

**BRITISH LITERATURE
FROM CHAUCER TO 18TH CENTURY
(ENG1C01)**



**STUDY MATERIAL
I SEMESTER
CORE COURSE
MA ENGLISH
(2019 Admission onwards)**

**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O.,
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CORE COURSE:

**ENG1C01 - BRITISH LITERATURE FROM CHAUCER
TO 18TH CENTURY**

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INTRODUCTION

This course provides a brief outlook of the period of English literature ranging from Age of Geoffrey Chaucer, which is also known as the Middle English Period up until the 18th Century. Hence, this paper covers +a lot of different periods in the history of English literature by studying only few of the major authors in each period. This Study Material has been divided into three sections of which the first Section deals with poetry beginning with Chaucer till the 18th Century poet Thomas Gray. The next Section deals with three major plays in the history of English literature until the eighteenth Century. The final section deals with three novels and two prominent prose works. As post graduate students of English literature, we recommend you to use this study material as a mere outline which has to be supplemented with extra reading. We hope you learn and imbibe as well as enjoy literature in the course of your study.

SECTION – A (POETRY)

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF 14th CENTURY ENGLAND

In the History of English Literature, the period ranging from 1343 to 1450 is commonly known as the Age of Chaucer. There were a lot of social as well as political changes that took place in England during this time period. But despite the great social and intellectual movements of this age, there were signs of poverty, revolt and unrest too. The Church was losing its hold as the sole moral authority and was being criticized for corruption and superstitions. The middle class was gaining more strength as a social class. A gradual shift from the age of Medievalism to the age of Modernism can be noted here. Another important event was the Black Death or plague which affected almost a third of the country's population. This resulted in shortage of labourers and therefore gave existing laborers the power to bargain for better wages which developed a kind of resentment in the higher and noble classes. This indirectly paved the path to the Peasant's Revolt which is the rising of the English peasantry in the year 1381.

This age also saw the emergence of the Standard English language. The East Midland dialect was accepted as the standardized form of English. And this is the dialect that Chaucer uses in "The Canterbury Tales". This Age witnessed the birth of English poetry and the most noted poets of this age were Chaucer, John Gower and William Langland.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Chaucer was born to a wealthy family of merchants in London sometime around 1343-45. Chaucer was captured and made prisoner by the French during the Hundred Years War, but then he was released soon on ransom. He went on to become an esquire at the King's court. He served as a spy being an esquire and therefore had to travel to Italy and France where he probably came in touch with European poetry which later influenced his writing. He held many different official positions.

For the purpose of convenience, his works have been divided into three periods, the French, the Italian and the English. During the French period (until 1372), Chaucer first translated the famous 13th century encyclopedia – *Le Roman de La Rose*. The next work which belongs to this period is *The Book of the Duchess* or *The Death of Blanche* (1369). The next is the Italian period (1372-85), during which his works were basically modeled on Dante and Boccaccio. To this period belong *The Parliament of Fowles*, *The House of Fame*, *Troilus and Crisyde* and *The Legend of Good Women*. It was during the English period (1358-1400) that he wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, which turned out to be one of the greatest poems of all of English literature.

Chaucer is generally considered as the ‘father of English poetry’ and Edward Albert called him “the earliest of the great moderns”. He has also been called “The Morning Star of Renaissance” as he stands during the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern age.

When taking into account Chaucer's style of writing, it must be remembered that Chaucer wrote English at a time when this language was in a poor state of development. This was a time when French was the language used in courts and by the upper classes. The church used Latin and English was spoken mostly by uneducated or illiterate common people. When contemporaries like Gower preferred to write in Latin, Chaucer chose the dialect of his native land. He also enriched his language by adopting words from French. Chaucer is also the first poet to be buried in the poet's corner of Westminster Abbey.

THE CANTERBURY TALES

Geoffrey Chaucer wrote "The Canterbury Tales" over the course of about thirteen years, from 1387 until his death in 1400. It is quite a long text in which some parts are written in verse and some in prose. "The Canterbury Tales" is a collection of stories by Geoffrey Chaucer and is considered as his masterpiece. Though Chaucer never makes direct reference to Boccaccio, he probably got much of his source material from Boccaccio's "Decameron". "Decameron" is also a series of linked stories that are structured almost like Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales". Now apart from the high literary standard of "The Canterbury Tales", the work also stands as a historical as well as sociological introduction to the life and times of the late Middle Ages.

Written in Middle English, the original Prologue to the Tales may be difficult to comprehend and hence an interlinear translation of the first 100 lines has been provided below:

THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

Here Bygynneþ the Book of the Tales of Canterbury

- 1 **Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote**
When April with its sweet-smelling showers
- 2 **The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,**
Has pierced the drought of March to the root,
- 3 **And bathed every veyne in swich licour**
And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid
- 4 **Of which vertu engendred is the flour;**
By which power the flower is created;
- 5 **Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth**
When the West Wind also with its sweet breath,
- 6 **Inspired hath in every holt and heeth**
In every wood and field has breathed life into
- 7 **The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne**
The tender new leaves, and the young sun
- 8 **Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,**
Has run half its course in Aries,
- 9 **And smale foweles maken melodye,**
And small fowls make melody,
- 10 **That slepen al the nyght with open ye**
Those that sleep all the night with open eyes

- 11 **(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),**
(So Nature incites them in their hearts),
- 12 **Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,**
Then folk long to go on pilgrimages,
- 13 **And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,**
And professional pilgrims to seek foreign shores,
- 14 **To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;**
To distant shrines, known in various lands;
- 15 **And specially from every shires ende**
And specially from every shire's end
- 16 **Of Engeland to Caunterbury they wende,**
Of England to Canterbury they travel,
- 17 **The hooly blisful martir for to seke,**
To seek the holy blessed martyr,
- 18 **That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.**
Who helped them when they were sick.
- 19 **Bifil that in that seson on a day,**
It happened that in that season on one day,
- 20 **In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay**
In Southwark at the Tabard Inn as I lay
- 21 **Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage**
Ready to go on my pilgrimage

- 22 **To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,**
To Canterbury with a very devout spirit,
- 23 **At nyght was come into that hostelrye**
At night had come into that hostelry
- 24 **Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye**
Well nine and twenty in a company
- 25 **Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle**
Of various sorts of people, by chance fallen
- 26 **In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,**
In fellowship, and they were all pilgrims,
- 27 **That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.**
Who intended to ride toward Canterbury.
- 28 **The chambres and the stables weren wyde,**
The bedrooms and the stables were spacious,
- 29 **And wel we weren esed atte beste.**
And we were well accommodated in the best way.
- 30 **And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,**
And in brief, when the sun was (gone) to rest,
- 31 **So hadde I spoken with hem everichon**
I had so spoken with everyone of them
- 32 **That I was of hir felawshipe anon,**
That I was of their fellowship straightway,
- 33 **And made forward erly for to ryse,**
And made agreement to rise early,

- 34 **To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.**
To take our way where I (will) tell you.
- 35 **But natheless, whil I have tyme and space,**
But nonetheless, while I have time and opportunity,
- 36 **Er that I ferther in this tale pace,**
Before I proceed further in this tale,
- 37 **Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun**
It seems to me in accord with reason
- 38 **To telle yow al the condicioun**
To tell you all the circumstances
- 39 **Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,**
Of each of them, as it seemed to me,
- 40 **And whiche they weren, and of what degree,**
And who they were, and of what social rank,
- 41 **And eek in what array that they were inne;**
And also what clothing that they were in;
- 42 **And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.**
And at a knight then will I first begin.
- 43 **A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,**
A KNIGHT there was, and that (one was) a worthy
man,
- 44 **That fro the tyme that he first bigan**
Who from the time that he first began

- 45 **To riden out, he loved chivalrie,**
To ride out, he loved chivalry,
- 46 **Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.**
Fidelity and good reputation, generosity and
courtesy.
- 47 **Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,**
He was very worthy in his lord's war,
- 48 **And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,**
And for that he had ridden, no man farther,
- 49 **As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,**
As well in Christendom as in heathen lands,
- 50 **And evere honoured for his worthynesse;**
And (was) ever honored for his worthiness;
- 51 **At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.**
He was at Alexandria when it was won.
- 52 **Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne**
He had sat very many times in the place of honor,
- 53 **Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;**
Above (knights of) all nations in Prussia;
- 54 **In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,**
He had campaigned in Lithuania and in Russia,
- 55 **No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.**
No Christian man of his rank so often.

- 56 **In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be**
Also he had been in Grenada at the siege
- 57 **Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.**
Of Algeciras, and had ridden in Morocco.
- 58 **At Lyeyes was he and at Satalye,**
He was at Ayash and at Atalia,
- 59 **Whan they were wonne, and in the Grete See**
When they were won, and in the Mediterranean
- 60 **At many a noble armee hadde he be.**
He had been at many a noble expedition.
- 61 **At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,**
He had been at fifteen mortal battles,
- 62 **And foughten for oure feith at Tramysene**
And fought for our faith at Tlemcen
- 63 **In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.**
Three times in formal duels, and each time slain his
foe.
- 64 **This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also**
This same worthy knight had also been
- 65 **Somtyme with the lord of Palatye**
At one time with the lord of Balat
- 66 **Agayn another hethen in Turkye;**
Against another heathen in Turkey;

67 **And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.**

And evermore he had an outstanding reputation

68 **And though that he were worthy, he was wys,**

And although he was brave, he was prudent,

69 **And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.**

And of his deportment as meek as is a maid.

70 **He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde**

He never yet said any rude word

71 **In al his lyf unto no maner wight.**

In all his life unto any sort of person.

72 **He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.**

He was a truly perfect, noble knight.

73 **But for to tellen yow of his array,**

But to tell you of his clothing,

74 **His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.**

His horses were good, but he was not gaily dressed.

75 **Of fustian he wered a gypon**

He wore a tunic of coarse cloth

76 **Al bismotered with his habergeon,**

All stained (with rust) by his coat of mail,

77 **For he was late ycome from his viage,**

For he was recently come (back) from his expedition,

- 78 **And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.**
And went to do his pilgrimage.
- 79 **With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,**
With him there was his son, a young SQUIRE,
- 80 **A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,**
A lover and a lively bachelor,
- 81 **With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.**
With locks curled as if they had been laid in a curler.
- 82 **Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.**
He was twenty years of age, I guess.
- 83 **Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,**
Of his stature he was of moderate height,
- 84 **And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.**
And wonderfully agile, and of great strength.
- 85 **And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie**
And he had been for a time on a cavalry expedition
- 86 **In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,**
In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy,
- 87 **And born hym weel, as of so litel space,**
And conducted himself well, for so little a space of
time,
- 88 **In hope to stonden in his lady grace.**
In hope to stand in his lady's good graces.

- 89 **Embrouded was he, as it were a meede**
He was embroidered, as if it were a mead
- 90 **Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.**
All full of fresh flowers, white and red.
- 91 **Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;**
Singing he was, or fluting, all the day;
- 92 **He was as fressh as is the month of May.**
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
- 93 **Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde.**
His gown was short, with long and wide sleeves.
- 94 **Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.**
He well knew how to sit on horse and handsomely ride.
- 95 **He koude songes make and wel endite,**
He knew how to make songs and well compose (the words),
- 96 **Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.**
Joust and also dance, and well draw and write.
- 97 **So hoothe he lovede that by nyghtertale**
He loved so passionately that at nighttime
- 98 **He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.**
He slept no more than does a nightingale.

99 **Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,**

Courteous he was, humble, and willing to serve,

100 **And carf biforn his fader at the table.**

And carved before his father at the table.

A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

The Prologue holds all the tales in “The Canterbury Tales” together. The Prologue begins with a description of the Spring season. The April rains wet the ground and the roots hidden deep inside the soil absorb this powerful liquid that lends life to its flowers. The sun shines down on these new plants and birds sing. People also are in the mood to go on pilgrimages, especially to the Canterbury Cathedral. The Canterbury Cathedral is where the martyr, Thomas Becket’s relics are kept. The poet himself is one of the pilgrims and he is residing at the Tabard Inn in Southwark before undertaking the journey to Canterbury. Around 29 other pilgrims also arrive at the Inn and Chaucer decides to join their company. The 29 pilgrims coming up in the Tale are Chaucer himself, the Knight, the Squire, the Canon and the canon’s Yeoman, the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar, the Merchant, the Sergeant of the Law, the Franklin, the Wife of Bath, the Reeve, the Pardoner, the Host, the Carpenter, the Franklin, the Cook, the Parson, the Plowman, the Miller, the Shipman, the Physician, the Nun’s Priest, the Second Nun, the Manciple, the Clerk, the Summoner and the Parson. He introduces each of these pilgrims describing their physical appearance as well as profession and social standing.

After introducing his fellow pilgrims, he turns his attention on the host, Harry Bailey. Harry Bailey is described by the poet as a plump and bright-eyed man who finds a liking for the pilgrims and thus decides to join them to Canterbury. In order to make the journey more fun and quicker, he decides that each pilgrim must narrate two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. He will judge which of them is the best and reward them with a free meal at the Inn upon returning. All the pilgrims accept the competition and they draw lots to decide who will be first to narrate the story. The Knight gets the first lot and he begins his story cheerfully.

The General Prologue is often referred to as a portrait gallery of the 14th C because it seems to be a precise portrait of an entire nation taking into account the different manners and humors of the whole English nation of Chaucer's Age. The Prologue therefore appears more like a commentary on English life in the Middle Ages. The thirty pilgrims Chaucer describes in the Prologue belong to different classes and strata's of the society. The Prologue acquaints the readers with the food, the hobbies and even the clothes worn by persons of different ranks, positions and professions. Due to the Peasant Revolt, a new middle class comprising of educated workers like lawyers, merchants and clerks were beginning to gain power and Chaucer himself was a member of this emerging new middle class. The Canterbury Tales both depict and also satirize or mock at the conventions of the 14th Century. The weaknesses or flaws of the 14th century monks and nuns are amusingly displayed in the General Prologue. Chaucer also portrays

church officials who have a love for material things like money, love etc. And so with this realistic depiction of the society of his times, Chaucer holds the mirror up to his times in “The Canterbury Tales”.

EXPLANATION

LINES 1 TO 42

The speaker opens the General Prologue by describing the return of spring. He narrates how the April rains drench the roots which are hidden beneath the soil. This rain water is described by Chaucer as a powerful liquid that helps leaves and flowers bloom and grow rapidly. The sun has gone through the second half of the zodiac sign, Aries, the ‘Ram’.

This blooming Spring season is also the time when people long to go on pilgrimages, and travellers from across England choose to travel to Canterbury Cathedral to seek help from the blessed martyr, Thomas Becket, whose ruins are at Canterbury Cathedral. They undertake this pilgrimage also in order to thank the martyr for having helped them in times of need. The narrator says that once while he was preparing to undertake such a pilgrimage, he stayed at the Tabard Inn before beginning his journey. A group of twenty-nine other pilgrims who were also heading to Canterbury entered the Inn. These pilgrims were a group of different people and when the narrator expressed his will to join them, they happily agreed. Meanwhile before the journey begins, the speaker decides to describe the profession, social standing and clothing (physical appearance) of each of these twenty-nine pilgrims. It is with the

Knight that the poet decides to start describing first.

LINES 43 TO 78

The speaker describes the Knight as a noble man who loves chivalry and is always ready to stand up for truth and honour. He has an outstanding reputation and was considered as a generous as well as courteous person. The Knight has travelled through many pagan territories like Alexandria, Prussia, Morocco, Lithuania etc. and he has been victorious as well in all these places. In all the three duels he had undertaken, he had won and killed his enemy. Hence, he is someone who is praised universally for his courage. It was out of his love for God that the Knight undertook such bold and daring feats and for attaining glory or fame. His dressing is also described as plain or modest and stained from his recent explorations.

LINES 79 TO 100

The speaker next describes the Knight's son who is a Squire. The Squire is described by the poet as a lively, young and lusty knight in training who is depicted as both a 'lover' and a 'bachelor'. He has curled hair, is of a moderate height and is quite quick in movement. He has participated in chivalric expeditions in Flanders and Northern France. The Squire fights in hope of impressing ladies and winning over their hearts. Unlike his father, he was in his prime youth and therefore always quite extravagantly and beautifully dressed in embroidered clothes. He is always found singing or playing the flute all day. The Squire knew how to carry himself elegantly even while sitting on a horse or while riding. He was capable of

inventing songs and dances and also knows to love women passionately that most nights he slept very little. Like his father, he too was a courteous person and was always willing to serve at the table or carve his father's meat for him.

ANALYSIS

The Prologue serves as an introduction to the large framework of stories that comprise "The Canterbury Tales". The entire work is united by the framework of the story-telling competition that is introduced in the General Prologue. It also helps in introducing the 29 pilgrims who are going to narrate stories in the rest of "The Canterbury Tales" and is therefore often considered as an extended 'dramatis personae' for the collection of tales. Chaucer taking up the role of both narrator as well as pilgrim lends a personal note and a perspective that seems to be born from direct witnessing. At the same time, we readers must also be aware that his descriptions of the other pilgrims are based on his personal opinions and views of them rather than an accurate and objective one.

St. Thomas Becket was the Archbishop of Canterbury (1162-70). His career was marked with a long quarrel with King Henry II and he was finally murdered in 1170 by King Henry's knights. A few days after his death itself his tomb became a place of pilgrimage and he was canonized by Pope Alexander III in 1173. In those days, Canterbury was a popular pilgrimage place also because it was not that difficult to reach or access. In 14th Century England, it was therefore a popular ritual to visit the Canterbury Cathedral where the remains of the Saint Thomas Becket lay.

The General Prologue consists of 858 lines in total which Chaucer uses to portray characters from almost all the social classes of England back then. The beginning of the General Prologue is a lot more formal and lengthier when compared to the rest of the Prologue but it helps the poet to clearly define the time and place of the upcoming story. These lines have such a romantic quality to it that we, readers, hardly ever expect the rest of the story to be something that is even remotely connected with a pilgrimage. This physical setting is also one of the motivations for pilgrims to set out on their pilgrim as the season is so fine and comfortable. The opening lines convey a sort of erotic or sexual energy with the use of terms like “engendered”, “pierced” etc. He begins by introducing characters from the highest class first. And hence we find that the Knight is the first pilgrim to be introduced. While Chaucer satirizes most of the other pilgrims he describes in the Prologue, his praise for the Knight seems quite genuine. The Knight is a down to earth and humble person despite his high social standing and achievements. The Squire’s youthfulness and sexual energy is evident in the speaker’s description of his ‘embroidered’ clothes that remind us of the Spring season. While the Knight fought for Christ’s sake, his son, the Squire fought in order to impress women and make them fall in love with him. The religious aim of the Knight is contrasted with the lustful aim of the Squire. Despite the fact that the Squire is being trained to occupy the same profession and social role of his father, he redefines this role in terms of a courtly lover. All his talents and mannerisms portray him as a courtly lover rather than a brave Knight. The Squire loved so

passionately that he hardly slept at night and this is probably a reference to his sexual exploits. But in order to maintain his social role, he does take an effort to show that he is courteous and ready to serve his father at the table. The Knight and Squire pair may in fact be taken as representing ideal and real respectively. The Knight's high religious ideals versus his son's not-so-religious attitude may also symbolize that the new generation coming up in England do not share the same religious values and ideals as firmly as the older generation did.

The General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* is considered as an estates satire. Estate satire is a genre of writing from 14th C Medieval Literary works.

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. <https://www.dvusd.org/cms/lib011/AZ01901092/Centricity/Domain/2891/Canterbury%20Tales%20prologue.pdf>
2. <https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/4941/1/thesis.pdf>

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare was born in the year 1564 on Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare is the eldest of the eight children of John and Mary. At 18 years of age, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, and they were blessed with three children over the course of the next few years. There are no records of what Shakespeare did between 1587 and 1592, thus these years are often referred to as the “lost years” by scholars. It was in London that he kicked off his career. He was the founding member of “The King's Men ". It was during his time in this company that he wrote some of his most famous tragedies like King Lear and Macbeth, as well as romances like The Tempest and The Winter's Tale. His works include around 37 plays, 154 sonnets and a variety of other poems. His immense popularity and success in the 1590s enabled him to buy a ‘New Place’, the second largest house in Stratford. Shakespeare died on the 23rd of April, 1616 at the age of 52 and was buried in Holy Trinity Church.

WHAT IS A SONNET?

A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines, written in iambic pentameter. The word ‘sonnet’ is derived from the Italian word ‘sonetto’ and means ‘a little sound or song’. The original form of the sonnet was the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet in which fourteen lines are arranged in an octet (eight lines) following a rhyme scheme of ABBA ABBA and then a sestet (six lines) rhyming either CDCDCD or CDECDE. The most common and simplest type of sonnet is the English or Shakespearean sonnet which came on much later. It is made up of three quatrains with

the rhyme scheme – ABAB CDCD EFEF and a closing rhymed heroic couplet, GG.

SONNET 18: “SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER’S DAY”

Sonnet XVII is one of the best known from among the 154 sonnets written by Shakespeare. It is also one of the most straightforward poems both in language and intent. The poem is made up of fourteen lines in length, consisting of 3 quatrains and a couplet like a traditional sonnet. It follows the rhyme scheme abba cdcdefef gg. The sonnets were published in 1609 and the first 17 sonnets revolve around the subject of ‘procreation’. It is universally believed that the first few sonnets were dedicated to Mr. W.H. or a ‘fair youth’ and the last 126 sonnets are dedicated to a ‘Dark lady’, though there is no written evidence for this. This is probably the first poem in the sonnets to not encourage procreation or hints at the possibility of preserving one’s beauty without the need of procreating. One of the main themes of the poem is the preservation of the beauty of a young man (or the fair youth) through the lines of the poem defying time. The opening lines of this poem is one of the most quoted lines of Shakespeare's lines.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The speaker in the poem wonders aloud whether he should compare the young man to a summer’s day. The most prominent figure of speech in this sonnet is the extended metaphor comparing the young man with a summer’s day.

Then he decides that the young man's attributes surpass that of a summer's day as it is more "lovely" and more "temperate". The speaker also comes to a realization that even summer is subject to change and will eventually lose its vibrancy. The speaker personifies nature here. The strong summer winds are a threat to the new flower buds of May, and at the same time summer doesn't last very long. Summer is thus destined to end. The summer sun is too hot and at other times it's not visible to our eyes. Here, "eye of heaven" and "gold complexion" are used as metaphors to describe the sun. The word "untrimmed" could signify two things, one it could refer to unadorned (not decorated) or can be taken as a metaphor for untrimmed sails on a ship. Here, nature is a ship with untrimmed sails or sails that haven't been cut out for properly sailing through the sea. The sail of a ship is meant to provide it stability and decoration. So, the speaker is referring to nature as a ship with sails that have not been adjusted to deal with changes in the wind in order to course through the sea correctly. The speaker here indicates that summer loses its beauty when nature is not paying attention to her sailing and allows weather changes to happen. The speaker declares that everything beautiful must eventually fade away losing its charm.

But as long as the poem is read, the young man in the poem will live forever in the lines of the poem. The beloved's summer is "eternal" in that it does not fade as it is captured in the words and lines of this poem. For ordinary people, usually summer passes by quickly and they age along with the passage of time but here both summer and the young man are turned

eternal because they exist in the poem. In the final lines of the poem the poet personifies death. Here, death won't get a chance to claim the young man as his immortal now. The speaker predicts that this poem will continue to be read and the fair youth (or young man) will continue to be analyzed forever. As long as men live, see and read, this poem will continue to exist. Here the poet is emphasizing the immortality of both the poem and the young man in it. Here the word "thee" could refer to either the fair youth or us readers, or both.

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. <https://www.thoughtco.com/sonnet-18-study-guide-2985141>
2. http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/viewpdf/default.aspx?article-title=Shakespeares_Sonnet_18_Commentary_and_Analysis_by_Ira_B_Zinman.pdf

JOHN DONNE

Donne was born in London in 1572 as the son of a rich iron merchant. Donne is considered as the leader and founder of the metaphysical school of poetry. The content of Donne's poetry shows the working of a mind quick to understand similarities in entirely different things and concepts. One of his most famous conceits is in "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" where he compares two separated lovers to the two legs of a compass. His conceits, coupled with witticism made him an obscure poet. Ben Jonson, his friend and admirer, said that Donne was the first poet to be remembered for not being understood.

Donne preferred to publish his poems in manuscript which made it difficult to point out their precise publication dates. It is believed that he wrote most his love lyrics, erotic verse and other sacred poems in the 1590's. During this period, he created two major volumes of work : *Satires* and *Songs and Sonnets*. Many of his *Holy Sonnets* were written during the time between his marriage in 1601 to his ordination in 1615. He wrote his private prayers, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, during a period when he was severely ill and published them in 1624.

METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Metaphysical poets refer to a group of writers who appeared at the beginning of the 17th Century. The term "metaphysical" was first used by Dr. Samuel Johnson, who borrowed it from Dryden's phrase for Donne: "He affects the

metaphysics”. In a chapter from Dr. Johnson’s “Lives of the Poets” titled “Metaphysical Wit” (1779), he describes what he means by metaphysical poets.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning and to show their learning through poetry was part of their endeavor. They never imitated anything and so their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural. Different ideas were brought and merged together in their poetry. One of the common features in their poetry was the comparison between two entirely different things or images. They hoped to say what was never said before, hence the novelty in expression. While they focused on bringing novelty and learning into poetry, their poems ended up being difficult to understand for common man. Their scholarship is often reflected in the scholarly allusions in their verses, especially of Donne’s and Cowley’s. Metaphysical poetry may be divided into two types, namely, religious and amorous. Amorous verse was written by courtly poets like Carew, Suckling etc. while religious verse was written by Herbert Crashaw and Vaughan.

“THE CANONIZATION”

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The poem begins with the speaker telling an unknown listener to be quiet and not bother him about anything else and just let him love. He enumerates a number of things they should pursue instead of distracting him from his love for his beloved. They could make fun of the speaker’s ‘palsy’ or involuntary tremors or even his ‘gout’, which refers to a disease

that makes one's joints swell. Or the listener could also direct his attention to the speaker's 'gray hairs'. If not, the listener could also try improving his own state of affairs or spend time thinking about the king's face (either real face or stamped on a coin).

In Stanza two, the speaker asks a rhetorical question about his love and what harm it is causing. He asks the listener if merchant ships are drowned due to his love or whether his tears are overflowing lands with water. It is quite obvious that it is ridiculous to think that 'love' could bring about such calamities like flooded lands and sunken ships. And in case the listener is still doubtful, the speaker further reaffirms that his love relation has not caused the plague and soldiers continue to fight battles despite his love. Also, lawyers continue to fight lawsuits and so the world goes on as it usually does while the speaker and his beloved love each other.

In Stanza three, the speaker tells the listener that no matter what they say about his love, he doesn't care about it. He is sure about his love and he compares himself and his lover to candles (tapers). He knows that the burning of the flames of the candle causes their own deaths. He then compares himself with the eagle, the dove and the phoenix. As a phoenix, they both become one creature and they die and are reborn in the same ashes just like the phoenix, returning to one another.

In stanza four, the speaker shows that he is ready to die if they are unable to live by love. Basically conveying that it is better to die rather than live in a world without each other. And even if their lives were not legendary enough to earn them

tombs, they will still be remembered by the world through ‘verse’ or poetry just like this one. In fact the speaker prefers his love ending up being remembered in songs and sonnets rather than being chronicled in a history book. Their lives are obviously not grand enough to earn themselves huge tombs or decorated urns but their love as a couple will earn them the state of saints of love and they will definitely be canonized.

In stanza five, the speaker conveys his hope that after their canonization, everyone will pray to them in order to seek help in matters of love. Just as Catholic Saints are invoked in prayer, the speaker expects himself and his lover to be invoked. People will praise their love and pray to be blessed with such deep and passionate love as it is so rare now in this world. Their love is considered by the world as an ideal love or as the role model of love. Their love brought peace and comfort to each other instead of rage and insecurity as it is in the present, modern world.

ANALYSIS

“The Canonization” was published posthumously in 1633 under the collection “Songs and Sonnets”. The poem consists of five stanzas of nine lines each. When one reads the title of the poem, we assume that it is connected with saints and holiness. While the literal meaning of ‘canonization’ is ‘official admission of a dead person into sainthood’, in this poem, the term refers to the poet’s love entering the canons of love because of the extraordinary depth of his love with his lover.

The poem begins in a colloquial outburst and as typical

of metaphysical poets, the tone used doesn't aim for sweetness, grace or verbal melody, but rather a realistic expressiveness that previously never appeared in lyric poetry. The immediate effect is thus of a vivid speech rather than a song. The poet says, Go on, attack my 'gout' or 'palsy' or even my 'five grey hairs', I don't care as long as you let me love. No matter what fun you make of my old age, all that matters to me is my love. The lovers may destroy each other in the act of burning with passion for one another.

The comparison with eagle and dove refers to the Renaissance idea that the eagle flies in the sky above earth, while the dove transcends even the skies to reach the heavens.

Phoenix is a bird that repeatedly burns in fire and comes back to life out of its own ashes. Here, the poet is conveying the message that even if the lovers' passion for each other burns each other out and consumes them, they will still come back to life and be reborn out of the ashes of their love. They become one through this action. In Plato's "Symposium", the original human beings had marks of both sexes before they were split into man and woman - each person was then set to seek his or her other half. The line "To one neutral thing both sexes fit" may be a reference to this concept of Plato's. The 'well-wrought urn' is an obvious reference to Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn". Just as Catholics invoke saints in their prayers, the lovers too would be invoked by the people in the world, for the intensity of their love has helped them reach a sort of sainthood. Donne draws a comparison between erotic and saintly love experience here. Donne has made use of religious

imagery like the ‘dove’, ‘eagle’ and ‘phoenix’ represent the Trinity here. Fire is also used as a symbol of purification, so when they die and rise, the lovers purge or cleanse themselves of sensualism. The Eagle and the dove also stand for opposite genders, where the eagle represents Masculine aggressiveness while the dove symbolizes feminine meekness in Christianity.

Throughout the poem, we find blasphemous undertones (or connotations) of a sort of erotic Sainthood. The lovers here represent the persons in the Trinity. Plato’s concept of ‘Ideas’ in “Symposium” which refers to the undivided self or ‘two in one’ relation, this state is achieved through love in the poem. In Classical literature, ‘dove’ is a lustful bird which passionately caresses, lovingly bites and copulates freely. And in Christian ideology, the ‘dove’ stands for the image of the Holy Spirit and the ‘Trinity’. The poem draws a contrast between the sensualist attitude of common lovers to the spiritualism of the poet’s love with his beloved.

FOR FURTHER READING :

1. <http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/poetry/metaphysical.htm>
2. https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/john-donn_e-and-metaphysical-poetry.

JOHN MILTON

John Milton was born in Breadstreet, London. He was a Puritan poet and a civil servant who had served the British Commonwealth. Milton is considered as one of the greatest English writers after Shakespeare. He wrote during a time of religious fluctuations and political upheaval. *Paradise Lost* is his magnum opus which was written after he became blind during the period of 1658-1664, which was later published in 1667. In 1671, he wrote a sequel to *Paradise Lost* named *Paradise Regained*. He faced imprisonment for his strong sentiments on popery and prelacy. Milton advocated the abolition of the Church of England and the execution of Charles I in his prose works. *Areopagactica* is one of his best known prose works till date. Milton was a Puritan and his works revolve around themes of faith, liberty of the press, freedom of expression etc. He made excessive use of blank verse in his poetry for which he gained appreciation from the Romantic poets. John Milton wrote in English, Greek, Italian and Latin and was therefore renowned internationally.

Christian and a humanist, protestant patriot and heir of the Golden Ages of Greece and Rome; Milton faced what appeared to him to be the birth-pangs of a new and regenerated England with excitement and idealistic optimism. It was this excitement and this optimism which led him to commit himself so completely to the parliamentary side in the Civil war; and that commitment was decisive for his middle and later poetic career.

Milton received a Christian humanist education and he studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Therefore, he got a thorough grounding in classical rhetoric (i.e., a grand poetic way of speaking). After his disillusionment over the possibility of a regenerate England, he became more and more suspicious of rhetoric showing its abuse, and the abuse of democratic debate is evident in the speeches of Satan and his followers in “Paradise Lost”. The Restoration of Charles II (1660) brought all Milton’s political hopes to an end, destroying at the same time his vision of a reformed and regenerate England, which had sustained him for so long. Meanwhile he had gone blind, the left eye beginning to go in the year 1644 and total blindness developing by 1652. At long last, Milton came to write the great epic poem he always wanted to write right from his earliest years. Milton wrote “Paradise Lost” to “justify the ways of God to man”. “Paradise Lost” was a richer, profounder and mature epic than his other poems because of what Milton had gone through before he completed it.

“PARADISE LOST”

“Paradise Lost” is an epic in twelve books. In the first edition that came out in 1667, the poem had only ten books, however the second edition published in 1675 came out with a total of 12 books. This was made so with the division of 7th and 10th books into two each. “Paradise Lost” is written in blank verse. It was composed by Milton after the Restoration, while he was blind and in poverty too. It was from such difficult circumstances that Milton penned one of the immortal classics of the world. Milton was a very learned poet and his

learning is strewn all over “Paradise Lost”.

Milton wrote “Paradise Regained” as a companion piece to “Paradise Lost” in 1671 and it dramatizes the temptation of Christ.

PARADISE LOST AS AN EPIC

In Book I of “Paradise Lost”, Milton states his aim was to attempt “things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme”. But this does not mean he got rid of the epic tradition, in fact, he followed the tradition of the classical epic which was modified or ennobled by his genius.

“Paradise Lost” is considered as a classical epic displaying all the features of the epics by Homer and Virgil. It is a long, narrative poem in XII books and its subject matter is both grand and serious. It also adheres to the unity of theme and treatment just as a classical epic would. Supernatural intervention is also present; in fact most of its characters are superhuman powers, like God, Satan, and Angels etc. The style, tone and versification of “Paradise Lost” are lofty and sublime. Both Homeric and epic similes have been used throughout the poem.

A classical epic usually deals with subjects of national importance, but Milton’s “Paradise Lost” deals with a vaster subject of universal human interest. Instead of focusing on a particular nation, city or empire he chose to deal with the entire human race. Everything in his epic is grander and loftier than epics before. For example, the scene of action is Universal Space, the time represented is Eternity and as we discussed in

the previous paragraph, the characters are God and his creations.

OUTLINE STORY OF “PARADISE LOST”

When the story begins, we find the fallen angels struggling in a burning lake and then they go on to hold a great debate in ‘Pandemonium’ (A vast hall built by Satan’s followers). It was Satan himself who first thought of the plan, he is obviously the hero in charge right from the beginning of Book I of “Paradise Lost”. He then journeys to the gates of Hell, encounters Sin and Death there and also gets the first glimpse of Heaven which is described as a fresh world suspended in a golden chain. Satan gets a glimpse of Adam and Eve in Heaven and is stunned by their beauty. He overhears them discussing God’s commandment that forbade them from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. That night when Adam and Eve are sleeping, Satan appears in the form of a toad and whispers to Eve. Satan is found out by the Archangel, Gabriel and seeing God hang down Golden Scales in the sky, Satan flees back. God sends the angel Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about Satan. Raphael eats with Adam and Eve and informs them about Satan and how he was expelled from Heaven. It is here that Milton reveals how Satan was jealous of God’s son and also convinced a third of the angels to rebel against God along with him. Only one angel named Abdiel left Satan’s cause and returned back to God. All the angels fought each other with Michael leading the Heaven’s army. Raphael narrated the story of creation, but warns Adam about seeking

too much knowledge and about Satan's attempt to corrupt them.

After seven days, Satan returns to Heaven as a serpent this time. Eve convinces Adam that they must work separately and although Adam relents at first, he finally gives in. Satan finds Eve and flatters her. When asked how the serpent learnt to talk, Satan says that he ate the fruit from the Forbidden Tree of Knowledge and tempts Eve to eat it too. He succeeds in seducing her to taste the fruit of the forbidden tree and Eve makes Adam also eat it. Adam realizes that Eve has fallen and eats it only so that they won't be separated from each other. Thus Adam and Eve commit the Sin of Disobedience and the result is divine punishment. As a consequence of this act of disobedience, God sends Son to punish the couple.

Meanwhile Satan returns to Hell and also sends Death and Sin to infect Earth. After the Fall, the angels reorganize Earth and make it less hospitable for man to live in by turning some animals into carnivorous and unfriendly ones. Adam suggests Eve that they both take revenge on Satan by obeying God and they both weep and repent. Before they both are expelled from Heaven, Michael, the angel, shows them a vision of the future including the many sinful generations to come as well as the flood which kills everyone but Noah's family.

Michael also explains the Son's sacrifice in order to make up for the Fall and save humanity as well. Adam finds consolation in this and he and Eve leave Paradise in tears.

BOOK I

EXPLANATION

LINES 1 - 26

Book I begins with Milton stating the main theme of the poem, which is about “Man’s First Disobedience” towards God and the consequences of this disobedience. The speaker further declares that it was this act of disobedience that brought death to human beings for the first time simultaneously causing us to lose our residence in paradise. The speaker also talks of the hope that Jesus will arrive one day in order to restore mankind to its former position in Heaven. Keeping with the tradition of classical epics, Milton invokes the aid of his “Heav’nly Muse” here. The Muse refers to a mystical source of poetic inspiration who the speaker hopes would sing about these subjects to him so he can complete his poem easily. The speaker makes it clear that he is not calling the muses who traditionally inspired classical poets, but instead he is calling the muse that inspired Moses to receive the Ten Commandments and write Genesis.

Therefore, his Muse is the Holy Spirit who was responsible for inspiring the Holy Bible itself. And because he is invoking the Holy Spirit, he believes his poem will also be way above those of the Classical poets. It would thus accomplish things that have never before been even attempted. He asks the Holy Spirit to fill him with knowledge about the beginning of the world as it was the Holy Spirit who was one of the active forces in creating the universe. The speaker also describes how Heavens and the Earth originated out of ‘chaos’.

The poet calls “Paradise Lost ” an ‘adventurous poem’ here while invoking help from the Heavn’ly Muse. The main purpose behind the work (“Paradise Lost”) which is to justify the ways of God to men, is also stated in these lines.

LINES 27 TO 33:

Right after the prologue, Milton calls on his muse to explain why Adam and Eve disobeyed and committed the original sin. The speaker asks who it is who seduced them to commit this sin and goes on to explain that it was a snake’s deception that brought about evil emotions of envy and revenge in Eve (‘Mother of Mankind’).

LINES 34 TO 83

This snake or ‘serpent’ is none other than Satan and then the speaker describes why Satan did so. The poet narrates how Satan’s pride was hurt when he was cast out of Heaven along with his followers following a war he waged against the Almighty. In order to seek revenge against God, he deceives Eve. Milton then describes Hell or Chaos. Next ensues a conversation between Satan and Beelzebub. Beelzebub is second in command to Satan. There is an awkward silence which is broken by Satan.

LINES 84 TO 126

Satan is now speaking to Beelzebub. Satan begins his speech by trying to realize what happened to his own self after being cast out from Heaven and he wonders if it's him only or someone else. He laments his current state, but says that despite these changes, their emotions and desires are still the same as

before which is to wage eternal war against their enemy (i.e., God). He convinces Beelzebub that God truly is a tyrant as he now holds exclusive power over Heaven. Their aim of turning against God is now revived. He claims that his heavenly essence can't be wiped off. Satan vows to fight God's tyranny as long as he's alive. In the last line, the Muse takes over.

LINES 127 TO 155

In this section, Beelzebub starts speaking. He says that after all, God does seem to be omnipotent as he always claimed to be and that he probably allowed the rebel angels to live just so that they would suffer forever. He feels God cannot be overpowered and is left doubtful now. Now, Satan doesn't contradict Beelzebub's speech or thoughts.

LINES 156 TO 191

Satan slyly suggests that they could still subvert God's good works into evil purposes. He hopes that this revenge he undertakes would grieve God enough. He then suggests that they move to a nearby plain (or dry land) which is right next to the flaming lake, in order to further discuss their plans of the war they are going to rage against God. Since all the devils who chose to follow Satan were angels before, God would still intend to turn their evil deeds into good ones.

LINES 192 TO 241

The poet now describes the physical appearance and enormous size of Satan's body. Satan's physical size is compared to a whale or a Green Titan floating on the waves. Satan is compared to a sea-monster who may be mistaken for

land by the sailor's. Gradually, Satan pulls himself out of the "liquid fire". Beelzebub follows Satan and they fly over the burning lake to a place of dry land. They are proud of the fact that they could do so using their own strengths and not with the help of God's supernatural powers.

LINES 241 TO 270

Here, Satan wonders if this is the place they are going to reside forever in. He compares the physical sights of Hell with the celestial glory of Heaven and laments the loss. But then he comes to the conclusion that the mind is capable of creating a "Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" so he would probably no longer be satisfied in Heaven anymore. Satan thus decides to make the most of the situation and also declares it is better to rule over Hell than serve as a slave in Heaven following God's rules ("Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n"). And so, thinking that he would gain more freedom and power in Hell, he decides to remain there and not return to Heaven (which also meant obeying God).

ANALYSIS

The title "Paradise Lost" refers to the fact that Paradise or Heaven is lost due to the expulsion of the first humans, Adam and Eve, from Paradise after they commit sin by eating from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Along with the story of the Fall of Man, the Fall of Satan and his followers is also depicted in the poem. In Book I, Milton invoked the Christian "celestial Muse" to inspire his poetry and not the pagan Goddess or Muse of Poetry because he was writing a Christian

epic and not a classical one.

There is a contradiction on who the hero of “Paradise Lost” is. Some claim it is Adam as he is the one who acts and suffers and is considered as the true hero of the human race. And few others consider Christ as the hero and some others claim Satan as the Hero. For example, Dryden writes in 1697 that “Milton would have a better claim to have written a genuine epic if the devil had not been his hero.” And poets like Blake confirmed this by asserting that Milton was of the devil’s party without knowing it. The poet, Lascelles Abercrombie agreed with this view as he writes that “It is surely a simple fact that if *Paradise Lost* exists for only one figure, that is Satan, just as the *Iliad* exists for Achilles, and the *Odyssey* for Odysseus ”. It must be noted that Milton’s Satan is very different from the comic or grotesque figure of the Devils and Vices of medieval writers or even the demons of other epic poets. Satan’s statement that it is “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven” may be born from Milton’s own sentiments and his republicanism. In the poem, Satan also showcases strong determination and leadership qualities and some critics state that Satan bears resemblances with Cromwell, the great leader of the Parliamentary forces in the Civil War. So, Milton’s ‘Satan’ is neither a fool nor a clown, rather he is a majestic, powerful and dignified character to whom the rebel angels are devoted to. Milton does not present him as a wicked villain but a fiercely proud, independent and ambitious character who is given long soliloquies of his own throughout the poem. But despite this confusion with Stan being the hero

of this epic, we must also take into consideration the progressive degradation that takes place in Satan's physical and mental form. In order to achieve his goals, he sinks into lowlier states like taking up the form of a toad and then a serpent.

Milton also depicts supernatural, abstract characters like God and his angels as more concrete and humanized versions in "Paradise Lost". The rebel angels especially seem more humanized as they experience human feelings of pride, shame, revenge and humiliation. We must also note the depiction of the only female character in "Paradise Lost", Eve, as a stereotypical woman. The entire story of the Fall could be attributed to this female character as it is her weakness and her choices that led Adam to Fall as well. In this poem, the first Man loses Paradise because of the weakness of a woman. Eve is depicted throughout the poem as Adam's inferior. She is in fact portrayed as a weak willed, easily flattered, vain and jealous woman. But Eve does portray a few positively strong and rebellious qualities like the fact that deep inside she wanted a share of the knowledge that God had full access to and after tasting the fruit, for a moment she thinks of keeping the secret knowledge to herself so that she can be equal or even 'superior' to Adam.

But despite the fact that the Biblical story of creation and the Fall of Man may have been burst by modern science, "Paradise Lost " never dies and never grows out-dated.

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. To know more about Milton's conception of the Universe, visit the following link : [http://tlhjournal.com/uploads/products/53.sudiptasaha-art icle.pdf](http://tlhjournal.com/uploads/products/53.sudiptasaha-art%20icle.pdf)
2. For viewing an infographic on "Paradise Lost", visit : <https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Paradise-Lost/infographic/>
3. Soft Copy of the text of *Paradise Lost*: <https://www.yorku.ca/earmstro/text/ParadiseLostBk1.pdf>

JOHN DRYDEN

John Dryden is a poet, dramatist and literary critic who was born in 1631 at Northampton shire in England. He received a predominantly classical education and he graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge. In May, 1660, Charles II was restored to the throne and Dryden joined the poets of that time to welcome him by publishing “Astrea Redux”, a poem of more than 300 lines. For the coronation in 1661, he penned “To His Sacred Majesty”. Both these poems were written in order to strengthen monarchy and lend the young King with an aura of majesty, permanence and even divinity. It was this kind of public poetry that he did best during these times and thereafter so his fortunes as a writer was for the most part dependent on his relation with the monarchy. His long poem, “Annus Mirabilis” (1667) is a celebration of the victories of the English fleet over the Dutch and about The English people’s survival of the Great Fire of 1666.

In 1668, when the then Poet Laureate, Sir William Davenant died, Dryden replaced him as the Poet Laureate. Two years later, he was also appointed as the Royal historiographer. Meanwhile, his attempts at playwriting were not as successful as his poetry. However, his tragicomedy “Secret Love or the Maiden Queen” was quite a hit and appealed to the King especially. In 1668, he published “Of Dramatic Poesy, an Essay” which is a defense of English drama against the champions of both ancient Classical drama and the Neoclassical French theatre. This is often considered as the first considerable piece of modern dramatic criticism and it shows

Dryden's detached scientific inquiry. In 1677, he wrote a tragedy "All for Love" based on Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra". It was in 1680 that Dryden returned to writing poetry after a gap of almost twelve years. Being a Tory, Dryden wrote a poem to support the King titled "Absalom and Achitophel". In "1682", "The Medall" and "Mac Flecknoe" (written nearly four years earlier) were published and Dryden's unsparing satire gained fame. The same year, "ReligioLaici" also came out as a poem arguing against the non-believers in order to console Anglicanism. Critics have often charged him opportunism for his shifting political and religious leanings. He died on 12th May, 1700 and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Dr. Samuel Johnson called Dryden "the Father of English Criticism" for his contributions in the field of literary criticism. He dominated the literary scene of his age so much that it came to be known as "The Age of Dryden".

"MAC FLECKNOE"

"Mac Flecknoe" is one of the four major satires of John Dryden. It is subtitled as "A Satyr upon the True-Blue-Protestant Poet TS". The exact date of publication of this poem is unknown and Dryden himself did not acknowledge his work until 1692. The poem is basically a satire on Thomas Shadwell who was a poet who offended Dryden with both his political as well as aesthetic choices. This poem was written as a reply to Thomas Shadwell's attack on Dryden through Shadwell's "The Medal of John Bayes"(1682). It was in a political work that Dryden retaliated with "Mac Flecknoe". The poem may also have taken birth out of a longstanding dispute between Dryden

and Shadwell over the nature of comedy. Dryden considered wit to be a far more intelligent form of comedy when compared to humor as it laid stress on reason over emotion. Shadwell, on the other hand, was a defender of the ‘Comedy of Humours, a genre of comedy that was popularized by Ben Jonson and which Dryden found unintelligent. The worst disagreement between Dryden and Shadwell were their political leanings, Dryden was a Tory while Shadwell was a Whig supporter.

In “Mac Flecknoe”, Dryden portrays Shadwell as the son of Richard Flecknoe. Richard Flecknoe was an English dramatist and poet whose writing was mocked at by poets like Andrew Marvell and Dryden. In this poem, Dryden depicts him in an imaginary role as the King of Nonsense and as father to Shadwell. When it is time for the King to choose his successor, the aging King chooses none other than Shadwell. Of all his children, Flecknoe finds Shadwell as the most worthy successor as he never even deviated into sense. And so Shadwell inherits the crown as Mac Flecknoe. Here, ‘Mac’ means ‘son of’.

“Mac Flecknoe” is considered to be an example of mock-heroic poetry. Mock-heroic poetry refers to a poem that uses a very grand and formal style to depict a trivial or lowly subject for which the style is not appropriate and seems like a mis-match. As the style of the poem doesn’t match with its subject, it leads to a kind of comic effect. A silly subject is thus inflated using epic devices with an aim of increasing the sense of absurdity. “Mac Flecknoe” is also a literary satire and it consists of 218 lines. Like Dante’s “Inferno”, this poem too has

a large number of references to Dryden's contemporaries. Dryden employs the mock heroic in "Mac Flecknoe" by drawing a parallel between the abdication of Aeneas in favour of his son Ascanius and Flecknoe favoring Shadwell over all his other children as heir to the crown.

EXPLANATION

LINES 1 TO 28

In these lines, the speaker introduces Flecknoe as the King of the realm of Nonsense. The only point of comparison between the Roman ruler, Augustus and Flecknoe is that both of them were called to rule while quite young. Here, Dryden contrasts the greatness of Augustus with the dullness of Flecknoe. But now Flecknoe has grown old and would probably die soon. So he decides that it is the right time to choose his successor.

Flecknoe thinks over which of his sons would be most suited to take the crown next and simultaneously start an eternal war with wit. He concludes that the one who most resembles him is Shadwell who although young in years was mature in dullness. While his siblings grasp meaning occasionally at least, Shadwell never even slips into sense at all. Other people may be illuminated by beams of 'wit', but Shadwell is so stupid that he is immersed in darkness (night) which "admits no ray". His ignorance ('fog') clogs or blocks the day and his obese figure may be compared to the majestic looking Oak.

That is to say, despite his large structure, he was

‘wooden’ (insensitive and dull). Just as the Oaks block the rays of the sun, Shadwell too permits no ray of sense to pass through him.

LINES 29 TO 63

According to Dryden, both Shirley and Heywood are wordy and worthless. They excelled in the art of wasting words, but Shadwell out-did them in this art. Shadwell wins the title “the prophet of Tautology”. Here ‘tautology’ refers to repetition of the same thing using different words. Flecknoe himself feels inferior when compared to his son, Shadwell who is a greater idiot than him. Flecknoe was just a forerunner or a sort of announcer who was born merely to prepare the way for Shadwell’s entry into this world. When Flecknoe sang with his flute for King John I of Portugal, he was merely preparing for the day when Shadwell would sail down the river Thames, puffed up and proud about his royal task.

While Shadwell sails on, it is as if a new Arion is sailing. Arion was the great musician of Corinth. Once while Arion was returning from a musical contest, sailors robbed him and threw him into the sea. But the music he played on his lute attracted dolphins and they carried him safely to land. But here, the only music that Shadwell is capable of producing is ‘squeaks’ and ‘roars’. Shadwell’s name can be heard from Pissing-Alley and Aston Hall. Little fishes gather around the boat like they would on morning toast.

Just like St. Andre’s (a French dance master) feet which could never keep equal timing, Shadwell’s play “Psyche” also

failed to perform well. “Psyche” was also a piece of tautology according to Dryden. Singleton is an actor who always acted the role of Villerius in Davenant’s play “The Siege of Rhodes”. Upon seeing “Psyche” performed, Singleton is now convinced the play he acted in is useless when compared to “Psyche” and therefore, out of jealousy, swears never to act again. This is Dryden’s ironic way of humiliating Shadwell and his play. Now, for a moment Flecknoe stops talking and weeps for joy for his son.

LINES 64 TO 93

In these lines, Dryden describes Shadwell’s coronation scene. The setting is near the walls of London (called Augusta) where once a watch tower and a walled city or barbican stood but is now in ruins. Instead, there are brothel houses where mother-strumpets keep their courts. Nearby is a nursery where children will be trained as actors. Here, the dull and shoddy plays of Shadwell find a ready audience while the plays of Fletcher and Jonson are never staged here. A long time ago, Thomas Dekker (a dramatist), predicted that a mighty and senseless prince would be born to rule over this pile. And this Prince’s pen will create misers, hypocrites and humorists.

LINES 94 TO 133

The entire nation gets ready for Shadwell’s coronation as Empress Fame publishes the famous coronation through town. And instead of Persian carpets, dusty books and pages of worthless writers are strewn across. Writers like Heywood, Shirley and Ogleby lie across the street but it is mostly

Shadwell's worthless books that clog up and fill the street. Finally, the prince appears sitting on top of a throne of his labours. Instead of the radiance that comes from knowledge and learning, clouds of dark ignorance are what forms above his head. His brows are thick with fogs of stupidity.

Hannibal is a great Carthaginian leader who was solemnly sworn by his father to eternal enmity towards Rome. Similarly, Shadwell also swears to maintain his dullness until his death and confirms that he will be in constant war with wit, never make peace with and will never even show any sign of sense. The term 'unction' refers to the action of anointing someone with oil or ointment as a religious rite or as a symbol of investiture as a monarch. Here, Flecknoe himself makes an unction of ale and places it in Shadwell's hands. Kings usually carry a ball and sceptre in their hands as a sign of royalty, but here Shadwell is instead given a mug of beer(ale) and a copy of one of Flecknoe's mediocre plays titled "Love's Kingdom". Flecknoe crowns Shadwell with a wreath of poppies as an allusion to Shadwell's opium addiction and also to the sedative quality of his works. At the very moment when the King seems to bless his son it is as if twelve owls fly off from his left hand. This is another mock-heroic situation where Dryden is alluding to the naming of Rome. Rome was built by Remus and Romulus and a dispute broke out between them, so they appealed to the Omens. Thus, Romulus sees twelve vultures while Remus sees only six, and so Romulus names the city. Owls are birds of ill omen and when Shadwell is crowned, instead of vultures owls appear. The admiring crowd cheers on.

LINES 134 – 163

Flecknoe shakes his head scattering drops of oblivion on his son in the process. He stands in a prophetic mood and begins delivering a speech. He declares that Heaven would bless his son and he shall reign from Ireland to Barbados. Flecknoe is sure that Shadwell's dominion would be greater than Flecknoe's. He pauses his speech and the crowd cries 'Amen'. Others may learn success, but he and his son have learned pangs without birth and fruitless endeavor. Sensible writers introduce fools into their plays to charm audiences but Shadwell's fools always defend Shadwell and his stupidity. Shadwell was accused of plagiarising Sedley's plays. But this practice of imitating only spoils Shadwell's otherwise genuine stupidity and dullness.

LINES 164 TO 217

Shadwell must not steal from other writers but trust his own spontaneous stupidity. Sir Formal is a character in the play, "The Virtuoso", who always uses decorative figures of speech. Dryden is mocking Shadwell's excessive use of flowery language just like Sir Formal. 'Northern dedications' refer to Shadwell's dedication of five of his plays to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland. The poet reminds Shadwell that he was not worthy of being compared to Ben Jonson. Flecknoe consoles him saying he is entirely Flecknoe's own child and that Ben Jonson has no role there because Jonson's plays were artistic and therefore Shadwell must not imitate him. Jonson never tried his hand at wit that he does not understand or have a Prince Nicander (a character from Shadwell's "Psyche") or a

play like “Psyche” or produce a farce after promising a play. Just as oil floats when mixed with water, Jonson would float while Shadwell sinks. Flecknoe reminds Shadwell that his realm is the realm of Nonsense, and he must not wander anywhere else. He can add as many new humors as he would like in his plays and indulge in dullness here in this kingdom. Dryden then makes fun of Shadwell’s obesity. Shadwell must be proud of his creepy and spiritless poetry. His tragedies evoke laughter rather than tears and his comedies make the audience sleep instead of laugh. Even his satires which are meant to be bitter don’t bite or are ineffective in hitting its target and are hence harmless. The hatred or poison in his heart doesn’t reach his pen as he would want to while writing satires especially. Shadwell’s genius doesn’t lie in iambics but rather in simple anagrams. Flecknoe advises Shadwell not to write plays but to focus on using his shallow wit in pseudo-witty description. While delivering his speech, suddenly Flecknoe disappears through a trapdoor. The wind carries his royal robe upwards and then falls on the shoulders of the new Kind of Nonsense - Shadwell, Mac Flecknoe.

ANDREW MARVELL

Born in 1621 at Winstead, Yorkshire, Marvell studied at the Trinity College in 1633 and in 1637 he published Greek and Latin poems addressed to the King and Queen. From the year 1650 to 1653, he lived at Appleton House tutoring Lord Fairfax's daughter and to these years belonged most of Marvell's pastoral and lyric poems. T.S.Eliot in an essay on Marvell, first published in 1921, defined 17th Century wit as "tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace" and the phrase is suggestive of the qualities of Andrew Marvell's poetry.

"TO HIS COY MISTRESS"

EXPLANATORY NOTES

In the first stanza, the speaker declares that if he wasn't constrained by time in this world, he would have been able to show her how deep and eternal his love for her is. If he did have all the time in this world, then he would have loved and admired each part of her body taking his own time. He would have admired her eyes for a hundred years and then spend two hundred years for each breast. Another thirty years would have been spent on admiring the rest of her body and so an entire age would have been devoted to give her his heart. If such limitless time was provided, he would definitely have not felt tired or fed up of her resistance or rejection towards his attempts at courting her. Her shyness wouldn't have been as discouraging as it is now because he could try spending an entire eternity together.

In the second stanza, the speaker points out the unfortunate brevity of life by personifying time. He tries to get her to love him, emotionally and physically by reminding her of the shortness of human life. He keeps on emphasizing that their time together is brief and therefore, they must enjoy each other before time gets over and both her beauty and virginity will be wasted if life ends before they consummate their love.

In the third and final stanza, the speaker urges and almost begs his beloved to change her mind and make use of the little time they have together. While they both are young and beautiful, they must make use of the opportunity and not bother about the future. In the 17th C, ‘sport’ was a word commonly used to refer to ‘sex’ and so here the speaker again urges his beloved to make love with him. He makes it clear that the feelings they have for each other and sexual desires are only natural, impulsive feelings. He shows a desire to take their passion to the next level, something above life itself. The speaker ends the poem by stating that even though they can't stop time, they could make time ‘run’, i.e., they could spend such happy times together that time would just fly by.

ANALYSIS

Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” was first published posthumously in 1681. This poem has come to be known as a seduction poem or *carpe diem* (seize or pluck the day) poem. Following the example of Roman poets like Horace, the poem urges a young lady to enjoy the pleasures (sexual) of life before death claims her. One of the obvious influences on this particular poem by Marvell was

Shakespeare's poem "Venus and Adonis". The poem consists of a single stanza of forty six lines which is split into three sections. The structure of the poem is an argumentative syllogism, explicitly stated. A syllogism is a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is drawn from two given or assumed premises. The basic argument expressed in the poem is that "If we had all the space and time in the world, we could delay consummation, but we do not; therefore let us enjoy the present". The syllogistic structure used in the poem dates back to the Renaissance tradition of formal logic and rhetoric. The topics of 'Carpe diem' and 'Carpe florem', i.e., the belief in the virtue of enjoying oneself while one is still young had often been made use of as the subject of lyric poetry for ages in several parts of the world. The originality of Marvell's poetry lies in the fact that while ancient poets handled this same theme they nearly always wrote with an undiluted pathos and seriousness in tone, Marvell turned the tone of the theme into a witty, elaborate and almost logical one. The carpe diem topic was probably partly suggested to Marvell by the last stanza of Cowley's poem, "The Mistress", from which Marvell has borrowed and made famous the phrase 'vast eternity'. Compared to Donne, Marvell's originality was of a much more tolerant and unambitious kind. Marvell's originality becomes evident when we analyze "To His Coy Mistress". The poem is divided into three sections, each section called a 'strophe' by T.S.Eliot.

The dominant principle in the poem (as mentioned in the previous paragraph) is the principle of syllogism. The

argument of the poem may be condensed into: “If we had infinite time, I would happily court you at leisure; but since our lives lasts only for a moment, we must seize the moment before it flies off”. In the first strophe of the poem, the poet describes at length how the lover and the beloved could have passed their days leisurely if they had ‘time’ enough at their disposal. The lover would not mind the great distance where his beloved would be roaming. He would find satisfaction in praising her limbs for ages together and to wait for the response of the beloved. In this strophe, Eliot points out that Marvell “plays into a fancy that begins by pleasing and leads to astonishment...”.

The second strophe demolishes the wishful thinking of the first by conveying the idea of the inevitability of death and the shortness of life. In the grave, chastity and love turn into empty concepts, even beauty would vanish and the lover himself would be mute. And his songs of praise for his beloved would also not be heard. The grave's a fine private place but it does not admit love-making. Love cannot therefore find fulfillment in the Marble tomb.

The third strophe effectively draws a lesson from the first two strophes : life is really limited, and both beauty and love are subject to the supremacy of the grave. Therefore, it would be sensible for the lovers to make use of the present and enjoy themselves fully in the brief span of time allotted to them on this earth. According to Helen Gardener, “argument and persuasion and the use of conceit as their instrument are the elements of a metaphysical poem”. In this poem, all the

arguments used by the lover to persuade his mistress are done with conceit and wit. Noted critic F.W. Bradbrook considers Marvell's poems "To His Coy Mistress" very original in spite of its traditional theme of 'Carpe Diem'. This common place theme of classical literature is treated in a totally new and innovative way by Marvell and according to Bradbrook, the poem "is a continuous argument, and even a more rigidly syllogistic argument than we shall find in any in the more serious of Donne's "Songs and Sonnets", where the poet is usually concerned with analysis rather than with demonstration". Thus, the traditional themes of 'Carpe diem' and 'Carpe florem' are given a greater philosophical depth by Marvell.

THOMAS GRAY

Thomas Gray was born in London in the year 1716. He was considered as a dominant figure in the mid 18th Century and is also one of the precursors of the Romantic Movement. He was sent to Eton in 1725 where he, along with Horace Walpole, Richard West and Thomas Ashton formed a friendship based on their love for classics and poetry. Out of these three, it was Richard West to whom he was closest to. In 1742, Gray settled in Cambridge and the very same year Richard West died. This affected him profoundly. Meanwhile, he had begun writing poems, some of the best ones were “An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”, “Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West”, “Hymn to Adversity” etc. However Gray gained the most recognition for “An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” which was published in 1751. Though he was offered laureateship in 1757, he declined it. Gray passed away at the age of fifty five and was buried at the country churchyard in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire. Gray’s literary achievements however, like those of his contemporaries like William Collins and Thomas Chatterton, were overshadowed by the second generation of Romantic writers like Wordsworth, Coleridge etc.

“ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD”

ELEGY: An elegy is a poem written as a tribute to something or someone loved and lost. Most common themes of an elegy are lamentation for the dead, unrequited love, fall of a famous city etc. It is often elaborate in style just like the Ode. It has classical origins and it was originally written in elegiac

measure with a dignified and solemn language. However, some of the best elegies written in the English language are touching poems that use simple language like Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard".

"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is a Restoration Period poem by Thomas Gray. Gray's elegy deviates slightly from classical elegies as he doesn't mourn a single person, rather he mourns about the inevitability of death in general and how the poet wishes to be remembered after his death. The poem sheds light on the life of simple, country folks. Gray wrote the first version of this poem in 1742, after the death of his friend, Richard West. The second version was written in 1748 after the death of an aunt and the final published poem came out in 1751 after many revisions.

EXPLANATION

STANZA 1

The speaker is describing the scenes at a rural churchyard in the evening, just as the day comes to an end. The 'curfew' refers to a bell that was rung to signal the end of the day to warn the people to put out lights and fires.

This stanza hints at the weariness or tiredness one feels by the evening after working hard through the day. The cattle and the ploughman, everyone, is returning home. Everybody leaves and all that's left is darkness and the speaker himself

STANZA 2

It has now become completely dark and silent

everywhere. The silence is broken only occasionally by the droning of a beetle or sleepy tinkling noises of sheep bells from far off places that lull one to sleep.

STANZA 3

The silence is broken by an owl from an ivy covered tower that seems to be making complaints to the moon. Maybe the owl is complaining against the speaker who is wandering near her shelter disturbing her solitude.

STANZA 4

Now the speaker sees the mounds of graves under which the simple forefathers of the village were buried. They are laid down in narrow graves where they must reside now.

STANZA 5

Here the speaker notes that nothing can bring these forefathers back to life, nothing can wake them up from their eternal sleep. The smell of the morning breeze, the rooster calling out in the morning, the twittering of birds, none of these have the power to raise these dead forefathers from their graves.

STANZA 6

The speaker paints a happy rural picture of a father returning home after a day's work. The speaker laments that there are no more warm fires to welcome them home, or even a busy housewife going about her evening duties, or children who fight for their father's kiss and run to sit on his lap.

STANZA 7

In this stanza, the speaker depicts how hard working these village forefathers were. They worked hard and cheerfully while they were alive. They were so efficient in the work they did that the tools they used to work seemed almost magical.

STANZA 8

The speaker requests ambitious, wealthy men not to make fun of these poor village people whose hard work was useful, whose joys were homely but never had clear cut ambitions or goals. Yet they were happy and content in their simple lives. So the speaker pleads his readers not to mock them or scorn them.

STANZA 9

In this stanza, the speaker says that no matter how wealthy or grand you are, death awaits you just like any other person. Here the meaninglessness of worldly gains and glory is emphasized. Death is portrayed as an inevitable force to which everyone, rich or poor, must yield. No matter how much you succeed in your life, you will also die ultimately.

STANZA 10

Here, the speaker asks us not to blame these simple rustic folk for not being able to afford expensive monuments or tombs built in their memory. Their gravestones may not be as decorative but they are not to be blamed for it.

STANZA 11

The speaker emphasizes the fact that nothing can bring back the dead in this particular stanza. No matter how much you are honoured or flattered after your death, or how decorative your tombstones are, none of these have the power to restore your life.

STANZA 12

The speaker says that these people that you mock or look down upon, they were probably once talented people. They may also have been born with all the talent or capabilities a rich person is born with, but may have gone unrecognized due their poverty. Here, the poet uses the term ‘pregnant’ with celestial fire. This refers to the fact that it is a potential and it was never born, that is, the heavenly flames were never born.

STANZA 13

These poor simple folk never got the opportunities or encouragement needed to expand their talents. Knowledge did not unroll her pages to them for they couldn’t afford education. ‘Penury’ means poverty. Their talented and artistic souls were suppressed by poverty. Here both ‘knowledge’ and ‘penury’ are personified.

STANZA 14

The speaker says that these village people are like treasures hidden in a cave or beautiful flowers that bloom unseen by anyone. The phrase ‘blush unseen’ could also refer to the fact that these people’s toils or abilities are never

appreciated or are taken for granted. They have so many talents and abilities inside them that lay hidden due to their circumstances and poverty.

STANZA 15

Hampden John was a great patriot, Milton a famous poet and Oliver Cromwell was the Lord Protector (or Head of State) of the Commonwealth of England. The speaker says that had these poor rustic people been given the same opportunities that the rich and privileged people received, they would have also attained the greatness that Hampden, Milton or Cromwell gained.

STANZA 16

The speaker says that all this was in fact good in a way as these simple folk never had to deal with all the evils that come with success or glory. With poverty, they stayed innocent and pure.

STANZA 11

They were never capable of committing grave sins therefore. They never killed their way to power or ever behaved in a merciless manner towards humanity. So they will never be remembered negatively.

STANZAS 12 to 19

Their poverty prevented them from doing things that brought them shame. It also helped them stay truthful and abstain from flattering anyone or turning into hypocrites. They lived far from the hustle and bustle of modern city life. Thus

they did not take part in the maddening stress or tensions of modern life.

STANZAS 20 to 29

The speaker notes that even these humble people are memorialized too. Shapeless monuments with carving marks mark their tombstones. Even Though they are poor, they also need to be remembered after death. The names of the dead and some holy text are carved on the tombstones by some uneducated country poet. It is born out of love and warmth rather than the talent of his head. Gradually, the poem blurs from a description of the forefathers to the speaker or the poet himself. The poet wonders how he would be remembered after his death.

Some might remember him from his early morning walks, some others may have noted him napping at noon at a particular spot. They might even think about why the speaker smiled or why he frowned. But what is certain is that one day he would also leave the world and be buried in a churchyard. He imagines his tombstone to be engraved with a poem.

THE EPITAPH

The final three stanzas of the poem narrate the verse that may appear on the speaker's tombstone. It describes him as a poor, unknown man who was generous and sincere and cried and was blessed with a good friend (which was all he wished for). Here, the 'friend' referred to is probably Richard West. The speaker ends the poem by requesting other people not to think or disclose his strengths or weaknesses. All those

strengths and weaknesses are to rest with him in “the bosom of his Father and his God”. Here, the speaker probably hopes for a good life after death in Heaven.

ANALYSIS

Thomas Gray is referred to as a transitional poet because his works portrayed characteristics of Neoclassicism as well as Romanticism and the poem “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” is a typical example of this transition. Neoclassical poets believed in following a strict structure in their poetry and we may note that Gray has adhered to a strict pattern of rhymes and rhythm. Imitation was also a common feature of neoclassical writers and we find that Gray’s elegy closely resembles or may be an imitation of Thomas Parnell’s poem titled “A Night- Piece on Death”. On the other hand, we find Gray focussing on nature, imagination and expression of subjective feelings just like typical Romantic poets do. Romanticism arose in England in the late 18th C and was the dominant movement until the early 19th C.

Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” is a poem written in four-line stanzas following an ABAB rhyme scheme. The setting of the poem is a country churchyard and from the language used in the poem, one gets a feeling that the speaker is probably standing on a hill. The churchyard in the poem is believed to refer to the churchyard at Stokes Poges, where Gray himself was buried. Unlike typical elegies that commemorate famous personalities such as war heroes, national leaders etc. But Gray’s elegy stands out as he writes about unknown and often misunderstood poor villagers.

Gray uses his poetry to defend their humble lives.

The fall of darkness as night approaches creates a metaphor for the fading light when a person is dying. Silence overtakes and marks the death of a person. And the setting and atmosphere of the first four stanzas are contrasted with the life once led by the dead person. He portrays death as the great leveler, something that is capable of making all the people the same. He emphasizes the fact that it is one's birth and associated circumstances that create a difference between the humble and the great, not their mental or physical qualities. Therefore, one of the major themes of the poem is the division between social classes and what actually causes it. The three Historical English figures he chooses to allude to in this poem are all considered as champions who rebelled against tyranny. All three of them are associated with the Civil Wars in England during which King Charles I was executed.

Gray points out that it's the duty of the living people to remember the dead people no matter how humble or obscure their lives were. He also imagines how he himself might be remembered by others after his death and from the epitaph in the poem, it is evident that Gray, despite being a recognized scholar and poet, felt more in line with the common, humble rustic folk than with great personalities. He imagines himself as dying young just like his dear friend, Richard West. In Stanza 30, the speaker's own imaginary death is merged with West's death. The poet also expresses hope that he would be reunited with his friend in heaven after death. In short, it is one's friendships, concern for others etc that would be remembered

in the end and not one's greatness or wealth. All other merits and weaknesses may be buried along with the dead and need not be pondered over.

SECTION B: DRAMA

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare wrote around 38 plays during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and her successor, James I. How his career as a playwright began is not clear, but from around 1594 onwards he was a prominent member of Richard Burbage's acting company and became its main playwright for the coming two decades. He strongly influenced literature, theater, poetry and even the English language itself. Many words like 'puppy dog', 'lackluster', 'nervy' etc. have been added to English by Shakespeare's use of such words in his works. He also blended different genres which was against the traditional practice of his times. For example, "Romeo and Juliet" is both a romance as well as a tragedy. Due to this blurring of boundaries between different genres, it is not easy to classify Shakespeare's plays. But for the sake of convenience, Shakespeare's plays have been broken down into three main categories:

1. Tragedies : Examples are "Antony and Cleopatra ", "Othello", "Macbeth" etc.
2. Comedies : Shakespeare's comedies may be further broken down into romances (E.g: "The Winter's Tale"), tragicomedies or 'problem plays' ("Measure for Measure").
3. Histories : Examples are "Henry V", "King John", "Edward III"

4. Problem Plays : Examples are “All’s Well that Ends Well”, “Measure for Measure” etc.

Most of his early plays were performed at the building that would eventually turn into the Globe Theatre in 1598. Shakespeare used a mix of prose and poetry in his plays according to the social standing of the characters. Usually, common, lowly characters used prose while high, noble characters used poetry (in iambic pentameter) in their dialogues. Shakespeare’s language is often too descriptive owing to the lack of sets or lighting and such theater aids in those times. The plays were performed in daylight, in the open air with no set.

SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

Shakespeare’s greatest works are often considered to be his tragedies. Shakespeare’s concept of tragedy is medieval and not concerned with the fate of the ordinary people but high-class, important personalities. And hence it is different from modern tragedies which deal with ordinary people. Since the hero is often a national hero or ruler, his fall often affects the entire nation or empire. Shakespeare uses his tragic heroes to emphasize the powerlessness and omnipotence of faith. Shakespeare wrote a total of 10 tragedies. “Hamlet” is the first published tragedy in the chronology and “Macbeth”, the last one. Some of the common features of Shakespeare’s tragedies are :

1. Tragic Hero: All of Shakespeare’s Tragic heroes are conspicuous characters who “stand in a high degree” and

conforms to Aristotle's definition of a hero. And these noble characters are also fundamentally 'flawed' or simply put, they have some weakness in their character that brings about their downfall. Examples of tragic flaw are Hamlet's indecisiveness, Othello's jealousy etc.

2. External Pressure: Almost all of Shakespeare's tragic heroes fall victim to some sort of pressure from the outside. This external pressure could be either fate or evil spirits or some manipulative character within the play who are directly involved in bringing about the hero's downfall.
3. Supernatural Elements: There is almost always the presence of some supernatural component like a ghost, witch, magic etc.
4. Paradox of Life: Shakespeare's tragedies reflect the paradoxical nature of life. This refers to the contrast drawn between a sense of calamity and suffering against the happiness and glory of the tragic hero's past.
5. Catharsis: Catharsis refers to the release of the audience's emotions (like pity or fear) through empathizing with the characters in the play.
6. Comic Relief: In his tragedies, Shakespeare always introduces one or more characters who are created exclusively for lightening up the mood and tone of the tragic play. Examples are the gravedigger's scene in "Hamlet".

HAMLET (1603)

SUMMARY

ACT I

SCENE 1

In this scene, the ghost of Denmark's late King Hamlet appears at the gates of the castle and this ghost is spotted by the castle guards (Marcellus and Barnardo) as well as Horatio, Hamlet's friend. Although Horatio was skeptical of the apparition when he had first heard about it from the guards earlier, he is truly convinced when he sees the ghost's apparition himself that night. He gets a feeling that the appearance of this ghost of the late King bears some meaning and something strange is sure to happen to their state. The ghost reappears again and Horatio tries to communicate with it but as morning approaches and the rooster crows, the ghost departs again. The guards and Horatio decide to tell Hamlet of the ghost's appearance and Horatio is sure that the apparition would communicate with his own son, Hamlet.

SCENE 2

Inside the castle, the new King of Denmark is holding court. Along with Claudius are his new wife, Gertrude, Hamlet's mother and the queen, Polonius, Claudius' councilor, Polonius, Polonius' children- Laertes and Ophelia; Hamlet himself and other members of the court are present. Claudius talks of how he laments the death of his brother, King Hamlet, but also states that it is high time everyone moves on and starts focusing on the future. He confirms that he has married his

former sister-in-law, Gertrude and thus become the new King. He admits that he has learned of Fortinbras' plans on Denmark and he is determined to keep Denmark strong. This scene makes it evident that everyone else except for Hamlet has recovered from the late King Hamlet's death. Hamlet would have been the rightful heir to the throne but he was blocked by Claudius' and Gertrude's quick marriage and thereby quick ascension to the throne.

Meanwhile, Voltemand and Cornelius, two courtiers enter to take a letter from Claudius which Claudius says is addressed to the new King of Norway, who is Fortinbras' uncle. Through the letter Claudius has asked the new King to put a stop to Fortinbras. Claudius commands Voltemand and Cornelius to quickly deliver the letter to the King of Norway. Both the courtiers leave promising speed in their journey.

Claudius then has a talk with Laertes and asks him to make any request he wishes for because Polonius is that important for Claudius and so Claudius would do anything Laertes asks for. Laertes merely asks for permission to return to France and this Claudius readily grants after making sure Polonius has given permission already.

Next Claudius has a talk with his cousin, and now son, Hamlet. He asks Hamlet to stop mourning but Hamlet gives cheeky retorts to all of his questions. Gertrude tries consoling Hamlet saying it is 'common' for loved ones to die and Hamlet stonily replies that it sure is 'common'. She tries to talk him into treating Claudius as his father now and to stop wearing black clothes of mourning. Claudius accuses Hamlet of

‘stubbornness’ and belittles him calling his display of grief as unmanly and disrespectful. He says mourning against death so long is like a sin against nature as death is just a normal and natural thing. He tries to stop Hamlet from returning to Wittenburg for his studies and he along with Gertrude beg him to stay as a high ranking member in the court. Finally , Hamlet decides to obey Gertrude and Claudius and Gertrude are relieved. Hamlet stays behind while everyone else leaves to make merry.

He then begins a lengthy monologue and he laments how stale and flat his life has become ever since his father’s death two months ago. He is angry at his mother’s quick marriage to his uncle and calls it ‘incestous’. However, he decides to stay silent and hold his tongue on the matter.

Meanwhile, Horatio and the two castle guards (Marcellus and Barnardo) enter and greet Hamlet. Hamlet is happy to see Horatio especially since he hadn’t met him since Horatio last returned from Wittenberg. He asks Horatio what his business in Elsinore is and Horatio says he came to attend the late King’s funeral. Hamlet quickly retorts that he would have participated in the wedding too if he had been there for the funeral and goes on to lament his mother’s remarriage. Horatio takes this opportunity to tell Hamlet of his meeting with the late King Hamlet’s ghost the other night. Hamlet is obviously amazed on hearing this and he decides to join the men on their watch tonight in the hope of meeting the ghost again. Once they leave, Hamlet wonders aloud if the ghost has something to tell him and suspects some ‘foul play’.

SCENE 3

In this Scene, we find Laertes getting ready to go back to France and meanwhile as he bids goodbye to his sister he warns her not to fall in love with Hamlet and to guard her reputation as well as virginity. Ophelia assures him he would follow his advice and asks him also to follow his own advice once he gets back to France. Polonius enters and warns Laertes to not get too attached to his new friends unless he's sure of their trustworthiness. He also advises him to refrain from quarrels and to dress well, to never borrow nor lend money and most importantly, stay true to himself. Laertes once again bids goodbye to both his sister and father and reminds Ophelia of the things he told her before.

After he leaves, Polonius asks Ophelia about what Laertes had told her and she tells him that Laertes had given some advice regarding Hamlet. Polonius also asks her not to be fooled by Hamlet's 'tenders' and as Ophelia pleads with him of Hamlet's sincerity, Polonius replies that Hamlet is way too 'young' and too much freedom also. Ophelia finally promises to obey her father's advice.

SCENE 4

That night, Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus wait outside to meet the ghost. It is a bitter cold night and there are sounds of Claudius and his courtiers drinking and making merry from inside the Castle which Hamlet criticizes as damaging the reputation of Denmark.

The ghost appears suddenly and Horatio urges Hamlet

to address it. When Hamlet asks the ghost why it has come here leaving its tomb and the ghost asks Hamlet to follow it. Despite Marcellus and Horatio trying to prevent Hamlet from following, Hamlet breaks free from their clutches and follows the ghost as he doesn't value his life anymore and so decides there's nothing to lose. Horatio and Marcellus decide to follow Hamlet closely behind. Here Marcellus remarks that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark".

SCENE 5

Hamlet follows the ghost and soon grows tired and asks the ghost to speak to him refusing to follow it any further. The ghost agrees and turns to speak to Hamlet. The ghost says that it has something important to convey before returning to purgatory. The ghost confirms itself as the spirit of his father and begins by speaking of the horrors of purgatory and Hamlet listens attentively, horrified at the same time. The ghost asks him to seek revenge for the late King's "unnatural murder".

The ghost makes Hamlet swear to seek revenge for what the ghost is about to tell him, and Hamlet urges the ghost to go on. Hamlet asks him to tell the story of his murder quickly so he can immediately go and seek revenge. The ghost tells him that although everyone believes the ghost died after being bitten by a serpent while sleeping in the orchard, what actually happened was "the serpent that did sling thy father's life now wears his crown". And thus the ghost confirms that the 'incestuous' Claudius was the one who murdered him by pouring poison in his ears while he was taking a nap in the garden. The ghost urges Hamlet not to let Claudius get away

with this murder and then vanishes. Hamlet vows aloud to do all that the ghost had asked him to do.

When Horatio and Marcellus catch up with him and ask him what the ghost told him, Hamlet initially refuses as he is scared if they would betray his secret. He merely tells them not to ask him anymore of what the ghost said and not to tell anyone else about the happenings of the last several nights. Both of them are made to swear their secrecy upon Hamlet's sword when the voice of the ghost calls out and demands them to swear secrecy. Hamlet also makes the men swear that they should withhold their secret even if Hamlet acts strangely in the coming days and the ghost again calls out for the men to swear. Now, Hamlet asks the ghost to rest and then urges Marcellus and Horatio to follow him back to the castle.

ACT II

SCENE 1

This scene takes place inside Elsinore Castle, where we find Polonius giving money and notes to his servant Reynold in order to take it to France. He explains that he expects Reynold to find out information about Laertes and how his social ties are there in Paris. He needs to know what man Laertes is becoming there. He asks Reynold to act as if he is merely a casual acquaintance of Laertes and under this pretence, gossip with his friends about Laertes's habits of gambling, drinking etc so that they may come up with responses that assert Polonius' assumptions.

Now, just as Reynold exits the scene to board a ship to France, pale looking, frightened Ophelia enters. When Polonius asks her why she looks so, Ophelia says that Hamlet entered her room unannounced with his shirt unbuttoned and his stockings hanging around his ankles. He appeared as if he had been “loosed out of hell”. He then seized her by her wrists and simply stared at her for a long time before gently releasing her with a sigh. He then departed her room without looking away from her face. Ophelia expresses her fear that Hamlet was after all really in love with her and Polonius urges her to go inform Claudius of Hamlet’s unusual and violent affection for Ophelia.

SCENE 2

In this Scene we find Claudius and Gertrude welcoming Hamlet’s childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Claudius states that the purpose of their visit is to spend time with Hamlet and make him feel better. They are also expected to report back about Hamlet’s strange behaviour and what’s bothering him. Gertrude promises to reward them both handsomely for carrying out these duties which would be helpful for both herself and Claudius. They agree and hope they will be useful and so an attendant takes them to find Hamlet.

Now, Polonius enters and declares that both Voltemand and Cornelius are back from Norway and they seem to be in good spirits. He also states that he has found out the cause of Hamlet’s ‘lunacy’ or unusual behaviour. Both the King and the Queen want to know about Hamlet first but Polonius urges them to meet Voltemand and Cornelius first. When they are brought to the hall, Claudius asks what news they have brought

back from Norway. Voltemand replies that the King of Norway has agreed to stop Fortinbras' schemes and Fortinbras himself has sworn to keep peace with Denmark for which he was rewarded with money from his uncle (the King). And they produce a letter from the King of Norway asking Denmark's King to give permission to Fortinbras' army to pass through Denmark on their way to Poland. Claudius promises to read the letter and reply to it later and sends them away. Polonius then asks Polonius to tell them about Hamlet and Polonius hands over a letter that Hamlet had given to Ophelia. Hamlet's fierce love for Ophelia was evident from the letter and Polonius admits that he feels Hamlet is in such a condition because he had advised his daughter to refuse Hamlet's advances and she had obeyed him.

Claudius and Polonius decide to test if Polonius' theory about the reason behind Hamlet's madness is true or not and so they work up a plan to hide behind the curtains while Ophelia and Hamlet meet each other. Meanwhile Hamlet is seen approaching with a book in his hand and Polonius asks the King and Queen to leave so he could have a talk with Hamlet. They both leave and Polonius talks to Hamlet. Their conversation shows that Hamlet is not in his right mind and also that he is trying to seduce Polonius' daughter. Polonius is confused by Hamlet's behaviour and aggressive talks and remarks aloud in an aside to the audience that there is a "method" in Hamlet's madness.

Again he continues to try to talk to Hamlet and tries to get out information from him about his plans to walk in the

garden to which Hamlet replies that he will walk into his “grave”. Polonius finally decides to leave him and find Ophelia so that he might carry out his plans. As Polonius exits, Hamlet calls him a “tedious fool”.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come in now and Hamlet acts as if he’s happy to see them. They catch up and share how each other’s lives have been going on. Hamlet asks them what brought them to Denmark and whether they were sent for. Guildenstern blurts out the truth and Hamlet sarcastically tells them the reason why they were sent for as well. The smiles on his friend's face reveal that Hamlet's assumptions are true. Rosencrantz tries to persuade Hamlet to enjoy the company of a troupe of actors if he doesn't enjoy the company of real men. It seems they both have invited an acting troupe on the way home. Hamlet says they are welcome if they play their parts well to which his friends assure him it is the same troupe that Hamlet used to love. They talk about the current trend of child actors gaining popularity to which Hamlet considers ridiculous.

Hamlet gets excited on the arrival of the acting troupe and welcomes them warmly ; he also asks for a speech that would probably give him a sample of their recent works. Hamlet asks the First Player to recite a speech he had heard long back from the First Player’s mouth itself and Hamlet tries to recall bits and pieces of the speech. The First Player is amazed by Hamlet’s memory and then he goes on to recite the rest of the speech. This speech tells the story of Pyrrhus, a young warrior who attacks and kills the elderly King of Troy, Priam while the King’s wife, stripped off her robes and crown,

watches and screams in horror. Hamlet tells him to stop and asks Polonius to make them feel comfortable and to be sure that they are treated well.

Hamlet then asks the First Player to practice for a performance of “The Murder of Gonzago” for the following evening. He also asks the First Player to add an extra speech in the play which is written by Hamlet himself. The First Player lets Hamlet know that he would do anything the Prince asks for. Everyone leaves and while Hamlet is left alone he laments aloud of his inability to stir up enough courage and emotion to be able to go and kill Claudius. He suddenly comes up with an idea of the actors playing something similar to the murder of his own father and he hopes it would be able to seize the conscience of Claudius through it and also find out if the ghost is real or just the devil playing. In short, he decides such a play would give him a clear idea whether the murder should be avenged or not.

ACT III

SCENE 1

In this Scene, we find Claudius, Gertrude, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Ophelia and Polonius gather in the Hall of the Castle. Gertrude asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern if they have been able to cheer up Hamlet to which they reply positively as Hamlet seems quite excited with the arrival of the actors. However, they haven't been able to make out the cause or reason of his unusual behaviour. Claudius is happy that Hamlet is excited about something at least and asks his friends

to make sure he stays so. And so they both hurry off to find Hamlet again. Gertrude is ordered to leave now so that Claudius and Polonius can carry out their plan of observing Ophelia and Hamlet. Before leaving, Gertrude expresses her wish that Ophelia would be able to bring Hamlet's sanity back. Polonius hands a prayer book to Ophelia and asks her to pretend as if she's reading it while he and Claudius hide. Here Polonius justifies his act of pretension of a pious thing as its ok since its just this once and Claudius, in an aside, states his emotional turbulence as he is carrying a burden of lies as well. Meanwhile Hamlet enters and ponders over committing suicide.

Meanwhile he spots Ophelia and seeing her carrying a prayer book asks her to liberate himself from his sins through her prayers. Ophelia greets him and states that she would like to return the gifts and letters he once gave her as it no longer brought her any joy. Hamlet asks her is she is being true or 'honest' and further states that there is no connection between her 'fair' beauty and her 'honesty'. Ophelia replies that both beauty and purity are connected. Hamlet goes on to states that he did love her once and when Ophelia retorts that he merely made her believe so, Hamlet agrees and asks her to go to convent and become a nun so no more men would become sinners like him. He gets more aggressive in his speech and asks her where Polonius is. Ophelia prays aloud to God and the Heavens to help Hamlet. In return, Hamlet curses and insults her and again urges her to shut herself up in a convent, away from all men. Before leaving the hall he expresses his desire

that there be ‘no more marriages’ and once again asks Ophelia to go to a convent. When alone, Ophelia laments aloud on the present derailed state that Hamlet is in. Meanwhile, Claudius and Polonius come out of their hiding place to console her. Claudius expresses his decision to send Hamlet away to England on a diplomatic mission so that he would get some time to recover, rest and also get more acquainted with the world. To this Polonius agrees but suggests they set Gertrude once more to find out the root cause of Hamlet’s madness once again before he leaves. Claudius agrees as he also feels that Hamlet should be closely observed.

SCENE 2

In this scene, Hamlet enters with the troupe of actors and explains to the First player how he should deliver the speech written by Hamlet. The players assure Hamlet of a spectacular performance that would make Hamlet proud. They leave, and Guildenstern, Rosencrantz and Polonius enter. Hamlet asks if the King and Queen would watch the play performance and Polonius replies that they would. He asks Polonius to go along with the players and sends everyone off. Meanwhile Horatio comes in and Hamlet is happy to see his only sincere friend. He tells Horatio about the play that is going to be performed in the evening and how it has an included scene which enacts the late King Hamlet’s murder. He asks Horatio to closely watch Claudius during the performance to test whether there’s any sign of guilt upon Claudius’ face. Horatio agrees to do so.

Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and other members of the court enter as the trumpet is sounded. Claudius enquires after Hamlet's well being to which Hamlet doesn't give a direct or proper answer. When Gertrude asks Hamlet to sit by her during the play, he says he would rather sit by the 'more attractive' Ophelia. Everyone in the room are happy and Hamlet laments over his mother's happiness despite his father having passed away only recently.

Meanwhile, the pantomime which precedes the play begins. The pantomime depicts the late King Hamlet's murder scene. The play begins and in the midst of the play Hamlet turns to Gertrude and asks how she finds the play. When a character called Lucianus in the play pours poison into the King's ears, killing him, Claudius stands up from his seat and announces he's leaving. Polonius orders the players to stop the performance and everyone's but Horatio and Hamlet follow Claudius out of the hall. Horatio and Hamlet discuss Claudius' reaction and they confirm his guilt. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern re-enter the hall and tell Hamlet that the King is quite upset and that the Queen would like to talk to Hamlet. Hamlet plays around with the actor's flutes and Polonius comes in and asks Hamlet to meet his mother immediately. He replies that he would be with her soon and sends Polonius off. He vows not to be harsh in words with his mother even though he expects her to be quite harsh.

SCENE 3

Here, Claudius is found talking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The King expresses his wish to send Hamlet off to England along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to which they both readily agree and take leave. Polonius enters and tells Claudius that Hamlet is in his mother's room. He decides to hide behind the tapestry in Gertrude's room so he could overhear the mother-son conversation and report it back to Claudius. He runs off to carry out his plan. Alone on stage, Claudius in a lengthy soliloquy admits to having murdered his brother, King Hamlet. He regrets what he's done and wants to be forgiven by God. He thinks he would probably never be forgiven unless he gives up his place as King and his new Queen also, but he wishes to be forgiven without doing this. He kneels down and prays. Hamlet enters and finds Claudius alone but decides not to kill him since he was praying and therefore that may lead his soul to Heaven. He wants Claudius to be sent to Hell, so he decides to kill him later at a guiltier occasion like in his mother's bed perhaps.

SCENE 4

Polonius narrates his plans to Gertrude in her room and she agrees. When Hamlet approaches, Polonius hides behind the tapestry. Gertrude and Hamlet talk of how King Claudius is offended by Hamlet and tries to reason with Hamlet. But Hamlet retorts rudely that it is Gertrude who offended his own father and Gertrude tries to leave. But Hamlet asks her to stay. Gertrude asks him if he plans to kill her and calls out for help. Hearing this Polonius also calls out from behind the tapestry

and Hamlet suspecting Claudius to be hidden there sticks his sword through the tapestry. Thus Polonius is killed and Gertrude curses Hamlet for this bloody deed. But Hamlet is not moved, he states that his deed is no worse than her killing his father by marrying Claudius so soon. Gertrude doesn't understand what she has done to make Hamlet talk so rudely to her but Hamlet doesn't stop insulting her. In between all this, the ghost appears and Hamlet asks the ghost what he should do. Gertrude, who can't see the ghost as Hamlet does, is now truly convinced of his 'madness'. The ghost reminds him to seek vengeance and also not to let Gertrude suffer. When Hamlet tries to point to the ghost, the ghost leaves out the door. Hamlet makes Gertrude swear not to inform Claudius of all that happened then in Gertrude's chamber and she promises to try. Hamlet tells Gertrude that he knows Claudius is sending him away with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in order to be murdered and that with the death of Polonius, he would probably have to leave to England even sooner. He bids goodbye to his mother and drags Polonius' body out of the chamber.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

The King, Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern stand in the hall. When Claudius asks what is disturbing the Queen, she asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to leave. After they both leave, Gertrude blurts out that Hamlet is truly mad and has murdered Polonius in some kind of hallucination. Claudius promises Gertrude to send him off from Elsinore. He calls

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and asks them to find Hamlet and bring Polonius' body back to the chapel.

SCENE 2

Hamlet runs into Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as he returns after hiding Polonius' body. His friends ask where the body is but Hamlet refuses to reply and an argument begins from which Hamlet insults both of them for doing Claudius' dirty work for him. HE runs out of the hall asking them to try to catch him.

SCENE 3

Claudius talks with some of his advisers and states that Hamlet is a dangerous person in Elsinore yet loved by the people of Denmark. So whatever Claudius decides to do with him must not hurt the sentiments of the citizens of Denmark. Meanwhile, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive and inform Claudius that Hamlet isn't revealing where he has hidden the body of Polonius. When Claudius calls Hamlet in and asks him directly also Hamlet doesn't give straight or proper answers. The King then orders his attendants to search for the body. He tells Hamlet that he is being sent away to England for his 'safety' and he orders attendants to follow Hamlet to make sure he leaves tonight. When alone, Claudius talks aloud about his hopes that the King of England won't make delay in following the instruction in the letter that Hamlet is carrying. The letter asks the King to execute Hamlet immediately on receiving the letter and Claudius says he can never find joy again in his life unless Hamlet is dead.

SCENE 4

Meanwhile, Fortinbras and his army have arrived at Elsinore. The captain of his army is sent to Claudius to remind him of the permission he had granted Fortinbras to pass through Denmark with his army and also to ask if there's anything Claudius needs so they could do it for him. Hamlet sees the Norwegian army and asks the captain what they are up to and the Captain informs him that Fortinbras has commanded them to claim a worthless piece of land in Poland. Seeing Fortinbras' determination for such a trivial matter, Hamlet feels meeting the army has sort of reminded him and made him more focused about his revenge and that mere thoughts on revenge are futile.

SCENE 5

In this scene Ophelia demands to speak to Gertrude but Gertrude refuses. The courtier however tells Gertrude that Ophelia has gone insane and so Horatio suggests it's better for Gertrude to hear her out and so she agrees. Ophelia comes in by singing a song about love and when Gertrude enquires what the song means Ophelia replies that it is about a man who has passed away. When Claudius comes in and speaks to Ophelia also she doesn't give proper answers instead talks nonsense and Claudius believes that Ophelia's insanity is because of her father's death. She keeps on singing songs about love and unfaithful men and then promises to inform her brother of all that happened. Finally she leaves bidding goodbye to the King and Queen. The King commands Horatio to follow Ophelia and keep an eye on her.

Suddenly, a loud noise comes from outside the castle and a messenger comes into the hall and reports that Laertes has brought an army of Danish people who support him and who feel he should be King. Louder noise is heard and Claudius understands that the army has broken into the castle. Laertes enters with his army of supporters but he asks them to stand down while he speaks with Claudius.

He declares that he has come to avenge his father and asks the King how Polonius died. Claudius promises him that it wasn't him who killed Polonius and that he would stay along with Laertes against the one who murdered Polonius. Ophelia enters and Laertes realizes that she has gone insane. Claudius vows to stand with Laertes against the one who brought such grief upon Laertes' family.

SCENE 6

Two sailors come up and hand over a letter from Hamlet to Horatio. Hamlet mentions that he has been captured by pirates and they have kept him prisoner in exchange for a favour. Hamlet urges Horatio to allow the sailors to hand over another letter to the King and meanwhile Horatio should come to release Hamlet as soon as possible. He also says he has a lot to say to Horatio, especially about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who are still travelling to England. And so Horatio rushes the sailors over to meet the King.

SCENE 7

Laertes and Claudius are conversing and Laertes finds out that Hamlet is the real murderer of his father and he vows

to seek revenge as soon as possible. A messenger enters with two letters from Hamlet, one for Claudius and the other one for Gertrude. In the letter to Claudius, Hamlet reveals that he has reached back in Denmark without money or any belongings and that he needs to meet the King in order to explain his sudden and unexpected return. Laertes and Claudius start thinking about plans to get rid of Hamlet without it appearing too suspicious. Claudius suggests Laertes and Hamlet enter into a duel with each other and show himself to be really his father's son and Laertes is all set to kill Hamlet even if it is in the middle of a church.

And so they both plan that once Hamlet arrives, they both should distance themselves first and meanwhile Claudius will make the people at Elsinore talk of Laertes' excellent fencing abilities which would in turn make Hamlet jealous and prompt him to challenge Laertes to a duel. During the duel, Laertes can kill Hamlet making it appear as a mere accident. Laertes decides to dip his sword in poison so that a mere scratch on Hamlet is enough to kill him. As a backup plan, Claudius decides to poison Hamlet's drink during the match.

Meanwhile, Gertrude enters and announces Ophelia's death. Ophelia has drowned herself in a nearby brook and her body was found covered in garlands of flowers. Laertes leaves to mourn his sister and vows that he would be ready for revenge as soon as he is done mourning.

ACT V

SCENE 1

In this Scene, we find a pair of gravediggers at work digging a patch of land outside the walls of Elsinore. They discuss about whether the woman that is going to be buried here would receive a 'Christian' burial or not as she had committed suicide. They are obviously referring to Ophelia. They both then argue over whether Ophelia drowned by accident or committed suicide. They both then pass jokes and decide to drink while they work. Horatio and Hamlet happen to pass by and are amazed at the cheerful way in which the gravediggers are engaging in their serious task. The gravedigger throws a skull out of the ground and Hamlet approaches the skull and wonders aloud if it had a tongue once and whether it used to sing, what it's profession may have been and all. He laments over the fact that death wipes out all of one's achievements and all that they loved while they were alive.

Hamlet doesn't know who the grave is being dug for and when he asks the gravediggers, they merely joke around and say it was for somebody who 'was a woman' before her death. They even talk of Prince Hamlet's insanity which shows that they don't know that they were talking to the Prince himself. When Hamlet realizes that he was holding the King's jester, Yorick's skull, he wonders if maybe even Alexander the Great came to look like this after being buried.

Meanwhile, Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes, a group of

courtiers and a priest come there bearing a coffin along with them. The procession was a plain one and so Hamlet tells Horatio it is probably someone who has committed suicide or was of a noble rank. They both hide and watch the burial. The priest says there are no more rites to be done as he has already gone more than the norm for someone who has committed suicide and that was because the woman (Ophelia) was a noble one. Laertes keeps insisting the priest to do more rites and then when the priest refuses, he curses him. Through this Hamlet realizes that it is Ophelia who is being buried and he cries out in pain as he watches Laertes jumping into his sister's grave and weeping loudly. Hamlet comes forward and claims to be even more grieved than Laertes and he too dives into Ophelia's grave which leads to a fight between Laertes and Hamlet. Everyone around them beg them to stop fighting and they are separated by a pair of courtiers. Hamlet claims his love for Ophelia is more than that of 'forty thousand brother'. Claudius asks Laertes to be patient and assures him he will get a chance for revenge soon.

SCENE 2

This scene takes place inside the castle where we find Hamlet and Horatio talking about how Hamlet escaped from the ship bound to England. He narrates how he read the contents of the letter that Claudius had written to the King of England. Upon learning it contained an order to execute Hamlet, he replaced the letter with an order to execute Guildenstern and Rosencrantz by copying Claudius' handwriting. This was done while both Rosencrantz and

Guildestern were sleeping. The very next day they had an encounter with the pirates and Hamlet escaped later. Horatio is shocked at finding out Claudius' evil intentions and urges Hamlet to quickly seek revenge before the news of Rosencrantz and Guildestern's death reaches Denmark. Meanwhile a courtier named Osric informs him that Claudius has bet on Hamlet in a fencing match set against Laertes and Hamlet immediately agrees to the duel. Horatio suspects a bad outcome for the duel and tries to get Hamlet to back out of the duel but Hamlet reassures him that he is prepared to fight Laertes and leave his fate to God.

The fencing match is about to begin and the King, the Queen, Laertes, Osric and other courtiers are present in the hall. As Hamlet approaches Laertes before the duel begins, he apologizes to Laertes for the pain he's caused Laertes and his family and also says that it was done under a spell of madness and therefore cannot be taken into account.

Laertes appears to forgive him and assures him that he has accepted his offer of love with gratitude. Osric hands them their swords and the duel begins. Claudius declares that the castle's cannons will be blasted to honour the winner and a delicious wine would be rewarded the winner. Hamlet hits Laertes in the first round and Claudius takes this opportunity to offer him the poisoned wine. Hamlet refuses it saying he would drink it later. In the second round also Hamlet hits Laertes and Gertrude picks up Hamlet's cup and drinks to his success in her excitement. In an aside, Claudius laments that he was unable to stop Gertrude from drinking the poisoned wine. In the third

round, finally Laertes does land a hit on Hamlet and both of them drop their swords and they both pick up one another's sword in the midst of the scuffle. Laertes is hit by Hamlet with the poisoned sword and all of a sudden, Gertrude collapses and Laertes quickly follows. While taking his last breath, Laertes regrets that he died in his own trap. Claudius tries to cover up things saying the Queen merely fell unconscious by watching the duel but Gertrude insists that it was the poisoned wine that did it and warns Hamlet not to drink it. Hamlet takes this opportunity to bring Claudius' evil and treacherous nature to the others and asks Osric to lock the doors to find out the culprit. Laertes speaks up now and admits that he is the traitor and tells Hamlet that he too has been poisoned by Laertes' hit and will die soon. Realizing that the words are poisoned, Hamlet stabs Claudius and forces him to drink from the poisoned wine as well to ensure his death. Claudius dies and before Laertes dies, he forgives Hamlet and regrets joining hands with Claudius. While Hamlet dies, he bids goodbye to Gertrude and when Horatio shows a desire to drink the poisoned wine and die along with Hamlet, Hamlet stops him so that he would live to tell Hamlet's tale to the world.

Just before Hamlet takes his last breath, war trumpets are heard outside the castle and Osric informs him that Fortinbras has returned successfully from Poland. Hamlet declares that it is Fortinbras who should wear the Danish crown. When Fortinbras enters the hall, he is shocked to see the bloody mess and he laments the deaths of all the noble people there. Horatio offers to narrate the story of these deaths. He

asks four of his Captains to bear Hamlet's body to a viewing platform and laments that Hamlet would probably have made a great King. He also orders all the other bodies to be cleared off the Hall.

ANALYSIS

“Hamlet” was first published around 1601 and 1603 and is considered as one of Shakespeare’s longest plays. The story of this play is believed to have been derived from various sources including Books III and IV from Saxo Grammaticus’ “Gesta Danorum” and Thomas Kyd’s play “Ur-Hamlet”. At the crux of the play lies a conflict between man as a victim of fate versus man as controller of his own destiny. This question of fate versus free will gives rise to the internal conflict within Hamlet’s mind which is the main thread of the story. The language used in the play heavily emphasizes ‘bodily’ corruption; there is plenty of verbal imagery that sketch out a disgusting, rotting, stinking disease like state. This is probably Shakespeare’s way of equating the rotten state of the body with the moral corruption of the mind. Almost as if Claudius’ soul is emanating an awful, rotten smell that almost all the characters in the play can smell.

Hamlet dominates the play and is also considered to be one of the most controversial characters in the history of dramas. At the start of the play itself, we find Hamlet dealing with two tragedies, one the death of his own father and the second one being the quick remarriage of his mother. Moreover, he is portrayed as an extremely sensitive character who is easily affected by things happening around him.

The three weapons Hamlet uses to find out the truth about his father's murder are his sharp words, his feigned madness and the play, 'The Murder of Gonzago' which he calls as 'the Mouse-trap'. Hamlet's deep hatred for his stepfather Claudius combined with his almost unnatural love for his mother point out a psychoanalytic profile of his character. Even his inability to completely love Ophelia may stem from this fixation on his own mother. At the same time, all these attitudes may also be due to his belief in Puritanical nature of love and sex.

He may be compared to Edgar in "King Lear" as both of them pretend to be mad and are not mad in actuality. But when you read Hamlet closely, there are instances where you probably feel that Hamlet is mad after all and it's not all pretence. There comes a point in the play where his 'feigned madness' makes him a truly hateful character who raises his voice against his mother, insults and alienates his lover (Ophelia) and also becomes directly or indirectly responsible for many deaths during the course of the play. Some of his other negative qualities are his indecisiveness, hastiness and brutality. The exact tragic flaw that led Hamlet into a tragedy is debatable. Readers are left wondering if his words and speech were his tragic flaw or his madness (or its pretension) or procrastination? But all the while he never loses his reflective and melancholic nature of character.

Ophelia is portrayed as a victim of patriarchy, treated and controlled like a small child by both her father and brother. She is almost always silent and speaks less as opposed to

Hamlet. Hamlet is loud and expressive in an unabashed way while Ophelia is right the opposite. Ophelia is like the other self of Hamlet, when he pretends madness, she becomes mad in reality. She believes that Hamlet loves her and is heartbroken when he declares that he doesn't love her anymore. Torn between her father's and brother's advice on one side and her love for Hamlet on the other side, this dilemma is probably what actually drives her to madness.

Despite being the Queen of Denmark, Gertrude never occupies the central figure on stage. There are doubts if she was Claudius' mistress even before the death of King Hamlet and this notion is indirectly conveyed in Hamlet's as well as Gertrude's own words. Throughout the fabric of the play, her speech portrays her as a highly dependent woman, lacking any sort of self assertion and always seeking guidance from others. She also meekly accepts all the decisions made by others even if she doesn't agree with it and this is especially evident when Claudius decides to send Hamlet away to England. She doesn't utter much until the very last scene where she finally speaks up and even musters up enough courage to disobey Claudius when he asks her not to have the wine (poisoned wine). She insists on drinking the wine and then as she falls, she realizes Claudius' villainy finally and as she dies she sides with her son against the King, Claudius.

Claudius, the play's antagonist, is portrayed as a conniving strategist who is supposed to have poisoned and murdered his own brother. However his love for Gertrude seems quite sincere. Claudius maintains an honourable self

when he decides that Ophelia must be buried with ceremony rather than as a suicide. Unlike Hamlet, he is quite a decisive man who knows what he wants and takes firm decisions and also acts upon it. At times, Claudius portrays more heroism and courageous qualities than Hamlet himself.

One of the major themes in the play is the theme of **revenge**. Both Hamlet and Laertes seek revenge but while Hamlet ponders and thinks a lot about it, Laertes doesn't even bother to confirm if Hamlet is the real murderer of his father or not, instead he immediately sets into action. So while Hamlet is busy thinking about revenge, Laertes starts acting out to seek revenge and even Claudius quickly makes a plan to kill Hamlet. This comparison of Hamlet with the other characters in the play (who are also seeking revenge) kind of highlights Hamlet's procrastination, his indecision and his constant fight with his conscience. Another important theme that comes up is the theme of **religion**. Hamlet firmly believes that 'there is a destiny that shapes our ends'.

There are many instances throughout the play that show Hamlet is a firm believer in religion. He even contemplates suicide and backs out due to its religious implications. Towards the end of the play, we find Hamlet playing the role of Christ where he sacrifices himself (along with the others) to heal the Kingdom.

Another theme that Shakespeare highlights in *Hamlet* is the contrast between appearances and reality. In *Hamlet*, we find that the lines that exist between appearances and reality is quite thin and fragile. Throughout "Hamlet", we find Hamlet

himself constantly trying to figure out the difference between what's real and what's not. Right from the beginning of the play, Hamlet is in an indeterminate state about the validity of all the things taking place around him. This also leads him to continue to be an indecisive person which when combined with his occasional impulsiveness ultimately leads to his own death.

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. <https://literariness.org/2016/04/17/freuds-critique-of-shakespeares-hamlet/>
2. <https://www.thoughtco.com/introducing-shakespeare-tragedies-2985293>
3. http://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/engfac/approachin-gshakespeare/18_hamlet.mp3

JOHN WEBSTER

One of Shakespeare's greatest contemporaries, John Webster was born sometime around 1580. He is considered as the last of the Elizabethan playwrights. He came to prominence during the final years of Shakespeare's career. Most of his works consisted of collaborations with leading writers, except for "The White Devil", "The Duchess of Malfi" and "The Devils Law-Case". He co-authored "Westward Ho" and "Northward Ho" with Thomas Dekker. Just like "The Duchess of Malfi", "The White Devil" is considered as one of the masterpieces of the early 17th Century English stage and both of them are tragedies based on real-life events that took place in Italy. It portrays the story of a beautiful Vittoria who falls head over heels in love with Duke Brachiano. Although Webster's dramas didn't gain much popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, twentieth century critics found "The White Devil" and "The Duchess of Malfi" as brilliant plays that depicted dark themes beautifully. His plays are known especially for the disturbing depictions of violence in them. He is known to push boundaries of what is commonly acceptable to be staged. Through his plays, he deals with issues of class conflict, love, politics, religion etc in a realistic manner.

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI (1623)

SUMMARY

The play begins in the palace of the Duchess, who is a young widow and also the ruler of the Italian town called Amalfi. The Duchess has two brothers, Ferdinand and the

Cardinal. Despite the Duchess being quite young and beautiful, they do not want her to remarry. By forcing her to remain a widow, they hope to preserve her sexual purity in order to inherit her fortune. For this, they employ a spy in the Duchess' palace. Their spy is a man named Daniel de Bosola, who is also a murderer and a former employee of the Cardinal who has only just returned after his punishment. Bosola isn't happy with being a spy but still undertakes the job in order to obey the Duke. Ferdinand helps Bosola to get a position in the Duchess' palace and then both the brothers confront her and ask her not to remarry. Although she agrees to their commands in front of them, as soon as they leave she tells her maid, Cariola, that she intends to marry in secret.

Meanwhile, the Duchess' steward, Antonio, has returned from a visit to the French court. The Duchess woos Antonio and they both marry in secret. Nine months later, we find the Duchess is pregnant with Antonio's child and Bosola starts getting suspicious of the Duchess' weight gain and her increased appetite. To confirm if the Duchess is really pregnant or not, he offers her apricots to test. The Duchess falls ill and goes into labour upon eating the apricots. Antonio quickly covers it up by stating that the apricots were poisoned and that is what made the Duchess ill. He accuses Bosola but Bosola denies it. As Antonio leaves after arguing with Bosola about the apricots, he accidentally drops behind a piece of paper that contains the baby's horoscope. Now Bosola gets this and he is now equipped with concrete evidence that the Duchess was indeed pregnant and has now given birth to the child. He sends

this piece of paper along with a letter to the Duchess' brothers who are now in Rome. The Cardinal and Ferdinand becomes furious when they get to know about the Duchess' pregnancy, especially as they think it was a child born out of illegal sex as they did not know she was married. They however decide to wait until they find out who the father of the child is first.

In the coming two years, the Duchess goes on to bear two more of Antonio's children. Two years later, Ferdinand suggests to the Duchess to get married to Count Malatestebut as expected, she dismisses this proposal. Ferdinand learns of the three children that the Duchess had and sneaks into her bedchamber, frightening the Duchess and asking her to kill herself. When she admits that she is married, Ferdinand is further infuriated. He accuses her of tarnishing their reputation and swears never to see her again in his life. In order to protect Antonio, she sends him off from the palace by announcing that Antonio has been using his position in the palace to steal from her and therefore he has been fired. She asks Antonio to flee to Ancona. Meanwhile Bosola pretends to defend Antonio as being an honorable and worthy man. Hearing this, the Duchess decides to take Bosola into her confidence and she confides to him that Antonio is her husband and that she is aware of his innocence. She plans to escape and join him soon too. Bosola informs her brothers about her plans and so the Cardinal banishes the Duchess, her children and Antonio. Ferdinand tries to trap Antonio by inviting him to reconcile, but Antonio suspecting that it is a trap, instead flees to Milan with his eldest son. After Antonio's departure, Bosola reenters in disguise and

holds the Duchess and her children prisoners under orders from her two brothers.

The Duchess is imprisoned in her own palace in Amalfi and Ferdinand confronts her only in the dark as he had earlier sworn never to see her again. He pretends to give his hand for her to hold but instead gives her a dead man's hand in order to make her believe that Anotonio is dead. He then makes Bosola play tricks on her with wax figures to convince her that her children are also dead. Then Ferdinand reveals to Bosola that he plans to further torture the Duchess by bringing madmen from the local insane asylum and Bosola continues to obey his orders despite feeling bad for the Duchess. All along, the Duchess maintains her sanity and remains calm when Bosola comes in disguised as an old tomb-maker announcing that he is about to kill her, her two children and her maid, Cariola. Ferdinand is maddened with guilt on seeing the Duchess' dead body and blames Bosola for carrying out his orders and refuses to pay him for his works. The Duchess wakes up after Ferdinand leaves, just long enough for Bosola to tell her that Antonio is still alive.

Antonio is in Milan and doesn't know about the Duchess' and his children's death. Meanwhile the Cardinal uses his influences to take some of Antonio's land and so Antonio decides to go and confront the corrupt Cardinal. Now, maddened by the Duchess' death, Ferdinand has begun to suffer from a disease called lycanthropy which makes him believe that he is a wolf. The Cardinal wants his involvement in the Duchess' murder to remain a secret and so orders Bosola to

kill Antonio in Milan. Meanwhile, the Cardinal's mistress, Julia starts falling for Bosola and Bosola tries to get the Cardinal to confess his involvement in the murder through Julia. When Julia does so and finds out the Cardinal's secret, the Cardinal quickly disposes her off by making her kiss a poisoned Bible. Bosola reveals to the Cardinal that he had overheard the Cardinal's confession and oversaw Julia's murder as well. But in return for payment, he agrees to keep mum and help the Cardinal. But in reality, Bosola is now so full of regrets about obeying the two brothers that he is now set on rescuing Antonio and instead seeking revenge on the brothers.

In the Cardinal's palace, the Cardinal gives out orders to all of his courtiers not to enter his room no matter what happens. Even if they hear screams or shouts, they mustn't enter. Bosola sneaks in and overhears the Cardinals plan to kill Bosola after Bosola has helped him. Meanwhile, Antonio has reached the palace in order to meet the Cardinal and put an end to their quarrel. In the darkness, however, Bosola accidentally stabs and kills Antonio and while dying, Bosola informs him of his children's and the Duchess' murder. Bosola then goes to find and kill the Cardinal and he stabs the Cardinal twice. Because of the Cardinal's orders nobody enters to save him. But Ferdinand steps in and mistakes the Cardinal and Bosola for devils, so he stabs them both. Bosola stabs Ferdinand before he dies himself and says that their deaths were caused by their own actions. Bosola makes his final speech and dies as well. Finally, Delio enters with Antonio's eldest sons and they

witness the dead bodies. Delio decides to help Antonio's son to at least receive his rightful inheritance and thus the play ends.

ANALYSIS

“The Duchess of Malfi” by John Webster was first performed in the year 1612 and published in 1623. The play is believed to be based on an Italian novella which is in turn based on true historical events of the life of the Duchess of Almafì, Giovanna d’Aragona. Giovanna d’Aragona married Antonio Beccadelli in secret and bore him three children. She was killed in 1510 by her brothers, of whom one was a Cardinal. It is often considered as one of the best of Jacobean tragedies. This drama comes under the genre of ‘Senecan tragedy’. ‘Senecan tragedy’ is characterised by a love of events that showcase violence with particular focus on revenge. Revenge and corruption are the two prominent themes in “The Duchess of Malfi”. Violence was a common feature of the plays belonging to the English Renaissance.

But having a female as the central character as in “The Duchess of Malfi”, was quite unusual in Renaissance tragedy. This play deals with issues of political and religious corruption, class conflict as well as gender. The story of the play is based on events that took place in the early 16th Century. Now, early modern England was no doubt patriarchal, but even then the Duchess’ remarriage still resides within the bounds of custom, decorum and laws of remarriage and hence need not be considered as big a sin as her brothers make it out to be. Webster also weaves in an anti-Catholic sentiment through his depiction of certain characters in “The Duchess of Malfi”.

Daniel de Bosola is a dynamic character who starts out as a criminal but turns into a better person who regrets his own evil actions and is willing to take efforts to undo them. He is the person who does all the dirty work for the Duchess' evil brothers and all the while he is aware that what he is doing is wrong. He is always in conflict with his own conscience. He is depicted as a master at deception initially and then turns into an instrument of revenge against the Cardinal and Ferdinand. In the end he tries to compensate for his crimes by willingly sacrificing himself in order to wound the Cardinal and murder Ferdinand.

Anotonio Bologna is a loyal character who is not corrupt, as opposed to Bosola. As the Duchess' steward, he runs her estate quite efficiently and although he is neither wealthy nor from the high class, he is described by the Duchess as a 'complete' man. He is portrayed as a man incapable of holding his family together and his helplessness arises probably from the reality of his social class and subsequent lack of political power. As the play develops, so does Antonio grow in courage and maturity and it is only towards the end of the play that he musters up enough courage to meet the Cardinal in person. But even this plan of his seems quite innocent and unsuspecting, not a cunning or clever plan.

Ferdinand is the Duke of Calabria and also the Duchess' twin brother. He is an unpredictable authoritarian who exhibits a sort of incestuous desire for his sister. Ferdinand is presented as a sadist who enjoys torturing and abusing his own sister. Almost all his evil acts arise out of the secret sexual

jealousy he harbours against his sister, the Duchess. Unlike the Cardinal, Ferdinand does feel deep regret on seeing the Duchess' dead body and it is this remorse that drives him into insanity.

The Cardinal, in essence, is even more cruel and cunning than his brother, Ferdinand. While Ferdinand's evilness arises out of impatience and sexual jealousy, the Cardinal's crimes are more calculated and dangerous. He is used by Webster to shed light on the religious corruption present in those times. He is exploitative and deceitful and also very careful in maintaining his reputation. Though the Cardinal joins with Ferdinand in scheming against the Duchess for remarrying secretly, the Cardinal does not depict the sort of incestuous lust for the Duchess. Both Ferdinand and the Cardinal are tools employed by John Webster to portray the misogynist discourse prevalent in that era.

The Duchess strays from her society's notions of a 'good woman' or appropriate female conduct as she not only makes her decisions independently but also marries someone who is socially inferior to her. It must be noted that Webster presents the Duchess' desire for sex as a natural feeling rather than a sinful or awkward one. He has obviously depicted her in the right way, not as the stereotypical chaste and pious woman, and neither the lusty and immoral woman. She is somewhere in between, a more natural and realistic female character who never loses her integrity or majesty for even once during the course of the play. It is interesting to note that while Ferdinand paints a picture of the Duchess as a 'lustful widow', the

Duchess herself portrays herself as a powerful, strong and honest woman. It is her courage, her integrity and moral strength that drives Bosola into turning against the brothers after her death. It is the strength of her character that makes a man like Bosola to pity her and regret his crimes. Even as she dies, she affirms her political status as the ‘Duchess of Malfi’ by stating “I am the Duchess of Malfi still”. At the same time, through this statement, she identifies herself with the identity given to her by her first husband (the Duke). She faces deceit, accusations, imprisonment, torture and death with majesty, all along holding her sanity and integrity upright.

FOR FURTHER READING :

1. <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-duchess-of-malfi-and-renaissance-women>
2. <https://literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Function-of-Antonio-in-The-Duchess-of-Malfi.pdf>
3. <https://literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Duchess-of-Malfi-as-a-Tragedy-of-Identity.pdf>

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was an Irish playwright, orator and Whig politician. Both of Sheridan's parents were also writers. His first attempts at developing his literary career may be seen in "Jupiter", a farce written along with his friend N.B. Halhed. It didn't turn out to be much of a success, but in the following three decades he published nine successful plays of which "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal" are the most popular ones. In 1770, he moved with his family to Bath from where he met a soprano singer, Elizabeth Ann Linley who later became his wife. He even fought two formal and public duels with a man named Thomas Mathews on Elizabeth's behalf, wounding himself in the second one. After marriage, he gave up his brief legal career and focused on writing. "The Rivals" is Sheridan's first play and it was first performed in 1775 in the Garden Theatre. The very same year, he also collaborated with his father in law Thomas Linley in producing a comic opera titled "The Duenna". In 1777, he wrote "The School for Scandal", which made others label him as 'the modern Congreve'.

Even today his stock characters and witty dialogue give a place of his own in the canons of English Literature. Sheridan used his pen as a tool to satirize the illusions as well as pretensions of the nobility and gentility. But his satire is not as sharp as that of authors like Alexander Pope or Jonathan Swift. Sheridan's satire is milder and optimistic in nature. His comedies left out the cynicism and sexual license of Restoration Comedy and instead maintained a witty and satiric comedy of manners.

***THE RIVALS* (1775)**

SUMMARY

PREFACE

The preface was not part of the original production of the play but then it was included in the first print of “The Rivals”. In the Preface, the author talks of issues like how it was received by the public initially, the play’s length, his revision of the play, the use of puns and also tries to justify the characterization of Sir Lucius O’Trigger.

PROLOGUE 1

In “Prologue on the play’s first night”, two actors, Absolute and Acres, impersonate an attorney and a serjeant-at-law respectively. They both try to secure a favourable ‘verdict’ for the play.

PROLOGUE 2

In “Prologue for later performances of the play”, an actress playing Julia identifies herself with the Muse of Comedy and contrasts ‘laughing comedy’ with ‘sentimental comedy’.

ACT I TO ACT V

Fag and Thomas, two servants who work for the younger Absolute and Sir Anthony Absolute respectively, run into each other on the streets of Bath. Thomas reveals that his master has brought his entire household to town suddenly. Fag says that he doesn’t work for Jack Absolute now but rather he

works for a new master named Ensign Beverley. And then he goes on to explain that Beverley and Absolute are one and the same person. Beverley is just a fake identity chosen by Absolute in order to court a young and beautiful girl called Lydia Languish.

Lydia Languish is staying with her guardian Mrs. Malaprop and in her dressing room, she and Lucy, the maid, discuss the novels that Lucy has secured for Lydia to read. Unexpectedly, Lydia's cousin, Julia enters. Julia has just arrived in Bath with her guardian, Sir Anthony. Lydia and Julia talk about their love affairs and how Lydia has been restricted from meeting her lover, Beverley, when Mrs. Malaprop found out about it. Mrs. Malaprop doesn't feel an ensign (An ensign is the lowest rank of officer in the British army) would be a suitable match for her young and beautiful niece, Lydia. But all the while, Mrs. Malaprop herself has been having a secret affair and has been writing letters under the name 'Delia' to Sir Lucius, an Irish baronet. Julia also doesn't seem to think a poor ensign is an appropriate match for Lydia. But Lydia is ready to give up nearly two thirds of her fortune to marry the ensign. Julia finds this silly but Lydia retorts that Julia's own fiances' jealousy is even more ridiculous. Julia's fiance is Faulkland. Julia however defends Faulkland stating that he does it merely out of his love for her.

A little later, Sir Anthony arrives at Mrs. Malaprop's house and both of them scold Lydia for her affair with Beverley. Sir Anthony blames Lydia's behaviour upon reading. He believes it is better for girls to stay illiterate and on hearing

this Mrs. Malaprop starts making a confused and distorted speech about the appropriate areas of study for young ladies. She uses sophisticated and complicated language to impress Sir Anthony but ends up sounding more ridiculous. Sir Anthony leaves the topic and they both then discuss ways to make Lydia and Sir Anthony's son, Absolute engaged to each other.

After Sir Anthony exits, Mrs. Malaprop starts wondering about her own affair with Sir Lucius and she starts worrying over how Lydia found out about it. She asks the maid, Lucy, whether it is she who told Lydia about her love affair with Sir Lucius. Lucy however denies this. On hearing this, Mrs. Malaprop is convinced and she hands Lucy another letter for Sir Lucius. When left alone, Lucy wonders of all the profits she's made out of these love affairs. She's received many tips and gifts for delivering letters for these lovers. At the same time, Lucy has tricked Sir Lucius to believe that the letters he received were from Lydia and not from Mrs. Malaprop. Lucy knew that Sir Lucius wouldn't be interested in the old Mrs. Malaprop and hence did this to continue gaining tips from these affairs.

Meanwhile, Absolute discuss with his servant Fag about how to keep his affair with Lydia (as Beverley) a secret from his father, Sir Anthony. Julia's fiance, Faulkland enters and suggests Absolute to go and ask Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony for Lydia's hand in marriage. Absolute doesn't seem to think it is a good idea as he feels Lydia wouldn't be interested in him once she finds out that he's rich. Faulkland talks of his worries and how insecure he feels when Julia is

away. Absolute tries to convince Faulkland saying that Julia is in Bath and she's keeping quite well. He urges Faulkland to stay on a bit longer as he is expecting Acres, a neighbour of the Absolutes in the countryside, to visit him at any moment. Acres is unaware of Julia and Faulkland being engaged so when Acres steps in and is asked about Julia, he says that Julia is indeed in perfect health and is quite a charming person who pleases everyone she meets. On hearing this, Faulkland feels extremely jealous and walks out of the room. Acres is also unaware of Absolute's relation with Lydia and so goes on to describe his attempts at courting the beautiful Lydia. A while later, Absolute's father arrives and makes it clear that Absolute could make his fortune simply by marrying the lady chosen by his father. Absolute admits that he is already in love and refuses to marry anyone else. Sir Anthony is enraged, he curses Absolute and leaves the place.

In the meantime, Lucy delivers Mrs. Malaprop's letter (signed by 'Delia') to Sir Lucius and Fag sees this. After Sir Lucius leaves, Fag (acting as the servant of Beverley) threatens Lucy by telling her that he is going to tell Ensign Beverley that Lucy is also acting on behalf of Sir Lucius. Lucy blurts out that the letters are actually from Mrs. Malaprop. Lucy informs him that Sir Anthony has proposed his son, Absolute, as a suitable match for Lydia and it is Absolute who is the true enemy of Beverley. Fa joyfully runs off to tell Absolute that his father is forcing him to marry the same woman he is in love with. On learning this, Absolute finds his father on the North Parade and rushes off to promise him that he would marry any woman his

father commands him to regardless of her age or her beauty. While Sir Anthony is pleased at this obedience, he finds it disgusting that Absolute is least bothered about his future wife's beauty.

Julia finds Faulkner waiting for her at her lodgings. When she comes in she asks Faulkland why he doesn't seem excited to see her to which he replies with indifference. He accuses her of being happy and jolly during his absence and she justifies herself saying she merely puts on a happy face to convince her friends. Although he is reassured temporarily, he further expresses his doubts about her sincerity towards him and Julia runs off crying.

Jack Absolute decides to pay Mrs. Malaprop and impresses her with his appearance and his flattering of Mrs. Malaprop. She pulls out a letter from Beverley (from Absolute himself in reality), addressed to Lydia and they both read it together. In the letter, Beverley makes fun of Mrs. Malaprop's pretentious use of language which seems ridiculous and also challenges to meet Lydia by making Mrs. Malaprop herself become a mediator between them. Sneering at Beverley's cheek for such a suggestion he asks Mrs. Malaprop whether he may meet Lydia. Mrs. Malaprop calls Lydia and leaves them both alone. Lydia is shocked to see Beverley and is pleased at the fact that he has cleverly deceived her aunt. Mrs. Malaprop eavesdrops their conversation but misinterprets the talk and thinking that Lydia has rejected Absolute, she interferes and asks Lydia to leave the room.

Meanwhile, Sir Lucius arrives at Sir Acres' lodgings

and Acres reveals that he has arrived in Bath to court the young Lydia who is now being courted by someone else called Beverley. Sir Lucius convinces Acres to enter into a duel with Beverley. Acres then sends the letter of challenge to Beverley in the hands of Absolute as he knew that Absolute and Beverley knew each other.

Mrs. Malaprop praises Absolute to Lydia and Lydia too agrees to this praise thinking it is Beverley who her aunt met earlier. When Sir Anthony arrives with his son Captain Absolute, Lydia refuses to even look at Absolute's face. But she is surprised that her aunt cannot recognize that the man she met earlier and this Absolute are two different men. Absolute refuses to speak initially, saying he is too nervous, but then realizing that he would be found out soon anyway he speaks to Lydia at which she exclaims 'Beverley' on hearing his voice. Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthon think that Lydia has gone out of her mind but then later on realize that Absolute has tricked them all. Sir Anthony however is glad to find out that Absolute isn't indifferent to his wife's beauty after all. Mrs. Malaprop is obviously angry at Absolute for writing such a letter mocking her but Sir Anthony convinces her that they must leave the young couple alone. Lydia is enraged at this deception and states that she would not marry him. Absolute walks out of the North Parade talking under his breath about all his hopes being destroyed. On spotting him, Sir Lucius challenges him to a duel. Absolute tries to understand Lucius' reasons but is unable to extract anything from him and blindly agrees to duel Lucius that very night. Absolute then runs into Faulkland and asks him

to be his second in the duel. A servant arrives with a letter from Julia to Faulkland. In the letter, Julia forgives Faulkland for his bad behaviour and this further anger Faulkland as he thought it was improper of her to forgive before he even asked for forgiveness. He tells Absolute that he just cannot listen to any more of the problems that Absolute is inventing for himself and leaves. Faulkland believes the duel will give him an opportunity to prove the sincerity of Julia's love for him.

Faulkland pretends to Julia that he has killed someone in a duel and must escape to England. He comes to bid her goodbye before leaving but she is determined to elope with him. Faulkland reminds her that they have very little money and that he may become even more argumentative, but Julia still insists that she wants to be with him. Ecstatic at having proved the sincerity of Julia's love, he admits that he merely made up the whole story of the duel and this makes Julia angry. She refuses to marry him now. After a while, Lydia comes in looking for Julia and she tells Julia about Absolute's deception after which Julia confesses that Faulkland has already told her about it. This angers Lydia but then she starts remembering about all the romantic moments she and Beverley shared together. Julia however is in no mood to stand all this drama so she asks Lydia to be practical and reasonable and not destroy a potentially successful marriage. Fag and Mrs. Malaprop enters and informs the ladies that Absolute, Faulkland, Sir Lucius and Acres are about to be engaged in a duel. All of them immediately rush off to attempt to put a stop to it. Despite Absolute trying to hide the fact of the duel from his father, Sir

Anthony still gets to know about it from David and they too rush off to stop the men.

Acres and Sir Lucius are found waiting for their dueling opponents in a place nearby town called the King's-Mead-Fields. When Faulkland and Absolute reach finally, Sir Lucius assumes Faulkland is Beverley but Acres realizes that neither of them are Beverley. Sir Lucius asks Acres to fight Faulkland anyway instead of Beverley but Acres refuses and Absolute takes this chance to admit that Beverley was a false identity that he himself had invented and so he would fight Acres in Beverley's place. When Acres still refuses Sir Lucius calls him a coward and he begins fighting Absolute. All the other characters rush in at this point and Sir Anthony demands an explanation for why his son is fighting. But nobody replies and Mrs. Malaprop exploits the opportunity to make Lydia tell Absolute that she still loves him. When Lydia remains silent, Sir Lucius says he can give an explanation for her silence. At this moment Lydia breaks her silence and says that she loves Absolute. Sir Lucius is shocked and he produces a love letter from 'Delia' and asks Lydia if she has written it which Lydia obviously denies. Mrs. Malaprop admits that it is she who wrote those letters in the name of Delia. Sir Lucius is obviously not interested in marrying the old Mrs. Malaprop and so all confusions regarding identity finally comes to an end here in this last scene. Sir Anthony suggests Julia to marry Faulkland and assures her that his jealous nature would probably improve after marriage. And so Julia and Faulkland get reconciled. Acres promises to throw a party for the newly

engaged couples and the play ends.

Epilogue

In the Epilogue of the play, the actress who plays the role of Julia talks of the central role of women in society and uses a number of examples to support her statement. The Epilogue conveys that it is love that improves life and not knowledge.

ANALYSIS

“The Rivals” is a comedy of manners in five acts and it was first performed in 1775. As a typical ‘comedy of manners’ play, “The Rivals” examines and mocks the manner of the upper class people and their interactions in society. The ‘comedy of manners’ flourished during the 1660s and 1700s. This variety of comedy often satirizes and makes fun of the follies, habits and norms followed in contemporary society. It points out the human weakness and errors, especially those of the upper class people.

The plot of the play is based on confusion over identities and it is basically a play about society and social customs which makes fun of the hypocrisy and superiority of the aristocratic society. The role of elders in the young people's lives, the role of servants and the issues that ensue out of their interference etc are some of the major themes dealt with in the play. Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s “The Rivals” contains a lot of autobiographical elements drawn from his scandalous love affair with his wife, Elizabeth. His life in Bath, his elopement with Elizabeth Linley, his duels etc are the obvious

autobiographical elements in the play. His courtship with Elizabeth may be paralleled with the courtship of Absolute and Lydia in “The Rivals”.

Let’s take a look at the character of Jack Absolute now. He exploits Lydia’s romantic disposition to get her to fall for him by pretending to be a poor person. He deceives almost everyone in the play and uses language also quite cleverly. His misbehaviour, deception and such negative qualities of his character are often forgiven and overlooked by the others due to his charm as well as deceiving nature.

Lydia Languish is a romantic and rebellious young girl who is also a voracious reader of romantic novels. She is determined to marry a poverty stricken suitor so she could elope and live together in blissful poverty. Her cousin, Julia is right her opposite as she is portrayed as a more sensible, practical and reasonable girl in the play who tries to put some sense into Lydia’s head when Lydia gets melodramatic. Julia is probably the only female character in the play who is not portrayed as a stereotype.

Faulkland is a character whose sentimentality and romantic views are similar to those of Lydia. His near psychotic behaviour and jealousy aside, he is a character driven by the passions of the heart. For both Faulkland and Lydia, the heart rules over the mind. The illusions and impracticality of Lydia and Faulkland are probably exaggerated reactions against the barren and desolate social order of the older generation characters

Mrs. Malaprop is a pretentious and authoritative woman who tries to use sophisticated language, most of the time not knowing the meaning of the words she uses by herself and very often in the wrong contexts. And this causes her speech to sound totally ridiculous and funny. Infact, the very term ‘malapropism’ was developed from this character in “The Rivals”. The name ‘Malaprop’ is derived from the French expression ‘mal a propos’ which means ‘unsuitable’ or ‘inappropriate’. The literal definition of the term ‘malapropism’ is “the mistaken use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one, resulting in a nonsensical and sometimes humorous utterance”. In short, it refers to the humorous misapplication of a word or words. Her hypocrisy is clear when she tries advising Lydia on proper behaviour fit for women while she herself engages in writing love letters to Sir Lucius.

Lucy, the maid is a character we must not miss out while analysing “The Rivals”. She is the seemingly ‘innocent’ and simple maid who is actually the most cunning and exploitative person in the play. Her seeming innocence gains her the trust of almost everyone. She not only deceives Sir Lucius but also flirts with him.

The female characters in the play are stereotypical female characters whose main power lies in their desirability and physical attraction. Absolutely no value is given for their intelligence or sense. The male characters are also stereotypical male characters who go over the way to protect their honour and ego. It must also be noted that the elderly characters in the play like Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop are constantly trying

to control and mould the younger generation according to strict values and norms. They also consider love as a tool for promoting one's social or economic status rather than being merely a romantic emotion felt by a person.

This play sheds light on the futility and foolishness of trying to behave like other people rather than be our true selves. Deception, duping others etc remains only temporarily and do not gather a positive effect and in the end truth always wins. Some of the major themes discussed in this play include hypocrisy, rebellion of the younger generation, false sense of honour, stereotypical notions of women's place in the society etc.

FOR FURTHER READING:

1. <https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Rivals/content/>
2. <https://benjaminbarber.org/a-critical-analysis-of-sheridans-the-rivals/>
3. https://www.watermill.org.uk/uploads/documents/education/140_210018_The%20Rivals%20Education%20Pack-PDF.pdf

SECTION C: PROSE AND FICTION

Of Marriage and Single Life

Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626)

Francis Bacon was an English philosopher and statesman who served as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England. His works are credited with developing the scientific method and remained influential through the scientific revolution. Bacon's most valuable work surrounded philosophical and Aristotelian concepts that supported the scientific method. He received his education from several universities including Trinity College and the University of Cambridge. He carried the true spirit of Renaissance in his philosophical thoughts. Bacon had a close affinity with Plato like that of the humanists. He shared with them the conviction that the human mind is fitted for knowledge of nature and must derive it from observation, not from abstract reasoning.

Bacon has been called the father of empiricism. His works argued for the possibility of scientific knowledge based only upon inductive reasoning and careful observation of events in nature. Most importantly, he argued science could be achieved by use of a skeptical and methodical approach whereby scientists aim to avoid misleading themselves. Although his most specific proposals about such a method, the Baconian method, did not have a long-lasting influence, the general idea of the importance and possibility of a skeptical methodology makes Bacon the father of the scientific method. This method was a new rhetorical and theoretical framework

for science, the practical details of which are still central in debates about science and methodology. Francis Bacon's philosophy is displayed in the vast and varied writings he left, which might be divided into three great branches:

Scientific works – in which his ideas for a universal reform of knowledge into scientific methodology and the improvement of mankind's state using the Scientific method are presented.

Religious and literary works – in which he presents his moral philosophy and theological meditations.

Juridical works –in which his reforms in English Law are proposed.

To the year 1609 belongs the treatise *De Sapientia Veterum*, or Of the Wisdom of the Ancients, which he describes in the preface as a recreation from severer studies. It is a collection of thirty-one classical myths, each with a second title in English, often one word only, giving Bacon's interpretation of the myth; for example, Perseus; or War, Sphinx; or Science. The stories are remarkably well told, and should be better known than they are.

His work in the field of advancement of learning was arguably his greatest contribution. One of his works titled "*The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning*" published in 1605 dealt with Bacon's famous distempers of learning, wherein he describes three types of unproductive and baseless enquiry: fantastical, contentious and delicate learning (alternatively known as vain imaginations, vain altercations and vain affectations).

In 1612, the second edition of the Essays, now enlarged from ten to thirty-eight, was published. In 1623, he published the Latin version of the *Advancement of Learning*, now issued in nine books with the title *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. The poet George Herbert is said to have helped him with the translation. His *Apophthegmes New and Old*, 1624, can only be said to have been the occupation of a morning in the sense that he may have arranged the order of the stories in one morning. The last three years of Bacon's life were spent in writing his *Sylva Sylvarum: or A Natural History*, and in editing the third and final edition of the Essays. This edition, published in March, 1625, contains the fifty-eight essays of all subsequent editions, and was entitled *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*. The book was dedicated to the Duke of Buckingham. Bacon's seminal work *Novum Organum* was influential in the 1630s and 1650s among scholars. This book involves the basis of the Scientific Method as a means of observation and induction. During these years Bacon wrote much.

Francis Bacon died, early on Easter morning, April 9, 1626, of the disease now known as bronchitis. With Francis Bacon begins philosophical reflection upon life, in the style of Plutarch's *Morals* and the *Essais* of Montaigne. Bacon's mind was catholic in its range like Plutarch's, but the subjects of moral thought that interest him are comparatively few, because generalized. His treatment of a moral subject is more scientific also than that of the classical writer, more scientific than himself even when writing on a strictly scientific theme. In the *Sylva Sylvarum: or A Natural History*, for example, Bacon

brings together a great many facts about nature, which he calls "experiments," some of them observations of real value, while others must have been trivial even to himself. In the *Essays or Counsels, Civill and Morall* the method is ever to reduce reflection to its lowest terms, to try to discover the fundamental principles of conduct that influence the actions of men. Again, Bacon has nothing of the attractive personality of Montaigne, a man of the world who made a point of finding out what the world was like from all sorts and conditions of men, from the king on his throne to the groom of his riding-horse. Montaigne writes on and on about a subject in breezy discursiveness, like a man on horseback traversing an interesting country. Bacon's Essays reflect his experience of life, but they tell us little or nothing of his personal likes and dislikes. They are austere, brief to the point of crudeness, they smell of the lamp.

Bacon's own judgment of his Essays, as we know from the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the third edition, was that they might last as long as books last. In the essay, *Of Innovations*, he says, "Time is the greatest innovator." The most obvious division of the Essays is that which time has made. Certain essays do "come home to men's business and bosoms" in a universal way. They appeal to all men at all times. They discourse of great subjects in the grand manner. The essays, *Of Truth*, *Of Death*, *Of Great Place*, might have been written by Aristotle, and what is said in these and other essays of like character is as true to-day as when Bacon lived. Another type of essay is distinctly limited, partly by Bacon's own character and partly by the social characteristics of his time

The essays, *Of Love*, and *Of Marriage and Single Life*, were the product of a social condition in which passion did not necessarily enter into the marriage relation, and marriage itself was an affair to be arranged between parties suitably situated. It was a man's world, and it is impossible to judge it fairly now, because in the modern world the advancement of woman has revolutionized the older ideas of domestic relations. Essayists of Bacon's mental characteristics will still write on love and marriage, but their treatment of these themes must inevitably be broader and deeper, because it has been spiritualized. It is juster, because it recognizes the mutual obligations of men and women. When Emerson talks about Friendship and Love we are in another world than Bacon's. Emerson opens his essay *on Domestic Life* with impassioned tenderness for the child in the house. There are no children in Bacon's world. Some eight or ten of Bacon's essays have become obsolete in thought. They are those which grew out of his experience of life at the Courts of Elizabeth and James I, of the petty rivalries and intrigues which led him to believe and to say, "All rising to great place is by a winding stair." Bacon's "winding stair" to the Lord Chancellorship runs through the essays, *Of Simulation and Dissimulation*, *Of Delays*, *Of Cunning*, *Of Wisdom for a Man's Self*, *Of Dispatch*, *Of Suspicion*, *Of Negotiating*, and *Of Followers and Friends*. Fancy Emerson writing an essay on cunning!

Of Marriage and Single Life()

Text

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to

fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men; which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children should have greatest care of future times; unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges. Some there are, who though they lead a single life, yet their thoughts do end with themselves, and account future times impertinences.[1] Nay, there are some other that account wife and children but as bills of charges. Nay more, there are some foolish rich covetous men, that take a pride in having no children, because[2] they may be thought so much the richer. For perhaps they have heard some talk, Such an one is a great rich man, and another except to it, Yea, but he hath a great charge of children; as if it were an abatement to his riches. But the most ordinary cause of a single life is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous[3] minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects; for they are like to run away; and almost all fugitives are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen;[4] for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates; for if they be facile and corrupt, you shall have a servant five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly in their hortatives put men in mind of their wives and children;[5] and I think the despising of marriage amongst

the Turks maketh the vulgar soldier more base. Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they may be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust,[6] yet, on the other side, they are more cruel and hardhearted, (good to make severe inquisitors,) because their tenderness is not so oft called upon. Grave natures, led by custom, and therefore constant, are commonly loving husbands; as was said of Ulysses, [7] *vetulamsuamprætulitimortalitati*. [8] Chaste women are often proud and forward, as presuming upon the merit of their chastity. It is one of the best bonds both of chastity and obedience in the wife, if she think her husband wise; which she will never do if she find him jealous. Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses. So as a man may have a quarrel,[9] to marry when he will. But yet he was reputed one of the wise men, that made answer to the question when a man should marry?—A young man not yet, an elder man not at all.[10] It is often seen that bad husbands have very good wives; whether it be that it raiseth the price of their husband's kindness when it comes; or that the wives take a pride in their patience. But this never fails, if the bad husbands were of their own choosing, against their friends' consent; for then they will be sure to make good their own folly.

Explanations

1. Impertinences. Latin sense of the word, things irrelevant. "O, matter and impertinency mixed! Reason is madness!" Shakespeare. King Lear. iv. 6.

2. Because. In order that.
3. Humorous. Controlled by humors; whimsical, capricious.
"As humorous as winter." Shakespeare. II. King Henry IV. iv. 4.
4. Churchmen. Clergymen.
5. "Strike—for your altars and their fires;
Strike—for the green graves of your sires; God—and
your native land!"
Fitz-Greene Halleck. Marco Bozzaris.
6. Exhaust. Condensed preterit for exhausted. The form is
common in the Bible and in Shakespeare.
"Our State to be disjoint and out of frame." Shakespeare.
Hamlet. i. 2.
7. Ulysses (Greek, Odysseus), in Greek legend a king of
Ithaca and one of the heroes of the Trojan War. The
Odyssey, an epic poem attributed to Homer, celebrates
the adventures of Odysseus during ten years of wandering
spent in repeated efforts to return to Ithaca after the close
of the Trojan War.
8. He preferred his aged wife to immortality. The goddess
Calypso entreated Ulysses to share her immortality,
instead of returning to Ithaca. Compare the Advancement
of Learning I. viii. 7:
"Ulysses, qui vetulamprætulitimmortalitati being a figure
of those which prefer custom and habit before all

excellency." The thought is Plutarch's, *Opera Moralia*. Gryllus. 1. Plutarch took it from Cicero, *De Oratore*. I. 44.

9. Quarrel. Cause, reason.

"and the chance of goodness Be like our warranted quarrel!" Shakespeare. *Macbeth*. iv. 3.

This means, 'May the success of right be as well warranted as our cause is just!'

10. This epigrammatic reply is quoted of Thales of Miletus, 640–546 B.C., one of the 'seven wise men' of Greece. The anecdote is told by Plutarch, *Opera Moralia*. *Symposiaca*. III. vi. 3. (Plutarch's *Miscellanies and Essays*. Edited by W. W. Goodwin, with an Introduction by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Vol. III. p. 276.) "Thales being asked when a man should marry, said: "Young men not yet, old men not at all." Bacon. *Apophthegmes New and Old*. 220.

Analysis

In this essay Bacon highlights the differences that mark a married man from a single one and the advantages and disadvantages of a married or single life. Bacon starts with a sudden statement, "He that hath wife and youngsters hath given hostages to fortunes". The statement clearly depicts that marriage obstructs great fortune and luck.

A man who is married and has wife and children is unable to risk his money for noble purposes. He has to rise and take care of his family. His family might be obstacles to any

endeavour either good or bad. The best works which are the best for the public have often come from unmarried men. These are the men who have “married” the public, that is, devoted their lives entirely to a public cause. Men who have children care a great deal about the future and make various important pledges and promises regarding the future. However there are also some single men who think only about themselves and they too account for the future. Some people consider wives and children as items of expense

According to him, human history proves the fact that the greatest achievements in the different spheres of science, art, literature etc. have been made by men and women who were single.

Bacon lists out the positive and negative qualities of a single man. Unmarried men make the best friends, the best masters, and the best servants. But they do not make the best citizens as they have so great a sense of freedom that they tend to run away from responsibilities. The single life is better suited for a clergyman because he can be more charitable as he does not have any needs to satisfy. For judges and magistrates the situation is indifferent because if they are corrupt it makes them servants who are worse than wives. For soldier it is often an emotional support to think of wives and children before going into battle. That is why Bacon says that the dislike of marriage among the Turks makes the vulgar soldiers even more so. Single men are often more charitable because they have less expenses. But at the same time they also tend to be cruel and hard hearted as they do not have a wife or children to invoke

the tenderness within them. Then there are a few who are married but consider their wives and children as a burden in their own freedom and selfish desires. There are also some wealthy people, who wittingly decide to not reproduce or have children in fear of losing their riches to their heirs.

To them, procreation will lead to more number of claimants to their wealth and property. They refuse to see the need and benefits of a family and leaving a legacy beyond their material possessions. They believe that their wealth will be lost in keeping a large family.

They are swayed by such notions of not having a progeny. Bacon then points out people who stay single because they believe that marriage only leads to more restraints, restrictions, responsibilities and obligations. They have strange convictions that single life can protect them from ever having such obligations, duties and stresses that bother married man. Therefore, unmarried men are always a flight risk, prone to just run away and desertion. They are often good employees, better friends, as they have ample time for their employees and friends.

Bacon says that there are generals among military, who with their hortative (speeches made for encouragement) put disdain about marriage within the minds of the soldiers. Consistent with Bacon, this is often the rationale behind the Turks soldiers that they're base. The author also supports the very fact that 'wife and youngsters are a sort of discipline of humanity'. On the opposite hand, single men are cruel and hard-hearted because in jobs' perspectives they don't care

about their tenderness

The husbands who are grave natured led by customs are mostly loving husbands. On the contrary, the chaste wives are often proud as presuming upon the merit of their chastity. As ‘Of Marriage and Single Life’ depicts, “Chaste women are often proud and forward”.

However, in Bacon’s view, the simplest wife is the one who has a blend of chastity and obedience. Bacon pays tribute to wives by saying, “Wives are young men’s mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men’s nurses”. Therefore, a man can reasonably decide when he would like to get married. Bacon here quotes a philosopher and mathematician who answered the question of when a man should marry and said – “a young man not yet, an elder man not at all”.

Questions

1. Critically comment on the essay “Of Marriage and Single Life”
2. What according to Bacon are the difference between the married and bachelor life?
3. Discuss the theme of this essay in the light of our contemporary moral viewpoints.

For Further Reading

https://books.google.co.in/books/about/Essays.html?id=kBo_AAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Essays_of_Francis_Bacon/VIII_Of_Marriage_and_Single_Life

SIR ROGER AT CHURCH: JOSEPH ADDISON

Joseph Addison, (born May 1, 1672, Milston, Wiltshire, England—died June 17, 1719, London), English essayist, poet, and dramatist, who, with Richard Steele, was a leading contributor to and guiding spirit of the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. His writing skill led to his holding important posts in government while the Whigs were in power.

In 1712, Addison wrote his most famous work, *Cato, a Tragedy*. Based on the last days of Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis, it deals with conflicts such as individual liberty versus government tyranny, Republicanism versus Monarchism, logic versus emotion, and Cato's personal struggle to retain his beliefs in the face of death. It has a prologue written by Alexander Pope and an epilogue by Samuel Garth.

The best of his essays are those which centre round the figure of Sir Roger De Coverley, and hence are known as the 'Coverley Papers'. Two things Addison did for English literature which is of immeasurable value. First he overcame a certain corrupt tendency bestowed by restoration literature. Addison set himself squarely against this unworthy tendency. Secondly, prompted and aided by the more original genius of his friend Steele, Addison seized upon the new social life of the clubs and made it the subject of endless pleasant essays upon types of mean and manners.

Sir Roger at Church: Explanatory Notes

The narrator is always very happy on Sunday in his

village. And he thinks the holy Sunday is only human institution that can make people civilize. He believes that if there were no Sunday villagers would degenerate into savages. The return of Sunday saves them from being barbarians. On this day, the whole village assembles looking fresh and cheerful in their best dresses. The villagers share their everyday life's problem each other. Priest in church explains to them their duties social and spiritual. They pray together to Supreme Being. The author says that Sunday clears away the rust of six days of a week both physically and spiritually. This refreshes their notion of religion and them thanks to god for his mercy. At this time everyone tries to impress their opposite sex by their best behaviour. They try to show their best quality before the whole villagers so that they are admired by all. In city area people can be seen in market while people can be seen like this on Sunday in village. This occasion is utilized by the people to discuss the village politics before or after the sermon. Then they return to their houses as new and better human being.

Being a good church man, Sir Roger de Coverley had made the church attractive and beautiful from insight through several quotations from the holy Bible at his own choosing. Like this he gives beautiful clothes of his own expense, and railed the communion tables. He told the author many times that when he came here he found people of this village very irregular to church, in order to teach and make them kneel before God, he gave every one of them a hassock, and prayer book; and hired a singing master in order to teach right tune and rhythm of prayer to the villagers. On this they feel proud

now that now they can sing their prayer in better way. Indeed, it is the best church of all that the author seen before his life. Sir roger is the landlord of whole congregation, and he has all the responsibility of church and prayer .so he is very strict for this rules and regulation and he keeps them in a very good manner in every way possible. And sir roger never let anyone sleep while praying. It is other thing that sometimes he sleeps for a short time. If by chance after a short nap at sermon, he stands up suddenly and looks around, if he sees anyone sleeping either he goes himself to wake him up or send his servant to do this. He is like an old knight, who is little whimsical by nature and this type of particularities are seen on these occasions. Sometimes when all people have sung their psalms he is keep singing verse for a minute, sometimes when he became happy with his own devotion he says amen three or four time in same prayer. And sometime when all people kneel before God but he stands up to count and to see if anyone is missing. The last day the author was very surprise to hear his friend sir Roger in the midst of the prayer, reminding a man name Johan Matthews not to disturb the people in church while praying. This Johan Matthews was famous for being idle person and this time he was kicking his heels on floor to play, Sir Roger's behaviour appears very odd. He seems to excreting his authority as a knight in church but he is not peculiar to his behaviour that always with him in all circumstance of life, that inspire people to be a good man. There is not anything bad in his character to see. It is more so because they know that sir Roger is essentially a man of good thinking. He is really a well-wisher by heart; therefore, they see the singularities in his

behaviour in an opposite way. These do not hide his good quality rather it highlights and has a deep effect upon the people.

As soon as the prayer finished, nobody dares to. Once priest told the author that on the day of religious practice, when sir Roger became happy with a boy, who answered sir Roger correctly. He gives him Bible to encourage and sometimes he gives piece of meat for his mother. Sir Roger increases five pounds every year to clerk's post. In this way he tries to encourage the youngsters to become active in church services. He promised to give good value to new clerk according to his merit when present clerk would be retired. Relation between Sir Roger and with his chapman is very good, the importance of this relation is realized when they are compared with the relation between the squire and chapman of a nearby villages. These villages are famous for their quarrels between both. The result is that people are losing interest in church. Everyone tries to prove himself best upon other. A squire does not go into church and chapman criticizes him openly. This is very harmful. Priest always teaches peoples against the landlord, and landlord takes revenge on him.

Sometimes he does not come to church. Landlord makes his villagers atheist and he advises them not to give funds to church. While priest teaches them every Sunday and tells them that in every prayer that he is a better person than landlord. After all this result has gone so far, that landlord didn't prayer either in private or in public this half year. Priest threatens him that if he does not mind his behaviour he would pay

for him before whole congregation. The quarrels between the landlord and priest are common in the village and also very harmful for the ordinary people. It is a common thing that ordinary people are deeply charmed by the wealthy people. Even sometimes, it became very difficult to convince by the priests when they come to know that many persons who earn five hundred pounds do not believe in church or God. These things impact upon all people; therefore, it is essential that rich and learned people should maintain a good relationship. Only then preaching of church can be effective upon common people. They go out until sir Roger is gone out from the church. Sir Roger comes down from his seat near to sitting people, and asks about their mother, family member or their relatives, whom he doesn't see in church. That is considered a hide insult.

Questions

1. Analyse the character of Sir Roger de Coverley
2. Comment on the prose style of Joseph Addison
3. What did Sir Roger do to beautify the church?

For Further Reading

<https://englishnotes07.wordpress.com/2019/10/22/sir>

[-roger-at-the-church-by-joseph-addison/amp/](https://www.literaturewise.in/mdl/mod/page/view.php?id=49)

<https://www.literaturewise.in/mdl/mod/page/view.php?id=49>

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS: JONATHAN SWIFT

Jonathan Swift (1667 -1745)

Jonathan Swift was an Irish author and satirist. Best known for writing 'Gulliver's Travels,' he was dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. In 1697 he wrote "The Battle of the Books" in defense of Sir William Temple, who had joined in the foolish Moderns Vs Ancients controversy in favour of the Ancients. This together with the more famous A Tale of a Tub was published anonymously in 1704.

Gradually his writings earned him a reputation in London, and when the Tories came into power in 1710, they asked him to become editor of the Examiner, their official paper. After a time, he became fully immersed in the political landscape and began writing some of the most cutting and well-known political pamphlets of the day, including The Conduct of the Allies, an attack on the Whigs.

Privy to the inner circle of Tory government, Swift laid out his private thoughts and feelings in a stream of letters to his beloved Stella. They would later be published as The Journal to Stella. When he saw that the Tories would soon fall from power, Swift returned to Ireland. In 1713, he took the post of dean at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. In 1742, Swift suffered from a stroke and lost the ability to speak. On October 19, 1745, Swift died. He was laid to rest next to Esther Johnson inside Dublin's St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Introduction

Gulliver's Travels is an adventure story involving several voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, a ship's surgeon who takes to the sea after fails his business. It is a political satire that uncovers the follies of the political parties in his time. In 1726, Swift anonymously published it as Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World, in Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships — also known, more simply, as Gulliver's Travels. The book was an immediate success and hasn't been out of print since its first run. Interestingly, much of the storyline points to historical events that Swift had lived through years prior during intense political turmoil.

Summary

Part I: A Voyage to Lilliput

This, Swift's most famous work, is a satire on man and his institutions in the form of a tale of travels. In the first part Gulliver, a ship surgeon, is ship wrecked on the island of Lilliput, whose inhabitants are dwarfs about six inches high. Everything else on the island is on the same diminutive scale. Because of their little size, their pomp and pageantry, civil strife and wars with their neighbours, look ridiculous. The political and religious dissensions of England in Swift's time are satirised in the quarrels of Lilliputians between the wearers of high heels and low heels and between the Big –endians and Little – endians on the earth –shaking question whether eggs should be broken on their big or little end. But things change

when Gulliver is convicted of treason for putting out a fire in the royal palace with his urine and is condemned to be shot in the eyes and starved to death. Gulliver escapes to Blefuscu, where he is able to repair a boat he finds and set sail for England.

Part II: A Voyage to Brobdingnag

After staying in England with his wife and family for two months, Gulliver undertakes his next sea voyage, which takes him to a land of giants called Brobdingnag. Here, a field worker discovers him. The farmer initially treats him as little more than an animal, keeping him for amusement. The farmer eventually sells Gulliver to the queen, who makes him a courtly fun and is entertained by his musical talents. When Gulliver tells of his own people their King say, “By what I have gathered from your own relation...I cannot but conclude the bulk of your native to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.”

Social life is easy for Gulliver after his discovery by the court, but not particularly enjoyable. Gulliver is often disgusted by the physicality of the Brobdingnagians, whose ordinary flaws are many times magnified by their huge size. Thus, when a couple of courtly ladies let him play on their naked bodies, he is not attracted to them but rather disgusted by their enormous skin pores and the sound of their torrential urination. He is generally startled by the ignorance of the people here—even the king knows nothing about politics. More unsettling findings in Brobdingnag come in the form of various animals of the

realm that endanger his life. Even Brobdingnagian insects leave slimy trails on his food that make eating difficult. On a trip to the frontier, accompanying the royal couple, Gulliver leaves Brobdingnag when his cage is plucked up by an eagle and dropped into the sea.

Part III: A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib and Japan

The third part relates Gulliver's visit to the flying island of Laputa where a floating island inhabited by theoreticians and academics oppresses the land below, called Balnibarbi. The scientific research undertaken in Laputa and in Balnibarbi seems totally frivolous and impractical, and its residents too appear wholly out of touch with reality. Taking a short side trip to Glubbdubdrib, Gulliver is able to witness the conjuring up of figures from history, such as Julius Caesar and other military leaders, whom he finds much less impressive than in books. After visiting the Luggnaggians and the Struldbrugs, the latter of which are senile immortals who prove that age does not bring wisdom, he is able to sail to Japan and from there back to England.

Part IV: A Voyage to the Land of the Houyhnhnms

Swift's bitterness and misanthropy rise to a climax in the fourth part which describes the country of Houyhnhnms, where rational-thinking horses who rule, and by Yahoos, brutish humanlike creatures who serve the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver sets about learning their language, and when he can speak he narrates his voyages to them and explains the

constitution of England. He is treated with great courtesy and kindness by the horses and is enlightened by his many conversations with them and by his exposure to their noble culture. He wants to stay with the Houyhnhnms, but his bared body reveals to the horses that he is very much like a Yahoo, and he is banished. Gulliver is grief-stricken but agrees to leave. He fashions a canoe and makes his way to a nearby island, where he is picked up by a Portuguese ship captain who treats him well, though Gulliver cannot help now seeing the captain—and all humans—as shamefully Yahoo-like. Gulliver then concludes his narrative with a claim that the lands he has visited belong by rights to England, as her colonies, even though he questions the whole idea of colonialism.

Major Characters

Lemuel Gulliver: A traveller and an adventurer. Gulliver is the protagonist of the Travels. He is an observer of other beings and other cultures.

Golbasto Momaren Evlame Gurdilo Shefin Mully Ully Gue: The Emperor of Lilliput. Swift uses the Emperor as an example of rulers who must always have some type of support before making a decision.

Flimnap: Lord High Treasurer of Lilliput.

Reldresal: A Lilliputian councilor, Principal Secretary of Private Affairs.

Skyresh Bolgolam: High admiral of Lilliput, a counselor of the Emperor.

Slamecksan and Tramecksan: Lilliputian political parties. The first represents the Low Heels; the second represents the High Heels.

Glumdalclitch: The daughter of Gulliver's master in Brobdingnag. She acts as Gulliver's nurse and protector.

The King of Laputa: Leader of Laputa. He is preoccupied with mathematics and music.

The Academy Projectors (Professors): Balnibarbian reformers who plan reforms without considering effects.

Munodi: The Governor of Lagado, on Balnibarbi. He represents the traditionalists, who are opposed to the reformers.

The Struldbruggs: A race of humans who age without dying; they are immortal, but their immortality has none of its supposed delights.

Houyhnhnms: Superior, totally rational horses, who are the masters of the Yahoos.

Yahoos: The repugnant anthropoids held in subjection by the Houyhnhnms.

The Grey Horse (The Master): Gulliver's master in the Country of the Houyhnhnms

Is Lemuel Gulliver a true hero?

Gulliver is a bold adventure and who visits a multitude of strange lands But it is difficult to regard him as truly heroic. Even well before his slide into misanthropy at the end of the book, he simply does not show the stuff of which grand heroes

are made. He is not cowardly—on the contrary, he undergoes the frightening experiences of nearly being gobbled by a giant rat, taken imprisoned by pirates, shipwrecked on faraway shores, sexually assaulted by an eleven-year-old girl, and shot in the face with poison arrows. Additionally, the isolation from humanity that he endures for sixteen years must be hard to bear, though Gulliver rarely talks about such matters. Yet despite the courage Gulliver shows throughout his voyages, his character lacks basic greatness. This impression could be due to the fact that he rarely shows his feelings, reveals his soul, or experiences great passions of any sort. But other literary adventurers, like Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*, seem heroic without being particularly open about their emotions.

Gulliver's Travels as a Political Satire

Broadly, the book has three themes: A satirical view of the state of European government, and of petty differences between religions. An inquiry into whether men are inherently corrupt or whether they become corrupted. A restatement of the older "ancients versus moderns" controversy previously addressed by Swift in *The Battle of the Books*. He satirizes party politics, religious differences, and western Culture as a whole in ways still relevant to today's world. But what we find mostly after reading "Book-1" is that it is an allegorical representation of English politics, where Swift depicts the total political corruption beginning from 16th century and ending with 18th century.

In his first encounters with Lilliputians, Gulliver is surprised "at the intrepidity of these diminutive mortals, who

dare venture to mount and walk upon my body" (I.i.16). The Lilliputians are the embodiment of England of the time period. The Lilliputians are small people who control Gulliver through means of threats. "...when in an instant I felt above a hundred arrows discharged into my left hand, which pricked my like so many needles; and besides they shot another flight into the air, as we do bombs in Europe" (Swift, 24). England was a small country that had Europe (represented by Gulliver) and many other parts of the world under their control. Gulliver encounters the ridiculous nature of war. His first encounter of war is in the form of a dispute over the way to eat an egg. A former king took the right of personal preference away from his people by telling them to eat the egg from the small end instead of the large end. Swift relates this trait to the situations where a dominant ruler oppresses nations. It also shows how a simple, ridiculous act can bring forth war. The fight continues through generations, soon the people continued to fight without really understanding why. Some of the people resisted, and they found refuge in Blefuscu, and "for six and thirty moons past" the two sides have been at war (I.iv.48). For Swift, Lilliput is analogous to England, and Blefuscu to France. With this event of the story Swift satirizes the needless squabbling and fighting between the two nations.

Swift mocks at the peculiar customs of the nation of Lilliput. The methods of selecting people for public office in Lilliput are very different from that of any other nation, or rather, would appear to be so at first. In order to be chosen, a man must "rope dance" to the best of his abilities; the best rope dancer receives the higher office. "This diversion is only

practiced by those persons who are candidates for great employments and high favour at court". While no nation of Europe in Swift's time followed such an absurd practice, they did not choose public officers on skill, but rather on how well the candidate could line the right pockets with money.

Gulliver also tells of their custom of burying "their dead with their heads directly downwards...The learned among them confess the absurdity of this doctrine, but the practice still continues" (I.vi.60). At this point in the story, Gulliver has not yet realized that by seeing the absurdity of the Lilliputians' traditions, that he might see the absurdity in European ones. With this Swift satirizes the conditions of Europe.

Again in the chapter 3 the kings cushions represents the Duchess of Kendal, One of George i's mistresses, whom Walpole was believed to have bribed in order to return in power in 1721. Thus, Swift was particularly antipathetic towards the Duchess and enjoyed satirizing Walpole because during his time political corruption reached the highest peak-

In chapter 4, book 1, swift narrates the folly of the religious war between Lilliput and Blefuscu to immediate European politics- "there(in Lilliput) have been two struggling parties in this Empire, under the name of Tramecksan and Slamecksan, from the high and low heels on their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves." Here two Lilliputians parties stand for English political parties. The high heels represent Tories, the low heels Whigs. These two massacre the English soil both politically and by religion. In Swift's voice- "we computed the Tramecksan, or High heels, to exceed us in number; but the power wholly on our side" refers to the

succession of Whigs in 1714 (i.e. the Hanoverian succession) though the Tories were large in number. Here, it should be mentioned that at first Swift was Whig and later joined the Tory. Again the king was sympathetic to the Whigs. He used them to support Hanover against France and appointed them to official positions to strengthen his position against the House of Lords. Thus the Lilliputians empire, who is George I, wears low heels which is censured by Swift.

Therefore, we can say, religion was a political issue during Swift's time. Owing to a minor religious issue there caused a serious conflict and it also results in the division of the nation into two political groups. Many lives were taken and many kings were to lose their power even their life was taken. The greatness of Swift lays in his great courage to satirize such political and religious issues with great rigour.

Questions

1. Comment on the philosophical and political background of *Gulliver's Travels*
2. Gulliver's Travels as a satire
3. What makes the Houyhnhnms' society ideal or a model for humans?
4. How does Gulliver change as the novel progresses?

For Further Reading

<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/gulliver/>

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/g/gullivers-travels/book-summary>

JOSEPH ANDREWS: HENRY FIELDING

Henry Fielding (1707 -54) the greatest novelist of the 18th century, was of a high family but without fortune. He took to novel writing after a career as dramatist, journalist, and lawyer. He was also in later life a magistrate, provoked to write a parody of Pamela, he soon found the story developing into an independent novel, dropped the satire and the result was *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of His Friend Abraham Adams*, written in imitation of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*. Fielding's next novel, *History of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) was based on a notorious bandit who had been hanged some years earlier. This is a satire on the popular ideas of greatness. *Tom Jones* (1749) Fielding's third novel, is a masterpiece. The full title is *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*.

In his later years Fielding continued to write, primarily satirical pieces for newspapers and pamphlets, while following his career as a magistrate. Fielding developed considerable influence in the movements for judicial and prison reform, authoring works such as *Proposals for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor*(1753). Fielding's health declined in the 1750s and he died shortly after travelling to Lisbon to seek medical care in 1754.

Introduction

Joseph Andrews, in full *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, novel by Henry Fielding, published in 1742. It was written as a

reaction against Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). Fielding portrayed Joseph Andrews as the brother of Pamela Andrews, the heroine of Richardson's novel. It also resembles the famous picaresque, episodic style Spanish novel *Don Quixote* written by Cervantes. The novel embodies a fusion of two competing aesthetics of 18th-century literature: the mock-heroic and neoclassical (and, by extension, aristocratic) approach of Augustans such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift; and the popular, domestic prose fiction of novelists such as Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson.

The story begins on lines parallel to those of *Pamela*. The narrator of Joseph Andrews mostly employs third-person omniscient narration but sometimes interrupts his story in first person (in his persona as author). Occasionally, he uses second person to directly address the reader.

Summary Book 1

Before beginning his story, the narrator says he wishes to provide his audience with a study of an exemplary life, in the vein of the biographies of Mr. Colley Cibber and Mrs. Pamela Andrews. The subject of his study is Joseph Andrews, the brother of the famous Pamela, who was able to preserve her purity despite being subject to great temptations.

Joseph is the son of humble people, and he is put out as an apprentice at age 10 to Sir Thomas Booby, the local squire. He is given various jobs until, at 17, he has grown into an exceptionally handsome young man, and Lady Booby makes him her footman. The local parson, Abraham Adams, also

notices Joseph and is impressed by the little learning he has accumulated as well as by his piety. He would like to teach him Latin, but Joseph is whisked off to London by Lady Booby.

When Joseph is about 21, Sir Thomas dies, and the widow, who has fallen in love with Joseph, tries to seduce him. When Joseph rejects her, she gets angry and dismisses him. Adding to her fury are false rumours planted by Mrs. Slipslop, her gentlewoman-in-waiting, that Joseph has been flirting with the female servants. Mrs. Slipslop also has a crush on Joseph and wishes to sleep with him. In the end Joseph is cast out of the house. He has not seen his fiancée, Fanny Goodwill, in many months, so he immediately sets off from London, headed toward his old parish, since Fanny works on a farm not far from the Booby estate.

Before he can get very far, he is attacked by robbers, who take everything, including his clothes. They beat him and leave him for dead in a ditch. A stagecoach stops and reluctantly picks him up and drops him at the next inn. Coincidentally, Parson Adams has been traveling toward London in the hope of selling his volumes of sermons, and he stops at the same inn. He and Joseph reunite.

Book 2

Once Joseph is well enough, the two set off, planning to go in opposite directions. But the parson realizes he doesn't have his sermons in his saddlebags and decides to return home with Joseph. Since they have only one horse between them (the parson's), one man walks and one rides. When the rider catches

up to the walker, they switch places. Parson Adams sets off first, but he forgets to pay the board for his horse, so the innkeeper will not let Joseph go. When Joseph is delayed in arriving, the parson steps into an alehouse, where he is caught up on Joseph's situation. Joseph in the meantime has been "rescued" by Mrs. Slipslop and rides up alongside her on Adams's horse. Slipslop invites him to give the horse to the parson and ride in her coach, but he defers to the parson, who becomes a passenger in the coach.

After some time, the coach stops at another inn so people can eat, and they learn that Joseph has arrived there first. The landlady is nursing a wound on his leg. He has fallen under the parson's recalcitrant (difficult to manage) horse, who has a nasty habit of kneeling down unexpectedly. When the woman's husband comes in, he becomes furious to see his wife tending to the handsome stranger. A general fight soon ensues when Parson Adams defends Joseph. Slipslop and the innkeeper's wife also take part in this fisticuffs. When the fight ends, Joseph replaces Adams in the coach. Later he sees his mentor walking on foot, apparently having forgotten that he has a horse, which he left at the inn.

Adams gets too far ahead of the coach and meets a hunter, who complains about the lack of patriotism and valour among his countrymen until both men hear a woman screaming, clearly in distress. The hunter becomes frightened and runs away, and Adams rushes toward the sounds of distress. He finds a woman fighting off a would-be rapist, and he knocks this man out. Since night has fallen, the parson calls

for help when he sees some young men trying to catch birds, and he calls them over. Adams tells what happened, but the villain, who is only pretending to be unconscious, jumps up and accuses Adams and Fanny of trying to rob him. The youths believe the ruffian, and they take Fanny and Adams into custody and bring them before the magistrate.

Because Fanny and Adams look disheveled, the judge doesn't believe their story and is ready to put them in jail and hold them over for trial. Luckily, a squire in the crowd recognizes Fanny and the parson, and they are let go. After they leave, they stop at an inn because it begins to rain, and they find Joseph there, also waiting out the rain with Slipslop's party. The lovers have a tender reunion, and now Joseph will not get back into the stagecoach because he wants to stay with Fanny. Slipslop leaves in a fury, and the trio now spend the night at the inn, where they wake to discover they cannot pay. Adams visits the farm of a local clergyman to ask for the 14 shillings and finds him to be rich and prosperous, but the man is scandalized when Adams asks for a loan and throws him out after Adams accuses him of not being a Christian.

When Adams gets back to the inn, a poor peddler loans the parson the money and promises to go through his parish at a later date and collect what is owed. At the next alehouse, Adams runs into a trickster, who promises to pay his bill but then disappears. In the morning, the innkeeper provides him with a true history of this liar, who has ruined many people with his false promises. The innkeeper sympathizes with Adams, since he himself was tricked by this man, and he lets

Adams's party go.

Book 3

On the road again at night, the trio are given hospitality on Mr. Wilson's farm with his family. Wilson tells Adams the story of his life after the others are asleep. The farmer was born a gentleman, but he ran through his inheritance by leading a dissolute life. He ends up in jail because he owes his tailor money. Before he went to jail, he had bought a lottery ticket, and he gives this ticket to a distant relation in exchange for food. Around the same time, the ticket wins 3,000 pounds, and the relation dies.

The ticket is now passed on to the man's daughter, a woman Wilson has admired from afar. After she sends him 200 pounds, he is able to get out of jail. When he visits her, she offers to loan him money if he wants to start a business. He confesses his feelings for her, and he learns she feels the same way. The two get married and move to the farm in the country. Wilson is very happy now as a semi recluse, and his only sorrow is that his baby son was kidnapped by gypsies many years ago.

After the trio take leave of this exemplary family, the parson and Joseph have a minor disagreement about whether the man was ruined by public school (private school for rich boys of the upper classes). When they stop to rest and the parson falls asleep, Joseph gives a discourse to Fanny on charity. Then the trio find themselves in the middle of a hunt. The dogs attack a hare in the middle of their camp, mistaking

Adams for part of their quarry and tearing at his clothes. Adams wakes up and knocks the dogs off, but when the hunting master arrives, he thinks it will be amusing to set the dogs on the parson. Joseph and Adams now fight the dogs together and kill two of them. When the squire arrives and sees Fanny, he immediately puts on a good face and invites them to his house for dinner.

At the house, Fanny and Joseph eat in the kitchen. Meanwhile, the squire and his vicious toadies play several nasty practical jokes on Adams until he finally realizes what is going on and storms out of the house with Fanny and Joseph. The squire is now enraged because he had planned to get Adams and Joseph drunk so that he could rape Fanny. He sends his toadies after the trio the next day, and they beat and tie up Joseph and Adams and kidnap Fanny. One of them, the captain, brings Fanny back to the squire, but Fanny's loud calls lead to her rescue by Peter Pounce, Lady Booby's steward. Pounce returns to the inn, and Joseph and Adams are freed. Joseph beats the captain, and the servants later let him go. Pounce is traveling with an entourage, so they put Joseph and Fanny on a horse. The parson rides with Pounce until the two of them get into an argument about the meaning of charity, and Adams jumps out of his chariot.

Book 4

The entourage arrives at the parish at the same time as Lady Booby, who is in a coach. When Lady Booby sees Joseph, she summons Slipslop to fill her in on what has happened. When she discovers that Joseph is engaged to be

married, she is furious. She summons Adams and attempts to persuade him to stop the marriage, but he refuses to fall in with her plans. She next calls on an unscrupulous lawyer, who promises to use an equally unscrupulous judge to drive the couple out of town and prevent them from marrying. Around this time, Lady Booby's nephew, Squire Booby, has come to the parish to visit his aunt with his new wife, Pamela. Pamela is anxious to see her brother Joseph. Squire Booby finds out from the servants that Joseph and Fanny have been sentenced to a month of incarceration in a workhouse, all for stealing a twig from the lawyer's property. Squire Booby convinces the judge to release the couple into his custody.

Pamela and Joseph have a joyful reunion, and he is pressured to stay at the Booby estate, so Fanny goes off with the parson to stay at his house. While Fanny is walking in the woods, two men try to rape her. She fights off the first one, Beau Didapper, a dandy from London who is visiting the Boobys, but is less successful with his servant, who is much stronger. Joseph arrives in time to save Fanny and beats the man.

The peddler from the inn arrives at Mr. Adams's house, and Joseph invites everyone out for dinner. Afterward, the peddler tells Fanny the true story of her origins. Up until now she thought she was an orphan who had been brought up in the Booby household (as a servant). But the peddler had been in a common-law marriage with a woman who confessed on her deathbed that she had stolen a child. That child was Fanny, taken from the Andrews family. It now appears that Fanny and

Joseph are siblings.

When Pamela hears about this development, she is skeptical, so her husband suggests that everyone come to his aunt's house to sort out the mystery. Pamela's family will arrive the next day, so they can ask her parents about it. Because of bad weather, everyone stays over at the Boobys. Didapper attempts to sneak into Fanny's room in the middle of the night, but he goes into Slipslop's room instead. When she screams, the parson bursts in, but he mistakes Didapper for the lady and lets him go. When he realizes he is in Slipslop's room, he bumbles out, this time accidentally going into Fanny's room instead of his own. She is fast asleep, so she doesn't even notice he is there. In the morning,

Joseph knocks on her door and finds Adams, but everyone realizes there has been another mix-up, and Adams returns sheepishly to his own room. Joseph and Fanny talk about their new status as brother and sister and decide to live together as platonic friends.

When the Andrews parents arrive, Mrs. Andrews tells how the gypsies stole her girl baby (Fanny) and replaced her with a boy baby (Joseph), who was sickly. Fanny was eventually sold by the gypsies at age four to the Boobys. The peddler has additional information about Joseph, and he says he thinks he knows to whom he belongs, again based on information he got from his dying common-law wife. Mrs. Andrews has mentioned Joseph's strawberry birthmark, and the parson remembers that Wilson also mentioned such a birthmark. Mr. Wilson happens to be passing by, and when he

hears this story, he realizes that Joseph is his long-lost son. Fanny and Joseph can now marry. The happy couple go off to live in Mr. Wilson's part of the world. Squire Booby provides money for Fanny, so she and Joseph are able to buy some land near Mr. Wilson. The couple continue happily and are expecting their first child. A disappointed Lady Booby returns to London and takes up with a young captain of the dragoons.

Major Characters

Joseph Andrews: the first hero of the story is a genteel footman who is dismissed from his post for not accepting the sexual advances of his older, patrician mistress.

Parson Adams: Mr. Abraham (Parson) Adams, the second hero of the story, is an upright and learned clergyman who accompanies Joseph Andrews on most of his adventures after he is dismissed from his post.

Fanny Goodwill: is the fiancée of Joseph Andrews, a beautiful and chaste dairy maid who leaves her post to look for Joseph after he is injured in a robbery.

Lady Booby: the villainess of the story, is a middle-aged, lecherous widow who will stop at nothing to revenge herself on Joseph Andrews if he will not have her.

Mr. Wilson: is a former rake (one not restrained by convention or morality) and now a country squire whom Joseph Andrews meets on his journeys.

Dick Adams: whom Parson Adams mistakenly calls Jacky because of the author's error, is his young son who almost

drowns in the river.

Mrs. Adam: is the wife of Parson Adams. She berates him for neglecting his family to care for his parishioners.

Mr. Andrews: Mr. Gaffer Andrews is the father of Pamela Andrews. At the end of the novel, he learns that he is also the father of Fanny Goodwill. He has raised Joseph Andrews as his own son.

Mrs. Andrews: Mrs. Gammar Andrews is the mother of Pamela Andrews and Fanny Goodwill. She has raised Joseph Andrews as her own son, although he is not. She lost Fanny when she was 18 months old and reclaims her at the end of the novel.

Mr. Barnabas: is a High-Church Anglican clergyman who disagrees with Parson Adams and believes clergy people should not live in luxury.

Bellarmino: is the second of Leonora's suitors, and he is mostly in love with her father's fortune.

Mrs. Pamela Andrews Booby: is a servant in the household of Squire Booby and ends up marrying him after he pursues her sexually. She believes she is the sister of Joseph Andrews.

Sir Thomas Booby: is the husband of Lady Booby. He dies shortly after the novel begins.

Squire Booby: is the nephew of Sir Thomas and Lady Booby. He marries the servant Pamela Andrews after he is unsuccessful in seducing her. Captain: is one of the disreputable friends of the evil squire. He hauls Fanny Goodwill off on a horse to deliver her to the squire so he can

rape her.

Mr. Beau Didapper: is a dandy from the city who tries to rape Fanny Goodwill.

Evil squire: is not named, but he invites Joseph Andrews, Parson Adams, and Fanny Goodwill to his house and then tries to rape Fanny.

Justice Frolick: is an ignorant and irresponsible judge who commits Fanny Goodwill and Joseph Andrews to Bridewell on the say-so of Lady Booby.

Mrs. Grave-airs: has recently entered high society and refuses to ride in the same carriage with Joseph Andrews.

Horatio: is a young lawyer and the fiancé of Leonora until she rejects him for Bellarmine.

Lady storyteller : helps Parson Adams and the others in a coach pass the time by telling the tragic story of Leonora.

Leonora: is a beautiful and shallow young woman who ends up losing two suitors because of her own greed and propensity for change.

Mrs. Slipslop: is a gentlewoman-in-waiting for Lady Booby. She acts as if she were one of the gentry, and she is sexually attracted to Joseph Andrews.

Parson Trulliber: is a prosperous farmer who is a parson only on Sunday. He is so greedy that he refuses to loan Parson Adams 14 shillings. Adams says he is no Christian.

Joseph Andrews: A Mirror of the Eighteenth century English society

Major themes of Joseph Andrews are charity, corruption and moral hypocrisy in the society. According to him charity is the mark of a true Christian. Time and again, Joseph Andrews is portrayed as a victim of people's lack of charity and even downright wickedness. For example, he is fired from his job by Lady Booby for refusing to sleep with her, and then he is beaten within an inch of his life by robbers on the road. He is saved by some people in a stagecoach only because they fear getting sued.

Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews are the moral centres of the novel, and both make speeches about charity. Joseph says that he doesn't understand why there is so little charity among people or why people don't at least practice charity so that other people will honour or admire them. In Joseph's view, being honoured for charity is far superior to being admired for being rich or accomplished. He finds it strange that "all men should consent in commending goodness" but "no man endeavour[s] to deserve that commendation." Similarly, all rails against wickedness yet seem eager to carry out wicked deeds.

The people who are kind to Joseph outside his circle of acquaintances are members of the lower classes, since the upper classes are painted fairly broadly in the novel as lacking charity and compassion the novel the upper classes—called the high people or fashionable people—are consistently portrayed as immoral, while the low people, or people with no fashion,

are mostly portrayed as moral. Mr. Trulliber is exemplified the true nature of the high class people. He is the richest man in his parish, yet he refuses to loan Parson Adams 14 shillings for his debt with the innkeeper. Trulliber accuses Adams of trying to rob him and throws him out of his house after Parson Adams says he is no Christian. Trulliber has completely intimidated his wife, who calls him "her master," as well as all his parishioners, who are afraid of his wrath.

In this novel Fielding makes an attempt to criticize the corrupted clergymen. Two such men are Mr. Barnabas, the parson who comes to see Joseph on his hypothetical deathbed, and Mr. Trulliber, the prosperous pig farmer who is a parson only on Sunday. While Mr. Barnabas is not actively evil, he is a poor specimen of a Christian. He tells Joseph Andrews it is okay for him to hate the men who robbed him and even to kill them if he had the chance, because that is allowable by law, but he says Joseph must forgive the robbers as a Christian.

Joseph, who is still justifiably harbouring a lot of resentment against his attackers, asks in all sincerity what forgiveness is—what it would look like in such a situation. The parson, whose spiritual understanding is about as deep as the water in a shallow pan, answers, "Forgive them as—as—it is to forgive them as—in short, it is to forgive them as a Christian."

Questions

1. Discuss Fielding's characterization of Joseph Andrews
2. Role of chastity and the Christian Morality in the novel Joseph Andrews
3. Discuss the role of female characters in Joseph Andrews
4. Is Joseph Andrews a parody of Richardson's Pamela?

For Further Reading

Simon Varey: Joseph Andrews: A Satire of Modern Times
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<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/j/joseph-andrews>

ROBINSON CRUSOE: DANIEL DEFOE

Daniel Defoe (1659 -1731), the author of Robinson Crusoe, is the first conspicuous example of a writer graduating from journalism to literature. His first popular work was *The True – Born Englishman* (1701), a verse satire in which he attacked those who opposed King William III on the ground that he was Dutch and not English. His second important work was *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702). In this Defoe, himself a Dissenter, very gravely argued that the shortest way with the Dissenters would be to liquidate them. He started *The Review* (1704 -13), a periodical which was at first weekly, then bi- weekly, and finally tri – weekly, written practically all by himself. He turned to fiction when he was nearly sixty, and his world famous Robinson Crusoe was published in 1719. This was followed in the next five years by about a dozen other works of fiction, the most important being *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *A journal of the Plague Year*, *Colonel Jack*, *Roxana* and *the Memoirs of a Cavalier*. During the last years of his life his restless pen produced a number of miscellaneous works on travel, trade, commerce, and other subjects.

About the Novel

Robinson Crusoe is a novel by Daniel Defoe, first published on 25 April 1719. An interesting fact is that the original title was 374 characters long: “**The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoke; Having been cast**

on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates". The first edition credited the work's protagonist Robinson Crusoe as its author, leading many readers to believe he was a real person and the book a travelogue of true incidents. The story has been thought to be based on the life of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish castaway who lived for four years on a Pacific island called "Más a Tierra", now part of Chile, which was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island in 1966.

Despite its simple narrative style, Robinson Crusoe was well received in the literary world and is often credited as marking the beginning of realistic fiction as a literary genre. It is generally seen as a contender for the first English novel. Before the end of 1719, the book had already run through four editions, and it has gone on to become one of the most widely published books in history, spawning so many imitations, not only in literature but also in film, television and radio, that its name is used to define a genre, the Robinsonade.

Summary

Robinson Crusoe was a youth of about eighteen years old who resided in Hull, England. Although his father wished him to become a lawyer, Crusoe dreamt of going on sea voyages. He disregarded the fact that his two older brothers were gone because of their need for adventure. His father cautioned that a middle-class existence is the most stable. Robinson defied his parents and went to sea. He was involved in a series of violent storms at sea and was warned by the

captain that he should not be a seafaring man. Ashamed to go home, Crusoe boarded another ship and returned from a successful trip to Africa. Taking off again, Crusoe met with bad luck and was taken prisoner in Sallee. His captors sent Crusoe out to fish, and he used this to his advantage and escaped, along with a slave and sailed down the African coast. A kindly Portuguese captain picked them up, bought the slave boy from Crusoe, and took Crusoe to Brazil. In Brazil, Crusoe established himself as a plantation owner and soon became successful. Eager for slave labour and its economic advantages, he embarked on a slave-gathering expedition to West Africa but ends up shipwrecked off of the coast of Trinidad.

Crusoe made immediate plans for food, and then shelter, to protect himself from wild animals. He brought as many things as possible from the wrecked ship, things that would be useful later to him. In addition, he began to develop talents that he had never used in order to provide himself with necessities. Cut off from the company of men, he began to communicate with God, thus beginning the first part of his religious conversion. To keep his sanity and to entertain himself, he began a journal. In the journal, he recorded every task that he performed each day since he had been marooned.

He came to appreciate his sovereignty over the entire island. One time he tried to use a boat to explore the rest of the island, but he was almost swept away, and did not make the attempt again. He had pets whom he treated as subjects. There was no appearance of man until about 15 years into his stay. He saw a footprint, and later observed cannibalistic savages eating

prisoners. They didn't live on the island; they came in canoes from a mainland not too far away. Robinson was filled with outrage, and resolved to save the prisoners the next time these savages appear. Some years later they returned. Using his guns, Crusoe scared them away and saved a young savage whom he named Friday. Friday soon became Crusoe's humble and devoted slave.

Crusoe and Friday made plans to leave the island and, accordingly, they built another boat. Crusoe also undertook Friday's religious education, converting the savage into a Protestant. Their voyage was postponed due to the return of the savages. This time it was necessary to attack the cannibals in order to save two prisoners since one was a white man. The white man was a Spaniard and the other was Friday's father. Later the four of them planned a voyage to the mainland to rescue sixteen compatriots of the Spaniard. First, however, they built up their food supply to assure enough food for the extra people.

Crusoe and Friday agreed to wait on the island while the Spaniard and Friday's father brought back the other men. Before the Spaniard and Friday's father returned, a boat of European men came ashore. There were three prisoners. While most of the men were exploring the island, Crusoe learned from one that he was the captain of a ship whose crew mutinied. With the help of Robinson and Friday the captain managed to capture the rest of the crew and retook his ship. The grateful captain gave Crusoe many gifts and took him and Friday back to England. Some of the rebel crewmen were left

marooned on the island. Even though Crusoe had been gone thirty-five years, he found that his plantations had done well and he was very wealthy. He gave money to the Portuguese captain and the widow who were so kind to him. He returned to the English countryside and settled there, married and had three children. When his wife died, he was persuaded to go on yet another voyage, and he visited his old island.

Major Characters Robinson Crusoe

The main character of the story, he is a rebellious youth with abizarre need to travel. Because of this need, he brings misfortune on himself and is left to fend for himself in a primitive land. The novel essentially chronicles his mental and spiritual development as a result of his isolation. He is a contradictory character; at the same time he has practical ingenuity and immature decisiveness.

Xury

A friend/servant of Crusoe's, he also escapes from the Moors. A simple youth who is dedicated to Crusoe, he is admirable for his willingness to stand by the narrator. However, he does not think for himself.

Friday

Another friend/servant of Crusoe's, he spends a number of years on the island with him, who saves him from cannibalistic death. Friday is basically Crusoe's protégé, a living example of religious justification of the slavery relationship between the two men. His eagerness to be redone in the European image is supposed to convey that this image is

indeed the right one.

Crusoe's father

Although he appears only briefly in the beginning, he embodies the theme of the merits of Protestant, middle-class living. It is his teachings from which Crusoe is running, with poor success.

Crusoe's mother

One of the few female figures, she fully supports her husband and will not let Crusoe go on a voyage.

Moorish patron

Crusoe's slave master, he allows for a role reversal of white men as slaves. He apparently is not too swift, however, in that he basically hands Crusoe an escape opportunity.

Portuguese sea captain

One of the kindest figures in the book, he is an honest man who embodies all the Christian ideals. Everyone is supposed to admire him for his extreme generosity to the narrator. He almost takes the place of Crusoe's father.

Major Themes of the Novel

Spiritual journey towards Christianity is one of the major themes of Robinson Crusoe. In the beginning of the novel, Robinson disdains Christianity and leads a life that he later looks back on as wicked. He discounts his father's warning that God will not bless him if he goes to sea, and does not thank God when he is rescued from the storm on the way to

London, or by the Portuguese captain off the coast of Africa. However, after he dreams one night of a strange figure scolding him for not repenting, Robinson turns to Christianity on the island and eagerly studies the Bible. With his newfound Christianity, Robinson is never entirely alone on his island, because he can converse with God through prayer. Moreover, Christianity offers Robinson a way to make sense of his life and its various twists and turns. He sees his rebelling against his father as his original sin, for which he was then punished by being taken as a slave and then by being shipwrecked. However, he believed that he was blessed and saved by God by being saved from drowning and ending up on the island with enough provisions to survive.

Tension between society and individuality is one of the central themes of Robinson Crusoe. As the novel begins, Robinson breaks free of his family and the middle-class society in which they live in order to pursue his own life. Robinson prioritizes his sense of individuality over his family and society at large.

Robinson gets exactly what he asks for when he finds himself stranded alone on his island. There, he lives entirely as an individual apart from society and is forced to struggle against nature to survive. He becomes self-sufficient and learns how to make and do things himself, discovering ingenuity he didn't know he had. His lonely life helps him to understand the relationship between man and nature and also makes him a better person. Robinson himself seems to come to this conclusion, as he realizes that his experience brings him closer

to God and that living alone on the island allows for a life largely without sin: he makes, harvests, and hunts only what he needs, so there is nothing for him to be greedy for.

And while he is alone, he does not suffer from lust or pride. And when he finally does return to England, he notes how much worry and stress issues of money and property caused him. However, there are some problems with Robinson's valuing of individuality over society. Even though he values his personal liberty, he doesn't respect that of others. He hates being a slave, but is quick to sell Xury into the service of the Portuguese captain. Similarly, he treats Friday as his inferior servant. This maltreatment of others can be related as well to Robinson's narcissistic style of narration. His narrative is always centered around him. He hardly even gives the names of other characters. We never learn the name of his wife, for example, whose death Robinson describes quickly and unemotionally at the end of the novel before hastening to tell us more of his own adventures. And finally, Robinson's intense individualism is inseparable from his painful isolation. He feels lonely in Brazil, and then is literally isolated when he is stranded on his island all alone. His only companions are his animals and, while he learns to enjoy life on the island, he still feels a deep desire for the human companionship that he lacks. Thus, the novel values individuality, but also shows the dangers of narcissism and isolation that may come with it.

Questions

1. Discuss the major themes of the novel, *Robinson Crusoe*.
2. What are Crusoe's attitudes towards women in the latter part of the novel?
3. Is '*Robinson Crusoe*' a "picaresque" novel?
4. Why does Defoe portray the island originally as a place of captivity and then later as a desired destination?

For Further Reading

Blewett, David. *Defoe's Art of Fiction*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1979.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Robinson Crusoe*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1995. <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/r/robinson-crusoe/book-summary#:~:text=Daniel%20Defoe%20Biography-,Book%20Summary,a%20successful%20trip%20to%20Africa>.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/crusoe/> <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/521/521-h/521-h.htm>