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Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Bachelor of Arts

UGEN-103

Literature in English 1750-1900

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UNIT-1

William Blake : *The Tyger*

UNIT-2

William Wordsworth : *Ode on Intimations*

UNIT-3

S.T. Coleridge : *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this block, we will study Pre-Romantic poetry and Romantic poetry. This block consists of the following 3 units:

Unit-1 covers William Black and his poem *The Tyger*. William Blake is a pre-romantic poet. He has a very individual view of the world. His poetic style, ideas, sensibility, and ideas contrast with order and control of the Augustans. The Tiger stands out in contrast to Blake's innocent Lamb. It is a symbol of strength and revolt.

In **Unit-2**, we will study William Wordsworth and his poem *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*. He was one of the founders of English Romanticism.

Unit-3 discusses S.T. Coleridge and his poem *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*. The poem tells the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea-voyage.

UNIT-1 WILLIAM BLAKE : THE TYGER

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Pre Romantic Poets
- 1.3 William Blake : Life and Works
- 1.4 The Tyger
 - 1.4.1 Poem (Text)
 - 1.4.2 Glossary
 - 1.4.3 Discussion
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Suggested Reading
- 1.7 Answer to Exercises

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall take up one of the famous poems by William Blake i.e. Tyger. The poem is one of the famous lyrics of English language with the famous opening line of English language ‘Tyger Tyger burning bright’. The ‘Tyger’ was first published in William Blake’s 1794 volume *Songs of Experience*, which contains many of his most celebrated poems. The *Songs of Experience* was designed to complement Blake’s earlier collection, *Songs of Innocence* (1789). However, we hope you will read the complete poem on your own. We have selected this short lyric. Before we discuss the poem, let us briefly look at some of aspects of the romantic and Pre Romantic poetry. This will give us an idea of the social and historical context from which this poem emerged. A quick look at the Life and Works of William Blake will not only introduce us to the poet but will also facilitate our understanding of his poetry.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the poem ‘Tyger’ by the eminent poet William Blake. We shall also discuss some features of Pre Romantic Poetry. After reading this Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of William Blake;

- Analyse the poem ‘Tyger’;
- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define Blake’s poetic technique.

1.2 PRE-ROMANTICISM

Pre-Romanticism is a cultural movement started in Europe from about the 1740s onward that preceded the artistic movement known as **Romanticism**. The new emphasis on genuine emotion can be seen in a whole range of **Pre-Romantic** trends. Some key Romantic ideas include a focus on the power of nature, imagination, revolution, the world of children and the lives of people marginalised in society. Romanticism has been very influential and important British Romantic poets include Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Blake.

Central features of Romanticism include:

- An emphasis on emotional and imaginative spontaneity.
- The importance of self-expression and individual feeling. ...
- An almost religious response to nature. ...
- A capacity for wonder and consequently a reverence for the freshness and innocence of the vision of childhood.

1.3 WILLIAM BLAKE : LIFE AND WORKS

William Blake was born on November 28, 1757 in the city of London. His father was a hosiery businessman. Due to poverty he was unable to get regular education. Thus we can say that Blake was a self-educated man. William Blake was a brilliant child and his mind was very fertile and imaginative. He started writing at the tender age of 12. In 1783 his first poetic collection appeared with the title “Poetical Sketches” at the age of 26. In 1781 he married Catherine Boucher the daughter of a market-gardener. The couple remained issueless. His imagination excelled him in the printing job. In 1788 he experimented a new kind of printing. Blake was always a man of poor financial sources and due to this reason he was always dedicated to poor and vanquished people. In 1800 Blake had left London with his wife and sister for doing the job of an engraver in the house of William Hayley at Sussex. But soon he was irritated by the interference of Hayley and returned to London. In 1821 he settled at Fountain Court and worked upon his most creative work ‘Illustrations of the Book of Job’. In 1825 he was assigned the job of making illustrations of Dante’s Divine Comedy. He had completed over one hundred water colour designs, and out of them, seven were engraved. Before he could finish this job, he died on August 12, 1827.

Blake was a very deeply religious man who has throughout been known for his intellectual integrity. The greatest misfortune with William Blake was that his contemporaries could not appreciate him and he remained in obscurity for three decades after his death. In 1863 Alexander Gilchrist wrote the biography of William Blake which was published that year. In 1957 his bronze bust was installed in the Poet's corner of Westminster Abbey. Besides being a painter of eminence he has shown proficiency in poetry as well as prose.

WORKS OF WILLIAM BLAKE :

1. Poetical Sketches 1783
2. Tiriel 1789
3. Songs of Innocence 1789
4. The Book of Thel 1789-91
5. Visions of the Daughters of Albion 1793
6. Songs of Innocence and Experience, showing the Two Contrary States of Human Souls 1794
7. America, A Prophecy 1794
8. Europe, A Prophecy 1794
9. The Book of Urizen 1794
10. The Song of Los 1795
11. The Book of Ahania 1795
12. Vala or the Four Zoas 1796-1807
13. Milton 1804-15
14. Jerusalem 1804-15

1.4 THE TYGER

"The Tyger," originally called "The Tyger," is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and his creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience*. Modern anthologies often print "The Tiger" alongside an earlier Blake poem, "The Lamb," published in 1789 in a collection entitled *Songs of Innocence*. 'The Tyger' is called as the companion poem of 'The Lamb' which appeared in Songs of Innocence; both poems ask the same question: where do we come from? In 'The Lamb', an answer is given: God made us – a simple affirmation of faith. You can see very clearly in the poem 'The Tyger' poet answers by posing the rhetorical question: 'Did he who made the lamb make thee?' You can observe in the poem that poet puts forward a

series of questions none of which are answered. In the poem poet put forwards two qualities of Creator/God, the ferocious, terrifying force of God apparent in the creature 'Tiger' and tenderness, softness in the creature Lamb. 'The Tyger' shows us something much more violent and mysterious; the tiger comes from 'the forests of the night' and its eyes burn in 'distant deeps and skies'. Tiger and Lamb both creatures show two contrasting qualities of God.

The poem consists of six quatrains. (A quatrain is a four-line stanza.) Each quatrain contains two couplets. (A couplet is a pair of rhyming lines). Thus we have a twenty-four-line poem with twelve couplets and six stanzas—a neat, balanced package. The question in the final stanza repeats (except for one word, *dare*). In each stanza of this poem, the first two lines rhyme and the last two lines rhyme. The rhyme scheme in each stanza is AABB. Blake employs rhyme to give a musical quality to the poem. Rhyme also enables a reader to memorize a poem more easily.

1.4.1 TYGER (TEXT)

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

1.4.2 GLOSSARY

Immortal-- living forever; never dying or decaying.

Symmetry-- uniformity, consistency, congruity, orderliness,

Distant—far away

Aspire -- **ambitions** towards achieving something.

Seize -- **take** hold of suddenly and forcibly.

Furnace -- an enclosed structure in which material can be heated to very high temperatures, e.g. for smelting metals

Anvil -- a heavy iron block with a flat top and concave sides, on which metal can be hammered and shaped.

Grasp -- seize and hold firmly.

Clasp-- grasp, to tightly grip.

1.4.3 DISCUSSION

The main theme of this poem is the magnificent creation that a tiger (tyger) is. William Blake wonders about the fact that the God who created the Lamb (Jesus Christ) was also the Creator of this formidable beast of the jungle. Blake sees great creative powers in this majestic animal. First line sets up to whom the poem is addressed: the "Tyger". It begins with the repetition of the name ("Tyger, tyger"). This repetition suggests a kind of mysteriousness. What is this about "burning bright,/ in the forests of the night"? Tigers don't burn. When you see crazy or unexpected metaphors like this – which *always* happens with Blake, "Burning bright" may describe the appearance of the Tyger (tigers have fiery orange fur), or it may on a deeper level describe a kind of energy or power that this Tyger has. The Tyger's presence in "the forests of the night" further increases the mystery and power of the creature – it's elusive, while at the same time burning with some sort of inner force. These lines introduce the central question of the poem: what "immortal" being or force is able to contain or produce the Tyger's sublime form? Big stuff, we know. The "immortal hand or eye," symbols of sight and creation, immediately references to a creative God (in pretty much all cases with Blake, "God" refers to the Christian God). If this is so, then questioning whether God *could* do *anything* is a direct attack on the omnipotence of such a God.

"Fearful" references the scariness of a tiger, but also alludes to the sublime. The sublime is an old notion of really big, powerful, mysterious stuff that terrifies us because it's big, powerful and mysterious. The first BIG example that should come to mind: God, or the divine (that stuff is big and powerful and mysterious). Symmetry is a classical quality of the divine, as well as the defining factor of artistic beauty. So, there are lots of

doors open with the first stanza. Just hold on, it'll be OK. If there is one thing Blake does, it's open doors, but it can be hard to keep track of where each one might lead as you read through the poem.

Stanza 2

These lines ask where the Tyger was created, and also add to the growing image the reader has of the Tyger. The use of "distant deeps or skies" seems to refer to an otherworldly ("distant") place, perhaps a kind of Hell ("deeps") or Heaven ("skies"). The metaphor of "burning" from line 1 returns with the burning "fire" of the Tyger's eyes, adding to the power and fearfulness of the image. These lines are where a lot of people just totally get knocked off the tracks. Who the heck is "he"? It may be God, it may be the poet, it may be the artist, its unclear – what "he" is for sure, is the creator of this Tyger. The Tyger – that we know is a big, powerful, mysterious thing – must have a pretty big, powerful, mysterious creator. The "hand" returns from line 3 as well as "fire," and the image of flying on wings is added, alluding to supernatural power, but not necessarily a divine one. Also, the notion of daring is introduced, which will be echoed in the last stanza.

Stanza 3

This stanza continues the questioning of who/what the creator of the Tyger is (notice the "And" continues the thought from the previous stanza). What "shoulder" roughly means what kind of bodily strength could create the Tyger ("twist the sinews of thy heart"). What "art" refers to the skill that could put the Tyger all together. Lines 11 and 12 are more mysterious, in that they're really vague. From earlier in the poem we know that hands and eyes frame (stanza 1), hands seize (line 8), shoulders twist (lines 9 and 10), but what do these hands and feet do after the heart begins to beat? Whose hands and feet? Again, not sure. Whatever the answer, the use of "dread" increases the same big, powerful, mysterious quality known as "the sublime." These lines further question how the Tyger was created. Blake uses the metaphor of the blacksmith, who forms metal with a hammer, furnace (fire), and anvil. The stanza is very rhythmic, adding further to the chant-like quality that we talked about in lines 1-2. We also get the sense that the pace and volume is picking up, since the questions are now coming faster and Blake uses his first exclamation point.

Stanza 4

These lines are the most clearly "Christian" of the poem. Lines 17 and 18 are a bit ambiguous, and may refer to the casting down of the angels after Satan rebelled against God (see *Paradise Lost*). The same "he" reappears here as in line 7, but in a much more Christian setting, more closely referencing God than the other stanza. The "Lamb" is a traditional Christian symbol for Jesus Christ (who was "made" by God, though that is a *big can of worms*). It also refers back to Blake's poem "The Lamb" in *Songs of Innocence*. The final stanza echoes the first, but why? Along with the rhyming and chant-like rhythm, the repetition may be like a

refrain, like song's chorus. The repetition is also a very clever device to get us to notice the one change that is made to the stanza: "could" is switched to "dare." Now, instead of questioning the *ability* of the creator, Blake questions his *nerve*. Blake seems to challenge the courage of whatever/whoever tried or tries to contain ("frame") the big, powerful, mysteriousness of the Tyger.

Symbols

The Tiger : Evil (or Satan)

The Lamb: Goodness (or God) / Jesus

Distant Deeps: Hell

Skies: Heaven

Alliteration: Tiger, tiger, burning bright (line 1); frame thy fearful symmetry? (line 4)

Metaphor: Comparison of the tiger and his eyes to fire.

Anaphora: Repetition of *what* at the beginning of sentences or clauses.
Example: *What dread hand and what dread feet? / What the hammer? what the chain?*

Allusion: *Immortal hand or eye*: God or Satan

Allusion: *Distant deeps or skies*: hell or heaven

1.5 LETS US SUM UP

The poem *The Tiger* is one of the poems from the 'Songs of Experience' collection of poems written by William Blake. The poem's main theme pays attention to tigers creator and centers on the creation aspects. The poet compares the fierce, ferocious and brutal tiger to the gentle, frail and adorable lamb and wonders whether they have the same creator.

The word tiger is emphasized through repetition on the opening of the poem to create rhythm in the poem. The repetition is also meant to draw the interest of the readers. The poet's description of the tiger shows the poet's great use of imagery, alliteration and metaphors. The tiger is described as being brightly coloured and fire has been symbolically used to represent horror, fury, superiority and force.

The poet says that the tiger is merciless and cold blooded that even its creator must be immortal or else it might turn against its creator. Only an immortal would be attacked by such a ferocious creature and get to live. Therefore the creator must be immortal!

Once the creation of the tiger was completed and it set foot on the earth bursting with life there were a lot of cries that flooded heaven from the stars. The stars put down their spears in rejection of the tigers creation knowing only too well the wanton destruction that would follow in the world. The poet wants to know whether the creator was delighted by the outcome of his creations power and strength. Do the ferocious tiger and the adorable lamb share the same creator? These are questions that never

cease to linger in the mind of the poet. According to the poem, the tiger is the lamb's predator, this means the tiger was created to eliminate the lamb. This means that in nature there must be a balance and it is the tiger that brings this balance therefore whatever has a beginning must certainly have an end.

1.6 SUGGESTED READING

Hazard Adams. Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision. Cornell University Press. 1955.

John Beer. Blake's Humanism. Manchester University Press. 1968.

Bernard Blackstone. English Blake. Cambridge University Press. 1949.

Anthony Blunt. The Art of William Blake. Oxford University Press. 1959.

Lorraine Clark. Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic. Cambridge University Press. 1991.

Samuel Foster Damon. William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols. New York: Houghton Mifflin. 1924.

J. G. Davies. The Theology of William Blake. Clarendon Press. 1948.

George Wingfield Digby. Symbol and Image in William Blake. Clarendon Press. 1957.

1.7 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Q.1. What does the speaker mean by "fearful symmetry"?

A.1. In order to grasp the meaning of the phrase "fearful symmetry" in "The Tyger" by William Blake, it's important to understand it in the context of the entire poem. At the end of the first stanza and again at the end of the overall poem, Blake asks the question, "What immortal hand or eye, dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" Blake was a Christian writer, and in this poem he wonders whether God, who created so much good, could have also created a creature of such deadly power as a tiger. The poem asks,

Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

In these lines, "he" refers to God, and Blake wonders whether God would feel joy at the creation of the tiger, which, though visually beautiful, destroys and devours other creatures. "The Lamb" is symbolic of Jesus Christ (as well as referring to meek, innocent creatures), and Blake questions whether the same God who created Jesus Christ could possibly have created the frightening tiger.

The phrase "fearful symmetry" is a summation of the question that Blake poses, but does not really answer, in the poem. "Symmetry" means the beauty inherent in the excellence or perfection of proportion. The concept of symmetry would not normally be frightening. When Blake adds the adjective 'fearful' what he is trying to do here is convey the sheer awe and sense of wonder that the tiger inspires. The tiger is "fearful," in that it induces fear in all who see it. At the same time, it has "symmetry" in its appearance, a sense of balance and proportion traditionally associated with objects of great beauty. So in other words, Blake presents the tiger as being scary and beautiful at the same time.

As well as being scary and beautiful, the tiger is also sublime. Its savage wildness cannot be neatly contained, or "framed," as the poem has it. As the tiger emerges from the forests of the night, it isn't subjected to any boundaries; this is real life, not a painting where the action can be framed. Not even God himself, the "immortal hand or eye," can control or contain the tiger's fearsome beauty, which takes on a life of its own. "fearful" to symmetry, he suggests something that doesn't fit and that cannot be explained. In other words, he questions the creation of evil by God, when God is supposed to create only beauty and perfection.

Q.2. What are the themes of William Blake's poem "The Tyger?"

A.2. One theme of Blake's poem is the mystery of how a God that could create a creature as gentle as a lamb—and identify the lamb with his son, Jesus—could also make a creature as fearful and bloodthirsty as a tiger.

The poem thus explores two sides of God. One side is gentle, comforting, and inviting—like a lamb. The other is sublime: it strikes us with fear and awe.

The tiger, because of the fear it raises in us, is an example of the sublime. The sublime, usually associated with nature, includes those elements of the natural world that are both beautiful and yet fill us with a sense of God's grandeur and vast might. Mighty waterfalls crashing down or the view from icy mountain tops could fill us with a sense of awe and terror. So does Blake's tiger.

In the poem, the speaker wonders why God is both so gentle as to create the lamb and so terrifying as to create a dangerous predator. The poem dwells in the space of mystery, not offering answers but asking questions.

The divine source of creation is a theme in William Blake's poem "The Tyger," keeping suit with Blake's Pre-Romantic aesthetic and simultaneous interest in the Bible and irreverence toward the Church of England.

The poem questions, "What immortal hand or eye, / Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" In other words, the poet is questioning what kind of god could be responsible for creating a creature who is inherently destructive in nature. This is an especially potent question within the context of the Lamb referenced in the fifth stanza. How could a divine

creator create two such seemingly opposite animals--one that is the pinnacle of innocence and one that is a killer? Blake does not provide any answers to these questions, but rather simply opens a dialogue for a discussion of this duality.

This poem is ultimately also a reflection of the limitations of human understanding, particularly as we try to discern the moral questions of good versus evil.

UNIT-2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH : ODE : INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 William Wordsworth : Life and Works
- 2.3 Ode : Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood
 - 2.3.1 Poem (Text)
 - 2.3.2 Glossary
 - 2.3.3 Discussion
- 2.4 Lets Us Sum Up
- 2.5 Suggested Reading
- 2.6 Answer to Exercises

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall take up one of the famous poem by Willaim Wordsworth i.e. Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood. *“Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood”* (also known as "Ode", "Immortality Ode" or "Great Ode") is a poem by William Wordsworth, completed in 1804 and published in *“Poems”, in Two Volumes* (1807). The poem was completed in two parts, with the first four stanzas written among a series of poems composed in 1802 about childhood. The first part of the poem was completed on 27 March 1802. The fourth stanza of the ode ends with a question, and Wordsworth was finally able to answer it with seven additional stanzas completed in early 1804. It was first printed as "Ode" in 1807, and it was not until 1815 that it was edited and reworked to the version that is currently known, *“Ode : Intimations of Immortality”*.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the poem *“Ode : Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood”* by the eminent poet

William Wordsworth. After reading this Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of William Wordsworth;
- Analyse the poem “*Ode : Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*”
- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define Wordsworth’s poetic technique

2.2 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH : LIFE AND WORKS

William Wordsworth was an early leader of romanticism (a literary movement that celebrated nature and concentrated on human emotions) in English poetry and ranks as one of the greatest lyric poets in the history of English literature. William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England, the second child of an attorney. Unlike the other major English romantic poets, he enjoyed a happy childhood under the loving care of his mother and was very close to his sister Dorothy. As a child he wandered happily through the lovely natural scenery of Cumberland. In grammar school, Wordsworth showed a keen interest in poetry. He was fascinated by the epic poet John Milton (1608–1674).

From 1787 to 1790 Wordsworth attended St. John's College at Cambridge University. He always returned to his home and to nature during his summer vacations. Before graduating from Cambridge, he took a walking tour through France, Switzerland, and Italy in 1790. The Alps made an impression on him that he did not recognize until fourteen years later. Revolutionary passion in France made a powerful impact on Wordsworth, who returned there in November 1791. He wanted to improve his knowledge of the French language. His experience in France just after the French Revolution (1789; the French overthrew the ruling monarchy) reinforced his sympathy for common people and his belief in political freedom.

Wordsworth fell passionately in love with a French girl, Annette Vallon. She gave birth to their daughter in December 1792. However, Wordsworth had spent his limited funds and was forced to return home. The separation left him with a sense of guilt that deepened his poetic inspiration and resulted in an important theme in his work of abandoned women. Wordsworth's first poems, *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk*, were printed in 1793. He wrote several pieces over the next several years. The year 1797 marked the beginning of Wordsworth's long friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834). Together they published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Wordsworth wanted to challenge "the

gaudiness [unnecessarily flashy] and inane [foolish] phraseology [wording] of many modern writers." Most of his poems in this collection centered on the simple yet deeply human feelings of ordinary people, phrased in their own language. His views on this new kind of poetry were more fully described in the important "Preface" that he wrote for the second edition (1800).

Wordsworth's most memorable contribution to this volume was "*Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*," which he wrote just in time to include it. This poem is the first major piece to illustrate his original talent at its best. It skillfully combines matter-of-factness in natural description with a genuinely mystical (magical) sense of infinity, joining self-exploration to philosophical speculation (questioning). The poem closes on a subdued but confident reassertion of nature's healing power, even though mystical insight may be obtained from the poet.

In its successful blending of inner and outer experience, of sense perception, feeling, and thought, "*Tintern Abbey*" is a poem in which the writer becomes a symbol of mankind. The poem leads to imaginative thoughts about man and the universe. This cosmic outlook rooted in the self is a central feature of romanticism. Wordsworth's poetry is undoubtedly the most impressive example of this view in English literature.

Wordsworth, even while writing his contributions to the *Lyrical Ballads*, had been feeling his way toward more ambitious schemes. He had embarked on a long poem in unrhymed verse, "*The Ruined Cottage*," later referred to as "*The Peddler*." It was intended to form part of a vast philosophical poem with the title "*The Recluse, or Views of Man, Nature and Society*." This grand project never materialized as originally planned.

Abstract, impersonal speculation was not comfortable for Wordsworth. He could handle experiences in the philosophical-lyrical manner only if they were closely related to himself and could arouse his creative feelings and imagination. During the winter months he spent in Germany, he started work on his magnum opus (greatest work), *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind*. It was published after his death.

However, such a large achievement was still beyond Wordsworth's scope (area of capabilities) at this time. It was back to the shorter poetic forms that he turned during the most productive season of his long literary life, the spring of 1802. The output of these fertile (creative) months mostly came from his earlier inspirations: nature and the common people. During this time he wrote "To a Butterfly," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," "To the Cuckoo," "The Rainbow," and other poems.

The crucial event of this period was Wordsworth's loss of the sense of mystical oneness, which had sustained (lasted throughout) his highest imaginative flights. Indeed, a mood of despondency (depression) descended over Wordsworth, who was then thirty-two years old.

In the summer of 1802 Wordsworth spent a few weeks in Calais, France, with his sister Dorothy. Wordsworth's renewed contact with France only confirmed his disillusionment (disappointment) with the French Revolution and its aftermath.

During this period Wordsworth had become increasingly concerned with Coleridge, who by now was almost totally dependent upon opium (a highly addictive drug) for relief from his physical sufferings. Both friends came to believe that the realities of life were in stark contradiction (disagreement) to the visionary expectations of their youth. Wordsworth characteristically sought to redefine his own identity in ways that would allow him a measure of meaning. The new turn his life took in 1802 resulted in an inner change that set the new course his poetry followed from then on.

Poems about England and Scotland began pouring forth from Wordsworth's pen, while France and Napoleon (1769–1821) soon became Wordsworth's favorite symbols of cruelty and oppression. His nationalistic (intense pride in one's own country) inspiration led him to produce the two "Memorials of a Tour in Scotland" (1803, 1814) and the group entitled "Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty."

The best poems of 1802, however, deal with a deeper level of inner change. In Wordsworth's poem "Intimations of Immortality" (March–April), he plainly recognized that "The things which I have seen I now can see no more"; yet he emphasized that although the "visionary gleam" had fled, the memory remained, and although the "celestial light" had vanished, the "common sight" of "meadow, grove and stream" was still a potent (strong) source of delight and solace (comfort).

Thus Wordsworth shed his earlier tendency to idealize nature and turned to a more sedate (calm) doctrine (set of beliefs) of orthodox Christianity. Younger poets and critics soon blamed him for this "recantation" (renouncing), which they equated with his change of mind about the French Revolution. His *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822) are clear evidence of the way in which love of freedom, nature, and the Church came to coincide (come together at the same time) in his mind.

Nevertheless, it was the direction suggested in "Intimations of Immortality" that, in the view of later criticism, enabled Wordsworth to produce perhaps the most outstanding achievement of English romanticism: *The Prelude*. He worked on it, on and off, for several years and completed the first version in May 1805. *The Prelude* can claim to be the only true romantic epic (long, often heroic work) because it deals in narrative terms with the spiritual growth of the only true romantic hero, the poet. The inward odyssey (journey) of the poet was described not for its own sake but as a sample and as an adequate image of man at his most sensitive.

Wordsworth shared the general romantic notion that personal experience is the only way to gain living knowledge. The purpose of *The*

Prelude was to recapture and interpret, with detailed thoroughness, the whole range of experiences that had contributed to the shaping of his own mind. Wordsworth refrained from publishing the poem in his lifetime, revising it continuously. Most important and, perhaps, most to be regretted, the poet also tried to give a more orthodox tinge to his early mystical faith in nature.

Wordsworth's estrangement (growing apart) from Coleridge in 1810 deprived him of a powerful incentive to imaginative and intellectual alertness. Wordsworth's appointment to a government position in 1813 relieved him of financial care.

Wordsworth's undiminished love for nature made him view the emergent (just appearing) industrial society with undisguised reserve. He opposed the Reform Bill of 1832, which, in his view, merely transferred political power from the land owners to the manufacturing class, but he never stopped pleading in favour of the victims of the factory system.

In 1843 Wordsworth was appointed poet laureate (official poet of a country). He died on April 23, 1850.

2.3 ODE : INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

“Ode : Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” (also known as "Ode", "Immortality Ode" or "Great Ode") is a poem by William Wordsworth, completed in 1804 and published in Poems, in Two Volumes (1807). The poem was completed in two parts, with the first four stanzas written among a series of poems composed in 1802 about childhood. The first part of the poem was completed on 27 March 1802. The fourth stanza of the ode ends with a question, and Wordsworth was finally able to answer it with seven additional stanzas completed in early 1804. It was first printed as "Ode" in 1807, and it was not until 1815 that it was edited and reworked to the version that is currently known, *"Ode : Intimations of Immortality"*.

The poem is an irregular Pindaric ode in 11 stanzas that combines aspects of Coleridge's Conversation poems, the religious sentiments of the Bible and the works of Saint Augustine, and aspects of the elegiac and apocalyptic traditions. It is split into three movements: the first four stanzas discuss death, and the loss of youth and innocence; the second four stanzas describes how age causes man to lose sight of the divine, and the final three stanzas express hope that the memory of the divine allow us to sympathise with our fellow men. The poem relies on the concept of pre-existence, the idea that the soul existed before the body, to connect children with the ability to witness the divine within nature. As children mature, they become more worldly and lose this divine vision.

2.3.1 POEM (TEXT)

*The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.
(Wordsworth, "My Heart Leaps Up")*

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day.
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.
The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.
Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;

I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy Shepherd-boy.
Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone;
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.
Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.
Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,

With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.
Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,

A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!
O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may

Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.
Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy

Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.
And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

2.3.2 GLOSSARY

Boon : a gift

Bower : a rustic dwelling, a pleasant shady place in a garden.

Burthen : burden

Cataract : a waterfall

Copses : patches of brush or growth

Coronal : a crown of flowers

Corporeal : bodily

Creed : a system of belief

Culling : to gather

Diurnal : daily

Dower : a natural gift

Enmity : hatred

Equipage : a carriage

Fen : a swampy marshland

Fretted : irritated

Hebrides : a grouping of more than 500 islands off the western coast of Scotland

Jocund : joyful

Lea : an open tract of land

Linnet : a small finch (bird)

Lore : a traditional body of knowledge

Palsied : having lost strength from age

Pensive : deeply thoughtful

Porringer : a bowl for porridge

Recompense : compensation

Roe : a small deer

Sordid : morally degraded

Stagnant : stale or foul from standing, as a pool of water

Steep : to soak or saturate

Tabor : a small drum

Throstle : a song thrush (bird)

Vernal : of or pertaining to spring

2.3.3 DISCUSSION

The Speaker begins by declaring that there was a time when nature seemed mystical to him, like a dream, "Apparelled in celestial light." But now all of that is gone. No matter what he does, "The things which I have seen I now can see no more."

In the second stanza the speaker says that even though he can still see the rainbow, the rose, the moon, and the sun, and even though they are still beautiful, something is different...something has been lost: "But yet I

know, where'er I go, / That there hath past away a glory from the earth." The speaker is saddened by the birds singing and the lambs jumping in the third stanza. Soon, however, he resolves not to be depressed, because it will only put a damper on the beauty of the season. He declares that all of the earth is happy, and exhorts the shepherd boy to shout.

In the fourth stanza the speaker continues to be a part of the joy of the season, saying that it would be wrong to be "sullen / While Earth herself is adorning, / And the Children are culling / On every side, / In a thousand valleys far and wide." However, when he sees a tree, a field, and later a pansy at his feet, they again give him a strong feeling that something is amiss. He asks, "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

The fifth stanza contains arguably the most famous line of the poem: "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." He goes on to say that as infants we have some memory of heaven, but as we grow we lose that connection: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy!" As children this connection with heaven causes us to experience nature's glory more clearly. Once we are grown, the connection is lost. In the sixth stanza, the speaker says that as soon as we get to earth, everything conspires to help us forget the place we came from: heaven. "Forget the glories he hath known, and that imperial palace whence he came." The poet means that a newborn child has just come from God's place, so he is pure, but as he grows up, he is corrupted by the worldly things.

In the seventh stanza the speaker sees (or imagines) a six-year-old boy, and foresees the rest of his life. He says that the child will learn from his experiences, but that he will spend most of his effort on imitation: "And with new joy and pride / The little Actor cons another part." It seems to the speaker that his whole life will essentially be "endless imitation." In the eighth stanza the speaker speaks directly to the child, calling him a philosopher. The speaker cannot understand why the child, who is so close to heaven in his youth, would rush to grow into an adult. He asks him, "Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke / The years to bring the inevitable yoke, / Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?" In the ninth stanza (which is the longest at 38 lines) the speaker experiences a flood of joy when he realizes that through memory he will always be able to connect to his childhood, and through his childhood to nature.

In the tenth stanza the speaker harkens back to the beginning of the poem, asking the same creatures that earlier made him sad with their sounds to sing out: "Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!" Even though he admits that he has lost some of the glory of nature as he has grown out of childhood, he is comforted by the knowledge that he can rely on his memory. In the final stanza the speaker says that nature is still the stem of everything in his life, bringing him insight, fueling his memories and his belief that his soul is immortal: "To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

2.4 LETS US SUM UP

"Ode; Intimations of Immortality" is a long and rather complicated poem about Wordsworth's connection to nature and his struggle to understand humanity's failure to recognize the value of the natural world. The poem is elegiac in that it is about the regret of loss. Wordsworth is saddened by the fact that time has stripped away much of nature's glory, depriving him of the wild spontaneity he exhibited as a child.

As seen in "The world is too much with us," Wordsworth believes that the loss stems from being too caught up in material possessions. As we grow up, we spend more and more time trying to figure out how to attain wealth, all the while becoming more and more distanced from nature. The poem is characterized by a strange sense of duality. Even though the world around the speaker is beautiful, peaceful, and serene, he is sad and angry because of what he (and humanity) has lost. Because nature is a kind of religion to Wordsworth, he knows that it is wrong to be depressed in nature's midst and pulls himself out of his depression for as long as he can.

In the seventh stanza especially, Wordsworth examines the transitory state of childhood. He is pained to see a child's close proximity to nature being replaced by a foolish acting game in which the child pretends to be an adult before he actually is. Instead, Wordsworth wants the child to hold onto the glory of nature that only a person in the flush of youth can appreciate.

In the ninth, tenth and eleventh stanzas Wordsworth manages to reconcile the emotions and questions he has explored throughout the poem. He realizes that even though he has lost his awareness of the glory of nature, he had it once, and can still remember it. The memory of nature's glory will have to be enough to sustain him, and he ultimately decides that it is. Anything that we have, for however short a time, can never be taken away completely, because it will forever be held in our memory.

2.5 SUGGESTED READING

Neil Stephen Bauer. William Wordsworth: A Reference Guide to British Criticism, 1793-1899. G. K. Hall. 1978.

Arthur Beatty. William Wordsworth: His Doctrine and Art in Their Historical Relations. University of Wisconsin. 1922.

Frederika Beatty. William Wordsworth of Rydal Mount: An Account of the Poet and His Friends in the Last Decade. E. P. Dutton & Co.. 1939.

Natalie Bober. William Wordsworth, the Wandering Poet. T. Nelson. 1975.

Leslie Nathan Broughton. The Theocritean Element in the Works of William Wordsworth. M. Niemeyer. 1920.

2.6 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Q.1. How is childhood central to Wordsworth's conception of self in this poem, and how is that self affected by the aging process?

A.1. The central theme of this poem is that there is a “veil of forgetfulness” between our previous existence and our present life since birth—“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.” The way Wordsworth explains this separation is that just after birth, during early childhood, we still recall the joy and wonder of the place we came from (, “Heaven lies about us in our infancy”) but that gradually “Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own” and, like a nurse or nanny, “doth all she can/ To make her foster child, her Inmate Man,/Forget the glories he hath known”. The poem goes on to poetically describe the growing and maturing process , the making of plans (the metaphor is of a builder or architect planning and building his life), until maturity (“The years to bring the inevitable yoke”); the Romantic point of view now comes into focus in the poem, when “in our embers/Is something that does live/That nature yet remembers”. In other words, the multiple beauties of Nature (“calm weather”, “immortal sea”, “Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves”, the “splendour in the grass” etc. remind us of the beauty of the “heaven” we left when we were born into this world, so that in our old age we are again reassured that Nature “hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality”. Every stanza, every line of this ode explains the seemingly enigmatic statement at the beginning: “The child is father of the man.”

Q.2. Please explain the fifth stanza in Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."

A.2. In stanza five of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," "the narrator explains how humans start in an ideal world that slowly fades into a shadowy life..."

The poet introduces his idea that we dwell in heaven *before* we are born and joined with our bodies; as infants, we retain a strong sense or memory of what heaven is like.

But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home:

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

However, as a "growing boy..."

Shades *of the prison-house* begin to close...

But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy...

As the young boy begins to grow, the "prison house," a disconnection between our souls prior to birth, which has remained in infancy, is beginning to fade—though the young boy is still *just close enough* to heaven to see the light, know where it is coming from, and find joy in the world. Wordsworth infers that the young boy is approaching a precipice, *almost* ready to move into unknown and dark territories, where heaven's light will be no longer visible, and will be forgotten.

In childhood, according to Wordsworth, one's own immortality is intuited and so young people are perpetually joyful; they have a "heart of May" not because their bodies are strong and capable but because of their spiritual health.

Wordsworth makes his argument that what makes young people capable is not their physical health, but their spiritual well-being: close at hand because they are still young and still connected to the source of their soul's initial joy: heaven.

The youth moves even farther from heaven, closer to the "precipice," but *still* a glimmer of heaven remains on the fringes of his awareness: though he is growing up and growing away from "spiritual health," he is "still Nature's priest." As an early Romantic poet, one of the elements in life Wordsworth felt was so important was one's connection to nature and the natural world.

As the youth becomes a Man, his connection to his "early form" is lost in the realities and materialism of the world: its obligations, work and trials. Nothing is left of that joyful sense that had earlier tied the Man to heaven as a baby. He loses hope as he plods along, continually without release, through each "common day."

Q.3. What is the meaning of childhood, pre-existence, and memory in William Wordsworth's poem "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"?

A.3. Wordsworth weaves together all three concepts—childhood, memory, and our pre-existence—in his poem to create a message of how children, having come straight from the presence of God, retain some of that heavenliness about them and can remember bits of that; however, as time goes on, they lose that memory of God and heaven, and eventually are fully immersed in the world of men. Wordsworth mourns this loss of our pre-existence with God; he feels that children are the closest to God as a result, and that men should look to children for wisdom because they still retain that heavenly memory.

He starts the poem off in stanza I on the theme of that heavenly memory; he says that "there was a time" when he could see heaven in all of nature around him, but now "the things which I have seen I can see no more," meaning, that memory has faded with age and time. In stanzas III and IV he goes on to describe how he feels that children still hold that memory of "a glory" from God; he feels that "the heavens laugh with" the children because they can still remember. In stanza V he elaborates, saying that when we are born, we forget where we came from; we come "trailing

clouds of glory...from God." He continues by saying, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" only to have "man perceive it die away".

I don't have room to go on and on through each stanza, but the message is the same, and it is throughout the entire poem. He feels that when we come to earth, we lose our memory of our premortal existence with God. He feels that glory of being with God is lost. Children embody the memory of that glory, but the harsh realities of this world soon "imprison" our hearts and make us forget the beauties and joys of living with God. He mourns this loss of memory throughout the entire poem, and longs to have it back.

UNIT-3 S.T. COLERIDGE : THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 S.T. Coleridge : Life and Works
- 3.3 The Rime of Ancient Mariner
 - 3.3.1 Poem
 - 3.3.2 Glossary
 - 3.3.3 Discussion
- 3.4 Lets Us Sum Up
- 3.5 Suggested Reading
- 3.6 Answer to Exercises

3.0 INTRODUCTION

“*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*” (originally *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*) is the longest major poem by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, written in 1797–98 and published in 1798 in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

“*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*” tells the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea voyage. The mariner stops a man who is on his way to a wedding ceremony and begins to narrate a story. Coleridge uses narrative techniques such as personification and repetition to create a sense of danger, the supernatural, or serenity, depending on the mood in different parts of the poem.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the poem “*The Rime of Ancient Mariner*” by the eminent poet S. T. Coleridge. We shall also discuss some features of Pre Romantic Poetry. After reading this Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of S. T. Coleridge.
- Analyse the poem “*The Rime of Ancient Mariner*”;

- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define Coleridge's poetic technique.

3.2 S.T. COLERIDGE : LIFE AND WORKS

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a major poet of the English Romantic period, a literary movement characterized by imagination, passion, and the supernatural. He is also noted for his works on literature, religion, and the organization of society. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the tenth and last child of the vicar of Ottery Saint Mary near Devonshire, England, was born on October 21, 1772. After his father's death in 1782, he was sent to Christ's Hospital for schooling. He had an amazing memory and an eagerness to learn. However, he described his next three years of school as, "depressed, moping, friendless." In 1791 he entered Jesus College, Cambridge, England. Because of bad debts, Coleridge joined the 15th Light Dragoons, a British cavalry unit, in December 1793. After his discharge in April 1794, he returned to Jesus College, but he left in December without completing a degree.

The reason he left was because of his developing friendship with Robert Southey (1774–1843). Both young men were very interested in poetry and shared the same dislike for the neoclassic tradition (a return to the Greek and Latin classics). Both were also radicals in politics. From their emotional and idealistic conversations, they developed a plan for a "pantisocracy," a vision of an ideal community to be founded in America. This plan never came to be. On October 4, 1795, Coleridge married Sara Fricker, the sister of Southey's wife-to-be. By that time, however, his friendship with Southey had already ended.

The years from 1795 to 1802 were for Coleridge a period of fast poetic and intellectual growth. His first major poem, "The Eolian Harp," was published in 1796 in his *Poems on Various Subjects*. Its verse and theme contributed to the growth of English Romanticism, illustrating a blending of emotional expression and description with meditation.

From March to May 1796 Coleridge edited the *Watchman*, a periodical that failed after ten issues. While this failure made him realize that he was "not fit for public life," his next poem, "Ode to the Departing Year," shows that he still had poetic passion. Yet philosophy and religion were his overriding interests. In *Religious Musings* (published in 1796), he wrote about the unity and wholeness of the universe and the relationship between God and the created world.

The most influential event in Coleridge's career was his friendship with William Wordsworth (1770–1850) and his sister Dorothy from 1796 to 1810. This friendship brought a joint publication with Wordsworth of the *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of twenty-three poems, in September 1798. The volume contained nineteen of Wordsworth's poems and four of Coleridge's. The most famous of these was "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*." Coleridge later described the division of labour between the two

poets: Wordsworth was "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us," while Coleridge's "endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic."

A second, enlarged edition of Coleridge's *Poems* also appeared in 1798. It contained further lyrical and symbolic works, such as "*This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison*" and "*Fears in Solitude*." At this time Coleridge also wrote "*Kubla Khan*," perhaps the most famous of his poems, and began the piece "*Christabel*."

After spending a year in Germany with the Wordsworths, Coleridge returned to England and settled in the Lake District. For the next twelve years Coleridge had a miserable life. The climate made his many ailments worse. For pain relief he took laudanum, a type of opium drug, and soon became an addict. His marriage was failing, especially once Coleridge fell in love with Sara Hutchinson, Wordsworth's sister-in-law. Poor health and emotional stress affected his writing. However, in 1802, he did publish the last and most moving of his major poems, "*Dejection : An Ode*." After a two-year stay in Malta (a group of islands in the Mediterranean), he separated from his wife in 1806. The only bright point in his life was his friendship with the Wordsworths, but by 1810, after his return to the Lake District, their friendship had lessened. Coleridge then moved to London.

Meanwhile, Coleridge's poetry and his brilliant conversation had earned him public recognition, and between 1808 and 1819 he gave several series of lectures, mainly on William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and other literary topics. His only dramatic work, *Osorio*, written in 1797, was performed in 1813 under the title *Remorse*. "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan" were published in 1816.

Coleridge spent the last eighteen years of his life at Highgate, near London, England, as a patient under the care of Dr. James Gillman. There he wrote several works which were to have tremendous influence on the future course of English thought in many fields: *Biographia literaria* (1817), *Lay Sermons* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and *The Constitution of Church and State* (1829).

When Coleridge died on July 25, 1834, at Highgate, he left bulky manuscript notes that scholars of the mid-twentieth century found and began editing. When the material is eventually published, scholars and the general public will realize the extraordinary range and depth of Coleridge's philosophical thoughts, and will understand his true impact on generations of poets and thinkers.

3.3 THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (originally *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*) is the longest major poem by the English poet Samuel

Taylor Coleridge, written in 1797–98 and published in 1798 in the first edition of Lyrical Ballads. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* relates the experiences of a sailor who has returned from a long sea voyage. The mariner stops a man who is on his way to a wedding ceremony and begins to narrate a story. The wedding-guest's reaction turns from bemusement to impatience to fear to fascination as the mariner's story progresses, as can be seen in the language style: Coleridge uses narrative techniques such as personification and repetition to create a sense of danger, the supernatural, or serenity, depending on the mood in different parts of the poem. The poem may have been inspired by James Cook's second voyage of exploration (1772–1775) of the South Seas and the Pacific Ocean; Coleridge's tutor, William Wales, was the astronomer on Cook's flagship and had a strong relationship with Cook.

3.3.1 THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER (TEXT)

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,

And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird

That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout

The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:

As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!

Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her *ribs* through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, *her* looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things

Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt away
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!

She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge,
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still

The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!'
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,

And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,

The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,

As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

First Voice

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

Second Voice

Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

First Voice

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second Voice

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—

It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep away.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:

I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood

Which slopes down to the sea.

How loudly his sweet voice he rears!

He loves to talk with mariners

That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—

He hath a cushion plump:

It is the moss that wholly hides

The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,

'Why, this is strange, I trow!

Where are those lights so many and fair,

That signal made but now?'

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—

'And they answered not our cheer!

The planks looked warped! and see those sails,

How thin they are and sere!

I never saw aught like to them,

Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag

My forest-brook along;

When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,

And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,

That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—

(The Pilot made reply)

I am a-feared!—'Push on, push on!'

Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.

'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,

The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,

I stood on the firm land!

The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,

And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'

The Hermit crossed his brow.

'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—

What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched

With a woful agony,

Which forced me to begin my tale;

And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,

That agony returns:

And till my ghastly tale is told,

This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;

I have strange power of speech;

That moment that his face I see,

I know the man that must hear me:

To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!

The wedding-guests are there:

But in the garden-bower the bride

And bride-maids singing are:

And hark the little vesper bell,

Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.
He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

3.3.2 GLOSSARY

albatross

A type of great, white sea bird native to the oceans of the Southern Hemisphere. Since the publication of "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*", "albatross" has also come to mean "a constant, worrisome burden" or "an obstacle to success."

allegory

The depiction of abstract ideas through the use of characters and events. Allegory can be verbal, written, pictorial, or theatrical.

crucifix

An image of Christ's body on the cross or a bare cross commemorating Christ's crucifixion. Often worn around one's neck on a chain.

hermit

A person who has chosen to live in seclusion from society, often in a wood.

kirk

Church, derived from the Middle English.

limbo

In common usage, an intermediary space, often permanent. The original Catholic term refers to the realm to which the righteous but unbaptized are relegated after death, as they are denied admission to heaven.

liminal

An adjective referring to an elusive but sensually rich threshold between two different places or states.

shrieve

A word now obsolete, meaning to absolve someone else of his sin.

3.3.3 DISCUSSION

Stanzas 1-5

- But standing outside the door you've got this old bearded mariner who suddenly grabs one of the guys. The other two guys enter the wedding feast, and they're like,
- The Mariner starts to tell a story as if it were programmed into his brain, and the Wedding Guest is understandably impatient, but also kind of rude.

- The Mariner immediately ("eftsoons") lets go of the guest, but the magnetic draw of his eyes is even more powerful than his grip.
- The Wedding Guest has no hope of escape. He sits on a rock and listens like a little boy at story time. It's going to be a long night.

Stanzas 6-10

- The Mariner starts his story:
- When the Mariner's ship left port, everyone was in a good mood. They sailed out and watched the church ("kirk"), the hill, and finally, the town lighthouse disappear from sight as the ship "dropped" below the horizon.
- Days went by, and the sun rose on the "left" and set on the "right." Every day the sun seemed to rise "higher," signaling that they were approaching the equator. Finally the sun was directly over the ship's mast at noon, meaning they had reached the equator.
- Suddenly the Wedding Guest has second thoughts as he realizes just how long this story is going to be.
- They started playing the music! The bride is led to the dance hall by the entertainers ("merry minstrelsy")! The wine! The women! He's missing out!
- The guest "beats his breast" in a sign of distress.
- But, as we said, there's something about that mariner that gives him power over the Wedding Guest. Something about his eyes...

Stanzas 11-15

- The Mariner continues his story:
- Near the equator, a storm strikes. The storm is compared to a huge flying creature that chases the ship southward. It drives them all the way down to the Antarctic, where they start to see huge icebergs that look green in the clear water.
- The sailors find themselves in the middle of an ice field with ice "here," "there," everywhere! Obviously there are no people or animals in sight. The giant icebergs making loud cracking, groaning sounds, like noises you might hear in a trance ("swound").
- At this point, everyone on the boat is convinced that they're done for.

Stanzas 16-20

- Everyone is happy to see another living thing fly past the ship: an albatross! You know, the bird with huge, white wings that can fly long distances across the ocean? Yeah, that one.

- The albatross seems particularly friendly, almost as if it were a person. And not just a person, but a good "Christian soul." Somehow the bird seems related to God and peace.
- The sailors feed the bird, and naturally it sticks around. Soon enough, the ice that had trapped them splits wide enough apart for the ship to sail through.
- More good things happen to the ship.
- A south wind that will take them back up north again starts to blow. The albatross continues to follow the boat in good fortune, and everyone treats it like their pet.
- The albatross follows them around for nine nights, or "vespers." It's still pretty foggy outside, and the moon glows through the fog at night.
- Then people start to notice that the Mariner has this sickly look on his face. They try to cheer up him: "What's wrong, man? Don't let the fiends get you down!"
- And the mariner essentially says, "Remember that albatross that seemed so mysteriously connected to all our good fortune?" Gulp. Uh-huh? "Well, I kind of took my crossbow and shot it." YOU DID WHAT?!

Stanzas 21-25

- At least time doesn't stop after he kills the albatross. The sun keeps rising and setting just as before, and the weather remains misty. Since the sailors are now traveling north instead of south, the sun rises on the right and sets on the left, instead of the other way around, as in Part I, Stanza 6.
- But, leave not doubt, that bird is as dead as a doornail. The sailors' favorite pet is gone. If you have ever read any other literature about sailors, like Melville's *Moby-Dick*, you might know that they take their good luck charms *very* seriously.
- The sailors are convinced that the bird brought them the good winds, and they all agree ("averred") that the Mariner has done a bad, bad thing.
- But then the mist goes away, and the sailors change their minds. Instead of bringing the good winds (hooray!), the sailors decide that the bird was responsible for the fog that was making it so hard to see (boo!). They now blame the bird for *bad* luck. Those fickle sailors.
- Everything is going along quite well for the crew. They carve the mounds or "furrows" of the waves with the wind at their back. They make their way into uncharted territory.

Stanzas 26-30

- One tip for reading this poem: conditions change really fast. It only took a stanza for the sailors to decide that the albatross was really a bad luck charm instead of a good one. Here, it only takes a stanza for the weather to turn from delightful to dreadful.
- In short, they lose the good breeze at their backs, and without a breeze to fill the sails, the ship can't move. Suddenly, the "silence" of the uncharted waters sounds very ominous.
- The sun is small and "blood-red": it looks very far away. The sky has a strange fiery color, but their main problem is a lack of water. If they don't find some kind of land (or, heck, ice), they will all die of thirst.
- There's no wind. Literally. Not even a tiny gust. The ocean looks like glass, and the scene is so motionless that it could be a painting.
- Without any water, even the "boards" – the wood planks of the ship – start to dry up and "shrink." So...thirsty!
- Um, so, sailors, what was that you were saying about being glad that the albatross was dead?

Stanzas 31-34

- When the world gets dry, the ocean starts to "rot" from the dryness. Think of a pond that is drying up, and how it turns brackish (extra-salty) and starts growing nasty algae. The ocean around the ship is undergoing a similar transformation. Its surface turns "slimy" and gross, slimy creatures start to appear.
- These creatures aren't fish: they have "legs." Are they walking on the water, or what? Hard to tell what's going on here, but the poem is beginning to turn strange.
- Crazy, disturbing lights start to appear at night, and the water "burns" green, blue, and white. If you wanted to be scientific about it, you might guess that the Mariner is seeing the phenomenon of "phosphorescence." Some kinds of algae and tiny animals can literally "glow" in the water in certain times of year.
- But Coleridge isn't being scientific, he's being supernatural. Some of the sailors start to dream that a spirit deep under the ocean has been following the ship ever since they left the Antarctic. Needless to say, it's not a happy, fuzzy spirit.
- The crew becomes so thirsty that they stop producing saliva and cannot talk. But they can still give the stink-eye to the Mariner. "This is all *your* fault."
- In one of the poem's most famous images, they hang the dead albatross around his neck.

- Side note: First, when did they pick up the albatross? We never heard about that one. Second, that albatross must *really* stink to high heavens.
- Nozo the sailors finally realize that they are under a curse and the mariner, who killed the albatross is responsible for it.

Stanzas 35-40

- They have spent a long time drifting on the ocean with no wind or water, and everyone is sick of it. Then one day, the Mariner sees something coming from the west; as in, the opposite direction as the Mariner's sweet home England.
- He can't decide whether the thing is a small "speck" or a more spread-out "mist." The shape starts to come into focus and he became aware ("wist") of what looked like. It moves around in zigzag fashion as if escaping supernatural forces. Hey, join the club.
- The speaker finally realizes what it is, and he wants to shout, but his mouth is too dry. His lips are sunburned and caked with dried blood. When you're as talkative as the Mariner, you know its trouble when you're so dehydrated that you can't speak.
- Fortunately, he has a solution that would make the guy from the *Survivor Man* TV show proud. He bites his arm to wet his lips with his own blood, just enough so that he can shout
- He shouts that he sees a sail.
- His crewmates are so happy that they shout "gramercy!" meaning, "Thank heavens!"
- The ship is coming their way. Maybe their crew will have water.

Stanzas 41-45

- The sun is setting in the west, and the ship is approaching from the west. Here Coleridge provides a complicated image to illustrate how the ship is really – get ready for it – a Ghost Ship!
- Here's the image: the mysterious ship sails in front of the setting sun, and rather than blocking out part of the sun completely, it just looks like the sun has bars in front of it. In other words, the ship looks like a skeleton.
- The ship's sails aren't normal sails – you know, the kind that can hold wind. Instead, they look like tattered spider webs, or "gossamers." Its hull looks like ribs. Worst of all, he can now see that the crew consists of only two people: Death and Life-in-Death.
- Well, shoot.

- We imagine death as the hooded guy with the sickle, or something like that, while Life-in-Death is a woman who appears relatively normal except for her pale, diseased-looking skin.

Stanzas 46-51

- When the ship approaches, Death and Life-in-Death are playing a game. (Please be Parcheesi, please be Parcheesi.) They are playing dice (no!) to decide who will gain the upper hand.
- We have the feeling that the fate of the Mariner and his friends rests on this dice game.
- We have a winner: Life-in-Death! She's just won power over a bunch of raggedy, thirsty sailors. She's probably wishing she had gone on *The Price is Right* instead – that dinette set is looking pretty good right about now.
- But nothing happens...yet.
- Night falls, and the mysterious Ghost Ship ("spectre bark") sails away.
- Everyone is waiting to see what will happen. Coleridge plays the scene like a suspense movie, complete with dew going drip-drip from the sails. The partial moon rises, and it looks like a "horn," or, if you prefer, a smiley face. One of the "horns" of the moon has a star next to it. This seems to be a bad sign, for some reason.
- Suddenly, everyone on the ship begins to die. They don't make a fuss but kind of just slump over. However, they do make sure to curse the Mariner with their eyes before they go.
- There are 200 men on the boat besides the Mariner, and they all die. Their souls escape their dead bodies and shoot past the Mariner like the crossbow with which he shot the Albatross.

Stanzas 52-55

- So Coleridge isn't super-obvious about it, but at this point the Wedding Guest (remember him?) interrupts the story to make another futile attempt at escape.
- After the Mariner tells this ghost story, the Wedding Guest notices that the Mariner looks a bit like a ghost himself: skinny, bony, with eerily bright eyes. Yup, all ghost-like features. Putting two and two together, the Wedding Guest freaks out.
- But the Mariner reassures him that he's no ghost. He was the only one on the ship who didn't die. He doesn't exactly give the Wedding Guest a lot of comfort, but just goes on with his story.
- The Mariner's story continues:

- So now he's by himself on this ship with a lot of dead people, all of whom have just cursed him. He wishes that the spirit of some dead saint would take pity on him.
- At least the slimy creatures are still there. He thinks what a shame it is that all these nice men have died, and he and the slimy things are still living.

Stanzas 56-60

- He tries to say a prayer to save his soul, but then he hears an evil voice like a little devil on his shoulder that saps his enthusiasm for praying.
- He closes his eyes to avoid looking at all the miserable sights around him. He has noticed that the bodies of all the dead sailors don't rot. Also, they're still cursing him with their looks. Let it go, guys.
- Their curses are worse than the curse of a poor little orphan. And that's really bad, because an orphan could drag an angel down to Hell. For a full week, the eyes of the dead sailors emanate this terrible curse.

Stanzas 61-66

- At night, the moon rises again, and the moonlight falls on the ship like frost.
- He still sees all kinds of strange bright colours, like red on the water, and a bright, "elfish" white light in the trail of the water snakes.
- Wait, when were there water snakes? Oh, yeah, the "slimy things." Wait, we thought those had legs.
- He looks at the water snakes swimming in the shadow of his ship: One Snake, Two Snakes, Red Snake, Blue Snake. They are all different colours, and they make crazy phosphorescent patterns in the water.
- He kind of gets excited watching the snakes. Look at the colours! He realizes that these hideous snakes are kind of beautiful. Without knowing it, he blesses the wriggly little creatures in his heart.
- This blessing for fellow creatures is all it takes to remove the horrible curse that the Mariner gained from killing the albatross. He has been wearing that albatross around his neck this whole time, but suddenly it falls off and sinks to the bottom of the ocean.
- He can pray again without being stopped by evil whispers. As Martha Stewart would say, "It's a *good thing*."

Stanzas 67-69

- Not only can he pray again, but he can also sleep again. Exhausted from all the endless cursing and dying of thirst, he falls asleep. He credits Mary, the mother of Christ, for this sleep.
- Naturally, he dreams about drinking water. But his dream actually comes true: it rains when he wakes up. Sailors are really good at collecting rainwater from their sails and in buckets, and the Mariner has all the water he needs.
- (In reality, a severely dehydrated person like that would probably die from drinking too much water too fast, but we won't quibble with Coleridge on this one.)
- He feels as light as if he had died and was now a ghost. But a happy ghost.

Stanzas 71-75

- Now that the curse has been lifted, more good news follows. He hears a loud wind in the distance. The *sound* of the wind rattles the dried out ("sere") sails. But it's important to remember that the wind hasn't reached the ship yet.
- He sees new activity in the sky. More stars return, and he sees things he calls "fire-flags." We have to think he's either talking about weird lightning flashes – but without clouds to block the stars – or the Aurora (in this case, the Southern Lights).
- He sees a black cloud, the partial moon and lightning falling in perfectly vertical fashion. We're not sure exactly what's going on, except that these are wild descriptions.

Stanzas 76-80

- OK, so what was the point of the wind if it "never reached the ship"? The wind was supposed to make the ship sail again, but it does no good at a distance. Except if you have a mysterious force moving your ship: score!
- Like a scene from *Frankenstein*, the dead sailors rise up amid the thunder and lightning. They look like zombies and don't say a word. But they all do the jobs they are supposed to do, helping to sail the ship.
- If you're starting to suspect that the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean* borrowed a lot of material from Coleridge, perhaps you are right.
- The Mariner goes with the flow, and he basically says, "I don't care if these guys are just bodies with no souls, as long as we get moving again, I'll help out."

- The Wedding Guest interrupts the story again. He's not the bravest Wedding Guest we've ever heard of. He's afraid that the Mariner is now telling a zombie story.
- The Mariner reassures the frightened Wedding Guest that the bodies of the sailors were possessed not by their original owners, but by a bunch of good spirits, like angels.
- The Mariner continues his story.
- He knew that spirits were angels because, when dawn comes, they all escape from the bodies and break out into song.

Stanzas 81-85

- The spirits float around the ship and sing like birds. They are like an entire symphony of voices. They stop singing after dawn, but the sails continue to make a pleasant sound like a stream following through a forest.
- The ship keeps moving, but there's no wind. What gives? The Mariner is sticking with his theory that someone or something is moving the boat from underneath the ocean.

Stanzas 86-92

- The Mariner explains his theory in more detail. The same spirit "nine fathoms deep" that earlier caused such problems near the Antarctic has now decided to play nice and guide the ship up to the equator. At noon the sun is again directly above the mast, which means that we're back at the equator.
- The ship stops and remains motionless for a bit. Then, all of a sudden, the ship takes off as if someone has just released a really fast horse or, to use a more modern metaphor, as if someone has put the gas pedal to the floor. Full use of accelerator in an automobile.
- The force of this movement knocks out the Mariner, and he loses consciousness. While in a stupor, he hears two mysterious voices talking. We're back in supernatural territory, here.
- One of the voices wants to know if the Mariner is the fellow, who shot the nice albatross. He sounds judgmental.
- The other voice sounds gentler and says that the Mariner has done a lot of penance for his mistake, and he'll do more penance in the future.
- We've got a bit of a good cop/bad cop routine here.

Stanzas 93-98

- The two voices continue their dialogue, and Coleridge helps us figure out who is talking by adding stage directions: "First Voice" and "Second Voice."
- The first voice is curious and the second voice is knowledgeable.
- The first voice asks how the ocean has made the ship move, and the second voice replies that the ocean is just following orders from the moon, personified as a woman. The moon is happy with the Mariner, but she wasn't before.
- The first voice isn't satisfied and wants to know how the ship is moving so fast. The second voice explains that the air is creating a vacuum in front of the ship and then pushing it forward from the behind.
- The second voice urges the ship to move faster. They have a lot of ground to cover before the Mariner wakes up.

Stanzas 99-105

- The Mariner awakes from his trance and finds all the dead sailors still hanging around on the ship's deck. He thinks that a slaughterhouse would be a more appropriate place to see a sight like that.
- But the sailors' curse has been lifted, and the ocean returns to its normal colour. The Mariner tries not to look back on the past horrors he has seen. He's still pretty frightened that they will catch up with him again.
- He feels a pleasant wind on his body, but the wind seems to be located *only* around him and not the ocean outside the ship.

Stanzas 106-110

- The strange wind is localized just around the boat, but it means that the Mariner can sail again, even as the boat is still being pushed from beneath.
- The Mariner ends up back at the port he left from so, so long ago. He sees the lighthouse, hill, and church come back into view.
- It's a beautiful sight, and naturally, the Mariner is overjoyed.

Stanzas 111-115

- The moonlight shines across the bay, but another set of lights soon appears. He sees shapes in "crimson" or red colors. These turn out to be angels ("seraphs"). All the dead men who came back to life to sail the ship go back to being dead, and the angels are standing beside their bodies.

- These must be the angels that took over the sailors' bodies. They wave at the Mariner as if to say, "Our work is done. We're gonna peace out."
- They don't speak to the Mariner, but he feels delighted anyway.

Stanzas 116-18

- The Mariner hears a boat coming toward the ship. A "pilot" or oarsman and his young crewmate are coming to rescue him.
- There's another man on the boat, too: the nice old "hermit." A hermit is someone, often very religious, who lives his or her life in solitude. This particular hermit lives in the forest.
- The Mariner looks forward to the hermit clearing away his sins by asking him questions, by "shrieking" his soul, like a confession.

Stanzas 119-125

- The hermit lives by himself in the woods near the ocean, and he likes to gab it up with sailors who have just come back from long trips. He's very religious and can be seen frequently kneeling down to pray on the lush moss in his forest.
- The Mariner hears voices from the rescue boat. It's probably the pilot. The pilot wants to know what all those crazy red lights were. He thinks they were a rescue signal.
- The hermit agrees that the lights were weird, and he notices that the ship and its sails look dry, like tattered, fallen leaves. We can see that the hermit is going to compare everything to the forest.
- The pilot becomes afraid, but the hermit isn't too concerned.

Stanzas 126-130

- What's that? Some kind of strange, rumbling sound echoes across the bay. Oh, wait, that's just the sound of the ship sinking. It sinks fast, kind of like the albatross when it fell into the ocean.
- The Mariner ends up floating in the water. He seems basically comatose.
- The pilot swoops by to pick him, and the small boat spins from the suction created by the sinking ship.
- The pilot and hermit think the Mariner is dead, so when he moves his lips, they both freak out. The pilot faints and the hermit prays.
- The Mariner is like, "OK, if you fellows aren't going to help, I'll just row us out of here myself." Meanwhile, the pilot's young assistant goes batty and starts laughing in a fit, saying that the Mariner must be a devil.

Stanzas 131-135

- Finally, they make it back to shore.
- Immediately the Mariner starts pestering the hermit to question ("shrieve") him like an over-eager kid in a maths class: "Call on me! Call on me!"
- The hermit plays along and asks a surprisingly dull question: what kind of man are you?
- At this point, the Mariner feels a sudden pain: "Must...tell...ridiculously long...story."
- As soon as he tells the story to the hermit, he feels a lot better.
- Now, the Mariner explains to the Wedding Guest that he often has this painful feeling that he needs to get the story off his chest, and the pain persists until he tells it.
- He travels from place to place looking for certain people who *need* to hear his tale. He's a serial storyteller.

Stanzas 136-141

- The Mariner has now concluded his story, and he notes that the wedding sounds like quite the party. The bride and groom are singing in the garden, but all the Mariner wants to do is to say his night prayers.
- The Mariner says he knows what it means to feel lonely and distant from God.
- He says that it's much better to walk to church with a friend than to go to a marriage feast. He wants to see the entire community bow down in prayer.
- The Mariner summarizes his long sermon with the message that only people who love God's creations – men, birds, and animals included – can pray well and gain salvation.
- You have to love big things as well as small things, he says. And with that, he's out of sight.

Stanzas 142-143

- For an old guy, the Mariner moves fast. He disappears and takes his bright eyes and frosty ("hoary") beard with him.
- Obviously moved by the Mariner's story, the Wedding Guest decides not to enter the wedding after all. (Can we just note: weddings are getting a really bad rap from the characters in this poem! You'd think the bride and groom had robbed a convenience store after the ceremony was over.)

- The Wedding Guest is totally befuddled, as if he has lost his senses. He just kind of staggers away in a stupor. He wakes up the next day "a sadder and a wiser man."

3.4 LETS SUM UP

Three guys are on the way to a wedding celebration when an old sailor (the Mariner) stops one of them at the door (we'll call him the Wedding Guest). Using his hypnotic eyes to hold the attention of the Wedding Guest, he starts telling a story about a disastrous journey he took. The Wedding Guest *really* wants to go and attend the party, but he can't pry himself away from this grizzled old mariner. The Mariner begins his story. They left port, and the ship sailed down near Antarctica to get away from a bad storm, but then they get caught in a dangerous, foggy ice field. An albatross shows up to steer them through the fog and provide good winds, but then the Mariner decides to shoot it.

Pretty soon the sailors lose their wind, and it gets really hot. They run out of water, and everyone blames the Mariner. The ship seems to be haunted by a bad spirit, and weird stuff starts appearing, like slimy creatures that walk on the ocean. The Mariner's crewmates decide to hang the dead albatross around his neck to remind him of his error.

Everyone is literally dying of thirst. The Mariner sees another ship's sail at a distance. He wants to yell out, but his mouth is too dry, so he sucks some of his own blood to moisten his lips. He's like, "A ship! We're saved." Sadly, the ship is a ghost ship piloted by two spirits, Death and Life-in-Death, who have to be the *last* people you'd want to meet on a journey. Everyone on the Mariner's ship dies.

The wedding guest realizes, "Ah! You're a ghost!" But the Mariner says, "Well, actually, I was the only one who didn't die." He continues his story: he's on a boat with a lot of dead bodies, surrounded by an ocean full of slimy things. Worse, these slimy things are nasty water snakes. But the Mariner escapes his curse by unconsciously blessing the hideous snakes, and the albatross drops off his neck into the ocean.

The Mariner falls into a sweet sleep, and it finally rains when he wakes up. A storm strikes up in the distance, and all the dead sailors rise like zombies to pilot the ship. The sailors don't actually come back to life. Instead, angels fill their bodies, and another supernatural spirit under the ocean seems to push the boat. The Mariner faints and hears two voices talking about how he killed the albatross and still has more penance to do. These two mysterious voices explain how the ship is moving.

After a speedy journey, the ship ends up back in port again. The Mariner sees angels standing next to the bodies of all his crewmates. Then a rescue boat shows up to take him back to shore. The Mariner is happy that a person called "the hermit" is on the rescue boat. The hermit is in a good mood. All of a sudden there's a loud noise, and the Mariner's ship sinks. The hermit's boat picks up the Mariner.

When they get on shore, the Mariner is desperate to tell his story to the hermit. He feels a terrible pain until the story had been told.

In fact, the Mariner says that he still has the same painful need to tell his story, which is why he stopped the Wedding Guest on this occasion. Wrapping up, the Mariner tells the Wedding Guest that he needs to learn how to say his prayers and love other people and things. Then the Mariner leaves, and the Wedding Guest no longer wants to enter the wedding. He goes home and wakes up the next day, as the famous last lines go, "a sadder and a wiser man

3.5 SUGGESTED READING

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3.6 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Q.1. How does this story explore penance and redemption?

A.1. A dream by Coleridge’s friend, John Cruikshank, was the inspiration for “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” Coleridge and poet William Wordsworth discussed Cruikshank’s dream, with Wordsworth suggesting that Coleridge incorporate elements of the dream into a poem based on a crime committed on a ship at sea. The crime, Wordsworth suggested, should be the heart of the narrative, driving the development of plot, character, and theme. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” reflects Wordsworth’s suggestions, but the poem is more complex than a tale of crime and punishment. The Mariner’s crime is committed against God, not man, and the narrative develops as an examination of sin, penance, and redemption. Moreover, the nature of the Mariner’s crime underscores the darkest aspect of human nature—the desire to destroy simply for the love of destruction.

The Mariner’s killing the albatross serves no apparent purpose. The bird poses no threat to him or to his shipmates; the albatross, in fact, seems to have brought the men luck after a violent storm had driven their ship off

course, sending it into the icy realm of the South Pole. Coming out of the snow and fog, the bird escorts the ship away from the South Pole and flies nearby as it follows the ship north into fair weather. The albatross comes when the men call it “for food or play,” and it rests on the ship at night, perching on the mast and rigging. The “sweet bird” remains with the ship day after day, a faithful companion, until the Mariner shoots it with his crossbow, committing a deliberate act of destruction with no purpose at all, except to exercise his will.

Much suffering ensues before the Mariner realizes that in destroying the albatross, he has committed a grievous sin against God; recalling the act many years later, he tells the wedding guest, “I had done a hellish thing.” It is only when he finds himself alone on the ship, surrounded by the dead, becalmed on a “rotting sea,” and unable to pray that his selfish pride is broken and he recognizes his place in creation. Looking beyond the shadow of the ship, he sees in the moonlight the beauty of God’s handiwork in the water snakes that “coiled and swam” in the sea, “every track ... a flash of golden fire.” Overwhelmed with love for the “happy living things” too beautiful to describe, he blesses them and takes a first step on a long road toward redemption.

When the wedding guest encounters the Mariner, now so old he is “ancient,” the Mariner will not be denied the opportunity to tell his story yet again, reliving the experience while sharing the truth it imparted to him. Many years after killing the albatross, the gravity of his sin still haunts him; when the “agony returns,” he must confess his sin once more by telling his “ghastly tale.” He continues to do penance for his sin by traveling “from land to land” to find men who most need to learn what he has to teach them, the spiritual truth summarized at the poem’s conclusion:

He prayeth best, who loveth best

All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,

He made and loveth all.

Through great suffering, the ancient Mariner had learned the true nature of mankind’s relationship to God and to God’s creation. He understands that senseless destruction is born of pride, humility is born of suffering, love is born of humility, and only in love can salvation be found.

The Ancient Mariner and his crew are forced to suffer for his unnecessary killing of the albatross, but this is not yet penance, as this curse visits involuntary suffering on the men.

The Ancient Mariner is redeemed and released from this suffering only when he recognizes that it was wrong to kill the albatross. He finally realizes that all of creation is formed by God and that all of it should therefore be treated with reverence and respect. He learns not only to understand but also to feel deeply that God loves all his creatures, not just

humankind, and that is best for humans to imitate God's love towards nature.

At this point, the Ancient Mariner does penance. Penance means to take on a voluntary burden to atone for having sinned. The mariner's penance is to go around the world telling his story to people who seem most in need of hearing it, which is how the wedding guest hears it. The mariner has been redeemed but has not yet fully been relieved of the agony his memories bring him. The poem suggests that it can be difficult to atone for having done wrong, even after having been forgiven.

Q.2. What does the Albatross symbolize in the poem of Rime of Ancient Mariner?

A.2. The albatross is symbolic of a few things. As a living bird, the albatross is symbolic of innocence, goodness, God's creation, and even God's love and salvation. In stanza 16 of part 1, the sailors and readers are introduced to the albatross.

At length did cross an albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

Notice how they hail it as a sign from God. Additionally, it is a good sign because the bird is shown as similar to a Christian soul. That would be something positive and eternal. The bird is beautiful and the sailors see it as a sign of God watching over them. Unfortunately, the Mariner shoots and kills the bird. The dead albatross is then symbolic of sin and bad luck. Many of the hardships that the sailors endure from this point forward are blamed on the Mariner's actions of killing a good creature of God's creation. Coleridge is fairly overt with comparing the killing of the albatross with the crucifixion of Christ. The final stanza of part 2 shows the albatross hanging from the Mariner's neck instead of the cross. Instead of the cross, the albatross
About my neck was hung.

It isn't until the mariner finally learns to pray that the albatross falls into the ocean and the curse is finally broken, and that is another reminder of how the albatross is symbolically pointing toward faith and God.

Q.3. What are examples of oxymoron in the poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"?

A.3. In the fourteenth stanza of Part One, the speaker describes a snow-filled crevice that they sail past; it is said that it gives off a "dismal sheen." This is an oxymoron because dismal means gloomy and depressing, while sheen means shining or resplendent.

In Part Five, it is oxymoronic that "with his cruel bow he laid full low / the harmless Albatross." "Cruel" and "harmless" are opposites that are juxtaposed here to describe the fateful killing of the bird. In the next

stanza, another example exists: "He loved the bird that loved the man / who shot him with his bow." The bird's love for his killer is an odd and wholly unexpected sentiment.

A third and final example of oxymoron appears in the poem's penultimate stanza in describing the mariner: "The Mariner, whose eye is bright, / Whose beard with age is hoar." Bright eyes are associated with the young and vital, which the mariner is not; hoar, however, means to be gray-haired or bearded with age, which of course the ancient mariner would be.

Oxymora are figures of speech which involve some kind of contradiction in terms. In Part II, the speaker says "Water, water, every where, / Nor any drop to drink." This might qualify as an oxymoron because it seems contradictory to be surrounded by water while being unable to drink any of it. However, this is easily explained away by the fact that it is saltwater and is therefore unfit to drink.

The most obvious example of an oxymoron in this poem occurs in Part III. The mariner and his crew encounter the character "LIFE-IN-DEATH." She (Life-in-Death) and Death are rolling dice, gambling over the fates of the men on the ship. Death wins all of the crew and they are killed. But "Life-in-Death" wins the mariner. She decides to put a curse on him.

Life and death are clearly contradictory terms. This combination fits the fate of the mariner. He is cursed to remain alone (alive) with his ship full of dead men. He is alive but in a world of death. His condition is worse than the dead. Had he died, he would have escaped lightly, but he was slated for living dead conditions because he had to atone.



Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Bachelor of Arts

UGEN-103

Literature in English 1750-1900

BLOCK

2

ROMANTIC POETRY (II) AND VICTORIAN POETRY

UNIT-4

P.B. Shelley : *Ode to the West Wind*

UNIT-5

John Keats : *Ode to Autumn*

UNIT-6

Lord Alfred Tennyson : *Ulysses*

UNIT-7

Robert Browning : *My Last Duchess*

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This block consists of 4 units

Unit-4 turns to the second generation of romantic poet P.B. Shelley. He was a key member of a close circle of visionary poets that included Lord Byron, John Keats, and Leigh Hunt. In this unit, you will study, the poem *Ode to the West Wind*. This poem symbolizes Nature's supreme and ultimate two-fold powers destructive and constructive.

Unit-5 discusses the romantic poet, John Keats. He is the most promising of all the young poets of the Romantic age. In this unit, we will study Keats' *Ode to Autumn*, which is one of the finest and purest poems of nature.

Unit-6 discusses the poet, Lord Alfred Tennyson. He is a representative poet of the Victorian age in English literature. In this unit, you will study his poem, *Ulysses*. This poem can be described as the intellectual ambition of the Victorian period and it finds its fullest poetic expression.

Unit-7 discusses the poet Robert Browning's poem *My Last Duchess*. It is a dramatic monologue in which Browning presents a psychological analysis of the character of the Duke who represents the culture and morality of the Italian Renaissance.

UNIT-4 SHELLEY : ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 P.B. Shelley : Life and works
- 4.3 Ode to the West Wind
 - 4.3.1 Poem
 - 4.3.2 Glossary
 - 4.3.3 Discussion
- 4.4 Lets Sum up
- 4.5 Suggested reading
- 4.6 Answer to Exercises

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Percy Bysshe Shelley was one of the major English Romantic poets, who is regarded by some as among the finest lyric and philosophical poets in the English language, and one of the most influential. A radical in his poetry as well as in his political and social views, Shelley did not see fame during his lifetime, but recognition of his achievements in poetry grew steadily following his death. Shelley was a key member of a close circle of visionary poets and writers that included Lord Byron, John Keats, Leigh Hunt.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall discuss the poem ‘Ode to the West Wind’ by the eminent poet P.B. Shelley. We shall also discuss some features of Pre Romantic Poetry. After reading this Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of P.B. Shelley;
- Analyse the poem ‘Ode to the West Wind’
- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define Shelley’s poetic technique.

4.2 P.B. SHELLEY : LIFE AND WORKS

Born in Broadbridge Heath, England, on August 4, 1792, Percy Bysshe Shelley is one of the epic poets of the 19th century, and is best known for his classic anthology verse works such as *Ode to the West Wind* and *The Masque of Anarchy*. He is also well known for his long-form poetry, including *Queen Mab* and *Alastor*. He went on many adventures with his second wife, Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*. He drowned in a sudden storm while sailing in Italy in 1822.

Childhood and Adolescence

Percy Bysshe Shelley, a controversial English writer of great personal conviction, was born on August 4, 1792. He grew up in the country, in the village Broadbridge Heath, just outside of West Sussex. He learned to fish and hunt in the meadows surrounding his home, often surveying the rivers and fields with his cousin and good friend Thomas Medwin. His parents were Timothy Shelley, a squire and member of Parliament, and Elizabeth Pilfold. As the oldest of their seven children, Shelley left home at age of 10 to study at Syon House Academy, roughly 50 miles north of Broadbridge Heath and 10 miles west of central London. After two years, he enrolled at Eton College. While there, he was severely bullied, both physical and mentally, by his classmates. Shelley retreated into his imagination. Within a year's time he had published two novels and two volumes of poetry, including *St Irvyne* and *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*.

In the fall of 1810, Shelley entered University College, Oxford. It seemed a better academic environment for him than Eton, but after a few months, a dean demanded that Shelley visit his office. Shelley and his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg had co-authored a pamphlet titled *The Necessity of Atheism*. Its premise shocked and appalled the faculty ("...The mind cannot believe in the existence of a God."), and the university demanded that both boys either acknowledge or deny authorship. Shelley did neither and was expelled.

Shelley's parents were so exasperated by their son's actions that they demanded he forsake his beliefs, including vegetarianism, political radicalism and sexual freedom. In August of 1811, Shelley eloped with Harriet Westbrook, a 16-year-old woman his parents had explicitly forbidden him to see. His love for her was centered on a hope that he could save her from committing suicide. They eloped, but Shelley was soon annoyed with her and became interested in a woman named Elizabeth Hitchener, a schoolteacher who inspired his first major poem, *Queen Mab*. The poem's title character, a fairy originally invented by Shakespeare and described in *Romeo and Juliet*, describes what a utopian society on earth would be like.

In addition to long-form poetry, Shelley also began writing political pamphlets, which he distributed by way of hot air balloons, glass bottles and paper boats. In 1812 he met his hero, the radical political philosopher William Godwin, author of *Political Justice*.

Harriet and Mary

Although Shelley's relationship with Harriet remained troubled, the young couple had two children together. Their daughter, Elizabeth Ianthe, was born in June of 1813, when Shelley was 21. Before their second child was born, Shelley abandoned his wife and immediately took up with another young woman. Well-educated and precocious, his new love interest was named Mary, the daughter of Shelley's beloved mentor, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, the famous feminist author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. To Shelley's surprise, Godwin was not in favor of Shelley dating his daughter. In fact, Godwin so disapproved that he would not speak with Mary for the next three years. Shelley and Mary fled to Paris, taking Mary's sister, Jane, with them. They departed London by ship and, mostly traveling by foot, toured France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland, often reading aloud to each other from the works of Shakespeare and Rousseau.

When the three finally returned home, Mary was pregnant. So was Shelley's wife, Harriet. The news of Mary's pregnancy brought Harriet to her wit's end. She requested a divorce and sued Shelley for alimony and full custody of their children. Harriet's second child with Shelley, Charles, was born in November of 1814. Three months later, Mary gave birth to a girl. The infant died just a few weeks later. In 1816, Mary gave birth to their son, William.

A dedicated vegetarian, Shelley authored several works on the diet and spiritual practice, including "A Vindication of Natural Diet" (1813). In 1815, Shelley wrote *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*, a 720-line poem, now recognized as his first great work. That same year, Shelley's grandfather passed away and left him an annual allowance of 1,000 British pounds.

Friendship with Lord Byron

In 1816, Mary's step-sister, Claire Clairmont, invited Shelley and Mary to join her on a trip to Switzerland. Claire had begun dating the Romantic poet Lord Byron and wished to show him off to her sister. By the time they commenced the trip, Lord Byron was less interested in Claire. Nevertheless, the three stayed in Switzerland all summer. Shelley rented a house on Lake Geneva very near to Lord Byron's and the two men became fast friends. Shelley wrote incessantly during his visit. After a long day of boating with Byron, Shelley returned home and wrote *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. After a trip through the French Alps with Byron, he was inspired to write *Mont Blanc*, a pondering on the relationship between man and nature.

Harriet's Death and Shelley's Second Marriage

In the fall of 1816, Shelley and Mary returned to England to find that Mary's half-sister, Fanny Imlay, had committed suicide. In December of that year it was discovered that Harriet had also committed suicide. She was found drowned in the Serpentine River in Hyde Park, London. A few weeks later, Shelley and Mary finally married. Mary's father, William Godwin, was delighted by the news and accepted his daughter back into the family fold. Amidst their celebration, however, loss pursued Shelley. Following Harriet's death, the courts ruled not to give Shelley custody of their children, asserting that they would be better off with foster parents.

With these matters settled, Shelley and Mary moved to Marlow, a small village in Buckinghamshire. There, Shelley befriended John Keats and Leigh Hunt, both talented poets and writers. Shelley's conversations with them encouraged his own literary pursuits. Around 1817, he wrote *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden city*. His publishers balked at the main storyline, however, which centers on incestuous lovers. He was asked to edit it and to find a new title for the work. In 1818, he reissued it as *The Revolt of Islam*. Though the title suggests the subject of Islam, the poem's focus is religion in general and features socialist, political themes.

Life in Italy

Shortly after the publication of *The Revolt of Islam*, Shelley, Mary and Claire left for Italy. Lord Bryon was living in Venice, and Claire was on a mission to bring their daughter, Allegra, to visit with him. For the next several years, Shelley and Mary moved from city to city. While in Rome, their first-born son William died of a fever. A year later, their baby daughter, Clara Everina, died as well. Around this time, Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound*. During their residency in Livorno, in 1819, he wrote *The Cenci* and *The Masque of Anarchy and Men of England*, a response to the Peterloo Massacre in England.

Death and Significance

On July 8, 1822, just shy of turning 30, Shelley drowned while sailing his schooner back from Livorno to Lerici, after having met with Leigh Hunt to discuss their newly printed journal, *The Liberal*. Despite conflicting evidence, most papers reported Shelley's death as an accident. However, based on the scene that was discovered on the boat's deck, others speculated that he might have been murdered by an enemy who detested his political beliefs.

Shelley's body was cremated on the beach in Viareggio, where his body had washed ashore. Mary Shelley, as was the custom for women during the time, did not attend her husband's funeral. Percy Bysshe Shelley's ashes were interred in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. More than a century later, he was memorialized in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

4.3 ODE TO THE WEST WIND

“Ode to the West Wind” is a lyric poem that addresses the west wind as a powerful force and asks it to scatter the poet's words throughout the world. (A lyric poem presents the deep feelings and emotions of the poet rather than telling a story or presenting a witty observation. An ode is a lyric poem that uses lofty, dignified language to address a person or thing.) Charles and Edmund Ollier published the poem in London in 1820 in a volume entitled *Prometheus Unbound: a Lyrical Drama in Four Acts With Other Poems*. *Prometheus Unbound* is a four-act play (intended to be read but not performed) that was the featured work in the volume

4.3.1 TEXT : ODE TO THE WEST WIND

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

4.3.2 GLOSSARY

Enchanter : magician or wizard

Pestilence : infectious epidemic disease

Azure : the blue colour of the clear sky

Sepulchre : a place of burial

Pumice : a volcanic glass like stone full of cavities and is very light.

Foliage : leaves, flowers, and branches

Tumult : a violent outburst

1.3.3 DISCUSSION

Stanza 1

Addressing the west wind as a human, the poet describes its activities: It drives dead leaves away as if they were ghosts fleeing a wizard. The leaves are yellow and black, pale and red, as if they had died of an infectious disease. The west wind carries seeds in its chariot and deposits them in the earth, where they lie until the spring wind awakens them by blowing on a trumpet (clarion). When they form buds, the spring wind spreads them over plains and on hills. In a paradox, the poet addresses the west wind as a destroyer and a preserver, then asks it to listen to what he says. The poet is describing the action of the west wind on land-leaves and seeds. It destroys to regenerate.

Stanza 2

The poet says the west wind drives clouds along just as it does dead leaves after it shakes the clouds free of the sky and the oceans. These clouds erupt with rain and lightning. Against the sky, the lightning appears as a bright shaft of hair from the head of a Mænad. The poet compares the west wind to a funeral song sung at the death of a year and says the night will become a dome erected over the year's tomb with all of the wind's gathered might. From that dome will come black rain, fire, and hail. Again the poet asks the west wind to continue to listen to what he has to say. In this stanza the west wind's effect in the sky has been depicted.

Mænad : Wildly emotional woman who took part in the orgies ofDionysus, the Greek god of wine and revelry.

dirge : Funeral song.

congregated : Gathered, mustered.

Stanza 3

At the beginning of autumn, the poet says, the the west wind awakened the Mediterranean Sea—lulled by the sound of the clear streams flowing into it—from summer slumber near an island formed from pumice (hardened lava). The island is in a bay at Baiae, a city in western Italy about ten miles west of Naples. While sleeping at this locale, the Mediterranean saw old palaces and towers that had collapsed into the sea during an earthquake and became overgrown with moss and flowers. To create a path for the west wind, the powers of the mighty Atlantic Ocean divide (cleave) themselves and flow through chasms. Deep beneath the ocean surface, flowers and foliage, upon hearing the west wind, quake in fear and despoil themselves. (In autumn, ocean plants decay like land plants. Once more, the poet asks the west wind to continue to listen to what he has to say. The poet has described the impact of the west wind on water. Thus its effect is felt all around - land, sky and water.

Stanza 4

The poet says that if he were a dead leaf (like the ones in the first stanza) or a cloud (like the ones in the second stanza) or an ocean wave that rides the power of the Atlantic but is less free than the uncontrollable west wind—or if even he were as strong and vigorous as he was when he was a boy and could accompany the wandering wind in the heavens and could only dream of traveling faster—well, then, he would never have prayed to the west wind as he is doing now in his hour of need.

.....Referring again to imagery in the first three stanzas, the poet asks the wind to lift him as it would a wave, a leaf, or a cloud; for here on earth he is experiencing troubles that prick him like thorns and cause him to bleed. He is now carrying a heavy burden that—though he is proud and tameless and swift like the west wind—has immobilized him in chains and bowed him down.

1.4 LETS SUM UP

The speaker invokes the “wild West Wind” of autumn, which scatters the dead leaves and spreads seeds so that they may be nurtured by the spring, and asks that the wind, a “destroyer and preserver,” hear him. The speaker calls the wind the “dirge / Of the dying year,” and describes how it stirs up violent storms, and again implores it to hear him. The speaker says that the wind stirs the Mediterranean from “his summer dreams,” and cleaves the Atlantic into choppy chasms, making the “sapless foliage” of the ocean tremble, and asks for a third time that it hear him.

The speaker says that if he were a dead leaf that the wind could bear, or a cloud it could carry, or a wave it could push, or even if he were,

as a boy, “the comrade” of the wind’s “wandering over heaven,” then he would never have needed to pray to the wind and invoke its powers. He pleads with the wind to lift him “as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!”—for though he is like the wind at heart, untamable and proud—he is now chained and bowed with the weight of his hours upon the earth.

The poem contains five stanzas of fourteen lines each. Each stanza has three tercets and a closing couplet. In poetry, a tercet is a unit of three lines that usually contain end rhyme; a couplet is a two-line unit that usually contains end rhyme. Shelley wrote the tercets in a verse form called *terza rima*, invented by Dante Alighieri. In this format, line 2 of one tercet rhymes with lines 1 and 3 of the next tercet. In regard to the latter, consider the first three tercets of the second stanza of "Ode to the West Wind." Notice that *shed* (second line, first tercet) rhymes with *spread* and *head* (first and third lines, second tercet) and that *surge* (second line, second tercet) rhymes with *verge* and *dirge* (first and third lines, third tercet).

All of the couplets in the poem rhyme, but the last couplet (lines 69-70) is an imperfect rhyme called eye rhyme. Eye rhyme occurs when the pronunciation of the last syllable of one line is different from the pronunciation of the last syllable of another line even though both syllables are identical in spelling except for a preceding consonant. For example, the following end-of-line word pairs would constitute eye rhyme: cough, rough; cow, mow; daughter, laughter; rummaging, raging.

In Shelley's poem, wind and behind form eye rhyme. Shelley unifies the content of the poem by focusing the first three stanzas on the powers of the wind and the last two stanzas on the poet's desire to use these powers to spread his words throughout the world.

4.5 SUGGESTED READING

Shelley, Mary, ed. *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. London: Edward Moxon, 1839.

Joseph Barrell. *Shelley and the Thought of His Time: A Study in the History of Ideas*. Archon Books. 1967. 207pp.

James Bieri. *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography: Exile of Unfulfilled Reknown, 1816-1822*. University of Delaware Press. 2005. 441pp.

4.6 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Q.1. What kind of life does the poet say he is leading at the time the west wind is blowing in "Ode to the West Wind"?

A.1. The speaker directly addresses the west wind, which he calls "wild," calling it both a "Destroyer and preserver" and asking it to "hear" him. In

the fifth and final section, we get the biggest clues as to how the speaker himself is feeling. He asks the wind to

Drive [his] dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!

It seems, then, that the speaker feels "dead" in some way—perhaps he lacks creativity or inspiration—and he hopes that the wind will scatter his old, dead thoughts and disperse them so that he can begin anew, like the earth after the winter, when spring comes. He asks the wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Thus, the speaker seems to be living a rather unfulfilled life; he feels as though he is dead in some way, like plants in the winter. He does not grow or create or change, as living things do. He wishes for the wind to carry away the detritus so that new life—new creations, perhaps—can flourish.

Q.2. What other things could the west wind represent?

A.2. In Shelley's "*Ode to the west wind*", I would argue, is symbolic of a primal force that is both the "destroyer and preserver" it is called, but also a life-giving element that spurs human creativity.

Shelley identifies the west wind with autumn, the season in which verdant life dies off and dark winter approaches. As is typical with Shelley, the changes brought by it are described in apocalyptic terms. The "pestilence-stricken multitudes" are carried before the wind; "black rain, and fire, and hail" will burst from the "dome of a vast sepulchre" in the vaulted sky above. But Shelley sees the wind as a positive force as well:

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams

The blue Mediterranean, where he lay . . .

Shelley's point is that the wild, destructive force of the wind is something necessary and, paradoxically, life-giving, rousing the world (and humanity) from the somnolent peace of summer.

That this "destroyer" is at the foundation of artistic creativity is made clear when the speaker commands it to

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is,

What if my leaves are falling, like its own?

Here we see the concept that the negative forces in life and in nature are somehow the source of man's ability to express himself and to achieve greatness. The idea is linked to the Romantic poet's prophecy of his own early death. Shelley, like his contemporaries Byron and Keats, died young. The Ode is not merely a prediction of his own death and the "death" of Nature of which the autumn west wind is a harbinger. It also expresses a faith that humanity, like the natural world, will renew itself. The wind symbolizes this rebirth in the famous closing line,

O wind!

If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

The poet gives a message that man should have faith and hope that the worst has to be replaced by the best.

Q.3. What ideas other than death and rebirth could you infer from the poem "Ode to the West Wind?"

A.3. The poem is a kind of appeal to the west wind to unite with the poet. When Shelley writes, "Be thou me, impetuous one!", it can be understood in several ways. Shelley could be wishing that the power and beauty of the west wind could inhabit his verse ("Make me thy lyre"), or he could be expressing a deeper desire to merge with nature, to become part of the seasonal cycle that the wind creates. There is a tragic difference, the poem suggests, between the power of the wind and the life of the adult Shelley ("I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"). Another idea is that by merging with the wind Shelley can somehow escape his adult responsibilities. The first three stanzas establish the wind as a great and terrible natural force, a creator and destroyer. Shelley's wish to become one with it is a yearning to claim that power for himself in order to break the cares that have "chain'd and bow'd" him. It is at once an expression of poetic ambition and a cry for personal absolution.

Another major idea or theme of "Ode to the West Wind" is that a poet's ideas can be blown all over the earth the way the wind blows autumn leaves. The leaves on a tree remind the poet of leaves of paper on which he writes his verses.

In the last verse, the poet addresses the wind, asking if he, the poet, can become its "lyre" or the instrument the wind plays. The poet desires to become one with the spirit of the wind. "Be thou [you] me," he implores. Here, he continues to convey the idea that his thoughts can be sent all over.

The poet understands the wind as a universal song that he can join. He notes the wind's "mighty harmonies." Finally, he imagines that he and the wind can come together so the wind becomes his "trumpet" and spreads his words.

In this, the poet expresses his deep, fervent desire not just to write poetry or experience rebirth, but also to have his thoughts widely known through his words.

Q.4. Why does Shelley invoke the power of the West Wind?

A.4. Shelley sees the West Wind as sublime, powerful as it blows the autumn leaves from the trees, and powerful as a force for change. Shelley invokes this power because he wishes the West Wind would blow the "leaves" or pages of his verse over the earth with the same power that it scatters the "leaves" from the trees. These leaves are dead on autumn trees, but the wind seems to blow new life into them...

Shelley sees the West Wind as sublime, powerful as it blows the autumn leaves from the trees, and powerful as a force for change. Shelley invokes this power because he wishes the West Wind would blow the "leaves" or pages of his verse over the earth with the same power that it scatters the "leaves" from the trees. These leaves are dead on autumn trees, but the wind seems to blow new life into them as they are scattered. So Shelley wishes the wind would breathe new life into what he calls his "dead" words:

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe

Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

Of course, he doesn't literally want his writing blown about by the wind. The wind functions as a metaphor for a force equally as powerful to spread his thoughts and ideas throughout the world. (He probably would have loved the Internet.) He also, himself, would like to be a force of change like the West Wind. "Be thou, Spirit fierce, my Spirit!" he writes. "Be thou me..."

As with many Romantic poets, Shelley sees nature as a powerful force with its own distinct personality. The wind isn't simply a meteorological phenomenon; it's a source of the sublime that both overawes us and reconnects us to the natural world. And the west wind, like other features of the natural world, when fused with the poet's imagination, can generate enduring works of art. In that sense, the west wind works in partnership with the poet, spreading his fame far and wide. Yet so overawed is Shelley by the forces of nature that he gladly adopts a subordinate position in this relationship, urging the west wind to make him its lyre. Shelley sees himself as an instrument of nature, a conduit for the transmission of what is heavenly and sublime.

UNIT-5 JOHN KEATS : ODE TO AUTUMN

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 John Keats : Life and works
- 5.3 Ode to Autumn
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5.0 INTRODUCTION

“*Ode to Autumn*” is a poem by English Romantic poet John Keats (31 October 1795 – 23 February 1821). The work was composed on 19 September 1819 and published in 1820 in a volume of Keats's poetry that included *Lamia* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*. Although personal problems left him little time to devote to poetry in 1819, he composed "To Autumn" after a walk near Winchester one autumnal evening. The work marks the end of his poetic career, as he needed to earn money and could no longer devote himself to the lifestyle of a poet. A little over a year following the publication of "To Autumn", Keats died in Rome.

The poem has three eleven-line stanzas which describe a progression through the season, from the late maturation of the crops to the harvest and to the last days of autumn when winter is nearing. The imagery is richly achieved through the personification of Autumn, and the description of its bounty, its sights and sounds. It has parallels in the work

of English landscape artists, with Keats himself describing the fields of stubble that he saw on his walk as being like that in a painting. The work has been interpreted as a meditation on death; as an allegory of artistic creation; as Keats's response to the Peterloo Massacre, which took place in the same year; and as an expression of nationalist sentiment. One of the most anthologised English lyric poems, "To Autumn" has been regarded by critics as one of the most perfect short poems in the English

language. The poem effectively brings out Keats as a painter in words as he paints concrete figures of a Autumn as a reaper, a winnower and a gleaner.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall discuss a poem by one of the famous modern poet John Keats. After reading the Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of John Keats.
- Analyse the poem 'Ode to Autumn'
- Explain lines with reference to their context.
- Define poetic technique of John Keats.

5.2 JOHN KEATS : LIFE AND WORKS

John Keats was born in Moorgate, London, on 31 October 1795 to Thomas Keats and his wife, Frances Jennings. There is little evidence of his exact birthplace. Although Keats and his family seem to have marked his birthday on 29 October, baptism records give the date as the 31st. He was the eldest of four surviving children; his younger siblings were George (1797–1841), Thomas (1799–1818), and Frances Mary "Fanny" (1803–1889) who eventually married Spanish author Valentín Llanos Gutiérrez. Another son was lost in infancy. His father first worked as a hostler at the stables attached to the Swan and Hoop Inn, an establishment he later managed, and where the growing family lived for some years. Keats believed that he was born at the inn, a birthplace of humble origins, but there is no evidence to support his belief. The Globe pub now occupies the site (2012), a few yards from the modern-day Moorgate station. He was baptised at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate, and sent to a local dame school as a child.

His parents were unable to afford Eton or Harrow, so in the summer of 1803, he was sent to board at John Clarke's school in Enfield, close to his grandparents' house. The small school had a liberal outlook and a progressive curriculum more modern than the larger, more prestigious schools. In the family atmosphere at Clarke's, Keats developed an interest in classics and history, which would stay with him throughout his short life. The headmaster's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, also became an important mentor and friend, introducing Keats to Renaissance literature, including Tasso, Spenser, and Chapman's translations. The young Keats was described by his friend Edward Holmes as a volatile character, "always in extremes", given to indolence and fighting. However, at 13 he began focusing his energy on reading and study, winning his first academic prize in midsummer 1809.

In April 1804, when Keats was eight, his father died from a skull fracture, suffered when he fell from his horse while returning from a visit to Keats and his brother George at school. Thomas Keats died intestate. Frances remarried two months later, but left her new husband soon afterwards, and the four children went to live with their grandmother, Alice Jennings, in the village of Edmonton.

In March 1810, when Keats was 14, his mother died of tuberculosis, leaving the children in the custody of their grandmother. She appointed two guardians, Richard Abbey and John Sandell, to take care of them. That autumn, Keats left Clarke's school to apprentice with Thomas Hammond, a surgeon and apothecary who was a neighbour and the doctor of the Jennings family. Keats lodged in the attic above the surgery at 7 Church Street until 1813 Cowden Clarke, who remained a close friend of Keats, described this period as "the most placid time in Keats' life."

Having finished his apprenticeship with Hammond, Keats registered as a medical student at Guy's Hospital (now part of King's College London) and began studying there in October 1815. Within a month of starting, he was accepted as a dresser at the hospital, assisting surgeons during operations, the equivalent of a junior house surgeon today. It was a significant promotion, that marked a distinct aptitude for medicine; it brought greater responsibility and a heavier workload. Keats' long and expensive medical training with Hammond and at Guy's Hospital led his family to assume he would pursue a lifelong career in medicine, assuring financial security, and it seems that at this point Keats had a genuine desire to become a doctor. He lodged near the hospital, at 28 St Thomas's Street in Southwark, with other medical students, including Henry Stephens who became a famous inventor and ink magnate.

In spite of the bad reviews of *Poems*, Hunt published the essay "Three Young Poets" (Shelley, Keats, and Reynolds) and the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," foreseeing great things to come. He introduced Keats to many prominent men in his circle, including the editor of *The Times*, Thomas Barnes; the writer Charles Lamb; the music conductor Vincent Novello; and the poet John Hamilton Reynolds, who would become a close friend. He was also regularly meeting William Hazlitt, a powerful literary figure of the day. It was a decisive turning point for Keats, establishing him in the public eye as a figure in what Hunt termed "a new school of poetry." At this time Keats wrote to his friend Bailey: "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the imagination. What imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth." This passage would eventually be transmuted into the concluding lines of "Ode on a Grecian Urn": "Beauty is truth, truth beauty'—that is all /Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know". In early December 1816, under the heady influence of his artistic friends, Keats told Abbey that he had decided to give up medicine in favour of poetry, to Abbey's fury.

In June 1818, Keats began a walking tour of Scotland, Ireland, and the Lake District with his friend Charles Armitage Brown. Keats's brother George and his wife Georgina accompanied them as far as Lancaster and then continued to Liverpool, from where the couple emigrated to America. They lived in Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky, until 1841, when George's investments failed. Like Keats's other brother, they both died penniless and racked by tuberculosis, for which there was no effective treatment until the next century. In July, while on the Isle of Mull, Keats caught a bad cold and "was too thin and fevered to proceed on the journey." After his return south in August, Keats continued to nurse Tom, exposing himself to infection. Some biographers suggest that this is when tuberculosis, his "family disease," first took hold. "Consumption" was not identified as a disease with a single infectious origin until 1820, and there was considerable stigma attached to the condition, as it was often associated with weakness, repressed sexual passion, or masturbation. Keats "refuses to give it a name" in his letters.¹ Tom Keats died on 1 December 1818.

5.3 ODE TO AUTUMN

If you analyse the poem you will find that in the poem, the speaker addresses autumn as if it were a person. In the first stanza, he notes that autumn and the sun are like best friends plotting how to make fruit grow and how to ripen crops before the harvest. The ripening will lead to the dropping of seeds, which sets the stage for spring flowers and the whole process starting over again. He tells us about the bees that think summer can last forever as they buzz around the flowers. The second stanza describes the period after the harvest, when autumn just hangs out around the granary where harvested grains are kept.

In the third stanza, the speaker notes that the music of spring is a distant memory, but that autumn's music is pretty cool, too. This music includes images of clouds and harvested fields at sunset, gnats flying around a river, lambs bleating, crickets singing, and birds whistling and twittering. All of the sights and sounds produce a veritable symphony of beauty.

5.3.1 POEM : ODE TO AUTUMN (TEXT)

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

5.3.2 GLOSSARY

Mists : to rain in very fine drops

Mellow : soft, sweet, and full-flavoured from ripeness

Bosom-friend : close friend

Conspiring : to act or work together toward the same result or goal.

Clammy : covered with a cold, sticky moisture

Kernel : the body of a seed within its husk or integuments.

Granary : a storehouse or repository for grain

Winnowing : to drive or blow (chaff, dirt, etc.) away by fanning.

Oozing : to move or pass slowly or gradually

Wailful : expressing grief or pain

Gleaner : farm worker, who picks up grain left in the field.

5.3.3 DISCUSSION

Lines 1-2

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;*

- It is clear from the title of the poem that the speaker is talking about autumn season. The speaker briefly describes the season and immediately jumps into personification, suggesting that autumn and the sun are old pals.
- "Mists" often accompany chilly weather because the moisture in the air condenses into a vapor when it's cold.
- "Mellow fruitfulness" sounds like something people would say at a wine tasting, doesn't it? The word "mellow," meaning low-key or subdued, is a good fit for autumn, with its neutral colors and cool, yet not cold, weather. And it's also the season when many fruits and other crops are harvested, making autumn fruit-full.
- Autumn is a close friend of the sun, who is "maturing" as the year goes on. "Maturing" could be a polite way of saying "getting old." The sun is no longer in its prime.
- A "bosom-friend" is like that friend you told all your secrets to in junior high school.

Lines 3-4

*Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;*

- The speaker says that the sun and autumn are "conspiring," Looks like we might have to separate the two of them. What are they whispering about over there?

- They are planning how to make fruit grow on the vines that curl around the roofs of thatched cottages.
- The image highlights the weight of the fruit as it "loads" down the vines.
- Thatched cottages suggest a pastoral setting, characterized by shepherds, sheep, maidens, and agriculture. The "pastoral" as a literary genre was thought to originate in Ancient Greece, and the ode is a Greek form, so it is appropriate for this ode to include pastoral themes. Keats's other Great Odes, especially "Ode on a Grecian Urn," include similar imagery.

Lines 5-6

*To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;*

- Keats is portraying the effect of Autumn with images of weight and ripeness. The apples "bend" down the branches of mossy trees with their weight. The trees belong not to some big farming cooperative, but to the simple cottages of country folk.
- The ripeness penetrates deep to the very center of the fruit.

Lines 7-8

*To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,*

- In line 6, the ripeness converged on the center of the fruit. Now, the ripeness expands like a balloon to "fill up" nuts and gourds. "Gourds" include things like squash, especially, pumpkins! What could be more appropriate for autumn than huge pumpkins ripening on the vine?
- "Hazel" is a plant that produces the nuts that add delicious flavor to coffee or gelato. The nut is the "sweet kernel" that we eat.
- It's almost as if the speaker is coordinating the growth of all these fruits and nuts.

Lines 9-11

*And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.*

- The "budding" that the speaker describes is in the future. He has just been describing the "kernels" or seeds that drop to the ground when nuts fall from trees.
- These seeds will "later" turn into new plants and flowers when spring comes again.

- Autumn isn't just a time of things dying off, turning brown, and falling to the ground. It also sets the stage for the return of growth in the spring. From nature's perspective, fruit is the mechanism for planting new seeds. In this manner Autumn starts the process of rejuvenation also.
- The speaker goes on a little imaginative trip into the next spring and summer, where the bees take advantage of the flowers that began as a small seed in autumn. Unlike humans, who can make sense of past, present, and future, the bees only know their task for the present. The bees think the summer will never end, and that the flowers will always be in bloom.
- The bees are like monks or prisoners inside of "clammy cells," the cells being the moist insides of the flowers in which they seek nectar. Cells also refers to the cells of the beehive too, which becomes sticky with honey.
- At this point, even the speaker must admit that all this growth has become too much, and summer is like a sweet liquid that threatens to spill over the brim of a glass. Besides, he is starting to get away from the point. Must be time for a new stanza.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

- Keats returns to the personification of Autumn. He asks a rhetorical question: Who *hasn't* seen autumn hanging out by his or her (we're not sure yet) "store" of fruits, nuts, and other ripe things?
- The word "store" suggests the abundance of crops, and you might think of a barn or a grain silo filled with the most recent harvest.

Lines 13-14

*Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,*

- Good, he's going to tell us how to find autumn now. It's like trying to find the leprechaun from the Lucky Charms commercial (we'll get those charms from you yet!).
- All anyone has to do is travel through the countryside hitting up every "granary" – buildings where large amounts of harvested grain are kept cool and dry – until you find autumn sitting on the floor of one of them.
- A silo is one kind of modern granary.
- Now that the grain has been harvested, autumn doesn't have a care in the world. The work for this season is done and in the books.
- We think "abroad" means "widely" or "through the countryside" or "across the land," rather than "in a foreign country."

Line 15

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

- From this line we will tentatively guess that autumn is a woman. Not only because seasons were traditionally personified as female in European art, but also because this season has oh-so-soft hair. What kind of conditioner are you using, autumn?
- We could play gender police and point out that Keats never uses "she" or "her" in this poem, but it's simpler if we use these pronouns while you just keep that fact in mind.
- Autumn is like a college student when exams are over: she has nothing to do but hang out. She sits on the granary, and her hair is lifted by a gentle wind.
- The word "winnowing" is perfect here because "to winnow" in farm-speak means to separate the grain (the edible part of the plant) from the chaff (its inedible covering). In centuries past, farmers winnowed their crops by having people beat the harvested plant with, say, large sticks. This action loosens the heavier grain, and then the chaff is light enough that it can be blown away, or "winnowed," in the wind.
- The place where the grain and the chaff are separated is called the "threshing floor" – this is where autumn is hanging out.

Lines 16-18

*Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:*

- But, Keats, what if she's not on the threshing floor? Where do we find autumn?
- Well, he says, she might also be on the furrow of a field that has only partially been harvested. She's taking a nap because, darn it, she's earned one. "Furrows" are the long, undulating hills that you see in fields, on top of which crops grow. The dips in the furrows are used for irrigation.
- The speaker claims that autumn is basically drunk on the smell of the poppy flowers that she was going to harvest. She lies on the furrow while the "hook," or sickle, that she uses to cut the flowers lies unused. She hasn't gotten to the next "swatch" of flowers, so they're saved... for now.
- The reference to poppies is no accident. Poppies were used to make opium, a drug that was popular in England in the 19th century. The writer Thomas de Quincey wrote an article called

"Confessions of an Opium-Eater" about his experience with the drug, which was published the year after "To Autumn."

- Of course, the smell of the flowers alone could not make someone intoxicated, except metaphorically.

Lines 19-20

*And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;*

- The harvesting metaphors continue, as autumn is compared to a "gleaner," someone who picks out the last stalks of grain that were missed during the threshing process. Poor peasants would often be allowed to "glean" the field, the equivalent of picking up scraps after a feast.
- Autumn puts her head down to cross over a brook, just as a gleaner bows his or her head to look for grains. Her head is "laden" or heavy – yet another image of weight.

Lines 21-22

*Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.*

- But, if we still haven't had autumn, after searching all those other places, we might try the "cider-press," where she's totally mesmerized watching the fruit get squeezed into a thick, sugary juice.
- Apple cider is the most common form, but pear cider is also drunk in England. Cider is frequently alcoholic, so this could be another reference to an intoxicant. See "Calling Card" for more on this trend in Keats's poetry.
- Autumn is starting to sound like a real slacker. She has nothing to do, nowhere to be. She can "patiently" watch the thick juice or "ooze" of the apples drop from the press for hours on end.
- "Oozings" is definitely our favourite word in this poem. It captures the concentrated sweetness of the season.

Lines 23-24

*Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,--*

- The final stanza begins with another rhetorical question, which we'll paraphrase as, "Where are your songs at, Spring? Huh? Bring it, if you got it. I can't hear you... Yeah, that's what I thought."
- That's the super-aggressive version, at least. But the speaker is definitely needling the season opposite to autumn on the calendar.

Spring might be great and all, but it doesn't stick around, so who needs it.

- He reassures autumn, who might be feeling a tad inadequate compared to her more celebrated counterpart, that she has her own music, albeit not much celebrated.
- Keats alludes again to the pastoral tradition in poetry, in which shepherds typically "sing" in springtime, often while playing a lyre.

Lines 25-26

*While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;*

- The speaker begins to describe the "song" of autumn. It's more of a metaphorical song, in that the scene begins with light and images.
- He describes the patchy clouds, between which patches of sky can be seen, as "barred." These clouds appear to be in "bloom," like flowers, as they light up with the colours of sunset. The use of "bloom" is a direct challenge, again, to springtime.
- The day is "dying" at sunset, but it's not a tragic or violent death. It's "soft" and gentle.
- The reddish colours of the sunlight "touch" the fields gently. The fields have been harvested, so all that is left is flat "stubble" of crop.

Lines 27-29

*Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;*

- The gnats by the riverside "mourn" the dying day like a choir at a funeral. They are "wailing" as if the daylight had been a favorite grandparent or something.
- In fact, they are just doing what gnats do: coming out at evening time. The choir sound is the collective buzzing of their tiny little wings. Some people would have a different word than "choir" to describe this sound: namely, "extremely annoying."
- Gnats especially like to hang out in wet areas, near trees, and here we find them near the willow or "sallow" trees down by the river.
- Their movement appears to be coordinated with the light. Light gets brighter, gnats go up; light gets dimmer, gnats go down. Keats is having all kinds of fun with movement and directions in this poem.

- The speaker continues to paint the sunset as a life-or-death struggle for the light.
- The sound of the gnats contributes to the song of autumn.

Lines 30-33

*And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.*

- The poem concludes with more animal sounds, but those of a more conventional variety than the buzzing of gnats.
- Lambs are bleating near the small stream, or "bourn," that flows down a hill. Notice that the speaker calls them "full-grown lambs," which is like saying, "full-grown child." Wouldn't that just be a sheep? He seems to want to highlight the in-between stage between the glorious ripeness of youth and plain old adulthood.
- Crickets are "singing" by rubbing their wings together, otherwise known as "chirping."
- With a soft but high ("treble") voice, the redbreast robin is whistling in an enclosed garden, or "garden-croft."
- Last but not least, the swallows have taken to the sky at twilight, and they "twitter" joyfully as the sun goes down.
- Now, really, what kind of ending is that? We just have a bunch of images of different birds and beasts! If this were a movie, you would probably leave the theater scratching your head. Fortunately, it's a poem, so we can keep asking questions.

5.4 LETS SUM UP

He assumes that everyone knows who this lady autumn is, and that all of us readers have seen her sitting in granary. What he really wants to say is, "I've seen autumn on the granary floor." He's also slightly aggressive when it comes to springtime. At the beginning of the third stanza, he puts his hand to his ear and is like, "Where are you at now, Spring?" He looks around and shouts, "I can't hear your songs, Spring!" He's obviously protective of autumn and, on the plus side, he would make a loyal friend. He's the kind of person who always wants to remind you of your good qualities when you're feeling a little inadequate. "But what about the time you did this cool thing?"

Can you guess which season this poem is set in? "To Autumn" gives us all the ripe, growing things we would expect from a poem with this title, and Keats even throws in an aimless, super-chilled-out lady, to boot.

When you look closely at the poem's images, you notice all kinds of hidden movement. In the first stanza, you get a sense of the "conspiratorial" tone between the sun and autumn, as the unassuming vines and fruits creep around houses and trees until – boom! – everything bursts into a surge of ripeness. The setting of the first stanza is characterized by growth and swelling under the influence of the sunlight, and this growth even carries us into the spring and summer, as if time itself were expanding.

The second stanza is all about the harvesting process. Autumn sits with her "store" of grains like King Midas with his gold. She may have been hanging around the poppy plants too much, because she seems a little tipsy. She just kind of wanders around, inspecting things and taking occasional naps. What a life. Despite being a tad out-of-it, she's a tough bird to track. The speaker follows her around like a bodyguard, from field to brook to, cider factory.

In the last paragraph, Keats ties everything together with the idea of music and songs. He uses a few powerful images to suggest that all of nature works in harmony to produce the beauties of autumn. This music is associated with the sunset, in particular, and you might think that the sun has been slowly going down through the entire poem. Only we were too busy admiring the poetic landscape to notice the passage of time, just as the speaker is too busy admiring autumn to notice the approach of winter.

5.5 SUGGESTED READING

Blades, John. *John Keats: the poems*. Macmillan, 2002.

Bloom, Harold. "The Ode To Autumn". In *Keats's Odes*. Ed. Jack Stillinger. Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Ridley, Maurice. *Keats' Craftsmanship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933.

5.6 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Q.1. What is the theme of poem?

A.1. Keats's "*Ode to Autumn*" is a poem of praise to this most inspirational of seasons. But, as is always the case with Keats, there is considerably more to this than meets the eye—a richer, more complex vision lurking beneath the opulent pleasures of nature, bursting to shine forth.

A recurring theme in Keats's odes is the fragility and transience of the natural world. And we encounter it once again here. Keats delights in providing us with lush descriptions of this "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness," while at the same time recognizing that the season, like each one of us, must one day pass, no matter how beautiful it is. But this shouldn't cause worry; new life will emerge from the old in a never-ending cycle of death and rebirth:

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

The season is drawing to a close, but nature is blossoming into full maturity as it points toward the onset of winter. The lambs are now "full grown," and the swallows are starting to gather in the skies.

Nature is so remarkably fruitful in all its variety. At times, it threatens to overwhelm us with the sheer scale of its fecundity. Man is the junior partner here; in his relationship to nature it is the world of the animals, the clouds, and the sweet, luscious fruit that dominates. In the midst of this endless cycle of seasonal change, there is nothing we can do but stand and admire. We must simply sit back and, in our reverie, enjoy the joyous bounties of nature, our sadness at their passing tinged with a realization that they will one day return.

Q.2. What is the significance of the title of the poem "*Ode to Autumn*"?

A.2. This poem by John Keats, one of the most well-known Romantic poets, is in the form known as an ode, which is a type of poem that is usually intended to celebrate a particular person or thing. The textbook definition is usually a variation of the following: "a lyric poem in the form of an address to a particular subject, often elevated in style or manner and written in varied or irregular meter."

The title of this ode indicates the poem is dedicated to the season of autumn, and Keats writes a very lofty and moving ode to this season. Keats could have created any number of possible titles, but keeping it so simple and yet so wide open (as opposed to naming it after the month in which he was inspired to write it, or after a particular image or idea) allows the reader to meditate upon the entire season of autumn, its warm beginnings, journey through abundance and harvest, and then to its beginning of dormancy in preparation for winter. The imagery suggests humans are deeply tied to this season, as it embodies both fullness and life, as well as decay and death, in the sights and sounds of the cycles of nature. By giving the poem this title, Keats encourages readers to allow themselves to be as moved as he is by the beauty of this season, almost as if it is a love song or an admired person who deserves to be honoured.

Keats crafted one of the most well-loved poems on autumn. It is a very sensual poem, with imagery that conjures sounds, tastes, smells, and textures, as well as visuals. The poem is the basis for the titles of the series of very popular "Sandman" graphic novels by Neil Gaiman, the first of which is called "Season of Mists," the first line of Keats's poem. In this way, Gaiman's work is a sort of ode to Keats's poem, which shows the relevance and significance of Keats's work centuries after he lived.

Q.3. What is the message of the poem To Autumn?

A.3. As always, it's difficult to say what the single most important message of a particular work of literature is, and John Keats's "To Autumn" is no different. However, it *is* possible to say what one of the major themes/messages is. In general, one can argue that the poem's message focuses on describing the melancholy beauty of the season of autumn and connecting this description to the general beauty of endings and conclusions within the cycles of the natural world.

Throughout the poem, Keats lingers on the beauty of the natural world during autumn. However in the last stanza, he more forcefully connects autumn to the beauty of endings (or death) within the natural world. For instance, Keats says, "Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn / Among the river shallows, borne aloft / Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies" (27-29), and these lines reference the "death" that autumn ushers in in preparation for winter. However, while melancholy, Keats sees this natural "death" as beautiful in its own right, as it follows a productive harvest that symbolizes a fruitful existence. Keats underscores this melancholy positivity by infusing even this last stanza with exceptionally beautiful natural imagery.

UNIT-6 LORD ALFRED TENNYSON : ULYSSES

Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Tennyson : Life and works
- 6.3 Ulysses
 - 6.3.1 Poem
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- 6.4 Lets Us Sum Up
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6.0 INTRODUCTION

The poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, is among the greatest of English literature. Many of his poems are mainstays of literature courses, and most have attracted copious critical attention. His poems are renowned for, among other things, their bold heroic narratives, their moving evocation of deep emotions, their skillful lyricism and cadences, and their memorable imagery.

In "Ulysses," the hero based on Homer's Odysseus confronts his impending death and ruminates on wanting to leave his home behind, since people there are weak and complacent, to undertake a new heroic journey. He considers his noble deeds thus far and is not content to sit idly without making his last years meaningful. This philosophy of creative action makes Tennyson the most representative poet of the Victorian age of English literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He expresses the doubts, but ultimately faith triumphs as he gives a positive message.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall discuss a poem by one of the famous Victorian poet Lord Tennyson. After reading the Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of Tennyson.
- Analyse the poem 'Ulysses'
- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define poetic technique of Tennyson.

6.2 TENNYSON : LIFE AND WORKS

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, is one of the most famous poets in English literature. Many of his poems are standards of 19th-century literature and are critical and popular favorites. The body of critical work on him is immense, and although some of his work is seen as too sentimental today, his intellectual contributions to poetry and metaphysics are undeniable.

Alfred Tennyson was born August 6, 1809, in Lincolnshire, England, to George and Elizabeth Tennyson. The family was very large; eleven children reached maturity. Alfred's father was not wealthy, as his grandfather had made his younger son Charles his heir, leaving George to enter the ministry. Tennyson often worried about money throughout his life. Several of Tennyson's family members also struggled with alcoholism and mental illness, including his father, who grew violent and paranoid from excessive drinking in the 1820s.

Tennyson left the family home to attend Trinity College at the University of Cambridge with his two brothers. He had already been writing poetry before he went away to school. One of his particular quirks was that, as he walked or performed other duties, he would think of discrete lines or phrases and store them in his memory until he invented the proper context in which to use them. At Cambridge his tutor was William Whewell, a renowned philosopher. Tennyson and his brothers Frederick and Charles published *Poems by Two Brothers* in 1827 and became well-known at the college, winning prizes for poetry.

At this time Tennyson composed the strange and mesmerizing "Timbuctoo," which attracted the notice of other young intellectuals. Tennyson was invited to join the Apostles Club in 1829, which included Arthur Henry Hallam, James Spedding, Edward Lushington, and Richard Monckton Milnes. These men would be his friends his entire life (except for Hallam, who died young). Hallam and Tennyson were particularly close, and the former became engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily after he met her on a visit to Somersby.

In 1830 Tennyson published *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. The volume included poems such as "Mariana," "The Kraken," and "Ode to Memory." "Mariana" is one of Tennyson's most beguiling and justly famous works. Reviews of this volume were generally favourable. In 1832 Tennyson published *Poems*, which included "The Lady of Shalott," "The Lotos-

Eaters," "The Palace of Art," and "Oenone." Unfortunately, the reviews were brutal and damning, and Tennyson, sensitive to criticism, was crushed.

Hallam's death in 1833 at the age of 22 was another profoundly devastating blow to Tennyson. This death, his sister's despair over her fiancé's death, the terrible reviews, his father's death, his poverty and isolation in the country where he resided, and his own fears about mental illness and addiction pushed him into depression. He said of this period, "I suffered what seemed to me to shatter all my life so that I desired to die rather than to live." Many of Tennyson's most famous works of poetry were influenced by his immense grief even though they were not uniformly pessimistic. These included "Ulysses," "Tithonus" and, of course, the monumental *In Memoriam A.H.H.*

Tennyson became engaged to a young woman, Emily Sellwood, but fears about his financial situation and his possible mental problems led him to break off the engagement in 1840. During this time he was rather itinerant, moving about a great deal, and some of those closest to him thought his poetic genius had evaporated. In 1842, however, he published *Poems*, which contained some work from 1830 and 1832 that had been revised as well as new work; these two volumes provided the basis for his excellent reputation and secured his fame.

A government pension in 1845 alleviated some of his financial distress, and he married Emily in 1850. In 1847 he published "The Princess: A Medley," and in 1850 he finally published *In Memoriam* anonymously. Subsequent editions of that poem brought Tennyson a great deal of fame and money. The death of Wordsworth in 1850 seemed to designate Tennyson as his poetic successor, and indeed, in 1850 he was made Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom. Alfred's and Emily's first son, Hallam, was born in 1852, and a year later they established a home in Farringford, the Isle of Wight. A second son, Lionel, was born in 1854. "Maud, and Other Poems" was published in 1855, *The Idylls of the King* was published in 1859, and Tennyson published various other poems throughout the next decade.

Tennyson was admired by Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. The Queen described her first impression after meeting him: "very peculiar looking, tall, dark, with a fine head, long black flowing hair & a beard, — oddly dressed, but there is no affectation about him." Tennyson accepted an offer of barony in 1883 and took his seat in the House of Lords in March 1884. He also was awarded honorary degrees from Oxford and Edinburgh, and he made friends with other luminaries such as Charles Dickens, William Gladstone, and Robert Browning.

Lord Tennyson was frequently ill throughout the 1880s. He suffered immensely once again when his son Lionel died at age 32 in 1886. On October 6, 1892, Tennyson died. He is buried at Westminster Abbey.

6.3 ULYSSES

"Ulysses" is a poem in blank verse by the Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), written in 1833 and published in 1842 in his well-received second volume of poetry. An oft-quoted poem, it is popularly used to illustrate the dramatic monologue form. Facing old age, mythical hero Ulysses describes his discontent and restlessness upon returning to his kingdom, Ithaca, after his far-ranging travels. Despite his reunion with his wife Penelope and son Telemachus, Ulysses yearns to explore again.

The character of Ulysses (in Greek, Odysseus) has been explored widely in literature. The adventures of Odysseus were first recorded in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey (c. 800–700 BC), and Tennyson draws on Homer's narrative in the poem. Most critics, however, find that Tennyson's Ulysses recalls Dante's Ulisse in his Inferno (c. 1320). In Dante's re-telling, Ulisse is condemned to hell among the false counsellors, both for his pursuit of knowledge beyond human bounds and for creating the deception of the Trojan horse.

6.3.1 POEM : ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

6.3.2 GLOSSARY

IDLE - Of actions, feelings, thoughts, words, etc.: Void of any real worth, usefulness, or significance

METE - To apportion by measure; to assign in portions; to portion or deal out

LEES - The sediment deposited in the containing vessel from wine and some other liquids.

SCUD - To run or move briskly or hurriedly; to dart nimbly from place to place.

HYADES - A group of stars near the Pleiades, in the head of the constellation Taurus, the chief of which is the bright red star Aldebaran.

TROY - *n.* The name of an ancient city in Asia Minor, besieged and taken by the Greeks.

UNBURNISHED - that which is not "burnished"

BURNISHED - Made bright and shining as by friction, polished.

FROLIC - Joyous, merry, mirthful.

FURROW(s) - A narrow trench made in the earth with a plough, esp. for the reception of seed. Here referring to the waves.

6.3.3 DISCUSSION

Lines 1-5

*It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.*

- The poem begins by telling us that a king gains nothing from just sitting around by the fire with his wife and making laws for people who don't even know him. This refers to the luxurious and idle life of a king. It also refers to the disconnect between king and his subjects.
- The speaker at first seems at to be some kind of observer or impersonal figure who knows a lot about how to be a king, but in line 3 we learn that the king himself, Ulysses, is speaking.
- The phrase "it little profits" is another way of saying, "it is useless" or "it isn't beneficial."
- "Mete" means "to allot" or "measure out." Here it refers to the king's allotment of rewards and punishments to his subjects.
- "Unequal" doesn't mean that the rewards and punishments are unjust or unfair, but rather variable. Quite often the mood of the king had a bearing on the rewards and punishment.
- "Match'd" doesn't refer to a tennis match or other sporting event; it means something like "paired" or "partnered with."
- Ulysses' subjects are presented to us as a large group of drones who do nothing but eat and sleep.

Lines 6-11

*I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed*

*Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vexed the dim sea:*

- After his moralistic opening, Ulysses tells us more about why sitting around doling out rewards and punishments bores him.
- We learn that he is a restless spirit who doesn't want to take a break from roaming the ocean in search of adventure. He will not let life pass him by.
- The word "lees" originally referred to the sediment accumulated at the bottom of a bottle of wine; to "drink life to the lees" means to drink to the very last drop. Nowadays we might say something like "live life to the fullest."
- Ulysses tells us that he has had a lot of good times and a lot of bad times, sometimes with his best friends, and sometimes alone, both on dry land and while sailing through potentially destructive storms. It refers to the diverse experiences of Ulysses.
- "Scudding drifts" are pounding showers of rain that one might encounter at sea during a storm or while crab fishing off the coast of Alaska.
- The "Hyades" are a group of stars in the constellation Taurus often associated with rain; their rising in the sky generally coincides with the rainy season. Here they are presented as agitators of the ocean.

Lines 11-18

*...I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known – cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all –
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy,
I am a part of all that I have met;*

- Ulysses elaborates on the good times and bad times – well, mostly the good times – he's enjoyed during his travels.
- The phrase "I am become a name" means something like "become a household name." Ulysses has become famous because he's traveled to so many places.
- Ulysses tells us that he's visited a variety of different places, with different manners, weather, governments, etc. He portrays himself as a Renaissance traveler of sorts with an insatiable desire ("hungry heart") to see as many places as he can, try as many foods as he can, etc.

- The phrase "myself not least, but honoured of them all" is a little tricky. It means something like "I wasn't treated like the least little thing but was honored by everybody I met." Ulysses is stressing that his experiences made him famous and honoured.
- Ulysses also describes the time he spent "on the ringing plains of windy Troy," the famous city where the Trojan War took place: you know, that famous war dramatized in the Brad Pitt movie *Troy*? The "plains" are "ringing" because of the armour clashing together in battle.
- "I am a part of all that I have met" is a strange phrase. Usually we say something like "all the places I have seen are now a part of me." The phrase suggests that Ulysses left parts of himself everywhere he went; this sounds like another way of saying "I don't belong here in Ithaca."

Lines 19-24

*Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life!*

- Ulysses further justifies his desire to keep traveling and living a life of adventure.
- He compares his life or experiences to an arch and describes the "untravelled world" as a place that "gleams" at him through that arch. All he has to do is walk through the arch...It means that he has so many experiences to gain even in future.
- The first two lines of the passage are very tricky, and we're not entirely sure what they mean. One way to read "Untravelled world" is as a reference to death; it is always looking at him through the "arch" of his experiences, but somehow seems to recede ("margin fades") as he keeps moving.
- You could also think of the "Untravelled world" as an arch. As Ulysses moves, his experiences make an arch covering the arch of the "Untravelled world." The more he travels, the more the margins or edges of that world recede or are covered up.
- Ulysses reiterates how boring it is just sitting around when he could be out exploring the world. It's a lot like that feeling you get when you're just getting into the rhythm of things and have to stop.
- He likens himself to some kind of metallic instrument that is still perfectly useful and shiny but just rusts if nobody uses it, like that ancient bicycle in your garage. If Ulysses weren't a soldier, he might say he's just collecting dust.

- For Ulysses, life is about more than just "breathing" and going through the motions; it's about adventure. It should be spent in creative pursuits.

Lines 24-32

*...Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this grey spirit yearning in desire
 To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.*

- Ulysses continues to radiate a desire for adventure, claiming that even multiple lifetimes wouldn't be enough for him to do all the things he wants. There are so many things to be done that one lifetime is insufficient.
- At this point, though, he's an old man – a "grey spirit" – near the end of his life, and he wants to make the most of what's left. It's a waste of time for him to hang out in Ithaca for three years when his desire for adventure is still so alive.
- The phrase "but every hour is saved / From that eternal silence, something more, / A bringer of new things" is strange. It means something like "each additional hour that I live, or each hour that I am saved from death, brings me new experiences."
- "Three suns" doesn't mean three days, but rather three years. Ulysses has apparently been wasting his time for quite a while.
- The phrase "follow knowledge like a sinking star" is ambiguous. On the one hand, Ulysses wants to chase after knowledge and try to catch it as it sinks like a star. On the other hand, Ulysses himself could be the "sinking star." That makes sense too; he is a great personality who is moving closer to death (though, in our opinion, he's also kind of a rock star). It refers to the insatiable thirst for knowledge -so much knowledge, which no human may have even thought of acquiring.

Lines 33-38

*This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle –
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and through soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.*

- Ulysses introduces us to his son and heir, Telemachus, who seems like the right guy to take over the job of King of Ithaca. He's smart, and he knows how to make his people do things without being too harsh about it.
- A "Sceptre" is a ceremonial staff that symbolizes authority. Ulysses means something like "I leave him in charge."
- When compared with Ulysses, Telemachus seems a lot less restless. He has "slow prudence," meaning he's patient and willing to make the best decision for the people of Ithaca without being too hasty.
- The people of Ithaca are "rugged," which means that they're a little uncivilized and uncultured. They're like country-bumpkins with a little bit of an attitude. That's why they need to be reigned in ("subdued," made "mild") and put to good use.
- "Soft degrees" implies that Telemachus will civilize the citizens of Ithaca in stages and in a nice way; it's kingship as constructive criticism. Ulysses believes that his son possesses all the qualities of an ideal king.

Lines 39-43

*Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.*

- Ulysses tells us more about Telemachus' qualifications; he's a straight shooter all the way, a nice guy.
- "Decent not to fail" means that Telemachus is smart enough not to fail at doing nice things for people and paying the proper respects to the gods.
- "Meet" means "appropriate" or "suitable."
- We're not sure whether "when I am gone" means that Ulysses is planning on going back to sea for some more adventures, or if he's thinking about his own death. Ulysses is confident that Telemachus will be a good replacement after he leaves.

Lines 44-50

*There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me –
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads – you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;*

- Ulysses shifts our attention from his son to the port of Ithaca, where he tells us a ship is preparing to set sail. Looks like he's planning on skipping town after all, and with his old friends as well.
- "Gloom" is usually a noun but here it's a verb that means "appearing dark" or "scowling."
- "Thunder and sunshine" is used here to mean something like "good times and bad times." They have gladly ("with a frolic welcome") gone through thick and thin for Ulysses.
- The phrase "opposed / Free hearts, free foreheads" is a little tricky. Ulysses means that his sailors "opposed" whatever came in their way – "thunder," for example – and they did it as free men and with a lot of confidence ("free foreheads").
- While at first it seems as though Ulysses has just been musing to himself, it turns out he's speaking to someone. We don't know whom he's talking to, but the other person is an old man. Actually we will see towards the end of the poem that Ulysses is assessing his sailors, who have become old like him.
- Speaking of old age, Ulysses suggests that even though old people are respected, they also have responsibilities.

Lines 51-56

*Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices.*

- Ulysses knows that death will end everything, but he still believes he can do great things, things worthy of men who fought against the will of the gods during the Trojan War.
- The Trojan War wasn't a war between men and gods, but occasionally the gods would come down and fight with either the Greeks or the Trojans.
- "Ere" is an old poetic word that means "before," as in "I will come ere nightfall."
- Ulysses observes the sunset and the arrival of night, but it seems like he's thinking about his own death as well. What's with the moaning? It reminds us of ghosts or people mourning a death.
- "Lights begin to twinkle from the rocks" is an elegant way of saying the stars are coming out.

Lines 56-64

*...Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.*

- It turns out that Ulysses is addressing his friends, at least during this part of the poem. He tells them what he's been telling us all along: it's never too late to go in search of new lands.
- Here a "furrow" refers to the track or mark made in the water by the ship. He tells his sailors to "smite" or strike it, most likely with oars.
- "Purpose" can mean two different things; it can mean either "destiny," as in "sailing is my purpose in life," or it can mean "intention," as in "I intend to sail as far as I can."
- The "baths / Of all the western stars" isn't a place where the stars go to bathe themselves. It refers to the outer ocean or river that the Greeks believed surrounded the (flat) earth; they thought the stars descended into it.
- To sail beyond the "baths" means Ulysses wants to sail really, really far away – beyond the horizon of the known universe – until he dies.
- The "happy isles" refers to the Islands of the Blessed, a place where big-time Greek heroes like Achilles enjoyed perpetual summer after they died. We might say Heaven.
- Ulysses realizes that he and his companions might die, but he's OK with that. If they die, they might even get to go to the "Happy Isles" and visit their old pal Achilles.

Lines 65-70

*Tho' much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

- Ulysses yet again tells us that even though he and his sailors are old and don't have a lot of gas left in the tank, there's enough left to go a little farther.

- "Abides" is a word that means "remains."
- These guys are a team with one heartbeat. They're old and broken, but they still have the will to seek out and face challenges without giving up. They can't bench-press 200 pounds anymore, but that won't stop them from trying anyway.
- The phrase "strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find, and not yield" means something like "we're strong because of our will to strive" or "our will to strive is strong." The final message is that, although he and his sailors have little time and energy left, but still they have enough to heroic deeds.

In the poem Ulysses the lines are spoken by a famous Greek hero it's no surprise that references to Greek mythology abound. Ulysses refers several times to the Trojan War and mentions several mythological landmarks in order to convey just how hungry he is for new adventures. More specifically, Ulysses' references to Greek mythology remind us of his heroic past while also giving us a sense of the (very large) scope of his future ambitions.

- Lines 16-17: Ulysses describes how he enjoyed fighting on the "plains" of Troy, an ancient city located in what is now Northwestern Turkey.
- Line 33: Ulysses introduces us to his son, Telémakhos, a figure who appears in Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic poem that describes Ulysses' (Odysseus') long journey home.
- Line 53: Ulysses refers to himself and his fellow mariners as men that "strove with Gods." During the Trojan War, the gods – Athena, Ares, Venus, etc. – frequently took part in battle.
- Lines 63-4: Ulysses suggests that if he and his friends die, they might visit the "Happy Isles," a sort of Elysium for heroes and others who lived virtuous lives. He implies that Achilles – the greatest of the Greek heroes who fought at Troy – resides there.

Ulysses has done a lot of traveling; it took him ten years to get home from Troy, which means he's had an entire decade to visit a whole lot of places. Apparently, those ten years weren't enough because all he talks about is leaving home again. It's not entirely clear whether Ulysses wants to visit any specific place or if he just wants to travel for its own sake. Maybe he just likes the smell of the ocean air. Either way, he wants to get out of Dodge.

- Line 6: Ulysses explains that he can't stop traveling because he wants to get the most out of life.
- Lines 9-11: Ulysses describes storms as resulting from the Hyades "vexing the sea." "Vex" means to upset, stir up, trouble; attributing human actions to a non-living thing (the Hyades) is called **personification**.

- Lines 12-15: Ulysses tells us that he's visited a lot of different places with different governments, people, foods, and the like. He portrays himself as some kind of predatory animal, "roaming with a hungry heart." Because he doesn't say "I was like a lion" or "I roamed just as a lion might," this is a **metaphor**.
- Lines 19-21: Ulysses compares life to an arch – that's a **metaphor** again – and explains that the "untravelled world" (death; places he hasn't experienced) gleams through it. The "untravelled world" is likened to some kind of planet or luminous world, which means this is also a **metaphor**.
- Lines 44-45: Ulysses directs our attention to the "port," where the mariners are preparing the ship. The ship can't "puff" its own sail; the wind is probably doing it. Attributing human characteristics to non-living objects is **personification**.
- Line 46: Ulysses refers to his "mariners" as "souls." The "soul" is part of the body; using a part (the soul) to stand in for the whole (the mariners) is called **synecdoche**.
- Lines 56-7: Ulysses tells his companions that even though they're old, they still have time to visit places they haven't already seen. Ulysses probably doesn't have any specific place in mind so "a newer world" is standing in for a host of potential places he might visit; this is another example of **synecdoche**.
- Lines 58-9: Ulysses exhorts his mariners to set sail; the phrase "smite / the sounding furrows" compares the act of rowing to hitting or striking something; hitting something that makes a sound is here a **metaphor** for rowing.
- Lines 60-61: Ulysses says he intends to sail "beyond the sunset," which is another way of saying he intends to sail beyond the known universe. "Beyond the sunset" is a **metaphor**.

6.4 LETS SUM UP

"Ulysses" is a dramatic monologue, a poetic form we usually associate with Robert Browning, a Victorian poet and contemporary of Tennyson. A dramatic monologue is a poem spoken by a single person (mono-) to an audience; that audience could be one person or a group of people referred to in the poem (at line 49 Ulysses says "you and I are old") or any other implied audience. A monologue differs from a soliloquy (which also has one speaker) because it is spoken to an audience that is a part of the situation, as opposed to the audience in a theater. A dramatic monologue is identifiable by the fact that it resembles a conversation in which you can only hear one person talking; the speaker seems clearly to be responding to someone, but that person or group doesn't actually speak in the poem.

6.5 SUGGESTED READING

- *Armstrong, Isobel, Victorian Poetry : Poetry, Poetics and politics.* Routledge, Landon, 12993.
- *Campbell, Mathew, Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry :* Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1999.
- *Crowder, A.B. Poets and Critics: Their Means and Meaning,* Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, NY, 1993.
- *Howe, Elisabeth A. The Dramatic Monologue:* Twayne Publishers, NY, 1996.

6.6 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Q.1. What is the strong desire in the mind of Ulysses?

A.1. Ulysses wants to travel; he wants to take to the high seas and embark upon exciting new adventures. Ulysses is an old man, acutely aware of his own mortality. But he's also a great king and a noble warrior. Exploration and adventure are in his blood; they are the very marrow of his being. He could just settle down for a nice, quiet life in the twilight of his years, but he simply can't do that. Nor, for that matter, does he want to.

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

Death closes all: but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

Ulysses is constitutionally incapable of settling down. However old he may be, there are always new worlds to conquer, new opportunities to explore.

"Come, my friends,

'T is not too late to seek a newer world."

And what goes for an old warrior king, also goes for the rest of us. Irrespective of our age or physical condition, we must seek to emulate the inspiring example of Ulysses and be

"but strong in will /To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

In Tennyson's poem "Ulysses," the speaker, who is the great former king and warrior Ulysses, also known as Odysseus, wishes to travel. He has lived a long life, and he remembers the voyages he took in his youth, both journeying to and from battle and just general voyages he took in life. In spite of his old age, he yearns from the feeling of being in a new land, because it is invigorating and exciting to see something new that he has never experienced before.

Ulysses is aging, and he feels death coming for him. Because of this, he wishes to escape and feel he is doing something adventurous and dangerous. In this way, he feels his death, which is at this point inescapable, will not be accepted lying down. He will instead be active, as he prefers to be forced into death than to simply succumb to it. He wants to do something constructive till his last breath and urges his followers and sailors to do likewise.

Q.2. What is the basic contrast between the past and present of Ulysses' life in "Ulysses" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson?

A.2. Essentially, the main contrast between Ulysses' past and present is that, in his past, the king was a mighty warrior and adventurer, while, in his present, he is an aged statesman bored with his idle existence and unhappy with the companionship of his family and subjects. One of the major points of Tennyson's "Ulysses" is to describe this contrast, and it quickly becomes very clear that Ulysses glorifies his legendary past while regarding his present situation with distaste. For instance, take a look at how Ulysses describes his past exploits:

Much have I seen and known; cities of men

And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy. (13-17)

From this description, it's obvious that Ulysses' past was filled with adventure, epic warfare, and great deeds worthy of legendary heroes. To contrast this thrilling description, take a look at how Ulysses describes his present:

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. (1-5)

It's clear that Ulysses regards his present life as boring, meaningless, and lacking in passion, and this dull assessment is emphasized by the king's sentimental assessment of his heroic past.

All in all, the main contrast here is that, in the past, Ulysses was a mighty warrior capable of great deeds, but he is now reduced to an old man who feels confined by his duties and his age. Thus, this poem is really about the aging process and how an elderly individual deals with the inability to live the life he enjoyed in his youth. By presenting this process in the legendary context of Ulysses and *The Odyssey*, Tennyson dramatically

highlights its inherent difficulty. The poem ends on a positive note as Ulysses resolves to utilize his remaining time and energy in a meaningful way.

Q.3. What is Ulysses' solution to the problems of old age?

A.3. Tennyson's "Ulysses" is a meditation on old age. We meet an aged Ulysses bitterly reflecting on the glory of his legendary youth and contrasting it with the apparently dull state of his advanced years. Rather than fighting epic battles and exploring distant realms, for instance, Ulysses finds himself wasting away on the shores of Ithaca, tending to the "boring" needs of his family and subjects. The poem is, above all else, an evocation of yearning for the glory days.

Ulysses' solution is to abandon his family and his kingdom and set out in search of further adventures. According to the aged king, "Some work of noble note, may yet be done,/ Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods" (52-3), and in making this claim, Ulysses suggests that he's heading off in search of a chance to once again illustrate his heroism. In leaving home in search of adventure, Ulysses assumes he'll solve the problems of old age and reclaim his dignity. Interestingly enough, rather the opposite occurs. Like a former high school quarterback clinging to his memories, Ulysses is blind to the limitations that come with old age and, instead of aging gracefully, he pathetically attempts to reclaim his youth. Thus, the poem has a rather melancholy tone, and it's hard to avoid viewing Ulysses' efforts with pity. Yet he ends the poem optimistically trying to make the best in such a situation.

UNIT-7 ROBERTS BROWNING : MY LAST DUCHESS

Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Robert Browning : Life and works
- 7.3 My Last Duchess
 - 7.3.1 Poem
 - 7.3.2 Glossary
 - 7.3.3 Discussion
- 7.4 Lets Us Sum Up
- 7.5 Suggested Reading
- 7.6 Answer to Exercises

7.0 INTRODUCTION

“*My Last Duchess*” is a poem by Robert Browning, frequently anthologised as an example of the dramatic monologue. It first appeared in 1842 in Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics*. The poem is written in 28 rhyming couplets of iambic pentameter. This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. he claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his “gift of a nine-hundred-years- old name.” As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with ever-more chilling certainty that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess's early demise: when her behavior escalated, “[he] gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together.” Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall discuss a poem by one of the famous Victorian poet Robert Browning. After reading the Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of Robert Browning.
- Analyse the poem 'My Last Duchess'
- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define poetic technique of Robert Browning.

7.2 ROBERT BROWNING : LIFE AND WORKS

Robert Browning was a prolific Victorian-era poet and playwright. He is widely recognized as a master of dramatic monologue and psychological portraiture. Browning is perhaps best-known for a poem he didn't value highly, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, a children's poem that is quite different from his other work. He is also known for his long form blank poem *The Ring and the Book*, the story of a Roman murder trial in 12 books. Browning was married to the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who was a more popular poet till her early death.

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812 in Camberwell, a suburb of London. He and a younger sister, Sarianna, were the children of Robert Browning and Sarah Anna Browning. Browning's father supported the family by working as a bank clerk (foregoing a family fortune because he opposed slavery), and assembled a large library -- some 6,000 books -- which formed the foundation of the younger Browning's somewhat unconventional education.

Browning's family was devoted to his being a poet, supporting him financially and publishing his early works. Robert Browning's *Paracelsus*, published in 1835, received good reviews, but critics disliked *Sordello*, published in 1840, because they found its references to be obscure. In the 1830s, Browning tried to write plays for the theater, but did not succeed, and so moved on.

Browning lived with his parents and sister until 1846, when he married the poet Elizabeth Barrett, an admirer of his writing. Barrett's oppressive father disapproved of the marriage and disinherited her. The couple moved to Florence, Italy.

During his married years, Browning wrote very little as he was a devoted husband looking after a sickly wife. In 1849, the Brownings had a son, whom Robert Browning educated. The family lived on an inheritance from Elizabeth's cousin, residing mostly in Florence. Elizabeth died in 1861, and Robert Browning and his son returned to England.

Robert Browning only began to attain popular success when he was in his 50s. In the 1860s, he published *Dramatis Personae*, which had both a first and second edition. In 1868-69, he published the 12-volume *The Ring and the Book*, which some critics believe to be his greatest work, and which earned the poet popularity for the first time.

One of Browning's biggest successes was the children's poem "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." Published in *Dramatic Lyrics* in 1842, the poem was not one that Browning deemed consequential; however it is one of his most famous.

Robert Browning secured his place as a prominent poet with dramatic monologue, the form he mastered and for which he became known and influential. In dramatic monologue, a character speaks to a listener from his or her subjective point of view. In doing so, the character often reveals insights about himself or herself, often more than intended. While Robert Browning's work was disparaged by many of the early 20th century modernist poets, by mid-century critics asserted the importance of his work.

In his more advanced years, Browning became widely respected: the Victorian public appreciated the hopeful tone of his poems. In 1881, the Browning Society was founded to further study the poet's work, and in 1887, Browning received an honorary D.C.L. (Doctor of Civil Law) from Balliol College at Oxford University. Browning continued publishing poetry, with his final work, *Asolando*, published on the day he died. Robert Browning died on December 12, 1889 in Venice, and is buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

7.3 MY LAST DUCHESS

"My Last Duchess," published in 1842, is arguably Browning's most famous dramatic monologue, with good reason. It engages the reader on a number of levels – historical, psychological, ironic, theatrical, and more.

The most engaging element of the poem is probably the speaker himself, the duke. Objectively, it's easy to identify him as a monster, since he had his wife murdered for what comes across as fairly innocuous crimes. And yet he is impressively charming, both in his use of language and his affable address. The ironic disconnect that colours most of Browning's monologues is particularly strong here. It displays like some of his others poems, a penchant to peep into the mind of his characters.

7.3.1 POEM : MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said

"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?— too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this

Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

7.3.2 GLOSSARY

Ferrera – The Italian Duke who is speaking in the poem.

Will't – Will it

Countenance – Face

Durst – Dare

'Twas – It was

Sir - Referring to the Ambassador

Spot of joy – The blush on the Duchess' cheek

Mantle – Cloak

The dropping of the daylight in the West – The sunset

Bough – Branch

Officious - ready to serve or obliging

That piece – the painting

Fra Pandolf – Name of the fictional painter who painted the Duchess

Stoop - to descend from one's level of dignity or to condescend

Trifling – something of very little importance, trivial or insignificant:

Lessoned – Taught

Forsooth – Indeed

Commands - Orders

Munificence – showing generosity

Warrant - authorization or justification

Dowry – Money given to a husband from the wife's family.

Neptune – Roman god of the sea and horses. The Ancient Greeks called him Poseidon.

Claus of Innsbruck – The name of a fictional sculptor who made the sculpture of Neptune

7.3.3 DISCUSSION

Lines 1-2

*THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive.*

- The speaker points out a lifelike portrait of his "last Duchess" that's painted on the wall.
- This tells us that the speaker is a Duke, that his wife is dead, and that someone is listening to him describe his late wife's portrait, possibly in his private art gallery.
- It also makes us wonder what makes her his "last" Duchess. The opening of the poem is abrupt and dramatic working the curiosity of the readers.

Lines 2-4

*I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.*

- The Duke tells his mysterious listener that the painting of the Duchess is impressively accurate.

- The painter, Frà (or "Friar") Pandolf, worked hard to achieve a realistic effect.
- Notice that the Duke's comment "there she stands" suggests that this is a full-length portrait of the Duchess showing her entire body, not just a close-up of her face.

Line 5

Will't please you sit and look at her?

- The Duke asks his listener politely to sit down and examine the painting.
- But the politeness is somewhat fake, and the question seems more like a command. Could the listener refuse to sit down and look and listen? We don't think so. The dictatorial attitude of the Duke is thus hinted at.

Lines 5-13

I said

*"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus.*

- The Duke explains to the listener why he brought up the painter, Frà Pandolf.
- He says that he mentioned Pandolf on purpose, or "by design" (6) because strangers never examine the Duchess's portrait without looking like they want to ask the Duke how the painter put so much "depth and passion" (8) into the expression on the Duchess's face, or "countenance" (7).
- They don't actually ask, because they don't dare, but the Duke thinks he can tell that they want to ask, if they had the courage.
- Parenthetically, the Duke mentions that he's always the one there to answer this question because nobody else is allowed to draw back the curtain that hangs over the portrait.
- Only the Duke is allowed to look at it or show it to anyone else. This is clearly his private gallery, and we're a little afraid of what might happen to someone who broke the rules there.

Lines 13-15

*Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek:*

Addressing his still-unknown listener as "sir," the Duke goes into more detail about the expression on the Duchess's face in the painting.

- He describes her cheek as having a "spot / Of joy" (14-15) on it, perhaps a slight blush of pleasure.
- It wasn't just "her husband's presence" (14) that made her blush in this way, although the Duke seems to believe that it *should* have been the only thing that would.
- The Duke doesn't like the idea that anyone else might compliment his wife or do something sweet that would make her blush.

Lines 15-21

perhaps

*Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy.*

- The Duke imagines some of the ways that Frà Pandolf might have caused the Duchess to get that "spot of joy" in her face.
- He might have told her that her "mantle" (her shawl) covered her wrist too much, which is the Renaissance equivalent of saying, "man, that skirt's way too long – maybe you should hike it up a little."
- Or he might have complimented her on the becoming way that she flushes, telling her that "paint / Must never hope to reproduce" (17-18) the beautiful effect of her skin and colouring.
- The Duke thinks the Duchess would have thought that comments like this, the normal flirtatious "courtesy" (20) that noblemen would pay to noblewomen, were "cause enough" (20) to blush.
- Strangely, the Duke seems to believe that blushing in response to someone like Frà Pandolf was a decision, not an involuntary physical reaction. Notice that the Duke also seems to infuse his comments with a judgmental tone.

Lines 21-24

She had

*A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad.
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.*

- The Duke describes the Duchess as "too soon made glad" (22) and "too easily impressed" (23). This is his main problem with her: too many things make her happy.

- Another way of looking at it is that she's not serious enough. She doesn't save her "spot of joy" for him alone. She's not the discriminating snob that he wants her to be.
- She likes everything she sees, and she sees everything. In fact the duchess was a good natured person, but this irritated the snobbish Duke.

Lines 25-31

*Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace – all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least.*

- The Duke elaborates further on the Duchess's tendency to see every pleasant thing as pretty much the same.
- If he gives her a "favour" or mark of his esteem that she can wear, such as a corsage or piece of jewelry, she thanks him for it in the same way that she approves of a pretty sunset, a branch of cherries, or her white mule.
- At first the Duke suggests that she speaks of all these things equally, but then he changes his claim and admits that sometimes she doesn't say anything and just blushes in that special way.
- And maybe she's a little promiscuous – either in reality, or (more likely) in the Duke's imagination.
- Part of the problem is not just that she likes boughs of cherries – it's that some "officious fool" (27) brings them to her.
- (An "officious" person is someone who pokes their nose in and starts doing things when they're not wanted – somebody self-important who thinks they're the best person to do something, even when everyone else wishes they would just butt out.)

Lines 31-34

*She thanked men, – good! but thanked
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift.*

- The Duke claims that, although it's all well and good to thank people for doing things for you, the way the Duchess thanked people seemed to imply that she thought the little favors they did her were just as important as what the Duke himself did for her.

- After all, the Duke gave her his "nine-hundred-years-old name" (33) – a connection to a longstanding aristocratic family with power and prestige.
- The Duke's family has been around for nearly a thousand years running things in Ferrara, and he thinks this makes him superior to the Duchess, who doesn't have the same heritage.
- He thinks the Duchess ought to value the social elevation of her marriage over the simple pleasures of life. This shows that the Duke was a jealous and haughty person.

Lines 34-35

*Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling?*

- The Duke asks his listener a rhetorical question: who would actually lower himself and bother to have an argument with the Duchess about her indiscriminate behaviour?
- He thinks the answer is "nobody."
- We don't think that there is much open and honest communication in this relationship! The Duke was definitely a suspicious husband with a complicated personality.

Lines 35-43

*Even had you skill
In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark" – and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
– E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop.*

The Duke lists all the obstacles that prevented him from talking to the Duchess directly about his problems with her behaviour.

- He claims that he doesn't have the "skill /In speech" (35-36) to explain what he wants from her – but his skillful rhetoric in the rest of the poem suggests otherwise.
- He also suggests that she might have resisted being "lessoned" (40), that is, taught a lesson by him, if she had "made excuse" (41) for her behaviour instead.
- But even if he were a skilled speaker, and even if she didn't argue, he says he still wouldn't talk to her about it.

- Why? Because he thinks that bringing it up at all would be "stooping" to her level, and he refuses to do that. Again a proof of the Duke's arrogant and snobbish person.

Lines 43-45

*Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile?*

- The Duke admits to his listener (who is this guy, anyway?) that the Duchess was sweet to him –she did smile at him whenever he passed by her.
- But, he says, it's not like that was special. She smiles at everyone in the same way.

Lines 45-46

*This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together.*

- The Duke claims that "This grew" (45)– that is, the Duchess's indiscriminate kindness and appreciation of everything got more extreme.
- The Duke then "gave commands" (45) and as a result "All smiles stopped together" (46).
- Our best guess is that he had her killed, but the poem is ambiguous on this point.
- It's possible that he had her shut up in a dungeon or a nunnery, and that she's as good as dead.
- She's not his Duchess anymore – she's his "last Duchess" –so she's clearly not on the scene anymore.

Lines 46-47

*There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise?*

- The Duke ends his story of the Duchess and her painting by gesturing toward the full-body portrait again, in which she stands "As if alive" (47).

Lines 47-48

*We'll meet
The company below, then.*

- The Duke invites his listener to get up and go back downstairs to the rest of the "company."
- As in line 5, this sounds like a polite invitation – but we can't imagine anyone refusing.

Lines 48-53

*I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object.*

- We finally learn why the Duke is talking to this guy: his listener is the servant of a Count, and the Duke is wooing the Count's daughter.
- The Duke tells the servant that he knows about the Count's wealth and generosity, or "munificence" (49), so he expects to get any reasonable dowry he asks for.
- But his main "object" (53) in the negotiations is the daughter herself, not more money.

Lines 53-54

*Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir.*

- The Duke's listener seems to try to get away from him (we would try, too).
- The Duke stops him and insists that they stay together as they go back to meet everyone else downstairs.

Lines 54-56

*Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!*

- Before the Duke and his listener leave the gallery, the Duke points out one more of his art objects – a bronze statue of Neptune, the god of the sea, taming a sea-horse.
- The Duke mentions the name of the artist who cast this statue, Claus of Innsbruck, who made it specifically for him. This further confirms that the Duke was a boastful snob and a heartless person.

7.4 LETS US SUM UP

My Last Duchess is a dramatic monologue set in Renaissance Italy (early 16th century) and conveys the opinions of a wealthy noble man as he shows a marriage broker, an emissary, a painting of his late wife, 'my last duchess'. It is a powerful piece of psychological poetry, formed in rhyming couplets (heroic couplets) in a single long stanza, and is one of

the best examples of Browning's talent for developing character in a persona. Over the years, since its first publication in 1842 in *Dramatic Lyrics*, many have questioned the character of the fictional speaker, loosely based on a historical figure, the duke of Ferrara. He is variously described as:

- *My Last Duchess* is a fictional account of one man's attempt to explain away a picture behind curtains and by so doing convince himself (and the emissary) of the truth. But the truth could well be one extended lie - the duke being a pathological liar - an excuse for the continuation of control over his unfortunate first wife.
- Browning's genius lies in his ability to keep the reader on the tightrope of uncertainty. Throughout the ambiguous monologue there is no moral judgement made; the audacious nature of the duke isn't questioned, we don't know if he's creating more untruths by pretending to reveal the truth. The debate goes on and will likely never end.

All the reader knows for certain is that the lady in the painting is no longer alive. Or is she?

When Browning himself was asked about the meaning of two lines in the poem...*I gave commands/Then all smiles stopped together....*he replied - 'yes, it means put to death...or she was shut up in a convent.' Which is true is up to the reader.

One thing is certain, this dramatic monologue is a masterpiece of the genre. The language perfectly fits the dark, pretentious, egotistic man who may or may not have killed his wife because she was too kind and welcoming, who is trying too hard to persuade the marriage broker that he is the right man for his next intended bride.

My Last Duchess was written in the Victorian age, when women were seen more as property in a marriage than real humans capable of love. Generally speaking men were in charge in a relationship; serious notions of equality had not yet been raised. Browning no doubt had this in mind when he wrote the poem, an attempt to explore the dominant role of the male in society, the idea of ownership and the position of women in marriage.

7.5 SUGGESTED READING

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7.6 ANSWER TO EXERCISE

Q.1. What themes are illuminated by the characters?

A.1. While out walking, Browning made the comment to Hiram Corson, after the latter had published an introductory study of Browning's poetry, stating that what he had in mind when he wrote "gave orders" in "My Last Duchess" was the orders were for her murder [as an afterthought he also added an alternative for her to be "shut up in a convent"]. The **Duke** illustrates that one of Browning's **themes** in writing this dramatic monologue is that of **Insolence**. It is the **tyrannical Duke's insolence** that allows him to think that a viable solution to personal dissatisfaction with the whims of a young bride is murder. Insolence can be understood as haughty, arrogant, disdainful, contemptuous disrespect of personhood. Murder is the ultimate manifestation of disrespect of personhood.

Browning drew the inspiration for his poem from the Renaissance account of the Italian Duke Alfonso II d'Este of the Duchy of Ferrara, attested to by the one word epigram at the head of the poem: "Ferrara." In 1558 the 25-year-old Alfonso married the 14-year-old Lucrezia, the poorly educated young daughter of the Medici family, then *nouveau riche* in comparison to the d'Estes of Ferrara. A poorly educated, fourteen year old bride unused to ancient tradition and manners of behaviour would--upon suddenly finding herself the object of attention, esteem, wealth, and authority--be very likely to display giddy, light-hearted and universally delighted deportment.

Since the Ferrara marriage tale inspired Browning's poem--including the similar mysterious deaths of Lucrezia and the first duchess--it is logical to conclude that this is the true description of the Duke's bride whose blush of delight was awakened by trivialities as readily as by his passions. Through the character of the **painted last Duchess**, Browning presents the **theme of Young Marriage**, a practice popular in early epochs but fallen out of practice before the Victorian period, yet still envisioned in the wishful romanticity of the morally strict era.

The main character in "My Last Duchess" is the speaker, the Duke of Ferrara. He is a jealous, gloating psychopath who boasts to his visitor that he "gave commands" to stop his wife's flirtatious smiles. The Duke seems pleased that he has control over the Duchess now that she is dead. He is the one, after all, who covers and uncovers her portrait as and when he

sees fit, and he is the one who decides what story about her his visitors hear.

While the Duchess was alive, the Duke didn't seem to have much control over her, and she would, at least as far as he could tell, flirt with other men. The Duke refused to even speak to his wife about his concerns, because even to do so would have been, he says, "some stooping," and he chose "never to stoop."

The main theme that emerges from Browning's presentation of the Duke and of his relationship with his wife, the Duchess, is the theme of gender inequality in the nineteenth century. The Duke seems to exercise all of the power, and he takes the life of his wife for nothing more than smiling at other men just the same as she smiled at him. She, on the other hand, is completely powerless. One symbol of this unequal power dynamic is the curtain which covers the portrait of the Duchess. The fact that he now has power to determine who sees her, and how they see her, indicates that he essentially has the power to determine how she is remembered, or if she is remembered at all.

The second key symbol which demonstrates this theme of gender inequality is the statue that the Duke points out to his guest at the end of the poem. The statue depicts "Neptune . . . Taming a sea-horse," which symbolizes the Duke taming the Duchess. Compared to the Duchess, represented by a small sea-horse, the Duke is a god, like Neptune.

This grossly unequal power dynamic is a reflection of the respective positions of men and women in Victorian England. When a woman married a man, for example, all of her legal rights, as well as all of her property, were transferred to the husband. A husband and wife were considered one body, represented by the husband.

One theme illuminated by the characters in "My Last Duchess" is the misuse of patriarchal power.

The Duke has wealth and position, and as a husband, a great deal of power over his young wife, the now dead duchess. He abuses his power by wanting her to direct one hundred percent of her affection and attention to him alone, and finally for killing her when she does not comply with his demands.

The late duchess's character illuminates her innocence and kindness:

she liked whate'er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West ...

The duke's character illustrates his ruthless abuse of power:

I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together.

The duke's character also reveals the theme of insecurity. The duke becomes jealous of the very minor attentions that the duchess pays to other men. One has to wonder why he is so worried about her blushing at the words of a painter or smiling at a servant. The poem implies that people, especially people with power, need to discern what they can safely overlook and to examine their own hearts and minds instead of blaming others for their demons.

One of the themes of the story is man's inhumanity to woman. And this theme is reflected in the attitude of the upper-classes towards marriage. High-born personages like the Duke don't regard marriage as having anything to do with love; it's all about forging strategic political alliances with other powerful families. As the established convention regards marriage as nothing more than a glorified business transaction, women such as the unfortunate Duchess are treated as chattels, property to be bought and sold by men.

Among other things, this means that, beneath the outward show of exaggerated courtesy shown towards women in this society, they are not truly respected. That being the case, it's no surprise that the Duke should feel no compunction whatsoever in resorting to murdering his wife when he suspects her of infidelity. Browning appears to be making a wider point here about the barbarism of human nature lurking not far beneath the surface, even in the ostensibly refined, civilized surface of Italian aristocratic life.

Q.2. What is the poem "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning about?

"My Last Duchess" is a dramatic monologue written by Robert Browning. That means that one person is speaking though the entire poem. In this case, the speaker is Duke Ferrara. Although there was a historical duke that Browning had in mind, Aphonso II, who lived in the second half of the 16th century in Italy, Browning was attempting to portray a way of life rather than a specific person.

The Duke is speaking to the emissary of a Count who is there to negotiate the dowry for the woman the Duke plans to marry and make his next duchess. The Count will pay a sum of money, which the Duke will have to agree on, so that the Duke will marry his daughter. As the poem begins, Ferrara is showing the portrait of his "last Duchess" to the emissary. He explains that he commissioned the painting and that only he pulls back the curtain that normally covers it. He then begins to speak of the Duchess. Her portrait shows a "spot of joy" in her cheeks, but rather than pleasing the Duke, it causes him to think about the things that bothered him about his former wife. The reader understands that the things that bothered the Duke were minor; the Duke reveals his desire for control and his jealousy as he speaks.

She was a woman who enjoyed everything and showed her pleasure toward things and people, but this aggravated the Duke because he thought she should gain greater pleasure from being his wife than from anything else. He admits that he could have instructed his wife on how to stop aggravating him, but he says that would be "stooping," that is, it would be beneath him to have to explain to his wife what he wanted. She was supposed to know. He then states that he "gave commands. Then all smiles stopped together." Readers, and the emissary as well, assume this means the Duke had his wife executed. Upon hearing this, the emissary tries to rush down the stairs to get away from the Duke, but Ferrara says, "Nay, we'll go together down, Sir." Finally, he points out a statue of "Neptune ... taming a seahorse," which he had commissioned. The statue is symbolic: It points to the fact that Ferrara believes he is a god and can control others, especially his wife.



॥ सरस्वती नः सुभगा मयस्कल् ॥

Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Bachelor of Arts

UGEN-103

Literature in English 1750-1900

BLOCK

3

PROSE

UNIT-8

Charles Lamb : *Dream Children*

UNIT-9

William Hazlit : *My First Acquaintance with Poets*

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This block consists of 2 units

Unit-8 discusses a famous essayist, Charles Lamb who wrote an essay under his Pseudonym of *Elia*. In this unit, you will study, *Dream Children*. This essay is deeply personal and Autobiographical.

Unit-9 discusses William Hazlitt, the greatest critics, and essayists in the history of the English language. You will study his essay, '*My First Acquaintance with Poets*'.

UNIT-8 CHARLES LAMB : DREAM CHILDREN

Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Charles
 - 8.2.1 Life
 - 8.2.2 Literary Works
- 8.3 Charles Lamb as an Essayist
- 8.4 The Prose Style of Charles Lamb
- 8.5 Charles Lamb : “*Dream Children*”
- 8.6 Summary and Analysis
 - 8.6.1 Summary
 - 8.6.2 Analysis
- 8.7 Let us sum up
- 8.8 Self Assessment Questions
- 8.9 Source

8.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Charles Lamb, the English author, critic, and a poet who was best known for his *Essays of Elia* and for the children’s book ‘*Tales from Shakespeare*’, co-authored with his sister, Mary Lamb. Referring to himself by the pseudonym Elia, Lamb has penned down the essays as personal accounts of his life devoid of any didactic or moral lesson. Charles Lamb has been acclaimed by common consent as the *Prince among English essayist*.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his life and literary works, you will be able :

- to understand Charles Lamb was as an English essayist
- to analyze the prose style of Charles Lamb.
- to appreciate and evaluate the given text.

8.2 CHARLES LAMB : LIFE AND LITERARY WORKS

8.2.1 LIFE

Charles Lamb was an essayist and critic, best known for his *Essays of Elia* (1823–33). He was born on Feb. 10, 1775, in London, the son of Elizabeth Field and John Lamb. Charles was the youngest child, with a sister 11 years older named Mary and an even older brother named John; there were four others who did not survive infancy. His father, John Lamb was a lawyer's clerk and spent most of his professional life as the assistant to a barrister named Samuel Salt, who lived in the Inner Temple in the legal district of London. It was there in Crown office Row that Charles Lamb was born and spent his youth. Lamb created a portrait of his father in his "Elia on the Old Benchers" under the name Lovel. Lamb's older brother was too much his senior to be a youthful companion to the boy, but his sister Mary, being born eleven years before him, was probably his closest playmate. His paternal aunt Hetty, who seems to have had a particular fondness for him, also cared for Lamb. At the age of seven, he entered Christ's Hospital, a free boarding school for sons of poor but genteel parents.

After beginning a lifelong friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a fellow student, Lamb left school at fourteen in 1789 and was forced to find a more prosaic career. For a short time he worked in the office of Joseph Plaice, a London merchant, and then, for 23 weeks, until 8 February 1792, held a small post in the Examiner's Office of the South Sea House. In 1792, he was hired as a clerk in the East India Company and worked there for the next 33 years.

On Sept. 22, 1796, Lamb's sister, Mary, in a moment of anxious rage, stabbed their mother to death. An inquest found Mary temporarily insane and placed her in the custody of Charles. After the death of their father in 1799, Mary came to live with Charles for the rest of his life. This companionship was broken only at intervals when the symptoms of Mary's illness recurred so that she had to enter an asylum. This lifelong guardianship prevented Lamb from ever marrying. He himself had spent 6 weeks in an asylum during the winter of 1795, stuttered badly all his life, and became increasingly dependent on alcohol. It is quite possible that his responsibility of Mary helped him to keep a firmer grip on his own sanity.

Some of Lamb's fondest childhood memories were of time spent with Mrs Field, his maternal grandmother, who was for many years a servant to the Plummer family, who owned a large country house called Blake ware, near Watford, Hertfordshire. After the death of Mrs Plummer, Lamb's grandmother was in sole charge of the large home and, as Mr Plummer was often absent, Charles had free rein of the place during his visits.

Though Lamb was still far from famous, these years were among the happiest of his life. At their home in Inner Temple Lane, he and Mary entertained their friends at a number of late Wednesday evening gatherings. The company included many of the famous authors of the romantic period-Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, William Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt. Yet, according to Hazlitt, Lamb "always made the best pun and the best remark" of the evening. Also, Lamb's letters to these friends during these years are among the best things he ever wrote. Filled with excellent critical comments, they also reveal much of the wistful humour of Lamb's own personality.

In 1823, Charles and Mary met and eventually adopted an orphan girl, Emma Isola. In August the Lambs moved from London for the first time, to Islington and then to Enfield. Charles's health was weakening, and a long illness during the winter of 1824 led him to retire permanently from the East India Company. He now occupied his time with walking trips around Hertfordshire with Emma Isola. By 1833, the frequency and duration of Mary's attacks had increased so that she needed almost constant care, so the Lambs moved to Edmonton to be near Mary's nurse. Charles ended his literary career the same year with the *Last Essays of Elia*. In July, Emma's marriage to Charles's friend Edward Moxon left him depressed and lonely.

He died of a streptococcal infection, erysipelas, contracted from a minor graze on his face sustained after slipping in the street, on 27 December 1834. He was 59. From 1833 till their deaths, Charles and Mary lived at Bay Cottage, Church Street, Edmonton, and north of London (now part of the London) Borough of Enfield. Lamb is buried in All Saints' Churchyard, Edmonton. His sister, who was ten years his senior, survived him for more than a dozen years. She is buried beside him.

Legacy

Two of the houses at Christ's Hospital (Lamb A and Lamb B) are named in his honour. He is also honoured by The Latymer School, a grammar school in Edmonton, a suburb of London where he lived for a time: it has six houses, one of which, Lamb, is named after him. A major academic prize awarded each year at Christ's Hospital School's speech day is "The Lamb Prize for Independent Study".

8.2.2 LITERARY WORKS

Lamb's literary career began in 1796 when Coleridge published four of Lamb's sonnets in his own first volume, *Poems on Various Subjects*. He has written about 56 essays.

In 1798, Lamb published his sentimental romance, *A Tale of Rosamund Gray*, and, together with Charles Lloyd, a friend of Coleridge, brought out a volume entitled *Blank Verse*. By 1801, Lamb had begun to contribute short articles to London newspapers and to write plays in an effort to relieve the poverty he and Mary endured. In 1802, he published *John*

Woodvil, a blank-verse play that enjoyed no success, and on the night of Dec. 10, 1806, his two-act farce, *Mr. H.*, was greeted by "a hundred hisses" at the Drury Lane Theatre.

In 1807, Charles and Mary together brought out *Tales from Shakespeare*, a collection of prose adaptations of Shakespeare's plays intended for young readers. The book proved popular with both young and old, and the Lambs followed up this success with others in the same vein. In 1808, Charles published his own version of Homer's *Odyssey* for children, *The Adventures of Ulysses*. Meanwhile, Lamb began a new aspect of his career in 1808 by editing the anthology *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare* and in 1809 he collaborated again with Mary on *Mrs. Leicester's School*, a book of children's stories, and *Poetry for Children*.

Lamb's brilliant comments on the selections he chose began his reputation as a critic, and the entire volume was largely responsible for the revival of interest in Shakespeare's contemporaries, which followed its publication. Lamb furthered his critical career with essays "*On the Genius and Character of Hogarth*" and "*The Tragedies of Shakespeare*," published in Leigh Hunt's journal, the *Reflector*, in 1811. In 1818, he brought out a two-volume collection *The Works of Charles Lamb*. Ironically, his real literary career was yet to begin.

From 1820 through 1825, he contributed a series of essays to the *London Magazine*, which was immensely popular. Though he wrote under the pseudonym Elia, these essays, like his letters, are intimate revelations of Lamb's own thoughts, emotions, and experiences of literature and life. Lamb is chiefly remembered for his "Elia" essays (included 55 essays). The "Elia" essays are characterized by Lamb's personal tone, narrative ease, and wealth of literary allusions. Never didactic, the essays treat ordinary subjects in a nostalgic, fanciful way by combining humour, pathos, and a sophisticated irony ranging from gentle to scathing.

He touches on a few disturbing subjects. He prefers instead to look to the past for a sense of calm, stability, and changelessness. Yet beneath the wit, humour, and humanity of such essays as "*A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*," "*Witches and Other Night-Fears*," and "*Dream Children*," one finds a gentle nostalgia and melancholy. This bittersweet tone remains the hallmark of Lamb's style.

Lamb's contributions to Coleridge's second edition of the *Poems on Various Subjects* showed significant growth as a poet. These poems included *The Tomb of Douglas* and *A Vision of Repentance*. Lamb's most famous poem was *The Old Familiar Faces*. Like most of Lamb's poems, it is unabashedly sentimental, and perhaps for this reason it is still remembered and widely read today.

At the end of the 18th century, Lamb began to work on prose, first in a novella entitled *Rosamund Gray*, which tells the story of a young girl whose character is thought to be based on Ann Simmons, an early love

interest. Although the story is not particularly successful as a narrative because of Lamb's poor sense of plot, but the prose is beautiful.

In the first years of the 19th century, Lamb began a fruitful literary cooperation with his sister Mary. Together they wrote at least three books for William Godwin's Juvenile Library. The most successful of these was *Tales from Shakespeare*, which ran through two editions for Godwin and has been published dozens of times in countless editions ever since. The book contains artful prose summaries of some of Shakespeare's most well-loved works. According to Lamb, he worked primarily on Shakespeare's tragedies, while Mary focused mainly on the comedies.

Lamb's essays are very personal. They possess humour and pathos like most romantic works of literature. Lamb is also praised for his allusive quality which is noted by many literary critics. And above all he is highly evocative, a quality possessed by all Romantic writers.

8.3 CHARLES LAMB AS AN ESSAYIST

Lamb's major trademarks as an essayist are to be found in his Essays of *Elia*: overall, a relaxed and colloquial voice and a genteel sensibility incorporating elements of humour, whimsy, strong personal recollection and touches of pathos. All these mark him out as one of the great exponents of the familiar essay in English in the nineteenth century, along with Thomas de Quincey and William Hazlitt. His writing is characterized by a strong personal element and an informal tone, on almost any subject of interest to the writer. Although he also tried his hand at many other literary forms, it is fair to say that Lamb really found his distinctive and most enduring voice in his essays, which he first contributed to the *London Magazine* under the pseudonym of 'Elia'.

The style is entirely suited to the subject matter at this point, slow-paced, languorous and poignant. This dissolution of realism into a dream is a stylistic trick more effective than any self-indulgent musings on the past and its lost possibilities could have been.

His essays exhibit two major concerns of the Romantic age: a fascination with the past and also with the supernatural. Lamb was certainly keenly interested in the past, but although not generally given to dreams or visions-unlike, for instance, his fellow-essayist de Quincey-he mingles realism, memory, and dream in a memorable and concise manner in the essay *Dream Children*. Lamb's habit of introducing reminiscences and anecdotes in his essays is clearly seen. He adds the element of sorrow to them, which gives him a special place in literary history.

In the delightful "*Essays of Elia*", Lamb is an egoist like Montaigne. He was a master of humour and pathos, both of which are blended together in his essays, as they did in his life. This is his unique style, which we rarely find in any other literary work of English literature.

8.4 THE PROSE STYLE OF CHARLES LAMB

Charles Lamb occupies a unique place in the history of the English prose by virtue of his unique style. *Dream Children: A Reverie* exhibits all of Lamb's strengths as an essayist. It is short but effective in encompassing a range of moods. It starts out on a convivial and realistic note with the picture of a cozy domestic life. It is revealed later to be a mere dream or 'reverie' on part of the writer. It is, in fact, the picture of the family that Lamb longed for but never actually had, as he is never married, instead he devoted a lifetime to caring for his sister Mary (who appears as Bridget in his essays) who was afflicted with periodical insanity.

The real achievement of this piece lies in the compact evocation both of the solid realism of family life and nostalgia for a family past, incorporating the memory of lost love, Alice, and also of Lamb's older brother, before merging into the air of a dream. More, he also skillfully conjures a genuine sense of eeriness when the two children reveal themselves to be a mere dream, the products of wishful thinking before the dreamer wakes up: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, *nor are we children at all We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been*"

Charles Lamb is unique not because of his 'Elizabethans', but that one of the most invigorating aspects of Lamb's style is his *dramatic characterization*. Though his imaginary characters are best revealed in his essays *The South Sea House*, *My Own Relation* and *Dream Children*, we also get a glimpse of Lamb's ability of characterization. James Elia of *My Relations* but John L-The *Dream Children*, so handsome and spirited youth, and a 'king', Charles' grandmother Mrs. Field, his sweetheart Alice Winterton are the living pictures in his picture gallery.

Lamb's essays focus on the theme of *temperament and consciousness* of man. Employing *personal experience* in his writing, Elia [Lamb] uses *simple language* that is effectual and that the ordinary man can easily understand and apply to his life.

To add dimension to his character, Elia faces life's experiences and handles them as Lamb thought a man should act. His *humorous* and *leisurely* approach to his writing makes the reader to internalize his concept and thus make the essay universal.

Widespread truths represent the greater portion of Lamb's work, yet these truths are not lofty sentiments. Elia prefers the past to the present. Lamb's descriptions subscribe to sensory pleasures.

Lamb's simplistic approach to the natural world both entertains and sends the reader to another place and time.

Lamb's other essential component in style is his profuse use of quotation and allusions to the older texts. Lamb was a prolific reader and

the huge influx of quotations shows that they are constantly in his mind, and are a natural component of his style not raked up on occasion.

8.5 CHARLES LAMB'S DREAM CHILDREN

Text

DREAM CHILDREN; A REVERIE

CHILDREN love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditional great-uncle or grandame whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk, (a hundred times

bigger than that in which they and papa lived,) which had been the scene (so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country) of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their uncle was

to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts; till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but

still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if some one were to carry away the old tombs

they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "that would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry too, of the neighbourhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the Psalter by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer, (here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till, upon my looking grave,

it desisted,) the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I

told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said "those innocents would do her no harm;" and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep

with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she; and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grandchildren, having us to the great house in the holidays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the twelve

Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that

huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed out; sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me; and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then; and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew-trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir-apples, which were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about upon the fresh grass with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that

darted to and fro in the fish-pond at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their

loved all her grandchildren, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out; (and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries:;) and how

impertinent friskings,—I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such-like common baits for children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then, in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field

their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me

upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy, (for he was a good bit older than I,) many a mile when I could not walk for pain; and how in after life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always, I fear, make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards

I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him, (for we quarrelled sometimes,) rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him as he their poor uncle, must have

as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial, meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech,

strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice

call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name"—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side; but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.

been when the doctor took off his limb.—Here the children fell a crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for Uncle John. and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n; and,

8.6 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF DREAM CHILDREN

The narrative essay, *Dream Children* is one of the 'Essays of Elia'. The essay expresses the feelings of loss and regret faced by the narrator. It is based on the description of a place, the relationships and the feelings that have been part of the narrator's past. Charles Lamb narrates the story of his dream that he had. In this dream, he came across his dream children that diminish and dissolve into nothingness at the end of the dream.

8.6.1 SUMMARY

Lamb opens the essay “*Dream Children*” by narrating the story of his grandmother, Mrs. Field to his children, Alice and John. Lamb’s grandmother, his children’s great-grandmother, lived in a ‘great house in Norfolk’. This house was a hundred times bigger than the house they are living in presently. Lamb narrates his children the story of the tragic scene that had been carved out in the wood upon chimney-piece of the great hall in the great house of his grandmother. However, this wood chimney was then replaced by a marble chimney by the owner. Mrs. Field, the Lamb’s grandmother, was not the real owner of the house, however, due to her kind and humble behaviour and her great religious devotion had turned everybody to respect her. The owner of the house hired her as the caretaker and handed over it to her while he himself lived in another house. Mrs. Field lived in the great-house as if it was her own. Later on, the precious ornaments of the great house were shifted to the real owner’s house; though, they didn’t suit the modern house. Furthermore, Lamb tells his children about his grandmother’s death and funeral that was attended by a large number of people, both poor and rich. Even people from many miles around had come to express their condolences and respect toward her. Mrs. Field was a very humble and pious woman who knew Psalms and a great part of the Testament by heart.

Lamb then starts telling his children about their grandmother’s youth. She was tall, upright with a graceful personality. She was the best dancer in the country until cancer attacked her and deprived her of her skill, however, this disease couldn’t take her good spirits. Furthermore, Lamb tells Alice and John of how his grandmother used to sleep alone in an isolated chamber of the house. Also, she believed that she saw two infant ghosts at midnight however, she was also sure that these were decent mortals that wouldn’t hurt her. Although his maid slept with him, Lamb was quite frightened of the ghosts as he was not as religious as his grandmother.

Furthermore, Lamb told his children about their great-grandmother’s love and affection towards her grandchildren. Lamb, along with his siblings and cousins, visited his grandmother in holidays where they, particularly he, spent most of the hours gazing around the old sculptures of the Emperors of Rome. He would gaze them so much that the sculptures would appear to him living or else he would turn marble; moreover, he would roam around in the mansion without getting tired. He used to be alone while roaming around in the empty rooms; worn-out tapestries etc. unless a lonely gardener would cross him. He would also roam about the gardens, scrutinizing at the vegetation and flowers. He was more satisfied with spending his holidays like this and preferred it to the usual habits of children. Lamb tells that he enjoyed sweet aromas of peaches and nectarines, but he scarcely plucked them.

Lamb, now, tells his children about their uncle John Lamb. Lamb's grandmother would love her all grandchildren, however, she had a special affection for John. John was a brave, handsome, and spirited man. He had a unique sort of personality. John, with the passage of time, earned respect and admiration of almost everyone in the family and out of the family as well. John was a few years elder than Charles Lamb. John would carry Charles, who was lame-footed, on his back for many miles when he was unable to walk. However, John, in the afterlife, became lame-footed. Lamb still dreads that he had not been sympathetic enough to endure the intolerant discomforts of John or even to recall his youth when he was supported by John. However, when John passed away, Lamb would miss him so much. He reminisced his gentleness and his pettiness and desired him to be alive again. He wanted him to come back to life so that he could fight with him again. Lamb felt as uneasy without him as the poor John felt when the doctor took off his limb.

The children at this point start mourning for their deceased uncle and demand the writer to proceed by narrating something about their dead mother. Then he started narrating them how for a period of seven long years he (Lamb) uncomplainingly dated the beautiful Alice Winterton. When Lamb was narrating his experiences with his wife, he suddenly realizes that the old Alice is communicating with him through little Alice sitting in front of him.

As Lamb sustains to stare it appears that his children, John and Alice, are disappearing from him. Finally, the two desolate apparitions vanish saying that they are neither of Alice nor of him, they are not children at all. Suddenly, Lamb wakes up and finds himself in the bachelor arm-chair where he had fallen asleep with the loyal Bridget by his side.

8.6.2 ANALYSIS

It starts out on a convivial and realistic note with the picture of a cozy domestic setting in which the writer regales his two children with stories of the family past; yet by the end this picture has dissolved into nothingness, and is revealed to be a mere dream, or 'reverie' on the part of the writer.

The character of Mrs. Field, the grandmother in the story, has a real basis. The name is real and the fact is also real that she kept a house in a distant place. While the name of the place is given as Norfolk, actually it was Hertfordshire. Lamb enriches the tale about his grandmother with an elaborate and fanciful description of the house she kept, and as the tale was fanciful, it inflamed the fancy of the listeners, John and Alice. Lamb selects the names for his dream children intelligently. Alice reminds one of Alice in Wonderland, a dream world, and John bears relation with his brother John. Lamb liberally intermixes facts with fancy.

Thus, when he speaks of John as a child, he makes the character so fanciful with all his lustiness that the tale warms up the children, but soon

he gets him dead to make the children fall ‘a-crying’. When he tells the children about Mrs Field, their great grandmother saying how tall, upright and graceful she was, how in her youth, she was esteemed the best dancer, the children’s fun soars up, only to be subdued a moment later when he tells them how she fell a victim to the cruel disease, cancer. While the nearly homo-phonic words – dancer and cancer – arouse our laughter, the hearts of the children ache, and the hearts of the readers too. As Lamb speaks how she saw the apparitions of two infants gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, John felt frightened but posed to be courageous.

The narrative effect gains momentum as Lamb now and then describes the reactions of the children. Lamb slips into a dreamy world when he tells the children how he enjoyed strolling about in the garden with all its trees, vines, orangery and the fish pond. Lamb’s dream transports himself into an idyllic world, the Romantics loved to traverse. The house of the Plumbers in Hertfordshire, which Mrs.Field kept and which Lamb visited, had all that Lamb speaks of, but what was not there is the charm that the essayist felt within his heart. The marble statues were there, but it is Charles Lamb who makes them turn alive or himself turn statuesque. The fish pond in which ‘the dace darted to and fro at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in a silent state’ might have had earthly existence, but the wonder that he felt and described to John and Alice was only an aerial signal that is only Lamb’s.

The response of children makes the essay dramatic and explains the effect of the essay on their mind. On the one hand, their actions make their characteristic features clear. When Lamb told them that he preferred to see things at a mansion rather than eating fruits, John puts the grapes back. This shows his innocence as well as his ability to control his senses. The tone of the essay shifts from humorous to tragic when Lamb describes the death of his beloved brother and great- grandmother whom he loses at an early age of his life.

The ending makes the essay even more psychological than the mention of the narrator’s feelings and the response of the children had made it. The surprise ending also points towards the inability of Lamb to get his love responded positively by Alice. The children that have been so close to him in his dream represent the ‘dream’ or aspirations that he had had while trying to woo his beloved.

The relationships of the narrator with the grandmother and his brother have been described very clearly. This description has served to clarify his characteristic features; develop the theme of family relationships as well as the theme of loss; and, to make the essay dramatic.

8.7 LET US SUM UP

Charles Lamb was at the centre of a major literary circle in England. In this essay, the author is brought in a dream world to reveal the

sweet recollections of the past days. The essay, being enhanced with despair, clarifies the worth and necessity of childhood and the loved ones for an individual, without whom the life appears to be dark and suffocating for the individual. The reaction and response of the children in the essay reflect the effect of the story on their mind and turns the essay dramatic. Lamb appears to be nostalgic throughout the essay and longed for his loved ones. He is depressed at the death of his beloved Alice and feels guilty for marrying her.

Towards the end of the essay, a twist in the essay comes when all the events in the story turn out to be a dream. This adds suspense to the story along with an open end.

8.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss Charles Lamb's literary works. Refer to 8.2
- Q2. Comment on the prose style of Charles Lamb with reference to his essay *Dream Children*. Refer to 8.4
- Q3. Discuss Charles Lamb as an essayist. Refer to 8.3
- Q4. “We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call

Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of let he millions of ages before we have existence and a name”-----and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair,” Explain with reference to context from the text ‘*Dream Children*’. Refer to 8.5 and 8.5.1

- Q5. She said “ those innocents would do her no harm;” and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I never saw the infants”. Explain these lines with reference to context from the Text ‘*Dream Children*’. Refer to 8.5 and 8.5.1

8.10 SOURCE

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UNIT-9 WILLIAM HAZLITT

Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 William Hazlitt : Life & Literary works
 - 9.2.1 Life
 - 9.2.2 Literary Works
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- 9.4 The Prose Style of William Hazlitt
- 9.5 William Hazlitt's 'My First Acquaintance with Poets'
- 9.6 Summary and Analysis
 - 9.6.1 Summary
 - 9.6.2 Analysis
- 9.7 Let us sum up
- 9.8 Self Assessment Questions
- 9.9 Source

9.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to William Hazlitt, who was an English essayist, dramatist and literary critic, painter, social commentator, and philosopher. He is now considered one of the greatest critics and essayists in the history of the English language. He is also acknowledged as the finest art critic of his age. Despite his high standing among historians of literature and art, his work is currently a little read and mostly out of print.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his life and literary works, you will be able :

- to understand William Hazlitt as an English essayist, and a literary critic.

- to analyze the essay
- to analyze the prose style of William Hazlitt

9.2 WILLIAM HAZLITT : LIFE AND WORKS

9.2.1 LIFE

William, the youngest of the surviving Hazlitt children, was born in Mitre Lane, Maidstone, in 1778. In 1780, when he was two, his family began a nomadic lifestyle that was to last several years. From Maidstone his father took them to Bandon Country Cork, Ireland; and from Bandon in 1783 to the United States, where the elder Hazlitt preached, lectured, and sought a ministerial call to a liberal congregation. His efforts to obtain a post did not meet with success, although he did exert a certain influence on the founding of the first Unitarian church in Boston. In 1786–87 the family returned to England and settled in Wem, in Shropshire. Hazlitt would remember little of his years in America, save the taste of barberries.

Few details remain of Hazlitt's daily life in his last years. Much of his time was spent by choice in the bucolic setting of Winterslow. But he needed to be in London for business reasons. There, he seems to have exchanged visits with some of his old friends, but few details of these occasions were recorded. Often he was seen in the company of his son and son's fiancée. Otherwise, he continued to produce a stream of articles to make ends meet.

In 1828, Hazlitt found work reviewing for the theatre again (for *The Examiner*). In play going he found one of his greatest consolations. One of his most notable essays, "*The Free Admission*", arose from this experience. Some of these, such as meditations on "Common Sense", "Originality", "The Ideal", "Envy", and "Prejudice", appeared in *The Atlas* in early 1830.

After a brief stay on Bouverie Street in 1829, he continued to turn out articles for *The Atlas*, *The London Weekly Review*, and now *The Court Journal*. Even at this time, however, he turned out a few notable essays, primarily for *The New Monthly Magazine*.

His last few days were spent in delirium. Finally, with his son and a few others in attendance, he died on 18 September. His last words were reported to have been "Well, I've had a happy life".

William Hazlitt was buried in the churchyard of St Anne's Church, Soho in London on 23 September 1830.

Posthumous reputation

His works have fallen out of print, Hazlitt underwent a small decline, though in the late 1990s

his reputation was reasserted by admirers and his works reprinted. Two major works then appeared. *The Daystar of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style* by Tom Paulin in 1998 and *Quarrel of the Age: The Life and Times of William Hazlitt* by A.C Grayling in 2000. Hazlitt's reputation has continued to rise, and now many contemporary thinkers, poets, and scholars consider him one of the greatest critics in the English language, and one of its finest essayists.

In 2003, following a lengthy appeal initiated by Ian Myes together with A. C. Grayling, Hazlitt's gravestone was restored in St Anne's Churchyard and unveiled by Michael Foot. A Hazlitt Society was then inaugurated. The society publishes an annual peer-reviewed journal called *The Hazlitt Review*. One of Soho's fashionable hotels is named after the writer. Hazlitt's hotel located on Fifth is the last of the homes William lived in and today still retains much of the interior he would have known so well. The Jonathan Bate novel 'The cure for love' 1998 was based indirectly on Hazlitt's life.

9.2.2 LITERARY WORKS

Hazlitt's most important works are often divided into two categories: literary criticism and familiar essays. Of his literary criticism, Hazlitt wrote, "I say what I think: I think what I feel. I cannot help receiving certain impressions from things, and I have sufficient courage to declare (somewhat abruptly) what they are." Hazlitt's diverse personal experiences in a more original, conversational style can be seen in his essays and works like:

- An Essay on the Principles of Human Action (essay) 1805
- A Reply to the "Essay on Population," by the Rev. T. R. Malthus (essay) 1807
- Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (criticism) 1817
- The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men, and Manners. 2 vols, [with Leigh Hunt] (essays) 1817
- Lectures on the English Poets (criticism) 1818
- A View of the English Stage (criticism) 1818
- Lectures on the English Comic Writers (criticism) 1819
- Letter to William Gifford, Esq. (letter) 1819
- *Political Essays with Sketches of Public Characters* (essays) 1819
- Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (criticism) 1820

- Table-Talk. 2 vols, (essays) 1821-22
- Characteristics: In the Manner of Rochefoucauld's Maxims (aphorisms) 1823
- *Liber Amorios*; or, the New Pygmalion (dialogues and letters) 1823
- Sketches on the Principal Picture-Galleries in England (essays) 1824
- The Spirit of the Age (essays) 1825
- Notes of a Journey through France and Italy (travel essays) 1826
- The Plain Speaker: Opinions on Books, Men, and Things. 2 vols, (essays) 1826
- The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte. 4 vols, (biography) 1826-30
- Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R. A. (dialogues) 1830
- Literary Remains of the Late William Hazlitt. 2 vols. (essays) 1836
- Sketches and Essays (essays) 1839; also published as Men and Manners, 1852
- Winterslow: Essays and Characters Written There (essays) 1850
- The Complete Works of William Hazlitt. 21 vols, (essays, criticism, letters, dialogues, and biography) 1930-34

9.3 WILLIAM HAZLITT AS AN ESSAYIST

William Hazlitt is one of the greatest essayists of English Literature. As an essayist, he enjoys an infallible reputation. After a brief stay at America, he returned to England where his literary genius ultimately flowered. From 1814 till his death, he contributed to *The Edinburgh*, *The Examiner*, *The Times* and *The London magazine*. His well-known essays were collected in the *Round Table*, *Table Talk* or *Original Essays on Men and Manners* and *The Spirit of the Age or Contemporary Portraits*.

His contribution to English essay is noteworthy. Hazlitt was a prolific writer and a keen observer of life. His sharp memory remembered the past incidents with astonishing vividness and detail. He was eager to inquire about human life with all its variety. Thus he wrote on a vast range of topics. His essays deal with the world of men and women. It records their action, assigns their motives and exhibits their whims. He writes on books of all kinds, politics, sports, stage. He writes on them with equal wit and wisdom. The views he expresses are his own. By his bold and radical views, Hazlitt attracted a lot of attention and criticism.

Most of Hazlitt's essays are therefore found to be subjective. His essays abound in self-revelation in reminiscence; they reveal his own personality, temperament, disposition, likes and dislikes. This personal element enhanced the appeal of his essay. Hence, the tone of his essays created a peculiar intimacy with his reader

His essays on literary criticism are on a variety of a topics that are generally of an intimate and personal nature. He produced a large number of essays, of excellent quality and varied interests. Hazlitt's sound understanding of human nature, his trained powers of reasoning and his analytical mind is evident in all his essays: Critical and personal. Hazlitt described his essays as "experimental" rather than "dogmatical," in that he preferred to use the model of common conversation to discuss ordinary human experiences rather than to write in what he believed was the abstract and artificial style of conventional nonfiction prose.

Hazlitt puts his ideas in an informal manner. Hazlitt's informality depends upon a systematic inquiry into the topic. In spite of this informality, Hazlitt's essays are not light in nature. They are serious and thought-provoking. They show his philosophic bent of mind. Hazlitt is more interested in ideas than form. A large number of his essays are on abstract ideas such as Egotism, Reason, Imagination, the Fear of Death etc. This was the underlying practice in the two collections of essay 'The Round Table' and 'Table Talk'. But Hazlitt does not indulge in moralizing.

Hazlitt has conveyed his enjoyment and observation through his essays. Whatever the theme of his essays, each of them is a reflection on human nature. They are the reflections of a man who lived and loved life. With penetrating sympathy and feelings, Hazlitt observes life. The reflection that we find in Hazlitt's essays are not the products of the head, but come straight from the heart. His personal prejudices often vitiate his judgment.

9.4 THE PROSE STYLE OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Hazlitt belongs to the group of the personal essayists. He puts himself in the centre whatever be the topic of the essay. He often glides into the past. He weaves the texture of his essays by the threads of memory. He, thus, reveals his life and mind. He is passionately alive to men and matters around him in the present. If he finds foibles and frailties in them, he ridicules them. His writings are thus also employed for exposing the follies of society and human life in general.

His essays have precision and purity of expression. Hazlitt does not use archaic, irrelevant and superfluous words. His figures of speech offer vividness and clarity of expression. He even describes abstract ideas in concrete terms. Hazlitt's sentences are brief and abrupt, vigorous and direct. He often writes balanced, antithetical sentences to present contrasting ideas. He is also praised for the use of epigrams and paradoxes. Like Bacon, he is aphoristic. Another distinctive feature of his

style is the use of quotations. Hazlitt's familiar essays are characterized by informal diction and an emotional tone. Hazlitt's is a futile blend of emotion and thought; passion and logic; imagination and analysis; the real and the romantic. However, he is famous for the lucidity and brilliance, in both style and content, of his many essays. There is no affectation or vulgarity in it. It reflects all that is loose and unconnected.

9.5 WILLIAM HAZLITT : MY FIRST AQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

TEXT

My father was a Dissenting Minister, at Wem, in Shropshire; and in the year 1798 (the figures that compose the date are to me like the "dreaded name of Demogorgon"). Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian Congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach, in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man, in a short black coat (like a shooting-jacket), which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers. Mr. Rowe had scarce returned to give an account of his disappointment when the round-faced man in black entered, and dissipated all doubts on the subject by beginning to talk. He did not cease while he stayed; nor has he since, that I know of. He held the good town of Shrewsbury in delightful suspense for three weeks that he remained there, "fluttering the proud Salopians, like an eagle in a dove-cote"; and the Welsh mountains that skirt the horizon with their tempestuous confusion, agree to have heard no such mystic sounds since the days of "High-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay"- Gray, "The Bard," 28

As we passed along between Wem and Shrewsbury and I eyed their blue tops seen through the wintry branches or the red rustling leaves of the sturdy oak-trees by the road. side, a sound was in my ears as of a Syren's song: I was stunned, startled with it, as from deep sleep; but I had no notion then that I should ever be able to express my admiration to others in motley imagery or quaint allusion, till the light of his genius shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road. I was at that time dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the way-side, crushed, bleeding, lifeless; but now, bursting the deadly bands that bound them,

With Styx nine times round them, —Pope, "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," 90-91

my ideas float on winged words, and as they expand their plumes, catch the golden light of other years. My soul has indeed remained in its original bondage, dark, obscure, with longings infinite and unsatisfied; my

heart, shut up in the prison-house of this rude clay, has never found, nor will it ever find, a heart to speak to; but that my understanding also did not remain dumb and brutish, or at length found a language to express itself, I owe to Coleridge. But this is not to my purpose.

My father lived ten miles from Shrewsbury, and was in the habit of exchanging visits with Mr. Rowe, and with Mr. Jenkins of Whitchurch (nine miles farther on), according to the custom of Dissenting Ministers in each other's neighbourhood. A line of communication is thus established, by which the flame of civil and religious liberty is kept alive, and nourishes its smouldering fire unquenchable, like the fires in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, placed at different stations, that waited for ten long years to announce with their blazing pyramids the destruction of Troy. Coleridge had agreed to come over and see my father, according to the courtesy of the country, as Mr. Rowe's probable successor; but in the meantime, I had gone to hear him preach the Sunday after his arrival. A poet and a philosopher getting up into a Unitarian pulpit to preach the gospel was a romance in these degenerate days, a sort of revival of the primitive spirit of Christianity, which was not to be resisted.

It was in January of 1798, that I rose one morning before daylight, to walk ten miles in the mud, to hear this celebrated person preach. Never, the longest day I have to live, shall I have such another walk as this cold, raw, comfortless one, in the winter of the year 1798.

Il y a des impressions que ni le tems ni les circonstances peuvent effacer. Dussé-je vivre des siècles entiers le doux tems de ma jeunesse ne peut renaître pour moi, ni s'effacer jamais dans ma mémoire. — See Rousseau, "Confessions."

When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th Psalm, and when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, "And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF, ALONE." As he gave out this text, his voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The idea of St. John came into my mind, "of one crying in the wilderness, who had his loins girt about, and whose food was locusts and wild honey."

The preacher then launched into his subject, like an eagle dallying with the wind. The sermon was upon peace and war; upon church and state—not their alliance, but their separation—on the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity, not as the same, but as opposed to one another. He talked of those who had "inscribed the cross of Christ on banners dripping with human gore." He made a poetical and pastoral excursion — and to show the fatal effects of war, drew a striking contrast between the simple shepherd-boy, driving his team afield, or sitting under the hawthorn, piping to his flock, "as though he should never be old" and the same poor country lad, crimped, kidnapped brought into town, made drunk at an

alehouse, turned into a wretched drummer-boy, with his hair sticking on end with powder and pomatum, a long cue at his back, and tricked out in the loathsome finery of the profession of blood:

"Such were the notes of our once-loved poet song".- Pope,"Epistle to the Earl of Oxford," I.

And for myself, I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres. Poetry and Philosophy had met together. Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion. This was even beyond my hopes. I returned home well satisfied. The sun that was still labouring pale and wan through the sky, obscured by thick mists, seemed an emblem of the good cause; and the cold dank drops of dew, that hung half melted on the beard of the thistle, had something genial and refreshing in them; for there was a spirit of hope and youth in all nature, that turned everything into good. The face of nature had not then the brand of JUS DIVINUM on it: "Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe." Milton,"Lycidas," 106.

On the Tuesday following, the half-inspired speaker came. I was called down into the room where he was, and went half-hoping, half-afraid. He received me very graciously, and I listened for a long time without uttering a word. I did not suffer in his opinion by my silence. "For those two hours," he afterwards was pleased to say, "he was conversing with William Hazlitt's forehead!"

His appearance was different from what I had anticipated from seeing him before. At a distance, and in the dim light of the chapel, there was to me a strange wildness in his aspect, a dusky obscurity, and I thought him pitted with the small-pox. His complexion was at that time clear, and even bright-

As are the children of yon azure sheen. -see Thomson,"Castle of Indolence" 33,7.

His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them, like a sea with darkened lustre. "A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread," a purple tinge as we see it in the pale, thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing-like what he has done. It might seem that the genius of his face as from a height surveyed and projected him (with sufficient capacity and huge aspiration) into the world unknown of thought and imagination, with nothing to support or guide his veering purpose, as if Columbus had launched his adventurous course for the New World in a shallop, without oars or compass. So, at least, I comment on it after the event. Coleridge, in his person, was rather above the common size, inclining to the corpulent, or like Lord Hamlet, "somewhat fat and pursy." His hair (now, alas! grey) was then black and glossy as the raven's, and fell in smooth

masses over his forehead. This long pendulous hair is peculiar to enthusiasts, to those whose minds tend heavenward; and is traditionally inseparable though of a different colour) from the pictures of Christ. It ought to belong, as a character, to all who preach Christ crucified, and Coleridge was at that time one of those!

It was curious to observe the contrast between him and my father, who was a veteran in the cause, and then declining into the vale of years.

*No two individuals were ever more unlike than were the host and his guest. A poet was to my father a sort of nondescript; yet whatever added grace to the Unitarian cause was to him welcome. He could hardly have been more surprised or pleased if our visitor had worn wings. Indeed, his thoughts had wings: and as the silken sounds rustled round our little wainscoted parlour, my father threw back his spectacles over his forehead, his white hairs mixing with its sanguine hue: and a smile of delight beamed across his rugged, cordial face, to think that Truth had found a new ally in Fancy! Besides, Coleridge seemed to take considerable notice of me, and that of itself was enough. He talked very familiarly, but agreeably, and glanced over a variety of subjects. At dinner-time he grew more animated, and dilated in a very edifying manner on Mary Wolstonecraft [wife of William Godwin] and Mackintosh. The last, he said, he considered (on my father's speaking of his *Vindiciae Gallicae* as a capital performance) as a clever, scholastic man—a master of the topics—or, as the ready warehouseman of letters, who knew exactly where to lay his hand on what he wanted, though the goods were not his own. He thought him no match for Burke, either in style or matter. Burke was a metaphysician, Mackintosh a mere logician. Burke was an orator (almost a poet) who reasoned in figures, because he had an eye for nature: Mackintosh, on the other hand, was a rhetoricians who had only an eye to commonplaces. On this I ventured to say that I had always entertained a great opinion of Burke, and that (as far as I could find) the speaking of him with contempt might be made the test of a vulgar democratical mind. This was the first observation I ever made to Coleridge, and he said it was a very just and striking one. I remember the leg of Welsh mutton and the turnips on the table that day had the finest flavour imaginable. Coleridge added that Mackintosh and Tom Wedgwood (of whom, however, he spoke highly) had expressed a very indifferent opinion of his friend Mr. Wordsworth, on which he remarked to them — "He strides on so far before you, that he dwindles in the distance!" Godwin had once boasted to him of having carried on an argument with Mackintosh for three hours with dubious success; Coleridge told him—"If there had been a man of genius in the room he would have settled the question in five minutes."*

He asked me if I had ever seen Mary Wolstonecraft, and I said, I had once for a few moments, and that she seemed to me to turn off Godwin's objections to something she advanced with quite a playful, easy air. He replied, that — "this was only one instance of the ascendancy which people of imagination exercised over those of mere intellect"

He did not rate Godwin very high (this was caprice, or prejudice, real or affected), but he had a great idea of Mrs. Wolstonecraft's powers of conversation; none at all of her talent for bookmaking. We talked a little about Holcroft. He had been asked if he was not much struck with him, and he said, he thought himself in more danger of being struck by him. I complained that he would not let me get on at all, for he required a definition of even the commonest word, exclaiming, "What do you mean by a sensation, Sir? What do you mean by an idea?" This, Coleridge said, was barricading the road to truth; it was setting up a turnpike-gate at every step we took. I forget a great number of things, many more than I remember; but the day passed off pleasantly, and the next morning Mr. Coleridge was to return to Shrewsbury. When I came down to breakfast, I found that he had just received a letter from his friend, T. Wedgwood, making him an offer of £150 a year if he chose to waive his present pursuit, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Coleridge seemed to make up his mind to close with this proposal in the act of tying on one of his shoes. It threw an additional damp on his departure. It took the wayward enthusiast quite from us to cast him into Deva's winding vales, or by the shores of old romance. Instead of living at ten miles distance, of being the pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Shrewsbury, he was henceforth to inhabit the Hill of Parnassus, to be a Shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. Alas! I knew not the way thither, and felt very little gratitude for Mr. Wedgwood's bounty. I was presently relieved from this dilemma; for Mr. Coleridge, asking for a pen and ink, and going to a table to write something on a bit of card, advanced towards me with undulating step, and giving me the precious document, said that that was his address, Mr. Coleridge, Nether Stowey Somersetshire, and that he should be glad to see me there in a few weeks' time, and, if I chose, would come half-way to meet me. I was not less surprised than the shepherd-boy (this simile is to be found in Cassandra), when he sees a thunderbolt fall close at his feet. I stammered out my acknowledgments and acceptance of this offer (I thought Mr. Wedgwood's annuity a trifle to it) as well as I could; and this mighty business being settled, the poet preacher took leave, and I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way. The scholar in Chaucer is described as going...Sounding on his way.

So Coleridge went on his. In digressing, in dilating, in passing from subject to subject, he appeared to me to float in air, to slide on ice. I observed that he continually crossed me on the way by shifting from one side of the footpath to the other. This struck me as an odd movement; but I did not at that time connect it with any instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle, as I have done since. He seemed unable to keep on in a straight line. We parted at the six-mile stone; and I returned homeward, pensive, but much pleased. I had met with unexpected notice from a person whom I believed to have been prejudiced against me.

"Kind and affable to me had been his condescension, and should be honoured ever with suitable regard."

He was the first poet I had known, and he certainly answered to that inspired name. I had heard a great deal of his powers of conversation and was not disappointed. In fact, I never met with anything at all like them, either before or since. I could easily credit the accounts which were circulated of his holding forth to a large party of ladies and gentlemen, an evening or two before, on the Berkeleian Theory, when he made the whole material universe look like a transparency of fine words; and another story (which I believe he has somewhere told himself) of his being asked to a party at Birmingham, of his smoking tobacco and going to sleep after dinner on a sofa, where the company found him, to their no small surprise, which was increased to wonder when he started up of a sudden, and rubbing his eyes, looked about him, and launched into a three hours' description of the third heaven, of which he had had a dream, very different from Mr. Southey's "Vision of Judgment," and also from that other "Vision of Judgment," [by Byron] which Mr. Murray, the Secretary of the Bridge-street Junta, took into his especial keeping.

On my way back I had a sound in my ears—it was the voice of Fancy; I had a light before me—it was the face of —Poetry. The one still lingers there, the other has not quitted my side! Coleridge, in truth, met me half-way on the ground of philosophy, or I should not have been won over to his imaginative creed. I had an uneasy, pleasurable sensation all the time, till I was to visit him. During those months the chill breath of winter gave me a welcoming; the vernal air was balm and inspiration to me. The golden sunsets, the silver star of evening, lighted me on my way to new hopes and prospects. I was to visit Coleridge in the spring. This circumstance was never absent from my thoughts, and mingled with all my feelings. I wrote to him at the time proposed, and received an answer postponing my intended visit for a week or two, but very cordially urging me to complete my promise then. This delay did not damp, but rather increased, my ardour. In the meantime, I went to Llangollen Vale, by way of initiating myself in the mysteries of natural scenery; and I must say I was enchanted with it. I had been reading Coleridge's description of England in his fine "Ode on the Departing Year," and I applied it, con amore, to the objects before me. That valley was to me (in a manner) the cradle of a new existence: in the river that winds through it, my spirit was baptized in the waters of Helicon!

I returned home, and soon after set out on my journey with unworn heart, and untired feet. My way lay through Worcester and Gloucester, and by Upton, where thought of Tom Jones and the adventure of the muff. I remember getting completely wet through one day, and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury) where I sat up all night to read "Paul and Virginia" Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read! I was still two days before the time fixed for my arrival, for I had taken care to set out early enough. I stopped these two days at Bridgewater; and when I was tired of sauntering on the banks of its muddy river, returned to the inn and read "Camilla". So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me

best. I have wanted only one thing to make me happy; but wanting that have wanted everything!

I arrived, and was well received. The country about Nether Stowey is beautiful, green and hilly, and near the sea-shore. I saw it but the other day, after an interval of twenty years, from a hill near Taunton. How was the map of my life spread out before me, as the map of the country lay at my feet! In the afternoon, Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet's, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow, that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when nothing was given for nothing. The mind opened and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath "the scales that fence" our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the "Lyrical Ballads," which were still in manuscript, or in the form of "Sybilline Leaves." I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

...hear the loud stag speak.

In the outset of life (and particularly at this time I felt it so) our imagination has a body to it. We are in a state between sleeping and waking, and have indistinct but glorious glimpses of strange shapes, and there is always something to come better than what we see. As in our dreams the fullness of the blood gives warmth and reality to the coinage of the brain, so in youth our ideas are clothed, and fed, and pampered with our good spirits; we breathe thick with thoughtless happiness, the weight of future years presses on the strong pulses of the heart, and we repose with undisturbed faith in truth and good. As we advance, we exhaust our fund of enjoyment and of hope. We are no longer wrapped in lamb's-wool, lulled in Elysium. As we taste the pleasures of life, their spirit evaporates, the sense palls; and nothing is left but the phantoms, the lifeless shadows of what has been!

That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice the ballad of "Betty Foy." I was not critically or sceptically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the "Thorn," the "Mad Mother," and the "Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman," I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged, In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite, — Pope, "Essay on Man," i. 293. as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first

welcome breath of Spring: While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed. — Thomson, "The Seasons," "Spring," 18. Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,

Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute, —Milton, "Paradise Lost," ii. 559-560. as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a matter-of-fact-ness, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence, "His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang." He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces, that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the costume of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own "Peter Bell." There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense, high, narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy: Haydon's head of him, introduced into the "Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem," is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear, gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern burr, like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said, triumphantly, that

"his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life."

He had been to see the "Castle Spectre" by Monk Lewis, while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said "it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove." This ad captandum merit was however by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. Wordsworth, looking out of the low, latticed window, said, "How beautifully the sun sets on that yellow bank!" I thought within myself, "with what eyes these poets see nature!" and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the objects facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr. Wordsworth

for having made one for me! We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of "Peter Bell" in the open air; and the comment upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, his face was as a book where "men might read strange matters," and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a chant in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accompaniment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animated, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more dramatic, the other more lyrical. Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption. Returning that same evening, I got into a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth, while Coleridge was explaining the different notes of the nightingale to his sister, in which we neither of us succeeded in making ourselves perfectly clear and intelligible. Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our flip. It was agreed, among other things, that we should make a jaunt down the Bristol Channel, as far as Linton. We set off together on foot, Coleridge, John Chester, and I. This Chester was a native of Nether Stowey, one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey, or bees in swarming-time to the sound of a brass pan. He "followed in the chase like a dog who hunts, not like one that made up the cry." He had on a brown cloth coat, boots, and corduroy breeches, was low in stature, bow-legged, had a drag in his walk like a drover, which he assisted by a hazel switch, and kept on a sort of trot by the side of Coleridge, like a running footman by a state coach, that he might not lose a syllable or sound that fell from Coleridge's lips. He told me his private opinion that Coleridge was a wonderful man. He scarcely opened his lips, much less offered an opinion the whole way; yet of the three, had I to choose during that journey, I would be John Chester. He afterwards followed Coleridge into Germany, where the Kantian philosophers were puzzled how to bring him under any of their categories. When he sat down at table with his idol, John's felicity was complete, Sir Walter Scott's or Mr. Blackwood's when they sat down at the same table with the King, was not more so. We passed Dunster on our right, a small town between the brow of a hill and the sea. I remember eyeing it wistfully as it lay below us: contrasted with the woody scene around, it looked as clear, as pure, as embrowned and ideal as any landscape I have seen since of Gaspar Poussin's or Domenichino's. We had a long day's march (our feet kept time to the echoes of Coleridge's tongue) through Minehead and by the Blue Anchor, and on to Lynton, which we did not reach till

near midnight, and where we had some difficulty in making a lodgment. We, however, knocked the people of the house up at last, and we were repaid for our-apprehensions and fatigue by some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs.

The view in coming along had been splendid. We walked for miles and miles in dark brown heaths overlooking the Channel, with the Welsh hills beyond, and at times descended into little sheltered valleys close by the seaside, with a smuggler's face scowling by us, and then had to ascend conical hills with a path winding up through a coppice to a barren top, like a monk's shaven crown, from one of which I pointed out to Coleridge's notice the bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon, and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship in the "Ancient Mariner." At Lynton the character of the seacoast becomes more marked and rugged. There is a place called the Valley of Rocks (I suspect this was only the poetical name for it), bedded among precipices overhanging the sea, with rocky caverns beneath, into which the waves dash, and where the sea-gull for ever wheels its screaming flight. On the tops of these are huge stones thrown transverse, as if an earthquake had tossed them there, and behind these is a fretwork of perpendicular rocks, something like the "Giant's Causeway". A thunder-storm came on while we were at the inn, and Coleridge was running out bare-headed to enjoy the commotion of the elements in the "Valley of Rocks," but, as if in spite, the clouds only muttered a few angry sounds, and let fall a few refreshing drops. Coleridge told me that he and Wordsworth were to have made this place the scene of a prose-tale, which was to have been in the manner of, but far superior to, the "Death of Abel," but they had relinquished the design. In the morning of the second day, we breakfasted luxuriously in an old fashioned parlour on tea, toast, eggs, and honey, in the very sight of the bee-hives from which it had been taken, and a garden full of thyme and wild flowers that had produced it. On this occasion Coleridge spoke of Virgil's "Georgics," but not well. I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant. It was in this room that we found a little worn-out copy of the "Seasons," lying in a window-seat, on which Coleridge exclaimed, "That is true fame!" He said Thomson was a great poet, rather than a good one; his style was as meretricious as his thoughts were natural. He spoke of Cowper as the best modern poet. He said the "Lyrical Ballads" were an experiment about to be tried by him and Wordsworth, to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally discarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II. Some comparison was introduced between Shakespeare and Milton. He said "he hardly knew which to prefer. Shakespeare appeared to him a mere stripling in the art; he was as tall and as strong, with infinitely more activity than Milton, but he never appeared to have come to man's estate; or if he had, he would not have been a man, but a monster."

He spoke with contempt of Gray, and with intolerance of Pope. He did not like the versification of the latter. He observed that "the ears of these

couplet writers might be charged with having short memories, that could not retain the harmony of whole passages."

He thought little of Junius as a writer; he had a dislike of Dr. Johnson; and a much higher opinion of Burke as an orator and politician, than of Fox or Pitt. He, however, thought him very inferior in richness of style and imagery to some of our elder prose-writers, particularly Jeremy Taylor. He liked Richardson, but not Fielding; nor could I get him to enter into the merits of "Caleb Williams." In short, he was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes. We loitered on the "ribbed sea-sands," in such talk as this a whole morning, and, I recollect, met with a curious seaweed, of which John Chester told us the country name! A fisherman gave Coleridge an account of a boy that had been drowned the day before, and that they had tried to save him at the risk of their own lives. He said "he did not know how it was that they ventured, but, Sir, we have a nature towards one another." This expression, Coleridge remarked to me, was a fine illustration of that theory of disinterestedness which I (in common with Butler) had adopted. I broached to him an argument of mine to prove that likeness was not mere association of ideas. I said that the mark in the sand put one in mind of a man's foot, not because it was part of a former impression of a man's foot (for it was quite new), but because it was like the shape of a man's foot. He assented to the justness of this distinction (which I have explained at length elsewhere, for the benefit of the curious) and John Chester listened; not from any interest in the subject, but because he was astonished that I should be able to suggest anything to Coleridge that he did not already know. We returned on the third morning, and Coleridge remarked the silent cottage smoke curling up the valleys where, a few evenings before, we had seen the lights gleaming through the dark.

In a day or two after we arrived at Stowey, we set out, I on my return home, and he for Germany. It was a Sunday morning, and he was to preach that day for Dr. Toulmin of Taunton. I asked him if he had prepared anything for the occasion? He said he had not even thought of the text, but should as soon as we parted. I did not go to hear him — this was a fault — but we met in the evening at Bridge-water. The next day we had a long day's walk to Bristol, and sat down, I recollect, by a well-side on the road, to cool ourselves and satisfy our thirst, when Coleridge repeated to me some descriptive lines of his tragedy of "Remorse"; which I must say became his mouth and that occasion better than they, some years after, did Mr. Elliston's and the Drury-lane boards—Oh memory shield me from the world's poor strife, And give those scenes thine everlasting life.

I saw no more of him for a year or two, during which period he had been wandering in the Hartz Forest, in Germany; and his return was cometary, meteorous, unlike his setting out. It was not till some time after that I knew his friends Lamb and Southey. The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a commonplace book under his arm, and the first with

a bon-mot in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best—Man as he was, or man as he is to be. "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is not to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues. Enough of this for the present. "But there is matter for another rhyme, And I to this may add a second tale." —Wordsworth, "Hart-leap Well," 95-96

9.6 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH POETS

9.6.1 SUMMARY

His essay, "My First Acquaintance with Poets," reveals the deep respect, even reverence. In it, he describes his meeting with Coleridge and Wordsworth. The essay opens with Coleridge, his arrival in Shropshire in order to take charge as the new Dissenting Minister of the Unitarian Church there. Hazlitt, young then with all those anxieties and expectation of a young mind eagerly awaited and crossed ten miles in the mud to listen to the young Enthusiast, Coleridge. But being a religious skeptic, Hazlitt could not have gone to simply hear the lecture of a Unitarian Minister, but to see how *"poetry and philosophy had met together. Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion."*

The vivid picture he gives of these two great (Coleridge and Wordsworth) poets at the beginning of their fame is of considerable value in gaining an understanding of them. Hazlitt tells us that he walked ten miles through freezing mud in January 1798, to hear Coleridge preach and that he was transfixed by the power of the man's imagination and imagery; so impressed was he that he arranged a meeting and a visit at the poet's home. He recounts their conversations and his subsequent introduction to Wordsworth. It is evident that these days with Coleridge were unforgettable and that they had furnished an inspiration for the literary life Hazlitt was to undertake.

9.6.2 ANALYSIS

"My First Acquaintance with Poets" was first published in 1823 in a short-lived but a highly significant periodical of the Romantic Age, The Liberal. This document is primarily an essay based on the reminiscences of the author of the experience he had almost twenty-five years back when he met a "poet" for the first time in life, a moment of "baptism".

The essay can be taken as a memoir because it moves around a particular incident in the author's life, i.e., his meeting with Coleridge, the successive interactions they had had in course of getting acquainted with each other in the next few months, the impact of this acquaintance that the

author bears in his mind and the inevitable although temporal separation between the two. This whole process of “acquaintance” not only with a poet in the singular but “poets” took place within the most significant year in the history of English Romanticism, 1798.

On 14 January 1798, Hazlitt, in what was to prove a turning point in his life, encountered Coleridge as the latter preached at the Unitarian chapel in Shrewsbury. A minister at the time, Coleridge had as yet none of the fame that would later accrue to him as a poet, critic, and philosopher. Hazlitt, like Thomas de Quincey and many others afterwards was swept off his feet by Coleridge's dazzlingly erudite eloquence. *"I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres,"* he wrote years later in his essay "My First Acquaintance with Poets". It was, he added, as if *"Poetry and Philosophy had met together. Truth and Genius had embraced, under the eye and with the sanction of Religion."* Long after they had parted ways, Hazlitt would speak of Coleridge as *"the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius"*. That Hazlitt learned to express his thoughts *"in motley imagery or quaint allusion"*, that his understanding *"ever found a language to express itself,"* was, he openly acknowledged, something he owed to Coleridge. For his part, Coleridge showed an interest in the younger man's germinating philosophical ideas and offered encouragement.

In April, Hazlitt jumped at Coleridge's invitation to visit him at his residence in Nether Stowey, and that same day was taken to call in on William Wordsworth at his house in Alfoxton. Again, Hazlitt was enraptured. While he was not immediately struck by Wordsworth's appearance, in observing the cast of Wordsworth's eyes as they contemplated a sunset, he reflected, *"With what eyes these poets see nature!"* Given the opportunity to read the *Lyrical Ballads* in manuscript, Hazlitt saw that Wordsworth had the mind of a true poet, and *"the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me."*

All three were fired by the ideals of liberty and the rights of man. Rambling across the countryside, they talked of poetry, philosophy, and the political movements that were shaking up the old order. This unity of spirit was not to last: Hazlitt himself would recall disagreeing with Wordsworth on the philosophical underpinnings of his projected poem *The Recluse*, as he had earlier been amazed that Coleridge could dismiss. Nonetheless, the experience impressed on the young Hazlitt, at 20, the sense that not only philosophy, to which he had devoted himself, but also poetry warranted appreciation for what it could teach, and the three-week visit stimulated him to pursue his own thinking and writing. Coleridge, on his part, using an archery metaphor, later revealed that he had been highly impressed by Hazlitt's promise as a thinker: *"He sends well-headed and well-feathered thoughts straight forwards to the mark with a Twang of the Bow-string."* This is an ample proof of Hazlitt's act of self-assertion in an age when poetry overpowers the literary-cultural.

Perhaps it is Hazlitt's strategy to establish Coleridge as a man of words only, not of action. Some exclusion and inclusion is natural in a memoir. Nonetheless the essay graphs well the intensity of Hazlitt's infatuation with Coleridge and the process of disillusionment as well. It might be taken as a journey from appearance to reality, taken together with and into Coleridge. There is a sequence when Coleridge was leaving for Shropshire from Wem with Hazlitt accompanying him halfway just to relish his company a little more as his engrossed auditor. There again Coleridge is reported to be talking the whole way and while talking he was continually crossing Hazlitt on the way by shifting from one side of the footpath to the other. Why this odd movement? For Hazlitt, it was an indication of the "instability of purpose or involuntary change of principle" which he could only connect now as a mature observer with the apostasy of Coleridge (Hazlitt, First Acquaintance). This inability to keep on in a straight line affected the essay itself for some unknown reason. For we found a sudden change in the temperament where Coleridge the apostle of freedom turned into a human being with all those vices and prejudices of a human heart and Hazlitt, 'the charmed listener' suddenly turned into a critique of "great speaker":

There is a paragraph written between the end of the first visit and the beginning of the second which captured the most autobiographical moment in the whole essay. Self-reflective in a way, a sense of suspense, anxiety, anticipation works in the narrative. The soul not only gets regenerated 'in the cradle of new existence' but finds an application of his new insights "to the objects before...[the] spirit was baptized in the waters of Helicon!"(Hazlitt, First Acquaintance). The essay could have ended here, but is yet to justify the phrase "acquaintance with poets."

Hazlitt gets acquainted with a number of personas there in Nether Stowey such as Wordsworth, Tom Poole and many more. In this part two we find Coleridge speaks "of providence foreknowledge, will and fate, fix'd fate freewill, foreknowledge absolute...[and speaks] as we passed through the echoing grove". But the charisma is much faded out. The incomparable speaker is now comparable to Wordsworth where "Coleridge's manner is more full, animated and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained and internal, the one might be termed more dramatic, the other more lyrical"(Hazlitt, First Acquaintance). Moreover, Hazlitt now sees himself almost on the equal plane with the two where he even engaged in a metaphysical argument with Wordsworth. And now he could distance himself in a way to comment on John Chester as "one of those who were attracted to Coleridge's discourse as flies are to honey or bees in swarming time to the sound of a brass pan"(Hazlitt, First Acquaintance).

John Chester acts as the mirroring other of Hazlitt. On the other hand Hazlitt sees him and distances himself more from Coleridge. He dislikes Coleridge's speaking of Virgil's Georgics and says, "*I do not think he had much feeling for the classical or elegant*". Hazlitt gives an assessment of Coleridge as a critic where he questions his objectivity, "*He*

was profound and discriminating with respect to those authors whom he liked, and where he gave his judgment fair play; capricious, perverse, and prejudiced in his antipathies and distastes”(Hazlitt, First Acquaintance.). There is a chance of misinterpretation on the part of the reader over who is speaking and when? Is it the responsibility of Hazlitt, the young scholar mesmerized with Coleridge’s knowledge and personality but now going through a process of disillusionment or of Hazlitt, a mature intellectual now ruminating over the past experience? There is always a possibility of overlapping of the two selves, the two personas. Since the essay is the end product of a process of recollection twenty five years later, a tension can clearly be discernible from this duality of responses of the younger self of the author vis-à-vis his mature self in the act of composition.

The journey ends with Hazlitt’s success in establishing and acquiring selfhood that he has so long been struggling to achieve through establishing one of his landmark philosophical idea “*the theory of disinterestedness*” before Coleridge and being able to suggest something to Coleridge “*that he did not already know*”. He was greeted not only with Chester’s Surprise and astonishment, but also by the early morning’s silent cottage smoke “*curling up the valleys*”. Once this process of disillusionment and attaining self-hood is complete the moment of return comes, “*I, on my return home, he for Germany*”. This is a moment of return too, re-turning to new acquaintances which gives the prospect of new friendships. So the process goes on.

The essay can be considered as Hazlitt’s way of writing back to Coleridge. In the beginning, he has built an almost godlike image of Coleridge, which by the end has completely been destroyed by him in an almost Frankensteinian way. It might be taken as an act of killing the father rhetorically or getting out of the influence of a predecessor and writing a story of his own. The conflict that can be seen through the lines of the essay is not only between the two personalities as such but between two different poetics that Hazlitt and Coleridge did follow.

Hazlitt’s theory of disinterestedness which anticipates Keats’s idea of “*Negative Capability*” is perhaps an answer to Coleridge’s extreme subjectivity or egocentricity as reflected through his poems and later propounded through his theory of Imagination. Regarded as one of the most eloquent essays of English literature, this can be taken as Hazlitt’s act of self-assertion in an age when poetry overpowers the literary cultural scenario. As he himself says, “*What is the use of doing anything unless we could do better than all those have been gone before us*”(Coleridge, p.1). Thus he wrote essays instead of poetry and helped to evolve this genre in a completely new form.

9.7 LET US SUM UP

William Hazlitt is considered as one of the greatest literary critics and essayists. He has recognized as the best art critic of the Romantic

period His writing style was simple, colloquial and insightful without any literary pretension. His works cannot be classified into a single school of criticism. His essays followed the trend of ‘familiar’ essays, i.e. essays which used the model of common conversation to discuss matters of human experiences. His literary pieces gave the readers a lens through which the compositions of his Romantic contemporaries can be seen.

9.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss William Hazlitt’s life in brief. Refer to 9.2.1
- Q2. Comment on the prose style of William Hazlitt with reference to his essays. Refer to 9.4
- Q3. *The last always appears to me (as I first saw him) with a commonplace book under his arm, and the first with a bon-mot in his mouth. It was at Godwin's that I met him with Holcroft and Coleridge, where they were disputing fiercely which was the best— Man as he was, or man as he is to be. "Give me," says Lamb, "man as he is not to be." This saying was the beginning of a friendship between us, which I believe still continues Explain the lines with reference to context Refer to 9.6 ‘Text’ My First acquaintance with poets’*
- Q4. *‘Mr. Coleridge came to Shrewsbury, to succeed Mr. Rowe in the spiritual charge of a Unitarian Congregation there. He did not come till late on the Saturday afternoon before he was to preach; and Mr. Rowe, who himself went down to the coach, in a state of anxiety and expectation, to look for the arrival of his successor, could find no one at all answering the description but a round-faced man, in a short black coat (like a shooting-jacket), which hardly seemed to have been made for him, but who seemed to be talking at a great rate to his fellow-passengers’. Explain the lines with reference to context Refer to 9.6 ‘Text’ My First acquaintance with poets’*
- Q5. Discuss analysis of Hazlitt’s essay ‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’ Refer to 9.6.2
- Q6. William Hazlitt as an essayist Refer to 9.3

9.9 SOURCE

- *Hazlitt's Essay introduction by Herbert Paul (London: Cassell, nd); and, William Hazlitt, Selected Writings, edited and with an introduction by Jon Cook (Oxford University Press, 1991).*
- David Jesson. “William Hazlitt”. The Coleridge Bulletin. New Series No 2. Autumn, 1993. 33-46. Web.10 Dec.2013



॥ सरस्वती नः सुभगा मयस्कल् ॥

Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Bachelor of Arts

UGEN-103

Literature in English 1750-1900

BLOCK

4

FICTION : JANE AUSTEN

UNIT-10

Jane Austen : Life and Literary Works

UNIT-11

Pride and Prejudice : Title, Theme and Plot

UNIT-12

Pride and Prejudice : Characters

UNIT-13

Structure and Technique

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this block, we will study Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

Unit-10 describes Jane Austen's biography and her literary achievements.

Unit-11 takes up for the discussion title main themes and Plot construction of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Unit-12 looks at the portrayal of different characters in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Unit-13 offers an analysis of the form, structure, and technique of the text.

UNIT-10 JANE AUSTEN : LIFE AND LITERARY WORKS

Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Jane Austen : Life
- 10.3 Literary Works
- 10.4 Let us sum up
- 10.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 10.6 Source

10.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Jane Austen, who was an English novelist known primarily for her six major novels. She was famous for romantic fiction, and she earned for herself a place as one of the most widely read writers in English literature. The economy, precision, realism, and wit of her prose style; the shrewd, amused sympathy expressed towards her characters; and the skillfulness of her characterization and storytelling continue to enchant readers of her social and geographical milieu in and around Hampshire, Bath, and Dorset.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through her novel, you will be able to know Jane Austen as a novelist. You will also understand the life and works of Jane Austen.

10.2 JANE AUSTEN : LIFE

Jane Austen was born in the Hampshire village of Steventon, where her father, the Reverend George Austen, was rector. She was the second daughter and seventh child in a family. Her closest companion throughout her life was her elder sister, Cassandra; neither Jane nor Cassandra married. Their father was a scholar who encouraged the love of learning in his children. His wife, Cassandra (née Leigh), was a woman of ready wit, famed for her impromptu verses and stories. The great family amusement was acting.

Jane Austen's lively and affectionate family circle provided a stimulating context for her writing. Moreover, her experience was carried

far beyond the Steventon rectory by an extensive network of relationships by blood and friendship. It was this world—of the minor landed gentry and the country clergy, in the village, the neighbourhood, and the country town, with occasional visits to Bath and to London—that she was to use in the settings, characters, and subject matter of her novels.

Her earliest known writings date from about 1787, and between then and 1793 she wrote a large body of material that has survived in three manuscript notebooks: *Volume, the First*; *Volume, the Second* and *Volume, the Third*. These contain plays, verses, short novels, and other prose and show Austen engaged in the parody of existing literary forms, notably the genres of the sentimental novel and sentimental comedy. Her passage to a more serious view of life from the exuberant high spirits and extravagances of her earliest writings is evident in *Lady Susan*, a short Epistolary Novel, written about 1793–94 (and not published until 1871). This portrait of a woman bent on the exercise of her own powerful mind and personality to the point of social self-destruction is, in effect, a study of frustration and of woman's fate in a society that has no use for her talents.

In 1802 it seems likely that Jane agreed to marry Harris Bigg-Wither, the 21-year-old heir of a Hampshire family, but the next morning changed her mind. There are also a number of mutually contradictory stories connecting her with someone with whom she fell in love but who died very soon after. Since Austen's novels are so deeply concerned with love and marriage, there is some point in attempting to establish the facts of these relationships. Unfortunately, the evidence is unsatisfactory and incomplete. Cassandra was a jealous guardian of her sister's private life, and after Jane's death, she censored the surviving letters, destroying many and cutting up others. But Jane Austen's own novels provide indisputable evidence that their author understood the experience of love and of love disappointed.

The earliest of her novels published during her lifetime, *Sense and Sensibility* was begun about 1795 as a novel-in-letters called "Elinor and Marianne," after its heroines. Between October 1796 and August 1797 Austen completed the first version of *Pride and prejudice*, then called "First Impressions." In 1797 her father wrote to offer it to a London publisher for publication, but the offer was declined. *Northanger Abbey*, the last of the early novels, was written about 1798 or 1799, probably under the title 'Susan'. In 1803 the manuscript of 'Susan' was sold to the publisher Richard Crosby for £10. He took it for immediate publication, but, although it was advertised, unaccountably it never appeared.

Up to this time, the tenor of life at Steventon rectory had been propitious for Jane Austen's growth as a novelist. This stable environment ended in 1801, however, when George Austen, then age 70, retired to Bath with his wife and daughters. For eight years Jane had to put up with a succession of temporary lodgings or visits to relatives, in Bath, London, Clifton, Warwickshire, and finally, Southampton, where

the three women lived from 1805 to 1809. In 1804 Jane began *The Watsons* but soon abandoned it. In 1804 her dearest friend, Mrs. Anne Lefroy, died suddenly, and in January 1805 her father died in Bath.

Eventually, in 1809, Jane's brother Edward was able to provide his mother and sisters with a large cottage in the village of Chawton, within his Hampshire estate, not far from Steventon. The prospect of settling at Chawton had already given Jane Austen a renewed sense of purpose, and she began to prepare *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* for publication. She was encouraged by her brother Henry, who acted a go-between with her publishers. She was probably also prompted by her need for money. Two years later Thomas Egerton agreed to publish *Sense and Sensibility*, which came out, anonymously, in November 1811. Both of the leading reviews, the *Critical Review* and, the *Quarterly Review*, welcomed its blend of instruction and amusement.

Meanwhile, in 1811 Austen had begun *Mansfield Park*, which was finished in 1813 and published in 1814. By then she was an established (though anonymous) author; Egerton had published *Pride and Prejudice* in January 1813, and later that year there were second editions of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* seems to have been the fashionable novel of its season. Between January 1814 and March 1815 she wrote *Emma*, which appeared in December 1815. In 1816 there was a second edition of *Mansfield Park*, published, like *Emma*, by Lord Byron's publisher, John Murray. *Persuasion* (written August 1815-August 1816) was published posthumously, with *Northanger Abbey*, in December 1817.

The years after 1811 seem to have been the most rewarding of her life. She had the satisfaction of seeing her work in print and well-reviewed and of knowing that the novels were widely read. They were so much enjoyed by the prince regent (later George IV) that he had a set in each of his residences, and *Emma*, at a discreet royal command, was "respectfully dedicated" to him. The reviewers praised the novels for their morality and entertainment, admired the character drawing, and welcomed the domestic realism as a refreshing change from the romantic melodrama then in vogue.

For the last 18 months of her life, Austen was busy writing. Early in 1816, at the onset of her fatal illness, she set down the burlesque *Plan of a Novel, According to Hints from Various Quarters* (first published in 1871). Until August 1816 she was occupied with *Persuasion*, and she looked again at the manuscript of "Susan" (*Northanger Abbey*).

In January 1817 she began *Sanditon*, a robust and self-mocking satire on health resorts and invalidism. This novel remained unfinished because of Austen's declining health. She supposed that she was suffering from bile, but the symptoms make possible a modern clinical assessment that she was suffering from Addison disease. Her condition fluctuated, but in April she made her will, and in May she was

taken to Winchester to be under the care of an expert surgeon. She died on July 18, and six days later she was buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Her authorship was announced to the world at large by her brother Henry, who supervised the publication of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*. There was no recognition at the time that regency England had lost its keenest observer and sharpest analyst; no understanding that a miniaturist (as she maintained that she was and as she was then seen), a “merely domestic” novelist, could be seriously concerned with the nature of society and the quality of its culture. Critics could not grasp Jane Austen as a historian of the emergence of Regency society into the modern world. During her lifetime there had been a solitary response in any way adequate to the nature of her achievement: Sir Walter Scott’s review of *Emma* in the *Quarterly Review* for March 1816, where he hailed this “nameless author” as a masterful exponent of “the modern novel” in the new realist tradition. After her death, there was for long only one significant essay, the review of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* in the *Quarterly* for January 1821 by the theologian Richard Whately. Together, Scott’s and Whately’s essays provided the foundation for serious criticism of Jane Austen: their insights were appropriated by critics throughout the 19th century.

Although the birth of the English novel is to be seen in the first half of the 18th century primarily in the work of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, it is with Jane Austen that the novel takes on its distinctively modern character in the realistic treatment of unremarkable people in the unremarkable situations of everyday life. In her six major novels—*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*—Austen created the comedy of manners of middle-class life in the England of her time, revealing the possibilities of “domestic” literature. Her repeated fable of a young woman’s voyage to self-discovery on the passage through love to marriage focuses upon easily recognizable aspects of life. It is this concentration upon character and personality and upon the tensions between her heroines and their society that relates her novels more closely to the modern world than to the traditions of the 18th century. It is this modernity, together with the wit, realism, and timelessness of her prose style, her shrewd, amused sympathy, and the satisfaction to be found in stories so skillfully told, in novels so beautifully constructed, that help to explain her continuing appeal for readers of all kinds. Modern critics remain fascinated by the commanding structure and organization of the novels, by the triumphs of technique that enable the writer to lay bare the tragicomedy of existence in stories of which the events and settings are apparently so ordinary and so circumscribed.

10.3 JANE AUSTEN’S LITERARY WORKS

Jane Austen was an English novelist known primarily for her six major novels, which interpret, critique and comment upon the British

landed gentry at the end of the 18th century. With the publication of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816), she achieved success as a published writer. She wrote two additional novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, both published posthumously in 1818, and began another, eventually titled *Sanditon*, but died before its completion. She also left behind three volumes of juvenile writings in manuscript, a short Epistolary Novel *Lady Susan*, and another unfinished novel, *The Watsons*. Her six full-length novels have rarely been out of print, although they were published anonymously and brought her moderate success and little fame during her lifetime.

A) SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

It was Austen's first published novel. Its first edition came out in three volumes in 1811, and the novel was reasonably well-liked and successful. "Sense" means good judgment, wisdom, or prudence, and "sensibility" means sensitivity, sympathy, or emotionality. In this novel, Elinor is described as a character with great "sense" (although Marianne, too, is described as having sense), and Marianne is identified as having a great deal of "sensibility" (although Elinor, too, feels deeply, without expressing it as openly). By changing the title, Austen added "philosophical depth" to what began as a sketch of two characters.

The novel, '**Sense and Sensibility**' tells the story of the impoverished Dashwood sisters. Marianne is the heroine of "sensibility"- i.e., of openness and enthusiasm. She becomes infatuated with the attractive John Willoughby, who seems to be a romantic lover, but is, in reality, an unscrupulous fortune hunter. He deserts her for an heiress, leaving her to learn a dose of "sense" in a wholly unromantic marriage with a staid and settled bachelor, Colonel Brandon, who was 20 years, her senior. By contrast, Marianne's older sister, Elinor, is the guiding light of "sense," or prudence and discretion, whose constancy toward her lover Edward Ferrars, is rewarded by her marriage to him after some distressing vicissitudes.

B) PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen's first novel, published in 1813. The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* is set in rural England of the early 19th century, and it follows the Bennet family, which includes five very different sisters. Mrs. Bennet is anxious to see all her daughters married, especially as the modest family estate is to be inherited by William Collins when Mr. Bennet dies. At a ball, the wealthy and newly arrived Charles Bingley takes an immediate interest in the eldest Bennet daughter, the beautiful and shy Jane. The encounter between his friend Darcy and Elizabeth is less cordial. Although Austen shows them intrigued by each other, she reverses the convention of first

impressions with initially the pride of rank, fortune and prejudice against the social inferiority of Elizabeth's family hold Darcy aloof, while Elizabeth is equally fired both by the pride of self-respect and by prejudice against Darcy's snobbery. The novel ends with the happy marriages of Jane and Mr. Bingley, and Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Mrs. Bennet is perhaps the happiest of all: she feels accomplished for having married off three of her daughters.

C) NORTHANGER ABBEY

Jane Austen wrote Northanger Abbey while she was residing in her childhood home in Steventon, England, but the novel is largely set in the resort town of Bath, where Austen visited for a month-long vacation in 1797. Northanger Abbey combines a satire on conventional novels of polite society with one on Gothic tales of terror. Catherine Morland, the unspoiled daughter of a country parson, is the innocent abroad who gains worldly wisdom, first in the fashionable society of Bath and then at Northanger Abbey itself, where she learns not to interpret the world through her reading of Gothic thrillers. Her mentor and guide is the self-assured and gently ironic Henry Tilney, her husband-to-be.

D) EMMA

The novel, Emma was first published by John Murray in December 1815. It was the last of Austen's novels to be published before her death, and, like her earlier works, was published anonymously. Of all Austen's novels, Emma is the most consistently comic in tone. It centres on Emma Woodhouse, a wealthy, pretty, self-satisfied young woman who indulges herself with meddling and unsuccessful attempts at matchmaking among her friends and neighbours. After a series of humiliating errors, a chastened Emma finds her destiny in marriage to the mature and protective George Knightly a neighbouring squire who had been her mentor and friend.

E) PERSUASION

This is Jane Austen's last completed novel. She began work on it in the summer of 1815 and completed it by the summer of 1816. The work was published with Northanger Abbey posthumously in December of 1817, six months after Austen's death. Persuasion tells the story of a second chance, the reawakening of love between Anne Elliot and Captain Frederick Wentworth, whom seven years earlier she had been persuaded not to marry. Now Wentworth returns from the Napoleonic Wars with prize money and the social acceptability of naval rank. He is an eligible suitor acceptable to Anne's snobbish father and his circle, and Anne discovers the continuing strength of her love for him. Austen was keenly aware that the human quality of persuasion : 'to persuade or to be persuaded, rightly or wrongly' is fundamental to the process of

human communication, and that, in her novel "**Jane Austen gradually draws out the implications of discriminating 'just' and 'unjust' persuasion.**" Indeed, the narrative winds through a number of situations in which people are influencing or attempting to influence other people-or themselves. Finally, Beer calls attention to "**the novel's entire brooding on the power pressures, the seductions, and also the new pathways opened by persuasion**"

F) MANSFIELD PARK

This novel, which is considered the author's most ambitious novel, was published anonymously in 1814. In its tone and discussion of religion and religious duty, Mansfield Park is the most serious of Austen's novels. The heroine, Fanny Price is a self-effacing and unregarded cousin cared for by the Bertram family in their country house. Fanny emerges as a true heroine whose moral strength eventually wins her complete acceptance in the Bertram family and marriage to Edmund Bertram himself, after that family's disastrous involvement with the meretricious and loose-living Crawfords.

G) LADY SUSAN

This is a short epistolary novel by Jane Austen, possibly written in 1794 but not published until 1871. This early complete work, which the author never submitted for publication, describes the schemes of the title character. Lady Susan Vernon, a beautiful and charming recent widow, visits her brother and sister-in-law, Charles and Catherine Vernon, with little notice at Churchill, their country residence. Catherine is far from pleased, as Lady Susan had tried to prevent her marriage to Charles and her unwanted guest has been described to her as the most accomplished coquette in England. Lady Susan toys with the younger man's affections for her own amusement and later because she perceives it makes her sister-in-law uneasy. Her confidante, Mrs. Johnson, to whom she writes frequently, recommends she marries the very eligible Reginald, but Lady Susan considers him to be greatly inferior to Manwaring.

Frederica, Lady Susan's 16-year-old daughter, tries to run away from school when she learns of her mother's plan to marry her off to a wealthy young man she loathes. She also becomes a guest at Churchill. Catherine comes to like her-her character is totally unlike her mother's-and as time goes by, detects Frederica's growing attachment to the oblivious Reginald.

Later, Sir James Martin, Frederica's unwanted suitor, shows up uninvited, much to her distress and her mother's vexation. When Frederica begs Reginald for support out of desperation (having been forbidden by Lady Susan to turn to Charles and Catherine), this causes a temporary breach between Reginald and Lady Susan, but the latter soon repairs the rupture.

Lady Susan decides to return to London and marry her daughter off to Sir James. Reginald follows, still bewitched by her charms and intent on marrying her, but he encounters Mrs. Manwaring at the home of Mr. Johnson and finally learns Lady Susan's true character. Lady Susan ends up marrying Sir James herself and allows Frederica to reside with Charles and Catherine at Churchill, where Reginald De Courcy could be talked, flattered, and finessed into affection for her.

H) THE BEAUTIFUL CASSANDRA

The Beautiful Cassandra is a short novel from Jane Austen's Juvenilia. It is a parody of the melodramatic, sentimental and picaresque novels of the time, and tells the story of a young woman who sets off into the world to make her fortune. Austen, then progresses to a story in which the heroine is "lovely & amiable & chancing to fall in love with an elegant Bonnet to make her fortune."

The character of Cassandra is constructed in fewer than thirty sentences and Austen relies on the audience's appreciation of the references she makes to issues of lineage, adventure, expectations of beauty and typical relationships.

This small character has her own being, both within the text and on her own- one that reflects much of the life that would be brought to Austen's later characters: her mischievousness and even delinquency are especially typical of Austen's adolescent work, with extreme behaviour and self-indulgence providing the prevailing tone. Thus, for example at a pastry-shop, Cassandra "devoured six ices, refused to pay for them, knocked down the Pastry-Cook and walked away", concluding to herself at the end of all her similarly delinquent adventures that "This is a day well spent".

I) CATHERINE (THE BOWER)

Catherine or the Bower (Kitty, or the Bower) is an unfinished novel from Jane Austen's Juvenilia. With its realistic setting and characters, it represents something of a bridge between her early burlesques, and the soberer novels that made her name.

Featuring an orphan heroine raised by a censorious aunt, *The Bower* also includes elements of farce, parody and burlesque (as did earlier Juvenilia). Sentimentalism featured strongly, with Catherine's Bower, constructed with the help of her two absent friends, featuring as the only place able "to restore her to herself",

Romance enters *The Bower* with Edward Stanley, whose presentation in some ways anticipates Mr Darcy, in others John Willoughby: his eventual role as villain or as hero remains undefined.

J) LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

The novel, **Love and Friendship**, is a juvenile story by Jane Austen, dated 1790. From the age of eleven until she was eighteen, Austen wrote her tales in three notebooks. These still exist, one in the Bodleian Library and the other two in the British Museum. They contain, among other works, **Love and Friendship**, which was written when she was fourteen, and **The History of England**, written when she was fifteen.

10.4 LET US SUM UP

Jane Austen's novels form a distinct group in which a strong element of literary satire accompanies the comic depiction of character and society. Austen's plots often explore the dependence of women on marriage in the pursuit of favourable social standing and economic security. Her works critique the Sentimental Novel of the second half of the 18th century and are part of the transition to 19th-century literary realism. Her uses of biting irony, along with her realism, humour, and social commentary, have long earned her acclaim among critics, scholars, and popular audiences alike. Despite her short time behind the writing desk, Jane Austen remains one of the most well-known and admired writers in literary history.

10.5 SELF ASSESSMENT

- Q1. Discuss a brief biography of Jane Austen. Refer to 10.2
- Q2. Write a short note on her literary works. Refer to 10.3
- Q3. Write a short note on *Pride and Prejudice*. Refer to 10.3.

10.6 SOURCE

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UNIT-11 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE : TITLE, THEME AND PLOT

Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Summary of the novel 'Pride and Prejudice'
- 11.3 Title
- 11.4 Theme
- 11.5 Plot
 - 11.5.1 The Plot of novel 'Pride and Prejudice'
- 11.6 Let us sum up
- 11.7 Self Assessment Questions
- 11.8 Source

11.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Jane Austen's second and arguably most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice* which was published in 1813. It was written in 1797-1798 when she was only 21. Originally written years earlier then titled *First Impressions*, a manuscript she tried but failed to sell, the revised novel was met with instant success. Despite *Pride and Prejudice's* 19th-century setting, its biting wit, sharp eyes for the nuances of human relationships and opposites attract romance continue to resonate with contemporary readers.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through her novel, you will be able to know the significance of its title, theme, and plot.

11.2 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE'

The novel's main characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, meet at a village ball, where they don't interact directly but form negative opinions of each other. Darcy dismisses Elizabeth as shallow and uninteresting, while Elizabeth deems Darcy arrogant and rude. As each struggle with mismatched suitors, friendship woes, and family drama, their

lives become more intertwined and their relationship shifts from one of mutual loathing to one of mutual respect and love-and they learn that first impressions aren't always reliable. When rich bachelor Mr. Charles Bingley moves to the English town of Meryton, one longtime resident, Mrs. Bennet, plots how to get him to marry one of her five daughters-Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine, and Lydia-much to the annoyance of her inattentive husband, Mr. Bennet. Her eagerness is not unwarranted, however: single women of middle-class status like the Bennets were not allowed to inherit money or property at the time. If the Bennet sisters did not find suitable and financially-secure husbands; they would likely become poor spinsters.

The opportunity for the Bennet sisters to meet Mr. Bingley arrives in the form of a ball held in town. Bingley dances with Jane and suggests that his friend Mr. Darcy dance too. But Darcy refuses and insults most of the women in attendance, including Elizabeth, in the process. Gossip has spread about Mr. Darcy's wealth, which is much greater than Mr. Bingley's. At first, Mrs. Bennet and those at the ball respect him, but after seeing his manner and refusal to dance, they decide Mr. Darcy is too proud. After the dance, Jane expresses interest in Bingley, and Elizabeth encourages her to pursue him.

When Jane falls ill and is bedridden during a visit to Mr. Bingley's estate, Netherfield, Elizabeth joins her there. The Bennet family becomes subjects of gossip between Miss Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst, Charles's sisters, who snobbishly find the less well-to-do family lacking in taste and depth of character. Mr. Darcy, however, has a change of heart about Elizabeth upon discovering her wit, sharp mind, and fine eyes. This angers Caroline Bingley, who wants Mr. Darcy for herself. Mrs. Bennet arrives to see Jane, boasting about Jane's beauty, and gets in a disagreement with Mr. Darcy, which embarrasses Elizabeth.

After Jane recovers, and she and her sister return home, their family receives a surprise visitor: Mr. Collins, who is Mr. Bennet's cousin and the man who will inherit the Bennet house when Mr. Bennet dies. Mr. Collins regales his relatives (much to their dismay) with stories of his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh. He confides in Mrs. Bennet that he intends to marry one of the Bennet daughters to keep the family house in their name. During Mr. Collins's stay, Elizabeth befriends Mr. Wickham, a militia officer who is stationed in the town. They discuss Mr. Darcy, whom Mr. Wickham clearly dislikes. He confides in Elizabeth that Darcy's father was also Wickham's godfather and left Wickham money in his will when he died. Mr. Wickham claims Mr. Darcy cheated him out of this money, and this further taints Elizabeth's opinion of Mr. Darcy.

The Bennets attend a ball at Netherfield, where Darcy asks Elizabeth to dance. During the dance, the pair argue over Mr. Wickham's character. Mr. Collins introduces himself to Mr. Darcy, whom Elizabeth finds out is Lady Catherine de Bourgh's nephew. Mrs. Bennet and Mary's

behaviour embarrasses Elizabeth, who begins to wonder if her family is just as unsophisticated as Mr. Darcy and the Bingley sisters believe.

The next day, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth. She refuses him. Her mother is furious with her, but her father supports her choice. The family's peace is again disturbed when Jane receives a letter from Caroline Bingley, saying that she and her brother have left Netherfield and that she hopes her brother will be able to woo Mr. Darcy's sister, Georgiana. Jane's feelings for Mr. Bingley make this news hard for her to take, but Elizabeth encourages her not to lose hope. Elizabeth finds out that Mr. Collins has proposed to her good friend Charlotte Lucas and that Charlotte, who is older than Elizabeth and more desperate for a secure future, has accepted him.

Jane travels to London to stay with her aunt. There, she meets with Caroline, who seems cold and distant. Jane begins to believe that Caroline had something to do with Mr. Bingley's sudden departure and loss of interest in her. She attempts to reunite with Mr. Bingley but is unable to. She wonders why he won't visit her.

Elizabeth goes to London with her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner, and reunites with Jane. Elizabeth visits the newly married Charlotte, and Mr. Collins and joins them for dinner at Lady Catherine's estate, where Lady Catherine finds fault with Elizabeth's character and upbringing.

The group is soon joined by Mr. Darcy, whom Elizabeth runs into several times in the following days. She begins to think of him less harshly until she hears that he is to blame for Mr. Bingley's leaving Netherfield and deciding to end his growing relationship with Jane. Elizabeth is furious. When Mr. Darcy surprises her by proposing marriage and admitting he loves her, Elizabeth vehemently rejects him, admonishing him for his role in her sister's sorrow and Mr. Wickham's misfortune. Mr. Darcy attempts to redeem himself by writing Elizabeth a letter, explaining the motives behind his actions. He tells her that, he didn't believe Jane loved Bingley, and Mr. Wickham made inappropriate advances toward Georgiana. Elizabeth begins to soften toward Darcy and feels ashamed that she ever considered Mr. Wickham a friend.

Elizabeth and Jane return home for a while. A friend of Lydia's invites her to travel to a town called Brighton. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner invite Elizabeth to tour Pemberley, Mr. Darcy's estate, with them, to which she reluctantly agrees. There, she runs into Mr. Darcy. Initially, their reunion is awkward, but then they warm up to each other and he introduces her to his sister. It seems important to him that Elizabeth gets to know Georgiana.

Things take a turn for the worse when Elizabeth receives a letter from Jane relaying that Lydia has run off with Mr. Wickham. Elizabeth goes to tell her uncle but finds Mr. Darcy instead. She ends up confiding in him, and she and her relatives return to Meryton.

After much familial distress and many attempts to track down Lydia, the Bennets find out that Lydia and Mr. Wickham are going to get married. This news comes as a relief to the family, though they suspect Mr. Wickham has only agreed to the marriage because he expects to receive Lydia's dowry. After the wedding, Lydia lets slip that Mr. Darcy was in attendance, which piques Elizabeth's interest. She finds out that Mr. Darcy gave Mr. Wickham money so that the latter would marry Lydia and therefore not sully her reputation. Elizabeth is touched by Mr. Darcy's kindness.

Mr. Bingley returns to Netherfield suddenly, with Mr. Darcy in tow. After visiting the Bennets several times, Bingley proposes to Jane, who happily accepts. He reveals that he never knew Jane was in London at the same time he was, which leads Jane and Elizabeth to suspect that Miss Bingley's machinations had kept them apart.

A week later, the Bennets receive another surprise visitor: Lady Catherine. She says she heard a rumour about her nephew, Mr. Darcy, being fond of Elizabeth. She demands that Elizabeth not marry Mr. Darcy, because he is engaged to her daughter, Miss de Bourgh. Elizabeth refuses to make this promise, which infuriates Lady Catherine.

Darcy pays a visit to Elizabeth and asks her again if she will marry him because he still loves her. This time she accepts, because she has grown to love him, too. At first, her family doesn't believe her—she had always hated him, after all—but they come around once they recognize the truth of Elizabeth's feelings.

The novel ends with the happy marriages of Jane and Mr. Bingley, and Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Mrs. Bennet is perhaps the happiest of all: she feels accomplished for having married off three of her daughters.

11.3 TITLE

Jane Austen eventually settled on the title *Pride and Prejudice*, which is symbolic for some of the most dominant themes and attitudes in the plot. Most of the characters are proud or prejudiced at given points in the novel. The title is, in a sense, ironic. In the novel, as Elizabeth starts thinking about Mr. Darcy's first proposal, she realizes that her initial understanding of pride and prejudice is in need of revision. As Elizabeth is the viewpoint character of the novel, Austen expects that readers, too, will rethink these terms and gain some degree of wisdom along with Elizabeth.

Initially, Mr. Darcy is the emblem of pride, a wealthy gentleman who appears to scorn unsophisticated provincial life and people less wealthy and cultivated than members of his own family. He is contrasted with the more genial Bingley. Elizabeth, on the other hand, appears to be prejudiced against Darcy, initially because she overheard some rather disparaging remarks he made about her. Elizabeth's rejection of Mr.

Collins can also be seen as a certain type of prejudice, as can her reaction to Charlotte's quite sensible acceptance of him.

Eventually, though, Elizabeth comes to understand that her own actions derive in part from her pride in her own cleverness. She also begins to understand that some of Darcy's pride stems from his sense of duty to the responsibilities he took on at a young age and that this pride causes him to be an excellent landowner and master to his servants.

The Bennets and their acquaintances become prejudiced against Darcy because of Wickham's story about his alleged cruel mistreatment. Similarly, the Bingley sisters are prejudiced against the Bennets because of the inferiority of their social and economic status. Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Bourgh show extreme pride in their situations and Lady Catherine also displays a considerable degree of class prejudice. The two protagonists, Elizabeth and Darcy, reflect the title the most. In general, Darcy represents pride and Elizabeth represents prejudice, though both seem to be proud to be proud and prejudiced. The title of the novel is apt as it represents the plot, theme and the main characters.

11.4 THEME

Through the various ways of presenting Jane Austen's ideas, readers are able to identify several themes including **prejudice, love, power, marriage, wealth, reputation, class, self knowledge.**

Prejudice

Prejudice is another main theme of the novel. This theme is displayed mostly through the characters of Elizabeth. She is quick to judge others upon meeting them. Her judgment turns into prejudice, even though they are often incorrect. This is shown especially through Wickham and Darcy. Her initial judgments of each are wrong. She sees Wickham as charming and handsome. She finds out over time that he is despicable and he is not what he seems. He defames others, something Elizabeth fails to see. Elizabeth sees Darcy as rude and superior. Although he is prideful, he is more caring than he seems. He usually has the best intentions in his actions. Darcy is not trying to be rude when she first meets him. He is simply a shy man who does not see the value in interactions with strangers. Elizabeth's misjudgments of each will cause her a lot of pain after receiving Darcy's letter. The author uses Elizabeth's prejudice to warn against making judgments.

Power

The theme of power is shown through wealth in this novel. The characters Bingley, Lady Catherine, and Darcy all show different sides of this. Bingley is one who does not use his power of wealth. Instead, he is genuine towards others and unassuming in his manner. Lady Catherine abuses her power. She takes it as an opportunity to criticize others and to get her way. Darcy abuses his power at first until he understands it is not

everything. The novelist tries to encourage using power as a last resort and praises the merits of letting others use the power, instead of flaunting it.

Interdependence

There are many examples of interdependence in this novel. One is Mrs. Bennet and the neighbourhood's dependence on each other for gossip. They depend on each other for fresh rumours. Jane and Elizabeth are interdependent. Since their characters are as such, their opinions often balance. Jane thinks good of everyone, while Elizabeth is cynical and judges too quickly. They depend on each other to help see the reason in each situation. Their opposing views on life help each other see what is really going on and what their true feelings are. Another example of interdependence is between Lady Catherine and Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins depends on her for his job. Without her, he would be poor and likely to work in a factory. Lady Catherine depends on Mr. Collins for the company and to run her parish throughout the novel, the characters depend on each other to support themselves in many ways.

Marriage

The opening line of the novel famously announces: **"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."** This sets marriage as a motif and a problem in the novel. Readers are poised to question whether or not these single men need a wife, or if the need is dictated by the "neighbourhood" families and their daughters who require a good fortune.

Marriage is a complex social activity that takes political economy and economy generally, into account. In the case of Charlotte Lucas, the seeming success of her marriage lies in the comfortable financial circumstances of their household, while the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet serves to illustrate bad marriages based on an initial attraction and surface over substance (economic and psychological). The Bennets' marriage is an example that the youngest Bennet, Lydia, re-enacts with Wickham and the results are far from felicitous. Although the central characters, Elizabeth and Darcy, begin the novel as hostile acquaintances and unlikely friends, they eventually work toward a better understanding of themselves and each other, which frees them to truly fall in love. This does not eliminate the challenges of the real differences in their technically equivalent social status as gentlemen and their female relations. It does however provide them with a better understanding of each other's point of view from the different ends of the rather wide scale of differences within that category.

When Elizabeth rejects Darcy's first proposal, the argument of marrying for love is introduced. Elizabeth only accepts Darcy's proposal when she is certain she loves him and her feelings are reciprocated. Austen's complex sketching of different marriages ultimately allows readers to question what forms of alliance are desirable, especially when it comes to privileging economic, sexual, companionate attraction.

Love

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* includes one of the most cherished love stories in English literature: the courtship between Darcy and Elizabeth. Elizabeth's pride makes her misjudge Darcy on the basis of a poor first impression, while Darcy's prejudice against Elizabeth's poor social standing blinds him, for a time, to her many virtues. Austen, meanwhile, poses countless smaller obstacles to the realization of the love between Elizabeth and Darcy, including Lady Catherine's attempt to control her nephew, Miss Bingley's snobbery, Mrs. Bennet's idiocy, and Wickham's deceit. In each case, anxieties about social connections, or the desire for better social connections, interfere with the workings of love. Darcy and Elizabeth's realization of a mutual and tender love seems to imply that Austen views love as something independent of these social forces, as something that can be captured if only an individual is able to escape the warping effects of hierarchical society. Austen does sound some more realistic (or, one could say, cynical) notes about love, using the character of Charlotte Lucas, who marries the buffoon Mr. Collins for his money, to demonstrate that the heart does not always dictate marriage. Yet with her central characters, Austen suggests that true love is a force separate from society and one that can conquer even the most difficult of circumstances.

Wealth

Money plays a fundamental role in the marriage market, for the young ladies seeking a well-off husband and for men who wish to marry a woman of means. George Wickham tried to elope with Georgiana Darcy, and Colonel Fitzwilliam married for money. Marrying a woman of a rich family also ensured a linkage to a high family, as is visible in the desires of Bingley's sisters to have their brother married to Georgiana Darcy. Mrs. Bennet is frequently seen encouraging her daughters to marry a wealthy man of high social class. In chapter 1, when Mr. Bingley arrives, she declares **"I am thinking of his marrying one of them"**. Inheritance was by descent but could be further restricted by entailment, which would restrict inheritance to male heirs only. In the case of the Bennet family, Mr. Collins was to inherit the family estate upon Mr. Bennet's death and his proposal to Elizabeth would have ensured her security but she refuses his offer. Inheritance laws benefited males because most women did not have independent legal rights until the second half of the 19th century and women's financial security depended on men. For the upper-middle and aristocratic classes, marriage to a man with a reliable income was almost the only route to security for the woman and the children she was to have. The irony of the opening line is that generally within this society it would be a woman who would be looking for a wealthy husband to have a prosperous life.

Class

Austen might be known now for her "romance" but the marriages in her novel, *Pride and Prejudice* engage with economics and class distinction. When Darcy proposes to Elizabeth, he cites their economic

and social differences as an obstacle his excessive love has had to overcome, though he still anxiously harps on the problems it poses for him within his social circle. His aunt, Lady Catherine, later characterizes these differences in particularly harsh terms when she conveys what Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy will become, "**Will the shades of Pemberley be thus polluted?**" Although Elizabeth responds to Lady Catherine's accusations that hers is a potentially contaminating economic and social position (Elizabeth even insists she and Darcy, a gentleman's daughter and gentleman, are equals), Lady Catherine refuses to accept Darcy's actual marriage to Elizabeth even as the novel closes.

The Bingleys present a particular problem for navigating class. Though Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Hurst behave and speak of others as if they have always belonged to the upper echelons of society, Austen makes a point to explain that the Bingleys are traders rather than inheritors and rentiers. The fact that Bingley rents Netherfield Hall -it is, after all, "to let" -distinguishes him significantly from Darcy, whose estate belonged to his father's family and through his mother, is the grandson and nephew of an Earl. Bingley, unlike Darcy, does not own his property, but has portable and growing wealth that makes him a good catch on the marriage market for poorer daughters of the gentry, like Jane Bennet, ambitious (merchant class), etc. Class plays a central role in the evolution of the characters and Jane Austen's radical approach to class is seen as the plot unfolds.

There is an undercurrent of the old Anglo- Norman upper class hinted at in the story, as suggested by the names of Fitzwilliam Darcy and his aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh; Fitzwilliam, D'Archy de Bourgh (Burke), and even Bennet, are traditional Norman surnames.

Reputation

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* depicts a society in which a woman's reputation is of the utmost importance. A woman is expected to behave in certain ways. Stepping outside the social norms makes her vulnerable to ostracism. This theme appears in the novel, when Elizabeth walks to Netherfield and arrives with muddy skirts, to the shock of the reputation-conscious Miss Bingley and her friends. At other points, the ill-mannered, ridiculous behavior of Mrs. Bennet gives her a bad reputation with the more refined (and snobbish) Darcys and Bingleys. Austen pokes gentle fun at the snobs in these examples, but later in the novel, when Lydia elopes with Wickham and lives with him out of wedlock, the author treats reputation as a very serious matter. By becoming Wickham's lover without benefit of marriage, Lydia clearly places herself outside the social pale, and her disgrace threatens the entire Bennet family. The fact that Lydia's judgment, however terrible, would likely have condemned the other Bennet sisters to marriageless lives seems grossly unfair. Why should Elizabeth's reputation suffer along with Lydia's? Darcy's intervention on the Bennets' behalf thus becomes all the more generous, but some readers might resent that such an intervention was necessary at all. If Darcy's money had failed to convince Wickham to marry Lydia,

would Darcy have still married Elizabeth? Does his transcendence of prejudice extend that far? The happy ending of *Pride and Prejudice* is certainly emotionally satisfying, but in many ways it leaves the theme of reputation, and the importance placed on reputation, unexplored. One can ask of *Pride and Prejudice*, to what extent does it critique social structures, and to what extent does it simply accept their inevitability?

Self-knowledge

Through their interactions and their critiques of each other, Darcy and Elizabeth come to recognize their faults and work to correct them. Elizabeth meditates on her own mistakes thoroughly in chapter 36 :

"How despicably have I acted!" she cried; "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity in useless or blameable distrust. How humiliating is this discovery! Yet, how just a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment I never knew myself."

Other characters rarely exhibit this depth of understanding or at least are not given the space within the novel for this sort of development. Tanner writes that Mrs. Bennet in particular, *"has a very limited view of the requirements of that performance; lacking any introspective tendencies she is incapable of appreciating the feelings of others and is only aware of material objects"*. Mrs. Bennet's behaviour reflects the society in which she lives, as she knows that her daughters will not succeed if they don't get married. **"The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news."** This shows that Mrs. Bennet is only aware of "material objects" and not of her feelings and emotions.

Austen writes about the simple theme of family life with all its complexities. Instead of the wild forces of nature, Austen concentrates on family life in small English towns. Instead of rampant emotionalism, Austen emphasizes a balance between reason and emotion.

11.5 PLOT

The Plot is a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story or the main part of a story. These events relate to each other in a pattern or sequence. The structure of a **novel** depends on the organization of events in the **plot** of the story.

A plot is one of the most important parts of a story and has many purposes. Firstly, the plot focuses attention on the important characters and their roles in the story. It motivates the characters to affect the story and connects the events in an orderly manner. The plot creates a desire for

the reader to go on reading by absorbing them in the middle of the story, ensuring they want to know what happens next.

The plot leads to the climax, but by gradually releasing the story in order to maintain readers' interest. During the plot of a book, a reader gets emotionally involved, connecting with the book, not allowing himself to put the book down. Eventually, the plot reveals the entire story, giving the reader a sense of completion that he has finished the story and reached a conclusion.

There are five main elements in a plot.

A) Exposition or Introduction

This is the beginning of the story, where characters and setting are introduced to the readers and begin to be established. The conflict or main problem is introduced as well.

B) Rising Action

Rising action which occurs when a series of events build up to the conflict. The main characters are established by the time the rising action of a plot occurs, and at the same time, events begin to get complicated. It is during this part of a story that excitement, tension, or crisis is encountered.

C) Climax

In the climax, or the main point of the plot, there is a turning point of the story. This is meant to be the moment of the highest interest and emotion, leaving the reader wondering what is going to happen next.

D) Falling Action

Falling action, or the winding up of the story, occurs when events and complications begin to resolve. The result of the actions of the main characters is put forward.

E) Resolution

Resolution, or the conclusion is the end of a story, which may occur with either a happy or a tragic ending.

11.5.1 THE PLOT OF THE NOVEL PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen creates a picture of the small, cocooned world of the middle-class gentry -- with their commonplace joys and their commonplace sorrows. The central concern of this comedy of manners is Mrs. Bennet's dogged efforts to find suitable husbands for her elder daughters. Of course, Mrs. Bennet's judgments cannot be trusted, for she is a nagging wife, an ineffectual mother, and a social misfit throughout

the novel. Her repeated and continued foolishness is one of the things that holds the plot together into a unified whole.

The plot's focus on marriage is seen from the very beginning of the story. The arrival of Mr. Bingley, 'a **single man of large fortune**' at nearby Netherfield immediately fires the imagination of Mrs. Bennet. An acquaintance is struck and what follows is a series of parties, balls, and teas, which are very essential to the plot; it is at these social gatherings that the four main characters (Bingley, Jane, Darcy and Elizabeth) are brought together. They also serve to illustrate the culture, manners, fashions, pretensions, and snobberies of the English gentry at the time.

The first ball at Netherfield hints at the course of things to follow. The amiable Jane and the gentle Bingley are almost instantly drawn to each other. In contrast, the proud Darcy and the prejudiced Elizabeth have great difficulty in communicating; Elizabeth is infuriated that the arrogant man has slighted her. Much of the remaining plot is centered on the unfolding of the pride and prejudices of this pair, which Jane Austen carefully develops. Jane's illness at Netherfield Park is deftly contrived by the author to get the two pairs of lovers into closer contact, where they can observe each other's natures and evaluate their own feelings.

In contrast to his reaction at the ball, Darcy is attracted by Elizabeth's fine eyes, her frankness, and her ready wit. Unfortunately, Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy makes her misinterpret anything he says or does. Wickham, serving as a contrast to Darcy, diversifies the plot. By telling falsehoods about Darcy, he strengthens Elizabeth's dislike of the man. When Elizabeth spurns Wickham's advances, he preys upon the coquetry and caprice of Lydia, finally eloping with her. This event lets Darcy prove his true worth to Elizabeth.

Mr. Collins is introduced into the plot to reveal the negative side of marriage. He is a sycophant, a pompous clergyman, and an odd combination of 'servility and self-importance'. He is a deliberately constructed, grotesque figure, who is desperate to marry for any reason. Unfortunately, Charlotte Lucas, compelled by economic and social pressures, accepts his proposal. The picture of their married life is a bleak one. The noble Charlotte, however, tries to make her life as pleasant as possible, tolerating Collins as payment for her sense of security offered by marriage.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh is introduced into the plot as a very wealthy member of the upper-class society and as Collins' patroness. She also happens to be Darcy's aunt, and it is speculated that her nephew will marry her unacceptable daughter. In each encounter with Lady Catherine, she shows herself to be rude, authoritative, and domineering woman, who would like to control and run the lives of everyone she knows. Through her, Jane Austen clearly shows that superiority of social class does not necessarily imply superiority of intellect, ethics, or morality. For all her purported sophistication and snobbery, Lady Catherine, in her own way, is as coarse and vulgar as Mrs. Bennet.

The plot is further advanced by another meeting of Darcy and Elizabeth, which leads him to know that he is in love with this vivacious young lady. Against his better judgment and sure that she will accept, Darcy, proposes to Elizabeth. Her stormy refusal jolts his feelings of pride and results in an explanatory letter, which seeks to clarify the two allegations leveled against him. Although angered by the letter, from this point forward, Elizabeth begins to change her opinion of Darcy, moving away from her prejudice to a more realistic and uncritical viewpoint. At the same time, Darcy is forced to look at himself and lose some of his arrogance.

Elizabeth's visit to Derbyshire with the Gardiners brings her into contact with Darcy once again. Elizabeth's prejudice really begins to thaw under the warmth he emits during the visit; but just as the two are about to be reconciled, tragedy strikes. Lydia has eloped with Wickham, and Elizabeth is summoned to Longbourn. Ironically, Lydia's crass behavior threatens to fatally injure the chances of her two admirable sisters to attract Bingley and Darcy.

In the end, this proves as a blessing in disguise because Lydia's elopement provides an opportunity for Darcy to prove his worth to Elizabeth. He convinces Wickham to marry Lydia, by offering him a large sum of money. When Elizabeth learns of his noble deed, she realizes how wrong she has been in her judgment of him and hopes for a chance to make things right. When she sees Darcy again, she apologizes and expresses her appreciation. Darcy's response to Elizabeth's humility is to propose to her once again. This time Elizabeth eagerly accepts, bringing the plot to its natural climax.

The fully developed and tightly constructed plot clearly centers on marriage in its various forms. It is the central theme that binds the plot together. Therefore, the natural end of the novel comes with Jane's marriage to Bingley and Elizabeth's marriage to Darcy. Love has conquered all, both pride and prejudice.

11.6 LET US SUM UP

Pride and Prejudice is a romantic novel by Jane Austen. It is a humorous story of love and life among English gentility during the Georgian era. Jane Austen vividly depicted English middle-class life during the early 19th century. It charts the emotional development of the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, who learns the error of making hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between the superficial and the essential. The comedy of the writing lies in the depiction of manners, education, marriage, wealth, social class and love during the Regency era in Britain.

11.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Q1. Discuss the title "Pride and Prejudice". Refer to 11.3

- Q2. Write a short note on the plot of novel in *Pride and Prejudice*? Refer to 11.5.1
- Q3. Discuss the plot summary in your own words? 11.5 and 11.5.1
- Q4. What is the major theme of *Pride and Prejudice*? Refer to 11.4

11.8 SOURCE

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UNIT-12 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE : CHARACTERS

Structure

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 Characters
 - 12.2.1 Character
- 12.3 Major and Minor Characters of Novel “ Pride and Prejudice”
- 12.4 Jane Austen’s Art of Characterization in her novel Pride and Prejudice
- 12.5 Let us sum up
- 12.6 Self Assessment Questions
- 12.7 Source

12.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the characters of novel ‘Pride and Prejudice’. It is Jane Austen’s second novel, which was published in 1813. It was written in 1797-1798 when she was only 21 years old.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be able to know the characters of Pride and Prejudice. You will also understand her art of characterization with reference to her novel Pride and Prejudice.

12.2 CHARACTERS

There are many types of characters that exist in Literature, each with its own development and function. Characters guide readers through their stories, helping them to understand plots and ponder themes. The main function of a character in a story is to extend or prolong the plot, make it readable and interesting. The characters refer to the way a character changes throughout a story. There are many types of characters in the novel, which include Antagonist, Protagonist, Confidante, flat, static, round, and dynamic character.

12.2.1 CHARACTER TOOL

A) PROTAGONIST

Elizabeth Bennet (Character Role Analysis)

Mr. Darcy goes through an equal or (maybe even greater) journey of character development, but the novel follows Elizabeth Bennet's thoughts, not Darcy's. We don't learn about Darcy's true character until Elizabeth does—and we watch her character struggle with the information and become much more open-minded.

B) ANTAGONIST

Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy (Character Role Analysis)

For a large portion of the book, Elizabeth directs her hate towards Mr. Darcy. His cold, haughty demeanour is such a contrast to her own playful, lively one that she has no trouble believing the worst of him (plus, he insulted her looks). Obviously, Darcy doesn't remain the novel's antagonist for too long. Soon that title switches to Wickham. Once Elizabeth starts to have feelings for Mr. Darcy, Mr. Wickham gets in the way, and she starts worrying that Wickham's seduction of Lydia will drive Mr. Darcy away for good.

Mr. Darcy (Character Role Analysis)

Mr. Darcy stands in Lizzy's way: he separates Jane and Bingley, and he (allegedly) destroys Wickham's life. Thanks to his cold, haughty demeanour, we (and everyone else) have no trouble believing the worst of him.

Mr. Wickham (Character Role Analysis)

One last possibility: when you think about it, it's really the Bennet family that gets in the way of Elizabeth's happily ever after. Her idiot mother, flirtatious sisters, and neglectful father nearly ruin her life for good. It's a good thing that Pemberley isn't very close to Longbourn.

C) FOIL

Mr. Wickham to Mr. Darcy (Character Role Analysis)

They have reverse characters. On the outside, Darcy is cold and alienating, while Wickham is charming and friendly. On the inside, Darcy is capable of great acts of kindness and love, while Wickham is a sleazy fortune-hunter. This is further supported by Elizabeth's relations to the two. Wickham is initially her ideal man, and she views Darcy as no better than Darth Vader (from Star Wars). After she learns their true natures, however, she reverses

her opinion. It seems as though Wickham and Darcy are meant to play each other's opposite.

D) INFORMATION TOOL

Colonel Fitzwilliam (Character Role Analysis)

Colonel Fitzwilliam is one of Darcy's cousins, and his brief entrance into the novel lets Elizabeth confirm Darcy's version of events. He's so nice and respectable that she believes him—even though you'd think she'd have learned not to judge based on experiences.

E) GUIDE MENTOR

Mrs. Gardiner (Character Role Analysis)

Lizzy doesn't have much in the way of role models, but she does have her aunt Mrs. Gardiner, the wife of Mrs. Bennet's brother. Mrs. Gardiner is an "**amiable, intelligent woman**" who is close with the older girls (25.2). But her real mentoring power shows up when she notices Lizzy getting a little too fond of Mr. Wickham, and "resolve[s] to speak to Elizabeth on the subject" (25.17)—a good thing, too, because Mrs. Bennet sure isn't going to.

12.3 MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Elizabeth Bennet

She is the second of the Bennett daughters. She is twenty years old and intelligent, lively, playful, attractive, and witty, but with a tendency to judge on first impressions. She is the protagonist of the novel. As the story progresses, so does her relationship with Mr. Darcy.

The course of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is ultimately decided when Darcy overcomes his pride, and Elizabeth overcomes her prejudice, leading them both to surrender to their love for each other. Elizabeth is always shown to be very loving and loyal, most especially to her sister Jane. Elizabeth's complex and intriguing character, as well as her friendly and good qualities, is what makes her so likable. Her views of the world and her constant fight to be treated with respect and equality, in a time when women were not seen as a man's equal allow every reader to see her as inspirational and brave. The character of Elizabeth makes Jane Austen one of the earliest voices of Feminism in English Literature, albeit without the fanfare of the 20th century movement.

Fitzwilliam Darcy

Fitzwilliam Darcy is a major character in the novel, who is very rich and handsome, tall and wealthy, twenty-eight year old owner of the family estate of Pemberley in Derbyshire rumoured to be worth at least £10,000 a year (£796,000 or \$1,045,000 in today's money. He is Elizabeth's love

interest and while at first he is characterized as proud and arrogant, the readers throughout the course of the novel discover that he really is a generous and caring man that truly loves Elizabeth. Darcy is also quite stubborn, but very protective of his loved ones. He is shown to gradually form a deep affection and love for Elizabeth and saves the Bennet family from ruin when paying off Mr Wickham to marry Lydia. He later reveals he did it all for Elizabeth, and the two end up happily married.

Mr Bennet

A late-middle-aged landed gentleman of a modest income of £2000 per annum, and the dryly sarcastic patriarch of the now-dwindling Bennet family (a family of Hertfordshire landed gentry), with five unmarried daughters. His estate, Longbourn, is entailed to the male line.

Mrs. Bennet

She is the middle-aged wife of her social superior, Mr. Bennet. She is the mother of their five daughters. Mrs. Bennet is a hypochondriac who imagines herself susceptible to attacks of tremors and palpitations ("[her] poor nerves"), whenever things are not going her way. Her main ambition in life is to marry her daughters off to wealthy men. Whether or not any such matches will give her daughters happiness is of little concern to her.

Jane Bennet

She is the eldest Bennet sister. Twenty-two years old when the novel begins, she is considered the most beautiful young lady in the neighbourhood and is inclined to see only the good in others (but can be persuaded otherwise on sufficient evidence). She falls in love with Charles Bingley, a rich young gentleman recently moved to Hertfordshire and a close friend of Mr. Darcy.

Mary Bennet

She is the middle Bennet sister and the plainest of her siblings. Mary has a serious disposition and mostly reads and plays music, although she is often impatient to display her accomplishments and is rather vain about them. She frequently moralizes to her family. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, Mary ended up marrying one of her Uncle Philips' law clerks and moving into Meryton with him.

Catherine “Kitty” “Benne”

She is the fourth Bennet daughter, 17 years old. Though older than Lydia, she is her shadow and follows her in her pursuit of the officers of the militia. She is often portrayed as envious of Lydia and she is described as a silly young woman. However, it is said that she improved when removed from Lydia's influence. According to James Edward Austen-Leigh's *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, Kitty later married a clergyman who lived near Pemberley.

Lydia Bennet

She is the youngest Bennet sister aged 15 when the novel begins. She is frivolous and headstrong. Her main activity in life is socializing, especially flirting with the officers of the militia. This leads to her running off with George Wickham, although he has no intention of marrying her. Lydia shows no regard for the moral code of her society; as Ashley Tauchert says, **she feels without reasoning.**

Charles Bingley

He is a handsome, amiable, wealthy young gentleman from the north of England (possibly Yorkshire, as Scarborough is mentioned, and there is, in fact, a real-life town called Bingley' in West Yorkshire), who leases Netherfield Park, an estate three miles from Longbourn, with the hopes of purchasing it. He is contrasted with Mr. Darcy for having more generally pleasing manners, although he is reliant on his more experienced friend for advice. An example of this is the prevention of Bingley and Jane's romance because of Bingley's undeniable dependence on Darcy's opinion. He lacks resolve and is easily influenced by others; his two sisters, Miss Caroline Bingley and Mrs. Louisa Hurst, both disapprove of Bingley's growing affection for Miss Jane Bennet.

Caroline Bingley

She is the vainglorious, snobbish sister of Charles Bingley, with a dowry of £20,000. Miss Bingley harbours designs upon Mr. Darcy, and therefore is jealous of his growing attachment to Elizabeth. She attempts to dissuade Mr. Darcy from liking Elizabeth by ridiculing the Bennet family and criticising Elizabeth's personal behavior and bearing. Miss Bingley also disapproves of her brother's esteem for Jane Bennet, and is disdainful of society in Meryton. Her wealth (her dowry gives her an income of £1,000 per annum, which she overspends) and her expensive education seem to be the two greatest sources of Miss Bingley's vanity and conceit; likewise, she is very insecure about the fact that her and her family's money all comes from trade, and is eager both for her brother to purchase an estate, ascending the Bingleys to the ranks of the Gentry, and for herself to marry a landed gentleman (i.e. Mr. Darcy). The dynamic between Miss Bingley and her sister, Louisa Hurst, seems to echo that of Lydia and Kitty Bennet's; that one is no more than a follower of the other, with Caroline in the same position as Lydia, and Louisa in Kitty's (though, in Louisa's case, as she's already married, she's not under the same desperation as Caroline). Louisa is married to Mr. Hurst, who has a house in Grosvenor Square, London.

George Wickham

An officer in the regiment stationed at Meryton, Officer Wickham possesses a charm that hides his dissolute, untrustworthy personality. He was Godson to Darcy's father. However, Wickham betrayed Darcy by seducing Georgiana when she was only 15. He also spreads false rumours

about Darcy throughout Hertfordshire and Meryton. Overall, Wickham is driven by self-interest, revealed by his many romantic engagements (or lack thereof, in the case of Elizabeth). He is also a static character and marries Lydia only because Darcy provides a financial incentive. In the epilogue, Austen implies that Wickham tires of Lydia after a certain point.

Mr William Collins

Mr. William Collins, aged 25 years old as the novel begins. He is Mr. Bennet's distant second cousin. He is a pompous, sycophantic clergyman, who is distantly related to Mr. Bennet. Mr. Collins idolizes Lady Catherine de Bourgh, his patron. He sees himself as more important due to his connection with her, and everywhere he goes, he mentions her and her elaborate estate. As the heir to Mr. Bennet's estate, Mr. Collins seeks to marry—mostly due to the urging of Lady Catherine de Bourgh—one of the Bennet girls in an attempt to ensure the Longbourn estate stays connected to the Bennet family.

When Mr. Collins first arrives at Longbourn, he expresses interest in marrying Jane Bennet. Mrs. Bennet, however, is convinced that Mr. Bingley will propose to Jane and urges Mr. Collins to propose to Elizabeth instead. Elizabeth steadfastly refuses him, even after several attempts. Feeling embarrassed and under appreciated by Elizabeth and the Bennet family, Mr. Collins then stays with the Lucas family, where he meets and proposes to Elizabeth's confidante and close friend, Charlotte Lucas. The two marry and live in a small parsonage near Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh

Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy's aristocratic aunt and Mr. Collins's patroness, is a sharp-tongued woman obsessed with flaunting her wealth and social superiority. Lady Catherine is the wealthy owner of Rosings Park, where she resides with her daughter Anne and is fawned upon by her rector, Mr. Collins. She is haughty, pompous, domineering, and condescending, and has long planned to marry off her sickly daughter to Darcy, to 'unite their two great estates', claiming it to be the dearest wish of both her and her late sister, Lady Anne Darcy (née Fitzwilliam).

Georgiana Darcy

Georgiana is Mr. Darcy's quiet, amiable (and shy) younger sister, with a dowry of £30,000, and is aged barely 16 when the story begins. When still 15, Miss Darcy almost eloped with Mr. Wickham, but was saved by her brother, whom she idolises. Thanks to years of tutorage under masters, she is accomplished at the piano, singing, playing the harp, and drawing, and modern languages, and, is therefore described as Caroline Bingley's idea of an accomplished woman.

Charlotte Lucas

Charlotte is Elizabeth's friend who, at 27 years old (and thus very much beyond what was then considered prime marriageable age), fears becoming a burden to her family and therefore agrees to marry Mr. Collins to gain financial security. Though the novel stresses the importance of love and understanding in marriage, Austen never seems to condemn at Charlotte's decision to marry for money. She uses Charlotte to convey how women of her time would adhere to society's expectation for women to marry even if it is not out of love, but convenience. Charlotte is the daughter of Sir William Lucas and Lady Lucas, neighbours of the Bennet family.

Colonel Fitzwilliam

He is the younger son of an earl, and the nephew of Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Lady Anne Darcy; this makes him the cousin of Anne de Bourgh and the Darcy siblings, Fitzwilliam and Georgiana. He is about 30 years old at the beginning of the novel. He is the co-guardian of Miss Georgiana Darcy, along with his cousin, Mr. Darcy.

Mrs Hurst

Bingley's elder sister, Mrs. Hurst, is just as arrogant as Caroline, though she is less involved in attacking the Bennet sisters. She seems to have no real affection or esteem for her husband.

Mr. Hurst

Mr. Bingley's brother-in-law is an indolent man. Mr. Hurst does almost nothing but eat and entertain himself by playing cards. He never says an intelligent word in the entire novel, and seems to be solely concerned with the quality of the food.

Mrs. Phillips

Mrs. Phillips is Mrs. Bennet's sister who shares her foolishness and frivolity. She lives in Meryton and facilitates Lydia and Kitty's obsession with the officers stationed there.

Mrs. Forster

Mrs. Harriet Forster is the wife of Colonel Forster and invites Lydia to accompany them to Brighton. The trip enables the near-disaster with Wickham. Mrs. Forster's frivolous nature is implied by her fellowship with Lydia, who eloped from Harriet's home.

Colonel Forster

A good-natured and basically responsible man, Colonel Forster is the regiment leader who allows his wife to bring Lydia to Brighton. After the disastrous elopement, Col. Forster helps Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Bennet to locate Lydia.

Miss Younge

She is Georgiana Darcy's governess back when Wickham seduced the young girl. In fact, Miss Younge was crucial towards facilitating Wickham's wickedness. She never features directly in the novel, but she proves to be the key in Darcy's locating Wickham and Lydia.

Mrs. Lucas

Mrs. Lucas is married to Sir William and is Charlotte and Maria's mother. Mrs. Bennet often taunts Mrs. Lucas with gossip about the potential marital success of the Bennet girls.

Mr. Edward and Mrs. M Gardiner

Edward Gardiner is Mrs. Bennet's brother and a successful tradesman of sensible and gentlemanly character. Aunt Gardiner is genteel and elegant, and is close to her nieces Jane and Elizabeth. The Gardiners are instrumental in bringing about the marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth.

Mr. Denny

Mr. Denny is a soldier in the regiment who introduces the Bennet girls to Mr. Wickham.

Miss King

Wickham pursues Miss King, a woman in Meryton, after she inherits a sum of money. Her inheritance distracts Wickham from his flirtation with Elizabeth.

Mrs. Jenkinson

Mrs. Jenkinson is Miss de Bourgh's companion. She pampers the young girl.

Mrs. Reynolds

Mrs. Reynolds is the estate's longtime housekeeper. She gives Elizabeth and the Gardiners a tour of Pemberley and impresses Elizabeth with her praise of Darcy.

Mrs. Annesley

Mrs. Annesley is Georgiana's companion at Pemberley. She shows great civility towards Elizabeth and Mrs. Gardiner when they visit, even though Bingley's sisters are rude to them.

Mrs. Gardiner

Mrs. Bennet's sister-in-law acts as a levelheaded maternal figure to Elizabeth and Jane, compensating for Mrs. Bennet's inadequacy in this regard. She is an intelligent, caring and sensible woman. Austen uses the

Gardiners as a means to explore the value of personality over class distinction.

Mr. Gardiner

Mr. Gardiner, Mrs. Bennet’s brother, is a London merchant. He is fond of fishing and has three children with his wife. Mr. Gardiner is respectful and distinguished, even impressing Darcy with his mannered behaviour. After Lydia elopes with Mr. Wickham, Mr. Gardiner immediately goes to London in order to assist Mr. Bennet in finding the two and forcing them to marry.

Sir William Lucas

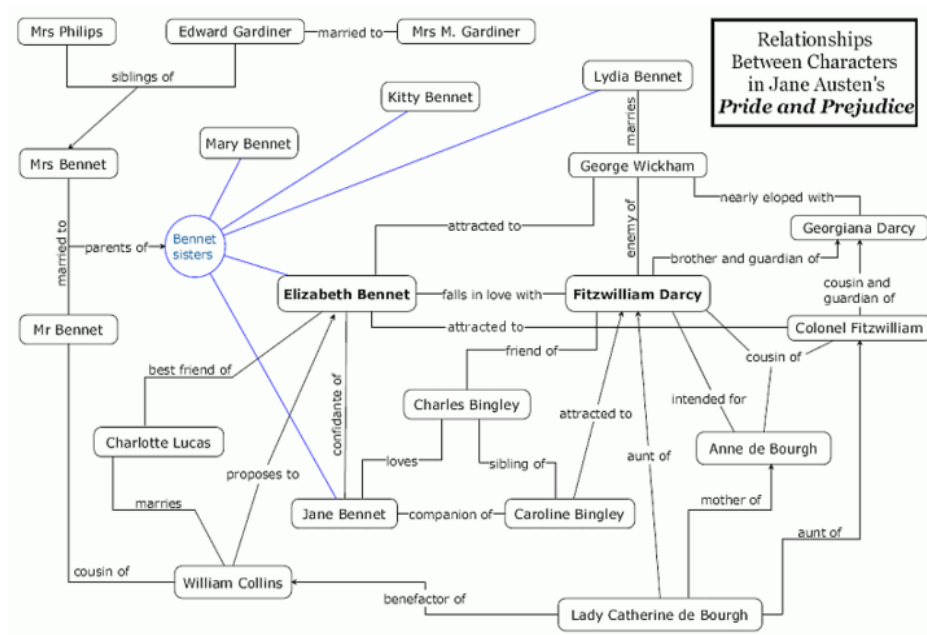
Sir William Lucas is a friend and neighbour of the Bennet family. He is pleasant, but not overly deep or intellectual. He is obsessed with knighthood. He is father to Charlotte and Maria Lucas.

Maria Lucas

Charlotte's younger sister, Maria, is as empty-headed as her father. She is never featured in the novel outside of her presence on the trip to visit Charlotte with Sir William and Elizabeth.

Lady Catherine

Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Darcy's aristocratic aunt and Mr. Collins's patroness, is a sharp-tongued woman obsessed with flaunting her wealth and social superiority. She advises people without solicitation on every aspect of their lives and suffers only flattery.



12.4 JANE AUSTEN'S ART OF CHARACTERIZATION IN HER NOVEL PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Jane Austen's real talent is revealed much through her wonderful capacity for characterization. Her true talent revealed through her gifted ability for the depiction and portrayal of situations and characters in a dramatic way. She presents her characters truthfully and realistically. She is sensitive to every small nuance of manner and behaviour and any deviation from the standard. Jane Austen identifies specific Regency/Victorian behaviours typical of the society in which she worked: the preoccupation with social class, the need for distinction, the necessity for marriage as a symbol of social status, and the double face of society. The range of her characters is narrow and she confines herself to the landed gentry in the country-side. Servants, labourers and yeomanry rarely appear and even aristocracy is hardly touched upon. When she deals with aristocracy, she satirizes them such as Lady Catherine.

Her Characters are never repeated despite such a narrow range. Not a single character has been repeated in any of her six books. Macaulay declares that her characters are commonplace, '*Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings.*'

Her characters individualized yet universal. Jane Austen has so comprehensive and searching a view of human nature that she invests them with a universal character. Her characters are universal types. Thus, when Mr. Darcy says, '*I have been selfish all my life in practice, but not in principle*' he confesses the weakness of high minded dominating males in every age and climate. Wickham represents all pleasant-looking but selfish, unprincipled and hypocritical flirts. Mr. Bennet is a typical cynical father. These qualities of Austen's characters make them universal and individualized, at the same time.

She is remarkable for a realistic portrayal of her characters. Her characters impress us as real men and women since they are drawn to perfection. They are never idealized. Even her most virtuous characters have faults. Jane Bennet, being a virtuous and sweet-nature girl, never thinks ill of others. This makes her lack proper judgment. Elizabeth, herself is a conventional heroine. She has faults of vanity and prejudice. Her mother, at a such a high level of responsibility as a mother, exhibits vulgarity and indecorous manners. Darcy and Lady Catherine's manners reflect aristocracy so realistically. The impartiality with which Jane Austen depicts her characters imparts a touch of realism and volume to them.

Her characters are three-dimensional. Her world of reality is never disturbed for all its romances, elopements and dejection because of the convincing reality of her characters. Her characters are three-dimensional portraying various human traits. Collins doesn't commit suicide when her

proposal is rejected by Elizabeth, but settles down with Charlotte. Darcy shows his unexpected trait after his proposal is rejected. The psychological and realistic portrayal of her characters is what makes them according to David Cecil, 'Three-dimensional'. The characters come alive in flesh and blood as it were because of their realistic portrayal. Jane Austen reveals her characters dramatically through their conversations, their actions, and their letters or gradually through a variety of point of view and this adds to their three-dimensional effects.

Characters revealed through conversations: She makes very careful use of conversations. Thus, the dialogue between Elizabeth and Darcy not only reveals effectively the antagonism between the two of them, but also the intelligence of the both. The characters of Collins and Lydia are revealed through their letters. And we learn of Elizabeth Bennet, the most striking of Jane Austen's heroines through her speech and actions and the remarks of such people as Mr. Darcy, her father and Miss Bingley. Thus, in the first chapter of the novel the vulgarity and stupidity of Mrs. Bennet and the sarcastic humour of Mr. Bennet have already been revealed in their dialogues. The characters of Austen frequently gossip with one another about other characters. This makes the plot even more gripping, realistic and touching.

Revealed through comparison and contrast Lady Catharine balances with Mrs. Bennet. Wickham serves as a contrast, while Bingley a foil to Darcy. Elizabeth can be contrasted with Jane. In novel, Elizabeth echoes Austen's own sense of humor and ironic wit and the ability to laugh at whims and inconsistencies, but it is preposterous to assume that Jane Austen herself suffered from such prides and prejudices. The sympathy and partial identification help Jane Austen in delineating the character faithfully.

Elizabeth: Jane Austen said of her heroine, "*I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print*". To create a charming heroine is one of the rarest achievements in fiction. Jane Austen's liking is borne out by the countless other readers who have fallen in love with her for more than a hundred and thirty years. A.C. Bradley wrote, "*I am meant to fall in love with her and I do*". Her charm arises to a great extent from her intricacy and her intellectual complexity. She is profound and perceptive with the ability to discern people and situations extraordinarily well. She comprehends the merits and demerits of the Bingleys almost at once; she knows Mr. Collins to be an affected fool and judges Lady Catherine at the first meeting. She understands her family is conscious of the vulgarity of her mother. She has the ready gift of repartee and a perfect command of epigrammatic expression. She is not intimidated by Lady Catherine to her enquiry whether Darcy had made a proposal to Elizabeth and she answers, "*Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible*". Despite all these characteristics, Elizabeth is not an idealized or perfect heroine of a romantic novel. She is prone to errors and mistakes of every day life. However, she learns from her mistakes and tends to correct them. It is true that Elizabeth blinds herself absurdly because of

prejudice. Thus, her intelligence, high spirit and courage, wit and readiness, her artistic temperament and her ability to laugh good-humouredly at herself is the speciality of Elizabeth. Indeed, the popularity of the novel rests on the brilliant portrayal of its charming and captivating heroine.

Darcy : To many readers and critics, the great blot in the novel, is the author's portrayal of Darcy. To all appearances, there are two Darcys that we meet, the Darcy in the first half of the novel proud, cold, haughty and unfriendly and the Darcy of the second half – warm, loving and considerate, kind, hospitable and eager to please. These seeming incorrigible aspects of Darcy's character are taken to be a failure on part of Jane Austen's art of characterization. However, critics believe that Darcy is a credible character and has these incorrigible aspects as a result of our misread Darcy's character along with Elizabeth. . Darcy is real and convincing, but appears only in scenes with Elizabeth. Darcy is proud in the beginning. He acknowledges his own weakness. At Netherfield, he tells Elizabeth, "*My opinion once lost is lost forever*". And finally his proposal to Elizabeth at Hunsford parsonage is more eloquent on the subject of pride than of tenderness, but he is sensitive, intelligent and complex. He is not morally blind either and recognizes the vulgarity of ill-manners of the Bingley sisters and is as much embarrassed by Lady Catherine's behaviour as he had been by Mrs. Bennet's vulgarity.

Jane & Bingley : At first glance, it is Bingley and Jane that capture our attention as the main characters and become the centre of attraction for everyone. Elizabeth says of Jane, "*You are too good. Your sweetness and disinterestedness are really angelic.*" Jane is a foil to Elizabeth. She, however, enjoys the admiration of both Elizabeth and Darcy and highlights their pride and prejudice. Similarly, Bingley is only a foil to the more forceful personality of Darcy despite all his cheerfulness. The Jane-Bingley romance also presents a contrast to the turbulent relationship of Darcy and Elizabeth. Their relationship is based upon harmony arising out of a similarity of natures. Jane and Bingley are both characters, not intricate or complex.

The art of characterization employed by Austen is most established in dialogue; narrator comment; emotional denotations; personality quirks and habits; feelings, desires and attitudes; vocabulary, tempo and silence. With these tools for her art of characterization, Austen has painted some of the most life-like, lovable and memorable characters in the history of English literature.

12.5 LET US SUM UP

Jane Austen's major characters are intricate; however, there are some failings. The minor characters are usually flat but they also develop when we meet them. Thus, each of these wide range of characters are multi-dimensional with a mix of the good and bad qualities, exhibiting

strong individual idiosyncrasies and traits, at the same time typical of universal human nature.

12.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the characters of Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet with reference to Novel 'Pride and Prejudice'. Refer to 12.3
- Q2. Discuss the character of Mr. Wickham. Refer to 12.3
- Q3. Discuss Jane Austen's art of characterization in her novel Pride and prejudice Refer to 12.4.
- Q4. Evaluate the characters of Fitzwilliam Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet in Jane Austen's Novel, 'Pride and Prejudice'. Refer to 12.3
- Q5. Write a note on the character Sketch of Elizabeth Bennet. Refer to 12.3

12.7 SOURCE

- Janet M Todd (2005), Books.Google.com, Jane Austen in Context, Cambridge University Press p. 127
- Wikipedia.org/wiki

UNIT-13 STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Structure
- 13.3 Technique
- 13.4 Let us sum up
- 13.5 Self Assessment Questions
- 13.6 Source

13.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the Structure and Technique of Jane Austen's second and arguably most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice* which was published in 1813.

13.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through her novel, you will be able to understand the Structure and Technique of Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice".

13.2 STRUCTURE

Based on Freytag's plot structure pyramid, the structure of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* divides the novel into three volumes. In Volume 1 (chapter 1-23) we meet all of the main characters and learn all of their relationships and conflicts. This section of the book ends with Collins' second proposal to Charlotte and the absence of Bingley. In Volume 2 (chapters 24-42) we learn more of the complications. Immediately we learn that Bingley and his party have returned to London and of Wickham's interest in Miss King. The romantic lives of the girls appear bleak. We meet one of the most important minor characters, Lady Catherine and hear Darcy's rather ill-conceived proposal to Elizabeth. We also get to hear Darcy's side of the story as revealed in his letter to Elizabeth. We hope that things will change, but aren't sure how that can happen. Volume 3 (chapters 43 to the end) resolves all of the relationship complications. It starts with the grand visit to Pemberly and Elizabeth's realization of her true feelings and ends with the marriage of three of the Bennet sisters.

The novel has a very simple structure (basically the progenitor of the romance novel), involving witty dialogue. In the first pages of Chapter One wherein Mrs. Bennet announces that Mr Bennet has rented a neighbouring manor and is taunted by Mr. Bennet who insists he shall never strike up a family friendship with the new tenants, leaving his wife and five daughters to fend for themselves in meeting the new young man and his friends at the upcoming town sponsored ball.

The rising action is based on the conflict, which is that Mr. Darcy is not overly impressed with Elizabeth and audibly expresses his opinion, thus setting Elizabeth's mind against him and its complications, like Mrs. Bennet's ill-bred behaviour and Miss Bingley's fondness for Mr. Darcy. The climax comes when Mr. Darcy says that he knows that Elizabeth would have told Lady de Bourgh honestly that she had no interest in Mr. Darcy if that had been true and then asks Elizabeth for her love.

The falling action is quite significant because Elizabeth has to break the news to her two parents, which is no small task because neither one likes him and Mr. Bennet has to be told that he owes Lydia's salvation to Mr. Darcy. The resolution occurs at the woefully understated wedding at which everyone who mattered to the couple was present and is followed by a brief epilogue describing the happiness of the other couples involved in the story.

The structure of the novel fits the classical plot structure (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution), but it can also be analyzed using other plot structures, dividing the story into three parts, each with its own plot line.

In the latter interpretation, one plot focuses on Jane and Bingley, another plot focuses on Lydia and Wickham, and the third (the main plot) involves Elizabeth and Darcy.

First Act : Austen introduces **characters, settings, and stakes**, all three, in the very first scene. Ten pages in, we've been introduced to all the major characters, given to understand the setting and show what's at stake for the Bennett daughters if one of them can't ensnare the unwitting Mr. Bingley. By the time we reach the first major plot point, we've gotten to know the sisters. The beauty and sweetness that will eventually win Jane a husband, the independence and strong opinions with which Lizzy drives the conflict and the foreboding irresponsibility of the youngest daughter Lydia are all in place and ready for use later in the story. We've also been introduced to the Bingleys, Darcy, and Wickham. Before the first act is over, Bingley is in love with Jane, and Lizzy has made up her mind to dislike Darcy—the two factors that will drive the entirety of the remaining story.

First Plot Point : After the ball at Netherfield Park, Darcy and Caroline Bingley convince Bingley to return to London and forget all about his growing affection for Jane. Much has happened in the story up to this point. Lydia and Kitty have become enamoured of the militia. Wickham has turned Lizzy against Darcy. Jane and Lizzy have stayed over at Netherfield during Jane's convalescence. And Mr. Collins has proposed to Lizzy. But everything changes when Darcy and the Bingleys leave. This is the event that breaks Jane's heart and infuriates Lizzy against Darcy. Character motivations and reactions aside, it also changes the landscape of the story, since several prominent characters are no longer in the neighbourhood for the Bennets to interact with as they did throughout the first quarter of the book.

Inciting Event : The arrival of the Bingleys and Darcy in Meryton is the inciting event that starts the chain of events moving irreversibly.

Key Event : But the main character, Lizzy, doesn't become involved with the inciting event until she meets and is rejected by Darcy at the Meryton assembly dance. This is the key event.

First Half of the Second Act : After Bingley dumps Jane and he, his sister, and Darcy leave Netherfield Park (the first major plot point), Lizzy and her sisters have no choice but to react. Jane goes to London to visit her aunt and to try to discover why Bingley left. Lizzy, in the absence of Mr. Wickham, pays an extended visit to her friend Charlotte (the new Mrs. Collins). While there, she again meets Mr. Darcy and is forced to react to his attention to her.

Midpoint : Austen makes readers sit up straight by hitting them with a humdinger of a (outstanding) midpoint. Not only does she give us an unexpected (or is it?) proposal from Mr. Darcy to Lizzy, she also smacks it out of the park by having Lizzy turn him down flat and cast in his face everything she hates about him. Up to now, the relationship between Lizzy and Darcy has been nebulous. Now, everything is out in the open, and both characters have ended their period of reaction with a set of strong actions that will force them to reevaluate both themselves and each other.

Second Half of the Second Act : After being pushed completely off balance by Darcy's proposal and subsequent justification of his other supposed misdeeds, Lizzy spends the second half of the second act realizing she's misjudged him and that, indeed, she's falling in love with him. Her actions in this segment take place more on an internal platform than an external one. She is actively realizing her mistakes and owning up to them. This is a good example of how the second half of the second act can be used primarily as a time of catalytic epiphany and self-realization.

Third Plot Point : The third act opens with the dramatic discovery of Lydia's elopement with Mr. Wickham. The Bennets' lives will never be the same, not only personally with their loss of and worry for their youngest member, but also publicly since Lydia's scandalous behaviour

will almost certainly ruin the other sisters' ability to marry well. Even more importantly to Lizzy, she fears that Darcy's abrupt behaviour toward her after he hears the news is an indication she's lost, once and for all, any chance she had of regaining his love. As a woman in early 19th century England, Lizzy isn't capable of taking direct action to personally rectify the situation.

Third Act : But she does what she can by immediately leaving Lambton with her aunt and uncle and returning home to her stricken family.

Climax : As in most romantic stories, the climax of this classic novel is the moment in which the two leads finally come together, admit their love for each other, and resolve upon a long-term relationship. After Darcy's gallantry in patching up Lydia's elopement with Wickham and his efforts to reunite Bingley and Jane, he and Lizzy are at last alone on a walk, during which they're able to put straight their former misconceptions, repent of their misconduct to one another (a personal turning point for each of them), and properly affianced (engage) themselves.

Resolution : After the climax in which Darcy and Lizzy proclaim their love for one another; Austen ties up her loose ends in a few neat scenes, which include the Bennets' reaction to their engagement. From her perch as an omniscient and distant narrator, Austen then caps her story with a final witty scene in which she covers the book's two culminating weddings and comments on Mr. and Mrs. Darcy's and Mr. and Mrs. Bingley's future lives together. Her final scene is a beautiful example of hitting a tone that sums up the story as a whole and leaves the reader feeling exactly how the author wants them to wish.

13.3 TECHNIQUE

Narrative techniques provide deeper meaning for the reader and help the reader use imagination to visualize situations. Narrative literary techniques are also known as literary devices.

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* employs the narrative technique of free indirect speech, which has been defined as "**the free representation of a character's speech, by which one means, not words actually spoken by a character, but the words that typify the character's thoughts, or the way the character would think or speak, if she thought or spoke**".

Jane Austen uses the following narrative techniques in her novel "Pride and Prejudice".

1. ***The Third Person Omniscient Author Technique*** : In this method of narration, the author Jane Austen is in complete control of the narration of the story. Whatever she says we have to accept unquestioningly and wherever she leads us we have to follow. The opening remark of the novel is a good example of this narrative

method: *"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."*

This method of narration sometimes entails the novelist to directly address the readers. This is known as **Authorial Intrusion**. In Ch.61 Jane Austen directly 'intrudes' into the action remarking *"I wish I could say."*

2. **The Dramatic Method of Narration** : In this method of storytelling, the novelist Jane Austen completely withdraws from the action and with very minimal narration and description the entire scene is played out right in front of our eyes. The dialogue very effectively portrays the personality of each character and simultaneously develops the plot of the novel. The very first chapter of the novel is a dramatic scene that not only introduces us to the family of the Bennets but also kicks starts the action by mentioning the arrival of Bingley in the neighbourhood.
3. **Dramatizing the Consciousness of the character** : In this progressive method of narration, Jane Austen takes her readers into the mind of her characters. She records every minute the entire thought process of the character and reveals the feelings and emotions of that character. In Ch.36 Jane Austen records in great detail the mental change that took place in the personality of the heroine Elizabeth after she had read and reread several times Darcy's letter: *"How despicably have I acted!" she cried. - "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! - I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust? - How humiliating is this discovery! - Yet, how just a humiliation! - Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. - Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either was concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself."* Thus we see that Jane Austen uses a variety of narrative techniques according to the varying needs of the plot and characterization of "Pride and Prejudice."

Austen's **narrative technique** is full of such irony as it comes to expose the surface harmony which makes her style rich enough in subtlety and complexity. A great deal of Austen's wit is actually seen through the use of irony, where irony is considered the foundation for this novel. Irony, humour and the extensive use of dialogue complement each other to create an inviting novel for potential readers to lose themselves in. Irony is used to show the difference in truth and the way things may seem. Austen uses irony to create deeper emotions and laugh and characters' perceptions in the novel. Humour is also used to show relationships but to guide

the reader to understand social status and the interactions between status' and how this can cause ineptness for many characters.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, we see all three types of irony displayed: **verbal, situational, and dramatic**.

Verbal irony

Verbal Irony pervading the whole novel makes it much too admirable. Let us take the beginning line as an example. It reads: "*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.*" Reading this initially we think that the great universal truth is the theme of the novel, but the last section of the sentence declares that the truth is nothing more than the common social problem of marriage. The irony is that the young man does not really search after a young girl, but truly the young girls in the locality are desirous of getting such a partner of life. Instead, this opening line is a perfect example of sarcasm, or Verbal irony, and a perfect example of Austen's wit.

Situational irony

The Situational Irony describes a moment when something occurs and the exact opposite was expected to occur. Either the audience or the characters can have the opposite expectations. One instance of situational irony can be seen early on in the novel at a party that takes place at Lucas Lodge. After Elizabeth is asked to play and sing, the party begins to dance. At the same moment that Sir Lucas is trying to convince Mr. Darcy to join in the dancing, Elizabeth begins walking towards them. Mr. Darcy so adamantly protests dancing to Sir Lucas, even insulting the activity, saying, "**Every savage can dance,**" that when Sir Lucas sees Elizabeth and encourages Darcy to dance with her the reader, as well as Elizabeth, are very surprised when Darcy "**requested to be allowed the honour of her hand**" (Vol. 1, Ch. 6). Darcy's behaviour in this instance is a true reversal of his earlier behaviour, especially at the Meryton assembly. Hence, this is a perfect example of situational irony. In addition, the moment is also amusing due to the sudden change of behaviour, also making it another example of Jane Austen's wit.

Dramatic irony

Dramatic irony occurs when the reader is aware of something that the characters have no idea. This scene is also a fine example of dramatic irony. The reader has already begun to get the impression that Darcy feels an attraction for Elizabeth, which the reader began to see when she was tending to her sister at Netherfield. Therefore, the reader knows that Darcy's sudden interest in dancing with Elizabeth is actually genuine while Elizabeth still believes that he dislikes her and is merely asking in an attempt to be well mannered. Again the situation is amusing due to both Elizabeth's and Darcy's reactions to the situation. Hence, again, this use of dramatic irony also **demonstrates Austen's wit**.

A close analysis of the plot of the novel reveals Austen's masterly use of irony. Almost at every stage of the novel, Austen lays stress on the difference between appearance and reality. The seemingly refined and cultured man turns out to be villainous and the boorish one as a refined gentleman. Though Mrs. Bennet's effort is always directed at catching the suitors, she, in reality, scares them away. The effort of Lady Catherine and Miss Caroline is intended to sabotage the prospect of a union of Elizabeth and Darcy, but this ultimately turns out to be the catalytic agent in their happy union. Moreover, Miss Bingley maligns Elizabeth to degrade her in Darcy's eyes. She thinks that this will help her to secure Darcy for herself. Little does she know that her efforts are blasting all chances of a matrimonial alliance between them? Besides these, there are other fine instances of the use of irony. Elizabeth was terribly mortified when Lydia eloped with Wickham as she thought that the case of the elopement shall spell a disaster to her union with Darcy. But in reality, the opposite only happened as it facilitated their union in the long run.

The whole plot of the novel deals with the contrast between intricacy and simplicity at an ironic level. The two sets of characters, so to say, Darcy and Elizabeth, and Jane and Bingley, represent this ironic contrast. The first two are intricate characters while the last pair is simple. 'Intricacy and simplicity are two desirable aspects of character, but they are mutually incompatible and here lies the irony. On this basis, we find in the title of the novel an ironic interpretation of the theme dealt with in this novel.

The ironic tone of the novel is thus established at its very outset. The novel is replete with such verbal irony. Let us take the example of Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst as in chapter IV. It reads: *"They were rather handsome, had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town, had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank, and were, therefore, in every respect entitled to well of themselves and meanly to others".* The irony becomes transparently clear when we find them proud, snobbish and utterly selfish. Let us recapitulate the remark of Mr. Bennet about Mr. Wickham in a later chapter: *"I am prodigiously proud of him. I defy even Sir William Lucas himself to produce a more valuable son-in-law"* We can well appreciate the impact of this irony when we know that the so-called valuable son-in-law is none other than the seemingly stupid Mr. Collins. We see Elizabeth Bennet boasts of her perception and calls in question Jane's who is alleged to be blind to realities. But she is unaware of the fact that she herself is blinded by prejudices. Again, Darcy's claim to be a gentleman is tarnished by his ungentlemanly proposal to Elizabeth. Bingley Sisters hate the Bennets being unrefined, while they prove themselves to be such. Jane Austen was very much amused by the contradictions inherent in human nature which she painted nicely to amuse her readers. In chapter VIII where the Bingley Sisters refer to Elizabeth's **"low connections"** and thereby indicate the social difference between Darcy and Elizabeth, readers wonder if Darcy's remark about Elizabeth's poor chances of marrying **"a man of any consideration in the world"** will not prove to be ironic. Again towards

the close of chapter XI, we find Darcy is aware of his growing attractions for Elizabeth: "**He began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention.**" The irony is that Elizabeth, who thinks that Darcy still dislikes her, and does not, therefore, even try to interest Darcy, is actually attracting him by her sharp wit, intellect, and spirited repartees. Again in the portrayal of Lady Catherine de Bourgh's pride and good breeding, two of the themes of the novel, are treated ironically. We see that this highborn lady has really poor manners and her treatment of others betrays her lack of taste and principles of decorum.

The dialogues of *Pride and Prejudice* have been rendered effective by verbal irony. Mr. Bennet is in the habit of speaking ironically to his wife, and this is evident when he says that he has no compassion on her poor nerves: *'you mistake me, my dear, I have high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them, with consideration these twenty years at last'*. It is a beautiful instance of verbal irony and we have no difficulty in understanding that he means the very opposite of what he says. Actually, he means that she has complained about her nerves incessantly ever since their marriage, and he finds the mention of her 'nerves' intensely irritating or ridiculous. More importantly, Mr. Bennet's words prepare the readers for some authorial remarks: *'Mrs. Bennet was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper, when she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.'* Significantly Mrs. Bennet's appearance (her good looks) conceals from Mr. Bennet her reality (her mean understanding and illiberal mind) but when he discovers it, he is disillusioned and loses interest in his life. The misery of Mr. Bennet's life emphasizes the importance of making a timely distinction between appearance and reality. Again, one is aware of the irony hidden in Darcy's statement about Elizabeth. When Mr. Bingley asked Mr. Darcy to dance with Elizabeth, he looked for a while at Elizabeth and coldly said: *"She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me, and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other.*

We relish the ironic flavour of this statement much later when we reflect, in retrospect, that the woman who is Darcy's eyes was not handsome enough to dance with was really good enough to marry. Another fine example of irony may be taken from the description of Miss Bingley and Mrs. Hurst: *"They were in fact very fine ladies; not deficient in good humour when they were pleased nor in the power of being agreeable when they choose it; but proud and conceited"*. Here the ironic implications of the expression 'Very fine ladies' become clear as we are acquainted with their pride, snobbery and selfishness. But Jane Bennet is not very discriminating in her judgment of character. She never sees any fault in anybody and therefore considers even the proud conceited Bingley sisters charming. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is able to see through their conceit. Darcy also understands the distinction between appearance and reality only gradually. To him, in the beginning, lower middle-class

people belonging to the countryside appear to be vulgar and unrefined whereas refinement, culture and dress appear to be the attributes of the aristocracy. He gradually learns better and subsequently realizes that Jane and Elizabeth are refined, whereas Lady Catherine and Bingley sisters are utterly alien to good manners. Jane Austen's instinctive attitude is that of a humorist. Her first impulse was humour. The follies and foibles, illusions and self-contradictions of human nature were a joy to her for their own sake. She would have found little zest in an ideal world so perfectly cured of folly as to be completely deprived of matter for laughter. The technique of ironic statement frees Jane Austen from the necessity of making involved commentaries on her character. It is left to the reader to understand the full force of the irony and to make the criticism himself. 'Mr. Collins had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth - and it was soon done- done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire. Taken at its face value this is merely a statement of fact-while Mrs. Bennet stirred the fire, Mr. Collins decided to marry Elizabeth instead of Jane. But there are implications behind Jane Austen's statement brought out by phrases such as '**Tied only to change**', '**soon done**'. Mr. Collins is considering a serious step, *ie.* Marriage, yet the woman involved is of so little importance to him as a person that he can change his mind in a second. And as yet he knows nothing of the feelings of either sister towards him. This is an aspect of Jane Austen's technique of ironic comment-a statement that does not seem to involve the author in any judgment, but which illuminates a character without unnecessary comment.

But these ironic statements are all made by Jane Austen *about* her characters. A further technique of irony is to put a speech into a character's mouth, which is not intended by the speaker as irony but becomes ironic in effect. In this case, *the character* is made to say more than he intends, though it is left to the reader to notice the implications. On Lydia's elopement with Wickham, Mr. Collins writes to Mr. Bennet, "**I must not, however, neglect the duties of my station or refrain from declaring my amazement, at hearing that you received the young couple into your house as soon as they were married. It was an encouragement of vice; and had I been the rector of Longbourn, I should very strenuously have opposed it. You ought certainly to forgive them as a Christian, but never to admit them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing.**" It is left to the reader to reflect upon the deficiencies of Mr. Collins' Christianity. Jane Austen's problem was to draw a true picture of life which should also amuse us. She lived through the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, but no shadow of their storm is permitted in her finest pictures of the sunny side of life. The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* is presented with the atmosphere of sunshine and hilarity. The immortal creation of Mr. Collins is the main source of humour in the novel. The man is ridiculous, but the humour which he produces is quite unconscious. He takes everything seriously but makes other people laugh at his words and deeds. The character of Mrs. Bennet is also a rich source of humour. She is a gross fool and her husband a fastidious one.

Apart from these humorous characters, *Pride and Prejudice* is full of humorous situations as well. The crowning example of such a humorous situation in the novel is the pompous stupidity of Mr. Collins' proposal to Elizabeth Bennet. The humour created by Mr. Collins gives a clue to the particular type of Jane Austen's humour. It is delicate and ironical.

An especial characteristic of her humour is that it pervades the whole novel. In her novels, Austen chose to use irony as a **stylistic device**. In *Pride and Prejudice*, there are a lot of ironical situations too, which provide twists and turns to the action of the novel. Mr. Darcy remarks about Elizabeth that "**she is not handsome enough to tempt me...**". Here, one can easily understand the ironic implication of this statement that the woman who was not handsome enough to dance with was really good enough to marry. He removes Bingley from Netherfield because he considers it imprudent to forge a marriage alliance with the Bennet family, but he ends up marrying the second Bennet sister. Collins proposes to Elizabeth when her heart is full of Wickham and Darcy to her exactly at the moment. When she hates him most, Elizabeth tells Mr. Collins that she is unable to reject the first proposal and accept the second, but she does exactly this when Darcy proposes a second time. The Lydia-Wickham episode may seem like an insurmountable barrier between Elizabeth and Darcy, but is actually instrumental in bringing them together. Lady Catherine, attempting to prevent their marriage, only succeeds in hastening it.

In *Pride and Prejudice* irony is of a **complex character**. It presents the novelist's world-view in regard to the two types of human personality—simple and intricate. There are four central human pairs in the novel. At the center, there are Elizabeth and Darcy, both of whom are intricate characters. Their intricacy has both its virtues and vices. Jane and Bingley are simple and unexceptionable. Lydia and Wickham are again intricate, though woefully lacking in the breadth and humanity of the first pair. Charlotte and Collins, who form the last pair are again intricate from another angle, that of the pursuit of worldly gain. Austen puts all these pairs in the milieu of love-making and brings out the contradictions in them, and sometimes through the objective account, sometimes through indirect comments and sometimes through authorial remarks highlight the inseparable admixture of intricate and simple characteristics in a human-being. This sharp contrast between knowledge and truth, between what the characters understand and what the reader understands, between intention or expectation and fulfilment is called dramatic irony.

The irony in Austen's novels is a composite of varied attributes. Unlike the satirists, she does not openly, directly and violently attack the follies of the people, but evokes a smile by exposing their follies. She never becomes angry with her characters and the subtle instances of irony give artistic touches of perfection to Austen's work. "By the mere tone of her voice," says David Cecil, "she sets drab *reality dancing and sparkling*

with the sunlight of her comic vision." Undoubtedly, irony, humour, and satire go hand in hand in her novels.

13.5 LET US SUM UP

The novel, *Pride and Prejudice* has neat and coherent dramatic structure. Austen's narrative technique is spun with superfine threads of irony adding subtle humour throughout the novel. She has her comments very cleverly contrived, of course, with a meaning lurking beneath the calm surface, yet always forcing the readers to find their own meaning. Her distinctive literary style relies on a combination of parody, burlesque, irony free indirect speech and a degree of realism. Austen extends her critique by highlighting social hypocrisy through irony; she often creates an ironic tone through free indirect speech in which the thoughts and words of the characters mix with the voice of the narrator. Thus, the structure and Technique of Jane Austen's novel is perfect and is ideally suited for the material she wanted to embody and the outlook she wished to present.

13.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the dramatic irony with reference to novel 'Pride and Prejudice'. Refer to 13.3 'Dramatic irony'
- Q2. Write a short note on the style of Jane Austen's novel 'Pride and Prejudice'. Refer to 13.4
- Q3. Discuss in brief on the Structure of Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice". Refer to 13.2.
- Q4. Write a short note on the Narrative Technique in Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice". 13.3

13.7 SOURCE

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॥ सरस्वती नः सुभगा मयस्कल् ॥

Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon
Open University

Bachelor of Arts

UGEN-103

Literature in English 1750-1900

BLOCK

5

FICTION : CHARLES DICKENS : OLIVER TWIST

UNIT-14

Charles Dickens : Life and Literary Works

UNIT-15

Oliver Twist : Analysis

UNIT-16

Characters

UNIT-17

Structure and Technique

UNIT-18

Social Concerns

UGEN-103/247

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this block, we will study Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*.

Unit-14 discusses Charles Dickens' biography and his literary works.

Unit-15 describes the detailed analysis of the novel *Oliver Twist*.

Unit-16 looks at the portrayal of different characters in *Oliver Twist*.

Unit-17 discusses the structure and technique of the text.

Unit-18 discusses the social concerns of *Oliver Twist*

UNIT-14 CHARLES DICKENS : LIFE & LITERARY WORKS

Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Charles Dickens : Life
- 14.3 Charles Dickens : Literary Works
- 14.4 Let us sum up
- 14.5 Self -Assessment Questions
- 14.6 Source

14.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Charles Dickens who was an English writer and social critic, a hard-working journalist and a great novelist. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters and is regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. *Oliver Twist* is one of the most famous and influential works of Dickens. It was the first novel in English to have a boy as the protagonist and one of the first examples of the social novel. It was also unique at the time for its unromanticized the portrayal of the lives of criminals and the poor. With irreverent black humour, the novel examines nineteenth-century English society's ills: poverty, child labour, urban crime, and the inherent hypocrisy of Victorian culture.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through the life and works of Charles Dickens you will be able to know Charles Dickens as a great novelist.

14.2 CHARLES DICKENS : LIFE

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in Landport, Portsmouth, on February 7, 1812. Charles was the second of eight children to John Dickens (1786–1851), a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, and his wife Elizabeth Dickens (1789–1863). The Dickens family moved to London in 1814 and two years later to Chatham, Kent, where Charles spent the early years of his childhood. Due to the financial difficulties, they moved back to London in 1822, where they settled in Camden Town, a poor neighbourhood of London.

The defining moment of Dickens's life occurred when he was 12 years old. His father, who had a difficult time managing money and was constantly in debt, was imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor's prison in 1824. Because of this, Charles was withdrawn from school and forced to work in a warehouse that handled 'blacking' or shoe polish to help support the family. This experience left profound psychological and sociological effects on Charles. It gave him a first hand acquaintance with poverty and made him the most vigorous and influential voice of the working classes in his age.

After a few months, Dickens's father was released from prison and Charles was allowed to go back to school. At fifteen, his formal education ended, and he found employment as an office boy at an attorney's, while he studied shorthand at night. From 1830, he worked as a shorthand reporter in the courts and afterward as a parliamentary and newspaper reporter.

In 1833, Dickens began to contribute short stories and essays to periodicals. A Dinner at Poplar Walk was Dickens's first published story. It appeared in the Monthly Magazine in December 1833. In 1834, still a newspaper reporter; he adopted the soon to be a famous pseudonym Boz. Dickens's first book, a collection of stories titled Sketches by Boz, was published in 1836. In the same year, he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of the Evening Chronicle. Together they had ten children before they separated in 1858.

Although Dickens's main profession was as a novelist, he continued his journalistic work until the end of his life, editing The Daily News, Household Words, and All the Year Round. His connections to various magazines and newspapers gave him the opportunity to begin publishing his own fiction at the beginning of his career.

The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club was published in monthly parts from April 1836 to November 1837. Pickwick became one of the most popular works of the time, continuing to be so, after it was published in book form in 1837. After the success of Pickwick, Dickens embarked on a full-time career as a novelist, 'Oliver Twist' (1837-39), 'Nicholas Nickleby' (1838-39), 'The Old Curiosity Shop' and 'Barnaby Rudge' as part of the Master Humphrey's Clock series (1840-41), all being published in monthly instalments before being made into books.

In 1842, he travelled with his wife to the United States and Canada, which led to his controversial American Notes (1842), and is the basis of some of the episodes in Martin Chuzzlewit. Dickens's series of five Christmas Books were soon to follow: A Christmas Carol (1843), The Chimes (1844), The Cricket on the Hearth (1845), The Battle of Life (1846), and The Haunted Man (1848). After living briefly abroad in Italy (1844) and Switzerland (1846),

Dickens continued his success with *Dombey and Son* (1848), the largely autobiographical *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-53), 'Hard Times' (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), 'A Tale Of Two Cities' (1859), and 'Great Expectations' (1861).

In 1856, his popularity had allowed him to buy Gad's Hill Place, an estate he had admired since childhood. In 1858, Dickens began a series of paid readings, which became instantly popular. In that year, after a long period of difficulties, he separated from his wife. It was also around that time that Dickens became involved in an affair with a young actress named Ellen Ternan. The exact nature of their relationship is unclear, but it was clearly central to Dickens's personal and professional life.

In the closing years of his life, Dickens worsened his declining health by giving numerous readings. During his readings in 1869, he collapsed, showing symptoms of a mild stroke. He retreated to Gad's Hill and began to work on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which was never completed.

On June 8, 1870, at dinner time he collapsed and sank into a coma; he died in the evening of the following day. The news of Dickens's death was carried on a shock wave of grief to remote regions of the earth. Contrary to his wish to be buried in Rochester Cathedral, he was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. The inscription on his tomb reads: "***He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world.***"

14.3 CHARLES DICKENS : LITERARY WORKS

Charles Dickens had written 15 novels, 5 novellas and hundreds of short stories. He had also written many non-fiction articles and lectured a lot.

The Pickwick Papers 1836

The Pickwick Papers, also known as *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, was the first novel of Charles Dickens. Chapman & Hall published it in monthly installments from March of 1836 until November 1837. Dickens worked a very serious subject into comedic *Pickwick Papers*, that of the injustice of the justice system. It is a comic masterpiece. The novel's main character, Samuel Pickwick is a kind and wealthy old gentleman, the founder and perpetual president of the *Pickwick Club*. To extend his researches into the quaint and curious phenomena of life, he suggests that he and three other "Pickwickians" (Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, Mr. Augustus Snodgrass, and Mr. Tracy Tupman) should make journeys to places remote from London and report on their findings to the other members of the club. Their travels throughout the English countryside by coach provide the chief theme of the novel. A distinctive and valuable

feature of the work is the generally accurate description of the old coaching inns of England.

Its numerous memorable characters form his main literary value and appeal. Each character in *The Pickwick Papers* are drawn comically, often with exaggerated personality traits. Alfred Jingle, who joins the cast in chapter two, provides an aura of comic villainy, with his devious tricks repeatedly landing the Pickwickians into trouble. These include a nearly successful attempted elopement with the unmarried woman Rachael Wardle of Dingley Dell manor, misadventures with Dr. Slammer, and others.

Further humour is provided when the comic cockney Sam Weller makes his advent in chapter 10 of the novel. First seen working at the White Hart Inn in The Borough, Weller is taken on by Mr Pickwick as a personal servant and companion on his travels and provides his own oblique ongoing narrative on the proceedings. The relationship between the idealistic and unworldly Pickwick and the astute cockney Weller has been likened to that between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Through humour Dickens is able to capture quintessential aspects of English life in the mid-nineteenth century that a more sober approach would miss. Perhaps the popularity of this novel was due in part to the fact that the readers of the time were able to see truly themselves, and could accept themselves because of Dickens's skilful use of humour.

Sketches by Boz

Sketches by "Boz," Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People (commonly known as *Sketches by Boz*) is a collection of short pieces which Charles Dickens originally published in various newspapers and other periodicals between 1833 and 1836. They were re-issued in book form, under their current title, in February and August 1836, with illustrations by George Cruikshank. The first complete one volume edition appeared in 1839. The 56 sketches concern London scenes and people, and the whole work is divided into four sections: "Our Parish", "Scenes", "Characters" and "Tales". The material in the first three sections consists of non-narrative pen-portraits, but the last section comprises fictional stories.

Oliver Twist- 1837

'*Oliver Twist*' was Charles Dickens's second novel. The first edition had a longer title, *Oliver Twist; or, The Parish Boy's Progress*. It was initially published in monthly instalments that began in February of 1837 and ended in April 1839. *Oliver Twist* is the story of a young orphan who lives until the age of nine in a poorhouse, where he goes hungry and suffers abuse by the Director, Mr. Bumble. The classic scene in which the half-

starved Oliver begs for some more food and is viciously denied by the obese Mr. Bumble exemplifies the inequity of Victorian society.

It revolves around his childhood in a workhouse, his subsequent apprenticeship with an undertaker, his escape to London and finally his acquaintance with the Artful Dodger. It is both an angry indictment of poverty, and an adventure filled with an air of threat and pervasive evil.

Here Oliver gets involved with a gang of thieves and pickpockets headed by Fagin, a satanic character and corrupter of young boys. Oliver now begins an underground, nocturnal, life together with his companions Fagin, Artful Dodger, Claypole, and Nancy. The last named is a thief and a prostitute, but a good person who has been led astray by Fagin and her lover, the violent Bill Sikes. Nancy, and Bill Sykes were both old pupils of Fagin. Oliver also comes under the influence of the mysterious Monks, another thief, who has some unknown connection to Oliver. It is later revealed that Monks has paid Fagin to keep Oliver in his clutches and turn him into a thief, as part of Monks' secret plan to destroy him.

Oliver's true origins are eventually discovered. Mr. Brownlow turns out to be an old friend of Oliver's father, and Monks is actually Oliver's step older brother, and was trying to corrupt Oliver so that he could secure the entire family inheritance for himself. Rose is actually Oliver's aunt and his deceased-mother's sister. Monks goes to America, but soon squanders his money and returns to a life of crime. Oliver also shows compassion towards Fagin and goes to see him in jail on the eve of his execution. Monks dies in jail.

Everything ends well. Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver. Claypole and the Artful Dodger leave their life of crime. Claypole becomes a respectable farmer and the Artful Dodger goes to work as a police informer.

Nicholas Nickleby- 1838

Nicholas Nickleby; or, The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby is a novel by Charles Dickens. It was originally published as a serial from 1838 to 1839. It was Dickens's third novel. The novel starts with the death of Nick's dad. The man passed away after he made the mistake of trusting his money with a bad investment. After his father dies, Nicholas is left to take care of his mother and sister. His uncle is a crook and actively tries to ruin the life of Nicholas. Still, his uncle finds the job of an assistant at a local school. Soon, Nicholas learns the truth of this school. The boys of this school had been rejected by their parents, some of them were crippled, and some were bastards. That allows the head of the school, whatever he wants to do with them. The Government, society and even their own parents do not care about these boys. Once, Nicholas witnesses Squeers (the head teacher) beating an innocent boy. Then he leaves school immediately after the incident and goes to London.

The tone of the work is that of ironic social satire, with Dickens taking aim at what he perceives to be social injustices. Many memorable characters are introduced, including Nicholas's malevolent Uncle Ralph, and the villainous Wackford Squeers, who operates an abusive all boys boarding school at which Nicholas temporarily serves as a tutor.

The Old Curiosity Shop- 1840

The *Old Curiosity Shop* was published in instalments in the periodical, *Master Humphrey's Clock*. The first instalment printed in April 1840 and the last was printed in February 1841. The death of the book's character, Little Nell traumatized Dickens. As he was writing the novel, he felt as though he were experiencing the death of one of his children. It also brought back painful memories of the death of his sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth.

The Old Curiosity Shop tells the story of Nell Trent, a beautiful and a virtuous young girl of "not quite fourteen". An orphan, she lives with her maternal grandfather (whose name never revealed) in his shop of miscellaneous items. Her grandfather loves her dearly, and Nell does not complain, but she lives a lonely existence with almost no friends her own age. Her only friend is Kit, an honest boy employed at the shop, whom she is teaching writing. Secretly obsessed with ensuring that Nell does not die in poverty as her parents did, her grandfather attempts to provide Nell with a good inheritance through gambling at cards. He keeps his nocturnal games secret, but borrows heavily from the evil Daniel Quilp, a malicious, grotesquely deformed, hunchbacked dwarf moneylender. In the end, he gambles away what little money they have, and Quilp seizes the opportunity to take possession of the shop and evict Nell and her grandfather. Her grandfather suffers a breakdown that leaves him bereft of his wits, and Nell takes him away to the Midlands of England, to live as beggars.

Quilp continues to sound Nell and her grandfather looking for them by joining forces with Nell's wastrel brother, Frederick and Swiveller. Nell manages to evade her pursuers as Kit and one of Nell's old relative try to evade her pursuers as Kit and one of Nell's old relative try to find her and help. As a result of running from pillar to post, Nell dies of exhaustion and her grandfather becomes mentally deranged and himself dies tragically as he is stricken with grief. So at the end we see Nell has died as a result of her arduous journey. Her grandfather, already mentally infirm, refuses to admit she is dead and sits every day by her grave waiting for her to come back until, a few months later, he dies himself.

Barnby Rudge- 1841

Barnaby Rudge was published in installments from February to November of 1841. It appeared in the magazine *Master Humphrey's Clock*. The historical novel is set during the Gordon Riots of 1780. The were riots

against the passing of the Catholic Relief Act by the British Parliament in 1778. Catholic churches were burnt and hundreds killed.

The plot follows two families- the Chesters and the Haredales. They have been rivals for a long time; at the same time, Edward Chester is in love with the “enemy’s daughter, Emma Haredale. Both Edward's father, John Chester, and Emma's uncle, the Catholic Geoffrey Haredale – these two are sworn enemies – oppose the union after Sir John untruthfully convinces Geoffrey that Edward's intentions are dishonourable. Sir John intends to marry Edward to a woman with a rich inheritance, to support John's expensive lifestyle and to pay off his debtors. Edward quarrels with his father and leaves home for the West Indies. Besides, he has got a huge debt that needs to be paid. But Edward is not ready to give up on his feelings and decides to leave home and find his happiness elsewhere. Eventually, he learns of his dad’s true intentions. Edward Chester and Emma are married and go to the West Indies.. Sir John Chester, now a member of parliament, turns out to be the father of Hugh and is killed in a duel by Geoffrey Haredale. Barnaby and his mother live out their years tending a farm at the Maypole Inn where Barnaby can work effectively due to his physical strength. The little character Barnaby is a less important character in the novel. He is a simple man who walks in and out of the story with his pet raven. It is well written idealistic, comes with rich, realistic characters and does a great job of putting the thoughts and hopes of the people involved with Gordon Riots.

Martin Chuzzlewit-1843

Chapman & Hall first published *Martin Chuzzlewit* in installments that began in January of 1843 and ran through July of 1844.

The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit (commonly known as *Martin Chuzzlewit*) is a novel by Charles Dickens, considered the last of his picaresque novels. This novel is dedicated to Angela Georgina Burdett- Coutt, a friend of Dickens's. Dickens wrote this novel after he travelled to America in 1842. The trip left Dickens with a very unfavorable impression of the United States. The novel dealt with his experience in US and so it is a satire on deceitful and selfish characters.

A Christmas Carol 1843

Being a Ghost Story of Christmas, commonly known as A Christmas Carol, is a novella by Charles Dickens, first published in London by Chapman & Hall in 1843 and illustrated by John Leech. The transformation of a miserly character Scrooge is central to the story. A Christmas Carol recounts the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an elderly miser who is visited by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and yet to come. After their visits, Scrooge is transformed into a kinder, gentler man.

Dombey and Son- 1846

The novel was first published in monthly parts between 1846 and 1848, with illustrations by

Hablot Knight Browne ('Phiz'). *The novel, Dombey and Son* was first published in instalments that began in 1846 and ran through 1848.

Dombey and Son is a novel by English author Charles Dickens. It follows the fortunes of a shipping firm, whose owner is frustrated at not having a son to follow him in the job, and initially rejects his daughter's love, eventually becoming reconciled with her before his death. The story features many Dickensian themes, such as arranged marriages, child cruelty, betrayal, deceit, and relations between people from different classes. *Dombey and Son* explores the devastating effects of emotional deprivation on a dysfunctional family and on society as a whole.

David Copperfield -1849

David Copperfield, Dickens's eighth novel, was first published as a serial. The first installment was published in May of 1849. The last installment was issued in November of 1850. *David Copperfield* held a special place in Dickens's heart. In the preface to the 1867 edition, Dickens wrote, "like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield." *David Copperfield* is the story of a young man's adventures on his journey from an unhappy and impoverished childhood to the discovery of his vocation as a successful novelist. In *David Copperfield* – the novel he described as his 'favourite child' – Dickens drew revealingly on his own experiences to create one of the most exuberant and enduringly popular works, filled with tragedy and comedy in equal measure. The novel deals with the theme of growth and maturity of a young lad and contains the novelist's views on education and women in the society.

Bleak House-1852

Bleak House was published in instalments from March 1852 through September 1853. This novel has the distinction of being perhaps the only work of classic literature featuring a character that dies by spontaneous combustion. The novel, *Bleak House* is regarded as Dickens's masterpiece, the plot revolves around a long-running legal case entitled *Jarndyce vs Jarndyce*. Mixing romance, mystery, comedy, and satire, *Bleak House* depicts the suffering caused by the intricate inefficiency of the law. This novel has been hailed as a precursor of the Detective novel in English Literature.

Hard Times-1854

The novel first appeared in Dickens's Weekly periodical, *Household Words*. *Hard Times* was published in installments that began in April of 1854 and ran through August of 1854. *Hard Times* – For These Times (commonly known as *Hard Times*) is the tenth novel by Charles Dickens first published in 1854. The book surveys English society and satirises the social and economic conditions of the era.

It is by far the shortest of Dickens' novels. Also, unlike all but one of his other novels, *Hard Times* has neither a preface nor illustrations. Moreover, it is his only novel not to have scenes set in London. Instead the story is set in the fictitious Victorian industrial Coketown, a generic Northern English mill-town, in some ways similar to Manchester, though smaller. Coketown may be partially based on 19th-century Preston. *Hard Times* takes an unsympathetic look at Utilitarianism. This no-nonsense movement relied heavily on statistics, rules, and regulations.

Little Dorrit-1855

Little Dorrit was published in instalments from December of 1855 through June of 1857. The Marshalsea debtors' prison plays a large part in *Little Dorrit*. The story features Amy Dorrit, youngest child of her family, born and raised in the Marshalsea prison for debtors in London. Arthur Clennam a kind middle aged man encounters her after returning home from a 20-year absence, ready to begin his life anew.

The novel satirises the shortcomings of both government and society, including the institution of

debtors' prison, where debtors were imprisoned, unable to work, until they repaid their debts. The prison in this case is the Marshalsea, where Dickens' own father had been imprisoned. Dickens is also critical of the lack of a social safety net, the treatment and safety of industrial workers, as well as the bureaucracy of the British Treasury, in the form of his fictional "Circumlocution Office". In addition, he satirises the stratification of society that results from the

British class system. *Little Dorrit* is one of the supreme works of Dickens's maturity.

A Tale of Two Cities -1859

The first chapters of *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared in print in April of 1859. The last chapter was printed in November of that same year. *A Tale of Two Cities*, portrays a world on fire, split between Paris and London during the brutal and bloody events of the French Revolution. Not only did the play give Dickens the idea for *A Tale of Two Cities*, but it also brought about lasting changes to Dickens's life in the form of Ellen Ternan.

The story follows the life of a gifted French Doctor. The man was condemned to almost two decades of imprisonment in a fortress in France. Still, after all those years, he made it out of that nightmare and started a new life in the UK with his lovely Kiddo- a young girl named Lucie. They have never met before, and the journey together proved to be challenging.

The girl's beloved man confronted the vagabonds who put her Dad in prison. This family crosses path with the Defarges, a couple who made a living selling wine in a perilous Parisian suburb. The better half of the book describes the events that drove people angry and crazy enough to start a horrifying revolution.

Lucie is a loving, caring, strong-willed character, and all she wanted was to connect with her father and offer him a better life after the terrifying conditions in prison. At first, he rejected his daughter: yet, solely, but steadily, they found a way to be a family.

Great Expectations -1860

Great Expectations was initially published in *All the Year Round*, a weekly periodical founded and owned by Charles Dickens. There were nine monthly instalments, running from December of 1860 until August 1861. *Great Expectations* is the thirteenth novel by Charles Dickens and his penultimate completed novel; a bildungsroman that depicts the personal growth a coming of age and personal development of an orphan nicknamed Pip. The novel is set in Kent and London in the early to mid-19th century and contains some of Dickens's most memorable scenes, including the opening one in a graveyard, where the young Pip is accosted by the escaped convict, Abel Magwitch. *Great Expectations* is full of extreme imagery—poverty, prison ships and chains, and fights to the death and has a colourful cast of characters who have entered popular culture. These include the eccentric Miss Havisham, the beautiful but cold Estella, and Joe, the unsophisticated and kind blacksmith. Dickens's themes include wealth and poverty, love and rejection, and the eventual triumph of good over evil. Considered by many as Dickens's best novel, in it is the humble, orphaned Pip apprenticed to the dirty work of the forge but dares to dream of becoming a gentleman— and one day, under sudden and enigmatic circumstances, he finds himself in possession of “great expectations.”

Our Mutual friend - 1864

Our Mutual Friend is the last novel that Charles Dickens completed before his death. An interesting feature of the novel is its focus on the “dust” business. "Our Mutual Friend" is a glorious satire spanning all levels of Victorian society. It centres on an inheritance – Old Harmon's profitable dust heaps – and its legatees, young John Harmon, presumed drowned when a body is pulled out of the River Thames, and kindly dustman Mr. Boffin, to whom the fortune defaults. The novel is richly symbolic in its vision of death and renewal in a city dominated by the fetid Thames, and the corrupting power of money.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood 1870

The Mystery of Edwin Drood was the fifteenth novel and the final novel of Charles Dickens originally published in 1870. Dickens was only halfway finished with the book when he died. Though the novel is named after the character Edwin Drood, it focuses more on Drood's uncle, John Jasper, a precentor, choirmaster and opium addict, who is in love with his pupil, Rosa Bud. Miss Bud, Edwin Drood's fiancée, has also caught the eye of the high-spirited and hot-tempered Neville Landless. Landless and Edwin Drood take an instant dislike to one another. Later Drood

disappears under mysterious circumstances. The story is set in Cloisterham, a lightly disguised Rochester

With Dickens' death on 9 June 1870 the novel was left unfinished, only six of a planned twelve instalments having been published. He left no detailed plan for the remaining instalments, or solution to the novel's mystery, and many later adaptations and continuations by other writers have attempted to complete the story.

Charles Dickens was a very prolific writer Apart from these novel he has written novellas, many short stories and some other stories such as :

The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton – This stand-alone story was published as the 29th chapter of *The Pickwick Papers*. Its theme is similar to *A Christmas Carol*.

Frozen Deep

Dickens and Wilkie Collins wrote this play. In 1857 they began benefit performances. Ellen Ternan was one of the actresses hired for the event. She became the companion of Dickens.

A Message from the Sea– This short story appeared in the 1860 Christmas issue of *All the Year Round*. Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins wrote the first, second and fifth chapters of this collaborative work.

The Battle of Life – Published in 1846, it's the fourth of his Christmas books.

A Child's Dream of a Star – Published in 1850 Cover of A Child's Dream of a Star

The Chimes: A Goblin Story

The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home – Published in 1845

Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions – Published in 1865 in *All The Year Round*

A Flight – Published in 1851 in *Household Words*

George Silverman's Explanation – Published in 1868

Going into Society – Published in 1858

The Haunted Man – Published in 1848, it's the fifth of Dickens's Christmas novellas.

A Holiday Romance – Published in 1868

Hunted Down – Published in 1859

The Lamplighter – Published in 1838

The Long Voyage – Published in 1853 in the *Household Words* magazine

Master Humphrey's Clock

Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy – Published in 1864

Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings – Published in 1863

No Thoroughfare

Nobody's Story

Public Life of Mr. Trumble, Once Mayor of Mudfog

Tom Tiddler's Ground

Travelling Abroad – City of London Churches

The Uncommercial Traveller

Wreck of the Golden Mary

14.4 LET US SUM UP

Charles Dickens was unquestionably the nineteenth-century master of the genre known as the “sensation novel,” a melodramatic fiction in which mystery, crime, villainy, and secret evil predominate. Dickens' work shows three major influences - his life experiences (many of his works include autobiographical features), his commentary on rapidly changing social and economic conditions in England at that time, and the tremendous imaginative abilities he brought to the creation of his characters. Dickens excelled in detailed and very descriptive writing, using word pictures to create elaborate impressions of the surroundings and allowing readers to feel personally acquainted with his characters.

14.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Q1. Discuss a brief life of Charles Dickens Refer to 14.2
- Q2. Write a short note on his literary works. Refer to 14.3
- Q3. Write short notes on his Charles Dickens' Novels ‘Oliver Twist’ and ‘Nicholas Nickleby’. Refer to 14.3

14.6 SOURCE

- Forster, John. *The Life of Charles Dickens*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1872-1874, rev. ed. 1876.
- Fielding, K. J. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction*. London: Longmans, 1958, 2d ed. 1965.
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UNIT-15 OLIVER TWIST : ANALYSIS

Structure

- 15.0 Introduction
- 15.1 Objectives
- 15.2 Oliver Twist : Analysis
 - 15.2.1 Analysis of the Terror in London's Underclass
 - 15.2.2 Analysis of Oliver Twist : Indictment of the 19th Century Workhouse
 - 15.2.3 Analysis of Poverty, Class and Society
 - 15.2.4 Analysis of Religion and the Failure of Charity
 - 15.2.5 Analysis of Fate and Free Will in the Novel
 - 15.2.6 Analysis of Identity and Family Life
 - 15.2.7 Analysis of Good Versus Evil
 - 15.2.8 Analysis of 'Setting' of the Novel
 - 15.2.9 Analysis of Symbolism, Allegory
 - 15.2.10 Analysis of Names, Habits, Physical Appearance and actions
 - 15.2.11 Analysis of 'The Title' and 'The Ending'
- 15.3 Let us sum up
- 15.4 Self-Assessment Questions
- 15.5 Source

15.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to an analysis of the novel *Oliver Twist*. Through *Oliver Twist*, Dickens has mixed the terrible realism and ruthless mischief in the 19th century to describe the impact of industrialism on England and to criticize the new unpleasant poor laws.

15.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his novel, you will be able to know Crime was a huge problem in London of the 1830s, when Dickens was writing. You will understand Charles Dickens is very concerned with showing just how miserable the lower classes really were in 19th Century London.

15.2 ANALYSIS

Oliver Twist is the story of a young orphan boy who reflects the life of poverty in England during the 1830's. The story illustrates the evils of the Poor Houses of the time and the corruption of the people who work there. It also shows the depths of London's crime with an emphasis on petty robbery and pick pocketing.

15.2.1 ANALYSIS OF THE TERROR IN LONDON'S UNDERCLASS

Oliver Twist is probably not the most psychologically complex of Dickens' novels. Instead, Dickens uses the novel to give readers of the time a dramatic understanding of the deplorable social situation for England's underclass and particularly its children. In this sense, it is more closely linked to Hogarthian satire than Dickens's novels that are more romantic. Mr. Bumble, the beadle, is an excellent example of Dickens' broad characterization at work. Bumble is a large, terrifying figure: a tin-pot Hitler, who is both frightening to the boys under his control, and slightly pathetic in his need to maintain his power over them. The Crime was a *huge* problem in London in the 1830s. Charles Dickens wanted to show how criminals really lived, in order to discourage poor people from turning to crime. He also wanted to show how external influences created criminal behaviour as much or more than natural criminal urges.

London is the Capital and greatest city of Great Britain. After arriving in a suburb of London, Oliver meets Jack Dawkins, known as the Artful Dodger, who leads Oliver to the east side of London. Before long, Oliver finds himself part of the London underworld, a world overseen by the sinister Fagin. The deserted streets, alleys, old dirty buildings, dark back streets, dim rooms, smoke, fog, and pitch-black nights of east London provide the proper atmosphere for Fagin's gang of thieves. They lurk in the crumbling ruins, which are symbolic of the political injustices of English society. The numerous evidence of neglect and decay in the surroundings closely correspond to the decadent human qualities that were running rampant in the hearts of the people. As in the workhouse environment, slime and filth prevail in much of London.

Fagin, too, is a wonderful example of Dickens' ability to draw a caricature and still place it in a convincingly realistic story. There is a streak of cruelty in Dickens' Fagin. In addition, a charisma has made him one of the literature's most compelling villains. Fagin remains one of the most controversial and arguably anti-Semitic creations in the English literary canon.

The main evil character of the novel, Fagin, also referred to as "The Jew," is characterized as a money pincher with no true affections. His main goals are to exploit the people around him so he can better his

station and strengthen his power. Fagin himself represents the evils of greed and unholiness.

The general mood of terror and extreme brutality that exists in London can be directly correlated with the frequent rain and extremely cold weather. Rooftops and corridors that interconnect the dirty, crumbling buildings provide Fagin's thieves with escape routes that reflect the squalor of their occupation. Bill Sikes, the leader of Fagin's band of trained pickpockets, is a lower-class alcoholic, who makes his living by robbing people at night. A significant portion of the action in the novel occurs during the nighttime, a time for darkness, criminals, and corruption.

15.2.2 ANALYSIS OF OLIVER TWIST : INDICTMENT OF THE 19th CENTURY WORKHOUSE

Workhouse Orphanage is the place, in which Oliver Twist is confined when the novel opens. Located approximately seventy-five miles north of London, the workhouse plays an important role in the mood, atmosphere, and plot of the story. Oliver, the protagonist, is born in the dingy, poor, hard-edged workhouse in the first half of the nineteenth century. His mother dies during his birth, and he is sent to an orphanage, where he is treated badly, beaten regularly, and poorly fed. Oliver spends many of his early years in the workhouse as a frail, malnourished lad in worn work clothes. His condition represents the conditions in the workhouse and the town. In English society, the workhouse and its inhabitants were at the lower end of the class scale.

In a famous episode, he walks up to the stern authoritarian, Mr. Bumble, and asks for a second helping of gruel. For this impertinence, he is put out of the workhouse. Please, Sir, Can I Have Some More? He then runs away from the family that takes him in. He wants to find his fortune in London. Instead, he falls in with a boy called Jack Dawkins, who is part of a child gang of thieves run by a man called Fagin.

Oliver is brought into the gang and trained as a pickpocket. When he goes out on his first job, he runs away and is sent to prison. However, the kind person he tries to rob saves him from the terrors of the city gaol (jail) and the boy is, instead, taken into the man's home. He believes he has escaped Fagin and his crafty gang, but Bill Sikes and Nancy, two members of the gang, force him back in. Oliver is sent out on another job—this time assisting Sikes on a burglary.

The job goes wrong and Oliver is shot and left behind. Once more, he is taken in, this time by the Maylies, the family he was sent to rob; with them, his life changes dramatically for the better. But Fagin's gang comes after him again. Nancy, who is worried about Oliver, tells the Maylies what is happening. When the gang finds out about Nancy's treachery, they murder her.

Meanwhile, the Maylies reunite Oliver with the gentleman who helped him out earlier and who—with the kind of coincidental plot turn

typical of many Victorian novels—turns out to be Oliver's uncle. Fagin is arrested and hanged for his crimes and Oliver settles down to a normal life, reunited with his family.

Alcoholism, a part of the life of poor English people, is rampant in the workhouse. Furthermore, the weather in the town is very dramatic, ranging from hail, freezing rain, snow, and bracing winds to the occasional bright sunshine. These extremes symbolize the changes that occur in Oliver's life. Because of the adverse conditions of the workhouse, Oliver finally runs away and walks for seven days before reaching the outskirts of London.

15.2.3 ANALYSIS OF POVERTY, CLASS AND SOCIETY

Poverty is a prominent concern in *Oliver Twist*. Throughout the novel, Dickens enlarged on this theme, describing slums so decrepit that whole rows of houses are on the point of ruin. In an early chapter, Oliver attends a pauper's funeral with Mr. Sowerberry and sees a whole family crowded together in one miserable room.

This prevalent misery makes Oliver's encounters with charity and love more poignant. Oliver owes his life several times over to kindness both large and small. The apparent plague of poverty that Dickens describes also conveyed to his middle-class readers how much of the London population was stricken with poverty and disease. Nonetheless, in *Oliver Twist*, he delivers a somewhat mixed message about social caste and social injustice. Oliver's illegitimate workhouse origins place him at the nadir of society; as an orphan without friends, he is routinely despised. His "sturdy spirit" keeps him alive despite the torment he must endure. Most of his associates, however, deserve their place among society's dregs and seem very much at home in the depths. Noah Claypole, a charity boy like Oliver, is idle, stupid, and cowardly; Sikes is a thug; Fagin lives by corrupting children, and the Artful Dodger seems born for a life of crime. Many of the middle-class people Oliver encounters—Mrs. Sowerberry, Mr. Bumble, and the savagely hypocritical "gentlemen" of the workhouse board, for example—are, if anything, worse.

On the other hand, Oliver—who has an air of refinement remarkable for a workhouse boy—proves to be of gentle birth. Although he has been abused and neglected all his life, he recoils, aghast, at the idea of victimising anyone else. This apparently hereditary gentlemanliness makes *Oliver Twist* something of a changeling tale, not just an indictment of social injustice. Oliver, born for better things, struggles to survive in the savage world of the underclass before finally being rescued by his family and returned to his proper place—a commodious country house.

Society

Dickens often shows how superficial class structures really are—at the core; everyone is really the same, regardless of the social class into which they are born. Dickens also exposes how callous and uncaring Victorian

society was—folks just ignored the plight of the less fortunate because they were so self-satisfied and so convinced that the systems they had in place to take care of the poor were the best and most humane systems possible. His novels shook the society and led to reforms.

Social status is not always a reliable marker of whether a character is good or bad, but it is an important tool for characterization in *Oliver Twist*. For example, Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies are members of the middle class—they are respectable, reasonably well-off, and seem to prefer the company of other members of the middle class.

Monks, on the other hand, is also a member of the middle class, but he staunchly refuses to hang out with his social equals. He prefers "slumming" with members of the criminal class, and his rejection of his own social class in favour of the lower class is a big mark against him in the world of *Oliver Twist*.

15.2.4 ANALYSIS OF RELIGION AND THE FAILURE OF CHARITY

Dickens was Anglican himself, but he felt like the Church was too impersonal and institutionalized, and did not do enough to take care of the poor and miserable folks who turned to the Church for help. The whole parish system was responsible for maintaining workhouses, orphanages, and baby farms, and Dickens thought that the whole system was inhumane and just stunk to high heaven. He certainly did not shy away from showing the negative side of the parish system in *Oliver Twist*.

The first part of *Oliver Twist* challenges the organizations of charity run by the church and the government in Dickens's time. Dickens points out; the officials who ran the workhouses blatantly violated the values they preached to the poor. Dickens describes with great sarcasm the greed, laziness, and arrogance of charitable workers like Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann. In general, charitable institutions like workhouse and baby farms only reproduced the awful conditions in which the poor would live anyway.

15.2.5 ANALYSIS OF FATE AND FREE WILL IN THE NOVEL

Some characters in this novel are free and live happily. Others are not able to escape the "labyrinth" that the city, their social class, and the systems of justice and religion seem to have created. Certain characters seem to give up their free will at certain points and to abandon themselves to a kind of bizarre fatalism.

As much as Dickens wants to show how external influences turn people into criminals, the emphasis on fate in *Oliver Twist* seems to undermine that idea. How much free will does anyone

have? Or everyone just trapped in the systems of social class and religion, and unable to make any independent choices?

15.2.6 ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY AND FAMILY LIFE

This novel is all about mistaken identities. Many characters do not know where their parents are, or even who their parents are. Names are supposed to be society's main marker for identity—the way everyone around you knows you—and, in *Oliver Twist*, Oliver's name is thrust on him almost arbitrarily (or not...) by Mr. Bumble. The result is a weird disconnect between the way Oliver sees himself, and the way the world around him views him. Which is the real Oliver? The innocent boy or the hardened criminal?

Oliver's loyalty to his dead mother when Noah insults her is important to Oliver's development as a character. For all he knows, Noah could be right when he calls her "a right downs bad" but he still jumps to her defence. Family is obviously very important to Oliver even though he does not have one of his own. He is always trying to create surrogate families—first with little Dick at the baby farm, and then with Mr. Brownlow, and then with the Maylies. Monks, on the other hand, robs his mother and runs away from her, insults his dead father, and is out to get his baby brother hanged.

15.2.7 ANALYSIS OF GOOD VERSUS EVIL

Oliver Twist is a story about the battles of good versus evil, with the evil continually trying to corrupt and exploit the good. It portrays the power of Love, Hate, Greed, and Revenge and how each can affect the people involved. The love between Rose and Harry, in the end, conquers all the obstacles between them. The hate that Monks feels for Oliver and the greed he feels towards his inheritance eventually destroys him. The revenge that Sikes inflicts on Nancy drives him almost insane and eventually to accidental suicide. Dickens's wide array of touching characters emphasizes the virtues of sacrifice, compromise, charity, and loyalty. Most importantly, though the system for the poor is not changed, the good in Dickens's novel outweighs the evil, and the main characters that are part of this good live happily ever after.

15.2.8 ANALYSIS OF 'SETTING' OF THE NOVEL

The setting of '*Oliver Twist*' London, England (And Villages Nearby) in the 19th Century. The city is repeatedly described as a labyrinth or a maze—if anybody once gets into it, it is hard to get back out. The city itself serves as a kind of prison. It is filthy, foggy, and crime-ridden, and things are not always, what they seem.

For example, Oliver gets dragged "into a labyrinth of dark, narrow courts" (15.63). Fagin "becomes involved" in "a maze of mean dirty

streets that abound in that close and densely- populated quarter” (19.4). Dickens might be suggesting that the city is more powerful. Its evil representatives, after all, are able to penetrate into the countryside, while elements of country life seem only able to survive on the fringes of the city.

Chertsey is a quiet village along the River Thames. Oliver is exposed to a completely different world when he is rescued, first by Mr. Brownlow, and later by Mrs. Maylie and her adopted daughter. It is only in these settings that brightness and sunlight occur for any length of time in the novel. This setting expresses hope in moral values that make a positive difference in the quality of human life. Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Maylie live in country homes in Chertsey, a community providing a pleasant, mellow atmosphere, where well-heeled members of English society lived. When Oliver moves to Mr. Brownlow’s home, his worn, tattered, second-hand clothing is exchanged for a new woolen suit. The transition represents the progress Oliver has made from a harsh, unpleasant life of poverty to a comfortable, peaceful lifestyle. From the abuse and social injustice of the workhouse and the world of Fagin, Oliver has escaped, having relied on his moral character to bring him up from dire circumstances to find happiness and peace in Chertsey.

15.2.9 ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLISM, ALLEGORY

Allegory : In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens mixes grim realism with merciless satire to describe the effects of industrialism on 19th-century England and to criticize the harsh new poor Laws.

Dickens makes considerable use of symbolism. The "merry old gentleman" Fagin, for example, has satanic characteristics: he is a veteran corrupter of young boys who presides over his own corner of the criminal world; He makes his first appearance standing over a fire holding a toasting-fork, and he refuses to pray on the night before his execution. The London slums, too, have a suffocating, infernal aspect. The dark deeds and dark passions are concretely characterized by dim rooms, pitch-black nights. While the governing mood of terror and brutality may be identified with uncommonly cold weather. In contrast, the countryside where the Maylies take Oliver is bucolic heaven.

Toward the end of the novel, the gaze of knowing eyes becomes a potent symbol. For years, Fagin avoids daylight, crowds, and open spaces, concealing himself most of the time in a dark lair. When his luck runs out, at last, he squirms in the "**living light**" of too many eyes as he stands in the dock, awaiting sentence. Similarly, after Sikes kills Nancy at dawn, he flees the bright sunlight in their room, out to the countryside, but is unable to escape the memory of her dead eyes. In addition, Charley Bates turns his back on crime when he sees the murderous cruelty of the man who has been held up to him as a model.

Symbolism Agnes's ring and locket are going to be important because so much mystery is associated with them. When Agnes first shows up at the workhouse to give birth to Oliver before dying, one of the very few things we learn about her is that she was not wearing a wedding ring.

The question of who she was, and whether there was ever a wedding ring at all, is always hanging around in the back of everyone's mind.

The first piece of the puzzle we pick up is that old Sally had stolen some kind of jewelry from Oliver's dying mother the night that he was born—and that it was something that contained a clue as to his parentage and identity. This gold jewelry, we finally learn in Book III, Chapter One included a gold locket with two locks of hair and a wedding ring.

The locket represents the physical union between Agnes Fleming and Edward Leeford, Oliver's father—it contains a lock of each of their hair, physically bound together. However, a locket is designed to be "locked" and kept a secret. The kind of union it represents is not the kind of union that the world recognizes.

The ring would represent a union that the world would recognize, but the ring was never completed: it has Agnes's name carved into it, but only her first name. Her maiden name, "Fleming" was given up when she lost her maiden-hood; and she never took the next step to become "Agnes Leeford" by marrying Edward. So the ring, which should (and usually does) represent unity, in *Oliver Twist*, represents only an incomplete union.

Oliver's resemblance to Agnes's portrait at Mr. Brownlow's house is what first gives Mr. Brownlow a clue that Oliver might actually be the son of Agnes and Edward Leeford. Of course (thanks for the suspense, Dickens) that clue is not shared with us, the readers, until later.

This is important: all we see is that Oliver feels some kind of connection to the woman in the portrait, and we are left guessing what the connection actually is. That kind of familial tie is especially important for Oliver, who never knew his parents. Even though he had never seen his mother, he still has some kind of instinctive feeling of attachment to her face in the portrait. But for characters like Monks, that sense of connection with family is completely broken, which makes Oliver's heightened sense of connection with his mother's portrait, and with Rose Maylie (who turns out to be his aunt) all the more important.

15.2.10 ANALYSIS OF NAMES, HABITS, PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, AND ACTIONS

Names : Many of the names in *Oliver Twist* are important—especially for the main character. The parish authorities, though, give Oliver's name to him so his name is not actually a reflection of his real character. In fact, it is actually in *contrast* to his true character.

However, the names of the minor characters are important, too: Rose Maylie, for example, is as fresh, delicate, pure, and natural as a rose, and that is the idea her name is meant to convey. Her last name, too, connotes the freshness of springtime ("May"), and of gladness, (it rhymes with "gaily"). The same can be said of her mother, Mrs. Maylie. Mr. Bumble's name is obvious—he is a bumbling fool. The irony slices pretty deep with him—we are not meant to look much beyond the surface of his name, because honestly, there is not much there.

Mr. Grimwig's name is equally superficial, because although he is a "good guy," he is also a two-dimensional character. Mr. Grimwig is always "grimly" stubborn and pessimistic. Moreover "wig" is a reminder of the fact that he's always threatening to "eat his own head," wig and all.

Habits: The way a character spends his or her free time is a good indication of what kind of character he or she is. Mr. Brownlow, for example, has a huge library and is a bookworm. The first time we see him, his face is buried in a book so he does not notice the Artful Dodger sidling up to pick his pocket. We are all reading a book, and Dickens is an author, so bookworms are generally going to be good people.

The Maylies like to go on long walks in the countryside—this fits in well with what we already know about them, based on their name. Sikes and the other criminals like to binge drink—not a good habit, and therefore we suspect immediately that they are seedy characters. You get the idea.

Physical Appearance: This is very remarkable in *Oliver Twist*—pretty much if a character looks like a bad person; he or she is a bad person. However, a couple of characters are not as easy to judge, Oliver himself, and Nancy. But only foolish characters (Mr. Bumble, the gentleman in the white waistcoat, Mr. Fang, the officers who arrest Oliver) think that Oliver is a thief; characters whose opinions the narrator wants us to trust (Mr. Brownlow, Mrs. Bedwin, Rose Maylie, Mrs. Maylie)

all take one look at his face and think, "there's no way this kid's a criminal! He looks so innocent!"

Nancy looks like a criminal, and she is one—but later on in the novel, when she starts trying to help Oliver, her looks are often misinterpreted. When she goes to visit Rose, for example, the servants take one look at her and think, "The creature was a disgrace to her sex" (40.39). Then Rose is able to look past her physical appearance and understand her true character.

Actions: Obviously important—the Dodger and Charley pick pockets; Oliver refuses to and actually runs away. Mrs. Maylie takes in orphans: clearly a good thing in the world of this novel.

Nancy, as usual, is an exceptional case—her actions aren't always easily interpretable, but that in itself is part of her characterization. She's a complicated figure, and the readers (and other characters) don't always know what to make of her. Is she acting for Oliver's good, or not?

15.2.11 ANALYSIS OF 'THE TITLE' AND 'THE ENDING'

When Oliver Twist is born at the workhouse, it is time to select from the O's in the naming of newborns, so "Oliver" is chosen by Mr. Bumble, the beadle, who is responsible for the naming of the children in the poorhouse. However, "Twist" is something that Bumble says he just "made up" as it was time for the last name that began with "T."

Nevertheless, there may have been some perverse cruelty in Bumble because the word "twist" is a slang term for "hanging." Certainly, Oliver's last name can suggest different things connected to hanging: a body twisting and writhing as the person hangs, the strands of rope that are twisted in a noose, and the rope noose itself that is twisted around the neck of the criminal.

At any rate, giving Oliver the last name of "Twist" seems to place an imaginary brand upon the boy, as others such as the Artful Dodger and Fagin and assign him a criminal role to play. Also, attaching *Twist* to Oliver places him in many different positions in his life, most of which turn his life in a changing direction. In the end, the happiest twist, or turn, in Oliver's life is his adoption by Mr. Brownlow who...fill[s] the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge, and becoming attached to him, more and more, as his nature developed itself, and showed the thriving seeds of all he wished him to become.....

Ironically, the other characters end up with the twist of the rope around them. Sikes inadvertently hangs himself as he tries to escape capture, and Fagin meets the hangman's noose at Negate Prison.

The final chapter of the book features the "good" characters all gathered together in some idyllic little country town, living happily ever after, cut off from all the badness of London and the wider world. The bad guys, meanwhile, get what is coming to them. Monks dies far from home in prison, and Fagin is completely alienated from the entire human race in the days leading up to his public execution— rather extreme punishments. Even after the narrator has told us 'what happened to all the main characters, good and bad', he says that he wants to "linger yet" with the good ones, and "share their happiness by endeavouring to depict it" (53.14). Then he gives us that final description of Rose and Harry's happy little family.

Now, why does Gissing dislike the ending of the novel? Why does he call the happiness of the good characters "feeble idyllicism"? Maybe because, at the close of a novel that is all about the gritty realism of everyday life in London, this seems like a cop-out (a poor excuse of avoiding). It is unrealistic to have the characters cut off from all the grime and poverty that Dickens had been so keen on describing before.

In addition, what is going on with the very last lines of the novel? Agnes gets the final words, even though she only appeared in the novel for about four paragraphs in the first chapter before kicking the bucket (dying). Dickens comes in with a rare first-person moment—he says, in the last sentence of the novel, "I do believe that the shade of that poor girl often hovers about that solemn nook – ay, though it is a church, and she was weak and erring."

Almost all of the earlier descriptions of churches and church organizations (like the workhouse or the baby farm) are negative—they make the Church of England seem institutionalized, unforgiving, and removed from real human life. But these last lines suggest that Agnes could find a place in the church—could even find forgiveness there, despite the fact that (gasp! scandal) she had a baby without being married. The other "fallen woman" of the novel, Nancy, died as well. Given this, Dickens ends his novel on an optimistic note for some, but not for others. For example, The final lines as offering some hope for change in a system that Dickens has condemned for the whole preceding novel, the readers left with an optimistic sense that the system may already be moving in that direction.

If, on the other hand, the final lines as retaining some doubt or pessimism about the system, the reader, may feel that the author is calling on to do something about it. So the way the readers read these final lines can affect not only the attitude towards the whole novel, but also the attitude towards the system he condemns: are you being called to action, or asked to stay comfortable, because the system is already mending itself?

15.3 LET US SUM UP

Oliver Twist was also influential in bringing to light the cruel treatment of paupers and orphans in Dickens' time. The novel, *Oliver Twist* is important as a crusading work of art, although it did not result in the dramatic changes in the English workhouse system that Dickens may have hoped. Nevertheless, Dickens researched that system extensively before writing the novel and his views undoubtedly had a cumulative effect. Two English reform two acts addressing the system actually preceded the publication of *Oliver Twist*, but several more followed, including the influential reforms of 1870. *Oliver Twist* remains a powerful indictment of English society in the early 19th Century.

15.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the importance of Identity and family life in *Oliver Twist*. Refer to 15.2.6
- Q2. Analyze the "The title" and "The ending" with reference the novel 'Oliver Twist'. Refer to 15.2.11

- Q3. Write short notes on Charity and Religion with reference to the novel *Oliver Twist*. Refer to 15.2.6
- Q4. Discuss the importance of “SETTING” in the novel ‘*Oliver Twist*’. Refer to 15.2.8
- Q5. Discuss Symbolism and Allegory with reference to the novel ‘*Oliver Twist*’. Refer to 15.2.9
- Q6. Discuss *Oliver Twist*: ‘Indictment of the 19th-Century Workhouse’. Refer to 15.2.2
- Q7. “*Oliver Twist* is a story about the battles of good versus evil, with the evil continually trying to corrupt and exploit the good.” Discuss this with reference to the novel, ‘*Oliver Twist*.’ Refer to 15.2.3 & 15.2.7
- Q8. Discuss poverty, class and society of 19th century London with reference to the novel *Oliver Twist*. Refer to 15.2.3

15.5 SOURCE

- Pope, Norris. *Dickens and Charity*. London: Macmillan, 1978
- Fielding, K. J. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction*. London: Longmans, 1958, 2d ed. 1965.

UNIT-16 OLIVER TWIST; CHARACTERS

Structure

- 16.0 Introduction
- 16.1 Objectives
- 16.2 Characters
- 16.3 Major and Minor Characters of the Novel “Oliver Twist”
- 16.4 Charles Dickens’s Art of Characterization in ‘Oliver Twist’
- 16.5 Let us sum up
- 16.6 Self Assessment Questions
- 16.7 Source

16.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the characters of the novel ‘Oliver Twist’. It is Charles Dickens’s second novel. It was initially published in monthly installment that began in February 1837 and ended in April 1839. A gritty, realistic novel it is full of satire on society and class. Dickens’s wide array of touching characters emphasizes the virtues of sacrifice, compromise, charity, and loyalty.

16.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be able to know the characters of Oliver Twist. You will also understand his art of characterization with reference to his novel Oliver Twist.

16.2 CHARACTERS

Characters guide readers through their stories, helping them to understand plots and ponder themes. The main function of a character in a story is to extend or prolong the plot, make it readable and interesting. There are many types of characters in the novel, which include Antagonist, Protagonist, Confidante, flat, static, round, and dynamic character.

16.3 MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS

OLIVER TWIST

Oliver Twist is the title character and protagonist of the novel 'Oliver Twist' by Charles Dickens. He was the first child protagonist in an English novel. Based in the 1820s, the orphan, young Oliver is born in a parish workhouse in an unnamed town. Both innocent and morally sensible, he gives force and sharpness, as well as a full measure of sentimentality, to Dickens' vision of social injustice.

He is a young, good-hearted, and kind--but often mistreated--an orphan who is raised in a workhouse, and finds himself indentured to an undertaker, living with thieves, and eventually taken in by the kind Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Maylie. His generosity of spirit is total, and even when faced with serious maltreatment, he never loses his sense of morality or kindness.

Fagin

Fagin is a fictional character in Charles's novel Oliver Twist. In the preface to the novel, he is described as a "receiver of stolen goods". A very old Jewish man, with a villainous-looking and repulsive face, Fagin is the leader of a gang of boy thieves and a very greedy and vicious man. He teaches them to make their livings by pick-pocketing and other criminal activities, in exchange for shelter. A distinguishing trait is his constant—and insincere—use of the phrase "my dear" when addressing others. In the novel, another character, Monks, too has already made criminals out of "scores" of children. Nancy, who is the lover of Bill Sikes (the novel's lead villain), is confirmed to be Fagin's former pupil.

Fagin is a self-confessed miser. Despite the wealth, he has acquired, he does very little to improve the squalid lives of the children he guards, or his own. In the second chapter of his appearance, he is shown (when talking to himself) that he cares less for their welfare than that they do not "peach" (inform) on him and the other children. Still darker sides to the character's nature are shown when he beats the Artful Dodger for not bringing Oliver back. He indirectly, but intentionally causes the death of Nancy by falsely informing Sikes that she had betrayed him, when in reality she had shielded Sikes from the law, whereupon Sikes kills her. The law for complicity in a murder finally executes him.

Artful Dodger (Jack Dawkins)

Jack Dawkins, better known as the Artful Dodger, is a character in the Charles Dickens's novel Oliver Twist. The Dodger is a pickpocket, so called for his skill and cunning in that occupation. He is the leader of the gang of child criminals, trained by the elderly Fagin.

He was a snub-nosed, flat-bowed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty, a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his

heels. He had turned the cuffs back, halfway up his arm, to get his hands out of the sleeves: apparently, with the ultimate view of thrusting them into the pockets of his corduroy trousers; for there he kept them. He was, altogether, as roistering and swaggering a young man as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in the blushers.

In the novel, he becomes Oliver's closest friend (although he betrays Oliver when Oliver is caught) and he tries to make him a pickpocket, but soon realizes that Oliver will not succeed. He also has a close relationship with Charles Bates. The Artful Dodger is characterized as a child who acts like an adult. He is described as wearing adult clothes, which are much too large for him. Like an adult, he seldom gives in to childish urges.

Ultimately the Dodger is caught with a stolen silver snuff box and presumably sent to a penal colony in Australia (only alluded to in the novel). The absurdity of the master pickpocket being caught over something so small is remarked upon in the book. The Artful Dodger, though a pickpocket, is not a heartless character. He has great respect for Fagin, to whom he delivers all of the pick-pocketing spoils without question.

Mr. Brownlow

Mr. Brownlow is a very respectable-looking elderly man, who has had his heart broken many times, including losing his fiancée on the day of their wedding. He takes a liking to Oliver even after suspecting him of stealing his handkerchief, and takes him in, doing everything he can to help him. Mr. Brownlow, the kindhearted, benevolent man who delivers Oliver Twist from a vicious judge, gives him care and trust, solves the question of his parentage, and finally adopts him. As a born scholar, he doggedly researches Oliver's identity.

Nancy

Nancy is a young woman thief and prostitute raised into that profession by Fagin. Dickens says in his preface to the third edition that Nancy practices prostitution to make a living. She also deeply loves the burglar Bill Sikes. Despite her upbringing, Nancy shows as much compassion and love as Rose Maylie. Nancy eventually betrays Fagin and Sikes to save Oliver, but she will not leave them and pays with her life for this decision. She takes Oliver from the start and wants to save him from a life on the streets. Her commitment to protecting both Oliver and the people she considers her family (Bill and Fagin's boys) ultimately prompts her to sacrifice herself for them. Although she remains loyal to Bill Sikes, he murders her in a rage.

Rose Maylie

Rose Fleming Maylie is a character in Charles Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* who is eventually discovered to be Oliver's maternal aunt. Though she plays a significant role in the novel, she is often omitted from dramatizations of the story. Rose is portrayed as pure, innocent, and

beautiful. Seventeen years old at the time of the novel's events, she is set up as a dramatic foil to Nancy, who is around the same age and sees her own degradation in contrast to Rose.

Rose is an orphan whose original surname was Fleming. Mrs. Maylie, who adopted her from a poor family who was looking after her, raises her from childhood. She refers to Rose as her niece. Rose is haunted by the thought that she may be illegitimate, and so she rejects the suit of Mrs. Maylie's son Harry for fear that marriage to her may harm his career in the church.

Later, Rose learns about Oliver's plight from Nancy. She offers to help Nancy escape from Sikes, but Nancy refuses to leave him. Rose teams up with Mr. Brownlow to rescue Oliver. It is later revealed that she is Oliver's aunt. Her sister Agnes Fleming was Oliver's mother. Like Oliver, she was a victim of Monks' plotting.

Towards the end of the novel, Rose becomes seriously ill and is apparently on the point of death. Harry hastens to her side and declares his love for her. She recovers and the couple is married.

Harry Maylie

He is the typical Victorian hero young, attractive, active, devoted to his mother and lover, nice to children, good with horses, and blonde. (Yawn.) At the beginning of the novel he is not staying with his mother because he is staying with a rich uncle, who was planning out some kind of fancy political career for him, as a necessary preface to inheriting his fortune. However, when Harry realizes that Rose cannot or will not marry someone whose public life might expose her (and her questionable birth) to ridicule, Harry changes his entire career path. He ends up becoming a minister in a little country church, marrying Rose, making babies, and living happily ever after.

The only other time we see Harry is when he is on horseback, egging on the crowd outside the house where Sikes is trying to escape. Harry takes an active interest in capturing Sikes and bringing him to justice. Harry is not really one of the better-developed characters of the novel. Harry Maylie, Mrs. Maylie's wastrel son, who later becomes a clergyman and marries his foster sister Rose is not a complicated character.

Mrs. Maylie

Mrs. Maylie is the gentle, good-hearted old woman. She is a very firm and vigorous woman. She goes on a long walk and her posture is amazing. She who takes Oliver in after he has been wounded and is being hunted as a burglar. She sees that he is happy and cared for until he finds a lasting home with Mr. Brownlow. She cares deeply for Rose and Oliver (and her own son, too, of course), but she is also very rational and does what needs to be done.

William "Bill" Sikes

William “Bill” Sikes is a fictional character and the main antagonist in the novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. Sikes is a malicious criminal in Fagin’s gang, and a vicious robber and murderer. Throughout much of the novel, Sikes is shadowed by his bull terror dog Bull’s-eye.

His girlfriend Nancy tolerates his violent behaviour, because she loves him. However, when he thinks Nancy has betrayed him, Sikes viciously murders her. After police identify him as travelling with a dog, Sikes attempts to drown Bull’s-eye to rid himself of his companion. In the end, a mob hounds Sikes through the streets of London until he drags Oliver to a rooftop as a hostage, and hangs himself while trying to escape. It is left ambiguous as to whether or not this act was intentional.

Sikes has almost no redeeming qualities, although Dickens does give him some shading: at the robbery in the countryside, Sikes, rather than leave Oliver at the scene of his botched burglary of

Mrs. Maylie’s house, picks him up and runs with him as far as he can, before hiding him in a ditch at the suggestion of an accomplice. After he brutally beats Nancy to death, Sikes apparently is capable of feeling guilt—although the reader cannot be sure the emotion is not merely his suspicion that Fagin lied to him about her betrayal and fear of being apprehended for the crime.

Mr. Sowerberry

He is a fictional character who appears as a weak antagonist in the Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist*. Mr. Sowerberry is the parochial undertaker, a tall and gaunt man, who takes Oliver on as an indentured servant. He rather likes Oliver, but cannot stand up to his wife’s hatred of the orphan.

He operates a small dark shop in a small town some 75 miles from London. His shop also serves as a dwelling for himself, his wife, a maidservant named Charlotte, an assistant named Noah Claypole, and, for a short period, as an apprentice, the protagonist of the novel, Oliver. Funerary practices and social customs of the time add depth to this character sometimes presenting him as a weak, miserly, menacing, and unwelcomed dark specter.

Mrs. Sowerberry

Mrs. Sowerberry is the undertaker’s wife, a short, thin woman with a vixen’s countenance, who has a strong dislike for Oliver and treats him accordingly.

Mr. Bumble

Mr. Bumble is a fictional character in the novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. Mr. Bumble is the cruel, pompous beadle of the poorhouse where the orphaned Oliver is raised. Bumbled, named after him, characterizes the meddlesome self-importance of the petty bureaucrat. Mr. Bumble marries the poorhouse matron, Mrs. Corney, a tyrannical woman who completely dominates him. In response to learning that a husband bears legal

responsibility for his wife's actions, Mr. Bumble utters the celebrated line "If the law supposes that—the law is a ass." The Bumbles become paupers in the same poorhouse where they once inflicted such damage and unhappiness.

Edward Leeford "Monks"

He is actually the criminally inclined step brother of Oliver Twist, but he hides his identity. Monks' parents separated when he was a child, and his father had a relationship with a young woman, Agnes Fleming. This resulted in Agnes's pregnancy. She died in childbirth after giving birth to the baby that would be named Oliver Twist. The orphaned Oliver has no idea of Monks's existence, but Monks knows of the existence of Oliver and sets out to ruin him. Monks accidentally sees him on the streets of London one day and tracks him to the den of Fagin, an old master criminal. Oliver has gone to live at Fagin's, completely unaware that the old man is a criminal. Monks knows of the existence of a will left by his father, who despised him. He is a vengeful person, he plots with Fagin against Oliver to keep the boy from his inheritance. The will favours Oliver, and not Monks; however, if Oliver ever should commit a criminal act, he will be automatically disinherited, whereupon the money would go to Monks. In the end, he confesses his villainy, makes restitution, moves to America, and eventually dies in prison.

Mrs. Corney

Mrs. Corney is formerly a vixenish workhouse matron. Mrs. Corney is cautious, distrustful, cruel, and power-hungry. We first meet her when she is fixing herself tea in her smugs little room on a blustery winter's day. The smugness of her little room is in sharp contrast to the bitterness of the rest of the workhouse, where the paupers have to live. She feels sorry for herself, though, despite the smugness, because she is a widow, and a kind of lonely.

When Mr. Bumble arrives to flirt with her and then to propose, Dickens keeps us from feeling at all sympathetic by satirizing her—he repeatedly refers to her as a "discreet matron," meaning that she won't allow anything improper to happen with Mr. Bumble. However, "discreet" also means that she won't commit to anything without knowing what she's getting into. She is certainly "discreet" in that sense. Dickens uses her to satirize the workhouse system that was run by people more interested in taking care of themselves than of the poor.

Mr. Grimwig

Mr. Grimwig in the novel is Mr. Brownlow's gruff old friend, who speaks harshly against Oliver but wishes him well. He is a typical Dickens character. He is eccentric, and his eccentricity takes the form of a frequently repeated verbal or physical tick. His favorite expression is, "I'll

eat my head!"—which we are totally stealing—and he repeats that phrase so often, and so oddly, that it is pretty much all there is to his character.

He is reducible to his own eccentric expression. He is stubborn, contrary, abrupt, hard on the outside, but marshmallow soft on the inside, and very fond of Rose (who isn't?).

Mr. Brownlow

He is a bookish, kind and a middle-aged bachelor. Mr. Brownlow is introduced when the Artful

Doger and his companion Charles Bates pick his pocket and Oliver Twist is arrested simply for "looking guilty". Later, in court, Brownlow discovers Oliver is completely innocent and, after dealing with the extremely agitated magistrate, he helps Oliver to escape the clutches of Fagin. He later adopts Oliver Twist as his son by the end of the novel.

Mrs. Bedwin

Mrs. Bedwin is Mr. Brownlow's warm-hearted housekeeper, who comforts the frightened, lonely Oliver. She took care of Oliver when he was sick and taught the boy to play cribbage. After Oliver was kidnapped by Nancy and Bill Sikes and having heard Mr. Bumble's false information, she still adamantly refused to believe that Oliver is a bad boy. Later on, she accompanied Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Grimming to West Indies. After they returned to London, Rose Maylie brought Oliver to them and told them the real story. Mr Brownlow adopted Oliver and they lived happily.

Mr. Losberne

Mr. Losberne is "The Doctor," a fat, good-hearted surgeon and the Maylies' family friend. He speaks roughly to Oliver Twist but cures his wound and saves him from the police.

Mrs. Mann

Mrs. Mann is the alcoholic matron who keeps the poor farm where Oliver lives for a time. In chapter two of the novel, Oliver is sent from the main workhouse to a "branch workhouse" where he, and thirty other children, are placed under the care of an elderly, female superintendent, Mrs. Mann, and it is her responsibility to care for the young Oliver and the other orphans.

Noah Claypole

Noah Claypole is a lumpish bully charity boy with a fierce look who also works as an apprentice for Mr. Sowerberry. Noah had been cruel and abusive to Oliver, giving orders, insulting him, calling "Work 'us." He did not restrain himself from physical violence and even kicked him. When Oliver is unfortunately fortunate to get a promotion to a position as a hired mourner for children's funerals, Noah gets violently jealous. He furiously attacks Oliver. He later, with Charlotte, steals from the Sowerberrys and

he runs away to London from the mortician and becomes a member of Fagin's gang.

Charlotte

Charlotte, is Mrs. Sowerberry's servant, who also misuses Oliver. Charlotte will do anything for Noah Claypole, including stealing twenty pounds from the Sowerberry's and running away to London. She marries Noah Claypole.

Charley Bates

Charley Bates is a supporting character in the Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist*. He is the boisterous friend and assistant of Artful Dodger. He is a young boy and a member of Fagin's gang of pickpockets, and sidekick to the Artful Dogger, whose skills he admires unreservedly. Sikes' murder of Nancy shocks him so much that at the end of the novel he leaves London to

become an agricultural labour. He struggled hard and suffered much, for some time; but, having a contented disposition, and a good purpose, succeeded in the end and, from being a farmer's drudge, he is now the merriest young grazier in all Northamptonshire.

Toby Crackit

Toby Crackit is the partner of Bill in crime. Toby is known for his flashiness and ability to seduce the servants into helping him. He is a burglar who, along with Oliver Twist and Bill Sikes, attempts to rob the Maylie house. He is red-haired and very skinny.

Old Sally

Old Sally is the beggar. He was present when Oliver Twist was born and he steals the tokens that eventually disclose Oliver's parentage.

Agnes Fleming

Agnes, Oliver's unwed mother, is nineteen years old when her father's new friend (who is about thirty or so) falls in love with her. She is young and has never been in love before, and she falls for him. Eventually, they have sex and she gets pregnant. Her lover is called away to Italy and dies there, and she runs away from home to avoid shaming her father by having a child out of wedlock. In addition, that is where the story picks up in the first chapter: she arrives at a workhouse, has her baby, and dies. Agnes was "weak and erring." So she had sex before marriage. And that wasn't actually a crime, legally, but it sure was a crime socially. By book ending the novel with Agnes's shenanigans, is Dickens trying to present crimes against Victorian social order as it is somehow equal to crimes like theft or fraud?

Mrs. Mann

Mrs. Mann is the female superintendent who runs the orphanage. It is her responsibility to care for the young Oliver and the other orphans. In fact, she is far more interested in the financial benefits of this role than actually tending to the needs of children:

The elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children; and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for her. So we see that she is very selfish and double faced.

In addition, we learn that Mrs. Mann is violent towards the children and does not provide them with adequate nutrition. When anybody from the authorities arrives to inspect her establishment, however, Mrs. Mann pretends to be the perfect mother figure. The children are washed, well dressed, and appear happy. We see this when Mr. Bumble unexpectedly arrives. Mrs. Mann acts as though her only interest is in the children's welfare when, in reality, they are all desperate to escape from her.

From the text, we see that despite her maternal role, Mrs. Mann is neither maternal nor caring towards the children she looks after. In fact, she is far more interested in the financial benefits of this role than in actually tending to the needs of children.

Mr. Leeford

Mr. Leeford is Oliver Twist's father, unhappily married and separated from his wife when he falls in love with Agnes Fleming. After he dies suddenly in Rome, his wife and son destroy a will that provides for Agnes and her unborn child.

Mrs. Leeford

Mrs. Leeford is Oliver's step mother the jealous, vindictive wife who tries to deprive Agnes Fleming and her child of their inheritance.

Mr. Giles

Mr. Giles is a rather fat man who works as Butler and steward to Mrs. Maylie. He shoots Oliver during the robbery, which he is at first very proud of, then very guilty. He is a servant, but he is at the top of the servant social ladder.

Giles gets his own room and office and can eat by himself there if he wants to (instead of eating meals with the other servants in the kitchen). However, the problem is that it is lonely at the top. Therefore, Giles hangs out in the kitchen with the other servants, but only on the understanding that he is doing them a favour by gracing them with his presence. He is pompous and arrogant but in a harmless way. He likes to feel important, and Mrs. Maylie likes to humour him. He is completely devoted to Mrs. Maylie and Rose. Despite being all proud of himself for having "caught" Oliver when he appears, bleeding, on their doorstep.

Toby Crackit

Bill Sikes's partner in crime, Toby is known for his flashiness and ability to seduce servants into helping him and Sikes break in.

Mr. Brittles

Mr. Brittles is a short and heavy man who has worked for Mrs. Maylie since he was a child as a "lad of all work." Everyone in the household still considers him a boy, although he is in his thirties.

Barney

Barney is the waiter at The Three Cripples. He has a very nasal voice and works for Toby Crackit.

Tom Chitling

Another of Fagin's boys, Chitling is eighteen, but not as accomplished a thief as the Dodger, and has just come from spending six weeks in jail.

Mr. Blathers

Mr. Blathers is an officer from Bow Street, a stout man of about fifty, who comes to Mrs. Maylie's after the robbery.

Mr. Duff

Mr. Duff is an officer from Bow Street, a red-headed, bony man with a sinister expression, who comes to Mrs. Maylie's after the robbery.

Dick

Dick is a young companion of Oliver's at the workhouse, who blesses Oliver as he runs away from the undertaker. Dick dies before Oliver can come back to save him.

Betsy

Betsy is a young woman prostitute who visits at Fagan's place. She is a little messy and not quite pretty, but relaxed and hearty. She goes crazy when she sees Nancy's dead body.

Mrs. Thingummy

Also known as Old Sally, Mrs. Thingummy is an old woman pauper who acts as a nurse during Oliver's delivery, while having had a little too much beer. She steals a locket from Oliver's dead mother, which holds the key to his identity.

Mr. Kags

Mr. Kags is a fifty-year-old robber and ex-convict with a scarred face, who is companions with Toby Crackit

Mr. Gamfield

Mr. Gamfield is a chimney sweep who is in debt to his landlord, and so is intrigued by the workhouse's offer of Oliver and, more importantly, five pounds. He is a very cruel man who has already caused the death of several young chimney sweeps apprenticed to him. Through this character, Dickens hits at the inhuman practice of employing children as chimney sweepers in the factories. The children had to pass through the entire length of the chimney in order to dream it.

Mr. Lively

Mr. Lively is a small man who works in Saffron Hill, buying and selling stolen goods.

The master

The master is a fat, healthy man, who is in charge of giving out the food at the workhouse.

Mr. Limbkins

Mr. Limbkins is a member of the board of the workhouse.

16.4 CHARLES DICKENS : ART OF CHARACTERIZATION IN OLIVER TWIST

Characterization in Oliver Twist shows Dickens's genius. It can be clearly observed in the portraying of his characters, through the depiction of details he represents the picture of every character in almost all the scenes of the novel.

Although Dickens denied that anti-Semitism had influenced his portrait of Fagin, the Jewish thief's characterization does seem to owe much to ethnic stereotypes. He is ugly, simpering, miserly, and avaricious. Constant references to him as **“the Jew”** give the impression that his negative traits are intimately connected to his ethnic identity. However, Fagin is more than a statement of ethnic prejudice; he is a richly drawn, resonant embodiment of terrifying evil behaviour. At times, he seems like a child who has a distorted vision of pure evil. Fagin is described as a **“loathsome reptile and as having”** fangs such as should have been a dog's or rat's. Other characters occasionally refer to him as **“the old one, a popular nickname for the devil.”**

Twice, in Chapter 9 and again in Chapter 34, Oliver wakes up to find Fagin nearby. Oliver encounters him in the hazy zone between sleep and waking, at the precise time when dreams and nightmares are born from **“the mere silent presence of some external object.”** Indeed, Fagin is meant to inspire nightmares in child and adult readers alike. Perhaps most frightening of all, though, is **Chapter 52**, in which we enter Fagin's head for his **“last night alive.”** The gallows, and the fear they inspire in Fagin are a specter even more horrifying to contemplate than Fagin himself. There is no doubt that Dickens made a special effort to depict Sikes, another leading character in the criminals' world of London.

Even after finishing this novel, Dickens picked up some scenes about Sikes and the girl Nancy who is always associated with him, revised those passages, and brought them into his public reading activity, with the title like Sikes and Oliver Twist. In the novel, Sikes is a complicated character that shows multiple aspects of the psychology of human beings, especially of criminals. Dickens was skilled in portraying a character through the description of details. A wonderful image was the depiction of Sikes first appearance.

Bill Sikes makes his first entrance in old Fagin's hidden refuge. The man was a stoutly-built fellow of about five-and-thirty, in a black velveteen coat, very soiled drab breeches, lace-up half boots, and grey cotton stockings, which enclosed a bulky pair of legs, with large swelling calves; -- the kind of legs, which in such costume, always look in an unfinished and incomplete state without a set of fetters to garnish them. He had a brown hat on his head, and a dirty belcher hand-kerchief round his neck with the long frayed ends of which he smeared the beer from his face. As he spoke disclosing, when he had done so, a broad heavy countenance with a beard of three days' growth, and two scowling eyes; one of which displayed various symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow. It seems as if a dreadful middle-aged brutal man with muscular physique were standing in front of the reader, so vivid and even generating the readers' fear. His clothes and accessories are filthy and ragged, which are dark (black and gray), symbolic of the unlit side of London where he and Fagin live.

Sikes is living a lower life, with no enviable treasures, finery and reputation but wearing bumps and wounds. This true-to-life depiction inputs a stereotype of violent mobster into readers' impression, which laid the groundwork for showing Sikes's cruel acting, such as gunning down innocent Oliver, beating his lover Nancy to death, and his rough treatment of his dog. Sikes's murder of Nancy might be the bloodiest scene in the whole novel. He finds that Nancy is trying to help Mr. Brownlow save poor Oliver out of the hand of Fagin. Fearing her betrayal, he decides to kill her to prevent divulgence. When he comes back to his dwelling place, Nancy is taken up by the noise of closing the door. While she is willing to serve some drinks for him, Sikes started his murder.

In Chapter Three, in 'Oliver Twist' the robber sat regarding her, for a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and heaving breast; and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth. The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind, even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own. The series of verbs (**sat, regarding, grasping, dragged, looking, placed, freed-beat**) are used here to express the detail of the process of Sikes's murder of Nancy. The cruelty of this scene is enhanced by his calm discreetness in not firing the pistol because the gunfire would draw neighbours' attention

so that his crime would be found out. Even in sheer exasperation, Sikes, a habitual criminal, can keep calm and choose the right activity in order to protect him. Indeed, Sikes' violence is contrasted with Nancy's pleading for mercy. Nancy says she loves him and will never betray him. However, her words fail to move this heartless man. Even being face to face with the woman who has been taking care of him for such a long time, this selfish man cares nothing except himself. The contrast between Nancy's pleading and Sikes' violence emphasizes savagery of the murder in a dramatic way. In addition, another point deserves attention here. The narrator uses a number of different nouns: **robber, housebreaker, and ruffian** for Sikes. These words, which represent different types of criminals are applied to one single man so that the readers easily grasp his flagrant guilt conspicuously.

Mr. Bumble, the beadle, is an excellent example of Dickens' broad characterization at work. Bumble is an overlarge, terrifying figure: a tin-pot Hitler, who is both frightening to the boys under his control, and slightly pathetic in his need to maintain his power over them. Fagin, too, is a wonderful example of Dickens' ability to draw a caricature and place it in a story that moves quickly and always keeps our attention. Less the pantomime villain that is portrayed in a number of its adaptations, there is a streak of cruelty in Dickens' Fagin, with a sly charisma that has made him such a lasting archetype.

Charles Dickens' characters are a very significant part of his writing. It is noticeable in Charles Dickens's novel that he employs an extensive cast of characters; each of them makes an important contribution to the plot of the story.

16.5 LET US SUM UP

Despite the number of characters in the novel, each one can be easily distinguished and remembered--even if it is not mentioned for several chapters-- due to Dickens's brilliant characterization methods. His wide array of touching characters emphasizes the virtues of sacrifice, compromise, charity, and loyalty.

He employs to enhance the uniqueness of his characters by describing them connected to their surroundings. He creates scenes and residences that parallel the essence of the character found within. He uses colours contrasting the light with the dark to create a mood for his character.

16.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the role of Agnes Fleming in the novel *Oliver Twist*. (Refer to Section 16.3)
- Q2. Discuss the role of Mr. Sowerberry and Mrs. Sowerberry in the development of the story. (Refer to Section 16.3)

- Q3. What is the role of Nancy in the life of Oliver? (Refer to Section 16.3)
- Q4. Discuss the character sketch of Artful Dodger(Jack Dawkins). (Refer to Section 16.3)
- Q5. Discuss the art of characterization of Charles Dickens with reference to his novel 'Oliver Twist'. Refer to 16.4
- Q6. Discuss the role of Edward Leeford "Monks" (See Refer to Section 16.3)
- Q7. How does Fagin change the life of Oliver? (See Refer to Section 16.3)
- Q8. Give a Character sketch of Harry Maylie & Rose Maylie. (See Section No. 16.3 Refer to heading)

16.7 SOURCE

- Fielding, K. J. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction*. London: Longmans, 1958, 2d ed. 1965.
- Wikipedia.org/wiki
- charlesdickenspage.com/charles_dickens_characters.html

UNIT-17 STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

Structure

- 17.0 Introduction
- 17.1 Objectives
- 17.2 Structure
- 17.3 Technique
- 17.4 Let us sum up
- 17.5 Self -Assessment Questions
- 17.6 Source

17.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the Structure and Technique of Charles Dickens's second novel, which was published as a serial during 1837-39.

17.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his novel, you will be able to understand the Structure and Technique of Charles Dickens's novel "Oliver Twist."

17.2 STRUCTURE

The novel, Oliver Twist is a picaresque fiction. It is realistic in manner, episodic in structure and often satiric in aim. The structure of Charles Dickens's novel 'Oliver Twist' divides the novel into three acts.

Act I

From the beginning until the moment, that Oliver is first arrested as a thief.

Act II

Includes friendship of Oliver with Mr. Brownlow and his kidnapping by Nancy and Sikes, lasting until the attempted robbery of the Maylies house that gets him a shot.

Act III

Oliver is cured and reunited with Mr. Brownlow. Nancy's information allows them to stop Monks's plot against Oliver and restore Oliver's

inheritance. All the good guys live happily ever after, except for Nancy, who gets murdered.

The structure of the novel fits the classical plot structure (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, conclusion).

PLOT STRUCTURE

- A) **Initial Situation** (Oliver Twist is brought up in the workhouse, and then sent to Sowerberry's to be apprenticed, and finally runs away).

Oliver is on his own from the start. No one pities him, and even though he is supposed to be looked after by the parish authorities, no one takes care of him. He is sent from one scene of cruelty and oppression to the next, and finally plucks up the courage to stick up for himself (first by asking for more food, then by hitting Noah in the face, and finally by running away). So, by the end of this stage, Oliver is completely on his own in the big bad world.

- B) **Conflict** (Oliver is arrested as a thief).

Oliver doesn't realize at first that the Dodger and Fagin are thieves—he is pretty slow. But it is as though the very fact of consorting with criminals somehow rubbed off on him, or made him look or seem criminal, himself.

The question at this stage isn't so much, whether or not Oliver will actually turn criminal, but whether it even matters—if he can be arrested as a thief without having done anything wrong, does it matter whether he's corrupted, or innocent?

- C) **Complication** (Oliver is taken in by Mr. Brownlow, but never returns from his errand.)

Oliver finally has a friend he can trust but never gets to tell him his story. In part to prove to Mr. Grimwig that Oliver is trustworthy, Mr. Brownlow sends Oliver off on an errand in the city, from which Oliver never returns. Will Mr. Brownlow lose faith in Oliver? Again, does it matter whether Oliver, actually, is a thief or not, if he looks and acts like a thief? Everyone seems to assume he is a thief.

- D) **Climax** (The attempted robbery of the Maylies' house.)

Oliver is forced to participate in the attempted robbery of the Maylies' house, and has just about made up his mind to risk being shot by Sikes, and go wake up the household to warn them. However, he is trapped between Sikes and his gun on one side, and Giles and his gun on the other. Again—he is in a position in which everyone assumes he is a thief because he has been hanging out with thieves. What is a poor orphan to do?

- E) **Suspense** (Oliver has been the victim of a giant conspiracy from the beginning.

After the Maylies have taken Oliver in and has been reunited with Mr. Brownlow, Nancy tells Rose what she overheard between Fagin and Monks. Oliver has been the victim of a conspiracy, and Monks is behind it all. However, they are not sure what to do about it.

- F) **Denouement** (Nancy's information enables Mr. Brownlow and the Maylie group to force a confession from Monks).

After Nancy overhears the second conversation between Monks and Fagin, she reports to Mr. Brownlow and Rose. She gives them enough information to be able to find Monks, and bully a confession out of him. The result is a couple of chapters in which Mr. Brownlow forces Monks to tell all. And what Monks don't know, Mr. Brownlow does, so he is able to throw in the necessary bits.

- G) **Conclusion** (Everyone is married, adopted, transported, or hanged)

All the loose ends are tied off, and we do mean all. Sikes murders Nancy, and Sikes accidentally hangs himself, saving the executioner the trouble. Monks's confession enables Oliver to inherit a bit of his father's estate.

Knowing that Oliver is the son of his dead best friend, Mr. Brownlow decides to adopt him (although he probably would have adopted him anyway). Rose gets to marry Harry Maylie. Fagin is arrested and hanged, and the rest of his gang is arrested and transported.

The remarkable feature of Dickens's novel **structure is his episodic writing style**. It resulted from his exposure to the opinions of his readers and friends. These instilments made the stories affordable and accessible, and the series of regular cliffhangers made each new episode widely anticipated. Dickens's talent was to incorporate this episodic writing style, but still end up with a coherent novel at the end.

17.3 TECHNIQUE

Various things, including the picaresque novel tradition, melodrama and the novel of sensibility, influence Dickens's approach to the novel. Dickens blends multiple genres in *Oliver Twist*, including melodrama, the Gothic, satire and social commentary.

The novel, *Oliver Twist* can also be seen as a deliberately experimental novel through which Dickens developed his skills by exploring various literary techniques and forms. The novel is a patchwork

of different genre conventions, which Dickens manipulates to challenge his readers' expectations. For example, readers are prompted to expect a *Pilgrim's Progress*-style narrative by the subtitle '*The Parish Boy's Progress*'. The novel can be read in this way if we see Oliver as a two-dimensional hero-figure who must overcome obstacles on his path to salvation (or in this case, a happy ending). However, at the same time, characters like Nancy have a psychological depth that resists allegory, and Dickens insisted in his Prefaces that the descriptions of poverty were realistic.

Picaresque Novel

Dickens had picked on the style of the picaresque novels that he could find on his father's shelves. The common features of the picaresque novel can be found in this novel. Dickens made efforts to provide details of picaresque scenes to complete his original motivation in novel writing. Dickens also adds time to the images or the scenes of the novel, furthermore, he uses the past and future to create a vivid picture in the readers' mind. Colours are another very critical part in Dickens' writings. The very fundamental picaresque aspect that is thus suggested is especially characteristic of some of the Spanish tales of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and it is therefore appropriate to examine Dickens's novel in the light of its Spanish picaresque background.

Narrative Technique

Charles Dickens has used Narrative Technique in this novel. He has narrated in the third person, and the narration varies in its intimacy and omnipotence throughout the novel. This narrator is self-conscious of his role as the teller of this story and refers to himself as Oliver Twist's "biographer,".

Satire

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens also uses satire to depict the corruption, inhumanity and alienation of charitable institutions in early 19th century England. His writing style is marked by satire and his marked show of caricature. The novel also reveals the horrors of the workhouse and the treatment of children in Victorian England, especially during the first few chapters. The reaction of the master is as humorous as it is horrible. The master was a fat, healthy man but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralyzed with wonder; the boys with fear. The idea that a boy asking for more food would make a grown man faint is pure hyperbole and satire. By making the master and the workhouse board respond in ridiculous ways to Oliver's request, Dickens reveals how absurd and shameful the care of orphans in Britain was at that time.

Satire, flourishing in his gift for caricature, is his forte. Dickens worked intensively on developing arresting names for his characters that would

reverberate with associations for his readers, and assist the development of motifs in the storyline, giving what one critic calls an “allegorical impetus” to the novel’s meaning. His satires of British aristocratic snobbery—he calls one character the “Noble Refrigerator”—is often popular. Comparing orphans to stocks and shares, people to tug boats or dinner-party guests to furniture are just some of Dickens’s acclaimed flights of fancy.

The Gothic

Dickens adapts elements of the Gothic tradition. Monks and Sikes exude a sense of menace, and pursue violent, tyrannical ends, while the former’s name evokes *The Monk*, a prominent 18th-century example of the genre. Nancy is an imperiled heroine who navigates the labyrinthine slums of London like her more passive, innocent Gothic predecessors traversed ruined castles. Nancy has vivid premonitions of her death, her ghost haunts Sikes, and Oliver has a vision of Monks and Fagin plotting his recapture. However, these Gothic manifestations seem more solid than spectral: Nancy’s ghost moves ‘like a corpse endowed with the mere machinery of life’ (ch. 48).

Melodrama

As the child hero of a melodramatic novel of social protest, *Oliver Twist* is meant to appeal more to our sentiments than to our literary sensibilities. On many levels, Oliver is not a believable character, because although he is raised in corrupt surroundings, his purity and virtue are absolute.

The sensationalism and suspenseful plotting that underpins Gothic fiction overlap with *Twist’s* other dominant influence: Victorian stage melodrama. This genre relied upon extreme contrasts, portraying villains as thoroughly wicked and heroines as spotlessly good. These contrasts culminate in the novel’s melodramatic high point, Nancy’s murder, with the girl reaching towards heaven and uttering a prayer as Sikes clubs her down. Dickens adapted this sensational scene for his final public readings in 1869, ‘tearing himself to pieces’ in front of audiences that were enthralled and horrified. At times Dickens’s pulse rose to 112 as he enacted Nancy’s innocence and Sikes’s brutality by turns, and the emotional and physical strain of this powerful solo performance is thought to have hastened his death. On the stage, these melodramatic contrasts work, Monks’s cries of ‘Throttle the girl!’ and ‘Wither his flesh!’ heighten the drama. Even the extraordinary chain of coincidences needed to bring about a happy conclusion – such as Rose and Oliver being related – seem more believable. Dickens did not see melodrama as antithetical to realism: instead, he felt that he could harness the power of melodrama’s extreme contrasts to reinforce his social critique.

Irony

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens brought the readers some real social issues wrapped in dark, deep written expressions of irony uttered by the characters of his novel. Undoubtedly, the novel had left an impact on the

British society at that time. The irony Dickens displayed here includes verbal, situational, and dramatic irony. His choice of irony made sense as he intended to criticize the English Poor Laws and to touch the public sentiment. He wanted to let the readers go beyond what was literally written and once they discovered what the truth was, they would eventually understand Dickens's purposes. Dickens satirizes the hypocrisies of his time, including child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children.

Literary Style

His writing style is marked by profuse linguistic creativity. The Literary Style, which Charles Dickens had used in his storyline is one that mixes up fantasy with realism and presents to the reader a great composition. Dickens had often compared orphans to stocks and shares. Even dinner party guests have been often compared to furniture and people to tugboats. Another important thing to be noticed in Dickens' writing is the catchy names that he had used in his novels

Dickens uses **periphrastic style** in *Oliver Twist*, but it is appropriate because it is just the kind of word, he would use. The narrator talks around the point a lot (that is what "periphrastic" actually means) and describes things in gory detail... without coming right out and saying what he means. For example, at the start of Book I, Chapter Thirteen, Dickens describes the Dodger and Charley's theft of Mr. Brownlow's wallet as " illegal conveyance of Mr. Brownlow's personal property" (12.1). Part of the effect of that periphrastic language is to show how jargon can be used to justify almost *anything*. This is dangerous; Dickens seems to maintain that you should call a thief a thief, and not try to gloss it over.

Sentimental Novel

Dickens belongs to the tradition of the Sentimental Novel. His "sentimental scenes and characters" are as crucial to the overall power of the novels as his darker or comic figures and scenes. In *Oliver Twist* Dickens provides readers with an idealized portrait of a boy so inherently and unrealistically good that his values are never subverted by either brutal orphanages or coerced involvement in a gang of young pickpockets. Dickens is often described as using idealized characters and highly sentimental scenes to contrast with his caricatures and the ugly social truths he reveals.

His characters were often so memorable that they took on a life of their own outside his books. Virginia Woolf maintained that "we remodel our psychological geography when we read Dickens" as he produces "characters who exist not in detail, not accurately or exactly, but abundantly in a cluster of wild yet extraordinarily revealing remarks". One "character" vividly drawn throughout his novels is London itself. Dickens described London as a magic lantern, inspiring the places and people in many of his novels. From the coaching inns on the outskirts of the city to the lower reaches of the Thames, all aspects of the capital – Dickens's

London – are described over the course of his body of work. Dickens's biographer Claire Tomalin regards him as the greatest creator of characters in English fiction after Shakespeare. Dickensian characters are amongst the most memorable in English literature, especially so because of their typically whimsical names. His characters are so well known as to be part of British culture, and in some cases have passed into ordinary language. Dickens often describes and uses idealized characters and highly sentimental scenes to contrast with his caricatures and the ugly social truths he reveals. Dickens's grief, his “despotic” use of people’s feelings moves them to tears.

Dickens’s language can also be very sentimental. For example; “the love scenes between Rose and Henry or the description of Oliver at the beginning of Chapter XXX.” Though Dickens was trying to describe the world realistically, the language does not always show how people in the slums talked. Not even Sikes uses four-letter words. Explicit sexual scenes are left out too. Dickens wanted *Oliver Twist* to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, and he didn’t want to offend his readers. On the other hand, Dickens uses some street slang, especially the slang of thieves, which adds a distinct flavour to the story. For example; look at the way the Artful Dodger talks and the way *Oliver Twist* talks. Oliver is not hard to understand.

Idealism

His idealism serves only to highlight Dickens's goal of poignant social commentary. Dickens's fiction, reflecting what he believed to be true of his own life, makes frequent use of coincidence, either for comic effect or to emphasize the idea of providence. For example, *Oliver Twist* turns out to be the lost nephew of the upper-class family that rescues him from the dangers of the pickpocket group. Such coincidences are a staple of the 18th-century Picaresque novel.

Dickens draws the portraits of characters from people he had known in real life. Many regard *Oliver Twist* as a veiled autobiography of Dickens. Dickens's father was sent to prison for debt, and this became a common theme in many of his books, with the detailed depiction of life in the Marshalsea prison resulting from Dickens's own experiences of the institution.

Symbolism

Dickens makes considerable use of symbolism. The "merry old gentleman" Fagin, for example, has satanic characteristics: he is a veteran corrupter of young boys, who presides over his own corner of the criminal world. He makes his first appearance standing over a fire holding a toasting-fork, and he refuses to pray on the night before his execution. The London slums, too, have a suffocating, infernal aspect; the dark deeds and dark passions are concretely characterized by dim rooms and pitch-black nights, while the governing mood of terror and brutality may be identified with uncommonly cold weather. In contrast, the countryside where the Maylies take Oliver is a bucolic heaven.

Toward the end of the novel, the gaze of knowing eyes becomes a potent symbol. For years, Fagin avoids daylight, crowds, and open spaces, concealing himself most of the time in a dark lair. When his luck runs out at last, he squirms in the "living light" of too many eyes as he stands in the dock, awaiting sentence. Similarly, after Sikes kills Nancy at dawn, he flees the bright sunlight in their room, out to the countryside, but is unable to escape the memory of her dead eyes. In addition, Charley Bates turns his back on crime when he sees the murderous cruelty of the man who has been held up to him as a model. *Oliver Twist* is notable for its unromantic portrayal by Dickens of criminals and their sordid lives, as well as for exposing the cruel treatment of the many orphans in London in the mid-19th century.

17.4 LET US SUM UP

Dickens wanted to show poverty and its consequences in their true light to move his readers to compassion, and if possible action. To make this message more effective, he refracts his portrayal of 'true' life through the media of melodrama, Gothic fiction, satire, sentiment, and allegory. Throughout, aspects of different genres are skilfully woven together to enhance the power of the writing, maintain reader interest, and move the audience to tears and laughter.

Through his novel, 'Oliver Twist' Dickens reveals his comic comments and criticism of contemporary society. He also shows various kinds of criminal activities through the characters of this novel. It has been argued that his technique of flooding his narratives with an 'unruly superfluity of material' that, in the gradual dénouement, yields up an unsuspected order, influenced the organization of Charles Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species.'

17.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Q1. Discuss the structure of the novel, 'Oliver Twist'. Refer to 17.2
- Q2. Write a short note on the literary style of Charles Dickens with reference to novel 'Oliver Twist'. (Refer to heading)
- Q3. Discuss 'Oliver Twist' as a 'Melodramatic novel' (Refer to heading)
- Q4. Discuss *Oliver Twist* as a Picaresque novel? (See Section 17.3 Refer to heading)
- Q5. Write a short note on the Narrative Technique in the novel of *Oliver Twist*. (Section 17.3 and Refer to Heading)
- Q6. Discuss Satire and Irony with reference to novel 'Oliver Twist'. (See Section 17.3 Refer to heading)

Q7. Discuss 'Oliver Twist' as a Sentimental Novel. (See Section 17.3 and Refer to heading)

17.6 SOURCE

- Fielding, K.J, Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction. , London: Longmans, 1958,
- Hardwick, Michael, and Mollie, Comp. The Charles Dickens Encyclopedia,
- www.literature-study-online.com/essays/dickens

UNIT-18 OLIVER TWIST : SOCIAL CONCERN

Structure

- 18.0 Introduction
- 18.1 Objectives
- 18.2 Oliver Twist: Social Concern
- 18.3 Let us sum up
- 18.4 Self -Assessment
- 18.5 Source

18.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the Social concerns of Charles Dickens's second novel Oliver Twist. He wrote the novel 'Oliver Twist' with the zeal of a reformer in order to expose the ugliness of growing materialism of the Victorian Age. In his novel, Oliver Twist, he depicts how social institutions and bureaucracies oppress poor children. However, the prevailing message is how Good prevails undefiled by Evil. In "Oliver Twist" Dickens almost emerged as a crusader against the social evils of his times, when Britain was the major economic and political power of the world.

18.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his novel, you will be able to understand the social concern of Charles Dickens's novel Oliver Twist as he depicted persuasively the disorder, squalor, blight, decay, and the human misery of a modern industrial city.

18.2 OLIVER TWIST : SOCIAL CONCERN

In "Oliver Twist," Dickens has presented the pathos of innocent childhood and protest against the abuses of powers, especially on the part of the governmental institutions. He throws light on the workhouse system of those days in England. Dickens explores many social themes in Oliver Twist, but three are predominant: the abuses of the new Poor Law system, the evils of the criminal world in London and the victimization of children. At the same time, he has exposed the defects of the Poor Law of 1834 that aimed at abolishing begging and unemployment.

The novel deals with the sad story of sorrows and struggles of an orphan boy and his ultimate union with well-deserved happiness. The first part of the novel presents the early childhood of Oliver in the workhouse and about his days of service as an apprentice. The latter part of the novel deals with Oliver's experience in London, where he is caught in the net of a master criminal named Fagin. Dickens wants to show how crime is bred (brought up). The story describes how Oliver keeps his honesty and purity in the midst of sinful ways and how he finally finds a happy home amongst good and kind people.

Through the story of Oliver, Dickens has exposed the corrupt class system prevalent in England. His zeal for social reform goods him to satirize the social institutions. The novel is an attack on the inhuman conditions of subsistence in the workhouses, the idiocy of law, and the unsatisfactory medical facilities. Dickens has also shown what it was meant to be a charity child. The indifference of the government and the people towards the welfare of children, especially orphans is epitomized in Oliver's sufferings. The workhouse world is full of a bitter and pitiful comedy. The novelist attacks the demons of cruelty and callousness. The workhouses were meant for helping the poor, but in fact, Oliver and other boys had to suffer slow starvation. The philosophers 'Managing the workhouse' were very 'sage, deep, philosophical men'. In their eyes, the workhouse had become a regular place for public entertainment, so they decided to set things right. They contacted with the waterworks to lay on an unlimited supply of water and with a corn factory to supply small quantities of oatmeal and issued three meals of thin gruel (soup like) a day with an onion twice a week. The diet was given in such a small quantity that the bowls never 'wanted washing'. The boys polished them with their spoons until they shone again. Oliver's demand for more food was considered as a crime and as a punishment, he was sent away to the undertaker's (coffin seller) house. The sick and dying were not properly cared. This can be seen in the example of Oliver's dying mother.

The novel presents cruelty and meanness of Parish (jurisdiction) authorities. This can be seen in the portrayal of Mrs. Mann, Mr. Corney, Mr. Bumble, Mr. & Mrs. Sowerberry (undertaker) Mrs. Man, was In-charge of Baby farm. Being 'a very great practical philosopher' and a woman of wisdom and experience, she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use. The parish doctors were usually the cheapest and most inexperienced Doctors. These Parish authorities starved and ill-treated poor under their care in order to make money for themselves. Mr. & Mrs. Sowerberry ill-treat Oliver so much that Oliver eventually runs away from their house. The death of the poor is neglected. A poor woman dies of starvation and the clergyman comes after an hour, reads as much of the burial services as he can compress in four minutes and walks away.

The unprotected, neglected, starved, and beaten children were led to enter the world of crime. Fagin is the leader of a gang of young pickpockets who also deals in stolen goods. Young victims are Dodger,

Charle Bates, Tom Chitling and later Noah Claypole worked for him. All these boys are engaged in pick pocketing. Young boys of the streets were trained by giving them tobacco and wine and making them think that the life of a criminal was something romantic. In the novel crime is shown to be ugly as well as miserable.

Dickens has lighted up the dark places that his well-to-do readers did not know to exist or had not troubled to know. Social parasite like Fagin is the breeder of the criminals, he makes young thieves work for him and if they are caught, they suffer imprisonment and even death while he gets off scot-free. The description of the criminal activities of Fagin and his band is a realistic picture of the underworld of London in those days.

People, in general, were addicted to smoking and drinking. In cities, there were public houses, which served beer to the public and which were the breeding place of crimes and gathering places of criminals. We have the 'Three Cripples (hotel)' as the specimen. Oliver had a drink at one such house while on his way to London from his native place. Sikes too had his food and drink at another house during the course of his flight.

The residential quarters of the people of the lower strata of the society were a shame for the government of the days. Those houses had practically no ventilation; they were dark and almost cell-like. The streets surrounding them were narrow, muddy, and foul-smelling— quite favourable for outbreaks of epidemics. Fagin's den illustrates this. There was a system of apprenticeship in trades. Traders engaged boys as apprentices. The workhouse authorities gave five pounds to Sowerberry for engaging Oliver as an apprentice. The traders used to treat the young apprentices most cruelly. We see Oliver running away from his master into the wide wicked world because of the cruel treatment that he received at the Sowerberry household. Dickens satirizes the hypocrisies of his time, including child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children.

Thus, "Oliver Twist" serves as a mirror that shows the social condition during England of the early 19th century. In writing the novel Dickens's aim was not only to amuse the public but also to light- up the dark places.

Dickens was not only the first great urban novelist in England, but also one of the most important social commentators who used fiction effectively to criticize economic, social, and moral abuses in the Victorian era. Dickens showed compassion and empathy towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged segments of English society and contributed to several important social reforms. Dickens's deep social commitment and awareness of social ills are derived from his traumatic childhood experiences when his father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison under the Insolvent Debtors Act of 1813, and he, at the age of twelve worked in a shoe-blackening factory.

Dickens gives the most uncompromising critique of the Victorian workhouse, which was run according to a regime of prolonged hunger, physical punishment, humiliation, and hypocrisy.

In his adult life, Dickens developed a strong social conscience, an ability to empathize with the victims of social and economic injustices. Dickens believed in the ethical and political potential of literature, and the novel in particular, and he treated his fiction as a springboard for debates about moral and social reform. In his novels of social analysis, Dickens became an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions. His deeply felt social commentaries helped raise the collective awareness of the reading public. Dickens contributed significantly to the emergence of public opinion, which was gaining increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities. Indirectly, he contributed to a series of legal reforms, including the abolition of the inhumane imprisonment for debts, purification of the Magistrates' courts, better management of criminal prisons, and the restriction of capital punishment.

18.3 LET US SUM UP

Dickens was a fierce critic of the poverty and social stratification of Victorian society. Dickens's second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1839), shocked readers with its images of poverty and crime. It challenged middle-class polemics about criminals, making impossible any pretense to ignorance about what poverty entailed. At a time when Britain was the major economic and political power of the world, Dickens highlighted the life of the forgotten poor and disadvantaged within society. Through his journalism, he campaigned on specific issues—such as the workhouse— but his fiction probably demonstrated its greatest prowess in changing public opinion concerning class inequalities. He often depicted the exploitation and oppression of the poor and condemned the public officials and institutions that not only allowed such abuses to exist but also flourished as a result.

Dickens attacks with sarcasm and verve, a range of issues he felt strongly about, or that he wanted to criticize: workhouses, orphanages, chimney cleaning, safety, hypocrisy, naval training, the legal system, funeral etiquette, Bow Street Runners. Through his novel, 'Oliver Twist' Charles Dickens brings the attention of the people towards social evils and abuses during Victorian England. Moreover, he earned the gratitude of posterity for awakening the social conscience in society.

18.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

- Q1. Explain the line with reference to novel *Oliver Twist* 'Dickens was a fierce critic of poverty and social stratification of Victorian society'. Refer to 18.3

- Q2. Discuss Charles Dickens as a ‘social critic’. Refer to 18.3 (Second Para)
- Q3. ‘Dickens was not only the first great urban novelist in England but also one of the most important social commentators’. Discuss above-mentioned line with reference to his novel ‘Oliver Twist’ Refer to 18.2
- Q4. Discuss the novel ‘Oliver Twist’ as a social concern of Victorian society. Refer to 18.2

18.6 SOURCE

- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999 (P. 61).
- Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 (P. 412)
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- A collection of *Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969. 8. Dickens, Charles.

ROUGH WORK