due to rough weather i.e. when biting cold, violent winds are blowing and rain is pouring down.  
(b) He would like to sit in a hut by the mountain side from where he would have access to a panoramic view of the surroundings – the incline of the mountain, wild forests, gushing rivers in spate, villages that appear brown in the twilight and the distant, faintly visible spires of the churches whose evening bells can be heard.
13. The delicate and moist fingers of Evening are casting a curtain over the surroundings as evening progresses and darkness settles in.
14. The poet creates evocative images as he describes Evening in various seasons. In the Spring season Evening is described as a frail maiden whose fragrant hair are soaked by the drizzle and delicate showers of the season. In the yellow Autumn season, Evening is described as a mature maiden whose lap is filled with fallen leaves.
15. 1) “PENSIVE PLEASURES”  
2) “FANCY”  
3) “FRIENDSHIP”  
4) ‘SCIENCE’  
5) ‘rose-lip’d HEALTH’
16. The poet concludes by saying that, the inspiring, chaste, sublime and creative influence of the beautiful Evening will be recognized in all the seasons by poets, artists, friends and scholars, all of whom will sing in admiration of her virtues.
17. Written in the year 1747, this poem by William Collins is perhaps one of the finest lyrics of the century. It is written in unrhymed stanzas of four lines. Though Odes and lyrics are always

written in rhymed verse, Collins chose to write this Ode in the unrhymed stanza because he felt that the rhymed form would not be able to convey the subtle sombreness characteristic of the evening. Although Collins poetic art, style and diction are marked with classicism, yet there is a natural and spontaneous grace about it. The language of the poem reminds us of Milton, Spenser and Shakespeare. The rhymeless meter of the Ode shows how anxious Collins was to secure for himself complete lyrical freedom for creative expression- a bold novelty for an age dominated by the heroic couplet. It was Milton who had first practiced rhyme less stanza and Collins followed him. It was a clear break from the tradition of Ode writers in form, style, temper and subject matter. In all these respects the ode struck a new note in English verse.

The evolution of thought follows marked stages. The first five stanzas are a conjuration and a petition to the evening with an exquisite modesty. He prays that she may bless his verse by all her own qualities. In the next two stanzas he expresses an admiration and longing for an evening as the season when the magical aspect of life dominates; when Solitude holds full sway and when the poet seeks no higher achievement than to wander with the elf's or nymphs in the early straight and dew. In the next three stanzas the poet recalls those scenes which moist delight him in these pilgrimages- the ruin by the lake, the fields at rest from the harvest, the hut on the hillside with its window opening in the panoramic countryside. After that there is a pause as if the poet is considering how to proceed further with this inimitable poem. He concludes the poem with an epilogue of three stanzas in which he makes his vow, on behalf of all "holy and humble men of heart" through all the four seasons and their changeful masque. To keep the wonder, the grace, the modesty and the kindness always before him:

“So long, sure found beneath the Sylvan shed  
Shall FANCY, FRIENDSHIP, SCIENCE,  
rose - lip'd HEALTH,  
Thy gentlest influence own,  
And hymn thy fav'rite name!”

It is one of the outstanding nature poetry of eighteenth century and may be said to be a prophecy of the nature poetry to come in the future. It approaches the sentiment and language of Keats in some places and the lyrical fervour of Shelly in others especially when he describes the evening sky. There is an elfin magic about it all, which is almost like Shelly, at the same time, the exquisite description of Evening is similar to Keats's mythological treatment. The myth making capacity of Collins is in evidence when we see the Sun seated in his cloudy tent in the west. The scenes portrayed in the poem are not mere description of nature, rather they reflect the poet's to these objects of nature. They are coloured with Collins mood and temperament, which is melancholic in essence, loves the quiet dusk and shadows of the evening and describes the stillness of the same in a graphic and picturesque manner:

“Now air is hush'd, save were the weak- ey'd bat,  
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,  
Or where the Beetle winds  
His small but sullen horn.”

Thus, the *Ode to Evening* foreshadows the coming romanticism with its lyricism, its subjectivity, its music, and its melancholy and its love of nature.

But Collins has not been able to completely shake off the traditions of classical poetry. The *Ode to Evening* in spite of its freshness and originality is not free from the vice of excessive personification, a common feature of the classical poetry of eighteenth century. The personification of Evening as a reserved nymph is quite in the tradition of the Ode, but the personification of Hours, Fancy, Friendship, Science exhibit the characteristics of his age. Collins believed that the poet had a public function and yet he was a private individual. In this poem he attempts to blend these two facts of a poet's life and moves from fancy to personal experience. Collins's greatest quality remains in his ability to create a powerful image construct a myth and invest with meaning.

19. The poem opens with an invocation to the spirit of Simplicity eg. "O Thou".
20. Simplicity (personified as a maid) has been taught by Nature to express honest, sincere, thoughts in verses that are warmly pristine and profoundly sweet.
21. The poet personifies poetry as the prettiest Child of Simplicity and Pleasure, and as one who is born in Fancy or Imagination.
22. Simplicity is described as a pure, dignified and modest maiden with an ascetic's heart. She is attired simply and scorns all pompous display and shallow artificiality.
23. The poet invokes the spirit of Simplicity through various images of Nature. He invokes Simplicity in the name of the sweetness of honey on "Hybla's" shore, in the name of blossoming flowers, rippling streams and the melodious love- lorn songs of the nightingale.
24. "Cephisus" is the river flowing around Athens where ancient Greek poetry flourished for many years.
25. Poetry could not be tempted to leave the lovely shores of Cephisus in Athens and reside in some other equally beautiful place because simplicity of style in diction could be found only in Greek poetry.
26.
  - a) "Truth"
  - b) The poet wants his "Youth" to be influenced by the sobriety and innate attractions of Simplicity.
  - c) By "flowr's" he means the sweet flowers of imagination of which he will make a garland ("Wreath") of poetry. He asks for the helping hand ("Hand") of Simplicity to arrange the words and lines of his poetry in different colours ("Hues") so as to make it truly great.
27.
  - a) Roman or Latin poetry was pure and simple and patriotism was its common theme.
  - b) Emperor Augustus.
  - c) Poetry fled Rome when Rome became an 'alter'd Land' i.e. when Rome fell prey to luxury and corruption and poets started writing artificial poetry and genuineness was lost.
28. The poetry of Italy later dealt with servile themes of love and wine and heroic themes of patriotism and simplicity were forgotten.

29. a) Then poet says that “Taste” and Genius” may adorn poetry and make it attractive to the eye but their charm is merely external.  
 b) Simplicity is important to poetry because it is simplicity that inspires the soul of the poet.
30. a) ‘Nature’  
 b) ‘Fancy’  
 c) ‘Pleasure’  
 d) ‘chaste unboastful Nymph’  
 e) ‘Her’  
 f) ‘holy Freedom’.
31. The Classical features in this poem are:
- (1) Personification – The river is personified as old eg.”old Cephisus”.
- (2) Use of mythology. “Her” refers to ‘Philomela’ the daughter of King Pandion who was transformed into a nightingale.
- Eg. “By Her, whose Love-born Woe  
 In Evening Musings slow  
 Sooth’d sweetly.....Ear”.
- The Romantic features in this poem are:-
- (1) Subjectivity – The poets opinion about Simplicity is that she has a heart as sublime and humble as an Ascetic’s
- Eg. “Thou, who with Hermyty Heart Disdain’st the Wealth of Art”
- (2) Nature Imagery – Description of elements of Nature like the green shore of Hybla, blossoming flowers and rippling streams.
- Eg. “By all the honey’d Store on Hybla’s Thymy Shore  
 By all her Blooms, and ming’ed Murmurs dear”.
32. 1. “genuine”  
 2. “pure”  
 3. “loveliest”  
 4. ‘Robe’  
 5. “unboastful”  
 6. “Woe”  
 7. “holy”  
 8. “distinguish’d”

9. "Shrine"
  10. "servile"
  11. "Soul"
  12. "Vale"
33. Ode to Simplicity celebrates the virtue of simplicity in poetry .It is perhaps the most egularly constructed Ode .It contains nine stanzas of six lines each. In address, it is somewhat formal. The poet characterizes Simplicity as a 'generous maid taught by Nature, who breathes her genuine thoughts in numbers warmly pure and sweetly profound'.

She is gowned in plain Attic robes and is the meek sister of Truth . She disdains pompous display and artifice. In his emphasis on simplicity in poetic diction, Collins comes nearest to Wordsworthian poetic creed. According to him, true poetry must be written in simple language free from all artificiality. But unfortunately the poem does not exactly conform to Collins ideal of poetry. His poetic instinct urged him to simplicity in the making of his verse but he could not break away completely from the traits of his age. Hence we find traces of artificial poetic diction in the poem such as "wavy Sweep", "warbled Wand'rings", "temp'rate Vale" etc.

In the first two stanzas the poet invokes the spirit of Simplicity. In the third and fourth stanzas he invokes her in the name of Hybla's Shore, in the name of Philomela and in the name of the old Cephisus river. These two stanzas have a striking pictorial quality and Collins love of nature finds expression here .In the fifth stanza, the poet eulogizes simplicity and addresses her as the gentle sister of Truth .In the sixth and seventh stanzas, the poet gives a historical account of the rise and fall of Poetry in Greece and Rome and her final refuge in England .In the concluding stanzas, the poet highlights the importance of simplicity in great poetry and finally once again asks for the sublime and natural beauty and genuineness of simplicity to adorn his own poetry.

The abundant use of nature imagery as he speaks of Hybla's shore of honey; of the nightingale singing love-lorn songs of grief; the river Cephisus flowing along its course; the flowers and mingled murmurs are typical of romantic poetry. Another noteworthy feature of romantic poetry is subjectivity in the poem. Collins introduces himself in the poem, he does so in the second, fifth and last stanzas .In the second stanza, he says "To the I call"! . In the fifth stanza as a young man who admires Simplicity and seeks her guidance .In the final stanza, he seeks the patronage of simplicity so that he may be able to write poems which touch the hearts of the common men who are described as the sons of nature.

The poem abounds in personifications, which was the favourite device of the neo- classical poets of the eighteenth century. Simplicity, Pleasure, Song, the river Cephisus, Freedom, Truth, Beauty, Love etc are all personified .The references to classical mythology and literature show Collins as a man of his age.

This Ode's appreciation by Cazamian is worth quoting here "Collins has in a pure inspiration the supreme gift of Simplicity : it is not yet the Simplicity at once verbal and moral of Wordsworth .His vocabulary remains laboured and the Ode to Simplicity does not fulfil all its promise. But where his Classicism is perfect, it is sufficiently spiritualised by an inner youthfulness of spirit to rejoin Romanticism in its moments of soberness"

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## 14.6 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit, we have given you practice in the study of

- poetry and its forms.
- meaning, interpretation and explanation
- literary terms and rhetorical devices.

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## 14.7 Review Questions

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1. Compare 'Ode to Simplicity' with Thomas Gray's "The Progress of Poesy".
2. Compare 'Ode to Evening' with Thomson's 'Seasons' and John Keats 'To Autumn'.

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## 14.8 Bibliography

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- Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary
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## UNIT-15

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### WILLIAM BLAKE

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#### Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 About the Author
- 15.3 About the Age
- 15.4 William Blake: Selected Poems from ‘Songs of Innocence’
- 15.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 15.6 Answers to SAQs
- 15.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.8 Review Questions
- 15.9 Bibliography

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#### 15.0 Objectives

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After going through this unit, you will be able to

- understand ideas contained in a poem,
- appreciate the poem critically and
- know about many literary devices such as symbols, metaphors and personification etc.

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#### 15.1 Introduction

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In this unit you are going to study a few of selected poems from *Song of Innocence* by William Blake, a pre-romantic poetry of eighteenth century. To understand and enjoy these poems you have to read them again and again. The poems describe the innocent state of childhood. Besides the literal meaning most of the poems have symbolic meaning also. To understand this you have to understand the symbols and their association. The annotations given at the end of each poem will be of great help to you in deciphering the meaning of the poem.

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#### 15.2 About The Author

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William Blake, the greatest visionary poet in English, was born on November 28, 1757, the second son of James Blake, a London native of obscure origin who was a hosier by occupation. The principle poetic works of Williams Blake are *Poetical Sketches* (1783) *Tiriel* (1789) *Songs of Innocence* (1789). *The Book of Thel* (1789-91) *Vision of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). *Song of Innocence and of Experience*, showing the two Contrary states of the Human Soul published in one volume (1794) *America A Prophecy* (1794) *Europe, A Prophecy* (1794). *The Book of Urizen* (1794) *The Song of Los* (1795). *The Book of Armarda* (1795). *Jerusalem* (1801-1820). An important work of

Blake is the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, written in prose. The most prominent characteristic of Blake's poems is that they have an amazing fund of symbolism and mythical connotations. The symbols are powerful, varying and dynamic. William Blake is a singer of the simple joys and raptures of ordinary life. Edward Albert writes: "In simple yet beautifully apt language, his lyrics reveal a variety and spontaneity of feeling which place them on a par with the best in our literature. Blake has to the highest degree the faculty of unreserved self-expression, and his style has the quality of "rightness" which is mark of all truly great romantic poetry." *Songs of Innocence and Experiences* are collection of lyrics in which there are many pairs of poems, each depicting varying mood. They are intended to show the two contrary states of the human soul. The tone and mood of the poems in *Song of Innocence* is given in the very first poem *Introduction* itself.

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### 15.3 About The Age

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William Blake is the early representative of the new school of poetry, known as romanticism. Blake is the worthy predecessor of Wordsworth. Swinburne calls Blake the only poet of 'supreme and simple poetic genius' of the eighteenth century," the one man of that age fit on all accounts, to rank with the old great masters". Romantic revival is the name given to a movement given to the last quarter of the 18th century. It was marked by a revolt against the conventionalized language of the Augustan poetry and this revolt is dated from the publication of the *Lyrical ballads* in 1798. Blake was a romantic, not only in his passion for liberty, but in his love for children, his love of nature, and his interest in the medieval and the Gothic literature. He contributed the spirit of lyricism, absolute sincerity of feeling, tenderness, and symbolism, love of lower animals and the poetry of man and nature poetry.

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### 15.4 Selected Poems

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[*Frontispiece*]

#### *Introduction*

Piping down the valleys wild,  
Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
On a cloud I saw a child  
And he laughing said to me:

'Pipe a song about a lamb.'

So I piped with merry cheer;

'Piper, pipe that song again.

So I piped; he wept to hear.

'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;

Sing the song of happy cheer.'

So I sung the same again,  
While he wept with joy to hear.

‘Piper, sit thee down and write  
In a book that all may read.’  
so he vanished from my sight:  
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,  
And I stained the water clear,  
And I wrote my happy songs  
Every child may joy to hear.

### **Main idea of the poem**

In the Poem ‘Introduction’ Blake Seeks blessing of Muses, the God of poetry for his poem. The child refers to the Jesus Christ and symbolizes poetic inspiration also. While roaming around in Wild valley, blowing music on a pipe the poet comes across the child who urges him to sing song about a lamb and the poet did so merrily and cheerfully. He further asks him to write this happy song for the children of future generation. Saying so the child disappeared mysteriously. The poet plucks the hollow reed to make a pen and fills it with clear water and writes songs of happiness and joy for children. By choosing a reed the poet retains the pastoral atmosphere. The poem is decorated in pastoral splendor and dazzling colors of countryside beauty.

### **Annotations**

Stanza 1. Frontispiece. The piper with his flock; the child of ‘Introduction’ hovers in the air over him  
L 1. Piping: Playing music on a pipe. A pipe is a tube-like wind instrumental  
2. Pleasant glee: heart-felt joy fullness. Both these words are related to each other in meaning: ‘glee’ is used to rhyme with ‘me’ of the fourth line. L 3. On a Cloud I saw a child: here the word ‘child’ bears great significance. (i) It may refer to Jesus Christ whose abode is heaven; (ii) it may signify the angel of innocence; (iii) it may be the personification of the spirit of pastoral poetry; (iv) it may also stand for a common child to whom Blake dedicates his poem

Stanza 2 L 5 Pipe: used as a verb. The child seen on the cloud asks him to play his pipe. lamb: ‘Lamb’ has a biblical reference. It refers to Christ. Secondly, it is a symbol of innocence.’ L 6. merry cheer: again two interrelated words like ‘pleasant glee’ with merry cheer’ means blissfully and enthusiastically. L. 8. he wept to hear: implies that he wept when he heard the piper’s song. Here, the child sheds joyful tears which well up in his eyes. when he hears the melodious music of the piper.

Stanza 3 LI 9-10. Drop thy Pipe..... cheer. The child is very much pleased to listen to the piper’s song

on his pipe. Then he asks him to sing the merry songs vocally. L 12. he wept with joy to hear: this is only a repetition or reassertion of Line 8.

Stanza 4 'LI 13-14 Piper..... read: The child wishes 'immortality' for his songs since they are heart touching, pleasing and moving. So the child asks him to write his poem which may be handed over to generation after generation, L 15. vanished: disappeared. L 16. hollow reed. The hollow reed can be used as an organ for producing music. But here it functions as a pen. Literally, it is a marsh plant. It also refers to pastoral poetry.

Stanza 5. L 17. And I made a rural pen: the poet plucks the reed and makes a pen of it. The adjectival 'rural' denotes the pastoral setting as well as the countryside setting which constitute the background of the poem. L 18. i stained the water clear: i.e. he made ink to write down his songs.

## **The Lamb**

Little lamb, which made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?  
Gave thee life and bid thee feed  
By the stream and o'er the mead—  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing, wooly bright,  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice?  
Little Lamb, who made thee,  
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little lamb, I'll tell thee!  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a lamb;  
He is meek and he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I am child, and thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee,  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

## Main Idea of the poem

The poem *The Lamb* is written in the Question and Answer format. The poem is dialogue between the child and the lamb. In the first stanza child puts certain questions and second stanza is answers of these questions. The poet extends the world of innocence even to the animals like the lamb. The child himself gives the answers and says that Almighty God is known after the name of lamb that is meek and gentle. Since God took birth upon the Earth as infant Jesus. He is also called a child The child asks the lamb about his creator and food giver and other things necessary for life. The child lamb and God are all brought to unite and form a single divine entity. The poem is based on Biblical parable. The lamb is a universal symbol of selfless innocence, Jesus the lamb is the gentle imagination, of the Divine Humanity.

## Annotations

Stanza 1. L 2. Dost thou know: Do you know? L. 3. bid thee feed: taught you to feed. feed: graze.L 4. by the stream: Beside the stream. meed: Meadow. L. 5. Clothing of delight: The ‘clothing refers to the fleece that grow on a lamb’s body. The delightful clothing may also refer to the innocence of the lamb. L. 7. tender: soft. L. 8. vales: valleys. rejoice: make glad

## The Shepherd

How sweet is the Shepherd’s sweet lot!  
From the Morn to the evening he strays;  
He shall follow his sheep all the day,  
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.  
For he hears the lamb’s innocent call,  
And he hears the ewe’s tender reply;  
He is Watchful while they are in peace,  
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.

## Annotations

- L.1 How sweet.....lot: When we transform this exclamatory sentence into assertive, we get: ‘The shepherd’s lot is extraordinarily sweet’. The term ‘lot’ means fortune.
- L.2 Morn: morning strays: wanders.
- L.4 Praise: Here ‘praise’ refers to the praise God.
- L.6 ewe: the mother-sheep. tender: kind.
- L.7 He watchful.....peace: The shepherd is keenly watching his flock of sheep and he is particular about their safety. Meanwhile, the sheep graze in peace because as their protector is at hand they need worry about anything.
- L. 9. nigh: near.

## The Main Idea of the Poem

The Shepherd - The poet uses capital 'S' for shepherd which has a further symbolic meaning. Shepherd symbolizes God and sheep stands for all human being who remain happy and cheerful under the protection of God. The poem drifts from the pastoral to the religious. The image of the shepherd is that of mutual concord and understanding. The feeling of security and safety under the watchful guidance of shepherd reinforces the spiritual significance of the situation. May be the shepherd is addressing the formal prayer to God. Though it is not mentioned but it is implied that he has a complete faith in God and His benevolence's he poem abounds in idyllic and pictorial beauty. It is a rural portrayal of sheep followed by shepherd. The world which is presented here is that of a mutual relationship among men, animals and mighty God.

My mother bore me in the southern wild,  
And I am black, but Oh! my soul is white;  
white as an angel is the English child:  
But I am Black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,  
And sitting down before the heat of day,  
She took me on her lap and kissed me,  
And, pointing to the east began to say:

“Look on the rising sun, there God does live,  
And gives His light, and gives heat away;  
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive  
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

“And we are put on earth a little space,  
That we may learn to beat the beams of love;  
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face  
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grave.

“For when our soul have learned the heat to bear,  
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear His voice,  
Saying: ‘Come out from the grove, My love and care,

And round My golden tent like lambs rejoice””.

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me:

And thus I say to the little English boy;

When I from black and he from white cloud free,

And round the tent of God like lambs we joy;

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear

to lean in joy upon our Father's knee:

And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,

And he like him, and he will then love me.

### **The Main Idea Of the Poem**

The poem *The Little Black Boy* exposes the social discrimination prevalent in the society at that time. The speaker is a little black boy who expresses agony and sorrow for his dark and black complexion but his soul is white like the soul of any other white boy. The Mother's love and affection gives solace to him and he understands the fact that God loves everyone alike. The color of the skin is only an outer covering or like a cloud or shady grove because when the soul will learn to love all this will be of no significance. God will give the shelter to all and then both white boy and the dark boy will enjoy like lambs in paradise. But what is important is that it is the black boy who leads the white boy to God and not vice versa. In this 'New World' the black boy proves his competence and legacy for equality. Since in his life span he is profoundly exposed to the heat of God's rays - the sunlight - he does not find it hard to suffer the radiance from God. The Negro boy who superseded the angelic white one is described as a heathen since he worships not the Christian deity but the sun. The earthly barriers of colors melt in the world of God and hence both of them come out alike and are measured on the same scale of divine love of God.

The poem is full of poetic pathos; the poet Blake has attained his height of poetic and imaginative splendor in the poem. The mother of the black boy's advice has a prophetic note. Her advice is not only for her boy but to all those who suffer. She very effectively has disapproved 'color factor' as a criterion for superiority.

The society for the abolition of Slave Trade was formed in 1787 and many artists and writers were involved in this movement. Blake too opposed slavery, but the plea of this poem is more against doctrines of race and religious superiority.

### **Annotations**

L 1. My..... wild; My mother gave me birth in South Africa.

L. 2. And.....white: Thought my skin is black my soul is white.

L. 3. white..... child: The contrast between the black Negro boy who was born in the wild and the

angelic white English boy is striking.

Stanza 2. L. 5. My..... thee: This suggests the black boy's exposure to nature and light.

Stanza 4 L 15 Sunburn face

Stanza 5 L. 19. My love and care: Children are God's beloved subjects.

Stanza 7. L.25... I'll shade.....heat : the Negro boy can protect the English boy by standing between God's heat and the English boy. Since the Negro boy is accustomed to heat on earth he can easily shield the English boy whose lack of experience in defending him-self against heat may put him in trouble.

## **The Echoing Green**

The Sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies;  
The merry bells ring  
To welcome the Spring;  
The skylark and thrush  
The bird of the bush,  
Sing louder around  
The bells' cheerful sound,  
while our sport shall be seen  
On the Echoing Green.

Old John with white hair,  
Does laugh away care,  
Sitting under the oak,  
Among the old folk,  
They Laugh at our play,  
And soon they all say:  
"Such, such were the joys  
when we all, girls and boys,  
In our youth-time were seen  
On the Echoing Green".  
Till the little ones, worry,

No more can be merry;  
The sun does descend,  
And our sports have an end:  
Round the laps of their mothers  
Many sisters and brothers,  
Like birds in their nest,  
Are ready for rest;  
And sport no more seen  
On the darkening Green

### **Annotations**

Stanza 1. L. 1. The Sun does arise: The sun raises,

L. 2. And make happy the skies: The prose order is 'makes the skies happy'. the Figurative use of 'happy' means glittering and gay.

L. 3. merry bells: The sound of the bell is merry. L.

5. skylark and thrush: Both these bird are singing bird.

L. 6. birds of the bush: birds residing in shrubs.

L. 7. Sing louder around; i.e. sing louder than the echoing sound of merry bells to welcome the spring season.

L. 9. our sports: 'our' refers to children who speak to the reader, 'sports' simply means the play and games of children.

L. 10. the Echoing Green: 'Green' refers to the green meadow or valley where the children are playing. It is 'echoing' with the shout of children and merry sounds of vernal birds and bells. Hence 'the Echoing Green'.

Stanza 2. L. 11. Ole John: 'John' is the name of an old man. white hair; grey hair.

L. 12. laugh away care: Old Johan watches the children playing on the meadow and forgets his worries and anxieties.

L. 13. Sitting: Old John is sitting under the oak with other old men. 'Oak' is a tree, naturally growing large in size with numerous branches.

L. 14. old folk: group of old men.

L. 18. we all, girls and boys: When we were young girls and boys.

L. 19. youth-time: younger days.

Stanza 3 L. 21. little ones: children. weary; tired (because of their prolonged play).

L. 23. descend: Sets,

- L. 24. And our sports have and end; here ends the words of the children and from the next line onward it is the poet who speaks to the reader. LI. 26.27. Many sisters....nest: Notice the aptness of the simile. L. 30. darkening Green: the twilight of evening is slowly spreading over the meadow. Unlike 'Echoing' in 'Echoing Green', 'darkening' does not begin with a capital letter because the poet finds out that the 'Green' is almost dead and devastated.

### **The Main Idea of the Poem**

The Echoing Green - The poem celebrates the carefree and happy childhood. The title of the poem 'Echoing Green' is very significant as it provides the pastoral setting to the poem which resounds with the cheerful sound of children. The old people are reminiscent of their past when they see children playing in the lush green garden. The poet makes use of transferred epithet where green stands for garden. The words like echoing and darkening intensifies the whole effect of the poem. The poem begins at dawn and ends at dusk thus a journey of life from childhood to old age is covered. It is a symbolic representation of the 'Day of innocences' from sunrise to sunset.

#### The Chimney Sweeper

Text

When my mother died I was very young,  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
could scarcely cry "weep ! 'weep ! 'Weep !"  
So you chimney I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,  
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said  
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare  
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, and that very night,  
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight !-  
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack,  
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel, who had a bright key,  
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;  
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they run,  
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left being,  
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.  
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work,  
Though' the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;  
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

### **Annotations**

Stanza 1. L. 2. And my father sold me : The speaker is a young boy, a chimney sweeper. He says his father sold him to a master-sweep.

L. 3. could..... seep ! 'Sweep' is the traditional cry of a chimney sweeper. the elimination of 's' from 'sweep' shows that the boys was too young to utter 'sweep' clearly.

L. 4. sweep : clean. soot: covered with the soot of chimneys that he cleans.

Stanza 2. L. 5. Tom dacre : It is the name of a fellow chimney sweeper.

L. 6. That.....back: The boy's hair curled on his head like the wool on the lamb's back.

L 7-8. Hush.....hair : The speaker consoles his fellow sweeper who was sorry for having his hair cut. The speaker says that the soot will not now stick on his head as it is hairless.

Stanza 3. L. 10. he had such a sight : such a wonderful sight.

L. 11. Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack : All imaginary young boys belonging to the group of chimney sweeps. L. 12. Coffin : The box in which corpses are buried. locked up in coffins of black : Rather than a dream this has a realistic sense in tube life of the sweepers. After sweeping the chimney they come out wrapped in a chick coat of sood which will appear like a black coffin.

Stanza 5. L. 17. bags : bags in which the chimney sweep stores the soot rubbed out from the chimney walls.

L.18. They rise upon cloud : The reader may be remembering the "child on a cloud" in 'Introduction'. Here it implies divine benediction upon the chimney sweeps.

L. 23. want joy : lack happiness, Their fathers have sold the chimney sweeps to the master sweeps. But the angel says that if they behave properly they can have God as their father and hence no lack of paternal love.

Stanza 6 L. 23 Tho' the.....warm : The dream Tom had seen was so consoling that he felt warm even in the cold morning.

L. 245. So.....harm : The didactic conclusion of the poem asserts that to do one's duty is

the way to God 's blessing.

### **Main Idea of the Poem**

The Chimney Sweeper - The poem is a story of small boys, chimney sweepers. The ray of hope runs undercurrent the sorrow of the chimney sweepers. The poem refers to the act when small boys were engaged in the work of sweeping chimney. The boys head used to be shaved so that their hair do not entangle while they move through chimney. The small boys used to enter the chimney and wipe it clean with cloth while inside and come out smeared with soot of chimney. The agony and grief of chimney sweeper runs through the poem but the dream gives solace and comfort to the boy as an angel in his dream had promised him to give a place in God's abode and give him all happiness that he wants. This dream fills him with a ray of hope and with a feeling of dutifulness he sets out for his work early in the morning with his bag and brush.. This chimney sweeper represents the whole class of them. He is the mouth piece of their sorrow and pain. Chimney Sweep's life was one of destitution and exploitation.

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### **15.5 Self Assessment Questions**

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1 Who is the child referred to by the poet in the first stanza?

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2. Why does the child urge the poet to write songs?

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3. List the words which give the poem a pastoral touch.

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4. What are the questions posed by the child?

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5. What is the similarity between the child, the lamb and God?

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6. Who are the speaker and the listener in the poem?

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7. There is a change from present tense to future tense in third line what does that indicate?

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8. What does the last line of the poem indicate 'for they know when their shepherd is nigh' The Little Black Boy

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9. What kind of feeling is expressed in the very opening line of the poem?

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10. What kind of role is played by the mother?

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11. Does the teaching of the mother help the black boy recover from his sadness?

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12. Explain the last line 'And be like him and he will then love me'

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13. List metaphors and similes used in the poem?

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14. Symbolic meaning of the poem?

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15. What kind of atmosphere pervades throughout the poem?

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16. Are the Old people sad when they are reminded of their past?

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17. Why has the poet used the word 'Old John'? Does it refer to any specific person or to common folk?

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18. How does the chimney sweeper soothe him self ?

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19. Is the poet sympathetic towards the chimney sweeper.

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20. Discuss the moral of the poem.

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21. Write a note on Blake's use of pastroliasm in the poems.

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## 15.6 Answers to SAQs

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1. The child referred is a mysterious child, perhaps a spiritual infant who disappears mysteriously. The child symbolizes poetic inspiration and Biblically it refers to Jesus Christ.
2. The child urges the poet to write songs for future generation. He wants to immortalize the songs of the poet so he bids him to write them down.
3. The poem has a pastoral setting words like 'reed', 'shepherd', 'lamb', 'valley', 'rural pen' etc. render the poem pastoral touch. The clear water again reminds one of purity and innocence of country life. The poem is set in the rural landscape. This is one of the main traits of the romantic poetry.
4. The child asks many questions to the lamb. He asks the lamb about its creator, its feeder or the giver of his cozy clothing of fleece. He also asks him whether he knows the person who gave him such a sweet and tender voice that fills the valleys with pleasant joy and music.
5. At the end of the poem the child, the lamb and the God are united to form a single divine entity. All the three are innocent. The innocuousness of the lamb, the innocence and purity of the heart of the child are nothing but divinely qualities.
6. The speaker in the poem is a child and listener is a lamb. Both of them symbolizes innocence and merge with God.
7. The change from present tense to future tense to indicate that God takes human beings for all time. God loves every one His love is not time bound. He will care not only in present time but also in future God plays the role guardian angel.
8. The last line of the poem indicates God as a protector. Under God's protection there is no fear but His presence provides feeling of safety & security. As the sheep feels secured when shepherd is near them. Sheep here refer to human beings shepherd refers to God. God's presence is not to guide, not to put a curb on his flock, instead it is meant only for their safety & security.
9. The very opening line of the poem expresses the agony and pain of the little black boy. The little black boy laments the dark color of his skin. His consciousness and guilt about his dark complexions speaks of inhuman practice of apartheid.
10. The mother plays a role of teacher, guide, consoler, she consoles him saying that skin is only outer covering. When God's light falls upon a man, this ephemeral body no longer matters. It is divinely qualities like love, humanity and kindness and benevolence which are important. This advice of mother relieves the black boy and he feels happy.
11. Yes, the teaching and advice of the mother help the black boy recover from his sadness.
12. The last line 'And be like him and his will then love me ' is black boys expresses ion of the

happiness over white boy's love towards him. He feels satisfied that white boy will no longer hate him but the irony is that to gain this love black boy has to sacrifice his life. Thus there is hidden pathos in this line.

13. These are many metaphors and similes used in the poem The body is compared with a cloud, with shady grove. The golden tant refers to Paradise or heaven; lamb are human beings.
14. The poem is about the goodness of heart. In God's abode all are equal. the color of the skin is of no significance but it is the goodness of heart that wins over and gets love of God. Blake attacks the very concept of racial and religious superiority through this poem.
15. The poem resounds with happy cheerful sounds of sport and merry making children.
16. The Old people are not sad when they are reminded of their part. They recall their past memories of childhood and relive their carefree and happy days.
17. The word 'Old John' does not refer to any specific person. But it is used for common folk.
18. The chimney sweeper soothes him by the dream in which an angel assures him of joy and happiness if he continues to do his duty faithfully. The promise of the angel fills the mind of chimney sweeper with a ray of hope and he feels consoled and relaxed.
19. The poet is sympathetic towards the chimney sweeper. The life of chimney sweeper was very miserable and pitiable. They were subject to inhuman treatment in the industrialized English society. The poet portrays greedy fathers who sell their children for a few pounds and abandon them to the eternal hell of suffering.
20. The moral of the poem is to do one "duty is the way to God's blessing". If one is faithful to one duty, God is bound to be happy and he will certainly bless that man.
21. Blake accepted pastoralist to embroider the background of his poems can be partly due to the influence of Romantic tradition which asserted the significance of nature in poetry. The spiritual visions and elements of innocence could be painted more coherently, eloquently and expediently. In "Introduction" to the "Songs of Innocence" in the other poems such as "The Lamb," Laughing Song and "Spring" has sought the help of pastrolism. But the remarkable singularity of Blake's pastrolasim is that is religious, textured in a Christen vein of divinity and heavenliness. There we see not merely sheep and Shepherd but also angels and young children shouting & sporting. In Blake's pastoral setting has an additional function it provides help in symbolism to propel the main theme of the poetry.

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## 15.7 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit we have thrown light upon

- pre-romantic poet William Blake,
- his selected poems from 'Songs of Innocence and Experience',
- the word pictures created by the writers,
- the different meanings words have in different contexts and
- different poetic devices such as symbols etc.

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## 15.8 Review Question

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1. What are the typical characteristics embodied in Blake's Song's of Innocence and of Experience?
2. Write a note on Blake's use of symbolism.
3. Write critical appreciations of the poem "*The Little Blacke Boy*".

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## 15.9 Bibliography

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## UNIT-16

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### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

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#### Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 General characteristics of the age
- 16.3 Literary characteristics of the Age
- 16.4 Difference between Puritan & Elizabethan Lit.
- 16.5 Literature of the Puritan Period
- 16.6 Metaphysical poets
- 16.7 John Milton
- 16.8 Prose writers of Puritan Age
- 16.9 The Restoration
- 16.10 Literary characteristics of Restoration period
- 16.11 Prose writers of Restoration age
- 16.12 Restoration Drama
- 16.13 Restoration Drama: Heroic tragedy
- 16.14 Restoration Comedy
- 16.15 Self Assessment Questions
- 16.16 Answers to SAQs
- 16.17 Let Us Sum up
- 16.18 Review Questions
- 16.19 Bibliography

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#### 16.0 Objectives

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In this unit you are going to know

- about the social and cultural history of Puritan period,
- about restoration period,
- about the important movements and events and
- about the important literary writings of both the period

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## 16.1 Introduction

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In this unit you are going to study literary, social and cultural history of the puritan age and Restoration age. These two periods mark an important place in the history of England.

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## 16.2 General Characteristics Of The Age

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- 1. Civil War:** The entire period was dominated by the civil war, which divided the people into two fractions, one loyal to the King and the others opposed him. English people had remained one and united and loyal to sovereign. The crisis began when James I, who had received the right of royalty from an Act of Parliament, gave too much premium to the Divine Right and began to ignore Parliament which had created him. The Puritans, who had become a potent force in the social life of the age, heralded the movement for constitutional reforms. The hostilities which began in 1642 lasted till the execution of Charles I in 1649. There was a little political stability during the interregnum of eleven years which followed. These turbulent years saw the establishment of Commonwealth, the rise of Oliver Cromwell, the confusion which followed upon his death, and finally, the restoration of monarchy in 1660.
- 2. The Puritan movement:** The Renaissance, which exercised immense influence on Elizabethan literature, was essentially pagan and sensuous. It did not concern the moral nature of man; it brought little from the despotism of rulers. The Puritans were the members of that party of English Protestants who regarded the reformation of the church under Elizabeth as incomplete, and called for further purification. Puritanism had two main aims: the first was individual and civil liberty and the second was personal righteousness. "The Puritan Movement", says W.J. Long, "may be regarded a second and greater Renaissance, a rebirth of the moral nature of man following the intellectual awakening of Europe in the 15th and the sixteenth centuries." Though the spirit of the movement was profoundly religious, the Puritan were not a religious, sect ; neither was the Puritan a narrow-minded and gloomy dogmatist, as he is still pictured even in the histories. From a religious point of view Puritan movement included all shades of belief. The name was first given to those who advocated certain changes in the form of worship of the reformed English church under Elizabeth; but as the ideal of liberty rose in men's minds, and opposed to it were the king and his evil counselor and the band of intolerant churchmen whom Laud is the great example, then Puritanism became a great national movement. It included English churchmen as well as extreme Separatists, Calvinists, Conveners, Catholic nobleman, - all bound together in resistance to despotism in Church and State, and with a passion for liberty and righteousness such as the world has never seen since. Naturally such a movement had its extremes and excesses, and it is from a few zealots and fanatics that most of our misconceptions about the Puritans arise. Life was stern in those days, too stern perhaps, and the intensity of the struggle against despotism made men narrow and hard. In the triumph of Puritanism under Cromwell severe laws were passed, many simple pleasures were forbidden, and an austere standard of living was forced upon an unwilling people. So the criticism is made that the wild outbreak of immorality which followed the restoration of Charles was partly due to the unnatural restrictions of the Puritan era.
- 3. Changing Ideals:** The political upheaval of the period is summed up in the terrible struggle between the king and parliament, which resulted in the death of Charles at the block and the

establishment of the common wealth under Cromwell. For centuries the English people had been wonderfully loyal to their sovereigns but deeper than their loyalty to kings was the Old Saxon love for personal liberty. At times, as in the day of Alfred and Elizabeth, the two ideals went hand in hand but more often they were in open strife, and a final struggle for supremacy was inevitable. The crisis came when James I, who had received the right of royalty from an act of Parliament, began, by the assumption of “divine right”, to ignore the Parliament which had created him. The blasphemy of a man’s divine right to rule his fellow men was ended.

4. **Religious Ideal: Religiously** the age was one of even greater ferment than that which marked the beginning of the Reformation. A great ideal, the ideal of a national church, was pounding to pieces, like a ship in the breakers, and in the confusion of such an hour action of the various sects was like that of frantic passengers, each striving to save his possessions from the wreck. It is intensely interesting to note that Charles called Irish rebels and Scotch Highlanders to his aid by promising to restore their national religions and that the English Puritans, turning to Scotland for help, entered into the solemn Covenant of 1643, establishing a national Presbyterianism.

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### 16.3 Literary Characteristics Of The Age

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In the literature also the Puritan age was one of confusion, due to breaking up of old ideals. Medieval standards of chivalry, the impossible loves and romances of which Spencer furnished the types, perished no less surely than the ideal of a national church; and in the absence of any fixed standard of literary criticism there was nothing to prevent the exaggeration of the “metaphysical” poets, who are the literary parallels to religious sects like the Anabaptists. Poetry took a new and startling forms in Donne and Herbert, and prose became as somber as Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The spiritual gloom which sooner or later fastens upon all the writers of this age, and which is unjustly attributed to Puritan influence, is due to the breaking up of all standards in government and religion. This so called gloomy age produced some minor poems of exquisite workmanship, and one great master of verse whose work would glorify any age or people, -John Milton, in whom the in dominate Puritan spirit finds its noblest expression.

- i. **The influence of Puritanism;** The influence of the Puritanism upon English life and literature was profound. The spirit which it introduced was fine and noble but it was hard and stern. The Puritan’s integrity and uprightness is unquestionable but his fanaticism, his moroseness and the narrowness of his outlook and sympathies were deplorable. In his over-enthusiasm to react against prevailing abuses, he denounced the good things of life, condemned science and art, ignored the appreciation of beauty, which invigorates secular life. Puritanism destroyed human culture and sought to confine human culture with in the circumscribed field of its own particular interests. It was fatal to both art and literature.
- ii. **Want of Vitality and Concreteness:** The literature of this period lacks in concreteness and vitality. Milton is concerned rather with theorizing about life, his lines roll over the mind with sonorous majesty, now and again thrilling us as Shakespeare did with the fine excess of creative genius, but more often impressing us with their Stateline and power, than moving us by their tenderness and passion.
- iii. **Want of the Spirit of Unity:** During this period James I and Charles II were hostile to the

interests of the people. The country was divided by the struggle for political and religious liberty; and the literature was as divided in spirit as were the struggling parties.

- iv. **Dominance of Critical and Intellectual Spirit:** In the literature of the Puritan period one looks in vain for romantic ardor. Even in the lyrics and love poems a critical, intellectual spirit takes its place, and whatever romance asserts itself is in form rather than in feeling, a fantastic and artificial adornment of speech rather than the natural utterance of a heart in which sentiment is so strong and true that poetry is its only expression.
- v. **Decay of Drama:** This period is remarkable for the decay of drama. The civil disturbances and the strong opposition of the Puritans was the main cause of the collapse of drama. The actual dramatic work of the period was small and unimportant. The closing of the theatres in 1642 gave a final jolt to the development of drama.

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## 16.4 Puritan And Elizabethan Literature: Differences

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There are three main characteristics in which Puritan literature differs from that of the preceding age: (1) Elizabethan literature, with all its diversity, had a marked unity in spirit, resulting from the patriotism of all classes and their devotion to a queen who, with all her faults, sought first the nation's welfare. Under the Stuarts all this was changed. The kings were the open enemies of all the people; the country was divided by the struggle for political and religious liberty; and the literature was as divided in spirit as were the struggling parties. (2) Elizabethan literature is generally inspiring; it throbs with youth and hope and vitality. That which follows speaks of age and sadness; even its brightest hours are followed by gloom and by the pessimism inseparable from the passing of old standards. (3) Elizabethan literature is intensely romantic the romance springs from the heart of youth, and believes all things even impossible. The great schoolman's *credo*, "I believe because it is impossible", is a better expression of Elizabethan literature than of mediaeval theology. In the literature of the Puritan period one looks in vain for romantic ardor.

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## 16.5 Literature Of The Puritan Period

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**The Transitional Poets:** When one attempts to classify the literature of the first half of the seventeenth century, from the death of Elizabeth (1603) to the Restoration (1660), he realizes the impossibility of grouping poets by any accurate standard. The classifications attempted here have small dependence upon dates or sovereigns, and are suggestive rather than accurate. Thus Shakespeare and Bacon wrote largely in the reign of James I, but their work is Elizabethan in spirit; and Bunyan is no less a Puritan because he happened to write after the Restoration. The name Metaphysical poets, given by Dr. Johnson, is somewhat suggestive but not descriptive of the followers of Donne; the name Caroline or Cavalier poets brings to mind the careless temper of the Royalists who followed King Charles with a devotion of which he was unworthy; and the name Spenserian poets recalls the little band of dreamers who clung to Spenser's ideal, even while his romantic medieval castle was battered down by Science at one gate and Puritanism at the other. At beginning of this bewildering confusion of ideals expressed in literature, we note a few writers who are generally known as Jacobean poets, but whom we have called the Transition poets because, with the later dramatists, they show clearly the changing standards of the age.

**Samuel Daniel (1562-1619) :-** Daniel, who is often classed with the first Metaphysical poets,

is interesting to us for two reasons - for his use of the artificial sonnet, and for his literary description of Spenser as a model for poets. His *Delia*, a cycle of sonnets modeled, perhaps, after Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, helped to fix the custom of celebrating love or friendship by a series of sonnets, to which some pastoral pseudonym was affixed. In his sonnets, many of which rank with Shakespeare's and in his later poetry, especially the beautiful *Complaint of Rosamond* and his *Civil Wars* he aimed solely at grace of expression and became influential in giving to English poetry a greater individuality and independence that it had been ever known.

**The Song Writers:** — In strong contrast with the above are two distinct groups, the Song writers and the Spenserian poets. The close of the reign of Elizabeth was marked by an outburst of English Songs, as remarkable in its sudden development as the rise of the drama. Two causes contributed to this result - the increasing influence of French instead of Italian verse, and the rapid development of music as an art at the close of the sixteenth century. The two song writers best worth studying are Thomas Campion (1567-1619) and Nicholas Breton (1545-1626).

**The Spenserian Poets:** - Of the Spenserian poets Giles Fletcher and Wither are best worth studying. Giles Fletcher (1588-1623) has at times a strong suggestion of Milton (who was also a follower of Spenser in his early years) in the noble simplicity and majesty of his lines. His best-known work, *Christ's victory and Triumph* (1610) were the greatest religious poem that had appeared in England since *Piers Plowman* and is not an unworthy predecessor of *Paradise Lost*.

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## 16.6 Metaphysical Poets

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**The Metaphysical Poets:** - This name - which was given by Dr. Johnson in derision because of the fantastic form of Donne's poetry - is often applied to all minor poets of the Puritan Age.

Donne and Herbert, who in different ways are the types of revolt against earlier forms and standards of poetry, in feeling and imagery both are poets of a high order, but in style and expression they are the leaders of the fantastic school whose influence largely dominated poetry during the half century of the Puritan period. Dr. Johnson borrowed this term from the phrase of Dryden 'He affects the metaphysics'. Two things were common among all the Metaphysical poets, learning with a kind of misplaced wit and the desire to say something which had never been said before and in their poetry we find a very fine blend of intellect and emotion but artificiality and hyperbolic expression could not keep itself away from this Metaphysical poetry.

1. **John Donne (1537-1631)** : John Donne was the founder of the metaphysical school of poetry, and he is the greatest of the poets of this school. His works include Satires, Songs and Sonnets, Elegies, which were published posthumously about 1633. His poetry falls naturally into three divisions:

i. **Love poetry:** Donne's love poetry was written in his brilliant and turbulent youth. His love poems, the *Songs and Sonnets*, are intense and subtle analyses of all the moods of a lover, expressed in vivid and startling language which is colloquial rather than conventional. A vein of satire runs even in his love poetry. His best known love poems are *Aire and Angels*, *A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day*, *A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning* and *Extasie*.

ii. **Religious Poems:** Donne's religious poetry was written after 1610. *Holy Sonnets* and lyrics such as a *hymn to God the Father* are his memorable religious poems. His religious or

devotional poems, though they probe and question, are nonetheless never sermons, but rather confessions or prayers. His love poems are noticeable for intellectual subtlety, the scholastic learning, and the “wit” and “conceits” of the love poems.

**iii. Satirical Poems:** Donne wrote satires, such as *Of the Progress of the Soul* (1600), which reveal his cynical nature and keenly critical mind. They show his dissatisfaction with the world around him. They were written in the couplet form, which was later adopted by Dryden and Pope.

**iv. Philosophical Poems:** These reveal a depth of philosophy, a subtlety of reasoning, a blend of thought and devotion, a mingling of the homely and the sublime, the light and the serious, which make them full of variety and surprise. Donne’s poetry bears the stamp of his scholarship. His images are far-fetched, obscure, unusual and striking.

2. **George Herbert (1593-1633) :** Herbert’s Chief work, *The Temple*, consists of over one hundred and fifty short poems suggested by the Church, her holidays and ceremonials and the experiences of the Christian life. The first poem, *The Church Porch*, is the longest and though polished with a care that foreshadows the classic school, the least poetical. It is a wonderful collection of condensed sermons wise precepts and moral lessons suggesting Chaucer’s *Good Counsel* Pope’s *Essay on Man*, and Polonius ‘s advice to Laerters, in Hamlet; only it is more packed with thought than any of these. Along with the delicate didactic vein, he shows a quaintness and daintiness characteristic of the time. He preferred simple, homely, racy language and naturalness of expression.
3. **Richard Crashaw (1613-49) :** Richard Crashaw’s best work is in *Steps to the Temple* (1646). Some of his poems are secular but he is at his best in his religious poems. To him religion meant everything. Crashaw’s poetry is noticeable for striking but fantastic conceits, for its religious fire and fervor.
4. **Henry Vaughan (1622-95) :** His books include *Poems* (1646), *Olor Iscanus* (1651), *Silex Scintillans* (1650) and *Thalia Rediviva* (1678). In the beginning Vaughan composed secular poems under the influence of Ben Jonson. They are *Poems* and *Silex Scintillans*. Vaughan like Crashaw was at heart a mystic. He was more at home in sacred than in secular verse. His work never rises to the heights attained by Crashaw, but he had a considerable gift for fantasy and used it to decorate his serious poetry. His poems reveal his good intellectual power and originality. Edward Albert writes: “His regard for nature, moreover, has a closeness and penetration that sometimes suggest Wordsworth.”
5. **Abraham Cowley (1618-67) :** Cowley distinguished himself as a classical scholar. He was a man of versatile literary interests, who wrote poems, plays, essays and histories. He wrote an epical romance *Pyramus and Thisbe* (1628) at the age of ten, and two years later he wrote *Constantia and Philatus*. His well known poems are *The Mistress* (1647), a collection of love poems, *The Davidic* (1656) and the *Pindaric Odes*. Cowley is important as a transitional poet of this period. He was the last of the metaphysical poets and in many respects he foreshadows the English classicists. He deserved to be numbered among the disciples of Donne. His knowledge of the ancients whom he imitated, entitles him to be considered a humanist. With all his piety, his fantasy, his conceits and his Pindaric, Cowley is, first of all, an intellectual.

6. **Andrew Marvell (1621-78)** : Marvell's poems, which were circulated in manuscript during his life, have been described, says Edward Albert, "as the finest flower of serious and secular verse. Marvell's work has the subtlety of wit, the passionate argument and learned imagery of the metaphysical, combined with the clarity and control of the classical followers of Jonson and the gracefulness of Cavaliers. His rhythms are flexible, his melody delicate. He loved nature and the freshness of gardens and in all his work there is a high seriousness and absolute sincerity.

**The Cavalier Poets:** - In the literature of any age there are generally found two distinct tendencies. The first expresses the dominant spirit of the times; the second, a secret or an open rebellion. So in this age, side by side with the serious and rational Puritan lives the gallant and trivial Cavalier. The Puritan finds expression in the best poetry of the period, from Donne to Milton and in prose of Baxter and Bunyan, the Cavalier in a small group of poets - Herrick, Lovelace, Suckling, and Care, who write songs generally in lighter vein, gay, trivial, often licentious, but who cannot altogether escape the tremendous seriousness of Puritanism. Cavalier lyrics were notable for sweetness and charm and the cavalier poets most dealt with the themes of love and war and like Ben Jonson were always concise lucid and polished.

**Thomas Carew (1598 - 1639)** : -Carew may be called the inventor of Cavalier love poetry and to him, more than to any other, is due to peculiar combination of the sensual and the religious which marked most of the minor poets of the seventeenth century. His poetry is the Spenserian pastoral stripped of its refinement of feeling and made direct, coarse, and vigorous. His poems, published in 1640, are generally, like his life, trivial or sensual, but here and there is found one, like the following, which indicates that with the Metaphysical and Cavalier poets a new and stimulating force had entered English Literature. As a lyric poet he is the first of his age.

**Robert Herrick (1591-1674):**- Herrick is the true Cavalier, gay, devil may care in disposition but by some freak of fate a clergyman of Dean Prior in South Devon, a country made famous by him and Blackmore. He watched with sympathy the country life about him and caught its spirit in many lyrics, a few of which, like, *Corinna Maying* "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," and *To Daffodils*, are among the best known in our language. His poems cover a wide range, from trivial love songs, pagan in spirit, to hymns of deep religious feeling.

**Suckling and Lovelace:** Sir John Suckling (1609-1642) was one of the most brilliant wits of the court of Charles I, who wrote poetry as he exercised a horse or fought a duel, because it was considered a gentleman's accomplishment in those days. His poems, struck from his wild life like sparks from his rapier are utterly trivial and even in his best known Ballad upon a Wedding rarely rise above mere doggerel. It is only the romance of his life his rich, brilliant careless youth and his poverty and suicide in Paris, whither he fled because of his devotion to the Stuarts - that keeps his name alive in our literature. In his life and poetry Sir Richard Lovelace (1618-1658) offers a remarkable parallel to Suckling, and the two are often classed together as perfect representatives of the followers of King Charles. Lovelace's *Lucasta*, a volume of love lyrics is generally on a higher plan than Suckling's work and a few of the poems like *To Lucasta* and *To Althea from Prison* deserve the secure place they have won.

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## 16.7 John Milton

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Shakespeare and Milton are the two figures that tower conspicuously above the goodly fellowship

of men who have made our literature famous. Each is representative of the age that produced him, and together they form a suggestive commentary upon the two forces that rule our humanity, the force of impulse and the force of a fixed purpose. Shakespeare is the poet of impulse of the loves, hates, fears, jealousies, and ambitious that swayed the men of his age. Milton is the poet of steadfast will and purpose who moves like a god amid the fears and hopes and changing impulses of the world, regarding them as trivial and momentary things that can never swerve a great soul from its course. John Milton was the first English poet who gave a new conception of poetic art - sublimity and purity. For him poetry was a high and grave thing. Byron said that Miltonic meant sublime. He chose grand themes for his poetry.

**Life and works of John Milton:** Born on December 9, 1608 in London, Milton spent most of his boyhood in this city. His father was a remarkable man and had considerable musical talents. It was from his father that John Milton inherited love for music. In the spring of 1625 Milton went to Cambridge for study and spent there seven years. He was educated in Christ's college and had a successful academic career. From the very beginning he had the passion of the student. The young Milton showed signs of remarkable literary promise. Proud and austere even at college, he conceived as lofty a view of the poet's calling as said Wordsworth two centuries later, and like Wordsworth, felt himself to be a consecrated spirit. Milton's foreign tour and his stay in Italy proved of very great significance in his life and in his poetic career. Milton's desire to write something that "the world would not let willingly die", was prevented from being fulfilled for twenty years owing to his absorption in his political affairs and in the religious controversies of the day. During the twenty year of civil commotion, he wrote, except a few sonnets, no poetry, but was fertile in controversial prose. These twenty years (1640-1660) constitute a significant phase of his personal life in as much as his attitude towards the question of divorce and marriage was formed during this period. During the whole of the period from 1639 to 1649 Milton devoted himself entirely to politics and what he believed to be the call of duty to his country. In 1658 he began work on *Paradise Lost* and thus abandoning politics he returned finally to poetry. At the Restoration in 1660, Milton was arrested but was subsequently released after which he lived a quiet life at Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields. He finished the published the composition of *Paradise Lost* in 1664 which was published three years later. In 1671, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were published. Milton got sufficient recognition of and renown for his poetical achievements.

*L Allegro and II Penseroso* are twin poems, containing many lines and short descriptive passages which linger in the mind like strains of music and which are known and loved wherever English is spoken. *L Allegro* (the joyous or happy man) is like an excursion into the English fields at sunrise. The air is sweet birds are singing a multitude of sights, sounds, fragrances, fill all the senses and to this appeal of nature the soul of man responds by being happy seeing in every flower and hearing in every harmony some exquisite symbol of human life. *II Penseroso* takes us over the same ground at twilight and at moonrise. The air is still fresh and fragrant the symbolism is, if possible more tenderly beautiful than before but the gay mood is gone, though its memory lingers in the afterglow of the sunset.

*The Masque of Comus* is in many respects the most perfect of Milton's poems. It was written in 1634 to be performed at Ludlow Castle before the earl of Bridgewater and his friends. There is a tradition that the earl's three children had been lost in the woods and whether true or not Milton takes the simple theme of a person lost calls in an Attendant Spirit to protect the wanderer and out of this, with its natural action and melodious songs makes the most exquisite pastoral drama that we possess.

In the next poem *Lycidas* a pastoral elegy written in 1637, and the last of his Horton Poems, Milton is no longer the inheritor of the old age, but the prophet of a new. A college friend, Edward King had been drowned in the Irish Sea and Milton follows the poetic custom of his age by representing both his friend and himself in the guise of shepherds leading the pastoral life. Milton also uses all the symbolism of his predecessors, introducing fauns, satyrs, and sea nymphs but again the puritan is not content with heathen symbolism and so introduces a new symbol of the Christian shepherd responsible for the souls of men, whom he likens to hungry sheep that look up and are not fed. The Puritans and Royalists at this time were drifting rapidly apart, and Milton uses his new symbolism to denounce the abuses that had crept into the Church. In any other poet this moral teaching would hinder the free use of the imagination but Milton seems equal to the task of combining high moral purpose with the noblest poetry. In its exquisite finish and exhaustless imagery *Lycidas* surpasses most of the poetry of what is often called the pagan Renaissance.

Those best known and most frequently quoted are *On His Deceased Wife, To the Nightingale*, *On Reaching the Age of Twenty Three*, *The Massacre in Piedmont* and the *On His Blindness*.

**Milton Prose:** Of Milton's prose works there are many divergent opinions ranging from Macaulay's unbounded praise to the condemnation of some of our modern critics. From a literary view point Milton's prose would be stronger if less violent and a modern writer would hardly be excused for using his language or his methods but we must remember the times and the methods of his opponents.

Of them all *Areopagitica* has perhaps the most permanent interest and is best worth reading. In Milton's time there was a law forbidding the publication of books until they were indorsed by the official censor. Needless to say, the censor, holding his office and salary by favor, was naturally more concerned with the divine right of kings and bishops than with the delights of literature, and many books were suppressed for no better reason than that they were displeasing to the authorities. Milton protested against this as against every other form of tyranny and his *Areopagitica*- so called from the *Areopagus* or *Forum of Athens*, the place of public appeal, and the Mars Hill of St. Paul's address-is the most famous plea in English for the freedom of the press.

**Milton's Later Poetry:**— Undoubtedly the noblest of Milton's works, written when he was blind and suffering are *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

Adam the central character is something of a prig while Satan looms up a magnificent figure entirely different from the devil of the miracle plays and completely overshadowing the hero both in interest and in manliness. The other characters, the Almighty, the Son, Raphael, Michael, the angels and fallen spirits, are merely mouthpieces for Milton's declamations without any personal or human interest. Regarded as a drama therefore, *Paradise Lost* could never been a success but as poetry with its sublime imagery, its harmonious verse its titanic background of heaven hell and the illimitable void that lies between, it is unsurpassed in any literature.

“It will be seen that this is a colossal epic, not of a man or a hereto, but of the whole race of men and that Milton's characters are such as no human hand could adequately portray. But the scenes, the splendors of heaven, the horrors of hell, the serene beauty of Paradise, the sun and planets suspended between celestial light and gross darkness, are pictured with an imagination that is almost superhuman. The abiding interest of the poem is in these colossal pictures and in the lofty thought and the marvelous melody with which they are impressed on our minds. The poem is in blank verse and

not until Milton used it did we learn the infinite variety and harmony of which it is capable. He played with it, changing its melody and movement on every page, as an against out of a single theme develops an unending variety of harmony.”

In this magnificent heroism Milton has unconsciously immortalized the Puritan spirit, the same unconquerable spirit that set men to writing poems and allegories when in prison for the faith, and that sent them over the stormy sea in a cockle shell to found a free common wealth in the wilds of America.

Soon after the completion of *Paradise Lost*, Thomas Ellwood a friend of Milton, asked one day after reading the manuscript, “But what hast thou to say of Paradise Found ? It was in response to this suggestion that Milton wrote the second part of the great epic, known to us as *Paradise Regained*. The first tells how mankind in the person of Adam, fell at the first temptation by Satan and became an outcast from Paradise and from divine grace the second show how mankind in the person of Christ, with stands the temper and is established once more in the divine favor. Christ’s temptation in the wilderness is the theme and Milton follows the account in the fourth chapter of Matthew’s gospel. Though *Paradise Regained* was Milton’s favorite, and though it has many passages of noble thought and splendid imagery equal to the best of *Paradise Last* the poem as a whole falls below the level of the first, and is less interesting to read.

In *Samson Agonistes* Milton turns to a more vita and personal theme and his genius transfigures the story of Samson the mighty champion of Israel, now blind and scorned, working as a slave among the Philistines. The poet’s aim was to present in English a pure tragedy, with all the passion and restraint which marked the old Greek dramas. That the succeeded where others failed is due to two causes first Milton himself suggests the hero of one of the Greek tragedies- his sorrow and affliction give to his noble nature that touch of melancholy and clam dignity which is in perfect keeping with his subject. Second, Milton is telling his own story. Like Samson he had struggled mightily against the enemies of his race he had taken a wife from the Philistines and had paid the penalty he was blind, alone, scorned by his vain and thoughtless masters. To the essential action of the tragedy Milton could add, therefore that touch of intense yet restrained personal feeling which carries more conviction than any argument. Samson is in many respects the most convicting of his works.

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## 16.8 Prose Writers Of Puritan Age

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As there is but one poet great enough to express the Puritan spirit, so there is but one commanding prose writer:

**John Bunyan(1628-1688) :** Sir, John Bunyan was the greatest prose writer of the age of Milton. Bunyan was born in 1628 and died in 1688. Bunyan is remarkable for his simple and homely style, which can be at times, both forceful and eloquent, in English Literature. His name has been included among the greatest writers of English and his works are of a permanent humanity. Milton was the child of he Renaissance, inheritor of all its culture, and the most profoundly educated man of his age. Bunyan was a poor, uneducated thinker. From the Renaissance he inherited nothing but from the Reformation he received an excess of that spiritual independence which has caused the Puritan struggle for liberty. These two men, representing the extremes of English life in the seventeenth century, wrote the two works that stand to-day for the mighty Puritan spirit. One gave us the only epic since *Beowulf*: the other gave us our only great allegory, which has been read more than any other book in our language save the Bible.

**Robert Burton (1577-1640)** : Burton is famous chiefly as the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* one of the most astonishing books in all literature, which appeared in 1621. Burton was a clergyman of the Established Church, an incomprehensible genius, given to broodings and melancholy and to reading of every conceivable kind of literature.

Butron's *Anatomy* was begun as a medical treatise on morebidness, arranged and divided with all the exactness of the schoolmen's demonstration of doctrines but it turned out to be an enormous hodgepodge of quotations and references to authors, known and unknown, living and dead, which seemed to prove chiefly that much study is a weariness to the flesh."

**Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682)** : Browne was a physician who, after much study and travel, settled down to his profession in Norwich. He was known far and wide as a learned doctor and an honest man, whose scientific studies had placed him in advance of his age and whose religious views were liberal to the point of heresy.

Browne's great work is the *Religio Medici*, i.e. *The Religion of a Physician* (1642), which met with most unusual success. the couplet for he is the first poet to use it consistently in the bulk of his poetry.

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## 16.9 Restoration Period

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1. **The Restoration (1660)** : The Restoration of Charles II brought about a revolutionary change in life and literature. During this period gravity, spiritual zeal moral earnestness and decorum in all things, which distinguished the commonwealth period were thrown to winds. The natural instincts that were suppressed during the Puritan period came to violent excesses. The Restoration encouraged a levity that often became immoral and indecent. Along with much that is same and powerful this latter tendency is prominent in the writing of the time, especially in the comedies."

The king, a thorough debauch, had a number of mistresses and numerous children. Corrupt and degenerate courtiers surrounded him. Profligacy was glorified in the royal court. Corruption was rampant in all walks of life. The great Fire of 1665 and the Plague that followed were popularly regarded as suitable punishments for the sins of the profligate and Selfish king. While London was burning and the people were suffering the King and his nobles kept up their revels.

2. **Religious and Political Quarrels** : This era also witnessed the rise of two political parties—the Whigs and the Tories, which were to play a significant role in English politics. The Whigs sought to limit the royal power in the interests of the people and the Parliament. The Tories supported the "Divine Right" theory of the king, and strove to restrain the growing power of the people in the interest of the hereditary rulers. The rise of these political parties gave a fresh importance to men of literary ability, for both parties tried to enlist their support with bribes and pensions. Almost all the writers of this period had political affiliations. Dryden was a Tory The religious controversies were more bitter. The supporters of the Puritan regime were fanatically persecuted. The nation was predominantly Protestant, and the Catholics were put to harassment. The religion of the King himself was suspect. His brother James was a Papist. As Charles II had no legitimate child and heir, it was certain that his brother James, a Catholic, would succeed to the throne. Efforts were made to exclude him from the throne. This controversy led to the so-called Popish plot sworn to by Titus Oates. The King sided with his brother and he removed all obstacles for the accession of James. Dryden's famous poem *Absalom and Achitophel*

reflects these religious and political conflicts of the day.

3. **The Revolution (1688 )** : James II ascended the throne in 1685. He soon revealed his Roman Catholic prejudices and by underhand means he tried to establish Catholicism in the country. He became unpopular within three years and the nation as a whole rose against him. The bloodless revolution of 1688 called the Protestant William and Mary of Orange to the throne. The country was once again restored to health and sanity. The religious passions diminished in intensity. The literature of the succeeding years tended to emphasize the political rather than the religious side of public affairs.

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## 16.10 Literary Characteristics of The Age

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In the literature of the Restoration we note a sudden breaking away from old standards, just as society broke away from the restraints of Puritanism. Many of the literary men had been driven out of England with Charles and his court or else had followed their patrons into exile in the days of the commonwealth. On their return they renounced old ideals and demanded that English poetry and drama should follow the style to which they had become accustomed in the gaiety of Paris.

With the final rejection of the Restoration drama we reach a crisis in the history of our literature. The old Elizabethan spirit, with its patriotism its creative vigor its love of romance, and the Puritan spirit with its moral earnestness and individualism, were both things of the past and at first there was nothing to take their places. Dryden, the greatest writer of the age voiced a general complaint when he said that in his prose and poetry he was “drawing the outlines” of a new art, but had no teacher to instruct him. But literature is a progressive art and soon the writers of the age developed two marked tendencies of their own, - the tendency to realism, and the tendency to that preciseness and elegance of expression which marks our literature for the next hundred years.

In realism -that is, the representation of men exactly as they are the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth with out regard to ideals or romance-the tendency was at first thoroughly bad. The early Restoration writers sought to paint realistic pictures of a corrupt court and society.

The second tendency of the age was toward directness and simplicity of expression and to this excellent tendency our literature is greatly indebted. In both the Elizabethan and the Puritan ages the general tendency of writers was towards extravagance of thought and language. Sentences were often involved, and loaded with Latin quotations and classical allusions. The Restoration writers opposed this vigorously. From France they bought back the tendency to regard established rules for writing, to emphasize close reasoning rather than romantic fancy and to use short, clean cut sentences without an unnecessary word.

It is largely due to Dryden that writers developed that formalism of style, that precise, almost mathematical elegance, miscalled which ruled English Literature for the next century. Another thing about Restoration Literature is the adoption of the heroic couplet that is two iambic pentameter lines, which rime together as the most suitable form of poetry. Waller who began to use it in 1623 is generally regarded as the father of

- i. **Social and Literary Changes** : The Restoration says Matthew Arnold marks the real moment of birth of our modern English prose. It is by its organism-an organism opposed to length and involvement and enabling us to be clear plain and short - that English prose after the Restoration

breaks with the style of the times preceding it, finds the true law of prose and becomes modern, becomes, in spite of superficial differences the style of our own day. From the historical point of view the establishment of modern English prose is the greatest single fact in the literary annals of the Age of Dryden.

- ii. **The Growth of Science** : The growing interest in rationalism and the advancement of science greatly aided the general movement towards precision and the lucidity of expression which are the essential qualities of good prose style. The foundation of the Royal Society (1662), which was restricted in the beginning to physical, and natural sciences aimed at evolving clearness plainness conversational ease and directness of expression for their members as far as their writing is concerned.
- iii. **Rise of Journalism** : It was an age of unceasing political and religious excitement. Various groups and sects pioneered the development of that sort of evanescent literature, which we now class under the head of journalism, so air their opinions on various topics of current interest. Numerous pamphlets were written and many periodicals came into existence. For the first time the general reader and the ready writer appeared together, each reacting upon the other. This change of reading public means those things, which had formerly been treated in a dry, pedantic and difficult way, had to be made simple and pleasant.
- iv. **French Influence** : In advance of all other European countries, France had already evolved a kind of prose which in its clearness, flexibility, plainness and good taste was admirably adapted for all the purposes of ordinary exposition, discussion and social intercourse. This prose provided just the model that the English prose writers needed for their guidance.

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### 16.11 Prose Writers In Restoration Period

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1. **Dryden** :-John Dryden was born in 1631, at Aldwinkle, Northampton shire. He was the son of the Rev. Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering his wife both of whom belonged to old country families with strong Puritan tendencies. He has his early education at Westminster school where he made his first attempt at verse making in an elegy to the memory of a school fellow. In 1650 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge where he wrote some ordinary verse. Though of remarkable literary taste, he showed little evidence of literary ability up to the age of thirty. By his training and family connections, he was allied to the Puritan Party

*The Preface to Fables* is generally regarded as a splendid example of the new prose style developed by Dryden and his followers.

2. **Samuel Butler (1612-1680)** :— Butler's *Hudibras*, a pointed satire on Puritans, was published respectively in 1663, 1664 and 1668. It is an lineal descent from the comic doggerel of Skelton who indeed paved the way for Restoration Satirists. It is a long savage attack on the Parliamentary party and pleased the fancy of the time. The name "Hudibras" comes from the Faerie Queens."

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### 16.12 Restoration Drama

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The theatres which were closed in 1642 were opened during the Restoration. The theatre had degenerated completely in to a thing of the court. The middle classes for the most part kept away from the theatre. The playhouse had become the riotous haunt of the upper classes and as a sequence, the

plays written for the playhouse were distinctly calculated by the authors to appeal to a courtly and cavaliers audience. It is this that explains both the rise of the heroic tragedy and the development of the comedy of manners. They appealed to artificial aristocratic sentiments on the subject of honor ; the other reflected the morally vicious but intellectually brilliant atmosphere of the saloons and the chocolate houses. Restoration affected the revival of Drama especially the comedy ; in the sphere of Tragedy heroic plays were produced and the imitative works of the new school were of a rigid nature and they evolved a number of rules purporting to the avoidance of enthusiasm, strict care and accuracy in poetical technique and humble imitation of the style of the Latin classics.

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### 16.13 The Restoration Tragedy Or The Heroic Play

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The heroic tragedy, often but not always written in rhymed couplets and always dealing in a high rhetorical manner with the conflict between love and honor or love and duty, is a characteristic phenomenon of 1660s and 1670s. Both foreign and native influences contributed to the rise of the heroic tragedy.

1. **The Foreign Influences :** The plays of Corneille and Racine, the French dramatists, were translated into English and they exercised great influence on the dramatists of the Restoration England. The introduction of the new style by Roger Boyle, that is, the employment of rime in place of blank verse in these heroic plays was due to the influence of France.
2. **The Native Influences :** The influence of the Royal Court of Charles II was paramount on dramatists and actors alike. It reflects the changing mortal, spiritual and social conditions of the time.
3. **Superb Characters :** The stress on velour, beauty and love necessitated the introduction of the wonderfully brave hero and the virtuously fair heroine. Antony in Dryden's All For Love is a typical hero of the Restoration Tragedy.
4. **Treatment of Love :** Love is the central factor in the Restoration Tragedy. It was not a normal kind of love. It was a legacy perhaps from the platonic love. It was considered superior to all virtues. Antony in All For Love renounces all —family, friends, country and kingdom —for love's sake. Love is depicted as a perfect virtue.
5. **The Classical Form :** The classical form implied the style which was employed by Ben Jonson and Racine. The three classical unities were observed. There was no intermixture of the comic and the tragic elements. The Restoration writers regarded plot as the "soul of the tragedy". The object of the plot was to make the fable pleasing and to endow it with verisimilitude and decorum.
6. **Heroic Couplet and the Blank Verse :** Lee's The Tragedy of Nero and Dryden's Don Sebastian and Tyrannical Love, which are written in the heroic couplet, could not attain great dramatic height and excellence.
7. **Sensationalism, Violence and Bloodshed :** Sensation is an important feature of the heroic play. Themes are taken from the past, and the action is laid in some far-off place to provide the charm of novelty and to make the "great actions 'credible. This helped admiration and remoteness cause willing suspension of disbelief. The setting is always foreign and unfamiliar, and the time remote, and in this way the dramatist try to procure "willing suspension of disbelief

“for the incredible in their pl**Conclusion** : Heroic tragedy, though it kept free from the profligacy of comedy, was equally artificial. For a time its most popular form was that of the Heroic Drama, in which love, gallantry and courage were depicted on a gigantic scale with little reference to life, and the dialogue of which was filled with sonorous rant and bombastic extravagance.

### **Development Of Restoration Tragedy**

- 1 Dryden :-**John Dryden was born in 1631, at Aldwinkle, Northampton shire. He was the son of the Rev. Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering his wife both of whom belonged to old country families with strong Puritan tendencies. He has his early education at Westminster school where he made his first attempt at verse making in an elegy to the memory of a school fellow. In 1650 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge where he wrote some ordinary verse. Though of remarkable literary taste, he showed little evidence of literary ability up to the age of thirty. By his training and family connections, he was allied to the Puritan Party and his only well known work of this period the Heroic Stanzas was written on the death Cromwell.. This grandeur he derived from Heaven alone,

For he was great ere fortune made him so,  
And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,  
Made him but greater seem, not greater grow.

In these four lines, taken from the Heroic Stanzas, we have an epitome of the thought, the preciseness and the polish that mark all his literary work. In 1659 he wrote *Astraea* a poem of welcome to Charles II.

From 1663-1681 Dryden devoted his energies to the field of drama because it was the most lucrative branch of the literary profession at that time. His first effort, *The Wild Gallant* (1663) was an absolute failure. *The Rival Livlies* (1664) was well received but *The Indian Emperor* in 1667 established his reputation as a play Wright. In all, Dryden wrote twenty years, but nothing as well as *The Indian Emperor*.

In 1665 when London was in the grip of the Great Plague, Dryden left London for Charlton his father in law's house. Here he wrote his first poem *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) a narrative poem describing the terrors of the great fire in London and the war with Holland. In 1669 appeared the critical *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, a prose work written in the form of dialogue a work which attempts to lay a foundation for all literary criticism. In 1670 he was asked to accept the appointments of Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal in recognition of his valuable intellectual activity. These appointments gave him a pension of 6200 year placing the author in affluent circumstances.

A masterpiece of its kind, the poem is undoubtedly the most powerful satire in the English language. Actuated by Lord Shaftsbury's scheming to secure the succession of the Duke of Monmouth Dryden took advantage of the political struggle between Shaftsbury, and the Crown to write this brilliant satire in which the king, Shafsbury, Monmouth and Buckingham are all attacked. The poem had enormous political influence and raised Dryden in the opinion of his Contemporaries, to the front rank of English poets.

*The Medal*, which we have every reason to believe to have been written at the suggestion of Charles II appeared in 1682. It is a bitter invective against Shaftsbury, its theme the medal which his partisans had very naturally struck upon the occasion of his acquittal in the preceding autumn.

The second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared in November 1682. It was mainly the work of Nahum Tate, who imitated his master's versification with success, but has numerous touches from the pen of Dryden, who inserted a long passage of unparalleled satire against his adversaries, especially Settle and Shadwell.

Simultaneously with the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared *Religio Laici* an argument for the faith of the Church of England. In one respect this takes the highest place among the works of Dryden, for it is the most perfect example he has given of that reasoning in rhyme of which he was so great a master.

Only a month before the appearance of the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* Dryden had devoted an entire poem to Shadwell who had just provoked him by a scandalous libel. The poem was entitled *Mac Flecknoe*. It is a vigorous attack and chiefly memorable in as much as the machinery evidently suggested that of Pope's *Dunciad*. Dryden's next important poem *The Hind and the Panther* appeared in 1683. It is a clever and curious piece of work with a very allegorical framework-the Panther being the English Church and the Hind, the Church of Rome. Though the plan of the poem is perverse and fantastic, none of the works of Dryden is richer in beauties of detail.

Dryden was also a lyric poet of considerable merit. The Odes and lyrical poems of the last fifteen years (1685 to 1700) form a last outstanding group. *The Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* (1687) composed in all the heat of his recent conversion to Roman Catholicism is of remarkable musical beauty and sweetness. *The Ode to the Pious Memory of Mrs. Anne Kilhrew* is more dignified. In this poem Dryden, expresses loud repentance for his part in augmenting the fat pollutions of the state. Dryden's most enduring poem, the splendid Ode called *Alexander's Feast* was written in 1697. Three years later he published his last work, *Fables* containing poetical paraphrases of the tales of Boccaccio and Chaucer and the miscellaneous poems of his last years. Throughout the eighteenth century the *Fables* were apparently the most popular of Dryden's poems. *The Preface to Fables* is generally regarded as a splendid example of the new prose style developed by Dryden and his followers.

At the revolution of 1688, Dryden refused allegiance to William of Orange. He was deprived of all his offices and pensions and in his old age, he was thrown back on literature as his only means of livelihood. Defying the hard strokes of fate, he worked with redoubled energy, writing everything that men would pay for Dryden's translations, the most successful work at this time, would give him a conspicuous place in English Literature. Had he never translated Virgil, his renderings or imitations of Juvenal, Horace and others would suffice to entitle him to the greatest rank among those who have enriched the native literature from foreign sources. His principle of translation was correct and accords with that of the greatest of English critics.

From the literary point of view the last troubled years were the best of Dryden's life. He died in 1700 and was buried near Chaucer in Westminster Abbey.

2. **Thomas Otway (1651-85).** Otway wrote *Alcibiades* (1675), *Don Carlos* (1676), *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserv'd* (1682). The first two plays are written in rhymed couplets. His reputations rest, however, on two plays - *The Orphan* and *the Venice Preser'd*.
3. **Nathaniel Lee (1653-92) :** He wrote many tragedies, of which the prominent ones are *Nero* (1676), *The Rival Queens* (1677) and *Mithridates* (1678). In Lee's plays the construction is weak, and the style is full of bombast and conceit.
4. **Other Dramatists :** Elkanh Settle (1648-1724), John Crowne (1640-1703), Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718).

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## 16.14 Restoration Comedy

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“Restoration comedy”, according to Moody and Lovett, “is a genuine reflection of the temper, if not actual life, of the upper classes of the nation, and as such it has a sociological as well as literary interest.” Unlike the Shakespearean comedy, which is romantic in spirit, it is devoted specially to picturing the external details of life, the fashions of the time, its manners, its speech, and its interests. The dramatists confine their scenes to the familiar places, and not to remote and far-off places. They confine themselves to the drawing rooms, the coffee houses, the streets, and gardens of London. The characters, which are mainly types, represent chiefly people of fashion. The plots of restoration comedies are mainly love intrigues. They are remarkable for a neat, precise, witty, balanced and lucid prose style. Summing up the main characteristics of restoration comedy Bo Jeffares remarks:” The plays performed reflected the taste of an aristocratic audience: there were high-flown ‘heroic’ plays and tearful tragedies; and there were also comedies” dashing, witty, coarse, cynical, satiric, sardonic. “The comedies voiced a reaction against Puritanism and the sexual repression it had attempted to enforce. Fashionable intrigue, sex, marriage and adultery were treated with cynicism, with worldly wit and a sense of comedy of life. The characters in the play no doubt owed much to the courtiers, the wits, the men-about-town as well as to ladies of fashion, citizens, wives and country girls.”

**Influences on Restoration Comedy :** The restoration comedy of manners was shaped both by native and French influences. It drew its main inspiration from the native tradition which had flourished before the closing of the theatres in 1642. In particular it was indebted to Beaumont and Fletcher and to Ben Jonson.

### Eminent Writers Of The Restoration Comedy Of Manners

1. **Willam Congreve (1670-1729) :** Congreve is the best and finest writer of the comedy of manners. He wrote all his comedies before he was thirty. In London, Congreve preferred drama to law. He was a good classical scholar and interested in translation ; his poems and translation impressed the dramatists, poet and critic John Dryden, who included some of them in collection of miscellaneous poems called *Examen Poeticum* (1693). In 1692 Congreve's novel *Incognita* was published; its plot was worked out on the lines of dramatic models, and the following year he finished his first play, *The Old Bachelor*. His next play was *The Double Dealer* (1693). His next play, *Love For Love* (1695) is wholly comic from start to finish. It was much more successful when it was staged in 1695. His next play *The Mourning Bride* was tragedy which proved popular when it was staged in 1697. *The Way of the World* (1700) is considered by common consent as a work of art and as a pure comedy of manners.

2. **George Etherege (1635-91)** : His three plays are *The Comic Revenge* or *Love in A Tub* (1664), *She Wou'd if She Cou'd* (1668), and *The Man of the Mode* or *Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676). His plays established the comedy of manners, and paved the way for Congreve. He paints a true picture of the graceful, heartless and licentious upper classes of the period. The prose dialogue is natural and brilliant, and its light, airy grace conceals some deficiency of plot and construction.
3. **Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726)** : he had a varied career, being in turn soldier, herald and architect. His best three comedies are *The Relapse* (1696), *The Provok'd Wife* (1697) and *Confederacy* (1705). In his first two plays Vanbrugh employs all the familiar puppets of the Restoration comedy, the fops and the fools being treated with more naturalness if less wit than by Congreve, and with far less coarseness.
4. **George Farquhar(1678-1707)** : A man of versatile genius, George Farquhar was in turn a clergyman, an actor, and soldier, and died when he was twenty-nine years old. His plays are *Love and a Bottle*, *The Constant Couple*, *Sir Harry Wildair*, *The Inconstant* (1703), *The Way to Win Him*, *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707).

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### 16.15 Self Assessment Questions

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1. What do you know about the Puritans ?

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2. What is Puritanism ?

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3. Was Milton also a Puritan ?

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4. Who was the greatest prose writer of the Age of Milton ?

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5. What do you know about Cavalier Lyrics ?

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6. Who were the other Cavalier lyrists ?

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7. What were the distinctive characteristics of the Cavalier?

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8. Who were the Metaphysical poets ?

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9. What do you know about the Restoration Tragedy ?

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10. What do you know about the Restoration Comedy ?

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11. Name some Restoration Tragedies ?

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12. How did the Restoration affect English Literature ?

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13. Name some important Restoration writers ?

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14. What do you know about Restoration Period ?

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15. What were the chief characteristics of the Restoration Age ?

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16. What type of plays was dominant during the Restoration Age ?

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17. What was Dryden's contribution to Restoration Literature ?

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18. Who was the first man to use the term Metaphysical?

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19. What were the main characteristics of the Metaphysical poets ?

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### 16.16 Answers to SAQs

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1. The members of that party of English Protestants who regarded the reformation of the church under Elizabethan as incomplete, and called for its further purification, were known as the puritans.
2. Puritanism was a reaction against the excesses of the post-Shakespearian dramatist and as a result of this reaction the theatres in 1642 were closed.
3. Milton had a very puritanical attitude towards life and in this connection Tillyard has observed, "you cannot ignore him any more than you can ignore Alexander the Great, or Cromwell or Napoleon, " Milton regarded the people as..... But a herd confus'd.
4. Sir, John Bunyan was the greatest prose writer of the age of Milton. Bunyan was born in 1628 and died in 1688.
5. It was a term applied to the lyrical poetry of which there was remarkable outburst during the reign of Charles I and of which the court was the centre though Robert Herrick, the chief of these Lyrists was not a courtier.
6. Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling and Richard Love -lace were the chief Cavalier poets.
7. Cavalier lyrics were notable for sweetness and charm and the Cavalier poets mostly dealt with the themes of love and war and like Ben Jonson were always concise, lucid and also polished.
8. Crashaw, Herbert, Vaughan and Donne were the Metaphysical poets.

9. The tragedy during the restoration times was uncommon. In Otway and Dryden we find the exponents of the Restoration tragedy, better known as the Heroic tragedy. Dryden's 'All for Love' written incidentally in blank verse displays real feeling of tragedy.
10. It is par-excellence a kind copied to some extent from the French and Spanish originals. The dramatists like Dryden, devenant, Wycherlev vanbrugh and Shadwell were all indebted, for plot and dialogue, to the contemporary French comedy.
11. Dryden's 'The Maiden Queen' and 'The Conquest of Granada'; Thomas O way's 'The Orphan'. Congreve's 'The Mourning Bride' and Johnson's 'Irene' are the most famous tragedies of the Restoration period.
12. Restoration affected the revival of Drama especially the comedy; in the sphere of Tragedy heroic plays were produced and the imitative works of the new school (the restoration school) were of a rigid nature and they evolved a number of rules purporting to the avoidance of enthusiasm, strict care and accuracy in poetical technique and humble imitations of the style of the Latin classics.  
  
Heroic couplet dominated poetry, and prose had an outstanding feature- the emergence of the middle style (discovered by Addison), Swift and Defoe adopted a plainer style and ornate prose disappeared for the time being.
13. Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh Forqughar, Rochester, Bunyan, Pepys and Locke were the chief literary figures of the restoration period.
14. The period after the restoration of Charles II in 1660 and the re-establishment of monarchy in England is known as the Restoration period.
15. Love of wit and gaiety often of immortality ;but at the same time a genuine revival of interest particularly of scientific discovery.
16. Heroic plays were common and dominant during the Restoration Age.
17. Dryden's contribution to Restoration literature was of no mean value and he shall be rembered in the history of English literature for the ages to come -for his contribution to English prose and criticism His best to poems are - 'Ode St.Cecillia' and 'Alexander 's Feast.Both these poems brought him immense fame. He wrote many other poems satiric, argumentative and philosophical veins. But as one of the founders of the modern English prose, John Dryden has become immortal in the history of literature.
18. Dr. Johson first of all applied the term 'Metaphysical' to the poetry of Donne. Dr. Johson borrowed this term from the phrase of Dryden 'He affects the metaphysics'.
19. Two things, were common among all the Metaphysical poets, learning with a kind of misplaced wit and the desire to say something which had never been said before and in their poetry we find a very fine blend of intellect and emotion but artificially and hyperbolic expression could not keep itself away from this Metaphysical poetry.

Alexander Pope, who was destined to be regarded, at least for three generations as one of the greatest poets of England, was born in 1688, in London. His parents were middle aged and were engaged in the wholesale linen trade. They were Roman Catholics at a time when the

Catholics suffered from a number of handicaps.

Pope's father was compelled to give up his business, leave London, and retire to Binfield nine miles from Windsor, where the major part of the poet's life was passed. The boy was weak and sickly and for the whole of his life he was little better than an invalid. As a Catholic, education at the university or at any one of the recognized public schools was out of question for him. He gained some instruction from the family priest and also went for a short while to some private school but for the most part he was self educated and studied so hard that at seventeen his life was probably saved by the sound advice of Dr. Radcliff to read less and to ride on horse back every day. He was a precocious child with a quick and intelligent brain and could make the best of his limited opportunities. Within a few years, he could dip into a number of great English, French Italian and Greek poets.

**His Poetic Career - Prosperity:**-His first published work Pastorals, which had already been circulated in manuscript from to a few discriminating friends, appeared in 1709. Pope asserted that it was written at the age of sixteen. The nine years from 1708-1717 were years of experiment, during which the poet perfected his powers and learned his craft. In 1717 appeared a collected volumes of his poems, which earned for him name and fame and also made him rich and prosperous. By common consent he was acknowledged to be the greatest poet of the day.

**His Satires:**- His works achieved immense popularity, and says John Denuis in his The Age of Pope that he was the first poet who without the help of any patron, could live with comfort on the sale of his books. But he was ill-tempered and peevish, acutely sensitive to criticism, and this led him into many quarrels and life long hostilities and created for him a host of enemies. The words of those who had spoken ill of him, were stored up in his memory, and he planned his revenge decisively and effectively. His reply was The Dunicad, in which he lashes effectively at all his critics. This mock epic achieved immediate success and left his enemies defeated and helpless.

A brief examination of Pope's poetic output during these periods, would reveal a gradual evolution of his poetic genius.

### **The First Period**

- (i) The first period lasts from 1704-1713. The more important works of this period are :
  - (a) The Pastorals
  - (b) Windsor Forest
  - (c) Essay on Criticism
  - (d) The role of the lock
  - (e) Some minor poems-The Temple of Fame, The Messiah, etc.

The period is largely a period of experiment. The poet gradually funds his way and acquires mastery over his craft. The pastorals, celebrating the four seasons, are artificial and immature, full of the conventional imagery of nymphs and shepherds. The characters and scenery, based on classical models, lack vigor and reality.

An Essay on Criticism, which appeared in 1711, is the first important work of pope. The Poem

summarizes with great skill the critical canons of the day, as taught by Horace and Boileau.

The poem is remarkable for its epigrammatic neatness: it is a storehouse of maxims, which have found their way into common speech and are used, without thinking of the author, whenever an apt quotation is needed. A little learning is a dangerous thing. To error is human to forgive divine are only two of the well known examples.

The rope of the Lock, one of the finest poems in the language, was first published in 1712, and then published in an enlarged form in 1714. It is founded on an actual incident, when a nobleman had cut off a lock of a lady's hair, the subject is worked up by the poet to the heights of comic heroism. It is a mock heroic, in which the mockery arises from, "the contrast between the sublimity of the style and what the 18th century called the meanness of the occasion."

The second period extending from 1713 to 1725, is the period of the great Homer translations.

The translations of the Iliad were begun in 1717 and were completed by 1720. the Odyssey appeared in 1725 and 1726. it was translated with the help of two classical scholars, Fenton and Broome. The two translations were perfectly successful and brought Pope immense wealth and popularity.

The last and the greatest period of Pope's poetic output, from 1725-1740 may also be called the Twickenham or the Haratian period. During this period, the poet was writing his masterly satires on the hack-writers of Grub Street, carrying on his war of words with them. The masterpieces of this great period are:

- a) The Dunciad
- b) Moral Essays, including The Essay on Man
- c) The Limitations of Horace and the Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnotays.
- d) Two Dialogues, entitled 1738.

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### **16.17 Let Us Sum Up**

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In this unit we have

- discussed Puritan age to Restoration age,
- literary characteristics of the age,
- prominent writers of both the ages.

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### **16.18 Review Questions**

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1. Enumerate the differences between parilan and Elizabethan literature.
2. Write an essay on metaphysical poets.
3. Point out the literary characterstics of the restoration period.

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### **16.19 Bibliography**

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## UNIT-17

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### IMPORTANT MOVEMENTS

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#### Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Reformation Period
- 17.3 The Metaphysical School of Poetry
- 17.4 Neo Classical Movement
- 17.5 Development of Novel
- 17.6 Drama in Neo Classical Age
- 17.7 Transition Period
- 17.8 Self Assesment Questions
- 17.9 Answers to SAQs
- 17.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.11 Review Questions
- 17.12 Bibliography

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#### 17.0 Objectives

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In this unit you are going to know

- the important movements and trends,
- the main literary forms during Neo-Classicism period,
- about Metaphysical poetry and its characteristics and
- about Transition period or Pre- Romantic period.

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#### 17.1 Introduction

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In the preceding unit you have studied the writers of the puritan age and the restoration age. To understand these writers you must know about the age in which they lived. In this unit a glimpse of the important movements in the history of English literature from the age of Milton to Pre- Romantic age is given. You should go through this unit carefully and relate the characteristics to the writers discussed in the preceding unit. For a detailed knowledge you should read the books given at the end of the chapter.

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#### 17.2 Reformation And Its Influence Of Literature

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Renaissance and Reformation began to be effective at about the same time in England.

Reformation a movement which had for its object the emancipation of conscience from the church began in Germany. Luther began it in 1517 when he attacked the power of the church and the Pope. Reformation as time went on produced a moral reaction against the worldly spirit of Renaissance but in the long run it ushered in an era of religious liberty and freedom of thought.

The struggle for the emancipation of conscience from priestly control had begun in England nearly two centuries before, with Wycliffe, and in spite of persecution the spirit of Lollards had survived until the reign of Henry VIII. The spirit strengthened by the example of German and Swiss reformers, supplied the moral force which found in Henry's political separation from Rome in 1534, on the occasion of the annulment of his first marriage, an opportunity for radical theological reforms. The message of Reformation went through the country in the sermons of Hugh Latimer who was the most powerful preacher of the day. He was a peasant by birth. His message written in straightforward, racy, simple as homespun prose appealed to Englishmen.

In 1534 King Henry VIII of England renounced the sovereignty of pope and declared himself the head of the English Church. English, instead of Latin became the language of religious offices. During the short reign of Edward VI, the English Reformation moved closer to the Protestantism of the continent. Edward's sister Mary vainly tried to re-establish Catholicism in England. After her death Queen Elizabeth sealed and ratified the Protestant Victory. During her reign the authority of the Roman Church was replaced by the English Church. A general atmosphere of individualism and self reliance reinforced the proposition that a man is responsible directly to his god, without the necessary mediation of an ecclesiastical hierarchy and that he is entitled to have the Bible in his own tongue so that he can make his own interpretations of the will of God rather than accept a series of official dogmas. The Reformation was a continental movement. Renaissance and Reformation were two different manifestations of the same spirit. Both these movements were basically a rejection of authority and tradition in favor of individual initiative and authority. Hudson writes: "While the Renaissance aroused the intellect and the aesthetic faculties, the Reformation awakened the spiritual nature; the same printing press which diffused the knowledge of the classics put the English Bible in to the hands of the people; and the spread of an interest in religion was inevitably accompanied by a deepening of moral earnestness." Reformation is briefly explained as the religious movement arising out of the revolt of Martin Luther against Pope's supremacy; and upon scriptural authority. The consequences produced by the conjunction of the Renaissance and the Reformation resulted in the growth of a new spirit of rationalism, repudiation of Pan-European Papal authority, the growth and development of national languages, and ultimately, the growth and development of Puritanism. Moody and Lovett remark : " The Reformation, and the controversies, religious and political, which grew out of it gave occasion for what we should call journalism, in the form of pamphlets, serious and satirical, in both prose and verse. " The great English writers of this period —Spenser, Jonson, Milton and Bunyan —are the true children of both Renaissance and Reformation.

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### **17.3. The Metaphysical School Of Poetry**

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The term metaphysical as applied to poetry was first used by Dr. Johnson who borrowed it from Dryden's phrase for Donne; He affects the metaphysics. It denotes in Saintsbury's words "the habit common to the school of poets, of always seeking to express something after, something behind, the simple, obvious first sense and suggestion of a subject". Dr. Johnson's opinion about the metaphysical poetry is worth quoting. About the beginning of the seventieth century appeared a race of writers that

may be termed metaphysical poets.... The metaphysical poets were men of learning and to show their learning was their whole Endeavour. If the father of critics (Aristotle) has rightly denominated poetry as an imitative art, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets for they cannot be said to have imitated anything, neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.. Their thoughts are often new but seldom natural. The most heterogeneous ideas yoked by violence together nature and art ransacked for illustrations, comparisons and allusions, their learning instructs and their subtlety surprise but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought and though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.... Their attempts were always analytic, they broke every image into fragments, and could no more represent by their slender conceits and labored particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life than he who dissects a sunbeam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon. The following characteristics are common in all metaphysical poets.

- i. **Delight in Novel Thoughts and Expressions** - The metaphysical poets desired to say what they hoped had never been said before. They cared to be singular in their thoughts and worked out their own manner of expressing them. They played with thoughts, say Sir Walter Scott, as the Elizabethans had played with emotions.
- ii. **Far-Fetched Images**- A characteristic feature of metaphysical verse is indulgence in dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. The poets probably deemed it a passport to fame to say something unexpected and surprising in far fetched images and hyperbolic expressions.
- iii. **Learning** - The metaphysical poetry reveals the scholarship of its authors. A whole book of knowledge might be compiled from the scholarly allusions in Donne and Cowley alone. What is unfortunate about metaphysical poets is that they sometimes drew, says Dr. Johnson, their conceits from recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers of poetry. Then metaphysical poets often twist their vast learning in such a manner that it becomes difficult for an average reader to follow what the poet wants to say.
- iv. **Religious and Amorous**- Metaphysical poetry may be classified into two broad divisions of amorous and religious verse. The former was written mainly by Carew, Suckling and Andrew Marvell, and the latter by religious verse. The metaphysical element, it seems first made its appearance in love poems. The metaphysical of the seventeenth century," says H.J.C. Grierson, combined two things... the fantastic dialectics of medieval love poetry and the simple sensuous strain which caught from the classics - soul and body lightly yoked and glad to soul together in the winged chariot of Pegasus.
- v. **Obscurity**- In the task trying to find the verbal equivalent for the states of mind and feeling the metaphysical poets made themselves difficult to understand. They are difficult to understand because they yoked dissimilar ideas without making an effort to unite them. The reader is confounded by their frequent use of elliptical languages, out of the way terms and strange learning.

After the Restoration the metaphysical poetry was on the wane. It was after the First World War that metaphysical element in poetry again appeared. T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, and Helen Gardner have a powerful mystical note in their poetry. H.J.C. Grierson rightly observes"... great poetry is always metaphysical, born of man's passionate thinking about life, love and death."

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## 17.4 The Neo Classical Movement In Poetry

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The Neo Classical Movement lasts from 1660, the Restoration of Charles II, to 1798 the year of publication of *The Lyrical Ballads*. Thus it covers the Restoration Age and the Augustan Age or the Age of Pope and Johnson. The year 1660 marks a break with the past and the beginning of neo classicism in literature, especially poetry.

The writers both in prose and poetry tacitly agreed upon the rules and principles in accordance with which they should write. The acceptance of these literary conventions drawn from the practice of writers of the past is the most characteristic difference between the classic age of Dryden and Pope and the romantic individualistic epoch of Spenser and Shakespeare. Rules and literary conventions became more important than the depth and seriousness of subject matter to writers of this period. They expressed superficial manners and customs of the aristocratic and urban society and did not pry into the mysteries of human mind and heart.

### Characteristics of Neo-Classicism

1. **Imitation of the Ancients-** The authors of this period turned to great classical writers, in particular to Latin writers, for guidance and inspiration. It was generally believed that the ancients had reached the acme of excellence and the modern poets could do not better than model their writings on classics. Thus grew the neo-classical school of poetry. The neo-classicists could not soar to great imaginative heights and could not delve deep into human emotions. They directed their attention to the limitation of rules and ignored the importance of subject matter.
2. **Respect For Rules-** Respect for rules is one of the cardinal characteristics of neo-classicism. The literary transition write Legouis and Cazamian is nothing more nor less than the progressive movement of a spirit of liberty at once fanciful, brilliant and adventurous, towards a rule and a discipline both in inspiration and in form. Classical conventions governed every variety of verse - drama, epic, satire, ode, pastoral etc. Seneca provided the model for the tragedy. Plautus and Terence for the comedy, Virgil for the epic and the pastoral, Juvenal for satire and Horace for literary taste and criticism. The writers were expected to write according to rules. Perfect form, based on rules and the faithful imitation of the ancient s was the ideal the subject was of minor importance.
3. **Nature Methodized** - The precept follow nature is the very centre of the neo-classic creed. It means to follow the rules of the ancients because they were based upon Nature. Pope wrote in Essay on Criticism:

Those Rules of old discover'd not devised.

Are nature still, but nature methodized

and

Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem

To copy nature is to copy them

Writers must obey three authoritative ideas - the idea of Nature, the idea of Antiquity and the idea of Reason. The term Nature Methodized implies avoidance of the excesses of excitement

and imagination- false stylistic ornamentation. It puts emphasis on restraint, balance and rationality.

4. **Intellectual Quality** - A vigorous intellectual quality, which implied moderation balance, correctness reason and good sense, governed the literature of this period. The artist must strictly follow the rules correct and any exuberance of fancy or emotion must be controlled by reason and good sense. The intellect must govern the heart, the reason must keep emotion n check. Moderation, a golden rule both a life and literature must be strictly observed. The poets were advised to write about time tested universal truths and general ideas. The writers must say that they had to say in the best possible manner.
5. **Literature of the Town** - The Literature of this period is strictly confined to town. The fashionable aristocratic society attracted the poets and writers of this period. Pope, Addison, Steele, Dr. Johnson and all others writers of this period deal with urban themes. It ignores the humbler aspects of lie and shows no real love of nature, landscape or countryside. The poetry of this period is shallow, and superficial. It neither ennobles nor inspires. It has no universal appeal. It eschews all emotions, enthusiasms, inspiration and wide human sympathy which distinguish the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton.
6. **Artificial and Conventional Style**- The poets deftly cared for form and took all pains to polish and refine the poetic style. It led to the establishment of an artificial and conventional style. The vocabulary was neither colloquial nor technical. It had to be selected from what Dr. Johnson called, “a system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Thus a standard poetic diction came into existence.
7. **Heroic couplet** - Heroic couplet dominated the poetry of this period. This metre produced a close, clear and pointed style. Its epigrammatic terseness provided a suitable medium of expression to the kind of poetry then popular. Waller brought into use the heroic couplet. Dryden used it for all purposes, and gave it an additional vigor, a sinewy elegance a noble rhythm and beauty. Pope perfected it. He used it with great material skill.

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## 17.5 Development Of Prose

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The Age of Pope is the age of prose in the real sense. The prose of Bacon, Jonson, S.T. Browne, Burton and Milton is the prose of an age of poetry; but “the prose of the new age is far better adapted to an age richer in philosophic and political speculation than to poetry ; in the art of critical exposition and journalistic realism than in work of creative imagination. “(Rickett). Dryden is the first great pioneer of modern prose. His ease, force, vigor, clearness and intellectuality imparted a really true prosaic character to his writings. Dryden’s *Essay On Dramatic Poesy* was undoubtedly” a model of the new prose

The Age of Johnson also saw the remarkable development of prose. It did not fashion a new prose style; that was done by Dryden; but it took the instrument that had been shaped for it, and turned it to glorious uses. Moreover, it did something for its further development; it improved and perfected, in the works of Fielding, Johnson, Gibbon and others, the solid and masculine style of prose, as distinguished from the conversational, almost feminine style of Addison on the one hand, and the highly ornate and rhetorical style on the other. A writer thus summarizes the gains of the eighteenth century: “The eighteenth century by itself had created the novel and practically created the literary history; it had

put the essay into general circulation; it had hit off various forms, and an abundant supply of lighter verse; it had largely contributed to the literature of philosophy. Above all, it had shaped the form of English prose—” The discovery of the modern novel is the typical growth of the eighteenth century. It is the “original contribution of England to the world of literature. Other great types of literature, like the epic, the romance and the drama, were first produced by other nations; but the idea of the modern novel seems to have been worked out largely on English soil; and in the number and the fine quality of her novelist, England has hardly been rivaled by any other nation. “(W.J. Long )The novel has been the prevailing type of popular literature since 1740, the year of the publication of Richardson’s *Pamela*. It was with Richardson that prose fiction passed definitely into its modern form. Defining novel W.J. Long writes:” For the novel is a work of fiction in which the imagination and the intellect combined to express life in the form of a story; and the imagination is always directed and controlled by the intellect. It is interested chiefly, not in romance or adventure, but in men and women as they are, it aims to show the motives and influences which govern human life, and the effects of personal choice upon character and destiny. Such is the true novel, and as such it opens a wider and more interesting field than any other type of literature. “ It appeals to modern readers because it realistically treats the great mass of interest and problem which make up modern life.

### **Historical Prose**

Some of the finest prose of Johnson’s age was written in history. The historians like Gibbon treated prose in a more artistic form than ever before in England. Edward Gibbon (1737-94) was the greatest historian of the time. His *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) is an imperishable contribution to English prose. His Autobiography which contains valuable material about his life is also a work of importance which is written with all his usual elegance and suave, ironic humor. Rickett writes “Gibbon was by far the greatest historian of his age and one of the greatest of any age. As a literary stylist he is sufficiently remarkable with his clear imposing rhythmic prose but he is even more remarkable for that intuitive faculty that endows some men so richly with the historic sense quite apart from their scholarship. It is faculty that enables Gibbon to present his work as an organic whole with the details properly subordinate to the main structure”. Gibbon’s style is commanding and lordly, with a full free and majestic rhythm. It is appropriate to its gigantic subject. It has some weaknesses too. Though it never flags, and rarely stumbles, the very perfection of it tends to monotony for it lacks ease and variety.

David Hume (1711-76) wrote a In six volumes which appeared between the year 1754 and 1761. Its style is swift, clear and polished. Hume had no talent for historical research and is greatly marred by carelessness in regard to facts. As a work of historical prose it is important as being the first popular and literary history of England. Hume also distinguished himself as a philosopher publishing *A treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) and *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741-42).

William Robertson (1721-93) a Scot had an active and successful career as a historian. He made a great mark with his *History of Scotland. History of Charles V and History of America*.

### **Political Prose**

Edmund Burke (1729-97), the renowned politician, parliamentarian and orator, was one of the greatest prose stylists of the eighteenth century. In politics he was passionately attached to the Whig Party. Burke’s works are both philosophical and political. His philosophical writings are a Vindication

of Natural society (1756) and *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). These works are of mediocre quality but they are remarkable for Burke's style and language. Burke's political writings consisting of his speeches and pamphlets have an abiding place in English prose. He supported the cause of American colonies in his speeches *An American Taxation* (1774) and *On Conciliation With The Colonies* (1775). These collections of his speeches are distinguished by a passionate rhetorical, brilliant and lucid style, fine and artistic arrangement of material and the statesmanlike insight which underlies these arguments. Burke's speeches on the impeachment of Warren Hastings are highly moving. His famous pamphlets are *Thoughts on the Cause of Present Discontent* (1770), *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). *A letter to a Noble Lord* (1795) and *Letters on Regicide Peace* (1797). *Reflections on the revolution in France* is a powerful challenge to the revolutionary ideas and it is a fine exposition of his own principles. Burke's style has assigned him a permanent place in literature. Edward Albert writes: "Dignified rather than graceful it is the most powerful prose of his day, and is marked by all the devices of the orator-much repetition, careful arrangement and balance of parts copious use of rhetorical figures (such as metaphor, simile, epigram and exclamation variation of the sentence structure homely illustrations and a swift vigorous rhythm. It is full of color and splendor and is fired by an impassioned imagination). He skillfully arranged his ideas with passionate moral earnestness vivid imagination, and splendid logical powers while his rich and highly wrought rhetorical style gave a gorgeous coloring to everything he wrote. Burke's style lacks persuasiveness humor pathos and intimacy.

Adam Smith (1723-90) wrote *The Wealth Of Nations* (1776), a fine work on the history of economics laid the foundation of modern economic thought. In the history of English prose it is memorable for the use of plain, businesslike style. William Godwin (1756-1836) wrote *Political Justice* (1793) which expressed his revolutionary ideas.

### **The Contribution of *THE SPECTATOR* in the Development of Novel**

The periodical Essay was the peculiar product of the eighteenth century. It was called 'periodical' because it was not published in book form like other types of essays, as the essays of Bacon, but it was published in journals and magazines which appeared periodically. It had an inherent social purpose. It aimed at improving the manners and morals of the people and, hence, it is also termed as the "social essay". The contribution of the Spectator to the development of Novel. Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison are the four great writers of the periodical essay in the age of Pope. *The Spectator* has been rightly called the forerunner of novel. There was no novelist in the age of Pope. Richardson, Smollet, Sterne and Fielding, known as the four wheels of novel, were in their infancy. At such a time appeared *The Spectator* which contains all the elements of social comedy, except a harmonious plot. The material for the novels of manner or the social comedy is found in *The Coverly papers*, with the exception of the continuity of scheme. The events are such as occurring every day. But "such events can hardly be said to form a plot, yet there are related with such truth, such grace, such wit, such humor, such pathos, such knowledge of the human heart, such knowledge of the ways of the world, that they charm us on the hundredth perusal. If Addison had written a novel, on an extensive plan, it would have been superior to any that we possess. As it is, he is entitled, not only as the greatest of English essayists, but as the forerunner of the great English novelist. Addison and Steele show of characterization in *The Spectator*, which is essential for the novel. The characters are named and individualized. The character of Sir Roger, which is artistically delineated, is both type and individual. His dominating presence in *The Coverly Papers* imparts a sort of unity, which became an important

element in the eighteenth century novel. Courthope remarks : “ Sir Roger De Coverly, with his simplicity, his high sense of honor, and his old world reminiscences, reflects the typical country gentleman of the best kind.” Other characters too are nicely portrayed and represent various segments of contemporary society. Will Honeycomb is a middle -aged beau; Sir Andrew Freeport a city merchant; Captain Sentry a soldier; and Mr. Spectator a shy, reticent person, who bears a resemblance to Addison himself. There are many incidents in *The Coverly Papers* which contain the germs of the future novel. “These papers not only trained the taste of the public in the direction of the novel, but also increased the number of the public readers.

### **Causes of the Popularity of the Novel in the Age of Johnson**

The causes which contributed to the rise and development of English novel in Johnson’s age are given below:

- i. The spread of education and the new reading public :-** In the eighteenth century the spread of education and the appearance of newspapers and magazines led to a remarkable increase in the number of readers. The newspaper and the periodical essay encouraged a rapid inattentive, almost unconscious kind of reading habit and it is exactly such a kind of habit that is required for novel reading. At the same time the middle class people assumed a foremost place in English life and history. These new readers and this powerful new middle class has no classic tradition to hamper them. They cared little for the opinions of Dr. Johnson and the famous Literary Club. They took little interest in the exaggerated romances of impossible heroes and the picaresque stories of intrigue and villainy which has interested the upper classes. The new reading class wanted to read for pleasure and relaxation without caring for any high classical or literary standards and this change of emphasis favored the growth of novel. Moreover, it wanted to read about itself about its own thoughts motives and struggles in short to find out its own life reflected in the books it read. Moreover, it did not have leisure enough for reading the lengthy heroic romances. The new ideal of the eighteenth century namely the value and importance of the individual life, demanded a new type of literature. So the novel was born which mirrored the tastes and requirements of this new class of readers.
- ii. Democratic Movement :** The rise of the novel is also associated with the democratic movement in the eighteenth century. The rise of the middle class is closely related with the democratic movement. With the growth of commerce and industry, the prestige of the old feudal nobility was on the wane, and the middle classes were increasing steadily in social and political power. The middle classes were inclined to morality, sentiment and reality. The novel reflected the temperament of the middle classes and hence it became popular.
- iii. Comprehensive of Form:** Novel a new form of literary art, was a sign that literature was beginning to outgrow the cramping limitations of classicism and tradition. It was difficult to reject altogether the authority of the ancients in the epic and the drama. In the novel that authority could be ignored. In general, the novel offered a fresh field, in which modern writers were able to work independently. Hudson writes : Finally as the form of the novel gives a far wider scope than is allowed by the corresponding form of drama for the treatment of motives, feelings and all the phenomena of the inner life it tended from the first to take a peculiar place as the typical art form of the introspective and analytical modern world.
- iv. New Prose Style:** One of the important causes of the development of novel is the rise of a

new prose style. For novel deals with ordinary life, ordinary people, ordinary events and with all sorts of miscellaneous matters it requires plain, lucid and straightforward style and not the highly poetic, eloquent and far fetched style. During the eighteenth century Addison Steele and Goldsmith evolve a plain style which was capable of expressing the realities of life, which the novel expressed.

- v. **The Decline of Drama:** It is a literary commonplace that the drama grew as the romance of chivalry declined and the novel grew as the drama declined. Drama which was the most popular form of literature during the Renaissance had grown artificial, unnatural and immoral during the Restoration. It had lost its appeal by the eighteenth century. It was the decline of drama during the earlier part of the eighteenth century that made way for the novel.

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## 17.6 Drama In Neo- Classicism Age

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The age of Johnson was unaccountably poor in drama. It was an age of sentimental comedy which was based on cheap sentimentalism and defeated the very purpose of comedy. Goldsmith and Sheridan, the true dramatists, reacted against the sentimental comedy and tried to restore it to its real comic spirit.

**The sentimental comedy:-** The sentimental comedy catered to the needs and tastes of the middle class audiences. With the end of the Stuart rule there set in a sweeping reaction against the licentiousness and immoral tone of the comedy of manners - the reaction which was spearheaded by the sober and literary section of the middle class. Jeremy Collier in his pamphlet *A Short View Of The Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* (1698) voiced the middle class uneasiness and concern at the grossness and vulgarity of the comedy of manners. This pamphlet paved the way for the change which gradually manifested itself in the advent of sensibility in place of wit and immorality in comedy. The new comedy offered them powerful stories full of pathetic and touching scenes which made them weep for the distress of lovers. In these comedies the course of true love never ran smooth till the lovers were rewarded for their sufferings and constancy in the last scene. This type of comedy had two conspicuous features - first an excessive display of sensibility by the chief characters and secondly the strong homiletic strain in their utterances. Nicoll remarks : In the place of laughter they sought tears in the place of gallants and witty damsels, pathetic damsels and serious lovers. Sentimental comedy though it occupied the stage for more than half a century did not give any memorable work because it lacked with, humor verbal dexterity and skill in characterization which are essential to great comedy.

Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy* (1768) and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771) are regarded as the best examples of the sentimental comedy. In sentimental comedy tears took the place of laughter melodramatic and distressing situations that of intrigue pathetic heroines and serious lovers and honest servants that of rogues and gallants and witty damsels. Nicoll says that in the sentimental comedy we are in the world of drama not of comedy in the realm of emotions not of the intellect.

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## 17.7 The Age Of Transition

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### General Characteristics of the Age

Although Dr. Samuel Johnson is the representative writer of the second half of the eighteenth

century, the age known as a transitional period, an era of change from pseudo-classicism to romanticism. The decline of party spirit and the democratic upsurge exercised great influence both on life and literature. The main characteristics of this period are given below.

- i. **Decline of the Party Feud :** The rivalry between the Whigs and Tories still continues, but it had lost its previous bitterness. This naturally led to a considerable decline of the activity in political pamphleteering. So, the poets and satirists ceased to be statesmen. The institution of patronage, by which the writers depended for their success on the favors of nobleman, gradually crumbled during the period under review, and men of letters to depend entirely on their public.
- ii. **The French Revolution :** During the second half of the eighteenth century new ideas were germinating and new forces were gathering strength. The French Revolution of 1789 was only the climax to a long and deeply diffused unrest. Revolutionary ideas gave birth to democratic and humanitarian feelings, and influenced literature greatly.
- iii. **Renaissance of Learning :** This period is characterized by a kind of mild Renaissance of learning. In Literature this Renaissance revealed itself in the study and editing the old authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, and research in to archaic literary forms like the ballad. The publication of Bishop Percy's *Reliques* (1765), which contained some of the oldest and most beautiful specimens of ballad literature, is landmark in the history of Romantic movement.
- iv. **The New Realism :** The birth of a new spirit of inquiry was at the root of realism which is conspicuous in the novels of this period and is noticeable in the poetry of the last decades of the century. In the novels of Richardson we find a microscopic analysis and a realistic portrayal of character, and his great contemporary, Fielding, never spares his readers the sordid realities of life.
- v. **The Rise of Middle Class :** The rise of the middle class did not destroy the authority and influence of the aristocracy, but it was modified and continually made more supple by the bourgeois elements which were commingling with it. The fusion of aristocracy and middle class which began in the Age of Pope was complete in the Age of Johnson. The middle class appropriated classicism with its moralizing needs. The emergence of middle class led to the rise of sentimentalism, feelings and emotions. Religion in the Age of pope was deistic, formal, utilitarian and unspiritual. In the great evangelical revival, led by Wesley and Whitfield, the old formalism was swept away and the utilitarian was abandoned. A mighty tide of spiritual energy poured out into Church and the masses.
- vi. **The Humanitarian Spirit :** This period is characterized by the rapid growth of democracy. The democratic movements led to protests against the callousness and brutality of society, which resulted in the rapid spread of the spirit of humanitarianism. Stress was laid on the individual worth of man. People became familiar with the notions of equality, liberty and brotherhood. They recognized their rights and were aware of the countless absurdities and evils of the existing social state. The philosophy of Rousseau and the French Revolution popularized the democratic ideals.
- vii. **An Age of Transition :** In the domain of poetry this period was clearly an age of transition. On the one hand we have poets like Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith who slavishly follow the Augustan tradition and emulate Pope in their writings. At the other extreme, we find, during the

closing years of the century, poets like Blake and Burns who herald the new age of Romanticism and have nothing in common with Augustan school of poetry. Between these two extremes, we have poets like Gray and Collins who are true transitional poets in the sense that they share both the romantic and the classic characters. The double tendency-the adherence to the classical tradition and the search for a new romanticism - is the most important characteristic of the Age of Transition.

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## 17.8 Self Assessment Questions

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1. What do you mean by the term Coffee-house literature in English language?

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2. Who are the main writers of the Coffee house literature?

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3. What do you know of the Pre-Romantic age of English Poetry ? What is the other name of this age of Poetry ?

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4. What was the main characteristic of the Transition Poetry ?

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5. What are the chief poets of this age ?

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6. Who were the heralds of Romantic Age ?

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7. What is the source of information about the life and works of Dr. Jhonson?

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8. Name any two early novels in English literature.

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9. Why did the novel develop in the 18th century?

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10. Name the authors who helped in the development of Novel in the 18th century?

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11. What is the contribution of Steele and Addison to the English Novel ?

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12. What are the points of difference between the 18th century and the 16th & 17th century?

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13. Who can be called to be the first novelist?

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## 17.9 Answers to SAQs

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1. In the age of Queen Anne Coffee house were very common in London and these coffee houses

were crowded with people of all upper middle classes, lawyers, medical practitioners, literary men, journalists, politicians etc. They talked in all elements of the time in their gossips. Out of these Coffee house gossips there grew a kind of literature, known as Coffee house literature.

2. As a matter of fact, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison were the pioneers as well as Gems of this literature. These two literary men, sitting in the Coffee houses, observed the movements, fashions and various trends of the society and described these trends through their periodical essays.
3. The Pre-Romantic, English Poetry, which is also known as the Transition Poetry, was a vacuum between the classical and Romantic fact of English Poetry. As a matter of fact sir, it paved the path for the march of Romantic Poetry which began with Wordsworth.
4. The Transition Poetry banished the rigid and formal conventional code of classicism. It made simple and day to day elements of life as its theme. It laid stress on the simplicity of diction and sweetness of poetic art. Though the poets of this age did not treat Nature spiritually, yet it attempted to treat and interpret nature in her external mood.
5. Gray and Collins are supposed to be the chief poets of this age Gray through his elegies gave a vivid description of Nature and her calm and serene beauties where as Collins drew a beautiful poetic picture of Nature by his odes which are regarded as some of the finest elements of English Poetry.

The movement begun of Pope ceased to possess any Vitality after Goldsmith and a new tendency leading towards romanticism was noticed during the period beginning from 1749 and therefore this period is known as the Transitional Period.

6. Colling Gray, Thomson, Shenstone, Goldsmith, Macpherson, Walpole, Percy, Chatterton, Crabbe, Cowper, Burns, Blake and many others were the true heralds of the Romantic Age.
7. Boswell's immortal work "Life of Samuel Johnson" is the best source of Dr. Johnson's life and works.
8. 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Gulliver's Travels' are the early English Novels.
9. 'The fall of Theatre' was the main cause of the development of the novel in the 18th century.
10. John Bunyan, Defoe, Overbury, Hall and Earl were the main figures, who helped in the development of the novel, of Steele and Addison cannot be overlooked.
11. Steele and Addison who were the great humorist contributed to the English Novel with the help of their 'Spectator' and 'Tatler'. The descriptions in the spectator are sufficient, if united and made to continue, to furnish the material for a novel. It is really the "Spectator" that gives us a glimpse for the first time of the method and subject matter for the modern English novel.
12. The novel during the 16th century was mostly unnatural, with the dialogues full of long drawn speeches, with diffused construction and lacking simplicity.

Humour, realism and commonsense were the chief characteristics features of the 18th century unlike 16th and 17th one.

13. Henry Fielding can be called to be the first novelist.

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## 17.10 Let Us Sum Up

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In this unit we have-

- Studied the Important movements from Neo classicist Age to Pre-Romantic Age'
- main literary trends during these ages and
- the development and rise of modern novel.

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## 17.11 Review Questions

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1. Comment on the influences of Reformation on literature.
2. Discuss the characteristics of the Metaphysical School of Poetry.
3. The Age of Pope is the Age of Prose. Discuss.
4. Write a note on the development of the sentimental comedy.
5. Discuss the general characteristics of the Age of Transition.
6. Discuss the characteristics on New-classicism.

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## 17.12 Bibliography

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