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RESTORATION LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

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The restoration period in England refers to the period of English history when the monarchies of England, Scotland and Irish were restored following the English Civil War. Charles II, of the House of Stuart, was the restored monarch of the period. The period describes the actual event of the restoration as well as the period of several years afterwards in which a new political settlement was established. The literature of this period is known as restoration literature.

Restoration literature denotes the homogeneous styles of literature that centres on a celebration of or reaction to the restored court of Charles II. The works of this literature includes extremes such as comedies full of sexual innuendo, as well as works that attempt to impart moral wisdom such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The most emblematic works of the period are the restoration comedies, also known the comedy of manners. Some of the major works of the comedy of manners include Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, Etherege's *The Man of Mod*e, and Congreve's *Love For Love*.

This book has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the Introduction followed by the Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. The Summary and Key Words further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

BLOCK - I

POETRY I

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UNIT 1 RESTORATION PERIOD

Structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Restoration period covers the reign of Charles II (1660–1685) and the brief reign of his younger brother James II (1685–1688). The year 1660 marks the beginning of the Restoration period in England when Charles II (the exiled Stuart king), son of executed King Charles I, was restored to the throne of England, after a period of exile during the English Civil War. With crowning of Charles II, monarchy was restored in England after the Interregnum, also called the Protectorate or the Commonwealth. The nation wearied by the strict rule of Oliver Cromwell, welcomed the Restoration of the Stuarts.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the religious and political condition during the Restoration Period
- Explain the social conditions existing in the Restoration society
- Examine the salient features of the literature produced during the Restoration Period

1.2 RESTORATION PERIOD: RELIGION, POLITICS AND CLASS

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The term 'Restoration' is not only used to describe the event by which the monarchy was restored to England but also the period from 1660 to 1700 that witnessed an era of new political, socio-cultural and literary movements. The return of monarchy was accompanied by various changes in the country. With the collapse of the Puritan government everything that had been long suppressed was expressed without restraint. As critic Hudson puts it, 'The Stuart Restoration was followed by an immense change in the general temper of the English people. A sweeping reaction against Puritanism and everything that it had stood for set in; and this reaction went so far that together with the galling restraints which religious fanaticism had unwisely imposed, moderation and decency were too often cast aside. England now touched low-water mark in its social The court of Charles II, was the most shameless this country has ever known; infidelity and profligacy became fashionable; the moral ideals of Puritanism were turned into jest, and those who still upheld the cause of domestic virtue laughed at as hypocrites or denounced as sour sectaries. Even outside the narrow circle of court and aristocracy, where things were at their worst, the spirit of corruption spread far and wide, and while piety and goodness were of course cherished among individuals, the general lowering of the moral tone was everywhere apparent.'

The return of monarchy was marked by a violent reaction against the Puritan manners and morals. There was an intense reaction against the stern morality of the Puritans. Charles II was himself dissolute and selfish and surrounded his court with men and women who rivalled in these qualities. A court was organized in which preferment and positions were distributed as the king desired. Licentiousness gained the upper hand. Morality was on the wane. Commonwealth insisted on gravity and decorum, Restoration encouraged activities that were immoral and indecent. Individuality was discouraged and people were expected to follow the ideals of conduct set up in accordance with reason and common sense. All men were expected to adapt themselves. Rules of etiquette and social convention were established.

The French influence was predominant during the rule of Charles II because the king had spent a number of years in exile in the French court. Popularly known as the Cavaliers, the courtiers had returned from a period of exile in French court. They brought with them French wit, repartee, humour, refinement, style, fashion, manners, a hedonistic lifestyle to the court. The French influence spread from the court to the fashionable society of England. It left it strong marks on the manners and fashions of people, penetrating the mode of thinking and feeling, language, taste, culture, literature. The court of King Charles II championed the right of England's social elite to pursue pleasure and libertinism. The members of Charles's Court emphasized upon self-consciously neo-classical style in conversation,

theatrical staging, music, oil-portraiture and clothing. The restored monarchy inaugurated a new temper, and a cultural style which lasted. The king's friends came back from France with a more secular, sceptical and 'civilized' tone and neo-classical ideas.

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1.2.1 Political and Religious Condition

One of the most able and popular Stuart kings, Charles II wanted the freedom for the Crown from any kind of parliamentary control. The Crown was dependent on the Parliament for almost all its functions, specially its finances. He wanted to rule as independently as he could. Richard Green has written: 'He (Charles II) was too humorous a man to care for the pomp and show of power, and too good-natured a man to play the tyrant. But he believed as firmly as his father or his grandfather had believed in his right to a full possession of the older prerogatives of the Crown. He looked on Parliaments as they had looked on them with suspicion and jealousy. He clung as they had clung to the dream of a dispensing power over the execution of the laws. He regarded ecclesiastical affairs as lying within his own personal control, and viewed the interference of the two Houses with church matters as a sheer usurpation. Above all he detested the notion of ministerial responsibility to any but the King, or of a Parliamentary right to interfere in any way with the actual administration of public affairs.'

No sooner Charles II ascended the throne of England than he decided to dissolve the union of England, Ireland and Scotland. The king's refusal to recognize the union of three kingdoms was a part of his politics to favour the Catholics and free the Crown from parliament. In his decision, he was supported by public opinion in England. The Covenant was abolished in England and the existing Church system of Scotland was deprived of legal sanction. The Scotch bishops were restored to their spiritual pre-eminence and to their seats in Parliament. In Ireland, the dissolution of the Union brought back the bishops. The severance of the two kingdoms from England was a gain to the Royal authority.

In heart, Charles II was inclined to Catholicism. He had long ceased to be a Protestant. He encouraged conversions among his courtiers. His wish was to seek formal admission into the Roman Church and make England a Catholic nation. But the power was yet with the Presbyterians who played a major role in the Restoration. The Presbyterians exclusively possessed the magistracy and all local authority. The first ministry formed by Charles was a compromise between the Presbyterians, the most powerful party and their old opponents. Its most influential member was Sir Edward Hyde (Earl of Clarendon), the adviser of the King during his exile, who soon became Earl of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor. Along with the other members, divided in their religious and political inclinations, the ministry declared itself a Parliament, called the Convention Parliament. The first measure that the house undertook was the Bill of Indemnity and Oblivion which pardoned everyone involved in the troubles during Civil War and Interregnum except those who committed regicides. The ministry was in favour of no bloodshed, therefore,

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most of these regicides were also pardoned except a few who were directly involved in the trial and execution of Charles I.

The Conventional Parliament was replaced by the Cavalier Parliament in 1661. The Presbyterians, dominant in the Convention, remained a handful of fifty members. The Cavalier parliament ordered every member to receive the communion, and the League and Covenant to be solemnly burnt by the common hangman in Westminster Hall. The1642 Bishops Exclusion Act, which excluded the bishops from their seats in the House of Lords, was repealed. The bishops of the Church of England could resume their positions in the House of Lords.

Hyde, who was now the Earl of Clarendon and Lord Chancellor, and the most powerful member of the Cavalier Parliament, wanted that the power and prerogative of the Crown and the authority of the Church to be preserved but only by the free will and conviction of the Parliament. Clarendon wanted the Crown, the Church and the Parliament to work in union. The aim was to keep checks in the system of English Government through the Parliament and the Church. He considered them to be essential parts through which the power of the Crown was to be exercised. Clarendon wanted the Parliament to be the political representative and the Church to be the religious representative of the nation respectively. Therefore, the Cavalier Parliament passed the Corporation Act in 1661 to suppress the Presbyterians. The Corporation Act made it mandatory for all officers of incorporated municipalities to take communion according to the rites of the Church of England and to renounce Presbyterian covenant. They were also required to declaration that it was unlawful on any grounds to take up arms against the King. Such tests were regarded both insults to the religious sentiments and political convictions of the occupants. The Act of Uniformity was passes in 1662 which was a blow to the Puritans. The Commons came down heavily on the Nonconformists. It required all the ministers to use the Book of Common Prayer. On St. Bartholomew's Day, August the 24th, the last day allowed for compliance with its requirements, numerous English clergy, were driven from their parishes as Nonconformists. 'No such sweeping alteration in the religious aspect of the Church had ever been seen before.' It is accepted that England had never witnessed such a drastic religious change earlier. The rectors and vicars were some of the most learned and the most active of their order. With the Act of Uniformity and the expulsion of the Puritan clergy a new element came into play in the religious and political history of England, the element of Dissent and the influence of the Nonconformist churches. Charles II wanted to emancipate the Roman Catholics from their position of political inferiority. But, more importantly, he wanted to preserve his own independence. This he could do only with the support of the supporters of the Anglican Church, and the church was determined to tolerate no relaxation of the penal code against other Catholics. Therefore, Charles II submitted to Clarendon and the church.

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At a favourable moment, King Charles II revealed how his temper and aim differed from those of his Chancellor, the Earl of Clarendon. Charles did not want any civil war, simultaneously, he did not wish to risk his throne in securing the supremacy of the Church. His aim was to secure toleration for the Catholics and revive at the same time his prerogative of dispensing with the execution of laws. Therefore, Charles II at the close of 1662 broke from the policy of Clarendon and laid his plans for toleration before the Presbyterian party who were struggling against the Chancellor in the royal council. Those who saw it as a secret league between the Dissidents and the Catholics opposed the declaration. The Houses forced the king to withdraw his pledge of toleration. Instead, the House called for the banishment of all Catholic priests, and followed this up by a Conventicle Act of 1664. The Conventicle Act forbade the assembling of five or more persons for religious worship other than Anglican. The Act stated that all persons who met in greater number than five for any religious worship except that of the Common Prayer will be punished with fine, imprisonment, and transportation.

The era witnessed the system of religious repression inspite of the efforts of the king to bring religious toleration. To further suppress any digression from the Anglican Church, a Five Mile Act was implemented in 1665. The Five Mile Act forbade any nonconformist clergy to come within five miles of a city or corporate town where he had served as minister. As the main body of the Nonconformists belonged to the city and trading classes, the aim was keep them ignorant of any religious teachings. These clergymen, who had been driven out by the Act of Uniformity, were called on to take an oath that he held it unlawful under any pretext to take up arms against the King and that he would never try to alter the government in Church or State. But the motion to impose the oath of the Five Mile Act was rejected in the same session of the House. The fours acts, Corporation Act (1661), Act of Uniformity (1662), Conventicle Act (1664) and the Five Mile Act (1665) were commonly known as the Clarendon code.

Charles II was highly offended by open opposition which Clarendon offered to the king's scheme in Parliament. Clarendon was also hated by the Catholics and Dissenters, and other Non-conformists. In August, 1667, the Chancellor was dismissed from office, and driven to take refuge in France. The fall of Clarendon marked a new epoch in the history of the Restoration. The union between King, Church, and Parliament, on which their system had been based, was roughly dissolved. The king was now the most formidable opponent of the supremacy of Church.

In 1667, Charles II replaced Clarendon by the Cabal administration that did not consist of a single focused follower of the Anglican churchman. It was the beginning of the emergence of the present cabinet system. The name Cabal given to a committee of five ministers under Charles II, whose surnames happened to begin with C, A, B, A, and L (Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley and Lauderdale). The new ministry was mainly made up of that section of the original

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ministry of 1660 which then represented the Presbyterians, and which under Ashley's (later Earl of Shaftesbury) guidance had bent to purchase toleration even at the cost of increasing the prerogatives of the Crown. Its first work was the Triple Alliance.

In the opening of 1668, Sir William Temple was sent to Hague in 1668 and an alliance was concluded between England, Holland and Sweden. England once again re-entered the general stage of European politics. The new Ministry was also a declaration on the King's part that the executive power was no longer necessarily to act in harmonious co-operation with the Parliament. The King published his Declarations of Indulgence for Roman Catholics and Dissenters in 1672. The Non-conformists were released from prison, conventicles were reopened, and the Act of Uniformity was suspended. All this was done in open defiance of the known will of the two Houses. When Charles II again proposed to his counsellors a general toleration he did not find any support. Instead of toleration the ministers pressed for a union of Protestants. They were still in favour of toleration the benefits of which did not extend to Catholics. This went against the king's projects. Charles II was once again baffled. He had overthrown Clarendon with the hope and belief that the Non-conformists would support him in the general reversal of Clarendon's policy. But the King found it difficult to obtain a toleration for Catholics from his new ministers. These ministers were also resolute to bring about the union of Protestants which Charles considered a blow to his designs. Soon, there were conflicts in the original members of the Cabal administration, particularly Buckingham and Arlington, over King's Declaration for Indulgence, the financing of the Anglo-Dutch Wars, Britain's relationship with France and personal rivalries. The Cabal administration lost the trust abroad and the confidence of the House of Commons. The Cabal administration dwindled and Danby came into office who did not lose time in establishing his authority. Shaftesbury began to agitate against Charles and his brother James. He briefly returned to government in the Privy Council Ministry and formed a Country party, partisan group that would eventually become known as the Whigs.

The House of Commons resolved not give in to the demand of the King of Declaration of Indulgence. The Commons resolved that penal statutes in ecclesiastical matters cannot be suspended without the consent of Parliament. They withheld supplies for the war till the Declaration was withdrawn. The King yielded to the demands of the House. As soon as the king withdrew the Declaration, the Parliament passed the Test Act in 1673 through both Houses without opposition which made the position of the Roman Catholics worse than it was before the Declaration. The Test Act of 1673 required all holders of civil and military offices to take the sacrament in the Anglican Church and deny transubstantiation; those who refused (e.g., Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics) were not allowed to attend university or hold public office. Catholics, on the other hand, were wholly excluded from all share in the government of the State. The Act was fatal to the King's schemes. Arlington pressed Charles to yield. With this failure, the King

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gave up his objective to emancipate the Roman Catholics and pursued only the task of emancipating the Crown from parliamentary interference. Church and state continued to be closely intertwined.

The Popish plot of 1678 was a conspiracy that was conceived by Titus Oates and Israel Tonge. They spread the rumours that the Jesuits were conspiring to kill Charles II to replace him by his brother James in order to establish Roman Catholicism in England. Immediately, the plot compelled the King to dissolve Parliament. The public was alarmed and in frenzy. Shaftesbury fanned the panic by tales of a Papist rising in London and Irish revolt with a French army to back it. He retired to his house in the City to find security against a conspiracy which had been formed, he said, to cut his throat. The Plot was constructed against the Catholics at court namely the Queen, the Duke and Duchess of York, and their clergy, many of whom were Jesuits. The King, Charles II defended his wife and brother but he not save all the accused despite the fact that the plot was a lie. Many Jesuits went into hiding and many of them died either in jail or on the gallows. Oates was tried for perjury in 1685. Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of supporting false witnesses to the plot.

A new Parliament was at once summoned and its election took place in a tumult of national excitement. The process of parliamentary corruption now took a further step. Danby had begun the bribery of members. With the election of 1679 began on a large and systematic scale was the bribery or 'treating' of constituents. The new members were still for the most part Churchmen and country gentlemen, but they shared the Protestant sentiments and threat from a Catholic King. The new Council gave hope of a wise and patriotic government. In two remarkable acts of the new Parliament, English freedom made an advance. Firstly, the statute for the regulation of printing which was passed in 1679 and the Parliament had put an end to any attempt at re-establishing the censorship. Secondly, the Habeas Corpus Act gave security and protected the personal freedom of every Englishman. It was a protection against arbitrary imprisonment. Every prisoner committed for any crime save treason or felony was declared entitled to his writ even in the vacations of the courts, and heavy penalties were enforced on judges or jailers who refused him this right. Every person committed for felony or treason was entitled to be released on bail unless indicted at the next session of jail delivery after his commitment, and to be discharged if not indicted at the sessions which followed.

By virtue of his ecclesiastical powers the King ordered 'that all manner of penal laws on matters ecclesiastical against whatever sort of Nonconformists or recusants should be from that day suspended,' and gave liberty of public worship to all dissidents save Catholics who were allowed to say mass only in private houses. Ministers returned from banishment, freed from jails, chapels. Quakers who were specially persecuted were set free to worship their God in their own way. There was a general feeling that liberty and religion were being unscrupulously

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betrayed. There was a suspicion that the armed force of the nation was in Catholic hands. The Duke of York, James who himself was a Catholic, was in command of the fleet. Catholics had been placed as officers in the land force which was being raised for a descent upon Holland. Lady Castlemaine, the mistress of the King, openly said about her change of faith and doubts hovered around the claims of the King to be of the Protestant. There was a general dread that national religion was in danger of being replaced by establishment of Catholicism and despotism.

Charles II did not have a legitimate heir to descend to the throne of England. This meant that the crown would pass his brother James I who was a devout Catholic. The question of the succession became a matter of concern. The possibility of having a Catholic ruler incited the fear of popery, slavery and subjugation to France and Rome in the Protestant England. On the question of succession, the new ministers were themselves divided. Shaftesbury was earnest for the exclusion of James and he was followed in his plan of exclusion by Lord Russell. Charles was firmly against a change in the order of hereditary succession Parliament tried to force Charles II to exclude his brother from the line of succession. The King was supported in his resistance by a majority of the Council with Temple and Lord Essex, Lord Halifax, and Lord Sunderland at its head. Charles II ended this 'Exclusion Crisis' by dissolving Parliament. Shaftesbury was deprived of his post of Lord President of the Council in 1679.

James I succeeded to the throne as James II in 1685. He was committed to Roman Catholicism which did not go well with the Protestant sentiments of Englishmen. King James II brought many tensions between the people of England because of the political changes that he made while he reigned as king. Coming into power as a Catholic already brought many concerns to the people because they feared popery and Catholic tyranny. King James II, a devout Catholic, increased the power of the Catholics in England. He began to replace all Protestants and Anglicans officials in powerful position with Catholics. He allowed Catholics to hold place as officers in the armed forces in November of 1685. The king suspended the Test Acts so that he could appoint Catholics as members of his council. In April 1687, King James II passed the Declaration of Indulgence Act which removed all laws against the rights of the Catholics. He introduced Roman Catholics into the army, the universities, the Privy Council, raised a standing force of thirty-thousand men. He ordered the prosecution of seven bishops, who refused the king's orders to read his second Declaration of Indulgence, for seditious libel. The fear of Catholic monarchy led people to oppose the reign of King James II. He had alienated the Anglican Church, by whose support alone he could hope to rule as an English despot. For the last four years of his reign, Charles II ruled with the goodwill of the Tories and the Church. James II began with everything in his favour; a Tory parliament, a discredited opposition and a great reputation for honesty. Within a couple of years he had thrown away all these advantages by his revival of Charles II's abandoned Roman Catholic policy. There was rebellion against King James II from several quarters.

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William III, the husband of King James II's daughter Mary, was invited by representatives of all parties to invade England and deliver it from the rule of a Catholic king. James II was rejected and replaced by Protestant sovereigns with William and Mary taking over the reins of England. In 1688, William of Orange and his wife Mary landed in England with a small army and seized power—an event known as the Glorious or Bloodless Revolution. The Glorious Revolution which overthrew King James II of England was propelled by a union of English Parliamentarians with William of Orange. William's successful invasion of England with a Dutch fleet and army led to his accession to the English throne as William III of England jointly with his wife Mary II of England.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 politically ended the Restoration Period. It ushered in a new era in which the power of Stuart kings was curtailed and the power of the Parliament to make or unmake a king was established. The Bill of Rights was passed in 1689 which declared that no Roman Catholic was permitted to ascend the English throne, nor could any English monarch marry a Roman Catholic. The Parliament won a great and lasting victory against the abuse of royal power. England was still far from being a democracy, but it has taken the leadership of the world in limiting the power of the kings.

James II fled to exile in France where he was received by his cousin and ally, Louis XIV, who offered him a palace and a pension. For over 50 years his supporters (called Jacobites, from the Latin *Jacobus*, for James) mounted unsuccessful attempts to restore the Stuart line of Catholic kings to the British throne.

The country was divided into two political parties-the Tories and the Whigs. In the political field, there were signs of strife between the Whigs and the Tories. The Tories supported the king and 'strove to check the growing power of the people in interests of their hereditary rulers.' The Whigs opposed the Crown and 'sought to limit the royal power in the interests of the Parliament and the people.' Political dissensions began to grow. There were people who supported the king and there were others who stood in the way of monarchial powers and prerogatives. The term Whig is now associated with liberalism and Tory is associated with conservatism. Both parties were largely devoted to the Anglican Church. When James II tried to establish Catholicism in England by intrigues that aroused the protest of Pope and Parliament, the Whigs and Tories, Catholics and Protestants, united in England to throw James II out of power.

1.2.2 The Restoration Society

With the coming of Charles II back to England a great change came in the social life of England. The social life and manners underwent a process of transformation. The social life of the Restoration Period is marked by noted reaction against Puritanism. The pendulum moved from one extreme to another. The atmosphere of gaiety and cheerfulness was restored. The theatres were reopened. Fashionable

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gentlemen spent time dueling, raking, gambling, swearing, drinking, bull and bear baiting, sports, singing and dancing. A wild delight in the pleasures and vanities of this world, frivolity and excess replaced the attitude of the Puritans of absorption in 'other worldliness' which characterized extreme Puritanism. All that was considered noble and of highest order in the Puritan regime was discarded as trivial and oppressive. John Richard Green says, 'Godliness became a byword of scorn; sobriety in dress, in speech, in manners was flouted as a mark of the detested Puritanism.'

London society took shape in the new quarter of St James's. Tea, coffee and chocolate were drunk in places of public recreation. Emerging social ideas included politeness a behavioral standard to which anyone might aspire and new rhetoric of liberty and rights, sentiment and sympathy. Dogmatism, or the acceptance of received religious beliefs, was widely regarded as dangerous. It became 'civilized' for men to be agreeable, not to converse on religion and politics, and to speak gallantly of 'the fair sex'. Increased importance was placed on the private, individual life, as is evident in literary forms such as diaries, letters and the novel.

The social structure of England during the Restoration Period had clear cut class distinctions prevalent in the realms of domestic life, social life and education. The Restoration society was defined by rank, property and increasingly, money. There was a wide gap between the wealthy and the poor, which made itself visible in almost all aspects of life. The landed aristocracy was restored and these wealthy landowners formed a very small but most powerful section of the society. The landed gentry obtained the predominant voice in Parliament for a century and three quarters. Consequentially, it led to the abolition of its feudal services to the Crown.

The landed aristocracy was followed by gentry which included those who received a high standard of upbringing like gentlemen, merchants, wealthy tradesmen and well-off manufacturers. The Restoration also saw the emergence of middle class. Expansion of literacy to middle class and to some sections of poor class led to the strengthening of the middle class. The upper middle class included certain professionals and merchants. The lower middle class included artisans, shopkeepers and tradesmen. It was not impossible to rise up the ladder of social structure. Property was the key to wealth and power and property could be purchased. Marriage was also very closely tied to social class. Women were never married in social class than their own and men could inherit the wealth of the woman they married.

1.2.3 Science and Economy

The Restoration Period was marked by increasing commercial prosperity and wealth. Increased literacy, combined with wealth led the British people to an increasingly public life. New developments in recreation, commercialization and industrialization also led to a transformation in both entertainment and occupations

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available. The Restoration Period was also marked by an advance and expansion in colonization and overseas trade. The Anglo-Dutch wars, also called the Dutch Wars or Dutch Engelse Oorlogen, (English Wars), were four times naval conflicts in 17th- and 18th-century between England and the Dutch Republic. The first three wars stemmed from commercial rivalry and established England's naval might.

During the Restoration Age, there was rapid development of science. The establishment of the Royal Society was a landmark in the history of England. On 28 November 1660, a group of men met at Gresham College and decided to form the foundation now known as the Royal Society. The Royal Society was formed to discuss science and explain its effects on everyday life and activity. The establishment of the Royal Society marked the opening of a great age of scientific discovery in England. Scientific discoveries brought people closer to knowledge of physical facts. Haley, Boyle, Wilkins, Sydenham, Willis, Woodward and Isaac Newton were some of the renowned members of the Royal Society. These scientists discussed 'the new philosophy of promoting knowledge of the natural world through observation and experiment, which we now call science.'

Initially, men were elected to join the Royal Society. It lent sceptical and experimental temper to the people of the age. There were attempts 'to bring religious speculation into harmony with the conclusions of reason and experience.' The fellows were not professional scientists. There was a mix of scientists and wealthy amateurs who would help keep the society functioning. Later, it was decided that Fellows would be elected solely on their scientific work rather than social status. Taking this decision ended up benefiting them in the long run. The Royal Society was a group of intellectuals with abundance of scientific knowledge.

Natural Calamities

In 1665, London was hit by a terrible calamity, the Plague. It began in London in the poor, overcrowded parish of St. Giles-in-the-Field. Rats carried the fleas that caused the plague. In six months a hundred thousand Londoners died of the Plague which broke out in May in the crowded streets of the capital. The King and his courtiers left London and fled to Oxford. The popular nursery rhyme 'Ring a Ring O' Roses' is said to be a parody on the horrors of the Great Plague. One of the first signs of the plague was a ring of rose-coloured spots, and the protection against this terrible disease was, in popular belief, a posy of herbs. Sneezing was taken as a sure sign that you were about to die of it, and the last line 'We all fall down' omits the word, 'dead'!

The Great Fire of London 1666 that started in Thomas Farriner's bakehouse in Pudding Lane, near London Bridge in the early hours of 2nd September, is known as the 'Great Fire'. The wind fanned the flames across firebreaks, and, despite the efforts of ward and parish officials and the lord mayor, the fire became uncontrollable. It was not until Friday that the firefighters and county militia could assess the devastation. 'The Tower of London (to the east) had survived, but Old St Paul's cathedral, the Guildhall, Royal Exchange, 87 parish churches, 52 company

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halls, markets, gaols, and 13,200 houses had succumbed; the area damaged (463 acres) was greater than that in the 1939–45 Blitz, with losses estimated at the then almost incomprehensible sum of over £10 million.

Charles II, who had placed his brother in control of the city to maintain order and discourage looting, rapidly introduced measures for recovery. Some of the rebuilding schemes submitted were too hurried to be practical, but under six commissioners a new city was built on the old plan though with improved access and hygiene, and in brick rather than wood. To commemorate events, the Monument was erected near the site of the outbreak (1677); to the inscription on the north panel the words 'But Popish frenzy, which wrought such horrors, is not yet quenched' were added in 1681 but removed in 1830.

Check Your Progress

1. Why did Charles II dissolve the union of England, Ireland and Scotland?
2. In which year was the Conventional Parliament replaced by the Cavalier Parliament?
3. Name the four Acts which came to be known as the Clarendon Code.
4. What was the significance of the Glorious Revolution?
5. State one significant feature of the Restoration society.

1.3 LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION PERIOD

Since literature is a product of its society, the Restoration Period was no exception. Literature of the Restoration Period too was deeply influenced by revolutionary changes in social, political and religious life of England. Critic Hudson has written, the literature of the period was 'at times openly and defiantly corrupt; while even at its best, though it had many admirable qualities, it was generally wanting in moral strength and spiritual fervour. Real earnestness of purpose had passed away, and with this, strong passion, and with this again, great creative energy. The thoughts of men no longer scaled the heights; they moved along the plain. Literature ceased to soar and became pedestrian. Thus, with the Restoration we enter upon a period in which literature is intellectual rather than imaginative or emotional, and though often brilliant, is on the whole a trifle hard and unsympathetic.'

Literature of the Restoration Period was influenced by France- its ideas, tastes and literature. Charles II had spent most of his years of exile in France, and when he returned to England he brought with him a new admiration for French literature. The literature of the age was dominated by the critical spirit as opposed to the imaginative spirit of the Elizabethan period. Intellect and reason were the driving forces. Imagination and emotion were substituted with wit and intellect,

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rationality and analysis. The literature of the age also emphasized correctness of rules and regulations with high regard for established literary conventions classical and French writers instead of being individualistic and romantic. To be 'correct' meant to avoid enthusiasm and express moderate opinion moderately. In particular, the effects of this penetrated very deeply into the drama, especially into comedy, the most copious literary product of the Restoration Period. The contemporary literature of France was characterized by lucidity, vivacity, conciseness and reason. The French writers paid close attention to form correctness, elegance and finish, guided by intellect with the critical faculty always in control. The English writers looked upto these French writers for guidance. The Restoration literature too is marked by principles of regularity and order and the spirit of good sense. The French writers who influenced the English writers of the age were Racine, Moliere, Corneille, Pascal, Bossuet and Malherbe.

The Restoration Period is also known as the Age of Dryden. This is because John Dryden is considered to be the most representative writer of the Restoration Period highlighting its mood and temper.

1.3.1 Restoration Drama

Dramatic entertainments were made illegal during Cromwell's rule, all theatres were closed in 1642. With the restoration of Stuart succession in 1660 theatres were reopened. Public theatres were back in business and the publishing trade also flourished. Charles II licensed two new companies: the King's company, managed by Thomas Killigrew, and the Duke's company, managed by William D'Avenant. Killigrew and D'Avenant were courtiers of Charles II. These two were authorized to give performances with scenery and music, to establish ticket prices and employee salaries and to suffer no rival companies. The theatre buildings got a new lease of life. The new buildings were roofed, with backstage areas, a proscenium arch, areas for musicians (the equivalent of orchestra pits), thrust stages, scenery and curtains in front of the stage. The front of house was in many respects the most important feature of the new theatres. There were three main areas: galleries, boxes and the pit. The pit was the most fashionable place to be seen. Women were allowed to play to appear on stage in female roles. Proprietors were willing to invest considerable capital, ensuring that theatres had state of the art facilities for audience and actors alike. The first Theatre Royal in Drury Lane opened in 1663. Lincoln's Inn Fields was refurbished in 1695 and brought back into service. Sir Christopher Wren designed the Dorset Garden Theatre that fronted the River Thames, which opened in 1671.

Restoration comedy or the Comedy of Manners, known for its wit, its urbanity, its sophistication, is the most characteristic literary product of Restoration society. It is called Comedy of Manners because it reflects the manners, modes and conventions of the aristocratic and upper class, fashionable society of London. It borrowed everything from the contemporary life. The milieu in Restoration comedy, in which these characters live and breathe, is the metropolitan London of

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Charles II's reign. Seduction, intrigue, foppery, cynicism, debauchery, found fitting expression on the English stage. It was a world of infidelity and sexual license. The action arises largely out of male sexual anxiety and the moral emptiness of the city. If men are not motivated by lust, their interest in women stems from money or social gain. The scenes are laid mostly in London coffee houses, chocolate houses, gambling centres and other places of fashionable gathering. Reputations are murdered, love intrigues are carried clandestinely. The female characters are as witty and charming as the male characters. Women are audacious and flippant just as men are gay and frivolous. Life presented is based on sex antagonism. There is persistent attack on the sanctity of the marital bond and parallel advocacy of free love. The plays are satires on cosmopolitan life of London expressed with wit and repartee is the soul of conversations. Restoration theatre was an imitation of the immorality and debauchery of fashionable society of London. The spectators and patrons enjoyed watching these imitations of immorality that they themselves indulged in. These plays had familiar character types like the young lovers, blocking parents, witty servants, fools, gulls, bullies, cast mistresses, whores, cuckolds and unhappy wives. These characters have their goals as courtship, seduction, cuckolding and gulling. There is no provincial culture or presentation of country life in the plays. In these comedies, characters from country are ridiculed for their unsophisticated lifestyle, low wit and uncouth behaviour.

Jeremy Collier condemned the comedy of manners in his pamphlet *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* and attacks the playwrights like William Wycherley, William Congreve, John Vanbrugh, and Thomas D'Urfey. Some of the renowned playwrights of Restoration comedy are Etherege, Wycherley, Cibber, Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh. Some of the well-known Restoration comedies are William Congreve's *The Way of the World,* William Wycherley' *The Country Wife,* Buclungham's *The Rehearsal* (1671),Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer*(1676), Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695), Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696), Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696), Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707) and Susannah Centlivre's *The Busie Body* (1709).

Heroic play or Heroic tragedy was also produced during the Restoration Period. The form was introduced by William Davenant but it was popularized by John Dryden. Tragedy could never be as popular as comedy during the period. According to Dryden 'a heroic play ought to be an imitation of a heroic poem, and consequently that love and valour ought to be the subject of it.' The hero of the play is a king, a prince, or an army general. The major conflict is between love and honour. The theme was of epic magnitude and everything is governed by an air of exaggeration. The dramatists aimed at effects of intensity and sublimity to arouse emotions of pity and fear. Dryden stated, 'Heroic play is indeed the representation of nature but it is nature wrought upto a higher pitch.' The scenes were laid in distant lands. The characters were persons of super human stature making loud declamation and magnificent speeches. The heroes were unparalleled in valour,

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honour, ambitious and deep in love. The dramatist employed heroic meter. Allardyce Nicolle said that heroic play is marked by crudities, violent rants, inflammatory speeches, impossible psychology and it exalts idealism in the twin forces of love and honour. He says the form and spirit are artificial, there is grandiloquence in sentiments and exaggeration in speeches. The most popular writer of heroic plays was John Dryden whose *Conquest of Granada* and *All for Love* have all the elements of heroic tragedy namely, love, honour, poetry, passionate speeches, courage and death.

The Restoration Period witnessed a growth of prose writers. Prose became a vehicle to give expression to the events of everyday life. Pamphlets were written in abundance on the socio-political life of England. Some of the prose writers of the Restoration Period are John Dryden, Hobbes, Pepys, Evelyn, Sir William Temple, Locke, Jeremy Collier and Halifax. Historical prose has been presented in the works Calrendon and Browne. John Locke and Hobbes stand out as writers of political prose. The Restoration Age also saw the rise of diarists and memoir writers. The age is vividly brought to life in the diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn. These diary writers recorded the routines dealings in their dairies. They give a vivid picture of the social and political life of the Restoration Period. These diaries are private documents with no pretensions to literary style.

The Restoration poetry reflected the social, cultural and political concerns of the age. Poetry became the vehicle of argument, controversy, personal and political satire. The poems were mostly satires condemning various political, social and religious events and people. The satires were personal and vindictive. Dryden's *Absolom and Achitophel* is a political satire while his *Mac Flecknoe* is a personal satire. Butler's *Hudibras* is a satire on the Puritans. They are didactic in tone and marked by intellect, wit and irony. The poetry of the age was characterized by balance, exactness and polish. The poets tried to achieved directness and simplicity of expression. They used the heroic couplet to achieve precision. Lyrics and odes were also common modes of expressing thoughts in poetry.

The last and greatest works of John Milton and John Bunyan were written in the beginning of the Restoration Period.

Major Events from 1660 to1700

1660: The Monarchy is restored; Charles II passes the Act of Oblivion.

1662: Charles marries Catherine of Braganza (they have no children).

1662 : Act of Uniformity requires all clergy to obey the Church of England; Act of Uniformity excludes Nonconformist ministers; Chartering of the Royal Society.

1664-66: Great Plague of London.

1666: Great Fire of London.

1666: Dutch raid the naval port of Chatham, near London.

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1670: Secret Treaty of Dover; Charles II agrees to help Louis XIV of France against Holland.

1672: Declaration of Indulgence towards Catholics and Nonconformists.

1673: Test Act requires all officeholders to swear allegiance to Anglicanism; Exclusion of Catholics from public office.

1677: William of Orange marries Mary, daughter of James, Duke of York.

1678: Titus Oates invents a 'Popish Plot'; inflames anti-Catholic feelings; Catholics persecuted.

1680: Crisis over the Exclusion Bill to exclude James, Duke of York, from the succession on the grounds of his Catholicism. (His second wife was the Catholic Mary of Modena, and they produced a son and heir.)

1681: Charles II dissolves Parliament

1683: Failure of the Rye House Plot to kill Charles II and James.

1684: Monmouth, Charles's bastard son, is implicated in the Rye House Plot.

1685: Death of Charles II; James II accedes the throne of England; Louis XIV allows persecution of French Protestants.

1687: James's Declaration of Indulgence for Liberty of Conscience.

1688: Seven bishops refuse to swear to a Second Declaration; The Revolution of 1688 also called the Glorious Revolution-William of Orange is invited to help depose James, who flees to France; William III and Mary II rule over England

1689: The Bill of Rights; toleration of Nonconformists. James lands in Ireland; William's war with France continues.

1690: William defeats James at the Battle of the Boyne in Ireland.

1691: Jacobites are defeated at the Battle of Aughrim (Ireland).

1693: National Debt is begun.

1694: Bank of England is established.

1702: War of the Spanish Succession begins; Death of William III; Succession of Anne (Protestant daughter of James II)

Check Your Progress

6. Name the French writers who had a significant impact on the literature of the Restoration Period.
7. Mention the two theatre companies that were licensed by Charles II.
8. List some well-known Restoration comedies.

1.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. As soon as Charles II ascended the throne of England he decided to dissolve the union of England, Ireland and Scotland. The king's refusal to recognise the union of three kingdoms was a part of his politics to favour the Catholics and free the crown from parliament.
2. The Conventional Parliament was replaced by the Cavalier Parliament in the year 1661.
3. The fours acts, Corporation Act (1661), Act of Uniformity (1662), Conventicle Act (1664) and the Five Mile Act (1665) were commonly known as the Clarendon code.
4. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 politically ended the Restoration period. It ushered in a new era in which the power of Stuarts kings was curtailed and the power of the Parliament to make or unmake a king was established.
5. The Restoration society was defined by rank, property and increasingly, money. There was a wide gap between the wealthy and the poor, which made itself visible in all aspects of life.
6. The French writers who had a significant impact on the literature of the Restoration Period were Racine, Moliere, Corneille, Pascal, Bossuet, Malherbe.
7. The two theatre companies that were licensed by Charles II were the King's company, managed by Thomas Killigrew, and the Duke's company, managed by William D'Avenant.
8. Some of the well-known Restoration comedies are William Congreve's *The Way of the World,* William Wycherley' *The Country Wife,* Buclungham's *The Rehearsal* (1671),Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer*(1676), Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695), Cibber's *Love's Last Shift* (1696), Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696), Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707), and Susannah Centlivre's *The Busie Body* (1709).

1.5 SUMMARY

- The Restoration period covers the reign of Charles II (1660–1685) and the brief reign of his younger brother James II (1685–1688).
- The term 'Restoration' is not only used to describe the event by which the monarchy was restored to England but also the period from 1660 to 1700 that witnessed an era of new political, socio-cultural and literary movements.

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- The return of monarchy was marked by a violent reaction against the Puritan manners and morals. There was an intense reaction against the stern morality of the Puritans.
- The French influence was predominant during the rule of Charles II because the king had spent a number of years in exile in the French court. Popularly known as the Cavaliers, the courtiers had returned from a period of exile in French court.
- One of the most able and popular Stuart kings, Charles II wanted the freedom of Crown from any kind of parliamentary control.
- No sooner Charles II ascended the throne of England than he decided to dissolve the union of England, Ireland and Scotland.
- The Conventional Parliament was replaced by the Cavalier Parliament in 1661. The Presbyterians, dominant in the Convention, remained a handful of fifty members.
- The era witnessed the system of religious repression inspite of the efforts of the king to bring religious toleration
- The Popish plot of 1678 was a conspiracy that was conceived by Titus Oates and Israel Tonge. They spread the rumours that the Jesuits were conspiring to kill Charles II to replace him by his brother James in order to establish Roman Catholicism in England.
- Charles II did not have a legitimate heir to descend to the throne of England.
- James I succeeded to the throne as James II in 1685. He was committed to Roman Catholicism which did not go well with the Protestant sentiments of Englishmen.
- The Glorious Revolution of 1688 politically ended the Restoration Period. It ushered in a new era in which the power of Stuart kings was curtailed and the power of the Parliament to make or unmake a king was established.
- The country was divided into two political parties-the Tories and the Whigs. In the political field, there were signs of strife between the Whigs and the Tories.
- With the coming of Charles II back to England a great change came in the social life of England. The social life and manners underwent a process of transformation.
- London society took shape in the new quarter of St James's. Tea, coffee and chocolate were drunk in places of public recreation.
- The Restoration Period was marked by increasing commercial prosperity and wealth. Increased literacy, combined with wealth led the British people to an increasingly public life.

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- Literature of the Restoration Period too was deeply influenced by revolutionary changes in social, political and religious life of England.
- Literature of the Restoration Period was influenced by France- its ideas, tastes and literature. Charles II had spent most of his years of exile in France, and when he returned to England he brought with him a new admiration for French literature.
- Dramatic entertainments were made illegal during Cromwell's rule, all theatres were closed in 1642. With the restoration of Stuart succession in 1660 theatres were reopened. Public theatres were back in business and the publishing trade also flourished.
- Restoration comedy or the Comedy of Manners, known for its wit, its urbanity, its sophistication, is the most characteristic literary product of Restoration society.
- Heroic play or Heroic tragedy was also produced during the Restoration Period. The form was introduced by William Davenant but it was popularized by John Dryden.
- The Restoration Period witnessed a growth of prose writers. Prose became a vehicle to give expression to the events of everyday life. Pamphlets were written in abundance on the socio-political life of England.
- The Restoration poetry reflected the social, cultural and political concerns of the age. Poetry became the vehicle of argument, controversy, personal and political satire.
- The last and greatest works of John Milton and John Bunyan were written in the beginning of the Restoration Period.

1.6 KEY WORDS

- **Comedy of Manners:** It is a genre of comedy that flourished on the English stage during the Restoration period. Plays of this type are typically set in the world of the upper class, and ridicule the pretensions of those who consider themselves socially superior, deflating them with satire.
- **Heroic Tragedy:** It is a form of serious drama which flourished briefly in England during the Restoration.
- **Tory:** It is the colloquial word for supporters of the conservative party in the United Kingdom.

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1.7 SELF ASSESSEMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Briefly mention the political and religious changes that came about with the return of monarchy in England in 1660.
2. Write a short note on the Popish plot of 1678.
3. What was the positon of women in Restoration society?
4. List the significant features of Restoration drama.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyze the French alliance during the rule of Charles II.
2. Examine the political changes in England with the succession of James II.
3. Discuss the new developments that took place in the field of science and economy during the Restoration Period.
4. Prepare a timeline of the major events which took place in England between 1660 and 1700.

1.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 JOHN MILTON

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Structure

2.0 INTRODUCTION

John Milton is one of the most prolific English writers of the seventeenth century. He is best known for his work, *Paradise Lost*. Apart from writing poems, he also wrote plays and other works of non-fiction. He was proficient in many languages. He was a champion of liberty. Milton influenced many writers such as John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, William Blake and others. In this unit, you will study a brief biographical sketch of John Milton. In addition, you also get to critically analyze his two poems—*L'Allegro* and *IL Penseroso*.

2.1 OBJEECTIVES

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

- Prepare a brief note on the life and works of John Milton
- Analyze the two poems *L'Allegro* and *IL Penseroso*
- Compare and contrast the themes of *L'Allegro* and *IL Penseroso*

2.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN MILTON

John Milton was born on 9 December 1608, and baptized in the parish church of All Hallows Bread Street, London. He belonged to a prosperous middle class Puritan family, full of servants and apprentices. Milton's grandfather Richard Milton was a staunch follower of the Roman Catholic religion who disinherited his son, John Milton senior, for embracing Protestant faith. Milton's father came to England about 1583 and became a scrivener. Nothing much is known of Milton's mother Sara Jeffrey.

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Milton was tutored at home in early stages of life. Thomas Young, one of his tutors, was highly revered and admired by Milton. In1620, he was admitted to St.Paul's school. He learned languages, literature and verse writing both in Greek and Latin. Milton's father encouraged and nurtured his poetic talents and his sheer delight in learning. Young Milton entered Christ's College, Cambridge in 1625. It was in college that Milton started writing poetry. He wrote several poems both in English and Latin when in college. He took his MA degree and left the University of Cambridge in 1632. During his years in Cambridge, Milton was disappointed by the education he received at Cambridge University and sharply criticized its curriculum and education system. He blamed this system for producing ignorant statesmen, ministers and citizens. He was rusticated from his college, the cause of which was Milton's non-adherence to the academic discipline.

In 1632, Milton went to live with his parents in the London suburb of Hammersmith. About three years later, in 1635, he moved with his family to the village of Horton in Buckinghamshire. During his stay at Hammersmith and Horton, Milton committed himself earnestly to writing poetry and to learning. His love for theatre, occasionally brought to the city.

His father expected him to pursue ministry and take orders but Milton was contemplating a poetic career. Milton senior's ability as a composer of madrigals and psalm settings contributed greatly to his son's enduring passion for music and to his development as a poet. Milton married Mary Powell, the young daughter of his tenant Richard Powell, in 1642. After a month, Mary left London for a visit with her family but she did not return. Mary and he reconciled in 1645. By 1652, Milton was completely blind. The same year Mary Powell died leaving Milton with four children Anne (aged 5), Mary (aged 3), John (aged 14 months) and the infant Deborah. He married Katherine Woodcock in 1656 who died two years later in 1658. Milton married the third time and this time he married Elizabeth Minshul.

Milton made a trip to France and Italy in 1638. This journey to Italy gave him confidence to pursue his career as a poet. It was here that Milton met most accomplished scholars, humanist intellectuals with whom he formed everlasting and gratifying friendship. Most importantly, his poetry was acclaimed here. Italy also gave him an opportunity to compare the Laudian church with the practices of reformed Protestantism on the Genevan model. He was able to identify that the English Reformation retained too many elements of popery. Catholic practices were all around him, in France and Italy, for comparison. He returned home to England in 1639.

Milton served as a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under its Council of State and later under Oliver Cromwell. After the execution of Charles I, the Purged Parliament replaced the Derby House Committee with the first Council of State. It appointed Milton as Secretary for Foreign Tongues. Milton served the Secretariat for Foreign Tongues for four and a half years. The Purged Parliament was dismissed by Cromwell in April 1653, and with it the term of its Council of

State expired. In 1655 the first Protectoral Parliament was replaced by direct military rule. Milton remained in the employment of the state throughout. He continued to perform the duties which were required of him, thus, contributing to diplomatic activities. He continued to work under the supervision of the Council.

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It is with the Restoration of monarchy in 1660 that Milton's life changed. He lived in fear of his life. Milton was imprisoned for some weeks in 1660 and some of his works were publicly burned and many of his close friends were executed. However, some of his friends remained loyal to him, hid him in times of danger and tried to seek pardon for him. Milton's name was excluded from the Act of Pardon, he had to escape. Later, he was granted pardon under the Act of Oblivion. He shifted to Jewin Street with the help of his friends. His domestic life was also rife with tension and difficulty.

Milton married for the third time that brought some order and domestic comfort to his life. After the marriage and move to Bunhill, some order and peace was restored to his life. Milton had friends, students and amanuensis to read to him and write for him. Sometime in June, 1665, Milton and his family settled into a small cottage. The final years of Milton's life were productive and comfortable. Milton died in November 1674. He was buried beside his father near the altar in St Giles Cripplegate.

John Milton: Works

Milton grew up in a Puritan milieu that inculcated in him qualities of self-discipline, as well as a commitment to reformist and militant Protestantism. From his early childhood, Milton was conscious of growing religious and political conflict in English society. He had high standards of personal morality and high expectations for the institutions of marriage, school, government and the church. Milton was also intimately involved in the political upheavals of the seventeenth century in England. He witnesses the execution of Charles I, Cromwell's rule as the Protector, the Civil War, and restoration of monarchy and consequent changes in England. Milton was part of it all, and he wrote many political and social tracts (prose pamphlets) in which he gave his views on such subjects as freedom of the press, divorce, the rights of kings and subjects, education and Christian doctrine. Milton wrote in English, Latin, Greek, and Italian languages. He received immense international recognition during his lifetime.

Some of Milton's significant publications are mentioned here. *Arcades* resembles the form of the masque— it is the combination of song, music, costume drama, dance and verse. *Comus* is a masque that was performed at Ludlow Castle in 1634. Comus, the god of revelry was the chief character of this drama. The theme of *Comus* is that God-given virtue can resist evil and corruption. The poem shows signs of Puritan influence on Milton early in his life.

Lycidas, published in 1638, is a pastoral elegy written upon the death of his college friend Edward King who was drowned in the Irish Sea when his ship, destined for Dublin, sank in a storm shortly after leaving Anglesey. It is written on

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the classical model of Theocritus and Bion. *Paradise Lost* was begun as early as 1685 and issued in 1667. It is divided into twelve books. The theme of this epic poem is fall of man and justification of the days of god to men. *Paradise Regained* takes its theme from St. Luke's Gospel in Bible. It begins with the journey of Jesus into wilderness after baptism and its four books describe the temptation of Christ by Satan. The glory of Satan dwindles in *Paradise Regained. Samson Agonistes* is a play published along with *Paradise Regained* in 1671. The theme of the play is Biblical. The play refers to the deception of Samson, the Hebrew hero, by his wife Dalila and the indignities to which he was subjected by his enemies. *Samson Agonistes* is a tragedy as Samson the protagonist is crushed to death at the end of the play. The spirit of Puritanism prevails in the play.

Milton propagated for Cromwell during the Civil War and his subsequent role as civil servant to the Cromwell government occupied most of his time. He produced vast amounts of prose; pamphlets and discourses on theology, law and politics. Much of his mature prose could well serve as a chronicle of two turbulent decades of English history, the 1640s and 1650s. Milton wrote tracts that ranged widely over issues of his times. His publications can be roughly divided into two categories, the religious and the political.

Milton, a reformer, considered the Holy Scripture the ultimate authority on such subjects as the nature of God, the Son, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the practice of religious worship. He did not believe in any form of worship determined by an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Faith was for Milton a matter of discussion between an individual conscience and his god. These views are reflected in many of his prose works. In his work, *A Second Defensce of the English People*, Milton advised Oliver Cromwell, the newly installed Lord Protector, to let the church settle its own matters. In his works *True Religion, Heresie, Schism, and Toleration*, published in 1673, Milton castigates the popery and warns against the Roman Catholic Church on one hand and he defends the various dissident sects against the charge of heresy urging that they be tolerated. Milton's prose works predominantly religious in content are his five Anti-Prelatical tracts, *Of Reformation*, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, and *Animadversions upon the Remonstartions Defence, against Smectymnuss* (1641), *The Reason of Church-Government*, and *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, were published in 1642.

In *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659) Milton argues that the civil magistrate should not use force in matter of religion. Further, when the Protectorate was replaced by the restored Rump Parliament, Milton urged, in his *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings* out of the Church (1659), to discontinue the practice of assessing tithes, the state-imposed taxes on parishioners for the support of the clergy. Milton's political pamphlet *An Apology against a Pamphlet* was published in June 1642.

Milton, after his separation from his wife Mary Powell, composed four tracts arguing for the legality of divorce: *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), *The Judgement of Martin Bucer*, *Tetrachordon* and *Colasterion*. These

tracts were written from 1643 to 1645. In these works, he contends that a husband and wife who are spiritually and physically incompatible should not be forced by law to remain in their marriage. He supported his arguments with the evidence of scripture, theology and philosophy. Milton was condemned for his views since everyone held that marriage vows were inviolable.

Milton's *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* did not receive official state approval prior to publication because government censorship of the press had been suspended since 1641. On 14 June 1643, in a bill designed to reestablish the state's authority to regulate printing, the English Parliament passed the 'Ordinance to prevent and suppress the licence of printing'. In response, Milton published *Areopagitica*, subtitled *A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing, To the Parlament of England* (1664), a tract couched in the form of a respectful speech to that Parliament, in which he condemns pre-publication censorship and defends the freedom of press and freedom of speech. Milton composed a short tract *Of Education* (1664) in reply to a request by Samuel Hartlib, a contemporary advocate of education reform, for Milton's views on the subject of education. He published his recommendations for the best books and exercises, a programme that is equally good for peace and war.

The History of Britain, published in 1670, is a chronicle of events from the landing of the Trojan Brutus on the shores of Britain to the Norman Conquest. The *History* was published with omission of few pages in which Milton had digressed from the historical account to comment on the political and religious controversy raging in England. The *Digression* to the *History* was published 1681, years after the Milton's death, under the title *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and Assembly of Divines*. In it, Milton abrades both, the Members of Parliament and the churchmen of the assembly. He writes that the members of the parliament have performed their public duty unfaithfully and unjustly, and he calls the churchmen of the assembly spiritual tyrants who have used their power for personal advantage.

Milton is amongst the most accomplished writers of the Caroline period. His works are marked by 'high seriousness' and moral edification. The supreme quality of Milton's poetry is that the subject matter is sublime. His poetry also reflects his profound love of beauty in its various forms. Milton's poems are picturesque, characterized by imagery and symbols. His works are also marked by autobiographical elements. The influence of Puritanism and his religious beliefs mark all his works. Milton's works reflect both the spirit of Renaissance and the Reformation.

Introduction to the poems: *L'Allegro and IL Penseroso*

'L'Allegro and *IL Penseroso*, the companion poems, are the most celebrated juvenile poems that Milton wrote when he was in college pursuing his Master of Arts degree. The poems explore the ideal pleasures appropriate to contrasting lifestyles – mirth and melancholy. As celebrations of their respective deities – the Grace Euphrosyne (Youthful Mirth) and the allegorical figure imagined as a deity,

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Melancholy – both poems are modelled on the classical hymn. The poems also incorporate elements of debate, the pastoral idyll and its festivals and the demonstrative or eulogistic oration.

These twin poems produce completely different rhythm, mood, tone and sound although they use the same meter and have parallel structures. The titles of these two poems establish the contrasting ideas--the cheerful man and the contemplative man. *L'Allegro* celebrates mirth, rural serenity and urban vitality while *IL Penseroso* eulogies melancholy, finds satisfaction in solitude, tragedy and contemplation. Each begins by criticizing and completely discrediting the thoughts presented in the other. Further, the companion poems, respectively describe and define mirth and melancholy by the type of interests, activities, seasons, landscape, music, literature, landscape, they participate in and their respective companions.

L'Allegro's essence, youthful mirth, is displayed in the activities and values of the pastoral mode and the literary genres harmonious with it, like rural folk and fairytales of Queen Mab and Goblin; court masques and pageants; and love songs in the Greek Lydian mode. In *IL Penseroso*, medieval romance and allegory presents the activities and pleasures of a solitary scholar. He wanders through a mysterious gothic landscape with a melancholy nightingale, lonely towers, a drowsy bellman, dim light and a hermitage with mossy cells. Melancholy man enjoys the philosophy of Plato and Hermes Trismegistus, romances like Chaucer's unfinished *Squire's Tale*, Greek tragedies about Thebes and Troy and bardic hymns like that of Orpheus. *L'Allegro* begins with morning and closes with night, while *IL Penseroso* moves form late evening to morning. *L'Allegro* portrays the lifestyle of youth as a cyclic round, beginning with Mirth's man awakening from sleep and ending with the drowsing Orpheus. Melancholy's man begins with the evening and ends in waking ecstasy, the vision of heaven, scientific learning and prophecy. There is a progression from *L'Allegro* to the higher life and art of *IL Penseroso,* an experienced life which offers ecstatic vision that will be conveyed to others in prophetic strain by the poet. Although they depict very different principles and worlds, each poem addresses the concepts of contentment and pleasure in an individual's life.

Structurally, both the poems follow closely the model of the classical hymn-banishment of the opposing deity followed by an invocation to the deity celebrated (Mirth, Melancholy); further, a celebration of her qualities and activities; and finally a prayer to be admitted to her with the exception that those in *IL Penseroso* are a little longer. The chief structural difference comes in the sixth section and in *Il Penseroso*'s eight-line coda, which has no parallel in *L'Allegro*. Both begin with a ten-line prelude, with alternating lines of six and ten (or eleven) syllables and an intricate rhyme pattern. For the rest of the portion, both use the verse form of the Winchester epitaph – octosyllabic couplets with seven-syllable lines freely intermingled, and with complex shifts between rising and falling rhythms, iambic and trochaic feet and lines.

Check Your Progress

1. Why did Milton's grandfather disinherit his son, John Milton senior from his property?
2. When did John Milton marry Mary Powell?
3. When was the first Protectoral Parliament replaced by direct military rule in England?
4. Why did Milton's *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* not receive official state approval prior to publication?

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2.3 *L'ALLEGRO*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

L'Allegro is a praise of youthful mirth, innocent joy and lighthearted pleasure. The prologue banishes melancholy associated with depression and madness. Then the speaker invites and praises Mirth, personified as the youthful Grace Euphrosyne and associated with Neoplatonic interpretations of the three Graces. Its origin is purer sources evocative of springtime: Zephyr, the West Wind, and Aurora, the Dawn. Her associates are Jests, Sports and Laughter; her special companion and defining quality is sweet Liberty. The sociable daytime pleasures of Mirth's devotee are portrayed at length, in a series of delightful idyllic pastoral scenes that mix classical shepherds and shepherdesses – Corydon, Thyrsis, Phillis – with the sights and sounds, the sunshine holidays, and the folktales of rural England. The delightful, jovial and rapturous aspects of Nature have been emphasized. Then the speaker details the nocturnal sociable pleasures that the happy man seeks in the city-its festivals, knightly jousts, court masques and stage comedies.

Text

Hence loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy;
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

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Melancholy- gloom, joyless, wretched

Cerberus- In Greek mythology, Cerberus is a dog with three heads which guards the gates of Hades.

Stygian cave- relating to the River Styx in Greek mythology. River Styx is one of the nine rivers in the underworld, over which Charon ferried the souls of the dead. Aeneas heard *shrieks* of dead children as he passed the cave. The origin of the word Styx is from Greek *Stux*, from *stugnos* which means 'hateful, gloomy'.

Ebon- ebony tree, dark in colour

Cimmerian desert- Homer's Cimmerians live on the edge of the world in a land of dead and perpetual darkness.

Explanation

The speaker ritually banishes melancholy and diseases associated with it. From now on, melancholy should be abhorred. It is born of Cerberus and darkest midnight in the gloomy and desolate caves where river Styx flows amidst the horrid shapes of dead people, their shrieks and evil sights in Hades. Melancholy should go and hide itself in some uncivilized, unrefined corner where darkness spreads its jealousy and raven crows, where under the shade of ebony tree and low lying rocks, which are as disarrayed as melancholy's locks, and live like a Cimmerian, in perpetual mist and darkness near the land of the dead.

Text

But come thou goddess fair and free,
In heav'n yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more
To Ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Notes

Euphrosyne- Goddess of mirth and joy. She is one of the three Charities.

Venus- the goddess of love in Greek mythology. The Roman name for Venus is Aphrodite.

Sister Graces-In Greek mythology, three sister deities: Aglaia, goddess of splendor and brightness; Euphrosyne, goddess of joy; and Thalia, goddess of festivity and good cheer.

Ivy crowned- wearing an ivy wreath as a crown

Bacchus- It is the Roman name for the Greek god Dionysus. He is the son of Zeus and Semele. Originally, Bacchus was the god of fertility of nature, associated with wild and ecstatic religious rites. In later traditions, he is a god of wine who loosens inhibitions and inspires creativity in music and poetry.

Sager- wiser person

Zephyr- the west wind

Aurora-the goddess of the dawn

Buxom-plump

Blithe-cheerful

Debonair-charming

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Explanation

The speaker welcomes Mirth which is fair and free in contrast to Melancholy that is dark and lives in caves. Mirth is known to both heaven and earth. She was born to lovely Venus (goddess of love) and Bacchus (god of wine and revelry, he wears a crown made up of ivy). Mirth was born along with two sisters Graces-brightness and bloom.

The speaker also provides an alternative genealogy of Mirth. Some others believe that Mirth is the daughter of Zephyr (west wind) and Aurora (dawn). Zephyr, the cheerful and fulfilled wind, is the breath of spring. Zephyr met Aurora in the month of May and on the bed of violet flowers, and beautiful roses sparkling with dew, Mirth was conceived. Mirth is described as voluptuous, blissful, cheerful, gracious and charming. Mirth embodies time of day the poem celebrates, the month of May. The month of May is associated with the rituals of fertility and community.

Text

Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee

Jest and youthful Jollity,

Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,

Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,

Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,

NOTES

And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as ye go
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee,
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;

Notes

Nymph- spirit of nature imagined as a beautiful maiden inhabiting rivers, woods and other locations. Nymphs are associated with the idyllic world of nature.

Quips-wit

Cranks-clever

Becks-wave, gesture

Hebe- the goddess of youth and the daughter of Hera and Zeus, and cup-bearer of the gods.

Derides- ridicules

Trip-dance

Explanation

The speaker tells Mirth to hasten its coming and urges Mirth to bring with her all her companions-Jest, Jollity, Sport and Laughter. All these personified qualities reflect youth, liveliness, glee, cheer and unrestrained sensuous pleasures. Sports mocks at care that brings wrinkles on face. Mirth brings laughter that leaves the cheeks aching. They carry smiles which is a characteristic of Hebe's smile. In Greek mythology, Hebe, daughter of Zeus and Hera, is the goddess of youth. She carries a cup to serve nectar to gods and goddesses of Mount Olympia. When Mirth comes, it should bring liberty or freedom along with her.

Text

And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come in spite of sorrow,

And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before;
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumb'ring morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill.
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Rob'd in flames, and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight.
While the ploughman near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Notes

Unreproved- approved, acceptable

Lark- a song bird

Dappled- dotted

Briar- prickly shrubs like a wild rose.

Eglantine- wild rose with sweet smelling foliage. It is also called sweetbriar.

Dames- Hens

Hounds and horn- the baying hounds and blowing horns of a fox hunt

Hoar hill- the hill is grey from lack of foliage or from mist.

Eastern gate- East, the sun rises in the east

State- rule, reign

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Liveries- uniforms

Dight- dressed

Tells his tale- counts his sheep

Hawthorn- thorny shrub of the rose family

Dale- valley

Explanation

The speaker expresses his desire to join the crew. He says that if he showers Mirth with the honour due to her, then Mirth must allow him to live with her. He wishes to live with mirth and freedom and enjoy pleasures of life. He desires to feel the morning vigour and spirit, chirping of the birds that will unsettle the darkness of dull and wearisome night. Night will be forced to welcome dawn and wish the speaker a good morning at his window covered with sweet briar or vine or eglantine. Darkness has been associated with sorrow and sullen mood throughout the poem.

The cock scatters the darkness with its loud and lively crowing and then vigorously struts in front of his lady folk. The speaker often listens to the sounds of hounds and horn, cheerfully rising the sleepy morning, from the side of some light grey hill or through the echoing shrill of the forest, or sometimes in plain view by the small green hill or rows of elms, in the East from where the sun rises. The elevated, distinguished sun wears a robe of flames of amber colour and the clouds can be seen wearing elaborate uniforms. The ploughman is happily whistling over the furrowed land, the milkmaid is singing merrily, the mower is sharpening his scythe, while every shepherd in the valley tells a tale. All these are features of pastoral poetry.

Text

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures
Whilst the landskip round it measures,
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.
Towers, and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

Notes

Land skip- landscape

Russet lawns- untilled land, scorched reddish brown by the sun.

Fallows- ploughed land.

Nibbling flocks- flocks of sheep grazing

Meadows- grassland

Pied- colorful

Battlements-parapet on the roof of a fort or castle

Cynosure- the centre of attraction or admiration

Explanation

The speaker eyes new pleasures as he can view and imagine in the landscape. He can perceive reddish brown lawns, grey farmlands that have been ploughed and harrowed, where flocks of sheep stray to graze. The speaker sees mountains on which the clouds seem to be resting, the brooks and rivers and the trimmed meadows spotted with daisy flowers. The speaker also spots the towers and the battlements raised high amongst the tuft of trees. Perhaps a beautiful woman dwells in one of the towers and is the centre of admiration for all those in the neighbourhood.

Text

Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,

From betwixt two aged oaks,

Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,

Are at their savoury dinner set

Of herbs, and other country messes,

Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;

And then in haste her bow'r she leaves,

With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;

Or if the earlier season lead

To the tann'd haycock in the mead.

Notes

Betwixt- between

Cordon and Thyrsis- Corydon is a goatherd and Thyrsis is a shepherd that appear in *Idylls* of Theocritus, a Greek pastoral poet. Corydon and Thyrsis appear together in Virgil's *Eclogues*. In the poem, these names of shepherds appear as stock names from pastoral poetry

Herbs- plants

Phyllis and Thestylis- stock names of servant girls or shepherdess from pastoral poetry

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Haycock- pile of hay heaped in a conical shape

Mead- meadow

Explanation

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In the vicinity, he sees smoke from the chimney, where the shepherds Corydon and Thyrsis have met for their savoury dinner of green leafy vegetables and other delicious food famous in the village, cooked by dexterous Phyllis. In haste, Phyllis leaves her cottage with Thestylis to finish other jobs like tying up the bundles of reaped grains of the present harvest or to put together the brown heaps of hay in the pastures or fields. It puts emphasis on the countryside and the seasonal rounds and rituals associated with harvesting and shepherds.

Text

Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the live-long daylight fail;
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faery Mab the junkets eat,
She was pinch'd and pull'd she said,
And he by friar's lanthorn led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat,
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath thresh'd the corn
That ten day-labourers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,
And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.

Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,

By whispering winds soon lull'd asleep.

Notes

Secure delight-

Upland- hilly land

Hamlets- a settlement smaller than a village and without a church

Jocund- cheerful

Rebecks- three stringed fiddles

Chequered- a pattern of squares like that on a chessboard

Ale- light beer

Faery Mab- queen of fairies in English folklore

Junkets- dishes made of cream

Lanthorn-lantern

Goblin- hobgoblin, also called Robin Goodfellow or Puck

End- put into a barn; he thrashes more corn in one night than ten labourers could stack in a day.

Lubber fiend- In English folklore, a huge manlike figure with a tail who does household or farm chores at night in exchange for a bowl of cream.

Matin- morning song

Explanation

Sometimes, the carefree and cheerful people from the highland villages invite to join them. The merry bells ring, joyful and light hearted music plays on the flute and young men and women dance to its tune under checkered shade. Even old people join the younger lot on a sunny and beautiful holiday to rejoice, dance and be merry until it is evening time and there is no light. Then rejoicing villagers will go indoors, drink the spicy nut brown beer and tell stories to each other. These stories are about English lore, fairies, victories and achievements acquired by great courage and strength- Mab, Friar, Hobgoblin and Robin Goodfellow. One tells the story of fairy queen Mab who ate cakes and sweetmeats. Robin joins with others in unending toil of rural life and he leaves at dawn. Once the story telling is over, the villagers go to bed and are lulled to sleep by the sound of wind.

Text

Tower'd cities please us then,

And the busy hum of men,

Where throngs of knights and barons bold,

In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,

With store of ladies, whose bright eyes

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Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit, or arms, while both contend
To win her grace, whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.

Notes

Throngs- crowds

Barons- a member of British nobility

Wit- intelligence

Arms- physical strength

Hymen- the god of marriage

Pageantry- elaborate ceremony

Explanation

The speaker is now pleased by city life too. He describes the social life of the city. City is buzzing and busy, it is thronged by courageous men like knights and barons who uphold peace. There are beautiful ladies whose charms make both strong, courageous men and witty men fight to win their grace. All shower praises on these charming ladies of the city. Marriages are often solemnized by Hymen, the god of marriage, who appears in tapered saffron robe. The union is celebrated with pomp, feast and revelry, masques and pageantry. Such are the sights that young poets wish to witness on pleasant summer evenings by the stream.

Text

Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.
And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes with many a winding bout

Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heap'd Elysian flow'rs, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regain'd Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

Notes

Well-trod- visited by many

Anon-soon

Sock- reference to the shoes worn by actors playing comic roles in Greek plays. Here, Milton uses the word to mean wittiness

Jonson's learned sock- Reference to Ben Jonson, an Elizabethan playwright known for his Comedy of Humours

Fancy's child- imaginative

warble- sing in a trilling voice

Wood-notes

Lydian airs- Lydian music is considered soothing and pleasant. Plato condemned the Lydian mode of music as being orally lax, and preferred the Dorian mode.

Orpheus…Eurydice- In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a poet and a musician who sought his dead wife in Hades; Pluto (god of the underworld) and his wife Proserpine permitted him to take his wife from the underworld on condition that Orpheus will not look back at her until they reach the upper world but Orpheus looked back and lost her again.

Elysian- heavenly; Orpheus was reunited with Eurydice in Elysium after his death.

Pluto-god of the Hades (underworld)

Eurydice- wife of Orpheus. After she was killed by a snake Orpheus secured her release from the underworld on the condition that he did not look back at her on their way back to the world of the living. But Orpheus did look back, whereupon Eurydice disappeared.

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Explanation

One can see city folks visiting theatres to see plays being staged whether it is a comedy by Ben Jonson, noted comedian or Shakespeare, the child of imagination meaning, he had highly creative faculty. And if ever the speaker is worried about life then he wishes to be calmed by pleasant and relaxing Lydian mode of music, in conjunction with immortal poetry that meets the soul. The meeting of music and verse will pour forth sweetness with careless attention, intoxication and with great craft. This will set the soul free and set it in harmony. Orpheus, the legendary poet, himself will lift himself up from his deep sleep on his bed heaped with Elysian flowers.

He will also hear such music and melodies that would have even won the attention of Pluto's attention. Such delights if Mirth can give to the poet then the poet wishes to live with Mirth forever.

Check Your Progress

5. How has Mirth been described by in the poem *L'Allegro* by the speaker?
6. Who is Bacchus?
7. What are the features of pastoral poetry as described in the poem *L'Allegro*?
8. What does 'lubber fiend' denote in English folklore?

2.4 *IL PENSEROSO*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The poem was written in 1631 but published in 1645 as part of a collection *The Poems of John Milton, Both English and Latin*. *Il Penseroso* is an Italian word that means 'the pensive man'. What is valued in *L'Allegro* is rejected in *IL Penseroso*. Melancholy symbolized by darkness or colour black represents thoughtful and pensive state of the individual. It gives expression to the creative, divine and spiritual aspect of human life. The poem celebrates Melancholy, having sombre temperament, seeking solitude, scholarly life and religious contemplation. Again, like, *L'Allegro*, a ten-line prologue banishes Mirth. The speaker then invites and praises Melancholy- saintly, holy, majestic stateliness and a rapt soul and black that personifies hue of wisdom. Her parents are Saturn and Saturn's daughter, Vesta. Her companions are calm Peace and Quiet, Spare Fast and Silence. Chief associate of melancholy is angelic contemplation. Reversing *L'Allegro*, this poem describes the nocturnal pleasures of Melancholy's man – philosophical studies and tragedies. During the day *IL Penseroso* hides himself from the Sun, enjoying the groves, shadows and sleep filled with mysterious dreams.

Text

Hence vain deluding Joys,

The brood of Folly without father bred,

How little you bested,

Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys;

Dwell in some idle brain,

And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,

As thick and numberless

As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,

Or likest hovering dreams,

The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.

Notes

Il Penseroso- the thoughtful man

Deluding- deceiving, misleading

Brood- progeny

Folly- reckless

Bestead- help or relieve

Toys- idle fancies

Motes-particle, specks of dust

Fickle- changing

Pensioners-attendants

Morpheus- the god of dreams, the son of Somnus (the god of sleep)

Explanation

In the above lines, the speaker ritually banishes vain joys and follies. The deceived joys of life are product of injudiciousness. These misled joys do not assist human beings much in life. These apparent joys and mirth cannot fill the determined mind with its whims and fancies. They cannot delude the mind any further. The speaker tells these deluding joys to vanish from him and find someone else to make its home. These vain joys can possess that brain with its foolish, credulous and showy imagination as much as it wishes like the minutes particles of dust that hover around the sun or like those hovering dreams that hirelings and mercenaries dream of in their sleep.

Text

But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,

Hail divinest Melancholy,

Whose saintly visage is too bright

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To hit the sense of human sight;
And therefore to our weaker view,
O'er-laid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem,
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starr'd Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The sea nymphs, and their powers offended.

Notes

Visage- face

Staid- quiet, solemn, respectable, steady

Prince Memnon- In Greek mythology, an Ethiopian king who was considered very handsome. Milton compares melancholy to Memnon's sister thus praising melancholy with great admiration

Starr'd Ethiop queen- Cassiopeia, wife of the Ethiopian king Cephalus. She was changed into a constellation because she claimed to be more beautiful than the Nereids.

Sea nymphs- the spirit of nature inhabiting sea

Explanation

The speaker greets melancholy, garbed in devotional colours, as a goddess, divine, wise and holy. Melancholy has a spiritual look. It is too bright for the human eye to see it. Instead the human mind perceives melancholy as black, which the speaker considers black to be the colour of wisdom. It is black but held in such great esteem and respect as is the esteem of prince Memnon's sister. The admiration and honour of melancholy is as high as the beauty of queen of Ethiopia who was transformed into a constellation because her boast offended the nymphs.

Text

Yet thou art higher far descended,
Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore,
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she (in Saturn's reign,
Such mixture was not held a stain)
Oft in glimmering bow'rs and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
While yet there was no fear of Jove.
Come pensive nun, devout and pure,

Sober, stedfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn,
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.

Notes

Vesta- the Roman goddess of the hearth and household, Saturn's daughter.

Saturn- Another name for Roman God Cronus, leader of Titans, the king god

Such mixture was not held a stain- Incest was not considered to be sinful.

Bowers-shades

Glades-open space in a wood or forest

Ida- Saturn reigned on Mount Ida in Crete.

No fear of Jove- Reference to the defeat of Saturn by his own son Jove (Zeus) who overthrew the Titans and became the king of gods

Sable-black

Cypress lawn- black cloth

Explanation

Melancholy is the virgin daughter of Saturn, the solitary god and Vesta, the goddess of hearth. Saturn often used to meet Vesta in secret places, in the interiors of forest Ida, where Jove could not see them and there was no fear of Jove. The speaker invites Melancholy to come along with her companions-the pensive pure and devout mood, sober, grave, serious and reserved. All of them will come wearing a flowing and majestic black colour robe and a stole made up of very fine black linen over its shoulders.

Text

Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With ev'n step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast,
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,

NOTES

And hears the Muses in a ring,
Aye round about Jove's altar sing.
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke,

Notes

Wonted- customary, usual

Musing- thoughtful, meditative

Gait-steps

Rapt- enchanted, rapturous

Leaden- colour of lead

Muses- In Greek and Roman mythology, each of the nine goddesses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, who preside over the arts and sciences. The Muses are generally listed as Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (flute playing and lyric poetry), Terpsichore (choral dancing and song), Erato (lyre playing and lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Thalia (comedy and light verse), Polyhymnia (hymns, and later mime), and Urania (astronomy). They are evoked by artists for inspiration.

Jove- In Roman mythology, the king of Gods, associated with thunder and lightning. His wife was Juno. The Greek equivalent of Jove is Zeus.

Philomel- the daughter of Pandion, king of Athens. She was turned into a nightingale after being raped by Tereus. Tereus was married to Procne, Philomel's sister.

Cynthia- the goddess of moon

Explanation

The speaker tells Melancholy to come keeping its customary, habitual countenance, with even and meditative steps. Her looks holding communication with heaven above and its enraptured soul can be seen through her eyes. Her looks are filled with holy passion till Melancholy forgets herself as if it were a marble statue, looking

downwards with a sad and heavy glance. The eyes are fixed on earth with the same firmness as is seen on her face. The speaker invites Peace, Quiet and Fast(ing) to join Melancholy. They often go fasting in the company of gods, listening to the Muses singing in a ring on Jove's altar. Leisure, that is resting or has withdrawn itself in well-organized garden, should also join Melancholy. But first and foremost, Melancholy should bring along with her the most important companion that is Contemplation. Contemplation comes soaring high on a chariot with golden wings. And with it will summon Silence unless the nightingale will design a sad song in her sweetest voice. While the moon will restrain her dragon yoke.

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Text

Gently o'er th' accustom'd oak.
Sweet bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among,
I woo to hear thy even-song;
And missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wand'ring Moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heav'ns wide pathless way;
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-water'd shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm.

NOTES

Notes

Shunn'st-ignore

Chauntress- Chanter, singer

Plat- small plot of ground

Counterfeit-imitate

Resort-retreat

Bellman- the night watchman or a town crier

Explanation

The song of nightingale and the sight of the moon crossing the sky would be welcome too. The speaker tells the nightingale, who has the most musical and most melancholic voice, to shun the noisy existence of folly. The nightingale is the magician of the forest. The speaker wishes to listen to the song equally melancholic and enchanting. Missing Melancholy, the speaker walks alone on the lawns with even grass, to see the moon at its peak moving like one that has gone astray on the pathless heaven. Often the moon will be shown through the moving clouds as if the moon is bowing down. The speaker hears the curfew bells over the shore with a sullen roar. If the weather does not permit him to remain outdoors then move in a silent room, devoid of any mirth, and sit by a quiet fireplace, where the embers teach light to feign darkness. There is no sound except that of cricket and of the bellman.

Text

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tow'r,
Where I may oft out-watch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook:
And of those dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet, or with element.
Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptr'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes', or Pelop's line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,

Or what (though rare) of later age,
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower,
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek.
Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That own'd the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wond'rous horse of brass,
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else, great bards beside,
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of tourneys and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

Notes

Bear- Ursa Major constellation

Hermes- Hermes Trismegistus a legendary figure regarded by Neoplatonists and others as the author of certain works on astrology, magic and alchemy.

Plato- The Greek philosopher

Immortal mind- Plato's soul/mind

Mansion- heavily home

Gorgeous- splendid

Sceptre's pall- Black robe

Thebes- a city in Greece. It is a setting of many Greek tragic plays like Oedipus, the king.

Pelop- In Greek mythology, Pelop was the grandson of Zeus and son of Tantalus. He was killed by his father to be served as food to the gods, but only one shoulder was eaten, and he was restored to life with an ivory shoulder replacing the one that was missing.

NOTES

NOTES

Buskin'd- an adjective, derived from 'buskin', the name of a boot worn by actors in ancient Greek and Roman tragedies

Troy- in Homeric legends, Troy was a city ruled by king Priam. It was besieged for ten years by the Greeks and was the sight of Trojan War as described in Greek epic *Iliad*.

Buskin'd stage-buskin'd stage is a stage presenting tragedies.

Sad Virgin- used for Melancholy

Musaeus- a poet and a singer in Greek mythology

Orpheus- in Greek mythology, Orpheus was a poet and a musician who sought his dead wife in Hades; Pluto (god of the underworld) and his wife Prosperine permitted him to take his wife from the underworld on condition that Orpheus will not look back at her until they reach the upper world but Orpheus looked back and lost her again.

Pluto- the god of Hades (the underworld)

Or call…wife- it is a reference to 'The Squire's Tale' from *The Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer

Call up him- refers to Chaucer

Half-told story- refers to the fact that Chaucer did not complete 'The Squire's Tale'

Cambuscan- the king of Sarra, Tartary in Chaucer's 'The Squire's Tale'

Tartar king- Cambuscan in Chaucer's 'The Squire's Tale'

Camballo, and Algarsife- sons of Cambuscan by his wife Elfeta in Chaucer's 'The Squire's Tale'

Canace- daughter of Cambuscan by his wife Elfeta in Chaucer's 'The Squire's Tale'

Explanation

The speaker expresses his desire to sit in a lonely tower at the midnight hour. He wants to keep awake all night read, study and muse over the constellations, or Hermes and Plato's philosophy to unfold the world of wisdom of immortal minds that have left their mighty impressions on the human life. Further, he would like to revisit literature associated with Melancholy like great ancient tragedies of Oedipus the king, Pelop's descendants, or the Trojan War or a rare contemporary tragedy. He wants the power of Melancholy to raise Musaeus from his bower and call upon the Orpheus from the underworld, both to sing sad songs that even Pluto will cry and let hell grant whatever love seeks. He tells Melancholy to call upon the story teller Chaucer, whose 'Squire's Tale' is unfinished, to narrate the stories of Cambuscan, Camball, Algarsife, Canace and the Tartar king. If nothing else then the great poets should sing the solemn and sad songs of various battles and wars, of enchanted forests where everything means more than heard.

Text

Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not trick'd and frounc'd as she was wont,
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchief'd in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud,
Or usher'd with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,
With minute-drops from off the eaves.
And when the Sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from Day's garish eye,
While the bee with honied thigh,
That at her flow'ry work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep;
And let some strange mysterious dream,
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture display'd,
Softly on my eye-lids laid.
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or th' unseen Genius of the wood.

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Notes

Civil suited- polished, refined

Morn- morning, reference to Aurora, the goddess of dawn in Greek mythology

Frounc'd- creased

Attic boy- Cephalus, an Athenian prince and hunter who lived in the Attica region of Greece. He was loved by Aurora, the goddess of dawn

Eaves- edge of the leaves

With minute-drops from off the eaves- the rain drops spilled over the edges of the leaves

Sylvan- Silvanus, Roman god of the woods.

Nymphs- Nature goddesses

Covert- sheltered place

Day's garish eye- used for the Sun

Consort- companion

Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep- the murmur of water lull the listener to sleep

Mortals good- mortals that are good

Genius- the guardian spirit of the woods

Explanation

The speaker often keeps awake at night till morning comes with all the civilities of a day. Night has passed and it is dawn. The morning has come wrapped in clouds, it is windy, raining and somber. When the sun will shine, Melancholy will accompany the speaker on his walks to the woods, dark and deep, quiet and ancient. He will stop by the brook and hear the bee hum and the murmur of water. He will be lulled to sleep and dreams. He will wake up to some sweet music sent by spirits for the good mortals.

Text

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voic'd quire below,

In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that Heav'n doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew;
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give,
And I with thee will choose to live.

Notes

Cloister- aisle

Pale- shade

Embowed- arched

Dight- covered

Religious light- spiritual light

Pealing organ- loud , reverberating sound of a musical instrument

Quire- set of four

Anthems- uplifting religious song

Shew-show

Prophetic strain- revelatory song

Explanation

The speaker reminds himself not to forget to walk the paths of religion and enjoy the beauty of it. He wishes to hear the music of the organ and the ecstatic hymns in the service of the god. The sweetness of these hymns and praises will fill the atmosphere and will drive the speaker into ecstasy. It will be a heavenly experience and he will find peace in his solitude. Here, he may sit and write about all his experiences till in his old age, his experience and his writings will become almost prophetic. These are pleasure of melancholy, therefore, the speaker will choose to live with melancholy forever.

NOTES

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Check Your Progress

9. When was *IL Penseroso* written and published?
10. Who are the parents of Melancholy?
11. Who is the most important companion of Melancholy?

2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Milton's grandfather disinherit his son, John Milton senior from his property for embracing the Protestant faith.
2. John Milton married Mary Powell in 1642.
3. The first Protectoral Parliament replaced by direct military rule in England in 1655.
4. Milton's *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* did not receive official state approval prior to publication because government censorship of the press had been suspended since 1641.
5. Mirth has been described as voluptuous, blissful, cheerful, gracious and charming by the speaker in the poem *L'Allegro*.
6. Bacchus is the Roman name for the Greek god Dionysus. He is the son of Zeus and Semele. Originally, Bacchus was the god of fertility of nature, associated with wild and ecstatic religious rites. In later traditions, he is recognized as the god of wine who loosens inhibitions and inspires creativity in music and poetry.
7. In the poem *L'Allegro*, The speaker often listens to the sounds of hounds and horn, cheerfully rising the sleepy morning, from the side of some light grey hill or through the echoing shrill of the forest, or sometimes in plain view by the small green hill or rows of elms, in the East from where the sun rises. The elevated , distinguished sun is wears a robe of flames of amber colour and the clouds can be seen wearing elaborate uniforms. The ploughman is happily whistling over the furrowed land, the milkmaid is singing merrily, the mower is sharpening his scythe, while every shepherd in the valley tells a tale. All these are features of pastoral poetry.
8. In English folklore, 'lubber fiend' refers to a huge manlike figure with a tail who does household or farm chores at night in exchange for a bowl of cream.
9. The poem was written in 1631 but published in 1645 as part of a collection *The Poems of John Milton, Both English and Latin*.

10. Melancholy is the virgin daughter of Saturn, the solitary god and Vesta, the goddess of hearth.
11. Contemplation is the most important companion of Melancholy.

NOTES

2.6 SUMMARY

- John Milton was born on 9 December 1608, and baptized in the parish church of All Hallows Bread Street, London.
- Milton was tutored at home in early stages of life. Thomas Young, one of his tutors, was highly revered and admired by Milton.
- It was in college that Milton started writing poetry. He wrote several poems both in English and Latin when in college.
- In 1632, Milton went to live with his parents in the London suburb of Hammersmith. About three years later, in 1635, he moved with his family to the village of Horton in Buckinghamshire.
- Milton made a trip to France and Italy in 1638. This journey to Italy gave him confidence to pursue his career as a poet.
- Milton served as a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under its Council of State and later under Oliver Cromwell.
- It is with the Restoration of monarchy in 1660 that Milton's life changed. He lived in fear of his life.
- Milton married for the third time that brought some order and domestic comfort to his life. After the marriage and move to Bunhill, some order and peace was restored to his life.
- Milton grew up in a Puritan milieu that inculcated in him qualities of self-discipline, as well as a commitment to reformist and militant Protestantism.
- Milton propagated for Cromwell during the Civil War and his subsequent role as civil servant to the Cromwell government occupied most of his time.
- In *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659) Milton argues that the civil magistrate should not use force in matter of religion.
- Milton is amongst the most accomplished writers of the Caroline period. His works are marked by 'high seriousness' and moral edification.
- *L'Allegro* celebrates mirth, rural serenity and urban vitality while *IL Penseroso* eulogies melancholy, finds satisfaction in solitude, tragedy and contemplation.
- *L'Allegro*'s essence, youthful mirth, is displayed in the activities and values of the pastoral mode and the literary genres harmonious with it, like rural folk and fairytales of Queen Mab and Goblin; court masques and pageants; and love songs in the Greek Lydian mode.

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- There is a progression from *L'Allegro* to the higher life and art of *IL Penseroso,* an experienced life which offers ecstatic vision that will be conveyed to others in prophetic strain by the poet.
- *L'Allegro* is a praise of youthful mirth, innocent joy and lighthearted pleasure. The prologue banishes melancholy associated with depression and madness.
- What is valued in *L'Allegro* is rejected in *IL Penseroso*. Melancholy symbolized by darkness or colour black represents thoughtful and pensive state of the individual.
- Again, like, *L'Allegro*, a ten-line prologue banishes Mirth. The speaker then invites and praises Melancholy- saintly, holy, majestic stateliness and a rapt soul and black that personifies hue of wisdom.

2.7 KEY WORDS

- **Allegory:** It is a figure of speech in which abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of characters, figures and events.
- **Prelude:** It refers to an action or event serving as an introduction to something more important, an introductory piece of music, or writing.
- **Orpheus:** In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a poet and a musician who sought his dead wife in Hades.
- **Troy:** In Homeric legends, Troy was a city ruled by King Priam. It was besieged for ten years by the Greeks and was the sight of Trojan War as described in Greek epic *Iliad*.

2.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of John Milton.
2. List the activities, things, events, figures and other characteristics associated with *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* respectively.
3. Write a note on pastoral elements in *L'Allegro*.
4. Briefly mention the religious and spiritual elements in *Il Penseroso*.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyze the use of classical mythology by Milton in his two companion poems *L'Allegro* and *IL Penseroso*.
2. Discuss the use of imagery in the companion poems.

3. Discuss the features of English Renaissance that influenced John Milton's poetic works with special reference to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.
4. Compare and contrast the themes of *L'Allegro* and *IL Penseroso*.
5. What are the main characteristics of Milton's poetry? Discuss.
6. Comment upon Milton's style and diction.
7. Write an essay on Milton as a child of the Renaissance and Reformation.

NOTES

2.9 FURTHER READINGS

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NOTES

UNIT 3 ALEXANDER POPE: *AN EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT*

Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Alexander Pope was a prominent figure of the neoclassical movement of the early eighteenth century. In the neoclassical period, wit, repartee, reason came to the forefront of literature. He was acknowledged for having perfected the rhyming couplet form and for using it in his satirical and philosophical writings. He is recognized as a true representative of his age and the values of the Age of Enlightenment. In this unit, you will study about the life and works of Alexander Pope and critical analyse of his poem, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- State the significant events which influenced the life of Alexander Pope
- List the major works of Alexander Pope
- Analyze the title of the poem *An Epistle to Arbuthnot*

3.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF ALEXANDER POPE

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was the son of Alexander Pope Senior and was born in London. His father was a Roman Catholic linen merchant. Pope spent his childhood in Binfield, at the edge of Windsor Forest. He always recalled this period as the 'golden age' in his later life.

Thy forests, Windsor, and thy green retreats,
At once the monarch's and the Muse's seats,
Invite my lays
Be present, sylvan maids!
Unlock your springs, and open all your shades.

NOTES

Tales from the life of Pope were thought to be worthy of being collected. According to Joseph Spence, a critic, minor poet and Pope's biographer, 'Pope was a child of a particularly sweet temper and had a great deal of sweetness in his look when he was a boy'. He was given the nickname of 'little nightingale' for his melodious voice. Pope's father, the son of an Anglican vicar, converted to Catholicism. It led to a lot of problems in the family as during those times, Catholics suffered repressive legislation and prejudices. They did not get admission to any universities nor were they given any kind of public employment. Hence, Pope had an irregular education which was frequently interrupted. As he was expelled from Twyford School for writing a satire on one of the teachers, his aunt taught him how to read at home. He learned Latin and Greek from a local priest and acquired the knowledge of French and Italian poetry soon after. He even attended clandestine Catholic schools.

Most of his time was spent in reading books from his father's library. According to his half-sister, at times, he did nothing but write and read. While he was in school, Pope wrote a play that was based on speeches from the *Iliad*. Samuel Johnson enlightens that Pope's first epic poem, *Alcander*, was burned at the suggestion of Francis Atterbury, who was later exiled for treason as he supported the deposed Stuart monarchy.

In 1700, when his family shifted to Binfield in Windsor Forest, Pope got infected with tuberculosis. It is supposed that it might have been Pott's disease, which is a tubercular infection of the bones. He even suffered from asthma and constant headaches, and his hunchback was a regular target for critics to ridicule him in literary battles. Pope was known as 'hunchbacked toad'. In his adulthood, he was only 4ft 6in tall and wore a stiffened canvas bodice for supporting his spine. After he shifted to London, Pope published his first major work, *An Essay on Criticism*. This essay was based on neo- classical doctrines and derived standards of taste from the order of nature.

Good nature and good sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive divine.

Before he became one of the members of the Scriblerus Club, Pope was associated with anti-Catholic Whig friends. However, by 1713, he was inclined towards the Tories. Some of his Tory friends were Jonathan Swift, Thomas Gray, William Congreve and Robert Harley, the first Earl of Oxford. In 1712, Pope published an early version of *The Rape of the Lock*. It was an elegant satire

regarding the battle between the sexes and follies of a young woman with her puffs, powders, patches, Bibles and billet-doux. The work got expanded in 1714. Its first version had two cantos (1712) and the final version, five cantos.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. When did Alexander Pope get infected with tuberculosis?
2. Name some of the Tory friends of Alexander Pope.
3. In which year was an early version of *The Rape of the Lock* published?

3.3 *AN EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot is a poem composed by Alexander Pope. The poem was completed in 1734 and published in 1735. The poem is addressed to a friend of Pope, John Arbuthnot. The *Epistle* is a regretful acknowledgment or an apology in which Pope attempts to justify his compositions against the criticisms of his critics like Joseph Addison, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Lord Hervey.

Pope composed this poem following the style of the great Roman poet Horace. He craftfully harmonized the natural cadence of the rhymed couplets with literary devices like enjambment and caesuras. The poem ridicules the timid critics, pretentious erudite, patrons who were devoid of any taste in arts and the work also satirizes some of the contemporaries of Pope.

Pope did not have any formal education. Whatever knowledge he gained, was through self-teaching, showing special interest in poetry. His physical appearance was not very appealing. He had a deformed structure because of his childhood illness. He had a stunted growth. He was only 4 feet 6 inches. He always complained of headaches. His appearance drew him lot of negative remarks even though he was an affectionate person.

Pope's genius had drawn him few favourable admirers at a very early phase of his life. His *Pastorals* (1709) was published under the supervision and goodwill of a publisher. In 1711, his *Essay on Criticism* came out when he was only in his early twenties. Though not of very superior quality, this work of Pope is considered to be of importance because of the comprehensive rules that it lays down in connection to the use of rhetorical techniques. In 1712, came his hugely successful *The Rape of the Lock*, establishing him as a poet of repute. It was a mock-epic work written in the epic format and style, but dealing with subjects which are regarded as very trivial. It is based on the real life story of Lord Petre cutting away a lock of hair on Arabella Fermor. He displayed, in this work, his innovative qualities, ability to handle classical forms and satire.

NOTES

Pope was influenced by the classical writers. His 1712 *Messiah* was inspired from the works of Virgil. He also translated *Chaucer* into contemporary English. However, in all, his translation of Homer's *Iliad* brings out the best of his translating abilities. The translation of *Iliad* happened at a time when Pope was undergoing financial difficulties. His translation was both critically acclaimed and commercially successful. The success earned him patronage of many noble men of his times, bringing an end to his financial insecurities.

From 1725 to 1726, Pope and two of his friends, William Broome and Elijah Fenton, got involved in translating the other great epic of Homer, *Odyssey.* When the book came out, Pope earned the major portion of the book's success because his name attracted a lot of readership.

After this, there was a slack in production of the original works by Pope. Inevitably, he got more involved in a lot of editorial works from where ensued a series of publications which were edited by him like Parnell's *Poems* (1721) and Duke of Buckingham's *Works* (1723). In 1725, he came out with huge six volumes of edited work of William Shakespeare. This was a very inferior quality work because the explanations and clarifcations provided by Pope were not scientific. They were rather very impulsive and this drew him a lot of criticism, especially from Lewis Theobald, who in his *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) ripped off Pope for his bad attempt.

In 1726, Pope came in contact with Jonathan Swift which resulted in publication of three volumes of literary creativity. This contact renewed and restored the creative vigour in Pope who had gotten dampened in his spirits after facing critical attacks for his work on Shakespeare. Ignited, Pope came up with his three part *Dunciad* published in 1728. In this work, Theobald appeared as the central character who was ridiculed and presented as the epitome of dullness. Though a work of fiction, the great comic and wit presented in *Dunciad* makes for a great reading and hence, became another immediate success. In 1742, Pope published the fourth part of *Dunciad* making it a four volume work.

Pope was a friend to Henry St. John Bolingbroke who helped him gain knowledge and interest in philosophy, as a result of which *An Essay on Man* came up. It stands out as a philosophical poem, written in heroic couplet. It is an effort to justify the ways of God to man. This work brought into vogue the notion of optimistic philosophy.

Pope invested five years of his life, from 1733 to 1738, in trying to compose *Imitations of Horace.* He also wrote many epistles and pamphlets validating his use of the vehicle of satire. Towards his later years he suffered from diseases and died on 30 May 1744.

Themes and Techniques

An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot can be analysed at many levels as far as themes and techniques are concerned.

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Satire on various levels

Alexander Pope, because of his satirical compositions, attracted a lot of criticism and no one seems to have escaped his wrath. He is well-known for ridiculing dishonest politicians, inept poets, and even though very subtly on the king himself. Dr. Arbuthnot was by profession a physician but was also a member of the Scriblerus Club of fame and an old friend to Pope. Expressing his concern over the criticism hurled at Pope, he had once asked the latter in a private letter, to sober down his satires. Dr. Arbuthnot especially requested Pope to put an end to naming those people in his work that might bring him imprisonment. Arbuthnot around this time was quite ill. Thus, if Pope could manage to publish a response with regards to the physician's concern it would make Dr. Arbuthnot appear good and would seem as if Pope was grateful for his advice. This, in the end, also meant that the work had to reason out why in the very first place Pope took recourse to satire and at times gave out the names of identities and personalities involved. Moreover, the work had to convey Pope's moral resentment at the unfair practices prevalent in his age and the superficial life that his contemporary fame-hungry writers lived. Along with the above issues Pope also had to refute the charge pressed against him as it was apparent from Dr. Arbuthnot's cautionary letter and serious allegation from his detractors that Pope displayed unreasonable pride in his literary achievements.

An Epistle to *Dr. Arbuthnot* came out in print only a few weeks prior to the death of the doctor. Pope in his poem managed to convey his above mentioned intentions clearly with force and humour. The poem is pretty long containing 419 lines. But the poem can easily be analysed if we, for our convenience, can segregate it into seven sections, each section ideating something new. Part one of the poem can roughly be assumed to be between 1 and 68 lines dealing with the poet getting astonished by fake admirers. He writes: 'Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigu'd I said, Tye up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead'. Pope genuinely desires to keep the fame-seekers at bay who arrive with their innumerable manuscripts. Pope would love to keep away all kinds of eccentric inept variety of amateur authors who come from far flung areas showing up at his country retreat in Twickenham just to read their poems. Pope goes on to express his feeling of resentment and dissatisfaction in this light while writing:

What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
They pierce my thickets, through my grot [grotto] they glide . . .
All fly to Twit'nam, and in humble strain
Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.

Without doubt, it was obvious that Alexander Pope exaggerated the line made by the crowds of aspirants who obstruct his path and consume his time via intentionally causing a form and sense of comic effect to come into reality. Invariably, Pope resolves to find out from his friend about such people, whose presence are actually repulsive to him.

Excerpt:

Friend to my life! Which did not you prolong,
The world had wanted many an idle song.
What drop or nostrum can this plague remove?
Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?
A dire dilemma! Either way I'm sped,
If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.
Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!
Who can't be silent, and who will not lie;
To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,
And to be grave, exceeds all pow'r of face.

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Pope discovers the effect of praising and trying to create encouraging influence in bad poets would be far sickening than becoming ill, because such an atmosphere would not be bereft of untrue utterances. Pope mutters his total discontentment to pass across the impossibility for him to listen through such atrocious work in respectful silence. When he is forced to express his opinion, Pope finds solace in Horace, who notified newbie writers that before thinking of getting their poems printed would need to wait for nine years as revealed in the quote:

I sit with sad civility, I read
With honest anguish, and an aching head;
And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,
This saving counsel, 'Keep your piece nine years'.

These bad poets instead turn to request Pope to mend their terrible compositions rather than even adhering to his advices. One of them pleads, 'The piece, you think, is incorrect: why, take it, I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it'. Another amateur strives to demand a balance in divide of whatever amount of profit his play gains, only if Pope decides to improve its present form. These authors refusing to give up their plights prefer not to look for artistic virtue nor literary knowledge, instead are interested in every form of commercial success that Pope's name would bring to their work.

The poem is literarily divided into two segments. The first dealing with the issues cum almost unsolvable questions surrounding the achievement of becoming a celebrity, whereas the second, scores on the likely evils that come with such renownship. 'Good friend forbear! you deal in dang'rous things; I'd never name Queens, Ministers or Kings', Pope supposes his friend doctor is uttering these words. They treat each other off the notoriety with cracking of jokes and finally brushing off the idea of making enemies. Pope notefully puts it as regardless of whatever experience in harms' way, his named victims would definitely care about what is said to avenge against him, or consciously revere the whole in their thoughts and hence, by this repent of their lifestyle. He goes on to opine that the renowned

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bad playwright Codrus would stop composing his plays if he genuinely felt offended by Pope's criticisms. Unfortunately, Codrus refused to stop composing which make Pope to believe that he has not felt the effect of the remarks, and hence, he would find no reason as such to hurt Pope as in the excerpt:

You think this cruel? Take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a fool.
Let peals of laughter, Codrus! Round thee break,
Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty crack:
Pit, box, and gall'ry in convulsions hurl'd,
Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world.

Pope goes further to exercise the veto in figures of speech and so makes comparison on the endurance of playwrights he considered as deviant to the strength of Samson, who brushed aside the criticism an intelligent and more self-aware person would have easily been leveled to the ground with. This form of mindset is what Pope conveys to every other kind of bad authors, who are definitely as hard working as spiders, yet their compositions will be as short-lived as webs spun by the same:

Who shames a scribbler? break one cobweb through,
He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew;
Destroy his fib or sophistry, in vain,
The creature's at his dirty work again;
Thron'd in the centre of his thin designs;
Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines!
Whom have I hurt? has poet yet, or peer,
Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer?

Pope relentlessly continues with his game of hurtful and haunting criticism by sometimes making obvious the actual names as well as providing classical fictitious names for the individuals who are his contemporaries and were victims of his satires previously. Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, is 'Sappho,' was a poet -friend of Pope until she decided to collaborate with Lord Hervey poetically.

Pope was without doubt far from revealing the truth by claiming that he is not in any form subjected to danger. The awareness was very glaring that bad authors as well as relatively powerful lords, could feel hurt by Pope's critiques even if they would not take his words very seriously. Thereabout around 1728, after the publication of *Dunciad*, Pope was without doubt more than scared and so he always went around the cities of London carrying two loaded pistols and accompanied by a Great Dane. Pope's ability to create a caricature of comedy about the likely reception of his writing exposes us to one aspect of his character, which is revealed as his absolute resolution not to ever conceal whatever he considers worthy of revelation and in consonance with his belief. However, what

affects his sole interest was not for foes but for the insincere friends he had, who utilized the opportunity and tricked him with unreasonable comparisons, 'I cough like Horace, and though lean, am short'. Coincidentally, Horace happens to be relatively short and fat in stature.

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Though originally supposed as intended, Pope comes up with a third segment for his poem, 'Why did I write? What sin to me unknown / Dipt me in Ink, my Parents' or my own?'. This was done in a bid to serve as another option towards whatever he was often trying to covey regardless of how angry he was. And of course, no poet can ever deliver an accurate reply to that question. Actually, most poets presume they are left with no choice:

I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.
I left no Calling for this idle trade,
No Duty broke, no Father disobeyed.
The Muse but serv'd to ease some Friend, not Wife,
To help me thro' this long Disease, my Life,
To second, Arbuthnot! The Art and Care,
And teach, the Being you preserv'd, to bear.

Pope at this point just to express the gravity and seriousness deliberately makes the witty switch that presents a slowdown in this part of the poem's verse and the syntax becomes rather easier. He recalls again that he is physically and legally not authorized to be part of many professions, and that the kind of composition he comes up with should aim to 'help' and 'teach' the soul to bear life's moral problems and mental troubles, just the way a doctor possesses the ability to cure a diseased body.

The fourth segment describes the role which Pope had to play to protect his works whenever they came under criticism by recalling those individuals who have been critical of his poetry or have denounced his work. One sect of criticism about his poem's reference to the beauty of the seasons during his earlier days of composition never ceases to place Pope within the walls of surprises. This makes him address Arbuthnot with the suggestion of definitely be critiqued by someone or other regardless of that whatever he might do. Hence, the best way became resolving to compose satire and express his opinion. He also insists that his early detractors were 'mad' (crazy) or vented out their emotion just for the sake of money.

Pope's next victims were textual editors, who preyed upon petty carelessness and 'live on syllables,' without having any idea as to what makes people or poems decent. Other foes included in lines 173–191 are simply angry because Pope will not acknowledge their plagiarized or extravagant compositions. But there are more luminous enemies, like Joseph Addison revealed in the 'Atticus'. Addison was once a very good friend of Pope and was a talented essayist. Unfortunately, he was now consumed with the idea of superiority and self-importance setting a bad

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example for other amateur writers. On the other hand, there is Bufo, a wealthy yet deceitful friend who demands several forms of servitude from the authors he sponsors:

His library (where busts of poets dead
And a true Pindar stood without a head,)
Receiv'd of wits an undistinguish'd race,
Who first his judgment ask'd, and then a place:
Much they extoll'd his pictures, much his seat,
And flatter'd ev'ry day, and some days eat:
Till grown more frugal in his riper days,
He paid some bards with port, and some with praise,
To some a dry rehearsal was assign'd,
And others (harder still) he paid in kind.

Relatively called Bufo in correlation to it's toad meaning, he became puffed up and hence, the proud possessor of an ancient sculpture that belonged to Pindar, a Greek poet. It can be interesting in the summary to note that the sculpture stands without a head implying that the sculptor is as brainless as Bufo. 'Undistinguished' authors seek Bufo for his views ('judgment') but actually what they need from him is 'a place' that is, employment. However, Bufo has his limitations, so unable to pay these authors he rewards them with drink only, or praises them with complete insincerity (like his clients) and with his own terrible compositions.

People like Bufo, Addison (Atticus) and others, occupied prominence in a literary scene where most poets managed their survival by being rich on their own, or by getting support from those who praised their efforts, or by composing for the stage in London (but this meant being dependent on people like, actors, promoters and first-night reception). Pope reminds us unhesitantly that his world is brimming with hypocrites and self-indulgent figures who fail to nurture those creative poets who as Pope presumes deserve it like John Dryden or John Gay died young and 'neglected.' Pope in this section associates financial affluence to intellectual freedom, and intellectual freedom to aesthetic prosperity.

This association becomes clearer in the fifth segment, where Pope explains his present attitude toward his own professional achievements and his life. The fortune that Pope has made might be the reason for which the amateurs and wannabes described in the first segment, find him appealing. However, when we come to think of it, a scenario that rescued him from being under the spell of anybody's servile command as shown;

Oh let me live my own! And die so too!
('To live and die is all I have to do:')
Maintain a poet's dignity and ease,
And see what friends, and read what books, I please.

Above a patron, though I condescend
Sometimes to call a minister my friend:
I was not born for courts or great affairs;
I pay my debts, believe, and say my pray'rs;
Can sleep without a poem in my head,
Nor know, if Dennis be alive or dead.

Pope thoughtfully concludes in his mind that he is 'above' the rich and the government representative 'ministers' because he has successfully turned around the social hierarchy. And since Pope is blessed by every means with more authority and air of freedom than they enjoy, he indeed could be referred to as 'above' professional literary critics like Dennis because Pope not only has the luxury to criticize but also has the power to be creative.

Pope confesses that his artistic and moral talents have made the matured readers to question him constantly about his upcoming poems. He also has people requesting him to attribute others' composition to him. And such offerings, leave him with no other option or choice but to indulge in producing satires: to condemn any famous figure 'Who loves a Lye, lame slander helps about, / Who writes a Libel, or who copies out' who invents, or spreads, wrong allegations. Pope argues, with the kind of verbal prowess he possess, he finds himself responsible to point out the wrong taking place in his society, which justifies his portrayal of Addison, and Bufo, and others as showcased in segments three and four.

The similar principle follows segment six which narrates a well-known angry picture of Lord Hervey 'Sporus'. Hervey appears insignificant and effeminate, to such a degree that at last Arbuthnot insists Pope not to bother to ridicule him. It seems as if, Lord Hervey is the representative of the lowest standard of his age.

Excerpt:

Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
Yet let me flap [swat] this Bug with gilded wings,
This painted Child of Dirt that stinks and stings;
Whose Buzz the Witty and the Fair annoys,
Yet Wit ne'er tastes, and Beauty ne'er enjoys,
So well-bred Spaniels civilly delight
In mumbling of the Game they dare not bite.

Trying to place Pope as a perfect model in terms of unbiased judgment more than Hervey lies at the bottom of servility, a personality who does not shy away from saying or writing anything to please the high and mighty of the society. He appreciates glamour, physical pleasure, and social acknowledgement, as well

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as almost everything that Pope denounced in his verse. Hervey as believed, was a homosexual, a fact that finds mention in Pope's verse. If Hervey did not falter to pinpoint at Pope's hunchback, he might have squared off the attack by recalling Hervey's sex life. According to history, the original 'Sporus' was a male partner of the Emperor Nero. Pope claims that the obedient and 'impotent' Hervey, at least the one in the portrait, shares the sexual tastes of Emperor Nero. He is 'now Master up, now Miss, and he himself one vile antithesis. . . . Now . . . a Lady, and now . . . a Lord.' This most passionate of Pope's attacks also brings us to the poem's only triple rhyme as if to highlight what he considered of Sporus' persona, he seemed to be one who was neither this nor the other, but was a summation of a sordid neither-and-both. Hervey does not get only to be described as having the likened prospects of a haemaphrodite but also a worse characterization of that relative to an animal-demon that is a changeling like Satan in the excerpt:

Eve's tempter thus the rabbins have express'd,
A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust,
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

This aggressively addressed kind of writing is what Arbuthnot had strived to bring to Pope's notice. However, it stands out that just the context of writing this way gets Pope to inform Arbuthnot that he could go to any length to do away with denouncing whatever immoral behaviour he comes across. Pope goes on to establish the air, he fuels the flames of these such attacks certainly not for the fun of it even though he certainly enjoys them), also not for revenge, but just much more as an inherent consequence of his free character. In the final phase of his attack, Pope is more than ever resolute to let loose his mind.

Segment seven consists, of the Pope's conclusion of his own character, which brings altogether the desirable qualities he wants Arbuthnot and his target audience to believe he possesses. He claims he is 'not proud, nor servile'; he writes 'not for fame, but virtue's bitter end'. He cares less about the 'distant threats of vengeance'. He reminds us that he had to face several such severe problems, including the death of his father. Much less to give a heck over what the society imagines or sees of him.

And yet ironically, he cannot stop himself from asking people what they are going to say when death comes knocking. He desires and believes, that if they get to rightly understand him, they will conclude;

That Flatt'ry, even to Kings, he held a shame,
And thought a Lye in Verse or Prose the same:
That not in Fancy's Maze he wander'd long;
But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song.

Pope wants us to be of the understanding that he employs his talents for the 'truth,' applauding the good and striving to dishonour the negative or bad and just in case we resolve to see him as being too stern, Pope goes on to describe his softer and kinder side. He narrates that he has helped even his former foes, like the elderly Dennis, emotionally as well as financially as we see in 'Foe to his Pride, but Friend to his distress'.

Pope's upright attitude and artistic credibility were inseparable traits. He composed satire as an aid of virtue and by so, his works gets to preserve the identities of true friends: 'Unspotted Names, and memorable long,/If there be Force in Virtue or in Song'. Though the poet's late father's identity is revealed as the last among the virtuous personalities, who himself was a paragon of humble uprightness:

Unlearn'd, he knew no Schoolman's subtle Art,
No language, but the Language of the Heart. . . .
His Life, tho' long, to sickness past unknown,
His Death was instant, and without a groan.
O grant me thus to live, and thus to die!
Who sprung from Kings shall know less joy than I.

Pope gets to finish this last section of his work on a dignified note with praise on which chronicles an allusion to his own weakness. The chronically sick poet had experienced lot of pain; his prayer makes him appear grateful to be alive, and nonchalant to any form of social status. After this Pope prays to 'extend a Mother's breath . . . And keep a while one parent from the sky'. Pope's mother was alive even till 1731, when he initially drafted these specific lines, and he believed that the lines fit fairly well for his later epistle and hence, refrained from making any form(s) of change to it and since he had after all, nursed his mother for years, this optimism for her health leads him towards a prayer for the recovery of his friend, the doctor.

Pope has indeed explained himself to the world and to his friend his whole life while at the same time has injured a few enemies. Analysing the poem, it is impossible not to figure out in Pope a secured and honest friend who also happened to be a talented and hardworking professional writer; an upright man who had to defend himself from the over critical and attacking world which surrounded him.

Juvenal Influence

Since it has always traditionally been believed that Alexander Pope was an imitator of Horace (65 BC – 8 BC), *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* has almost always been considered by critics and intellectuals as a text that reflects traces of influence of Horace, a Roman poet and satirist. It is needless to say that Horace's influence on Pope is very prominent, yet at the same time, it would be an incomplete effort to analyse *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* only as a Horatian satire and not take into account the trail of Juvenalian satire that is equally prominent in the poem. As a

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work which is considered to be his greatest defence of satire, Pope in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* distinctly embraces a few allusions and references that underline his indebtedness to both Horace and Juvenal. Pope's cautious inclusion of Juvenalian satire in his ambitious composition seems justified and effective if we take into account the context in which he composed the work. In trying to defend this specific art form, Pope is also taking it upon himself to advocate for his own position as a significant figure amidst literary stalwarts of the time.

Tracing back to the literary history we know that both Horace and Juvenal composed satire as a response to those maladies they witnessed permeating the humankind and the society. Though it must not be forgotten that in terms of their stylistic approaches, both were completely different from each other. Horatian satire took recourse to gentle mockery and jeered at the human imperfection. On the other hand, Juvenalian satire is marked by personal attacks and severe criticism of human defects. Alexander Pope deserves the credit for mastering these two extreme forms of satire and presenting them in a balance way in his work. His masterful use of language in composing his work highlights that his use of satire in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* was very well planned. Samuel Johnson had once opined that Horace's satires were pleasant and not bitter.

While composing *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope indeed realized that to achieve his objectives, he has to move beyond the mild ridicule that was the hallmark of Horatian satire. It is undoubtedly true that *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is, no matter what, a distinctly persuasive composition and at no point of time deserts its Horatian associations. Pope infuses humour and compassion to convince his audience of the incompetency of certain poets while underlining the importance of satire and his own vital contribution to the literary world. But again the poem is also, retributive in nature; after all it condemns corruption and longs for retribution on foes. Such a combination helps to produce a highly convincing argument in Pope's poem.

The gradual development of personal element that appears in Pope's argument in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* brings about the Juvenalian tendencies that Pope displays as the poem unfolds. Pope introduces a more acrid satire in his effort to react to the attacks hurled on the poet himself and at his compositions and to defend with utmost ardour his role in literary society. The people whom he picks up on an individual level to satirize are not merely literary competitors but are also personal adversaries.

We must not forget the conditions under which *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* was published and the work came out as response to a row of attacks questioning and expressing doubts over Pope's personal as well as literary prowess. Pope, without hesitation, very clearly expresses his intentions behind composing the work. He wrote:

This Paper is Sort of Bill of Complaint, begun many years since, and drawn up by

snatches, as the several Occasions offer'd. I had no thoughts of publishing it, till it

pleas'd some Persons of Rank and Fortune to attack in a very extraordinary manner, not

only my Writings (of which being the Publick judge),

but my Person, Morals,

and Family, whereof those who know me not, a truer Information

may be requisite.

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Pope is referring to Lady Wortely Montagu and Lord Hervey as the very 'Persons of Rank'. These were the authors of 'Verses Addressed to the Imitator of Horace' which was published in 1733 before *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. These 'Persons of Rank' gained so much popularity through this piece because it was critical of Pope and his works in satire. 'Verses Addressed to the Imitator of Horace' put across a more or else fault-finding relativity between Pope's hunchbacked physical appearance and his satire, thus associating the author's physical deformity with his inept writing aptitude.

In the early parts of Pope's satire, one realizes that his attacks are rather mild, which is more in synchronization with the Horatian pattern. Pope makes common place remarks at the poor writers, where he inquires about their skill and their rationality. He claims to have shared advice with such amateur authors who have unfortunately ignored them. He had asked them to 'keep your piece nine years' which literally means wait for nine years before you decide to get your work published. Pope seems to be suggesting that the writers should not rush into publishing their work and wait for some time to see if the work needs improvisation or even worth publishing. Even at this juncture in the poem, we realize that Pope has not involved personal matters. He does not display any vengeance against these amateur writers. It still reflects the simple and gentle Horatian manner of ridicule. However, we realize that this tone eventually changes as *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* develops. With the escalation of Pope's frustration his satire displays distinct Juvenal's influence. Pope's attack on invalid poets takes a bad shape when he decides to defend his own satirical works.

Most of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* deals with those people who were critical of Pope's work and those poets who are mostly his contemporaries. These, he perceives to be unsuitable for the profession. Pope embarks on his critical journey and attacks various individuals which are very similar to Juvenal. He even draws parallel between his victims and the Roman satirists. The speaker carries out a discussion on the 'offensiveness' of his satirical work with his correspondent and associate, Dr. Arbuthnot. He clearly mentions that satire is not affective on those who are devoid of intelligence and understanding. In the lines 'Let Peals of Laughter, Codrus! Round thee break, Thou unconcern'd canst hear the might Crack'. The reference of Codrus, an imaginary poet who was ridiculed by Virgil

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and Juvenal, extends an instance of a satirical target and also builds a connection between the author and his Juvenal inspiration. Codrus, is a name that has traditionally been used to represent bad poets. This name has been used by Juvenal in many of his compositions to portray the figure of a piteous or struggling writer. Pope introduces the name 'Codrus' and includes the image of a spider to cast an attack on the 'sophistry' of inappropriate poets. Juvenal insists that the 'clients themselves are the dupes,' a claim that was based on his personal observation of naive authors and their unfair patrons. In a similar fashion, Pope desires in a spiteful way that the inept poets and their rapacious patrons should be able to find each other.

Carrying forward his vengeance, Pope interrogates the sanity of the incompetent 'Grubstreet poets,' and goes on to comment on the 'madness' of his contemporary poets by interspersing the references to Bedlam, which was a famous sanatorium in London during Pope's time.

He says, 'All Bedlam, or Parnassus, it let out'. This method of attack is distinctly Juvenal. Pope continues, 'The Dog-star rages!', connecting the unskilled writers of poetry with madmen. The 'dog-star' is obviously an allusion to the constellation, Sirius, which is said to appear in August and was believed to heighten the 'maddening heat.' In fact, a literary document suggests that the visibility of Sirius coincides with that time of the year in Juvenal's Rome when poets read out their poetry loudly. Pope's inclusion of this reference immediately brings out a connection between the literary milieu of the eighteenth century with Juvenal's period. Pope indulges in conjuring up particular images involving real places and people to make his satirical composition more irresistible and probably more acrid.

Juvenal, in some of his works, throws light on the corrupt relation that exists between the patron and his client. In one of compositions he writes about those patrons who fail to keep the promises they have made to their authors. Juvenal insist that patrons exercise their power not through magnanimity or by assisting to popularize an author's work, but by spurious claims and assurances of fake opportunities. This portrayal of patrons as avid and dishonest figures is similar to Pope's depiction of Bufo. Bufo, as it happens, is a patron who insists those whom he supports to compose what he instructs them and yet does not pay their remuneration. Due to such a condition it becomes difficult for deserving poets like Dryden to grow because of financial constraint:

'Dryden alone (what wonder?) came not nigh,
Dryden alone escap'd the judging eye:
But still the Great have kindness in reserve,
He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.'

Here, Pope is describing the cruelty extended by patrons. He gives the example of Dryden's ironical situation. Dryden's patron let him struggle through (even letting him pass days without food) yet was generous enough to bear expenses for his funeral. The satire conveyed is loud and clear and bears resonance to

Juvenal's portrayal of patronage. Pope's unhinged attack on the patron-client relationship that was shared by his peer underlines the pitiable state in which the literary world of eighteenth century struggled.

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Both Pope and Juvenal incorporate real and graphic details of contemporary society to magnify the realism that was present in their satire. Juvenal is well known for his realistic sketch of places and people who inhabited Roman society just like the way he was vocal about his critique of the kind of equation the patron and his client shared. Juvenal also talks about moral hypocrisy while describing the humdrum of Rome. Several of Juvenal's works comment upon the existing sexual moral codes and even attack the hypocritical moralists in one of his works. He reprimands people of the elite class and the self-endorsed 'moralists' for acts of homosexuality and unfaithfulness. Juvenal is not kind to the emperor Domitian, who was publicly criticized adultery, describing him as a sexual dissembler and despot. Echoing Juvenal, Pope is critical of his contemporary English society and those members of the elite section who reflect a pitiable literary taste and are devoid of morality. The parallel between Pope's and Juvenal's method of attack is deliberate. The Juvenalian satire, as has already been stated, is more prone to making personal and rude attacks, thus befitting Pope's purposes.

Pope is definitely not at ease with the kind of literary climate that was evident in his time. He clearly expressed his concern over the publication of substandard authors and the prevalence of critical view with respect to the skilled writers. Contrasting himself with the mediocre poets he presents himself as a poet of class and fame:

Well-natur'd Garth inflam'd with early praise,
And Congreve lov'd and Swift endur'd my Lays;
The Courtly Talbot, Somers, and Sheffield read,
Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head,
And St. John's self (great Dryden's friends before)
With open arms receiv'd one Poet more.

These lines work as a form of foundation for the defence of his position in the literary milieu of that time. Pope's *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* carries on with its defensive intentions. It reaches its climax unfolding the strong Juvenalian satire against two of Pope's most well-known foes- Lord Montagu and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Hervey's 'Verses Addressed to the Imitator of Horace', which as already mentioned, was a precursor to *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and leashed out attack on Pope and his literary achievements. Reacting to this in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthno*t Pope identifies Lady Montagu as 'Sappho,' who is a lesbian poetess who wrote way back in the seventh century BC. He portrays Lord Hervey as 'Sporus,' which was a direct attack on Hervey's supposed bisexual inclination. Sporus was one of the lads who were in possession of Emperor Nero for his sexual gratification. Popes attack achieves its climatic juncture when he

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presents Lord Hervey in a cross-dressing: 'Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord'. Pope assaults both Hervey and Montagu with the claims that both were homosexuals; a severely scathing personal remark which was bound to have effect on their public image. Needless to say, such incorporation of Juvenalesque attacks transforms Pope's work into well documented commentary on the life and practices of the people who adorned the literary sphere. If Horace's style of satire can be identified as casual and Juvenal's as more direct then Pope's analysis of An *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* would indicate a closer leaning towards Juvenalian approach of satire. Pope's criticism of Lord Hervey in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is deliberate, vindictive and bitter—all of which are characteristic of Juvenal's satires.

Actually, in *Satire and Satirists* James Hannay seems to be of the opinion that Pope is at times even more severe in comparison to Juvenal in his attacks, for his savageness is not just pervasive. It is actually well controlled and implemented very effectively. In its characteristics, the poem is actually punitive as it attacks and expresses its disagreement over corruption and seeks retribution on some critics.

Though in general, the Horatian tendencies of Pope eclipse his Juvenalian inclination, an understanding of Pope's indebtedness to Juvenal in composing his work, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, is significant to the reading of the poem. The strategic use of satire that Pope displays while composing his defense, that plays a dual role—expresses his vindication as well as consolidates the significance of the art form—makes it necessary for Pope to incorporate punitive, biting, deliberately rude Juvenalian attacks to make it a memorable effort.

Horatian Influence

Without doubt, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* has drawn from the Horatian satire to a large extent. The sole aim of this work is to protect Pope as well as his compositions from every form of wrong and malicious allegations. The poem is a painstaking attention on the satirist's life and career and the scope surrounds a larger canvas covering the entirety of Pope's literary career while making obvious a greater influence in the interest on literary morals. Laced with unnecessary allegations, Pope faced several issues on justifying not only his behaviour in a specific literary genre but also explaining the behaviour of his life as a whole. Thus, Pope decided to rest his defence on ethics and not on aesthetics while striving to record every accordable victory through his merit rather than on the artistic qualities (or so he aimed at making his audience believe). *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* lays down its intentions as well as its modus operandi at the outset to reveal that Pope has suffered not only the criticism of hacks and amateur poets but also of scribblers who even during the days of Horace and Juvenal were a menace. Pope states, 'The Dog-star rages' Pope's introduction of classical allusions establishes neatly his cultural as well as poetic acceptability while it provides his enemies with more despicable qualities. The use of classical names, like Pitholeon and Codrus, reminds one of the similarities that existed between Pope's foes and the authors who critique the Roman poets, and therefore, by introducing a parallel with the

past, Pope consolidates his position while completely nullifies his detractors. Most of the characterization of individuals through Pope's works followed this pattern:

Is there, who lock'd from Ink and Paper, scrawls
With desp'rate Charcoal round his darken'd walls?

There reverberates the hidden personality in this part of Pope's work for literary perpetuity as revealed in an epigram written by Martial about what Pope's couplet resonates. The repetitive voice in the final part of the *Ars Poetica or The Art of Poetry* unmasks that Pope and his contemporaries 'rave, recite, and madden round the land', while Horace takes a dig at an exponent of the bad poets who caused distress to him and his city; it also creates an environment in which Pope and his work must survive. Imperial Rome is the perfect setting for people like Arbuthnot, Persius, Juvenal and Horace which were personalities chosen by Pope for his works' reference.

Regardless of having suffered a similar destiny like them, Pope remains a real poet:

He is cast solidly in their fashion constantly being plagued by favor seekers and defamers.

Although Pope's opening lines carry thoughts to completion more than this, we are made to discover that if part of the poetic atmosphere of the poem rests on the classical literature, then the other part is inspired from the body of Christian polemical outputs. Pope convicts the inept poets of impiety in a very subtle style of disclosure:

No place is sacred, not the Church is free,
Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me:
Then from the Mint walks forth the Man of Ryme,
Happy! To catch me, just at Dinner-time.

Pope furthers to say:

And they are guilty of sacrilege too.
Is there a Parson, much be-mus'd in Beer,
A maudlin Poetess, a ryming Peer,
A Clerk, foredoom'd his Father's soul to cross,
Who pens a Stanza when he should engross?
Is there, who lock'd from Ink and Paper, scrawls
With desp'rate Charcoal round his darken'd walls?
All fly to Twit'nam, and in humble strain
Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.
Arthur, whose giddy Son neglects the Laws,

Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause:

Poor Cornus sees his frantic Wife elope,
And curses Wit, and Poetry, and Pope.

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Pope has subtly merged two images to embody the symbolic characteristics of literary and theological transgression within the subject matter of his poem. Pope was an author who pursues his muse in alcohol and commits to sin just as massively as the clergy who looks for inspiration in an intoxicated state. In all, the actual pointers to the poem's dialectic are provided at the beginning by the ill-fated clerk and by Arthur's 'giddy Son.' The lines describing them reverberate those issues which would have definitely brought forward the contemporary religious concerns: 'foredoom'd his Father's soul to cross,' 'neglects the Laws,' 'imputes,' 'damn'd works'—all these deal with the ideas that are clearly involved in the mundane controversy and in the debates about the effectiveness of good works in comparison to faith in the minds of the eighteenth century readers.

All these ideas echo words from *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, that provided the canonical impetus for that sectarian outlook. Pope's reference to

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans at the starting of his own defence, scores on the circumstances into which his discussion solely prevailed upon. Arthur's wrong claims and indirect reference to Pope's 'damn'd works' categorize him with the Calvinist protesters towards the time *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* was composed, perhaps even with the 'enthusiastic' methodists.

Authur and Pope's other foes are correlated with St. Paul's enemies. Hence, are associated with the orthodox disapprobation consistent upon that fact. Pope has brought together the eighteenth century opposing voices with the early unbelievers of the apostolic period. Furthermore, he has connected the poetically inefficient with the religiously heretical while successfully comparing the unskilled poets with the dissenters using metaphoric grounds, so that they turn out to be the absolute images of misrule in both culture as well as religion. Pope metamorphoses into symbol as well as master of orthodoxy, and his 'damn'd works', therefore, must be read as another apostolic act, a similar kind of preaching of the reality for which St. Paul was criticized by the first century followers of 'the laws.'

Pope showed as a real Christian with the prowess of a real poet which translates as the mission of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* to confirm both the assertions. The poem establishes this through dialectic of works, identifying Pope's deserving poetic works from the confusing world of the dunces. The ideas that Pope has drawn from the *Epistle to the Romans*, therefore, has to be understood from the right perspective. The offence of the bad poets is simultaneously poetic as well as theological: 'the Laws' that Arthur's son refuses to adhere to also applies to poetry like the Mosaic code that finds mention in St. Paul's work; the misuse of poetry by Arthur's son, and the rhyming peer form a world that screams of the degradation of a certain way of life and becomes an eventual means of salvation. The clerk's instance is also within the same frame and he is guilty because he has no authentic inclination towards poetry; his actual task is just nothing else but to get attention.

The central crux of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* flays on making an effort to disentangle Pope's composition from the accusation of the dim witted and in

this light, both the author and his creativity finally get to obtain the real merit they deserve to gain. The actual goal of the work is to elaborate the exact meaning of the 'virtue's better end' that Pope has religiously adhered to throughout his literary life. This idea of virtue is best presented in the portrayal of Pope's father that finds mention in the climax of the poem. Through the audience's conclusion, 'Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n', the poem gets to fulfil its actually desired intentions.

Check Your Progress

4. When was *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* published?
5. What is the main idea behind the writing of the poem?

3.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. In 1700, when Alexander Pope's family shifted to Binfield in Windsor Forest, Pope got infected with tuberculosis.
2. Some of Alexander Pope's Tory friends were Jonathan Swift, Thomas Gray, William Congreve and Robert Harley, the first Earl of Oxford.
3. In 1712, Pope published an early version of *The Rape of the Lock.*
4. *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is a poem composed by Alexander Pope. The poem was completed in 1734 and published in 1735.
5. The *Epistle* is a regretful acknowledgment or an apology in which Pope attempts to justify his compositions against the criticisms of his critics like Joseph Addison, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and Lord Hervey.

3.5 SUMMARY

- Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was the son of Alexander Pope Senior and was born in London. His father was a Roman Catholic linen merchant.
- Pope had an irregular education which was frequently interrupted. As he was expelled from Twyford School for writing a satire on one of the teachers, his aunt taught him how to read at home. He learned Latin and Greek from a local priest and acquired the knowledge of French and Italian poetry soon after. He even attended clandestine Catholic schools.
- In 1700, when his family shifted to Binfield in Windsor Forest, Pope got infected with tuberculosis. It is supposed that it might have been Pott's disease, which is a tubercular infection of the bones.

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- Pope published an early version of *The Rape of the Lock*. It was an elegant satire regarding the battle between the sexes and follies of a young woman with her puffs, powders, patches, Bibles and billet-doux. The work got expanded in 1714.
- *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is a poem composed by Alexander Pope. The poem was completed in 1734 and published in 1735. The poem is addressed to a friend of Pope, John Arbuthnot.
- Pope's genius had drawn him few favourable admirers at a very early phase of his life. His *Pastorals* (1709) was published under the supervision and goodwill of a publisher.
- From 1725 to 1726, Pope and two of his friends, William Broome and Elijah Fenton, got involved in translating the other great epic of Homer, *Odyssey.* When the book came out, Pope earned the major portion of the book's success because his name attracted a lot of readership.
- In 1742, Pope published the fourth part of *Dunciad* making it a four volume work.
- Alexander Pope, because of his satirical compositions, attracted a lot of criticism and no one seems to have escaped his wrath. He is well-known for ridiculing dishonest politicians, inept poets, and even though very subtly on the king himself.
- Thereabout around 1728, after the publication of *Dunciad*, Pope was without doubt more than scared and so he always went around the cities of London carrying two loaded pistols and accompanied by a Great Dane.
- Pope confesses that his artistic and moral talents have made the matured readers to question him constantly about his upcoming poems.
- While composing *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope indeed realized that to achieve his objectives, he has to move beyond the mild ridicule that was the hallmark of Horatian satire.
- Most of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* deals with those people who were critical of Pope's work and those poets who are mostly his contemporaries. These, he perceives to be unsuitable for the profession.
- Juvenal, in some of his works, throws light on the corrupt relation that exists between the patron and his client. In one of compositions he writes about those patrons who fail to keep the promises they have made to their authors.
- Pope is definitely not at ease with the kind of literary climate that was evident in his time. He clearly expressed his concern over the publication of substandard authors and the prevalence of critical view with respect to the skilled writers.
- Though in general, the Horatian tendencies of Pope eclipse his Juvenalian inclination, an understanding of Pope's indebtedness to Juvenal in composing

his work, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, is significant to the reading of the poem.

- Pope showed as a real Christian with the prowess of a real poet which translates as the mission of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* to confirm both the assertions.

3.6 KEY WORDS

- **Enjambment:** It refers to the running-over of a sentence or phrase from one poetic line to the next, without terminal punctuation.
- **Caesura:** It implies a pause in a line of poetry, especially near the middle of a line.
- **Servitude:** It is a condition in which one lacks the liberty especially to determine one's course of action or way of life.

3.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Briefly mention the life of Alexander Pope.
2. State the prominent works of Alexander Pope.
3. Write the summary of the poem *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyze the major themes of *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.
2. Examine the influence of Horace and Juvenal on *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.
3. Comment on the ending of the poem *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

3.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 JOHN DRYDEN

NOTES

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

John Dryden is recognized as one of the greatest English poets of the seventeenth century. He has written plays, poems, essays, works of literary criticism and so forth. However, he is beset known as a satirist, even though he has produced only two satires, *Mac Flecknoe* (1682) and *The Medall* (1682). As a poet, Dryden developed his distinct style of writing, perfected with the use of heroic couplet and the use of metric variations. In this unit, you will get to critically analyse the poem *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day* written by John Dryden.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- State the significant events in the life of John Dryden
- Analyse the significance of music in *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*
- Identify the major works of John Dryden

4.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF JOHN DRYDEN

John Dryden was born in the year 1631 to the village rector of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England. He was raised a puritan who by the age of 10 years had read and assimilated as English translation of the works of the Greek historian Polybius. Dryden spent his early formative years at a famous school in Westminster where he received exceptional classical education as the basis of his future literary and poetic genius. The evidence of Dryden's excellence is reflected in his first attempt at poetry in the form of an Elegy written in memory of his friend, Lord Hastings. Furthermore, Dryden exhibited his genius in school when he translated the third Satire of Persius as part of his school assignment.

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Dryden began pursuing higher education at Trinity College, Cambridge in the 1655. He was among the most highly educated men of his times and was one of the forerunners of the Augustan age. Just as he did in Westminster School, Dryden excelled at Cambridge too and tried his hand at poetry. Upon successfully graduating from Cambridge in 1657, Dryden became secretary to Sir Gilbert Pickering and Chamberlain to Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector in London. Having aligned with the Puritan party, Dryden wrote an elegy entitled *Heroic Stanzas* on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659 and it is these verses that made him famous all over the country.

With the start of the Restoration Period, Dryden was a changed man as he aligned immediately with the winner's side and welcomed King Charles II with a poem called *Astrae Redux* and followed it with another poem called *Panegyric to his Sacred Majesty*. He married the daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, Lady Elizabeth Howard, but the marriage which brought him 100 pounds annually, gave him little happiness. For some 20 years after the restoration, Dryden's main output consisted of plays, together with panegyrics, prefaces, prologues and epilogues. The exposure of the style of his heroic play entitled *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) preceded his turning to those great satirical narrative poems in which he first revealed his full stature as a poet.

Dryden knew that plays were the most profitable branch of literature so he wrote them mostly from 1663 to 1681 knowing well that his genius did not lie in drama. During this period, he mostly wrote plays which were mostly coarse as the stage audiences during those times demanded vulgarity and Dryden complied.

However, Dryden's position as a critic and writer of prose is almost as important in history as his position as a poet is. Dr. Johnson writes 'Dryden may be properly considered as father of English criticism', doing perfect justice to the eminent poet. Deft in his poetic craft, Dryden also punctuated it with essays discoursing topics such as characterization, diction, technique, structure, fashion and literary taste.

His first significant work in criticism was the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' (1668), which is a discourse on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays.

While the plague ravaged much of London in 1665, Dryden and his wife Lady Elizabeth Howard retired to his father-in-law's house in Charlton. It was there in 1667 that he wrote his first great poem, *Annus Mirabilis*, which he wrote in stanzas of four lines each in alternating rhyme. Following this, in the year 1670 Dryden was appointed Poet-Laureate and Historiographer Royal. This placed Dryden in prosperous circumstances. Dryden, like Bacon, spent his last years in total devotion to creative writings. He went on to work with courage and energy, writing plays, poems and translations. *The Fables* his last work consisted of a collection adopted from the works of Chaucer and Boccaccio. Dryden died in 1700, the year of the publication of his *The Fables*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

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Check Your Progress

1. Name the first work of John Dryden which brought him fame and recognition all over England.
2. What does the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' deal with?

4.3 *A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Text

Stanza 1

From harmony, from Heav'nly harmony
This universal frame began.
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Arise ye more than dead.
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And music's pow'r obey.
From harmony, from Heav'nly harmony
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

Stanza 2

What passion cannot music raise and quell!
When Jubal struck the corded shell,
His list'ning brethren stood around
And wond'ring, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound:
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell

That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot music raise and quell!

Stanza 3

The trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms
With shrill notes of anger
And mortal alarms.
The double double double beat
Of the thund'ring drum
Cries, hark the foes come;
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat.

Stanza 4

The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Stanza 5

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs, and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains and height of passion,
For the fair, disdainful dame.

Stanza 6

But oh! what art can teach
What human voice can reach
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their Heav'nly ways
To mend the choirs above.

Stanza 7

Orpheus could lead the savage race;
And trees unrooted left their place;
Sequacious of the lyre:
But bright Cecilia rais'd the wonder high'r;

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When to her organ, vocal breath was giv'n,
An angel heard, and straight appear'd
Mistaking earth for Heav'n.

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Grand Chorus

As from the pow'r of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And music shall untune the sky.

Summary and Analysis

Even though man has been attracted towards music since time immemorial, the origins of music has always remained a mystery and as a result numerous legends and myths took birth regarding the origination of music. Saint Cecilia was one such legendary figure from the second century who's attributed as having established musical traditions as a divine art on earth. While her connection with music remains a matter of debate, legend has it that an angel was attracted down to earth owing to her singing. Furthermore, she's even considered as the inventor of the musical instrument - the organ.

With the above in the backdrop, Dryden, in 1687, wrote his ode – *A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* in order to commemorate the sacrifice of the pious Christian figure Saint Cecilia who gave up her life in the year AD 230, in Rome. Pythagoras's pagan philosophical doctrine has been drawn upon by Dryden in order to elucidate the power of music. Remarkably enough, Henry Purcel, one of the greatest English composers of Dryden's time had composed the music for the song. The ordained Saint Cecilia who is supposedly divine, is the patron of music.

With the help of diving music, the poet conjures up the birth of the universe and imagines that the frame of this universe has developed with the help of the powers that music has. The symphony of divine music synergised the various discordant and scattered elements of the universe to create a compact whole. Prior to this all the planets in nature were in a disorderly state and the power of nature responsible for creation of life couldn't function correctly. So with order among the various elements of the universe comes harmony, and harmony itself is created by the power of music. God used the powers of his music's symphony to all the disorderly atoms to spring up at once and occupied their respective positions in nature in consonance with the divine orders received through God's music.

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Dryden was of the belief that this divine music was responsible for the existence of the universe. As the music was harmonious, it brought all the elements of the universe in harmony as well as the music which God created ran across all dimensions of the musical scale. These divine scales were sounded to create all sorts of beings and objects of the universe. In the end, God created man.

Post this, Dryden stresses the usefulness of music by saying that it has the power to induce and even calm down the feelings which the passion of man cannot do. When Jubal, the father of music, sounded the string of his stringed instrument and produced music, it captivated his audience comprising of his brothers and sisters who stood around him listening intently to the captivating music. They thought that instrument to be something divine, which could produce music of divine quality. Such was the effect of the heavenly music produced by the instrument that all of them came to believe that only God could have produced such musical sounds.

The poet then proceeds to explain what the effects of the musical instrument were on man's psyche. He says that since the sounds produced by the trumpet and drum are loud and harsh, their notes induce the feelings of anger and fear. Owing to these sounds, man is encouraged to take up arms and wage wars against the foe. Since the repeated beating sound of the drum arrests the people's attention, it urges and alerts people to take up defensive measures against their enemy's attack.

The next musical instrument which the poet describes is the flute, and says that the music of its notes has a captivating and melancholic effects over its listeners. Speaking of the flute's music, Dryden opines that its music seemed like the complaint of a lover who cannot meet his beloved. The next musical instrument which the poet talks about is the lute, which he says is used to make music at funerals and likens its tune t the sound of birds. Similarly, violin reveals the great pain of the hopes that are being lost. The notes produced by the violin express great pain and anger of heart for the lady love who has deserted her lover.

The poet comes to the music of Saint Cecilia after having described the power of music, which is responsible for the creation of the universe and arousal of the feelings of love, anger, hatred, enmity, fear, attack, support, longing for oneness and love etc. and adds further that Saint Cecilia had invented the musical instrument called the 'Organ'. This instrument, he says, is outside the purview of man's capability to fully appreciate and praise its music as it is unparalleled and unmatched by any other man or manmade musical instrument. So when Saint Cecilia played her Organ, it struck such divine notes that it produced feeling of love and praise for God. So beautiful was the sound of the Organ that an Angel descended upon the earth mistaking it for heaven.

The Lyre of Orpheus, the Greek God of music, is yet another musical instrument which Dryden speaks of in the poem. He says that the Lyre was such a powerful musical instrument that its music had the capacity to turn inanimate objects

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animate and followed the instrument everywhere it was taken. Even trees uprooted themselves and followed Orpheus under the impact of his music.

In the last stanza of this ode, or the chorus, sounds the ultimate truth that the same music responsible for the creation of the universe could also cause its end. He says that the heavenly bodies were set in motion owing to the singing of the Angels to tune of the music and this resulted in production of the harmony of the spheres themselves which sang in praise of God to all of His Angels residing in heaven. On Judgement Day, Gabriel will appear and blow his trumpet aloud, thus awakening the dead to stir from their graves and arise to hear to their judgement. Also, the living persons would die. God will weigh each individual's deeds and pass his judgement accordingly. Thus, in the end, the same power of music which made order from disorder would produce disorder from order.

Check Your Progress

3. What is the main idea of *A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day*?
4. What is the utility of music according to Dryden?

4.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Dryden wrote an elegy entitled *Heroic Stanzas* on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659 and it is these verses that made him famous all over the country.
2. The 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' (1668), is a discourse on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays.
3. Dryden, in 1687, wrote his ode – *A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* in order to commemorate the sacrifice of the pious Christian figure Saint Cecilia who gave up her life in the year 230 AD, in Rome.
4. Dryden stresses the utility of music by saying that it has the power to induce and even calm down the feelings which the passion of man cannot do.

4.5 SUMMARY

- John Dryden was born in the year 1631 to the village rector of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England. He was raised a puritan who by the age of 10 years had read and assimilated as English translation of the works of the Greek historian Polybius.

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- Dryden began pursuing higher education at Trinity College, Cambridge in the 1655. He was among the most highly educated men of his times and was one of the forerunners of the Augustan age.
- Having aligned with the Puritan party, Dryden wrote an elegy entitled *Heroic Stanzas* on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659 and it is these verses that made him famous all over the country.
- Dryden knew that plays were the most profitable branch of literature so he wrote them mostly from 1663 to 1681 knowing well that his genius did not lie in drama. During this period, he mostly wrote plays which were mostly coarse as the stage audiences during those times demanded vulgarity and Dryden complied.
- His first significant work in criticism was the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' (1668), which is a discourse on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays.
- *The Fables* his last work consisted of a collection adopted from the works of Chaucer and Boccaccio. Dryden died in 1700, the year of the publication of his *The Fables*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.
- Saint Cecilia was one such legendary figure from the second century who's attributed as having established musical traditions as a divine art on earth.
- Dryden, in 1687, wrote his ode – *A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* in order to commemorate the sacrifice of the pious Christian figure Saint Cecilia who gave up her life in the year 230 AD, in Rome.
- Dryden was of the belief that this divine music was responsible for the existence of the universe.
- The poet then proceeds to explain what the effects of the musical instrument were on man's psyche. He says that since the sounds produced by the trumpet and drum are loud and harsh, their notes induce the feelings of anger and fear.
- The next musical instrument which the poet describes is the flute, and says that the music of its notes has a captivating and melancholic effects over its listeners.
- The Lyre of Orpheus, the Greek God of music, is yet another musical instrument which Dryden speaks of in the poem.
- In the last stanza of this ode, or the chorus, sounds the ultimate truth that the same music responsible for the creation of the universe could also cause its end.

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4.6 KEY WORDS

- **Ode:** It is a poem written in praise of a person, thing or event.
- **Chorus:** It is a part of a song which is repeated after every verse.

4.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of John Dryden.
2. List the prominent works of John Dryden.

Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the effects of the musical instrument on the man's psyche? Discuss.
2. State the significance of the music produced by Saint Cecilia in the poem *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*.

4.8 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - II

POETRY II

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UNIT 5 THOMAS GRAY

Structure

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Eighteenth century poets Alexander Pope, Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Gray belonged to the Age of Enlightenment. Thomas Gray is generally considered the second most important poet of the eighteenth century (following the dominant figure of Alexander Pope). His poems deal with themes such as death, afterlife, hopelessness and vanity of life. Gray's prominent poems include *The Progress of Poesy*, *On a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes*, *and Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the life of Thomas Gray
- List the prominent poems of Thomas Gray
- Analyze the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

5.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF THOMAS GRAY

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London, on 26 December 1716. He went to Eton College where his uncle was a teacher. Reminiscing his wonderful days at Eton College, he later wrote *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.* Gray was a delicate and intelligent child who loved reading literature. During this time,

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he made three close friends—Horace Walpole, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West.

Gray moved to Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1734. He did not like the curriculum, teachers and his classmates at Peterhouse. He found the curriculum boring, teachers 'mad with Pride' and his classmates 'sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate Things'. Though he took admission as a law student, yet he spent most of his time reading classical and contemporary literature.

It was in 1742 that he took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer. He went to Cambridge and began a self-imposed programme of literary study. He turned out to be one of the most learned men of this period, though he called himself lazy. He became a Fellow of Peterhouse and later of Pembroke College, Cambridge. He spent most of his life as a scholar in Cambridge. Interestingly, he is considered a leading poet of the mid eighteenth century even though his published work during his lifetime amounts to less than 1,000 lines. He was offered the post of Poet Laureate in 1757, which he declined.

He was also known to be extremely self-critical and afraid of failures so much so that he published only thirteen poems throughout his lifetime. It is believed that the poet started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend. However, he completed the poem in 1751 and it was soon published. The poem immediately turned out to be a literary sensation and is still considered as one of the most popular poems of English language. Some of the popular phrases used in this poem are 'the paths of glory', 'celestial fire', 'kindred spirit', 'the unlettered muse', 'far from the madding crowd' and 'some mute inglorious Milton'. His poems exhibit his sharp observation and mischievous sense of humour. He died on 30 July 1771 in Cambridge.

Some of his popular poems are:

- *The Progress of Poesy (1754)*
- *The Bard: A Pindaric Ode*
- *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*
- *On a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes (1748)*
- *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College (1742)*
- *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West (1742)*
- *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751)*

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was Thomas Gray born?
2. Mention the incident which instigated Thomas Gray to write poetry.
3. In which year was Thomas Gray offered the post of Poet Laureate?

5.3 *ELEGY WRITTEN IN THE COUNTRY CHURCHYARD:* TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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Text

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share,
Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

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The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:-
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:
But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Critical Analysis

An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow. It admires the deceased person and describes the implications of his death on his loved ones. However, in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Gray mourns the death of common people. It puts common people on the pedestal and applauds them. The poet believes that death does not differentiate between renowned and common people. He wonders if there are any ordinary people buried in the churchyard whose talents could not be discovered by anyone. This thought encourages the poet to appreciate common people who have lived simple and honest lives.

The poem has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry since it was written towards the end of Augustan age, a period which marked the beginning of Romantic period. The poem exhibits balanced phrasing of Augustan age and emotionalism of Romantic era.

It is believed that Gray began writing this elegy in 1742 in the graveyard of a church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and completed it in 1751. The poem was first published in 1751 and its improved versions were published in 1753, 1758 and 1768. The poem is written in iambic pentameter and heroic quatrains. It is considered to be one of the masterpieces by Thomas Gray.

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In the opening lines of the poem, the poet observes signs which depict that a country day is coming to a close. Some of these signs are a curfew bell knelling, cattle across the field and a farmer going back home. After sometime, the poet feels lonely and thinks about the isolated rural landscape. 'Knell' is a sound of a bell, especially, when it is rung solemnly to announce a death or funeral. Thus, the poet uses this word in the first line of the poem deliberately to remind the readers about the mortality of human life.

The sober tone is maintained by the poet even in the second stanza. However, it is important to note that the poet seems to be meditative and not sad at this point. He describes the quiet atmosphere around him after the day has come to a close by using phrases like 'fades the glimmering landscape', 'air a solemn stillness' and 'drowsy tinklings'. Then, an owl's sound breaks the silence of the atmosphere. The owl is sad and complains to the moon. In the first three stanzas, the poet does not make any direct reference to funeral and death but indirectly prepares the atmosphere for funeral by describing some doleful sounds.

In the fourth stanza, the poet draws our attention to the graves in the country churchyard. The poet describes the load of earth and brings out the fact that even the earth has to be disrupted for digging a grave. The poet inverts the sentence from 'Where heaves the turf' to 'Where the turf heaves' in order to depict that the earth has already been disrupted. However, this disruption does not affect 'rude Forefathers' buried beneath the earth. They seem to be unmoved and at peace. The poet tells us that they are in 'cells'. Here the word 'cells' connotes quietness of the graveyard and that they are in deep 'sleep'.

Here the poet reminds us that the forefathers would not rise from their 'lowly beds' even after hearing 'cock's shrill clarion'. The phrase 'lowly beds' connotes humble graves and humble lives that they have lived. The poet also reminds us that they would not be able to hear the satisfying sounds of country life and would not be able to enjoy the joy that family life brings, such as the joy which a father feels when his children 'climb his knees'.

In addition, the poet also states that forefathers lying in the graves would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of working in the fields. A poem that deals with practical aspects of agriculture and rural affairs is called georgic verse. This stanza brings out the element of georgic verse in the poem, a verse that was quite popular in the eighteenth century. This relation of a farmer with soil also brings out the link of a man with nature. The element of nature was one of the major characteristics of Romantic poetry.

Further, the poet warns the rich and powerful people not to scorn the ordinary people just because they are not popular and do not have annals written on their graves. Here he reminds the rich people that they would also die one day irrespective of the fact that they are wealthy and have a respectable position in the society.

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He also tells the rich that they should not look down upon the modest graves of the ordinary people. He also implies that even though the powerful people have elaborate graves with profuse memorials and inspiring honours but these do not help in bringing them back to life. Their merits in life would not save them from death. He uses the phrase 'Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust, Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?'. In these lines, Gray personifies flattery and death as if death has a will which cannot be changed even with the help of flattery.

Gray then wonders about the hidden talents and intellectual abilities of the common people. He states that they might have become powerful people or great poets but there was no one to patronize them. Their lack of resources forced them to resort to rustic life and forget all their ambitions.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.
Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,
Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.
Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,

Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.
For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, —
Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upl
'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high.
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.
'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;
'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne,-
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'

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The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melacholy marked him for her own.
Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.
No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dreaabode
(There they alike in trembling hope repose),
The bosom of his Father and his God.

The poet compares common people to pearls and gems that lay deep down in the oceans and are unseen. He also compares them to flowers in jungles which fade away unnoticed.

In the past, these graveyards gave shelter to Hampden when he faced Charles I. Thus, these graveyards may help such heroes even in the future. He again reminds us of the talents of these common people. He believes that among these graves lay people whose talents might be equivalent to those of Milton and Cromwell. Some of them perhaps deserved to be great legislators and were capable of bringing prosperity to their country. But he is also of the opinion that though their poverty stopped them from prospering, it also helped them by stopping them from committing crimes like killing their own brothers for the throne.

Some ambitious people tried to gain patronage by flattering their patrons. People who did not do such things and died unknown were at least saved from 'killing their conscience' to get patronage. The poet is happy about the fact that villagers are away from the hustle and bustle of city life where people cherish high ambitions and spend their lives hankering for prosperity, power and fame. He is happy that villagers are able to spend a peaceful life.

Though the graves of these people are not elaborately ornamented and are not full of rhymes of praise like the graves of the rich people yet some records of their lives and few sayings from the Bible are written on their graves. These sayings might have been written by some educated people of the village so that other people can praise these deceased people. The Bible inscriptions perhaps help these people embrace death cheerfully.

After this, Gray explains the reasons for raising memorials. He tells us that memorials are raised because people spend their lives struggling therefore, they wish to be remembered after death. According to the poet, even parting souls wish their loved ones to cry for them and want praises to be written on their tombs.

Now, the poet wonders about his own death. He wonders what would happen if his loved ones inquire about him from the villagers after he dies. The poet imagines that if this happens then some peasant might tell them that he was usually found walking around this area. He also visualizes that some peasant might tell them that he could not be seen around the hills, trees and lawn, where he was usually found, for two consecutive days and the next day his corpse with lamentation was carried to the church.

Then the peasant might say that he is now in the lap of the earth. He might praise the poet that he was not fortunate enough to get fame and wealth during his lifetime but he was a knowledgeable person in spite of the fact that he was born in a modest family. The peasant might feel sad about the fact that the poet was devoid of happiness during his lifetime. But he might praise him as a sincere soul who was charitable and liberal in approach and helped poor people with his limited resources.

He then says that no one might then even ask about his merits and faults because God is the one who would reward him for his good deeds and punish him for his bad deeds on the Judgment Day. Thus, the elegy ends on a note of contentment.

Check Your Progress

4. What does the phrase 'lowly beds' denote in the poem?
5. State one characteristic of Romantic poetry evident in the poem.
6. Why are memorials raised as per the speaker of the poem?

5.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London, on 26 December 1716.
2. It was in 1742 that Gray took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer.
3. Thomas Gray was offered the post of Poet Laureate in 1757, which he declined.
4. The phrase 'lowly beds' in the poem connotes humble graves and humble lives that they have lived.
5. In the poem, the poet also states that forefathers lying in the graves would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of working in the fields. This relation of a farmer with soil also brings out the link of a man with nature. The element of nature was one of the major characteristics of Romantic poetry.

6. The speaker tells us that memorials are raised because people spend their lives struggling therefore, they wish to be remembered after death. According to the poet, even parting souls wish their loved ones to cry for them and want praises to be written on their tombs.

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5.5 SUMMARY

- Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London, on 26 December 1716. He went to Eton College where his uncle was a teacher. Reminiscing his wonderful days at Eton College, he later wrote *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*.
- It was in 1742 that he took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer. He went to Cambridge and began a self-imposed programme of literary study.
- He was also known to be extremely self-critical and afraid of failures so much so that he published only thirteen poems throughout his lifetime. It is believed that the poet started writing his most popular poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1742 soon after the death of his close friend.
- An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people. It does not tell a story but expresses feelings of sorrow.
- The poem has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry since it was written towards the end of Augustan age, a period which marked the beginning of Romantic period. The poem exhibits balanced phrasing of Augustan age and emotionalism of Romantic era.
- He also tells the rich that they should not look down upon the modest graves of the ordinary people. He also implies that even though the powerful people have elaborate graves with profuse memorials and inspiring honours but these do not help in bringing them back to life.
- Gray then wonders about the hidden talents and intellectual abilities of the common people. He states that they might have become powerful people or great poets but there was no one to patronize them.
- The poet compares common people to pearls and gems that lay deep down in the oceans and are unseen. He also compares them to flowers in jungles which fade away unnoticed.
- The poet is happy about the fact that villagers are away from the hustle and bustle of city life where people cherish high ambitions and spend their lives hankering for prosperity, power and fame. He is happy that villagers are able to spend a peaceful life.
- Now, the poet wonders about his own death. He wonders what would happen if his loved ones inquire about him from the villagers after he dies. The elegy ends on a note of contentment.

5.6 KEY WORDS

- **Elegy:** An elegy is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people.
- **Age of Enlightenment:** It is also known as the Age of Reason. The Enlightenment was an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the eighteenth century.
- **Annals:** It refers to a historical record of events arranged in a chronological order.
- **Georgic:** It is a poem or book dealing in agriculture or rural topics.

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5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of Thomas Gray.
2. Identify the major works of Thomas Gray.
3. List the elements of georgic verse as evident in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

Long-Answer Questions

1. What features of the Augustan age are evident in the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*? Give examples in support of your answer.
2. Comment on the ending of the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.*
3. Compare and contrast the lives of rich and poor as presented in the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

5.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 6 WILLIAM COLLINS

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Structure

6.0 INTRODUCTION

William Collins was a well-known eighteenth century English poet from England. The lyrical odes written by Collins' indicate a major turning away from the Augustan poetry of Alexander Pope's generation and moving towards the Romantic era that was to follow soon. In this unit, you will study about the life and works of William Collins and the critical analysis of *Ode to Evening*.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the significant events of the life of William Collins
- List the prominent works of William Collins
- Analyze the title of the poem *Ode to Evening*

6.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLIAM COLLINS

Collins was born on 25 December 1721 in Chichester, England. His father was a hat maker who had previously remained a mayor of the town. Collins underwent education at Winchester and Magdalene College, Oxford. During his studying tenure in the university, Collins completed the publishing of the *Persian Eclogues* (1742). He had started this work while he was still in school. After graduating in 1743, he remained uncertain regarding his career. He failed to procure a university degree. One of his uncles serving in the military commented about him that he is 'too indolent even for the army'. Even the notion of becoming a clergyman did not much interest him. Thus, Collins finally opted for a career in literature. In this, he won the support of his cousin, George Payne, in London who gave him some

allowance, not amounting to much. It was here that he met and became a friend of James Thomson and Dr Johnson besides the actors David Garrick and Samuel Foote.

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Fig. 6.1 *William Collins*

The year 1747 witnessed the publishing of his work *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects*. His forthcoming repute was dependent on this very work. The ode form, which permits intensely poignant depictions and individual association with the theme of the poem, mark the poems. These poems went almost unnoticed during that period as they did not comply with the Augustan spirit of the times. His not being much successful made him remain depressed. This depression was further worsened by his drunken habit. This made him go further into a mentally imbalanced condition and 1754 saw his confinement to the McDonald's Madhouse in Chelsea. He was shifted from this place under the supervision of his elder sister in Chichester till he died in 1759. His was laid to rest at St. Andrew's church.

Following the Odes, even though his mind was full of several projects, not even one of them was actually brought into action. His only other poems were the ode written on Thomson's death (1749) and *Ode on the popular superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, which were found out in an incomplete state after his death. A fascinating add-on, currently untraceable, is the *Ode on the Music of the Grecian Theatre*. He gave a description of this and put forth a proposal of having it sent to the musician William Hayes in 1750. Hayes had recently set 'The Passions' to music as an oratorio that earned some fame. This, together with the fame of the *Persian Eclogues*, a version to undergo revision, that was published the year he passed away, remains the nearest approach to the success that Collins so craved for.

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After his death, John Langhorne, British translator, poet and priest, published his poems in a collected edition which gradually gained more recognition, although never without criticism. Dr Johnson penned down a sympathetic description of his former friend in *Lives of the Poets* (1781); however, he dismissed the poetry stating that it was contrived and was not executed well.

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was William Collins born?
2. In which year was *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* published?

6.3 *ODE TO EVENING*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Text

I faught of oaten stop, or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales;
O nymph reserved, while now the bright-hair'd sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed:
Now air is hush'd save where the weak-eyed bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,
As oft he rises, 'midst the twilight path
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum:
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some soften'd strain,
Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As, musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return!
For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp

The fragrant hours, and elves
Who slept in buds the day,
And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The pensive pleasures sweet,
Prepare thy shadowy car:
Then lead, calm votaress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallow'd pile,
Or upland fallows grey
Reflects its last cool gleam.
Or if chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovere'd spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.
While Spring shall pour his show'rs, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve!
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light;
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves,
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train,
And rudely rends thy robes:
So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipp'd Health
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy favourite name!
And hymn thy fav'rite name! If aught of oaten stop, or past'ral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs and dying gales,
O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,

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O'erhang his wavy bed;
Now air is hushed, save where the weak-ey'd bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path
Against the pilgrim, borne in heedless hum:
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,
Whose numbers stealing through thy dark'ning vale
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return.
For when thy folding star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours, and elves
Who slept in flowers the day,
And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge
And sheds the fresh'ning dew, and lovelier still,
The pensive pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shad'wy car.
Then lead, calm votress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile
Or upland fallows grey
Reflect its last cool gleam.
But when chill blust'ring winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.
While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,

And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy ling'ring light;
While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;
So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipp'd Health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy fav'rite name!
If aught of oaten stop, or past'ral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
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O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
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Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;
So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipp'd Health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy fav'rite name!

Critical Analysis

Ode to Evening appeared in *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* (1747). It remains one of the most beautiful lyrics of the eighteenth century. It is written in unrhymed stanzas of four lines.

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In *Ode to Evening*, the poet is seen at his best. The personification of the 'evening' makes it a masterwork creation of Collins. It is not just a time of dusk. It is the spirit of the 'evening' appearing as Nymph. She is depicted as being reserved by nature. She is serene and simple. In her tent, the sun sets and resets. She has been depicted as a composed maid. The poet desires to sing his songs to comfort her modest ear. He desires to learn some softened strain from the 'evening' herself so that when he sings it, she is pleased.

The poem starts with an invocation to the spirit of the evening to teach the poet to sing a soft strain to it. She is not just a part of dead nature. At times she comes across as contemplative Eve. She wants to hear the poet's songs. Her hours are fragrant. Fairies, sleeping inside the buds at daytime, appear in the evening filling the atmosphere with their fragrance.

His song should be as soft as the murmur of the streams or the dying winds. The poet says that barring the cry of the bat and the beetle, there is complete calm all around in the evening. He wishes to go to some solitary and barren spot or some ancient ruined building among lonely valleys in the evening to watch its beauty. But if he is prevented from doing so by the 'chill, blustering winds or driving rain', he would like to go to a lovely cottage on the mountain side to watch the dark coloured evening gradually descending over the surrounding landscape with the 'gradual dusky veil'.

The poem ends with the poet's conviction that the evening shall continue to inspire fancy (poets), friendship (friends), science (men of learning) and smiling peace (lovers of peace) throughout the seasons of the year.

An allegorical ode is one in which the poet develops the georgic topic of time and change in an exquisite blank verse lyric. A comparison can be drawn with the Spenserian sunrise described by William Blake in *To Spring*, also unrhymed, which emulates Milton and Collins in lyric condensation and quasi-allegorical imagery. There are significant textual variants in what is today the best-known of Collins's poems. The *Ode to Evening* was a touchstone poem for early romantic poets and became one of the most frequently imitated odes written in the eighteenth century.

The succinct picture of the setting sun, in the 8th book of the *Iliad*, 'Now deep in ocean sunk the lamp of light, / Drawing behind the cloudy veil of night' has very strong outlines, and commends the warmest approbation of our judgment; but, being unadorned by other circumstances, and wanting objects to enliven the landscape, the applause ends with the judgment, and never sinks deep into the heart. The following scene in Mr Collins' *Ode to the Evening*, being animated by proper allegorical personages and coloured highly with incidental expressions, warms the breast with a sympathetic glow of retired thoughtfulness: 'For, when thy folding star, arises, shews / His paly circlet...'

The lyric stanza, without rhyme, was first introduced by Milton, in his stiff, obscure translation of the 5th ode of the first book of Horace. This new order of

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verse was adopted, polished and rendered exquisitely harmonious by Collins in his *Ode to Evening*. Collins wrote his admired *Ode to Evening*; he had a design of writing many more Odes without rhyme. If Collins lives by the reputation of one, more than of another performance, it strikes the critics that his *Ode to Evening* will be 'THAT' on which the voice of posterity will be more uniform in praise. It is a 'PEARL' of the most perfect tint and shape.

In smaller poems, blank verse has been rarely tried, except in numerous and nameless imitations of an indifferent prototype by Collins — a poet who had, indeed, a curious ear as well as an exquisite taste in versification; but both were of so peculiar a kind that neither the music of his numbers nor the beauty of his imagery are always agreeable. The very structure of the stanza of his *Ode to Evening* is so mechanical to the eye — two long lines followed by two short ones — that a presentiment (like an instinctive judgment in physiognomy) instantly occurs, that both thought and language must be fettered in a shape so mathematical, wanting even the hieroglyphic recommendations of the metrical hatchets, wings, altars and other exploded puerilities of the later Greek epigrammatists and the elder English rhymers. Collins's *Ode* itself is a precious specimen of mosaic work, in which the pictures are set with painful and consummate skill, but have a hard and cold effect, beyond the usual enamel of his style.

A critic Algernon Charles Swinburne says: 'Collins' range of flight was perhaps the narrowest but assuredly the highest of his generation. He could not be taught singing like a finch: but he struck straight upward for the sun like a lark. Again, he had an incomparable and infallible eye for landscape; a purity, fidelity, and simple-seeming subtlety of tone, unapproached until the more fiery but not more luminous advent of Burns. Among all English poets he has, it seems to me, the closest affinity to our great contemporary school of French landscape-painters. Corot on canvas might have signed his *Ode to Evening*; Millet might have given us some of his graver studies, and left them as he did no whit the less sweet for their softly austere and simply tender gravity.'

Collins is best known by his *Ode on the Passions*, but incomparably his finest and most distinctive work is the *Ode to Evening*. The superior popularity of *The Passions* is easily explained. It might be recited at a penny reading, and every line of its strenuous rhetoric would tell and every touch would be at once appreciated. But the beauties of the *Ode to Evening* are of a much stronger kind, and the structure of it is infinitely more complicated.

A critic George Saintsbury says: 'We shall meet with this uncovenanted rhymelessness not seldom; and it would be premature to discuss it in its first example, which, however, it may not be premature to say, remains by far the most successful ever written. In fact, we ought to be particularly grateful for it, because it shows, with as little adventitious aid as possible, how exquisite Collins's ear was. Yet it is impossible not to think how much more beautiful it would be with rhyme.'

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The poem was doubtlessly the result of personal experience, for it notes facts, such as the rising of the beetle in the path at twilight, that were not yet stock poetical property. The lines, 'Thy dewy fingers draw / The gradual dusky veil,' could hardly have been written by one unfamiliar with the slow disappearance of a landscape as night comes on. More remarkable are the simplicity and directness of touch by which the few details are made to stand for complete pictures. The cloudy sunset, the silence of evening, the calm lake amid the upland fallows, the fading view and the windy day in autumn, are all excellent examples of the stimulative as opposed to the delineative description.

Keats in the *Ode to Autumn* has followed Collins in the general setting and some details of his poem. 'Thou hast thy music too' is the first note in Collins, and instead of the bat and beetle, Keats' Spirit is attended by the gnat and the swallow. The silvered fallows of Collins were never far from the 'stubble-plains' touched 'with rosy hue' of the later genius. The *Ode to Evening* was reprinted in Dodsley's collection and became popular enough to be frequently imitated.

John Langhorne observes: 'The blank ode has for some time solicited admission into the English poetry; but its efforts, hitherto, seem to have been vain, at least its reception has been no more than partial. It remains a question, then, whether there is not something in the nature of blank verse less adapted to the lyric than to the heroic measure, since, though it has been generally received in the latter, it is yet unadopted in the former. In order to discover this, we are to consider the different modes of these different species of poetry. That of the heroic is uniform; that of the lyric is various; and in these circumstances of uniformity and variety probably lies the cause why blank verse has been successful in the one, and unacceptable in the other. While it presented itself only in one form, it was familiarized to the ear by custom; but where it was obliged to assume the different shapes of the lyric muse, it seemed still a stranger of uncouth figure, was received rather with curiosity than pleasure, and entertained without that ease or satisfaction which acquaintance and familiarity produce — Moreover, the heroic blank verse obtained a sanction of infinite importance to its general reception, when it was adopted by one of the greatest poets the world ever produced, and was made the vehicle of the noblest poem that ever was written. When this poem at length extorted that applause which ignorance and prejudice had united to withhold, the versification soon found its imitators, and became more generally successful than even in those countries from whence it was imported. But lyric blank verse had met with no such advantages; for Mr. Collins, whose genius and judgment in harmony might have given it so powerful an effect, has left us but one specimen of it in the *Ode to Evening*.'

He further adds: 'In the choice of his measure, he seems to have had in his eye Horace's ode to Pyrrha; for this ode bears the nearest resemblance to that mixed kind of the asclepiad and pherecratic verse; and that resemblance in some degree reconciles us to the want of rhyme, while it reminds us of those great masters of antiquity, whose works had no need of this whimsical jingle of sounds.'

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He further says: 'From the following passage one might be induced to think that the poet had it in view to render his subject and his versification suitable to each other on this occasion, and that, when he addressed himself to the sober power of Evening, he had thought proper to lay aside the foppery of rhyme'.

'Now teach me, maid composed
To breathe some soften'd strain,
Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
As, musing slow, I hail Thy genial loved return!'

But whatever were the numbers, or the versification of this ode, the imagery and enthusiasm it contains could not fail of rendering it delightful. No other of Mr Collins's odes is more generally characteristic of his genius. In one place, we discover his passion for visionary beings:

'For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant Hours, and Elves
Who slept in buds the day,
And many a Nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The pensive Pleasures sweet,
Prepare thy shadowy car.'

In another we behold his strong bias to melancholy:

'Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene,
Or find some ruin 'midst its dreary dells,
Whose walls more awful nod
By thy religious gleams.'

Then appears his taste for what is wildly grand and magnificent in nature; when, prevented by storms from enjoying his evening walk, he wishes for a situation,

'That from the mountain's side
Views wilds and swelling floods'

and through the whole, his invariable attachment to the expression of painting:

'and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.'

It might be a sufficient encomium on this beautiful ode to observe, that it has been particularly admired by a lady to whom nature has given the most perfect principles of taste.

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Check Your Progress

3. How has 'evening' been personified in the poem *Ode to Evening*?
4. How does the poem *Ode to Evening* begin?

6.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Collins was born on 25 December 1721 in Chichester, England.
2. The year 1747 witnessed the publishing of his work *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects*.
3. The personification of the 'evening' makes it a masterwork creation of Collins. It is not just a time of dusk. It is the spirit of the 'evening' appearing as Nymph. She is depicted as being reserved by nature. She is serene and simple. In her tent, the sun sets and resets. She has been depicted as a composed maid.
4. The poem starts with an invocation to the spirit of the evening to teach the poet to sing a soft strain to it. She is not just a part of dead nature. At times, she comes across as contemplative Eve. She wants to hear the poet's songs.

6.5 SUMMARY

- William Collins was a well-known eighteenth century English poet from England.
- The lyrical odes written by him indicate a major turning away from the Augustan poetry of Alexander Pope's generation and moving towards the Romantic era that was to follow soon.
- Collins was born on 25 December 1721 in Chichester, England. His father was a hat maker who had previously remained a mayor of the town.
- The year 1747 witnessed the publishing of his work *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects*.
- His only other poems were the ode written on Thomson's death (1749) and *Ode on the popular superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, which were found out in an incomplete state after his death.
- After his death, John Langhorne, British translator, poet and priest, published his poems in a collected edition which gradually gained more recognition, although never without criticism.

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- *Ode to Evening* appeared in *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* (1747).
- In *Ode to Evening*, the poet is seen at his best. The personification of the 'evening' makes it a masterwork creation of Collins.
- The poem starts with an invocation to the spirit of the evening to teach the poet to sing a soft strain to it. She is not just a part of dead nature.
- His song should be as soft as the murmur of the streams or the dying winds. The poet says that barring the cry of the bat and the beetle, there is complete calm all around in the evening.
- The poem ends with the poet's conviction that the evening shall continue to inspire fancy (poets), friendship (friends), science (men of learning) and smiling peace (lovers of peace) throughout the seasons of the year.
- The lyric stanza, without rhyme, was first introduced by Milton, in his stiff, obscure translation of the 5th ode of the first book of Horace.
- Collins is best known by his *Ode on the Passions*, but incomparably his finest and most distinctive work is the *Ode to Evening*.
- Keats in the *Ode to Autumn* has followed Collins in the general setting and some details of his poem.

6.6 KEY WORDS

- **Allegorical Ode:** It is one in which the poet develops the georgic topic of time and change in an exquisite blank verse lyric.
- **Hieroglyphics:** These are symbols in the form of pictures which are used in some writing systems, for example those of ancient Egypt.

6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write in brief about the life of William Collins.
2. Briefly mention the writing style of the poem *Ode to Evening*.

Long-Answer Questions

1. How has the poem *Ode to Evening* critically acknowledged by his contemporaries?
2. Critically analyze the title of the poem.
3. Compare and contrast Collins' *Ode to Evening* and Keats' *Ode to Autumn.*

6.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 7 WILLIAM COWPER

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Structure

7.0 INTRODUCTION

William Cowper was one of the leading English poets of the eighteenth century. Even though he had studied classical literature, yet he never used allusions or rhetorical language in his writings. He wrote in a simple language which explicitly conveyed the feelings of his heart. In several ways, he was one of the predecessors of the Romantic poetry. Cowper wrote *The Castaway* in 1799 after reading a vivid account of a crewmen being washed overboard during George Arson's 1741 around-the world voyage.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the life and works of William Cowper
- Analyse the title of the poem *The Castaway*
- Identify the salient features of Cowper's writing style

7.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLIAM COWPER

William Cowper was born at Great Berkhampstead in Hertfordshire, England on 15 November 1731. His father was Reverend John Cowper, the rector of the parish while his mother Anne belonged to the nobility. She died at the age of 37 leaving six year old Willian Cowper deprived of the love and affection of his mother. She died immediately after giving birth to one of his siblings leaving an emotional void in young Cowper's life. He was deeply affected by her death. His father married a second time. The father and son did not share much apart from the filial bond. Cowper seemed to have not received the care and affection he desired and needed.

At the age of six, Cowper was enrolled in Dr. Pitman's Boarding school in Bedfordshire. Here, Cowper was tormented by a young boy who took pleasure in persecuting the very small Cowper. After two years, he was removed from the school because of his weak eyesight. He was sent to live with Mr. and Mrs. Disney, both of whom were ophthalmologists. Cowper mentions in his memoir that the family neither knew nor practised religion. In 1741, at the age of ten, he entered Westminster school where he spent next eight years of his childhood. It is here that he was exposed to thorough learning of the classical and Latin. He found a congenial atmosphere as compared to Dr. Pitman's. Cowper's associates here were Warren Hastings, Lord Dartmouth, Charles Churchill, the satirist Robert Lloyd, the poet, Bonnell Thornton who translated *Plautus* to name a few.

Fig. 7.1 *William Cowper*

After completing his studies at Westminster school at the age of 18, Cowper spent next nine months in Great Berkhampstead. A career in law was decided for him and he became a trainee solicitor for three years. He came to London in 1749 and started his study of law. He was never inclined to the legal pursuit. At the age of 21, Cowper took a chamber at Middle Temple. Cowper was ill-adjusted both physically and emotionally. He was fragile, weak, sensitive, timid and meek. A seemingly happy man in his youth, Cowper was overcome by dejection and despair at the Middle Temple. To divert himself from these feelings of hopelessness and melancholy, he started looking for new interests. He got interested in George Herbert, his Christian thoughts and complete resignation to God. He also went to Southampton with his friends where there was marked improvement in his spirits. At the Temple, the rest of his time from 1753 to 1762, he led a healthy life reading classics, occasionally writing verses and in the company of friends. Later in life, he blamed himself for indulging in this leisurely existence, calling it sinful.

Cowper fell in love with his cousin Theodore but the romance did not culminate into marriage. Apparently, her father did not give permission for the marriage because they were first cousins. It is also said that Ashley Cowper, Theodore's father and William's uncle had detected signs of emotional instability

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in William Cowper. Cowper's hope was still alive and the affair continued for some more time but ended in 1757. The loss did not affect him for long.

Cowper did not take up any legal case even after completing his legal studies. He was less and less inclined to law. Though his legal degree fetched him an appointment as Commissioner of Bankrupts in 1759. His father died in 1759. In sometime, Cowper bought a set of chambers in the Inner Temple though he was less interested in his professional duties and more inclined towards literary pursuits. He acquainted himself with ancient, modern and contemporary writers.

In order to augment his income Cowper was nominated for Clerk of the Journals in the House of the Lords by his relative Major Cowper. It is because of his shy and meek disposition that Cowper accepted this position. A very shy and reserved person found it dreadful to mingle with the public. Soon, Cowper was called to the House of Lords by the opposition challenging his right to nomination. The thought of appearing in the bar in front of large audience terrified him and caused immense anxiety. He again became dejected in spirits. As he prepared to defend himself despair set in and he went into depression. He started longing for complete insanity so that he did not have to take the exam at the bar. He even attempted suicide thrice to avoid the situation. He started hallucinating and suffered mental collapse. He lived in the Temple until December 1763.

Later in life, Cowper believed that it was the voice of God that tempted him to commit suicide and his failure in these attempts angered God. He also suffered from sense of guilt of trying to end his life. He got obsessed with sin. Cowper suffered from morbid depression gripped by the thought that he is damned. He thought that his distress and agony is a punishment for all his sins. His apprehensions anguished his heart and never let him be in mental peace. John Cowper called upon Reverend Martin Madan, an Evangelist. The reverend reminded Cowper of the original sin and that man is naturally corrupt. Cowper found solace in his talks with the clergy but this was momentary. He started hallucinating, seeing horrible faces, listening to terrifying voices. His tortured mind and body finally collapsed and he became mad. This was the first phase of insanity in his life, beginning from 1763, that Cowper felt he is bereft of mercy of God and salvation. It lasted till his conversations with Dr. Cotton at the asylum in St. Albans where he spent some months. He was restored to sanity and this recovery was also aided by his faith in Evangelism to which he converted. His conversion deeply affected his personality and life. He decided never to go to London, the centre of pleasure. He resigned from his position as Commissioner of Bankrupts. He withdrew completely from social gatherings and company of gay spirited people.

Cowper left St. Albans in June 1765 and settled in Huntington, a few miles away from Cambridge University where his younger brother John Cowper studied. Most of his time was spent in church, private prayers and devotion to God and religious enlightenment. His acquaintances were mostly people devoted to religion. He was also inclined to find companions only in those who were akin to him in

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their religious views. It is here that he met the Unwin family and the relationship lasted lifelong. He became a permanent paying guest of the family. He enjoyed the domestic life and it was the happiest period in his life where he needed no worldly diversions. Cowper continued to stay in the house even after the death of Mr. Unwin in June 1767 where Mrs. Unwin took care of Cowper like a mother. Already a pious and religious woman, Mrs. Unwin also accepted Evangelism. They shared the same view of life and lived in perfect harmony. The Reverend John Newton of Olney visited the family and proposed them to shift to Olney in Buckinghamshire.

The family moved to Olney in September 1767. Their neighbours were poor people. Cowper enjoyed the company and conversations with Reverend Newton. Some critics are of the view that Newton's Evangelist preaching further strengthened Cowper's views that he is guilty of unpardonable sins. Others deny this influence. But it was true that self-doubt and self-examination revived. He tortured himself with the thought that he did not deserve Christ's mercy. He got yet another blow from the death of his younger brother John in 1770. If critics are to be believed his death contributed to Cowper's second attack of insanity.

The second phase of insanity was in 1773 that lasted until his death. Cowper's spirits and mental condition started declining in 1771. He got engaged to Mrs. Unwin in 1772. He also regretted the phase of his life in Southampton where he had visited with his friends after an attack of melancholy. He believed that he had committed a great sin of disobedience against God. He felt that he was cured of melancholy by the worldly diversions which were Satan's calls. He was sure that he had committed an unpardonable sin. Newton visited him daily, said family prayers and took him for walks. Mrs. Unwin remained devoted to Cowper till his death. Once again, he made an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide in 1773. Newton was given appointment in London. Though not present physically, Newton remained a friend and a counsellor to Cowper.

The success of his published collection of poems encouraged Cowper and he felt happy again. He made new acquaintances and the older ones revived. Once again, Cowper started enjoying outdoor life. His memories of traumatic events in his life were now distant and he took pleasure in remembering the times spent with his cousins Harriet and Theodora. The summer of 1786 was filled with pleasure and work. He got rid of the sobre and gloom of his past years.

In 1786, Cowper shifted to Weston with Mrs. Unwin. Willian Unwin, son of Mrs. Unwin died in November 1786, bringing back melancholy and despair in the life of the elderly couple. He dreaded winters. Cowper tried to commit suicide once gain in 1787. His spirits were revived for some time. He made a couple of new friends younger to him in Weston. He devoted himself to the translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and completed it in 1791. But his dreams kept him in anxiety. He made a trip to Eartham, in Sussex with Mrs. Unwin and other friends in 1792. His condition further declined by 1793. They moved to Norfolk in 1795 never to return. Mrs. Unwin died in 1796 after an elongated period of failing health and three paralytic strokes. Cowper died on 25 April 1800.

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William Cowper: Works

Cowper contributed to a work entitled '*Connoisseur*' edited by his sincere and loyal friend Robert Lloyd. The work delineates interesting and satirical account of those who had chambers in the Temple. It describes the carefree attitude of those pursuing a legal career. Three of the essays in 'Connoisseur', number 119, 134 and 138 are ascribed to Cowper. He is also known for his ballad, *The Journey of John Gilpin*.

Cowper wrote love poems addressed to Theodore. He also wrote a poem called *Absence* and *Bereavement* lamenting the loss of his dear friend Sir William Russell, who drowned, and his beloved Theodore, who had separated from him forever. In a narrative called *Adelphi* Cowper describes the circumstances of his younger brother John Cowper's death. It was published posthumously.

Cowper, along with Newton published a collection of hymns called the '*Olney Hymns*' in 1779. Newton collaborated with Cowper on this book of hymns to be sung by their church to engage Cowper in poetic work and commemorate their friendship. Several of them are still among the best known of English hymns such as 'Oh! For a closer walk with God'; 'Hark, my soul! it is the Lord'; and 'God moves in a mysterious way'. Cowper's *Poems* (1782) is a collection of satirical set pieces in heroic couplets, on such subjects as the progress of error, truth, hope and charity. Cowper's hymns are most Evangelical of all his poems. The 'Olney Hymns' played an important role in the Evangelical movement as the congregations found these hymns perfectly expressing their doctrinal views and religious sentiments.

His next major work *The Task* is a 100-page poem in blank verse, which established his fame. Gilbert Thomas says of Cowper's major poem, *The Task* (more than one hundred pages): 'The whole has one tendency: to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.' The poem was composed in response to his friend Lady Austen's remark that he should write on the subject of her sofa. The poem demonstrates the poet's contention that country lends itself to the cultivation of 'piety and virtue,' while life in the city leads to degradation of man. It is Cowper's poetic expression on nature, society, God and man. The poem deals with simple and familiar themes and contains many fine descriptions of countryside and nature including details of ordinary things. *The Task* is distinguished by its abundant descriptive detail and conversational mode and introducing new motifs into English poetry, including such subjects as the love of animal and domestic life.

Cowper wrote a poem title *Tirocinium* (Latin for the state of a new recruit—inexperienced, raw) in which he praises private education. He resents and condemns public school system. The poem is also a cry from a son to a father to take special care of their children's mental and emotional health.

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Cowper wrote his last original poem on March 20 1799, called *The Castaway*. The poem *The Castaway* was translated into Latin by Cowper himself. The poem tells the story of a sailor washed overboard in a storm. His comrades desperately try to save him but fail in their efforts. They are forced to leave him behind because the ship cannot be stopped in the wind. He survives for an hour calling out in vain and then dies.

Cowper's *Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper*, published posthumously in 1816, recounts his first attack of mental illness, his subsequent treatment and his religious rebirth. It was written after his conversion to Evangelical religion, it is an honest account of his spiritual life. The piece makes clear to its readers the reason for his morbid personality and insanity. He was obsessed with sin and considered himself a sinner irrevocably doomed.

Cowper's letters, first published in *The Life and Works of William Cowper* (1835-37), are unanimously admired for their humour, keen observation, and the writers ability to express every day and ordinary subjects in an engaging manner. These letters reveal a lot about Cowper's life. They also depict his love of nature and genial spirits and humanitarianism.

The volume *Poems by William Cowper*, *of the Inner Temple*, *Esq*. first appeared in 1782. It includes long and short poems like *Table Talk*, *Boadicea*, *Verses Supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk*, four satires on philosophical subjects, meditative verses on moral and theological issues such as *The Progress of Error* and Truth. These are characterized by Cowper's spontaneous and simple diction and emotional response to nature. They become didactic in tone as the poet explores moral relationship of human beings with nature, society and God.

Another collection of *Poems* appeared in 1798, containing *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, *Yardley Oak*, *A sonnet To Mrs Unwin*, and the mock-elegy *On the Death of Mrs Throckmorton's Bulfinch* and other poems, satirical verses, elegiac poems, his darkest and most grief-stricken. The collection was subsequently expanded to include works Cowper composed in his final years, notably *The Castaway*, written in 1799, which documents his anxiety and spiritual torment.

William Cowper started writing for publishing at the age of 50. As a poet, he was against servile imitation. He also believed that the contemporary poets were writing to appeal to the public. His works are marked by simplicity of language. He wrote many poems to make people familiar with Bible. His hymns are loaded with Biblical metaphors.

Cowper is considered a transitional poet representing the old and the new, the Neoclassical and the Romantic in his works. Cowper's use of blank verse, his interest in nature, his focus on everyday life, and his emotional response to the world around him establish Cowper as the precursor of the Romantic period. It puts him in league with poets like George Crabbe, Robert Burns, and William Wordsworth. He is neoclassical poet in his admiration for the classics, writing

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moral satires and didactic verse, order and rationalism. At the same time, he is a precursor to the Romantic movement in his description of humble lives and affinity with nature. He is also one of the established poets of the Evangelical movement. He has also been praised for his social commentary and self-analysis. Cowper's popularity as a writer during hit times also owed to his religious beliefs and advocacy of humanitarian ideals.

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was William Cowper born?
2. Who were Cowper's associates in Westminster school?
3. In which year was Cowper appointed the Commissioner of Bankrupts?
4. Name the poem which commemorates Cowper's and Newton's friendship.

7.3 *THE CASTAWAY*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Text

Obscurest night involv'd the sky,
Th' Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destin'd wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.

He lov'd them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.
Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;

But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.
Some succour yet they could afford;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delay'd not to bestow.

But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.
Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.
He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent pow'r,
His destiny repell'd;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—Adieu!
At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

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No poet wept him: but the page
Of narrative sincere;
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.
I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.
No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

The Castaway was written by William Cowper in a ballad form in 1799. This was his final poem as he died a year later at the age of 69. Let us now study the poem stanza-wise.

Stanza 1

Obscurest night involv'd the sky,
Th'Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destin'd wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

Notes

Obscurest- dubious, uncertain

Atlantic- The ocean lying between Europe and Africa to the east and North and South America to the west. It is divided by the equator into the North Atlantic and the South Atlantic oceans.

Billows- strong waves

Wretch- unfortunate person

Washed headlong- fell from the ship with head first

On board- on the ship

Floating home- ship is referred to as floating home

Explanation

The dark, unclear night made it difficult to see the sky and know the direction. The waves in the Atlantic Ocean were gushing outward with undulating motion. It was in this hour that the speaker was unfortunate to fell headlong into the water and got separated from the ship in which he is travelling. Now, he is left all alone, without friends and without hope. His ship has left never to return again.

Stanza 2

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.
He lov'd them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Notes

Braver chief- no one more courageous than the chief of this ship

Albion- a literary term for Britain or England often used when referring to ancient or historical times

Beheld- see (past participle of behold)

Explanation

The speaker was travelling with the most courageous naval chief of England. There was no one in England as brave as him. Also, not a single ship was seen departed from England with such warm wishes and blessings as this one left the shores of England. The speaker loved both-the chief and the ship. But in vain, he will neither see the chief nor the ship ever again.

Stanza 3

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

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Whelming- engulfing

Brine- salt water, seawater

Strife- conflict, discord

A lasting strife- last struggle

Despair- hopeless

Explanation

It was not very long before he fell into the salty water of the ocean which was witnessing an overwhelming storm. He was an expert swimmer but he lay there on water tired and weak. His strength was waning and he was losing his courage. But he made a last try by waging anger against his death and in this he was supported by complete loss of hope and faith of life.

Stanza 4

He shouted: nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Notes

Vessel- ship or large boat

Vessel's course- route of the ship

Furious blast- thunder and storm

Pitiless- cruel

Perforce- forced by circumstances

Outcast- castaway, rejected

Scudded- driven by the force of wind

Explanation

He shouted and called out for help from his friends on the ship. His friends also tried to save him as well as the ship. But the furiously strong storm built up like a blast in the ocean. So the sailors on the ship were pitifully compelled to leave the speaker behind and were driven forcefully in the direction of the wind.

Stanza 5

Some succour yet they could afford;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delay'd not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Notes

Succour- help
Afford- manage
Cask- drum
Coop- cage
Cord- rope
Floated- glide
Bestow- grant
Should visit more- will not come back or will not be saved

Explanation

The sailors on the ship were able to provide some aid to the speaker in spite of the raging storm and distress. They threw a cask, a coop, a rope at the speaker so that he could make his way to the ship and save his life. But they all knew that it will be very difficult for the speaker to make it to the shore or to the ship.

Stanza 6

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

Notes

Haste- hurry
Condemn- criticize, express disapproval
Flight- escape
Bitter- showing hurt, anger
Deserted- no people around
Nigh- near

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Explanation

Though it seemed cruel that his friends and companions on the ship were leaving him behind to die but the speaker could not condemn their act of working fast to save their lives because the speaker is consciously aware that fleeing from the ocean as soon as possible is the only way to rescue themselves from this life threatening storm. Yet, the speaker feels bitter to meet death like this, deserted, left all alone even when his friends were so near.

Stanza 7

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent pow'r,
His destiny repell'd;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—Adieu!

Notes

Self-upheld- support himself

Repelled-fight off

Entreated- beg, plead

Adieu- goodbye

Explanation

The one who is alive upholding himself all alone even for an hour in the ocean on such a stormy night has survived for a long time. And as long as he was able to hold on to his life with all his might and power and the energy left he kept his destined death away from himself. As the time passed by minute by minute, he cried for help and sometimes cried farewell to his life.

Stanza 8

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

Notes

Transient- temporary

Respite- rest

Past- gone by

Blast- burst of wave

Catch the sound- hear no more

Toil- hard work

Subdued- lowered, toned down

Stifling- choking

Explanation

Gradually, his momentary reliefs were also gone. His companions, who could hear his cried of help earlier, could no more hear his voice which was now lost in the sound of the destructive waves in the ocean. By then, the speaker could no more work any harder to save himself from death. The water entered his body and he drowned into the ocean.

Stanza 9

No poet wept him: but the page
Of narrative sincere;
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

Notes

Wept- lamented

Anson- George Anson, a British admiral and a wealthy aristocrat. He is known for circumnavigating the globe.

Explanation

No poet ever wrote poetry on the sailor's loss of life. But there is one page sincerely written on the efforts of the sailor that tell's his name, his age and his value as a sailor and a person. His name is Anson. Poetry or songs written in remembrance of the great action immortalize the dead.

Stanza 10

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,

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To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

Notes

Purpose not- do not try to
Descanting- discuss
Melancholy- sad
Enduring- lasting, durable
Misery- suffering
Delights- takes pleasure
Trace- find out
Semblance- similarity, resemblance
In another's case- in another story, event, example

Explanation

The speaker does not wish or dream to write a melodious song or discuss the fate of the sailor to make this melancholic fate of the sailor specific to him. This kind of misery traces itself in similar incidents involving different people.

This remnant of delight and this alertness to spiritual reality and poetic form seems to point to something less than absolute desolation.

Stanza 11

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

Notes

Voice divine- God did not intervene
Allay'd- diminish, put to rest
Propitious- favourable
Effectual- powerful, successful, effective
Aid- help
Perish'd- die,
Whelm'd- submerged
Gulfs- chasm, void

Explanation

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There was no divine intervention to diminish the storm. There was no auspicious light shone to save the sailor. When all kinds of assistance is withdrawn from human beings they perish, they die and each one dies alone. The poet says that he is suffering a storm that is rougher than the sailor suffered and lost his life. The poet says, he is engulfed and buried in a deep chasm than the sailor was. John Piper says, 'This is clearly meant by Cowper to be a parable of his own forsaken and doomed condition…There is something paradoxical about this statement of despair. The fact that he wrote it at all shows that his spirit was not wholly paralyzed with meaninglessness and emptiness. He is still strangely alert and responsive to the world. A man cannot write a beautiful poem who has lost all his joy in beauty.' The poem reflects Cowper's faith in spiritual reality and mercy of God in the trials of human beings.

The 'storm' represents the difficulties and anxieties that Cowper suffered in his period of insanity. It also symbolizes the trials and tribulations of mankind. The poem presents a vision of life as a voyage over a tempestuous ocean. Like the voyager's friends, even Cowper's friends tried to cheer him up. The image of a voyager in the stormy sea or ocean recurs in many of his other poems, his letters as well as his memoir. 'The analogy that Cowper makes between himself and the sailor is so pointed that no one acquainted with his life can read these verses without feeling sympathy for his suffering.'

Check Your Progress

5. When was *The Castaway* composed by William Cowper?
6. How do the sailors on the ship assist the speaker in saving his life?
7. What does the 'storm' in the poem *The Castaway* symbolize?

7.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. William Cowper was born at Great Berkhampsted in Hertfordshire, England on 15 November 1731.
2. In Westminster school, Cowper's associates were Warren Hastings, Lord Dartmouth, Charles Churchill, the satirist Robert Lloyd, the poet, Bonnell Thornton who translated Plautus to name a few.
3. Cowper was appointed the Commissioner of Bankrupts in 1759.
4. Cowper, along with Newton published a collection of hymns called the *Olney Hymns* in 1779. Newton collaborated with Cowper on this book of

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hymns to be sung by their church to engage Cowper in poetic work and commemorate their friendship.

5. *The Castaway* was written by William Cowper in a ballad form in 1799.
6. The sailors on the ship were able to provide some aid to the speaker in spite of the raging storm and distress. They threw a cask, a coop, a rope at the speaker so that he could make his way to the ship and save his life. But they all knew that it will be very difficult for the speaker to make it to the shore or to the ship.
7. The 'storm' in the poem *The Castaway* symbolizes the difficulties and anxieties that Cowper suffered in his period of insanity. It also symbolizes the trials and tribulations of mankind.

7.5 SUMMARY

- William Cowper was born at Great Berkhampstead in Hertfordshire, England on 15 November 1731. His father was Reverend John Cowper, the rector of the parish and mother Anne belonged to nobility.
- At the age of six, Cowper was enrolled in Dr. Pitman's Boarding school in Bedfordshire. Here, Cowper was tormented by a young boy who took pleasure in persecuting the very small Cowper.
- In 1741, at the age of ten, he entered Westminster school where he spent next eight years of his childhood. It is here that he was exposed to thorough learning of the classical and Latin.
- After completing his studies at Westminster school at the age of 18, Cowper spent next nine months in Great Berkhampstead. Career in law was decided for him and he became a trainee solicitor for three years.
- Cowper fell in love with his cousin Theodore but the romance did not culminate into marriage. Apparently, her father did not give permission for the marriage because they were first cousins.
- Cowper did not take up any legal case even after completing his legal studies. He was less and less inclined to law. Though his legal degree fetched him an appointment as Commissioner of Bankrupts in 1759.
- Later in life, Cowper believed that it was the voice of God that tempted him to commit suicide and his failure in these attempts angered God. He also suffered from sense of guilt of trying to end his life.
- Cowper left St. Albans in June 1765 and settled in Huntington, a few miles away from Cambridge University where his younger brother John Cowper studied.

- The second phase of insanity was in 1773 that lasted until his death. Cowper's spirits and mental condition started declining in 1771. He got engaged to Mrs. Unwin in 1772.
- The success of his published collection of poems encouraged Cowper and he felt happy again. He made new acquaintances and the older ones revived. Once again, Cowper started enjoying outdoor life.
- Cowper wrote love poems addressed to Theodore. He also wrote a poem called *Absence* and *Bereavement* lamenting the loss of his dear friend Sir William Russell, who drowned, and his beloved Theodore, who had separated from him forever.
- Cowper wrote his last original poem on March 20 1799, called *The Castaway*. The poem *The Castaway* was translated into Latin by Cowper himself. The poem tells the story of a sailor washed overboard in a storm.
- Cowper's *Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper*, published posthumously in 1816, recounts his first attack of mental illness, his subsequent treatment and his religious rebirth.
- William Cowper started writing for publishing at the age of 50. As a poet, he was against servile imitation. He also believed that the contemporary poets were writing to appeal to the public.
- *The Castaway* was written by William Cowper in a ballad form in 1799. This was his final poem as he died a year later at the age of 69.
- The poem reflects Cowper's faith in spiritual reality and mercy of God in the trials of human beings.
- The 'storm' represents the difficulties and anxieties that Cowper suffered in his period of insanity. It also symbolizes the trials and tribulations of mankind. The poem presents a vision of life as a voyage over a tempestuous ocean.

7.6 KEY WORDS

- **Blank Verse:** It is a literary form of writing poetry in which there is no rhyme but it does have iambic pentameter.
- **Evangelical Movement:** It represents a loosely confederated movement of Protestants from the eighteenth century to the present believing in the need for a conversion experience, a personal relationship with Jesus, and relying on the Bible as the standard for faith and practice.
- **Didactic Verse:** It is a form of literary writing intended to teach or convey information.
- **Neoclassical:** In general, it refers to the revival of a classical style or treatment in art, literature, architecture, or music.

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7.7 SELF ASSESSEMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of William Cowper.
2. List the major works of William Cowper.
3. Mention the significant features of Cowper's writing style.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the theme of the poem *The Castaway*.
2. Critically analyze to poem *The Castaway*.
3. How is the sailor's fate described in the poem? How does it fit within the greater scheme, as mentioned towards the end of the poem *The Castaway*?
4. Examine the use of Christian theology in *The Castaway*.
5. Comment upon Cowper' views on religion.

7.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 8 WILLIAM BLAKE: *THE LAMB*

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Structure

8.0 INTRODUCTION

William Blake is recognized as one of the prominent contributors to English literature. In 1789, he published his *Songs of Innocence*, but it was followed *by Songs of Experience*, comprising a deep expression of adult corruption and repression. In this unit, you will study about Blake's poem *The Lamb*, written and published as part of *Songs of Innocence*. The poem is in the form of a dialogue between a child and the lamb. It is one of the simplest poems written in English literature yet immense in meaning and thought.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the life and works of William Blake
- Examine the writing style adopted by Blake in *The Lamb*
- Analyze Blake's vision of childhood as depicted in *Songs of Innocence*

8.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake was born in London on 28 November 1757. Two of his six siblings died in infancy. From early childhood, Blake spoke of having visions—at four he saw God 'put his head to the window'; around age nine, while walking through the countryside, he saw a tree filled with angels. Initially, his parents tried to discourage him from lying but later they did observe that he was different from his peers and did not force him to attend conventional school. In 1782, he married an illiterate woman named Catherine Boucher. Blake taught her to read and write, and also

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instructed her in draftsmanship. She gradually helped him print the illuminated poetry for which he is remembered today; the couple had no children. Blake's first printed work, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), is a collection of apprentice verse, mostly imitating classical models. The poems protest against war, tyranny, and King George III's treatment of the American colonies. He published his most popular collection, *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 and followed it in 1794, with *Songs of Experience*. Some readers interpret *Songs of Innocence* in a straightforward fashion, considering it primarily a children's book, but others have found hints at parody or critique in its seemingly naive and simple lyrics.

Songs of Innocence: Overview

The spontaneity of these songs is the spontaneity of art, not of nature, of imagination and not of experience. Nothing but the purest imagination could give so stainless an image. The pure expression of spontaneity has never been made before or since. If we compare the *Songs of Innocence* with Stevenson's *Child Garden of Verses*, we are not once conscious of an immense difference. Stevenson writes of his own childhood, making the reminiscent efforts and fanciful condescension of a grown man. Blake recaptures the child's mind. He does not merely write about childish happiness; he becomes the happy child. He does not speak of, or for, the child; he lets the child speak its own delight and, what is most marvellous, there are no false tones in his voice. Stevenson is particular writes memories of his own childhood: he expresses what he remembers of his own wonder or fancy, his childish hopes and fears. Blake is universal – he expresses the natural delight in the life of every happy child in the world. The cry of his *Little Boy Lost* is the cry of every child at the first discovery of loneliness.

All this has been recognized. But what is not so widely recognized is the fact that these songs are all symbolic. *The Lamb* is a symbol of 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' *The Echoing Green* is not only the record of a happy day; it is a symbolic presentation of the Day of Innocence from sunrise to sunset. *Infant Joy, The Little Black Boy*, and *Laughing Song* symbolize the three ages of Innocence: infancy, childhood and youth. *A Cradle Song, Nurse's Song,* and *Holy Thursday* are symbolic of the same ages of man, this time in relation to society; and the remaining poems, which images the human soul in its quest of self-realization, are all of even deeper symbolic import. Reading them, Blake once decided they should be placed in order because we pass through consecutive stages of growth from infancy to self-consciousness. It is a mistake to say that the symbolism of these poems is so unobtrusive that it can well be neglected. Without that symbolism, these poems could not have been written, and to ignore this fact is not the best way to appreciate them.

Blake's theme was the soul of man. His aim was to revel the same nature of the soul. This is ultimately the concern of every true poet. Blake differs from others in that it was his whole concern. His aim being clear to him, how was he to attain it? Symbols as Freud has shown, are the only language of the soul. When Blake

realized exactly what he wanted to write about he could employ no other means but the symbols. How else could the immaterial adventures of the soul find sensible means of expression?

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There are many technical faults like palpable irregularities, metrical license, lapse of grammar; but often the sweetest melody and the daring eloquence of rhythm saves it all.

There is in these poems the same divine afflatus as in Blake's *Poetical Sketches*; a maturity of expression, despite the persisting negligence and a maturity of thought and motive. These poems also have a unity and a mutual relationship, the influence of which is much weakened if the poems be read otherwise than as a whole.

Who but Blake, with his pure heart, his simple exalted character, could have transfigured a common-place meeting of charity children at St. Paul's, as he has done in the *Holy Thursday*. It is a picture of tender and grand at the same time. The bold images, by a wise instinct resorted to at the close of the first and second stanzas and the opening of the third, are in the highest degree imaginative; they are true as only poetry can be.

The poem *Spring* is very vocal despite imperfect rhymes. From addressing the child, the poet, by a transition infrequent with him, passes out of himself into the child's person, showing a wide-range of sympathy with childlike feelings. We are made to see the little three-year-old prattler stroking the white lamb, her feelings made articulate for her. Even more remarkable is the sentiment appropriate to that perennial image of meekness. To this poem, the fierce eloquence of *The Tyger* in the *Songs of Experience* is an anti-type. In *The Lamb* the poet again changes person to that of a child. Of lyrical beauty, *The Laughing Song* is a good specimen, with its happy ring of merry innocent voices. This and the *Nurse's Song* are more in the style of his early poems but of far mature execution. The little pastoral poem *The Shepherd* has a delicate simplicity. Noteworthy also is *The Echoing Green* with its picture sequences in a warmer hue, its delightful domesticity, and its expressive melody. The touching *Cradle Song* is irradiated by a lovely sympathy and piety. More enchanting still is the air of fancy and sympathy which animates *The Dream*; that

Did weave a shade o'er my angel-guarded bed;
of an emmet that had lost her way,
Where on grass me thought I lay.

The readers appreciate the symbolic grandeur of *The Little Boy Lost* and *The Little Boy Found*, or the enigmatic tenderness of *The Blossom* and *The Divine Image*. The verses, *On Another's Sorrow*, express some of Blake's favourite religious ideas, his abiding notions on the subject of the Godhead, which surely suggest the kernel of Christian feeling. A similar tinge of the divine colours the lines called *Night* with its revelation of angelic guardians, believed in with unquestioning piety by Blake. The poet here makes us conscious, as we read, of

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the noiseless steps of the angels. For a nobler depth of religious beauty, with a grandeur of sentiment and language to suit, there is no parallel or hint elsewhere of such a poem as *The Little Black Boy*:

My mother bore me in the southern wild.

We may read these poems again and again, and they continue fresh as at first. There is something in them which does not become stale, a perfume as of a growing violet, which renews itself as fast as it is inhaled.

The Chimney Sweeper and *Holy Thursday* are remarkable due to the anticipation of the daring choice of homely subject, of the yet more daringly familiar manner, nay, of the very metre and trick of style adopted by Wordsworth in such poems as *The Reverie of Poor Susan, The Star-Gazers*, and *The Power of Music*. The little chimney-sweeper's dream has the spiritual touch peculiar to Blake's hand.

The tender loveliness of these poems will hardly re-appear in Blake's subsequent writing. Darker phases of feeling, more sombre colours, profounder meanings, ruder eloquence, characterize the *Songs of Experience* five years later.

The design, which in the most literal sense illuminates the *Songs of Innocence*, consist of poetized domestic scenes. The drawing and draperies are as grand in style as graceful, though covering few inches' space: the colour pure, delicate, yet in effect rich and full. The mere tinting of the text and of the free ornamental border often makes a refined picture. The costumes of the period are idealized, the landscape given in pastoral are symbolic hints. Sometimes these drawings almost suffer from being looked at as a book and held close, instead of at due distance as pictures, where they become more effective. In composition, colour, pervading feeling, they are lyrical to the eye, as the Songs are to the ear. On the whole, the design of the *Songs of Innocence*' are finer as well as more pertinent to the poems; more closely interwoven with them, than those which accompany the *Songs of Experience*.

The *renaissance* of wonder: Blake's *Songs of Innocence* carried his own peculiar blend of the earthly and the unearthly. The first stanza of the first poem has an imaginative naiveté that belong to no one else:

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me.....

Blake's lyrics most completely fulfil the definition of romanticism as 'the *renaissance* of wonder'. The world of nature and man is the world of love and beauty and innocence enjoyed by a happy child, or rather by a poet who miraculously retains an unspoiled and inspired vision. But in the *Songs of Experience* the serpent has corrupted Eden, and themes that before had the radiance of spontaneous purity and joy are darkened by a knowledge of age and

evil and suffering and oppressive authority. The most striking if not the most typical contrast is that between *The Lamb* and *The Tyger,* between a primitive painting of the innocent child, lamb and Christ, and a fiery incantation, a symbolic hymn of wonder and terror and power. In *The Tyger,* Blake celebrates the untamed forces in man and nature that must shatter unnatural ethical restraints and mechanistic philosophies.

This is how Alexander Gilchrist, who wrote an exhaustive biography of Blake, commented on the *Songs of Innocence:*

> 'As we read, fugitive glimpses open, clear as brief, of our buried childhood, of an unseen world present, past, to come; we are endowed with new spiritual sight, with unwonted intuitions, bright visitants from finer realms of thought, which ever elude us, ever hover near. We encounter familiar objects, in unfamiliar transfigured aspects, simple expression and deep meanings, type and anti-type. True, there are palpable irregularities, metrical licence, lapse of grammar, and even of orthography; but often the sweetest melody, most daring eloquence of rhythm, and what is more, appropriate rhythm. They are unfinished poems: yet would finish have bettered their bold and careless freedom? Would it not have brushed away the delicate bloom, that visible spontaneity, so rare and great a charm, the eloquent attribute of our old English ballads, and of the early songs of all nations. The form is, in these songs, a transparent medium of the spiritual thought.'

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was Blake born?
2. When did Blake get married to Catherine Boucher?
3. Mention the prominent poems of William Blake.

8.3 *THE LAMB*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Text

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,

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Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

Some Important Explanations

1. *Little lamb……..made thee.*

   The first stanza contains a number of natural pictures to build up lamb's habitat. But the emphasis is on the 'lamb-hood'–that is, the character and qualities of this innocent creature of God. The speaker asks: 'Little Lamb, who made thee?' The speaker is, of course, a child who puts child-like questions.

2. *Little lamb……bless thee.*

   The maker of the lamb is himself called a 'lamb'. The reference is to Christ who because of his qualities of gentleness and meekness, and mildness is so called.

3. *For he calls Himself a Lamb –*

   Christ is known as a Lamb. Christ also possessed the qualities of a child and praised the innocence of children. (That is why, in the Introduction, the child on the cloud may be regarded as symbolizing Christ).

4. *We are called by His name*:

   Both the child and the lamb have the same qualities as Christ. They all share the qualities of meekness, mildness and innocence. The lamb, the child, and Christ are identified in this poem. Christ had the qualities of meekness and mildness which both a lamb and a child possess. Christ was an incarnation of love and tenderness.

   'The structure of each stanza consists of a theme (2 lines), its exposition (6 lines), and a coda (2 lines). Technically it is a triumph of form, but that one hardly notices, such is the childish beauty of the symbol, and the deep religious feeling which pulses through it.'

Critical Appreciation

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The Lamb is one of the simplest poems of Blake, both as regards the subject and the style. It has a significant position in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

In the first stanza, the child who is supposed to be speaking to the lamb gives a brief description of the little animal as he sees it. The lamb has been blessed with life and with the capacity to feed by the stream and over the meadow; it has been endowed with bright and soft wool which serves as its clothing; it has a tender voice which fills the valley with joy. We have here a true portrait of a lamb.

In the second stanza, there is an identification of the lamb, Christ and the child. Christ has another name, that is, Lamb, because Christ is meek and mild like a lamb. Christ was also a child when he first appeared on this earth as the Son of God. Hence the appropriateness of the following lines:

He becomes a little child,
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.

The child in this poem speaks to the lamb, as if the lamb were another child and could respond to what is being said. The child shows his deep joy in the company of the lamb who is just like him, meek and mild. The poem conveys the very spirit of childhood – the purity, the innocence, the tenderness of childhood and the affection that a child feels for little creatures. A religious note is introduced in the poem because of the image of Christ as a child.

The Lamb is a pastoral poem and it thus perfectly harmonizes with the pastoral note of the Introduction to the *Songs of Innocence*. The pastoral note in Blake is another symbol of innocence of joy.

The particular significance of this poem lies in the fact that it is a counterpart to *The Tyger* of the *Songs of Experience*. In other words, *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* represent the two contrary states of the human soul. The opposition between these two poems is most pointed and striking. The lamb represents the violent and terrifying forces within man. Taken together, the lamb and the tiger represent the duality of human nature.

Blake's Vision of Childhood as Depicted in the *Songs of Innocence*

The world of the *Songs of Innocence* is largely a child's world. It is a world of simplicity, purity, happiness, and security, though touches of the adult world of misery and guilt do occasionally intrude here. The central situation in this world is that of a child or young animal delighting in life. Fear is not necessarily totally absent from this world, but when danger threatens, a parent-figure (father, mother, God, or angel) is at hand to console and to comfort.

The keynote of the world of the *Songs of Innocence* is struck in the very opening poem called *Introduction* which is a little pastoral but which is also an appropriate preface to the poems that follow. Blake here thinks of himself as a shepherd with a pipe, playing, songs of joy in the open country, when he sees a

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'child' or a lamb; and under its inspiration he writes 'happy songs' which 'every child may joy to hear'. The child in this poem seems to carry suggestions of (1) the Christ child speaking from Heaven ('a cloud'); (2) an angel symbolizing innocence; and (3) the spirit of pastoral poetry. It is possible therefore, to treat the poem as an allegory, its subject being divine inspiration. The poem brings divinity effortlessly to earth. The fact that the poem deals with divine inspiration in such simple and natural terms makes it a highly appropriate introduction to the *Songs of Innocence*. The poet shows himself setting out happily to record the joys of childhood which are pure and secure.

The Echoing Green is the record of a happy day. It is a scene of a village green on a warm afternoon in late spring, but it is also a symbolic presentation of the days of innocence from sunrise to sunset. Children, young folk, and the old people all participate in an 'unfallen' enjoyment of life in a beautiful natural environment. The poem reminds us of the Biblical picture of Adam and Eve before they sinned and were expelled from Paradise. Even the reminiscences of the old people seem not to contain any regret. The end of the day brings rest and refreshment, not fear of darkness.

The Lamb suggests the Lamb of God that 'taketh away the sin of the world'. What is vital in this poem is the nature of the innocent creature of God. Innocence has a divine source. The innocent lamb symbolizes Christ, the incarnation of love and tenderness. The child who speaks in the poem is also identified with Christ because Christ became a child and particularly praised the innocence of children. The child-like qualities of this poem lie particularly in the little speaker's unselfconscious and serious address to the lamb as to another little child, and in his delight in repetition.

Check Your Progress

4. What is the analogy drawn in the second stanza of the poem *The Lamb*?
5. How is *The Lamb* a counterpart to the poem *The Tyger*?

8.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. William Blake was born in London on 28 November 1757.
2. In 1782, he married an illiterate woman named Catherine Boucher.
3. The prominent poems of William Blake are *A Cradle Song, Nurse's Song,* and *Holy Thursday, Spring* and others.
4. In the second stanza, there is an identification of the lamb, Christ, and the child. Christ has another name, that is, Lamb, because Christ is meek and mild like a lamb. Christ was also a child when he first appeared on this earth as the Son of God.

5. *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* represent the two contrary states of the human soul. The opposition between these two poems is most pointed and striking. The lamb represents the violent and terrifying forces within man. Taken together, the lamb and the tiger represent the duality of human nature.

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8.5 SUMMARY

- William Blake was born in London on 28 November 1757. Two of his six siblings died in infancy.
- He published his most popular collection, *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 and followed it in 1794, with *Songs of Experience*.
- Some readers interpret *Songs of Innocence* in a straightforward fashion, considering it primarily a children's book, but others have found hints at parody or critique in its seemingly naive and simple lyrics.
- Blake is universal – he expresses the natural delight in the life of every happy child in the world. The cry of his *Little Boy Lost* is the cry of every child at the first discovery of loneliness.
- Symbols as Freud has shown, are the only language of the soul. When Blake realized exactly what he wanted to write about he could employ no other means but the symbols. How else could the immaterial adventures of the soul find sensible means of expression?
- This and the *Nurse's Song* are more in the style of his early poems but of far mature execution. The little pastoral poem *The Shepherd* has a delicate simplicity. Noteworthy also is *The Echoing Green* with its picture sequences in a warmer hue, its delightful domesticity, and its expressive melody.
- The tender loveliness of these poems will hardly re-appear in Blake's subsequent writing. Darker phases of feeling, more sombre colours, profounder meanings, ruder eloquence, characterize the *Songs of Experience* five years later.
- Blake's lyrics most completely fulfil the definition of romanticism as 'the *renaissance* of wonder'. The world of nature and man is the world of love and beauty and innocence enjoyed by a happy child, or rather by a poet who miraculously retains an unspoiled and inspired vision.
- *The Lamb* is one of the simplest poems of Blake, both as regards the subject and the style. It has a significant position in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.
- The child in this poem speaks to the lamb, as if the lamb were another child and could respond to what is being said. The child shows his deep joy in the company of the lamb who is just like him, meek and mild.
- The particular significance of this poem lies in the fact that it is a counterpart to *The Tyger* of the *Songs of Experience*. In other words, *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* represent the two contrary states of the human soul.

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- The world of the *Songs of Innocence* is largely a child's world. It is a world of simplicity, purity, happiness, and security, though touches of the adult world of misery and guilt do occasionally intrude here.
- *The Lamb* suggests the Lamb of God that 'taketh away the sin of the world'. What is vital in this poem is the nature of the innocent creature of God. Innocence has a divine source. The innocent lamb symbolizes Christ, the incarnation of love and tenderness.

8.6 KEY WORDS

- **Pastoral Poem:** It presents an idealistic, almost Utopian, view of rural life.
- **Symbolism:** It is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense.
- **Draftsmanship:** It refers to the art of making mechanical drawings such as that of machines, structures and so forth.

8.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of William Blake.
2. Mention the prominent works of William Blake.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyze *The Lamb* as a pastoral poem.
2. Examine Blake's vision of childhood as depicted in the *Songs of Innocence*.
3. Compare and contrast the poem *The Lamb* and *The Tyger*.

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BLOCK - III

POETRY III

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UNIT 9 WILLIAM BLAKE: *THE TYGER*

Structure

9.0 INTRODUCTION

The Tyger written by William Blake was published in a collection of poems called *Songs of Experience* in 1794, and the poem was composed during his radical period. The poems in *Songs of Experience*, on the other hand, deal with poignant issues of what happens when that innocence is lost. *The Tyger* is often read in comparison with the poem *The Lamb* from *Songs of Innocence*. *The Tyger* questions that it is the same creator (God) who created the tiger and the lamb as well. *The Lamb* is one of the sublime poems which asks the Lamb who made 'thee' (just like *The Tyger*), admires how soft and cute the lamb is and then tells it about the creator God. In this unit, you will study about William Blake's revolutionary ideas and a critical appreciation of the poem, *The Tyger*.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the ideas espoused by William Blake
- Critically analyze the poem *The Tyger*
- Examine the use of symbolism in the poem *The Tyger*

9.2 BLAKE'S REVOLUTIONARY VIEWS

NOTES

William Blake was a revolutionary in every sense. His views on politics, religion, literature and science were all revolutionary as he could not accept the prevailing ideas and culture of the eighteenth century. He was opposed to the eighteenth century mechanistic view of the universe. Therefore, he despised the tendency to analyse rather than synthesize which made him critical of philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau:

> Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau:
> Mock on, Mock on, 'tis all in vain!
> You throw the sand against the wind,
> And the wind blows it back again.

Again, in *Reason and Imagination,* Blake says:

> I come in self-annihilation and the grandeur of Inspiration
> To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour,
> To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
> To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from Albion's covering,
> To take off his filthy garments and clothe him with Imagination.

He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind. For him, imagination (like other Romantic poets) plays an important role not only in poetic creation, but also in the development of human mind. Being a person born during the age of Revolution, he was attracted to the ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity' of the French Revolution.

Blake was eighteen when the Declaration of Independence by the American Colonies inspired idealists all over Europe. Blake in his lifetime was witness to the burning of Newgate Prison (1780) which was a violent expression of the hatred of authority. Like many others of his generation, Blake was sympathetic to the causes of the French Revolution. He was incensed when Tom Paine was attacked in 1798. With such a political background, Blake became an anarchist of sorts as he hated all political systems (as he thought them to be oppressive) and favoured complete personal freedom. He admired radicals such as William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Several other radicals were his friends such as, Dr. Price (who was the first Englishman to support the French Revolution) and Thomas Paine. Blake was against any kind of tyranny and despised it to the heart's core. Although he did not develop (in the sense of writing) a coherent political theory, but he wanted freedom and love for all. Blake was opposed to private property, any established church, formal government, the prevailing laws and machinery.

William Blake also hated traditional Christianity which he thought cramped the soul rather than setting it free. Like all the Romantics who attempted a re-evaluation of Christian values after the French Revolution, William Blake also had

his own interpretation of Christian religion and its use for the benefit of mankind. He was against the authoritarian God who is revengeful. Therefore, he thought of churches as a kind of prison as there is no individual freedom under the purview of the church. Therefore, in *The Garden of Love,* Blake writes –

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I have never seen;
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

For Blake, love is the supreme religion and it cannot be found in the bricks and mortar of churches, but in love for humanity. It is not that he did not have faith in the merciful and benevolent Christ, but he is against God the Father who, according to him, is authoritative and tyrannical. If we look at the poems *The Lamb* and *The Tyger* from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* respectively, then we will figure out that Jesus is the lamb, merciful, innocent and tender, whereas God, the Father, as represented in 'The Tyger' has a 'fearful symmetry.'

William Blake's hostile attitude towards traditional Christianity also influenced his interpretation of history. He identified three stages in history which corresponded to three stages in the life of an individual. The first stage corresponds to that of the Garden of Eden, or of primal innocence. The second stage was the eating of the forbidden tree or the Fall (that is, the phase of Experience). The third stage was that of achieving a higher state of innocence or redemption (when one is as clever as a serpent and as innocent as a dove). In the third stage, innocence cannot be corrupted anymore as one has the necessary cleverness of the serpent will not allow the corruptions to affect innocence. So from that point of view, the two contrary states – innocence and experience are absolutely essential as 'without contraries, there is no progression.' One can never be in the first stage of innocence forever; one will get into the phase of experience with aging and with the pressures of culture; but when one surpasses that to achieve supreme innocence, one is in an ideal. Blake through his two series of poems – *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is trying to concretize the notion of Supreme Innocence for the readers.

Check Your Progress

1. Why did Blake favour imagination over reason?
2. What opinion did Blake hold regarding churches?

9.3 *THE TYGER*: TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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Text

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?
And what shoulder, & what art.
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?
What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Critical Appreciation

The Tiger, originally called *The Tyger*, is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and His creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. It is one of Blake's best- known and most analysed poems. *The Tyger* is a highly symbolic poem based on Blake's personal philosophy of spiritual and intellectual revolution by individuals. The speaker in the poem is

mystified at the sight of a tiger in the night, and asks a series of questions about its fierce appearance and the creator responsible for its creation. The first impression that William Blake gives is of seeing a tiger in the night, and, as a result of his state of panic, exaggerating the description of the animal when he writes:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright

In the forests of the night,

Immediately upon seeing the 'Tyger' in the forest, the poet makes inquiries about the deity that could have created it:

What immortal hand or eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

The word 'immortal' gives the reader a clue that the poet refers to God. In the second stanza, the author wonders in what faraway places the tiger was created, inferring that these places could not be reached by any mortal. In the third stanza, once the tiger's heart began to beat, the poet again inquires about the creator of such a frightening and evil animal. However, the context must be interpreted according to Blake's philosophy of symbolic myths about human life, society and spiritual revolution.

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand dare seize the fire?

The tiger itself is a symbol of the fierce forces in the soul and a divine spirit that will not be subdued by restrictions, but will arise against established rules and conventions. In the forth stanza, William Blake inquires about the tools used by God for creating the fearsome and deadly creature, namely, the hammer, the chain, the furnace and the anvil.

What the hammer? what the chain?

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp

Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

All these tools are used by an ironsmith. Thus, according to the poet, God is a kind of craftsman. In the fifth stanza, the poet asks two scientific questions. These questions refer to God's feelings:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Here, the poet wonders whether God was happy with his creation of the fearsome tiger. He does not understand why or how the deity, who is responsible for good and innocence, can introduce violence and evil in this world. However, the poet does not make any statements throughout the poem. The poem's last

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stanza is the same as the first one, which may indicate that the author is still not able to understand the world in which we live.

The Tyger presents a question that embodies the central theme– Who created the tiger? Was it the kind and loving God who made the lamb or Satan? Blake realizes, of course, that God made all the creatures on earth. However, to express his bewilderment that God, who created the gentle lamb, also created the terrifying Tiger, he includes Satan as a possible creator while raising his rhetorical questions.

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

In these lines, 'fire' refers to hell and 'skies' to heaven. In either case, there would be fire, the fire of hell or the fire of the stars. The tiger symbolizes evil or the incarnation of evil, and the lamb represents goodness. Blake's inquiry is a variation on an old philosophical and theological question: Why does evil exist in a universe created and ruled by a benevolent God? Blake provides no answer for this question, as his mission is to present reality in arresting images. A poet's first purpose, after all, is to present the world and its denizens in a language that stimulates the aesthetic sense. Nevertheless, the poem does propel the reader to deep thought. Here, the tiger symbolizes the quest for sustenance, and the lamb, meek and gentle, symbolizes the quest for survival. The poet wonders if it is possible that the same God who made the lamb also created the tiger, or was it the devil's work.

The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself. In contemplating the terrible ferocity and remarkable symmetry of the tiger, the speaker is at a loss to explain how the same God, who created the lamb, could also create the tiger. Therefore, this poem subtly reminds that humans are incapable of completely understanding the mind of God and the mystery of his handiwork. The poem consists of six quatrains and each quatrain contains two couplets.

Therefore, we have a twenty-four line poem with twelve couplets and six stanzas. A neat and balanced package, Blake's choice of 'tiger' has usually been interpreted as rendering an exotic or alien quality of the beast. In the first stanza, we can observe that the word 'tiger' is written with a 'y' instead of an 'I'. Here, the purpose of the poet is to give the word an inclination towards Ancient Greece. This is closely followed by the alliteration '(.,.) burning bright (.,.)'.

This alliteration is used by the author to emphasize the strong, bright, shiny colours of the 'tyger'. The symmetry 'y' is highlighted in this stanza, which is closely related to the spelling of the word, because in Ancient Greece, symmetry is seen as 'beauty'. It also speaks about an 'immortal hand or eye', which is an allusion of the tiger's creator, God. The pattern of the poem is also symmetrical.

'*Distant deeps',* in the second stanza is an alliteration used to remark on the distant depths. Subsequently, the poet writes '*On what wings dare he aspire?',* the meaning of which is directly connected to God who created the tiger. In the third stanza, the creator of the tiger is seen as an artist, and the appreciation he has

for the creator's work is quite apparent. This is followed by the line '*and when thy heart began to beat'*, which highlights God's power to create life. In the fourth stanza, God is portrayed as a 'Hammersmith', which can be gauged by the use of the words 'hammer', 'furnace' and 'anvil'. Through his meter and techniques, Blake manages quite efficiently to enforce a chanting rhythm and powerful voice. Demanding questions and vivid images disprove the simple nature of his end rhyme, rather exploring a deep, driving question.

Check Your Progress

3. What does the tiger symbolize in the poem?
4. When was the poem, *The Tyger* published?

9.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Blake favoured imagination over reason because he held the view that imagination plays an important role not only in poetic creation but also in the development of human mind. He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind.
2. Blake thought of churches as a kind of prison as there is no individual freedom under the purview of the church. He believed that love could not be found in the bricks and mortar of churches.
3. The tiger symbolizes evil or the incarnation of evil. The tiger is a symbol of the fierce forces in the soul and a divine spirit that will not be subdued by restrictions but will arise against established rules and conventions.
4. *The Tyger* was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake.

9.5 SUMMARY

- William Blake was a revolutionary in every sense. His views on politics, religion, literature and science were all revolutionary as he could not accept the prevailing ideas and culture of the eighteenth century.
- He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind. For him, imagination (like other Romantic poets) plays an important role not only in poetic creation, but also in the development of human mind.
- William Blake also hated traditional Christianity which he thought cramped the soul rather than setting it free.

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- For Blake, love is the supreme religion and it cannot be found in the bricks and mortar of churches, but in love for humanity. It is not that he did not have faith in the merciful and benevolent Christ, but he is against God the Father who, according to him, is authoritative and tyrannical.
- Blake through his two series of poems – *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is trying to concretize the notion of Supreme Innocence for the readers.
- The French Revolution (1789–1799), was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France which laid the foundation of modern democracy as the ideas germinated by the scholars found a place in the hearts of the people of France and they revolted against the oppressive monarchy and religious system.
- *The Tiger*, originally called *The Tyger*, is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and His creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake.
- The tiger itself is a symbol of the fierce forces in the soul and a divine spirit that will not be subdued by restrictions, but will arise against established rules and conventions.
- The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself. In contemplating the terrible ferocity and remarkable symmetry of the tiger, the speaker is at a loss to explain how the same God, who created the lamb, could also create the tiger.
- Through his meter and techniques, Blake manages quite efficiently to enforce a chanting rhythm and powerful voice. Demanding questions and vivid images disprove the simple nature of his end rhyme, rather exploring a deep, driving question.

9.6 KEY WORDS

- **Redemption:** It is an act of redeeming or atoning for a fault or mistake**.**
- **Incarnation:** It literally means embodied in flesh or taking on flesh.
- **Anarchist:** It refers to a person who rebels against any authority, established order, or ruling power.

9.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer questions

1. Write a short note on Blake's interpretation of history.
2. Briefly mention Blake's revolutionary ideas.

Long-Answer questions

1. Critically analyze the poem, *The Tyger*.
2. 'The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself.' Explain the statement with reference to *The Tyger*.

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UNIT 10 RICHARD STEELE AND JOSEPH ADDISION: *THE SPECTATOR*

Structure

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Sir Richard Steele was an Irishman, a writer and politician of excellent worth. *The Spectator* began to be published first from Thursday March 1, 1711. It was published all six days of the week except for Sunday and continued being published till its last issue 555, on December 6, 1712. Each paper or number had to contain 2,500 words in a sheet. All the 555 issues of this literary daily, made seven volumes. This paper was revived in 1714 without the co-authorship of Richard Steele when it came thrice a week for six months. The later publications added the eighth volume where Addison's cousin called Eustace Budgell lent his voice too.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Appreciate critically, the subject matter of *The Spectator's Account of Himself*
- Discuss and analyze the literary periodical, *Of the Spectators*
- Examine critically the contents of the letter *The Uses of the Spectator*
- Describe the writing style of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele

10.2 AN INTRODUCTION TO RICHARD STEELE AND JOSEPH ADDISON

NOTES

Joseph Addison was an essayist, playwright, poet and politician in seventeenth century England. He, along with his friend, Richard Steele, are best known for founding the most influential literary periodical of that time known as *The Spectator*. Both of them also founded the short-lived newspaper called the *Guardian*. The *Guardian* featured contributions from Steele, Addison, as well as other important literary figures like Alexander Pope and Ambrose Philips. Both Steele and Addison were extremely popular figures of the Augustan Age of English Literature.

Joseph Addison was born in Milston, Wiltshire, in 1672. He was educated at Charterhouse School, where he first met Richard Steele, and at The Queen's College, Oxford. He studied the classics and was known for his Latin verse. He began his literary career with a poem addressed to John Dryden. In the same year, he came out with a translation of Virgil's *Georgics*. In 1709, he became a contributor to Steele's journal known as the *Tatler*. Subsequently, he and Steele founded *The Spectator.* Addison also became a Member of Parliament for the Whig party, representing various constituencies up until the time of his death in 1719. It is to be noted that you will study about the life and works of Joseph Addison in detail in Unit 11.

Richard Steele was also born in 1672 in Dublin, Ireland. He began his education at Charterhouse School and then on to Merton College, Oxford. He went on to join the British Army and fought in King William's campaign against France. He also had a career in politics, becoming a Member of Parliament. However, he was subsequently expelled for his political beliefs. Some of Steele's literary works include *The Christian Hero*, *The Funeral* and *The Tender Husband.* He died in 1729.

You will briefly go through three essays from *The Spectator Papers: The Spectator's Account of Himself*, *Of the Spectators*, and *Uses of the Spectator*.

In the first issue of this literary magazine, the author is Addison himself who quite satirically sketches his character declaring himself a man of distinguished talents and ostensibly reserved in nature. In the second paper, Steele gives us the introduction of the six revered members of the honourable Spectator Club. Steele has maintained the same sarcastic manner, initiated by Addison in the first issue. In the tenth paper, authored by Addison, we are told the purpose and the kind of readers, to whom this daily is addressed. Both the writers wrote to reach the common masses through simple language of ordinary speech and lucid expression of our day to day businesses. 'The Spectator' retains a very high and significant place in English letters for its wide reading in its age, outstanding essays on different social topics, objective style, genteel language and its elevated message. These essays corroborated ethics, good nature, sagacity, sound judgement, propriety,

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prudence, serenity, high moral, merit and chastity. The writers were keen, poignant, witty, learned and virtuous men whose collective aim was to uplift the morality and sow the seeds of virtue through the spread of their readership. It was so because the moral standards and social values, in the eighteenth century English town life, were on the verge of extinction. The men and women, mad after fashion and sex, had lost their sense of judgement of good and evil. They were mostly of fallen character. In such a society, the two proprietors of this daily magazine earned a large number of followers and readers by their regular discourse. Mr Spectator's voice is both of Addison and Steele. He is a gentle, pleasant, scholarly, wise and witty man. The essays instruct elevated moral lessons for a higher human conduct. They deal with human characters in their ambitions, jealousy, envy, ardour and many other psychological abstractions developing in different social circumstances with their actions and reactions. They also encompass social ideas regarding shamelessness, mockery, disgrace, decency, insolence, happiness, respect, marriage, courting, etc.

Almost every article of *The Spectator* takes an epigraph from the ancient classics of Roman, Greek or Latin literature. Many of the essays are criticisms on the eighteenth century theatre and plays exclusively. Steele created the Spectator Club and rendered a definite structure and plot to this daily. The most heard voice is that of Sir Roger De Coverly, often referred to as 'Coverley' later, who is a bachelor even at the age of fifty-six. He hails from the countryside but is a man of high social repute even in the town. Besides his central role, we have many other members of the club, a lawyer, Sir Andrew Freeport who is a rich merchant, Captain Sentry, a clergy and Will Honeycomb, a notable man of fashion, and others. The effect that this paper had on people, assures its high repute and wide circle in its era. Its universal themes and characters make it relevant even today.

Check Your Progress

1. Who was Joseph Addison?
2. Who founded *The Spectator*?

10.3 *THE SPECTATOR'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF* (NO. 1, THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1711 BY J. ADDISON)

Summary and analysis

> 'He does not lavish at the blaze of his fire, Sudden to glare, and in a smoke expire; But rises from a cloud of smoke to light, And pours his specious miracles to sight —'
>
> **—Frances**

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The Spectator takes its epigraph from the Latin poet Horace (Horace's 'Ars Poetica,' Ver.143) which is translated by Philip Frances, the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish chaplain. It means: 'he does not have to display the might that he keeps at an instant; as he does not mean to shine immediately and vanish afterwards like a smoke; it is a person who rises from a smoke of cloud to spread light that he keeps; and with his steady qualities, he shows one by one what mortal capabilities has he in store which human beings seldom possess.' The epigraph invokes the qualities of the paper as well as the person. This might allude to the writer of the first issue, Joseph Addison's, own character: as the first issue of this daily literary periodical deals with the introduction of the protagonist or speaker called Mr Spectator, who is Addison himself.

Paragraphs — 1, 2 and 3

In the first person narrative, Mr Spectator, the protagonist of the famous daily periodical *The Spectator,* describes his history. He speaks of him till the age when he begins publishing the paper. It might be termed his invocation to the society and his circle, whom he is intending to address. He says that the reader comes to read a book with apt appreciation and sympathy only when he is sure of the origin, nature, and a little of the biography of its author, particularly, whether he is married, or of good temper, etc. So, with this intention, he designs this paper, and further, mentions things which may serve as the preface. Since he is being its chief contributor— taking care of compiling, digesting and proof reading, he takes the liberty to introduce himself first. He belongs to a village whose historical background coincides with the rule of William the Conqueror, the first Norman King of England. He was born to a known lineage and for the six hundred years of English history, they have retained the same status. When he was still in the womb, his mother dreamed of him being a man of law at the court and foretold his future to be the same. He was unlike other babies. Even as a breastfeeding two-month old infant, he proved how different he was by showing his aversion to jingling toys. By such utterances, the writer wishes to convey that he was a morally strict and sincere person, but the tone is exaggerated. He respects sobriety and has no room for cheap entertainment.

Paragraphs — 4, 5, 6 and 7

He was a quiet child who resorted to extreme silence all the while. He was regarded as a reticent and reserved youth, not quite popular with peers, but he was specially loved by his school-master who could foresee his worth. Even though he spent eight years at the university, he later realised how reserved he had been: that except during public activities, he had barely spoken a hundred words. And therefore, to sum up his character, he did not speak three sentences together in his whole life. He considered himself an avid reader who had read any and everything he could lay his hands on at the university. He was well acquainted with several

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classic or modern languages. He intended to travel abroad after his father's demise. He gave up academics as a very learned, yet unrecognized student. Knowledge prompted him to seek learning through the means of extensive travel to different European nations. That is how he landed in Cairo to ascertain the size of the pyramid because certain masters debated on its measurement. He returned to England contented.

Afterwards, the writer returned to England, his homeland. He remained in this city ever after and frequented every public resort, although his friends were less than six in number. He intends to give the account of his selected friend circle in its following issue. Addison was an immensely popular person in his life. And so, Mr Spectator, says that he was part of almost every public gathering: often he is observed as a silent member of the political group that thronged Will's Coffee House, a famous resort known for the wits of the day since Dryden's time; or he was seen smoking a pipe at Child's Coffee House, at Saint Paul's Churchyard which was another famous resort frequented by physicians, philosophers and the clergy. He would sit with a leading newspaper in his hand, called *Postman*, and attentively overhear conversations. On Sunday nights, he would attend the meeting of the politicians held in the inner room at James' Coffee House, to learn the ways to improve life. Situated near St. James' Palace, it was a favourite haunt for the Whig officers of the Guards and men of fashion in Addison's days. He was also a known face at the Grecian Coffee House, owned by a Greek: a famous haunt for the lawyers, scholars of Greek, learned Professors and Fellows of the Royal Society. He was a regular visitor of the Cocoa-Tree, a Chocolate House in St. James' Street, a known resort to the Tory statesmen and men of fashion in his days. He was a frequenter also at the theatres — the Cockpit at the Drury Lane and the Haymarket. By now, the readers get to know that the speaker is a silent observer even though he is a famous face in his city. At the Exchange, for over a decade, people think that he is a merchant, or he is sometimes taken for a Jew in the gathering of the stock-jobbers at Jonathan Coffee House, in Change Alley. By this description, the author means to convey satirically to his readers that he loves to visit public places without any desire of being famous; he becomes one with them but chooses to always listen to others, and does not like to speak anywhere else than at his own club.

Paragraphs — 8, 9 and 10

The speaker says that he lives among human beings as a Spectator of mankind, as one who watches keenly and observes mankind as a mere spectator. To become a Spectator or an onlooker, he has acquired the best qualities of a statesman, soldier, merchant and artisan without actually playing any of these roles in his life. He knows very well the art of a husband or a father and can recognize faults in the economy, business and other fields with better capability than the people actually practising those trades. He has shunned violence altogether with equal respect

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towards both Whigs and Tories, until driven by enmity he is forced to side with any one of the two. During his long introduction, he has aimed at one point only: he has solely practised the art of being a spectator. This is the character he is going to play in this paper. Through his introduction he has tried to convey his eligibility for the role he has undertaken. He would give the rest of the information, in other papers if required. It is his reserved nature owing to which he himself could never fathom the depth of his knowledge and learning. With this intention, he has decided to write about himself and continue this practice till his last breath. His friends repent the fact that his useful discoveries lie in his possession, disregarded, as he is a reticent man. For the benefit of his contemporaries, compatriots and for his own satisfaction, he has decided to publish one paper daily. In the paper, he has kept his name, age and place of residence concealed from people because he regards his love for obscurity and does not like to be recognized by people as a public figure. He takes care to hide his identity. The paper published the next day would carry information regarding his other friends who contributed in this daily as per norms of the club. Through a unanimous approval amid the contributors, he is selected to render voice to this paper as a protagonist, and invites others, who are willing to speak their minds, to write letters to the *Spectator*, at Mr Buckley's, in Little Britain, which was the address of this literary daily periodical in the beginning.

Addison and Steele's *The Spectator*'s first issue which carries the introduction of Mr Spectator, means to convey humorously that its speaker is a grave man who has never fallen prey to cheap pleasures or youthful passions in his life. He is taciturn and intends to amend the social behaviour through teaching good conducts and moral lessons to the society. He has given a detailed account of his wide learning and quiet character to convince his readers that his words would be well weighed and they must trust his sagacity in full faith. He is a learned, widely travelled, great social observer and a known face in the public. Above all, he firmly believed that good conduct could be imbibed; and culture could be inculcated with discipline, and together can help a human become perfect in spirit and daily habits.

Check Your Progress

3. Who is the protagonist of the daily periodical, *The Spectator*?
4. What are the essential qualities for becoming an onlooker as per the speaker of *The Spectator?*
5. What does *The Spectator's first issue* deal with?

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10.4 *OF THE SPECTATORS* (NO. 2, FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 1711 BY R. STEELE)10.4 'OF THE SPECTATORS' (NO. 2, FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 1711 BY R. STEELE)

Summary and analysis

> 'Six more, at least, join their consenting voice.' (Juvenal, 'Satires,' vii, 167)

This issue of the famous eighteenth-century literary periodical *The Spectator* is written by Sir Richard Steele, a very close friend of Joseph Addison. This essay carries the information about the people who are contributing to the Spectator Club. The epigraph is extracted from 'satires' by Juvenal, the great Roman poet and satirist. It means that there are at least half-a-dozen more contributors to this literary magazine, apart from Mr Spectator. All the members are fictional characters. While reading this essay your central thesis should be the discussion of Addison's art of characterization and the different traits of the characters of the Spectator club.

Paragraphs — 1, 2 and 3

Furnishing details of membership of the Spectator Club, the author says that their first most important association is a Baronet of known historical significance, called Sir Roger De Coverly who is a gentleman from Worcestershire, one of the major western counties of England. His character is sketched with humour and wit. His great grandfather is famous for inventing a country dance form which is duly named after him; and thus, it serves as their identity since then. All people acquainted with that place are familiar with the merit and extraordinary qualities with which Sir Roger is abundantly blessed. His nature is remarkably uncommon, if taken in good sense; but they stand opposite to what is seen commonly in this world, so he thinks that others might be wrong. His behaviour is unique and quite contrary to the upper class manners of the society then. Perhaps he is not acquainted with the elite manners which make others consider him as an odd character and an object of laughter. When he shows that others are at the odd end when he reacts to the manners of the world, he does it without being stern or rigid. Thus, he is spared of making enemies, and he is able to please all those who know him because of his supple mentality and liberal attitude towards anything new that comes his way. He resides in Soho Square, which was considered the most fashionable and elite locality of the city. Ever since he is rejected in love, by a beautiful widow of fallen character from the adjacent county, he purposefully remains a bachelor. Prior to this disappointment, and ill use by that widow, Sir Roger used to be in a fine mental state. Several times, he was seen dining in the company of Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege. He fought a duel upon his arrival in the town; and also

kicked Bully Dawson in a public coffee house for addressing him as youngster. Following the rejection in his love-affair, he remained in trauma for a year and a half.

Finally, his jovial nature helped him get over that mental state, but he became averse to dressing up or fashion. As a result, he is still seen in the coat and doublet in the style of the year when he lost his love. He happily tells people how this style of the coat has come into and been out of fashion twelve times, while he has continued to remain consistent. Stories run that Sir Roger had lost his dignity so much after being rejected by his lover, that he often fell for beggar or gypsy women. However, critics take pleasure in ridiculing him for his lewd behaviour. He is a jolly, merry and warm gentleman of fifty-six who keeps a great house both in the village and the town. He is a lover of mankind and his high-spirited, merry nature is loved by all. But he is hardly held in esteem. His tenants become rich, his servants look content, all the young ladies claim that they are in love with him and the young men are happy to be in his company. He is familiar in households to the extent that upon his entry, he calls the servants by their very names and keeps talking all his way upstairs regarding the purpose of his visit. Or it might mean that Sir Roger does not maintain his status and talks even to the household servants upon his visit. He is described to be a light person who talks a lot and talks to anyone despite his elite belongings, which was quite strange and did not suit the culture of the eighteenth-century English society. He is a Justice of the Quorum: with fixed number of members whose presence is necessary to transact business in a small territory. He fills the chair after three months at a Quarter-Session with all the great faculties nature has blessed him with. It was just three months ago that he received universal praise for describing a passage from Game-Act, an Act for better preventing of excessive and deceitful Gaming, 9 Ann, C 19. In this manner, Sir Roger De Coverly, a merry gentleman aged fifty-six, is introduced to the readers by Steele. Sir Roger stands first amid all the other contributors of the Spectator Club. The author has tried to convey that Sir Roger is a man of light mood and though people of all classes and ages appreciate him for his jovial nature and kindness, they fail to hold him in respect. Also, he is estimated to be a man of light character; one who is unable to maintain his dignity and status. Over all, he is careless of these worldly ways and enjoys life happily.

The next respectable member of the Club, a bachelor, is a Member of the Inner Temple, which is one of the four Inns of the Court. These are professional associations of barristers and judges in London. He is a gentleman of great moral principles, honesty, intelligence and understanding, but he has chosen his place of residence to obey his old father's wishes, than out of his own choice. He had been made to study the laws of the land and therefore, he is considered the most learned among other members in the House. His knowledge of Aristotle and Longinus are estimated to be better than those of Sir Edward Coke and Sir Thomas De Littleton, who were notable jurists of England and authorities on land tenures then. His father is keen on settling feuds or answering questions related to marriage, leases

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and tenures in the neighbourhood. He answers all these questions, with the help of an attorney. He studies the passions and moods of all those involved in the feuds that he helps to settle. He is familiar with every argument given in the orations of Demosthenes and Marcus Tullius Cicero, but is ignorant of every single case in the reports of the English Law Courts. It is a pity that except for his intimate friends, no one else knows that he is really intelligent. His words are never work-centric or meaningful to business but mostly gossip. He has a strange choice of books for the age in which he is living. Although he has read them all, he likes very few of them. Even though he is closer to the customs, manners, actions and writings of the classic writers, he is a better and keen judge of the incidents that occur in his time. He is a man who wastes time when he is at work and criticises others. He quits the workplace exactly at five in the evening and travels by the route of New Inn, through Russel Court and goes to Will's, in time to catch a play. He gets his shoes polished and his periwig powdered at the barber before he visits the Rose tavern. It is in the benefit of the audience that he goes to plays because the actors make sure to please him. The description of the second contributor of the Spectator Club is also full of bantering. Steele finds him a man of no worth, but he is holding a very high position without any knowledge in that particular field. He is more interested in fashion and fun, than in his duty in the law court.

The next important member of the Club was Sir Andrew Freeport: a famous merchant of London who is laborious, logical and experienced. His ideas regarding business are very noble and generous, but he would cunningly joke calling the sea 'British Common.' He was fully experienced in trade and said that it is foolish and inhuman to spread the kingdom by the power of the sword because true power has to be obtained by art and labour. Often, he would give the logic that even if one part of their trade were well sown into the soil of one country, they would reap benefits. Similar results could be achieved from other nations too. The author has found him speaking many times that assiduity reaps more sweeter fruits than valour or heroism, and that sloth might ruin all the prospects of a nation. His choicest maxim is 'A Penny saved is a Penny got.' By this, he probably means that everything cannot be gained by power. The greatest fault with the British government is its application of force to win a land; rather they should be actively planting deep roots of their trade into a foreign soil which would pay them better, and forever. Laziness and languor are the greatest enemies of the English. It is difficult to maintain a nation with power if the ruling authority is blessed with sloth. He firmly believes that a businessman with fine tenets of his profession would always be better company than a fine scholar. The author says that Sir Andrew is gifted naturally with the power of lucid, unaffected and pleasant oration. He only lacks wit. His labour has brought him fortune and he says that England is richer than other nations of the world by plain methods, and so is he than other men. This shows how he has acquired his wealth. Almost all English trading ships abroad and at home, are his. He is another respectable, rich and authoritative member of this club, who is devoid of wit.

Paragraphs – 4, 5 and 6

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The gentleman next in consequence is Captain Sentry: a man of towering courage, good understanding, but insurmountable modesty. He is a man of great talent, but does not know how to make others recognize his qualities and ends up very awkward. For some years, he was a captain who showed vigorous energy at many sieges, but he owns a small estate now and is an heir next in line to Sir Roger. He lives in a manner different than others where none can meet his capability either as a courtier or a soldier. The author has found him admitting many times with a feeling of loss that in a profession where merit is of so much value, impertinence should overcome modesty. Finding himself a misfit, he sadly quit. He wears a sad expression whenever he remembers his past. Strict honesty and orderly behaviour became his greatest hurdles and he could not favourably play the role of a citizen-favouring leader and a Commander simultaneously. It shows that he could be either honest to himself or to his people; it was difficult to please both of them together. The author indicates that he was dismissed from the army by the Generals who set an inquiry into his case and could not do him justice. A person quite inclined to help in the misery, which had befallen this Captain, had to encounter the hostility of many higher officials. The Captain also had to do the same because he had none in his favour. Therefore, to avoid encumbrances of such sort, he resorted to pass the verdict that if the Captain wished to make a name in the military, he must overcome his pretended modesty; and, assist his patron firmly against all odds and opponents. The author tells his readers that this military man speaks very frankly about his past and that of others as well. He does not feel ashamed to express his failure in exposing his demerits, or those of others. His military exploits have bestowed him with many virtues owing to which he is very agreeable to this company. He does not dominate others, but is able to command all the same. He does not fawn over those remarkably above his rank. This is how the author sketches the portrait of Captain Sentry who is another fictitious member of this Spectator Club like others, full of humour and satire. He is a man who did not know how to behave and perhaps could not make a balance between his profession and his personal wishes, and was thrown away then. He very openly spoke of the ways of the military, in public, where he ought to remain silent. He is of foolish temper and very humble in attitude. He does not know how to regard his seniors.

And so, his society should not only comprise a set of fools or jokers who are deficient, but also the gallants or wits of the time. Thus, they have a beau called Will Honeycomb, a man at the verge of death. He knows how to make fortune. And time has neither given him wrinkles, nor wisdom which age and experience naturally give. Handsome and tall, he is ever ready to please women with his talk. He has always dressed very fashionably and copies other men very well. He makes friends easily with his flattering behaviour. He has great knowledge of the history of various things. For example, he can well explain from which French

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King's ladies, a particular hair-curling, or style of placing hoods, has descended down to the English women. In short, he is well-versed in the realm of women's history. While other men of his age would rather take interest in discussing the politics of the day, he would tell people how the Duke of Monmouth danced at the court and what type of lady fell for him, or which other woman was seen with him at the head of his troop in the park. Among such beautiful women of higher social rank, whose stories he relates with interest, he has always been an object of amorous attention too. This fop would get startled if you speak about a young Member of the House saying something of interest and excitement. He would retort –– 'He is a high born, Tom Mirabell is his father. That knave cheated me in that affair. That young fellow's mother used me like a dog, more than any other woman on whom I have made my advances.' Like this he introduces himself to be a known figure of chivalry in every high household. He has countless love-affairs in his pockets and still, he is of importance above these young and handsome men. He revives the Club with such a conversation because except for the Spectator, who rarely speaks, none admits him to be a man of fine taste and culture. To be honest, minus the women in his life, he is an honest and worthy man beyond doubt. Will Honeycomb then, is chivalrous and is fond of intrigues. He is always trying to beat his age by fashion and follow the current trends of the time. He has a good historical store of instances to please women and men everywhere where he himself plays a character of great importance. He is a typical eighteenth-century fop that we come across in the Comedy of Manners. Since all the members of the Club remain in sober mood, it is good to have a lively member like him. Overall, he is an honest man of great regard.

The author is not sure whether he should give the account of the other member of his Club or remain silent. This is because he rarely visits their Club, and whenever he comes, every member here receives a new sort of pleasure derived from his company. He belongs to the clergy and is a very philosophic man. He is not much learned, maintains purity in life, and is of the most perfect breeding. Sadly though, he is of weak health, so he is unable to undertake the businesses and cares which may promote him higher in his career. Thus, he remains on the same designation among the divines as a Chamber-Counsellor would be amid lawyers. The uprightness of his mind and the integrity of his life, have given him uncountable disciples as pleasing speeches and servile flattery would do with others. He seldom introduces a topic of discussion on which he speaks. The other members of this club are so advanced in age, he believes, that in their presence he is compelled to start some religious subject for conversation. He treats that subject with great authority as though he has lost all interest in worldly affairs like the one who is prepared to leave the world and that which receives hope from his decaying health and debility. Such are the companions, we have in our Club. There is an initial 'R.' written at the end of the paper, which stands for Richard Steele. 'R' continued to be used till the paper number 91. Then, he used 'T' or occasionally 'R' till number 134. Afterwards, he always used 'T' for his signature.

In all these six satirical and fictitious characters that Steele sketches here with masterly strokes, we have latent humour and mockery interspersed. All respectable members of the Spectator Club are old, rugged gentlemen– too well used to be exploited afresh. However, they constitute a singular company together with the speaker and we certainly expect a great deal of entertainment from their association. Like this, we get to know the benefactors of the Spectator Club. These gentlemen are supposed to give their precious accounts of something if they wish to convey their amusement, instruction and embellishment to the readers, through the speaker in order to promote them on the path of morality and wisdom.

Check Your Progress

6. Who is Sir Roger De Coverly in the issue *Of the Spectators*?
7. Who is Captain Sentry?

10.5 *USES OF THE SPECTATOR* (NO. 10, MONDAY, MARCH 12, 1711 BY J. ADDISON)10.5 'USES OF THE SPECTATOR' (NO. 10, MONDAY, MARCH 12, 1711 BY J. ADDISON)

Summary and analysis

> 'Non aliter quam gui adverse vix flumine lembum Remigiis subigit: si brachia forte remisit, Atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni.'
>
> **– Virgil**
>
> 'So the boat's brawny crew the current stem, And, slow advancing, struggle with the stream: But if they slack their hands, or cease to strive, Then down the flood with headlong haste they drive.'
>
> **– John Dryden**

The two epigraphs, at the beginning in this issue, are extracted from *Virgil's, Georgics*, i, 201 and Dryden's translation of the same. Dryden says: 'the boat is loaded with people full of physical strength and vigour. Their journey is slow as they have to struggle through the strong currents of water. But if they lose control over their hands, or relax their muscles, or stop their effort for a moment, they would be hastily driven along the currents of the flood.' The epigraph is suggestive of constant high pressure on the cruise; and for them not even momentary relaxation is permissible.

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Paragraphs — 1, 2 and 3

The author of this issue is Joseph Addison. He describes the situation about the ever increasing demand of his paper. He is satisfied to see that the great city is fond of his daily *The Spectator*. His paper consists of his good words regarding various social and behavioural issues and he calls it his 'morning lecture.' People of London are taking his words seriously and paying attention to what he has to say. Three thousand copies of his paper are sold regularly. According to his calculations, if he thinks there might be twenty readers for each paper, there would be sixty thousand followers both in London and Westminster. He expects that, perhaps, he has been able to teach his mind and enliven the wits of these sixty thousand readers who would be able to feel better and responsible than their ignorant and inattentive fraternity around them. It is to his great pleasure that he has raised a large number of followers among his compatriots. He would still be working painfully after their instruction and make this effort useful to the fullest. Addison means that he would spare no leisure for himself and enjoy the success of having such a following. Instead, he would labour hard and bring these diverted minds to the seriousness of life, which they sincerely lack. He intends to 'enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality,' so that, his readers, by the end of the day, may find themselves useful in both ways. He wants to inculcate virtues and prudence in the society. The eighteenth century English society was full of vice, folly and immorality. He would wash off his readers' already tainted minds, with his fresh ideas and great words repeatedly till they are completely out of this infection. The empty mind even for a day is like a ploughed yet unseeded field. It gives birth to faults and foibles which can be controlled by tough discipline and culture, imbibed only by hard labour. Just like Socrates brought Philosophy from heaven to earth, to spread it among fellow beings, Addison would want himself to be called the one who brought philosophy out of closed-shelves, libraries, schools and colleges to sit among the ordinary people, who frequent clubs or assemblies or sit at tea-tables and visit coffee-houses. The writer wishes to convey that he has been of great help to the English society through his lectures full of education, intelligence and morality – the qualities that fertile society verily lacked because they had lost track to culture and educational discipline. Thus, he would address his words of experience to the people who are part and parcel of their society whose mornings invariably consist of tea, bread and butter. He would advise them sincerely to read this paper every morning as a fulfilling element with their tea. Addison has capitalized the words like 'City,' 'Seriousness,' 'Attention,' 'Publisher,' 'Disciple,' 'Threescore,' etc in order to convey his emphasis on them to his readers. According to Sir Francis Bacon, a well-written book to its rivals and antagonists is like Moses' serpent, which killed those of the Egyptians by devouring them immediately. However, he would not apply the same reaction to other publications, which were rivals to 'The Spectator.' He would leave it to the discretion of his readers to decide whether his paper is superior in intellectual pursuit and material to those which please them with happenings at Russia or Poland. They should

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better see whether they are at pleasure with his paper, which gives them sincere discourse to discriminate between good and bad, than those which mislead them altogether. In these paragraphs, Addison has tried to convey the very aim of his publication. *The Spectator's* aim is none other than the correction of vices and evils in the society by good and convincing lessons, full of high moral and culture. He wishes to see the society upright and is happy to reckon how his words are mending a solid structure in their hearts, bit by bit, which are ruined by corrupt ideas and false fashion of the day.

Paragraphs — 4 and 5

Now, Addison talks about those to whom he wishes to address his paper specifically. He recommends daily perusal of *The Spectator* to those men whose lives lay wasted without any work because either they are too rich, or too lazy. They merely look upon their fellow beings, but never go deep into their lives. Such a class may comprise mercenary tradesmen, physicians only for namesake, religious knights who would not fight, statesmen who are out of service, etc. In fact, he wants his paper to be perused by all who consider this world to be a theatre, a place of mere enjoyment without any responsibilities on their shoulders, and form their judgements on their deeds and actions. He pleads to all to read and learn from his paper, especially to those who do not pay attention to their being constructive, but are simply living for the sake of pleasure, devoid of any social or moral responsibility.

Another group of men consists of those whom the author calls a 'blank' of the society because they are empty of mind or ideas, until they come to know about any news of the day. They are those who do not have anything to do with their own lives as they are very rich, but they waste time on the affairs of others. Ironically, the author feels pity for them as they have nothing else to do, till in the morning they meet someone in the street and ask for any news in the city that might distract them from their normal emptiness or dullness. Till the sun has sought the west horizon, these leisure-loving men do not know what to talk of. Their chief subjects might be – the weather, the direction of the wind, the Dutch mail, or a newspaper. Throughout the day, their mood or behaviour depends on the mercy of the first man they meet in the morning. They may remain serious or impudent. So, he would earnestly recommend the perusal of his paper to this class of people every morning. He swears to fill the minds of such impressionable lots, daily with healthy and profound sentiments. He feels this will at least ensure they have good topics to discuss during their twelve-hour conversation.

Paragraph — 6 and 7

From different groups of men, Addison now moves to instruct the women of his time. They were considered very much frivolous and fickle-minded. He addresses the whole female world, saying that his paper will be most useful to them. According to him, the daily English papers do not have much to say to women. It is as though they are not taken for sensible creatures, but only as women. They are treated

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more to be mere objects for sex and they hold men in greater value than them. To decorate themselves and style their hair would be their chief occupations. The most important and engaging work for their mornings may be the selection of ribbons suiting their dress. Visiting a silk textile or toy shop would make them tired for the whole day. They keep themselves occupied around their sewing and embroidery and their most difficult duties would be to prepare jellies or sweet-meats for their family. But the author precisely considers this to be the case with ordinary ladies only. He knows that there are innumerable educated and truly accomplished women with elegant manners and conversation. They have sublime knowledge and noble behaviour entwined with their elevated life and society. This enhances their beauty, which inspires awe, respect and admiration in all the males who look at them. It would be his great effort to increase the number of such good ladies by the recommendation of 'The Spectator' where he has put at least some innocent entertainments for them, if not something for improving their manners. He intends to divert the attention of the fair sex towards reasonable things instead of the useless trifles that keep them engrossed the whole day. Simultaneously, he would gladly write ample material for those who are already pursuing life with reason, in order to apply a finishing touch to their already respectable and worthy characters. It would be to enable them to be the most beautiful creations of nature. He will point out all the marks of imperfection which can be called their faults and all the good qualities which enhance their beauty. He calls his women readers the gentle ones, with enough spare time in their hands. He humbly requests them to steal a quarter of an hour for his paper in the morning before their routine work commences. Like this, Addison very pleadingly conveys that his paper would be of greater significance to those silly women whose lives are but fashion and kitchen. However, it would also appeal to the ladies, who are beautiful and sensible both. For all, such a reading in the morning will bring fresh and erudite passages of interest to render them with knowledge and reason. His paper would claim only forty-five minutes in the morning, so that their daily business goes uninterrupted. He makes sure that it supplies valuable and interesting lessons.

Then he turns towards his critics and says how some of his friends feel that his endeavour would be a short-lived one. Perhaps he will not be able to write such great and spirited words for his fellowmen every day. Addison says that it is unfortunate for such concerned and sympathetic friends because he promises to do it faithfully with all his vigour and capability forever. He is very much sure that it would be a subject of laughter and derision to people of petty intelligence or ordinary minds. These ordinary men will remind him almost regularly that he should give them the promised refreshment and find faults with his paper wishing him to stop this publication. They might say how unpleasant it is to read such words because it does not please them. This is chiefly because it is directed at their best companions who claim to be witty and responsible men of the society. He also reminds them that the regular publication of this paper would be a warning to their piece good humour. In this manner, Addison closes his tenth episode of *The*

Spectator.

In this paper, he has chiefly addressed those towards whom he feels his humanly duty and expects them to gain from his discourse. He has also made very clear that his aim after publishing this periodical would be — 'to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality.' He wants to chastise the misled people of his country through his teaching and good words. His stress on 'morality' shows how corrupt the eighteenth-century English cities were. He knew his opponents were jealous of his efforts towards such a correction of taste, yet he warns them saying that he would happily make efforts to produce a short ideal lesson every day for his readers, against their sly will. Addison is sure that his paper is well received by people. So, he is encouraged to change the hearts and manners of his fellow beings. All he wishes is, to create a sane and meaningful society, comprising valuable beings doing constructive work for their development.

Check Your Progress

8. Who is the author of the issue entitled *Uses of the Spectator*?
9. To whom does Addison recommend the daily perusal of *The Spectator*?

10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Joseph Addison was an essayist, playwright, poet and politician in seventeenth century England.
2. Joseph Addison, along with his friend, Richard Steele, together founded the most influential literary periodical of that time known as *The Spectator*.
3. Mr Spectator, the combined voice of Addison and Steele, is the protagonist of the famous daily periodical *The Spectator.*
4. To become an onlooker, the speaker of *The Spectator*, has acquired the best qualities of a statesman, soldier, merchant and artisan without actually playing any of these roles in his life.
5. Addison and Steele's *The Spectator*'s first issue which carries the introduction of Mr Spectator, means to convey humorously that its speaker is a grave man who has never fallen prey to cheap pleasures or youthful passions in his life. He is taciturn and intends to amend the social behaviour through teaching good conducts and moral lessons to the society.
6. *Of the Spectators* has been written by Richard Steele. Here, Steele introduces Sir Roger De Coverly, a gentleman from Worcestershire, one of the major western counties of England.

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7. Captain Sentry is a man of towering courage, good understanding, but insurmountable modesty. He is a man of great talent, but does not know how to make others recognize his qualities and ends up very awkward.
8. The author of this issue of *Uses of the Spectator* is Joseph Addison.
9. Addison recommends daily perusal of *The Spectator* to those men whose lives lay wasted without any work because either they are too rich, or too lazy. In fact, he wants his paper to be perused by all who consider this world to be a theatre, a place of mere enjoyment without any responsibilities on their shoulders, and form their judgements on their deeds and actions.

10.7 SUMMARY

- Joseph Addison was an essayist, playwright, poet and politician in seventeenth century England. He, along with his friend, Richard Steele, are best known for founding the most influential literary periodical of that time known as *The Spectator*.
- Richard Steele was also born in 1672 in Dublin, Ireland. He began his education at Charterhouse School and then on to Merton College, Oxford. He went on to join the British Army and fought in King William's campaign against France.
- Almost every article of *The Spectator* takes an epigraph from the ancient classics of Roman, Greek or Latin literature. Many of the essays are criticisms on the eighteenth century theatre and plays exclusively.
- *The Spectator* takes its epigraph from the Latin poet Horace (Horace's 'Ars Poetica,' Ver.143) which is translated by Philip Frances, the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish chaplain.
- In the first person narrative, Mr Spectator, the protagonist of the famous daily periodical *The Spectator,* describes his history. He speaks of him till the age when he begins publishing the paper.
- He was a quiet child who resorted to extreme silence all the while. He was regarded as a reticent and reserved youth, not quite popular with peers, but he was specially loved by his school-master who could foresee his worth.
- The speaker says that he lives among human beings as a Spectator of mankind, as one who watches keenly and observes mankind as a mere spectator.
- Addison and Steele's *The Spectator*'s first issue which carries the introduction of Mr Spectator, means to convey humorously that its speaker is a grave man who has never fallen prey to cheap pleasures or youthful passions in his life.

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- Furnishing details of membership of the Spectator Club, the author in *Of the Spectators*, says that their first most important association is a Baronet of known historical significance, called Sir Roger De Coverly who is a gentleman from Worcestershire, one of the major western counties of England.
- The next respectable member of the Club, a bachelor, is a Member of the Inner Temple, which is one of the four Inns of the Court.
- The next important member of the Club was Sir Andrew Freeport: a famous merchant of London who is laborious, logical and experienced. His ideas regarding business are very noble and generous, but he would cunningly joke calling the sea 'British Common.'
- The two epigraphs, at the beginning in this issue, *Uses of the Spectator*, are extracted from *Virgil's, Georgics*, i, 201 and Dryden's translation of the same. Dryden says: 'the boat is loaded with people full of physical strength and vigour.
- Addison talks about those to whom he wishes to address his paper specifically. He recommends daily perusal of *The Spectator* to those men whose lives lay wasted without any work because either they are too rich, or too lazy.

10.8 KEY WORDS

- **Whigs:** It was one of the two most important British political factions known for supporting the supremacy of the Parliament and anti-Catholic ideals.
- **Russel Court:** It was a narrow passage, for foot-passengers only, leading from Drury Lane into Catherine Street, Covent Garden.
- **Inner Temple:** It was one of the four societies of students and practitioners of the law of England; also the name of one of the buildings where law students and barristers have their chambers. Others are the Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn.

10.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. In what sense does Addison call himself a spectator?
2. Who are the people who, according to Addison, should benefit by reading *The Spectator* and how?
3. From where has the epigraph of 'The Uses of Spectators' been extracted?

4. What is the importance of the epigraph from Horace's poem in the beginning of this essay *The Spectator's Account of Himself*?
5. Prepare a character sketch of Sir Roger De Coverly.

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyze Addison's assessment of himself in the essay *The Spectator's Account of himself*.
2. Comment on Addison's style and treatment of subject in *The Spectator* essays prescribed for you.
3. Would you consider *The Spectator* essays to be representative of neoclassical prose writing? Illustrate your answer with suitable examples from the essays that you have read.
4. What is the main idea behind *The Spectator?* Explain with reference to the context.

10.10 FURTHER READINGS

Hammond, Paul. 2002. *Restoration Literature: An Anthology*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.

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UNIT 11 JOSEPH ADDISON

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Structure

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Joseph Addison is a distinguished English essayist, poet and playwright. He is largely remembered as an essayist. In collaboration with his friend, Richard Steele, he began the periodical, *The Spectator*. In 1713, Addison wrote *Cato: A Tragedy,* a play in which he undertook to imitate and to improve upon classical Greek tragedy. The play was a success, probably because some of the audience took it to be a political allegory. Alexander Pope wrote the prologue and Samuel Johnson later praised the play as Addison's noblest work. In this unit, you will get to study the life and works of Joseph Addison and critical analysis of his essay, *Westminster Abbey* published in the periodical *The Spectator*.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the significant events of the life of Joseph Addison
- Identify the major works of Joseph Addison
- Critically analyze the essay Westminster Abbey

11.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF JOSEPH ADDISON

Joseph Addison was born on 1st May, 1672, to Reverend Lancelot Addison at Milston, Wiltshire, England. He was the eldest son. At the time of his birth Reverend Lancelot was the dean of Lichfield, Staffordshire, therefore, Addison started his formal education from the Lichfield Grammar School. Afterwards, he went to the Charterhouse School in Godalming Surrey. It is at Charterhouse school that Addison made his acquaintance with Richard Steele. Later, Addison joined The

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Queen's College, Oxford, for his further studies. He studied classical literature, excelled in it and earned fame for his Latin verses. His excellence in classical poetry won him the scholarship to Magdalen College. He took the degree of Master of Arts from Magdalen College in 1693 and remained a fellow there devoting his time in the study of poetry, especially Latin poetry and criticisms.

From 1699 to 1702, Addison received pension from British government. Lords Montagu and Somers, discerning his value, desired his services in foreign courts. To enable him to acquire thorough knowledge of French language they offered him pension of $1,500 a year, so that he might pass sufficient time abroad to prepare himself for official duty. Addison made profitable use of this opportunity. He studied, not only languages but also men and manners. He gained the acquaintance of many influential, eminent and renowned men. He wrote poems, letters, and observations. Unfortunately, his pension was withheld after his first year abroad on account of the waning power of his patrons. The death of Henry III caused him the loss of his pension and he returned to England at the end of 1703. Addison fell on evil days and lived in poverty. One year after, Lord Godolphin requested Addison to write a poem in honour of Lord Marlborough's famous victory at Blenheim. He wrote the poem *The Campaign,* praising the war policy of the Whigs in general and the worthiness of Marlborough in particular. This poem brought him fame and fortune. He was immediately installed as Commissioner of Appeals. Later, Addison was appointed Under-Secretary of State. Three years after, he was elected as member of the House of Commons. His visit to Ireland was occasioned by his appointment as Secretary to the profligate Marquis of Wharton, Lord-lieutenant of Ireland. Addison enjoyed an eminently prosperous political career.

Addison's personal life was not as successful as his political and literary career. In 1716, he married Countess-Dowager of Warwick. She was a widower and Addison was his son's tutor. It is believed that she married Addison not for love but because of his popularity as a writer, his good fortune and his increasing importance in the State. The countess was arrogant and disdainful towards Addison. Her son too was a rake. Joseph Addison died at the age of forty-seven at the Holland House, London due to extremely poor health. Till his death he remained the Minister of Parliament in spite of his shy demeanour. He was laid to rest at the Westminster Abbey, City of Westminster in London. In his honour, a town in upstate New York, Middletown, NewYork, was renamed Addison, NY in March 1796.

Joseph Addison: Works

Joseph Addison was a prolific writer, poet, essayist and dramatist. He attained early distinction through his Latin verses. These verses were highly praised for proficiency in Latin verses. His earlier works were translations from Roman poets like Virgil and Ovid. His work *The Campaign* published in 1704 gave him the reputation as one of the major poets of the age. It has been written in the heroic

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couplet, and it has been called a 'rhymed gazette'. It is not of much literary significance. A critic has described it as 'a catalogue of places and persons; the style is but mediocre, and warms only when it is feebly stirred by the ignorant enthusiasm that a sedentary civilian feels for the glory of war. The hero is Marlborough, who is drawn on a scale of epic grandeur.' The most famous passage of the work is the one in which the writer compares the general to the angel that rides the storm. The poem made Addison's fortune. After reading the poem, the Whig Lord Treasurer, Godolphin gave him the valuable appointment of Commissioner of Appeals. Addison also wrote scholarly hymns which were melodious and full of cheerful piety.

Addison was not very successful as a dramatist. In 1713, he produced the tragedy of *Cato,* part of which had been in manuscript as early as 1703. It was of little merit. Many critics are of the view that the play had mechanical characters, monotonous blank verse and dull speeches. But the play caught the ear of the political parties. The play had the remarkable run of twenty nights and was revived with much success. Addison also attempted an opera, *Rosamond* (1707), which was a failure; and the prose comedy of *The Drummer* (1715). Addison also wrote some political pamphlets but as a pamphleteer he was not impressive.

Addison's fame stands neither on his poems, nor plays, nor his political and polemical pamphlets. It is almost entirely as an essayist that Joseph Addison enjoys fame and reputation in the literary circles. He is one of the most celebrated and noted essayist in the history of English literature. His essays were published in periodicals *The Tatler*, the *The Spectator* and the *Guardian*. His career as an essayist began accidentally. His friend Richard Steele started a periodical named *The Tatler* in 1709. Addison was in Dublin at that time but as soon he discovered about the periodical he sent an essay for it. It was an immediate success. The *Tatler* ran for one year and nine months. Two months later, they started *The Spectator* which was issued daily. This periodical had five hundred and fifty-five numbers printed. *The Spectator* obtained an unprecedented popularity and exercised a great influence upon the reading public of the period. Addison wrote 274 essays out of a complete total of 555. Steele wrote 236 essays. It was succeeded by the *Guardian*, which enjoyed only moderate success and terminated after 175 numbers. Addison contributing 51 essays. The *Guardian* was followed by a new series of the *Spectator*, which also came to an end after the issue of eighty numbers. Macaulay says of this eighth volume of The *Spectator*, which was conducted by Addison alone that 'it contains perhaps the finest essays, both serious and playful in English language.'

There was the famous series dealing with the Spectator Club. It was Steele who mooted the idea of Sir Roger de Coverley, an imaginary eccentric old country knight who frequented the Spectator Club in London. Around the knight were grouped a number of contrasted characters, also members of the same club. These characters are Will Honeycomb, a middle-aged beau; Sir Andrew Freeport, a city merchant; Captain Sentry, a soldier; and Mr Spectator, a shy, reticent person,

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who bears a resemblance to Addison himself. These characters represent the country, city, army and society. The Church is not represented. Addison charged the spectator club with life, amusement, vibrancy, adventure, charming and pleasant humour. This series appeared at intervals in the pages of *The Spectator,* and added immensely to the popularity of the periodical. In between there were essays on other topics too.

In all, Addison penned almost four hundred essays, which are of nearly uniform length covering a wide diversity of subject and themes—amusements, religion, literature, art, dress, clubs, superstitions and in general all the fashions and follies of the time. The essayists, especially Addison, with his wide and mature scholarship, aimed to form public taste. But the chief purpose of the papers, professedly, was 'to banish Vice and Ignorance'. These are a faithful reflection of the life of his times viewed with dispassionate observation. In all aspects of life, Addison advocated moderation and tolerance.

About his essays, Daniel Wise, has remarked, 'The charm of Addison's essays must be sought, not in their ideas, their style, their humor, or their spirit taken separately, but in their happy combination of good thoughts, a graceful style, delightful humor, and a cheerful spirit.' His essays are 'always luminous, seldom commonplace, and usually instructive.' Addison wrote with ease and gracefulness. His essays are ornamented, but not burdened with, 'rhetorical adornments'. The essays sparkle with wit and humour and are neither coarse nor vulgar. The essays of Addison are moral satires aiming to make the follies and eccentricities of people look ridiculous that deserve criticism. He was an amicable person and with the same genial cheerfulness he condemned the follies. As a satirist, Addison was never bitter, personal or spiteful. He intended to criticize vices and not the man. His essays are not a discourse on religion or spirituality but they are full of practical wisdom. 'Whoever wishes,' says Samuel Johnson, 'to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.'

Check Your Progress

1. When was Joseph Addison born?
2. Name the poem which Addison wrote in honour of Lord Marlborough's victory at Blenheim.

11.3 'WESTMINSTER ABBEY': TEXT AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Text

Pallida mors aquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres, O beate Sexti,

Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.

Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,

Et domus exilis Plutonia. —Hor.

When I am in a serious Humour, I very often walk by my self in Westminster Abbey; where the Gloominess of the Place, and the Use to which it is applied, with the Solemnity of the Building, and the Condition of the People who lye in it, are apt to fill the Mind with a kind of Melancholy, or rather Thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable. I Yesterday pass'd a whole Afternoon in the Church-yard, the Cloysters, and the Church, amusing myself with the Tomb-stones and Inscriptions that I met with in those several Regions of the Dead. Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried Person, but that he was born upon one Day and died upon another: The whole History of his Life, being comprehended in those two Circumstances,that are common to all Mankind. I could not but look upon these Registers of Existence, whether of Brass or Marble, as a kind of Satyr upon the departed Persons; who had left no other Memorial of them, but that they were born and that they died. They put me in mind of several Persons mentioned in the Battles of Heroic Poems, who have sounding Names given them, for no other Reason but that they may be killed, and are celebrated for nothing but being knocked on the Head.

Greek: Glaukon te, Medonta te, Thersilochon te] — Homer Iliad XVII.216

Glaucumque, Medontaque, Thersilochumque. " Virgil.

The Life of these Men is finely described in Holy Writ by the Path of an Arrow which is immediately closed up and lost. Upon my going into the Church, I entertain'd my self with the digging of a Grave; and saw in every Shovel-full of it that was thrown up, the Fragment of a Bone or Skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering Earth that some time or other had a Place in the Composition of an humane Body. Upon this, I began to consider with my self, what innumerable Multitudes of People lay confus'd together under the Pavement of that ancient Cathedral; how Men and Women, Friends and Enemies, Priests and Soldiers, Monks and Prebendaries, were crumbled amongst one another, and blended together in the same common Mass; how Beauty, Strength, and Youth, with Old-age, Weakness, and Deformity, lay undistinguish'd in the same promiscuous Heap of Matter.

After having thus surveyed this great Magazine of Mortality, as it were in the Lump, I examined it more particularly by the Accounts which I found on several of the Monuments which are raised in every Quarter of that ancient Fabrick. Some of them were covered with such extravagant Epitaphs, that, if it were possible for the dead Person to be acquainted with them, he would blush at the Praises which his Friends have bestowed upon him. There are others so excessively modest, that they deliver the Character of the Person departed in Greek or Hebrew, and by that Means are not understood once in a Twelve-month. In the poetical Quarter, I found there were Poets who had no Monuments, and Monuments which had no Poets. I observed

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indeed that the present War had filled the Church with many of these uninhabited Monuments, which had been erected to the Memory of Persons whose Bodies were perhaps buried in the Plains of Blenheim, or in the Bosom of the Ocean.

I could not but be very much delighted with several modern Epitaphs, which are written with great Elegance of Expression and Justness of Thought, and therefore do Honour to the Living as well as to the Dead. As a Foreigner is very apt to conceive an Idea of the Ignorance or Politeness of a Nation from the Turn of their publick Monuments and Inscriptions, they should be submitted to the Perusal of Men of Learning and Genius before they are put in Execution. Sir Cloudesly Shovel's Monument has very often given me great Offence: Instead of the brave rough English Admiral, which was the distinguishing Character of that plain gallant Man, he is represented on his Tomb by the Figure of a Beau, dress'd in a long Perriwig, and reposing himself upon Velvet Cushions under a Canopy of State, The Inscription is answerable to the Monument; for, instead of celebrating the many remarkable Actions he had performed in the service of his Country, it acquaints us only with the Manner of his Death, in which it was impossible for him to reap any Honour. The Dutch, whom we are apt to despise for want of Genius, shew an infinitely greater Taste of Antiquity and Politeness in their Buildings and Works of this Nature, than what we meet with in those of our own Country. The Monuments of their Admirals, which have been erected at the publick Expence, represent them like themselves; and are adorned with rostral Crowns and naval Ornaments, with beautiful Festoons of Seaweed, Shells, and Coral.

But to return to our Subject. I have left the Repository of our English Kings for the Contemplation of another Day, when I shall find my Mind disposed for so serious an Amusement. I know that Entertainments of this Nature, are apt to raise dark and dismal Thoughts in timorous Minds and gloomy Imaginations; but for my own Part, though I am always serious, I do not know what it is to be melancholy; and can, therefore, take a View of Nature in her deep and solemn Scenes, with the same Pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones. By this Means I can improve my self with those Objects, which others consider with Terror. When I look upon the Tombs of the Great, every Emotion of Envy dies in me; when I read the Epitaphs of the Beautiful, every inordinate Desire goes out; when I meet with the Grief of Parents upon a Tombstone, my Heart melts with Compassion; when I see the Tomb of the Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow: When I see Kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival Wits placed Side by Side, or the holy Men that divided the World with their Contests and Disputes, I reflect with Sorrow and Astonishment on the little Competitions, Factions and Debates of Mankind. When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of some that dy'd Yesterday, and some six hundred Years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.

Let us now study the explanation of the essay, *Westminster Abbey*.

Text

Pallida mors aquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres, O beate Sexti,
Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam.
Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,
Et domus exilis Plutonia. —Hor.
"With equal foot, rich friend, impartial fate
Knocks at the cottage, and the palace gate:
Life's span forbids thee to extend thy cares,
And stretch thy hopes beyond thy years:
Night soon will seize, and you must quickly go
To story'd ghosts, and Plutos' house below." Cresch

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Horace- Roman poet of the Augustan period; full name Quintus Horatius Flaccus. A notable satirist and literary critic, he is best known for his Odes, much imitated by later ages, especially by the poets of 17th-century England.

Pluto's house below- reference to the underworld. Pulto was the God of the underworld.

Explanation

The quotation has been taken from Horace *Odes*, I.4.13-17. The writer has used the translation in his essay. It means death will treat everyone equally. It will knock at the door of a poor man as well as a rich man. Human life is put to an end by death, therefore, life is short to extend worries and stretch one's hopes beyond the years he has to spend on earth. Soon night will come that is death will seize and a person will become a ghost in stories and to the underworld. 'Pale death knocks with impartial foot at the huts of the poor and at the towers of kings, O happy Sextus. The shortness of the span of life forbids us to cherish remote hope; already night overtakes thee, and the fabled shades, and the wretched house of Pluto.'

Text

When I am in a serious Humour, I very often walk by my self in Westminster Abbey; where the Gloominess of the Place, and the Use to which it is applied, with the Solemnity of the Building, and the Condition of the People who lye in it, are apt to fill the Mind with a kind of Melancholy, or rather Thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable. I Yesterday pass'd a whole Afternoon in the Church-yard, the Cloysters, and the Church, amusing myself with the Tomb-stones and Inscriptions

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that I met with in those several Regions of the Dead. Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried Person, but that he was born upon one Day and died upon another: The whole History of his Life, being comprehended in those two Circumstances, that are common to all Mankind. I could not but look upon these Registers of Existence, whether of Brass or Marble, as a kind of Satyr upon the departed Persons; who had left no other Memorial of them, but that they were born and that they died. They put me in mind of several Persons mentioned in the Battles of Heroic Poems, who have sounding Names given them, for no other Reason but that they may be killed, and are celebrated for nothing but being knocked on the Head.

Greek: Glaukon te, Medonta te, Thersilochon te] — Homer Iliad XVII.216

Glaucumque, Medontaque, Thersilochumque. " Virgil.

Notes

Humour- mood or state of mind

Westminster Abbey- It is the collegiate church of St Peter in Westminster, originally the abbey church of a Benedictine monastery. Nearly all the kings and queens of England have been crowned in Westminster Abbey. It is also the burial place of many of England's monarchs and of some of the nation's leading figures.

Gloominess- sad and sombre

Solemnity- dignified and grave

Melancholy- sad

Disagreeable-unpleasant

Cloysters- a covered and secluded walk in a convent, monastery or church.

Amusing- diverting

Inscriptions- words written on a tomb

Regions of the Dead- grave and the cemetery

Two Circumstances- life and death

Registers of Existence- tombstones and epitaphs

Satyr- satire

Battles of heroic Poems- poems written on heroic themes, actions and battles

Homer- a Greek poet, writer of epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

Virgil- a Roman poet, his Latin name was Publius Vergilius Maro. He is known for his pastoral poetry. His major works are the Eclogues, the Georgics and the Aeneid.

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Explanation

When the writer is in a serious mood he often goes alone to take a walk in Westminster Abbey. He describes one such afternoon that he spent in the Abbey looking at the tombs and their epitaphs. The gloominess and the sad atmosphere of the place, the use of it as a cemetery, the dignity of the church building, and the condition of people who lie in their graves in the cemetery at Westminster Abbey fill the writer's mind with melancholy. The writer calls it more of thoughtfulness than melancholy. This thoughtfulness provoked by the dignity and seriousness of the place is not unpleasant to the visitor. He spends his entire afternoon in the churchyard, the secluded walks, and the Church thinking and amusing himself with tombstones and inscriptions on the tombstones that he saw while taking a walk alone in the various areas of the cemetery in Westminster Abbey. Some of these tombstones were made of brass and others of stone. Most of the tombstones did not have much inscribed on them other than the information on the birth date and the death date. The writer reflects that the entire life of a human being is understood or summarized by these two situations- life and death which are common to the entire human race. He feels that these tombstones are a kind of satire on the person who has departed from the world. It looks like the tombstone is satirizing the person as if he has done nothing to leave behind as memories or as a memorials except to be born and then die. These tombstone and its inscriptions remind the writer of all those persons whom the poets mention in the battles of their heroic poems. These people have been given great names to be put on their tombs. He says that it seems that these names were given to them for no other reason except that they were killed. To the writer, these people fighting battles are celebrated in heroic poems for being knocked in the head.

Glaucumque, Medontaque, Thersilochumque has been borrowed from Virgil. The line appears in *Aeneid (VI.483)*. It is a translation of Homer's *Glaukon te, Medonta te, Thersilochon te*, a line that appears in *Iliad* (XVII.216).

Text

> The Life of these Men is finely described in Holy Writ by the Path of an Arrow which is immediately closed up and lost. Upon my going into the Church, I entertain'd my self with the digging of a Grave; and saw in every Shovel-full of it that was thrown up, the Fragment of a Bone or Skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering Earth that some time or other had a Place in the Composition of an humane Body. Upon this, I began to consider with my self, what innumerable Multitudes of People lay confus'd together under the Pavement of that ancient Cathedral; how Men and Women, Friends and Enemies, Priests and Soldiers, Monks and Prebendaries, were crumbled amongst one another, and blended together in the same common Mass; how Beauty, Strength, and Youth, with Old-age, Weakness, and Deformity, lay undistinguish'd in the same promiscuous Heap of Matter.

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Holy Writ- Bible

The Path of an Arrow- taken from the *Wisdom of Solomon 5:12*

Fragment- piece

Intermixed- mixed up

Mouldering- decaying

Lay confused together- mingled together without individual identity

Prebendaries- an honorary canon

Common Mass- without distinction

Promiscuous- unselective

Deformity- not in shape

Heap of Matter- heap of substance

Explanation

The life of these men buried here can be described by the saying from the holy Bible –'the Path of an Arrow'. The phrase 'the path of an arrow' has been taken from the portion *Wisdom of Solomon 5:12* holy Bible. When the arrow is shot at the target, it parts the air from where it passes but the air immediately and swiftly comes together that a man does not even come to know from the arrow passed. Similarly, lives of these men begin to move towards their deaths as soon as they are born. The Wisdom of Solomon tells the followers of Bible about the temporariness of life and transitory nature of material things that human beings spend chasing time and accumulating, and forgetting to know and following the path of God.

In the churchyard cemetery, the writer entertained himself by digging a grave. In every shovel, he saw a piece of bone or skull mixed with freshly decayed clay which was once a part of human body. He refers to the common acceptance that human body is composed of clay and it will be mingled with clay after death. He reflects upon the fate of countless number of people lying buried together under the pavement of the church. All these men and women, friends and enemies, priests and soldiers, monks and prebendaries, lay together without any distinction, disintegrated and blended together in the same heap. The beautiful, the strong, the young and the old, the weak and the deformed, all lie in unison, without any discrimination. None can distinguish one from the other. All lie buried together like an indiscriminate heap of substance. The writer asserts that death makes everyone equal. Human beings discriminate against each other all their lives based on wealth, beauty, strength, age, sex but death does not differentiate among human beings. It equals all and all mingle into the same earth.

Text

After having thus surveyed this great Magazine of Mortality, as it were in the Lump, I examined it more particularly by the Accounts which I found on several of the Monuments which are raised in every Quarter of that ancient Fabrick. Some of them were covered with such extravagant Epitaphs, that, if it were possible for the dead Person to be acquainted with them, he would blush at the Praises which his Friends have bestowed upon him. There are others so excessively modest, that they deliver the Character of the Person departed in Greek or Hebrew, and by that Means are not understood once in a Twelve-month. In the poetical Quarter, I found there were Poets who had no Monuments, and Monuments which had no Poets. I observed indeed that the present War had filled the Church with many of these uninhabited Monuments, which had been erected to the Memory of Persons whose Bodies were perhaps buried in the Plains of Blenheim, or in the Bosom of the Ocean.

Notes

Surveyed- observed

Magazine of Mortality- cemetery, grave

As it were in the Lump- in general

Accounts- descriptions

Ancient Fabrick- old building

Epitaph- words written on the tombstone in memory of the dead buried there

Once in a Twelve month- death anniversary

Poetical Quarter- that part of the cemetery where poets are buried

Present War- European War of the Spanish Succession

Plains of Blenheim- a village in Bavaria on the river Danube

Bosom of the Ocean- in the depths of the ocean

Explanation

After reflecting upon the death, mortality and temporariness of human life in general, the writer examined closely specific descriptions on various epitaphs that he found in different quarters of that old building. Some of these epitaphs showered such extravagant praises on the person that if the dead person could read he would blush at the eulogy written for him by his friends. While there are other tombstones which have epitaphs which are so excessively ordinary and limited. These epitaphs tell about the personality of the departed person in an ancient language that none understands except when someone talks about the person on his death anniversary. In the quarter of the cemetery where the poets are buried, the writer sees that some graves of poets do not have the epitaphs while there were epitaphs which

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did not have a grave. The writer observes that the church is filled with uninhabited epitaphs built in memory of those who died fighting in war and were buried in the plains of Blenheim, a village in Bavaria, on the river Danube or those whose bodies were buried in the ocean. At the end of reign of William III the exiled James II died. King William of France proclaimed his son as the King of England. William III took England with him into the European War of the Spanish Succession. The accession of Queen Anne did not check the movement, and on 4 May 1702, war was declared against France and Spain by England and Holland. The war lasted throughout the reign of Queen Anne and continued until the signing of the Peace of Utrecht on the 11 April 1713. In this war, Marlborough had among his victories, Blenheim (1704), Ramilies (1706), Oudenarde (1708), Malplaquet (1709). At sea, Sir George Rooke had defeated the French fleet off Vigo, in October, 1702, and in a bloody battle off Malaga, in August, 1704, after his capture of Gibraltar.

Text

I could not but be very much delighted with several modern Epitaphs, which are written with great Elegance of Expression and Justness of Thought, and therefore do Honour to the Living as well as to the Dead. As a Foreigner is very apt to conceive an Idea of the Ignorance or Politeness of a Nation from the Turn of their publick Monuments and Inscriptions, they should be submitted to the Perusal of Men of Learning and Genius before they are put in Execution. Sir Cloudesly Shovel's Monument has very often given me great Offence: Instead of the brave rough English Admiral, which was the distinguishing Character of that plain gallant Man, he is represented on his Tomb by the Figure of a Beau, dress'd in a long Perriwig, and reposing himself upon Velvet Cushions under a Canopy of State, The Inscription is answerable to the Monument; for, instead of celebrating the many remarkable Actions he had performed in the service of his Country, it acquaints us only with the Manner of his Death, in which it was impossible for him to reap any Honour. The Dutch, whom we are apt to despise for want of Genius, shew an infinitely greater Taste of Antiquity and Politeness in their Buildings and Works of this Nature, than what we meet with in those of our own Country. The Monuments of their Admirals, which have been erected at the publick Expence, represent them like themselves; and are adorned with rostral Crowns and naval Ornaments, with beautiful Festoons of Seaweed, Shells, and Coral.

Notes

Elegance of Expression- gracefully and stylistically expressed in flowery language

Justness of Thoughts- doing justice to the thoughts expressed

Ignorance or Politeness of a Nation- understand the character and qualities of a nation

Men of Learning and Genius- poets, writers and intellectuals

Beau- a rich fashionable young man; a dandy

Perriwig- a wig

Reposing- resting

Canopy- ornamented cloth covering erected for shade

Rostral crowns- a memorial column having sculptors representing the rams of ancient ships

Festoons- garlands

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Explanation

The writer is delighted to read several modern epitaphs written with great elegance and dignity of expression in style, grace, refinement and just thoughts. These epitaphs written with such finesse honour the dead person for whom the epitaph is written as well as the living person who wrote the epitaph. The writer says that the values and the attributes of a nation can be gauged from the inscriptions on its monuments. A foreigner will get to know much about a nation through its monuments. Therefore, inscriptions should first be submitted to men of knowledge and great learning and men of genius. Thereafter, these inscriptions should be installed for public view. The writer finds Sir Cloudesley Shovel's epitaph to be offensive. Sir Cloudesley Shovel was a brave man of humble birth. He started as a cabin boy and through merit he became an admiral. He died by the wreck of his fleet on the Scilly Islands as he was returning from an unsuccessful attack on Toulon. His body was cast on the shore, robbed of a ring by some fishermen and buried in the sand. When the ring was discovered, his body was exhumed and brought home to be buried in Westminster Abbey. The writer is annoyed because instead of adorning his epitaph with his distinguishing character of a plain gallant man, his tomb has a figure of a fashionable Englishman wearing a long stylish wig and resting himself upon velvet cushions under a canopy. Such an epitaph has not done justice to Sir Cloudesly Shovel as it does not celebrate the remarkable acts performed by him for his country. It only introduces the reader to his manner of death in which it was not possible for him to find any honour. Even the Dutch people, whom Englishmen think that they lack creativity and intellect, have significantly greater taste and knowledge of antiquity and politeness in erecting epitaphs and writing inscriptions and other works of similar nature than English people. The monuments erected and epitaphs written for their admirals at the public expense represent those admirals just as they were, reflecting their true personality and enigma. These monuments are decorated with rostral Crowns (a memorial column having sculptures representing the rams of ancient ships) and naval ornaments. These monuments are further adorned with beautiful garlands made up of seaweed, shells and corals. The writer wishes to convey that these admirals who fought bravely on the sea have their epitaphs and monuments too adorned with everything that represents their sea life.

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Text

But to return to our Subject. I have left the Repository of our English Kings for the Contemplation of another Day, when I shall find my Mind disposed for so serious an Amusement. I know that Entertainments of this Nature, are apt to raise dark and dismal Thoughts in timorous Minds and gloomy Imaginations; but for my own Part, though I am always serious, I do not know what it is to be melancholy; and can, therefore, take a View of Nature in her deep and solemn Scenes, with the same Pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones. By this Means I can improve my self with those Objects, which others consider with Terror. When I look upon the Tombs of the Great, every Emotion of Envy dies in me; when I read the Epitaphs of the Beautiful, every inordinate Desire goes out; when I meet with the Grief of Parents upon a Tombstone, my Heart melts with Compassion; when I see the Tomb of the Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow: When I see Kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival Wits placed Side by Side, or the holy Men that divided the World with their Contests and Disputes, I reflect with Sorrow and Astonishment on the little Competitions, Factions and Debates of Mankind. When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of some that dy'd Yesterday, and some six hundred Years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.

Notes

Our Subject- graves, epitaphs, inscriptions

Repository-resting place

Contemplation- examination, inspection, observation

Disposed for- inclined towards

Amusement- thought

Dismal- sad

Timorous- timid

Those Objects- death, grave

Inordinate- disorderly

Vanity- uselessness

Rival wits- literary men who compete with each other for fame

Contests- rivalry

Great day- doomsday

Explanation

After musing upon the specific tombstones, the writer now returns to the original subject that is death and mortality. He writes that he will contemplate and discuss about English kings on another day when his mind is inclined to contemplate on such a serious theme once again. He understands that such ruminations, thoughts

on serious subjects like death and mortality raise dark and gloomy thoughts in weak and apprehensive minds. However, as far as the writer is concerned, he is always serious and does not understand what it means to be melancholy in nature. This gives the writer the freedom to meditate and deliberate upon the deep, intense, sombre and solemn scenes of life and nature with the same pleasure that the joyful, cheerful, vivacious and sprightly scenes of nature impart. This also means that the writer gets an opportunity to improve his personality by gaining knowledge of those objects and thoughts of life which other people think or perceive with dread and panic. When he looks at the tombs of great people, jealousy dies in him and when he reads the epitaphs of the beautiful people, every unreasonable desire leaves him. Whenever he sees the grieving parents upon their child's tombstone, his heart melts with compassion. And whenever he sees the tomb of the parents, he is forced to think about the uselessness of grieving and crying over those who are no longer alive now. When the writer sees kings lying buried besides those who overthrew them by defeating these kings, when he considers intelligent and witty rivals and sees priests and monks who divided the world on the basis of religious disputes laid alongside each other in their graves; the writer reflects with great sorrow and grief as well as astonishment on the pettiness and trivial competition, disputes, divisions and lame arguments and strife's in which human beings are engaged when alive. When he reads the dates on the tombstones, some died yesterday and some centuries ago, he is reminded of the day when all of them will lie dead and buried in their graves and will be contemporaries, making their appearances together by mingling into this earth.

Critical Remarks

The essay *Westminster Abbey* was published in *The Spectator*, on 30 March 30 1711 as essay number 26. The essay deals with the universal theme of death. Death is inescapable, it is common to both rich and poor, common and famous, king and pauper. The visit to the graveyard enables the writer to meditate on death and its profound impact on life. Death makes us understand the futility of actions. The earth into which they are buried equals all. The dead become a common mass and heap. Death is a great leveller. Death helps the writer understand the truth of life and gives the writer immense pleasure and knowledge.

Addison wrote for the rising middle class in the style which Johnson called 'the middle style'. Dr. Johnson said, 'His prose is the model of the middle style; familiar but not coarse, elegant but not ostentatious: on grave subjects not formal; on light occasions not groveling, but without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaborations; and always equable, and always easy, without glowing words or painted words or pointed sentences." Addison's language is both simple and ornate. He has wit and humour, combined with fancy and grace. His essay is replete with judiciously selected quotations, allusions, anecdotes, references from classical and biblical sources. Clarity of thought and lucidity of expression is a virtue of Addison's style as an essayist.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

3. What does the phrase – 'the Path of an Arrow' denote?
4. Why does the writer find Sir Cloudesley Shovel's epitaph to be offensive?

11.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Joseph Addison was born on 1st May, 1672, to Reverend Lancelot Addison at Milston, Wiltshire, England.
2. Addison to write a poem in honour of Lord Marlborough's famous victory at Blenheim.
3. The phrase 'the path of an arrow' has been taken from the portion *Wisdom of Solomon 5:12* holy Bible. When the arrow is shot at the target, it parts the air from where it passes but the air immediately and swiftly comes together that a man does not even come to know from the arrow passed. Similarly, lives of these men begin to move towards their deaths as soon as they are born.
4. The writer finds Sir Cloudesley Shovel's epitaph to be offensive. The writer is annoyed because instead of adorning his epitaph with his distinguishing character of a plain gallant man, his tomb has a figure of a fashionable Englishman wearing a long stylish wig and resting himself upon velvet cushions under a canopy. Such an epitaph has not done justice to Sir Cloudesly Shovel as it does not celebrate the remarkable acts performed by him for his country. It only introduces the reader to his manner of death in which it was not possible for him to find any honour.

11.5 SUMMARY

- Joseph Addison was born on 1st May, 1672, to Reverend Lancelot Addison at Milston, Wiltshire, England. He was the eldest son.
- It is at Charterhouse school that Addison made his acquaintance with Richard Steele. Later, Addison joined The Queen's College, Oxford, for his further studies.
- From 1699 to 1702, Addison received pension from British government. Lords Montagu and Somers, discerning his value, desired his services in foreign courts.
- The death of Henry III caused him the loss of his pension and he returned to England at the end of 1703. Addison fell on evil days and lived in poverty.

- Addison's personal life was not as successful as his political and literary career. In 1716, he married Countess-Dowager of Warwick.
- Joseph Addison was a prolific writer, poet, essayist and dramatist. He attained early distinction through his Latin verses.
- Addison was not very successful as a dramatist. In 1713 he produced the tragedy of *Cato,* part of which had been in manuscript as early as 1703. It was of little merit.
- Addison's fame stands neither on his poems, nor plays, nor his political and polemical pamphlets. It is almost entirely as an essayist that Joseph Addison enjoys fame and reputation in the literary circles.
- In all, Addison penned almost four hundred essays, which are of nearly uniform length covering a wide diversity of subject and themes—amusements, religion, literature, art, dress, clubs, superstitions and in general all the fashions and follies of the time.
- When the writer is in a serious mood he often goes alone to take a walk in Westminster Abbey. He describes one such afternoon that he spent in the Abbey looking at the tombs and their epitaphs.
- To the writer, these people fighting battles are celebrated in heroic poems for being knocked in the head.
- The life of these men buried here can be described by the saying from the holy Bible –'the Path of an Arrow'. The phrase 'the path of an arrow' has been taken from the portion *Wisdom of Solomon 5:12* holy Bible.
- After reflecting upon the death, mortality and temporariness of human life in general, the writer examined closely specific descriptions on various epitaphs that he found in different quarters of that old building.
- The writer is delighted to read several modern epitaphs written with great elegance and dignity of expression in style, grace, refinement and just thoughts.
- After musing upon the specific tombstones, the writer now returns to the original subject that is death and mortality.
- The essay *Westminster Abbey* was published in *The Spectator*, on 30 March 30 1711 as essay number 26. The essay deals with the universal theme of death.

11.6 KEY WORDS

- **Prebendary:** It refers to an honorary canon.
- **Magazine of Mortality:** It refers to cemetery or grave.

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- **Epitaph:** These are words written on the tombstone in memory of the dead buried there.
- **Canopy:** It is an ornamented cloth covering erected for shade.
- **Rostral Crowns:** This refers to a memorial column having sculptors representing the rams of ancient ships.

11.7 SELF ASSESSEMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Prepare a brief note on the life of Joseph Addison.
2. Mention the prominent works of Joseph Addison.
3. Write a short note on the writing style of Joseph Addison.
4. What is the theme of the essay *Westminster Abbey*?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Assess Addison's contribution to the development of essay.
2. Account for the popularity of the Essay in the 18th century.
3. Discuss the contribution of Joseph Addison to development of English prose.
4. Comment upon the style of Joseph Addison as an essayist.

11.8 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - IV

FICTION AND PLAYS

NOTES

UNIT 12 HENRY FIELDING

Structure

12.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit discusses Henry Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews*. The novel was published in 1742 and is thought to be a parody of Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela*. The protagonist of the novel is a man named Joseph Andrews. He is supposed to be Pamela's brother, a servant in the household of Lady Booby. Andrews is noticed by Lady Booby due to his worth as a horsemen. Joseph Andrew in his behaviour and through the adventures he encounters allows Fielding to mock the moral world Samuel Richardson created in *Pamela*. In this unit, you will deal with the biographical sketch of Henry Fielding and a critical analysis of his novel *Joseph Andrews*.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Henry Fielding
- Summarize the novel *Joseph Andrews*
- Discuss the significant features of the protagonist of the novel *Joseph Andrews*

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12.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF HENRY FIELDING

Henry Fielding's contribution to the acceptance of the novel as a revered literary form is immense. There has been a lot of debate on the importance of the novelistic forms developed by Fielding and Samuel Richardson, at around the same time. Both were different in their approach and personalities, and their innovations regarding their work were seen as responses to each other's works. Fielding believed in enjoying his life to the fullest. However, he was not the libertine, free spirit that he is made out to be.

Fig. 12.1 *Henry Fielding*

Samuel Richardson was more middle class; Fielding had a more refined background. Fielding was born on 22 April 1707, at Sharpham Park in Somerset. He was related to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Earl of Denbigh. In April 1718, Henry's mother died. Colonel Edmund Fielding, his father, left his children with his in-laws, the Gould family, and went away to London. He remarried in 1719 and tried unsuccessfully to regain the custody of his children.

Fielding attended school in Eton. In 1727, his family lost quite a lot of money through a broker's treachery, and the situation left Fielding desperately in need of an income. Drama was thriving then, and Fielding used his London connections to step into the world of theatre. He published his first play *Love in Several Masques*, in 1728. Following this success, after a month, Fielding enrolled at Leyden University. However, he soon fell into financial difficulties and returned to London after two years in the university. *The Temple Beau*, his second play, was published in 1730 and that was soon followed by *The Author's Farce, and the Pleasures of the Town*; and *Tragedy of Tragedies, or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*. These works were immensely successful and he began to be recognized as a force in the theatre circle. The eight years following his return from London

were prolific for Fielding. He wrote a total of 25 plays in that period, though none were of any historical significance.

In 1734, Henry Fielding married Charlotte Craddock of Salisbury. He began courting her after dedicating some verses to her, in 1730. As a matter of fact, Sophia Western, a prominent character in his most famous work, *Tom Jones*, was modelled on Charlotte. His first daughter was born in 1736. In the same year, Fielding's political satire — *Pasquin, a Dramatic Satire on the Times* — was extremely well received, and ran in the theatres for more than 60performances. The play had some scenes of bribery in election procedures, which were subtly directed at Sir Robert Walpole, a prominent British statesman. The attacks in *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737) were more scathing and drew the attention of the authorities. These two plays were arguably the foremost reasons for the passing of The Licensing Act (1737), which put drama and theatre under the direct charge of Lord Chamberlain, one of the chief officers of the Royal household. This law stood for over two-hundred years, till 1968. Also, this, for all sense and purposes, ended Fielding's career as a dramatist.

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Fielding then decided to study law in 1737. He had inherited substantial wealth from his mother-in-law; however, he soon managed to once again find himself in a financial strife. He began working on a periodical called *The Champion, or British Mercury* (1739-1741) to cover for his losses. Several articles he penned for this publication were precursors of the initial chapters in *Tom Jones.* He worked under the pseudonym Captain Hercules Vinegar for the publication.

First two volumes of *Pamela*, *or Virtue Rewarded* were published in 1740; the following year, the next two volumes were published. *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews* was published in 1741, followed by *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* in 1742.

Joseph Andrews was well received in the literary circles and inspired the author to pen *Miscellanies* in 1743. This was a collection of essays, plays, poems and prose. The third volume of *Miscellanies* contained *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, widely regarded as being among the best instances of continued irony in English fiction. This novel highlights the achievements of Wild, who in reality was a notorious criminal hanged in 1725. Here, Fielding tries to convey that there is no real relation between having good morals and achieving greatness.

Fielding's situation during this period of his life was difficult. While he received critical acclaim for his work; his excesses meant that his financial state was still precarious. This had a bearing on his wife's health. In 1744, she died of fever. Fielding later married Mary Daniel, his wife's former maid, in 1747. She bore him five children, of whom only two survived passed childhood.

In 1748, Henry Fielding became Justice of the Peace for Westminster and Middlesex; this helped him rid his financial strive to a great extent. His new role brought him in regular contact with crime, the influence of which is evident in his last book *Amelia*. Fielding continued to devote himself to writing on political issues.

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True Patriot, and History of Our Own Time (1745-1746) and *Jacobite's Journal* (1747-1748) were responses to the Jacobite uprising of 1745. This event also provided the basis for *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), inarguably Henry Fielding's greatest achievement.

Fielding's final novel, *Amelia* (1751), revolves around a positive and strong woman character. In this novel, William Booth, the husband of the main character Amelia, is responsible for several domestic problems. However, Amelia forgives him for all his indiscretions and the novel has a happy ending.

The Covent-Garden Journal (1752) was the author's last periodical essay and contains some of his most humorous works. This was also the last literary work of his career. Fielding suffered from gout for large stretches of his life. To recover his health, he left for Lisbon, Portugal in 1754. However, this change was futile. Fielding died on 8 October 1754.

Fielding's contribution to English literature, especially the novel, cannot be understated. He was the humourist to Samuel Richardson's realist. His influence was evident even in the twentieth century; *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* were adapted into motion pictures in 1963 and 1977, respectively.

Some of the popular works of Henry Fielding are as follows:

- *The Masquerade* – a poem (Fielding's first publication)
- *Love in Several Masques* – play, 1728
- *Rape upon Rape* – play, 1730.
- *The Temple Beau* – play, 1730
- *The Author's Farce* – play, 1730
- *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb* – play, 1731
- *Grub-Street Opera* – play, 1731
- *The Modern Husband* – play, 1732
- *The Covent Garden Tragedy* – play, 1732
- *Pasquin* – play, 1736
- *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* – play, 1737
- *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* – novel, 1741
- *The Life and Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great* – novel, 1743. Published as Volume 3 of Miscellanies.
- *Miscellanies* – collection of works, 1743,
- *The Female Husband or the Surprising History of Mrs Mary alias Mr George Hamilton, who was convicted of having married a young woman of Wells and lived with her as her husband, taken from her own mouth since her confinement* – pamphlet, fictionalized report, 1746

- *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* – novel, 1749
- *A Journey from this World to the Next* – 1749
- *Amelia* – novel, 1751
- *The Covent Garden Journal* – periodical, 1752
- *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* – travel narrative, 1755

Check Your Progress

1. When was Fielding's first play published?
2. When did Henry Fielding marry Charlotte Craddock?
3. Name the last literary work of Fielding's career.

12.3 *JOSEPH ANDREWS*: CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Joseph Andrews, or *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, was published in 1742. It was the first published full-length novel of Henry Fielding, and indeed among the first novels in the English language. This section provides a detailed summary of the novel *Joseph Andrews*.

Book I

In the opening lines, the narrator, who is jovial as well as intrusive, explains the nature of the protagonist of the novel — Joseph Andrews. At the age of ten years, Joseph tended animals as Sir Thomas Booby's apprentice. Sir Thomas' wife, Lady Booby noticed him due to his worth as a horseman. She employed him as her footman when he was seventeen years old.

After Sir Thomas's death, Joseph finds that Lady Booby's fondness towards him has increased. During a trip to London, she offers herself to him in her chamber. Later, she comes to know that his Christian commitment to chastity before marriage is firm. She decides to dismiss him from his job and his lodgings but before dismissing him, the Lady once again calls him to her chamber and makes one last attempt at seducing him but fails.

While Joseph prepares to leave London by moonlight, the heroine of the novel, Fanny Goodwill, is introduced to the reader. She is a poor illiterate girl of 'extraordinary beauty' (I, xi) and lives with a farmer near Lady Booby's parish. She and Joseph are close to each other and they are leaving separately because their local parson and mentor, Abraham Adams, recommended them to postpone their marriage until they find means to live comfortably.

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On his way to meet Fanny, Joseph ends up staying in the nearby inn due to mugging. In the inn, he meets Adams, by chance. Adams stays in the inn during his trip to London to sell three volumes of his sermons. The thief is also found and brought to the inn but escapes later that night. However, Joseph gets his possessions.

One of the many burlesque and comic digressions in the novel caps Joseph and Adams' stay in the inn. Betty, the inn's chambermaid, starts liking Joseph but feels disappointed due to Joseph's loyalty to Fanny. Mr Tow-wouse, the landlord of the Inn and an admirer of Betty, sees Betty's disappointment as an opportunity to take advantage. Mrs Tow-wouse discovers them locked in an embrace. She chases Betty through the house before Adams restrains her. The landlord promises Mrs Tow-wouse that he would not transgress again and his lady allows him to make his peace by 'quietly and contentedly bearing to be reminded of his transgressions, as a kind of penance, once or twice a day, during the residue of his life'.

Book II

During his stay in the inn, Adams realizes that his wife, deciding that he would need shirts more than sermons on his journey, has not packed the sermons. Therefore, the pair decides to go back to the parson's parish: Joseph in search of Fanny and Adams in search of his sermons.

With Joseph following on horseback, Adams finds himself sharing the carriage with an anonymous lady and Madam Slipslop, who is an admirer of Joseph and a servant of Lady Booby. When they cross the house of a teenage girl named Leonora, the anonymous lady is reminded of a story and starts one of the novel's three interpolated stories, 'The History of Leonora, or the Unfortunate Jilt'. This story continues for a number of chapters in the novel, punctuated by interruptions and queries of other passengers.

When they stop at an inn, Adams offers his seat in the carriage to Joseph and forgetting his horse, absentmindedly sets out his journey on foot. Feeling that he is ahead of Joseph, he rests by the roadside and starts a conversation with a stranger. He gets so engrossed in the conversation that he misses the carriage when it passes. As the night falls, Adams and the stranger hear a shriek during their discourse on courage and duty. The stranger, who was praising the virtues of bravery and chivalry a few seconds ago, flees the scene without turning back. However, Adams rushes to help the girl and knocks her attacker down after a fight. The girl tells him that she is Fanny Goodwill and is searching for Joseph after hearing about his mugging. In spite of Adams' good intentions, he and the girl are accused of assault and robbery.

After some comic and argumentative fights in front of the local magistrate, the pair is eventually released and they soon set out in search of Joseph. After walking down a little, they face a storm and decide to stay in a nearby inn to save themselves. By coincidence, Joseph and Slipslop are also staying in the same inn.

Joseph and Fanny meet each other and Slipslop departs angrily due to her jealousy ignited by the reunion of the two lovers. In the morning, the departure of Adams, Joseph and Fanny is delayed due to their inability to settle the bill. A local peddler rescues the trio by loaning them his last 6s 6d.

The solicitations of charity that Adams is forced to make, and the complications they face during their stay in the parish, bring them in contact with many local squires, gentlemen and parsons. Discussions on literature, religion, philosophy and trade take place among the group.

Book III

The three leave the inn during the night and soon Fanny feels the need to rest. They overhear approaching voices planning 'the murder of any one they meet' (III, ii). To save themselves, the trio escapes to a local house. Mr Wilson, the owner of the house, invites them inside his house. He tells them that the gang of supposed murderers were sheep-stealers, who wished to kill livestock and not Adams and his friend. After giving them shelter in the house, Wilson begins the lengthiest interpolated tale of the novel and tells his life story. This story is similar to the story of Fielding's own young adulthood.

Wilson's father dies and leaves him a humble fortune. Finding himself the lord of his own destiny, he leaves school and travels to London. There he learns the dress, etiquettes and reputation for womanizing to consider himself a 'beau'. Wilson's life in the town is fake: He writes love-letters to himself, buys fine clothes and is concerned more with being seen at the theatre than with watching the play. After two terrible experiences with women, he loses a lot of money and falls into the companionship of a group of freethinkers, Deists and gamblers. Finding himself in debt, he starts writing plays to lessen his monetary debts. He buys a lottery ticket with his last few pence but soon exchanges it for food since he is not sure of winning the lottery. While in jail, he gets to know that the ticket he gave away has won a £3,000 prize. He feels disappointed but soon the daughter of the winner pays off his debts after hearing about his plight. After a brief courtship, both of them marry each other.

Wilson finds himself at the mercy of a number of social ills. The literary market which is over-saturated and abused, the exploitative state lottery, and strict laws which sanction detention for small debts. After facing the corrupting power of the town, he leaves the town with his new wife and goes to live in a rural solitude in which Adams, Fanny and Joseph now find them. The only break in his satisfied life was the kidnapping of his eldest son.

After some time, Wilson goes to see off the trio and promises to meet Adams when he comes to his parish. After another mock-epic battle on the road with a number of hunting dogs, the trio goes to the house of a local squire. With the help of this event, Fielding illustrates another contemporary social ill by making Adams subjected to a humiliating robbing. Furious, the trio goes to the nearest inn

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and comes to know that their last half-guinea has been robbed while they were at the squire's house. To add to their misery, the squire accuses Adams and Joseph of kidnapping Fanny, in order to have them arrested though he himself orders the kidnapping of the girl. However, Lady Booby's steward, Peter Pounce, rescues her in transit and four of them go to Booby Hall together.

Book IV

On seeing Joseph back in the parish, Lady Booby meanders through varied emotions like anger, pity, loathe, arrogance and affection. The next morning when Joseph and Fanny's banns publish, the Lady gets angry at Parson Adams, who is accommodating Fanny at his house. When Lady finds herself powerless either to stop the marriage or to banish them from the parish, she takes the help of Lawyer Scout, who put a fake charge of theft against Joseph and Fanny in order to stop, or at least postpone, the marriage.

Three days later, the Lady's strategy is thwarted by the visit of her nephew and an unexpected guest, Mr Booby. Booby has married Pamela which gives Joseph a powerful ally and brother-in-law. Booby knows the justice who is presiding over Joseph and Fanny's trial, and takes them into his own custody. Knowing of his sister's hostility towards the two lovers, Booby offers to reunite Joseph with his sister and take Fanny into his own parish.

In a conversation with Joseph on fatalism and stoicism, Adams asks him to surrender to the will of God and control his passion, even during an overpowering catastrophe. After some time, Adams comes to know that his youngest son, Jacky, has drowned. He gets very sad contrary to his lecture a few minutes ago. Later, Adams comes to know that the report was hasty, and that the peddler who loaned him his last few shillings in Book II has saved his son.

Lady Booby, in a final attempt to disrupt the marriage, brings a young beau named Didapper to Adams' house to seduce Fanny. Fanny is not attracted to his bold attempts of courtship. Didapper provokes Joseph into a fight. The Lady and the beau leave the house in anger, but the peddler, after seeing Fanny, is compelled to relate a tale. There, the Peddler tells that he has found out that Fanny is the long-lost daughter of Mr and Mrs Andrews. Everybody is shocked to hear the revelation but they are also relieved that the crime of incest has been narrowly prevented.

The next morning, Joseph and Pamela's parents reach, and everyone discusses the question of Fanny's parentage together. The Andrews recognize her as their lost daughter, but add a twist to the tale. They say that when Fanny was an infant, she was stolen from her parents, but the thieves left behind an unhealthy infant Joseph in return, who was raised by the couple as their own. It is evident that Joseph is the kidnapped son of Wilson, and when Wilson arrives on his promised visit, he recognizes Joseph by a birthmark on his chest. Joseph is therefore

Wilson's son and the couple is no longer suspected of being siblings. Two days later, they are married off by Adams. The narrator, at the end ensures the reader that there will be no sequel to this novel.

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Joseph Andrews: Themes and Characters

Joseph Andrews (1792) is ostensibly a parody of *Pamela*. Its hero is supposed to be Pamela's brother, a servant in the household of Lady Booby. Joseph in his behaviour and fortunes allows his creator to laugh at Richardson's moral world through the adventures and misadventures he encounters. The element of parody in the novel soon disappears. Fielding, too, writes a moral novel and it soon becomes evident that he is developing and illustrating a moral code of his own, not fundamentally different from Richardson's as he thought but different enough. He reveals another aspect of the moral sensibility of that age. Joseph's virtue is threatened by his widowed mistress, Lady Booby and when he repulses her, she dismisses him from her service. Fielding treats male chastity with the same seriousness with which Richardson treated female chastity.

Published in 1742 and described by Fielding as a 'comic romance', it is the tale of a footman's adventures on the road home from London with his absentminded friend and Parson Abraham Adams. The novel represents the mixture of the two competing forms of the eighteenth century literature: The mock heroic and neoclassical (and, by extension, aristocratic) approach of Augustans such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift; and the famous, domestic prose fiction of novelists such as Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson.

Written 'in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*', the work owes much of its humour to the techniques developed by Cervantes, and its subject-matter to the seemingly loose arrangement of events, digressions and lower-class characters to picaresque. In deference to the literary tastes and recurring tropes of the period, it relies on bawdy humour, an impending marriage and a mystery surrounding unknown parentage, but conversely is rich in philosophical digressions, classical erudition and social purpose.

Fielding's first endeavour into prose fiction came a year before the publication of *Shamela* in pamphlet form, a parody of, and direct response to the stylistic failings and moral duplicity that Fielding observed in Richardson's *Pamela*. Richardson's epistolary tale of a stubborn servant girl, armed only with her 'virtue', fighting against her master's efforts at seduction became literary sensation overnight in 1741. The implied moral message — that a girl's chastity has a value like a commodity — as well as the awkwardness of the epistolary form to deal with events, and details, were the foremost targets of Fielding's parody. In the first chapter of the novel, Colley Cibber, poet laureate and mock-hero of Pope's *Dunciad*, is recognized as another delinquent against morality, propriety and literary value.

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Fielding claims in the Preface that the purpose of the novel is to establish a genre of writing 'which I do not remember to have been hitherto attempted in our language'. It is defined as the 'comic epic-poem in prose': a prose fiction, epic in length and variety of events, and characterization in Homer's comic poem *Margites*. He disassociates his fiction from the contemporary novel and the scandal memoir.

In the first few chapters of the novel, Richardson and Cibber are parodied harshly and the real source of *Joseph Andrews* is Fielding's opposition to the moral and technical limits of the accepted literature of his time. While *Shamela* was a sustained rebellion of a rival's work, in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding only uses the apparent moral perversion of accepted literature as a catalyst to envision his own philosophy of prose fiction.

Characters

The important characters of the novel have been discussed in this section.

(a) Narrator

The narrator, the 'I' in the novel, is a fictional character and is not confused with the author of this novel. The narrator keeps reminding the readers that it is a fictional novel and is not real. He also underlines the fact that though the facts are not real in nature but the human nature which is depicted in the novel is true to its core. According to Ian Watt, the narrator makes his contribution in the 'realism of assessment.' The narrator is also used by the author to link the unrelated events.

(b) Joseph Andrews

The characterization of Joseph Andrews is not conventional in nature. The portrayal seems like parity of a mock epic style. In this novel, Joseph Andrews is not a round character and is described in a mock epic style with a lyrical description of being hard working, humble, beautiful, tender, virtuous and almost a demi-God. He is passionate about upholding a virtuous life even amidst vulnerable circumstances.

(c) Mr Abraham Adams

He is a compassionate and absent-minded parson of Lady Booby's country parish. He encourages Joseph's intelligence and supports him in his decision to marry Fanny. During his journey to the countryside, we come to know that he has a simple and jovial nature.

(d) Fanny Goodwill

She is Joseph's beloved in the novel and a beautiful girl with reserved nature. Throughout the novel, we are not aware of her correct parentage. She is successful in fighting the seductive attempts of beau and proves to be loyal to Joseph.

(e) Lady Booby

She illustrates a number of traditional flaws of the upper class such as arrogance, selfishness and self-indulgence. She is Sir Thomas's widow and makes advances towards her handsome footman. When he rejects her advances, she dismisses him from the job of footman and makes all the possible attempts to stop his marriage with Fanny later in the novel.

(f) Mr Booby

He is Sir Thomas's nephew and a snobbish squire. He marries his servant Pamela Andrews. He tries to help Joseph and Fanny as he knows the Justice who is presiding over Joseph and Fanny's trial. Later, when he comes to know of Lady Booby's inclination towards Joseph, he tries to reunite them but fails.

(g) Pamela Andrews

She is a servant in Mr Booby's household and marries her master. Fielding has taken this character from Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*. Towards the end of the novel, we come to know that she is the daughter of Mr and Mrs Andrews and Joseph is not their real son.

(h) Mr Wilson

He is a gentleman who gives shelter to Joseph, Fanny and Mr Adams when they ask for his help after overhearing a conversation of a group of 'murderers'. After giving them shelter, Wilson begins the lengthiest interpolated tale of the novel and tells his life story. Towards the end of the novel, we come to know that he is Joseph's father.

(i) Peddler

He helps Adams twice in the novel. He rescues him from a difficult situation by paying one of his inn bills. Later, he rescues his son from drowning. Also, it is his revelation about Fanny's parentage which adds suspense towards the end of the novel.

(j) Madam Slipslop

The character of Madam Slipslop is in complete contrast and antithetical to what Joseph Andrews represents. She is dull, old, ugly and coarse. She is humorous, funny, amusing. She is ridiculed for her perception that she has earned the right to commit sin due to her long maidenhood.

(k) Peter Pounce

He is Lady Booby's steward who is stingy by nature. He lends money to Lady Booby's servants at high interest. He flaunts the fact that he is a member of the new capitalist class.

(l) Mr and Mrs Andrews

Throughout the novel, they are shown as Joseph's parents but towards the end of the novel, we come to know that Joseph is not their real son and they are Pamela's real parents.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

4. In which year was *Joseph Andrews* published?
5. Who is the heroine of the novel *Joseph Andrews*?
6. Who is Mr Abraham Adams in the novel?

12.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Henry Fielding published his first play *Love in Several Masques*, in 1728.
2. In 1734, Henry Fielding married Charlotte Craddock of Salisbury.
3. *The Covent-Garden Journal* (1752) was the last literary work of Fielding's career.
4. *Joseph Andrews*, or *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, was published in 1742.
5. Fanny Goodwill is the heroine of the novel *Joseph Andrews*.
6. Mr Abraham Adams is a compassionate and absent-minded parson of Lady Booby's country parish. He encourages Joseph's intelligence and supports him in his decision to marry Fanny

12.5 SUMMARY

- Henry Fielding's contribution to the acceptance of the novel as a revered literary form is immense. There has been a lot of debate on the importance of the novelistic forms developed by Fielding and Samuel Richardson, at around the same time.
- Fielding attended school in Eton. In 1727, his family lost quite a lot of money through a broker's treachery, and the situation left Fielding desperately in need of an income.
- In 1734, Henry Fielding married Charlotte Craddock of Salisbury. He began courting her after dedicating some verses to her, in 1730. As a matter of fact, Sophia Western, a prominent character in his most famous work, *Tom Jones*, was modelled on Charlotte.
- First two volumes of *Pamela*, *or Virtue Rewarded* were published in 1740; the following year, the next two volumes were published. *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews* was published in 1741, followed by *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* in 1742.

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- Fielding's final novel, *Amelia* (1751), revolves around a positive and strong woman character. In this novel, William Booth, the husband of the main character Amelia, is responsible for several domestic problems.
- *Joseph Andrews*, or *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, was published in 1742.
- In the opening lines, the narrator, who is jovial as well as intrusive, explains the nature of the protagonist of the novel — Joseph Andrews. At the age of ten years, Joseph tended animals as Sir Thomas Booby's apprentice.
- One of the many burlesque and comic digressions in the novel caps Joseph and Adams' stay in the inn.
- Wilson's father dies and leaves him a humble fortune. Finding himself the lord of his own destiny, he leaves school and travels to London. There he learns the dress, etiquettes and reputation for womanizing to consider himself a 'beau'.
- On seeing Joseph back in the parish, Lady Booby meanders through varied emotions like anger, pity, loathe, arrogance and affection.
- Lady Booby, in a final attempt to disrupt the marriage, brings a young beau named Didapper to Adams' house to seduce Fanny. Fanny is not attracted to his bold attempts of courtship.
- *Joseph Andrews* (1792) is ostensibly a parody of *Pamela*. Its hero is supposed to be Pamela's brother, a servant in the household of Lady Booby.
- Fielding's first endeavour into prose fiction came a year before the publication of *Shamela* in pamphlet form, a parody of, and direct response to the stylistic failings and moral duplicity that Fielding observed in Richardson's *Pamela*.

12.6 KEY WORDS

- **Deist:** A deist is one who believes in God but denies revealed religion.
- **Stoicism:** It refers to the endurance of pain or hardship without the display of feelings and without complaint.
- **Parody:** It is an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect.

12.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life and works of Henry Fielding.

2. How is *Joseph Andrews* a parody of *Pamela*?
3. How does Peddler's confusion about Fanny's parentage create suspense towards the end of the novel *Joseph Andrews*?

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss Henry Fielding as a novelist.
2. Discuss the genres and themes used in the novel *Joseph Andrews*.
3. Explain Lady Boody's attempt to disrupt the marriage of Joseph and Fanny.
4. Compare the development of the novel form by Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding.

12.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 13 RICHARD SHERIDAN: *THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL*

NOTES

Structure

13.0 INTRODUCTION

Richard Sheridan is a famous Irish playwright, primarily involved in the writing of satire and comedy of manners. During his literary career, he published nine successful plays, the most famous of which were *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *The Duenna* and *A Trip to Scarborough*. In this unit, you will study about the life and works of Richard Sheridan. In addition, you will also get to analyse the main characters of the play *The School for Scandal*, the role of wit and humour in the play and the significance of artificial comedy

13.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Richard Sheridan
- Explain the main characters of the play *The School for Scandal*
- Identify the role of wit and humour in the play
- Define sentimental comedy

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13.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF RICHARD SHERIDAN

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in1751. Regarded as a major dramatist, his chief merits are precision of diction in dialogue that rapidly scores witty hits; and aberrations of behaviour in social relationships. He is also noted for his skill in the construction of scenes that succeed on stage on the strength of well-conveyed surprises. His chief weakness lies in the elaboration of episodes at the expense of their relationships to the whole. His characters are derivative in the sense that they have long literary ancestries, and the same is true of his plots. His principal concern lies in the exaggeration of and variations on the traditional patterns of the comedy of manners in characterization and action.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in 1751 in Dublin, Ireland. His family owned a house on then fashionable Dorset Street. In Dublin, Sheridan attended the English Grammar School in Grafton Street. The family forever moved to England in 1758 when he was seven years old. He studied at the Harrow School from 1762 to 1768.

His father, Thomas Sheridan, was for a while an actor-manager at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. However, when the family permanently shifted to England, his father gave up his acting profession and started writing books on the subject of education, and especially the standardisation of the English language in education.

In 1772, Richard Sheridan, at the age of 21, eloped and then married Elizabeth Ann Linley and set up house in London. In 1775 Sheridan's first play, *The Rivals*, was produced at London's Covent Garden Theatre. It immediately established Sheridan's good reputation. The play went on to become a standard of English literature.

Shortly after the success of *The Rivals*, Sheridan and his father-in-law Thomas Linley the Elder, a successful composer, produced the opera, *The Duenna*. This piece was also quite successful and it played for seventy-five performances. His most renowned play *The School for Scandal* is considered one of the greatest comedies of manners in English. It was followed by *The Critic* (1779), an updating of the satirical Restoration play *The Rehearsal*.

In 1787 Sheridan demanded the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India. His speech in the House of Commons was described by Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox and William Pitt as the greatest ever delivered in ancient or modern times. He was twice married. He and his first wife Elizabeth had a son. In 1795, Richard B. Sheridan married Hester Jane Ogle (1776–1817), daughter of the Dean of Winchester.

He held the posts of Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall (1804–1807) and Treasurer of the Navy (1806–1807). In December 1815 he became ill, largely confined to bed. Sheridan died in poverty, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

We may regard Sheridan as the author of a kind of didactic comedy which evokes laughter and satirical perception by ridiculing persons who are vain, affected, foolish or malignant. Sheridan resembles other Georgian dramatists in admiring compassion and benevolence, and in avoiding erotic episodes. He is unlike most of them in keeping pathetic situations out of his comedies. His best comedy *The School for Scandal* has an acerbity and a precision of phrase that set it apart.

Sheridan dramatizes simple relationships among individuals and groups of individuals. We are never left in doubt about his judgement of characters. He writes comedies with a satirical bite that affects only the fatuous and malicious individuals. He wrote his plays in some haste. Despite the haste, however, he closes his intrigues neatly and with finality. He leaves no disturbing matrimonial or financial loose ends. Act V of *The School for Scandal* may be anti-climactic, as has often been alleged. But the uncertainty in personal relationships is definitively resolved, even in the case of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, where there is reason enough for an open ending of the sort found in several of the best Restoration comedies.

The School for Scandal is a most entertaining play, the interest of which depends mainly upon its brilliant, witty dialogue and its funny situations. This play is a satire on the upper-class society of the time. In this respect, therefore, it shares the principal characteristics of Restoration Comedy or the Comedy of Manners. There are two main targets of satire in this play, one is scandal-mongering, and the other is hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Lady Sneerwell and her circle indulge in slanderous gossip about their friends and their acquaintances, and amuse us greatly by their combination of wit and malice. Joseph Surface is the very embodiment of hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and he amuses us by his intrigues and his double-dealing. In the end, both Lady Sneerwell and Joseph are thoroughly exposed, and the exposure has an obvious moral. All satire has a moral aim, and the moral aim her, too, is unmistakable. There are a couple of other targets of satire also.

Check Your Progress

1. In which year was Richard Sheridan born?
2. What are the two main targets of satire in the play *The School for Scandal*?

13.3 SCENE-WISE INTERPRETATION OF THE PLAY: *THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL*

Let us go through a scene-wise interpretation of the play, *The School for Scandal*.

ACT I Scene I

Lady Sneerwell, a rich widow, is talking to a man called Mr. Snake. Lady Sneerwell is fond of indulging in scandalous gossip; and Mr. Snake assists her in this sort of

thing. From the conversation of these two, we learn that two brothers, Joseph Surface and Charles Surface, are rivals over the hand of a rich young girl by the name of Maria. We also learn that Lady Sneerwell is herself in love with Charles and is therefore collaborating with Joseph in an intrigue to hinder the marriage of Charles and Maria. Maria's father is dead, and she is being looked after by Sir Peter Teazle who is acting as her guardian. Maria herself has a preference for Charles, though her guardian wants her to marry Joseph. Lay Sneerwell knows the character of Joseph well and describes him as cunning, selfish, malicious, in short, "a sentimental knave."

Joseph Surface now arrives to see Lady Sneerwell and tells her that their joint plan is succeeding and that, as a result of the scandalous stories they have been spreading about Charles, Maria has stopped meeting that man. Joseph also informs her that Charles's troubles are increasing on account of the debts which Charles has incurred. The next to arrive is Maria herself. She is soon followed by Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin and his uncle Crabtree. All of them, with the exception of Maria, indulge in the kind of scandalous gossip which has become their hobby. Maria, however, does not relish this kind of conversation and, when they begin to talk about Charles also, she leaves as a mark of protest.

ACT I Scene II

Sir Peter Teazle is talking to himself about the unhappiness of his married life. Six months before, he, an old bachelor, had married a young wife from the countryside. Since the very time of his marriage, Sir Peter has been feeling wretched with his wife because she has been squandering his wealth and contradicting all his opinions. Sir Peter is also unhappy because his ward, Maria, refuses to marry Joseph - who is Sir Peter's choice for her. Rowley, a steward to the late father of Joseph and Charles, comes and informs Sir Peter about the arrival in London of Sir Oliver Surface. Sir Oliver is the uncle of Joseph and Charles. He has lived in the east for some sixteen years; and he has now returned home. Sir Peter feels very glad that his old friend has returned to England.

ACT II Scene I

Sir Peter Teazle and his wife are quarrelling with each other; Lady Teazle insists on living a life of fashion, like other ladies of her status and means, while Sir Peter is opposed to her extravagant ways and reminds her of her humble background.

ACT II Scene II

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Mr. Crabtree, Sir Benjamin, and Joseph are having one of their conversations in the course of which they attack the reputations of people of their acquaintance. They all take pleasure in scandalous gossip. Sir Peter Teazle arrives, but he feels disgusted with the kind of malicious talk which these people are having, and so he leaves, but Lady Teazle and Maria who had also joined the scandalous group stay on.

Getting an opportunity to talk alone to Maria, Joseph renews his suit to her, but she is not interested in him. Just at this point Lady Teazle detects Joseph speaking to Maria in a pleading tone, and feels annoyed with him because Joseph has been professing some interest in Lady Teazle as well; and Lady Teazle now finds that this man is simultaneously wooing Maria.

ACT II Scene III

Rowley informs Sir Oliver that although Charles is essentially a good fellow, he has become the target of some malicious talk among his acquaintances. Sir Oliver says that he will not feel prejudiced against Charles on the basis of any malicious talk. Sir Peter comes and extends a hearty welcome to Sir Oliver on his return to England. Sir Peter then gives Sir Oliver his own favourable impression of Joseph and his adverse opinion of Charles. But Sir Oliver says that he would like to judge the character of both the nephews himself without any preconceptions.

Act III Scene I

In pursuance of his intention to test the characters of his two nephews, Sir Oliver now decides in consultation with Rowley and Sir Peter, that he will first meet Charles in the disguise of a broker by the name of Mr. Premium and that, afterwards, he will meet his other nephew, Joseph, to whom he will go in the disguise of a needy relative by the name of Mr. Stanley.

When Sir Peter is left alone, he speaks, in a brief soliloquy, of his suspicions about his wife's relations with Charles. These suspicions have arisen in his mind because of the malicious rumours which have been circulated by the scandal-mongers. At this point, Maria appears, and Sir Peter asks her whether she has given any thought to his proposal that she should marry Joseph. But Maria expresses her firm opposition to this proposal, and leaves.

Next, Lady Teazle comes, and a quarrel takes place between her and Sir Peter. Sir Peter says that he committed an act of madness in marrying "a rural coquette" like her; and Lady Teazle says that she was a fool to marry 'an old dangling bachelor' like him.

Act III Scene II

Sir Oliver Surface accompanied by a Jewish money lender by the name of Moses, now goes to meet Charles at the latter's house. Charles's servant, Trip, speaks to Sir Oliver in a saucy manner; and Sir Oliver is partly amused and partly annoyed by Trip's behaviour.

Act III Scene III

Charles is making merry at his house in the company of his boon companions. Sir Oliver's initial impression of Charles is therefore unfavourable, especially because Charles is ready to borrow money on any terms. Sir Oliver finds Charles to be truly a spendthrift with no sense of responsibility. In order to get a loan from Sir Oliver, whose is disguised as Mr. Premium, Charles must produce some security,

but is unable to do so. Charles then offers to sell his family portraits to Mr. Premium (that is, Sir Oliver) and the latter agrees to buy these.

Act IV Scene I

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Charles shows not the least feeling for his ancestors and in fact speaks about them in a rather disrespectful manner. He then proceeds to sell the portraits of those ancestors, one by one, for various amounts; and afterwards sells the whole lot for a lump sum. However, he firmly refuses to part with one particular portrait, this being the portrait of Sir Oliver himself. Charles's refusal to sell this portrait shows that he has some affection for the uncle who has been sending him money during his years of absence from England. Sir Oliver's heart softens towards Charles at his clear proof of Charles's affection for him. When Sir Oliver has left after paying Charles for the portraits, Charles sends an amount of one hundred pounds through Rowley to a needy relative who is facing financial troubles.

Act IV Scene II

Moses tries to impress upon Sir Oliver the fact that Charles is irresponsible and extravagant in his habits. But Sir Oliver replies that the faults of his nephew Charles do not matter at all in view of the fact that the young fellow has a deep affection for his uncle. When Sir Oliver learns from Rowley about the money that Charles has sent to a needy relative, he feels even more pleased.

Act IV Scene III

Joseph is waiting at his house for Lady Teazle who had promised to meet him there. Finding it difficult to make a retreat, Joseph is now seriously thinking of becoming Lady Teazle's lover though at the same time he is continuing his pursuit of Maria whom he wants to marry for the sake of her wealth. Lady Teazle arrives and tells Joseph that her husband is annoyed with her and that he is at the same time feeling jealous of Charles because he thinks that she and Charles are in love with each other. Joseph inwardly feels that his plan to slander his brother's name is proceeding satisfactorily. Lady Teazle expresses her wish that her husband would let his ward, Maria marry Charles so that his suspicions with regard to Charles may come to an end.

Joseph now thinks it a good opportunity to acquire Lady Teazle as a mistress, and she too seems inclined to accept him as a lover. Joseph argues that if a husband loses his trust in his wife, his wife then has every reason to give up the path of virtue and to start a love affair with some other man. Just when Lady Teazle is on the point of surrendering herself to Joseph, the servant interrupts the lovers and announces the arrival of Sir Peter. At this Lady Teazle becomes panicky, and seeing a screen in the room, runs and hides behind it.

Sir Peter enters and tells Joseph his worries. He informs Joseph that he suspects a love-affair between his wife and Charles. He also informs Joseph that he has nothing but goodwill for his wife and that he intends to settle a large amount of money upon her so that she should have an independent income of her own to

spend it as she likes. Lady Teazle, of course is overhearing all this. Sir Peter then asks Joseph how his efforts to win the hand of Maria are progressing. Joseph feels embarrassed at this question because this means that Lady Teazle would realise that his declarations of love to Lady Teazle was only a pretence.

The servant now comes and informs Joseph that his brother Charles has come to see him. Sir Peter says that he would hide himself somewhere in the room so that Joseph can have a frank talk with Charles and can also find out if Charles is having an affair with Lady Teazle. Sir Peter moves towards the screen but catching a glimpse of a petticoat, comes back and asks Joseph who is behind the screen. Joseph quickly invents the excuse that the woman behind the screen is a French milliner who has been after him for some time and who hid herself when Sir Peter's arrival was announced. Thereupon Sir Peter hurriedly hides himself in a closet.

Charles now enters. In accordance with Sir Peter's request, Joseph interrogates Charles about his relations with Lady Teazle, but Charles stoutly denies the charge. On learning that Sir Peter is hiding in the closet, Charles drags out Sir Peter who is, however, now happy to find that his suspicions about Charles were unfounded.

When Joseph leaves the room for a couple of minutes, Sir Peter mischievously tells Charles that a French milliner is hiding behind the screen. Charles is astonished to find Lady Teazle there. Joseph has by now also returned. Joseph's effort at explaining the presence of Lady Teazle behind the screen proves futile, and Sir Peter is now convinced of the hypocrisy and crookedness of this man. Lady Teazle then comes out with the truth. She now knows that Joseph wanted merely to seduce her and that his real aim had always been to win the hand of Maria. She also realises that Sir Peter has a genuine affection for her. These two discoveries bring about a great change in her.

Act V Scene I

Sir Oliver, now disguised as Mr. Stanley, goes to meet Joseph at the latter's house. After the exposure of his true character, Joseph is already feeling bad, and he feels even more upset by the thought that Sir Peter would now support Charles's claim to the hand of Maria. Joseph, however, assures Lady Sneerwell that there is still some hope for both of them. He says that they can still discredit and defame Charles, partly by producing those forged love letters which Charles is supposed to have written to Lady Sneerwell, and partly by producing Mr. Snake to give evidence in the case and to support Lady Sneerwell's allegations that Charles had promised to marry Lady Sneerwell.

Sir Peter now takes the initiative in seeking a reconciliation with his wife. Sir Peter also admits that Charles is a good fellow and that Joseph is a hypocrite and a rogue. And that is precisely the conclusion to which Sir Oliver has come as a result of the tests to which he had subjected both his nephews.

Lady Sneerwell now makes the allegation that Charles is pledged to marry her. Joseph says that he can produce evidence in support of Lady Sneerwell's

claim. Mr. Snake is then brought in. To the complete surprise of Lady Sneerwell and Joseph, Mr. Snake tells the truth and exposes the intrigue which Lady Sneerwell and Joseph had entered into against Charles and Maria. Lady Teazle also takes this opportunity to snub Lady Sneerwell for running a scandalous college where nothing but malicious gossip goes on. Lady Sneerwell and Joseph then withdraw from the scene. The way is thus cleared for the union of Charles and Maria. Charles promises to reform himself and Rowley says that nothing will please him more than Charles's doing so.

Check Your Progress

3. Who is Maria's guardian?
4. Why is Sir Peter Teazle unhappy with his wife?
5. Who is the girl for whom Joseph Surface and Charles Surface are contesting?

13.4 CHIEF CHARACTER SKETCHES

Let us study the prominent characters of the play *The School for Scandal.*

1. Joseph Surface

Joseph is the elder of the two Surface brothers, and the worse man of the two. It would not be wrong to describe him as a villain though he fails in the long run to do any damage to anybody. He is devoid of all moral scruples, even though his talk abounds in moral utterances. Like Lady Sneerwell, he too is completely exposed at the end, and while she sweeps out of the room in a rage, he slinks away after her. Indeed, the play might well have been called "The Unmasking of Joseph Surface and Lady Sneerwell".

Joseph's character is summed up in the very opening scene by Lady Sneerwell who describes him as "artful, selfish, and malicious, in short, a sentimental knave". Lady Sneerwell knows him well because they are both partners in an intrigue against Charles and Maria. It suits both of them to hinder the marriage between Charles and Maria, and so they join hands in defaming Charles in order that Maria may not marry him; and Maria's guardian, Sir Peter, may become even more determined to forbid this match. That Joseph should join Lady Sneerwell in furthering the intrigue against his own brother by itself discredits him in our eyes. When the earlier efforts of these two intriguers come to nothing, Joseph comes out with another plot against his brother, assuring Lady Sneerwell that they maystill succeed in their purpose. However, this intrigue is foiled also.

Joseph may be regarded as a member of Lady Sneerwell's circle. He has the necessary wit and the necessary malice to qualify as a member of the school for scandal. However, he does not take a very active interest in the scandalous

gossip of the school even though he generally attends its meetings. When he does say something in the course of the gossip, his remarks are generally witty. For instance, this is what he says about Sir Benjamin and Mr. Crabtree (Act I, Scene I): *There is no advantage in not knowing him (Sir Benjamin); for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend—and his uncle's as bad.* This is what he says to Lady Sneerwell about Mrs. Candour (Act I, Scene I): *Whenever I hear the current running against the characters of my friends, I never think them in such danger as when Mrs. Candour undertakes their defense."* And to Mrs. Candour herself, Joseph pays the following ironical compliment (Act I, Scene I): *Ah! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your forbearance and good nature!* He makes an acute observation about Snake also when he tells Lady Sneerwell that that fellow "has not virtue enough to be faithful even to his own villainy."

Joseph is always at pains to please both Maria and Lady Sneerwell. The result is that, on one occasion, he has to experience the embarrassment of having to agree with both of them in turn when they express opposite opinions. His contradiction of himself in almost the same breath shows his flexibility of opinions, and it amuses us too. It is noteworthy that, in both these cases, he shows a talent for making condensed generalizations.

Joseph has somehow been able to create a very good impression on Sir Peter who holds a high opinion about him. We learn from Snake in the very opening scene that, according to Sir Peter, Joseph "has not his equal in England". Subsequently, speaking to Rowley, Sir Peter expresses the opinion that Joseph is "a model for the young men of the age" and that Joseph is a man of sentiment who acts up to the sentiments he professes. But, of course, Rowley understands Joseph better. Even in the screen scene, before Lady Teazle is discovered hiding behind the screen, Sir Peter, speaking to Charles, expresses a high opinion about Joseph in the following words (Act IV Scene III): *"He is a man of sentiment. Well, there is nothing in the world as noble as a man of sentiment."* However, Charles also understands the real character of Joseph, and that is why he says to Sir Peter at this time: "He is too moral by half."

At the suggestion of Rowley, Sir Oliver agrees not to take Sir Peter's opinions about the two brothers for granted. Accordingly, Sir Oliver decides to test the characters of his two nephews and come to his own conclusion. Sir Oliver is not impressed by what Sir Peter calls the "sentiments" of Joseph. That is why Sir Oliver, commenting on Joseph's sentiments, says to Sir Peter (Act II, Scene III): *"Ah, plague of his sentiments! If he salutes me with a scrap of morality in his mouth, I shall be sick directly."*

When Sir Oliver, disguised as Mr. Stanley, subsequently meets Joseph, he is sadly disappointed. Joseph not only declines to render any financial help to a needy relative, but completely denies having received any money from his uncle, Sir Oliver. Thus Joseph proves to be utterly ungrateful to the man who had sent

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him an amount of twelve thousand pounds. Sir Oliver afterwards says that he has discovered Joseph to be "destitute of truth, charity, and gratitude".

Joseph wants to marry Maria not because of any genuine feeling of love for her but for the sake of her wealth. As Maria's suitor, he may therefore be described as a dowry-hunter or a fortune-hunter. In his efforts to win Maria as a wife, he tries to enlist the support of Lady Teazle but it so happens that Lady Teazle misunderstands his attentions to her and begins to look upon him as her would-be lover. The result is that he feels compelled to accept the role of Lady Teazle's would-be lover, though at the same time he cannot give up his pursuit of Maria and Maria's wealth. As Maria's suitor and Lady Teazle's lover, Joseph soon finds himself in a most embarrassing position.

Of Joseph's hypocrisy there can be no doubt at all. Again and again he pretends to have a sentiment or a feeling which he does not genuinely experience. For instance, he is always expressing sympathy for the difficulties of his brother though actually he himself is trying to do the utmost damage to his brother's reputation. He pretends sympathy for Sir Peter when Sir Peter tells him that he suspects his wife of having a love-affair with Charles. Actually Joseph himself is having a love-affair with Sir Peter's wife, but he pretends to be Sir Peter's well-wisher and condemns Charles for his alleged designs on the honour of Sir Peter's wife. When Stanley comes to him for financial help, he pretends great sympathy for him but has not the slightest intention to render any concrete help.

Joseph shows his hypocrisy in another way also. Although he is far from moral, yet he keeps making moral statements. It is on account of this tendency that Sir Peter calls him a man of noble sentiments. Many of his moralizing statements have the character of epigrams. The following statements by him are noteworthy in this connection (Act IV, Scene III):

1. Punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.
2. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.
3. Books, you know, are the only things I am a coxcomb in.
4. When ingratitude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has double danger in it.
5. To pity, without the power to relieve, is still more painful than to ask and be denied.

Joseph is indispensable to the action of the drama. In the first place, he is his brother's rival for the hand of Maria. Secondly, he is responsible for starting an intrigue against his brother in collaboration with Lady Sneerwell. When one intrigue has failed, he quickly thinks of another. Thirdly, the screen scene would be impossible without Joseph, and the screen scene is the highlight of the play. Indeed, the action of this play would have no legs to stand upon without Joseph. Joseph is important from the point of characterization also. He is an embodiment of hypocrisy, and his moral utterances are merely a camouflage or mask for his villainy. The

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portrayal of Joseph is part of the satirical intention of this play. Joseph's epigrams and moral sentiments lend an additional interest to the play. It is also noteworthy that the character of Joseph as portrayed by Sheridan is more complex than that of any other person in this play.

2. Sir Peter Teazle

When we first meet Sir Peter (in Act I, Scene II), we find him complaining about his wife. His wife, who is much younger than he and who had been leading a life of simplicity in her father's home before her marriage, has now become an extravagant woman who is squandering his wealth. What is more, she "contradicts all his humors". However, Sir Peter knows that a wife who is much younger than her husband is bound to take an undue advantage of him. As he says: "When an old bachelor takes a young wife, what is he to expect?"A little later, when Rowley comes to meet him, Sir Peter says to him that in all her arguments with him, his wife is always in the wrong.

Sir Peter has a grievance against Lady Sneerwell and her circle also, because they are the people who encourage the "perverseness" of his wife's disposition. Soon afterwards (in Act II, Scene I) we find Sir Peter engaged in an argument with his wife. Lady Teazle wants to have her own way in every matter and she wants to indulge in all kinds of extravagances, while Sir Peter wants to restrain her from doing so. When she leaves, Sir Peter discovers that he has gained nothing at all by his protests against Lady Teazle's extravagances and against her mixing with Lady Sneerwell's circle.

However, Sir Peter has to admit to himself that he loves Lady Teazle in spite of all her defiance of him and her disregard for his feelings. In the course of another quarrel (in Act III, Scene I), Sir Peter is again annoyed with his wife. When he tells her that he was a mad man to have married a pert coquette like her, he gets the retort that she was a fool to marry "an old dangling bachelor" like him. At the end of this quarrel, he feels that he is "the miser ablest fellow", especially because, whereas he gets angry, she manages to maintain a cool temper while quarrelling with him.

Sir Peter has a strong distaste for the kind of slanderous gossip in which Lady Sneerwell and others of her circle indulge. For this reason, Sir Peter feels ill at ease in the company of these people. After hearing their talk on one occasion, for instance, he says in an aside (Act II, Scene II): "*Mercy on me, here is the whole set - A character dead at every word, I suppose."*

Sir Peter means to say that with every word that these people speak they kill somebody's good name. He is even more dismayed to find that these people do not spare even their intimate friends and relatives. Sir Peter's view of wit is entirely different from that of Lady Sneerwell. In Sir Peter's opinion, true wit is closely allied with good nature. Sir Peter is such an enemy to scandal that he would like Parliament to pass a law forbidding the circulation of slanderous stories. If such a law is passed, he says, *"then no person should be permitted to kill*

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characters or run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows." (Act II, Scene II).

This remark, incidentally, shows Sir Peter's capacity for sarcasm. Sir Peter gives evidence of his wit on various other occasions also. For instance, when Sir Oliver is being tutored by Moses to demand a very high rate of interest, Sir Peter says: "A good honest trade you are learning, Sir Oliver." However, Sir Peter entertains mistaken ideas of the respective characters of Joseph and Charles, thus showing that he is not a good judge of human character. In his opinion, Joseph is a model for the young men of the age. Charles has, on the other hand, in Sir Peter's opinion, dissipated not only the wealth he had inherited but also the good qualities he had inherited.

Not only does Sir Peter have completely wrong opinions about the two young men, but he is sure that he is right. In a conversation with Rowley, Sir Peter makes the claim that he was never mistaken in his life. Even in the screen scene, when Sir Peter does not yet know the true facts, he says to Charles that Joseph is a man of sentiment and that there is nothing in the world as noble as a man of sentiment. In view of all this, we can realize the shock that Sir Peter experiences on discovering the wickedness and villainy of Joseph.

Sir Peter and Sir Oliver are old friends. When they were young, they used to make fun of marriage and they were both determined never to marry. However, Sir Peter does get married in his old age; and when Sir Oliver returns from the east where he has lived for sixteen years or so, Sir Peter, though glad to meet his old friend, feels somewhat embarrassed because he has broken his vow not to marry. He knows that Sir Oliver will jeer at him for having got married and more so when Sir Oliver learns about the quarrels that Sir Peter frequently has with his wife. Thus, Sir Peter is quite aware of the comic aspect of his personality.

Sir Peter has an important role in the play. He is the man who has acted as a kind of guardian to Charles and Joseph after the death of their father, and he is the man who is now acting as a guardian to Maria. His mistaken judgement of Charles and Joseph are sharply contrasted with Rowley's correct judgement and with Sir Oliver's conclusions. He serves as a contrast also to Lady Sneerwell and her circle in so far as he disapproves of their slanderous talk. He is an important character in the screen scene - which is one of the highlights of the play. Finally, his character has an inherent interest of its own; he is the amiable old man who takes a superficial view of things and does not have the capacity to go deep into any matter or to look beneath appearances. However, he is an affectionate sort of person whom we all like despite his mistaken judgement of people.

3. Lady Teazle

Lady Teazle is a lady of fashion and an important member of Lady Sneerwell's circle. As Sir Peter says in a soliloquy, she was a girl bred wholly in the country, a girl who never knew any luxury beyond one silk gown and who knew no dissipation beyond the annual dance held on the occasion of the races. She is the daughter of

a plain country squire, and she used to live in humble style before her marriage. Lady Teazle herself recalls that it used to be her daily occupation to inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family recipe- book, and comb her aunt's lap-dog. But, when the play opens, Lady Teazle has become one of most fashionable women in London, and she has picked up all the habits of the women of the upper classes. Indeed, she has become almost aggressive in her pursuit of fashion. For instance, this is what she says to Sir Peter in the course of one of her quarrels with him(Act II, Scene I): "*What! Though I was educated in the country, I know very well that women of fashion in London are accountable to nobody after they are married."*

Moving in the company of the ladies of fashion, Lady Teazle has developed her latent gift for witty conversation also. When, for instance, Sir Peter asks her if, as her husband, he is to have no authority over her, she gives the following devastating reply (Act II, Scene I): *"If you wanted authority over me, you should have adopted me, and not married me. I am sure you were old enough."* She now spends her husband's money almost recklessly, and when Sir Peter criticizes her for her extravagant habits, she says that she is no more extravagant than a woman of fashion should be, and that it is not her fault if roses are so costly in winter.

Lady Teazle is a distinguished member of the group of scandal-mongers who regularly gather at Lady Sneerwell's house, and she plays her part at these gatherings most successfully. She lags behind nobody in making sarcastic remarks about people. For instance, she pokes fun at the way in which Mrs. Prim keeps her mouth partly closed in order "to conceal her losses in front". She also pokes fun at the fat Mrs. Codille who, according to Lady Teazle, almost lives on acids and whey, and who rides her pony in order to reduce her bulk. Lady Teazle ridicules Lady Stucco by comparing her to *"the French fruit one cracks for mottoes—made up of paint and proverb"*(Act II, Scene II).

In order to keep up with fashion, Lady Teazle wishes to have a lover, though she has no wish to enter into an adulterous relationship with anybody. And it is Joseph Surface whom she selects for the purpose, telling him frankly that she would admit him as a lover no further than fashion requires. Her husband's suspicions that she is having an affair with Charles irritate her, and she seems to be impressed by Joseph's strange reasoning that the only way to cure her husband's jealousy is to have a lover in the real sense of the word. Lady Teazle does describe Joseph's proposed remedy as "the oddest doctrine but she is almost on the verge of surrendering herself to Joseph when Sir Peter's unexpected arrival interrupts the two of them, and Lady Teazle's honour is saved.

When, standing hidden behind a screen in Joseph's apartment, she overhears her husband expressing his sincere love for her and his plans to make an independent financial provision for her, a great change comes over Lady Teazle. She realizes how mistaken she was in her judgement of Sir Peter, and of Joseph also.

Accordingly, when the screen has been thrown down, she does not hesitate to call Joseph a hypocrite and to tell her husband how her honour has been saved by sheer chance. She now feels sincerely repentant and Sir Peter, on his part, is prepared to forget the past and begin a new life with her. Lady Teazle gives a much deserved snub to Lady Sneerwell towards the close of the play, describing Lady Sneerwell as the president of the Scandalous College which she runs at her residence. She will no longer kill characters and reputations, says Lady Teazle.

Lady Teazle has an important role in the play. Her life with Sir Peter is an important theme in the story of this play. At the opening of Act 1, Scene II, Sir Peter expresses his discontentment with his wife. Act II, Scene I is wholly devoted to a quarrel between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. In Act III, Scene I we have another quarrel between the husband and the wife. In Act IV, Scene III (the screen scene), Lady Teazle is one of the main characters. At the beginning of this scene, we see Joseph trying to acquire Lady Teazle as a mistress. Then, with the unexpected arrival of Sir Peter, we see her hiding behind a screen and overhearing the entire conversation which brings about a change of heart in her.

Lady Teazle is also an important character so far as the school for scandal is concerned, because she makes a substantial contribution to the witty and slanderous conversations which go on in this school. Lady Teazle is a rich source of comedy in the play. She has a sparkling wit, and some of her sarcasms and retorts are truly brilliant.

13.4.1 Construction of Plot in *The School For Scandal*

It is obvious that the plot of this play is a complex one, and yet it is skilfully constructed. There are two main strands in the plot. One of these relates to the scandal-mongers who include Lady Sneerwell, Joseph, and a few others. The other relates to the two brothers, Joseph and Charles, who are rivals for the hand of Maria. What connects these two strands is the theme: "Never believe what is said." The slanderers are always indulging in malicious gossip, and they take pleasure in maligning all sorts of people. As Sir Peter puts it: "A character dead at every word," meaning that every word spoken by the scandal-mongers destroys someone's character. The scandal-mongers do not even spare their own friends and relations.

Although there is a lot of miscellaneous gossip of a scandalous nature in the play, it is the stories about Charles, circulated by Lady Sneerwell and Joseph that are important from the point of view of the plot-construction. Lady Sneerwell and Joseph have each their own selfish motives in maligning Charles, but Sir Peter actually begins to believe these stories so that he forms a most unfavourable opinion about Charles. At the same time, Sir Peter is deceived by the moral pose which he adopts. The effect of the stories circulated by Lady Sneerwell and Joseph is that Maria stops all communication with Charles even though she still feels drawn towards him. It is only Rowley who knows the truth about the two brothers, and

it is he who urges Sir Oliver to keep an open mind about them till he is able to know the truth about them at first hand. There are at least three scenes in which the scandal-mongers are shown indulging in their usual malicious gossip, and it is against this background of scandal-mongering that the main drama of the rivalry of the two brothers for the hand of Maria is played out.

While Joseph seeks Maria's hand in marriage, he becomes friendly with Lady Teazle and soon finds himself on the way to become Lady Teazle's lover. Lady Teazle, who in the beginning wants Joseph as a lover for fashion's sake only, though she is prevented from thus degrading herself by a timely exposure of his real character. Lady Teazle gets the impression that Joseph is really in love with her, and that is why she goes to meet him at his house. Charles, on the other hand, is genuinely in love with Maria and he is therefore astonished when Joseph, as desired by Sir Peter, asks him whether he has developed an illicit relationship with Lady Teazle. Lady Sneerwell and Joseph have taken care to circulate a story that Charles is having a love-affair with Lady Teazle. This story has reached Sir Peter's ears also and, having believed it, he has been feeling miserable. Lady Teazle, on her part, feels much vexed that Sir Peter should suspect her of having an affair with Charles when there is no basis at all for such a suspicion.

Such, then, is the gulf between appearance and reality or between what is being said and what the actual state of affairs is. Charles is truly in love with Maria but, according to reports, he is carrying on a love-affair with Lady Teazle. Lady Sneerwell is in love with Charles, but only Joseph and Snake know this fact, while nobody else is aware of it. Sir Peter regards Joseph as a man of noble sentiments, and Joseph has a good reputation, his true character being known only to Lady Sneerwell. The screen scene is crucial for exposing of Joseph and Lady Teazle and for establishing Charles's innocence in Sir Peter's eyes. In this scene a close link is established between the Lady Teazle-Joseph affair and the domestic life of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle - this domestic life being the third strand in the play.

The theme of appearance versus reality finds a comic illustration in another way also. Sir Oliver goes to meet his nephew Charles and is introduced to him as Mr. Premium, the broker. Charles takes his uncle to be a broker and sells his family portraits to him without knowing the reality of Mr. Premium. Afterwards Sir Oliver goes in the disguise of Mr. Stanley to meet his other nephew, Joseph; and Joseph, taking his uncle to be a needy relative by the name of Mr. Stanley, gets rid of him as quickly as possible. But, by adopting these devices, Sir Oliver comes to know the reality of both his nephews. He has discovered that Charles, in spite of his apparent recklessness and irresponsibility, is kind and benevolent at heart, and has a genuine affection for his uncle. And he has also discovered that his other nephew, Joseph, despite his good reputation, is unkind and callous towards needy relatives and ungrateful to the uncle who had sent him twelve thousand pounds.

The Importance of the Last Scene

The last scene (Act V, Scene III) is very important in bringing together the two main strands in the plot of this play. This scene begins with Lady Sneerwell taking Joseph to task for having spoilt the whole game by straying from their joint intrigue and having tried to entangle Lady Teazle in his net. Joseph then suggests another strategy, namely that Lady Sneerwell should produce the letters forged by Snake in order to prove that Charles is pledged to marry her. Lady Sneerwell at once agrees to this proposal, as the only other way of preventing the marriage between Charles and Maria.

There is a variation on the theme of appearance versus reality when both Joseph and Charles try to push out Sir Oliver from Joseph's house, one thinking him to be Mr. Stanley, and the other believing him to be Mr. Premium. It is only when Sir Peter arrives that the two brothers realize that the man whom they were trying to push out is their own uncle, Sir Oliver. When the talk centres around the love of Charles and Maria for each other, Joseph intervenes to say that Lady Sneerwell's claims have to be recognized. Thereupon Lady Sneerwell herself appears on the scene, as had been arranged between her and Joseph. But, just when Lady Sneerwell has accused Charles of having gone back on her promise to marry her, Snake is summoned by Rowley, and Snake exposes the truth about Lady Sneerwell and Joseph. All misunderstandings are thus cleared, and the way is paved for the marriage of Charles and Maria. In this scene, then, the two strands of the plot meet, and the theme of the play is clarified. Charles was never in love with Lady Sneerwell and he never wrote any letters to her. The letters had been forged by Snake and Snake himself is there to speak the truth, for once in his life. The true identity of Sir Oliver is also revealed in this scene, and he in his turn reveals the true character of his two nephews. He points out that he has found Joseph to be destitute of truth, charity and gratitude; while he has discovered little about Charles that would discredit this young man too much.

In short, not only is the contrast between the two brothers clearly and finally established in this scene but the truth about the scandal-mongers, slanderers, and schemers is also revealed. This scene carries further the unmasking of Joseph who has already been exposed in the screen episode; and this scene completely unmasks Lady Sneerwell. This, the last scene in the play, rehabilitates Charles in the estimation of Maria, whose mind had been prejudiced against him to a certain extent. Finally, this scene shows the close interweaving of the two main strands in the plot of the play.

The Third Strand in the Play

As mentioned above, the third strand in the play is the domestic life of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. These two are closely connected with the rest of the play. Sir Peter is necessary as Maria's guardian, and also as the elderly husband of a young wife whom he can, with some justification, suspect of having a love-affair with a younger man. A married lady, preferably young in years, was necessary to the plot

so that Joseph could be shown as courting Maria to get her as a wife and flirting with a married woman in order to acquire a mistress. Without Lady Teazle, the screen episode loses its meaning. And Lady Teazle plays a certain role even in the last scene by adding her own testimony to the discovery that Sir Oliver has made about Joseph, and to the exposure of Lady Sneerwell by Snake. Indeed, this married couple is indispensable to the plot-construction of this play, even though the quarrel scenes are not integral to the plot; but are valuable only as contributing to the hilarious character of the comedy.

In *The School for Scandal* Sheridan shows almost a classical sense of form. In spite of a multiple plot, the play does not become incoherent or confusing. The plot is certainly complex but it shows a unified pattern. Even the unities of time and place have been loosely observed.

Check Your Progress

6. How does Lady Sneerwell describe Joseph's character in the opening scene of the play?
7. What is the role of Sir Peter in the play?

13.5 *THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL* AS A MASTERPIECE OF ARTIFICIAL COMEDY

Artificial Comedy is another name for the comedy of manners which reached the height of its achievement during the Restoration in England. In the history of British drama, the comic genius of British playwrights has expressed itself in several distinct forms. Its most striking manifestations are: romantic comedy; comedy of humours; comedy of manners (or artificial comedy) sentimental comedy; comic opera; pantomime; burlesque; farce; etc.

Romantic Comedy

Romantic comedy achieved its greatest success in the hands of Shakespeare, whose comedies are essentially romantic. They are romantic because there is in them a mingling of the romantic love-interest with mirth and fun; because they are also a mixture of serious or tragic elements and comic elements; and because they do not observe any of the classical unities of time, place, and action. In addition to all this, these comedies are rich in characterization in terms of both, variety and depth. *The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It,* and *Twelfth Night* are among the masterpieces of Shakespeare's romantic comedy.

Comedy of Humours

The comedy of humours reached the height of its success in the hands of Ben Jonson. Jonson tried to recall comedy from its romantic entanglements and to

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restore it to the position which it held in ancient Roman times. The characters in the comedies of Jonson represent certain well-marked traits which are known as humours. The boastful soldier, the clever servant, the jealous husband, the gay young man, the dupe - such are the characters in Jonson's play *Every Man In His Humour*. Likewise, a vain knight, a public jester, a flattering courtier, and certain others exhibit their respective traits in the play *Every Man Out of His Humour*. Even in his masterpiece, *Volpone,* Jonson represents the characters of a miser-cum-sensualist, a clever servant, a shameless lawyer, a willing cuckold who offers his wife in return for an inheritance, a foolish English traveller, and so on. This play is chiefly a satire on vice and has an obvious moral purpose. In fact, a moral purpose is the dominant motive behind Jonson's comedy of humours.

Comedy of Manners or Artificial Comedy

The 'comedy of manners', which is often described as 'artificial comedy', arose during the Restoration. The comic dramatists of this period wrote plays picturing the external details of life, the fashions of the time, its manners, its modes of speech, its interests. Their characters were chiefly men and women of fashion, and their plots and love-intrigues are developed with clever and witty dialogue. The scenes are laid in drawing-rooms, coffee-houses, the streets, and the parks and gardens of London. The Puritans had suppressed drama, which was revived with the Restoration of monarchy in England. The comic plays of this period represent the reaction of the public and the authors against Puritanism.

These plays represent social institutions, especially marriage, in a ridiculous light. Social conventions are attacked and mocked at chiefly for the sake of witty raillery or to give point to an intrigue. The first of this school of comic dramatists was Sir George Etherege, who established the comedy of manners. He was followed by William Wycherley, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh, and George Farquhar. Congreve is easily the greatest writer of the comedy of manners. His masterpiece, *The Way of the World*, carries the interest of dialogue - the verbal exchanges between characters - to its extreme development. As a painter of the contemporary life of fashion and the manners of fashionable society, Congreve has no equal; his use of irony and paradox in exposing the foibles of society is masterly, and his wit is unsurpassed.

13.5.1 Sentimental Comedy of the Eighteenth Century

The eighteenth century gave rise to what has been called 'sentimental comedy'. Audiences in the middle years of this century wished to be moved not to laughter, but to tears. They loved something moral and something pathetic, something edifying and something genteel. In short, they wanted an agreeable dramatic sermon with a happy ending. Colley Cibber, Richard Steele, Hugh Kelly, and Richard Cumberland were the most successful of the writers of sentimental comedy. Other forms in which the comic spirit manifested itself in the eighteenth century were the

pantomime, the comic opera, the burlesque, and the farce, but these are all minor forms of comedy.

The Revival of the Comedy of Manners by Goldsmith and Sheridan

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Goldsmith and Sheridan wrote comedies free from the sentimentality and the moralising which had overwhelmed the comic plays of their time. They did so by reviving the 'comedy of manners' or 'artificial comedy' of the Restoration. In this context, Sheridan occupies a commanding position with his plays *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, the latter being his masterpiece. *The School for Scandal* reveals the selfishness, envy, and hypocrisy of the society of the time with a remarkable skill and a sure knowledge of theatrical effect. Here, Sheridan captured the current forms of fashionable speech and heightened them with fine phrases and sustained wit. He built up a comedy of manners or an artificial comedy with more striking situations in it than any other play in English. It is without dispute the most brilliant artificial comedy written in the eighteenth century, and one of the most successful ever produced on the stage. It gives us a satirical picture of the contemporary scene – the love of fashion, the extravagant habits of young men, the love-intrigues, the exorbitant rates of interest charged by money-lenders, and the hypocrisy of fashionable men and women. The author also pokes fun at contemporary journalism, with sarcastic references to *The Town and Country Magazine*.

Artificial Comedy, an Inferior Form

To describe the comedy of manners or artificial comedy as an inferior form of drama is not unfair. The very use of the word 'artificial' for this kind of drama shows its inferiority. It is inferior because it deals with the artificial life of fashionable people –their pretences, their gay irresponsibility, their recklessness, their love-intrigues, their lack of scruples, their flirtations, their delight in slanderous conversation, and their habit of aping the current fashions in dress and speech.

This kind of comedy relies for its effect mainly on the humorous situations and on witty dialogue. This comedy is unemotional and purely intellectual in its treatment of its themes. It often deals with stock figures of comedy, and is therefore lacking in any originality of character-portrayal. Perhaps its greatest weakness is its want of psychological depth. Artificial comedy plays on the surface of things; it is superficial; it does not probe the inner recesses of the mind. As compared with Shakespearean comedy, it is inferior in another respect also: it is written in prose, while Shakespearean comedy employs verse in its more important portions. Poetry lends a certain dignity, though prose, it must be admitted, makes for greater realism. Perhaps the most serious charge against Restoration comedy of manners is its coarseness. Only Charles Lamb has defended artificial comedy against this particular charge.

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The Merits of *The School for Scandal*

Having considered the grounds on which artificial comedy is regarded as an inferior form of drama, we may now proceed to an examination of *The School for Scandal* to discover in what respects it is superior to all other comedies of this kind. To put the matter briefly, this comedy shows to full advantage the author's skilful handling of the plot, his brilliant handling of stock-characters, his command of comic situations and his constant flow of true wit. Furthermore, it is a play in which Sheridan has an obvious moral purpose. Above all, this artificial comedy is totally free from coarseness or immorality.

Plot-Construction in *The School for Scandal*

This play has two plots - that of the slanderers and that of the brothers Surface. These plots are linked by Sir Peter and Lady Teazle: Lady Teazle being a member of the scandal club, and Sir Peter being the guardian of the two brothers and of Maria. The scenes of the two plots are Lady Sneerwell's home, Charles Surface's picture-gallery, and Joseph Surface's house. There are various go-betweens who help to reveal the characters of the main characters. These are Snake, Rowley, Sir Oliver, and Maria. The underlying theme of the play is: "Never believe what is said; all is not what it seems to be". In other words, Sheridan here deals with one of comedy's basic ingredients - the difference between appearance and reality.

The Delineation of Characters

The classical sense of form which Sheridan shows in this play and the skill with which he has constructed its plot are, however, not enough to make it a masterpiece. Sheridan here imparts a certain originality to some of the stock-figures of comedy. Lady Teazle is the country girl dazzled by fashion; Rowley is the faithful servant; Sir Oliver is the greatest of stage uncles; Maria is the simple, unsophisticated girl with good qualities; Charles is the reckless spendthrift running into debt; Lady Sneerwell is the arch scandal-monger; Joseph is the great hypocrite, "a man of sentiment".

However, each of these characters is touched with life. Lady Teazle is perhaps the most superb creation of Sheridan. Her transformation from a rustic girl into a witty and fashionable lady is really amazing; and the second transformation which occurs in her is equally surprising. Sir Oliver is not just a benevolent uncle; he also shows much zest in playing the roles of Mr. Premium and Mr. Stanley, taking a genuine pleasure in the impersonation. Charles is not merely a prodigal young man with not a care in the world; he has a serious side to his character which he shows in his charitable disposition. Lady Sneerwell is not merely a scandal-monger; she has a heart, and she is genuinely in love with Charles, though she employs devious and crooked methods to attain her objective. The portrayal of Joseph is the most skilful. There is an element of subtlety in this portrayal. Joseph is a complex personality. He is Charles's rival for the hand of Maria; at the same time he

unthinkingly develops into Lady Teazle's lover. The unmasking of this character in the 'screen episode' is one of the supreme moments in this play.

13.5.2 Humour and Wit in this Play

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The School for Scandal is a hilarious comedy. It keeps us laughing from beginning till end. The scandal scenes are undoubtedly very amusing, even when the talk is malicious. The sarcastic comments of Mrs. Candour, Mr. Crabtree, and Sir Benjamin are delightfully pungent. The impersonation of Sir Oliver as Mr. Premium is another entertaining episode. But the highlights of the comedy of situation are the auction scene and the screen scene, the latter being one of the most memorable episodes in the entire range of English comedy from the earliest times till the twentieth century.

Wit in the Play

As for wit, almost every character makes his or her contribution to it. Joseph is an adept not only in making witty remarks but also in turning out neat epigrams having a moral content. Charles gives evidence of his wit in the auction scene when he pokes fun at the portraits of his ancestors. Lady Sneerwell shows her wit not only in the scandal scenes but in the manner in which she takes Joseph to task for having tried to seduce Lady Teazle while at the same time chasing Maria as a bride.

Sir Peter shows his wit when he talks to Charles about the French milliner supposed to be hiding behind the screen. Even Rowley shows his wit when he taunts Sir Peter on the latter's all-knowingness. But it would be no exaggeration to say that the wittiest scenes in this play are the two quarrel-scenes between Lady Teazle and Sir Peter, in which Lady Teazle has decidedly the upper hand. Indeed, it is amusing to find this country girl proving more than a match for her husband in an exchange of retorts, arguments, and sarcasms. There is thus no character in this play that is devoid of wit, and such a thing is possible only in an artificial comedy.

13.5.3 Characterization in the Play *The School For Scandal*

Let us begin by discussing familiar character types.

Familiar Types of Characters

In the choice of characters for this play, Sheridan was content to use familiar types. Sir Peter Teazle is the traditional old man who had already appeared in Sheridan's *The Rivals* and *The Duenna*; and Charles Surface is the traditional young man, just as generous and impulsive as Captain Absolute in Sheridan's *The Rivals,* only more exposed to temptation. The other personages, except Lady Teazle, are not studies of character, but occasional figures, vaguely suggestive of the Restoration comedy or of Moliere's plays, seen only from one angle, as they come and go in the act of creating the background or contributing to a situation. Even Sir Oliver, despite his common sense, his pardonable vanity at finding his own picture rather than another's spared in the portrait scene, and despite his

humanity, is hardly more than "an angel entertained unawares" in an eighteenth-century garb.

The World of Fashion and its Vices

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But, if *The School for Scandal* does not tell us anything that is new or profound about human nature, it is a brilliant exposition of an idle, though civilized society. In *The School for Scandal*, Sheridan put on the stage, in his own way, the psychology of the world of fashion. In the first place, as conversation was a fine art in a community of drawing-room idlers, Sheridan endowed his personages with a flow of witty dialogue. Besides this, he portrays the underlying stratum of jealousy and intrigue in the conversation of his characters, and shows how the vices of polite society overgrow natural instincts. He depicts extravagance and scandal-mongering as examples of decadence and then works out a crisis, in the lives of persons who have lived under those influences.

Charles Surface is the centre of a circle demoralized by extravagance till a chance episode reveals the generosity of his nature. Lady Sneerwell typifies the incorrigible scandal-monger. Joseph Surface, too, is gradually fascinated by a brilliant and corrupt society, till an unexpected event shows that he has sinned beyond forgiveness. Sir Peter is good at heart. Though somewhat self-centred; he is, however, rendered ridiculous by the vagaries of his young wife. Lady Teazle is Sheridan's best female creation; she is an example of how youth and inexperience may be blinded to the follies of fashionable life till her eyes are opened by a sudden crisis. Of all the characters, only Sir Oliver, Rowley, and Maria are colourless, because they are untouched by London frivolity.

Sheridan's Originality in Portraying Types

As regards characterization, Sheridan's originality lies in making personages come alive on the stage and in the reader's imagination. Although there is something familiar about these personages, they possess a certain novelty about them. Each personage is given a certain individuality which distinguishes him from the type which he represents. Rowley is the traditional faithful servant no doubt, but he possesses a capacity for planning and devising schemes which few servants possess. It is he whodevises the plan which Sir Oliver adopts, to test his two nephews. Sir Peter is the traditional elderly gentleman who marries a wife much younger than himself. The typical husband of this kind is generally made to look foolish; he becomes the butt of ridicule. However, one of his finest qualities is his opposition to malicious gossip. Sir Peter would like a law to be passed by Parliament to prevent people from slandering others. And he wittily says(Act II, Scene II): *No person should be permitted to kill characters or run down reputations, but qualified old maids and disappointed widows'*.

Sir Oliver too, though corresponding to the notion of a large-hearted uncle, has something new about him. He displays a certain zest for social adventurism: he readily agrees to the plan suggested by Rowley. Having spent many years away

from his country, he now wishes to see fashionable life at first hand and therefore offers, with great enthusiasm, to impersonate two different types of characters - Mr. Premium and Mr. Stanley. And his insistence on staying on at Joseph's house to await the arrival of Joseph's rich uncle (which he himself is) is most comic.

Sheridan's Originality in Portraying Joseph Surface

Joseph is a moralist and hypocrite, but with a difference. His moral utterances are memorable as proverbial sayings even though his own conduct runs contrary to what he preaches. In the screen scene alone, he makes the following statements which, in their moral content, are perfectly sound and valid (Act IV, Scene III):

1. Punctuality is a species of constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a lady.
2. Prudence, like experience, must be paid for.
3. Ah! It is a happiness to have a friend whom one can trust even with one's family secrets.

Lady Teazle's Individual Traits

We have noted how Lady Teazle also represents a certain type. But no country girl, after having been transformed into a lady of fashion, ever gave evidence of such animation, such high spirits, and such high-brow demeanor as Lady Teazle does. If she has been dazzled by the fashionable world of London, she herself succeeds in dazzling that world of fashion with her own personality and charm. Even Sir Peter wonders at her coolness and composure in the course of her quarrels with him. And the second transformation in her, namely her return to home and husband, is equally remarkable.

The Portrayal of Other Characters Types

The other characters in this drama hardly call for any comment. Careless and Sir Toby, the companions of Charles, belong to the category of persons who are freely available to rich men willing to spend money on them. Moses is a typical Jewish money-lender charging exorbitant rates of interest. Trip is a typical servant of the time, imitating all the vices and even the mannerisms of his master. (For instance, Trip addresses Mr. Premium as "little Premium" just as Charles addresses him). Sir Benjamin is a conceited fellow, vain about the inferior verses that he produces, and Crabtree is the parasitic uncle who is always at pains to keep his nephew in a state of good humour. Lady Sneerwell really sneers well; and her motive for doing so is made clear to us. Mrs. Candour too is the typical glib-tongued female going from house to house, circulating the latest malicious reports. Snake is the typical rogue, but there is something new about him; he is a poet and a critic, and therefore somewhat different from the common run of rogues who sell their services for money.

Every Character a Wit to a Greater or Lesser Extent

In addition to these peculiarities, each of these personages is a wit in his own right, and this particular talent also distinguishes him from the established type which he

otherwise represents. Charles's wit is seen to the best advantage in the auction scene and the screen scene. In the auction scene, he pokes fun at the portraits of his ancestors, and he asks his friend Careless to knock down his ancestors with their own pedigree. In the screen scene, he has some very sarcastic remarks to make to the various persons involved. He says to Joseph: *Brother! Will you please to explain this matter? What, morality dumb too!* To Sir Peter he says: *Though I found you in the dark, perhaps you are not so now, Sir Peter. There's nothing in the world so noble as a man of sentiment.*

Sir Peter and Lady Teazle show their wit in the two quarrel-scenes where we have regular fire-works. Sir Peter taunts Lady Teazle on her country background, and Lady Teazle takes her revenge by saying that her cousin Sophy used to call Sir Peter a stiff, peevish old bachelor whom she should regard as her father rather than accept him as a husband. Even Rowley, otherwise so sober a person, takes an opportunity to have a fling at Sir Peter when the latter's eyes are opened with regard to the truth about Charles and Joseph. And the servant, Trip, also has some wit in him. Indeed, it has been said that Sheridan endows even his stupid characters with some wit, and this is certainly a distinction, however unrealistic it might be.

The Essential Features of Character-Portrayal in this Play

It is true that the chief excellence of this play is its witty dialogue, but the portrayal of characters here should not be underestimated. In the first place, as has already been shown above, each character, while being a type, has a certain freshness about him and also has some distinguishing marks. Secondly, all the characters are real people, not wooden figures. Thirdly, in some of the characters (in Lady Teazle, in Sir Peter, in Charles, and even in Snake) there is some development; and these characters show variations as the story develops. We may therefore conclude with the following comment by a critic: *The characters are lively, and though they are to a certain extent types, they are sufficiently differentiated by their dialogues and the situations in which they appear to carry the play forward with sparkle, speed, and assurance.*

Check Your Progress

8. Name the prominent romantic comedies written by Shakespeare.
9. Why is artificial comedy known as an inferior form of drama?

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Richard Sheridan was born in the year 1951.
2. There are two main targets of satire in the play *The School for Scandal* one is scandal-mongering, and the other is hypocrisy and self-righteousness.

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3. Sir Peter Teazle is Maria's guardian.
4. Since the very time of his marriage, Sir Peter has been feeling wretched with his wife because she has been squandering his wealth and contradicting all his opinions.
5. Maria is the girl for whom Joseph Surface and Charles Surface are contesting.
6. Joseph's character is summed up in the very opening scene by Lady Sneerwell who describes him as "artful, selfish, and malicious, in short, a sentimental knave".
7. Sir Peter has an important role in the play. He is the man who has acted as a kind of guardian to Charles and Joseph after the death of their father, and he is the man who is now acting as a guardian to Maria.
8. *The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It,* and *Twelfth Night* are among the masterpieces of Shakespeare's romantic comedy.
9. The very use of the word 'artificial' for this kind of drama shows its inferiority. It is inferior because it deals with the artificial life of fashionable people – their pretences, their gay irresponsibility, their recklessness, their love-intrigues, their lack of scruples, their flirtations, their delight in slanderous conversation, and their habit of aping the current fashions in dress and speech.

13.7 SUMMARY

- Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in1751. Regarded as a major dramatist, his chief merits are precision of diction in dialogue that rapidly scores witty hits; and aberrations of behaviour in social relationships.
- We may regard Sheridan as the author of a kind of didactic comedy which evokes laughter and satirical perception by ridiculing persons who are vain, affected, foolish or malignant.
- *The School for Scandal* is a most entertaining play, the interest of which depends mainly upon its brilliant, witty dialogue and its funny situations.
- Sir Peter Teazle is talking to himself about the unhappiness of his married life. Six months before, he, an old bachelor, had married a young wife from the countryside.
- Rowley informs Sir Oliver that although Charles is essentially a good fellow, he has become the target of some malicious talk among his acquaintances.
- Sir Oliver, now disguised as Mr. Stanley, goes to meet Joseph at the latter's house. After the exposure of his true character, Joseph is already feeling bad, and he feels even more upset by the thought that Sir Peter would now support Charles's claim to the hand of Maria.

- Joseph is the elder of the two Surface brothers, and the worse man of the two. It would not be wrong to describe him as a villain though he fails in the long run to do any damage to anybody.
- Joseph is indispensable to the action of the drama.
- Lady Teazle is a lady of fashion and an important member of Lady Sneerwell's circle. As Sir Peter says in a soliloquy, she was a girl bred wholly in the country, a girl who never knew any luxury beyond one silk gown and who knew no dissipation beyond the annual dance held on the occasion of the races.
- Although there is a lot of miscellaneous gossip of a scandalous nature in the play, it is the stories about Charles, circulated by Lady Sneerwell and Joseph that are important from the point of view of the plot-construction.
- The last scene (Act V, Scene III) is very important in bringing together the two main strands in the plot of this play.
- Artificial Comedy is another name for the comedy of manners which reached the height of its achievement during the Restoration in England.
- The comedy of humours reached the height of its success in the hands of Ben Jonson. Jonson tried to recall comedy from its romantic entanglements and to restore it to the position which it held in ancient Roman times.
- The eighteenth century gave rise to what has been called 'sentimental comedy'. Audiences in the middle years of this century wished to be moved not to laughter, but to tears.
- *The School for Scandal* is a hilarious comedy. It keeps us laughing from beginning till end. The scandal scenes are undoubtedly very amusing, even when the talk is malicious.
- Joseph is a moralist and hypocrite, but with a difference. His moral utterances are memorable as proverbial sayings even though his own conduct runs contrary to what he preaches.

13.8 KEY WORDS

- **Scandal-monger:** It refers to a person who stirs up public outrage towards someone or their actions by spreading rumours or malicious gossip.
- **Pantomime:** It is a type of musical comedy stage production designed for family.
- **Burlesque:** It is a literary, dramatic or musical work intended to cause laughter by caricaturing the manner or spirit of serious works, or by ludicrous treatment of their subjects.

13.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the life of Richard Sheridan.
2. What is the importance of the screen scene in *The School for Scandal*?
3. What are the essential features of character portrayal in the play?
4. What is the Comedy of Manners? What are its chief characteristics?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the importance of the last scene in *The School for Scandal*.
2. 'Joseph is indispensable to the action of the drama.' Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Discuss the plot of the play *The School for Scandal*.

13.10 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 14 OLIVER GOLDSMITH: *SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER*

Structure

14.0 INTRODUCTION

Eighteenth century poets — Alexander Pope, Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Gray — belong to the Age of Enlightenment. Oliver Goldsmith is recognized as a fascinating English writer of the eighteenth century. He wrote a number of novels, plays, poems, essays and biographies. His works deal with themes such as social class and position, and wealth and poverty. His well-known works include *The Vicar of Wakefield, The Deserted Village*, 'Citizen of the World', and *She Stoops to Conquer*. In this unit, you will study the act-wise summary of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*, the character portrayal of the main characters and the depiction of the main themes of the play.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Oliver Goldsmith
- Assess the prominent works of Oliver Goldsmith
- Explain the main themes of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*
- Analyze the main characters of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*

14.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Several details about the life of Oliver Goldsmith are precisely unknown. It is believed that Goldsmith was born in 1728 in Ireland. His father was a poor

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clergyman in a Church of Ireland. Due to meagre financial resources, Goldsmith struggled for education and later for his livelihood. He spent most of his youth in the Lissoy village. Goldsmith joined the Trinity College, Dublin in 1745 under the sizar system which allowed poor students to study in lieu of the work they did as servants for the tutors. He never enjoyed a good reputation at college because he did not do well in studies, violated the rules and also participated in a riot in which several people died. He received his degree in 1749. In 1752, he moved to Edinburgh to study medicine but left it without a degree. From 1753–56, he travelled across the British continent.

Goldsmith worked hard on the subject of theology for a couple of years but was rejected by the ministry. He failed as a teacher. He struggled to make a living as a tutor, a comedian, an apothecary's assistant, a physician in Southwark, an usher in a country school, all without any success. Eventually, he started writing reviews and essays for periodicals and embarked on a career as a Grub Street journalist and hack writer. He also started proofreading for the novelist and printer Samuel Richardson. The first book that appeared under the name of Goldsmith was entitled *The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher Residing in London to His Friends in the East.* These letters were published as a series of essays. These were fictionalized letters presumed to be written by a Chinese mandarin visiting England. Under the identity of an Asian visitor, Goldsmith satirized the follies and foibles of the fashionable London society. These letters brought Goldsmith into limelight and to the attention of Samuel Johnson. Through Johnson's friendship, Goldsmith became a member of the city's exclusive Literary Club, which included writers— James Boswell, Edmund Burke, and Thomas Percy, painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, and actor David Garrick. At the age of 47, Goldsmith fell sick of fever and died in 1774.

Works

Oliver Goldsmith was a poet, a novelist, a playwright and an essayist. As a journalist, he contributed articles to several magazines like Tobias Smollett's *Critical Review*, Ralph Griffith's *Monthly Review, The Busy Body*, *The British Magazine*, *The Bee* and *The Lady's Magazine*: *or, Polite Companion for the Fair Sex*, and *The Westminster Magazine.* He wrote many essays including 'The Citizen of the World' in two volumes, 'The Life of Richard Nash,' 'The Mystery Revealed,' and 'History of England' in four volumes, 'Roman History' in two volumes, 'The Life of Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke,' and 'The Life of Thomas Parnell' and his most famous essay 'On Theatre: A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy'. He wrote numerous poems like *Edwin and Angelina, The Traveller, The Deserted Village, Retaliation* and *The Haunch of Venison*. His significant plays include *The Good Natur'd Man, She Stoops to Conquer, The Grumble*r and a novel *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

Goldsmith's fame chiefly rests on his masterpiece, a novel *The Vicar of Wakefield,* two plays *The Good Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer,* two

poems *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* was published in 1773.

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Check Your Progress

1. Name the prominent works of Oliver Goldsmith.
2. When was *She Stoops to Conquer* published?
3. Who is the hero of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*?

14.3 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY: *SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER*

Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) is seen as the first successful reaction to the sentimental comedy initiated by Steele. In a nutshell, the hero of the play Marlow is shy with ladies of his own social status, but quite open with servants, barmaids, and women of lower class. So the heroine, Miss Kate Hardcastle, decides to make him fall in love with her as someone from the lower class. She 'stoops' to an acceptable level to 'conquer' him. The play entertains and provokes laughter with its intrigues and mischievous tricks that are not malicious. The play also marked an important step in the development of comedy by eclipsing the popular 'sentimental comedy' of the times. Though Horace Walpole, an advocate of sentimental comedy, attacked the play *She Stoops to Conquer* for being devoid of a moral lesson, the play proved to be an outstanding popular success when it debuted in 1773.

Sentimental comedy was developed in response to the perceived immorality of the Restoration theatre. It was founded on the belief that man is innately good and that he can be softened through tears that flow from contemplation on undeserved suffering. Goldsmith challenged sentimental comedy in his essay 'A Comparison between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy' published in 1773. In this essay, Goldsmith has written that comedy should excite laughter, by ridiculously exhibiting the follies of the lower part of mankind. All the classic writers of comedy aimed only at rendering folly or vice ridiculous. They never exalted their characters or made what Voltaire humorously calls a tradesman's tragedy. He writes that in sentimental comedies, the virtues of private life and distress are exhibited while the vices and faults of mankind are not exposed. Sentimental comedies were successful among the people of his age. These plays portray all the characters as good and generous souls. Such plays did not do justice to the genre of comedy since they were more serious and moralizing in tone and the actors had block faces when they showed emotions. With the abundance of sentiment and feeling the plays lacked humour. The spectator was expected to pardon the faults or foibles, if any, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts. To Goldsmith, a genuine comedy

is one that is a great source of entertainment and sentimental comedy provided none. Instead of ridiculing, it commended folly. Goldsmith believed if humour is banished from the stage, people would be deprived of the art of laughing. With *She Stoops to Conquer,* Goldsmith succeeded in introducing humour, mirth and delight, driving out the pathos of the sentimental comedy. The play proved to be innovative and exhibited a new kind of comedy.

Oscar James Campbell noted in an introduction to *Chief Plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan: The School for Scandal, She Stoops to Conquer, The Rivals* that the central idea of this play was suggested to Goldsmith by an incident of his boyhood. He was told that the house of Mr Featherstone was an inn and directed there for entertainment. Goldsmith, easily deceived by a practical joke, had gone to the squire's house and treated him as a host. From this situation, grew his character and their games of cross purposes.

14.4 ACT-WISE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Let us go through an Act-wise summary of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Prologue

Mr Woodward, the speaker, is dressed in black and holding a handkerchief to his eyes. He is mourning for the death of 'Comic muse' that is genuine comedy. He argues that comedy which produced genuine laughter and candidly entertained people is now dead. It has been replaced by a new type of comedy known as the sentimental comedy. If sentimental comedy takes over the stage completely then the comic actors like himself and Ned Shuter (who played the role of Hardcastle) will have no work in future. Woodward tries to imitate a sentimental comedy actor and feels hopeless as he realizes that moralizing will not work for comic actors like him. The speaker hopes that Oliver Goldsmith, who, like a doctor, will restore an ailing patient, with five potions corresponding to the five acts of his comedy. Goldsmith will infuse comedy with lively and amusing situations and revive it by entertaining and giving comic relief to the audience. At the end of the play, the audience will decide whether the doctor is qualified or just another quack like many others of the time.

Critical Analysis

Prologues and epilogues were written to comment on the play and to introduce the audience with the objectives of writing the play. The Prologue also gave the reasons for composing the drama.

The Prologue of *She Stoops to Conquer* was written by Mr David Garrick, a well-known actor and producer of his times. He was a manager of a patent house in Drury Lane. The Prologue was spoken by Mr Edward Woodward, a contemporary comic actor. He was offered the role of Tony Lumpkin but the actor turned down the offer thinking that the play would not be successful. Ned

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Shutter, another comic actor of the times, played the role of Mr Hardcastle in the play. The Prologue is presented in the form of a metaphor where genuine comedy is the patient dying of sentimentalism while Oliver Goldsmith is the doctor who will resuscitate it through his play *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Act I Scene I

Summary

Scene I of the play begins with the entry of Mr and Mrs Hardcastle. Mrs Hardcastle is unhappy with their old fashioned house that resembles an old inn. She grumbles about not visiting the town every now and then like many others in the neighbourhood. She also complains that no one pays them a visit except Mrs Oddfish, the curate's wife and Cripplegate, the lame dancing master. Besides, another source of entertainment are the old stories of prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough told by Mr Hardcastle over and over again. Mrs Hardcastle does not enjoy these stories anymore and dismisses them as old fashion trumpery. She snubs her husband for always accusing her son Tony. Tony is neither educated nor mature; he has never been to school which Mrs Hardcastle says was due to his sickness. She believes as long as Tony has fortunes, education is insignificant. Mrs Hardcastle thinks Latin is a suitable form of schooling for Tony. Mr Hardcastle expresses fondness for everything old, old friends, old wine, old books, and old manners. He is critical of Tony, that he is a drunkard, growing fat, is a trickster and knows only mischief. He is not fit for any education. The only schools that he can visit are the ale-house and a stable. Mr Hardcastle believes that Tony and his mother have spoiled each other.

As Tony enters the stage, he is in a hurry to reach the alehouse, The Three Pigeons. His mother dissuades him from keeping the company of low and paltry set of fellows at the ale house. Dick Muggins, Jack Slang, Little Aminabad, Tom Twist are Tony's companions at the alehouse, whom he does not find of low disposition. Moreover, he cannot disappoint himself by not visiting the alehouse and leaves with his mother running behind him.

As Kate Hardcastle enters, Mr Hardcastle comments on her dress. He loathes the superfluous silk with laces which he feels are trimmings of vanity. He does not like this show. She reminds her father of the deal they have that she can wear fashionable silk dresses of her choice during the day to receive visitors of her interest each day. In the evening, she dresses up according to her father's taste and welcomes his guests.

Mr Hardcastle informs Kate that he has invited his prospective son-in-law, a young man Marlow, who is the son of his longtime friend Sir Charles Marlow. No one from the family has ever met him. Mr Hardcastle has heard of him to be scholar, a well-bred young man with excellent services and will be employed to serve his nation. Marlow is said to be brave, generous, handsome, bashful and reserved. Mr Hardcastle believes that modesty resides in people who are endowed

with noble virtues and, therefore, he likes Marlow for his reserved nature. Kate feels that Marlow's reserved nature has undone all his other accomplishments. Though impressed by his good looks, Kate is not enamoured by the quality of being reserved since such men become suspicious husbands. She also believes it would be difficult to develop friendliness and love in a marriage fixed like a business. Nevertheless, Kate agrees to take Marlow as her husband to fulfil her father's desire. Mr Hardcastle informs, it may happen that Marlow may reject her. Kate takes it lightly, she will not cry on rejection and indifference, instead will set out to find a gentleman of newer fashion. For Kate, it is more important for her husband to be handsome and young rather than be sensible and good natured. She is apprehensive about having a reserved husband. She would first secure a lover and then a husband.

Miss Constance Neville, a very dear friend of Kate, is the last person to enter the stage in Scene I of Act I. Kate breaks the news of Marlow to Constance. The audience learns from Constance that her beloved Hastings will accompany Marlow. The two gentlemen are inseparable friends. Constance appreciates Marlow for his good reputation and virtues. She also says that Marlow is timid and diffident in the company of modest ladies of her own class but he mixes well with girls of low social class. Another information divulged through their communication is that Mrs Hardcastle is the guardian of Constance's fortune. She wants Constance to marry Tony because of this good fortune, as this marriage will secure her son's future. Constance keeps Mrs Hardcastle happy by portraying a good picture of Tony and pretending to be in love with him though she knows they both do not love each other. Mrs Hardcastle also does not suspect Constance to have feelings for another man. She says if her relationship with Hastings grows and culminates into marriage she does not mind leaving the fortune. She will happily leave it for her aunt. Even Tony does not want to marry Constance. He would be happy to see her marry someone else.

Critical Analysis

The Act introduces the audience to the place of action that is a small countryside, in the house of Mr Hardcastle. Some background information, necessary to understand the play, is given to the audience. Mr and Mrs Hardcastle is an old couple and for both it is their second marriage. Mrs Hardcastle has a son Tony Lumpkin from her first marriage. Mr Hardcastle too has a daughter named Kate Hardcastle from his first wife.

Through a conversation between the two, Goldsmith instantly presents a contrasting nature of the two characters. While, Mrs Hardcastle has an interest in the London society and she takes a lively interest in the fashions of the day, Mr Hardcastle, on the other hand, is a traditional man. Their tastes also present a contrast between the hustling bustling life of London and its people and the serene, countryside and the simplicity of the rustics. Mr Hardcastle criticizes the vanities and affectation of the town, lamenting the loss of traditional values as the people of

this age are lacking in sense and discretion. He believes whoever goes to London only comes back with fopperies and affectations. The worst is that earlier very few were affected by pretentiousness and snobbery but now it travels faster. Even her daughter Kate has become pretentious, influenced by the fashion, manners and French frippery after spending two years in London.

Although we see nothing of the surrounding countryside yet we hear about some of the neighbouring inhabitants. Miss Hoggs, Mrs Grigsby (a grig is a grasshopper) and Mrs Oddfish, all sound truly rural. Then there are Tony Lumpkin's low class friends who have rustic names and their occupations reflect their social class. Dick Muggins is the excise man, Jack Slang the horse doctor and there is Tom Twist.

The conversation between the couple throws light on some of the major characters and prepares the audience for their entry. Tony's entry confirms that Mr Hardcastle has given a more realistic account of Tony. He scarcely pays heed and respect either to his mother or his stepfather. Kate's entry immediately after Tony's exit puts them in stark contrast. She is polite in addressing both her father and stepmother; obedient in following Hardcastle's whim requiring her to wear simple dresses of her father's choice and meeting people of his choice in the evening.

The circumstances leading to plot development have also been established. Mrs Hardcastle's description of the mansion, comparing it with an inn prepares the audience for Marlow and Hastings to mistake the house for an inn and for Kate to be taken for a barmaid because of her plain attire in the evening.

Themes of wealth and inheritance are introduced. Tony Lumpkin has inherited an annuity from his father and Constance Neville owns a considerable quantity of jewellery which her aunt manages for her. She has to marry with the consent of her aunt or else loose her fortune.

The personalities of all the major characters of the play are revealed through their actions and dialogues. Kate is a confident and independent woman who will marry for love. At the same time, she ensure her father's happiness by making the man of his choice fall in love with her. We come to know about Marlow through Mr Hardcastle and Constance. Tony is fat, uneducated and outspoken. He is a trickster and loves to drink with his rowdy fellows. Hardcastle's description and his own actions confirm it.

Act I Scene II

Summary

Scene II of Act I is set in the alehouse, The Three Pigeons. Tony is sitting at the head of the table, which is a little higher, with the ease of being very much at home. A gathering of shabby looking fellows with punch (cigar) and tobacco surround him, all shouting and singing. Holding a mallet in his hand, he sings a song, in which

he raises a toast to all drunkards, shuns learning, education, and dismisses schoolmasters and Methodist preachers. The third verse of his song is in praise of the low life at the countryside. The alehouse landlord announces the arrival of two gentlemen from London standing outside. They have lost their way and are asking for directions to Mr Hardcastle's house. Tony is sure that one of them is a gentleman who has come to court his sister Kate. Instantly, Tony Lumpkin hits on a plan to avenge his stepfather's constant grumbles about his behaviour. He asks the landlord to bring them in.

As the gentlemen ask about the Hardcastles, in his own fantasy, Lumpkin describes Mr Hardcastle as a cross-grained, old-fashioned, whimsical old man with an ugly face. He describes Kate as an 'all trapesing, trolloping, talkative maypole'. He presents the old man's son (himself) as a pretty, well-bred, agreeable youth, that everybody is fond of. Marlow is reluctant to believe the information they have gathered about the father and his daughter from Tony's account. The daughter is said to be well-bred and beautiful and the son is an awkward brat spoiled by his mother. Tony and the landlord fabricate the description of the countryside as an area of boggy roads, hills and dangerous commons. As Marlow and Hastings express their desire to rest tonight in the tavern, Tony says there is no space. He directs them to his stepfather's house, describing it as an inn named The Buck Head run by an eccentric innkeeper who fancies himself as a gentleman. He presents Mr Hardcastle as an innkeeper on the verge of retirement aspiring to be recognized as one of the gentry. The deluded travellers leave for the inn.

Critical Analysis

Act I, Scene II lays the basis for the ensuing plot that begins to work immediately. The mistakes of the night begin with Marlow and Hastings believing that Hardcastle's house is The Buck's Head inn and Hardcastle is the old, idiosyncratic innkeeper.

The scene further unfolds Tony's character. His picture presented in the previous scene matches his actions. His seating position shows his dominating position in the group which includes the rustics named in Scene I. Tony is happy drinking and merry-making. He asserts that he chooses his company. No one dictates him. He is his own master. We get a glimpse into Tony's background. People, in general know, that his father has left him considerable wealth which he will inherit when he comes of age. He is a living replica of his father, who excels in country pursuits. He also says that he will soon be a worth fifteen hundred pound a year on marrying Constance.

Goldsmith also creates two scenes of the countryside. One scene is set in Mr Hardcastle's mansion which lacks the fashion of the town but there is decorum and refinement. The other scene is set in the alehouse, a hub for the rowdy and boisterous low class rustics and drunkards like Tony. The setting and characters further present a social order with class bias.

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Act II

Summary

The scene is set in Hardcastle's house. Mr Hardcastle, awaiting the visit of his prospective son-in-law Marlow, is seen instructing his servants Diggory, Roger and others on how to behave when the guests come to their house. These servants are not used to receiving guests and waiting at the table. Diggory, the head servant, is very talkative and loves to eat. Hardcastle instructs them not to talk, eat, drink or laugh hard in their presence and be attentive. He finds it hard to teach these servants who do not know anything about table etiquettes. The servants are only more confused. The scene is interrupted by the news of the arrival of Marlow and Hastings. Mr Hardcastle goes to receive his guests.

Marlow and Hastings, with their servants, arrive at the scene. They admire the house instantly, clean and creditable, which as intended by Tony, is taken to be an inn. We learn from their conversation that Marlow has spent much of his life travelling, residing at the college or in an inn. This kind of life has not given him an opportunity to interact with reputable ladies. This factor is also responsible for his low confidence in the company of modest women. He does not remember of being acquainted with a single modest woman, except his mother. On rare occasions meeting a young cultured lady of his own class has left him petrified. He always looks for an opportunity to leave the room as he loses his confidence when the lady looks at him. He is also unable to counterfeit impudence since he is a modest man. He considers a modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, the most tremendous object of the whole creation.

On the contrary, Marlow is affable and boisterous with serving women and barmaids. He can say the finest things to the barmaid and the college bed maker but not a word of it to modest women. Jokingly, Hastings remarks that with this diffident attitude Marlow will never be able to get married unless his bride is courted by a proxy. Marlow is not even sure how will he court this woman whom he has come to meet and will simply answer her questions in yes and no. Hastings is surprised to know that a warm friend can be a cold lover. Marlow also asserts that he has come here to see the reconciliation of Hastings with Miss Constance Neville.

Mistaking Hardcastle to be an innkeeper, as intended by Tony, Marlow behaves arrogantly with him. Mr Hardcastle welcomes the two gentlemen in the Liberty Hall, at which the two young men poke fun throughout the conversation. While Marlow and Hastings speak of the need to change from travelling clothes into something fine like silk, the old man talks of his colonel uncle of which Marlowe and Hastings make fun in an aside. The young men call for a cup of punch and then discuss the evening meal. They ask Mr Hardcastle for a bill of fare. It is a long menu because it has been prepared for special guests, Mr Hardcastle's prospective son-in-law and his friend. Marlow and Hastings are amazed at the quality and quantity of the proposed meal. They shun it thinking this big menu is to extract

money from them. They ask for simple two-three things on the table. They force the old man to show them their bedroom. Mr Hardcastle is surprised to witness such imprudent and flippant behaviour. Nonetheless, he does what they desire. Marlow feels that the desire and learning to be a gentleman, has made the old man brazen. Finding the old man becoming troublesome, Marlow leaves the Liberty Hall to inspect his bedroom followed by the protest of Mr Hardcastle.

Hastings is surprised to see Miss Neville in an inn. Understanding that Hastings and Marlow have been duped by Tony, Constance clears the confusion. She tells him that it is her guardian Mrs Hardcastle's house and since it is old, it does look like an inn. She also mentions that Mrs Hardcastle is courting her on behalf of her son Tony who dislikes Constance. Hastings divulges his ploy to seize this opportunity to enter Constance's family and elope with her. Once the horses are refreshed they can travel to France. He wants to go to France because France gives freedom even to the slaves to choose their partners and the law of marriage among slaves is also respected. However, Constance is reluctant to leave without her jewels. She is anxious to get her jewels and secure her future. She has been asking for it from her aunt to wear it and will be successful very soon. Hastings does not desire anything but her. Together the lovers decide to leave Marlow in the deception that he is staying at an inn because telling Marlow all this abruptly will make him leave the house and their plan to elope will not be executed.

Hastings informs Marlow that Constance and Kate have arrived. The family had come to dine in the neighbourhood and stayed back refreshing the horses at the inn. Marlow is reluctant to meet Kate. Constance and Hastings persuade Marlow to stay. After introducing Marlow and Kate to each other Hastings and Constance leave the place. A humorous conversation ensues between Kate and Marlow. Marlow is overcome by shyness, faltering and stuttering, scarcely able to complete his own sentences. In her solus, Kate sums up her impression of Marlow. She finds him attractive and a man of sentiment, sober, a serious, honourable and highly sensitive young man. He has good sense, but is ignorant of it. He is extremely engrossed in his fears. She determines to find out how she can boost his confidence and help him in overcoming his shyness.

The fashion styles of London are the topics of discussion for Mrs Hardcastle and Hastings as they re-enter the room. Hastings flatters Mrs Hardcastle on her hairstyle, her dress and her youthful appearance. Mrs Hardcastle is impressed with his talks of London which she loves and regrets that she has not been there. Hastings, to impress her, says it seems that she has been brought up in London as her manners are like the fashionable elite of London.

Mrs Hardcastle finds similarities of face and height in the two young people Tony and Constance and sees it as an auspicious sign of their suitability for each other. Meanwhile, Constance and Tony are fighting, Tony tells Constance to keep distance and that he does not wish to have any relationship with her. Mrs Hardcastle calls these fightings falling in and out of love many times a day as if they are already

husband and wife. Tony Lumpkin upsets his doting mother and a rant between Tony and his mother ensues. She calls him a viper, a monster who is never seen in the house when in good humour or spirits. He is always found in the ale house, and that he never fulfils any duty towards his mother. She calls him a dear, sweet, pretty, provoking, and undutiful boy. The two ladies leave.

Tony and Hastings are left in each other's company. Hastings tries to know about his feelings for Neville. Tony makes fun of Constance and Kate. He calls Constance a bitter cantankerous toad in all Christendom, with lots of tricks in her thicket, as loud as a hog in a gate with friends, eyes as black as shoes, and cheeks as broad and red as a pulpit cushion. Hastings exhibits his feelings for Constance; she is well-tempered, silent and sensible. Her meekness and modesty charms him. Tony says Hastings finds her to be a well-tempered girl because he does not know her as well as him. Hastings loves Constance and wants to marry her, while Tony detests the thought of marrying her. He is being urged by his mother so that she can maintain control of Constance's fortune for his son. Hastings requests Tony to help him elope with Constance. Tony instantly agrees since he wishes to get rid of her as soon as possible. He also promises to help them get Constance's fortune.

Critical Analysis

The servants' scene once again emphasizes the contrast between the low life of the rustics to that of the gentry. The gap between the expectations of polished behaviour and what the servants can manage adds humour to the scene. The servants, in their conversation also emphasize that Mr Hardcastle is a great teller of military tales, which was also mentioned by Mrs Hardcastle.

The ploy that Tony Lumpkin conceived starts working. Hastings and Marlow mistake Mr Hardcastle to be an old innkeeper who wishes to be a part of the gentry. The whole scene reveals the condition of taverns and inn and their owners. The maintenance of large mansions usually made the owners bankrupt, who later turned them into inns for their livelihood. Marlow, in spite of travelling widely, still lacks the assurance about these inns. The bad inns fleece and starve the travellers and the good ones tax them dearly for the luxuries. Everything appears so hospitable to them that the two fear the high charges for all of it.

The conversation between Hastings and Mrs Hardcastle exhibits the contrast between the opinion held by Mrs Hardcastle about the metropolitan city, London and the actual scenario. Mrs Hardcastle dwells in her own imaginative view of the world of the fashionable metropolitan London society. Her opinion of the elite London society which she has not experienced is based on the information given in 'the Scandalous Magazine' which contained reviews of books, plays and social circulars. Hastings has fun at her expense. Tower Wharf was certainly not a fashionable place. The Pantheon was in Oxford Street, the Grotto Gardens were less fashionable than Ranelagh and the Borough of Southwark was by this date

not a place where the nobility resided. He pokes fun at Mrs Hardcastle's incomplete knowledge of London's fashionable society, of which she so yearns to be a part of. When Mrs Hardcastle joins Hasting's talk with Constance, her conversation reveals her pretensions and ignorance of the fashionable London life. Mr Hardcastle, too, is transported to the other world of campaigns in war. It is also a fabricated one with incorrect dates and names of places. Often, he narrates stories of valour and gallantry from the past.

Marlow, as described earlier, admits being shy and reserved with ladies of his own class, confident and boisterous with women of low class, and stating the reasons for such behaviour. He becomes uncomfortable and uneasy talking to a lady from the same class. Not once did he lift his eyes to look at Kate's face directly. He fumbled over the words throughout the conversation with the lady. Marlow's impudent behaviour with females of the lower class and refined conduct in the company of women of reputation, as well as his misbehaviour with Mr Hardcastle, thinking him to be the innkeeper and the servants emphasizes the entrenched system of class division in eighteenth century England.

The plan to elope to France where there is freedom to choose one's partner and respect for the institution of marriage is a critical statement on England's class conscious society where individuals marry with the intention of upholding their status rather than for love.

There is also one scene in the play in which Lumpkin has been presented as a friendly and agreeable person. Hastings draws attention of the audience to his virtue that he looks like a lad of spirit. Tony promises to get Constance jewels so that she can take them with her.

Act III

Summary

The scene in Act III is set in Mr Hardcastle's mansion. Mr Hardcastle alone is perplexed and wonders why his friend, Sir Marlow, recommended that Kate should marry young Marlow, who seems rude and unmannered. He believes that Kate, too, will be shocked to meet such an insolent man. As it is evening, Kate has changed her dress to live upto her commitment to her father to dress up with simplicity in the evening. Mr Hardcastle and his daughter share their views on Marlow. While Kate praises Marlow and approves of his ways which, she concludes, he has acquired from travelling across the world. She finds everything natural about the man. She is thoroughly impressed with his timidity. She claims to have not seen anyone so modest as Marlow, who met her with a respectful bow, stammering voice and a look fixed on the ground. He treated her with diffidence and respect, admired the prudence of girls that never laughed, tired her with apologies for being tiresome and then left the room with a bow. Mr Hardcastle disapproves of Marlow's ways and is convinced that he has acquired all that immodesty by travelling across the world, from the bad company and French

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dance masters. He is aghast by his brazen immodesty, asking twenty questions, and never waiting for an answer, interrupting his remarks with some silly pun, asking him to make punch (drink). He compares Marlow to a bully called Dawson from earlier in the century. Mr Hardcastle discerns that the first sight of Marlow has deceived his daughter.

Finally, father and daughter agree to reject Marlow as unsuitable, but for different reasons, Hardcastle because of Marlow's impudence, Kate because of his apparent bashfulness. Although Kate does not dismiss Marlow completely yet she feels that he may have some good qualities behind his diffident appearance. For her, a smooth face represents good sense and virtue. Hardcastle says if Marlow, whom he addresses as Mr Brazen, is able to reconcile the contradictions in his personality then only he can please both of them. Both are of the opinion that they are neither completely right nor wholly wrong about Marlow and proceed to find more about him.

Tony enters with a casket of jewels that he has stolen from Mrs Hardcastle's drawer and gives them to Hastings. Tony has the keys to all the drawers in his mother's bureau and that is how he was also able to go to the alehouse every day. He does not want Constance to be cheated of her fortune. Hastings believes it would be better if Mrs Hardcastle gives the jewel casket to Miss Neville herself. Tony tells him to keep the box till she gets it directly from his mother which is like parting with her tooth. Hastings is worried about her disappointment when she finds jewels are not in her bureau.

In the next scene, Constance is seen requesting her aunt to give her the casket of jewels. Mrs Hardcastle reprimands her with remarks about the unsuitability of wearing ornaments at such a young age. She will need them when her beauty will fade. Constance retorts something that will repair beauty at 40 years of age will improve beauty at 20 years of age. Mrs Hardcastle praises Neville's beauty which is absolutely natural blush and is beyond the beauty of thousand ornaments. Mrs Hardcastle tries to convince Constance saying that jewels are out of fashion and offers her own unfashionable semi-precious ornaments to Constance, which she refuses to accept. In an aside, Mrs Hardcastle tells Tony that she will hang on to the jewels till Tony and Constance get married and the fortune passes on to Tony. As she leaves to bring her own jewellery, Tony informs Constance that he has given the jewels to Hastings and they both can elope. Tony Lumpkin, as mischievous as he can get, suggests Mrs Hardcastle to tell Constance that the jewels have been stolen and he is witness to this incident. She does so. Moments later a dreadful wailing breaks out as Mrs Hardcastle discovers that the jewels are missing. Lumpkin continues with his mischief appreciating Mrs Hardcastle for being a fantastic actor. She bemoans that her son is unable to distinguish between jest and earnest and feels sorry for her niece. Ironically, she is the one who has been tricked.

Kate, simply dressed, is accompanied by her maid Pimple. Her simple dress led Marlow to believe that she is a barmaid in the inn. Every woman in the country wears simple dress in the evening and changes only when she visits or receives company. Also, Marlow did not look up at her face even once when she met him first as Kate Hardcastle. Also, Kate's face was hidden behind the bonnet. Therefore, he does not recognize her in her evening dress. Kate wishes to keep up that delusion. It is by keeping up the mistake she wishes to be seen, and that is no small advantage to a girl who brings her face to the market. By stooping to conquer she would make an acquaintance and victory gained over one who never addresses any but the wildest of her sex. Her chief aim is to take Marlow off his guard and examine his heart. Marlow enters whistling, happy to find himself away from the people of the house all alone. He muses that Miss Hardcastle is too grave and sentimental for him and she squints. Kate meets Marlow as a maid. The moment he looks at her, he wants to steel a kiss from her. He behaves the way Hastings had mentioned earlier about his behaviour in the company of women from the lower strata. He is unabashed with barmaids and others of the like. Marlow mentions he is a great favourite among ladies but he does not know what makes him so popular. At the Ladies Club in the town, a reference is made to a famous female coterie; he is called by the name Rattle. Telling his name Solomon, he flirts with Kate, mistaking her to be a bar maid. Offers to kiss her, salute her, to be at her service. He admits that cards, suppers, wine, and old women make him merry. Tries to hold her hand and kiss but fails and leaves.

Once again, Mr Hardcastle is shocked to see the impudence of the young man. But Kate wants to prove Marlow to be a modest man and wants to get a chance to convince her father of Marlow's modesty. She believes that he has only the faults that will pass off with time, and the virtues that will improve with age, and hopes that her father forgives him.

Critical Analysis

This Act highlights the diverse views held by Mr Hardcastle and Kate about Marlow's character. It seems Kate and Mr Hardcastle are talking about two different people. With Mr Hardcastle, whom he believes to be an eccentric innkeeper, Marlow shows his unruly side. Knowing Kate to be a fine lady, however, Marlow remains reserved.

This Act furthers confirms the personality traits of Kate, Marlow and Tony. Kate takes pleasure in being obedient to her father. Marlow is modest and shy in the company of his own class and wild when with the barmaids. Tony shows his righteousness by giving the casket of jewels to Hastings and making arrangements for him to leave with Constance.

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Act IV

Summary

Mr Hardcastle receives a letter informing that Sir Charles Marlow will arrive shortly. Constance apprises Hastings of this information. The plans for elopement are made and Hastings wants to be out on their way to France as soon as possible because of the fear of getting caught since Charles Marlow recognizes him. He has given the jewels casket to Marlow. Marlow is a little confused about the casket. He has given it to Mrs Hardcastle to keep it secure and safe. Hastings is horrified to know that the jewels casket is in the possession of Mrs Hardcastle and decides to leave without it.

Enchanted by the barmaid, Marlow is unable to free himself of her thoughts. He also expresses his intense desire to be one with her. He is totally in awe of her personality. He regrets not being able to kiss her.

Mr Hardcastle is exasperated with Marlow and his servants. He tolerates Marlow only because he is his friend's son. Angrily Mr Hardcastle commands Marlow to leave his house with the drunken pack of his servants immediately. He has endured Marlow's insolence for more than four hours and still there seem to be no an end to his immodesty. Marlow, on the contrary, not only refuses to leave but also claims to never have met with such impudence in his whole life before. Mr Hardcastle reveals that Sir Charles Marlow's letter made him believe Marlow to be a well-bred and modest man but he is no better than a coxcomb and a bully. Mr Harcastle informs Marlow of his father's arrival anytime soon which leaves Marlow puzzled.

A conversation follows between Kate and Marlow. He wishes to confirm whether the place is an inn and she is a barmaid or not. Kate calls herself a poor relation of Mr Hardcastle to whom the mansion belongs. She only manages the household. Marlow is ashamed for thinking Kate to be a barmaid. He feels sorry for his misbehaviour and for mistaking her simplicity for allurement. He expresses his feelings for Kate, thinking her to be a poor relation of Hardcastle, and that he is bewitched by her simplicity and he would be undone, if he stays any longer. Kate pretends to weep and Marlow calls it the first mark of tenderness he ever had from a modest woman. He is deeply touched. She is the only one from the family whom he would leave with reluctance. Owing to their different status Marlow cannot make her his wife.

Constance requests Tony to get the casket of jewels again; he refuses and informs her he has arranged for a horse for them to elope. Mrs Hardcastle arrives. Diggory, the servant brings a letter for Tony. Constance recognizes the handwriting, the letter is from Hastings. She tries to keep Mrs Hardcastle engaged so that their plan is not revealed. As Tony could not understand the handwriting, it is Mrs Harcastle who reads it, comes to know about their plan, and decides to send Constance to live with aunt Pedigree. She immediately prepares to leave for aunt Pedigree's house.

Hastings accuses Tony of disclosing the plan to his mother. Marlow blames Hastings for hiding the truth and not stopping him from the wrong act. Marlow tells Tony that it is because of his mischief that all here are in trouble and, hence, unhappy. All present on the stage are disappointed with the happenings.

Critical Analysis

The mistaken identities and circumstances start unfolding. As Mr Hardcastle mentions Marlow's father, he begins to think of mistaking the mansion to be an inn. Kate tells him it is Mr Hardcastle's house. Marlow confesses to have feelings for Kate and Kate also reciprocates those feelings. Hastings plan to elope with Constance is also disclosed to Mrs Hastings.

The conversation between Marlow and Hastings also throws light on Marlow's opinion about women belonging to the low class. Hastings warns Marlow that he cannot rob a woman of his honour to which the reply comes that firstly, barmaid of an inn does not have any honour and secondly, there is nothing in this inn for which he cannot pay. He means to say that he will pay the barmaid to be with him. And if she has virtue, he should be the last man in the world that would attempt to corrupt it. The scenes also reveals Marlow's character a little more and his thoughts about women of lower class. Once again the class differences are highlighted and the necessity to be in relationship only with people of the same class is asserted. As Marlow says that if, he were alone in this world with no social obligations he could have married her. But the opinion of the world matters to him. According to Marlow, difference of birth, fortune and education has prevented him from marrying her. Kate has also fallen in love with Marlow and reiterates the title of the play that she will preserve the character to which she has stooped to conquer her love.

Act V Scene I

Summary

Charles Marlow and Mr Hardcastle have come to know about Marlow's mistakes. Marlow possesses a fortune more than a competence already, and can want nothing but a good and virtuous girl to share and increase his happiness.

Marlow feels sorry for his misconduct. He apprises his father and Mr Hastings that he has not given Miss Hardcastle the slightest mark of his attachment or even the most distant hint to suspect him of affection. They have just had one interview, and that was formal, modest and uninteresting. The old men are unable to believe this statement. As he leaves, Kate joins the two old men. She admits that Marlow has professed of a lasting attachment and love, has said civil things to her, talked much of his want of merit, and her greatness. Old Marlow mentions his son's submissive nature and inability to have conversation with modest women. Kate suggests them to hide and see Marlow professing his love for her.

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Scene II

Scene II is set in the back garden. Tony tells Hastings that he took the ladies for a round and brought them back to the Hardcastle's house instead of taking them to aunt Pedigree's house. Moreover, Mrs Hardcastle falls into the pond. She does not know that it is her own house. She sees someone coming and Tony frightens her saying it is a highwayman. It is actually Mr Hardcastle, who has come listening to the cry for help. Anxious, she hides behind a tree. Tony convinces Mr Hardcastle there is no one around and his mother along with Constance is at aunt Pedigree's house. Mr Hardcastle is surprised that they have covered such a long journey in such a short time. Mrs Hardcastle, thinking the old man to be a highwayman, pleads for mercy to take all the money but spare her son. Recognizing the voice of his wife, Mr Hastings thinks she is out of her senses. Blinded by her fears, she is amazed to see Mr Hardcastle in a frightful place, far from home. Mr Hardcastle understood that Tony has played a prank on her. Mrs Hardcastle swears to teach Tony a lesson. Tony retorts that the whole parish is of the opinion that Mrs Hardcastle has spoiled her son so she should also bear the fruits of the same.

Constance is reluctant to elope and wishes to marry with the consent of everyone in the family and also get her fortune. Hastings tries to persuade her to elope, stay in love from the moment, let fortune perish. Love and contentment will increase their fortune beyond the monarch's revenue. Constance wishes to be prudent. She believes that hasty decisions taken in a moment of passion lead to repentance in the long run. She has decided to talk to Mr Harcastle to resolve the issue for he is compassionate and just. Hastings is apprehensive because Mr Hardcastle may have the will to relieve her but not the power to do so since Mrs Hardcastle is her guardian and fortune keeper.

Scene III

Marlow admits to Kate (disguised as a poor relation) his inability to marry her. It agonizes him to be separated from her. Kate asks him to wait for a couple of more days and see his uneasiness subside. He confesses that he has already trifled too long with his heart. Now pride begins to surrender to his passion. The disparity of education and fortune, the anger of parents, and the contempt of his peers, begin to lose their ground. There is nothing that can restore him to himself except this painful effort of resolution. Kate, still playing the role of a poor relation, says his sufferings for her are of little value as they will soon be gone in a day or two once he leaves for his city. Soon, he will regret the feeling he harbours for her. She does not urge him to stay. Kate tells Marlow that her family and education is as good as Miss Hardcastle's family but they come to nothing if the family is not affluent. Acting sorry, she says she must remain contented with the slight approbation of credited merit. Kate says what began with indifference should also end with indifference. Any connection between them would appear mercenary on her part and imprudence on his part. She will never feel the confidence of being addressed by a secure admirer.

Marlow defends himself. He does not care for the fortune; it is her beauty at first sight that caught his attention. He likes spending time with her. He decides to stay and tell his father about her. He is sure that after seeing her, his father will not question about her class. Marlow will not repent any decision except that he did not understand her merit before and would like to atone for his past misconduct. Every moment reveals a new merit in her and increases his diffidence and confusion. Marlow kneels down and expresses his feelings to make her feel confident and secure.

Both the fathers, Charles Marlow and Mr Hastings, who were listening to the conversation hiding behind the screen, chide Marlow for wooing Miss Hardcastle in private but not accepting it before them. Marlow is surprised to hear that Kate is Mr Hardcastle's daughter. Kate pokes fun at him and asks which Marlow should she address, one who is a faltering gentleman, with looks on the ground, that speaks just to be heard, and hates hypocrisy; or the one who is loud, confident and keeps it up with Mrs. Mantrap, and old Miss Biddy Buckskin, till three in the morning. The two old men pardon Marlow for everything.

Mrs Hardcastle believes Hastings and Constance have eloped but Constance has not taken her fortune. Mr Hardcastle knows she cannot be so mercenary. Hastings and Constance enter the stage and announce they could not go without the consent of everyone. Hardcastle asks Tony whether he refuses to take Constance as his wife or not. Tony says that he has not come of age yet to pronounce this statement. Mr Hardcastle discloses the secret that Tony has come of age three months ago and his wife asked him not to reveal this fact. Tony formally announces his refusal to make Constance his wife. Marlow and Kate reconcile and decide to have a merry morning.

Critical Analysis

Themes of class, marriage and money are again reinforced in this Act. Marriages are about making bonds stronger, as the old men say, and this will further lead to union of families. To own wealth and fortune is vital to be respectable in the society. As Kate mentions being affluent is more important than to have good education and family. The fact that it is Mrs Hardcastle who is responsible for spoiling her son, everyone believes it, is once again fortified. Kate, who stooped to conquer, wins Marlow's heart as a woman of social class lesser than his own. That justifies the title of the play. Marlow not only expresses his love to her but also firmly decides to convince his father and make Kate (belonging to low class) as his wife going against all restrictions of class.

The Act ends with the announcement of the union of both sets of lovers and that too with the consent of the family members.

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Epilogue

Epilogue one is spoken by the actress who played the part of Kate Hardcastle. She speaks in the person of a barmaid. It summarizes the action, hoping that the humorous tale of how Kate, who 'stooped to conquer' justifies the author's abandonment of sentimental comedy. She stooped to conquer and win a husband for herself without any aid from her fortunes. And Marlow falls in love with the simplicity of the barmaid and not the fashionable Kate and her fortunes. She begins and ends the epilogue with the plea to obtain the appreciation of the audience for the play. She narrates the five stages of the barmaid's life. The structure of the epilogue corresponds with the lines spoken by Jacques in *As You Like It.*

The second epilogue is spoken by J. Cradock, who playes the role of Tony Lumpkin. This epilogue reiterates the theme of the play that assumptions of money and class should not matter much to anyone. He says that now he has renounced Miss Constance and will soon start receiving a thousand pounds a year. He will go to London since there people have some regard for the innate qualities of a person, no matter what he inherits. He will show the world what good taste is. He will set new fashions and prove it to the London gentry that they too are gentlemen.

Critical Analysis of the Setting

The play is set in eighteenth century England. The play is set in a country side, away from the urban London society. The place of action is in and around Mr Hardcastle's mansion. One of the scenes is set in the alehouse called The Three Pigeons, Tony's favourite hangout.

Themes and Characters

Let us now study the prominent themes of the play.

Class

The play showcases the reality of class distinctions and class snobbery. People belonging to the upper class are keen to find suitable partners from the same class for their children. Young men from good families might consider sleeping with a barmaid, but would not normally consider marrying one.

Nevertheless, Goldsmith views class as more of a psychological construct, class prejudices are the product of social and psychological conditioning. The perspectives of the characters are influenced by the class to which they belong. For instance, Tony Lumpkin is a squire's son and like his biological father, prefers alehouse companions and country folk to people of his own class. He does not spend much time with any of his family members too. He is the only one who enjoys the company of low class people. Another example is that of Marlow. He is terrified of the respectability of women of his class like Kate Hardcastle. When he confronts Kate as a barmaid, Marlow is sexually interested in her, and gets emotionally involved when he comes to know that Kate is a poor relative of Mr. Hardcastle. But Marlow shows inability to marry a woman outside his class. Kate

is the same person who plays different roles, and it is Marlow who invests those roles with social and psychological value. Kate, in disguise, cuts across the social boundaries and stoops to conquer love. Marlow's attitude towards Kate Hardcastle is another example of the vital role played by class in eighteenth century England. His behaviour throughout the play is natural and genuine.

Inheritance

The theme of inheritance is a common one which was largely found in the plays of the seventeenth and eighteenth century England. In these plays, the fortunes of young men and women were often controlled by their guardians. If they married without the consent of their guardian these young people would lose their fortunes. Continuing with the tradition, Goldsmith also sets the same condition for Miss Constance, niece of Mrs Hardcastle. She has to marry the man of his aunt's choice or she will have to part with the jewels that her uncle has left for her in his will. And it is to save Tony's future that Mrs Hardcastle wishes Miss Constance to marry Tony.

Money

Money is a practical need of life. Even amidst emotions, it is important to think of money. Kate, when playing the role of a poor relative to Mr Hardcastle, mentions to Marlow that men of their class marry women not for love but for their fortunes. Even Constance is reluctant to leave her casket of jewels behind. The characters are judged on the basis of lack or access to money. Marlow would hide his emotions for a woman who belongs to the lower class because his father would not accept this and, hence, will not give his approval for marriage. Even Mr Hardcastle is treated with disrespect till the moment he is thought to be the innkeeper. Mrs Hardcastle wants Tony to marry Constance for her fortune. It is Hastings who is ready to elope with Constance without her casket of jewels. He needs only her companionship and not her money.

Tony is another character who does not care for money. He refuses to marry Constance because he does not like her. It does not matter to him if he loses the inherited wealth. Nonetheless, he can afford extravagance because he has access to wealth.

Love

The theme of love runs throughout the play. Hastings accompanies Marlow only for his love for Constance. It does not matter to him whether Constance is able to get her money from Mrs Hastings or not. All he wishes for is to get married to her. This is the reason he decides to run away to France where love marriages are accepted.

Kate makes it clear in the beginning of the play that she would not marry someone whom she does not love. She has, therefore, 'stooped' from her status

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to make Marlow fall in love with her. This way she obediently respects her father's decision as well as fulfills her own desire to marry a man for love.

Mr and Mrs Hardcastle also share a bond of love that is strong and resilient. It is their second marriage. Mrs Hardcastle is loud, pretentious, greedy, a fashion freak and eccentric. She is the one who is responsible for Tony's presumptuousness. Mr Hardcastle loves the lady and treats her with all regards. He loves her with all her faults and attends her gently and in good humour. Mr Hardcastle is a loving and an affectionate father to both his obedient daughter Kate and his boisterous step son Tony.

Mrs Hardcastle loves her son so much that she covers up all his mischief. In order to protect Tony's future she wants Constance and Tony to get married even when she know they do not love each other. It is believed that Mrs Hardcastle's love and pampering has spoiled Tony.

City vs Countryside

Mr Hardcastle views town manners as pretentious. The conversation between Mr and Mrs Hardcastle and their respective tastes present a contrast between the hustling bustling life of London and its people and the serene, countryside and the simplicity of the rustics. Mr Hardcastle criticizes the vanities and affectation of the town, lamenting the loss of traditional values as the people of this age are devoid of sense and discretion. He believes whoever goes to London only comes back with fopperies and affectations. In his song in the alehouse, Tony praises the countryside and he is the one who enjoys the company of his rustic friends.

Kate provides a combination of being refined and simple at the same time. It is Marlow who praises her for having a refined simplicity. Having lived in town, she is able to appreciate the values of both sides of life and can find happiness in appreciating the contradictions that exist between them.

Characters

Mr Hardcastle, an old fashioned romantic, is a traditionalist who loves the past times, old manners, old books and old wine, and a rustic way of life. He is critical of the fashionable London society, which he believes, breeds vanity and affectation. He is a caring husband and an affectionate father. As a husband he loves his second wife with all her faults and treats her with his usual gentle good humour. As a stepfather, he is only gently critical of Tony.

Mr Hardcastle understands Tony better than his mother and gives a more realistic appraisal of Tony's character. He is a doting father who wants his daughter to be happy in marriage and, therefore, firm in his decision to find a compatible match for Kate, but of course with her daughter's consent. He believes in class hierarchy.

Mrs Dorothy Hardcastle is an admirer of the fashionable London society. She yearns for it. Her first dialogues with her husband express her longing for a trip to the town. She takes lively interest in fashion. To accommodate the latest fashions she tries to look younger than her age. Her love for Tony, her son has spoilt him. Being a doting mother, she is not ready to admit any faults of Tony. In her selfish pursuit, she wants Miss Neville to marry Tony because of her inheritance and social standing. She is not at all concerned whether the two love each other or not.

Tony Lumpkin is an ill-mannered and a spoilt freak who enjoys drinking with his alehouse companions. He is neither interested in studies nor conscious of his class. His buddies are rustics who drink with him at the alehouse. He amuses himself by gambling, drinking, and playing pranks on people.

It is his mischievous act on Marlow and Hastings that puts the plot into motion. Tony is reluctant to marry Constance but cannot refuse until he legally comes of age. For all his immaturity and imbecility, Tony does show some strength of character. He refuses to marry for money and fortune. Though for selfish reason to get rid of Constance, he helps Hastings to run away with Constance. He even steels the jewels for the lovers from his mother's drawer which could have been his own had Constance married with Hastings without Mrs Hardcastle's consent.

Kate Hardcastle is an independent woman. She is polite in addressing both her father and stepmother. She obediently follows her father's whim to wear a plain dress in the evening. She seeks a companion in marriage with whom she is comfortable, and not just a wealthy gentleman. To ascertain Marlow's true feelings, Kate pretends to be a barmaid to get him to announce that he loves her despite her low social position.

Marlow is a young man who behaves differently with people of different class. He is informed to be a handsome, brave and generous scholar, a reserved fellow. Marlow mixes with girls of low class, brash and outspoken in the company of barmaids and other working class women, but shy and tongue-tied when in the company of women of his own class and standing.

Check Your Progress

4. What is a sentimental comedy?
5. Who wrote the Prologue of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*?
6. How does Scene I Act I of the play *She Stoops to Conquer* begin?
7. What is the setting of Act I Scene II?
8. Why does Mrs Hardcastle want Constance to marry Tony?
9. Whom does Mr Hardcastle want his daughter Kate to marry?
10. How does Marlow's treatment of ladies of low class and high class differ?

14.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. The prominent works of Oliver Goldsmith are *The Vicar of Wakefield, The Good Natur'd Man, She Stoops to Conquer, The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village.*
2. *She Stoops to Conquer* was published in 1773.
3. Marlow is the hero of the play *She Stoops to Conquer.*
4. A sentimental comedy is a genre of the eighteenth century literature in which comedy is aimed at producing tears rather than laughter.
5. The Prologue of *She Stoops to Conquer* was written by Mr David Garrick, a well-known actor and producer of his times.
6. Scene I Act I of the play *She Stoops to Conquer* begins with the entry of Mr and Mrs Hardcastle.
7. Scene II of Act I is set in the alehouse, The Three Pigeons.
8. Mrs Hardcastle wants Constance to marry Tony because Constance Neville has a fortune to her name. Hence, through this marriage Tony's future would be secured.
9. Mr Hardcastle wants his daughter Kate to marry his friend's son Marlow.
10. Marlow is affable and boisterous with serving women and barmaids. He can say the finest things to the barmaid and the college bed maker but not a word of it to women of high class. He is extremely shy and lacks confidence in front of women of high class.

14.6 SUMMARY

- It is believed Goldsmith was born in 1728 in Ireland. His father was a poor clergyman in a church of Ireland. Due to meagre financial resources, Goldsmith struggled for education and later for his livelihood.
- Goldsmith received his degree in 1749. In 1752, he moved to Edinburgh to study medicine but left it without a degree. From 1753–56, he travelled across the British continent.
- Oliver Goldsmith was a poet, a novelist, a playwright and an essayist.
- Goldsmith wrote numerous poems like *Edwin and Angelina, The Traveller, The Deserted Village, Retaliation* and *The Haunch of Venison*. His significant plays include *The Good Natur'd Man, She Stoops to Conquer, The Grumble*r and a novel *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

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- Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) is seen as the first successful reaction to the sentimental comedy initiated by Steele.
- Sentimental comedy was developed in response to the perceived immorality of the Restoration theatre. It was founded on the belief that man is innately good and that he can be softened through tears that flow from contemplation on undeserved suffering.
- Oscar James Campbell noted in an introduction to *Chief Plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan: The School for Scandal, She Stoops to Conquer, The Rivals* that the central idea of this play was suggested to Goldsmith by an incident of his boyhood.
- Mr Woodward, the speaker, is dressed in black and holding a handkerchief to his eyes. He is mourning for the death of 'Comic muse' that is genuine comedy.
- Prologues and epilogues were written to comment on the play and to introduce the audience with the objectives of writing the play. The prologue also gave the reasons for composing the drama.
- The Prologue of *She Stoops to Conquer* was written by Mr David Garrick, a well-known actor and producer of his times. He was a manager of a patent house in Drury Lane. The prologue was spoken by Mr Edward Woodward, a contemporary comic actor.
- Scene I of the play begins with the entry of Mr and Mrs Hardcastle. Mrs Hardcastle is unhappy with their old fashioned house that resembles an old inn.
- Mr Hardcastle is critical of Tony, that he is a drunkard, growing fat, is a trickster and knows only mischief. He is not fit for any education. The only schools that he can visit are the ale-house and a stable. Mr Hardcastle believes that Tony and his mother have spoiled each other.
- Mr Hardcastle informs Kate that he has invited his prospective son-in-law, a young man Marlow, who is the son of his longtime friend Sir Charles Marlow. No one from the family has ever met him.
- Mr Hardcastle believes that modesty resides in people who are endowed with noble virtues and, therefore, he likes Marlow for his reserved nature.
- Kate feels that Marlow's reserved nature has undone all his other accomplishments. Though impressed by his good looks, Kate is not enamoured by the quality of being reserved since such men become suspicious husbands.
- For Kate, it is more important for her husband to be handsome and young rather than be sensible and good natured. She is apprehensive about having a reserved husband. She would first secure a lover and then a husband.

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- Act I presents a contrast between the characters of Mr and Mrs Hardcastle. While, Mrs Hardcastle has an interest in the London society and she takes a lively interest in the fashions of the day, Mr Hardcastle, on the other hand, is a traditional man.
- Act I Scene II highlights Tony's character. Tony is happy drinking and merry-making. He asserts that he chooses his company. No one dictates him. He is his own master.
- The servants' scene in Act II once again emphasizes the contrast between the low life of the rustics to that of the gentry. The gap between the expectations of polished behaviour and what the servants can manage adds humour to the scene.
- Marlow admits being shy and reserved with ladies of his own class, confident and boisterous with women of low class, and stating the reasons for such behaviour. He becomes uncomfortable and uneasy talking to a lady from the same class.
- Act III furthers confirms the personality traits of Kate, Marlow and Tony. Kate takes pleasure in being obedient to her father. Marlow is modest and shy in the company of his own class and wild when with the barmaids. Tony shows his righteousness by giving the casket of jewels to Hastings and making arrangements for him to leave with Constance.
- In Act IV Marlow confirms that difference of birth, fortune and education has prevented him from marrying Kate (woman of low class). Kate has also fallen in love with Marlow and reiterates the title of the play that she will preserve the character to which she has stooped to conquer her love.
- Themes of class, marriage and money are again reinforced in Act V. Marriages are about making bonds stronger, as the old men say, and this will further lead to union of families.
- The Act ends with the announcement of the union of both sets of lovers and that too with the consent of the family members.
- The play showcases the reality of class distinctions and class snobbery. People belonging to the upper class are keen to find suitable partners from the same class for their children.
- The theme of inheritance is a common one which was largely found in the plays of the seventeenth and eighteenth century England.
- Money is a practical need of life. Even amidst emotions, it is important to think of money. Kate, when playing the role of a poor relative to Mr Hardcastle, mentions to Marlow that men of their class marry women not for love but for their fortunes.

- The theme of love runs throughout the play. Hastings accompanies Marlow only for his love for Constance. It does not matter to him whether Constance is able to get her money from Mrs Hastings or not.

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14.7 KEY WORDS

- **Sizar System:** This system appears to have begun in the late sixteenth century in Cambridge and Dublin. This system allowed poor students to study in lieu of the work they did as servants for the tutors.
- **Foible:** It is a minor weakness or eccentricity in someone's character.
- **Solus:** It is alone or unaccompanied (used especially as a stage direction).
- **Coterie:** It refers to a small group of people with shared interests or tastes, especially one that is exclusive of other people.
- **Fop:** This term refers to a man who is excessively vain and concerned about his dress, appearance, and manners.

14.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short Answer Questions

1. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Oliver Goldsmith.
2. Summarize the play *She Stoops to Conquer*.
3. Write a short note on the Prologue and Epilogue of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*.
4. Briefly summarize the role of Kate Hardcastle in the play.

Long Answer Questions

1. Analyze *She Stoops to Conquer* as a sentimental comedy.
2. Discuss the title of the play *She Stoops to Conquer*.
3. Critically analyze the theme of wealth and inheritance as presented in the play.
4. Evaluate the characteristics of Marlow's personality.

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14.9 FURTHER READINGS

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