



# **ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY**

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**KARAIKUDI – 630 003**



## **Directorate of Distance Education**

**B.A. [English]**

**I - Semester**

**112 14**

# **ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Elizabethan literature refers to the English literature created during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558 - 1603). The Elizabethan era was strongly featured by flourishing literature especially in the domain of drama. The Italian Renaissance had rediscovered the ancient Greek and Roman theatre, which influenced the development of the new emerging drama besides the old mystery and miracle plays ruling the Middle Ages. The Italians were especially inspired by Seneca (a major tragic playwright and philosopher, the tutor of Nero) and Plautus (its comic clichés, especially that of the boasting soldier had a powerful influence on the Renaissance and later). However, the Italian tragedies were characterized by a feature in contrast to Seneca's ethics: showing brutality on stage. In Seneca's plays such scenes were only enacted by the characters. However, the English playwrights were highly interested in the Italian model of drama. Renowned Italian actors had settled in London and Giovanni Florio had introduced much of the Italian language and culture into England.

In this book, *Elizabethan Literature*, we will study some of the most important texts of the Renaissance, its artistic styles and aesthetic concerns by writers like Spencer, Sidney, Shakespeare, Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson among others. Popularly understood as a kind of 'revival' of the arts based on motley Classical models, the Renaissance is widely recognized and studied as one of the most influential, potent and robust movements not only in the arts but also in various other disciplines. We will learn about the political, social and literary background and pick up some of the most important works of poetry, essay, novel and drama.

This book is written with the distance learning student in mind. It is presented in a user-friendly format using a clear, lucid language. Each unit contains an Introduction and a list of Objectives to prepare the student for what to expect in the text. At the end of each unit are a Summary and a list of Key Words, to aid in recollection of concepts learnt. All units contain Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises, and strategically placed Check Your Progress Questions so the student can keep track of what has been discussed.

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## BLOCK - I

Background Studies

### POETRY-I

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## UNIT 1 BACKGROUND STUDIES

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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The age of Shakespeare was a great time in English history. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603), England emerged as the leading naval and commercial power of the Western world. England consolidated its position with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and Elizabeth firmly established the Church of England begun by her father, King Henry VIII. The Elizabethan era is the epoch in the Tudor period of the history of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Historians often depict it as the golden age in English history. The unit will also discuss England at the time of Oliver Cromwell.

Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was an English military and political leader. He served as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1653 until his death. Cromwell was also the head of state and head of government of the new republic. He was one of the signatories of King Charles I's death warrant in 1649 and dominated the short-lived Commonwealth of England as a member of the Rump Parliament (1649–1653). He was selected to take command of the English campaign in Ireland in 1649–1650. Cromwell's forces defeated the Confederate and Royalist coalition in Ireland and occupied the country, bringing to an end the Irish Confederate Wars.

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### 1.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe Shakespeare's England
- Describe the England of Charles and Cromwell
- Explain the history of the Renaissance

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### 1.2 SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND (1564-1616)

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English Renaissance theatre—also known as Renaissance English theatre and Elizabethan theatre—refers to the theatre of England between 1562 and 1642.

This is the style of the plays of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson.

We will discuss this section in three broad categories: The Renaissance Drama and Poetry, Shakespeare Renaissance and Elizabethan Drama.

The period of Queen Elizabeth's reign (1558—1603) which is usually termed as the Elizabethan Age or the Elizabethan Era is often used synonymously for the Renaissance or for the Early Modern Period of English literature and culture. Coincidentally, this was also the time of Shakespeare. He was born in around 1564 and died in 1616. And it was sometime after 1585 that his successful literary career took off.

Many literary scholars and historians often used the term 'renaissance' or the early modern period to refer to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The term 'Renaissance'—meaning 'rebirth' or 'reawakening', applies to the socio-political and cultural development that happened all over Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In England, the term Renaissance applies to the sixteenth century when England witnessed a socio-cultural upheaval and a change that affected the lives of all. This period witnessed a rapid growth in English commerce, naval power and Nationalist feeling, along with it being the greatest age of English literature, especially for plays and poems. The prominent writers of the age were William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Francis Bacon and Walter Raleigh amongst others. The age is considered to be one of the most fruitful periods in terms of literature and art. The Elizabethan Age is also considered by many literary historians as the first Modern Age, as the development in terms of science and the rise of capitalism and mercantilism changed people's lives. The focus of study shifted from God to man as 'man' became the centre of literary and cultural concern. Religion, that is, Christianity, still played an important part in man's life, but God was not the centre anymore, leading to a new and fresh outlook, often termed by literary historians and scholars as 'Renaissance Humanism'.

## English Renaissance Poetry

Background Studies

The poetry of the Renaissance has all the freshness and vigour of a youthful race. English poetry is interesting more for its promise than for its performance. The poetry of the age opens with the publication of the volume known as *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). The chief writer of this age is Thomas Wyatt, esquire to the king who travelled to Italy on several occasions and was the first to introduce the sonnet form to England. He adhered strictly to the Petrarchan model with such fine effect that the same style was used at a later date by Milton and still more recently by Rossetti.

Sir Philip Sidney was another famous sonneteer of the age. His chief works are *An Apologie for Poetrie*, written in 1591, renamed as *Defense of Poetrie*. The *Arcadia* appeared in 1590 in an unfinished state and appeared again in 1598 when completed. The *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets appeared in 1593 numbering one hundred and eight and eleven songs.

Edmund Spenser was born about 1552 and died in 1599 on January 16 in King Street; Westminster. His publications include: *The Shepherd's Calendar*, *Prothalamion*, *Epithalamion*, *The Fairie Queene*, etc. *The Faerie Queene* realistically conveys Christian dogmas. It is an outline of the Reformation in England. In the form of an allegory, it recounts the conflict which was going on between the two groups – Protestant England headed by Queen Elizabeth and the Catholic forces represented by the Queen of Scots. Spenser disliked the Catholic religion.

## English Renaissance Drama

The drama is the greatest force of the time. It is in the Elizabethan age that drama found an expression in bountiful terms.

Elizabethan theatre derived from several medieval theatrical traditions, such as the Mystery plays, which were based on biblical themes. They were also influenced by the Morality plays that emerged from the mysteries; and the plays by the University Wits who recreated Greek tragedies. The Italian tradition of *Commedia Dell'arte* (artistic comedy) as well as the rich masques that were often enacted before the court also helped in the shaping of public theatre. But the Elizabethan theatre was different from the Medieval Age dramas as the theatre came out of the purview of the church to become secular and dealt with themes which were not typically religious as those of the Medieval Age were. Shakespeare and his contemporaries were inspired by stories from English and European history, as well as by other poems and plays. In the sixteenth century, plays were initially enacted on stages set up against walls in the yards of inns (hotels). Troupes of actors travelled across the country performing in inns and in the houses of the rich. In 1576, three theatres were set up in London. One was at Blackfriars and the other two, 'The Theatre' and 'The Curtain', were erected in Shoreditch fields. The authorities

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of the City of London, who were primarily Puritans, were generally hostile to public performances, but their hostility was overruled by the Queen's liking for plays. Theatres sprang up in suburbs, which was accessible across the Thames River to city dwellers, but beyond the authority's control. All the theatres of London during the Elizabethan era had their own uniqueness, yet the commonality of their function meant that they needed to have a similar general approach. The public theatres usually extended to a height of three stories and were constructed around an open space at their centre, into which a stage jutted. This stage was basically a platform surrounded by the audience on three sides, with access to the rear being restricted for movement of the actors and seating of the musicians. The upper level just behind the stage was used as a balcony. In Elizabethan theatre the stage was largely bare with only a few props, and there were no lavish scenery or sets used. Hence, the main visual experience was created through the use of elaborate, bright and visually appealing costumes. However, costumes were expensive and most of the actors wore contemporary clothing, irrespective of the time period of the play. Sometimes, an important character would don a conventionalized version of the more historically accurate garb. The stage was primarily bare, and the backdrop of the play was left simple for the audience to use their imagination. Mostly a placard was hung on the stage door to suggest where the scene is set. A flag was unfurled to suggest that the play has started. After some music, an actor would come on stage and give the gist of the setting of the play to make the audience understand the backdrop against which the play is about to be performed. If the play lacked a prologue then in the opening scene(s) the backdrop of the play is referred to, to tell the audience where the play is set. Just like the Royalists promoted literature and theatre, there was a faction in England called the Puritans who had a strong dislike for theatre, as they saw the theatre as an immoral place. Though Queen Elizabeth herself was a great admirer and promoter of theatre, still women were not allowed to act in plays in the Elizabethan era. The women characters were mostly played by boys who used to cross-dress as females.

The greatest of the English dramatists, William Shakespeare, is a product of this Age. Apart from Shakespeare there are a host of other dramatists who made the Age proud by their dramatic creations. Some of them are:

1. **John Lyly's:** His best-known drama *Alexander and Compaspe* probably played for the first time on New Year's Eve, 1581 and *Sapho and Phao* in 1584.
2. **George Peele:** An actor as well as a writer of plays. He wrote the *Arraignement of Paris* (1584), *Edward I* (1593), *The Battle of Alcazar*, (1594), *The Old Wives' Tale* (1595), *David and Fair Buthebeba* (1599), *The Hunting of Cupid* (1591), *Polyhmnia* (1590), *The Fall of Troy* (1589) and *A Farewell to Norris and Drake* (1589).

3. **Thomas Kyd:** A dramatist and a translator, who achieved great popularity with his first work *The Spanish Tragedy*. His chief works are *Cornelia*, *Teronima*, *The Rose Triumphs of Love* and *Fourteen Salyman* and *Persoda*.
4. **Robert Greene:** He achieved distinction through vigorous characterization and could handle a love story better than anyone else. His plays include *Orlando Furioso*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bunguy*, *Alphonus King of Aragan*, etc. His most effective play *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, is partly about the tricks of the Friar, and partly a straight forward romantic love story.
5. **Christopher Marlowe:** Was educated at the king's school in Canterbury. In 1587 his first play *Tamburlaine* was produced and was liked by the public at once due to its impetuous force, its splendid command of blank verse and its sensitiveness to beauty. It was succeeded by the *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. *The Jew of Malta*, was a play rich in fine episodes and with a glorious opening but lacking the grip and imaginative appeal of the earlier plays. *Edward II*, his last play, was his best from the technical point of view. In 1593 Marlowe was slain in a drunken brawl by a serving man. All the above dramatists were also known as the University Wits as their plays are influenced by their education of the classical works of literature.
6. **William Shakespeare:** Is widely regarded as the greatest dramatist of all time and occupies a unique position in world of literature. The prophecy of his contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare '*was not of an age, but for all time*,' has come true and will probably always hold true.

The parish register of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, shows that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564; his birthday is conventionally celebrated on April 23. His father, John Shakespeare, was engaged in various kinds of trade and appears to have suffered some fluctuations in prosperity. His mother, Mary Arden, of Wilmcote, Warwickshire, came from an ancient family and was the heiress to some land. Thus, Shakespeare belonged to an affluent family, but not to a family who were close to art and literature.

Shakespeare studied in the Grammar School, Stratford where he acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek. He did not have the benefit of an university education. His father had suffered losses in business and in order to help his family, Shakespeare had to give up his studies. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway of Stratford, and they had two daughters — Susanna and Judith and one son, Hamnet.

How Shakespeare spent the next eight years or so, until his name began to appear in London theatre records, is not known. There are many

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stories; like — his earning a living as a schoolmaster in the country; of his going to London and gaining entry to the world of theatre by minding the horses of theatre goers, etc. But we have no proof to assert the validity of these stories, and at the same time it is of no concern to us as we are more interested in knowing about his dramatic works and his presence in the Elizabethan theatrical world.

**Robert Greene:** Was a contemporary of Shakespeare's and in fact it was Greene who was the one who first talk about Shakespeare in a pamphlet, and introduced him to the literary world of London in 1592. While it is unclear how his theatrical career began, from about 1594 he was accepted as a key member of the company of players known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the accession of James I in 1603).

Shakespeare took to theatre full-time, sharing in a cooperative enterprise and was intimately concerned with the financial success of the plays he wrote. For twenty years Shakespeare dedicated himself industriously to his art, writing thirty-seven plays, one hundred and fifty four sonnets and two longer narrative poems — *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*.

Dramatic works of William Shakespeare:

**The Early Plays:** There are no accurate records of Shakespeare's early theatrical successes. Among his early works are the exceptional two-part play, *The Wars of the Roses* and *The Whole Contention betwixt the two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*. *The Comedy of Errors* consisted of many hilariously comic situations. *Titus Andronicus* is a tragedy in the high Roman fashion. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* broke ground as a new style of romantic comedy. *The Taming of the Shrew* is renowned for its wittiness. *Love's Labour's Lost* is a witty spoof on society. *Romeo and Juliet* presents tragedy, comedy and merriment.

**The Histories:** Shakespeare drew inspiration from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587) for his English history plays and from Edward Hall's earlier account of *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548). From these, as well as several other sources he imbibed traditional themes such as the birthright of royal succession, the need for unity and order in the kingdom, the unacceptability of dissent and treason, the cruelty and pain of war, the corruptive influence of money, the importance of family ties, the necessity of human understanding and careful calculation, and the power of God's influence, which protected his followers, punished evil, and drove England into the stable comfort of Tudor rule. After completing the last of his English history plays, he wrote about the Roman emperor, Julius Caesar, who was particularly fascinating for



the Elizabethans. After six or seven years Shakespeare returned to the Roman theme again in, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*.

**The Great, or Middle Comedies:** The comedies written between 1596 and 1602 have much in common. With the exception of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, all are set in ‘imaginary’ lands — Illyria, Messina, Venice and Belmont, Athens, or the Forest of Arden. In these plays, the lovers are young and witty.

Their actions involve wooing which ultimately leads to marriage. Shakespeare’s sources were varied, and he was inspired by, Italian novels (*The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado About Nothing*), a rustic English story (*As You Like It*), an Italian comedy (the Malvolio story in *Twelfth Night*), or even his own imagination (probably *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and parts of each of his plays). Using all these sources he portrayed exceptional mastery in theatre.

**The Great Tragedies:** Shakespeare’s mastery and contribution of the world of drama is most visible in his tragedies — *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. Each of these works address different issues and are unique in their own way.

**The Dark Comedies:** Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* are known as dark comedies as they address the comic aspect in a questioning, satiric, intense and very dark manner.

**The Late Plays:** *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *Henry VIII*, were written between 1608 and 1612, and are collectively known as Shakespeare’s ‘late plays’, or his ‘last plays’. A common feature in all these plays is that they conclusively lead towards reconciliations, reunions and resolution of difficulties even though they portray tragic or pathetic emotions; events move toward a resolution of difficulties in which reconciliations and reunions are prominent.

Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in the same church where he was baptised. The inscription on his tombstone reads:

Good Friend for Jesus’ sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here;  
Blest be the man who spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

7. **Ben Jonson:** Another leading dramatist of the age. His chief works include: *Every Man in his Humour* (1596), *Volpone* (1605) *Epicoene* or *The Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), *Caroline* (1611), *The King’s Men* and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). He is more a classicist than a romantic. Unlike Shakespeare, he deals with human life in sections

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rather than as a whole: being content to satirize men and women. In his dramas, he is a moralist first and foremost; then an artist. In *Every Man in his Humour*, he has first struck the anti-romantic note and sought to establish a satirical comedy of manners framed in a definite plan. In *Volpone*, he glories less in the hoarding of his treasure.

**8. George Chapman:** Was another significant dramatist of this Age. Some of his works are: *the Blind Begger of Alexanderia* (1596), *Two Comedies All Fools* (1599), *The Gentleman Usher*, *Two French Tragedies* *Buddy D' Ambais* (1613), *The Admiral of France*, *The Odyssey* (1616) and *The Hymns* (1624).

**9. John Webster** (1580 – 1625): Also made valuable contributions as can be seen by his plays *The White Devil* (1612), *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), *The Devil's Case* (1623) and *Appius of Virginia* (1654) which were very popular in his age.

### 1.2.1 Shakespeare and the Renaissance

In the preceding section, we have learnt that William Shakespeare was a key literary figure of his age, immensely contributed to the English letters:

*An honest tale speeds best, being plainly told.*

(*King Richard III*, Act-IV, Scene-IV)

If the English Renaissance breathed its erudition and mood of romance in English poet Edmund Spenser, its religious intensity in Wycliffe and More, its social criticism in English author William Langland, its judgement of art in English poets Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson, its humour and poetry in Father of English literature Geoffrey Chaucer, then Shakespeare was also no exception to it. William Shakespeare was very much the part and offspring of the English Renaissance and Humanism as were Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon. The entire period of the Renaissance commencing from 1400 to 1700 covers writers, poets, dramatists and critics of incomparable flair and dexterity in England; but Shakespeare uniquely outshines all:

*He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul.*

(John Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatick Poesie*)

There has been no comparison of Shakespeare in literature; he is ranked above all in English, reigning the world literature supremely, sitting parallel to Dante, the Italian poet of the Late Middle Ages, and the great writers of the Golden Age of Greece and Silver Age of Latin classics. Shakespeare did not loudly confirm his assent to any specific movement or literary trend as many other eminent writers did. His works express his being a true child of the Renaissance:



*What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!*

(*Hamlet*, Act- II, Scene- II)

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In this speech, he has equated man to God, and this is the voice of Renaissance in him.

As mentioned earlier, the literal meaning of Renaissance is ‘rebirth’ or ‘spiritual awakening.’ Like other Western nations, England too, looked forward to the growth of art, science and literature as it was happening in Italy after the Greek scholars fled from their land; they settled in different parts of Europe to avoid the Turks and gave vent to a different free spirit. Through these scholars, the awareness towards the Golden Age of Greece and the Silver Age of Rome grew. Following this, the writers, philosophers, scientists, geographers, historians and others explored the treasure of ancient arts, science and philosophy. Not a single field of life was left behind. Britain, partly because of its religious connections, and partly because of diplomatic and royal exchanges, along with visits of university scholars, artists, architect and diplomats, came in close proximity to Italy. From thence flowed inland, the fragrance of Renaissance influence.

Shakespeare also depended both on native tales and the stories which he borrowed from the classics of ancient Rome, Greece or Italian writers of the Medieval Age, or from other possible resources. One trend of the Renaissance was to promote development in the homeland. In this regard, Shakespeare looked back to his native tradition and picked tales as the bases of his plays either from his immediate predecessors like Thomas Kyd whose *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582–1592) he utilized in *Hamlet* or Plutarch, Holinshed and the likes. Kyd was considered the creator of the ‘genre of revenge’ in English tragic plays. The technical elements, such as ‘play-within-a-play,’ supernatural agents, and so on, in literature of England were initiated by Kyd. However, Kyd followed Seneca (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, 4 BC–AD 65) for his *Tragedy of Revenge* style. Kyd was seen as ‘the Bard’ of English theatre. Another playwright among his contemporaries, the greatest Renaissance persona among the playwrights, was Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593). ‘Marlowe’s mighty line’, as Ben Jonson puts it, was blank verse which he used with perfect refinement for his plays. Shakespeare adopted from both of them as much as it suited to his theme or style.

Critics often observed that, at times, Marlowe’s genius merged into Shakespeare’s:

‘On purely stylistic grounds, nearly half of the Shakespearean works have been attributed in whole or part to Marlowe by critics who accept Marlowe’s death in 1593. Edmund Malone, the founder of modern Shakespearean studies, credited Marlowe with “*Titus Andronicus*”,

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as did William Hazlitt and F. C. Fleay. Alexander Dyce, a founder of the Shakespeare Society in London, observed, "There is a strong suspicion that [Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III] are wholly by Marlowe." Samuel S. Ashbaugh stated, "Shakespeare.....must have taken a Richard III, written by Marlowe but now lost, and revised it into the Richard III subsequently ascribed to him by the pirate publishers.... There is far more of Marlowe than of Shakespeare in Richard III. Jane Lee concurred, 'Richard III is full of .... Marlowe's soul and spirit.'"

Likewise, many of the plays blend in each other. Both Shakespeare and Marlowe were not accessible to all public eyes and their lives are viewed mostly on surmise. However, Shakespeare was a master of the powerful portrayal of tragic characters in plays in blank verse. This was brought into fashion and established firmly as a befitting attire of tragedy by the genius of Marlowe. Shakespeare followed Marlowe in adopting his blank verse 'to plume' his tragic plays.

Professor James Shapiro observed: 'Shakespeare seems to be very much aware of what Marlowe is up to and chooses to plot a parallel course, virtually stalking his rival.' Many other critics came to prove similarities of purpose, style, diction and presentation of many of Shakespeare's historical dramas, and even *Hamlet*. Apart from all prominent facets of drama where we draw a stark parallel between Marlowe and Shakespeare, the element of myth and supernatural appear as active agents in their major plays, including *Doctor Faustus*, *Dido Queen of Carthage* and *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* in the shape of Hecate.

Shakespeare's another contemporary John Lyly (1553–1606), an eminent dramatist of comic plays, influenced him greatly. It is said, Shakespeare drew close on Lyly while writing *Love's Labour's Lost*. In plot, theme, characterization, humour, diction and style, the play haunts the memory of Lyly. Similarly, Shakespeare also borrowed his plot from many other contemporary playwrights. The main source of his romantic tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), was English poet Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). This poem was also a borrowed story but in England as was very much popular in French and Italian literature; it was the first of its kind. English author and translator William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1580) could be a possible source to his romantic tale of Romeo as well. On Shakespeare's delineation of theme and characters, Chaucer's handling of love, passion, envious world and its antipathy towards the tender lovers are obvious. On the other hand, Shakespeare might have, as his plays reveal his being widely read, gone through the Italian sources of the story, *Giulietta e Romeo* by Matteo Bandello (1554), a novella; Masuccio Salernitano's *Il Novellino* (1476); and, Luigi Da Porto's *Historia Novellamente Ritovata di Due Nobili Amanti* (A Story Newly Found of Two Noble Lovers, 1530).

However, he adopted any story or style to mould it to serve his purpose natively, and the outcome was always brilliant; this is where he excels all his predecessors and contemporaries in art.

Shakespeare's art unfolds his rich experience and close scrutiny of Nature. He took his ideas from many notable predecessors like Ovid (43 BC, Italy), Seneca (4BC–65AD, born in Spain and raised in Rome), Holinshed (1529–1580, the United Kingdom), Chaucer (1343–1400, England), Plutarch (45 AD–120 AD, Greece), and so on. Facts about him remain shadowed as there are seldom available sources which confirm their veracity, save his drama and the art of handling stagecraft which impart on how he had learnt his art from Nature and her exponents. In this way, Shakespeare very much breathed the spirit of the Renaissance.

It is true that Shakespeare was born when the Renaissance had come to its end but his art carried its essence everyway. His use of Nature and realistic characters smelt of his deep, humanistic approach towards life. In most of his comic plays, he made use of closeness to Nature: in *As You Like It*, 'Forest of Arden' plays almost a character which influences every air in its contact; and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Nature is more an active background where conflicts resolve, where solace and solitude fill in colours for comic situations, and so on. Nature becomes a moral companion for man in both these plays.

Shakespeare's Nature is unlike English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy, who decides their fate, but here, it helps into development of the tale while fostering courage and protecting benevolence as a universal guard. Somewhere it plays the character of beneficiary, whereas somewhere it becomes saturnine, for example, in plays including *The Tempest*, *The Twelfth Night*, and so on. Circumstances and scenes build in atmosphere for conflicts and their resolution: flow of mysteries and their revelations; making of mistakes and their corrections; punishments and rewards: all blend in the soft and rough milieu of Nature in his comedies or tragicomedies.

Through Nature, Shakespeare has tried to expose human errors and pettiness in his plays like *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and so on. Supernatural characters like Ariel or Puck become supplements for nourishing the plot, whereas in his tragedies, the supernatural elements become contrast. Nature sings dirges in his tragic dramas—the same supernatural agencies play death-tunes. However, sometimes they are friendly, that is, *Hamlet's* ghost sequence. In his comedies, Nature is a liberal substitute for courtly injustice and artificial life; it is an open and creative ground for fructification, whereas man-made environment is spiritually smothering and impious. In his tragedy *King Lear* (1605–1606), the role of Nature is evident as it permeates into people and their actions in words related to animal and the holy world. When Lear asked his daughters the question who loved him best, he said:

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*That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge.*

*(King Lear, Act-I, Scene-I)*

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Lear's eldest daughter Goneril was blessed by her father's 'shadowy forests', 'champaigns rich'd', 'plenteous rivers' and 'wide-skirted meads'. However, Cordelia, the most honest of all his children, did not reply with a pleasing answer like her sisters; so she became the subject to her father's unhappy decision where Nature imagery abounded all:

*...For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;  
By all the operation of the orbs  
From whom we do exist, and cease to be;  
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
Propinquity and property of blood...*

*(Act-I, Scene-I)*

Later, in Act-I, Scene-IV, Lear said to Albany:

*Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child  
Than the sea-monster!*  
*Macbeth* also opens with the following words:  
*As whence the sun 'gins his reflection  
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,  
So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come  
Discomfort swells.*

*(Sergeant, Act-I, Scene-I)*

We also mark the tinge lacing the animal imagery, such as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*— *...sparrows eagles or the hare the lion* (Act-I, Scene-I).

*Man and Nature amalgamate:  
Into the air; and seem'd what corporal melted  
As breath into the wind.*

*(Macbeth, Act-I, Scene-I)*

Antony's speech in Act-V, Scene-V in *Julius Caesar* reminds us of Nature being our powerful creator:

*His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world 'This was a man!'*

Nature, the foster mother in all aspects, is observed as a keen companion of Shakespeare's all types of dramas, and it was a movement during

Humanism to see and feel man as a natural element. This imagery from man's daily life rises to the height of metaphorical ecstasy in *Coriolanus* in Menenius Agrippa's speech:

*For one poor grain or two!*  
*I am one of those; his mother, wife, his child,*  
*And this brave fellow too, we are the grains:*  
*You are the musty chaff; and you are smelt*  
*Above the moon: we must be burnt for you.*

(Act-V, Scene-I)

The English context of the Renaissance was more about a spiritual awakening which sought novel ways to see life through recently lighted learning that it had achieved, that is, exploration of ancient classical texts. It tried to strike a new fire into every Englishman's heart and sowed the seeds of shaking off medieval outlook. One important feature of the Renaissance was to seek inspiration from the classical antiquity:

'On the continent, with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 and the flight thence of Greek scholars to the west European countries, interest in ancient Greek and Latin classics, neglected as pagan literature during the Middle Ages, was revived, leading to interest in man and his affairs.'

Thus, exploration of classical texts to find a new way to life was admitted as the Renaissance, and the interest in man and his affairs was named Humanism. Both these traits were amply woven in Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare did not choose only poetry as his vehicle for expressing art but theatre also. Theatre itself is a completely different form of practical and lettered art combination. To be a notable dramatist, with successful stagecraft delineated on paper and for the audience, was no easy toil. Before Shakespeare, drama, with the exception of the University Wits, was not that developed as a form of art.

Shakespeare resourced and excavated every possible resort for his stories and gave an exquisite masterly polish to them which makes them stand alone and shine above all in English literature. It is not for the volume of his works that he matters to us the most, but the worth. Volumes have been piled up by many mediocre authors or poets. He adequately employed classical references in his dramatic art apart from borrowing basic tales from his contemporaries or the classics. In *Henry the VIth*, Gloucester uttered:

*I'll play the orator as well as Nestor;*  
*Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,*  
*And, like a Sinon, take another Troy...*  
 (Henry the VIth, Part III, Act III, Scene III)

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In *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), he used similar allusion:

And for an old aunt whom the Greeks held captive,

*He brought a Grecian Queen...*

*Is she worth keeping? Why, she is a pearl*

*Whose price hath launched above a thousand ships,*

*And turned crowned kings to merchants.*

(*Troilus and Cressida*, Act-II, Scene-II)

His use of classical context in his dark comedy *Measure for Measure* in the words of Claudio among many others, is:

*Thus can the demigod Authority*

*Make us pay down for our offence by weight*

*The words of heaven; on whom it will, it will,*

*On whom it will not, so.*

(Act-I, Scene-I)

In *Hamlet*, beside all other classical Greek and Roman references, the main structure indicates the story of bloodthirsty and vicious king Pyrrhus and a queen, who pines at her husband's assassination, Hecuba. Shakespeare's reference to 'Jove in a thatched house', 'Adam', 'Juno's Crown', 'Noah's Ark', 'Veni, Vidi, Vici', 'Bastard of Venus', 'Juno's Swans', and so on, in *As You Like It*; 'Proteus', 'Valentine', 'Hero and Leander' (Act-I, Scene-I), 'Cupid' (Act-II, Scene-VI), 'Phaëton' (Act-III, Scene-I), 'The Temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden' (Act-III, Scene-I), 'Ariadne' (Act-VI, Scene-VI), 'Philomela' (Act-V, Scene-VI), and so on, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, among others, are some such examples which we find intermixed in his comedies too. In this way, in all Shakespearean plays, we acknowledge his inclination towards using classical allusions. His texts are also richly infused with relics of the Bible and the mythical treasure. Shakespeare, therefore, seemed to breathe the spirit of the Renaissance.

Shakespeare's interest in human relationships is another important facet of the Renaissance where man and his relation with the universe became incorporeal instead of the medieval ideals of man and his relation to God. Beside this, his dramas often induced concern for man and his affairs. His philosophy of life hovered round the existence of man in this cosmic world where his own wisdom, experience, principles, deeds, presence of mind or their failure in difficult circumstances, ambitions, faith in humanity, faith in his relations, his characteristic weakness and goodness, and so on, decide his vicissitudes. He did not believe in Nature handling man as a feeble and frightened tool; his man handled Nature in such a manner that good or bad fell in his destiny.

Whether we look back to his comedies, tragedies, chronicles or tragicomedies, everywhere Shakespeare's characters create a world by their



wisdom and sagacity or they simply lose their goodness to fall prey to time, temptation and ill-judgement to win over an adverse condition, or lose life and die. Shakespeare came up with this philosophy that man is not dominated by mere atrocities of Nature or his environs but he chose to mislead himself if it were to be the fate of a tragic hero. For his comic plays, he presented a conflict, or conflicts where his ingenious, quick-witted characters of keen insight, brave heart vanquished an enemy by their brilliance. Here too, in envisaging human folly as so minute a factor that may destroy life, he was a Renaissance man who could see facts with a critical, keen eye. He differed from his predecessors in this regard.

In his tragedies, Shakespeare laid special stress on delineation of catastrophic fall of a hero using models of Seneca and Aristotle's theory. He always applied his masterly brush, painting the hero's character with a flaw that led him to his failure, and consequently, death. In comedy, he usually designed special parts for his witty, clever and sharp heroines who turned down the show to contrive a muddled, decisive and seeming-to-be-impossible situation into an easy, soothing and happy end by finding out an apt solution to it. In his tragedies, whether historical like Richard or Henry's or Othello, Hamlet, Lear or Macbeth's, a major characteristic fault is observed in the protagonist who is the chief navigator either to lead or to doom, where he eventually doomed himself. Consequently, in all his comedies, whether it was *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or others, the resolution was designed by the exceptionally genius heroes or heroines. They are akin.

Valuing human relations, studying them closely weaving his plays, is a significant Renaissance tenet permeating via all Shakespearean dramas. His plays vouchsafe and reflect humanist philosophies whether it is the Duke Senior or Jaques in *As You Like It* with his 'Blow, blow, thou winter wind', Prospero in *The Tempest*, or Hamlet with his utterance—'To be or not to be...' or 'The undiscovered country...' All his tragedies, especially *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, are very intent studies of human nature. His critical, pithy and perceptive insight is intricately plunged into a human anatomy and character to analyse nature and deportment of a certain person from where he sifted reasons that created a tragic fate. To arouse pity and terror, Shakespeare did not activate outward agencies but a particular human nature and its excesses. His plays often relate to the objectives of human existence and the crash of all human ambitions for a mere nothing, as this 'tale' of life is:

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

(*Macbeth*, Act-V, Scene-V)

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Therefore, the Renaissance aspect of humanistic philosophy is witnessed profusely in his dramas. He also dwelt on the linkage of life without birth, or his indication to an afterlife:

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.*

(*As You Like It*, Act-II, Scene-VII)

The philosophic observation of life as an unpredictable journey after a man dies was a clear steer-away from the oft-beaten Medieval thinking which was authenticated and sealed by the church and the Pope on a man's fate. This is the liberty of thought, this judgement of conscience, such a firm outspokenness that life is not in the hands of a man to be sent to heaven or hell, the sins are not subjected to decision of any religious body but solely the Creator whose wish is unknown and unfathomable.

His plays showed evidently, whether it was *The Tempest*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II*, *Othello* or a tickling comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that man alone is the master of his fate, even though natural destiny acted in favour. Shakespeare stood firmly on this philosophy of his to create himself a true Renaissance offspring.

As many other tenets of the Renaissance, the relation of man to the universe, the practical approach to see man as Nature's kin, the rise of scientific inquiry into reasons of existence, discoveries of astral bodies, and much more, found their space in his dramas too. His complex characters were a part of complexities that the Renaissance man encountered. His plays delved deep into human psyche and described a problem of life, or brought forth the reason of a problem hidden in multiple, indescribable layers of human mind. Shakespeare very much proved that he breathed in the Renaissance England of Bacon and Browne. For instance, in his *Hamlet*, he used the technique of 'play-within-the-play' by Prince Hamlet who used the 'Mousetrap' to collect sufficient proof against his father's murderers, whereas to the court, it was a mere piece of entertainment. In *As You Like It*, Rosalind clad as Ganymede feigned a complete new drama to get the justice done and the evil punished. In this way, his characters try to take the thread of scrutiny into their hands to manifest a fact which refers to human boldness, willing to prove things scientifically, or a quest after reason.

Here, too, Shakespeare's plays echo the spirit of the Renaissance and Humanism. To sum up, Shakespeare was not a genius who highlighted any specific detail too much to cloy or typify the genre of drama via theme or characterization or plot or moral message or story. Rather, he cleverly manipulated and exploited human nature so much so that the matters



appeased taste, sufficed intellectual urge and entertained as well as delighted his audience.

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### 1.2.2 Dramatic Art during the Renaissance

Briefly, it was during the Renaissance that the educational institutions of all kinds supplied translations of famous writers of antiquity including Seneca, Plautus, Terence and others. These Roman authors remained chief influence on the English Renaissance litterateurs. Inns of Court were places for imparting training to the lawyers where ancient plays were read and copied. The other resources were also imitated and explored, such as medieval plays, religious dramas, other forms of dramas, farces, and so on.

Man was portrayed as a heroic figure of magnificent feats. Every artist delved into his creative capability and expressed his autonomy in chiseling a work of art. This was a period of individualistic importance that every writer gave himself. Art was regarded as a higher ability, and the artist looked at himself as a person with responsibility and in charge of a race. Therefore, works of art weighed with professionalism and its rigorous practice. The companies bloomed in good numbers and the art of writing plays flourished like a rage filling competitiveness among its practitioners.

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## 1.3 THE ENGLAND OF CHARLES AND CROMWELL

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In this section, we will study the political and social background in the period of and between Charles and Cromwell.

**Historical: James I (1603-1625).** When the Tudor dynasty was brought to a close by the death of Elizabeth in 1603, James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Stuart, Protestant, and descendant of Henry VII of England, ascended the throne as James I. With the declining years of the Renaissance Queen had waned the patriotic unity of the country, and the wisdom necessary to cement the factions and to revive patriotic fervor was not possessed by the new King. The people resented the new taxes made necessary by the Monarch's lavish expenditures and resented the attempted at an alliance with Spain through the betrothal of the King's son Charles. Persecutions of the Catholics by Parliament and of the Puritans by James I led to the establishment at Plymouth (1620) of the first permanent English Settlement in New England, and to the 'Great Emigration' (1630) to Massachusetts. As the middle-class rose to power, it clashed with the Crown, who in turn dissolved three Parliaments (1604, 1614, 1621) over imposition of customs, money grants, and right of free speech. Continuously the defenders of popular privileges endeavored to check the King's prerogative, assigned to himself by his Theory of Divine Right.

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**Charles I (1625-1649).** At his accession Charles I was popular, but his deliberate deceitfulness and wrongheaded impulsiveness soon turned the people against him. Difficulties with Parliament were increased by his marriage with Princess Henrietta Maria of France, a Roman Catholic, and by his appointment of James's hated favorite Buckingham as Lord Chancellor. Public feeling became further embittered by the King's dissolution of three Parliaments convoked in four years. Finally, Charles I was forced to concede the Petition of Right (1628), designed to prevent the abuse of royal prerogative by providing for no taxation without the consent of Parliament no arbitrary billeting of soldiers on the citizenry, and no arbitrary imprisonment without trial.

Then Charles I dissolved Parliament and had some of the leading members imprisoned. For eleven years he governed without the Parliament, substituting in its place the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission. During these years Archbishop Laud's policy of punishing Puritans caused large emigrations to America, and his attempt to impose episcopacy upon Scotland provoked riots. Refused his demands for money, and urged to conclude a peace with Scotland, Charles I dissolved the 'Short Parliament' (1640). The 'Long Parliament,' Summoned by Charles I after his defeat at the hands of the Scots, impeached both Strafford and Laud, imprisoning the latter and executing the former. By compelling Charles I to confirm a bill by which Parliament was not to be dissolved without its own consent, the actual control of the kingdom was no longer in the hands of the king.

**Civil War (1642-1648).** At first the Royalists (or Cavaliers, represented by the Court, the Church, the Catholics, and the northern gentry) were the victors; but the Parliamentary forces (Puritans or Roundheads, represented by the bulk of the middle classes, the merchants, artisans, London, and the southeast, who in contrast to the flowing locks of the Cavaliers cut short their hair), soon acquiring experience, defeated Prince Rupert (1644) and annihilated the royal army (1645). The King, surrendering to the Scottish army, was delivered to the English Parliament. Finally, after his escape from the residence assigned him, he was recaptured, tried, and sentenced to death for murder and treason (1649). Thus at last ended the struggle between Parliament and James I and his son Charles I.

**The Commonwealth (1644-1653).** The country was declared a commonwealth, nominally a republic. When Scotland proclaimed Charles II the King of Ireland, Scotland, and England, Cromwell immediately took steps to break Scotland's resistance, succeeding in his purpose by 1651. The place of the provisional Rump, expelled in 1653, was taken by the Nominated or 'Barebone's' Parliament.

**The Protectorate (1653-1658).** When the 'Barebone's' Parliament was voted into dissolution, Cromwell, under an adopted written constitution, called the

Instrument of Government, assumed the title of Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland. He became recognized for his strong foreign policy, which brought the Dutch War to a successful conclusion, and for a dictatorial home policy, which tolerated many sects including the re-admission of the Jews, expelled since 1290. By 1658 the Protectorate had become virtually a monarchy. Upon Cromwell's death (1658) there succeeded a period of strife, under his son Richard. Finally, the Parliament voted (1660) to restore the monarchy with Charles II as King.

**Social: Life and Temper of the Times.** Horse-racing, bear-baiting, the sport of the cock-pit, and the theatrical performance were all condemned by the puritans, who looked upon the Cavaliers as given to profane swearing and sensual excesses. To the King and his courtiers, on the other hand, the Puritan was a symbol of spiritual pride, hypocrisy, rebellion, and tyranny. But the typical Puritan was a person of high ideals, tolerant of differences of opinion; the spirit of the Puritan was a noble force: it inspired the Commonwealth to safeguard England's national ideals, it gave to the Pilgrim Fathers the courage to search for a land where they could worship in their own manner, it had as its spokesmen, two of the greatest English writers—Milton and Bunyan. Progress should also be noted in several fields—in philosophy by Bacon, in medical science by William Harvey, in mathematics by John Napier. While advances were made in the field of architecture by Inigo Jones, yet in general the fine arts obtained but small patronage. On the whole the nation was prosperous.

### General View of the Literature

Relaxing in vigor, this period is one of gradual transition from the exuberant gaiety and imaginative freedom of the Renaissance to that of artificial cheer, philosophic melancholy, and puritan sobriety. Often political or religious, the prose is in general either simple and disputatious or florid and oratorical; despite its quaint affected mannerism, the prose displays a new freedom, copiousness, and power. The poetry is marked much less by its originality of thought and impetuosity of emotion than by a correctness of form and an intellectual play of fancy; while fashionably short, its greatest weaknesses are possibly an affected adulatory language for the charms of women and a triviality of subject matter. While the Civil Wars contributed to bringing about the collapse of the drama, now frequently marked by a studied indecency, it was the Puritan opposition that affected the closure of all theatres (1642). Not until eighteen years later were the dramatic performances legally permitted. Meanwhile the neo-classicism, fostered by Jonson, was making progress. In conclusion, although Milton is the only great representative in the field of blank verse, and the only writer of great versatility, he is not altogether representative of his age rather it should be called the Age of the Cavalier and the Puritan.

## NOTES

NOTES

**Check Your Progress**

1. What does the term Renaissance apply to?
2. What influenced Elizabethan theatre?
3. State an important facet of the Renaissance.

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**1.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS**

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1. The term ‘Renaissance’ – meaning ‘rebirth’ or ‘reawakening’, applies to the socio-political and cultural development that happened all over Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
2. Elizabethan theatre was influenced by the Morality plays that emerged from the mysteries; and the plays by the University Wits who recreated Greek tragedies.
3. Shakespeare’s interest in human relationships is an important facet of the Renaissance where man and his relation with the universe became corporeal instead of the medieval ideals of man and his relation to God.

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**1.5 SUMMARY**

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- English Renaissance theatre—also known as Renaissance English theatre and Elizabethan theatre—refers to the theatre of England between 1562 and 1642.
- The period of Queen Elizabeth’s reign (1558—1603) which is usually termed as the Elizabethan Age or the Elizabethan Era is often used synonymously for the Renaissance or for the Early Modern Period of English literature and culture.
- The term ‘Renaissance’ – meaning ‘rebirth’ or ‘reawakening’, applies to the socio-political and cultural development that happened all over Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
- The prominent writers of the age were William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Francis Bacon and Walter Raleigh amongst others.
- The poetry of the Renaissance has all the freshness and vigour of a youthful race. English poetry is interesting more for its promise than for its performance.
- The drama is the greatest force of the time. It is in the Elizabethan age that drama found an expression in bountiful terms.

- Elizabethan theatre derived from several medieval theatrical traditions, such as the Mystery plays, which were based on biblical themes.
- Christopher Marlowe was educated at the king's school in Canterbury. In 1587 his first play *Tamburlaine* was produced and was liked by the public at once due to its impetuous force, its splendid command of blank verse and its sensitiveness to beauty.
- There are no accurate records of Shakespeare's early theatrical successes. Among his early works are the exceptional two-part play, *The Wars of the Roses* and *The Whole Contention betwixt the two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*.
- William Shakespeare was very much the part and offspring of the English Renaissance and Humanism as were Christopher Marlowe and Francis Bacon. The entire period of the Renaissance commencing from 1400 to 1700 covers writers, poets, dramatists and critics of incomparable flair and dexterity in England; but Shakespeare uniquely outshines all.
- Shakespeare's another contemporary John Lyly (1553–1606), an eminent dramatist of comic plays, influenced him greatly. It is said, Shakespeare drew close on Lyly while writing *Love's Labour's Lost*.
- It is true that Shakespeare was born when the Renaissance had come to its end but his art carried its essence everyway.
- Shakespeare's interest in human relationships is another important facet of the Renaissance where man and his relation with the universe became incorporeal instead of the medieval ideals of man and his relation to God.
- In his tragedies, Shakespeare laid special stress on delineation of catastrophic fall of a hero using models of Seneca and Aristotle's theory.
- Briefly, it was during the Renaissance that the educational institutions of all kinds supplied translations of famous writers of antiquity including Seneca, Plautus, Terence and others.
- When the Tudor dynasty was brought to a close by the death of Elizabeth in 1603, James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Stuart, Protestant, and descendant of Henry VII of England, ascended the throne as James I.
- At his accession Charles I was popular, but his deliberate deceitfulness and wrongheaded impulsiveness soon turned the people against him.
- The country was declared a commonwealth, nominally a republic. When Scotland proclaimed Charles II the King of Ireland, Scotland, and England, Cromwell immediately took steps to break Scotland's resistance, succeeding in his purpose by 1651.

## NOTES

- While the Civil Wars contributed to bringing about the collapse of the drama, now frequently marked by a studied indecency, it was the Puritan opposition that affected the closure of all theatres (1642).

## NOTES

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### 1.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Renaissance:** It refers to the revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th–16th centuries.
- **Mercantilism:** It is the economic theory that trade generates wealth and is stimulated by the accumulation of profitable balances, which a government should encourage by means of protectionism.
- **Humanism:** It is a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters.

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### 1.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on English Renaissance drama.
2. Mention any four dramatists of Elizabethan age and their works.
3. What is known as the ‘golden age’?

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Give a detailed description of what constitutes Shakespeare’s England.
2. Explain the dramatic works of William Shakespeare.
3. What is the relationship between Shakespeare and Renaissance?
4. Discuss the political and social background during the Elizabethan age.

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### 1.8 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 2 EDMUND SPENSER: PROLOGUE TO *THE FAERIE QUEENE*

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Edmund Spenser: Prologue  
to the Faerie Queene

### NOTES

#### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 About the Author
- 2.3 *The Faerie Queene*
  - 2.3.1 Preface or Prologue to *The Faerie Queene*
- 2.4 Book I Summary and Analysis
- 2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.9 Further Readings

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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Edmund Spenser's greatest and longest work was his poem *The Faerie Queene*. This poem absorbed almost half of his life and kept him occupied for a large period of his time, however Spenser did publish other poems in the interim. The first three books of *The Faerie Queen* were published in 1590 and then republished with Books IV through VI in 1596. Spenser died on 13 January 1599, at Westminster while still working on this voluminous poem.

Spenser only completed half of *The Faerie Queene* he planned. In his letter to Sir John Walter Raleigh, Spenser explained the purpose and structure of the poem. The preface to *The Faerie Queene* by Spenser functions as the prologue of the poem.

It is an allegory, a story whose characters and events nearly all have a specific symbolic meaning. The poem's setting is a mythical 'Faerie land,' ruled by the Faerie Queene. Spenser sets forth in the letter that this 'Queene' represents his own monarch, Queen Elizabeth.

A detailed analysis of the Book I of the poem is given in this unit.

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### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Edmund Spenser



- Discuss the plot of the poem
- Critically analyse the poem

## NOTES

### 2.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) was an Elizabethan poet, famous for composing *The Faerie Queene*. It is an allegorical poem which is incomplete. The first part of the poem was published in 1590 and the second half was published in 1596. The poem is about the rule of the Tudors and Queen Elizabeth I. Spenser was an outstanding poet of contemporary romantic poetry and had experimented continuously with English at its nascent state.

As a young boy, he went to the Merchant Taylors' School in London and matriculated as a 'sizar' at Pembroke College, Cambridge. A sizar is a Cambridge or Trinity undergraduate student who receives subsidiary food and stay benefits from the university and a stipend for other expenses. When he was studying at Cambridge he befriended Gabriel Harvey, and later consulted him for his works despite their varying viewpoints on poetry.

Through his poetry Spenser expected to get a place at court, which he visited in Raleigh's company to pass on his most well-known work, *The Faerie Queene*; although he courageously opposed the Queen's principal secretary, Lord Burghley. This led him to receive just a pension in 1591. When it was advised that Spenser should receive a payment of 100 pounds for his epic poem, to which Burghley commented, 'What, all this for a song!'

### 2.3 THE FAERIE QUEENE

*The Faerie Queene* was the first poem written in the Spenserian stanza and is one of the lengthiest poetries in English. It was commissioned by Queen Elizabeth I and written by Spenser in her praise. The poem is known to pursue many Knights who examine their numerous virtues. In *A Letter of the Authors* he states that the complete poem is 'cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devises'. According to him, *The Faerie Queene* was published mostly to 'fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline'. The poem was much appreciated by royalty. So much so that it had become the defining work by Spenser. Spenser received a pension of fifty pounds a year, although there is no documentation to prove that Elizabeth had even read the poem.

#### 2.3.1 Preface or Prologue to *The Faerie Queene*

In 1589, Spenser had written a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh with a preface for *The Faerie Queene*. In this preface he mentions the symbolic appearance of high merits by the Arthurian Knights in the mythical 'faerieland'. The



summarized plan was to make twenty-four books, twelve based on the twelve knights and the other twelve based on King Arthur, who represented twelve 'public virtues'. Though Spenser acknowledges Aristotle as the basis for these assets, the influence of Thomas Aquinas on these tenets cannot be ruled out. Since the poem is unfinished, it is difficult to foresee what the work would have looked like if Spenser were alive to finish it. The preface in the letter projected plans from which the actual book differed extensively. The changes were evident even from the portion published in 1590.

As published in 1596, the epic presented the following virtues:

- Book I: Holiness
- Book II: Temperance
- Book III: Chastity
- Book IV: Friendship
- Book V: Justice
- Book VI: Courtesy

Spenser had mentioned in his letter to Raleigh that Arthur represented the virtue 'magnificence' which is 'the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all' according to Aristotle. He also maintained that *The Faerie Queene* was a symbol of glory, and was thus named Gloriana. The unfinished seventh book (the Cantos of Mutability), appears to have signified the virtue of 'constancy'.

### The Poem and Politics

Queen Elizabeth I belonged to the Tudors and the poem celebrates, reminisces as well as criticizes their rule. Faerie Queene was in the same league as Virgil's Aeneid, where Virgil celebrates Augustus Caesar's Rome. In the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser illustrates that the Tudors have descended from King Arthur in just the same fashion that Virgil maintains that Augustus was the follower of a noble son of Troy. The poem is allusive, allegorical and symbolic. Queen Elizabeth has been eulogized and manifested in the guise of Gloriana, the Faerie Queene herself. In Books III and IV she has been described as the virgin Belphoebe, daughter of Chrysogonee and twin sister to Amoret, the essence of married, feminine love. In Book I she comes across more seriously as Lucifera, the unmarried queen who maintains a dungeon full of prisoners and a brightly-lit Court of pride. The poem is based completely on English Arthurian legend. Spenser has followed Italian epics Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* in the style and spirit of the poem. In Book V, the Book of Justice, Spenser discusses political hypothesis and ventures into foreign policies like policies towards Ireland and discusses the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots at length.

## NOTES

## NOTES

### Language

The style of communication that Spenser uses is akin to his other work *The Shepheardes Calender*. Though it is deliberately ancient, according to Ben Jonson, ‘in affecting the ancients Spenser writ no language’ was definitely an exaggeration. Bruce Robert McElderry, Jr. states that a detailed dissection of the *Faerie Queene*’s diction ‘is a skillful epigram; but it seriously misrepresents the truth if taken at anything like its face value’. He stresses that ‘the subject-matter of *The Faerie Queene* is itself the most powerful factor in creating the impression of archaism’ and that the language is not the explanation of the poem’s archaic tenor. Samuel Johnson commented that he ‘found it a useful source for obsolete and archaic words’ when he referred to it while working on *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Classical content like *The Rape of Lucretia* was revised by Spenser into the tale of the character Amavia in Book Two and the atmosphere and pronunciation of the poem was based on much more than Middle English. Spenser always made allusions to traditional Greek names like ‘Poris’ and ‘Phao lilly white’.

### Medieval Subject Matter

For the praise for the character of Faerie Queene, Arthur goes to a medieval writer, that is, Geoffrey of Monmouth. In his *Prophetiae Merlini* (Prophecies of Merlin), Geoffrey’s Merlin makes a public statement that the Saxons will rule over the Britons. They will be ruled until the ‘Boar of Cornwall’ (Arthur) again reinstates them to their appropriate position as rulers. This prediction was accepted by the British and in the end was used by the Tudors. From the lineage of their ancestor, Owen Tudor, the Tudors had Welsh blood. It was by this that they asserted to be the descendants of Arthur and the legal rulers of Britain. The custom that Geoffrey of Monmouth started set the perfect ambiance for Spenser’s selection of Arthur as the hero and likely bridegroom of Gloriana.

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## 2.4 BOOK I SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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In this section, we will study, in detail, the different Cantos of Book I.

### Book I, Cantos i and ii

Book I narrates the story of the Knight of Holiness, Redcrosse Knight. He derives his name from the blood red cross emblazoned on his shield. Gloriana has given him a task, ‘that greatest Glorious Queen of Faerie lond’, to fight a terrible dragon (I.i.3). He is on his journey accompanied by a pretty, simple, young lady and a dwarf as servant. Soon after the three travellers embark on their journey, a storm breaks upon them. This makes them hurry and search for a shelter in a forest nearby. After the skies clear, they discover that they have gone astray. This makes them reach a cave, which the lady identifies as

the 'Den of Error'. Without paying any heed to her admonitions, Redcrosse goes inside the cave. The dangerous beast Error and her young ones attack him. He gets wrapped in her tail, but ultimately succeeds in strangling and beheading her. Her young cubs drink their mother's milk till they burst and die. Jubilant, the Knight and his companions venture out again in search of the right path. As the night approaches, they come across an old hermit who invites them to stay in his inn. While the travellers are fall asleep, the hermit takes on his true identity—he is Archimago, the black sorcerer. He calls upon two spirits to trouble Redcrosse.

One of the spirits conjures a dream from Morpheus, the God of sleep; the other assumes the shape of Una, the lady with Redcrosse. These spirits then go to the Knight; one shows him the dream of love and lust. On waking up, Redcrosse who is in passion sees the other spirit, who has assumed the shape of Una, lying next to him offering him a kiss. The Knight puts up a brave resistance to her temptations and goes back to sleep. Archimago then attempts a new way of deceiving Redcrosse. He puts the spirit who is in the disguise of Una in a bed and changes the other spirit into a young man, lying next to the unreal Una. Archimago then wakes up Redcrosse to show him the two lovers in bed. Redcrosse is enraged that 'Una' would defile her virtue with an unknown man. Angry and disgusted he leaves without Una in the morning. The true Una on waking finds her Knight has left without her, and in grief rides off in his search. Archimago, pleased with the results of his wicked designs, assumes the shape of Redcrosse and goes after Una.

As Redcrosse continues to wander, he meets another Knight named Sansfoy, a traveller accompanied by his lady. He challenges Redcrosse, which leads to a fierce duel between the two. However, the shield bearing the blood-red cross saves Redcrosse; finally, Sansfoy is killed by Redcrosse. Redcrosse then offers to take care of the woman named Fidessa the companion of Sansfoy. She claims to be the daughter of the Emperor of the West. Fascinated by her beauty, Redcrosse takes an oath to shield her. Both continue on their journey, but shortly, the day becomes hotter. This forces them to take rest under the shade of some trees. Redcrosse breaks a branch of a tree and is astonished to see blood dripping from the branch and a voice crying out in pain. The tree then goes on to narrate its story that it was once upon a time a man called Fradubio. He had an attractive lady called Fraelissa—the tree beside him. One day, Fradubio chanced to win over a Knight thereby winning his lady (similar to what Redcrosse did). That lady was in reality Duessa—a wicked witch. To have Fradubio completely to herself, Duessa transformed Fraelissa into a tree. However, Fradubio one day saw the witch in her real evil form while she was taking a bath. When he made an attempt to escape, she transformed him also into a tree. Once Fradubio completes his story, Fidessa faints since it is she who in reality is Duessa. She feels afraid that her true identity will be discovered. She soon recovers and Redcrosse fails to understand her true identity. They then continue with their journey.

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to the Faerie Queene*

## NOTES

## Comments

## NOTES

Redcrosse is the protagonist of Book I. Moreover, when Canto i begins, he is known as the 'Knight of Holiness'. He faces big trials and battles ferocious monsters all through the Book. This in itself entertains as a story of a heroic 'Knight errant'. However, what is more crucial about *The Faerie Queene* is its allegory, and the significance of its characters and incidents. The story is set in a whimsical 'faerie land', which only stresses on the way its allegory is meant for a land extremely near home that is, Spenser's England. Redcrosse embodies a single Christian, searching for Holiness. His armour is 'faith in Christ', denoted by the shield with the bloody cross. He is on a journey with Una, the meaning of her name being 'truth'. As a Christian, in order to maintain his holiness, he needs to possess real faith. Therefore, the plot of Book I is primarily concerned with the attempts of evildoers of separating Redcrosse from Una. A majority of these evildoers are intended by Spenser to signify one thing in common—the Roman Catholic Church. The poet was of the opinion that in the English Reformation people had conquered 'false religion' (Catholicism) and adopted 'true religion' (Protestantism/Anglicanism). Therefore, Redcrosse has to win over the villains, mimicking the unreality of the Roman Church.

The first of these is 'Error'. When Redcrosse strangles the beast, Spenser writes, 'Her vomit full of bookes and papers was (I.i.20)'. These papers signify the Roman Catholic propaganda that was put out against Queen Elizabeth and Anglicanism. The Christian (Redcrosse) may succeed in defeating these evident and ridiculous mistakes, but before he becomes one with the truth he continues to remain lost and may be cheated without much effort. It is Archimago who arranges for this deception. The meaning of his name is 'arch-image'—the Protestants blamed the Catholics for idol-worship because of their proliferate use of images. The sorcerer succeeds in separating Redcrosse and Una by deceit and lust. This signifies the separation of Holiness from Truth. On separation, Holiness is prone to the contrary of truth, or falsehood. Redcrosse may succeed in defeating the power of Sansfoy (literal meaning 'without faith' or 'faithlessness') by his own virtue, but he becomes an easy victim to the wicked devices of Duessa, the human incarnation of Falsehood. Duessa too is a representation of the Roman Catholic Church. This is because she is 'false faith'. Moreover, she is clothed in rich, violet and gold clothing, which, for Spenser, stands for the gluttonous richness and self-important vanity of Rome. A bulk of the poet's description is taken from an opening in the *Book of Revelation*, which offers an account of the 'whore of Babylon'. Many Protestant readers employed this Biblical passage to indicate the Catholic Church.

*The Faerie Queene* has references outside of the Bible as well. Spenser thinks himself to be an epic poet so he makes use of the great epics of ancient times—Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. This is obvious at

the opening of Book I in which Spenser calls on one of the muses to direct his poetry. Such invocation of the Muse had been employed by Homer and Virgil who had set this form as the ‘proper’ starting to an epic poem. The outlook with the ‘human tree’, in which a broken branch drips blood, reminds one of an episode in the Aeneid. Though, while the ancient poets mostly wrote to tell a story, we have by now seen that Spenser has another idea in mind. In the letter that initiates *The Faerie Queene*, he says that he followed Homer and Virgil and the Italian poets Ariosto and Tasso since they all have ‘ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man’. Spenser means to enlarge on this instance by defining the traits of a good and virtuous Christian man.

### **Book I, Cantos iii, iv and v**

#### **Summary**

Book I Cantos iii chases Una, still wandering, searching for her friend, the Redcrosse Knight. When she stops to relax under a tree, a lion unexpectedly comes up to her. As the animal is about to attack her, it sees her beauty and feels her virtue, he remembers his rage no more. He then follows her around as a custodian and friend. Meanwhile, Una meets a girl carrying a vessel of water. The girl gets scared when she spots the lion. She is deaf and dumb, and runs home to her mother who is blind. Una follows the girl home and asks for a place to sleep. When the woman inside the house refuses to unlock the door for her, the lion smashes it open. During the night, a church thief, who frequently gives his spoils to Abessa (the daughter) and Corceca (the mother), arrives with his latest spoils. However, on entering the house he is assaulted by the lion and is shredded into pieces. The morning finds Una embarking on her journey again. Riding along, she imagines that she is seeing her Knight on a mount close-by. It is not in reality Redcrosse but the camouflaged Archimago. Una is tricked and greets her Knight with tears of delight. They now journey together. Soon they chance upon the Knight Sansloy, who is keen to take vengeance of the bereavement of his brother Sansfoy. He also mistakes Archimago to be Redcrosse. In anger he knocks down Archimago. When he is just about to murder him the sorcerer’s camouflage gives way. When he sees that it is not actually Redcrosse, he is redeemed by Sansloy. He takes Una as his prize and kills the lion, which makes an effort to save her.

In the meantime, the real Redcrosse has been taken by Duessa to a grand palace—the House of Pride. It is magnificent and generously decorated with a broad entry, although, its base is weak. Redcrosse and Duessa are brought in and speculate at the splendour. The whole court welcomes them, especially Lucifera, the Queen of the palace. Filled with arrogance, Lucifera shows off by calling her couch, pulled by six beasts upon which her six counsellors travel, namely, Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Envy and Wrath; their outer forms matching their names. The procession has brusquely gone by when unexpectedly Sansloy reaches the scene. When he sees Redcrosse,

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he confronts him to a contest to take vengeance for the death of Sansfoy. Redcrosse concurs, but the Queen commands that they wait in anticipation of the next morning.

The two Knights come out before the palace in the morning, and in the view of the whole court, their fight starts. It is a bloody contest, but Redcrosse comes out stronger—he is about to murder Sansloy when the latter disappears. Redcrosse is then put to bed as he had been injured, but Duessa, grieving the defeat of Sansloy, goes to wake up the Night. Together, they recover the body of Sansloy, thereby moving down into the Hell itself. It is here that they find Aesculapius, a doctor of medicine who was thrown into Hell because of his having the skill of restoring men back to life. Duessa and Night compel him to try and reinstate Sansloy's life. Meanwhile, Redcrosse's dwarf finds out an offensive fact that in the prisons of the palace lay the bodies of many who were taken in by arrogance and could never depart this House. To defend himself from meeting a similar fate, Redcrosse understands that he must leave right away, and with the dwarf he flees from the house as dawn approaches.

### Comments

The lion, though without a name, is essential to Spenser's parable. As a part of wild environment, it indicates natural law, which may be atrocious at times but is thoughtful to Christian truth. As per Christian religion, natural law shapes a part of God's concept of justice. So, a Christian is not an opponent of nature but does something in agreement with it—thus, the lion helps Una. However, it proves to be no equal for Sansloy ('without the law of God'), who functions outside the realm of heavenly law. The lion, which embodies natural law, is intimately linked with the Christian Truth, and had no power over Sansloy. Not subjected to the rules of nature or religion, he has the ability to obliterate the lion. The lion has the aptitude of defeating the robber, who severs the natural law by robbing from others. (This too is an infringement of the divine law, but Spenser would have detained that man's own natural sense of right and wrong ) The two women who in fact are from Kirkrapine ('church robber') indicate monasticism; Abessa's name recalls 'Abbess', the chief of an abbey. Monasticism is a feature of the Catholic Church, and in Spenser's era, monasteries often faced allegations of thieving donations for the deprived. Abessa's deafness and dumbness, Corceca's blindness, all symbolise Spenser's belief that monks, friars and nuns are ignorant of the obligations of the world as they live in isolation.

The 'House of Pride' is a collection of antique and medieval thoughts looking into the issues of sin and evil. Christianity considers Pride to be the ultimate sin, and to be the source of all other vices. Pride was the sin of Satan, which resulted in his fall from Heaven; then, the 'Queen of Pride' is linked with Lucifer by her person's name. The procession of the seven chief vices, each carrying a meticulous prop or set of clothes indicating their



nature (Pride holds a mirror, as she is filled with arrogance), was a common feature of medieval morality plays—Spenser uses it for this picture in Canto iv. The Queen, nevertheless, is not just a parable for Pride; she has a political importance as well. Spenser deliberately contrasts her with the real Queen, to whom the poem is offered—Queen Elizabeth. The poet reminds that Lucifera ‘*made her selfe a Queene, and crowned to be, / Yet rightfull kingdome she had none at all, / Ne heritage of native soveraintie / But did usurpe with wrong and tyrannie / Upon the scepter* (I.iv.12)’. This is in contrast to Elizabeth, who held her authority lawfully, ruled with fairness and ‘true religion’, and was a successor of a noble pursuit.

Again, Spenser employs a variety of sources in structuring his description. The House of Pride, the poet writes, ‘*Did on...weak foundation ever sit: / For on a sandie hill, that still did flit, / And fall away, it mounted was full hie* (I.iv.5)’. This reminds the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus states that those who do not keep His words ‘*shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house on sand* (Mt.7.26)’. The house will plummet, as Redcrosse discovers on finding out the bodies of those damaged by arrogance. The features of the castle, though, for example the periphery wall that a gold foil covers (outside beauty concealing internal weakness) have been taken from *Orlando Furioso* by the Italian poet Arisoto, whom Spenser praised a lot

As Virgil depicted Aeneas’ journey through Hell to meet his father in *Aenid*, similarly, Spenser depicts Duessa’s and the Night’s journey to hell in Book I. We must keep in mind that to a late medieval/early Renaissance audience, it was a sign of being a well-educated poet when discerning similarities in content and style with epic poems. The medieval style was one of amalgamation, not innovation, and this persists from Dante to Spenser to Milton.

### Check Your Progress

1. Why did Spenser write the poem *The Faerie Queene*?
2. Who is Redcrosse?
3. What saves Redcrosse from Sansfoy?
4. How did Archimago separate Redcrosse and Una?
5. What does Spenser try to convey in Book 1?

## 2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. *The Faerie Queene* was commissioned by Queen Elizabeth I and written by Spenser in her praise.

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2. Redcrosse is the protagonist of Book I. He is known as the ‘Knight of Holiness’. Redcrosse embodies a single Christian, searching for Holiness. His armour is ‘faith in Christ’, denoted by the shield with the bloody cross.
3. The shield bearing the blood-red cross saves Redcrosse from Sansfoy.
4. Archimago called upon two spirits to trouble Redcrosse. He transformed one into Una, companion of Redcrosse and the other one into a young man. He then made them to lie together on a bed and then woke up Redcrosse to see them together on the bed. This infuriated Redcrosse who the next morning left Una and went away. This is how Archimago succeeded in his mission in separating Redcrosse and Una.
5. Spenser in Book I is primarily concerned with the attempts of evildoers of separating Redcrosse from Una. A majority of these evildoers are intended by Spenser to signify one thing in common— the Roman Catholic Church. The poet was of the opinion that in the English Reformation people had conquered ‘false religion’ (Catholicism) and adopted ‘true religion’ (Protestantism/Anglicanism). Therefore, Redcrosse has to win over the villains, mimicking the unreality of the Roman Church.

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## 2.6 SUMMARY

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- Edmund Spenser was an English poet who was popular for *The Faerie Queene*, an epic poem and fantastical allegory that celebrates the Tudor dynasty and Elizabeth I.
- The *Faerie Queene* is an incomplete English epic poem by Edmund Spenser. The first half was published in 1590, while the second half was published in 1596. The *Faerie Queene* is noteworthy for its form.
- Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) was an Elizabethan poet, famous for composing *The Faerie Queene*. The poem is about the rule of the Tudors and Queen Elizabeth I.
- As published in 1596, *The Faerie Queene* presented the following virtues:
  - o Book I: Holiness
  - o Book II: Temperance
  - o Book III: Chastity
  - o Book IV: Friendship
  - o Book V: Justice
  - o Book VI: Courtesy
- Queen Elizabeth I belonged to the Tudors and *The Faerie Queene* celebrates, reminisces as well as criticizes their rule.



- *The Faerie Queene* is allusive, allegorical and symbolic. Queen Elizabeth has been eulogized and manifested in the guise of Gloriana, the Faerie Queene herself.
- Book I of *The Faerie Queene* narrates the story of the Knight of Holiness, the Redcrosse Knight. He derives his name from the blood red cross emblazoned on his shield.
- Redcrosse in the story on his journey accompanied by a pretty, simple, young lady and a dwarf as servant. As the night approaches, they come across an old hermit who invites them to stay in his inn. While the travellers are fall asleep, the hermit takes on his true identity—he is Archimago, the black sorcerer. He calls upon two spirits to trouble Redcrosse.
- Archimago wakes up Redcrosse to show him the two lovers in bed (both spirits). Redcrosse is enraged that ‘Una’ would defile her virtue with an unknown man. Angry and disgusted he leaves without Una in the morning.
- Redcrosse is the protagonist of Book I. Moreover, when Canto i begins, he is known as the ‘Knight of Holiness’. He faces big trials and battles ferocious monsters all through the Book.
- Book I Cantos iii chases Una, still wandering, searching for her friend, the Redcrosse Knight.
- The lion, though without a name, is essential to Spenser’s parable. As a part of wild environment, it indicates natural law, which may be atrocious at times but is thoughtful to Christian truth.
- The ‘House of Pride’ is a collection of antique and medieval thoughts looking into the issues of sin and evil. Christianity considers Pride to be the ultimate sin, and to be the source of all other vices.
- The Queen, nevertheless, is not just a parable for Pride; she has a political importance as well. Spenser deliberately contrasts her with the real Queen, to whom the poem is offered—Queen Elizabeth.

## NOTES

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### 2.7 KEY WORDS

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- **Friar:** A person who is a member of a mendicant religious order in Catholic Christianity.
- **Spenserian stanza:** A fixed verse form invented by Edmund Spenser for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*.
- **Archaic Tenor:** Old fashioned classical male singing voice whose vocal range is one of the highest.
- **Lond:** Land

- **Conjure:** Make (something) appear unexpectedly.
- **Deceit:** Deceiving someone by concealing or misrepresenting.

## NOTES

### 2.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Short Answer Questions

1. What does Archimago do with the false dream he gets from Morpheus?
2. Whom does Redcrosse meet when he takes rest with Fidessa?
3. Who is Fradubio and how did he become a tree?
4. What did *The Faerie Queene* celebrate?
5. What was the political message of *The Faerie Queene*?
6. Where do Redcrosse and Fidessa/Duessa stop for the night?

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Write a detailed note on the theme of the poem *The Faerie Queene*.
2. What kind of language has Spenser used in *The Faerie Queene* and why?
3. What does Spenser try to convey by introducing the lion in the poem?
4. 'Duessa, like Archimago, is an important evil character in *The Faerie Queene*. Elaborate.'

### 2.9 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 3 SIR PHILIP SIDNEY: *THE NIGHTINGALE*

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Sir Philip Sidney:  
*The Nightingale*

### NOTES

#### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 About the Author
- 3.3 Critical Appreciation of *The Nightingale*
- 3.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Key Words
- 3.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Readings

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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Right from the middle of the seventh century to the present day, English poetry has witnessed the creation of some of the most enduring poems in Western culture. Renaissance marked the beginning of English poetry. This was followed by the age of Victorian poetry. The Victorian poets had a precise scientific approach to life. They were interested in the occult and even dwelled on the pathological.

The early twentieth century was characterized by significant artistic change and was dominated by the repercussions of World War I and World War II. The artistic concerns of modernism had an impact on the themes and techniques of writing of this age. The readership of English literature multiplied and so did the range of the literature itself. In this unit, we are concerned with Elizabethan poetry, particularly one poem by Sir Philip Sidney. He has written several major works of poetry and criticism, but he wrote for his own circle of friends and did not allow his works to be published within his lifetime.

In this unit, you will study Sir Philip Sidney's poem, *The Nightingale*.

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### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Give a brief biographical sketch of Sir Philip Sidney
- Explain major works and characteristics of Sidney's works
- Critically analyse Sidney's poem, *The Nightingale*

## NOTES

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### 3.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sir Philip Sidney was born at Penshurst (Kent) on 30 November 1554. He was the eldest son of Sir Henry Sidney and Lady Mary Dudley. His mother was the eldest daughter of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland and sister of Robert, Earl of Leicester and Ambrose, Earl of Warwick. Thus, we can say that Sidney belonged to the aristocratic class. This had direct implications on his hopes for the future and his reactions when it did not unfold as he had anticipated.

He attended the Shrewsbury school (from 1564 to 1568) which was run under the tutelage of Thomas Ashton, a noted educator of his time. Here he met his lifelong friend, Fulke Greville. His father had been a close companion of the young King Edward VI. This proximity continued during the reigns of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. This is borne out by the fact that while the son attended Shrewsbury the father served the crown as Lord Deputy of Ireland.

Philip was thirteen when he entered Christ Church, Oxford in 1568. During his three years here he acquainted and befriended the likes of Richard Hakluyt the geographer and William Camden the historian. When he turned seventeen, his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, sponsored his Grand Tour of Europe. The aim was to familiarize him with foreign languages and international relations so that when he returned home he would have first-hand knowledge of events and people in the Continent and could use this familiarity to build a future for himself at home. Leicester was sufficiently impressed by his nephew's knowledge and recommended him to Sir Francis Walsingham, then resident ambassador in Paris. As a result, Sidney went to France in May 1572 in a special embassy to Charles IX. While in France, he met Hubert Languet (1518–1581) a Huguenot humanist and political observer for the Elector of Saxony. They became friends and corresponded for nearly nine years.

His tour of the Continent for the next two-and-a-half years was mostly under the aegis of Languet. During this time, he attended the University of Padua (in Venetian territory and thus safe for Protestants) for a year, and also spent time in Vienna, Frankfurt and Prague. He travelled to Poland in the East and Florence in the South, and freely interacted with the correspondents and friends of Languet. This exposure made him the Queen's best-informed courtier about international relations. Languet's friendship proved useful in other fields as well. As a result of his interactions and discussions with Languet and his friends, Sidney was introduced to the politico-religious philosophy of Philipp Melanchthon. Melanchthon was Luther's friend and was instrumental in converting many humanists to the cause of the Reformation. It was his belief that if the politico-religious fight against the Pope and the King of Spain

was to be won, it was imperative that the Reformed churches unite under the leadership of a Protestant prince. This does not mean that Melanchthon considered theological issues to be more important than political ones. He held that a stable, prosperous state was possible only under the aegis of a wise and godly political government.

If we were to follow the trajectory of Sidney's career, it would not be wrong to say that it was governed by this belief. He was recalled by the Queen in May 1575 and became a courtier under the sponsorship of Leicester. In the next few years Philip acted as his father's representative. Even though his father was criticized Philip was immensely respected. In 1577, he headed a special embassy to the new Emperor, Rudolph II. During this trip, he was tasked to explore the probability of forging a feasible Protestant alliance to counter the Pope's Holy League. He was successful in performing both these tasks brilliantly. Sidney returned with a detailed account on the Emperor and his entourage and also a draft for 'Heads of a treaty' between Elizabeth and the Protestant German princes. Though this treaty never materialized, its brilliant, cogent and insightful observations and arguments greatly enhanced his reputation. On his return from this trip Sidney reverted to his role of protecting his father's interests in court, while the former was still in Ireland. In one instance, where his father and Ormond were opposed to each other, he wrote a memorandum addressed to the Queen. Though it was well received, it did not change her mind because she was parsimonious and favoured Ormond (his father's rival and an ally of another enemy, the Earl of Sussex). This memorandum, though incomplete, is the first remaining piece of his writing (apart from letters). Sidney's ability to look at the larger picture was borne out by the interest he took in the exploration of the New World. He invested in Frobisher's expedition to Newfoundland in search of a Northwest passage to Asia and also wrote to Languet about it.

While, Sidney was first and foremost a courtier wanting to be a statesman, he was also a talented poet and a writer not only of verse, but of fiction also. We get a glimpse of this in *The Lady of May* which is his first known literary work. It is a masque composed in 1578 to commemorate the Royal visit to Leicester's house at Wanstead.

By the end of the 16th century, a series of Spanish successes saw a change in British foreign policy to the extent that French concerns and claims were seen to be legitimate. This conflict is best illustrated in the revived project to marry Elizabeth. King Henri III's younger brother was the new candidate. This match had the support of a section of the Court and the Government. The Protestant faction, including Leicester and Walsingham, opposed the same. To convince the Queen and to bring her around to their way of thinking, the Protestant faction persuaded Sidney to write a Letter to the Queen. The Letter is a highly intelligent and heartfelt document. It clearly sets out the arguments against such a union by reminding Her Majesty of the

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involvement of her suitor in the worst persecutions of the Huguenots. The letter was taken seriously and the marriage was shelved.

In 1580, Sidney left the Court temporarily to stay at his sister Mary's (wife of Earl of Pembroke) country house for a year. Here he began to write his three greatest works—*Arcadia*, a prose romance, the treatise *A Defence of Poesy* (also known as *The Apology for Poetry*), and the sonnet-sequence *Astrophil and Stella*.

Sidney was knighted in the early 1580s. Along with his uncle, the Earl of Warwick, he became the Master of the Ordinance and oversaw the country's material preparedness for an increasingly inevitable war with Spain. He married Frances, Walsingham's daughter, in 1583. One can discern a change in his literary creations of this period. It seems his conception of 'poesy' in the sense of fiction was transforming into a view of literature in line with the Huguenot ideals of Walsingham and his Continental friends. Under this influence, he wrote an English versification of the *Psalms*. He died before he could complete it, but was later completed by his sister Mary. He also translated the Huguenot poet Du Bartas' *Semaine*, or Week of Creation. He began the translation of his friend Duplessis-Mornay's defence of Christianity against atheists, but died before he could complete it. This was later completed by Arthur Golding.

The year 1584 saw political turmoil in Europe—William of Orange was assassinated, and Spain recaptured large parts of Netherlands. When Elizabeth was apprised of the situation, she agreed to intervene and negotiated three cautionary towns as guarantee for her financial and military backing. Leicester was charged with designing the form this intervention would take. In these conditions, Sidney became governor of Flushing (Vlissingen). From this moment, he became obsessed with two things—arranging payment for his soldiers and trying to salvage what he could from a town ravaged by war. He also saw action during this conflict. He along with Maurice of Nassau, the young Dutch prince, led the storming of Axel, a town near Antwerp.

Zutphen was strategically important for the Spanish. The British lay siege of this town. In one of their charges Sidney was shot in the thigh. He was evacuated to Arnhem where his wound developed gangrene. He died on 17 October 1586. It was a slow death and he faced it stoically. Thus, formed a legend called Sidney, who was a brave soldier, an accomplished statesman, a great writer and as the Queen called him 'the most accomplished gentleman in Europe'.

### Major Works of Sidney

*The Defence of Poesy* is his treatise wherein he asserts that 'poesy' (imaginative writing) is crucial for any moral education. The text also marks the poet's creative ability as special. Sidney claims that of all the human arts



and sciences it is only the poet's faculty of 'invention', that equals God's creative ability as reflected in the abundance of nature.

Sir Philip Sidney:  
*The Nightingale*

*Astrophil and Stella* is a seminal work by Sidney. Its success sparked a renewal of the Petrarchan sonnet-sequence. The creative impulse was his love for Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich. Using the principle of *energia*, the sonnet sequence explores the way esteem becomes love, love into desire, and how desire finally destroys true love. It circulated in manuscript form and was published five years after the poet's death.

*The Arcadia*, details the combative and romantic adventures of two princes Musidorus and Pyrocles; they are in love with princesses Pamela and Philoclea respectively. It is an adaptation of Sannazaro's *Arcadia* and Montemayor's *Diana*. The first version, now referred to as the *Old Arcadia*, was never published. Sidney's revision of this text is the *New Arcadia*. The poet died before he could complete it. Therefore, the 1593 edition used the ending of the *Old Arcadia*. Sidney tried many poetic innovations in this version: he tried to substitute classical meters for traditional English rhyme. The poem deals with issues of literary composition and theory. The *New Arcadia* is a complex, variegated work and addresses issues of public and private (self-) government.

### Characteristics of Sidney's Work

Sidney's fame as a poet rests on the work he produced over a span of merely eight years, from about 1577 to his death in 1586. If we consider his poetic work, we find that the themes of his writings were not based on him or his experiences. He never wrote about the military campaigns in Netherland in which he participated. Despite being a courtier, except for some passages in *The Lady of May*, he never wrote in praise of the Queen, being religious he never wrote a poem of personal devotion, he valued friendship, yet other than his 'Two Pastorals' and a single mention of Languet he never wrote a commendatory or memorial poem for a real person; despite being interested in politics, he never wrote of issues connected to it. In fact, with the exception of *Astrophil and Stella*, his verse is neither official nor personal and deals entirely with imagined situations.

Sidney's focus in his poetry is love. This aloofness allows Sidney to look at and assess his work with a detached eye. As a result, the poetic forms and plot structures of his works reveal a level of intricacy and polish not seen in English before.

In his eclogues, Sidney imitated Petrarch and Sannazaro. In his later poetry, he abandoned this close stylistic imitation and developed his own style. It embraces tradition even as it modifies it and is more critical and revisionist. Sidney was a humanist and his work reveals this bent of mind. He saw options and alternatives for every issue and a discussion of these,

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in the form of dialogue, populates his work. Further, the presence of these options and alternatives imply that for him the world existed in binaries. This in turn explains the presence of pairings and oppositions with respect to plot, character, and language in his work.

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### 3.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *THE NIGHTINGALE*

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#### Text

*The nightingale, as soon as April bringeth  
Unto her rested sense a perfect waking,  
While late bare earth, proud of new clothing, springeth,  
Sings out her woes, a thorn her song-book making,  
And mournfully bewailing,  
Her throat in tunes expresseth  
What grief her breast oppresseseth  
For Tereus' force on her chaste will prevailing.  
O Philomela fair, O take some gladness,  
That here is juster cause of plaintful sadness:  
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth;  
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.*

*Alas, she hath no other cause of anguish  
But Tereus' love, on her by strong hand wroken,  
Wherein she suffering, all her spirits languish;  
Full womanlike complains her will was broken.  
But I, who daily craving,  
Cannot have to content me,  
Have more cause to lament me,  
Since wanting is more woe than too much having.  
O Philomela fair, O take some gladness,  
That here is juster cause of plaintful sadness:  
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth;  
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.*

Sir Philip Sidney's (1595) *The Nightingale*, extensively taken into consideration as one of his excellent quick poems, seems within the second part of his *Defense of Poesy*. It is by far based on a popular tune of the time, 'Non Credo Gia Che Piu Infelice Amante', also regarded by means of the identity 'Philomela'; the poem is based totally on the tale of 'Philomela' in book 6 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Philomela and Procne were the daughters of King Pandion of Attica. Procne married Tereus of Thrace, even though he lusted after Philomela. Later, Tereus raped Philomela and reduced out her tongue to silence her. She, but, wove the tale into a tapestry that she sent to her sister. Procne then killed her son and served him for dinner to Tereus. The girls fled, pursued through Tereus, but the gods turned them all into birds: Procne became a nightingale, Philomela a swallow, and Tereus a hoopoe.

The richness of the rhyme in this poem is indicative of its basis on an Italian piece, as are the musicality and continuity of the terms. The innovation on this piece lies in Sidney's comparison of himself to Philomela as he explores sexual dynamics, voice, self-expression, and the English way of life of male stoicism. This is carried out through both phrases and rhythm.

Sidney establishes the temper right away: 'The nightingale, as soon as April bringeth/Unto her rested sense an ideal waking.../Sings out her woes' (ll. 1-4). April is a month of juxtapositions: winter has ended and summer time is drawing close; negative rain falls alongside generative sunshine; lifestyle is beginning while a few ends. Further, Philomela's rape functions juxtapositions, too—demise of the woman and delivery of the girl; give up of innocence and beginning of experience—as proven: 'Her throat in tunes expresseth/What grief her breast oppresseth' (ll. 6-7). Acknowledging the horrible act that has led to this moment—'For Tereus' force on her chaste will winning' (l. 8)—Sidney then directly inverts the tale. The audience must now not experience pity for Philomela; rather, they must sense sorry for Sidney: 'o Philomela truthful, o take some gladness,/That right here is juster motive of plaintful unhappiness' (ll. 9-10).

To start with commiserating with Philomela, Sidney then berates her for vocalizing her pain, while he himself cannot. Philomela, Sidney claims, at the least can explicit her unhappiness via track and accordingly purge herself of it, but he, as a person, should suffer in silence. Along with her song, he claims, 'Thine earth now springs', however as he can say not anything in his state of affairs, 'mine fadeth' (l. 11). He ends the first stanza via underscoring her emotional launch thru tune and his own emotional stress in silence: 'Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth' (l. 12). At this point, it will become clear that this poem isn't only a retelling of the Philomela fantasy and a clever parody of a famous tune, but is also in element a grievance of the social mores dictating that a lady may express her emotions overtly even as a man may not. It also refers to the popular notion that positive songbirds

Sir Philip Sidney:  
*The Nightingale*

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sang their most stunning music at once before their demise, resulting from plunging their breast onto a thorn.

In the second stanza, Sidney maintains his diatribe in opposition to Philomela's vocalization of her enjoy, lightly looking at that 'unluckily, she has no other cause of discomfort/but Tereus' love, on her with the aid of robust hand wroken,/in which she suffering, all her spirits languish;/full womanlike complains her will was damaged' (ll. thirteen-sixteen). Indeed, Sidney nearly seems to be implying here that Philomela did not thoughts things as a whole lot as she claims, but as a substitute is utilizing her role as a woman to claim she has been wronged, consequently keeping her own innocence and chastity within the face of the act committed. In other phrases, she should revel in bodily love without social effects, something authorized to no man in polite society.

Sidney then continues on with his very own aspect of factors, claiming, 'I, who daily yearning,/can't should content me,/Have extra reason to lament me,/due to the fact that trying is extra woe than too much having' (ll. 1720). These strains clearly monitor the difference among the sexes: ladies see sexuality as an exhausting duty pressured upon them, while guys see it as something desired, however rarely finished.

Sidney embraces the male angle: women are merciless torturers who tease guys with their appeal, but then protest whilst guys pursue them, unfairly exploiting the girl's normally mentioned right to voice her feelings and causing men to go through in agonized silence at their cruel behavior. with the aid of utilizing the classic Philomela myth, he shows that this type of conduct and those tensions between the sexes have been going on for the reason that beginnings of civilization, and the tongue-in-cheek parody of a modern Italian love music allows him to explicit this fantastically vitriolic factor of view in a stylish and nonthreatening manner via a recognizable, exciting shape that lets in everything to seem harmless. He's able to air his views thoroughly within the guise of a poetry-writing exercise. Sidney might also declare once more in the second stanza that Philomela has a voice and he has none, that 'Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth;/Thy thorn without, my thorn my coronary heart invadeth' (ll. 23-24), however the poem itself is his tune, and Philomela, an insignificant myth now dead and long past, has not anything more to mention on the problem. Sidney has consequently cleverly received his argument and had the final phrase.

In this poem, the speaker is using the artwork of rhetoric. This is an example of a courtly-love poem, in which the speaker (Sidney) is in love with a lady, whom he can never have. In this poem, Sidney evaluates himself by using alluding to classical delusion (Philomela). In doing so, he's able to evaluate his state of affairs to that of hers. Despite the fact that she become raped and had her tongue cut out, the speaker says, 'That here is juster cause of plaintful unhappiness', which means that he has a better purpose to be

sad than she does: ‘due to the fact that trying is more woe than too much having’. He is largely saying that it’s far worse to need someone and not get them, than to have an excessive amount of somebody that you did not need. In short, he is trying to convince the reader that his scenario is worse than that of someone who has been raped and sick-fated to everlasting silence.

In ‘Philomela’, Sidney alludes to Philomela’s violent remedy by Tereus, however that isn’t the primary subject matter of this paintings. In this poem, the focus is on the narrator being resentful of Philomela. This jealousy toward any such wretched mythological parent shows the intense loneliness experienced by using the narrator and the following sexist undertones.

In the first few traces of the poem, Philomela is known as a ‘nightingale’ and the narrator further attributes her more bird-like features, alluding to her escape from Tereus as an actual nightingale, showing a prior know-how of the parable. An informed target audience might commonly see Philomela as a pitiful sufferer guarded over via a vicious Tereus. This isn’t always how the narrator sees the state of affairs in any respect. She or he does now not even deal with the horrors committed in opposition to Philomela. The manner the poem is offered it does no longer even provide the slightest indication of the abuses suffered with the aid of Philomela on the arms of Tereus. The narrator sees Philomela’s sole source of ache to be Tereus’ over-ample love, of which the speaker is glaringly green with envy. The narrator makes this jealousy clean because they say that they’re ‘each day craving’ such attentions and that ‘looking is more woe than an excessive amount of having’ (17, 20). So, on this individual’s opinion, wanting love is greater painful than having too much, because the case seems to be with Philomela and Tereus. Thus, it seems that the narrator is jealous of the lust, or love, that Philomela evokes in others. And this envy, in conjunction with the lack of affection, is inflicting the narrator excellent misery.

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### Check Your Progress

1. Where was Philip Sidney born?
2. Name Sidney’s three greatest books.
3. State one characteristics of Sidney’s work.

## 3.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Philip Sidney was born at Penshurst (Kent) on 30 November 1554.
2. Three greatest works of Sidney are *Arcadia*, a prose romance, the treatise *A Defence of Poesy* (also known as *The Apology for Poetry*), and the sonnet-sequence *Astrophil and Stella*.

3. In his eclogues, Sidney imitated Petrarch and Sannazaro. In his later poetry, he abandoned this close stylistic imitation and developed his own style.

## NOTES

### 3.5 SUMMARY

- Philip Sidney was born at Penshurst (Kent) on 30 November 1554.
- Philip was thirteen when he entered Christ Church, Oxford in 1568. During his three years here, he acquainted and befriended the likes of Richard Hakluyt the geographer and William Camden the historian.
- While, Sidney was first and foremost a courtier wanting to be a statesman, he was also a talented poet and a writer not only of verse, but of fiction also.
- *The Lady of May* is Sidney's first known literary work. It is a masque composed in 1578 to commemorate the Royal visit to Leicester's house at Wanstead.
- In 1580, Sidney left the Court temporarily to stay at his sister Mary's (wife of Earl of Pembroke) country house for a year. Here he began to write his three greatest works— *Arcadia*, a prose romance, the treatise *A Defence of Poesy* (also known as *The Apology for Poetry*), and the sonnet-sequence *Astrophil and Stella*.
- The year, 1584 saw political turmoil in Europe—William of Orange was assassinated, and Spain recaptured large parts of Netherlands. When Elizabeth was apprised of the situation, she agreed to intervene and negotiated three cautionary towns as guarantee for her financial and military backing.
- Sidney's fame as a poet rests on the work he produced over a span of merely eight years, from about 1577 to his death in 1586.
- Sidney's focus in his poetry is love. This aloofness allows Sidney to look at and assess his work with a detached eye.
- In his eclogues, Sidney imitated Petrarch and Sannazaro. In his later poetry, he abandoned this close stylistic imitation and developed his own style.
- The richness of the rhyme in this poem is indicative of its basis on an Italian piece, as are the musicality and continuity of the terms.
- In *The Nightingale* poem, the speaker is using the artwork of rhetoric. This is an example of a courtly-love poem, in which the speaker (Sidney) is in love with a lady, whom he can never have.

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### 3.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Protestant:** It refers to a member or follower of any of the Western Christian Churches that are separate from the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with the principles of the Reformation, including the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran Churches.
- **Atheist:** It refers to a person who disbelieves or lacks belief in the existence of God or gods.
- **Epigram:** It refers to a pithy saying or remark expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way.

### NOTES

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### 3.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short Answer Questions

1. Describe the early life of Sir Philip Sidney.
2. Write a short note explaining the first stanza of *The Nightingale*.
3. Who was 'Philomela'? Give a character sketch.

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the major works and characteristics of Sidney's work in detail.
2. Critically analyse Sidney's poem *The Nightingale*.

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### 3.8 FURTHER READINGS

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## NOTES

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# UNIT 4 THOMAS NASHE: *A LITANY IN TIME OF PLAGUE*

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### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 About the Author
- 4.3 Critical Appreciation of *A Litany in Time of Plague*
- 4.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Words
- 4.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Readings

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## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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Thomas Nashe was a prominent writer of the Elizabethan literature. Even though Shakespeare is considered the center of the Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, however, it is known that although Shakespeare was considered an important writer in the last decade of the queen's reign, Nashe was one of the dominant literary voices.

Nashe, who wrote some poetry but more drama and prose, helped establish the nature of English theater, as well as expanding the range, depth, and sophistication of English prose style beyond what his predecessors and contemporaries could have imagined or thought possible. In this unit, Thomas Nashe's poem *A Litany in Time of Plague* is discussed in detail.

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## 4.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Give a brief biographical sketch of Thomas Nashe
- Explain Nashe's style of writing
- Critically analyse Nashe's poem, *A Litany in Time of Plague*

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## 4.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Thomas Nashe (1567- c.1600) was poet, dramatist and pamphleteer. Thomas Nashe is considered to be one of the dominant literary voice that reigned during the Elizabethan England. He was a significant face of 'University Wits'. Even the Elizabethan literature is usually identified with Shakespeare,



there are significant studies and evidences which suggest that Nashe was indeed an influential and significant literary figure of the period. Thomas Nashe had composed a few poems. But his greatest contribution lies in the field of prose and drama. He played a pivotal role in establishing English theatre while bringing in sophistication occasion to the prose style of writing in English literature. Most of the work identified with Thomas Nashe are collaborative works. *Summer's Last Will And Testament* (published in 1600) is the only play that we know of which he had authored individually. It is well known that Thomas Nashe had collaborated with the literary stalwarts of his time like Shakespeare, Marlowe et al.

Thomas Nashe is credited with the authorship of the first picaresque novel in English language - *The Unfortunate Traveller*; or, *The Life of Jacke Wilton* (1594). After completing his studies from University of Cambridge, Nashe moved to London where he came in contact with other prominent litterateurs of his time like Robert Greene. In 1592 Nashe produced his first significant work, a satire, *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devill*. The satire is remember for its prose style and the new words introduced into it. *The Unfortunate Traveller* is identified as one of the most realistic texts ever composed. The adventure find the place in the English literature because of its pace and economy of world. The Hero, Jacke Wilton, travels in Germany and Italy and learns to survive in difficult situation. By the end of the novel Jacke is shown to live a more defined and acceptable way of life. Thomas Nashe died when he was thirty four. But the reason causing his death was never very clear. Various reasons has been suggested like food poisoning, cardiac arrest etc.

Thomas Nashe: A Litany in  
Time of Plague

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### 4.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF A LITANY IN TIME OF PLAGUE

*Adieu, farewell, earth's bliss;  
This world uncertain is;  
Fond are life's lustful joys;  
Death proves them all but toys;  
None from his darts can fly;  
I am sick, I must die.  
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Rich men, trust not in wealth,  
Gold cannot buy you health;  
Physic himself must fade.*

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*All things to end are made,  
The plague full swift goes by;  
I am sick, I must die.  
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Beauty is but a flower  
Which wrinkles will devour;  
Brightness falls from the air;  
Queens have died young and fair;  
Dust hath closed Helen's eye.  
I am sick, I must die.  
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Strength stoops unto the grave,  
Worms feed on Hector brave;  
Swords may not fight with fate,  
Earth still holds ope her gate.  
'Come, come!' the bells do cry.  
I am sick, I must die.  
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Wit with his wantonness  
Tasteth death's bitterness;  
Hell's executioner  
Hath no ears for to hear  
What vain art can reply.  
I am sick, I must die.  
Lord, have mercy on us!*

*Haste, therefore, each degree,  
To welcome destiny;  
Heaven is our heritage,  
Earth but a player's stage;  
Mount we unto the sky.*

*I am sick, I must die.  
Lord, have mercy on us!*

Thomas Nashe: *A Litany in  
Time of Plague*

*A Litany in time of Plague* written by Thomas Nash, is a poem which is decorated with powerful imagery while highlighting the grim realities of life. The poem revolves around the concept of death which is the biggest truth of life and has the power to trivialize all incidents of glories that one is proud of during ones lifetime. Even though the title of the poem 'A Litany in time of plague' uses the word plague in it, the lyric does not ever directly address any place or epidemic. But to a certain extent it refers to the inevitability of death and the social Indifference that death adopts as 'plagues'.

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The first stanza of the poem, 'Adieu, farewell, earth's bliss...mercy on us', as it is evident begins with a 'farewell'. The poet persona is bidding his farewell to all the joys that the planet earth that provided him with. He insists that the life that we live is full of uncertainties. The joys that we witness ('lustful joys') are temporary and death has the ability to make them appear as if they are toys which can be taken away at any point of time. Towards end of the stanza Thomas Nashe seems to be highlighting the might as well as the Permanency of death. The truth of the death is recalled in the line 'I am sick, I must die.' The poet persona decides to beg God to show his mercy and help him sail through.

The second stanza, 'Rich men, trust not in wealth... Mercy on us !', continues in a similar tone which appeared in the first stanza. The speaker addresses the wealthy population. He says that, it is foolish for the rich people to rely solely on their wealth because 'gold' (i.e, money or wealth) does not have the ability to bless one with good health. With the line 'psychic himself must fade', Nashe is reiterating an old philosophy that body is Mortal and with the passage of time it will move towards the process of decay and finally come to an end. The poet persona insists that not just human being, but everything that has been created by God will one day meet its finality. In fifth line, the poet mentions the word 'plague'. This could be an allusion to the actual disease but many critics suggest that this probably refers to death. Death is constantly in motion and at any given point of time it can bring an end to our life. Anyone who attains a privilege to obtain a birth in this earth has to leave it someday. The poet persona realises this truth and claims that one day even he has to leave this planet. This stanza, like the previous stanza, ends with a plea to the almighty.

The lines of third stanza are oft quoted and contain some of the most Beautiful lines of the poem. In this stanza the poet wants the readers to remember that the physical 'beauty' is short lived. It is just like a flower. 'wrinkles' will take over the beauty, i.e., beauty is temporal and no amount of effort can stop it from being consumed by death. If beauty had the power to turn the course of events, then there would not have been instances where

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many a young queens had to bow down to the power of death. Substantiating his view, the speaker says, 'Dust hath closed Helen's eye.' the beauty of Helen is well documented. She is still the epitome of beauty. Yet her incomparable beauty could not save her from the clutches of death. Continuing with the pattern adopted in the previous stanzas the poem ends will with the same refrain 'Lord, have mercy on us!'

The fourth stanza of 'A Litany in time of plague', 'strength stoops... Mercy on us!', creates an intricate imagery. The first line of the stanza reaffirms an old truth. Grave is the final destination where human powers cease to exist. The second line goes on to validate this idea. We get to see how worms are feeding on the dead body of the mighty Hector. This is more of one sided battle that is waged between the sword and the fate. Since we all emerge from the planet earth we have to go back to it ('Earth still holds open her Gate.'). The speaker announces that the wise and the learned men embrace death without much hesitation because they realise that death is inevitable.

The first two lines of the fifth stanza, 'wit which is... Bitterness;', suggest people are born with sharp intelligence. Having spoken about people who are rich, beautiful and brave, the poet now focuses on people who are blessed with intellect. According to the speaker, irrespective of whether one is an intellectual or a creative artist, one has to succumb to the powers of death. The speaker says that, the executioners of hell do not have time to differentiate one from the other. Indirectly, the poet highlights the impartiality of divine justice. God's will is devoid of prejudice it does not distinguish between good and bad; appealing or unappealing; powerful or the weak. Everyone has to undergo the phase called death. That cannot fall into the Trap of 'vain art' and its smooth ways. The stanza, comes to an end looking for a mercy from the divine powers.

Despite a strain of pessimism running through the poem, The last stanza and with their optimistic note. In the lines 'Haste, therefore, each degree... Mercy on us!' the speaker wants the people to 'welcome destiny' with a natural ease. The speaker insists that, the heaven is our original home ('true heritage') and one should not hesitate to return to it. Moreover, this stay on planet earth is only a temporary role that we were made to perform on a 'stage' that was designed by the creator. But our ultimate destination is the sky. And when the time is right, one must not hesitate to 'mount' towards a journey to the sky. To undertake this journey one must die and only then can the person reach the original. The poem ends with an affirmation to die and asking God to bless him.

As we can see, each stanza ends with a refrain which is taken straight out of the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer. The line, 'I am sick, I must dye:/Lord, have mercy on us' is a reaction to the litany of saints. Social history suggests that this was a phrase that was often found on the doors of

the hoses which was infected by plague; though it has been observed that such direct as well as topical reference to a certain disease that tormented London gives it a local flavour. Plague was considered to be descendent of the Black Death at that point of time. Such localisation of the poem has a direct impact on the broad concluding statement that talks about the need for spiritually announcing oneself for the life after death: 'Haste therefore eche degree, / To welcome destiny: / Heaven is our heritage' (ll. 1609-11).

Thomas Nashe's '*A Litany in Time of Plague*' brings in many different rhetorical techniques to highlight a serious yet at the same time positive view of the Black Death. It is important to highlight that 'litany' is a kind of prayer where a series of invocations are made by a leader. This invocation is followed by a typical response from the congregation present in the gathering. This pattern can be understood in context to the poem so that the structure of this poem follows just this format. All throughout '*A Litany in Time of Plague*,' the phrase, 'I am sick, I must die. Lord, have mercy on us!' is repeated at the end of each stanza. The context of this line seems to change as the poem progresses, even though it is simply the 'response' of a people. The speaker in 'Litany' consistently makes appeals (to God) concerning death and life thereafter.

The word 'litany' in the poem, '*A Litany in Time of Plague*' means a list. each stanza In the poem talk about a different theme, that is usually identified as a sin which has the power to bring you closer to death. Moreover given the poem was written during the Black Plague time the poem reflects a depressing and helpless tone which revolves around death are facing death. As we have already seen, each stanza ends with the line , 'I am sick, I must die, / Lord, have mercy on us!'. The lines are continuously repeated because in a Catholic Church more often than not the mass usually begins with the audience repeating 'Lord, have mercy on us!' this is a way to remove sins , so that anyone who is part of the mass is turned into a person who is sinless. The four mysteries of Rosary talks about joyfulness, Luminousness, sorrowfulness, and gloriousness. And in the poem each stanza reflects each of these themes. Rosary, as many of you would already know, he is a long list of prayer which is offered as penance from confession by the Catholics. The repetition of the refrain at the end of each stanza is meant to emphasize that there is no way one can run away from death.

Thomas Nashe gained his reputation as a writer through the pamphlets that he composed. During the Elizabethan era a pamphleteer invariably gained more prominence because through pamphlets serious ideas was spread across the country. It is believed that Nashe's pamphlets were controversial in nature while his poetry caused unexpected stir. Given that his writings usually meandered around topics which were not considered to be polite, he probably was looking for a way to attain salvation. It is believed that during the Black Death as many as 200 million people were killed. It was a plague

Thomas Nashe: *A Litany in Time of Plague*

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that troubled Europe for a very long period of time. During the time of Thomas Nashe the knowledge of medicine was not so developed as to understand the reason which caused the plague and hence there was no way to cure it, thus causing millions of people to lose their life. Historians suggest that Queen Elizabeth I was so scared of plague that she had introduced various ways of protecting herself including adopting some Quarantine measures.

### Check Your Progress

1. What is Thomas Nashe credited with in a first fore English Language?
2. What is the concept of the poem *A Litany in time of Plague*?
3. How does each stanza in the poem end?

## 4.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Thomas Nashe is credited with the authorship of the first picaresque novel in English language - *The Unfortunate Traveller*; or, *The Life of Jacke Wilton* (1594).
2. The poem revolves around the concept of death which is the biggest truth of life and has the power to trivialize all incidents of glories that one is proud of during one's lifetime.
3. Each stanza ends with a refrain which is taken straight out of the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer: 'I am sick, I just dye:/Lord, have mercy on us'.

## 4.5 SUMMARY

- Thomas Nashe (1567- c.1600) was poet , dramatist and pamphleteer . Thomas Nashe is considered to be one of the dominant literary voice that reigned during the Elizabethan England.
- Most of the work identified with Thomas Nashe are collaborative works. Summer's Last Will And Testament (published in 1600) is the only play that we know of which he had authored individually.
- Thomas Nashe is credited with the authorship of the first picaresque novel in English language - *The unfortunate Traveller*; or, *The life of Jacke Wilton* (1594).
- In 1592 Nashe produced his first significant work, a satire, *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil*.

- *A Litany in Time of Plague* written by Thomas Nash, is a poem which is decorated with powerful imagery while highlighting the grim realities of life.
- The poem *A Litany in Time of Plague* revolves around the concept of death which is the biggest truth of life and has the power to trivialize all incidents of glories that one is proud of during one's lifetime.
- The first stanza of the poem, 'Adieu, farewell, earth's bliss...mercy on us', as it is evident begins with a 'farewell'.
- Despite a strain of pessimism running through the poem, the last stanza has an optimistic note.
- Each stanza of the poem *A Litany in Time of Plague* ends with a refrain taken straight out of the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer.
- Thomas Nashe's '*A Litany in Time of Plague*' brings in many different rhetorical techniques to highlight a serious yet at the same time positive view of the Black Death.
- The word 'litany' in the poem, *A Litany in Time of Plague* means a list. Each stanza in the poem talk about a different theme, that is usually identified as a sin which has the power to bring you closer to death.
- Thomas Nashe gained his reputation as a writer through the pamphlets that he composed. During the Elizabethan era, a pamphleteer invariably gained more prominence because through pamphlets serious ideas was spread across the country.
- It is believed that Nashe's pamphlets were controversial in nature while his poetry caused unexpected stir.

## NOTES

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### 4.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Stanza:** It is a group of lines forming the basic recurring metrical unit in a poem; a verse.
- **Plague:** It is an epidemic disease causing a high rate of mortality: pestilence.
- **Pamphleteer:** It refers to a writer of pamphlets, especially ones of a political and controversial nature.

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### 4.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a brief note on life and works of Thomas Nashe.



2. What is the meaning of litany?
3. How is rhetoric used in Nashe's poem *A Litany in Time of Plague*?

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### Long Answer Questions

1. Give a detailed stanza-wise description of Thomas Nashe's poem *A Litany in Time of Plague*.
2. Explain the theme of Nashe's poem *A Litany in Time of Plague*.

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## 4.8 FURTHER READINGS

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## BLOCK - II

### POETRY - II

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John Donne: *The Funeral*

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## UNIT 5 JOHN DONNE:

### *THE FUNERAL*

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## NOTES

### Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 About the Author
- 5.3 Critical Appreciation of *The Funeral*
- 5.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.8 Further Readings

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### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

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John Donne is the founder of the Metaphysical Poets. The term was coined by Samuel Johnson, an eighteenth-century English essayist, poet, and philosopher.

The Metaphysical Poets are known for their ability to startle the reader and coax new perspective. They make intense use of paradoxical images, subtle argument, inventive syntax, and imagery from art, philosophy, and religion using an extended metaphor known as a conceit. Donne reached beyond the rational and hierarchical structures of the seventeenth century with his exacting and ingenious conceits, advancing the exploratory spirit of his time. In this unit, you will study John Donne's poem, *The Funeral* in detail.

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### 5.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of John Donne
- Explain Donne's style of writing
- Critically analyse his poem, *The Funeral*

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## 5.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### NOTES

John Donne was born in London on 22 January 1572. He belonged to a Roman Catholic family. When John Donne was only four years old his father died. The name of his father was also John Donne and his mother's name was Elizabeth Heywood. His mother was daughter of a playwright and her sister was a translator and a Jesuit priest. John took his education privately. After few months of the death of his father, his mother married to a wealthy widower who had three children. John Donne were had five brothers and sisters, but two of his sisters died in 1581. His mother died in 1631, exactly after two months when Donne became Dean of St Paul's. John Donne started his studies at Hart Hall when he was 11 years old. Now that place is known as Hetford College, Oxford. John Donne was shifted to the University of Cambridge after completing his three years of study at Hart Hall. At the University of Cambridge, he continued his studies for the next three years. Despite studying six years in both universities, John Donne was not able to get any type of degree because he refused to take Oath of Supremacy due to his Catholicism. This oath was required to obtain graduation degree.

In 1591, Donne was given permission to join Thavies Inn legal college. That was one of the Chaucery in London and in May 1592, he had got admission in one of the Inns of court that was Lincoln's Inn. But in 1593, after five years of defeat of the Spanish Armada and during the Anglo Spanish War which took place between 1585 to 1604, Queen Elizabeth issued the first English statue which was against the sectarian dissent from the Church of England. It was titled as 'An Act for Restraining Popish Recusants'. In this title the Popish recusants were defined as the convicts who did not repaired some Chapel, Church or usual places of doing prayers to hear the Divine Service there, but they forbear the same contrary to the tenor of the laws and statutes heretofore made and provided in that behalf. In 1593, Henry who was John Donne's brother was also arrested for harbouring a Catholic priest. Before his arrest he was also a University student. Henry Donne died in the prison due to bubonic plague. After the death of his brother, John Donne began to question his Catholic Faith. During his education and even after completing his education, John Donne lived in poverty for many years of his life. He had to rely on his rich friends. He spent a large amount of his money and time on literature, womanizing, travel and pastimes.

There is not any type of record details of the places where John Donne traveled. Izaak Walton wrote a biography of John Donne in 1658 in which he had mentioned that John Donne crossed Europe. He also fought with Sir Walter Raleigh and The Earl of Essex at the Azores in 1597 and at Cadiz in 1596 against the Spanish. He was the witness of loss of flagship of Spain. He did not return back to England. First of all he had stayed in Italy. After that

he got shifted to Spain. He had made many precious and beneficial studies of those countries. He observed the laws and manners of the governments of those countries. He learnt the languages of the countries and got perfection in the languages.

John Donne married Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, Sir Thomas Egerton's niece Anne More after four years of their love and it was a secret marriage because Egerton and George More were against the marriage. In 1601, after their marriage the career of John Donne was ruined because he was got fired from his job and was sent in the fleet prison. Along with him the priest of the Church of England was also sent to jail because he helped them in the marriage and the man who acted as the witness of the marriage was also jailed. But shortly afterwards, their wedding was proved valid and all of the three were released from the jail. According to Walton, when John Donne lost his job, he wrote a letter to his wife to tell the truth. He wrote: *John Donne, Anne Donne; Un-done*. In 1609, John Donne's father in law accepted their love marriage and he also got dowry from his father in law.

The life of John Donne was filled with sorrows poverty, pains and grievances. The misery of his life is seen in his poetry. After the freedom from jail, John Donne started living in Pyrford, Surrey where he stayed in a small house which was given to them by Sir Francis Wooley, Anne's cousin. He lived there till the end of 1604 then he moved to a small house in London. There he lived as a small lawyer and his income was very small. Anne gave birth to a child almost each year. In sixteen years of their marriage she gave birth to twelve children. Out of which two children aborted on eight month of her pregnancy. The last child was born in 1617. Thus they were blessed with ten living children. But three of his children died before reaching the age of ten years. John Donne was facing so much poverty and lack of sources and money that when his children died he felt that he would have to feed fewer mouths. But the hard fact was that he did not afford even their funeral expenses. He was so depressed and in a state of despair that he wanted to commit suicide. He almost drove himself towards his death. His wife died after five days of the birth of their last child in 1617. In those days of distress he wrote 'Bianthanatos', his defense of suicide, but did not get it published. Donne was very sad and distressed. He wrote about the loss of his children and wife and love in his seventeenth *Holy Sonnet*.

John Donne was elected as a Member of Parliament for the Constituency of Brackeley in 1602. But the membership of parliament was not such type of position which was given salary or it was a position without any type of payment. In 1603, after the death of queen Elizabeth I, King James VI of Scotland had become the King James I of England. The period of coterie poetry started and with the beginning of this period, John Donne got an opportunity to seek patronage and wrote poetry for his rich friends, patrons, MP's etc. He met MP Sir Robert Drury of Hawsted in 1610. He became chief

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patron of John Donne and gave him and his family an apartment in Drury Lane in his big house and started furnishing him.

In 1610 John Donne wrote an anti-Catholic polemic *Pseudo-Martyr* for Morton and in 1611 he wrote another poem *Ignatius His Conclave*. Afterwards in 1611 and 1612 he wrote two Anniversaries for Drury: *An Anatomy of the World and of the Progress of the Soul*. In the earliest poems of John Donne, there is a development of knowledge about the English society. He criticized the problems of the society very satirically and sharply. The poems dealt with the problems prevailing in the society during the rule of Elizabeth. He wrote satirically about the problems in the legal system of the society such as corruption which was very common in those times. He wrote about the mediocre poets and the jealous courtiers who were corrupt. He tried his best in writing poetry to tell us about the foolishness which was prevailing in the society at that time. He used symbolically different images of plague, manure, sickness, vomit etc. to represent the view of the society satirically. With the help of such type of images, he told us that the society was full of knaves and fools.

In his third satire, John Donne wrote about the problems of true religion. He considered it as a matter of great importance. He wrote that people must examine the religious convictions and should not follow the traditions blindly. He was of the opinion that after death, when there would be the time of final judgment nobody would be saved by giving the statement that Martin taught this or Harry taught them. In the early period of his career, John Donne was known for erotic poetry. Mainly in his elegies, John Donne had made use of unconventional metaphors. For example in *Elegy XVIII* John Donne compared the distance of the breasts of her lover to the Hellespont and in *Elegy XIX* the poet had undressed his mistress and to express the fondling of her he used the comparison of the exploration of America. In another example he used metaphor of flea biting the two lovers to express sex. But John Donne did not allow these poems to be published in manuscript form and had not sent these poems for publishing.

John Donne faced a variety of problems in his life like poverty, financial crisis, a number of illnesses, the deaths of his children, wife and friends. Some of the persons are of the opinion that all these problems of his life made a main contribution in developing a pious and somber tone in his later poems. For example, we can notice a change in the pattern of poetry in the poem *An Anatomy of the World* which was written in 1611 after the death of his Patron's daughter Elizabeth Drury. Her father Sir Robert Drury of Hawstead, Suffolk was very close to him. He wrote this poem in the memory of his daughter. John Donne expressed extreme sadness on the demise of Elizabeth. He said in his poem that her death is the destruction of the universe and the fall of man.

Another poem of John Donne showing extreme gloominess is *A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day, Being the Shortest Day*. This poem was written in 1627. At that time Lucy, John Donne's friend who was the countess of Bedford and also his daughter Lucy Donne expired. His poem expresses the despair at the death of a loved one. In this poem the poet expressed the feelings of hopelessness, despair, sadness and gloominess. He compares himself as a dead thing which has no emotions and no life. He expressed the feelings of absence of something in his life, darkness in his life and also mentioned death. After three years of the death of Lucy Donne, in 1630, he called 13 December, the date of the death of Lucy as Saint Lucy's Day. The poem describes as "Both the year's, and the day's deep midnight."

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It was observed that the life of John Donne was full of miseries and gloominess. He was expressing his gloominess in his poems and it is also noticed that the gloominess was increasing with time and so was his poverty. With time the gloominess turned his life towards religious beliefs. He started diverting towards religion. Even in his writings during the same period are full of religious sentiments. In the early years, his belief was in skepticism but slowly he started following the traditional teachings of the Bible. He was converted towards the Anglican Church. In this phase, John Donne mainly focused on the religious literature. He is well known for his religious poems and his sermons. The lines of the devotional writings and the sermons are expected to influence the works of the English Literature. For example, the title of the poem '*No Man is an Island*, written by Thomas Merton's was taken from the paragraph of Meditation XVII of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* and the title of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* written by Ernest Hemingway is also taken from the same source.

With the passage of time, near the last years of his life, John Donne wrote poems mainly on the subjects like the fear existing in the most of the people of the world. This is the fear of the life after the death, mainly each and every person of the world wants to go to heaven after his or her death. The concept of heaven and hell is common in every corner of the world and the people lives in this fear as they want to live eternal life in heaven. Secondly he wrote about challenged death. One example of this challenge is his Holy Sonnet X, '*Death Be Not Proud*', from which come the famous lines "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so." Even as he lay dying during Lent in 1631, he rose from his sickbed and delivered the Death's Duel sermon, which was later described as his own funeral sermon. Death's Duel portrays life as a steady descent to suffering and death; death becomes merely another process of life, in which the 'winding sheet' of the womb is the same as that of the grave. Hope is seen in salvation and immortality through an embrace of God, Christ and the Resurrection.

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John Donne was known as a metaphysical poet and he was criticized over the years for his metaphysical poetry. In 1781 Samuel Johnson coined a phrase that John Donne was the most prominent member of the metaphysical poets and then John Dryden also commented on this. Dryden had written of Donne in 1693: "He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love." In 1781, Samuel Johnson wrote *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, a work of biography and criticism. In this Johnson wrote that in the beginning of the seventeenth century that there was an appearance of race of metaphysical poets. The immediate successors of John Donne tried to consider his works in the field of poetry with ambivalence and with the Neoclassical poets they regarded his conceits as the abuse of the metaphors. But the romantic poets revived him. Mainly the romantic poets who revived him were Robert Browning and Coleridge. In the early twentieth century, poets like T.S. Eliot also tended to revive John Donne. But his critics like F. R. Leavis tried to portray him by approving him as an anti romantic poet.

John Donne is known as a master of the metaphysical conceit i.e. a poet who uses two different ideas in his poetry into a single idea and often these ideas are imagery. As in the poem *The Canonization*, there is an equation of lovers with saints. This is not like the conceits that are found in the Elizabethan poetry. In that type of poems Petrarchan conceits are used. These conceits made use of the comparison between the closely related objects like love and rose. But in the metaphysical poems the conceits are used between two objects which are completely different from one another and the conceits are used in depth to tell the deep meaning hidden in the poem. For example in the poem *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, John Donne made use of metaphysical conceit in which he compared the two lovers who are separated like the two legs of a compass.

John Donne used to make use of different types of puns, paradoxes, analogies etc. to make his work full of wisdom. His analogies are subtle but are remarkable. His poems are cynical and ironic and are related to the human and love motives. The main subjects and topics of John Donne's poems are different in his different age groups like in his early years of life the main subject of his poems is love and after the death of his wife it is death and in the later years of his life the main subject of his poem changes to religion. His poetry changes from a classical form of poetry to the personal form of poetry. John Donne is famous for his poetic metre. This poetic metre was structured with jagged and changing rhythms. These rhythms are like casual speech. At this Ben Jonson who was classical minded commented that "Donne for not keeping of accent deserved hanging."



As discussed earlier that the poetry of John Donne changes with the changes in the phases of his life like in the early years of his life, he wrote poetry mainly on love, then after the death of his wife, his poetry is based on death and in the later years of his life he wrote about religion. Thus his trends changed from love poetry in youth to the religious sermons in the later years of his life. But some of the scholars like Helen Gardner raised a question on this statement and the validity of this timing as they said that most of his poems are published after his death i.e. in 1633. Only the poem *The Anniversaries* and the poem *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* are the exceptions as these poems are published in 1612 and in 1624 respectively. Even his sermons are also dated specially by date and year of publication.

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In the calendar of the Church of England John Donne was commemorated as a priest and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on 31 of March he is commemorated as priest in the Calendar of Saints. John Donne had a number of likenesses in his life. One of the example, the anonymous portrait of 1594. This portrait is now restored and is placed at the National Portrait Gallery. One of the earliest Elizabethan portraits of an author, in this portrait the poet is shown fashionably dressed and brooding on his love darkly. John Donne described this portrait in his will as “that picture of mine which is taken in the shadows. And this portrait was bequeathed by him to Robert Kerr who was first Earl of Ancrum. A 1616 head and shoulders after Isaac Oliver and a 1622 head and shoulders in the Victoria and the Albert Museum are the examples of likes of the poet. These paintings are now in the National Portrait Gallery. The young Stanley Spencer devoted a visionary painting in 1911 to John Donne. This painting was known as *Arriving in Heaven* and this painting is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum.

On 31 March 1631 John Donne died and he was buried in old St. Paul's Cathedral. At that place Nicholas Stone erected his memorial statue with a Latin epigraph which was composed by John Donne. The memorial is one of the few memorials which survived in the Great Fire of London in 1666. It is now known as St. Paul's Cathedral. In his biography, Isaac Walton claimed that that statue was modelled from John Donne's life as he wanted to suggest his appearance at the resurrection. During the course of the seventeenth century, this monument was to start a vogue. In 2012 a bust of the poet by Nigel Boonham was unveiled outside in the Cathedral Churchyard. After the death of John Donne, many people from public paid tribute to him. One of the tributes was a tribute paid by his friend Lord Herbert of Cherbury was most difficult to follow was elegy for Doctor Donne. After the death of John Donne, over the period of two centuries several elegies upon the author accompanied the posthumous editions of John Donne's poems. Fellow churchmen wrote six of these elegies and others were written by Sidney Godolphin, Thomas Carew, Endymion Porter etc. In 1963, Joseph Brodsky wrote *The Great Elegy* for John Donne.

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In the beginning of the twentieth century there were several historical novels which took John Donne's life as their subject and written a number of episodes on his life. For example Elizabeth Gray Vining took the subject of courtship of John Donne and Anne More in his novel *Take Heed of Loving Me: A Novel About John Donne*. Maeve Haran took the same topic of courtship in the novel *The Lady and the Poet* in 2010. In 2007 Mary Novik took both of the characters in conceit but in this novel the main focus was on John Donne's daughter Pegge who was rebellious in nature. Garry O'Connor's treated with John Donne as a young man in his novel *Death's Duel: a Novel of John Donne*. In 2012 a novel was written by Christie Dickason. This novel was based on the patronism of John Donne and the author claimed that Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford was his lover in this novel *The Noble Assassin*. There is Bryan Crockett's *Love's Alchemy: a John Donne Mystery* in 2015. In this novel the poet blackmailed into service in Robert Cecil's network of spies, attempts to avert political disasters and outwit Cecil.

During the lifetime of John Donne, his lyrics were given musical settings. In his 1609 Ayres, "So, so, leave off this last lamenting kisse" by Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, *Break of Day* by Henry Lawes, to ask for all thy love and *Break of Day* by John Dowland are the musical settings done by the lyricists. In 1688 Pelham Humfrey and John Hilton the younger made settings of 'A Hymn to God the Father'. There were no more musical settings in the seventeenth century but in the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1905 there was first performance of *A Nocturnal* on St Lucy's Day with Havergal Brian. In 1905, Eleanor Everest Freer published 'Break of Day' in 1909, *The Cross* was performed by Walford Davies. These two performances are said to be among the earliest performances. During the period 1916 to 1918, At the round earth's imagined corners of 'Holy Sonnet 7' of John Donne was composed by the composer Hubert Parry. Hubert set music in his choral work, *Songs of Farewell*. In 1945 John Donne's nine holy sonnets were set by Benjamin Britten in his song cycle for piano and voice. The *Holy Sonnets* of John Donne set 62 texts of John Donne. These 162 settings of 62 texts of John Donne include the choral settings of Negative Love. This composition has opened *Harmonium* by John Adams.

The musical settings are also done in the popular songs and music like in 1966 *Go and Catch a Falling Star* on John Renbourn's debut album John Renbourn in which the last line is altered to "False, ere I count one, two, three."

### Check Your Progress

1. What theme did Donne use in his third satire?
2. State one major characteristic of Donne's writing.

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### 5.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *THE FUNERAL*

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John Donne: *The Funeral*

#### The Text

#### NOTES

##### *The Funeral*

Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm  
Nor question much  
That subtle wreath of hair which crowns my arm;  
The mystery, the sign, you must not touch,  
For 'tis my outward Soul,  
Viceroy to that which then to heaven being gone  
Will leave this to control  
And keep these limbs, her Provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewy thread my brain lets fall  
Through every part  
Can tie those parts, and make me one of all,  
These hairs, which upward grew, and strength and art  
Have from a better brain,  
Can better do't; except she meant that I  
By this should know my pain,  
As prisoners then are manacled when they're condemned to die.

Whate'er she meant by 't, bury it with me,  
For since I am  
Love's martyr, it might breed idolatry  
If into others' hands these relics came;  
As 'twas humility  
To afford to it all that a Soul can do,  
So 'tis some bravery  
That since you would save none of me, I bury some of you.

The poem, *The Funeral* is written by John Donne. In this poem the poet expressed his feelings emotions and thoughts after being rejected by his beloved. This poem is full of serious thoughts and light heartedness. After being rejected by his beloved, the poet is distressed and in sheer agony, he wanted to be a martyr on the altar of God of love. The poet said that if his beloved comes to shroud him in other words if she comes to cover his dead body with a cloth, nobody would ask her any question. He puts a lock of her hair in his arm and secured it as a token of love. He explains it as a wreath and the sign and the mystery which nobody is allowed to touch even after his death as he feels it as his outward soul. He thinks that the lock of the hair

## NOTES

will help him even in the journey of heaven. This lock of hair will prevent his dead body from disintegration and decay and will preserve his body after his death. This outward soul will be helpful in achieving immortality and this feeling is very charming for the poet. The poet wishes that he must die as a martyr and the hair of his beloved should be buried with his dead body. because he thinks that otherwise people would start worshipping her hair like a relic after his death and he does not want this. He feels that although his beloved rejected him and does not want any of his memory or anything related to him, but he would wish to bury her hair along with him even after his death. This thing also shows the feeling of revenge against the beloved who has not considered his feelings and emotions for her. The poet wants to put a part of her body in the grave before her death.

The development of thought and the ideas of the poem are taken from the works of other poets and other poems. The central idea of the poem revolves around the lock of the hair of the poet's beloved and this central theme of the poem is taken from another poem named *The Relic*. In the poem *The Relic*, the poet mentioned that the souls of the lover and the beloved meet in their graves with the help of the hair. In that poem the hair is mentioned as a device which helps the souls of the lover and the beloved to spend some time together after death in the graves before the day of judgment. The poet takes the lock of the hair of his beloved and put it in his arm as a bracelet and this is considered as a relic which every man and woman wants at the time of seeking love from the other gender. They think that with the help of this relic there may be miracles, and this would be helpful in bringing the lovers together and make their love story successful. But in the poem *The Funeral* the poet wants the relic to be buried along with his dead body and he believes that this relic would save his body from disintegration and his body would be preserved forever. The second thought which is to be explained is that the beloved's hair acts as a handcuff in the arm of the poet which causes the pain to him and reminds him about her rejection. The third thought of the hair lock developed in the poem is that the poet wants to take revenge from his beloved after her rejection. He wants to get it buried after his death as a symbol of revenge as he thinks that by doing this act he would be able to bury her one body part even before her death. In this poem the lock of hair of the beloved worn by the lover in his arm is expressing the feelings and emotions of the poet which are a great mixture of love, hatred, revenge and agony.

The poet in the poem warns the people not to destroy the lock of hair of his beloved worn as a bracelet in his arm after his death because it is a symbol of charm for him and he thinks that this bracelet would be helpful in preserving his body after his death. He exemplifies the lock of hair with our brain. As brain controls all parts of our body, similarly her hair will help him in holding together the limbs of the body into a complete organic whole. The way, the poet expressed his views in the poem after the rejection of his beloved, it may be possible that his beloved had not been thought in that way.

According to her, her hair was a charming thing for him and she was thinking that it might be the reason of her lover's sufferings. The poet expresses her thoughts of giving punishment to his beloved after her rejection. He wants to commit suicide and to become a martyr of love. He wants to take a part of his beloved to the grave after his death. He is in a hope that she would save him from death and he would not take her body part for burial.

The poem, *The Funeral*, is made of three stanzas. Each stanza has eight lines each but the second, fifth and seventh lines are shorter than the other lines. The poem is a typical poem in which the poet makes use of the conceit of hair. The hair is a thing of satisfaction in the beginning of the poem when the poet wears it as a bracelet in his arm to feel the love of his beloved. After that it becomes a thing of satisfaction when the poet expresses his emotions that the hair would protect his body from disintegration and he would become immortal. But in the end the hair becomes a symbol of anguish when the poet describes that after his death, his beloved's hair must be buried along with his body so that a part of the body of the beloved would be in grave although she will be alive. The poet personified his beloved's hair with the brain and the soul and compared its functioning with both brain and soul. He also compares it with the manacles to exemplify it for his suffering and pain. Thus in this poem the hair is used as a piece of idolatry and a relic. The poet expressed his feelings of frustration and anger with the help of these fanciful images. In brief, the poem shows a series of emotions, sentiments, attitudes and changing moods of a lover who is rejected by his beloved and all his love is centralized around the subtle wreath of the hair of his beloved worn on his arm as a bracelet.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

3. What is the central theme of the poem, *The Funeral*?
4. What is the structural form *The Funeral*?

## 5.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. In his third satire, John Donne wrote about the problems of true religion.
2. John Donne is known as a master of the metaphysical conceit i.e. a poet who uses two different ideas in his poetry into a single idea and often these ideas are imaginary.
3. The central idea of *The Funeral* revolves around the lock of the hair of the poet's beloved and this central theme of the poem is taken from another poem named *The Relic*.

4. The poem, *The Funeral*, is made of three stanzas. Each stanza has eight lines each but the second, fifth and seventh lines are shorter than the other lines.

## NOTES

### 5.5 SUMMARY

- John Donne was born in London on 22 January 1572. He belonged to a Roman Catholic family.
- There is not any type of record details of the places where John Donne traveled. Izaak Walton wrote a biography of John Donne in 1658 in which he had mentioned that John Donne crossed Europe.
- The life of John Donne was filled with sorrows poverty, pains and grievances. The misery of his life is seen in his poetry.
- In 1610 John Donne wrote an anti-Catholic polemics *Pseudo-Martyr* for Morton and in 1611 he wrote another poem *Ignatius His Conclave*.
- John Donne wrote about challenged death. One example of this challenge is his Holy Sonnet X, *Death Be Not Proud*, from which come the famous lines “Death, be not proud, though some have called thee/ Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so.”
- John Donne was known as a metaphysical poet and he was criticized over the years for his metaphysical poetry.
- Dryden had written of Donne in 1693: “He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love.”
- John Donne is known as a master of the metaphysical conceit i.e. a poet who uses two different ideas in his poetry into a single idea and often these ideas are imaginary. As in the poem *The Canonization*, there is an equation of lovers with saints.
- John Donne used to make use of different types of puns, paradoxes, analogies etc. to make his work full of wisdom. His analogies are subtle but are remarkable. His poems are cynical and ironic and are related to the human and love motives.
- The poetry of John Donne changes with the changes in the phases of his life like in the early years of his life, he wrote poetry mainly on love, then after the death of his wife, his poetry is based on death and in the later years of his life he wrote about religion.



- The poem, *The Funeral* is written by John Donne. In this poem the poet expressed his feelings emotions and thoughts after being rejected by his beloved.
- The development of thought and the ideas of the poem are taken from the works of other poets and other poems.
- The central theme of *The Funeral* revolves around the lock of the hair of the poet's beloved and this central theme of the poem is taken from another poem named *The Relic*.
- The poem, *The Funeral*, is made of three stanzas. Each stanza has eight lines each but the second, fifth and seventh lines are shorter than the other lines. The poem is a typical poem in which the poet makes use of the conceit of hair.

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### 5.6 KEY WORDS

- **Biography:** It is an account of someone's life written by someone else.
- **Satire:** It refers to the use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.
- **Religion:** It is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.

### 5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Short Answer Questions

1. Who was John Donne?
2. What do you understand by 'conceit'?
3. Who are metaphysical poets?

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the life and works of John Donne. How did his personal sufferings reflect in his work?
2. Describe the characteristics of Donne's poetry.
3. Critically appreciate John Donne's poem *The Funeral*. How was imagery and paradoxes employed in the poem? Can the poem be categorized as metaphysical? If yes, give valid reasons for your answer.



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## 5.8 FURTHER READINGS

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### NOTES

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## UNIT 6    ANDREW MARVELL: *TO HIS COY MISTRESS*

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Andrew Marvell:  
*To His Coy Mistress*

### NOTES

#### Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 About the Author
  - 6.2.1 Elements of Wit in Marvell's Poetry
- 6.3 Critical Appreciation of *To His Coy Mistress*
- 6.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Key Words
- 6.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 6.8 Further Readings

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### 6.0    INTRODUCTION

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Andrew Marvell is known as one of the most popular writers of the 17th century. Marvell is popular for writing political satire (the use of irony, sarcasm, or ridicule in exposing and denouncing immoral behavior) and lyrical verse. Marvell's writings are composed of lyrics and poetry. Most of Andrew Marvell's written works are based on events from his life or things that occurred during his lifespan. Many of his writings paint a picture for writers to see and experience the story.

This unit critically analyses Marvell's style of writing in his poem *To His Coy Mistress*.

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### 6.1    OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Andrew Marvell
- Explain Marvell's style of writing
- Critically analyse his poem, *To His Coy Mistress*

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### 6.2    ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The son of a priest, Andrew Marvell was born on 31 March 1621, in the church house of a vineyard near Hull of Yorkshire, England. He was the fourth child and the first son of his parents. The fifth and last child of the family, a boy, died at the age of one and Andrew, therefore, grew up as an only son with three sisters, Anne, Mary and Elizabeth.

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Andrew Marvell's contribution to literature may be classified as follows:

- Poems which, for the most part, belong to the years 1650–1652
- Satires, which he wrote on public men and public affairs during the reign of Charles II
- Newsletters, which he regularly addressed to his constituents in Hull after his election as Member of Parliament for that borough in 1659 and which extend from 1660 to the time of his death in 1678
- His controversial Essays on ecclesiastical questions written at intervals between 1672 and 1677

### Poet of Nature

One set of poems by Marvell shows him as an ardent nature lover. These poems include *Upon Appleton House*, *Upon the Hill, Grove at Bilbrough*, *The Garden*, *On a Drop of Dew*, *Bermudas*, *The Picture of Little T.C.*, and *The Nymh Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn*. Then there are the four 'Mower' poems which are more or less in the tradition of pastoral poetry; though the principal character in these poems is a mower, not a shepherd. All these poems show Marvell's detailed observation of nature. Nature, indeed, casts a spell upon him. He finds the appeal of nature to be simply irresistible and he surrenders to her charm with the utmost willingness and joy.

*Upon Appleton House* provides the finest examples of his precise description of nature. In this poem, we have detailed pictures of the flower garden in Lord Fairfax's estate, followed by equally graphic descriptions of the meadows, the river in flood and after the flood. These descriptions are followed by perfectly realistic and vivid pictures of the wood into which the poet withdraws in a contemplative mood. In this part of the poem, the realism and accuracy with which Marvell describes the activities of the nightingale, the doves, and the wood pecker have been admired by every critic and reader.

Here he identifies himself with the birds and growing things:

*Thus I, easy philosopher,*

*Among the birds and trees confer.*

Here he can, 'through the hazels thick, espy the hatching throstle's shining eye.' He has dialogues with the singing birds. The leaves trembling in the wind are to him Sibyl's (mystical or spiritual) leaves. To be covered with the leaves of trees is a delight to him:

*'Under this antic cope I move,*

*Like some great prelate of the grove.'*

In more than forty stanzas of this poem Marvell shows that he is familiar with all aspects of the countryside, the trees and birds and that he has attentively listened to and compared the songs of birds. He feels so

happy and peaceful in the midst of these scenes of nature that he calls upon the trees and the plants to cling to him and not to let him leave this place:

*'Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines,  
Curl me about ye, gadding vines.'*

This is the exalted love for nature of a romantic poet. Joined with this love for nature and for birds, is Marvell's feeling for animals. His suffering when they suffer is voiced with infinite gracefulness in his semi-mythological poem, *The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn*. Here, the girl utters a pathetic lament over the death of her pet animal and this lament is so touching that it cannot but have come from the heart of the poet himself.

In *An Horatian Ode* we have the picture of a falcon thrown casually into the poem in order to convey the idea of Cromwell's obedience to the commons in spite of his fierce nature. The behaviour of the falcon in returning from the sky and perching on the branch of a tree in response to the lure is depicted in just a few lines and shows the accuracy of Marvell's observation. In *Eyes and Tears* there is, in the last but one stanza, a series of brief pictures of nature: two clouds dissolving into two raindrops; two fountains trickling down, and two floods overflowing the banks of the two rivers.

The finest examples of Marvell's sensuous nature-imagery are to be found in *The Garden* and *Bermudas*. In *The Garden*, ripe apples drop on the poet's head, the luscious clusters of grapes squeeze their juice upon his mouth; the nectarine and the peach reach his hands of their own accord; he stumbles on melons; and he is ensnared with flowers. These lines make the reader's mouth begin to water. In *Bermudas*, we have an equally alluring description of fruits. Here we have bright oranges shining like golden lamps in a green night; the pomegranates containing jewels richer than are found in Hormuz; the figs meet the mouths of the visitors without any effort on the part of the latter. The visitors find the melons thrown at their feet. The apples here are of such exquisite quality that no tree could ever bear them twice. The cedars here have been brought from Lebanon. The presence of ambergris on the sea shores is proclaimed by the roaring waves. This whole description makes an irresistible appeal to our senses of taste, smell and sight. It is a richly colourful and sumptuous description. (In the same poem, *Bermudas*, there is a two-line picture of whales which is extremely realistic and highly poetic. The huge sea monsters are imagined as lifting the sea upon their backs).

In certain poems, Marvell's way of looking at natural scenes and phenomena shows his spiritual approach to nature and arouses corresponding spiritual feelings in the reader. *The Garden* is one such poem. Here, after describing the rich fruits growing in the garden, the poet tells us that his mind withdraws from the sensuous pleasure of the fruits into its own happiness. The natural environment puts Marvell into a contemplative mood in which his

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mind can create worlds and seas transcending the actual worlds and seas and in this mood his mind annihilates everything 'to a green thought in a green shade'. At this time, while his body lies somewhere close to the fountains and the fruit trees, his soul glides into the branches and sits there like a bird singing and combing its silver wings in order to prepare itself for a longer flight. The spiritual tranquility and bliss which Marvell experiences here remind him of Adam's bliss in the garden of Eden before Adam's tranquility was broken by his being provided with a companion in the shape of Eve. In the poem, *On a Drop of Dew*, again, a natural phenomenon suggests a spiritual significance, or we might say a spiritual experience of the poet lends a new significance to a dew drop. The poet first gives us a picture of a dew drop, investing this tiny drop of water with a life and a soul, and then goes on to describe the human soul which, he says, comes from heaven and which is anxious to go back to that original abode. The soul of man, says the poet, remembers its previous exalted status and shuns the pleasures of this world. The soul is ever ready to go back to heaven: 'How girt and ready to ascend'! The pleasures of the earthly world are here referred to in terms of the beauty of nature: 'the sweet leaves and blossoms green'.

Marvell was the first to sing on the beauty and glory of gardens and orchards. In them he tastes his dearest delights. *The Garden* forestalls Keats' style by its sensuousness and Wordsworth's by its optimistic and serene meditative mood. Yet Marvell preferred nature in its wild rather than cultivated form. It is in the spirit of charming Perdita in Shakespeare's *The Winters Tale* that Marvell protests, in *The Mower Against Gardens*, against artificial gardening processes such as grafting, budding and selection.

The feeling for nature is sometimes introduced by Marvell into poems which are otherwise inspired by Christianity or by love. In *Bermudas*, Marvell imagines that he hears a Puritan refugee from the Stuart tyranny singing praises to God as he rows along the coast of an island in the Bermudas, safe from the storms and the rage of prelates; and then the singer mentions the sensuous delights provided by nature on this island. Sometimes, Marvell returns to the pastoral, but he gives it a new emphasis of truth, and of realism. The short idyll *Ametas and Thestylis* is very original and graceful and there is also the touching complaint of *Damon the Mower* who, working beneath a burning sun, laments his Juliana's hardness of heart. Nor can we ignore *The Mower to the Glow-Worms* in which Marvell gives us delightful pictures of the light shed by the glow-worms and concludes with a reference to the Mower's disappointment in his love for Juliana. The fanciful picture of the nightingale studying late in the night and composing her matchless songs is especially very pleasing. Then there is the poem called *The Fair Singer* in which the wind and sun image lends the required magnitude to the overpowering appeal of the eyes and the voice of the beloved. Likewise the image of the lovers placed as far apart as the two poles imparts the necessary

magnitude to the situation in the poem *The Definition of Love*. The mention of the Indian Ganges and the English Humber in *To His Coy Mistress* enhances the humour of the opening passage.

Andrew Marvell:  
*To His Coy Mistress*

### Poet of Love

Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature. His love poems include *The Fair Singer*, *The Definition of Love*, *To His Coy Mistress*, *Young Love*, *The Unfortunate Lover*, *The Picture of Little T.C.*, *The Mower to the Glow-worms*, and *Damon the Mower*. Then there are poems in which the theme of love occurs as a subsidiary subject, poems like *Upon Appleton House* and *The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn*. According to one critic, the least satisfactory of the poems of Marvell are those whose theme is love. In the opinion of this critic, Marvell's love poetry has, with the exception of *To His Coy Mistress*, as little passion as Cowley's, while it is as full of conceits. *The Unfortunate Lover*, says this critic, is probably the worst love poem ever written by a man of genius, while *The Definition of Love* is merely a study in the manner of Donne's *Valediction Against Mourning*. Cleverer and more original and somewhat more successful, is *The Gallery*. The two opposite sides of one long picture gallery into which the chambers of the lover's heart have been thrown by breaking down partitions are supposed to be covered with portraits of his lady. On the one side she is drawn in such characters as Aurora and Venus and on the other as an enchantress and a murderess.

The charge of a want of passion in the love poems of Marvell has been confirmed by some other critics also. The abundance of conceits in all the poems of Marvell, whether of love or religion or nature, is a fact which every reader knows. As for the adverse opinion about *The Unfortunate Lover*, most readers might agree. Nonetheless, to say that Marvell's poems of love are, on the whole, the least satisfactory may be too sweeping a statement. *To His Coy Mistress* is, as even this critic agrees, a masterpiece. About it, this critic says that here passion is allowed to take its most natural path, that as a love poem it is unique, and that for sheer power it ranks higher than anything Marvell ever wrote.

In certain respect, Marvell, in his love poems, adopts the established Petrarchan approach, while in other his treatment of love, like his technique or style of expression, is wholly unconventional. The Petrarchan mode, which became very popular with the Elizabethan poets, was to exalt the beloved and to shower glowing and eloquent praises on her beauty and charm. The Petrarchan lover was given to sighing and weeping over the indifference and callousness of his beloved and over the disappointment he felt as a consequence of her attitude. Now, we have these Petrarchan elements in at least three of Marvell's love poems, namely, *The Fair Singer*, *To His Coy*

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*Mistress*, and *The Unfortunate Lover*. In the first of these poems, the lover praises the beauty of his mistress's eyes and voice in extravagant terms, and speaks of her total and complete conquest over his mind and heart. In *To His Coy Mistress*, the lover speaks of the beauty of his mistress' limbs in exaggerated terms, asserting that he needs hundreds and thousands of years to be able to praise them adequately. In *The Unfortunate Lover*, the lover has learnt from the winds and the waves to sigh and to shed tears.

In these three poems, the passion of the lover is as intense as in any Elizabethan love poem. The statement that Marvell's love poems are cold is certainly not true of these three poems. In *The Fair Singer*, the lover says that both beauties of his mistress (the beauty of her eyes and the beauty of her voice) have joined themselves in fatal harmony to bring about his death, and that with her eyes she binds his heart, and with her voice she captivates his mind. He then goes on to speak of the 'curled trammels of her hair' in which his soul has got entangled, and the subtle art with which she can weave fetters for him of the very air he breathes. If a lover can thus speak about his feelings, we cannot say that he is a cold kind of lover. In the poem *To His Coy Mistress*, the passion is equally ardent. While the lover adopts a witty and somewhat sarcastic manner of speaking in the first two stanzas, he becomes truly ardent and spirited in his passion in the last stanza. In this final stanza, he becomes almost fierce in his passion when he suggests that he and she should roll all their strength and all their sweetness up into one ball and should tear their pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life. In *The Unfortunate Lover* also the passion is intense, almost red-hot. The lover here is hit by 'all the winged artillery of cupid' and, like Ajax, finds himself between the 'flames and the waves'. The lover is then depicted as one 'dressed in his own blood'. It is true that the unfortunate man's plight in love is only briefly described because his other misfortunes too form an important part of his story, but his love is certainly not of the lukewarm kind. It is his disappointment in love which constitutes his real tragedy and which brings his life to a painful close.

In the other poems, the passion of love is certainly not very intense, and therefore, T. S. Eliot is right in speaking of 'a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace'. The intellectual element in some of the poems is so strong so as to push the passion of love into the background. These poems have an argumentative quality which has the effect of diminishing the passion. In such poems, the lover feels his love to be very strong. No doubt he gets so entangled in arguing his case that the passion is almost forgotten. *The Definition of Love* is an outstanding example of the argumentative love-lyric. The poem begins with a highly intellectual conceit. His love, says the poet, was begotten by 'despair upon impossibility'. 'Magnanimous despair' alone could show him so divine a thing as his love. He could have achieved the fruition of his love, but fate drove iron wedges and thrust itself between him



and the fulfillment of his love. The poet then goes on to say that fate grows jealous of two perfect lovers and does not permit their union because the union of two lovers would mean the downfall of the power of fate. Fate, the poet goes on to say, has placed him as far away from his beloved as the two poles are from each other, that is, the North Pole and the South Pole. This love can be fulfilled only if the earth undergoes some new convulsion and if the world is cramped into a plan sphere. The poet next compares his own love and his mistress' love to parallel lines which can never meet even if stretched to infinity. Finally, the poet describes the love between him and his mistress as the 'conjunction of the mind' and the 'opposition of the stars'. The whole poem is a kind of logically developed argument in which the passion itself is almost forgotten and the speaker's chief concern is to establish the utter hopelessness of true love, the villain in the case being fate. The conceits in the poem are audaciously far-fetched. It is a learned poem in which every subject of the academic trivia is exploited in turn. Marvell, here, has made the fullest use of the logic which he had learnt at Cambridge. Geometry and astronomy are pressed into the service of logic here. It is a thoroughly unconventional kind of love poem and it occupies a unique position in the whole range of English love poetry.

The poem *Young Love* has an unusual theme wherein the poet's arguments are more pronounced than the theme of love. It is logic that dominates the poem.

The theme of the poem revolves around a grown-up man's attraction towards a girl in her early teens (around thirteen or fourteen) and the girl's logic for not responding to his 'love'. The man tries to persuade the girl with his arguments that it is the right time for them to fall in love and be with each other as time will fly fast and this opportunity will never remain. The lover wants the immature girl to take a quick decision and not wait to attain further maturity. He does not want to wait for another one to two years for her to turn fifteen. He is not confident that fate will favour them, and hence is in haste.

The whole poem is one extended argument, and the originality of the poem lies in the manner in which the argument is developed. Although the response of the girl is not included in the poem, an element of disappointment is briefly introduced. Interestingly, the main subject of *The Nymph Complaining* is the death of a pet fawn. Despite this, the theme of love is dominant.

The poem speaks of the girl's suffering at the hands of her 'lover' Sylvio at equal breath as her suffering at the loss of her pet fawn by the wanton troopers. The girl, the nymph, is not portrayed as cold-hearted but had intense feeling for Sylvio who deserted her.

The poem speaks of the strong love of the first Fairfax for Miss Thwait whom he was able ultimately to win as his bride in spite of the opposition of the nuns and her own excessive modesty, as related in the poem, *Upon Appleton*

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*House*. In these two poems, however, the passion of love is not much dwelt upon; it is merely indicated and we have ourselves to imagine its intensity.

In the pastoral poems, too, the passion of love does not find any direct expression. For instance, in *The Mower to the Glow-Worms*, the speaker mentions his love only in the last stanza, as a kind of after thought. So it could be regarded as a cold poem.

### 6.2.1 Elements of Wit in Marvell's Poetry

The word 'wit' has several meanings. It means intelligence or understanding; it also means the capacity to amuse others by an unexpected combination of ideas or a contrast between ideas or expressions. These are the two most common meanings of the word 'wit'. In the second sense, wit is allied to humour. However, the word 'wit' has had certain other connotations as well, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For instance, Alexander Pope described 'wit' as being that which has been often thought but was never before so well-expressed. Dr Johnson described wit, in relation to the metaphysical poets, as a kind of *Discordia concors* or a combination of dissimilar images. The metaphysical poets, according to Johnson, put together the most varied ideas by violence; and they ransacked both nature and art for illustrations, comparisons and illusions. This was Dr Johnson's way of explaining the kind of conceits which are found in abundance in the poetry of Donne and his followers. Then, in the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot has used the word 'wit' in relation to Marvell in his own way, meaning by it 'a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace'. Now, the poetry of Marvell contains all these kinds of wit and contains them in abundance.

Wit in the sense of the capacity to amuse or entertain by employing words in unexpected combinations or by means of unexpected comparisons and contrasts or by means of ingenious ideas is to be found to a most striking degree in Marvell's poem *To His Coy Mistress*. We are here amused, in the opening passage, by the very idea that, if the lovers had enough space and enough time, the mistress could easily search for rubies by the Indian Ganges, and the lover could complain by the banks of the river Humber in England. We are amused by the idea that the lover would love her from ten years before the Flood, and that she could refuse his love till the conversion of the Jews; and that the lover would be able to spend hundreds and thousands of years in praising the beauty of the mistress's limbs. Here 'wit' arises from what is known as hyperbole or an exaggerated manner of speaking. The notions stated by the lover here tickle our minds and we smile with amusement. In the second stanza, we have an example of wit in the lover's remark that, in the grave, worms would try the long-preserved virginity of the mistress. Here wit arises from the very unexpectedness of the possibility which the lover visualizes because ordinarily we never think of worms in the context of the seduction of a woman. Then the lover makes another witty observation

when he says that the grave is a fine and private place but that nobody can enjoy the pleasure of embracing his beloved there. Here, we are amused by the lover's sarcastic remark.

The same kind of wit may be found in *A Dialogue between the Soul and Body*. Here we feel amused by the manner in which the soul and the body attack each other. The very idea of the two being regarded as separate entities is funny. Then the manner in which the complaints and grievances are given vent to is quite entertaining, in spite of the serious intention of the author in writing the poem. For instance, we feel greatly amused to read the soul describing itself as a prisoner who stands fettered in feet and handcuffed, with bolts of bones; here blinded with an eye, and there deaf with the drumming of an ear. The body amuses us equally by its retort when it complains that the soul, stretched upright inside the body, impales the body in such a way that the body goes about as 'its own precipice'. It may be pointed out that the speakers themselves are not to be regarded here as being consciously witty, but somehow their attacks and counter-attacks do produce the effect of wit. There is no such wit or amusing effect in *A Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure*, the whole of this poem being characterized by an atmosphere of solemnity.

In *An Horatian Ode*, we have a couple of examples of wit arising from the use of irony. When the poet uses the phrase 'wiser art' in connection with the role of Cromwell in the flight of King Charles I from Hampton Court, he is employing irony. Apparently, Marvell here pays a compliment to Cromwell but actually he is hinting at Cromwell's cunning and crafty nature. Similarly, Marvell seems to be ironical when, at the end of this poem, he says that the same arts, through which Cromwell gained power, will be required to maintain or retain that power. Thus, a paradox may serve as a source of wit. The best example of this is to be found in the following two lines from *The Garden*:

*Two paradises 'twere in one  
To live in Paradise alone.*

Then we come to Marvell's use of wit in the sense of unexpected metaphors, the putting together of heterogeneous ideas and images and ingenious or far-fetched notions. Actually, the wit in the poem *To His Coy Mistress* proceeds from conceits of this kind, because Marvell makes use of certain fantastic assumptions such as the lovers having enough time and space at their disposal. Nevertheless, all metaphysical conceits are not witty in the sense of having the capacity to amuse or entertain. We have, for instance, a metaphysical conceit in the poem *On a Drop of Dew*, but the conceit here is of a kind that produces the effect of sublimity. The conceit in this poem lies in the connection which the poet establishes between a dew drop and the human soul, a connection which normally we would never think of. The poet here first describes a dew drop lying lightly on a rose petal, and then

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expresses the unexpected idea that the dew drop is gazing wistfully upon the sky, and is shining with a mournful light because it feels sad at having been separated from heaven. In this context, the dew drop is 'like its own tear'. Then the poet proceeds to describe the human soul which also, according to him, feels sad in this world because it recollects its original abode in heaven. Both the dew drop and the soul will ultimately dissolve, like Manna (mentioned in the Bible), and 'run into the glories of the Almighty Sun.' In this poem, the word 'wit', therefore, means a fantastic and far-fetched notion or idea or comparison.

In *The Coronet*, we also have an example of wit of this kind in the poet's idea that his garlands would at least crown the feet of Christ, though they could not crown his head. We also have the same kind of wit in the conceited notion that the poet's motives of fame and self-interest in offering his tribute to Christ represent 'the old serpent' which, says the poet, should be crushed by Christ's feet.

Wit of the same variety is to be found in the metaphysical conceits of the poem *Eyes and Tears*. Here tears are compared to watery lines and plummets. Then we have the conceited notion that two tears have long been weighed within the scales of the poet's two eyes and then been paid out in equal poise. Another example of wit, in the sense of ingenuity and the unexpectedness of the image, is found in the idea that the sun first makes the water on the earth evaporate and then sends it back to the earth out of a feeling of pity. Next, two eyes swollen with weeping are compared to full sails hasting homewards, to the chaste lady's pregnant womb, and to 'Cynthia teeming' that is, the full moon. Also, the poem goes on like that, one witty image following another, not witty in the sense of amusing or entertaining, but in the sense of far-fetched, original, and clever.

### Check Your Progress

1. State one example of Marvell's poem that establishes him as a poet of nature.
2. How is Marvell's lyric poetry divided?

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## 6.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *TO HIS COY MISTRESS*

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In *To His Coy Mistress* a lover addresses his beloved who refuses to grant him sexual favours on account of her modesty and her sense of honour. The lover says that her coyness or sexual reluctance would have been justified if they had enough space and time at their disposal. If they had enough space at their disposal, she could have occupied herself by searching for rubies on

the banks of the Indian river, the Ganga, while he would complain about his unfulfilled love on the banks of the river Humber in England. If they had enough time at their disposal, he would have started loving her ten years before the great flood (mentioned in the Bible) while she could refuse to satisfy his desire till the Judgment Day when the Jews might agree to be converted to Christianity. If they really had enough time, he would spend a hundred years in praising her eyes and gazing on her forehead; he would spend two hundred years in admiring each of her breasts; and he would spend thirty thousand years in praising the remaining parts of her body. She really deserves so much praise and adoration, says the lover.

However, all this is not possible; the lover goes on to say. Time is passing at a very fast pace, and eventually they have to face the 'deserts of vast eternity'. After some years, her beauty will no longer be found on this earth. She will lie in her marble tomb, and he would no longer be there to sing his love song. There, in the grave, worms will attack her long-preserved virginity. Her sense of honour will then turn to dust, and his desire to make love to her will then turn to ashes. The grave is a fine and private place, but nobody can enjoy the pleasure of love making there.

Therefore, it would be appropriate for both of them to enjoy the pleasures of love when there is still time, when her skin is still youthful and fresh, and when her responsive soul is still burning with a desire for lovemaking. They should, like amorous birds of prey, devour the pleasures of love, which now time still permits them to enjoy, rather than that they should suffer the pangs of unsatisfied love. They should roll all their strength and all their sweetness into one cannon-ball and shoot it through the iron gates of life. (In other words, they should enjoy the pleasure of love making with all their energy and vigour, and they should even become fierce in extracting the maximum pleasure from their love-making). If they cannot arrest the passage of time, they can at least quicken time's speed of passing.

*Had we but world enough and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down, and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day.  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the flood,  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow*

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*Vaster than empires and more slow;  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.  
But at my back I always hear  
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long-preserved virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust;  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none, I think, do there embrace.  
Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may,  
And now, like amorous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour  
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.  
Let us roll all our strength and all  
Our sweetness up into one ball,  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Through the iron gates of life:  
Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.*



## Explanation

Andrew Marvell:  
*To His Coy Mistress*

*To His Coy Mistress* is probably the best-known poem of Andrew Marvell and his most popular one. It is a love poem in which the speaker offers a strong plea for the beloved to soften towards him and to relax her rigid attitude of Puritanical reluctance and to grant him sexual favours. The lover, who may be the poet himself, builds up a really strong case and supports it with arguments which no sensible woman can reject. The poem has, what is known as, a *carpe diem* theme. (*Carpe diem* is a Latin phrase meaning: 'seize the day.' The full Latin sentence is: '*Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*' which means: 'Enjoy the present day, trusting the least possible to the future'.)

The poem is written in the form of what is known as a syllogism. A syllogism means an argument developed in a strictly logical form and leading to a definite conclusion. In a syllogism there are three stages which may be indicated by three words initiating each stage in the argument. These three words are: 'if', 'but'; 'therefore'. This poem is divisible into three clearly marked sections. The first section begins with 'if': 'Had we but world enough, and time.' In this line, the word 'had' conveys the sense of 'if', and the line means: 'If we had only enough space and time at our disposal.' The second section of the poem begins with the word 'but': 'But at my back I always hear'. And the third section begins with 'therefore': 'Now, therefore, while the youthful hue'. Thus, the poem begins with the statement of a condition; then reasons are given why that condition cannot be fulfilled and finally a conclusion is drawn. The conclusion of the poem is that the lovers should lose no time in enjoying the pleasures of love. The conclusion justifies us in saying that the theme of the poem is that of *carpe diem*, which means that one should enjoy the present day.

There are a number of concrete pictures in the poem and a whole series of metaphysical conceits. The very notion of the lover that, having enough space and time at their disposal, they would be able to wander as far apart as the Indian Ganges and the English Humber is fantastic. Then the lover's saying that he would love his mistress from a time ten years before the Flood and would spend hundreds and thousands of years in admiring and adoring various parts of her body constitutes another metaphysical conceit. The picture of Time's winged chariot hurrying and coming closer and closer to overtake the lovers vividly brings before our minds the rapid passing of time.

Here, an abstract idea has been made concrete by means of a metaphor, and this is a realistic picture in contrast to the metaphysical conceits noted above, though there is a conceit in the image of Time as having a winged chariot. The pictures of the woman lying in her grave and the worms attacking her long preserved virginity and her honour turning to dust are conceits because worms are regarded here as being capable of seducing a woman and

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a dead woman at that. Then we have metaphysical conceits in the concluding stanza, where the mistress's willing soul is depicted as giving out instant fires at every pore and the lovers are imagined as rolling their strength and their sweetness into one ball and tearing their pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life.

The witty manner in which the poet argues his case is note worthy. In fact, the whole poem is characterized by metaphysical wit, and a streak of irony runs through it. The lover is mocking at his mistress's coyness. If the lovers had enough time, the beloved would be in a position to refuse till the conversion of the Jews. This is a witty and ironical remark. Then the lover speaks of his 'vegetable love' growing vaster than empires. The manner in which the lover would have spent hundreds and thousands of years to admire her beauties is also described in a witty manner. Here, we have an example of a witty exaggeration.

The style of the poem is marked by compression and economy in the use of words. There is a concentration of meaning in the lines, and the poet shows a remarkable skill in compressing his ideas in the fewest possible words. The idea of time passing rapidly has admirably been compressed in four lines, and the idea of all the beauty and charm of the woman coming to nothing has also been stated in only a few words. Some of the lines have an epigrammatic quality, for example:

- i. *Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song.*
- ii. *The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.*

Even the two opening lines of the poem have an epigrammatic quality.

### Important stanzas for explanation

- (i) *'I would love you ten years ..... Jews.'*

These are very amusing lines, like those which follow. The lover says that he would have started loving his mistress from ten years before the Flood. This Flood is mentioned in the Bible and is believed to have occurred in the year 2354 BC. The conversion of the Jews is expected to take place only a little before Doomsday. This means that the lover would have started loving nearly 2500 years ago, and the mistress would be free to refuse his love till a little before Doomsday. According to the calculations of a critic, the period of the lover's love would extend over 30,600 years. The phrase 'the conversion of the Jews' implies impossibility.

(ii) *Let us roll all our strength the iron..... gates of life.*

Several interpretations of the word 'ball' have been suggested by critics. However, the most satisfactory interpretation is to regard the ball as a cannon-ball which crashes through the iron gates of a town. The whole idea in these lines, therefore, is that the lovers would invade life and time with the violence of their love making. Their love making is not to be of the ordinary, common kind which is generally characteristic of weak, anaemic people. The passion of the lovers in the poem is intense and ardent. They will tolerate no obstacle in their way, but would extract the maximum possible pleasure from love making; and their pleasure, like their passion, would be of a fierce kind.

Andrew Marvell:  
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### Check Your Progress

3. What is the plot of Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*?
4. What is a syllogism?

## 6.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. *Upon Appleton House* provides the finest examples of Marvell's precise description of nature. In this poem, we have detailed pictures of the flower garden in Lord Fairfax's estate, followed by equally graphic descriptions of the meadows, the river in flood and after the flood.
2. Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature.
3. In *To His Coy Mistress* a lover addresses his beloved who refuses to grant him sexual favours on account of her modesty and her sense of honour.
4. A syllogism means an argument developed in a strictly logical form and leading to a definite conclusion.

## 6.5 SUMMARY

- The son of a priest, Andrew Marvell was born on 31 March 1621, in the church house of a vineyard near Hull of Yorkshire, England.
- One set of poems by Marvell shows him as an ardent nature lover. These poems include *Upon Appleton House*, *Upon the Hill*, *Grove at*

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*Bilbrough, The Garden, On a Drop of Dew, Bermudas, The Picture of Little T.C., and The Nymh Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn.*

- *Upon Appleton House* provides the finest examples of his precise description of nature. In this poem, we have detailed pictures of the flower garden in Lord Fairfax's estate, followed by equally graphic descriptions of the meadows, the river in flood and after the flood.
- In *An Horatian Ode* we have the picture of a falcon thrown casually into the poem in order to convey the idea of Cromwell's obedience to the commons in spite of his fierce nature.
- The finest examples of Marvell's sensuous nature-imagery are to be found in *The Garden* and *Bermudas*.
- In certain poems, Marvell's way of looking at natural scenes and phenomena shows his spiritual approach to nature and arouses corresponding spiritual feelings in the reader. *The Garden* is one such poem.
- Marvell was the first to sing on the beauty and glory of gardens and orchards. In them he tastes his dearest delights.
- The feeling for nature is sometimes introduced by Marvell into poems which are otherwise inspired by Christianity or by love.
- Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature.
- Marvell's love poems include *The Fair Singer, The Definition of Love, To His Coy Mistress, Young Love, The Unfortunate Lover, The Picture of Little T.C., The Mower to the Glow-worms, and Damon the Mower*.
- The charge of a want of passion in the love poems of Marvell has been confirmed by some other critics also. The abundance of conceits in all the poems of Marvell, whether of love or religion or nature, is a fact which every reader knows.
- In certain respect, Marvell, in his love poems, adopts the established Petrarchan approach, while in other his treatment of love, like his technique or style of expression, is wholly unconventional.
- The Petrarchan mode, which became very popular with the Elizabethan poets, was to exalt the beloved and to shower glowing and eloquent praises on her beauty and charm.
- Wit in the sense of the capacity to amuse or entertain by employing words in unexpected combinations or by means of unexpected comparisons and contrasts or by means of ingenious ideas is to be found to a most striking degree in Marvell's poem *To His Coy Mistress*.

- *To His Coy Mistress* is probably the best-known poem of Andrew Marvell and his most popular one. It is a love poem in which the speaker offers a strong plea for the beloved to soften towards him and to relax her rigid attitude of Puritanical reluctance and to grant him sexual favours.
- *To His Coy Mistress* is written in the form of what is known as a syllogism. A syllogism means an argument developed in a strictly logical form and leading to a definite conclusion. In a syllogism there are three stages which may be indicated by three words initiating each stage in the argument.

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### 6.6 KEY WORDS

- **Puritan:** It refers to a member of a group of English Protestants of the late 16th and 17th centuries who regarded the Reformation of the Church under Elizabeth I as incomplete and sought to simplify and regulate forms of worship.
- **Imagery:** It refers to visually descriptive or figurative language, especially in a literary work.
- **Petrarchan:** Denoting a sonnet of the kind used by the Italian poet Petrarch, with an octave rhyming abbaabba, and a sestet typically rhyming cdedcd or cdecde.

### 6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on elements of wit in Marvell's poetry.
2. Discuss the Petrarchan influence in Marvell's poetry.
3. What was Marvell's contribution to literature?

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Exemplify the use of 'Wit' in Marvell's poem *To His Coy Mistress*.
2. Give a detailed description of Andrew Marvell's poetry that establishes him as a poet of nature and a poet of love.
3. What is the central theme of *To His Coy Mistress*. Critically analyse the poem and comment.
4. How is imagery used by Marvell in his poems?

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## 6.8 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 7    GEORGE HERBERT: *THE PULLEY*

### NOTES

#### Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 About the Author
- 7.3 Critical Appreciation of *The Pulley*
  - 7.3.1 Myth and Conceit in *The Pulley*
  - 7.3.2 George Herbert and Metaphysical Conceit
- 7.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 7.5 Summary
- 7.6 Key Words
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- 7.8 Further Readings

### 7.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit continues the theme of using metaphysical conceits as discussed in previous units. *The Pulley* by George Herbert is a religious, metaphysical poem which centers on the ‘pulley’ as a prime conceit in the poem. Herbert wants to unveil the truth that why human beings are so restless and unsatisfying despite having all the things he wants. A pulley signifies how strength is used to pull the pulley. Similarly, to pull mankind back to the God, back to his origin, God keeps man away from the ‘rest.’ This can only be possible in the metaphysical conceits and therefore, the title is thematic in nature.

A detailed analysis of George Herbert’s poem *The Pulley* is given in this unit.

### 7.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of George Herbert
- Assess Herbert’s style of writing
- Analyse Herbert’s use of metaphysical conceit
- Critically analyse his poem, *The Pulley*

### 7.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George Herbert was born on 3 April 1593. He was the fifth son in a famous Welsh family. Herbert’s mother, Magdalen Newport, is known to be a patron

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of the eminent literary writer John Donne. It is believed that Donne dedicated his *Holy Sonnets* to her.

George Herbert could not enjoy his father's company for long. His father died when George was only three-years old. As a result, Magdalen was entrusted with the responsibility to raise ten children, all on her own. She was confident that she will be able to educate and provide a healthy upbringing to her children. At the age of ten, Herbert went to study at Westminster School. Later on, he won scholarships at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Herbert received his graduation degree in 1613 and completed his post-graduation in 1616. Later on, he was elected as a major fellow of Trinity. Almost immediately after graduating from college, Herbert was appointed as reader in Rhetoric at Cambridge. By 1620, he was elected a public orator. This was a post which gave Herbert the chance to represent Cambridge at public gatherings and platforms. For two successive years, 1624 and 1625, Herbert was elected as representative to the Parliament. In 1627, Herbert resigned from his role as an orator. In 1629, he tied the knot with Jane Danvers. By 1630, Herbert 'took holy orders in the Church of England'. Henceforth, until his death, Herbert spent his life discharging the role of rector in Bemerton near Salisbury. In Bemerton, apart from preaching, he spent a considerable time writing poetry and helping the community by rebuilding the church from his own funds. Herbert had composed a practical manual during his stay in Bemerton, known as *A Priest to the Temple*.

In 1633, Herbert died of consumption. He was only forty. *A Priest to the Temple* came out in print in 1633. Scholars have highlighted the popularity of book by pointing out that the book had been reprinted as many as twenty times since the year 1680.

George Herbert's poems will always be remembered for the deep religious devotion they reflect, for their linguistic accuracy and fluidity in rhyme. The great Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge had written: 'Nothing can be more pure, manly, or unaffected,' in the context of Herbert's use of language in his poetry.

### Conceit and metaphysical conceit

The word 'conceit' means 'a concept or an image'. In simpler terms, it is a figure of speech that brings out interesting or striking comparison between two different things, or situations or ideas to create a new concept. The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit: (a) the Petrarchan conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit. We will more or less focus on metaphysical conceit that was mainly employed by the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century like John Donne, Andrew Marvell and George Herbert.



Metaphysical poetry was in vogue during the seventeenth century. It was popularized by John Donne. Later on, many of his literary successors like Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and Richard Crashaw carried on the tradition.

*George Herbert: The Pulley*

The metaphysical poets 'shared a philosophical point of view and strongly opposed the mode of the idealized human nature and of physical love which was a tradition in Elizabethan poetry'. Initially, the 'metaphysical' school of poetry was looked down upon by the earlier writers. For instance, Ben Jonson had remarked, 'Donne deserved hanging because he had run roughshod over the conventional rhythm and imagery and smoothness of the Elizabethan poetry.'

Distinct characteristics of metaphysical poetry include extreme use of puns, allegories and conceits which are incorporated into the ordinary speech. Metaphysical poetry is marked by 'its exaltation of wit' that indicated 'nimbleness of thought' during the seventeenth century. The phrases and terms incorporated by these poets in their writing were inspired from various fields of knowledge. The metaphysical poets were extremely well read. Their writing reflected their high education as well as the vastness of the knowledge. Their poems exposed their deep faith in matters of life and religion. Whereas, if we consider the love poems, then we see that the neo-platonic concept of ideal love is glorified and sensuousness, along with physical beauty, receives a backseat. They highlighted the tension arousing in matters of love by incorporating realism in their poetry.

Speaking about the metaphysical writers in his essay, T. S. Eliot opines that the metaphysical poets used the conceit as a prominent tool to challenge the existing imagery used in the contemporary writings 'in order to stimulate both emotions and intellects'. It is also believed that they tried to express their highly sensitive mind and thought process through their poems. They invariably tried to bring together the human body to understand the notion of completion in their poetry.

Scholars suggest that the metaphysical conceit is a process by which a logical argument is presented in a poetic manner. Critic Baldick suggests that metaphysical poetry '... is an unusual or elaborate metaphor or simile presenting a surprisingly apt parallel between two apparently dissimilar things or feelings'.

Metaphysical poetry flourished at an age that coincided with the development of age of reason. It is argued by many that metaphysical poetry was the end product of the various movements that were taking place as a consequence of social, political, economic, and religious conditions that were prevalent in that age.

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### 7.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *THE PULLEY*

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The poem, *The Pulley*, centres on the theme of relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man. God, the ultimate father-figure to mankind, uses his special pulley to draw man back to him, once man's scheduled quota is over on this planet earth. He (God) does it for the good of mankind. *The Pulley* portrays the life of a man as he grows up experiencing certain aspects of life and in the process developing a relationship with God through this pulley.

*When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
'Let us,' said he, 'pour on him all we can.  
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,  
Contract into a span.'*

*So strength first made a way;  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.  
When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.*

*'For if I should,' said he,  
'Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;  
So both should losers be.*

*Yet let him keep the rest,  
But keep them with repining restlessness;  
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.'*

#### Explanation

In this famous poem by George Herbert, an analogy is drawn between a pulley and Pandora's box. As the Pandora's box keeps all the evils of the world, anyone who opens it only takes the risk of spreading all the evil contained in the box and this process cannot be undone. Whereas in the poem *The Pulley*,

Herbert suggests that God controls everyone through a metaphorical pulley so that God can keep man under control and pull on a man to come to his salvation; hence, denying him the temptation not to undo the Pandora's box. The very initial lines of the poem, state that:

*When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessing standing by,  
Let us (he said) pour all on him we can.*

These lines points to the reader that when God created man, he gave the best of everything he had in his possession to him. God almost poured his own image in man. He has blessed man with prosperity and has endowed him with all the riches because God realizes that man deserve these privileges. God has done this out of the goodness he stores in his heart for the mankind.

The reader must understand that after God blessed man by creating him, next he filled man with gifts such as, wisdom, honour and pleasure; rare yet incomprehensibly precious. After this, God gave man everything he could give to make man different of all the species:

*When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.*

After blessing man with so much good, God decided to take rest. Thus, suggesting that God is beyond comparison in his ability to be so generous. He parted with whatever he had and decided not to keep anything for himself. The word 'rest' creates a pun because it means both physical rest and the notion of being left behind.

Moving on, Herbert says that God has showered all his gifts on man but man is foolish to worship the gifts while ignoring God. And since this happens, Herbert suggest, 'And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature: / So both should be losers.'

To elaborate further, if the man worships the gifts and not God, then both man and God are unsuccessful in their intentions. Man did not realize that God is the ultimate being and creator and he should not forget God while lingering after the gifts that God has given him. Moreover, God too failed because he did not give that wisdom to man to understand as to what he should worship. Thus, man choses a different path and moves further away from God. Each of them are definitely unsuccessful because the man chooses to go after something not pious and not precious as God had originally intended. However, this is the choice which each and every human must decide upon, because, needless to say, Pandora's box is extremely tempting but it is up to man to realize that God is doing everything that he can do out of his love for humanity.

George Herbert: *The Pulley*

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The last segment of the poem, states, 'Yet let him keep the rest, / But keep them with repining restlessness.' Here, Herbert insists that both God and man are failures.

God insists that the man must keep the gifts, but this leads to him being discontent in every aspect of his life due to the transitory choices he makes. Herbert goes on to suggest:

*Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to My breast.*

Thus, God finally decided that the man may remain rich but weary. Since God's goodness could not make man to worship him, then let these troubles and worries make people return to God. In this manner, we are back to discussing the pulley which was talked about in the early part of the poem. Human beings, in general, have a choice. The individual can either chose to remain weary and lead a miserable life. Nevertheless, he can also take recourse to good that God has made for him; thus, continuing to remain under his protection forever. God specifically wants the best for his prized creation. God desires that man will worship him of his own will. Yet, if this does not happen then let through despair, he will be drawn back to God and in the process have the good life that he possess.

To no one's surprise, God has intentionally withheld the gift of rest from man. As God is fully aware that his other treasures would finally result in bringing upon a spiritual restlessness and fatigue in man. Man will after all grow tired with his material gifts that he has provided. Soon humans will turn to God in exhaustion and desperation. Certainly, God is omniscient and prophetic. He is fully aware that the wicked might not come back to him, yet at the same time, he knows that his mortal creation will linger in lethargy. At this point of time, 'his lassitude, then, would be the leverage.'

Once the reader goes through this poem, he will realize that God is only seeking to make the best possible life for all humans. Herbert prays that people might get the right powers to choose the correct path and follow God because the latter has created them. For some reason, if man decided not to choose the right path, then he will be surrounded by the Pandora's box. This will continue as long as he does not decide to change his course of action and worship the almighty. Through this poem, Herbert is trying to make a very strong point. According to the poet, God has created man but human beings are prone to mistakes. Thus, God has made a metaphorical pulley which will constantly remind human beings that they are still connected, yet they need that extra pull at times to remind them of the God's existence.

### 7.3.1 Myth and Conceit in *The Pulley*

George Herbert: *The Pulley*

Many critics consider the poem, *The Pulley*, containing a myth of origins. Yet many others suggest that it is a moral and spiritual fable. However, both these genres overlap because of the way the poem is presented. According to Herbert, someone's devotional responsibility is perfectly consistent with the flow that decides his personality. The poem is short and yet simple, but Herbert manages to reaffirm several key facts. The approach to creation myth emphasizes the dignity of humankind. This dignity is bestowed by God, who is always considered to be thoughtful, generous apart from being kind. In the *Book of Genesis*, the story of creation that we come across says that a spiritual breath raised dusty clay to life and this living being was Adam. Nevertheless, in Herbert's poem, the creation appears to be even more wonderful because humanity as well as humankind is projected as the summation of all the riches that the world possesses. Moreover, God is a being that can easily and cordially communicate with all his creations—living and non-living.

Along with this emphasis on the dignity of humankind, there is, however, a carefully drawn difference; beauty, strength, wisdom, honour along with pleasure are all integral and vital aspects of humankind. Yet, these are not sufficient to guarantee the spiritual health of the people. Only for this purpose, human beings need rest and this is one quality that God has held back. Thus, the independence of human beings is definitely curtailed. *The Pulley* never suggests that humankind is miserably flawed or impotent, or life that we come across in the world of nature is insignificant or useless. Herbert opines that life can, definitely, be 'rich'. Nevertheless, the poem highlights the limitations of human beings and the liabilities that one comes across while undergoing this earthly existence.

*The Pulley* is one of those rare poems which are replete with meaning. God is presented as a being who knows everything and has clear knowledge about how eventually life will turn out to be.

This poem begins with the story of God creating man and goes on to say:

*'For if I should' said he,  
'Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
and rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;  
So both should losers be.*

Here, we see that God is tense that man might prefer to rest in nature, while ignoring him completely. God was definitely aware that his treasures would eventually tire man and exhaust him. He desired that man should find true rest only in him. God wanted all of us to rest in him, for he is the only one who is able to give the best while the rest appear desperately seeking comfort.

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**7.3.2 George Herbert and Metaphysical Conceit****NOTES**

George Herbert employs a single conceit throughout his compositions. In the poem, *Easter Wings*, the conceit that keeps recurring throughout the work is depicted through the print shape that is spread upon the page. While in *The Pulley*, the conceit is visible through the content that the poem presents. Herbert takes on an argumentative tone while trying to express the relationship that God has with his creation that of ‘the whimsical man and the logical power’. The conceit that we come across here appears in the image of the pulley that continuously moves in a pleasing manner, trying to carry heavy loads that will signify the tensed and restless condition of man during his life:

*When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
‘Let us,’ said he, ‘pour on him all we can:  
Let the world’s riches, which dispersed lie,  
Contract into a span.’*

This specific poem, just like his other poetic output, underline that Herbert was a devotional preacher. He was definitely burdened by an inner conflict that was spiritual in nature, especially between his worldly desires and the commitment that he owed towards his religious duties that he graced in the capacity of a priest. His poems, in general, speak about the fact that he considered life as something ‘worthless’ and ‘unprofitable’.

**Notion of Sleep and *The Pulley***

In the context of the mechanical operation that we come across in the poem through the imagery of a pulley, the same kind of leverage and force when ‘applied makes the difference for the weight being lifted’. The same idea is applied to man in this composition by Herbert. One can definitely suggest that the denial of rest by God is actually the leverage that will make it possible to hoist or draw mankind towards the almighty. However, if we look at the first line of the last stanza, we realize that Herbert puns with the word ‘rest’, implying that it may be God’s will, after all, allow man to ‘keep the rest’. Yet, such a reading will appear to lessen the intensity behind the poem’s conceit. Rest, which also implies sleep, is an idea that was definitely plaguing the minds of the Renaissance writers.

One can come across numerous Shakespearian plays which speak about sleep or denial of it as a result of some punishment or due to some heinous sins committed. For example, in *Macbeth*, King Macbeth is said to ‘lack the season of all natures, sleep’ while both he and Lady Macbeth are tortured due to lack of sleep. If we consider the case of Othello, we realize that even he is disconcerted by the fact that he is not being able to sleep peacefully.

Especially, once Iago tries to poison him with a remote possibility that his wife might be infidel to him and preferring Cassio over him. Hence, considering the poem in this context, we realize Herbert's *The Pulley* does not provide us with any new concept. Rather, the ideas presented in the poem are extremely commonplace, especially, if we consider for seventeenth century religious poems that were composed by Herbert and his contemporaries. Though the most distinctive feature of this metaphysical poem is the religious tone it conveys through a secular as well scientific image that not just requires the reader's friendliness with the subject matter but also expects certain knowledge of some basic laws of physical sciences.

George Herbert: *The Pulley*

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### Check Your Progress

1. Define conceit.
2. Name the two types of conceits.
3. What does the distinct characteristics of metaphysical poetry include?
4. What is the central theme of *The Pulley*?

## 7.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The word 'conceit' means 'a concept or an image'. In simpler terms, it is a figure of speech that brings out interesting or striking comparison between two different things, or situations or ideas to create a new concept.
2. The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit: (a) the Petrarchan conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit.
3. Distinct characteristics of metaphysical poetry include extreme use of puns, allegories and conceits which are incorporated into the ordinary speech.
4. The poem, *The Pulley*, centres on the theme of relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man.

## 7.5 SUMMARY

- George Herbert was born on 3 April 1593. George Herbert's poems will always be remembered for the deep religious devotion they reflect, for their linguistic accuracy and fluidity in rhyme.
- The word 'conceit' means 'a concept or an image'. In simpler terms, it is a figure of speech that brings out interesting or striking comparison



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between two different things, or situations or ideas to create a new concept.

- The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit: (a) the Petrarchan conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit.
- Metaphysical poetry was in vogue during the seventeenth century. It was popularized by John Donne. Later on, many of his literary successors like Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and Richard Crashaw carried on the tradition.
- The metaphysical poets ‘shared a philosophical point of view and strongly opposed the mode of the idealized human nature and of physical love which was a tradition in Elizabethan poetry’.
- Speaking about the metaphysical writers in his essay, T. S. Eliot opines that the metaphysical poets used the conceit as a prominent tool to challenge the existing imagery used in the contemporary writings ‘in order to stimulate both emotions and intellects’.
- Scholars suggest that the metaphysical conceit is a process by which a logical argument is presented in a poetic manner.
- The poem, *The Pulley*, centres on the theme of relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man. God, the ultimate father-figure to mankind, uses his special pulley to draw man back to him, once man’s scheduled quota is over on this planet earth.
- In *The Pulley* by George Herbert, an analogy is drawn between a pulley and Pandora’s box. As the Pandora’s box keeps all the evils of the world, anyone who opens it only takes the risk of spreading all the evil contained in the box and this process cannot be undone.
- Many critics consider the poem, *The Pulley*, containing a myth of origins. Yet many others suggest that it is a moral and spiritual fable. However, both these genres overlap because of the way the poem is presented.
- Along with the emphasis on the dignity of humankind in *The Pulley*, there is, however, a carefully drawn difference; beauty, strength, wisdom, honour along with pleasure are all integral and vital aspects of humankind.
- *The Pulley* is one of those rare poems which are replete with meaning. God is presented as a being who knows everything and has clear knowledge about how eventually life will turn out to be.
- George Herbert employs a single conceit throughout his compositions. In the poem, *Easter Wings*, the conceit that keeps recurring throughout the work is depicted through the print shape that is spread upon the page.

## 7.6 KEY WORDS

- **Allegory:** It refers to a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
- **Analogy:** It is a comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification.
- **Myth:** It refers to a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

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## 7.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

### Short Answer Questions

1. What is the difference between conceit and metaphysical conceit?
2. How is the notion of sleep used in Herbert's poem *The Pulley*?

### Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss the life and works of George Herbert in detail.
2. Critically comment on the central theme of Herbert's poem *The Pulley*. What is the analogy used by Herbert in the poem?
3. How is myth and conceit used in *The Pulley*?

## 7.8 FURTHER READINGS

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# UNIT 8 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *WHEN TO THE SESSIONS OF SWEET SILENT THOUGHT*

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### Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 About the Author
- 8.3 Critical Appreciation of *When To The Sessions Of Sweet Silent Thought*
- 8.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 8.5 Summary
- 8.6 Key Words
- 8.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 8.8 Further Readings

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## 8.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, you will study Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 *When To The Sessions Of Sweet Silent Thought*.

Shakespeare's Sonnets are laced with a plethora of feelings and emotions which are still relevant to today's time. His sonnets are often breath-taking, sometimes disturbing and sometimes puzzling and elusive in their meanings. As sonnets, their main concern is 'love', but they also reflect upon time, change, aging, lust, absence, infidelity and the problematic gap between ideal and reality when it comes to the person you love. It is asserted that probably the sonnets were written, and perhaps revised, between the early 1590s and about 1605. Versions of Shakespeare's Sonnets 128 and 144 were printed in the poetry collection *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599. They were first printed as a sequence in 1609, with a mysterious dedication to 'Mr. W.H.' A detailed description of Shakespeare's life and works is given in this unit.

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## 8.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Shakespeare
- Explain Shakespeare's style of writing sonnets
- Critically analyse Shakespeare's sonnet, *When To The Sessions Of Sweet Silent Thought*

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## 8.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*William Shakespeare's  
When to the Sessions of  
Sweet Silent Thought*

William Shakespeare was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford. The name of his father was John Shakespeare and his mother's name was Mary Arden. His father was a successful glove maker and an alderman, and his mother was the daughter of a farmer. There is a great confusion regarding the date of birth of William Shakespeare. Some people are of the view that the George's Day i.e. 23 April is his actual date of birth. This date was traced by the eighteenth-century scholar by mistake and it proved appealing to the biographers because this is the same date on which he died in 1616. William Shakespeare had seven brothers and sisters and he was the eldest surviving son of his parents. There are no clear evidence found about the life history of William Shakespeare. Most biographers estimated about his life that in 1553, he got education from the King's New School, Stratford which was a free school chartered. This school was at a four hundred metre distance from their house.

In Elizabethan era, there was a great variation in the grammar schools. In spite of the variation in the schools, the curriculum of the schools was largely similar. Royal decree standardised the Basic Latin Text. There was intensive education in grammar provided in the schools and this education was based upon the Latin Classical Authors. In 1582, William Shakespeare got married with Anne Hathaway who was twenty six years old and he was eighteen years old at that time. The marriage certificate was issued on 27 November 1582 by the consistory court of the Diocese of Worcester. Two neighbours of the Hathaway posted bonds in which they guaranteed that no lawful claims impeded the marriage. The Worcester Chancellor allowed the marriage banns to be read once, otherwise these were read three times. Therefore the marriage ceremonies were arranged hastily. After the six months of their marriage Anne gave birth to a girl child whose name was Sussana. After two years of their marriage twins, one daughter and one son were born. Daughter's name was Judith and son's name was Hamnet. In August 1596, Hamnet died at the age of eleven due to unknown reason.

After the birth of the twins, William Shakespeare left few traces of the history and in 1592, he is mentioned as part of the London Theatre. But in 1588 and in October 1589 before the Queen's bench court at Westminster his name was appeared in a case regarding complaint bills. So we can say that during that period of history he was mentioned in a law case. Most of the scholars named the period of 1585 to 1592 as the lost years of William Shakespeare. But some of the biographers had attempted to report this period. They had reported many apocryphal stories which were written by William Shakespeare. The first biographer of William Shakespeare wrote about a legend in Stratford. He told in the biography that Shakespeare was prosecuted

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for poaching of deer in the local squire Thomas Lucy's estate. He fled from there to London to get escaped from this prosecution. Shakespeare wrote a scurrilous ballad about Thomas Lucy to take revenge from him. In the sixteenth century, Shakespeare has started his career in theatre by minding the horses of theatre patrons in London. According to John Aubrey Shakespeare was also employed as a country school master. In the opinion of the twentieth century scholars, A catholic landowner Alexander Hoghton of Lancashire has employed him as a school master. In his will, Alexander has mentioned about William Shakeshafte. After the death of William Shakespeare, some evidences were collected to know about Shakeshafte and it was found that this was a very common name used in the Lancashire area.

It is unclear when William Shakespeare had started writing plays and novels or stories. But from his records of performances and contemporary allusions it had been found that in 1592, a number of his plays were being played on the London stage. At that time, he was famous in London because the playwright attacked him in a print of *Groats-Worth of Wit*. Different scholars have different opinion on the words of Greene and its meaning. Most of the scholars were of the opinion that William Shakespeare was reaching at the upper rank than his capability and was trying to match the writers who got their education in the universities and Greene used the term university wits for those university educated like Thomas Nashe, Christopher Marlowe and Greene himself. The phrase in Robert Greene's writing "Oh, Tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" taken from *Henry VI*, part 3, of William Shakespeare along with the pun Shake-scene clearly shows that Greene makes a target to William Shakespeare in his writing. In the theatre, Greene was the first person who attacked the theatrical works of William Shakespeare. There is no clear demarcation of the time during which Shakespeare started his work. Many biographers are of the view that the career of Shakespeare started from mid-1580 or just before Greene's remarks. After 1594, the Lord Chamberlain's Men which was a company owned by a group of players performed the plays of Shakespeare along with William Shakespeare. Within no time this company became a leading company in London. In 1603, after the death of Queen Elizabeth, the new king James I awarded the company a royal patent and gave it a new name King's Men.

On the banks of the River Thames, a partnership of the members of the company made their own theatre which they named the Globe, in 1599. In 1608, the Black friar's indoor theatre was also taken over by the company. Shakespeare made a number of investments in the property and the records proved that he purchased a number of properties with the companies and his association with the company made him a rich and wealthy man. In 1597, he purchased the house in Stratford, New Place which was the second largest house of the city and in 1605, he made an investment in the shares of the parish tithes in Stratford. In 1594, the plays of Shakespeare were published in

quarto edition and upto 1598, he became so popular that his name was selling like hot cakes and his name started appearing on the title pages of the books and magazines. Shakespeare had become a successful playwright and after this success he started acting in his own plays as well as the plays written by the other writers. Ben Johnson assigned roles to William Shakespeare in his plays *Sejanus His Fall* in 1603 and *Every Man in His Humour* in 1598 and he mentioned about this in his 1616 edition. Some scholars are of the opinion that in 1605, William Shakespeare's acting career was near to its end as his name was absent from the cast list for Jonson's *Volpone*. But it is also a truth that in 1623, edition of First Folio mentioned William Shakespeare as one of the principal actors in all these plays and the list of the plays in which Shakespeare was mentioned also include the plays staged after the play *Volpone*. But there is no record found regarding the types of roles played by Shakespeare. John Devis of Hereford mentioned in 1610 that Shakespeare played kingly roles and he called him as 'Good Will'. In 1709, Rowe gave the statement that Shakespeare played the role of ghost in Hamlet and he was the ghost of the father of Hamlet. From further studies, it was made clear that he played a variety of roles like the chorus in *Henry V*, Adam in *As You Like It* etc. But the source of this information is not clear.

The lifetime of Shakespeare's career can be divided into two places i.e. between London and Stratford. A year before the purchase of New Place in Stratford for his family in 1596, William Shakespeare was living at the north of the River Thames in the parish of Bishopsgate of St. Helen. By 1599, Shakespeare got shifted to Southwark across the river and constructed his theatre known as the Globe Theatre with his company. Then he shifted towards the north of the river in 1604. This area was in the north of St. Paul's Cathedral and there were many fine houses. At that place he got rooms on rent from a maker of ladies' wigs and other headgear. He was a French Huguenot named Christopher Mountjoy.

The first biographer who repeated the recording of tradition given by Johnson was Rowe. He told that Shakespeare got retired and shifted to Stratford before some years of his death. Shakespeare was working in London as an actor in 1608. According to the statement given by Cuthbert Burbage in 1635, Shakespeare acted in a number of plays after purchasing the lease of the Blackfriars Theatre. In 1609, there was bubonic plague raged in London throughout. There was closing of the London public playhouses repeatedly due to outbreak of the plague and the number of closures of the playhouses was almost sixty in between May 1603 to February 1610. Due to the closures of the public playhouses there was no acting work in the theatres and the retirement from the work was very uncommon in those days. There were continued visits to London during the years from 1611 to 1614 by Shakespeare. In 1612, there was a court case of the daughter of Mountjoy regarding the marriage settlement and Shakespeare was called as a witness

*William Shakespeare's  
When to the Sessions of  
Sweet Silent Thought*

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there. In 1613, William Shakespeare purchased a gatehouse in the former Black friars priory. And in 1614, during the month of November, Shakespeare was staying in London with John Hall, his son-in-law. Shakespeare wrote few plays after 1610 and none after 1613. His last three plays were collaborations, probably with John Fletcher who succeeded him as the house playwright of the King's Men.

At the age of fifty-two years, William Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616 and before a month of his death, he had signed a will. In this will, he had described himself in perfect health. But the reason of his death is not clear from any of the sources. Half a century later, John Ward, the vicar of Stratford, wrote in his notebook: "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson had a merry meeting and, it seems, drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted". This may be the reason of his death because Jonson and Drayton were known to him. Of the tributes from fellow authors, one refers to his relatively sudden death: "We wondered, Shakespeare, that thou went'st so soon / From the world's stage to the grave's tiring room."

After the death of Shakespeare, he had left his wife and two daughters Sussane and Judith. Sussane got married to John Hall in 1607 and Judith got married to Thomas Quinter two months before the death of Shakespeare. He had signed his last will and testament on 25 March 1616. On the following day, It was found that Thomas Quiney who was the younger son-in law of Shakespeare had an illegitimate relationship with Margaret Wheeler who had died during child birth and they had an illegitimate son. Thomas was ordered by the church court to do public penance, which would have caused much shame and embarrassment for the Shakespeare family. In his will Shakespeare gave a large part of his property to his elder daughter Sussane but she was told to pass it down intact to her first son. Her younger daughter had three children but all of them died before getting married. His elder daughter had one girl child, Elizabeth. She got married twice. But in 1670, she died without any child. Thus, the family of William Shakespeare ended here. In his will Shakespeare had hardly mentioned about his wife who was entitled to one third of his property. He had made a point of leaving her "my second-best bed" a bequest. This bequest given by Shakespeare has led to great speculation. It is believed by some of the scholars that Shakespeare has insulted his wife Anne by giving her the bequest but some of the scholars believe that the meaning of the second-best bed may be the matrimonial bed which enriches the significance of the bequest and the importance of his wife in his life. After two days of the death, Shakespeare was buried in the Chancel of the Holy Trinity Church and his grave was next to those of his wife Anne Shakespeare and Thomas Nash, husband of his granddaughter.

Most of the playwrights revised the plays of the others and it is believed that Shakespeare also did the same thing. *Titus Andronicus* and the early history plays were under this controversy but *The Lost Cardenio* and



*The Two Noble Kinsmen* are the well attested documentations. A number of the plays were revised after the original composition and the textual evidences of this have been found. It is recorded that in the early 1590, Shakespeare wrote *Richard III* and three parts of *Henry VI* which are considered as the first recorded works of Shakespeare during a vogue for historical drama. There are no records found with the help of which we could estimate the exact date of Shakespeare's plays. But from different studies it is found that *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of the Shrew* belong to the earliest period of Shakespeare. The first histories of Shakespeare were based on the corruption and weaknesses of the ruling party and were describing the origins of Tudor Dynasty. His early plays were influenced by the Elizabethan Dramatists like Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd. The play *The Comedy of Errors* was based on the classical models. In the early classical and Italianate comedies of William Shakespeare, there is tight double plot and precise comic sequence which gives way to the romantic atmosphere of his most acclaimed comedies in the mid-1590s. The play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is full of fairy magic, comedy, lowlife scenes and romance. In his next comedy *Merchant of Venice*, there is a portrayal of Shylock who is a Jew and a money lender. It is a reflection of the views of Elizabethan writers but appears derogatory to the modern audience.

In the sequence of comedies, Shakespeare had written about wit and wordplay in *Much Ado About Nothing*, about the lively merrymaking in the *Twelfth Night* and about the charming rural setting in *As You Like It*. In the late 1590s, after writing *Richard II*, Shakespeare started writing in verse and introduced prose comedy. He wrote *Henry IV* part one and two and *Henry V*. In these he complicated his characters as the characters were switched between prose and poetry, serious and comedy scenes. In these plays, he has achieved a mature work and experience in narrative variety. In the end of this period Shakespeare wrote two tragedies *Romeo and Juliet*, another one is *Julius Caesar*. *Romeo and Juliet* were a famous romantic tragedy in which he wrote about sexually charged adolescence, then love followed by death. *Julius Caesar* was based on Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. It introduced a new type of drama. According to Shakespearean scholar James Shapiro, in *Julius Caesar*, "the various strands of politics, character, inwardness, contemporary events, even Shakespeare's own reflections on the act of writing, began to infuse each other".

Shakespeare wrote problem plays in the early seventeenth century and these were known as the best-known tragedies like *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* etc. Some critics remarked that the tragedies written by Shakespeare represent the peak of his art. The greatest tragedy written by him is *Hamlet* in which the tragic hero Hamlet is discussed more than any other tragedies written by him. Hamlet is shown introvert and his fatal

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flaw in a hesitation. Other tragic heroes of the Shakespearean tragedies are *King Lear* and *Othello*. In the Shakespearean tragedies, there are fatal flaws and these errors became the reason of the destruction of the heroes of the play and the characters who loves the hero. For example, in *Othello*, the villain of the play Iago murders the innocent wife of the hero of the play *Othello* who loves Othello in sexual jealousy with him. In the play *King Lear*, the hero of the play King Lear gives up his powers and commits mistakes which lead to the torture of the Earl of Gloucester and in the end, there is a murder of his youngest daughter Cordelia. According to the critic Frank Kermode, 'The play-offers neither its good characters nor its audience any relief from its cruelty'. *Macbeth* is considered as the most compressed and shortest tragedy of Shakespeare in which Macbeth and his wife are incited by their uncontrollable ambition and the lady Macbeth murders the honest and rightful king to usurp the throne. Shakespeare makes use of a supernatural element in this tragic play. *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* are the last major tragedies written by Shakespeare which contains the finest poetry. The critic and the poet T.S. Eliot considered it as the most successful tragedies of Shakespeare.

In the last years of his career, Shakespeare started writing about romance and tragicomedy. In this period, he wrote *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*.

### Check Your Progress

1. Among which places is the lifetime of Shakespeare's career divided?
2. Name the last major tragedies written by Shakespeare.

## 8.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *WHEN TO THE SESSIONS OF SWEET SILENT THOUGHT*

### The Text

#### *When to the sessions of sweet silent thought (Sonnet 30)*

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
I summon up remembrance of things past,  
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:  
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,

And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:  
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
 The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,  
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.  
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
 All losses are restored and sorrows end.

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### Paraphrase of the poem:

When in these sessions of gratifying silent thought  
 I think of the past,  
 I lament my failure my failure to achieve all that I wanted,  
 And I sorrowfully remember that I wasted the best years of my life:  
 Then I can cry, although I am not used to crying.  
 For dear friends now hid in death's unending night,  
 And cry again over woes that were long since healed,  
 And lament the loss of many things that I have seen and loved:  
 Then can I grieve over past griefs again,  
 And sadly repeat (to myself) my woes  
 The sorrowful account of griefs already grieved for,  
 Which (The account) I repay as if I had not paid before.  
 But if I think of you while I am in this state of sadness, dear friend,  
 All my losses are compensated for and my sorrow ends.

This Sonnet 30 was written by William Shakespeare. In this sonnet the poet writes about his failures, griefs and sufferings. He talks about his friends who have died, and he expresses his feelings. He thinks that he had done nothing in his life. But in the end of the sonnet, William Shakespeare writes positive thoughts. He writes that the thoughts of his friends help him in bringing positivity in his life and these thoughts help him in recovering all those things which he had lost in his life. The thinking about his friends helps him in forgetting his miseries of life and mourning over all the bad things that happened in his past life.

Sonnet 30 is one of the first group of 154 sonnets written by William Shakespeare in the first group of sonnets. These sonnets are thought to be about a fair young man. Shakespeare mentioned about this young man in his other sonnets also. He described him as a fair young man who is good looking, gentle, and a person full of all virtues which are never ending. Some people are of the opinion that Shakespeare had a relationship with a homosexual

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person who was young and beautiful, and he is mentioning that person in his sonnets. But there is also a possibility that Shakespeare simply wanted to describe a male friend and his friendship which was above the so called romantic love between man and woman. The original volume of the sonnet which was published in 1609 is dedicated by the publisher to a Mr. W.H. Some people think that this is the same fair young man who is mentioned in the sonnet. Some of the candidates for W.W. are William Houghton, William Hewes, William Hathaway and with reverse initials it may be Henry Walker, Henry Wriothesley.

Like all 154 sonnets written by William Shakespeare, Sonnet 30 also follows the Shakespearean Sonnet form. This form was based on the Surrey or the English Sonnet form. In this type of sonnets there are fourteen lines which are divided in three quatrains and a couplet. If we have to write down the rhyming scheme of the sonnets, it would be abab cdcd efef gg. This form of Shakespearean sonnet is also known as Petrarchan sonnet form because while using the metrical structure of the English sonnet and Surrey sonnet, Shakespeare usually used the rhetorical form of the Italian form. In this type of sonnet, the sonnet is divided into two parts: one is the octet part and the other is the sestet part. Octet is made up of first eight lines and it usually tells us about the subject and helps in developing it. The other part sestet is made up of last six lines and it leads the reader towards the climax. The change which occurs between the end of the eighth line and in the beginning of the ninth line is known as volta. Thus, volta is between the octet and sestet. Shakespeare gave a strong pause at the end of each quatrain usually. In Petrarchan form he suggests placing a chief pause after eighth line in about twenty or so of the sonnets. In about two thirds of the Shakespearean sonnets, there is a chief pause after the twelfth line of the sonnet.

Iambic pentameter is used in almost all the sonnets, as it is here. This is a metre based on five pairs of metrically weak/strong syllabic positions. Occurring after much metrical tension throughout the quatrains, the couplet exhibits a quite regular iambic pentameter pattern:

× / × / × / × / × /

But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,

× / × / × / × / × /

All losses are restored and sorrows end. (30.13-14)

/ = *ictus*, a metrically strong syllabic position. × = *nonictus*.

The first line is a frequent target for metrists, possibly because of the ease with which the initial triple rhythm can be carried right through the line, producing this *unmetrical* reading:

/ × × / × × / × × /

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought (30.1)

Differences in scansion, however, tend to be conditioned more by metrists' theoretical preconceptions than by differences in how they hear the line. Most interpretations start with the assumption that the syllables in the sequence “-ions of sweet si-” increase in stress or emphasis thus:

1   2   3   4

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1 = *least* stress or emphasis, and 4 = *most*.

Metrists who are most committed to the concept of metrical feet (for example Yvor Winters, W. K. Wimsatt, and Susanne Woods) tend to find a “light” iamb followed by a “heavy” iamb:

1   2   3   4

/   ×   ×   /   ×   /   ×   /

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Metrists with a slightly more flexible conception of feet may find either a *pyrrhic* followed by a *spondee*, or the four-position *minor ionic* replacing two iambs. Metrists rejecting feet may find an ictus moving to the right. Graphically, these stances add up to more or less the same thing:

1   2   3   4

/   ×   ×   /   ×   ×   /   /   ×   /

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The poem *When to the Sessions of Sweet Thought* begins with the thought of the poet about his losses incurred in the past. The speaker in the poem talks about his shortcomings and failures in his life. He also talks about the loss of his lovers and his close friends. The narrator makes use of the financial language and legal language within the words of the sonnet. He makes use of the words like sessions, dateless, summon etc. and many other legal terms. It seems as if the narrator is trying to take meticulous accounts of his personal grievances and trying to add an unhealthy dose of guilt to the proceedings of the poem. The poem or the sonnet is an abstract but with the proceedings, as the remembering process makes it a drama. In almost middle of the poem the tone of the speaker is changed. The speaker begins talking about the restoration and gain felt after the talking about the loss of his dear friend and the ending is with a joyous tone. The Sonnet starts with a gloomy atmosphere as a funeral gloom and then leads towards bankruptcy and ends with a happy ending. Sonnet 30 seems to the readers like a typical Hollywood classic, or rather a classic that Hollywood might dream about.

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### Quatrain 1

In first quatrain the first line of the sonnet '*When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought*', The phrase sessions of sweet thought tells us that Shakespeare is remembering about the past events of his life. The word session refers to the judge who is sitting in the court of law and the word summon is also a legal word and a court term. Summon means a call by the court or the legal authority to answer a charge or to provide evidence related to the court case. It also means to call a certain quality into action. Shakespeare in this sonnet is recalling his old memories in his mind. There is small pause in the phrase sessions of sweet thought as the poet wants to express his painful feelings rather than sweet emotions. He wants to lay stress on the fact that old memories bring pain and grief to him. In the third and fourth line of the sonnet, the poet regrets as the word sigh is used in the third line which means to lament.

### Quatrain 2

In the second quatrain of the sonnet, the speaker of the poem talks that he is not able to reminiscence his friends by using his own eyes and then he says that his friends are hidden in death's dateless nights. He means to say that his friends are gone long ago and dateless means the time is without any limit and cannot be counted. He does not want to say that his friends have died but he just wanted to say that they are hidden in the night and the night is everlasting and it will never end. Some poets describe that the phrase death's dateless nights is a chilling phrase which expresses coldness after the death which is felt by everyone. Further into the quatrain the narrator uses the term cancelled to describe the relationship with past friends, as if the time with them has expired. As if everything in his past has expired or been lost. The phrase Moan the expense is also used to express the moaning of the narrator over what the loss of 'precious friends' and how it costs him in sorrow.

### Quatrain 3

In line nine, in the beginning of the third quatrain, the poet narrates about his sorrows and hardships of his life and mourns over it. The lines from woe to woe tell over is like a metaphor used by the poet to express his griefs, sorrows, failures of life etc. He used this metaphor in such a way that his failures and sorrows are like an account book and he is reading that account book again and again. The word heavily tells us about the pain felt in reading this account book or the poet reads this account book very painfully. The words fore-bemoaned moan is very close to the meaning of the words grievance foregone. These words express the thought of continuous reviewing of the past sorrows and pains of the poet.



## Couplet

The last two lines of the sonnet forms the couplet i.e. the thirteenth and the fourteenth lines of the sonnet end the sonnet in a satisfactory note. In the end of the sonnet the speaker describes that the recollection of his dear friends helps in vanishing the sorrows and woes of his life. The speaker tells us that the memory of his friends gives him joy and it wipes out all of his pain he has suffered on remembering them. The couplet takes away all the frustration, sorrows mentioned in the three quatrains. It states that the mountain of failure can easily be removed by the thought of the beloved. Many people are of the opinion that the couplet of the sonnet is like a jack in the box and it brings the happy and satisfactory ending of the speaker. Some also say that the couplet of Sonnet 30 to be weak, perfunctory, trite and gives an appearance of intellectual collapse.

William Shakespeare wrote about the sorrows of his life in this sonnet. He also expressed his feelings about the death of his dear friend but in the end of the sonnet, he is satisfied by stating that the memories of his friends and near and dear ones help him in bringing happiness in his life. This poem is full of meaning because it is an inclusion in the most famous collection of sonnets in English language. Sonnet 29 which reflects the speaker's position as an outcast and failure has the same thought progression as the sonnet 30. The poet laments that the fortune as not been kind to him. He wishes that the fortune changes a bit.

### Check Your Progress

3. What does Shakespeare write about in Sonnet 30?
4. What is Shakespearean Sonnet based on?

## 8.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The lifetime of Shakespeare's career can be divided into two places i.e. between London and Stratford.
2. Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus are the last major tragedies written by Shakespeare.
3. In Sonnet 30, the poet writes about his failures, griefs and sufferings. He talks about his friends who have died, and he expresses his feelings.
4. The Shakespearean Sonnet form was based on the Surrey or the English Sonnet form. In this type of sonnets there are fourteen lines which are divided in three quatrains and a couplet.

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## 8.5 SUMMARY

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- William Shakespeare was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford.
- In Elizabethan era, there was a great variation in the grammar schools. In spite of the variation in the schools, the curriculum of the schools was largely similar. Royal decree standardised the Basic Latin Text.
- The lifetime of Shakespeare's career can be divided into two places i.e. between London and Stratford. A year before the purchase of New Place in Stratford for his family in 1596, William Shakespeare was living at the north of the River Thames in the parish of Bishopsgate of St. Helen.
- At the age of fifty-two years, William Shakespeare died on 23 April 1616 and before a month of his death, he had signed a will. In this will, he had described himself in perfect health.
- Most of the playwrights revised the plays of the others and it is believed that Shakespeare also did the same thing. *Titus Andronicus* and the early history plays were under this controversy but *The Lost Cardenio* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are the well attested documentations.
- In the sequence of comedies, Shakespeare had written about wit and wordplay in *Much Ado About Nothing*, about the lively merrymaking in *The Twelfth Night* and about the charming rural setting in *As You Like It*. In the late 1590s, after writing *Richard II*, Shakespeare started writing in verse and introduced prose comedy.
- Shakespeare wrote problem plays in the early seventeenth century and these were known as the best-known tragedies like *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* etc.
- The greatest tragedy written by him is *Hamlet* in which the tragic hero Hamlet is discussed more than any other tragedies written by him.
- Sonnet 30 was written by William Shakespeare. In this sonnet the poet writes about his failures, griefs and sufferings. He talks about his friends who have died, and he expresses his feelings.
- Sonnet 30 is one of the first group of 154 sonnets written by William Shakespeare in the first group of sonnets. These sonnets are thought to be about a fair young man.
- Like all 154 sonnets written by William Shakespeare, Sonnet 30 also follows the Shakespearean Sonnet form. This form was based on the Surrey or the English Sonnet form. In this type of sonnets there are fourteen lines which are divided in three quatrains and a couplet.
- Iambic pentameter is used in almost all the sonnets. This is a metre based on five pairs of metrically weak/strong syllabic positions.

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## 8.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Quatrain:** It means a stanza of four lines, especially one having alternate rhymes.
- **Bubonic Plague:** It is the most common form of plague in humans, characterized by fever, delirium, and the formation of buboes.
- **Friar:** It is the member of any of certain religious orders of men, especially the four mendicant orders (Augustinians, Carmelites, Dominicans, and Franciscans).

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## 8.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short Answer Questions

1. Discuss Shakespeare's early life and works.
2. What are sonnets? What kind of sonnets did Shakespeare write?
3. What is the metre and rhyme scheme of Sonnet 30?

### Long Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 *When To The Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought*.
2. How is the use of a 'young man' in sonnets common to Shakespeare's sonnets?
3. Explain the four Quatrains of Shakespeare's Sonnet 30.

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## 8.8 FURTHER READINGS

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# UNIT 9 ROBERT HERRICK: *DELIGHT IN DISORDER*

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### Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 About the Author
- 9.3 Critical Appreciation of *Delight in Disorder*
- 9.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Key Words
- 9.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.8 Further Readings

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## 9.0 INTRODUCTION

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Robert Herrick (1591-1674) was an English Cavalier poet, whose 1648 collection *Hesperides* contains much of his great poetry. *Delight in Disorder* is one of Herrick's most famous poems.

The poem was written against the backdrop of a turbulent time in English history: the English Civil War of the 1640s. As a Cavalier (supporter of King Charles I) Herrick may well have championed freedom and leisure, and the pursuit of pleasure, because his enemies the Puritans, led by Oliver Cromwell, detested such things. There is a lot more to the poem *Delight in Disorder* than it just being a nice poem about clothes. The poem is capable of being contextually analysed. Herrick calls for a freedom and a disorder which the Puritan mindset would find it harder to embrace. Such a (tentative) contextual analysis is not necessary to enjoy the poem, of course: it can also be interpreted as an elegant poem in praise of spontaneity and difference over slavish obedience to convention.

This unit provides a critical analysis of Robert Herrick's poem *Delight in Disorder*.

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## 9.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Robert Herrick
- Explain Herrick's style of writing
- Critically analyse Herrick's poem, *Delight in Disorder*

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## 9.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Robert Herrick (1591-1674) was an English clergyman and a poet. He was born in London and died in Devonshire. Robert Herrick is usually identified as the most original of the “sons of Ben”. He is credited with the revival of the spirit of the classical criticism. He is considered to be one of the best among the Cavalier poets. Robert Herrick’s uncle, sir William Herrick, was an influential and prosperous goldsmith of his time. After graduating from University of Cambridge, Robert Herrick went to pursue his MA degree in 1620 and by the year 1623 he was ordained. For the next few years he spent his time in London where he enjoyed the company of the prominent writers of the age and the courtly society. In the year 1627 Robert Herrick went to the Duke of Buckingham as a chaplain as a part of military expedition. In the year 1629 he was presented with the living of Dean Prior. Robert Herrick’s popularity as a poet gained prominence sometimes between 1620-30. He wrote satires, love songs, imaginary mistresses, elegies, epigrams, marriage songs, songs for friend and patrons etc. The most powerful element of his poetry was the human sentiment that reflected through the perfection that appeared in his form and style. As an author, Robert Herrick, was almost forgotten in the 18th century; though the 19th century recalled him for the lyricism found in his poetry while condemning the ‘obscurity’ that appeared in the poems. Finally, in the latter half of 20th century Robert Herrick got his due and was recognized as one of the most powerful non-dramatic poets who wrote during that age.

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## 9.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *DELIGHT IN DISORDER*

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*Delight in Disorder* is a 14-line lyric composed by Robert Herrick. John Williams and F. Egesfield had first included this poem in 1648 as a part of *Hesperides: Or, the Works both Human and Divine* of Robert Herrick. This was the book which contained a collection of poems by Robert Herrick.

*Delight in Disorder* like most of Robert Herrick’s poems was written during the English Civil War that took place around 1640s. This was one of the most turbulent phases of English history. Robert Herrick was a Cavalier. People who are supporters of king Charles I were identified as Cavaliers. It is commonly believed that Robert Herrick must have been the supporter of the idea freedom and leisure. He must have been the champion of the idea of endorsing pleasure. The Puritans, who opposed the ideas of the Cavalier, spearheaded by Oliver Cromwell were extremely critical about life surrounded by leisure.

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Robert Herrick's poem *Delight in Disorder* reiterates the notion that real beauty lies in the realms of artlessness. The poet suggests that anything which is too structured has a sense of artificiality. It is devoid of genuineness and definitely does not conform to natural beauty. A lady, who is not too fastidious about being too perfect is always more appealing and attractive and someone who is groomed to perfection. This is a scenario which is very similar to art effects of art where when a piece of art which is not extremely perfect draws more appreciation. Following one of the popular themes of his time, the beauty of imperfection, Robert Herrick in this poem that the most appealing beauty is the one which is not in order. For him the true beauty is like the flaming leaves that decorate the footpath in the month of October. True beauty is like "winning waves/in the tempestuous petticoat".

To put it in a different way the poet is suggesting that the appeal of an individual, a place, an object, an action or even an idea is magnified by the imperfections and inconsistencies that is the hallmark of that thing. Let us for example consider the Liberty Bell (situated in Philadelphia). It is an extremely popular tourist destination and the beauty of the place is accentuated by the imperfection - a crack. Another beautiful example is the leaning Tower of Pisa; one of the world's most popular architectures is situated in Italy. As the name suggests the tower is not straight and it is leaning and it is this inclined structure that make the tower extremely beautiful. Many civilizations believe that a single mole on the cheek makes a woman look extremely beautiful. Even though, this flaw, the mole on the cheek, should ideally have made the women look not so attractive but because of this tiny flaw she actually appears more beautiful. Many a times, grey hair helps a middle aged man stand out as a distinguished personality in comparison to a young man. Critics suggest that many a time great works of art instead of drawing attention to the 'perfect centre' actually position the focal point away from it. The best examples that can be thought of from the world of painting are Claude Monet's 'Impression, Sunrise' and Edward Munch's 'The Scream'.

Robert Herrick highlights this notion of imperfection through the style that he adopts to compose the poem. *Delight in Disorder*, is a poem which is composed of 14 lines. But it is not a sonnet in the traditional sense because it does not follow the sonnet form. The poem plays around with the rhyme structure and places near rhymes in conjugation to true rhymes. This non adherence to structure is intentional so that the poet's understanding of beauty could be explained. The poem uses a number of internal rhymes too. Robert Herrick mostly relies on iambic tetrameter to compose this poem. In iambic tetrameter one comes across 8 syllables or 4 feet. As we already know, an iambic foot has one unstressed syllable which is followed by stressed syllable. Again, in the poem, line 2 and 8, they follow tetrameter pattern but they are not iambic in nature.

If we take a closer look at Robert Herrick's contemporaries we find similar ideas being reflected in the writings. For example, Francis Bacon writes, "there is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion". Again Ben Jonson writes, "give me a look, give me a face / that makes simplicity a grace; / robes loosely flowing, hair as free. Havelock Ellis mentions, "the absence of flaw in beauty is itself a flaw."

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The tone of the poem is playful and nature. The word 'lawn' which appears in the line 3 of the poem means a piece of sheer cotton or a linen fabric. Again the word 'stomacher' that appears in 6 of the poem means stiff cloth, one that has embroidery or designs made with jewels. If we take a close look at the poem we can see the poem consists of seven couplets. Yet at the same time, to understand the rhyme scheme the reader might have to walk on the pronunciation of the final syllables with regards to certain words. The rhyming pairs that appeared in the poem are: dress - wantonness ; thrown - distraction; there - stomacher; thereby - confusedly; note - petticoat; tie - civility; art - part.

The poem *Delight in Disorder* makes use of a number of figures of speech. The most prominent one being, alliteration. In line one we have the repeated use of the alphabet 'd': disorder in the dress. again in line 2 we see the appearance of (k/c) pronunciation : Kindles in clothes. Line 6 of the poem has crimson stomacher. In line 13 we come across the usage of "w" (winning wave). Similarly line 13 and 14 too are examples of alliteration "Do more bewitch me / precise in every part" in the line 10 the poet makes a comparison through the use of metaphor "tempestuous petticoat". Here the petticoat is compared to a storm or tempest. In the line 12, we come across an example of paradox: wild civility.

The poem *Delight in Disorder* is not just a mere poem on the idea of fashion and clothes. Seen from a contemporary political context one can see that Robert Herrick's call for freedom and disorder only highlights the puritan mindset's inability to accept unstructured freedom. But of course, one can enjoy the poem as it is without taking into account the difference in ideology as expressed by the Cavaliers or the puritans. This poem can also be read as an appreciation to the art of spontaneity and indifference to the established norm which is in stark contrast to the obedience to convention that most people rely on.

The Cavalier poets, were a group of lyric poets who were associated with the 'Cavaliers'. Along with Robert Herrick some prominent poets of this group were, Richard Lovelace, Sir Johan Suckling, Thomas Carew et al. Apart from their allegiance to Charles I, they were also identified as the 'Sons of Ben' because they were admirers as well as followers of Ben Jonson. The Cavalier poets, usually wrote short lyric poems, which were easy to read. Their tone was usually happy, trivial and definitely witty and many a times licentious. Primary focus of their poems was - 'woman and beauty'.



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Robert Herrick's support is one of the reasons to identify as Cavalier poet. But he was also one of the poets who displayed traits of Cavalier poetry. Many critics agree that Herrick's *Delight in Disorder* fulfils majority of the characteristics of a Cavalier poet's composition. If we take a closer look at the poem, we get enough evidence which supports our hypothesis.

The poem *Delight in Disorder* is one which is of short length. It is extremely witty while talks about a licentious theme. The poem focuses on a lady who is disorderly dressed. Many critics believe that lady in question might be someone named 'Julia'.

At the very beginning of the poem we get to see that, the poet gets to find out some kind of disorder in the 'lawn' that seems to be wrapped carelessly about the shoulders. Says the poet;

*A Lawn about the shoulders thrown Into a fine distraction:*

The lawn, according to the contemporary fashion, should have been attached with the shoulders. But in case of this specific lady, her lawn is free from her neck. And this disorder is a source of joy for the poet.

Soon the poet finds another disorder in the lady. This time it is in her stomacher. The poet mentions:

*An erring lace which here and there*

*Enthralls the crimson stomacher:*

Within no time the poet notices the third disorder. It is in the said lady's cuff which is placed carelessly in lady's hand. As the poet narrates:

*A cuff neglectful and thereby;*

*Ribbons to flow confusedly.*

By then this time it appears as if the lady is a paragon of disorder and the poet notices a disorder in lady's petticoat as well. The poet mentions:

*A winning wave, deserving note, In the tempestuous petticoat;*

Ideally the petticoat should have been well attached with body. But in this scenario the petticoat of the lady is seen to be waiving in the air. For the poet the idea appears to be extremely delightful.

As if this was not enough the poet finally discovers a disorder in the shoestring of the lady. Witnessing this, he poet remarks:

*A careless shoestring in whose tie*

*I see a wild civility:*

In a normal scenario any kind of disorder is apt to make a man unhappy. Yet in this case, the disorder makes the poet extremely pleased. He writes:

*Do More Bewitch me them when art*

*Is too precise in every part.*



Robert Herrick makes a point about the attractiveness of carelessness by using number of oxymorons. the play of oxymoron begins with the title itself, *Delight in Disorder*. From a General perspective disorder is usually identified as something which is the cause of inconvenience and one that triggers annoyance. There is hardly any element of delight associated with disorder. Robert Herrick in the poem makes this disorderliness Beautiful by using phrases like, “wild ciility”, “fine distraction”, “sweet disorder” etc. On the other hand, the clothes are made to appear guilty of making the whole look so unkempt. We find usage of words like, “cuff neglectful”, “careless shoestring”, “tempestuous petticoat”.

Robert Herrick following the Cavalier tradition challenges the traditional concept that beauty can only be found in perfect harmony. *Delight in Disorder* will always gain a special place in literature of elizabethan age because of its high musical quality and the melodious end rhymes.

While he was a student at Cambridge Robert Herrick was also gaining reputation as a young poet he was a great admirer of Ben Jonson (1572 - 1637). Jonson was an well known dramatist and lyricist of the Jacobean era. Robert Herrick was also a member of the group which admired Ben jonson called the Sons of Ben. Moreover he was friends with his contemporary metaphysical poet George Herbert (1593- 1633). *Delight in Disorder* as we already know revolves around a lady who is casual sense of dressing draws more attention and makes her appear more seductive then those who dress more appropriately. The woman in the poem and her appeal has been highlighted with words like ‘disordered’, ‘distraction’, ‘careless’, ‘confusedly’, ‘neglectful’ etc. While the poem draws attention towards an untamed beauty simultaneously it draws attention towards the major influences which has helped to shape this Poem. One can identify traces of Cavalier poetry, metaphysical poetry and lyricism of Ben jonson’s writings. Following the tradition of the Cavalier poetry the poet has used a language which is simple as well as secular. Even the imagery used in the poem are easy to follow and direct in nature. This is in stark contrast to the characteristics of metaphysical poetry which is characterized by usage of imageries that are complicated and that which brings about certain kind of ambiguity to the piece of writing. As far as *Delight in Disorder* is concerned the ambiguity probably arises from the fact that it is difficult to figure out whether the poet narrator is talking about a woman who has carelessly dressed herself or is the narrator talking about a painting of a woman where she has breast herself in a careless manner: ‘than when art/Is too precise in every part.’ this is one way of reading the poem; along with the widely accepted idea that the poem says, an art which is too perfect does not seem to impress people much. As we all know, a lyric is usually considered to be an expression of one’s own feelings which has been influenced by some external stimulus and one can see Ben jonson influence in this lyric in the following lines:

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*I see a wild civility;--  
Do more bewitch me, than when art  
Is too precise in every part."*

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It might be interesting to note that Robert Herrick'once was a goldsmith. It is pretty well known that for many years Robert Herrick himself what is an apprentice and not to become a goldsmith himself. Many critics point out that he is training as an goldsmith probably reflected in his poems; most of his poems reflect a fine sense of balance, perfection and a certain kind of delicacy which spoke about he is ability as a craftsman.

*Delight in Disorder*, according to many, can be read as a long synecdoche or as a long metonymy. Robert Herrick is usually considered to be a religious poet. The poet was born in the year 1591 London city which at that point of time must have reflected a rigid religious surroundings. Robert Herrick took Holy orders in the year 1623. He also took part in the great rebellion which took place in the year 1647. He was removed from his position of Vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire. This removal was result of his association with and sympathy is for the royalists. If we take into account the phase in which author was composing this poem, it would be extremely significant for the to observe disorder around him. It is so, because one could witness conscious orderliness irrespective of whether it is taking place in the realms of society or in the lifestyle one chooses to adopt. Hence, coming across disorderliness and also observing it is both unexpected as well as expected at the same time. Unexpected because, since the society liked to live by the strictest terms of orderliness finding someone who does not stick to it is not very common; where is on the other hand, since such a sight was rare, without a doubt such careless appearance would have caught the fancy of the author.

By the end of the poem, the poet narrator reveals that although he is aware that a society should follow certain orders to function properly yet at the same time he enjoys discovering disorder at a very macro level, in things which are subtle, because in a way they reveal an individual's identity. Even though people who adopt disorderliness in their life still live by the rules of the society yet at the same time, the way they express themselves at an individual level, where they do not show their allegiance to the social order makes them extremely interesting subjects for observation and understanding their role in the social fabric. Thus, for the poet narrator, true art manifests itself through the slight disorder that he experiences every day at various levels. This uniqueness of existence, is what makes the poet narrator happy. It is not as if these people who reflect a certain amount of disorderliness in their life are living an uncivilized life. This concern of bringing out the idea uncivilized, reminds the readers that the poet likes to have a certain amount of order in his life.

### Check Your Progress

1. State the most powerful element of Herrick's poetry.
2. When was *Delight in Disorder* written?
3. What is the notion reiterated in the poem?

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## 9.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The most powerful element of Herrick's poetry was the human sentiment that reflected through the perfection that appeared in his form and style.
2. *Delight in Disorder* like most of Robert Herrick's poems was written during the English Civil War that took place around 1640s.
3. Robert Herrick's poem *Delight in Disorder* reiterates the notion that real beauty lies in the realms of artlessness. The poet suggests that anything which is too structured reviews about it a sense of artificiality.

## 9.5 SUMMARY

- Robert Herrick (1591 - 1674) was an English clergyman and a poet. He was born in London and died in Devonshire. Robert Herrick is usually identified as the most original of the 'sons of Ben'. He is credited with the revival of the spirit of the classical criticism. Robert Herrick's popularity as a poet gained prominence sometimes between 1620-30.
- *Delight in Disorder* is a 14-line lyric composed by Robert Herrick. *Delight in Disorder* like most of Robert Herrick's poems was written during the English Civil War that took place around 1640s.
- *Delight in Disorder* reiterates the notion that real beauty lies in the realms of artlessness. The poet suggests that anything which is too structured reviews about it a sense of artificiality. It is devoid of genuineness and definitely does not conform to natural beauty.
- The poet in *Delight in Disorder* suggesting that the appeal of an individual, a place, an object, an action or even an idea is magnified by the imperfections and inconsistencies that is the Hallmark of that thing.
- Robert Herrick highlights the notion of imperfection through the style that he adopts to compose the poem. *Delight in Disorder*, is a poem

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which is composed of 14 lines. But it is not a sonnet in the traditional sense because it does not follow the sonnet form.

- The poem plays around with the rhyme structure and places near rhymes in conjugation to true rhymes. If we take a closer look at Robert Herrick's contemporaries we find similar ideas being reflected in the writings.
- The poem *Delight in Disorder* makes use of a number of figures of speech. The most prominent one being, alliteration. It is not just a mere poem on the idea of fashion and clothes.
- Seen from a contemporary political context one can see that Robert Herrick's call for freedom and disorder only highlights the puritan mindset's inability to accept unstructured freedom.
- The Cavalier poets, were a group of lyric poets who were associated with the 'Cavaliers'. Many critics agree that Herrick's *Delight in Disorder* fulfils majority of the characteristics of a Cavalier poet's composition. If we take a closer look at the poem, we get enough evidence which supports our hypothesis.
- Even the imagery used in the poem are easy to follow and direct in nature. This is in stark contrast to the characteristics of metaphysical poetry which is characterized by usage of imageries that are complicated and that which brings about certain kind of ambiguity to the piece of writing.
- A lyric is usually considered to be an expression of one's own feelings which has been influenced by some external stimulus and one can.
- *Delight in Disorder* can be read as a long synecdoche or as a long metonymy. If we take into account the phase in which author was composing this poem, it would be extremely significant for the to observe disorder around him.
- By the end of the poem *Delight in Disorder*, the poet narrator reveals that although he is aware that a society should follow certain orders to function properly yet at the same time he enjoys discovering disorder at a very macro level.

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## 9.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Royalists:** It is a person who supports the principle of monarchy or a particular monarchy.
- **Disorder:** If refers to something that disrupts the systematic functioning or neat arrangement of.
- **Freedom:** It is the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants.

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## 9.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Robert Herrick: *Delight in Disorder*

### Short Answer Questions

1. Briefly discuss life and works of Robert Herrick.
2. What is the political background of the time when *Delight in Disorder* was written?
3. What is the figure of speech employed in the poem by Herrick?

### Long Answer Questions

1. What are the characteristics of Cavalier poets?
2. Give a detailed analysis of Robert Herrick's poem *Delight in Disorder*. How does it reflect the political inclination of Herrick and explain Herrick's comment on the same?

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## 9.8 FURTHER READINGS

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- Poetry, LII. 1939. *Elizabethan Poetry. Modern Essays in Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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**BLOCK - III****ESSAY AND NOVEL****NOTES****UNIT 10 BACON'S ESSAYS****Structure**

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 About the Author
  - 10.2.1 The Universal Appeal of the Essays of Bacon
  - 10.2.2 Spirit of Renaissance in Bacon's Essays
  - 10.2.3 Bacon's Morality
- 10.3 Critical Appreciation
  - 10.3.1 'Of Truth'
  - 10.3.2 'Of Nobility'
  - 10.3.3 'Of Ambition'
  - 10.3.4 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation'
- 10.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 10.5 Summary
- 10.6 Key Words
- 10.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 10.8 Further Readings

**10.0 INTRODUCTION**

The essay is a composition of prose which is short. The English Essay has many forms, but there are hardly any cut and dried rules to guide and govern their writing. Sir Francis Bacon rightly suggests that there is a very close relationship between the word 'essay' and the word of the mineralogist 'assai' which explains the process employed by the mineralogist. Bacon broods over some topics of social custom or behaviour till his conclusions are reduced to well written concise statements, justifying the appropriateness of the remark. 'Brevity is the soul of wit'. It is for this reason that Bacon's essays can be called a collection of sayings, mottoes and proverbs. Bacon has the power of explaining a bare truth with the help of an appropriate image or metaphor.

It is as relevant as it is important to note that although Bacon is called the father of the English Essay he did not invent the form. He should be given the credit for importing the idea from France and transplanting it into the literary soil of England. In his Essays Bacon does not appear as a scientist or a philosopher but as a man of action or in the words of Bacon himself a 'Citizen of the World'. But he is too much of an English man and a Protestant and Elizabethan-Jacobean Englishman to be more precise. Bacon was not a speculative philosopher alone. He lived in a world of action and formulated

a philosophy for a man of action. Many of Bacon's essays are written for the benefit of the kings. Bacon was a very shrewd observer of Society and he had a keen insight into the nature and affairs of men. He was born in the age which was remarkable in many ways. It was a period of great importance in the history of England. He was the true son of Renaissance. The element of wonder, of enquiry, of admiration, is all found in Bacon. In this unit, we will study some selected essays of Sir Francis Bacon.

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### 10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Sir Francis Bacon
- Assess the main characteristics of Bacon's writing
- Critically analyse his essays, 'Of Truth', 'Of Nobility', 'Of Ambition', 'Of Simulation And Dissimulation'

### 10.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bacon was born on 22 January 1561 in London. It is believed that Bacon was educated at home in his early years owing to poor health (which plagued him throughout his life). He was sent to attend Trinity College at the age of twelve. Bacon's education was conducted largely in Latin and followed the medieval curriculum.

His studies brought him to the belief that the methods and results of science as then practised were erroneous. To recover from debts after his father's debt, Bacon took to a career in law. Soon he came to the attention of Queen Elizabeth and this helped him to regain his financial stability. James I also showered many honours on Bacon, including knighting him.

At the age of forty-five, Bacon married *Alice Barnham*, the fourteen-year-old daughter of a well-connected London *alderman* and MP. On 9 April 1626 Bacon died of *pneumonia* and left behind debts which would amount to three million pounds today.

#### 10.2.1 The Universal Appeal of the Essays of Bacon

Sir Francis Bacon was a man of great resourcefulness. In considering the universal appeal of his essays this fact about Bacon has to be constantly kept in mind. His versatility encompassed his encyclopedic range of literature, mythology, history and knowledge about human nature and affairs. He gained this knowledge through personal experiences and his foreign travels.

The greatness of the man can be gauged from the fact that his contribution to language and literature is considerable. He imported into



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English literature a new **genre** called the Essay (the name given by him) and therefore known as the father of the English Essay. He is still considered one of the greatest essayists in the language. His contribution to the development of modern English prose and prose style earned him yet another accolade of being termed the father of the Modern English Prose. These tributes are a confirmation of Bacon's popularity among successive generations.

The essays have a special flavour which makes them popular with all classes of readers. The more we read them the more we fall under the spell of their charm and wisdom. The same essay can be read many times over without losing either its interest or utility. The subsequent readings, on the contrary, yield more wisdom and pleasure. Among the reasons for the continued popularity of his essays are their variety of themes, the wisdom contained in them, their utility in the practical life, their human interest, and above all their cunning character.

Bacon was a very busy and active person. From a very early age he had cultivated the habit of jotting down notes of everything that interested or enlightened him. This habit equipped him with material on almost all topics of human interest. Bacon made use of these notes and jottings in the composition of his essays.

When we look at Bacon's essays, the first thing that catches our attention is their wide variety of theme. He has written on lofty subjects like truth, love, friendship, death etc.; on subjects concerned with a person's conduct in society, religious and metaphysical subjects; on subjects concerned with the affairs of the state and politics; as well as essays on very common place topics such as gardens, buildings, masques and triumphs. Whatever be the topic, the essays are characterized by knowledge and critical insight and observation, wisdom and commonsense and shrewd and original conclusions. Bacon's practical wisdom and approach and a convenient disregard of the moral and the virtuous is both intriguing and disturbing to a casual reader. But Bacon's essays are almost always interesting, informative and enlightening.

Another remarkable feature of Bacon's essays is their human interest. His essays both interest and enlighten the readers transcending the barriers of time and countries because they are not addressed to a people of one country or one age, they are concerned with humanity at large. Bacon observed the common man from a height and his observations are not in an informal manner. The tone is always moralizing. He preaches and sermonizes, cautions and advises but he does not always command respect. At times Bacon becomes more interesting (on account of his mysterious personality) than his essays, the reason being his preoccupation with the practical aspect of everything.

Bacon's essays are full of gems of wisdom, and mostly worldly wisdom. Bacon was born in an age which happened to be the meeting point of the old and the new. So while Bacon retained an interest in the abiding moral values

he tempered this interest with practical wisdom which taught him to care more for the end and less for the means. Besides caution we come across practicality in his essays. His essays are a store house of practical wisdom and teachings for a person aspiring to achieve power, position and material possession in a society full of treachery, intrigue, conspiracy, flattery, etc. Bacon proposes that to be successful in an atmosphere of opposition and hostility, a person has to be unscrupulous. His morality is really intriguing and mystifying but there is not the least doubt that his counsels are useful for the common man although his essays were primarily meant for an aspiring young aristocrat who had set his eye to advance materially.

Passions and emotions have no place in Bacon's scheme of things as the virtue of 'giving' also has no meaning for him. He values a thing only for what it gives. He is a utilitarian valuing the end and disregarding the means. But it should not be inferred that he was not aware of morality, virtue or values in life. He not only knew them but admired them also. But, whenever they interfered with practical situations, he ignored them. His morality and philosophy were Machiavellian and of convenience. This contradiction has baffled many but it was in his nature. He practiced it in his own life and earned from Pope the remark:

'The wisest, brightest and meanest of mankind'. And from Blake for his essays: 'Good advice for the kingdom of Satan'.

Essays of Bacon, although deficient in emotional content, are rich in imagery.

### 10.2.2 Spirit of Renaissance in Bacon's Essays

Bacon's genius was versatile and his personality colourful. Taken as a whole, Sir Francis Bacon was an enigma to many of his own generation and to most of subsequent generations. Bacon was the child of the Renaissance. He was highly educated, and a thoroughbred scholar with an encyclopedic range of knowledge. He was a scientist. His love for experimentation was the cause of his death. He caught a cold while performing experiments and this resulted in his death. He was a very widely travelled man- the scholars of his age did not consider their education complete unless they had supplemented their education with foreign travels. Thus, Bacon was not only an accomplished scholar, he was also a man of great wisdom and practical experience. His knowledge and experience helped him in securing important positions. He was a great statesman, and a true policeman, who excelled in manoeuvring and manipulation. For him no holds were barred to gain personal advantages of position and power. He rose to great heights but also paid the penalty of impropriety and immoral conduct. But in an age in which Bacon lived such jockeying for power and unscrupulous conduct were not uncommon. Although Bacon did not write a single word about himself in his essays, we can make a fairly accurate estimate of the man and his general mental make-up from

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them. Bacon has rightly been called a true and representative child of the Renaissance and we shall proceed to examine the elements of Renaissance spirit from a study of his essays.

### **Bacon's Essays Advocate A Utilitarian Attitude Towards Life**

Bacon is one of the most colourful personalities of English literature, celebrated not only for his literary worth and innovative genius but also for his versatility and wisdom. Bacon was a child of the Renaissance and represents the best of both the old and new spirits. Bacon was no doubt a man of the practical world and believed in political and economic power, but he was not an atheist. He was a Protestant Christian, a follower of the Church of England but he was not a religious activist. Though religious and spiritualistic considerations left Bacon indifferent and cold, it should not be inferred that he was oblivious of the virtues and the religious and spiritualistic considerations altogether.

#### **10.2.3 Bacon's Morality**

Bacon's life reveals the dichotomy of values in his personal conduct and the same duality appears in his writings. He is practical and mundane to his finger tips. Also he is rational and prudential. The predominance of intellect precludes emotional and sentimental approach. All these factors combined to make Bacon opportunistic, utilitarian and Machiavellian. The current political atmosphere was congenial to the promotion of such traits. Bacon writes chiefly for the benefit of the kings, princes and aristocrats and for the safeguarding of their interests was his avowed aim. He counsels and advocates shrewdness in order to achieve material progress and prosperity.

To Bacon the means had no meaning. He was concerned with the ends. It is for this reason that we find him cold and aloof from moralistic and spiritual considerations. They do not fit into his scheme of things. He advocates secrecy to achieve success.

Bacon is not ignorant of the value and nobility of virtue and virtuous conduct but as a man of great practical wisdom and sagacity he advocates the mixture of 'falsehood'.

At times Bacon waxes eloquent in praise of noble and virtuous conduct (such occasions are rare and, though).

But Bacon is too worldly and practical to be swayed by the sentiment of virtuosity. He makes necessity the occasion of being moral and noble and virtuous. The following expression proves it

*'This is certain, that a man that studied revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well'.*

*(Of Revenge)*

Thus Bacon's morality is the morality of convenience.

## Bacon's Worldly Wisdom

Bacon's Essays

As we have already seen, practical considerations rule supreme in Bacon's scheme of things, and spiritual, moral and religious considerations take a back seat. But Bacon is a great scholar, steeped in classical learning, mythology and scriptures. His essays are full of quotations from, 'Vulgate' (the Latin Version of the Bible) and have ample references and allusions to historical and mythological occurrences mentioned in the ancient masters.

We find in his essays passages which are of great significance (and where no morality or selfish interests harmful to others are not involved). His essay *Of Studies* is such a gem of pure and serene wisdom wherein he writes:

'Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability'.

'They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants that need pruning by study'

'Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find, talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider'.

'Readings make a full man; conference a ready man; and writing a exact man'.

'Histories make man wise; poets witty, the mathematics subtle, natural philosophy deep, moral grave, logic and rhetoric able to contend'.

This too is worldly wisdom, but it is not mixed with any basic instinct or degenerate and evil mundane consideration.

### Check Your Progress

1. List the different subjects on which Bacon has written essays.
2. What is the most remarkable feature of Bacon's essays?

## 10.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION

In this section, we will critically appreciate the different essays.

### 10.3.1 'Of Truth'

#### Summary of 'Of Truth'

Bacon in the essays says that it is difficult and troublesome to find Truth. When found, the Truth enforces a follow up in speech and action. It is difficult to follow it because it reveals the imperfections and emptiness of human minds on the one hand and the defects and hollowness of the nature of things on the other. It, therefore, encourages the telling of the lies.

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The Truth which judges itself teaches the enquiry of truth, the knowledge of truth and the belief of truth and it is the sovereign good of human nature. The Truth is light. God first created the light of sense and last the light of reason. The Illumination of his spirit is the work of God. God first breathed light upon the face of chaos (matter) next the face of man and He continues to do so into the face of His chosen.

A man of Truth attains a serene height from where he views the errors, doubts, ignorance and misfortunes of other men. But this should not make the man of Truth proud but humble. The mind of the man of Truth moves like Heavenly spheres by Love with the support of Providence on the axis of Truth. This Truth is philosophical truth.

The Truth of civil business admits to a mixture of falsehood which makes it work better and adds pleasure and utility to it. The mixture of falsehood degrades it.

*'The Poet loves a lie because it gives pleasure.*

*But the poet's lie is a shadow which passes.*

*The Merchant loves a lie because it gives profit.*

*The corrupt loves a lie for the sake of the lie.'*

Such a lie settles in the mind and adulterates it.

*'It is a vice to be found false and perfidious and it covers a man with shame.*

*A liar challenges God but is afraid to face man.'*

The wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith will bring God's judgement on the generation of men.

**Important explanations**

- (i) *'Truth may perhaps come to the price .....doth ever add pleasure'.*

The author discusses the philosophical or theological truth of civil business in this essay. At the very outset, the essayist makes it clear that it is very difficult to tell what truth is. In trying to explain truth Bacon contrasts it with falsehood. He tells that truth is like sunlight which reveals the true nature of things. There are certain things which do not look decent in sunlight because their defects become apparent. It is for this reason that the Elizabethan entertainments, masques, mummeries and triumphs are performed after dark, using artificial light.

In these lines Bacon compares truth with sunlight and falsehood with artificial lights. He says that there are certain things, like pearls, which look best when they are viewed in the natural light, i.e. of the sun. The value of the pearl lies in its purity, it has no defects or artificiality about

it. On the contrary diamonds or carbuncles owe their worth to artificial treatment by artisans and they appear best by artificial and varied lights because their defects, which have been treated by workers, may remain concealed and invisible.

(ii) '*Certainly it is heaven ..... upon the poets of truth*'.

The essays of Bacon, besides being stuffed with moral and practical wisdom, are also gems of literature and abound in quotations which are extremely educative and enjoyable. *Of Truth* is one of the most quoted pieces. In this essay, the essayist says that truth enables a person to view the vain struggles, errors, doubts, misunderstandings, conflicts and ignorance of his fellow beings. But he cautions that it should not make him proud but humble. He should view these vain endeavours with pity and sympathy. The man of truth is really the chosen of God and it is a blessed state of mind to be so fortunate. To have the universal love as the motivating force, to have the help of God's will to move his mind on the axis of truth. What more can one can aspire for? The man of truth (described above) enjoys the pleasure and privileges of heaven during his life on earth itself when universal love and submission to the will of God guide and generate his actions and his reasoning and actions are based on truth.

### 10.3.2 'Of Nobility'

The essay, 'Of nobility', is an essay of the argumentative nature and it is meant to criticize the nobility of the present times and question their contribution to the society. Francis Bacon in his essay, 'of nobility' discusses about two kinds of nobility. By the use of the word 'nobility' Bacon intends to consider meaning 'nobleness of character' as well as 'the aristocracy'. Interestingly, the essay does not actually begin with a discussion on nobility; it begins with the praise of democracy. In the first section of the essay he mostly focuses on his idea about the nobility of aristocracy'. In the essay Francis Bacon writes, 'A monarchy, where there is no nobility at all, is ever a pure and absolute tyranny; as that of the Turks.' the sentence simply implies that if one is planning to support a system where a Monarch rules than they must have a procedure to have aristocracy around to keep the balance of the system. Or else the powerful individual in the centre will not have any kind of control and he might turn into a dictator. Monarchy is a form of rule where a single individual or if family who rules the state. He give the example of Turkey where without the presence of noble class and with monarchy presiding the political arena the country was an absolute tyranny. Aristocracy not only brings a sense of balance but it also it is considered to be one of the most essential elements of a sovereign state. Yet at the same time there is no denying that while we are discussing the concept of democracy , there is hardly any need for nobility. Moreover chances are extremely slim that nobody will ever initiate a revolt against a government that is democratic in

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nature. One of the obvious hallmarks of democracy is that people usually do not remain united under one school of thought. But they keep preying upon the life of others. Praising Switzerland, Francis Bacon in his essay suggests that the Swiss people are good example of how they are bound together by the utility of their bonding. It is not the respect for all religion that keeps them together. In sharp contrast lies England. England is a state which is controlled by monarchy, yet at the same time the best results in governing system would be seen in Low Countries. Praising this system of governance , Bacon says, in Low Countries people enjoy a sense of equality and pay taxes to the government without any discomfort.

Going back to the idea of nobility, Francis Bacon says that even though aristocracy brings with it a certain kind of dignity to the monarchs yet this association is always marked by some diffusion of power. Again, nobility is able to provide spirit to the people, but this involves an exchange of wealth. The essayist opines that the best kind of nobility is the one that remains controlled under the existing sovereign power along with the power of Justice. But in the social matrix it should be represented about the common people. If the nobility is given status of this kind they will actors protective shield between the emperor as well as the common people. In this kind of arrangement, the wrath of the Monarch will first be faced by the nobility and gradually it is percolated to the common man. But Bacon is quick enough to add that no State should entertain more than the required number of nobility; because the presence of too many aristocrats will only lead the state towards poverty as well as inconvenience. After all maintaining nobility itself is very expensive, trying to keep them would turn others poor and in a situation like this wealth and owner of individuals would be of no use.

In the second part of 'Of Nobility', the essayist draws the comparison between the old nobility and the nobility of the contemporary times. Understanding the old nobility is like watching a ancient building with great structures. As we get awestruck by the beauty of the architecture of the ancient era in a similar manner one has to praise the nobility of the old times who have managed to survive all the odds that has befallen them and have transcended time. Francis Bacon firmly believes that the nobility of the antiquity focused more about acting upon the needs of the hour where as unfortunately the prime focus of the nobility of the present time is to attain power and authority. They are least concerned about the well being of the population at large. If we compare the nobility of the earlier times with the nobility of the present time we realise that both of them are equally virtuous. Despite being virtuous , the nobility of the contemporary times are no match to their ancestors in terms of Innocence. Of course we realise that human beings have always been guided by the virtues of good and evil at the same time. Despite the prevalence of Evil it is always the goodness which wins over the evilness; and it is the power of goodness which transcends beyond time while evil comes to an end with the end of the person.



Francis Bacon after criticizing the nobility of the present times, goes on to tell the readers that the nobility of the present time does not like to work; and ironically they also do not like to admire people who are used to working hard. Nothing much can be done about this kind of an attitude because Noble people are born with it and it is difficult for them to rise beyond it. The essayist feels that such kind of envious attitude is ingrained in the immunity of the nobility and they carry a natural air of enviousness because it directly affects their honour.

Francis Bacon in 'Of Nobility' uses wit and brevity to highlight his ideas. He is very direct in his approach towards his argument. Through out the essay he remains to the point and does not meander around unnecessarily. His directness of approach coupled with a systematic way of writing make this essay one of the most logically argued essays. Moreover, since the subjects that Francis Bacon chose for his essays reflected the society around him, most of the audience found them to be relatable and hence they manage to identify epigrammatic wisdom in these essays.

The essay, 'Of Nobility', revolves around Francis Bacon's understanding of the role of nobility in his time. He initiated by supporting democracy where he feels that nobility is of no use, and their presence might cause trouble in the business of others. But Francis Bacon feels that nobility holds a special place in a setting which is run by monarchy. The prime focus is to keep check on the monarchs and their whimsical manners. Yet at the same time, the nobility has lost its original honour as well as its virtue because of its laziness. Ideally their role was to act as a buffer and keep peace between the monarchs and the subjects. Despite the role of a safety valve, they also come at an expense to the monarch; the monarchy has to share its power with them and people have to share their wealth.

Francis Bacon in his essay describes how the nobles are part of the aristocratic society. Their significant positioning makes an important aid to the king. As mentioned, the citizens of the democratic countries are generally considered to be law-abiding and hence they do not indulge in unexpected conspiracies and remain quiet most of the time. Switzerland and Netherlands are examples of Democratic Nations which house numerous relations as well as states. But the main reason for these countries to flourish is the absence of the presence of nobility- a class which exercises superiority over other classes. Apart from the various advantages and disadvantages the class of nobility has on the society, there are some significant impacts that an individual noble has on his surroundings. An ancient noble family, which has withstood the decay of time, is nothing but a product of time itself. Whereas on the other hand, a comparatively new noble family is nothing more than a product of the law itself. Francis Bacon highlights how despite the fact that nobles feel envious of others, others do not feel envious of them because they seem to be naturally blessed with power and a demeanour which draws instant obedience from the common men.

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Francis Bacon lived in a time which was marked by its restriction on the freedom of expression. Francis Bacon must have taken a lot of pain to compose this essay which was not just epigrammatic but was full of wisdom and truth.

**10.3.3 'Of Ambition'**

During the period of Francis Bacon, it was believed that human body is composed of four different fluids- blood, choler or yellow bile, melancholy or black bile and phlegm. Presence of each of these elements was responsible for controlling the emotional as well as the physical condition of a human being. An excess of Yellow bile was associated with restlessness and irritability. A person with dominant signs of yellow bile would be someone who would look forward for actions in his life. He was identified as a man of unquenchable ambition; and thus could not lead a passive, relaxed and content life. Since he is a person who is aiming for the sky, he will undoubtedly come forward with interesting ideas which will be away for things newer and better. He will not hesitate to beat challenges and will do his best to solve them. With every step of success, he will try harder to reach the next level of success. He will try and be in that League of people who are continuously challenging themselves to venture into untrodden areas. This kind of a person invariably will turn out to be a perfectionist as well as a workaholic. This person will be bubbling with ideas as well as energy. As a result of his discontent nature and panache for success he will invariably find his surroundings dull and unchallenging.

But if this kind of an ambitious man is not allowed to carry out his passion and is asked to confine himself to his mediocre surroundings then this kind of a person will turn angry and his suppressed anger will eventually take the shape of rebellion. In the long run, this person with exceptional energy will lose his prowess and dynamism and will be left to be wasted. Seeing himself get wasted and unable to do anything about it will make this person develop a negative mindset. This negative mind set will eventually pave way to a phase where this ambitious man, who could have been a lot of other things, now will use the world as his enemy and start nurturing hostile feelings for people around him.

On one hand, if a person who is bubbling with ambition is given an appropriate opportunity to pursue his goals without creating too much of hinderance, will succeed in his role. The person will remain engrossed in his work and hence none of the negative feelings will find a chance to enter into his mind. Just kind of a person will remain harmless, in general, to people around him. But if the same person is not allowed to develop his passion and approach his ambition and held back, then this kind of a person will gradually turn into a destructive person. His inability to reach his vision will turn into someone who is plagued by frustration and motivated by anger. Being fuelled

by his internal discontent he will eventually start seeing people as wicked and at times as hideous. And this will be his perception and it might not be true per se. Soon his frustration will make him feel happy when others start suffering. Irrespective of who is that the receiving end, the once ambitious person, starts enjoying the misfortune of the others. It is understood that employees who developed this kind of negative mindset are, sooner or later, turn into liabilities for the organisation they are part of, and the government as well as the society at large.

Francis Bacon suggests that, it is imperative that people who are born into the world of ambition should be given enough opportunity and freedom so that they can let their creativity bloom. If such kind of conducive environment can be built then the ambitious mind can be turned into an asset for the society. They will remain dedicated and focused towards their work. They will, under normal circumstances, will not turn hostile towards their surroundings and not get angry at people in general. The organization must be clear on one ground, that if they are unable to provide freedom to a person who is ambitious by nature, then they might as well consider not getting associated with them at all; because in the long run the suppression of ambition will only lead to greater problems. The employees who are ambitious but are not allowed to express themselves in the right way will eventually bring disgrace as well as downfall for the organization they are associated with and this will not bring happiness to any of the parties involved. The essayist, points out that there is always an added risk to employ people who are by nature extremely ambitious. Because they cannot be contained within a restricted structure for a very long time; hence for all the practical reasons these kind of ambitious persons should not be considered to be associated with unless and until there is an extreme necessity. But obviously this is not a 'rigid' rule that cannot be changed depending on the needs of the situation.

Continuing with his argument, Francis Bacon quickly points out that when someone is considered for the position of commander who will be responsible for strategic results ambition cannot be a bad thing for him. He cannot be disqualified for his ambitious nature. Being a commander and holding a significant position, he cannot have the luxury of displaying a laid back attitude or a content disposition. This kind of approach will impact the country in a wrong way. The commander's un-ambitious approach will be considered as his negative trait. Not having an ambition, without a doubt, will only highlight the fact that, when the situation arises, this, that might be the first one to leave the battlefield when even a whiff of defeat is felt. On the contrary, only a commander who is ambitious as well as egoistic by nature will have the power to face his enemy boldly and will carry the confidence to vanquish them from the battlefield and win the war for the ruler.

Francis Bacon, praising the ambitious attitude says that these kind of people are an asset to the government especially to the people holding higher

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positions in the administration. Ambitious men invariably turn out to be the best option for safeguarding the personal safety of the king; and not just the ruler himself but of the all the major senior functionaries who are responsible for the well being of the state. People who are ambitious more often than not, turn out to be reliable when they hold the position of Bodyguard. Being a bodyguard for someone is the position of extreme responsibility. This is a role which when one takes over is conscious of the fact when the time comes he might have to sacrifice his own life. The role of a bodyguard, revolves around saving the life of his employer and following the Call of Duty if certain danger looms over the employer the Bodyguard will be expected to either avert the danger or give his own life in his effort to save the life of his employer.

For a bodyguard the most sacrosanct aspect of his role is to take care of his employer. The essayist compares such dedication to a blind folded dove. Dove is considered to be a small robust bird who has potentiality to soar to unexpected heights in the sky without bothering about the distance it is covering or worrying about the diminishing energy. But at some point the bird that's too exhausted and falls into the ground. An Ambitious bodyguard too goes to extreme lengths to prove his loyalty towards his master and does is best who save the life of he is employer.

Francis Bacon brings in the reference of the gallant and the ambitious warrior Sejanus, who ruled as the emperor of Rome. Sejanus was discharging the role of the king in absence of the actual emperor, Tiberious. Tiberious for certain reasons was staying in a distant island. After a point, being informed by people who mattered in his council, Tiberious began to believe that Sejanus was conspiring against him and was planning to dethrone him and usurp his crown. This way Sejanus will be able to destroy Tiberious. To keep a track of the situation Tiberious decided against directly confronting Sejanus. Instead, he decided to take recourse to a complicated plan which required to create confusion in the minds of the members who were holding positions in senate. He decided to dispatch ambiguous messages to the members in the form of letter. In his letters he kept praising and deriding Sejanus alternately, thus confusing the receiver as to what opinion to form with respect to Sejanus.

Sejanous, as a caretaker king, had created enough enemies within the state of Rome. It was because of his own behaviour, being brash and boastful, that people had started detesting him. To combine it, Sejanous as a ruler was a brute. Taking into account the gravity of the situation, and being a ruler with a good heart, Tiberious decides to take charge of the situation. Tiberious befriends with the valiant and ambitious Marco and asks him to help him get rid of Sejanous. Tiberious returned to his Kingdom, rome, one fine early morning, and immediately summoned Sejanous under the pretext of honouring him. Marco did not lose this golden opportunity. To complete his task, Marco to control of the mounted guards who were used to taking

orders from Sejanous until then. Once the Guards were under control, Marco attacked Sejanus and killed him; after that he disposed off the body of the traitor in the river, unceremoniously. Francis Bacon highlights that if a person like Marco did not exist then Tiberious would have found it extremely difficult to annihilate the growing powers of Sejanous. That is why it is important for people holding important positions- Kings, leaders, generals - to remain surrounded by people who are naturally ambitious.

Despite favouring powers and might of the ambitious people Francis Bacon decides to share a word of caution. He is of the opinion that if ambitious men are employed in responsible positions then they must be kept under strict vigilance either obviously or indirectly. This kind of control is important because if these men are not restricted in their actions then there is a strong possibility of the ambitious men going against them those who are their benefactor and employers. But again not all ambitious men pose similar kind of threat. Francis Bacon explains, if the ambitious man who is offering his services as a guard to some important person (head of the state, king etc), happens to be from the lower section of the society then they seem to pose comparatively less danger to the ruling class. But if these ambitious man incharge of protecting significant people happened to be from the aristocratic class then the chances were very high that they might be in a conflicting position with the people who occupy the power in a state. Going by the appearance, it was understood that ambitious men who displayed ill mannered and rough appearance were expected to remain more loyal then their counterparts who might appear to be popular and polished. In a similar fashion, men who are recruited newly invariably remain lesser of a threat than someone who has been around for a very long time and knows the ways and means of the situation around. Being around for a long time, these men have access to information which are confidential and time sensitive. Depending on their equation with their master the might feel tempted to use these significant knowledge against their employers and jeopardise their position.

History is filled with example, how in every age Kings, head of the states, men of importance have their own men around themselves. They would employ someone for their own protection if they knew the person, trusted him and relied on his judgement during a situation of crisis. Many people criticize this system. According to them, this is not a fair policy and relies on the foundation of nepotism. But according to Bacon this is a smart policy. A decision like this, only helps in keeping pretentious people and their scheming minds happy in their respective positions and they do not get to intervene in major decisions where the intervention could have brought disaster to the state. Again, some ambitious people who are dissatisfied with their employers can overthrow the employers when the time is right. That is why it is important to keep the ambitious guards in good humour.

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Needless to say, a person who is chosen to take care of the king or someone equally important, in the long run, can either remain loyal to him or turn against him. The position of the guard will be strictly decided by its proximity to the person he is serving. In the hindsight, a guard's Association with his master might or might not impact the interest of the state or the king. But an ambitious person with latent hostility towards his master at any point of time has a potentiality to rebel against his master which might have a larger impact in the overall political scenario. Since it is imperative to have a few ambitious people in the circle for one's own benefit, it is important to take a note of the over zealous attitude. And to keep this over zealous attitude in control the employer must employ someone who is better or equally talented as this ambitious person in a position which is parallel to his.

Francis Bacon further adds that this is not a full proof solution. How can we know that these two ambitious men holding similar roles will not come together and hatch a plot against the king himself. In a different situation these two might have a fallout, and this can worsen things beyond control. Their antagonistic attitude towards each other has the potentiality to create disharmony and undesirable situation which will have a direct impact on the master. For such a situation to not take place, it is desirable to appoint some high level officials or ministers or counselors who will be expected to possess sound sense of judgement and will help in building coherence as well as stability in the state.

To keep your balance in the administrative setup a king or a Prince or an employer should I take care to hire someone who is ambitious but has an upbringing which is inferior to those who occupy significant positions in the inner circle of the court, for the well being of the state. Even though at the surface level these employees might not appear sophisticated enough to walk alongside the members who belong to the inner circle of the court yet their presence only helps in balancing the presence after overtly ambitious employees who are also in possession of greedy and wicked mind.

In this essay, Francis Bacon exhibits his ability to observe things from a very close quarter and provide a neutral judgement on every situation. He says, if someone is being considered for the post of security incharge and advisor (a very important position) is known to have beautiful features, unpleasant persona and carries repulsive aura around him, one must consider him a potential candidate for the role. On the other hand, if the person who is being considered is someone who is in possession of a robust physic and holds a daring nature that kind of person should not be considered for the role as it might invite disastrous consequences.

If by some chance there are hints that arouse suspicion with respect to the integrity as well as loyalty of the ambitious guard then it is advisable to take charge of the situation in the most diplomatic person. These kind



of people have the power to usurp the throne and hence it is imperative that these people are dealt with cleverly. It is important to be considered that one should not take any kind of rash action against these kind of people as they are brave and intelligent and slightest of provocation has the power to explode them, which might result in something extremely nasty. Thus it is necessary to not give them any impression that sooner or later they might face dismissal. It is the role of the ruler to keep the disloyal ambitious men guessing by providing them with confusing situations. The ruler might decide to reward the ambitious men one day and on another day criticize them for their actions. This ambivalent behaviour will keep them occupied in trying to figure out a plan to understand what is running in the mind of the ruler and this way they will be distracted from the evil thoughts and their ambitious plans will suffer a setback.

Francis Bacon goes on to argue that 'ambition' as such is not a bad thing. He is the example of an amateur author who intends to outdo his contemporaries by bringing out a piece which is one of its kind. In this kind of a scenario, ambition is a good thing. Again, if we consider a musician who is trying to bring innovation through his music will do a great favour to the society through his ambition. But that kind of an ambition and enthusiasm should be limited to the area of expertise. If over enthusiasm is expressed in sensitive matter like administration, affairs of the state or military understanding then it could turn fatal. And overly ambitious person could be a potential threat. After all he carries within him the power of destruction. Thus, it is important to understand that impact of ambition can vary from person to person. If a person employs his ambition in the field of his passion then the focused approach towards success will bring him closer to his ambition. But if it is found in the nature of those who hold key position in the day to day administration and realise that the ruler values their contribution, then chances are high that ambition assimilated with pride in the position might bring him unpleasant results.

It is perfectly alright to pursue excellence and fame by individuals who are indulging in actions that do not pose any threat to mankind. These kind of ambitions should be nurtured as well as rewarded. But in case a person feels like belittling others and bring the general mass under his control it can safely be concluded that this person and his ambition are only going to hurt the state and its people in the long run. Francis Bacon says that the word 'honour', as understood in a general context usually brings with it the following benefits:

- It helps in reaching its significant position in society
- It helps in being closer to the king as well as those who exercise power on the society
- It also brings with it affluence, well being along with prosperity.

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- But one should not forget that an ambitious man who get remains restricted in this three aspects is the person who should be encouraged and rewarded for his efforts. Any ruler who is able to judge the aspirations and power of such ambitious people is truly a wise ruler. Concluding his essay, Francis Bacon says that people who want to use their ambition for personal gain should not be appreciated. People who are ruled by their conscience and not just simply by their duty should be considered for the role.

**10.3.4 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation'**

The following is a summary of what Bacon discusses in the essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation'. He argues that both simulation and dissimulation are useful but their successful use requires both intelligence and 'Strong Heart'.

Dissimulation is a weak and negative policy. It means a lack of the power to judge and to take decision. Those people who lack courage and determination practice it. People of strong mind and penetration do not dither or stall. People who know what to conceal, and what, how much, to whom and when to reveal, to them dissimulation is a weakness and an obstacle. For them it is important to earn a reputation for frankness and honesty. When such people are driven by necessity to dissemble, they are not suspected of dissimulation.

Bacon says there are three varieties of secrecy, the 'reserve', the 'dissimulation', and the 'simulation'. In 'reserve', the person hides his real nature of intentions from others. In 'dissimulation', which is a negative property, the person deceives others by the vagueness or indirectness of his speech or action. In 'simulation', which is a positive property, practicing 'reserve' is both a matter of policy and a matter of morality. It encourages others to confide their secrets to a person of reserved nature. Such persons win the confidence and respect of others if their actions and expressions do not betray their real thoughts and feelings. 'Dissimulation', the second variety, is necessary for concealment. With its help a person keeps those persons, who are desirous of learning their secrets, away. It is absolutely necessary for secrecy. 'Simulation', the third variety, is positively a vice and weakness of character if it is practiced habitually and consistently. It is cowardice and hence immoral. It should be practiced very rarely and discreetly.

Both simulation and dissimulation have advantages and disadvantages. They take the enemy by surprise; afford easy means of retracing steps when difficult situations make retreat necessary; and encourage the confidence of other people. The disadvantages, on the other hand, are that they destroy boldness and initiative; confuse and confound allies and friends discounting help and cooperation; and lose faith and confidence of others. A person should be cautious and reserved so as to gain the reputation for frankness but if the

occasion demands he should be prepared to dissemble and, if absolutely necessary, to deceive also.

### Important explanations

- (i) *'Dissimulation is but a faint kind of policy ..... and to do it.'*

These are the opening lines of the essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation'. This essay may be taken as typically Baconian in the sense that it reflects the essayist's characteristics of practical wisdom. Here the essayist discusses dissimulation.

Literally, dissimulation means behaviour or speech to hide feelings, plans and thoughts or to give a wrong idea about them. Bacon asserts that such behaviour is a weakness and is not wisdom. Persons who are wise and courageous do not practise dissimulation because they know the occasion when they should speak the truth and they have the courage also to practise what they consider to be correct. Thus Bacon recognizes dissimulation in persons lacking wisdom and courage.

- (ii) *'The best composition and ..... If there be no remedy.'*

While concluding the discussion, the author considers the advantages and disadvantages of simulation and dissimulation.

At the end Bacon says that it is best a person should use his talents and qualities in such a manner as to gain a reputation for frankness and honest dealings, a habit of remaining reserved and aloof, practicing dissimulation when the occasion demands, and he should be prepared to even pretend and deceive if it is absolutely necessary and if there is no alternative.

Thus, we see the Bacon's morality admits of no moral scruples. He does not hesitate to advise and advocate deception for personal gains. It is for this reason that Bacon's essays are considered the sermons on social conduct for personal gains.

#### Check Your Progress

3. What is the theme of the essay 'Of Nobility'?
4. What is dissimulation?

## 10.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Bacon has written on subjects like truth, love, friendship, death, religious and metaphysical subjects etc.

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2. One remarkable feature of Bacon's essays is their human interest. His essays both interest and enlighten the readers transcending the barriers of time and countries because they are not addressed to a people of one country or one age, they are concerned with humanity at large.
3. The essay, 'Of Nobility', is an essay of the argumentative nature and it is meant to criticize the nobility of the present times and question their contribution to the society.
4. Dissimulation is a weak and negative policy. It means a lack of the power to judge and to take decision.

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## 10.5 SUMMARY

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- Bacon was born on 22 January 1561 in London. It is believed that Bacon was educated at home in his early years owing to poor health (which plagued him throughout his life). Bacon's education was conducted largely in Latin and followed the medieval curriculum.
- Bacon came to the attention of Queen Elizabeth and this helped him to regain his financial stability. James I also showered many honours on Bacon, including knighting him. On 9 April 1626 Bacon died of *pneumonia* and left behind debts which would amount to three million pounds today.
- Sir Francis Bacon was a man of great resourcefulness. He imported into English literature a new genre called the Essay (the name given by him) and therefore known as the father of the English Essay.
- Bacon's contribution to the development of modern English prose and prose style earned him yet another accolade of being termed the father of the Modern English Prose.
- When we look at Bacon's essays, the first thing that catches our attention is their wide variety of theme. He has written on subjects like truth, love, friendship, death, religious and metaphysical subjects etc.
- Bacon's essays are full of gems of wisdom, and mostly worldly wisdom. Bacon was born in an age which happened to be the meeting point of the old and the new.
- Bacon's essays are a store house of practical wisdom and teachings for a person aspiring to achieve power, position and material possession.
- Bacon was the child of the Renaissance. His knowledge and experience helped him in securing important positions.
- Bacon's life reveals the dichotomy of values in his personal conduct and the same duality appears in his writings. He is practical and mundane to his finger tips.

- To Bacon the means had no meaning. He was concerned with the ends. Bacon's morality is the morality of convenience.
- In Bacon's work 'Of Truth', Bacon says the Truth which judges itself teaches the enquiry of truth, the knowledge of truth and the belief of truth and it is the sovereign good of human nature.
- The essay, 'Of Nobility', is an essay of the argumentative nature and it is meant to criticize the nobility of the present times and question their contribution to the society. 'Nobility' means 'nobleness of character' as well as 'the aristocracy'.
- In the second part of 'Of Nobility' the essayist draws the comparison between the old nobility and the nobility of the contemporary times. Understanding the old nobility is like watching a ancient building with great structures.
- Francis Bacon in the essay 'Of Nobility' after criticizing the nobility of the present times, goes on to tell the readers that the nobility of the present time does not like to work; and ironically they also do not like to admire people who are used to working hard.
- During the period of Francis Bacon, it was believed that human body is composed of four different fluids- blood, choler or yellow bile, melancholy or black bile and phelgm.
- In 'Of Ambition', an ambitious man is not allowed to carry out his passion and his asked to confine himself to his mediocre surroundings then this kind of a person will turn angry and his suppressed anger will eventually take the shape of rebellion.
- Bacon says in the essay 'Of Ambition' if a person who is bubbling with ambition is given an appropriate opportunity to pursue his goals without creating too much of hinderance, he will succeed in his role.
- Francis Bacon in the essay 'Of Ambition' is quick point out that when someone is considered for the position of commander who will be responsible for strategic results ambition cannot be a that thing for him. He cannot be disqualified for his ambitious nature.
- Despite favouring powers and might of the ambitious people Francis Bacon decides to share a word of caution. He is of the opinion that if ambitious men are employed in responsible positions then they must be kept under strict Vigilance either obviously or indirectly.
- Francis Bacon goes on to argue that 'ambition' as such is not a bad thing. It is perfectly alright to pursue excellent and fame by individuals who are indulging in actions that do not pose any threat to the mankind.
- In the essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation' Bacon defines the terms and cautions about its use.

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### 10.6 KEY WORDS

- **Renaissance:** The revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th–16th centuries.
- **Aristocracy:** The highest class in certain societies, typically comprising people of noble birth holding hereditary titles and offices.
- **Dissimulation:** Concealment of one's thoughts, feelings, or character; pretence.

### 10.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a brief note explaining the universal appeal of Bacon's essays.
2. Write a short note on Bacon's morality and worldly wisdom.
3. Briefly-examine Bacon's essay 'of ambition'.

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Explain how the spirit of Renaissance is reflected in Bacon's essays.
2. Give the summary and critical analysis of Bacon's essays 'of nobility' and 'of truth'.
3. Discuss in detail the interpretation of Bacon's essay 'of Simulation and Dissimulation'.

### 10.8 FURTHER READINGS

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# UNIT 11 THOMAS MORE: *UTOPIA*

## *BOOK I & II*

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Thomas More: *Utopia*  
Book I & II

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### 11.0 INTRODUCTION

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Sir Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in 1516. The work was written in Latin and it was published in Louvain (present-day Belgium). *Utopia* is a work of satire, indirectly criticizing Europe's political corruption and religious hypocrisy. In depicting Utopia, More steps outside the bounds of orthodox Catholicism, but More's ultimate goal is to indicate areas of improvement for Christian society. Is an ideal state possible? Utopia means 'no place' but sounds like 'good place.' *Utopia* exposes the absurdities and evils of More's society by depicting an alternative.

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### 11.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the social conditions when *Utopia* was written
- Explain More's concept of an ideal society
- Describe the society of *Utopia*

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### 11.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sir Thomas More was born in London on 7 February 1477. His father, Sir John More, was a barrister (lawyer) and later became a judge. As a young child, More went to St. Anthony's School, and at the age of 13, Thomas More became a page for John Morton the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord



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Chancellor of England. Morton was impressed with More's intelligence and he arranged for the young man to study at Oxford. More attended Oxford University from 1492-1494, studying Latin, Greek, French, History, and mathematics.

During early adulthood, More seriously considered entering the priesthood. For about four years, More actually resided in a monastery.

In the end, More did not become a priest and he returned to law. More first married Jane Colte who died in 1511 after giving birth to four children. After Jane's death, More married Alice Middleton, a woman who was seven years older than him.

In 1516, *Utopia* is published in Latin and this is More's most successful work.

In 1532, More resigned from his position as Chancellor of England because he disagreed with Henry VIII's elevation to a position as head of the church in England. More was imprisoned in the infamous Tower of London and accused of treason. He was executed in 1535.

### Events That Influenced the Writing of *Utopia*

The period from fourteenth till sixteenth century was a glorious time for Europe. It was the reformation of many old ideas and the formation of new. This was called the Renaissance. The Renaissance brought many changes to Europe. The economy was greatly boosted by all the new explorations. The flourishing economy helped to inspire new developments in art and literature. And from that many new beliefs were formed. Humanism, one of the new beliefs which was formed during the Renaissance, said that people should read the works of the greats and focus on writing, and the arts. Humanists believed that they were equal with the ancient Greek and Roman writers and philosopher.

As new scientific discoveries were made many of the church's theories were beginning to be questioned. Some of the new scientific discoveries consisted of theories that went against the church beliefs. One theory which was proven true was about the Earth revolving around the sun. This was contrary to the church's view that everything revolved around the Earth. As the church began to be questioned more and more, new religions were formed. The major religion that was formed during the Renaissance was the Protestant religion. The Protestant religion began to spread throughout Europe. At one point of time the official Church of England was a Protestant Church.

By the early sixteenth century, the church and state had become inextricably intertwined. The spiritual yearnings of the people, combined with a worsening economic situation, and an increasing popular resentment of church officials as immoral and corrupt, paved the way for sweeping changes. Under Louis XIV's reign, France found economic stability and

an effective government free from Church inference. Dictatorship evolved into constitutionals, a few steps closer to democracy. Following this was the significant break from the Church of England made by the Puritans, who pioneered the brutal landscape of the North American continent, where freedom of religion, expression and lifestyle are legally protected.

More was a devout Catholic and was opposed the principle of the Anglican Church and the King of England's role as the head of the Church (replacing the pope in Rome). More's *Utopia* implies that Utopians are better than some Christians. Utopia is a type of New Jerusalem, a perfect place on earth.

More uses the New World theme to get his philosophical points across. He is less interested in New World politics and more interested in offering *Utopia* as an indirect critique of the Catholic European societies (England mainly, but also France, the Italian city-states, and other areas to a lesser extent). More opposed the vast properties of the wealthy English aristocracy, the monopoly of London's guilds and merchants, and the burdensome oppression of the work through the imposition of unjust laws.

More's work has left a lasting impact on subsequent political thought and literature. The Greek word Utopia translates as 'no place' or 'nowhere', but in modern parlance, a Utopia is a good place, an ideal place (eutopia). The term 'utopia' has gained more significance than More's original work. *Utopia* has inspired a diverse group of political thinkers.

#### Check Your Progress

1. Which King abolished the power of the Church at first?
2. What was More against in the society of his time, as concerns land laws?

### 11.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *UTOPIA* *BOOK I & II*

Throughout *Utopia*, More alludes to the scholarly and traditional literature of his period, also referencing earlier Greek and Latin works. Almost immediately, *Utopia* presents itself in a book whose form is different from other works. The full title of the work attests to this. '*On the best form on a Commonwealth and on the New Island of Utopia; a Truly Precious Book No Less Profitable than Delightful by the most Distinguished and Learned Gentleman Thomas More, Citizen and Undersheriff of the Illustrious City of London.*' This book includes several things: it presents philosophy as well as descriptions about a foreign place. It poses as history but it is also a fictional adventure-story. Finally, parts of *Utopia* read much like a story with a moral

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aiming to improve the reader with a moral education by giving examples illustrated in stories.

Just as *Utopia* is a complex of styles. The introduction is a ‘**pastiche**’ (collage) of different literary forms including the poem, the pictogram and the **epistle**. Each of these serves a distinct narrative purpose.

The first poem is a six line stanza by Utopia’s poet laureate. This poem creates a pun on the word Utopia as opposite to eutopia. Utopia actually means no-place, a fantasy. Eutopia means a good place. The poem describes Utopia as a eutopia and compares it to ‘Plato’s state’ ‘In one sense, *Utopia* is also a response to Plato’s work, *The Republic*. More presents his own political philosophy, though in a very vague way.

A **quatrain** written about Utopus (the general who founded the state which he named after him) follows the **sextet**. Neither poem bears any significant resemblance to the established lyrical forms of More’s society. Indeed, the poem is translated into prose. The poem tells us that Utopia was an island state founded by the general Utopus. It has subsequently become a ‘philosophical state.’ The image of the island parallels More’s Britain. Unlike its neighbours on the continental mainland, the island is militarily secure enough to forge its own identity and isolated enough to become a unique idealistic state. Moreover, the security of the island makes it safe for the citizens to do business and participate in the trade and exchange of ideas. According to the poem Utopia eagerly shares its ideas and adopts the best practices of other societies.

More’s letter to Peter Giles combines actual people with fictional characters. This is what we would expect, considering the mix of fictional and non-fictional genres incorporated with the work. More has made himself into a character. Peter Giles is an actual friend of More’s and Giles assists in the publication of *Utopia*. Neither More nor Giles had a friend named Raphael Hythloday. The New World remains, in 1516 largely unexplored by Europeans, but there was no ‘Utopia’ nor had More travelled to any distant lands.

In the letter (the ‘epistle’) to Giles, More is actually writing to the reader indirectly. Details that Giles would already know are supplied to give the reader context. This is a form of apostrophe because the speaker is addressing his intended audience indirectly. The themes of truth and virtue are very important in *Utopia*. Narrative accuracy certainly involves issues of truth, but the definition of truth depends upon what sort of narrative is being written: in the same way that we can judge the philosophy of the Utopians as true or false, we can judge the philosophy of Utopia as true or false. If *Utopia* is read as a travelogue (description of a real place), we would look to see whether its descriptions were true (i.e. accurate). On the other hand, as a work of history, *Utopia* would be true if it were ‘objective.’ And if we

are reading *Utopia* as a fictional work, an adventure story or fantasy, ‘truth’ is more a matter of consistency and believability. Do the characters sound like themselves? Is that how Utopians would really act?

The idea of public service is another major theme of this work. More is the under-sheriff of London and he served in several other roles before he dies. Giles is a clerk for the city of Antwerp. Raphael Hythloday presents ideas regarding the individual’s obligations to society. To the extent that *Utopia* was written to enhance the public debate on the ‘ideal’ state, the book is an act of public service.

Finally, the idea of travel to the ‘New World’ is an obvious theme of *Utopia*. We cannot travel to Utopia because it is far away and the journey is dangerous. The next best thing is to receive an account of the New World from Hythloday and this is what More faithfully presents to us. There were plenty of travelogues and ‘accounts of the Indies’, mostly false, on the market during More’s era. *Utopia* borrows the idea of the New World, but More does not argue that Utopia is actually a location somewhere in the actual New World.

### Summary of Book One

In Book One, Thomas More describes the circumstances surrounding his trip to Flanders where he has the privilege of meeting Raphael Hythloday. This first part of *Utopia* chronicles the early conversation between More, Peter Giles, and Hythloday. The three men discuss a wide range of civil, religious and philosophical issues. Hythloday is a rebel and disbeliever on certain issues but he is a skilled speaker. Both More and Giles think there is considerable merit in much of what Hythloday has to say. Book Two is the continuation of the conversation during which Hythloday explains the details of Utopia in full.

More visited Flanders as an ambassador of Henry VIII. Alongside a man named Cuthbert Tunstall, More toured the cities of Bruges, Brussels, and Antwerp (all in present-day Belgium). Once in Antwerp, More finds his friend Giles. After attending a Mass at the Church of St. Mary, Giles introduces Thomas More to Raphael Hythloday. Raphael is not a native Utopian: he is Portuguese. Peter explains that Raphael accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on a voyage to the New World but Raphael remained overseas when Vespucci returned to Europe. Hythloday and his companions enjoyed their continued travels and afterwards, they were reconnected with a fleet of Portuguese ships near the island of Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka, due south of India). Hythloday made his way home with these sailors. Apparently, Hythloday’s visit to Utopia occurred in between his voluntary separation from Vespucci and his arrival at Ceylon.

After this rather lengthy introduction, Hythloday and More exchange greetings and the three men continue their discussion in the garden attached

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to More's lodging place. When he visited various regions, Raphael befriended the native inhabitants and gained their sincere friendship and trust. According to Raphael, the equatorial regions are excessively hot and there are monsters in the New World. When one continues further south, however, the climate becomes temperate again; populous cities and commercial areas emerge. Because Raphael's comparative analysis of the regions is so precise and intelligent, Peter suggests that Raphael become an advisor or counsellor for a king. Raphael rejects the idea and celebrates the degree of freedom that he currently enjoys, freedom he would forfeit should he enter politics. Raphael further argues that the other royal counselors would become jealous and would create unbearable complications. More agrees with Giles, but Raphael is resolute in his belief that he could ultimately do little in a political position.

Hythloday mentions that he has travelled extensively through Europe, encountering 'arrogant, absurd, and captious judgments once even in England.' More is eager to hear Hythloday's impressions of England because the traveller has spent several months there. Hythloday also spent some time with the Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev. Father John Morton (an acquaintance of More's). The traveller recounts a dinner conversation with Morton and several of Morton's assistants: Hythloday focuses more on political issues and less on the usual traveller's cultural interest. It is not long before Hythloday is engaged in a spirited albeit respectful debate on British legal practices. Hythloday learns of 'the rigorous justice applied to thieves in England' changing. He argues that the punishment is too harsh and unjustly severe for such a small crime. He also says that the punishment will not deter thieves if they are poor and have no other way to make a living. The Cardinal argues that the thieves could have become tradesmen or farmers but Raphael disputes that there are many wounded veterans of the King's wars who can no longer become farmers or learn a new trade. The government provides no avenue of opportunity for these veterans. Raphael also argues that the British noble class enforces a system of economic efficiency. Nobles keep their tenants in poverty and reserve much of the land for non-agrarian purposes (private gardens, hunting grounds). Raphael also mentions that once a noble lord has died, the lord's retainers often become armed beggars and thieves. Raphael continues his argument with a lawyer and their debate touches upon the military valour of retainers, England's 'sheep' problem, and the moral hazard of merchants who seek to develop monopolies.

The Cardinal finally interrupts Raphael and stops him from rambling. The Cardinal returns to the original topic (capital punishment) and asks what punishment Raphael would propose in place of hanging thieves. Raphael argues that Christianity has evolved from 'the law of Moses' to the 'new law of mercy' and that killing one another is forbidden. Raphael argues that murder and theft should not be punished in the same way, otherwise, a thief may be more inclined to kill, there being no additional penalty. Raphael

suggests a punishment of hard labour restoring the public works (roads, bridges) and that the thieves should compensate the owner for the stolen property. The lawyer disagrees with this idea and says it would endanger the commonwealth, but the Cardinal says that it would make sense to try the idea as the present system has failed. The Cardinal's associates then applaud the idea, as the Cardinal's own.

Raphael apologizes to More and Giles for his lengthy discourse only to draw attention to the fickle and jealous character of the Cardinal's associates. Raphael takes this as evidence that he would not fare well with the King's courtiers. More is pleased with Raphael's story and reminded of his own education in the Cardinal's household.

Resuming his attempts to persuade Raphael to consider public service, More mentions Plato's Republic and the idea of a 'philosopher-king.' Since Raphael cannot be king, he should bring his philosophy to the court. Raphael cites the fact of common property in Utopia, as opposed to private property. This difference makes it difficult to enact Utopian policies in Britain. Raphael's final argument is that wise men, perceiving the folly of those in government, do well to stay clear of politics and 'remain in safety themselves.' Raphael does not convince More of the superiority of common property nor does the abolition of private property strike More as a good idea. Raphael reminds More that the Utopians adopted the best practices of every culture with which they came in contact. Within a short period of time, Utopians interview their guest travellers like Hythloday and learn of advances in science, nautical engineering, law and culture. At this point, More is eager to hear of the Utopians and after lunch, Raphael begins his discourse-describing Utopia. This is found in Book Two.

### Analysis

Raphael's discourse with More and Giles is philosophical and abstract. It is also very idealized. The conversation begins in a church, continues in a garden, and pauses for lunch. This philosophizing is a leisure activity enjoyed by three well-educated men of means. How do we reconcile this with More's confession to Giles that he has been so busy working that he has not had time to write *Utopia*? Indeed, More has had time to write and to invent 'Utopia.' The theme of public service appears in More and Hythloday's debate on the utility of philosophy. Is Raphael morally obligated to put his philosophy and knowledge to good use in the service of the King? Does royal service or political work even count as a worthy application of philosophy and knowledge?

This thematic question applies to More's career in the broadest sense. More was a lawyer who served in a variety of roles: undersheriff, ambassador, member of the King's Council. Master of Requests, Speaker of the House of Commons, High Steward of Oxford and Cambridge, and, eventually, Lord

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Chancellor of England. Concurrently, More wrote a number of philosophical works besides *Utopia*, contributing to the discourse of his era.

Thomas More wrote *Utopia* early in his career and this underscores the importance of More's argument with the fictional Raphael. After a life of public service, More was convicted of treason (on perjured evidence) and beheaded by the very king whom he defended fourteen years earlier in a work called *Responsio ad Lutherum* (1523). There is a strange unintended irony in Book One. At least on one point, More's fictional character proves wiser than More himself. Raphael Hythloday is half-sage, half-fool and Book One develops both literary traditions. Raphael is clearly a man of intellect with more than a few good ideas. Nonetheless, Raphael's stories of far-off Utopia are laughably naive and innocent. His ideas for policy are unrealistic. The account of the Cardinal's dinner parallels the courts scenes later made famous in Elizabethan drama. Hythloday has some interesting ideas but he is so wordy, so verbose that the Cardinal must interrupt him. Raphael is unable to answer a raised question without first answering other unanswered peripheral questions.

'Raphael' is the name of a guardian angel. 'Hythloday' is a compound of Greek words translating to 'peddler of nonsense.' Thomas More does not intend for us to take Raphael or *Utopia* at face value. Book One is written in a style resembling the ancient Dialogues. In these Dialogues, intermingled real and fictional characters discussed philosophical ideas. The written work is essentially a transcript of the discussion. Raphael is so wordy that Book One hardly seems like a discussion or dialogue. It is not hard to argue that More concentrates on presenting ideas and constructing complex sentences (the original Latin work was praised as much for its syntax as for its narrative). More is less interested in telling a very good story.

Modern readers accustomed to reading novels might interpret Book One as a narrative device to build suspense. We must read through nearly half of *Utopia* before we reach the full description of the island. More is interested in the philosophical contemplation of European and Christian legal customs. Book one provides the context wherein More can critique the Utopian society. The abolition of private property has already become a point of contention between More and Hythloday. Conveniently, Hythloday's visit to England justifies and enables More's desire to discuss England's problems (and also pay tribute to his dearly beloved, dearly influential friend, the Cardinal Archbishop). Raphael is a fictional character and a mask. More shields himself behind Raphael and gains the safety to discuss a number of controversial ideas. Raphael presents land reform, capital punishment, and the distribution of property. On these issues, either More is silent or he takes the traditional position. More does not create Raphael as a mouthpiece for his own secret and unpopular beliefs; rather, More uses Raphael to create a discussion on



issues that clearly need resolution. More may not accept Raphael's extreme and divergent opinions, but More does imply that some reform is needed.

Much like the island of Utopia, Raphael's is a piece of fiction inserted in the real world.

Thomas More: *Utopia*  
Book I & II

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### Check Your Progress

3. What is *Utopia* the book, a mix of?
4. Which are some of the styles of writing used in the introduction of *Utopia*?
5. What is the word *Utopia* a pun on?
6. What account does Raphael give of the New World?
7. What punishment does Raphael suggest for thieves?
8. How does More indicate that we should not take Raphael too seriously?

## 11.4 SUMMARY OF BOOK TWO (FIRST HALF)

In the first half of Book Two, Raphael describes the natural geography of Utopia and then addresses the major cities the system of government, the social distribution of labour and responsibility, and 'how the Utopians travel.' Throughout Book Two, Hythloday praises the Utopian customs and fails to offer any negative criticism.

In *Utopia's* introduction, the quatrain mentions that Utopia was made into an island. In book two, Hythloday explains that the General Utopus dug through the narrow **isthmus** that connected Utopia to the mainland. The neighbouring villages mocked Utopus because his ambitious project seemed doomed to fail. What Utopus and his men achieved in a relatively short period of time astonished these naysayers.

The island is roughly circular in shape and its natural harbours are navigable. The straits of Utopia are dangerous with shallows and rocks. The Utopians have mapped and mastered these waters but the shallows and rocks successfully deter foreign invaders. The island has fifty-four cities sharing 'exactly the same language, customs, institutions, and laws.' The cities also have the same planned layout. Much of this is due to the civilizing influence of Utopus who transformed a 'crude and rustic mob' into a culture of note. Amaurot, the capital city,

Each city is divided into four equal districts and the marketplace occupies the centre of the city. The head of each household offers his goods and obtains whatever his household needs. There is no exchange of money and

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no direct exchange of goods for 'there is plenty of everything' and no reason to hoard goods or deny them to others. In the city, each block of houses has a dining hall in which the households eat together. Stewards from each hall go to the market to get food for the meals. Hence, in the cities, the Utopians eat their meals in large communal groups and not as isolated families as is the case in the countryside. As always, the Utopians seek to advance the moral education of their people especially the youth. The common dining hall features brief lectures or readings followed by discussion. Young people are seated with their elders to prevent the youth from misbehaving.

In Utopia, there is no problem of travelling bands of rogues, nor is it possible for an individual to escape his civic obligations by travelling for another city. Utopians travel, they must join the labour of the resident citizens, otherwise they are not fed. Citizens must first get the permission of the magistrate to travel and husbands must have their wives' consent. Hythloday concludes that these travelling individuals remain just as profitable and useful to the state as if they never left. And 'with the eyes of everyone upon them' the Utopians have 'no wine taverns, no alehouses, no brothels, no occasion to be corrupted no hideouts, no hangouts.'

Utopia believes in storing a full year's worth of provisions as reserves. The excess supply of goods is exported to foreign lands at a reasonable price and one-seventh is donated to the poor in foreign lands. Utopians import is well in Utopia's favour, as they import far less than they export. Gold and silver are held in low regard upon the island. Utopians use these 'precious metals' to decorate criminals, slaves, and children. As a result of the stigma, gold and silver are not stolen or hoarded. Hence, these metals are always in great supply and are available in case of war.

The Utopians follow a keen sense of virtue and rationalism. They seek to avoid the social complications of private wealth and class structure and they rely upon an education in reason, morality and religion to keep Utopians well behaved. Utopians believe the greatest pleasures to be those of the mind and not the body, and they devote much of their free times to these pleasures.

### Analysis

In Book two, Raphael Hythloday develops the motif of perfection. A series of images and symbols support the notion of Utopia as a good place (and Utopians as the ideal people). Garden imagery is prevalent in Book Two, presenting an allusion to the Biblical garden of Eden. Utopians enjoy many gardens and love to garden. In symbolic terms, the Utopians enjoy a pure Eden-like life, free of many real world concerns. On a practical level, the garden imagery also reflects the agricultural skill and abundant harvests of the Utopians. The strength of the civilization is seen in the life and vitality of its crops and vegetation.

Thomas More's combination of urban and agricultural features makes Utopia a unique and modern state. The Utopian ideal fills the cities the cities with garden and surrounds each city with agricultural land. The land symbolizes Eden but there is certainly social commentary reflecting More's Britain. The Utopians have not constructed congested and dirty cities like London, nor have they devoted land to the wasteful pleasure of the nobility. More than Eden-like gardeners, the Utopians are 'stewards' of the land and they carefully preserve their resources. This connects the imagery of perfection and gardens to the themes of virtue and public services.

Besides the gardens, there are other images of perfection. Utopus constructed the 'whole plan of the city' Amaurot and the Utopians sustain the zeal for urban planning and design 1760 years later. The island is circular in shape, its cities are perfectly arranged, and the cities are divided into four equal districts. For the Utopians, equality is the visual image of perfection. Cities are the same size. Houses look the same. Each city has the same number of adults.

In considering *Utopia* as a philosophical essay and Utopia as a model civilization, we find that the theme of truth becomes very complicated. There is the question of probability. Assuming that the Utopians' beliefs are true and morally correct, how useful is the information to More's audience? Hythloday asserts that Utopian policies could improve Britain's conditions, but Utopia's condition seems unrealistically advantaged. Indeed, Utopia is described as the opposite of the real world. More than a mere 'ideal,' Utopia is a fictional society that has with the stroke of More's pen easily solved the actual problems of real societies.

Utopus easily cuts through the **isthmus** that connects Utopia to the mainland. Here, More alludes to the Greeks' failed attempts to dig a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth. This historical episode was so well known in More's time that it became a proverbial figure of speech for failure. Utopia's capital city, Amaurot, Strongly resembles London. London has the Thames River and smaller streams called the Fleet Ditch, but these are far dirtier than Utopia's Anyder River and freshwater springs. Even more significantly, both the Anyder and the Thames flow in from the sea, with the city built on the riverbanks. London's bridge was built in between the city and the coast, restricting ships from travelling through the city. Amaurot's bridge is built further inland so that ships can sail the river into the city and through much of it, facilitating trade. Utopia is More's reflection of his own society. It is not entirely fictional or imagined.

The Utopian' lifestyle also resents the theme of innovation. The Utopians discover the best practices and seek to implement them whenever possible. Like More's contemporaries, the Utopians discover new land and come into contact with new foreign ideas as a result of international commerce

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and trade. The Utopians have rearranged their natural landscape, creating an island. This creates a tension between God's role as creator and man's roles as innovator.

By the standards of democratic capitalism, the Utopian idea of the common life is rather objectionable. *Utopia* reads a lot like communism.

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### 11.5 SUMMARY OF BOOK TWO (SECOND HALF)

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The Utopians have slaves, including prisoners of war captured in battle. The children of slaves are not held in slavery. Utopians also travel to foreign countries to purchase and enslave criminals condemned to die. Utopians who commit serious crimes are also held as slaves and they are treated most harshly. These slaves are a disgrace to the Utopians because these slaves had been given an excellent moral education, but they nonetheless became criminals.

Raphael discusses a few other customs of the Utopians. They are skilled in medicine and they devote considerable time to attending to the sick. The Utopian priests also encourage **euthanasia** when a patient is terminally ill and suffering pain (but this can only be done if the patient consents).

Raphael discusses the marriage customs of the Utopians. Women marry at the age of 20 and men marry at the age of 24. Because Utopians believe that sexual promiscuity makes it difficult for an individual to live a happily married life, premarital sex is illegal and severely punished. Before the marriage, the intended bride and groom are presented to one another naked, so that any 'sores' or defects can be exposed and 'no one is duped or deceived.' The Utopian marriages last until death and divorces are rare, requiring the permission of the ruler. Adultery is grounds for divorce and is punished with harsh servitude. If an adulterer repeats the offense, the punishment is death.

The senate has no penal code and punishments are determined on a case-by-case basis. The most serious crimes are usually punished with servitude, rather than death because the society can benefit from the prisoners' labour. If these slaves are patient and if, after a long period of labour they show that 'they regret the sin more than the punishment,' they are sometimes released. In passing judgement on a case, the attempt to commit a crime is not distinguished from the criminal act itself. A criminal is not redeemed by his inability to successfully complete the attempted act.

At this point, Raphael's narrative becomes somewhat rambling and he discusses a number of issues in rapid succession. The Utopians have fools and jesters to keep them entertained, but they abhor the practice of mocking people who are crippled or disfigured. It is important to be well groomed, but the Utopians consider cosmetics to be disgraceful. In the marketplaces

Utopians erect statues of virtuous men who have done good things for the commonwealth. This serves as an inspiration for the citizens to live up to the standards established by their ancestors. Anyone who campaigns for public office disqualifies himself from holding any office at all, and lawyers are banned from Utopia. In courts, each citizen represents himself and tells his story without legal counsel. The Utopians believe this makes it easier for the judge to determine the truth in a given case. The Utopians do not make treaties with other nations because treaties are regularly broken. Utopians consider themselves friends with foreigners unless some harm has been done.

Regarding war, the Utopians are peaceful, but they are not pacifists. When necessary, Utopians will fight to defend their interests as well as the interest of their allies. Both women and men are trained in regular military exercises so that the island is well protected. Utopians also go to war if one their citizens is unjustly disabled or killed in a foreign nation and the guilty persons are not handed over to the Utopian authorities. Rather than fight in wars, Utopians rely upon strategy whenever possible. They often offer large rewards for the death of the enemy rulers, intending to avoid a conflict before it begins or at the very least, sow the seeds of distrust within the enemy camp.

The Utopian often hire a nearby tribe, the Zapoletes, as mercenaries to fight in place of Utopian citizens. The Zaploletes are perversely bloodthirsty and they are eager to fight for the Utopians because the Utopians pay high wages. Often, the Zapoletes die in war and so the Utopians do not have to pay the high rewards promised. At the same time, the Utopians regard the Zapoletes as a moral curse and they are only too happy to ‘enlist these wicked men in order to use them.’ Utopians will only use their own citizens as a last resort and even then, only as volunteers if it is a foreign war. But if the island should be invaded, men and women in good physical health fight to protect the commonwealth. Often times, families go to the battle lines together (only the adults, of course) for the Utopians reason that the soldiers fight harder to protect one another especially in hand-to-hand combat as family members are especially protective of one another.

The last major topic discussed concerns the religions of the Utopians. Throughout the various regions, there are a few sects devoted to ancestor worship or the worship of some celestial. The ‘vast majority’ of Utopians are monotheists who believe exclusively in one god as creator.

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### Check Your Progress

9. What does the garden imagery in the book symbolize?
10. How do the Utopians seek to advance the moral education of their young?

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## 11.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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### NOTES

1. Under Louis XIV's reign, France found economic stability and an effective government free from Church interference. Dictatorship evolved into constitutionals, a few steps closer to democracy.
2. More opposed the vast properties of the wealthy English aristocracy, the monopoly of London's guilds and merchants, and the burdensome oppression of the work through the imposition of unjust laws.
3. *Utopia* is a mix of several things: it presents philosophy as well as a description about a foreign place. It poses as history, but it is also a fictional adventure-story. Finally, parts of *Utopia* read much like a story with a moral aiming to improve the reader with a moral education by giving examples illustrated in stories.
4. Styles used in the introduction of *Utopia* include the poem, the pictogram and the epistle, each serving their purpose of narration.
5. The word is a pun on the word *Utopia* as opposite to *eutopia*. *Utopia* actually means no-place, a fantasy. *Eutopia* means a good place.
6. According to Raphael, the equatorial regions are excessively hot and there are monsters in the New World. When one continues further south, however, the climate becomes temperate again; populous cities and commercial areas emerge.
7. Raphael suggests a punishment of hard labour restoring the public works (roads, bridges) and that the thieves should compensate the owner of the stolen property.
8. 'Raphael' is the name of a guardian angel. 'Hythloday' is a compound of Greek words translating to 'peddler of nonsense.' Thus, we see that Thomas More does not intend for us to take Raphael or *Utopia* seriously.
9. Garden imagery presents an allusion to the Biblical garden of Eden. Utopians enjoy many gardens and love to garden. In symbolic terms, the Utopians enjoy a pure Eden-like life, free of many real-world concerns. On a practical level, the garden imagery also reflects the agricultural skill and abundant harvests of the Utopians. The strength of the civilizations is seen in the life and vitality of its crops and vegetation.
10. The Utopians eat their meals in large communal groups and not as isolated families as is the case in the countryside. To advance the moral education of their people especially the youth, the common dining hall features brief lectures or readings followed by discussion. Young people are seated with their elders to prevent the youth from misbehaving.



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## 11.7 SUMMARY

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- Sir Thomas More was born in London on 7 February, 1477. In 1516, *Utopia* is published in Latin and this is More's most successful work.
- More was imprisoned in the infamous Tower of London and accused of treason. He was executed in 1535.
- The period from fourteenth till sixteenth century was a glorious time for Europe. It was the reformation of many old ideas and the formation of new. This was called the Renaissance.
- More's work has left a lasting impact on subsequent political thought and literature. The Greek word *Utopia* translates as 'no place' or 'nowhere', but in modern parlance, a *Utopia* is a good place, an ideal place (eutopia).
- Throughout *Utopia*, More alludes to the scholarly and traditional literature of his period, also referencing earlier Greek and Latin works.
- The idea of public service is another major theme of 'Utopia'.
- Finally, the idea of travel to the 'New World' is an obvious theme of *Utopia*. We cannot travel to *Utopia* because it is far away, and the journey is dangerous.
- Book One is written in a style resembling the ancient Dialogues. In these Dialogues, intermingled real and fictional characters discussed philosophical ideas.
- The written work is essentially a transcript of the discussion.
- More concentrates on presenting ideas and constructing complex sentences. More is less interested in telling a very good story.
- In considering *Utopia* as a philosophical essay and *Utopia* as a model civilization, we find that the theme of truth becomes very complicated. There is the question of probability.
- *Utopia* is a work of satire, indirectly criticizing Europe's political corruption and religious hypocrisy. In depicting *Utopia*, More steps outside the bounds of orthodox Catholicism, but More's ultimate goal is to indicate areas of improvement for Christian society.
- *Utopia* means 'no place' but sounds like 'good place.' *Utopia* exposes the absurdities and evils of More's society by depicting an alternative.

## NOTES

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## 11.8 KEY WORDS

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- **Pastiche:** It refers to a literary work consisting wholly or chiefly of techniques borrowed from one or more source, basically a hodge-podge of styles.

## NOTES

- **Epistle:** It refers to a formal letter sent to a person or a group of people.
- **Quatrain:** It refers to a complete poem or a verse consisting of four lines of rhyming lines.
- **Sextet:** It refers to a musical composition written for six voices or instruments.
- **Isthmus:** It refers to a strip of land which connects two larger land masses.
- **Dystopia:** It refers to an imaginary place where the conditions of living are unbearable, the opposite of Utopia.
- **Euthanasia:** It refers to a mercy killing, putting an end to someone's life in order to give them relief from pain or an illness which is incurable.

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## 11.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short Answer Questions

1. What are two themes discussed in *Utopia*?
2. What all did Raphael find wrong with British society?
3. Does the Utopian way of life sound a lot like communism?
4. Give one example of More's modern thinking.

### Long Answer Questions

1. What do we learn of the society from More's *Utopia*?
2. Give a detailed critical analysis of *Utopia Book I & II*.

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## 11.10 FURTHER READINGS

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- More, Thomas, George M. Logan. 2010. *Utopia: A Revised Translation, Backgrounds, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Bodden, Martin. 2007. *Thomas More: Utopia and the Vision of Ideal Life*. Germany: GRIN Verlag.
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- Olin, John C. 1989. *Interpreting Thomas More's Utopia*. New York: Fordham University Press.

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## BLOCK - IV

### DRAMA

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Christopher Marlowe:  
*Edward II*

#### NOTES

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## UNIT 12 CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE: *EDWARD II*

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### Structure

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 About the Author
- 12.3 Critical Appreciation of *Edward-II*
  - 12.3.1 *Edward II*: Scene-By-Scene Interpretation
  - 12.3.2 Significant Features of *Edward II*
- 12.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 12.8 Further Readings

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### 12.0 INTRODUCTION

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Christopher Marlowe was one of the greatest writers of the Elizabethan era. Even Shakespeare had paid a tribute to him through his play *As You Like It* in which he has quoted a line from Marlowe's play. Marlowe had a great impact on Shakespeare which is very clear from the fact that Shakespeare in his plays used lines that were there in Marlowe's plays.

*Edward II* is a historical play about the assassination of the King by his Queen and the Barons. He portrayed the Saint Bartholomew's day massacre in his very vivid work which was named The Massacre at Paris. This unit discusses *Edward II* in detail.

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### 12.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Christopher Marlowe
- Summarize Marlowe's play *Edward II*
- Critically analyse *Edward II*

## NOTES

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## 12.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was an Elizabethan poet and playwright at the forefront of the 16th century dramatic scene. Scholars believe that his works influenced playwrights like William Shakespeare and dramatists who succeeded him.

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury (England) in 1564. Christopher Marlowe's literary career spanned for less than six years. He lived for only twenty-nine years. He has left his indelible mark through his famous literary work like *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.

Marlowe went to King's School where he was awarded a scholarship. With the help of this scholarship he managed to study at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge until 1587.

In 1584 Marlowe received his Bachelor of Arts degree. However, in 1587 the university did not grant him a Master's degree. His regular absence from college along with the belief that he had converted to Roman Catholicism or would soon join some college elsewhere brought him some bad name. It was only after the Privy Council wrote a letter to the university declaring that Marlowe was now engaged in 'matters touching the benefit of his country,' that he was finally awarded his master's degree.

Conspiracy theorists love to believe that Marlowe was a secret agent. The exact nature of Marlowe's service to England was never clearly specified by the Council. So the letter sent to Cambridge aroused much curiosity and speculation, leading many to believe that he was engaged as a secret agent. Perhaps he was working in the intelligence service of Sir Francis Walsingham; though no direct proof could substantiate this theory. Yet the Council's letter spells out clearly that Marlowe indeed was serving the government in some discreet manner.

The records available in Cambridge for the period when Marlowe studied, shows that Marlowe was absent from the university for substantial period, suspiciously much longer than regulations permitted. Moreover, his dining room accounts suggest that he spent lavishly on food and drink which was impossible to afford in his limited scholarship income. Such behaviour indicates that he might have some other source of income. Yet with such limited evidence and rampant speculation, the mystery only turned deeper regarding the kind of service that Marlowe offered to the Queen. It will remain unknown as to whether Marlowe was a spy or not; but after obtaining his Master's degree, Marlowe settled in London and absorbed himself in full-time writing.

## Early Writing Career

Christopher Marlowe:  
*Edward II*

After 1587, Christopher Marlowe settled in London. He was engaged in writing for theatre and was also probably engaged in occasional government service. It is believed that his first play was *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, but it was not published until 1594. However, scholars believe that it was written while he was still a student at Cambridge. Company records suggest that the play was performed by the Children of the Chapel (which was a company of boy actors) between 1587 and 1593.

Marlowe's next play the two-part *Tamburlaine the Great* was published in 1590. Records suggest this was Marlowe's first play to be performed for a mass audience on the regular stage in London. It is considered to be the first English play composed in blank verse. It is also benchmarked as the beginning of the mature phase of Elizabethan theatre. Nevertheless, it was the last of Marlowe's plays to be published.

It must be mentioned here that there is serious disagreement among Marlowe scholars with regards to the order in which plays after *Tamburlaine* were composed.

Some insist that *Doctor Faustus* immediately succeeded *Tamburlaine*, after which Marlowe focused on writing *Edward the Second*, *The Massacre at Paris*, and ending with *The Jew of Malta*. As per the Marlowe Society's chronology, the sequential order of his plays is *The Jew of Malta*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II* and *The Massacre at Paris*. Although the chronological order suggested that *Doctor Faustus* (1604) was first to be performed and *The Jew of Malta* (1633) the last one.

## The Plays

### 1. *The Jew of Malta*

*The Jew of Malta* (whose full title is *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta*) has a prologue that is delivered by a character called Machiavelli. The play depicts the life of Jew Barabas, who is the richest man on the island of Malta. After his wealth is seized, he puts up a brave fight until his death with the government to regain his lost wealth. However, finally he meets his end at the hands of Maltese soldiers.

The play highlights the religious conflict. It is based on intrigue and revenge. It is believed that *The Jew of Malta* has a major influence on Shakespeare's famous play *The Merchant of Venice*. The central character, Barabas, is considered to be the main inspiration for Shakespeare's creation of Shylock, his main character in *The Merchant of Venice*. The play also has the distinction of being the first successful tragicomedy or black comedy.

Barabas is a complex character. He has garnered mixed reactions from the audiences. Critics have had extensive debate about the portrayal of Jews

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## NOTES

in *The Jew of Malta*. The play is full of unseemly characters, and it ridicules the oversexed Christian monks and nuns. It has a pair of greedy friars who are keen on usurping Barabas' wealth.

### 2. *Edward II*

*Edward II* is a historical play. The full title of the play is *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England, with the Tragicall Fall of Proud Mortimer*. The play is about the deposition of England's King Edward II by his barons and the queen. They all resented the undue influence that the king's men had over his policy matters.

*Edward II* is a tragedy. The play depicts a weak and flawed monarch. It is believed that this play paved the way for Shakespeare's more mature historical compositions like *Richard II*, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*.

### 3. The Massacre at Paris

*The Massacre at Paris* is a short work. Interestingly, the only extant text of this play is a reconstruction from memory, or 'reported text,' of the original performance. Due to its unsystematic documentation the play is more or less half the length of *Edward the Second* or even *The Jew of Malta*. The play comprises mostly serious action with little concern to characterization or even to quality verse. For the above-mentioned reasons, the play has not managed to gain much prominence unlike Marlowe's other works.

*The Massacre at Paris* portrays the events of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre which took place in 1572. In this massacre, French royalty and Catholic nobles planned the murder and execution of protestant Huguenots.

### 4. Doctor Faustus

Marlowe is largely remembered by readers and critics for his successful play *Doctor Faustus*. The complete title of the play is *The Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus*. The play is based on the German Faustbuch. *Doctor Faustus* is considered to be the first dramatized version of the Faust legend. It narrates about a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and knowledge; though many versions of the story can be traced back to as early as the 4th century. Nevertheless, Marlowe deviates significantly by making his hero incapable of repentance and have his contract annulled at the end of the play. Faustus is warned to do so throughout the play by another Marlowevian interpretation —a Good Angel. However, Faustus chose to ignore the angel's advice throughout the play.

At the end of the play, Faustus is shown as repenting for his actions but unfortunately, it is too late as the Devil's agent has already arrived to collect his soul.



## Arrest and Death of Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe:  
*Edward II*

Christopher Marlowe's atheism resulted in his arrest for just that 'crime' in 1593. Atheism was a serious offense in those times and the only penalty that was meted out was burning at the stake. Interestingly, despite the seriousness of the charge Marlowe was not put behind the bars nor was he tortured. He was rather released on the condition that he would report every day to an officer who was part of the court.

But on 30 May 1593, Marlowe was killed by a man named Ingram Frizer. He was assisted by Nicholas Skeres and Robert Poley. All the three men were related to one of the many Walsinghams—including Sir Francis Walsingham (the same man who had appointed Marlowe in the secret service). Popular belief suggests that the three spent the day together with Marlowe in a lodging house. But then a fight broke out between Marlowe and Frizer over the bill. And the fight took a sharp turn when Marlowe was stabbed in the forehead and was immediately killed.

Conspiracy theories have many stories to offer from being a spy to an atheist but the real reason for Marlowe's death is yet to be discovered.

However, it is unanimously agreed that Marlowe was a contemporary of Shakespeare with significant literary works to his credit.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

1. Name the first play written by Christopher Marlowe.
2. Mention the prominent works of Christopher Marlowe.

## 12.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *EDWARD-II*

In this section, we will critically analyse the play *Edward-II*.

### *Edward II*: Historical Background

The historical Edward II (AD 1307–27) lacked the royal dignity that his father (Edward I) possessed. He even failed miserably as a king. Edward II was expected to carry forward his father's war with Scotland. But unfortunately, he displayed his incompetency as a soldier. The dissatisfied barons, not in favour of Edward as Prince of Wales, decided to curtail his royal power from the beginning of his reign. Edward brought himself more wrath by extolling money and other rewards upon his male favourites while other deserving people went unnoticed. Such unpopular ways of running the empire only cost Edward his life.

Edward I had dreamt of a unified British world. But his dream immediately got disintegrated under Edward II. Rebellion of the barons led

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way for Robert Bruce to win back much of Scotland. However, finally in 1314, Bruce managed to defeat the English forces completely at the battle of Bannockburn. This Scottish independence continued until 1707, when the union of England and Scotland finally took place. History suggests that Bruce is responsible for inciting a rebellion in Ireland.

Edward II felt elated while he was surrounded with outsiders and sycophants that brought around the same memories that haunted the reign of Henry III. History does mention of one Piers Gaveston, a young man who was exiled by Edward I for exercising undue influence on the then Prince (Edward II). He was also considered to be his homosexual lover. Gaveston wielded strong influence on the court and administrative decisions after he was recalled by Edward once he occupied the throne. However, such contemptible decisions in courtly matters let the magnates to unite in opposition under the king's cousin, Thomas (Earl of Lancaster). The Parliaments of 1310 and 1311 imposed restrictions on the power of Edward and sent Gaveston to exile. Immediately the next year, in 1312, the barons revolted. This rebellion also saw Gaveston being murdered. Fortunately, a full rebellion was evaded by making Edward accept further limitations to his sovereign powers. After this incident, Earl of Lancaster shared the responsibility of governing the nation along with Edward. Soon afterwards, the king once again fell prey to the influence of another licentious person, Hugh Dispenser. In the year 1322, Edward displayed unexpected resolve and brought together an army to face the Earl of Lancaster at the Battle of Borough bridge. The war saw Edward emerging as winner who executed Earl of Lancaster. Edward II along with Dispenser continued ruling for a while but again they came across many enemies. So immediately some knights and barons were executed and many more were exiled for rebellion.

Making things more complicated there were problems in Gascony. Hence, Isabella (Edward's queen) was sent to negotiate French king Charles IV (her brother) to bring out a solution to the problem. But Isabella got involved in a romantic relationship with Roger Mortimer who was one of the disaffected barons of Edward. Instead Edward was convinced and persuaded to send his son to France to follow up on the negotiation. In 1326, Isabella and Roger Mortimer invaded England and imprisoned Edward. Edward II left his throne and, Edward III (his son) replaced him and took over the kingship in 1327. Edward II was finally murdered at Berkeley castle.

Sir Richard Baker, historian and religious writer in his *A Chronicle of the Kings of England*, while mentioning about Edward I asserts his indictment against Edward II. He writes: 'His great unfortunateness was in his greatest blessing; for four sons which he had by his Queen Eleanor, three of them died in his own lifetime, who were worthy to have outlived him; and the fourth outlived him, who was worthy never to have been born.'

### 12.3.1 *Edward II*: Scene-By-Scene Interpretation

*Christopher Marlowe:  
Edward II*

Let us go through a scene-by-scene interpretation of *Edward II*.

#### **ACT I, Scene I**

The play begins with Piers Gaveston entering the stage while reading an intimate letter which had arrived from King Edward II. The letter conveys the information about the demise of the old king which ultimately paves the way for Gaveston's return to England. Gaveston is overjoyed to receive the news.

Three poor men then approach Gaveston and ask for his assistance. Being coerced, he finally tells those men to come back later after he has finished his meeting with the king. Just then, Gaveston moves aside, while the king and the lords come out from the Parliament. Everyone including the Mortimers, the Earl of Lancaster are troubled with the fact that Gaveston has been asked to come back from exile. Moreover, he will again earn the favour of the new king.

Edward II seems disinterested in knowing the concerns of the lords. He informs them in clear terms that he is not going to send his beloved Gaveston away from kingdom. The lords become annoyed and angry and threaten to have an open war if Gaveston is not expelled. Just then Gaveston enters and the king receives him with joyous arms. The king makes him lord chamberlain, the royal secretary and Earl of Cornwall and gives him a word suggesting that he will be given protection against his enemies. In an ironic situation, the man who had set the order of exile on Gaveston, The Bishop of Coventry, entered the stage. He is sad to see the exiled man back in the kingdom. He reminds once again that there will be retribution for breaking the law. But to such honest words, the king reacts by stripping the Bishop of all his possessions. The king passed on the Bishop's possession to Gaveston and imprisoned the Bishop.

#### **ACT I, Scene II**

In Act 1, Scene 2 the Mortimers, the Earl of Lancaster and Warwick come together and discuss how they can get rid of the influence of Gaveston. They also express their disgust over the new titles and positions that he was being ushered with. They also felt unhappy over the fact that the Bishop of Coventry's possessions have been given to Gaveston. Soon the Archbishop of Canterbury joined them and expressed his unhappiness with the treatment meted out to the Bishop. He agrees to be part of the forces that are with the lords against Gaveston. But clearly mentioned he is not keen on joining the king. Just then Queen Isabella enters, and complains that the king does not care about her and has focused all his attention on Gaveston. The lords extend their sympathy to her informing her that they will take care of Gaveston. Isabella requests the group not to raise force against the king. But then Mortimer makes it clear that they will if verbal diplomacy fails.

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### Act I, Scene III

In this scene, Gaveston informs Kent that the lords have marched towards Lambeth.

### Act I, Scene IV

In this scene, the lords manage to draw up a document suggesting that Gaveston should once again be exiled from England. They get ready to get the document signed from the king himself. As soon as the king and Gaveston enter, the lords put across their perspective. They want both Gaveston and Kent to be moved out and asked the king to get rid of Gaveston. The king tries to dissuade them by offering them high offices. But the lords persist in their demands. So finally, Edward signs the document and the lords leave the place in happiness. Soon Gaveston and Edward II bid each other farewell. However, then the queen arrives and an argument sparks between them over the king's affection for Gaveston and queen's relationship with Mortimer.

The queen is unhappy with the situation. She finally decides that the best way to win Edward II's affection is to support Gaveston. The lords comfort the queen and try to make her happy. She says that she wants Gaveston to return to England so that the king is happy.

Most of the lords do not agree with this idea. But Isabella takes Mortimer into confidence and explains him that it would be more beneficial for Gaveston to remain in England so that it might be easy to kill him off. On listening to the reason, the lords unanimously agreed to revoke Gaveston's exile proposal. The king is informed by the queen that Gaveston will not be banished. On listening to this news, Edward is overjoyed and expressed his gratitude to the queen and all the lords who express their wish to bring back Gaveston.

King Edward announces that to celebrate the joyous occasion tournaments will be organized and Gaveston will marry his cousin, the heiress to the Earl of Gloucester. After this everyone except the Mortimers take their leave. The senior Mortimer explains that he must go to Scotland and that his nephew (the younger Mortimer) will look into affairs of the court. He also suggests not to worry much about Gaveston because it is natural for kings and rulers to have favourites. The younger Mortimer is not very keen to remain secondary to a person of such low birth (Gaveston) but nonetheless pledges his loyalty to the royalty.

### Act II, Scene I

This scene takes place in Gloucester's house. Baldock inquires Spencer Junior under whom he would like to serve as the Earl of Gloucester who is now no more. Spencer quickly replies that he desires to serve Gaveston because he wanted to receive the king's favour. They both discuss how happy the king's

heiress to the Earl of Gloucester must be as Gaveston has returned from exile. Just then the lady enters, merrily reading a letter that informs her of her love's return. Soon Margaret and Spencer move to meet Gaveston.

*Christopher Marlowe:  
Edward II*

## **Act II, Scene II**

## **NOTES**

As Edward II waits for Gaveston to return, he keeps talking about his friend. The lords are irked with this as he showed no interest in matters of the state. Mortimer made many unsuccessful attempts to convey Edward II the urgency of the state affairs. Finally, Mortimer and Lancaster use allusions to convey the king of their hatred towards Gaveston. This makes the king angry.

But just then Gaveston arrives and the king is overwhelmed again. On the other hand, the lords only extend their welcome that aggravates the king's anger. This led to a tiny fight which leads to Mortimer wounding Gaveston. Edward in a fit of rage admonishes the lords for their actions and threatens to bring together an army to annihilate them. The lords did not take these words kindly and decided to eliminate Gaveston at the earliest.

While the discussion was still going on, a messenger arrived and informed the lords that the Senior Mortimer has been seized by the Scots. Listening to the news Mortimer Junior immediately suggested that the king should pay for his uncle's freedom because he was captured while fighting a war on behalf of the king. The king comes again, and Mortimer immediately informs him of his uncle's delicate situation and requested him to pay the ransom. But Edward outright refused the proposal. This refusal acted as the catalyst and both Mortimer Junior and Lancaster infuriated in anger inform the king about his bad deeds. According to them, France, Ireland, Scotland and northern England are beyond control because of Gaveston's mismanagement. They said the queen is also not taken care of which has made things worse; moreover, the people were becoming rebellious. To make matters worse, the only time the king had led an army (at Bannockburn against the Scots), the battle had turned into a complete disaster. Mortimer and Lancaster leave the place suggesting a rebellion.

In a state of absolute anger, the king blames his brother Kent for the situation. But Kent tells him that the lords are right in their opinion about Gaveston. This further angers the king which leads to Kent's dismissal. Around that time Gaveston, Spencer, the queen, and some other enter the place and the king expresses his displeasure about the rebellious behaviour of Mortimer and the lords. In a bid to escape the situation, the king indicates advancement for Spencer as well as Baldock but to no avail.

Edward swears revenge against the lords and announces about the marriage which will take place between Gaveston and Margaret.

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### Act II, Scene III

This scene takes place near Tynemouth's castle. Kent expresses his desire to join the lords in their rebellion against Gaveston. This draws enough suspicion from the lords because he is the king's brother. Eventually, they accept him with open arms. The lords decide to take on their enemy Gaveston and his followers but do not intend to harm the king.

### Act II, Scene IV

The king, Spencer, Gaveston and Margaret are unexpectedly pursued by the lords. In a state of panic they frantically flee but even at this point the king accused the queen of showing interest in Mortimer. The lords enter in time and comfort the queen. She informs them of the king's plan and where can they locate the king and Gaveston.

The lords follow the king and his accomplish in a boat. The queen keeps lamenting about her miserable conditions and decides that if Edward does not give her the respect and the attention that she deserves then she will leave England with her son. She will leave for France where her brother is king.

### Act II, Scene V

This scene starts with Gaveston being captured. Lords tell him that he will be executed immediately for misleading their king. In the meantime, the Earl of Arundel arrived and told the lords that the king knew of Gaveston's arrest and requests them to permit him to meet his friend one final time before he is killed. Initially, the lords did not change their resolve but only after the Earl of Pembroke agreed to bring back Gaveston on his own risk once he has met the king. The lords give their consent to this suggestion and Gaveston was put in charge of James, servant of Pembroke.

### Act III, Scene I

The Earl of Warwick comes to capture Gaveston from the army of Pembroke. The Earl of Warwick comes to know that Gaveston has not got an opportunity to speak with Edward. Warwick takes away Gaveston with him.

### Act III, Scene II

Edward is seen busy mourning about Gaveston. On the other hand, Spencer asked the king to be stricter with the rebel lords. Edward concurred with his opinion. After that Spencer Senior arrived to show his support to the king's cause.

Just then, the queen and Prince Edward reached the place and inform Edward II that the King of France has captured the English holdings in Normandy. Consequently, Edward sent his wife and his son to France to take care of the crisis.



In the meanwhile, the Earl of Arundel entered and told the king that Gaveston is no more after he was abducted from the custody of Pembroke. The king is emotionally shattered on hearing the news. He vows to take revenge on the rebel lords who have brought him such sorrow.

A messenger from the lords arrived and informed the king that they want Spencer to be ousted from the kingdom. The king dismisses the messenger and asks him to inform the lords that they should be prepared to meet him in the battle field.

### **Act III, Scene III**

Act 3, scene 3 describes the fighting which takes place in the battlefield at Boroughbridge, Yorkshire. The battle takes place between Edward and the Spencer on one hand and the rebel lords on the other hand. The lords then come and inform the king of his partiality towards base sycophants while ignoring the honest ones. The king declares that he will fight until his death and kill all the traitors.

### **Act III, Scene IV**

Edward finally wins the battle of Boroughbridge. He manages to have all the lords, as prisoners, including his own brother Kent. Edward expresses his displeasure to them for their treacherous actions and the murder they planned for Gaveston. Finally, he dismissed his brother but not before ordering that the executions of Lancaster and Warwick while announcing the imprisonment of Mortimer and then departs with a triumph.

Soon after Spencer Junior, Levune and Baldock try and work out a strategy against the queen, who it was believed was making a deal with the French king, her brother, to dethrone King Edward. Levune is sent to France to prevent this deal.

### **Act IV, Scene I**

Kent is unable to bear the actions of his brother and laments his decision taken to exhibit his preference for the sycophant nobles and also his attempt to travel to France to help the queen in her mission. Mortimer manages to escape from imprisonment, and the two of them leave for France.

### **Act IV, Scene II**

The queen informs Prince Edward that her brother will not help them. The prince then suggests that they should march back to England. Right at that moment, Sir John of Hainault arrives and tries to console the queen. The queen tells him that she and the prince would like to join him in Hainault, where they will definitely support their cause. Soon Kent and Mortimer meet the queen and she is happy to see that both of them surviving the rebel defeat.

*Christopher Marlowe:  
Edward II*

## **NOTES**

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Immediately, Mortimer states that he intends to depose the king and instead make Prince Edward the king of England but surprisingly the prince does not agree with this idea. Everyone, except the prince, vow to do everything possible to dethrone the king and bring down his sycophants and hence, reinstall good governance in England. They all depart for Hainault.

### Act IV, Scene III

After returning victorious from the battlefield, the king and Spencer boast about their victory in the battle and declared that, if Mortimer decides to return England, then he will be recaptured and punished for his audacity.

A messenger comes and informs the king that the queen, prince, Mortimer and Kent have been seen together in Hainault where they are receiving assistance and are planning to place the prince on the throne. On hearing this Edward is extremely disappointed and is upset that his young son is being made a scapegoat and promises to raise another battle against the rebels.

### Act IV, Scene IV

The rebel group enters England. The queen and Mortimer strategize how they can depose the current king (Edward) along with his sycophants and place the crown on Prince Edward.

### Act IV, Scene V

The king's army and his allies are defeated in the battle against the rebels fought near Bristol. As a result, Spencer suggests that they should take refuge in Ireland, but Edward denies.

Kent undergoes a change and delivers a soliloquy on how he took a wrong decision of deserting his brother, the king, and assisting the rebels. Just then the rebel party arrives and announces about their proud victory against the royal army. They declare Prince Edward, the Lord Warden of the country. Kent wonders what will happen to the king now (just as Mortimer and the queen's had expected). Mortimer tells him that it is the decision of the Parliament to decide how to deal with Edward.

Howell enters with his prisoner Spencer Senior, and everyone praises him for his exceptional services. But their happiness was short lived, and they are informed that the king and the rest of the royal party along with Spencer Junior have escaped and have marched to Ireland. Immediately, Mortimer orders Spencer Senior to be beheaded and the rebels undertake a serious discussion to figure out their next plan of action.

### Act IV, Scene VI

We find the king, Spencer and Baldock hiding in Neath abbey while disguised as monks. They are seen as lamenting over their tragic situation and feel

envious of the monks who lead a quiet and peaceful life. However, Rice and the Earl of Leicester reach the abbey and arrest Spencer and Baldock for treason.

*Christopher Marlowe:  
Edward II*

### **Act V, Scene I**

Act 5, scene 1 is set in a room in Kenilworth Castle. King Edward is seen sitting with Earl of Leicester, Trussell and the Bishop of Winchester. Both Trussell and the Bishop of Winchester are busy convincing the king to give up his crown in favour of his son (Prince Edward). The king finally agrees and in a remorseful speech acknowledges that finally it is going to be Mortimer and not Prince Edward who will govern England.

However, Edward changes his mind and refuses to give up his crown. The men depart to convey his reply to the Parliament. Then Leicester convinces the king to change his mind because if he does not willingly give up the throne, then that would mean that the prince is disinherited. On hearing this, Edward gives up his claim to the throne and hands over a handkerchief for his wife. Soon Lord Berkeley comes in with directions from Mortimer that the king has to be transferred to his custody.

### **Act V, Scene II**

In the royal palace Mortimer informs the queen that the king's sycophants have been beheaded. He expresses his pleasure on how he would remain the guardian of England with Prince Edward ruling as the king of England. Isabella, the queen agrees to be part of any plan that he may propose. The Bishop of Winchester and a messenger inform the duo that the king has willingly renounced the throne. The Bishop brings in the message that Earl of Kent has made an attempt to make his brother free. Moreover, both Berkeley and Leicester seem to be showing their loyalty towards the king. Mortimer feels dismayed on hearing this news. As a precautionary measure, Mortimer asks Matrevis and Gurney to keep an eye on the king. Mortimer instructs them to treat the king in a merciless manner and keep shifting his location so that it will be difficult for anyone to find his whereabouts. Isabella, whose heart longs for her husband, hands over the men a ring to gift the king.

Prince Edward arrives, and Mortimer promises to speak politely to Kent in spite of his attempt to show his loyalty towards the king. Mortimer insists that Kent should act as guardian to the prince. Nonetheless the earl puts his foot down and insists that the queen should take on the role of regent. Kent immediately understands that Mortimer is being sly. Prince Edward, on the other hand, wants his father to continue as the ruler of England and is not keen to reign at such a young age. Hence Mortimer forcibly takes the prince out of the place and the Earl of Kent promises to free king Edward.

### **NOTES**

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### Act V, Scene III

Matrevis and Gurney carry the king to a different location. Kent arrives and attempts to rescue the king, his brother, but unfortunately is taken captive.

### Act V, Scene IV

In the royal palace, Mortimer, in a soliloquy reveals his feelings that he must dispose of the king in order to rise in status. He discloses about a plot that he has laid to get rid of the king but makes it appear as if Matrevis and Gurney are responsible for the plan. Mortimer then speaks to Lightborne, the man he has hired to kill the king.

Soon after, captive Kent is brought into the court of the new king Edward III (previously Prince Edward) and Mortimer instructs that Kent should be executed. Edward III pleads not to carry out the order. On the other hand, even the Queen insists that the act is justified.

### Act V, Scene V

At Berkeley castle, Matrevis and Gurney cannot believe that the king has been living in a miserable condition for so long. Then Lightborne arrives and asks the two of them (Matrevis and Gurney) to leave. Lightborne kills the king. On seeing the king dead, Gurney then kills Lightborne and throws his body in the moat and finally departs to send the king's body to Mortimer.

### Act V, Scene VI

In the royal palace, Matrevis informed Mortimer that the king as well as Lightborne have been murdered and Gurney has fled without intimation. The queen informs Mortimer that Edward III is holding them responsible for the death of his father. Edward III refuses to accept Mortimer or his mother's denial in the murder and shows them the letter that Mortimer wrote to carry out the murder of the king. Mortimer is taken for execution and the king shows pity on his mother and leaves her with a note of warning and laments about his dead father.

### 12.3.2 Significant Features of *Edward II*

Let's study the significant features of *Edward II*.

#### 1. Queerness and *Edward II*

*Edward II* is an early modern period play written by Christopher Marlowe. Many critics believe that King Edward II was a homosexual. There are few extant descriptions coupled with centuries-long rumour which consolidated the belief. Moreover, the play has gone to the extreme to convey the 20th and 21st century's audience that Edward II was 'a homosexual, a sodomite, and a sexual deviant'.

Historical evidence suggests that Edward's so called brotherly relationships made some believe that he was engaged in intimate sexual relationships with people of the same gender, while many others insist that the lack of firm proof in this regard and the fact that he had produced an heir proved that he could not have had sexual relationship with men.

Interestingly though, Marlowe's own story suggests that he might have had male sexual partners. And this further only adds to Edward's mystifying representation in his play. It is not possible at this juncture to prove authentically that Edward II actually had sex with men and his sexual predilections will remain shrouded in doubts. Still, needless to say, it is a homosexual Edward II that has always caught the fancy of the contemporary audience.

In 1968 critic Wilbur Sanders in his work *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare* lamented about the 'unholy fascination' that readers have associated with Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*. Moreover, with the general belief that associates homosexuality with mental illness, Sanders suggests that readers might 'confuse the deep satisfactions of great imaginative literature with the idle pleasure of indulging [their] curiosity about the fringes of human sanity'.

Years later Edward II's so called affairs with Piers Gaveston became the central premise of Chris Hunt's 1992 novel, *Gaveston*. *Gaveston* highlights the purported love affair between the two and the story is told from Edward's point of view. Time and again, Edward II's sexual preferences have been spoken about not to uncover facts about his past but to introspect about contemporary ideas that concerns homosexuals and homosexuality.

*Edward II* by Marlowe's speaks about a character that the contemporary audiences of 20th and 21st century identify as gay. In the play, one comes across many instances of desire being openly expressed between men and reciprocated by other male characters. Soon after Edward II takes over the English throne after Edward I, he lavishes unreasonable affection and showers unprecedented titles on Piers Gaveston. Gaveston was a man who was in general hated by others in Edward's court because of the low nature of his social origin. Mortimer Senior did his best to dismiss Edward's curious obsession with Gaveston as mere youthful transgression which will be cured with the passage of time. 'The mightiest kings have had their minions,' he had reasoned in the play. He also had provided a listing where great men have displayed their interest in boys.

Mortimer had said, (Edward should) 'freely enjoy that vain, light-headed earl' while he is still a young boy '(f)or riper years will wean him from such toys.'

Mortimer's notions indeed resonate the 20th century concepts that homosexuality is syndrome or a phase that can be easily outgrown with age.

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To put it simply, it is just a passing phase. On the other hand, Queen Isabella (Edward's wife) turns jealous of Edward's affection for Gaveston. She is remorseful and laments that 'never doted Jove on Ganymede / So much as he on cursed Gaveston.'

In addition, critics point out the manner in which Edward was killed to highlight his homosexual preferences. His executioners killed him by thrusting a hot iron poker through his anus thus putting an end to his life and reign.

*Edward II*'s performance history from 1950 onwards suggests that directors over the years have interpreted the play as per the demands of the contemporary audience and their notions of homosexuality. Angela K. Ahlgren, professor at the University of Texas, United States in her article 'Christopher Marlowe's "Unholy Fascination": Performing Queer Edward II in the 1990s' says 'as American playwrights like Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee were masking gay themes in codes and innuendo to avoid detection by censors and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), British directors were interpreting Marlowe's Edward as an openly homosexual man.' Ahlgren mentions in the same article that Toby Robertson, a famous television and stage director who in the 1960s and 1970s had directed *Edward II* had incorporated a scene where a ward and Gaveston share a long passionate kiss. In one of the interviews published in 1964, Robertson says that, 'The homosexuality in the play is treated without the reserve, almost hesitancy, found Tennessee Williams . . . . The lack of shame about homosexuality in Edward II perhaps partly created the enormous interest.'

A Time magazine reviewer writes of the 1969 Edinburgh Festival production of *Edward II* that featured Ian McKellen as the central character that 'McKellen and Director Toby Robertson have confronted with stark candor the fact that Edward II is a play by a homosexual about a king who was a homosexual who indeed ruined himself for an infatuation.'

In addition, Gerard Murphy's Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) production of *Edward II* in 1990 and Derek Jarman's film on *Edward II* in 1991 both showcase the play in sync with the current notions of homosexuality.

From the middle of 20th century onwards several stage productions of the play *Edward II*, have presented the character of Edward in concurrence with the current notions on politics of sexuality and identity. Yet, there has not been much scholarship that centres on such obvious queer adaptations. Though much has been said and discussed about Jarman's film, which explicitly brings out queer politics of the play, but not much has been spoken about the RSC production. This has the dubious distinction of being the first major stage production of *Edward II* that clearly becomes part of contemporary queer activism. Marlowe's text, with or without historical authenticity has remained one of the most popular texts that has supported the LGBT movement in contemporary times.



## 2. The Politics of Power in *Edward II*

Christopher Marlowe:  
*Edward II*

King Edward II's association with homosexuality probably emerges from the idea that Kantorowicz (a German-American historian of medieval political and intellectual history and art) formulated in his book *The King's Two Bodies*. In this book it is highlighted that contemporary legal thinking associated much of the governance of a kingdom with the king's private and public bodies. Edward II's association with homosexuality can probably be understood as Arvind Thomas expresses in the article 'Land, Law and Desire in Marlowe's *Edward II*' if 'looked for in the play's explicit staging of the confusion over the relations between the king's two bodies by both the king and his supporters, on the one hand, and the rebellious barons, on the other'. While homosexuality is not entirely specified with any specific homoerotic suggestions but meaning takes over an obvious shape when the sexual preference affects the political. It all happens when the homoerotic affection between Edward and his favourites cause unexpected disturbance in the functioning of his relations between 'him as a natural body and a divine body'. Therefore, it could imply that homosexuality might have less problematic association with transgression of sexuality as much it is to do with the transgression of law.

According to the late medieval English political ideology, the king had a dual personality: the king was born human, but he attained divinity through his high birth. Hence, part of his 'human' nature, made him a victim of error, death and decay. However, as divine reincarnation the king was 'timeless, incorruptible and infallible'. Due to his human birth, the king is 'subject to positive law' while his graceful birth makes him rise above legal aspects.

Since the 14th century, especially with Edward I taking over the throne 'the relations between the king's human and divine bodies began to be cast in the form of a reciprocal relationship between the king and the Crown'. Kantorowicz in his seminal work *The King's Two Bodies* points out that, though contemporary lawyers imagine the king and throne as certainly different from the other, they did believe that both of them are inseparable. Thus, suggesting that the throne and the rights and duties associated with it are personified by the king. However, after the demise of the king, the throne instantly aligns itself to the human body of the next legitimate ruler of the kingdom. This argument has put forward the legal belief that the crown could never be detached from the human body of the king.

By the time Edward II ascended the throne, many historians have pointed out that a further addition to the relations between the king's two bodies and his authorial prowess had taken place. Another key term 'the rights of the realm' came into existence. The Crown was not just a symbolic representation of the divine prowess and capabilities of a king but it also, meant to symbolize the absolute rights of the kingdom that the king takes over after his coronation.

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*Edward II* from the very beginning highlights this confusion over the two bodies of the king in the form 'of a concerted disordering of the tripartite relations between king, Crown, and realm'. In the very first scene, we come across the decentralization of royal prerogatives that takes place between King Edward II for his special friend Gaveston. Moreover, Edward II without discussing or consulting with his courtiers proposes Gaveston (of French origin) to 'come ... and share the kingdom with thy dearest friend'.

Again, Edward bestows on Gaveston three different titles quickly without paying heed to the consequences: 'Lord High Chamberlain ... Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man.' Edward goes on to arm his friend with discretionary and executive powers on his friend: 'Thou shalt have a guard ... Go to my treasury ... Receive my seal ... save or condemn and in our name command whatso thy mind affects or fancy likes'.

However, Edward II takes a number of risks in order to favour Gaveston which angers the earls and unites them in rebellion. For instance, Gaveston is responsible for the deteriorating relationship between the king and his subjects. As if to underline this obvious political discontent, towards the close of the first scene Mortimer (junior) makes it more than clear that it is not:

[Edward's] wanton humour [that] grieves ... one so basely born [Gaveston]/ Should by his sovereign favour grow so pert and riot it with treasure of the realm / While soldiers mutiny for want of pay.

With Edward II's treasury taking special care of Gaveston instead of the army or kingdom the land becomes increasingly vulnerable to foreign attacks. Thus, Mortimer (junior) blames Gaveston of turning 'a robber of king's renown'. People like the Earl of Kent start introspecting and judging the rebel lords' actions as politically illegitimate.

The new king (Edward III) in his desire to put an end to the 'unnatural' or 'monstrous' actions do not act on his own. He takes into account the suggestions of his council. The play characterizes Edward III's first action as evolving from a team effort ... 'the king and the peers act in unison to repair the rupture between king, Crown and the realm, and in doing so, expunge once and for all any further suggestions of sodomy'.

### 3. Society in *Edward II*

Christopher Marlowe in *Edward II* brings out several social conventions that were prevalent during the early modern period. He focuses on class, laws, accepted sexual practises and alternate gender roles. Drama produced during this period, especially one with a comedy element, was full of homoerotic innuendos. Moreover, the actors who played female roles were also male, which apart from encouraging cross-dressing, caused a stir among many religious groups and insisted on prohibiting theatre and encouraged the followers to do the same.

Moreover, laws of the period determined which social class would adhere to which type of fabric. However, these legal parlances were highly disregarded in the theatre space. Actors of low origin dressed up as royals, which caught the attention of many upper-class citizens in the wrong way. Many British citizens, especially the nobility of the period laid emphasis on class distinction.

Many were feelingly threatened by the sudden rise of mercantile middle class in social mobility.

In *Edward II* Christopher Marlowe highlights the way in which Renaissance society decided to place people in hierarchy especially in connection to their social standing which was defined by birth. Moreover, anything outside the traditional social conventions was identified as 'unnatural'. Both Gaveston's and Spencer's desire for more power and prosperity is explicitly expressed through words and metaphors of unnatural behaviour. Nonetheless, Marlowe takes the conventional route and ends the play so that every character who has in some way decided to upturn the social mobility is severely punished for his actions. Yet with the death of Mortimer, Junior (one who had been vocal enough to maintain social conventions) Marlowe takes poetic liberty in registering his own anguish about the society which expects him to restore it to its 'natural' state. Moreover, with this ending Marlowe managed to escape punishment for writing a play which highlights the unfair practices of the Elizabethan period.

Christopher Marlowe:  
*Edward II*

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

3. What paves the way for Gaveston's return to England?
4. Who is hired to kill the old king in Berkeley castle?

## 12.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. It is believed that Marlowe's first play was *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, but it was not published until 1594.
2. Some of the prominent works of Marlowe are *Doctor Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, *Edward the Second*, *The Massacre at Paris* and *The Jew of Malta*.
3. An intimate letter which had arrived from King Edward II conveys the information about the demise of the old king which ultimately paves the way for Gaveston's return to England.
4. Mortimer hires Lightborne to kill the king.

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## 12.5 SUMMARY

- Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was an Elizabethan poet and playwright at the forefront of the 16th century dramatic scene. Scholars believe that his works influenced playwrights like William Shakespeare and dramatists who succeeded him.
- Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury (England) in 1564. Christopher Marlowe's literary career spanned for less than six years.
- Marlowe has left his indelible mark through his famous literary work like *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.
- After 1587, Christopher Marlowe settled in London. He was engaged in writing for theatre and was also probably engaged in occasional government service.
- It is believed that Marlowe's first play was *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, but it was not published until 1594.
- Marlowe's next play the two-part *Tamburlaine the Great* was published in 1590.
- There is serious disagreement among Marlowe scholars with regards to the order in which plays after *Tamburlaine* were composed.
- Conspiracy theorists love to believe that Marlowe was a secret agent. The exact nature of Marlowe's service to England was never clearly specified by the Council.
- After obtaining his Master's degree, Marlowe settled in London and absorbed himself in full-time writing.
- *The Jew of Malta* (whose full title is *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta*) has a prologue that is delivered by a character called Machiavelli. The play depicts the life of Jew Barabas, who is the richest man on the island of Malta.
- It is believed that *The Jew of Malta* has a major influence on Shakespeare's famous play *The Merchant of Venice*.
- *Edward II* is a historical play.
- *The Massacre at Paris* is a short work. The play comprises mostly serious action with little concern to characterization or even to quality verse.
- *Doctor Faustus* is considered to be the first dramatized version of the Faust legend. It narrates about a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and knowledge.

- In *Edward II* Christopher Marlowe highlights the way in which Renaissance society decided to place people in hierarchy especially in connection to their social standing which was defined by birth.
- Marlowe takes the conventional route and ends the play so that every character who has in some way decided to upturn the social mobility is severely punished for his actions.

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### 12.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Scapegoat:** It refers to a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others, especially for reasons of expediency.
- **Annihilate:** It means to destroy something completely so that nothing is left.
- **Baron:** It refers to a member of the lowest order of the British nobility.

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### 12.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short Answer Questions

1. Discuss the life and works of Christopher Marlowe.
2. Write a short note explaining all major plays written by Marlowe.
3. Give the historical background of *Edward II*.

#### Long Answer Questions

1. Conduct a comparative study of the works of Shakespeare and Marlowe in the Elizabethan era. Substantiate your answer using examples.
2. What are the significant features of Marlowe's play *Edward II*.
3. Write a critical appreciation of *Edward II*.

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### 12.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Marlowe, Christopher. 2008. *Edward the Second*. U.S.: Wildside Press.

Riggs, David. 2014. *The World of Christopher Marlowe*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Bloom, Harold. 2004. *Elizabethan Drama*. New York: Infobase Publishing.

## NOTES

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# UNIT 13 BEN JONSON: *THE ALCHEMIST*

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### Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 About the Author
  - 13.2.1 Historical Background of Elizabethan Era
- 13.3 Critical Appreciation of *The Alchemist*
  - 13.3.1 Important Passages for Explanation
  - 13.3.2 Character Sketches
- 13.4 *The Alchemist*: A Moralist Comedy
  - 13.4.1 *The Alchemist*: A Play about Possession
- 13.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 13.6 Summary
- 13.7 Key Words
- 13.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 13.9 Further Readings

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## 13.0 INTRODUCTION

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Ben Jonson (11 June 1572 – 6 August 1637), a Jacobean (or Elizabethan) playwright, poet and critic is best known for the satirical plays *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), *Volpone, or The Foxe* (1605), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair: A Comedy* (1614) and also for his poems and masques. Jonson is considered to be the next best English dramatist, after William Shakespeare, of the Elizabethan era.

In this unit, you will study Jonson play *The Alchemist* in detail.

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## 13.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Ben Jonson
- Critically analyse *The Alchemist*
- Describe *The Alchemist* as moralist comedy

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## 13.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Born in an Anglo-Scottish border country, Jonson's father was a clergyman who died two months before his birth. His mother remarried a master bricklayer. After finishing his early education, Jonson was an apprentice to



bricklaying as his step-father wanted him to join his profession. Thereafter, Ben Jonson went to the Netherlands, and volunteered to soldier with the English regiments of Francis Vere (1560–1609), in Flanders. Next Jonson returned to England and worked as an actor and playwright. By 1598, with the production of *Every Man in His Humour* Ben Jonson established his reputation as a dramatist. In 1599, came the play *Every Man out of His Humour*.

### Ben Jonson

His play *Cynthia's Revels* was produced by the Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars Theatre in 1600. It satirized both John Marston, who Jonson believed had accused him of lustfulness and Thomas Dekker. Jonson attacked the two poets again in 1601's *Poetaster*. Dekker responded with *Satiromastix*, subtitled 'the untrussing of the humorous poet'. This 'War of the Theatres' appears to have ended with reconciliation on all sides. Of the many poets and dramatist, he participated in welcoming James I to the throne. Next, Jonson pursued a more prestigious career, writing masques for James's court. *The Satyr* (1603) and *The Masque of Blackness* (1605).

The period between 1605 and 1620 may be viewed as Jonson's glory days. By 1616 he had produced all the plays on which his present reputation as a dramatist is based, including the tragedy *Catiline* (acted and printed 1611), which achieved limited success, and the comedies *Volpone*, (acted 1605 and printed in 1607), *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610), *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) and *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). *The Alchemist* and *Volpone* were immediately successful.

### Works of Jonson

Apart from two tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, which did not impress Renaissance audiences too much, Ben Jonson's dramatic works are primarily comedies. The plays of Ben Jonson are as follows:

- *A Tale of a Tub*, comedy
- *The Isle of Dogs*, comedy (1597, with Thomas Nashe)
- *The Case is Altered*, comedy (1597–98; printed 1609)
- *Every Man in His Humour*, comedy (performed 1598; printed 1601)
- *Every Man out of His Humour*, comedy (performed 1599; printed 1600)
- *Cynthia's Revels* (performed 1600; printed 1601)
- *The Poetaster*, comedy (performed 1601; printed 1602)
- *Sejanus His Fall*, tragedy (performed 1603; printed 1605)
- *Eastward Ho*, comedy (performed and printed 1605), a collaboration with John Marston and George Chapman
- *Volpone*, comedy (c. 1605–06; printed 1607)

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- *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*, comedy (performed 1609; printed 1616)
- *The Alchemist*, comedy (performed 1610; printed 1612)
- *Catiline His Conspiracy*, tragedy (performed and printed 1611)
- *Bartholomew Fair*, comedy (performed 31 October 1614; printed 1631)
- *The Devil is an Ass*, comedy (performed 1616; printed 1631)
- *The Staple of News*, comedy (performed Feb. 1626; printed 1631)
- *The New Inn, or The Light Heart*, comedy (licensed 19 January 1629; printed 1631)
- *The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*, comedy (licensed 12 October 1632; printed 1641)
- *The Sad Shepherd*, pastoral (c. 1637, printed 1641), unfinished
- *Mortimer his Fall*, history (printed 1641), a fragment

### 13.2.1 Historical Background of Elizabethan Era

We have learnt some of these concepts in Unit 1. In this section, let's revisit some of those topics. The Elizabethan era is the period associated with Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1558–1603) and is often considered to be the golden age in history of English Literature and art. It is considered to be the height of the English Renaissance. The Renaissance begun in fourteenth-century Italy and from there spread throughout Europe. Renaissance means rebirth. In the European context Renaissance was the rebirth of the classical (Greek and Roman) learning. Therefore, the age of renaissance saw new interest in ancient Greek and Roman classics which created a fresh vigour and vitality in the mindset of the people. The significant change that occurred during the Renaissance was that man began questioning things and tried to understand the scientific reason that culminated in events. The temper of scientific enquiry dominated the age.

The Elizabethan era is the greatest age of English literature as plays and poems reached a new height in this age like never before. The prominent writers of the age are William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Francis Bacon, and Walter Raleigh among others. They not only wrote plays, poems, essays but experimented with different genres and often tried intermingling genres. It was a time when theatre flourished. It was also a time when theatre severed its link from the churches and established itself as a secular institution. Moreover, The Elizabethan era is also seen as an age of exploration and expansion. In England, the Protestant Reformation was going on which helped in creating a national mindset. This period witnessed a rapid growth in English Commerce and naval power.

Though Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, literary scholars include the literature written in sixteenth and seventeenth-century to be belonging to the Elizabethan era. Often John Milton is also considered to be an Elizabethan poet. King James I ruled England from 1603 to 1625 which is termed by scholars as the Jacobean Age. Shakespeare's famous tragedies and tragicomedies, most of Ben Jonson's satiric comedies, John Donne's sermons and poetry, Webster and other dramatists' plays, Francis Bacon's didactic essays, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and many other famous writings were created during the era of James I's rule. Some scholars consider Ben Jonson to be a Jacobean playwright.

Elizabethan theatre derived from several medieval theatre traditions, such as the Mystery plays, based on biblical themes, that formed a part of religious festivals in England and other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages, the morality plays that evolved out of the mysteries; and the plays by University Wits that attempted to recreate Greek tragedy. The Italian tradition of Commedia dell'arte as well as the elaborate masques frequently presented at court also helped in the shaping of public theatre. The City of London authorities, primarily Puritans, were generally hostile to public performances, but its hostility was overmatched by the Queen's taste for plays. Theatres sprang up in suburbs, accessible across the Thames River to city dwellers, but beyond the authority's control.

All the theatres of London during the Elizabethan era had individual differences; yet their common function necessitated a similar general plan. The public theatres were three stories high, and built around an open space at the centre. Usually polygonal in plan to give an overall rounded effect, the three levels of inward-facing galleries overlooked the open center, into which jutted the stage—essentially a platform surrounded on three sides by the audience, only the rear being restricted for the entrances and exits of the actors and seating for the musicians. The upper level behind the stage was used as a balcony.

Elizabethan theatre did not make use of lavish scenery, instead left the stage largely bare, with a few key props. The main visual appeal on stage was costumes. Costumes were often bright in colour and visually entrancing. Costumes were expensive, hence, usually, players wore contemporary clothing regardless of the time period of the play. Occasionally, a lead character would wear a conventional version of a more historically accurate garb, but secondary characters would nonetheless remain in contemporary clothing.

Moreover, the Elizabethans did not have elaborate props for the stage. The stage was primarily bare and the backdrop of the play was left for the audience to imagine. Mostly a placard was hung on the stage doors to suggest where the scene is set. The play used to start with a flag being unfurled to suggest that the play has started. After some music, the prologue was spoken

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by an actor where he would give a gist of the setting of the play to make the audience understand the backdrop in which the play is about to be performed. If the play lacked a prologue then in the opening scene(s) the backdrop of the play made the audience know where the play is set.

If the Royalists promoted literature and theatre, then there was a faction in England called the Puritans who had a strong dislike for theatre, as theatre was perceived by them as an immoral place. Though Queen Elizabeth herself was a great admirer and promoter of theatre, still women were not allowed to act in a play during her reign. Mostly women characters were played by boys who used to cross-dress as women in the plays. The rising Puritan movement was hostile towards theatre, and when they gained control of the city early in the English Civil War, and on 2 September 1642, they ordered the London theatres to be closed. The theatres remained closed for most of the next eighteen years, and reopened after the Restoration of the monarch in 1660. It is a matter of discussion that theatre rose to its pinnacle in an age when the opposition against it was strongest.

What is also significant in Jonson is not only the realistic element, but also the notion of *humour* which had a significant role to play in his comedies. What we figure out is that almost each of Jonson's characters is endowed with a whim or affectation – some ludicrous exaggeration in manner, speech or dress which becomes the subject of comedy. Jonson based his theory of Comedy of Humours on the physiology of the times when it was thought that a person is regulated by a harmonious blend of the humours engendered in the liver, heart and spleen. The various humours were blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. These four humours should be balanced in the case of a normal person; but if any of these gets imbalanced then it may lead to a folly, or an affectation or an imbalance in the person's character. In Jonsonian comedies what we see, each of his characters suffers from a peculiar habit or tendency whether in their way of speaking or dressing or a singular trait which has grown to a point of abnormality.

As against the norms of the Romantic Comedy, Ben Jonson invented a new genre called the Comedy of Humours where the main objective along with evoking laughter was to also correct their vices. Ben Jonson specifically writes in the Prologue of *Every Man in His Humour* that his comedies deal with vices and not with crimes.

Jonson was a strict follower of the classical norms primarily that of the three unities set by the Greek playwrights (as mentioned earlier in the features of Classical comedies). Moreover he was against the Romantic Comedies which provided a relief from everyday reality by situating the play in a dream like atmosphere as in Shakespeare's *Mid Summer Night's Dream*. Jonson based his comedies on actual conditions of life of the people of the age. Suppose if one makes a comparison between Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, one will be able to

discern that while Shakespeare's play is set in the fanciful world of the forest of Arden, Jonson's play is set in the everyday reality of the then England. This aspect of Jonson's plays – the everyday reality – makes them more realistic and is a great way to understand the socio-political and cultural scenario of the age. Emile Legouis significantly makes a comparison between Jonson and Shakespeare and says that 'In one sense, he (Jonson) was more original than Shakespeare. Shakespeare accepts the conditions of the stage of his time; he was aware of its shortcomings, but he reconciles himself to them with a smile. His relation with the public remains sympathetic. Jonson, however, is angry and in an arrogant opposition to the Elizabethan stage, and sets up his own tastes, ideas and theories, all derived from the ancients, against the popular taste. He also makes sarcastic references to his public. Thus, while Shakespeare passively follows the course of the stream, Jonson throws his huge bulk against it.' This opinion of Emile Legouis is significant in understanding Jonson's contribution to the English stage and theatre; though there are divided opinions about the comment as the light in which Shakespeare has been portrayed in the comment is not completely true. Shakespeare also stood against the prevailing conditions of theatre of the Elizabethan era but reacted in a different way.

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### Check Your Progress

1. Who produced *Cynthia's Revels*?
2. Name the two tragedies written by Johnson.

## 13.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *THE ALCHEMIST*

*The Alchemist* tells the story of how a trio of cheats practices fraud on a number of trusting people who are easily taken in the false promises and assurances made by the cheats. The play is, in fact, a satire on greed, hoarding, and sensuality. Only one man resists the temptations offered by the cheats, while all the others, who come to meet them, fall prey to their tricks and their cheating. In the end, the cheats are exposed and, while two of them have to flee to save themselves from arrest by the police, the third manages to save himself and, in fact, emerges victorious.

The play opens in the house of a man called Lovewit in London. As the plague has been raging in the city, Lovewit has gone away to his country home, leaving his London house in the charge of a butler, Jeremy. Jeremy, wanting to make the best use of his master's absence, enters into a partnership with two persons, a man and a woman. The man, called Subtle, pretends to be an alchemist, claiming that he can produce the philosopher's stone or the elixir which would have the power to transform base metals into gold, which

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would be able to cure all kinds of diseases, and which would perform other wonders also. The woman, called Dol Common, is actually a prostitute, but she poses to be a respectable woman and a helper of the alchemist. Jeremy, the butler, functions as an assistant to the alchemist, his duty being to blow upon the coals in the furnace, because Subtle has set up a laboratory in one of the rooms of the house and has equipped it with some apparatus and some materials to show that he is busy manufacturing the philosopher's stone with which his clients would be able to work wonders. Jeremy sometimes disguises himself as an army captain and goes about in search of credulous clients whom he invites to Subtle's laboratory in order to rob them of as much money as possible by giving them false assurances regarding the power of the philosopher's stone to satisfy all their wishes and desires. Subtle is well versed in the language of the pseudo-science called alchemy, and he can talk at length about the principle on which this science is based. Indeed, he is capable of impressing his clients by his use of technical words and phrases relating to the science of alchemy, and he has even taught Jeremy the butler how to use those technical words and phrases. The various clients who come to Subtle's establishment include Dapper, Druggier, Mammon, two Anabaptists called Ananias and Tribulation, Kastril and his widowed sister, Dame Pliant. Each of these clients has to pay a price for his or her naivety and greed because each of them wants to become rich through the philosopher's stone and each of them blindly believes in Subtle's claims about his power to produce the philosopher's stone.

Dapper is a lawyer's clerk who wants that the alchemist should provide him with a familiar or an attendant spirit who might enable him to win money at horse-races, at card-parties, and at dice-parties. Dapper would like to give up his real profession and to become a whole-time gambler in order to win money and become a wealthy man. Subtle, aided by Face, assures Dapper that his wish would be fulfilled. Subtle invents the myth that Dapper is a nephew of the Queen of Fairies, that the Queen of Fairies would bless Dapper with her grace, and that Subtle would even arrange an interview between Dapper and the Queen of Fairies. Face's duties include coaxing the clients to pay an adequate fee to the alchemist for the favour that would be done to them. Accordingly, Dapper is made to pay enough money to Subtle. Dapper is then sent away with instructions to sharpen all his sense with the use of vinegar. When Dapper pays his next visit, he is blindfolded and told that the Queen of Fairies has sent some of her subordinates to collect from Dapper whatever valuables and cash he happens to carry on his persons. Dapper complies with the directive which, according to the doctor (namely Subtle), the Queen of Fairies has sent to Dapper, and is in this way relieved of all his valuables. Thereafter Dapper is gagged and then stowed away in the toilet to wait for a visit from the Queen of Fairies. Finally, Dol disguises herself as the Queen of Fairies and showers her blessings upon Dapper. Dapper goes away, fully



satisfied. At the end Dapper finds himself poorer than before, having been robbed of his money and valuables.

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The Alchemist*

Drugger is by profession a tobacconist who is going to build a new shop and wants the doctor's advice as to where he should install the door and the shelves, and where he should put the boxes and the pots, so that he can achieve prosperity in his business. Subtle prophesizes a bright future for Drugger. Subtle now claims that he is also well versed in the science of palmistry and astrology, and in face-reading as well. He looks at the lines on Drugger's forehead and says that a ship, which is coming from the Persian Gulf, will bring large quantities of various commodities which will yield enormous profits to Drugger. Subtle then gives the needful instructions to Drugger regarding the location of the door at his new shop and the location of the shelves. He also suggests to Drugger a method by which he can attract numerous customers to his shop. At a suggestion by Face, Drugger gives enough money to the doctor as his fee. Face also suggests that Drugger should bring a damask suit for the doctor when he comes next time. On his next visit, Drugger brings some tobacco for the doctor and speaks about a young man by the name of Kastril who has come from the countryside the town with his widowed sister, Dame Pliant. Face asks Drugger to bring both the young man and his sister to the doctor who would teach Kastril the art of quarrelling and who would teach Kastril's sister, Dame Pliant, how to become a lady of fashion and how to get remarried. On the next occasion, Drugger not only brings a damask suit for the doctor, but also Kastril and his sister, Dame Pliant. Subtle is able to create a good impression upon both Kastril and Dame Pliant. Subtle gives a lesson to Kastril in the art of quarrelling, because in those days the gallant young men of the city knew how to quarrel and how promptly to withdraw from the quarrel if the quarrel if took a turn unfavourable to them. Subtle is also able, on this occasion, to kiss Dame Pliant several times. A little later Face is also able to kiss the rich young widow. It is now Face's desire to obtain Dame Pliant as a wife for himself, though he gives Drugger the impression that he would arrange matters in such a way that Dame Pliant would get ready to marry Drugger. Later, Dame Pliant is introduced to a Spanish Don, who is in reality an Englishman by the name of Surly, and who has disguised himself as a rich Spaniard with the object of discovering what goes on at this alchemist's establishment, and then reporting the matter to the police. It is now possible for the Spanish Don (or Surly) to seduce Dame Pliant but, being an honest man, he refrains from doing so and proposes marriage to her. In the long run, however, he is unable to get the widow as a wife for himself because Face so manages affairs that she has no choice but to marry Face's master, Lovewit, when Lovewit returns suddenly and unexpectedly to his London house where the cheats have been carrying on their operations. Poor Drugger is nowhere in the picture so far as Dame Pliant is concerned; and even the recipes suggested by Subtle to him for becoming rich are fake.

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Sir Epicure Mammon is another client of Subtle's. He comes to Subtle in the company of a friend called Surly (who has been already mentioned above). Mammon had been told by Subtle that the philosopher's stone would be ready for him on a particular day; and, accordingly, Mammon comes on the fixed day to obtain the philosopher's stone with which Mammon hopes to work wonders. Mammon tells Surly that, through the philosopher's stone, he would become fabulously rich, and that he would equal the ancient King Solomon in wealth. At the same time, Mammon would like to enjoy endless sensual pleasures by means of the philosopher's stone. He would maintain a regular harem of wives and concubines, as many in number as King Solomon had. Thus, Mammon wants not only to acquire unlimited wealth but also to enjoy endless sexual pleasure. With the philosopher's stone he would become so strong so as to be able to perform sexual intercourse with fifty women in one night. At the same time, Mammon is not entirely a selfish man. He wants to make even the beggars and paupers rich; he wants to cure the sufferers of all the diseases from which they happen to be suffering and he would like to establish hospitals and other charitable institutions. Mammon is fully convinced that Subtle would produce the philosopher's stone and hand it over to him on the appointed day. At the same time, Mammon, having caught a glimpse of Dol, feels sexually attracted by her, and he urges Face (whom he addresses as 'Lungs' because one of Face's duties is to blow upon the coals in the furnace) to procure that woman for his sexual gratification. Face obliges Mammon by procuring Dol for him, asking Mammon at the same time not to let Subtle know that Dol has been supplied to him for his sexual pleasure. However, Dol, being herself a member of the group of cheats, knows the role which she has to play. At a signal from Face, Dol pretends that she has got a fit of madness, whereupon Mammon's love-making comes to an end. There is now an explosion in the laboratory, and Face reports that the whole alchemical process has been disrupted and that everything in the laboratory has gone up in the smoke. Subtle, finding Mammon in Dol's company, now declares that it is because of Mammon's sinful indulgence in sensual pleasure that the alchemical process has collapsed. Subtle reminds Mammon that one of the conditions for the success of the alchemical process was that those conducting the process should be pious men and that the premises where the alchemical process is conducted should be treated as a sacred premises. Mammon, by indulging in sensuality and by trying to use Dol for his sexual gratification, has violated the sanctity of the premises and is responsible for the explosion which has brought the whole alchemical process to a halt. Thus, Subtle is able to put the whole blame for the failure of his experiment on Mammon. The philosopher's stone was in any case a myth, but Subtle is now able to hold Mammon responsible for his own incapacity to place the promised philosopher's stone in Mammon's hands. Mammon, who has already paid a lot of money to Subtle in the hope of getting the philosopher's stone, has now to go away disappointed, and also feeling ashamed of his sinful

conduct. Face asks him to repent for his sinful action, and also to donate a sum of one hundred pounds to a mental hospital. Of course, this donation would also go into the pockets of the cheats.

Kastril is told by Face that the doctor (Subtle) is a competent man who knows many arts and possesses many skills. Kastril has come to London from the countryside in order to learn city manners and especially the art of quarrelling in which he receives some lessons from Subtle.

Kastril also wants this widowed sister, Dame Pliant, should get married to somebody not below the status of a knight. Face and Subtle introduce Dame Pliant to a Spanish Don (who, however, is no other than Mammon's friend, Surly). They ask her to submit to the Spanish Don's love-making and, when she refuses, she is bullied into submission by her brother Kastril who feels happy at the prospect of a rich Spanish Don's marrying his sister. Alone with Dame Pliant, the Spanish Don (or Surly) tells her that she has fallen into the hands of cheats (namely Subtle, Face, and Dol). Instead of seducing her, he proposes marriage to her; and she says that she would think over his proposal.

Surly, who is a friend of Mammon's, is a complete disbeliever so far as the science of alchemy is concerned. He refuses to believe in the existence of the elixir or the philosopher's stone which can convert base metals into gold, which can restore youth to the aged, and which can cure people of all their diseases. When Subtle expounds to him the theory of alchemy and the scientific principle underlying it, Surly refuses to believe Subtle's exposition. Surly then comes back here, this time in the disguise of a Spanish Don, his object being to discover the secret activities of the gang of cheats and to report the matter to the police for necessary action against these frauds. Subtle and Face, thinking Surly to be a real Spanish Don, introduce Dame Pliant to him for him for his sexual gratification because Dol, who was the one to be really supplied to him, is at this time busy with Mammon. Surly is an honest man and he, instead of seducing Dame Pliant, reveals to her his real identity and tells her that she has fallen into the hands of a group of crooks. He then proposes marriage to her, and she says that she would think over his proposal. A little later, Subtle, wanting to rob Surly of whatever he has got on his person, tries to search Surly's pockets, but gets a beating from Surly, Surly's real identity now becomes known to the cheats who, however, are able to drive him away from the premises with the help of their clients including Kastril, Drugger, and Ananias.

Ananias and Tribulation are two Anabaptists who come to Subtle on behalf of the brethren at Amsterdam in connection with Subtle's promise that he would provide the brethren with the philosopher's stone which would not only make the Anabaptists rich but would enable them to extend their sphere of influence and their authority over their followers. Subtle has already received a substantial sum of money from the brethren at Amsterdam, but now he demands more money from Ananias and Tribulation who have

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come on behalf of the brethren. Subtle paints a very rosy picture of how the Anabaptists would be able to flourish and to enhance their prestige and power through the philosopher's stone which he would soon place at their disposal. The Anabaptists pay more money to Subtle, and they are also prevailed upon to buy from Subtle a large quantity of metallic articles which Mammon had sent to Subtle for being converted into gold, but which are described by Subtle to the Anabaptists as being the goods belonging to certain orphans. Subtle pretends that the proceeds from the sale of these goods would go to the orphans. In his speeches to Ananias and Tribulation, Subtle cleverly pokes fun at the hypocrisy and hollowness of the Anabaptists. He reminds them of the various malpractices and crooked devices in which the Anabaptists indulge, and thus exposes the falsity of their claims to piety and religious zeal. He also offers to cast Dutch dollars for the Anabaptists, and the Anabaptists feel glad at this offer because it means that they would come into the possession of unlimited wealth. Thus, the greed and the hypocrisy of the Anabaptists are fully revealed to us. Of course, in the long run, the Anabaptists, like the other clients of Subtle, get nothing, but find themselves poorer by whatever amount of money they have paid to Subtle.

When the three cheats are still actively at work, Lovewit, the master of the house, where the cheating operations have been going on, returns to his house suddenly. Face now finds himself in a very piquant situation because the neighbours, who crowd around Lovewit, inform him that many visitors have been coming to his house during his absence and that they had observed a lot of activity here. Lovewit finds the doors of his house shut. Then Face appears before his master and pretends that he kept the house shut for over a month because the house had been visited by the plague. Face has now shaved himself and has appeared before his master as Jeremy the butler. He is no longer wearing a captain's uniform, and he is no longer wearing the clothes which he used to wear as 'Lungs'. The various persons who had been cheated and robbed of their money by Subtle and Face, have now spoken to one another, and they have all become aware that the so-called alchemist-cum-doctor is merely an impostor and a fraud. They all collect at Lovewit's house and ask where the doctor is, and where Lungs is. Face is standing there with his master, but the ex-clients of Subtle cannot recognize him because he has shaved off the beard which he was keeping as a captain, and because he is now wearing a butler's livery. From inside the house come the voices of Dapper and Subtle, but Face tries to mislead his master by saying that these are the voices not of human beings but of the spirits of the air. However, Lovewit now finds something fishy about the whole thing, and calls upon his butler to tell him the truth or be prepared for the consequences. Face now privately makes a full and complete confession to Lovewit of what had been going on in Lovewit's house and the role which he (Face) had been playing. He begs his master's forgiveness, saying that he (Face) would, in return, do something for his master which the master would greatly appreciate. Lovewit

thereupon pardons his butler, while the butler so manages the situation as to have Dame Plaut, the rich young widow, married to Lovewit. Lovewit feels very glad to have acquired a young wife who would also bring him a rich dowry. When now the ex-clients of Subtle clamour for action being him taken against the impostors, Lovewit asks them to search his house and find out where the imposters are. Face has, in the meantime, already sent Subtle and Dol away through the back door without, however, allowing them to take even the slightest part of the accumulated booty including the cash which had been collected from the clients. The groups of ex-clients are unable to trace the impostors, and so they all feel dismayed. When Surly learns that the young widow has got married to Lovewit, he feels that his honesty has done him no good because somebody else has acquired the widow as his wife. Thus, the ultimate winners in this whole enterprises are Face (or Jeremy the butler) and his master Lovewit, while Surly, the only honest man in the whole lot of characters in the play, has to go away without getting any reward whatsoever.

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### 13.3.1 Important Passages for Explanation

- (i) 'But I shall \_\_\_\_\_ artillery Yard.'

**Reference to context:** These lines, are from a speech by Face. The lines appear in the very opening scene when Face and Subtle are quarrelling with each other.

**Explanation:** Face says that he would like to remind Subtle of what kind of man Subtle originally was. Face says that he had met Subtle at an inn called Pie Corner, situated near Smithfield (in London). Accordingly to Face, Subtle could not even afford to buy food for himself at that time. Subtle, in those days, used to try to satisfy his hunger merely by inhaling the smell of the cooked foods available at the eating-stalls. Subtle was at that time a pitiable, constipated fellow, with his nose looking pinched by the horn-spectacles which he wore. The complexion of his face has been made dark like that of an Italian by his habitually applying to his face a cosmetic-lotion meant to cure venereal diseases and skin diseases. His face was in those days dotted with black spots and pimples which looked like the grains of gunpowder exploded by gunners conducting the firing-practice at the training-ground close to the Tower (in London). Thus, according to Face, Subtle presented in those days a most wretched and miserable sight.

- (ii) 'What makes \_\_\_\_\_ good spirit.'

**Reference to context:** These lines are spoken by Tribulation, an Anabaptist pastor, to his deacon, Ananias. Ananias has given his superior adverse negative report about Subtle because Subtle had demanded more money from Ananias, and because Subtle had also spoken to Ananias in very harsh and severe terms. Tribulation tries to soothe the feelings of Ananias by saying that even wicked men like Subtle can be used to promote holy causes.



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**Explanation:** Tribulation asks Ananias what it is that makes the Devil so wicked. Satan is the enemy of all mankind, and he is so devilish only because he is constantly surrounded by the fires of hell and because he is always busy in boiling sulphur and arsenic. Tribulation means that much of Subtle's wickedness is also due to the fact that he has to spend most of his time close to the heat of his furnace. Tribulation suggests that he and Ananias should make allowances for the dominant personal characteristics of an individual, and that they should make allowances for the forces which stimulate a man's natural disposition. Tribulation therefore wants that Ananias takes a lenient view of Subtle's misbehaviour. It is possible, says Tribulation, that, when Subtle's experimentation is over and the philosopher's stone has been obtained, Subtle's very heat of anger may change into a religious passion. It is possible that Subtle may then support the beautiful discipline of the Anabaptists against the Church of Rome which, according to Tribulation, is so dirty and filthy that it may be compared to a woman's under-garment which is stained with her menstrual discharge. Tribulation therefore wants that he and Ananias should wait for the time when Subtle would be converted to the Anabaptist faith, and when the spirit of true piety would be awakened in Subtle's heart.

(iii) 'That master \_\_\_\_\_ crack it too.'

**Reference to context:** These lines are spoken by Lovewit. Lovewit, having joined hands with his butler Jeremy (who has been calling himself Face), and having driven away all the ex-clients of Subtle, makes this speech to justify his complete forgiveness of his butler who, along with Subtle and Dol, had been indulging in criminal activities to cheat people.

**Explanation:** Lovewit says that he has received, through the efforts of his butler, such happiness as will result from his marriage with a wealthy widow. He says that he would prove himself to be very ungrateful if he were not to adopt a somewhat lenient attitude towards his witty servant, and not promote his servant's prospects in life, even though by this leniency and this forgiveness he would bring a little dishonour to himself. Then, addressing the audience in the theatre, Lovewit says that, if he has gone beyond an old man's solemnity or violated the strict code of conduct (by forgiving Jeremy), the audience should make allowances for him in view of the fact that he has got a young wife and a witty servant both of whom can render many services to him. Sometimes, says Lovewit, ancient truths have to be stretched and even ignored. Sometimes, he says, it becomes necessary to deviate from the strict standards of honourable conduct, and even to fly in the face of such conduct.



### 13.3.2 Character Sketches

Ben Jonson:  
*The Alchemist*

#### 1. Subtle

The play opens with a quarrel between Subtle and Face. This quarrel reveals Subtle's capacity for verbal attack and sarcasm equal to that of Face. In fact, the two men are well-matched in this respect. Subtle threatens to throw chemical water on Face's silk garments and thus mar all that the tailor has made for him. Face claims that he had picked up Subtle at a time when the latter was starving and had set him up as a practicing alchemist. Subtle replies that the house where his laboratory has been set up belongs, after all, not to Face but to Face's master and that when he (Subtle) had set up his laboratory here, there was no living being here except Face and the rats. He accuses Face of selling for personal profit the provisions which his master had intended to give away in charity to the poor. Subtle claims that he had taken Face out of dung at a time when no living creature wanted to keep company with Face except a spider. Subtle goes on to say that he had made Face fit for decent company and taught him oaths and the art of quarrelling, as well as instructed him in the technique of cheating at horse-races, at cockfights, at cards, and at dice. Eventually, of course, the two men make up at the intervention of Dol.

Subtle is as ingenious, witty, and as inventive as Face is. He has as quick and as intelligent as Face, who is supposed to be his assistant in the alchemical process. We clearly see these qualities in the manner in which Subtle deals with Dapper and then with Drugger. At first Subtle pretends to be reluctant to provide Dapper with a familiar or an attendant spirit as he would not like to endanger his art and his livelihood by providing Dapper with a familiar. Ultimately, however, Subtle agrees to comply with Dapper's request, and Subtle says that Dapper is a lucky man because he is loved by the Queen of Fairies.

Subtle offers similar hopes to Drugger, though his technique in this case is different. Subtle here claims that he is an adept in palmistry, astrology, and in the art of reading faces. Looking at the lines on Drugger's forehead, he says that he can see a certain star there. Drugger's long ears and certain spots in his teeth show that Drugger is a very fortunate man, says Subtle. He then goes on to explain palmistry to Drugger as well.

Subtle tries to convince a doubting Surly of his alchemical powers by giving certain instructions to Face in language that is highly technical, and then goes on to expound the theory of alchemy, providing a scientific basis for it.

People who believed in alchemy were also aware of its religious aspect. It was generally believed that only a man especially favoured by God could hope to discover the secret of alchemy, and that such a man must be completely free from the contaminating influence of worldliness. Accordingly,

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Subtle here pretends to be a very pious man, a noble soul who spends his time in prayer and fasting.

Subtle shows his capacity to make eloquent and persuasive speeches when both Ananias and Tribulation come to him on behalf of the Anabaptists in Amsterdam. He describes in detail the advantages which would accrue to the Anabaptists from the philosopher's stone which, he says, he is going to place in their hands very soon.

These speeches by Subtle show not only his command of the language and his powers of logical argumentation; but also his capacity to mock at and ridicule the hollowness and hypocrisy of the Puritans.

Subtle is, indeed, a many-sided genius, though his genius is of the evil kind. When Kastril says that he would like to learn the art of quarrelling as practiced by 'the angry boys' of the city, Face tells him that the doctor (namely Subtle) is an adept in the art of teaching this art to anyone who wishes to learn it. Indeed, Subtle can handle any kind of man, and any situation in which he finds himself. He is a versatile manipulator.

When Kastril comes to Subtle, Subtle gives him a lesson in the art of quarrelling.

When Surly comes in the disguise of a Spanish Don, both Subtle and Face find themselves outwitted by the Spanish Don. This is the one occasion in the course of the play when Subtle meets more than his match.

However, in the end Subtle is outwitted by Face. Both Subtle and Dol have to flee from the house when Lovewit returns without being allowed to carry any part of the accumulated booty with them.

### 2. Face or Jeremy the Butler

Face appears in various guises in the course of the play. He is actually Jeremy the butler, but he becomes Captain Face and, at the same time, he functions as an assistant to the alchemist, Subtle, and in that capacity he is called 'Lungs' by Mammon, one of Subtle's clients. The quarrel between Subtle and Face in the beginning of the play, with each indulging in scathing criticism of the other and each denouncing the other proves that Face is a match for Subtle and seems, in fact, to have the better of that man.

It is Face who persuaded Dapper to call on Subtle, the alchemist.

The next client called Abel Drugger who, by profession, is a tobacconist is also introduced to Subtle by Face. Face points out to Subtle that it is only because of his (Face's) efforts that clients come to Subtle. Face asserts that he has to spend lot of money in going about, gathering information about potential clients, and prevailing upon them to visit Subtle's establishment. The speech which Face makes on this occasion, emphasizing the importance of the role which he is performing, is undoubtedly a convincing one.

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By the time Mammon arrives on the scene, Face, we find, has picked up all the vocabulary relating to the pseudoscience of alchemy. Indeed, he shows a remarkable memory in this context, and uses technical words and phrases without stumbling or stammering at any point. When, for instance, Subtle asks him if he had dissolved certain materials in their own menstrual (or liquid) and Face replies like an expert.

By getting some money from Mammon as a bribe for procuring Dol for the sexual gratification of the man, Face functions not only as Lungs but also as a pimp.

When the Spanish Don reveals his true identity as Surly, Face experiences embarrassment, but he is able to tide over the difficult situation by cleverly enlisting the support of Drugger, Kastril, and others, all of whom then drive away Surly from the premises. Thus even in this situated Face emerges triumphant. Indeed, he shows himself to be a skilful manipulator.

Face has an excellent command of the language, and can speak in a most persuasive and impressive manner. This is evident in the ways in which he speaks to Dol about the Spanish Don. Indeed, it is surprising that a mere household servant should be able to speak in such a manner, using all kinds of similes and metaphors. He does not employ the expression 'private parts', but refers to Dol's private parts as her 'drum' and as her 'virginal' and he asks her to tickle the Spanish Don with her mother-tongue, to 'firk like a flounder', and to 'Kiss-like a scallop'.

Face prevails upon Dame Pliant to yield to the amorous advances of the Spanish Don. Although Dame Pliant has a prejudice against Spaniards, yet Face is able to overcome her prejudice, of course with the active support of her brother, Kastril, who forces her to submit.

When Lovewit returns to his London house suddenly and unexpectedly, Face finds himself in a most difficult situation, and yet he comes out triumphant on this occasion also. At first he tries to throw dust into Lovewit's eyes by saying that he had kept the house shut for over a month because it had been visited by the plague. When voices are heard from inside the house, Face again tries to throw dust into his master's eyes by saying that these are the voices not of human beings but of the spirits of the air. Eventually, however, he makes, in private, a full and complete confession to his master and comes to an understanding with him. Face says that he would so manage the whole situation that the young, rich, and beautiful widow would be married to Lovewit. Lovewit having been bribed by Face in this manner, forgives Face for all the criminal activities in which Face had been indulging during Lovewit's absence. Face drives away both Subtle and Dol by telling them that, if they do not instantly flee from this house, they would be taken into custody by the police. Subtle and Dol have no choice but to flee instantly, taking with them not the slightest bit of the booty.

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Face is one of the two principal gainers at the end of the play, the other gainer being Lovewit. All other characters, with two exceptions, namely Kastril and Dame Pliant, have been cheated, and defrauded of their money and their goods. Face not only escapes scot-free at the end but manages to retain his master's favour; and some of the accumulated booty would also doubtlessly be bestowed upon him by the master. At the same time it must be admitted that he possesses some positive qualities too, such as wit, ingenuity, inventiveness, and an excellent command of the language. On the basis of these positive qualities, which are shared in equal measure by Subtle, some critics have tried to justify the victory which Face wins at the end over all those who have come to know his reality and who now want to have him punished. It has been said by these critics that a man who possesses such a fertile wit and such a quick intelligence deserves a lenient treatment at the hands of the author of the play; but we do not feel convinced by this reasoning. A cheat and a fraud as Face is, he should definitely have been subjected to some sort of punishment in the interests of legal, moral and poetic justice.

### 3. Dol Common

Dol Common is a member of the trio who have set up the alchemical.

Both Subtle and Dol are however outwitted by Face who has come to an understanding with his master and who tells them that they must leave the house immediately if they wish to escape being arrested by the police, saying further that they must leave the entire booty behind and must not take the slightest part of it. Both Subtle and Dol feel shocked by Face's tactics but flee from the house in the greatest possible haste in order to save themselves from the police.

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## 13.4 THE ALCHEMIST: A MORALIST COMEDY

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In the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, Jonson had written that the aim of his comedy was to 'sport with human follies, not with crimes'. It was his object to expose human follies to laughter and, by this means, to rid people of those follies. Now, there is no doubt that comedy has always had a corrective purpose and that, although comedy is primarily intended to entertain an audience, the moral purpose is never lost sight of by the author. Comedy leads an audience to try to shed their follies and absurdities by making them laugh at those follies and absurdities. These observations are certainly valid to a large extent in the case of *The Alchemist*.

While *The Alchemist* provides plenty of fun and laughter, yet its moral aspect cannot be ignored. The moral purpose behind the play becomes evident when we examine the ultimate fate of the various characters. In the case of Subtle, Face, and Dol, the author has depicted not just follies or absurdities but crimes. All these three persons are real criminals who

deceive and cheat their clients and rob them of as much money as then can. The chief criminal is, of course, Subtle who claims that he is an alchemist capable of manufacturing the elixir or the philosopher's stone which can diseases. Ultimately, Subtle is completely outwitted by Face and has to flee from Lovewits' house without being able to take away with him the slightest bit of the accumulated booty. Although Subtle's punishment is not very severe, yet it is not light also, because he would now be reduced to the same straitened circumstances in which he was when he entered into a partnership with Face. Thus the fate of this villain is a lesson for all those who try to make money by crooked methods. Dol shares Subtle's fate and she also gets nothing from the accumulated booty. Only Face among these three villains escapes scot-free. In his case the requirements of poetic justice have not been met. In fact, in his case the requirements of poetic justice have been flouted in a most outrageous manner, and this certainly diminishes the moral impact of the play.

Face's villainy is undeniable. He is an active partner in the frauds which are practised by Subtle and he, in fact, is the man who entangles victims for Subtle. He betrays his ex-partners and drives them away from the house without allowing them to take even a little bit of the booty. And yet this man emerges triumphant at the end. As Jeremy the butler, he becomes a favourite of his master. Here the requirements of poetic justice have been thrown to the winds. Here it would seem that Jonson has lost sight of his stern moral purpose. The establishment of Face in the master's favour at the end greatly weakens the moral effect of the play.

The moral purpose behind *The Alchemist* also becomes evident from the way in which the various clients of Subtle find themselves to be the victims of his fraud. All these clients prove themselves to be fools and gulls. But they are punished not just for their folly or lack of intelligence. They are all morally flawed characters. Their ruling passion is avarice or greed, and they must therefore be punished for this vice. All these men are punished severely for their greed, their credulity, and their stupidity. Among the people duped are also Kastril and his sister Dame Pliant. However, they are not avaricious; and therefore they neither deserve nor receive any punishment. Thus, in all these cases, the requirements of poetic justice have fully been met. In view of all this we may assert that *The Alchemist* is a moralist-comedy with teeth in it. It bites deep into many vices and follies, and generates in a thoughtful audience a much more serious interest than mere entertainment will provide.

Another case which shows the failure of poetic justice is that of Surly. Surly is an honest man. He has seen through the fraud being practised by Subtle; and he is determined to bring the man to justice. He gets an opportunity to seduce Dame Pliant but he refrains from doing so. He behaves most honourably towards her and, instead of seducing her or deceiving her, proposes marriage to her. At the end, however, this honest man has to go

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away empty-handed. He feels very bitter to find that he has suffered because of his 'foolish vice of honesty'. Now, to deprive Surly of what was his due, certainly offends our ideas of moral justice. In this particular case, then, we find that virtue is not always rewarded just as vice is not always punished.

Lovewit, who appears in the play only towards the end, is perhaps the best winner in the play. He shows a want of integrity when he enters into a pact with his butler whom he completely forgives for all his dishonest deeds because the butler offers the young, rich, and beautiful widow to him in marriage. Lovewit receives a rich prize without having earned it. He admits that he has departed from an old man's gravity or strict rules; but he declares that a young wife and a good brain (which his butler has got) justify this departure. However, we do not feel convinced by this logic. In view of all this we must agree with the critic who says that 'the distribution of rewards and punishments in this play has the randomness of life, not the neatness of poetic justice.'

The view of another critic also deserves consideration. According to this critic, the gulls show a cross-section of society led by greed and lust to folly and loss. The nobleman, the countryman, the little clerk, the churchman, the small shopkeeper; Jonson has cast his net widely over society to include all these. Morally the scope of the play is equally wide. Their faults include greed and lust; excess; triviality; coarseness, thick-headedness; false ambition; credulity; feeble submissiveness; hypocrisy; double-think; extortion; and silliness. But these different vices achieve unity and purpose from the motive which is common to all the gulls, the motive being an obsessive desire for easy money. Thus the play depicts a whole society, ruthlessly individualistic and acquisitive. This society is ultimately deluded and impoverished by its own false values. The moral of the play thus becomes obvious. At the same time this critic has a word to say in praise of the conspirators. According to this critic, the conspirators are certainly wicked and evil but they have something positive about their characters. The trio of conspirators display a wit and an ingenuity indicative of a creative force whereby they dupe their victims by promising to give them all that they want, whether it is a meeting with the Queen of Fairies or success in their businesses. Jonson's own creative joy is with his entertainers, and that is why he lets them off lightly at the end.

### 13.4.1 *The Alchemist*: A Play about Possession

Although the real theme of *The Alchemist* may be described as avarice and lust, alchemy figures largely and prominently in the play that it deserves the first and foremost consideration. The very title shows the importance of alchemy in the scheme of the play. The entire action of the play proceeds on the basis of a general belief among the people of the time that alchemy was a true science and that Subtle, who has set up an establishment to produce and supply the philosopher's stone to his clients, was a genuine alchemist. The belief in alchemy underlies the entire action of the play.



Alchemy, however, is essentially a vehicle in this play. The real centre of interest lies elsewhere. Jonson is using the particular subject of alchemy in this play as the means to another end. Jonson saw himself as a social critic whose business it was to strip the 'ragged follies' of the time naked as at their birth. The various clients of Subtle look upon Lovewit's house as a gold mine. Dapper, Mammon, Drugger, and Tribulation are by nature very different characters, but in their folly and greed they are possessed by a common passion. Those who visit Lovewit's house are possessed by the single idea of gain, and this is their 'humour.'

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All the characters named above are dominated by avarice or greed. Alchemy is accepted by all of them as a genuine science capable of producing the philosopher's stone which will make each of them rich and wealthy. Dapper, a lawyer's clerk, wishes to give up his profession and become a whole-time gambler with the sole aim of acquiring riches. Drugger is a tobacconist who wants directions from the alchemist as to the construction of his shop and the arrangement of the shelves in his shop. Furthermore, he wants a sign of good luck, a 'thriving sign' which is duly given to him. He also wants Subtle to strikeout his unlucky days from the calendar so that he should not do any business on those days. Not satisfied with all this, Drugger would like to get married to the widow, Dame Plaut. Mammon's ambition to become rich is the most fantastic. He wants to equal King Solomon in wealth. Nor are the Anabaptists free from this taint of avarice. The conspirators themselves are symbols of greed and avarice. Their fraudulent activities have been prompted by the desire for money, and whatever they do in the course of the play is motivated by this desire. The action of the play consists of a series of episodes in which the clients of the alchemist are shown as asking for wealth, being assured of wealth, and being robbed of whatever wealth they already possess. Thus it is wealth and the longing for wealth which dominates the play. It is through these seekers after wealth that Jonson depicts a society or a civilization at a particular state of development. The rise of capitalism had put before men's eyes exciting prospects of private enrichment by private enterprise. The jostle and thrust of competition, which is inevitable in any sphere of power, became particularly fierce in London of the early seventeenth century. For centuries, the basis of power had been in possession of land and rank; now money became the basis of power. At the time this play was written, London had become increasingly a place where individuals made money in order to cut a figure and in order to obtain influence and so make more money. Jonson was the great chronicler of this development; and this play shows Jonson in that role.

Avarice is, however, not the only theme of the play. There is at least, one character whose lust equals his desire to become fabulously rich. Indeed, Mammon's lust is beyond the power of words to describe. He wants to maintain a harem of wives, mistresses, and concubines equal in number to those kept by the ancient King Solomon. When Dol is introduced to him,

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he is so overcome by his lustful desire for her that he begins to pay glowing tributes to her beauty and her graces. Mammon is completely blinded by his lust. Thus lust too is one of themes of this play.

*The Alchemist* gives us an insight into human nature in general. This play is concerned fundamentally with the nature of man. All those person who come to Subtle are credulous. They desire wealth, and in the process of their efforts to acquire it, they would believe anything. They also believe that the philosopher's stone would not only serve them as a means of acquiring wealth but also extend their influence and prestige in the community. Thus credulity and gullibility are also themes in the play. Then there is the theme of vanity, which is symbolized chiefly by Kastril. He tries to show off about his wealth and the fact that he would not marry his sister to a lower ranking man than a knight. He keeps asking for praise about how well he quarrelled or how well he had learned to smoke tobacco. Ananias too is a vain fellow, as is clear from the way he regards Subtle as a heathen and evil man and believes himself to be a pious and saintly person though in actual fact he is as dishonest and hypocritical as Subtle is.

### Characterization

Jonson's wide and penetrating observation of manners, whether of city or of court, is one of his obvious merits, as is his ingenious and systematic construction of plots. But the great excellence of both his tragedies and his comedies is their description of character. Each person is awarded the illustration of one trait or humour, to exaggerate his satire into farce. Jonson makes an over-use of the long monologue after the fashion of the classical models or the English drama, because of its clearness, its richness of humour, and its dramatic honesty. He is at his best in that type of comedy in which everything else comes second to the dramatic unfolding of character.

Jonson gifted each of his characters with some particular quirk or mannerism, some ridiculous exaggeration of manner, speech, or dress; and he pushed forward this single odd trait to such an extent that all others might be lost sight of. In *The Alchemist* most of the characters are under the influence of avarice or greed which therefore constitutes the humour of each one of them.

### Difference between Jonson's Method and Shakespeare's Method

The fixed, narrow limits of Jonson's characterization, were very different to the practice of contemporary dramatists who gave their characters full play, developing them spaciouly and endowing them with complexity and the faculty of growth. These other dramatists made oddity the characteristic only of their secondary characters. Jonson bestows humours on all his characters and especially on the principal characters. Even where Shakespeare shows a character under the influence of a master passion he does so in a different way from Jonson's. Shakespeare studies the master passion of jealousy in his *Othello*, but he does so with much more surprise, variety, and free play

of life than does Jonson in his study of the master passion of greed in *The Alchemist*. Jonson exhibits one character after another as a logician presents the various parts of his argument. In other words, he always, or nearly always, lets us see the machinery. However, what he loses in spontaneity, he gains in intellectual unity and in massiveness of purpose.

### Characters as Caricatures

Jonson was, deceiving himself when he thought that he had depicted real men in his plays. He noticed only obvious individual peculiarities or the violent actions of exceptional persons. He showed an almost total disregard of fundamental feelings common to mankind, and his ignorance of love. He thus never got near to nature in the classical meaning of the word. To find in his plays a character who is merely a man or a woman is almost impossible. In his later comedies, Jonson's satirical attitude becomes stronger. Several characters in these plays are caricatures. The portraits exaggerate the odd behaviour and extravagance of the characters depicted. Shakespeare's characters are more complex, and their motives are more varied so that they are capable of surprising us. They are, in this sense, more like real people, Jonson's characters, on the other hand, are not portraits but caricatures. They are simplified and exaggerated, but just for this reason they are clearly recognizable and alienated from our sympathy. For instance, we feel little sympathy for the characters in *The Alchemist* because we know from the start that they are not human. The characters in this play are both super-human and sub-human. They are superhuman in the extent and intensity of their passion, and they are sub-human in their singleness and limitation, and in the absence of any redeeming qualities.

Almost all the characters in *The Alchemist* are possessed by one and the same humour, which is an obsessive desire for money, though individual characters have certain other humours or interest also.

Mammon, for instance, would like to use his money to gratify his unlimited sexual desire. Furthermore, Mammon is distinguished from the other characters by his generosity of mind. He would like to dispense the elixir as a medicine freely to those who are suffering from any diseases. In fact, he would search various areas for those suffering from various diseases would cure them with the elixir. He also speaks of establishing hospitals and other institutions of public welfare. Thus in his case money is not an end in itself but a means to other ends. He is also distinguished from the other characters by his falling in love with Dol whom he thinks to be a lord's sister, subject to fits of madness. He becomes poetic in her company and pays glowing compliments to her beauty and charms. He is further distinguished from the other characters by the learned manner in which he talks about the wonders which the philosopher's stone can work. He cites several classical myths in support of his argument. According to him, all these myths are allegorical accounts of the miracles which were worked by the philosopher's stone. The

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Anabaptists want money as a means to power. The ambitions of Drugger are even humbler to start with than those of Dapper. He simply wants more customers at his tobacco-shop. He aims at ensuring a thriving trade, though a cure for the worms which afflict him would also be welcome. But within the same day his imagination moves to an ambition not previously entertained. Why should he not marry his neighbour, the wealthy Dame Pliant, and so attain a lifestyle surpassing that of any mere tobacconist, however successful? This pattern of cunningly enlarged aspiration, developed initially with Dapper and Drugger, repeats itself with all except one of Subtle's other customers.

Subtle, Face, and Dol are distinguished from the dupes by their skill, ingenuity, wit, and freedom from illusion, though they too are driven by the same desire for wealth. They share also the common view that the ends are important, not the means. They have a business agreement to cheat outsiders, but this does not prevent them from cheating one another. The two chief conspirators, Subtle and Face, are also clearly differentiated from each other. Subtle is the (bogus) alchemist, while Face is only 'Lungs'. Subtle stays at home, conducting the alchemical experiment, while Face roams abroad in order to rope in customers. Besides, Face serves as a propagandist for Subtle. It would not look proper for Subtle to praise himself, and therefore Face performs the duty of describing to the customers the wonders which Subtle can perform. Eventually, Face shows himself to be smarter than Subtle. Subtle had decided to deprive Face of the latter's share of the booty, but it is Face who deprives both Subtle and Dol of their share. In fact, Face manipulates the whole situation in such a way that Subtle and Dol have to flee from the house in the greatest possible hurry in order to escape police action against them.

Kastril is clearly distinguishable from all the other characters. He is a rustic gentleman, a gentleman who has newly come to London. He is hardly twenty one. He has full control over his widowed sister. He is a man of some fifteen hundred pounds a year. He has come to London in order to learn how to quarrel and how to live by his wits. He has already started smoking tobacco, and he would now like to receive lessons in quarrelling from Subtle. Although he is not governed by a passion for money, he does desire status. He is not crazy after money as he is well provided for. All that he now aims at is sophistication and his sister's marriage to a knight.

Surly too is clearly distinguishable from the other characters. In the beginning he is described as a gamester, which perhaps implies that he is a gambler. However, we find him to be a very sensible and rational kind of man. He is intelligent enough not to believe in alchemy or in the philosopher's stone. He is given an opportunity to seduce Dame Pliant, but he shows himself to be too respectable to do any such evil deed. He reveals his real identity to Dame Pliant to whom he then proposes marriage. Eventually, even he is cheated of his hope of marrying the widow. We feel sorry for him because the one man who really deserved a reward has been deprived of it.

One limitation of *The Alchemist* as a comedy of humours is the lack of development in the characters. The characters remain the same from beginning to end.

Ben Jonson:  
*The Alchemist*

### Check Your Progress

3. What is the plot of *The Alchemist*?
4. Who is Dapper?

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## 13.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Benson's play *Cynthia's Revels* was produced by the Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars Theatre in 1600.
2. The two tragedies written by Jonson are *Sejanus* and *Catiline*.
3. *The Alchemist* tells the story of how a trio of cheats practices fraud on a number of trusting people who are easily taken in the false promises and assurances made by the cheats.
4. Dapper is a lawyer's clerk who wants that the alchemist should provide him with a familiar or an attendant spirit who might enable him to win money at horse-races, at card-parties, and at dice-parties.

## 13.6 SUMMARY

- Ben Jonson (11 June 1572 – 6 August 1637), was a Jacobean (or Elizabethan) playwright, poet and critic.
- Jonson is best known for the satirical plays *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), *Volpone, or The Foxe* (1605), *The Alchemist* (1610), and *Bartholomew Fair: A Comedy* (1614) and also for his poems and masques.
- Jonson is considered to be the next best English dramatist, after William Shakespeare, of the Elizabethan era.
- Jonson's play *Cynthia's Revels* was produced by the Children of the Chapel Royal at Blackfriars Theatre in 1600.
- The Elizabethan era is the period associated with Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1558–1603) and is often considered to be the golden age in history of English Literature and art. It is considered to be the height of the English Renaissance.
- Elizabethan theatre derived from several medieval theatre traditions, such as the Mystery plays, based on biblical themes, that formed a part of religious festivals in England and other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages.

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- Elizabethan theatre did not make use of lavish scenery, instead left the stage largely bare, with a few key props. The main visual appeal on stage was costumes. The stage was primarily bare so the backdrop of the play was left for the audience to imagine.
- If the Royalists promoted literature and theatre, then there was a faction in England called the Puritans who had a strong dislike for theatre.
- What is significant in the works of Jonson is not only the realistic element, but also the notion of humour which had a significant role to play in his comedies.
- *The Alchemist* tells the story of how a trio of cheats practices fraud on a number of trusting people who are easily taken in the false promises and assurances made by the cheats. The play is, in fact, a satire on greed, hoarding, and sensuality.
- In the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, Jonson had written that the aim of his comedy was to 'sport with human follies, not with crimes'. It was his object to expose human follies to laughter and, by this means, to rid people of those follies.
- Comedy leads an audience to try to shed their follies and absurdities by making them laugh at those follies and absurdities. These observations are certainly valid to a large extent in the case of *The Alchemist*.
- Jonson is using the particular subject of alchemy in this play *The Alchemist* as the means to another end. Jonson saw himself as a social critic whose business it was to strip the 'ragged follies' of the time naked as at their birth.
- At the time *The Alchemist* play was written, London had become increasingly a place where individuals made money in order to cut a figure and in order to obtain influence and so make more money.
- *The Alchemist* gives us an insight into human nature in general. This play is concerned fundamentally with the nature of man.
- Jonson makes an over-use of the long monologue after the fashion of the classical models or the English drama, because of its clearness, its richness of humour, and its dramatic honesty.
- Jonson was, deceiving himself when he thought that he had depicted real men in his plays. He noticed only obvious individual peculiarities or the violent actions of exceptional persons.
- Jonson showed an almost total disregard of fundamental feelings common to mankind, and his ignorance of love. He thus never got near to nature in the classical meaning of the word.
- One limitation of *The Alchemist* as a comedy of humours is the lack of development in the characters. The characters remain the same from beginning to end.



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## 13.7 KEY WORDS

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- **Avarice:** It refers to extreme greed for wealth or material gain.
- **Alchemy:** It refers to medieval forerunner of chemistry, concerned with the transmutation of matter, in particular with attempts to convert base metals into gold or find a universal elixir.
- **Gullibility:** It is a failure of social intelligence in which a person is easily tricked or manipulated into an ill-advised course of action.
- **Credulity:** It is a tendency to be too ready to believe that something is real or true.

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## 13.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life and works of Ben Jonson.
2. Give a historical background of Elizabethan era.
3. Who is Drugger? What was his profession?
4. How is *The Alchemist* a play about possession?
5. Write a note on characters as caricatures in Jonson's play.

### Long Answer Questions

1. Give detailed character sketches of major characters in *The Alchemist*.
2. Discuss any two important passages from the play *The Alchemist*.
3. Assess Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* as a moralist comedy.
4. What is the difference between Jonson's method and Shakespeare's method?

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## 13.9 FURTHER READINGS

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- Pope, D.W.G. 2013. *Adventures Into the Past: Elizabethan Era*. Indiana: Xlibris Corporation.
- Forgeng, Jeffrey L. 2009. *Daily Life in Elizabethan England, 2nd Edition*. Greenwood: ABC-CLIO.
- Jonson, Ben. 2012. *Volpone and The Alchemist: Dover Thrift Editions*. North Chelmsford, Massachusetts: Courier Corporation.

## NOTES

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# UNIT 14 THOMAS DEKKER: *THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY*

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## Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 About the Author
- 14.3 Critical Appreciation of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*
  - 14.3.1 Structure of the Play
- 14.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 14.5 Summary
- 14.6 Key Words
- 14.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 14.8 Further Readings

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## 14.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, you will study about the life and works of Thomas Dekker. The unit further provides a critical analysis of Dekker's play *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.

Thomas Dekker (c. 1572 – 25 August 1632) was an English Elizabethan dramatist and pamphleteer, a versatile and prolific writer, whose career spanned several decades and brought him into contact with many of the period's most famous dramatists.

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## 14.1 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Thomas Dekker
- Describe the structure of Dekker's play *The Shoemaker's Holiday*
- Critically analyse the play *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

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## 14.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Thomas Dekker was an Englishman. It is believed that he was probably of Dutch origin. But all of his plays carry with them the spirit of the English life. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is definitely one of those special plays which shows the easy interesting blend of history and ordinary life of London. The plot revolves around noble men, artisans, young lovers, merchants and even introduces a king. The way Thomas Dekker has dealt with the plot made the play extremely successful when it was performed during his period. The drama manages to hit

the right chord among the people because of the patriotic flavour it served. This specific play was performed by Lord Admiral's Men as a counter narrative to the history plays that were performed by Lord Chamberlain's Men (a company that relied on the writings of William Shakespeare). The inspiration for Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a story *The Gentle Craft* (1597- 1598). This story was written by Thomas Deloney.

Thomas Dekker: *The Shoemaker's Holiday*

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### 14.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *THE SHOEMAKER'S HOLIDAY*

The first performance of the play took place in the court of Queen Elizabeth. It was a period when London was experiencing a transition especially in the state of theatre. People were slowly rejecting the romantic style of work that were composed by the predecessors like Robert Greene, John Lyly et al. For the contemporary audience this kind of play now appeared superficial as well as escapist in nature. But it was also a time, which was yet to experience the realistic comedies of Ben Jonson or even the dark plays of William Shakespeare. As a document of history, and then embodiment of the spirit of London, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a fantastic piece of literature that highlights the nuances of the transitional period of which it was a representative work.

Thomas Dekker in this play blends in an appropriate amount of realism as well as romanticism. This also is a highlighting feature of the play because both of the genre is appropriately assimilated in the play. For the contemporary theatre lovers, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* where's the best romantic comedy they could have asked for. Yet the undercurrent of realism that the audience witnessed through the play also marked a significant aspect of translation that the theatre was going to experience in a few years' time. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is brims with a tone of exuberance. This is probably an indication that the youthful nature of the playwright gets translated into him text despite the grim reality that he was projecting to the work. Many critics believe that even though enjoyed a long life and also composed many other dramas, but this was his best. Thomas Dekker, is believed to have collaborated in creating more than 30 plays during his lifetime. But his life was not very disciplined, records suggest that he frequented the prison because he was forever in debt.

The realistic note in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is most explicit in the street scenes as well as when the Shoemakers appear on the stage. It is also an indication of the kind of impact, Dekker leaves on stage despite his young age. Is it taking a cue from this work, the playwright continued experimenting with realism in theatre; and the honest whore (1604 - 1605) is the best example of realism that the playwright created for his audience.

Like it has been already mentioned Thomas Dekker in his play uses two different elements. In a logical scenario this kind of contradictory elements being placed together in a work of art is expected to bring in conflict of aesthetics. But

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credit goes to, Dekker for building a seamlessly woven story whose magic is still pronounced. The first element that is apparent in the play is a dose of good humour. It speaks about enjoying life without worrying about the pleasure it has to offer without hesitation. The other element is the introduction of suffering and pain that human life undergoes especially on their journey to death; Thomas Dekker had managed to put in this aspect of every life without romanticizing or glorifying it. An integral idea that Thomas Dekker has used as a base to project these different elements into the play is by using the idea that light is used for highlighting the prominence of darkness. But the play per se is not a collage of diverse elements put together. The idea that stitched together with the empathetic perspective that the playwright has to offer. This is why one does not find it difficult to view a comedy situation alongside and an extremely serious court case of the period.

Some of the best prose pieces composed by Dekker give an insight into his literary inspiration. The details of debtors' prison can be found in *Lanthorne and Candle-light* as well as *Dekker his Dreame*. On the other hand, *The Wonderfull Yeare*, provides a deep insight into the plague that troubled London city (this is also a book that influenced Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*). And then we have *The Guls Hornebooke*; this book provided a satirical perspective to the people who were used to the comedy of manners. Thomas Dekker and his work are identified by the sympathetic outlook and an inherent desire to understand the situation without being judgmental about them. It is believed that his own troubled life smeared with poverty, frequent visit to prison, imprisonment etc. would have been the reason for him expressing himself in such sweet manner.

Even as we analyse the later works of Thomas Dekker we can clearly see that compassion is an element which is forever apparent in his work. For example, if we consider *The Witch of Edmonton* (a dark play) which is based on the trial system of the contemporary times, we see that Mother Sawyer who is a convicted witch (like many other women) turns out to be a rebel by the end of the play. Jeffrey Burton Russel in *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (1972) says, "Witchcraft was . . . the strongest possible religious expression of social discontent". Through Mother Sawyer and her rebellion against a community which was both stupid and cruel, Thomas Dekker along with his team brings in compassion for the poor lady, an emotion that would not have been considered appropriate to be associated with someone who has been branded as witch in the contemporary times. Yet the sense of sympathy is fundamentally very Thomas Dekker. Going back to the play, the rebellion actually ends up complicating the matter further by arousing the suspicion Mother Sawyer's neighbour, gaining her more hatred from the community and finally leading to her own degeneration of physical and mental health. Mother Sawyer's shattered dreams are an obvious revelation that did not hesitate to bring out the actual circumstances that result in doing in the lives of people and criticizing the society which plays a significant role in making this happen.

Even though Thomas Dekker and his criticism of the society is extremely obvious in almost all of his works, in an ironical situation *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is many a times criticized for being one of the 'happy' dramas about London city and is considered to be nothing more than that. It is identified as a city comedy or a citizen comedy which meant please the audience. But nurturing this kind of view about the play is only an incomplete understanding of the work. Moreover, one cannot ignore that, that the people who went to attend theatre in London city were better educated and reflected better sense of understanding.

Without a doubt, one can identify elements of citizen comedy in the play *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. How can one not find some? After all the play is about Rowland Lacy, the Aristocrat, Rowland Lacy, who disguises himself as a shoe maker with the purpose of marrying a girl who belong to the middle class. But seen from this perspective one might have to dismiss the *Merry Wives of Windsor* as nothing more than a story that talks about gratification of the middle class and their taste. After all, both *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Shoemaker's Holiday* share a number of similarities including the reference to *Henry V*.

Thomas Dekker in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* makes changes and addition to the original plot that he had borrowed to not make his composition only a simple entertaining text but also the critique of the contemporary society. Close reading of Deloney's *The Gentle Craft*, will suggest that he was hostile towards the immigrants and this was the common impression that most of the Londoners carried. One could witness protestant Refugees across the London city who were posing a serious threat to the local population especially in terms of job achievement. On the other hand, the Dutch people were already challenging the commercial aspect of England's economy. In the play by Deloney the hatred for the 'outsiders' finally come to an end when the foreigners and their deceitfulness are exposed while the English people and their virtue triumphs. The xenophobia is replaced with the protestant fraternity.

Despite all the comical moments that Thomas Dekker provides in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* he also makes an appeal to treat the refugees as humans. You also are used for a political Alliance that would bring protestants together with the European Catholic forces, an idea that was close to the heart of the Earl of Essex. Despite his good intentions, Thomas Dekker at no point of time turn into a fanatic. He does not turn into someone who has the power to dictate that one group is superior than the other and has the power to accomplish whatever they wish at any cost.

In the days of Thomas Dekker, it was believed that citizen comedies and nothing more than near entertainment. But the playwright gives citizen comedy an distinguished dimension by decorating it with values of humaness that is reflected in his characters; even though the play is about reality and Aristocrats yet he saves the common man from suffering in the world and that suggests that the world is a good place to live as long as one could manifest human sympathy and treat everyone with compassion and love.

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Thomas Dekker in his *The Shoemaker's Holiday* brings in some interesting subplots which make it different as well as better than the original. The two major subplots that are included in the drama are romantic in nature and deal with the idea of love that is lost and then again it is found. The first subplot is about Ralph Dampport, who is the journeyman of Eyre. He is conscripted into the Army and Sony leaves for France to fight for England in the war. Upon his returning from the war, you figured out that his wife Jane has left him (as she thinks he is dead) and leaves in a different section of London. He or she is being courted by another gentleman called Hammon. In the next subplot we have the rich and Aristocrat Roland Lacy disguising himself as a Shoemaker of the Dutch descent so that he does not have to go to the war and Ken romance with Roland Lacy (a beautiful lady whose father disapproves of). Thomas Dekker in the dedicatory epistle mentions the play is "a merry conceited comedy" where "nothing is proposed but mirth". But we all know that beneath this surface of comedy lies a series of insightful information about London. The social, economic as well as political London that is mentioned in the play is that of 1598 - 1600, the period during which the play was written as well as produced. One of the most important aspect that the drama highlights is the rise of capitalism. This is reflected through Eyre's dramatic elevation in the social position where he becomes Lord Mayor and his personal wealth makes him the part of upwardly mobile middle class of England.

The middle class at that point was the most fertile section of the society who had the financial opportunities to explore and had the scope to expand themselves socially. As we read the text we realize that most of the major characters in the play are engaged in buying and selling of product. Eyre as we know makes his fortune by bringing lots of foreign products and selling it in London at a higher cost; thus, bringing him enormous profit. To be with Rose, Lacy keeps bribing people so that he can buy time to be with his lady. Hammon, on the other hand, tries to buy Jane from Ralph and the money offered was gold worth £20. Along with capitalism and other important aspect that is highlighted in the play is the development of guilds. We can see the establishment of early trade unions each set under the backdrop of similar mother tongue, group identity or mythology or patron saint. The language used in the Play simply highlights the intense knowledge that Thomas Dekker possessed of the working-class community in London. Letters for example look at the sentence: "Hark you, shoemaker," Firk asks Lacy, 'have you all your tools? A good rubbing-pin, a good stopper, a good dresser, your four sorts of awls, and your two balls of wax, your paring knife, your hand and thumb-leathers, and good Saint Hugh's bones to smooth your work?' the world that Thomas Dekker is portraying here is a place where everyone is proud of his or her work. And they take unexpected pride in accomplishing whatever they are good at. For instance, we get to hear: "This shoe, I durst be sworn, / Once covered the instep of my Jane. / This is her size, her breadth. Thus, trod my love. / These true-love knots I pricked. I hold my life, / By this old shoe



I shall find out my wife”. Another hallmark of *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* is the inclusion of rich and exotic language, which appears most prominently in Eyre’s vocabulary which is extremely imaginative alliterative as well as rhetorical. We also have the pseudo - Dutch language that Lacy uses; we get to hear the courtly and fashionable discourse that Hammon reliance upon while Firk keeps talking about obscenities as well as erotic possibilities with the usage of words like tongue, tightness etc.

By understanding the size and breadth of the feet of Jane, Ralph actually manage to map the size of her soul and not just her feet. The Cinderella motif which appears in the play through the comfortable footwear episode ends with a perfect fit expect to be successful. This is how Jane finally decides to reject Hammon, who does not reflect the similar standards of morality and ethical behaviour that Ralph as well as the shoemaker’s brotherhood who belong to the Shoemaker guild display. The play tightly focuses on the commercialism and the emergence of industrial guild. This is precisely why the play take place another place but in London; a place that give the opportunity to explore the real life as well as provide beautiful scenic background to the characters as well as to the events that appear in the. When Eyre and his group move around landscapes people get to witness the popular places like St. Paul’s Church, Leaden Hall, Watling Street, the Guildhall, Tower Street and many search similar locations. Inclusion of such popular places was a smart strategy because the audience immediately manage to identify with the location. To the audience who belong to the city of London the play felt more at home because of the setting it took recourse to. The urban setting that the play demonstrates makes *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* one of the precursor to the popular and influential literary genre, Jacobean City comedy.

A play that has the word ‘holiday’ in the title will indeed speak something about ‘holiday’ aspect. We get to witness how three different plots “ move from Union to wondering to joyful reunion at the conclusion”.

We also come across a few scapegoat kinds of characters who display mean-spirited antagonism. This is also something which is exploited to the best extent to provide comic relief. We see characters wearing rich and fine clothing which indicate their social as well as financial effluence. But the most interesting aspect probably would be the amoral nature of the setting in which the play is set up. But a final analysis will also say that *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* not just talks about the contemporary London but also gives any insight into the person who wrote the drama. Thomas Dekker was a very popular playwright of the period but unfortunately you were not a rich man. Unlike William Shakespeare, who was financially better off being a shareholder in his own theatrical company Thomas Dekker remained a playwright who moved on from one job to another, from one company to another as and when his services were required. It might come as a surprise to many modern readers that Thomas Dekker earned merely £3 for his work. *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* at the end of the day is a compelling piece of social propaganda.

Thomas Dekker: *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*

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### Characters

**The king of England:** Plays a very minor role in the play. he appears only at the end of the action and he is expected to pardon the faithful lovers. He rewards those who actually deserve honour and takes the chance to spread his wisdom as well as his mercy across the kingdom.

**Sir Hugh Lacy:** He is identified as the Earl of Lincoln. he is a member of the aristocracy. he also happens to be the uncle of Roland Lacy. he disapproves of the marriage between Roland and Rose. The grounds of his disapproval revolved around class hierarchy. He goes to any length to stop the marriage. That is why he has his nephew sent into the army which was set to leave for a war in France.

**Roland Lacy:** He is the nephew of Sir Hugh Lacy. he was in love with Rose. He pretends to leave with the army but returns with a disguise as Hans Meulter, a Dutch shoemaker. This gives him an opportunity to court her. Soon Roland and Rose triumph over all the obstacles and finally marry each other and help unite the two classes.

**Askew:** He is cousin of Roland Lacy. he is also part of the army. After Roland decides to leave the army and disguise himself and stay in England, he falls upon Askew for help.

**Dodger:** A servant who worked for Sir Hugh Lacy.

**Sir Roger Oatley:** He is identified as the lord mayor of London for most part of the play . During the play he loses his position to Simon Eyre as he becomes rich and powerful through his business. Roger Oatley is Rose's father who initially only mildly objects to her marriage to Roland. But within his heart he secretly hoped for the marriage to materialize so that he can have access to a higher section of the society. But when Rose proposes to tie the knot with Roland who is then disguised as Hans, Sir Roger is disappointed and vehemently raises objection. It is for the same reason that Sir Hugh Lacy had raised his dissatisfaction - the class issues. But neither Sir Hugh nor Sir Roger could stop the marriage in the end.

**Rose Oatley:** She is the daughter of Sir Roger Oatley. Rose is extremely in love with Roland. By the end of the play she and Roland are married. This brings in joys for the working class while earns the blessing of the king.

**Sybil:** maid of Rose.

**Hammon:** A gentleman from London. while hunting he accidentally meets Jane and instantly fell in love with her. He and Jane both develop a belief that her husband, Ralph, might have succumb to the war. That is why they plan to wed. But Ralph (who was still alive) returns from France at the nick of the time to stop the wedding materialize.

**Warner:** He is Hammon's brother-in-law. he is as good as Hammon in most things, which his love for him. After meeting Sybil, the maid of Rose, he falls in love.

**Scott:** Sir Roger Oatley's friend.

**Simon Eyre:** A middle-class shoemaker who is happy by nature as well as lucky by fortune. Unexpectedly (one can give credit to the exceptional luck) he rises in the social ladder to the position of lord mayor of London.

**Margary Eyre:** She is wife of Simon Eyre. She is made to be the butt of many lower-class joke. Most of these jokes she rightly deserves because of her pretentiousness that arises from her ego as she rises in her status from being the wife of an ordinary shoemaker to the wife of the lord mayor.

**Roger:** He is nicknamed as Hodge. he happens to be the foreman in Eyre's cobbler shop.

**Ralph Dampont:** He is a journeyman in Eyre's cobbler shop. He is made to go to war; despite the fact that he was recently married to Jane. War leaves him wounded. He returns to London at the right time to get informed that his wife (who presumes him to be dead) is all set to marry Hammon. Asking his fellow workers to help, he manages to stop the marriage; thus, showing the spirit as well as the strength of the tradesmen.

**Jane:** She is Ralph's wife. She has a very much middle-class upbringing. She happens to be a loving wife. She turns her attention to Hammon only after she is absolutely confirmed that her husband is no more.

**Firk:** A journeyman who works in Simon Eyre's cobbler shop.

#### 14.3.1 Structure of the Play

The structure of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is extremely interesting. Thomas Dekker display as his mastery in the art of construction of structure. The subplots in the play are inter woven skillfully and harmoniously. The romantic young man Rowland and the young shoemaker Ralph are not the heroes of the play as one would assume. Instead, we find that Simon Eyre is the real hero of the play. It is obvious that the merry Shoemaker helps stitch both the subplots in the play. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* has been often identified as the citizen play and as the romance of the working class this is because of the way Thomas Dekker decides to project the Shoemaker. He looks at the ordinary people from a very different perspective which has no resemblance to the way his contemporary writers were portraying the common man. Most of the writer of the period look down upon the common people and always use them as object of ridicule. They are supposed to be fickle minded who did not have the power to take proper judgement and were often described as irrational. This is a very typical description of a common man which one can find in many Elizabethan plays. On the other hand, Thomas Dekker, decided to give a very faithful depiction of the artisans - the Shoemakers - about whom he was writing. He does not make them the object of ridicule neither tries to highlight their loopholes; instead he decides to highlight their talent and exceptional qualities. But of course, keeping the comic vein intact he

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does make fun of the pretentious as well as the boastful life they live. But he balances it by showcasing some of the enduring qualities. Thomas Dekker suggests that the shoemakers are hardworking people and they do not like to live on charity instead they would prefer to earn their own bread through hard work and honest work. The shoemaker's always carry with them a sense of professional dignity. They are always truthful, and they never cheat on anyone. And just like people of other profession they are happy and cheerful people who love to have fun and enjoy your holiday. They like to live the in their own way following their own philosophy.

As a play *The Shoemaker's Holiday* mirrors the feelings that people nurtured about the trading plan during the Elizabethan age. The traders were expected to be hopelessly materialistic while being devoid of any kind of self-respect who could do anything for the sake of money. Just like the men the women were also supposed to be of frivolous nature who could do anything for the sake of pleasure. Thomas Dekker takes the realistic view of the class that he is writing about in his work. He believed that since the trader class enjoyed material prosperity that brought with it a natural environment which help in creating an atmosphere of goodwill and celebration. The play as it is probably being not responsible for exercising the eternal charm, showcases the abundance of joy of life that is reflected in Elizabethan London life. The play makes display much more interesting. In a very smart and compelling way the play says what most of the literature of the period failed to say that dignity of labour is same for everybody and everyone has a right to rise in the social ladder. One of the most prominent features of Elizabethan comedy is the appearance of relatable characters through people as well as the scenes in which they appear. Thomas Dekker who is considered to be a realistic in the same way as Ben Johnson, in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* tries to write a realistic comedy. It provides a very true and faithful picture of the citizens of London. In fact, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a valuable contribution to the genre of domestic comedy beach throws light on the everyday life of the common people who worked on the margins of the London. Many critics consider Thomas Dekker to be somewhat similar to Charles Dickens in his depiction of the everyday ordinariness of the people.

### Check Your Progress

1. What was the inspiration for Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*?
2. Where did the first performance of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* take place?
3. State the realistic notes in Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.

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## 14.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. The inspiration for Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a story *The Gentle Craft* (1597- 1598). This story was written by Thomas Deloney.
2. The first performance of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* took place in the court of Queen Elizabeth.
3. The realistic note in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is most explicit in the street scenes as well as when the Shoemakers appear on the stage.

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## 14.5 SUMMARY

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- Thomas Dekker was an Englishman. It is believed that he was probably of Dutch origin. But all of his plays carry with them the spirit of the English life.
- The way Thomas Dekker has dealt with the plot made the play extremely successful when it was performed during his period.
- The inspiration for Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a story *The Gentle Craft* (1597- 1598). This story was written by Thomas Deloney.
- The first performance of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* took place in the court of Queen Elizabeth. It was a period when London was experiencing a transition especially in the state of theatre.
- The *Shoemaker's Holiday* is a fantastic piece of literature that highlights the nuances of the transitional period of which it was a representative work.
- Thomas Dekker in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* blends in an appropriate amount of realism as well as romanticism.
- The realistic note in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is most explicit in the street scenes as well as when the Shoemakers appear on the stage.
- Even as we analyse the later works of Thomas Dekker we can clearly see that compassion is an element which is forever apparent in his work.
- Even though Thomas Dekker and his criticism of the society is extremely obvious in almost all of his works, in an ironical situation *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is many a times criticized for being one of the 'happy' dramas about London city and is considered to be nothing more than that.
- Thomas Dekker in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* makes changes and addition to the original plot that he had borrowed to not make his composition only a simple entertaining text but also the critique of the contemporary society.
- *The Shoemaker's Holiday* not just talks about the contemporary London but also gives any insight into the person who wrote the drama.

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- The structure of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is extremely interesting. Thomas Dekker display as his mastery in the art of construction of structure. That to subplots in the play are inter woven skillfully and harmoniously.
- As a play *The Shoemaker's Holiday* mirrors the feelings that people nurtured about the trading plan during the Elizabethan age.
- Many critics consider Thomas Dekker to be somewhat similar to Charles Dickens in his depiction of the everyday ordinariness of the people.

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### 14.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Drama:** It is a play for theatre, radio, or television.
- **Alliteration:** It refers to the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.
- **Romanticism:** It refers to a movement in the arts and literature which originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual.

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### 14.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Thomas Dekker.
2. Give a brief background of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.
3. Discuss the structure of the play *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.

#### Long Answer Question

1. Give a detailed analysis of Thomas Dekker's play *The Shoemaker's Holiday*.
2. Describe the major characters in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and mention their role.

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### 14.8 FURTHER READINGS

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