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OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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INTRODUCING ENGLISH LITERATURE - I

**BA [ENGLISH]
[BEG-104]**



INTRODUCING ENGLISH LITERATURE-I

BA [English]

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E-28, Sector-8, Noida - 201301 (UP)

Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999

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SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Introducing English Literature-I

Syllabi

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George Herbert's – *The Pulley*

Andrew Marvell's – *To His Coy Mistress*

Shelley–*Prometheus Unbound*

Unit – C: Poetry

Alfred Lord Tennyson – *Break, Break, Break*

Thomas Hardy's – *The Darkling Thrush*

Louis MacNeice – *Prayer Before Birth*

Matthew Arnold – *Longing*

Unit – D: Short Stories

Guy de Maupassant – *The Necklace*

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Guy De Maupassant

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Unit – E: Literary Terms

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Hyperbole, Epithet, Transferred Epithet, Epigram, Synecdoche,

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INTRODUCTION

Literature symbolizes people, culture and tradition. It guides us towards a world full of experience and helps us evolve ourselves through its literary journey. It speaks to us in its various forms such as short story, poetry, drama, prose, fiction and so forth.

William Wordsworth has defined poetry ‘as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’. The most prominent era of English poetry and prose was the Victorian era. During this period, poets and novelists wrote some of the most enduring literature. Alfred Lord Tennyson is the most representative poet of the Victorian age. This period marked the beginning of English poetry, which continued through the Romantic period and reached an all-time high in the eighteenth century. The Romantic period in English poetry was shaped by a multitude of political, social and economic changes. Some of the prominent poets of this period were Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats and P. B. Shelley.

Short stories owe their popularity to their brevity. These stories can be read without breaks, in a single sitting. A short story can be read even on a short journey because it does not require too much time. No matter how busy you are, you would always have the time to read a short story. In fact, a short story, even with its limited length, is able to achieve what a novel does. This is the very reason why it is more challenging to write a short story than a novel. The author cannot afford to devote pages and pages introducing the main theme or the main characters. He has to make the story interesting, without sounding abrupt and achieve a lot more using fewer words. In addition, short stories are easier to understand and assimilate.

This book, *Introducing English Literature-I*, familiarizes the students with poems written by Robert Burns, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Shelley, Tennyson, Thomas Hardy, Louis MacNeice and Matthew Arnold. In addition, students will also read short stories written by Maupassant, Anton Chekhov and Graham Greene; along with an introduction to the significant literary terms generally found in English literature. This book has been written in the self-instructional mode (SIM) wherein each unit begins with an ‘Introduction’ to the topic followed by an outline of the ‘Unit Objectives’. The detailed content is then presented in a simple and an organized manner, interspersed with ‘Check Your Progress’ questions to test the understanding of the students. A ‘Summary’ along with a list of ‘Key Terms’ and a set of ‘Questions and Exercises’ is also provided at the end of each unit for effective recapitulation.

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UNIT 1 POETRY-I

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Robert Burns: An Introduction
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Robert Burns is widely regarded as the pioneer of Romantic movement and after his death became a cultural icon not only in Scotland but around the world. His works cover a wide range of topics, including love, social commentary and satirical attacks on the Church and establishment. *A Red, Red Rose* is a love song which reveals the poet's highs and lows in his emotional affairs. A deeper reading of the poem brings forth a number of other themes that run through the poem.

George Herbert is generally reckoned as one of the greatest metaphysical poets. He uses language in an open, unassertive way, while simultaneously achieving concentration of meaning in poetry. Herbert's writing inspired Vaughan and Crashaw in writing poetry. In *The Pulley*, Herbert creates a fable about God's creation of the world.

Andrew Marvell is a famous poet of the seventeenth century. He is famous for writing political satire and lyrical verse. *To His Coy Mistress* is his most celebrated poem which exhibits the distinct traits of metaphysical poetry.

P. B. Shelley was a foremost romantic and lyric poet of the nineteenth century. Shelley's four-act lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* was first published in 1820 which portrayed the suffering of the Greek mythological character Prometheus. It was Zeus who made him suffer due to the punishment to which he was sentenced to punishment for eternity. In this unit, you will study the poems written by Robert Burns, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell and P. B. Shelley.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Assess the effect of the French Revolution on Burns' writings
 - Describe *A Red, Red Rose* as a love song written by Robert Burns
 - Discuss George Herbert and Andrew Marvell as metaphysical poets
 - Describe *Prometheus Unbound* as a lyrical drama written by P. B. Shelley
-

1.2 ROBERT BURNS: AN INTRODUCTION

Robert Burns (25 January 1759 – 21 July 1796) is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. He was a poet and lyricist best known for poems written in English and a light Scots dialect, accessible to an audience beyond Scotland. A lot of his poetry comprises original compositions, but he also collected folk songs from across Scotland, often revising or adapting them. Thus, his work is also a repository of the folk heritage of Scotland. *A Red, Red Rose* is a famous poem. His works reveal the emotional highs and lows he felt and have consequently led to the belief that he had bipolar disorder. In fact, the poet himself said that he suffered from 'blue devilism'.

His poetry is a political and civil commentary on the events of the times. In many ways, he is a pioneer of the Romantic movement since his concerns with oppression, freedom and the impact of changes on the rural landscape are reflected in the works of other poets. He is also seen as a source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism. He is a proto Romantic poet who influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley greatly. He also influenced Scottish poets like Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. It is interesting to note that there was a conscious attempt by the Edinburgh literati to project Burns as a poet of the lower classes, as a 'heaven-taught ploughman'. In fact, a conscious attempt was made to dismiss his education and its impact on his work and style. It was only later that poets like Hugh MacDiarmid tried to dismantle this sentimental cult with respect to Burns, especially in Scottish literature. His style is direct and is marked by spontaneity and sincerity. The tone is tender, humorous as in *Tom O'Shanter* and sometimes even satirical, for example, in *The Holy Fair*. Some of his poems like *Love and Liberty* are in English as well as Scottish dialect. His poetry reflects his knowledge of classical literature as well as his knowledge of the Bible and English literary traditions. He is the creator of the first modern vernacular style in British poetry.

Burns lived during the period of the French Revolution and this influenced his poetry. The theme of republicanism in his work can be attributed to this influence. His poetry is also very radical and a poem like *Scots, Wha Hae* is proof of this aspect. Other themes like Scottish patriotism, anticlericalism, class inequalities, gender roles, commentary on the Church of Scotland (Scottish Kirk) of his time, Scottish cultural identity, poverty, sexuality, and the beneficial aspects of popular socializing (carousing, Scotch whisky and folk songs) are also found in his poetry.

During the final years of his life he worked for James Johnson's *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787–1803) project to preserve traditional Scottish songs for the future. In

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this endeavour he recorded nearly 300 songs, *Auld Lang Syne*, being the most famous. He also collaborated on a similar endeavour with George Thomson for his anthology *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice*, but they often disagreed on the type of songs that ought to be included in the volumes. He wrote to a friend, ‘What to me appears to be the simple and the wild, to him, and I suspect to you likewise, will be looked on as the ludicrous and the absurd.’

The same seems to have been the case with *A Red, Red Rose*. In his book Pierro Urbani claims that Burns gave him the words for the poem. He was struck by the words when he heard a country girl sing it. He copied it down and wanted Urbani to set it to a Scottish tune.

Urbani published the song to an original tune that he wrote. He later included the poem in his book *Scots Song*. In fact, Burns also refers to the poem as ‘a simple old Scots song which I had picked up in the country.’ The song first appeared in Johnson’s Museum in 1797 to the tune of Niel Gow’s *Major Graham*. This was the tune that Burns himself had wanted his song to be sung to. The song appeared in Thomson’s *Scottish Airs* in 1799 where it was set to William Marshall’s Wishaw’s lyric *And fare thee weel awhile*. The song became extremely popular when it was paired with *Low Down in the Broom* by Robert Archibald Smith in his *Scottish Minstrel Book* in 1821. This form is the most popular arrangement even today.



Fig 1.1 Robert Burns

1.2.1 *A Red, Red Rose*: Text and Explanation

*O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O my Luve's like the melodie,
That's sweetly play'd in tune.*

*As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.*

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Check Your Progress

1. When and where was Robert Burns born?
2. Which revolution affected Burn's writings?

*Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
 And I will luve thee still, my dear,
 While the sands o' life shall run.
 And fare-thee-weel, my only Luve!
 And fare-thee-weel, a while!
 And I will come again, my Luve,
 Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile!*

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Explanation

Literary critic David Daiches describes Burns as ‘the greatest songwriter Britain has produced’ and calls the poem a ‘combination of tenderness and swagger’. According to him, Burns’ work facilitated in refurbishing and improving traditional Scots songs.

While the similes and metaphors on love are not unique it is their cumulative effect that makes this poem effective. As the song progresses, the metaphors to describe love and its depth become more detailed and reflect the growing love. The fact that this is done through the use of relatively simple images only serves to give freshness to the poem. The poem is indicative of true depth of feeling of love and the effect on the speaker. As this emotion grows it only draws the listener/reader into the emotional world of the song. In the poem, the speaker compares his love to a rose. In the beginning of the poem, the rose is newly sprung, tiny and fragile. However, as the poem progresses we see a change. This transformation reflects the various stages of love – in the beginning it is fresh and vulnerable. This is indicative of the beauty and excitement of the first stages of tender love blossoming. The tiny rose is reflective of the blossoming emotion of new love.

In other words, just as nature blossoms in June, similarly the beginning of the poem refers to the first spark when love begins in the heart. Just as a newly sprung rose is fragile similarly, the speaker’s emotions are fragile since he is not sure what the beloved feels or whether it will survive. However, the tone is optimistic, after all it is springtime and all is fresh and glowing. The word ‘newly’ suggests an intimacy of emotion. The feelings of love are fresh and perhaps the speaker has not had time to come to terms with them and recognize and accept them for what they are. The speaker then goes on to compare his love with melody. A melody is played on an instrument and so can be accessed again and again. In other words, there is a degree of permanence in the emotion the speaker feels and he cherishes it. The melody is also self-reflective and calls attention to the fact that the emotion is expressed in a song about love. This self-reflective mess of the poem further heightens the emotion the speaker feels and makes it truer and more immediate. Again a tune survives only if it is played and listened to, in other words, it requires a player and an audience. Similarly, love survives only if there is an object of affection and somebody to shower that affection. In this way, the beloved becomes a living presence in the song. And the emotion instead of being a fragile entity that needs to be protected becomes a flourishing emotion that is given and received willingly.

In the second stanza, the beloved makes an appearance in the song. ‘My bonnie lass’ is, in fact, the listener of the song. At this point of the poem, the speaker addresses

the vanity of the beloved by suggesting that his love is as pure as the beloved is fair. At this point in the poem even though the love is not as fragile as a tiny rose, the speaker is still not confident of the beloved's emotions and feels the need to flatter her. At the same time, the personal tone here is suggestive of the fact that this love has formed an intimate bond between the two of them. The tone of the next two lines is markedly different. Here, the speaker suggests that he loves the beloved not because she is beautiful but due to the facts that she is the centre of his existence. This idea is suggested by the fact that the tone becomes serious and he says that his love will transcend time and change. The speaker says that he will continue loving the beloved even when the seas are dry of water. In other words, his feelings for her are strong and will withstand the changes time will wreck on her visage. He will still love her when the bloom of youth ends and she is a dry old crone. This takes us back to the image of the rose and the fragility of the rose gains significance.

In the beginning, it suggested transience and hinted at an emotion about which the speaker is not sure. This is no longer the case and now the fragility of the rose is transformed into an emotion which is strong and eternal. This fragility becomes strength. In other words, love, while a fragile emotion, gives strength and paradoxically is strength. The fact that the nature of the love the speaker feels has changed is highlighted by the fact that the line 'Till a' the seas gang dry.' Here, the idea is that the love will survive till the seas go dry but also beyond a time when the rocks exposed by the drying sea melt in the heat of the relentless sun. In other words, this love will never die but will keep on growing. Again one must note the increasing strength of the love the speaker feels for the beloved. The last lines of the third verse are illustrative. Here, the speaker abandons the hyperbole of the earlier lines and the poem looks back at itself. The speaker suggests that his feelings will not change as long as he lives and no matter what life throws at him. This is a deeper expression of his emotions than the earlier similes because it acknowledges that the path of love is not always easy. Here, the speaker acknowledges that life throws challenges but even these will not deter or alter his emotions. And this is the truest expression of the poet.

The final verse is the tender farewell scene and puts the poem in perspective. This is not an ordinary love song sung to woo the beloved. Instead it is a song sung at the time of parting to convince both the speaker and the beloved of the truth of emotions that the speaker feels. The last few lines prior to these now acquire greater depth. The speaker is suggesting that even though he is leaving at this point of time, his feelings will remain unchanged.

1.3 GEORGE HERBERT: AN INTRODUCTION

George Herbert was born on 3 April 1593. He was the fifth son in a famous Welsh family. Herbert's mother, Magdalen Newport, is known to be a patron of the eminent literary writer John Donne. It is believed that Donne dedicated his *Holy Sonnets* to her.

George Herbert could not enjoy his father's company for long. His father died when George was only three-years old. As a result, Magdalen was entrusted with the responsibility to raise ten children, all on her own. She was confident that she will be able

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Check Your Progress

3. Who described Burns as the greatest songwriter of Britain?
4. In the poem, *A Red, Red Rose*, how does the speaker refer to his beloved?

to educate and provide a healthy upbringing to her children. At the age of ten, Herbert went to study at Westminster School. Later on, he won scholarships at Trinity College, Cambridge.

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

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

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



Fig 1.2 George Herbert

Conceit and metaphysical conceit

The word 'conceit' means 'a concept or an image'. In simpler terms, it is a figure of speech that brings out interesting or striking comparison between two different things, or situations or ideas to create a new concept. The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit: (a) the Petrarchan

conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit. We will more or less focus on metaphysical conceit that was mainly employed by the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century like John Donne, Andrew Marvell and George Herbert.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Major literary works

The well-known literary works of George Herbert are the following:

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<i>A Dialogue-Anthem</i>	<i>Heaven</i>	<i>The British Church</i>
<i>A True Hymn</i>	<i>Jordan (I)</i>	<i>The Call</i>
<i>A Wreath</i>	<i>Jordan (II)</i>	<i>The Church-floor</i>
<i>Aaron</i>	<i>Joseph's Coat</i>	<i>The Collar</i>
<i>Affliction (I)</i>	<i>Life</i>	<i>The Dawning</i>
<i>Affliction (II)</i>	<i>Love (I)</i>	<i>The Elixir</i>
<i>Affliction (III)</i>	<i>Love (II)</i>	<i>The Foil</i>
<i>Affliction (IV)</i>	<i>Love (III)</i>	<i>The Glance</i>
<i>Antiphon (I)</i>	<i>Love-Joy</i>	<i>The Holdfast</i>
<i>Christmas</i>	<i>Man</i>	<i>The Holy Scriptures I</i>
<i>Church-music</i>	<i>Mary Magdalen</i>	<i>The Holy Scriptures II</i>
<i>Colossians 3.3</i>	<i>Mortification</i>	<i>The Pearl</i>
<i>Death</i>	<i>Peace</i>	<i>The Pilgrimage</i>
<i>Dialogue</i>	<i>Prayer (I)</i>	<i>The Pulley</i>
<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Prayer (II)</i>	<i>The Quiddity</i>
<i>Dullness</i>	<i>Redemption</i>	<i>The Quip</i>
<i>Easter</i>	<i>Sepulchre</i>	<i>The Search</i>
<i>Easter Wings</i>	<i>Sinne (I)</i>	<i>The Sinner</i>
<i>Even-song</i>	<i>Sinne (II)</i>	<i>The Son</i>
<i>Faith</i>	<i>Vanity (I)</i>	<i>The Storm</i>
<i>Grief</i>	<i>Virtue</i>	<i>The Temper (I)</i>
<i>H. Baptisme (I)</i>	<i>The Agony</i>	<i>The Temper (II)</i>
<i>H. Baptisme (II)</i>	<i>The Answer</i>	<i>The Windows</i>

1.3.1 The Pulley: Text and Explanation

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

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

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

*'For if I should,' said he,
'Bestow this jewel also on my creature,*

Check Your Progress

5. What are the salient features of George Herbert's poetry?
6. Name the major poems written by George Herbert.

*He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;
So both should losers be.*

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

Explanation

In this famous poem by George Herbert, an analogy is drawn between a pulley and Pandora's box. As the Pandora's box keeps all the evils of the world, anyone who opens it only takes the risk of spreading all the evil contained in the box and this process cannot be undone. Whereas in the poem *The Pulley*, Herbert suggests that God controls everyone through a metaphorical pulley so that God can keep man under control and pull on a man to come to his salvation; hence, denying him the temptation not to undo the Pandora's box. The very initial lines of the poem, state that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

To elaborate further, if the man worships the gifts and not God, then both man and God are unsuccessful in their intentions. Man did not realize that God is the ultimate being and creator and he should not forget God while lingering after the gifts that God has given him. Moreover, God too failed because he did not give that wisdom to man to understand as to what he should worship. Thus, man choses a different path and moves further away from God. Each of them are definitely unsuccessful because the man

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chooses to go after something not pious and not precious as God had originally intended. However, this is the choice which each and every human must decide upon, because, needless to say, Pandora's box is extremely tempting but it is up to man to realize that God is doing everything that he can do out of his love for humanity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3.2 Myth and Conceit in *The Pulley*

Many critics consider the poem, *The Pulley*, containing a myth of origins. Yet many others suggest that it is a moral and spiritual fable. However, both these genres overlap because of the way the poem is presented. According to Herbert, someone's devotional

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.3.3 George Herbert and Metaphysical Conceit

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

*When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,*

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'Let us,' said he, 'pour on him all we can:
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.'

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

1.3.4 Notion of Sleep and *The Pulley*

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

One can come across numerous Shakespearian plays which speak about sleep or denial of it as a result of some punishment or due to some heinous sins committed. For example, in *Macbeth*, King Macbeth is said to 'lack the season of all natures, sleep' while both he and Lady Macbeth are tortured due to lack of sleep. If we consider the case of Othello, we realize that even he is disconcerted by the fact that he is not being able to sleep peacefully. Especially, once Iago tries to poison him with a remote possibility that his wife might be infidel to him and preferring Cassio over him. Hence, considering the poem in this context, we realize Herbert's *The Pulley* does not provide us with any new concept. Rather, the ideas presented in the poem are extremely commonplace, especially, if we consider for seventeenth century religious poems that were composed by Herbert and his contemporaries. Though the most distinctive feature of this metaphysical poem is the religious tone it conveys through a secular as well scientific image that not just requires the reader's friendliness with the subject matter but also expects certain knowledge of some basic laws of physical sciences.

1.4 ANDREW MARVELL

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

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

- Poems which, for the most part, belong to the years 1650–1652
- Satires, which he wrote on public men and public affairs during the reign of Charles II

Check Your Progress

7. What is the theme of the poem, *The Pulley*?
8. What are the gifts bestowed by God on man in *The Pulley*?

- Newsletters, which he regularly addressed to his constituents in Hull after his election as Member of Parliament for that borough in 1659 and which extend from 1660 to the time of his death in 1678
- His controversial Essays on ecclesiastical questions written at intervals between 1672 and 1677

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Fig 1.3 Andrew Marvell

1.4.1 Poet of Nature

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

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

Here he identifies himself with the birds and growing things:

*Thus I, easy philosopher,
Among the birds and trees confer.*

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

'Under this antic cope I move,
Like some great prelate of the grove.'

In more than forty stanzas of this poem Marvell shows that he is familiar with all aspects of the countryside, the trees and birds and that he has attentively listened to and compared the songs of birds. He feels so happy and peaceful in the midst of these scenes of nature that he calls upon the trees and the plants to cling to him and not to let him leave this place:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.4.2 Poet of Love

Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature. His love poems include *The Fair Singer*, *The Definition of Love*, *To His Coy Mistress*, *Young Love*, *The Unfortunate Lover*, *The Picture of Little T.C.*, *The Mower to the Glow-worms*, and *Damon the Mower*. Then there are poems in which the theme of love occurs as a subsidiary subject, poems like *Upon Appleton*

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House and *The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn*. According to one critic, the least satisfactory of the poems of Marvell are those whose theme is love. In the opinion of this critic, Marvell's love poetry has, with the exception of *To His Coy Mistress*, as little passion as Cowley's, while it is as full of conceits. *The Unfortunate Lover*, says this critic, is probably the worst love poem ever written by a man of genius, while *The Definition of Love* is merely a study in the manner of Donne's *Valediction Against Mourning*. Cleverer and more original and somewhat more successful, is *The Gallery*. The two opposite sides of one long picture gallery into which the chambers of the lover's heart have been thrown by breaking down partitions are supposed to be covered with portraits of his lady. On the one side she is drawn in such characters as Aurora and Venus and on the other as an enchanteress and a murderess.

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

In certain respect, Marvell, in his love poems, adopts the established Petrarchan approach, while in other his treatment of love, like his technique or style of expression, is wholly unconventional. The Petrarchan mode, which became very popular with the Elizabethan poets, was to exalt the beloved and to shower glowing and eloquent praises on her beauty and charm. The Petrarchan lover was given to sighing and weeping over the indifference and callousness of his beloved and over the disappointment he felt as a consequence of her attitude. Now, we have these Petrarchan elements in at least three of Marvell's love poems, namely, *The Fair Singer*, *To His Coy Mistress*, and *The Unfortunate Lover*. In the first of these poems, the lover praises the beauty of his mistress's eyes and voice in extravagant terms, and speaks of her total and complete conquest over his mind and heart. In *To His Coy Mistress*, the lover speaks of the beauty of his mistress' limbs in exaggerated terms, asserting that he needs hundreds and thousands of years to be able to praise them adequately. In *The Unfortunate Lover*, the lover has learnt from the winds and the waves to sigh and to shed tears.

In these three poems, the passion of the lover is as intense as in any Elizabethan love poem. The statement that Marvell's love poems are cold is certainly not true of these three poems. In *The Fair Singer*, the lover says that both beauties of his mistress (the beauty of her eyes and the beauty of her voice) have joined themselves in fatal harmony to bring about his death, and that with her eyes she binds his heart, and with her voice she captivates his mind. He then goes on to speak of the 'curled trammels of her hair' in which his soul has got entangled, and the subtle art with which she can weave fetters for him of the very air he breathes. If a lover can thus speak about his feelings, we cannot say that he is a cold kind of lover. In the poem *To His Coy Mistress*, the passion is equally ardent. While the lover adopts a witty and somewhat sarcastic manner of speaking in the first two stanzas, he becomes truly ardent and spirited in his passion in the last stanza. In this final stanza, he becomes almost fierce in his passion when he suggests that he and she should roll all their strength and all their sweetness up into one ball and should tear their pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life. In *The*

Unfortunate Lover also the passion is intense, almost red-hot. The lover here is hit by 'all the winged artillery of cupid' and, like Ajax, finds himself between the 'flames and the waves'. The lover is then depicted as one 'dressed in his own blood'. It is true that the unfortunate man's plight in love is only briefly described because his other misfortunes too form an important part of his story, but his love is certainly not of the lukewarm kind. It is his disappointment in love which constitutes his real tragedy and which brings his life to a painful close.

In the other poems, the passion of love is certainly not very intense, and therefore, T. S. Eliot is right in speaking of 'a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace'. The intellectual element in some of the poems is so strong so as to push the passion of love into the background. These poems have an argumentative quality which has the effect of diminishing the passion. In such poems, the lover feels his love to be very strong. No doubt he gets so entangled in arguing his case that the passion is almost forgotten. *The Definition of Love* is an outstanding example of the argumentative love-lyric. The poem begins with a highly intellectual conceit. His love, says the poet, was begotten by 'despair upon impossibility'. 'Magnanimous despair' alone could show him so divine a thing as his love. He could have achieved the fruition of his love, but fate drove iron wedges and thrust itself between him and the fulfillment of his love. The poet then goes on to say that fate grows jealous of two perfect lovers and does not permit their union because the union of two lovers would mean the downfall of the power of fate. Fate, the poet goes on to say, has placed him as far away from his beloved as the two poles are from each other, that is, the North Pole and the South Pole. This love can be fulfilled only if the earth undergoes some new convulsion and if the world is cramped into a plan sphere. The poet next compares his own love and his mistress' love to parallel lines which can never meet even if stretched to infinity. Finally, the poet describes the love between him and his mistress as the 'conjunction of the mind' and the 'opposition of the stars'. The whole poem is a kind of logically developed argument in which the passion itself is almost forgotten and the speaker's chief concern is to establish the utter hopelessness of true love, the villain in the case being fate. The conceits in the poem are audaciously far-fetched. It is a learned poem in which every subject of the academic trivia is exploited in turn. Marvell, here, has made the fullest use of the logic which he had learnt at Cambridge. Geometry and astronomy are pressed into the service of logic here. It is a thoroughly unconventional kind of love poem and it occupies a unique position in the whole range of English love poetry.

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

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

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

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

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The poem speaks of the strong love of the first Fairfax for Miss Thwait whom he was able ultimately to win as his bride in spite of the opposition of the nuns and her own excessive modesty, as related in the poem, *Upon Appleton House*. In these two poems, however, the passion of love is not much dwelt upon; it is merely indicated and we have ourselves to imagine its intensity.

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

1.4.3 Elements of Wit in Marvell's Poetry

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

Wit in the sense of the capacity to amuse or entertain by employing words in unexpected combinations or by means of unexpected comparisons and contrasts or by means of ingenious ideas is to be found to a most striking degree in Marvell's poem *To His Coy Mistress*. We are here amused, in the opening passage, by the very idea that, if the lovers had enough space and enough time, the mistress could easily search for rubies by the Indian Ganges, and the lover could complain by the banks of the river Humber in England. We are amused by the idea that the lover would love her from ten years before the Flood, and that she could refuse his love till the conversion of the Jews; and that the lover would be able to spend hundreds and thousands of years in praising the beauty of the mistress's limbs. Here 'wit' arises from what is known as hyperbole or an exaggerated manner of speaking. The notions stated by the lover here tickle our minds and we smile with amusement. In the second stanza, we have an example of wit in the lover's remark that, in the grave, worms would try the long-preserved virginity of the mistress. Here wit arises from the very unexpectedness of the possibility which the lover visualizes because ordinarily we never think of worms in the context of the seduction of a woman. Then the lover makes another witty observation when he says that the grave is a fine and private place but that nobody can enjoy the pleasure of embracing his beloved there. Here, we are amused by the lover's sarcastic remark.

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

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

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

Then we come to Marvell's use of wit in the sense of unexpected metaphors, the putting together of heterogeneous ideas and images and ingenious or far-fetched notions. Actually, the wit in the poem *To His Coy Mistress* proceeds from conceits of this kind, because Marvell makes use of certain fantastic assumptions such as the lovers having enough time and space at their disposal. Nevertheless, all metaphysical conceits are not witty in the sense of having the capacity to amuse or entertain. We have, for instance, a metaphysical conceit in the poem *On a Drop of Dew*, but the conceit here is of a kind that produces the effect of sublimity. The conceit in this poem lies in the connection which the poet establishes between a dew drop and the human soul, a connection which normally we would never think of. The poet here first describes a dew drop lying lightly on a rose petal, and then expresses the unexpected idea that the dew drop is gazing wistfully upon the sky, and is shining with a mournful light because it feels sad at having been separated from heaven. In this context, the dew drop is 'like its own tear'. Then the poet proceeds to describe the human soul which also, according to him, feels sad in this world because it recollects its original abode in heaven. Both the dew drop and the soul will ultimately dissolve, like Manna (mentioned in the Bible), and 'run into the glories of the Almighty Sun.' In this poem, the word 'wit', therefore, means a fantastic and far-fetched notion or idea or comparison.

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

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

1.4.4 *To His Coy Mistress*: Text and Explanation

In *To His Coy Mistress* a lover addresses his beloved who refuses to grant him sexual favours on account of her modesty and her sense of honour. The lover says that her coyness or sexual reluctance would have been justified if they had enough space and time at their disposal. If they had enough space at their disposal, she could have occupied herself by searching for rubies on the banks of the Indian river, the Ganga, while he would complain about his unfulfilled love on the banks of the river Humber in England. If they had enough time at their disposal, he would have started loving her ten years before the great flood (mentioned in the Bible) while she could refuse to satisfy his desire till the Judgment Day when the Jews might agree to be converted to Christianity. If they really had enough time, he would spend a hundred years in praising her eyes and gazing on her forehead; he would spend two hundred years in admiring each of her breasts; and he would spend thirty thousand years in praising the remaining parts of her body. She really deserves so much praise and adoration, says the lover.

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

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

Had we but world enough and time,

This coyness, lady, were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way

To walk, and pass our long love's day.

Check Your Progress

9. Which aspects of nature does Marvell describe in *Upon Appleton House*?
10. Give examples of sensuous images of nature from *The Garden* by Marvell.
11. What Petrarchan elements do we see in Marvell's poems?

*Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
 Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
 Of Humber would complain. I would
 Love you ten years before the flood,
 And you should, if you please, refuse
 Till the conversion of the Jews.
 My vegetable love should grow
 Vaster than empires and more slow;
 An hundred years should go to praise
 Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
 Two hundred to adore each breast,
 But thirty thousand to the rest;
 An age at least to every part,
 And the last age should show your heart.
 For, lady, you deserve this state,
 Nor would I love at lower rate.*

*But at my back I always hear
 Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
 And yonder all before us lie
 Deserts of vast eternity.
 Thy beauty shall no more be found;
 Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
 My echoing song; then worms shall try
 That long-preserved virginity,
 And your quaint honour turn to dust,
 And into ashes all my lust;
 The grave's a fine and private place,
 But none, I think, do there embrace.*

*Now therefore, while the youthful hue
 Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
 And while thy willing soul transpires
 At every pore with instant fires,
 Now let us sport us while we may,
 And now, like amorous birds of prey,
 Rather at once our time devour
 Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
 Let us roll all our strength and all
 Our sweetness up into one ball,
 And tear our pleasures with rough strife
 Through the iron gates of life:
 Thus, though we cannot make our sun
 Stand still, yet we will make him run.*

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Explanation

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

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

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

Here, an abstract idea has been made concrete by means of a metaphor, and this is a realistic picture in contrast to the metaphysical conceits noted above, though there is a conceit in the image of Time as having a winged chariot. The pictures of the woman lying in her grave and the worms attacking her long preserved virginity and her honour turning to dust are conceits because worms are regarded here as being capable of seducing a woman and a dead woman at that. Then we have metaphysical conceits in the concluding stanza, where the mistress's willing soul is depicted as giving out instant fires at every pore and the lovers are imagined as rolling their strength and their sweetness into one ball and tearing their pleasures with rough strife through the iron gates of life.

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

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

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

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

Important stanzas for explanation

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

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

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

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

1.5 PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY: AN INTRODUCTION

Percy Bysshe Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822) was radical in his poetry as well as his political and social views. He is well-known for his poems such as *Ozymandias*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *To a Skylark*, *Music*, *The Cloud* and *The Masque of Anarchy*. His other major works include long visionary poems such as *Queen Mab*, *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Adonais* and the visionary verse dramas, such as *The Cenci* (1819) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1820).

Shelley studied at University College, Oxford. *Zastrozzi* (1810) 'a gothic novel' was his first published work. Shelley published his second gothic novel, *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian*, in 1811 and in the same year, a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism* was also published. The revolutionary ideas in the pamphlet led to his expulsion

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Check Your Progress

12. What does the term *carpe diem* imply?
13. What is the lover trying to convey to his beloved in *To His Coy Mistress*?

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from Oxford on 25 March 1811. After a few months of being expelled from Oxford, on 28 August 1811, Shelley, then nineteen years old, eloped with a sixteen year-old girl Harriet Westbrook to Scotland. Though initially Shelley was exuberant about Harriet Westbrook, but as days passed he became increasingly unhappy in his marriage to Harriet. Subsequently, on 28 July 1814, Shelley abandoned her and ran away to Switzerland with Mary who was the daughter of William Godwin (Shelley's mentor, the revolutionary writer) and Mary Wollstonecraft (often considered as the first feminist writer). He lived the next part of his life with Mary and they lived close to London; and at this period Shelley wrote the following poems: *Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude*, and so on. (Mary Shelley herself was a famous writer and the novel *Frankenstein* is her great achievement where she criticizes the revolutionary spirit of the Romantic poets.) P. B. Shelley's major writing in this period, when he was with Mary, was *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City* which was later edited and republished as *The Revolt of Islam* in 1818. In 1818, Shelley also began the long lyrical play *Prometheus Unbound*. It was completed when the poet was in Rome.



Fig 1.4 Percy Bysshe Shelley

1.5.1 *Prometheus Unbound*

Percy Bysshe Shelley's four-act lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* was first published in 1820 which portrayed the suffering of the Greek mythological character Prometheus. It was Zeus who made him suffer due to the punishment to which he was sentenced to for eternity. Shelley's play was inspired by the classical work, *Prometheia*, a trilogy of plays which is usually attributed to the classical Greek dramatist Aeschylus. What Shelley is doing is not a translation or transliteration of Aeschylus' plays; he is taking the basic plot of Prometheus from the Greek source to treat it according to the demands of the romantic era. When one compares Shelley's play with Aeschylus, we see that there are vast differences between the two of them. Shelley borrowed only that part of the play from the Greek source which was essential for him to convey the message of how Prometheus is a rebellious figure, who rebelled against the tyranny of Zeus. Shelley's play deals with Prometheus' release from captivity which is unlike Aeschylus' plays. In Shelley's work, there is no reconciliation between Prometheus and Jupiter (Zeus); instead, Jupiter is overthrown, which allows Prometheus to be released.

Shelley's lyrical play is not meant to be performed on stage; instead it can be termed as a closet drama, which is staged in the mind of the readers. In other words, we can say that the imagination of the readers will make them visualize the play in their minds while reading the same. *Prometheus Unbound* is a play which is meant to be read rather than staged. Though the format of the text is that of a play, it is usually considered to be one of the best lyrical poetry ever written.

'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world' – this critical statement of Shelley itself points out what he thought to be the role of the poet in society. The poet, according to Shelley, is always striving for the ideal, trying to always provide a better model from the then society so that people have a better life due to wisdom that has been garnered over the ages. They are like the legislators who are always striving towards proving a better society; but the poet's contribution of new ideas of society often goes unacknowledged which makes Shelley term the poets as 'unacknowledged legislators.' Shelley's poems deal with the ideal (a better world, a utopian world) and therefore, make a critique of the existing society by exposing the pitfalls that ought to be addressed and rectified. The revolutionary characters, whether Satan or Prometheus, become heroic for Shelley as they question the tyranny of the existing order and try to come up with a better world. In choosing Prometheus as the hero for his lyrical drama, Shelley is choosing the theme of questioning the tyrannical authority which is in keeping with the rebellious spirit of the French Revolution (1789).

Text and Explanation

Act I

Act I of *Prometheus Unbound* begins in the Indian mountain Caucasus. The chief character Prometheus is chained to a rock in the mountain Caucasus as he is surrounded by the Oceanides, Panthea and Ione. The suffering Prometheus, in the beginning of the play, makes us sympathetic towards him as the educated readers of Shelley already are acquainted with the character. As soon as the pitiable state of the protagonist is shown, immediately the readers' sympathies are drawn towards him. As the day breaks, the Greek Titan Prometheus cries out against the 'Monarch of Gods and Daemons', Jupiter, and his tyranny which is making him suffer in this manner. His vexation against God Jupiter, even while he is being trapped and bound by him, makes us look up to him and the cause for which he is suffering. Prometheus proclaims that even though he is being chained by Jupiter, he is greater and nobler than him. Prometheus narrates his tale of suffering to the earth, heaven, sun, sea, and shadow. He tells how nature has aided in his suffering as his flesh is constantly torn by 'Heaven's winged hound' that is, the hawks of Jupiter:

*No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, forever!*

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As Prometheus carries on relating his tale of suffering, four voices, from the mountains, springs, air, and whirlwinds, respond to him by describing how they see the world and how:

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We shrank back: for dreams of ruin

To frozen caves our flight pursuing

Made us keep silence

Following this, the Earth proclaims how the whole world is aware of the woeful tale of Prometheus and his suffering and knows how unjust it is to suffer in this manner. They cry out 'Misery' as they perceive Prometheus suffering.

Prometheus reflects on the voices that he listens to and then again returns to his own tale of suffering (how Jupiter is making him suffer) and recalls his love for Asia. After sometime, Prometheus asks earth to repeat his curse against Jupiter (so the audience/readers comes to know), and the earth is made to tell Prometheus:

I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King

Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain

More torturing than the one whereon I roll.

The earth also relates to Prometheus that he is 'more than God / being wise and kind'. Prometheus further asks who she is talking about. The earth says that she is the mother of all who suffered and is suffering under Jupiter's tyranny. Listening to this, Prometheus starts praising earth, but again stresses on the fact that she should recall the curse that he had laid upon Jupiter. The earth responds to Prometheus by describing Zoroaster. She says that there are two realities: one that one can perceive and the other is the shadow that exists 'Till death unite them and they part no more'. She then talks about Demogorgon whom she describes as 'the supreme tyrant' of the shadow realm, and further asks Prometheus to call upon

Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,

Hades, or Typhon or what mightier Gods

From all-prolific Evil.

Taking earth's advice, Prometheus calls upon the Phantasm of Jupiter. Ione and Panthea narrate the Phantasm's appearance. The Phantasm first asks,

Why have the secret

powers of this strange world

Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither

On direst storms?

Prometheus asks the Phantasm to repeat the curse he made against Jupiter, and the Phantasm obeys Prometheus and says:

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,

All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;

Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,

One only being shalt thou not subdue....

Thou art omnipotent.

O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,

And my own will....

I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse

*Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
 'Till thine Infinity shall be
 A robe of envenomed agony;
 And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
 To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.*

After hearing these words, Prometheus could not believe that these were his words. When the earth tells him that they were indeed his words, Prometheus repents saying these and says:

I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

The earth laments that Prometheus is defeated and Ione responds to it by saying that it is not true. When they are speaking thus, they are interrupted by the appearance of Mercury. With him appear furies who intend to torture Prometheus further. Mercury has come with message from Jupiter:

*I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
 To execute a doom of new revenge.*

Seeing the state that Prometheus is in, Mercury pities him but cannot help but oppose him as Prometheus stands against Jupiter. Mercury requests Prometheus to tell the secret of Jupiter's fate which only Prometheus knows, but Prometheus refuses Jupiter's request.

Finding no way to make Prometheus submit to his will, Mercury tries to bargain with Prometheus. Mercury offers Prometheus that he will be made free from his suffering and pain and would be welcomed among the gods if he agrees to what Mercury demands. However, Prometheus would not budge and he refuses the offer. Jupiter is angered by Prometheus' refusal and he, in his rage, makes thunder ring out across the mountains. Mercury understands the omen and departs immediately. The impending furies, who have been stopped by Mercury till now, begin to haunt Prometheus. Panthea and Ione can do nothing but despair over Prometheus's tortured self. Prometheus describes his suffering as part of his martyrdom and tells the remaining fury:

*Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes;
 And yet I pity those they torture not,*

Fury departs immediately. Thereafter, Prometheus announces that peace comes with death, but that he would never want to be mortal. The earth reacts to Prometheus,

*I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
 As pain and virtue give.*

At that very moment, a Chorus of Spirits appears and celebrates Prometheus's secret knowledge, which then breaks into accounts of dying individuals and the ultimate triumph of good people over evil. The spirits together tell Prometheus,

*Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
 Woundless though in heart or limb,*

The spirits depart, leaving Ione and Panthea to discuss the spirits' message with Prometheus and Prometheus recalls the Oceanid Asia. The Act ends with Panthea telling Prometheus that Asia is waiting for him.

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Act II

Act II Scene I of the lyrical drama begins in the valley of Caucasus where the Oceanid Asia speaks to Panthea. She says:

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This is the season, this the day, the hour;

At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine

Panthea then describes to Asia how her and Ione's lives have changed consequent to the fall of Prometheus; and how she came to figure out Prometheus' love for her in a dream. Asia tells Panthea to lift her eyes so that she may read his soul written in her eyes. Panthea agrees to it and the dream of the Titan Prometheus is revealed to Asia. Asia then could see another dream in Panthea's eyes. Soon the words 'Follow! Follow!' are repeated in Panthea and Asia's minds. The words are then soon repeated by Echoes, which tells them to follow. Both of them are mesmerized but Asia questions the Echoes. The Echoes only summon them further:

In the world unknown sleeps a voice unspoken;

By thy step alone Can its rest be broken

Asia and Panthea begin to follow the voices of the Echo.

In Scene II, the spirits describe Asia's and Panthea's journey and how

There those enchanted eddies play

Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,

By Demogorgon's mighty law,

With melting rapture, or sweet awe,

All spirits on that secret way.

Scene III takes place in mountains, to which Panthea announces that:

Hither the sound has borne us - to the realm

Of Demogorgon.

A Song of Spirits begins, calling Panthea and Asia 'To the deep, to the deep, / Down, down!' Asia and Panthea follows the spirits and descend.

Scene IV begins in the cave of the Demogorgon. Panthea illustrates Demogorgon upon his throne in the following words:

I see a mighty darkness

Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom

Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,

Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,

Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is

A living Spirit.

Asia asks Demogorgon who create the world, and Demogorgon replies that God created everything – all of the good and all of the bad. Asia asks Demogorgon to reveal the name of God:

Utter his name: a world pining in pain

Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.

When Demogorgon still does not say his name, Asia continues to question Demogorgon, and accounts the history of Saturn and Jupiter as rulers of the universe. She says:

Then Prometheus

Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter;

*And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign.*

She then criticizes Jupiter for all the problems of the world — famine, disease, strife and death. Prometheus, she says, gave man everything that is good — fire, the knowledge of mining, speech, science and medicine. Demogorgon responds to this by saying that:

*All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no*

As Asia carries on further to pestering Demogorgon for answers, Demogorgon merely says that 'All things are subject to eternal Love.' Asia then asks when Prometheus will be freed. Demogorgon asks Asia to watch the mountain opens and chariots moves out across the night sky, which are being driven by the Hours. One Hour stays to talk to Asia, and Asia questions him as to who he is. The Hour responds,

*I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.*

Asia could not fathom what the Hour meant, and Panthea describes how Demogorgon has risen from his throne to join the Hour to travel across the sky.

Scene V takes place upon a mountain top where the chariot in which Panthea and Asia are travelling stops. The Hour says that his horses are tired, but Asia asks him to go forward. Panthea asks the Hour, to 'Tell whence is the light/ Which fills the cloud? The sun is yet unrisen', and the Hour informs her 'Apollo/ Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light... Flows from thy mighty sister.' Panthea realizes that Asia is changed, and describes how her sister radiates with beauty. It is through Asia's love that she understands how people move through time and ends with a notion of the paradise.

If Act I of the play was about the repetition of the Prometheus' curse to him and the repentance of Prometheus and a tale of his suffering and torments, then Act II is about Hope, about love and ideals. The two dreams of Asia—of release of Prometheus and the renewal of the world, and the consequent journey to the realm of Demogorgon asserts that though there is suffering and injustice that Jupiter has perpetrated on Prometheus, yet there is hope that such suffering will be over soon. Demogorgon's speeches to Asia suggest that things are not all over yet. It is the hope that Shelley wanted to give his contemporary readers that though the French Revolution has failed, yet there are hopes of a change—a change for the ideal to manifest itself in terms of the overthrowing of the omnipotent tyrannical forces.

Act III

Act III Scene I of *Prometheus Unbound* is set in heaven where Jupiter, the monarch, is sitting on his throne along with other gods. The scene is a natural consequence of what we have seen in the last scene. After Demogorgon and his speeches on creation and creator of the world to Asia, we are eagerly waiting to meet Jupiter basking in his own glory forgetting that things may take a turn which is least expected by him. Jupiter is in conversation with the other gods and is rejoicing over his omnipotent force. He

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claims that he has conquered almost everything except the soul of mankind. Jupiter says that:

*Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the distant hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.*

Though Jupiter is celebrating, he seems to have forgotten that there is Demogorgon, his own offspring who has the potential in him to drag Jupiter to the abyss of chaos. As Jupiter is rejoicing over his omnipotence, Demogorgon appears and proclaims himself to be Jupiter's child. He, moreover, states that he is more powerful than Jupiter. Jupiter on the other hand claims that not even Prometheus would have him suffer. A fight between Jupiter and Demogorgon ensues, in which Jupiter tries his best to attack Demogorgon, but the elements refuse to help him and consequently Jupiter falls.

Scene II is set at a river on Atlantis, where Ocean discusses Jupiter's fall with Apollo in the hands of Demogorgon. Apollo says that he will not like to talk about the fall. Scene III moves back again to the Mount Caucasus where Hercules has unchained Prometheus. Hercules tells Prometheus:

*Most glorious among spirits! thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
and thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.*

Prometheus is grateful to Hercules for freeing him. Prometheus then turns to Asia and tells her about a cave where they can go and live and which they could call home. Prometheus requests the Hour to take Ione, with the conch shell of Proteus, over the earth so she can 'breathe into the many-folded shell/loosing its mighty music; it shall be/as thunder mingled with clear echoes, then/return; and thou shalt dwell besides our cave.'

Prometheus also calls upon the Earth and she responds that she feels life and joy. Asia questions Earth as to why she talks about death, and the Earth responds that Asia will not be able to understand because she is immortal. She then talks about the nature of death, of war and faithless faith. She then calls forth a spirit, her torch bearer, who would guide Prometheus, Asia, and the others to a temple that was once dedicated to Prometheus and will become their cave to dwell in.

Act IV

In Scene IV, we are shifted to a forest near the cave. Asia and the spirit which guarded the forest and the cave begin to talk to each other about nature and love. The Hour comes and tells of a change:

*Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thing air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,*

*As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the sphered world.*

He then talks of a revolution within mankind when thrones were abandoned and men treated each other as equals and with love. This is Shelley's dream and answer to the French Revolution. French Revolution was meant to liberate the people of France from the tyrannical authority. Nevertheless, what happens in France immediately after the French Revolution (1789) was Reign of Terror (1791) and advent of one of the greatest monarch on the throne of France, Napoleon. That was not the dream with which the French revolution started. It started with the notion of overthrowing monarchical form of governance and end of all kind of oppression and suppression leading to a just society where common people will enjoy their rights and live a prosperous life; but instead of achieving the objective the French Revolution substituted one monarch (Louis XIV) by another (Napoleon).

Shelley in writing *Prometheus Unbound* is trying to talk about his notion of revolution and what would ensure a successful revolution. In this context of the play, we see that mankind is no longer fearful of Jupiter, the tyrant.

*The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread.
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
Passionless; no, yet free from guilt or pain.*

In the beginning of Act IV of the play a voice fills the forest near the cave where Prometheus is living. We find Ione and Panthea to be asleep. The voice narrates the dawn in front of a group of shadows, who claim to be the dead Hours and begins to sing of the King of the Hours' death. Ione wakes up and asks Panthea who they were and Panthea explains to her. Panthea describes spirits of the human mind approaching and these spirits soon join in with the others singing and rejoicing love. Eventually, they decide to break their song and go across the world to proclaim love. As we have said earlier, Shelley's answer to the French Revolution is love for intellectual beauty and that love is spread through the song of the spirits.

Ione and Panthea notice a new music, which Panthea describes as

*the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air,
Æolian modulations.*

Panthea then describes how the two melodies are different, and Ione describes a beautiful chariot with a winged infant whose 'two eyes are heavens/of liquid darkness, which the deity/within seems pouring, as a storm is poured/from jagged clouds' and 'in its hand/ It sways a quivering moon-beam.' Panthea begins describing a sphere of music and light containing a sleeping child who is the Spirit of the Earth. The Earth interrupts and describes:

*The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vapourous exultation not to be confined!*

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The Moon responds by describing a light which has come from the Earth and penetrates the Moon. The Earth explains how all of the world 'Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter'. The Moon then describes how all of the moon is awakening and singing. The Earth sings of how man is restored and united:

*Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamant stress.*

The Earth continues by declaring that man now controls even lightning and that the Earth has no secrets left from man.

Panthea and Ione interrupt the Earth and the Moon by describing the passing of the music as a nymph rising from water. Panthea then claims:

*A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which has been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight.*

Demogorgon appears next and speaks the final words of the lyrical play. His speech is considered by many scholars as the central theme of the play.

*This is the day, which down the void abyss
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.
To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.*

Check Your Progress

14. Mention the major poems written by P. B. Shelley.
15. When did Shelley begin writing *Prometheus Unbound*?
16. Who is Demogorgon?
17. Who is Prometheus?

1.6 SUMMARY

- Robert Burns (25 January 1759 – 21 July 1796) is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. He was a poet and lyricist best known for poems written in his native Scottish language.
- Robert Burns's poetry is a political and civil commentary on the events of the times. In many ways he is a pioneer of the Romantic movement since his concerns with oppression, freedom and the impact of changes on the rural landscape are reflected in the works of the other poets.
- Burns lived during the period of the French Revolution and it influenced his poetry. The theme of republicanism in his work can be attributed to this influence.
- Literary critic David Daiches describes Burns as 'the greatest songwriter Britain has produced' and calls the poem as a 'combination of tenderness and swagger'.
- George Herbert was born on 3 April 1593.
- The course of development that one comes across in English poetry, suggests that there are two kinds of conceit: (a) the Petrarchan conceit and (b) the metaphysical conceit.
- Metaphysical poetry was in vogue during the seventeenth century. It was popularized by John Donne. Later on many of his literary successors like Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, and Richard Crashaw carried on the tradition.
- Distinct characteristics of metaphysical poetry include extreme use of puns, allegories and conceits which are incorporated into the ordinary speech.
- Speaking about the metaphysical writers in his essay, T. S. Eliot opines that the metaphysical poets used the conceit as a prominent tool to challenge the existing imagery used in the contemporary writings 'in order to stimulate both emotions and intellects'.
- The poem, *The Pulley*, by George Herbert, centres on the theme of the relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man.
- In *The Pulley*, George Herbert draws an analogy between a pulley and a Pandora's box.
- Many critics consider the poem, *The Pulley*, containing a myth of origins. Yet many others suggest that it is a moral and spiritual fable.
- Andrew Marvell, a poet of the seventeenth century England, expressed extraordinary terseness and sensuousness in his poems.
- The finest examples of Marvell's sensuous nature imagery are to be found in *The Garden* and *Bermudas*.
- Marvell's love poems constitute an important division of his lyric poetry, the other two important divisions being poems dealing with the theme of religion and those dealing with the theme of nature.
- In certain respects Marvell, in his love poems adopt the established Petrarchan approach, while in other respect his treatment of love, like his technique or style of expression, is wholly unconventional.

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- The word ‘wit’ has several meanings. It means intelligence or understanding; it also means the capacity to amuse others by an unexpected combination of ideas or a contrast between ideas or expressions.
- P. B. Shelley’s lyrical four-act play *Prometheus Unbound* is based on the Greek character Prometheus who is usually thought to be an archetypal rebel.
- Though the character of Prometheus is based on Aeschylus’ *Prometheia*, there are significant differences from the original myth as Shelley shows no reconciliation between Prometheus and Jupiter, the tyrannical omnipotent figure.
- Shelley’s intention in dealing with the myth is to manifest his idea of revolutionary character in the character of Prometheus.
- Prometheus is similar to Satan in his rebellious spirit but different from him as he does not have the characteristics of envy, revenge, wickedness and other follies that characterized Satan in canonical English literature.
- Shelley’s intention in *Prometheus Unbound* is to create an ideal rebellious character who would be an answer to the French Revolution (1789) which championed the notions of liberty, equality and fraternity.

1.7 KEY TERMS

- **Prelate:** A high ranking member of the clergy, such as a cardinal, abbot, or bishop, who has authority over lesser clergy, is called a prelate.
- **Syllogism:** It is a kind of logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true.
- **Transliteration:** It means writing or printing using the closest corresponding letters.
- **Utopia:** It is an imagined state of perfection.

1.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. Robert Burns was born on 25 January 1759 in Scotland.
2. The French Revolution affected Burns’ writings.
3. Burns was described as the greatest songwriter of Britain by David Daiches.
4. In the poem, *A Red, Red Rose*, the speaker calls his beloved ‘a bony lass’.
5. The salient features of George Herbert’s poetry include its deep religious devotion, linguistic accuracy, fluidity in rhyme and most importantly, the use of metaphysical conceit.
6. The major poems written by George Herbert are as follows:
 - *Holy Sonnets*
 - *The Pulley*
 - *Affliction*
 - *The Collar*

7. The poem *The Pulley* centres on the theme of the relationship between God and his best creation, that is, man.
8. In *The Pulley*, God bestows the gifts of wisdom, honour and pleasure on man.
9. In *Upon Appleton House*, Marvell gives us detailed pictures of the flower garden in Lord Fairfax's estate, followed by vivid descriptions of the meadows, the river in flood and after the flood. These descriptions are followed by perfectly realistic and life-like pictures of the wood into which the poet withdraws in a contemplative mood. In this part of the poem, Marvell also describes the activities of the nightingale, the doves and the woodpecker.
10. In *The Garden*, ripe apples drop on the poet's head, the luscious clusters of grapes squeeze their juice upon his mouth; the nectarine and the peach reach his hands of their own accord; he stumbles on melons; and he is ensnared with flowers. These lines make the reader's mouth begin to water. The images also appeal to the sense of smell, eyes and touch besides taste.
11. The Petrarchan mode, which became very popular with the Elizabethan poets, was to exalt the beloved and to shower glowing and eloquent praises on her beauty and charm. The Petrarchan lover was given to sighing and weeping over the indifference and callousness of his beloved and over the disappointment he felt as a consequence of her attitude. We see these characteristics reflected in three of Marvell's poems, *The Fair Singer*, *To His Coy Mistress*, and *The Unfortunate Lover*.
12. Carpe diem is a Latin phrase meaning 'seize the day.'
13. In *To His Coy Mistress*, the lover is trying to convince his beloved that they should waste no time and indulge in lovemaking and the pleasures of love.
14. The major poems written by P. B. Shelley are as follows:
 - *Ozymandias*
 - *Ode to the West Wind*
 - *To a Skylark*
 - *Music*
 - *The Cloud*
 - *The Masque of Anarchy*
15. In 1818, Shelley began writing *Prometheus Unbound*.
16. Demogorgon is the force that represents the masses of the French Revolution. It is formidable and indestructible.
17. Prometheus is a Titan who stole fire from the Heavens and gave it to man and for this 'transgression' he was bound to a rock by Zeus to be eternally tormented.

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1.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. How did Robert Burns become famous as a song writer?
2. Why are the final verses of the poem *A Red, Red Rose* important?
3. Provide a short biographical sketch of George Herbert.

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4. What qualities of the metaphysical does Marvell display in his works?
5. Write short notes on the following:
 - (a) Marvell as a poet of nature
 - (b) Marvell as a poet of love
6. State the importance of the Introduction or the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*.
7. How is Shelley's play *Prometheus Unbound* different from Aeschylus' trilogy on Prometheus?
8. Give a brief description of Prometheus' suffering in *Prometheus Unbound*.
9. According to Shelley, who were responsible for the collapse of the French Revolution?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the effect of the French Revolution in the poetry of Burns.
2. Critically analyse the poem *The Pulley* by George Herbert.
3. Compare Marvell and Wordsworth's style or approach to nature.
4. 'The poetry of Marvell contains all these kinds of wit, and contains them in abundance.' Elaborate with examples.
5. Is Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* different from the protagonist of Aeschylus' trilogy on Prometheus? Give reasons to support your answer.
6. Prometheus is a portrait of an archetypal rebellious intellectual. Do you agree? Give your views.
7. Shelley's intention in writing *Prometheus Unbound* was not to create a play but a poem dealing with a rebellious figure who has contemporary relevance. Do you agree? Give a reasoned answer.
8. Comment critically on the character of Prometheus with reference to Milton's Satan (*Paradise Lost*). Do you think Prometheus is similar to Satan? Give a reasoned answer.

1.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 POETRY-II

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Alfred Lord Tennyson: An Introduction
 - 2.2.1 *Break, Break, Break*: Text and Explanation
- 2.3 Thomas Hardy: An Introduction
 - 2.3.1 Works of Thomas Hardy
 - 2.3.2 *The Darkling Thrush*
- 2.4 Louis MacNeice: An Introduction
 - 2.4.1 *Prayer Before Birth*
- 2.5 Matthew Arnold: An Introduction
 - 2.5.1 *Longing*
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Key Terms
- 2.8 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 2.9 Questions and Exercises
- 2.10 Further Reading

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

Coming down in the history of English literature from the Romantic age of idealism to the Victorian era of realism, one experiences the feeling of a return from solitude to society, from nature to industry, from concepts to issues, from spiritualism to pragmatism, from optimism to agnosticism, from lyricism to criticism and from organicism to compromise.

The movement of Realism is an integral part of Victorian age. Although the literary scene during the Victorian period was dominated by the novel form, its achievement in poetry was no less significant. Although the period may not have produced as great poets as were begotten by the preceding period of Romanticism, it did produce a number of poets who not only carried on the poetic tradition in English but also made significant contributions to it. Just as in the Romantic period, there were two distinct generations of poets, in the Victorian period too, there were the early Victorians (ending around 1870) and the late Victorians.

Among the early Victorians, the most prominent poets were Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Emily Bronte, Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, George Eliot among others. Writers associated with the late Victorian Period include Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy, Robert Louis Stevenson among others. In this unit, you will study the poems written by Alfred Tennyson, Thomas Hardy, Louis MacNeice and Matthew Arnold.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the major works of Alfred Tennyson
- Analyse the poem, *Break, Break, Break* by Tennyson

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- Describe Thomas Hardy as a prominent poet of the Victorian era
- Compare *The Darkling Thrush* by Hardy with Keats *Ode to a Nightingale*
- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Louis MacNeice
- Identify the distinguishing features of *Prayer Before Birth*
- Summarize Matthew Arnold's contribution to Victorian poetry
- Explain the poem *Longing* by Matthew Arnold

2.2 ALFRED LORD TENNYSON: AN INTRODUCTION

Alfred Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809 in an old Lincolnshire family. He was the first Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater. He was an English poet who is generally considered as being the chief representative of Victorian age poetry.

His parents had twelve children and Alfred was fourth among them. In 1815, three brothers—Charles, Frederick and Alfred, were sent off to Louth grammar school. However, Alfred remained unhappy there and left the place in 1820. Even though difficult conditions existed in the household, his father managed to provide him a good and wide literary education. Alfred was an intelligent child and even before he turned thirteen, he had begun composing in the style of great literary figures like John Milton, Sir Walter Scott and Alexander Pope. Also, in the works of Alfred from his youth, one can clearly see a dominant influence of Lord Byron. *The Devil and the Lady* is a collection of unpublished poems from his youth which was published in 1930 as a collection, many years after his death.

The influence of Lincolnshire countryside is clearly visible in the writings and especially, poetry of Tennyson. Phrases such as 'the waste enormous marsh,' 'the sea about his home' and 'the sand-built ridge of heaped hills that mound the sea' abound in his works.

His father's health started declining in 1824 and he turned to drinking as a refuge. Despite unhappy conditions at home, Alfred did not stop writing. He wrote in collaboration with Charles and Frederick in *Poems by Two Brothers* (1826; dated 1827).

Frederick joined Charles and Alfred in 1827 at Trinity College, Cambridge. This is where Alfred established his lifelong friendship with Arthur Hallam. Arthur was the talented offspring of Henry Hallam, the famous historian. The two of them joined the Apostles which was an exclusive undergraduate club catering to earnest intellectual interests.

During this time in Cambridge, there was a rise in the reputation of Tennyson as a poet. In 1829, Alfred became the winner of the chancellor's gold medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*. *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was printed in 1830. In 1830 itself, Alfred Tennyson and Hallam visited Spain to aid the unsuccessful revolution against Ferdinand VII. In the meantime, Hallam had formed an attachment towards Emily, Tennyson's sister, but their correspondence was forbidden for a year.

Alfred's father passed away in 1831 leaving the family in debt. As result, Alfred left Cambridge without getting his degree. In 1831 itself, a eulogistic article on *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* was published by Hallam in *Englishman's Magazine*. Then 1832, he

arrived in Somersby as Emily's accepted suitor, the same year in which Tennyson published another volume of his poems (dated 1833), including *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Palace of Art* and *The Lotos-Eaters*. Among these poems was a satirical epigram on the critic Christopher North (Scottish writer John Wilson), who in *Blackwood's Magazine* had made an attack on *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. He again attacked Tennyson's new works in *Quarterly Review*. Tennyson was deeply distressed by this, yet he carried on revising old and writing new poems.

Hallam, whose engagement his family recognized in 1833, met a sudden death in September while visiting Vienna. This even added to Tennyson's misery as he was going through a difficult phase in his life. His works were not being received well and his three brothers Septimus, Charles and Edward were mentally ill. It was at this time that Tennyson produced *The Two Voices* (1842), *Ulysses*, *St. Simeon Stylites*, and possibly also *Morte d'Arthur* (first draft). Several of the poems that he wrote at this time are present in *In Memoriam*.

In 1836, Alfred's brother Charles got married to Louisa Sellwood of Horncastle. It was at this wedding that Alfred fell in love with Louisa Sellwood's sister, Emily. The two of them corresponded with each other for years, despite the disapproval of Emily's father. Her father disapproved of Tennyson due to the latter being a Bohemian, with an addiction for tobacco and port and liberal religious views. In the meantime, the Tennysons had moved near London and were leading a sort of wandering life. During this time, Tennyson befriended several men of fame, such as William Ewart Gladstone (politician), Thomas Carlyle (historian) and Walter Savage Landor (poet).



Fig 2.1 Alfred Tennyson

Major literary works

In 1842, Tennyson published *Poems* in two volumes. While one volume comprised revised selected works from the volumes of 1830 and 1832, the other volume consisted of new poems. The new poems included *Morte d'Arthur*, *The Two Voices*, *Locksley Hall*, *The Vision of Sin*, *The May Queen*, *Lady Clara Vere de Vere* and *The Lord of Burleigh*. Over all, the volume of new poems was not successful. It was the £200 pension that he was getting from the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel that enabled Tennyson to deal with

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his financial troubles. The first long poem by Tennyson named *The Princess* was published in 1847 and was a singular anti-feminist fantasia.

A major turning point in the life of Tennyson took place in 1850. He renewed his correspondence with Emily Sellwood, got engaged and married her. In the meantime, an offer was made by Edward Moxon to publish Tennyson's elegies on Hallam which he had been composing for years. These had already been published in *In Memoriam* (1850), anonymously and had attained huge success with the public as well as critics. This publication had helped him to acquire the friendship of Queen Victoria. Consequently, he was appointed as poet laureate in 1850.

Tennyson enjoyed a happy married life with Emile. He had two sons whom he named Hallam and Lionel. By 1853, Tennyson's life of wandering ended and finally he bought a house in the Isle of Wight, named Farringford. This was where he spent the rest of his life.

Tennyson's recognition as the national poet was confirmed with the publication of *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* (1852) and *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1855).

One of Tennyson's long considered project came out as the *Idylls of the King* (1859), which was a set of twelve poems, all related to each other and providing an outlook on the legendary life of King Arthur. *Idylls of the King* became an instant success. Tennyson, who had loathing for publicity, attained much public fame with this work.

Tennyson embarked on writing poetic drama in 1874, and in 1875 *Queen Mary* appeared. In 1876 its abridged version was produced at the Lyceum but was only moderately successful. Then came *Harold* (1876; dated 1877), *Becket* (unpublished in full until 1884), and the 'village tragedy' named *The Promise of May*, which failed in November 1882 at the Globe. His poem named *Despair*, which had been published in the November 1881 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*, had caused a certain amount of sensation. It also indicated his beliefs which became apparent in his later works such as *The Ancient Sage*, published in *Tiresias, and Other Poems* (1885). In this work, he has mentioned his intimations of life before and life after death.

Alfred Tennyson accepted peerage in 1884. In 1886 he brought out a new volume containing *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, which mostly contained imprecations against modern decadence and liberalism and a retraction of the earlier poem's belief in inevitable human progress.

The poem *Crossing the Bar* was written by Tennyson in 1889 while passing through the Isle of Wight. In 1889, Tennyson also published *Demeter and Other Poems*, that also had *To Mary Boyle*, *The Progress of Spring*, and *Merlin and the Gleam*, the last being an allegorical that summed up Tennyson's poetic career. Tennyson's play, *The Foresters* was produced successfully in 1892 in New York City. In spite of his deteriorating health, he fixed the proofs of his works *The Death of Oenone*, *Akbar's Dream* and *Other Poems* (1892).

Tennyson is considered as a forerunner of the Victorian age in England. By the middle of the nineteenth century, he held the position much like that held by Alexander Pope in the eighteenth century. He is regarded as a consummate poetic artist, who refined and consolidated such traditions that were passed on to him from his predecessors

in the Romantic Movement, more specifically by Keats, Byron and Wordsworth. Tennyson's poetry is notable for verbal melodies, descriptive imagery and metrical variety. In addition, Tennyson was regarded as the spokesman of the educated middle class on religious and moral outlooks. Tennyson used his poetry to address such misgivings in the form of intimate personal problems of a sensitive and troubled individual who would become dismal. Even then Tennyson's poetry provides a clear feeling of serenity and reassurance. He can be considered as the first great English poet who completely knew the modern day picture of man's place in the universe revealed by modern science. Even though this precarious position of mankind caused forebodings in Tennyson's mind, at the same time, it provided him a wider range for his imagination which went to provide his art with greater resonance and depth.

Even during Tennyson's lifetime itself, people posed questions with respect to his ascendancy among Victorian poets. In the twentieth century criticism which was guided by a new school of poetry led by T. S. Eliot, put forth the proposal that Tennyson's works have been drastically devaluated. They are of the opinion that most of the works written by Tennyson and that were much admired by his contemporaries have lost their appeal. In the present times, there is a balanced view of Tennyson's works, with the recognition of the enduring greatness of *Ulysses*, the unique poignancy of Tennyson's best lyric poems, and, above all, the stature of *In Memoriam* as the great representative poem of the Victorian age. Today, it is even recognized that the comic and realistic aspects found in the works of Tennyson have greater importance than they were considered in the period when anti-Tennyson reaction was at its peak.

2.2.1 *Break, Break, Break*: Text and Explanation

As against the grim realities of life, Tennyson presented an ideal of life in his poems, reflected by their recourse to the historical past. Tennyson used a wide range of subject matter, ranging from medieval legends to classical myths and from domestic situations to observations of nature, as source material for his poetry. The influence of John Keats and other Romantic poets is evident from the richness of his imagery and descriptive writing. The insistent beat of *Break, Break, Break* emphasizes the relentless sadness of the subject matter.

*Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.
O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!
And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!
Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.*

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Check Your Progress

1. List the well-known works of Alfred Tennyson.
2. In which year did Tennyson become the poet Laureate?

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Explanation

The short poem *Break, Break, Break* composed by Alfred Tennyson is an expression of his personal grief. However, it is more than an individual cry of pain and despair. He has presented grief and suffering as a universal characteristic of our world. He has drawn a picture of permanent and lasting images in contrast with temporariness of human life. The narrator grieves the loss of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, a promising poet and essayist who had been engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily. Hallam died of a stroke in 1833 when he was only twenty-two years old. The shock at the sudden death of his best friend, Arthur Hallam from a stroke at age twenty-two, teaches us the priceless value of youth and good health.

The whole world is indifferent to individual suffering. World has nothing to do with individual's grief. Tennyson also presents man's mechanical attitude towards a big individual loss. It clearly shows that man passes away so quickly but the scene of nature remains the same. The poem has similarity with W. H. Auden's *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* in which the death of a great poet does not affect anyone. In this poem also, the poet mourns the death of a dear friend who will never come back. In a sorrowful mood, the poet depicts the picture of sea and its waves constantly striking against cold gray stones. He also draws the image of fisherman's boy singing in his boat or at play with his sister and the grand ships coming to the harbour. He believes that these images are more enduring than the life of a man.

The poet thinks that these things remain unchanged. Nature is totally unaffected by any individual's loss. Even people keep doing their daily work. They hardly care for any individual loss. Thus, the world is too busy and man's life is so transitory. It is in a flux. It changes from childhood to youth, then to old age and finally embraces death. As man grows old, the sweet memories of his life become a part of the vanished past. Thus, between past and present, man suffers and complains.

The poet is missing his lost friend while standing on the sea bank. He expresses his sorrow that he will never feel the soft touch of that hand and will never hear that voice again. On the surface, the poem looks sad and depressing. Nevertheless, the grief is set against things which are permanent.

The poem describes the narrator's feeling that there is loss throughout the world, but also that there is some life within that loss. The sea is then used to represent that there is something greater beyond the cycle of life and death even though words can never truly describe what this is:

*Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.*

The poem begins with an apostrophe: 'Break, break, break, On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!' The speaker tells the sea to crash on the shore to cool down and change form. It is probably the cry of the speaker in an attempt to break the silence of his heart which impedes him to 'utter / The thoughts that arise in' him.

The word 'break' has been repeated, probably underlining the speaker's intention to interrupt the unbearable silence. The terms 'cold' and 'grey' might be associated with death, morbidity and mourning. Crashing of waves on 'cold, grey' stones is an expression that narrates the speaker's feeling and attempt to come out of the slumber and paralytic state of mind.

From the second stanza onwards, the focus of the poem shifts and we experience the sound of an active and fruitful life. The speaker recognizes that the sea is an indispensable part of his life, and conveys what he sees—that the fisherman’s boy is playing with his sister, the sailor lad who sings rowing down the sea and the stately ships which sail with the purpose of trade. It is the ceaseless motion of life painted through the words of the speaker. It tells us that motion is continuous, heedless of personal anxiety and pain.

The speaker looks on, depicting motion as life. But he cannot become part of these activities as he is troubled by his memory. The person in his thought weighs down the speaker, but his identity has not been revealed. It can only be understood that he is close to the speaker. However, it is evident that the person is no more as the speaker can feel the touch of his ‘vanish’d hand’ and the ‘sound of’ his voice. It is often conjectured that *Break, Break, Break* is a requiem of Tennyson’s close friend and fellow poet, Arthur Henry Hallam.

The poem *Break, Break, Break* can have different interpretations. Firstly, the poem presents Tennyson’s true love for his friend. Secondly, the poem reflects the dying of religion and the theory of evolution being introduced to society. The religious faith is disappearing from the world and man has become so mechanical that he has lost that fellow feeling which he used to have in ancient times.

Tennyson uses lots of punctuation, especially commas, which makes the poem move extremely slow, which when added with the context of the poem, heightens the feeling of sadness and depression in the poem. Another technique which Tennyson uses in this poem to make it more slow and depressing is his use of the sound ‘O’:

O Sea! - [1st Stanza, 2nd line]

O well for the fisherman’s boy, [2nd Stanza, 1st line]

O well for the sailor lad, [2nd Stanza, 3rd Line]

Tennyson displays a mastery of imagery in this lyrical poem of heartache and bereavement. The poet’s pain is real as he expresses the indifference of nature in a cruel and unfeeling world through personification in an address to the sea.

2.3 THOMAS HARDY: AN INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was a prominent writer of the Victorian era. His life can be easily compartmentalized into three phases. The first phase (1840–1870) was marked by his early life, including first marriage, early compositions and a first unpublished novel. The second phase (1871–1897) was marked by his establishment as a writer, along with a prosperous writing career in the form of fourteen published novels and numerous short stories. The third phase (1898–1928) was marked by his attainment of a celebrity stature, moving away from composing novels and returning to poetry.

Except for the period in London during young manhood, Thomas Hardy passed his life near Dorchester, close to the place where he was born in 1840 and died in 1928. He was surrounded by people and customs, the monuments and the institutions of Dorset and contiguous counties of south-western England, which he placed permanently on the literary map by the ancient name Wessex. As a writer, Hardy was a living paradox. A natural poet, much of his poetry is nevertheless in prose. He had the poet’s largeness, minuteness and intensity of vision—a threefold faculty displayed throughout his novel. The irony in Thomas Hardy’s novels is not directed at human egotism but at the very conditions of human existence. He saw his characters as elemental figures whose passions were doomed to run the course that human conditions had set for them.

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Check Your Progress

3. What does the insistent beat of the poem *Break, Break, Break* emphasize?
4. How does the poem *Break, Break, Break* teach us the priceless value of youth and good health?

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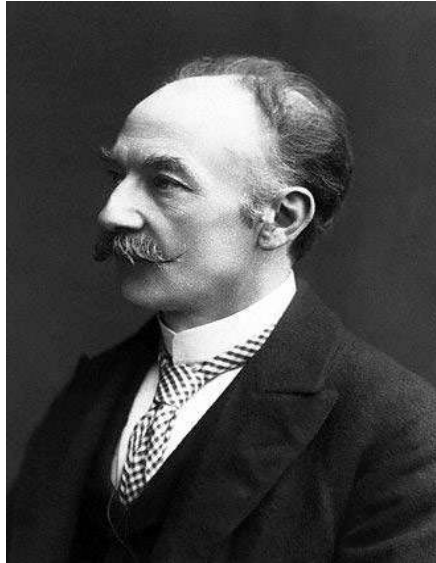


Fig 2.2 Thomas Hardy

Hardy was neither a philosophical novelist nor a subtle psychologist. His view of man is neither holy consistent nor any degree profound. His prose has air of being self-taught; it is often clumsy, sometimes pretentious generally rough-hewn and unequal. Hardy's vision of life was genuine and he wrestled it alone. The underlying rhythm of his novel is sound and what Henry James called the 'sense of felt life' is movingly present.

'Critics can never be made to understand that the failure may be greater than the success... To have the strength to roll a stone weighing a hundredweight to the top of a mountain is a success, and to have the strength to roll a stone of then hundredweight only halfway up that mount is a failure. But the latter is two or three times as strong a deed' (Hardy in his diary, 1907).

Hardy was born to a master mason and building contractor in the village of Higher Bockhampton, on the edge of Puddletown Heath. His mother, who had literary tastes and read Latin poets and French romances, had a huge impact on him. Early training as an architect gave him intimate knowledge of local churches utilized to advantage in his writings. He married Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1874. At the age of 22, Hardy moved to London and started to write poems which idealized the rural life. Emma Lavinia Gifford encouraged him and he started to consider literature as his 'true vocation.'

Hardy's first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was rejected and he was advised by Alexander Macmillan to improve his work. *Under the Green Wood Tree* (1872) is an idyllic tale of rustic life. *Far From the Madding Crowd*, (1874) use a wider canvas and take a closer look at the nature and consequences of human emotions. Misfortune, coincidences and the intrusion into the pastoral life makes this love story tangled and violent. *The Return of the Native*, (1878) is a more ambitious work.

In the novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), nature, civilization and human character work on each other continually. The novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* outraged the religious conscience of 1891 and his novel *Jude the Obscure* is fatally injured by his ruthlessness.

In 1896, disturbed by the public uproar over the unconventional subjects of two of his greatest novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy announced that he would never write fiction again. In April, 1912, Hardy wrote:

‘Then somebody discovered that *Jude* was a moral work—austere in its treatment of a difficult subject—as if the writer had not all the time said in the preface that it was meant to be so. Thereupon many uncursed me, and the matter ended, the only effect of it on human conduct that I could discover being its effect on myself—the experience completely curing me of the further interest in novel-writing.’

He continued writing poems the rest of his life.

As for his marriage to Emma, it was an unhappy one, but they continued to stay with each other. They did not have any offspring. Hardy, however, had many affairs.

Emma died in 1912 and a couple of years later he married Florence Emily Dugdale, his secretary, who was a woman in her 30s and approximately thirty years younger to him.

Hardy breathed his last on 11 January 1928 in Dorchester, Dorset. Hardy was popular as a lyrical pastoralist. He was also a modern, even revolutionary writer. It may be a sign of the times that some of us take his books to bed, as if even his pessimistic vision was one that enabled us to sleep soundly.

2.3.1 Works of Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy tries to create impressions by the skilful use of similes, metaphors, allusions and images. He invests in his characters, objects and elements an extraordinary power which is not inherently their own.

The popular works of Thomas Hardy include the following:

Novels and Short Stories

- *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
- *Jude the Obscure*
- *Under the Greenwood Tree*
- *Far from the Madding Crowd*
- *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*
- *The Fiddler of the Reels and Other Stories (1888-1900)*
- *The Hand of Ethelberta*
- *A Changed Man and Other Tales*
- *Desperate Remedies*
- *The Distracted Preacher*
- *A Laodicean*
- *Life's Little Ironies*
- *A Mere Interlude*
- *A Pair of Blue Eyes*
- *The Return of the Native*

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- *The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid*
- *Selected Stories of Thomas Hardy*
- *Stories of Wessex*
- *The Trumpet-Major*
- *Two on a Tower*
- *The Well-Beloved*
- *Wessex Tales*
- *The Withered Arm and Other Stories*
- *The Woodlanders*

Poems

Hardy wrote poems during the second Boer War of 1899–1902 and the Great War of 1914–1918. Naturally, his verses reflected the conflicts related to war. His war poems reflect a wide diversity in attitude. While *Channel Firing* has a deeply pessimistic tone, *The Breaking of Nations* is rather optimistic and focuses on the good things of daily life that are sure to survive even when wars are long forgotten. His popular poems include the following:

- *At an Inn*
- *Beeny Cliff*
- *The Darkling Thrush*
- *The Dead Man Walking*
- *Heiress and Architect*
- *Her Dilemma*
- *Her Immortality*
- *I Look into my Glass*
- *The Ivy-Wife*
- *The Man He Killed*
- *Neutral Tones*
- *The Ruined Maid*
- *She, At his Funeral*

2.3.2 The Darkling Thrush

Thomas Hardy invariably wrote about gloomy and fatalistic perspective of life. Hence, when he uses a bleak winter landscape, in his poem, to symbolize the transitory nineteenth century, it does not surprise anyone. In the poem, *The Darkling Thrush*, he calls nineteenth century a ‘corpse’ which is lying in a ‘crypt’.

When Hardy composed *The Darkling Thrush* he was living on the threshold of the twentieth century. In addition, it was not just the age but he himself was also making a transition in his creative approach, from writing novels he was focusing on writing poems. The desire for this transition was the negative public reception of his two novels, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Hardy had been too frank in his depiction of morally disagreeable subject matter. This had outraged the

readers of his time. Hardy's contemporary novelist, George Gissing (1857–1903), had famously called the novel *Jude the Obscure*. This was of course, one personal reason for which Hardy was gloomy in temperament.

Ironically, both *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure* are widely read and appreciated today along with his poetry which is considered to be of high quality.

The Darkling Thrush was composed at the far end of the nineteenth century. The poem was first printed as *By the Century's Deathbed* sometime during December 1900.

The poem appears in the form of an ode. It is a conventional lyric poem. It appears in the form of an address identifying a particular subject. It is written in a lofty and elevated fashion. The poem has a formal tone although we also know that odes can be written in the form of a personal note as well. On the very special occasion of the adieu hours of the old century, the poet puts down his reflections in the first person, 'I'. It appears as if he is leaning on a gate by the little wood. Such a pose is traditionally considered to be a 'thinking pose'.

Apart from the thinking pose, the gate symbolizes the arrival of the new year as well as the century.

Hardy portrays a frosty evening landscape in the poem. It is that time when everyone else has gone indoors. He has depicted realistic pictures of the winter landscape. It appears to him as if the season is a corpse, that resembles, the corpse of the almost dead nineteenth century. Along with the natural surroundings, the cloudy sky is considered as the crypt (burial place) for the corpse. Adding to it is the sound of the winter wind; for the poet it is a lament that is usually associated with a dead person (the nineteenth century). Each and every living organism appears to be as devoid of passion as Hardy. Both of them appear to be almost as dead as the century. At this moment of absolute despair a thrush's beautiful song suddenly is heard somewhere nearby. It breaks upon the grim cold scene or as the poet prefers to call, the 'growing gloom'. This makes Hardy wonder whether the bird is aware of any such cause/subject which might indicate hope. Perhaps Hardy is ignorant of such subject. The title of the poem, *The Darkling Thrush* is indicative that Hardy was intentionally incorporating words that have a long poetic history. 'Darkling' implies darkness, or emergence of darkness. Emergence because Hardy can still view the landscape, as well as figure out that the sun is 'weakening' but it is not completely set. It is believed that the title probably is a shorthand for 'the thrush that sang as night was approaching.'

*I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.*

Explanation

The poem begins with the speaker stating that finally it is the middle of winter. One can also call it a very cold and dreary autumn. There is no fun of springtime here. Everywhere,

NOTES

Check Your Progress

5. Mention the three phases of Thomas Hardy's life.
6. What is the name of Hardy's first novel?
7. List the major poems written by Thomas Hardy.

NOTES

it is cold and ice, darkness and grey. The speaker is leaning against a gate. Even the exact identity of 'I,' is vague. However, 'I' could refer to a depressed soul.

What is important to mention here is that the word frost is mentioned in capital 'F'. It is almost as if frost has attained human-like characteristics. This is very typical to human beings whose names are capitalized while writing them. Certain elements of nature, like snow, ice and frost are definitely not proper names but the capitals suggest their human-like attributes.

As we move on, we come across further human-like qualities, the 'almost human' part of the description. The speaker probably thinks that frost is 'spectre-grey.' Here, the word 'spectre' means 'ghost'. That is why if frost is human-like then it is also ghost-like, thus, being human and non-human.

The speaker continues to suggest that this winter day is dreary. The word 'dregs' is related to coffee. It refers to those grainy, bitter things that cling to the bottom of the coffee cup. Dregs invariably imply anything which is not good to taste. Hence, when the speaker of the poem suggests that we are in the dregs of winter, he wishes to convey that this is not the beautiful snowfall that one comes across during Christmas time. In fact, it refers to those grey and gloomy elements which make the reader depressed.

The speaker goes on to mention that the day has got an eye. This seems to imply that 'Winter' is a person. In continuation with the dreary image, the whole world appears to be mostly dead. In fact, as our speaker observes, the day already appeared inferior and in a weak state long before winter's dregs made things all the more worse.

Despite the fact that Hardy is writing this poem at the end of the nineteenth century, it is surprising to note that he is not celebrating the arrival of the new century. Also, he is not looking ahead to see good times. He is rather carrying forward the gloom and despair of the previous century with him.

Further, the speaker is describing things which he sees while gazing the patch of tangled bushes. However, amidst those bushes all he can see is death and destruction. The vines in front of the speaker appear to resemble the broken bits of a lyre. Lyre is a harp-like instrument used in the classical times.

Hardy has incorporated classical allusions which makes the poem all the more beautiful. The lyre also appears in infinite poems of the antiquity. Hardy probably intends to suggest that with the new era setting in; the stock and trade of traditional poetry are also moving out of their way.

The first stanza reconfirms that the speaker is a loner. The speaker is outside observing the surroundings when other people are not out and around. It is definitely some late hour. Even the speaker mentions that everyone else he is acquainted with is curled up by the fire or may be enjoying dinner or probably relaxing over a nice cup of tea. The speaker is sure there is life out there somewhere but just that it does not happen to be anywhere in his proximity.

But then the question arises: Is there really life out there somewhere. After all, as the speaker makes it clear that the people who we assume are enjoying life were earlier 'haunting' the landscape. So are these people human at all?

It is believed that the writing of *The Darkling Thrush* by Hardy is a prequel to *Night of the Living Dead*. Some reasons for such thought could be that Hardy is writing this poem towards the end of the Industrial Revolution. With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, Britain, an agrarian nation, became an industrial one. People migrated

to cities in search of better livelihood. Nevertheless, the industries turned cities into centres of smog and dust which in turn brought in many deadly diseases.

Hardy is trying to point out that the Industrial Revolution changed the way work was perceived and executed. Prior to the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, both men and women worked as peasants for rich landowners yet they were in touch with nature. However, as soon as people started working in factories, everything changed suddenly. The workers had to work for 12 or 14-hours a day. It was all about getting a job and working arduously. No worker got to see the sun due to long working hours. Most of them turned pale as a ghost. Several English novels like *Mary Barton* by Elizabeth Gaskell highlight this plight of workers during the Industrial Revolution.

We can assume that the folks, who are walking around like ghosts as the speaker perceives them, could be the industry workers and they have been turned into automations by the life being led by them. It is a scary and dreary scenario.

Hardy is probably drawing a parallel between the end of the century and Doomsday because some almost dead exist here. Nevertheless, it is more than evident that the speaker, just like Hardy himself, is not very appreciative of the modern age.

The land's sharp features seemed to be

The Century's corpse outleant,

His crypt the cloudy canopy,

The wind his death-lament.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth

Was shrunken hard and dry,

And every spirit upon earth

Seemed fervourless as I.

Explanation

In the second stanza, the speaker uses metaphor to describe the desolate landscape as the carcass of the nineteenth century.

The speaker wonders why is the century 'outleant'? Though technically, outleant is not a word per se, but Hardy's speaker probably considers himself out of this world and hence, has chosen to use the word. The word is so special that even the entire vocabulary of the English language could not match up to find one word to describe the speaker's experience. This is precisely where the word has been incorporated for literary effect. Till now, we realize Hardy has been discussing inanimate concepts like 'Winter' or 'the century'. Yet he has hardly made any reference to living beings. Hardy's speaker insists on focusing on the death of inanimate (or at times abstract) things, so much so that at times, we wonder if we are still alive or are we heading towards our grave.

Nature appears to conspire to lament over the transition of the century. In a way, the whole idea is very romantic (like Wordsworth or Coleridge would have expressed it). A Romantic poet might have understood something similar.

It is interesting to note here that even the speaker moves on with the idea of ending all things; the rhythm of the poem remains absolutely constant and conventional. One can definitely see an uncanny relationship being built between the rhyme scheme and the huge void that the speaker experiences around himself.

NOTES

‘The ancient pulse of germ and birth/ Was shrunken hard and dry’ is filled with symbolism. Hardy incorporates metaphors of germination. Here in the poem, he refers to the unsuccessful and futile germination.

NOTES

In the last two lines of this stanza, the speaker says that there is some kind of spirit that is present at the moment. It could also imply a lack of reason or perhaps the speaker is too engrossed in the gloom and sorrow around that he happens to see a spirit. It appears as if Hardy is trying to prove that there is no real living being in this poem.

Hardy insists on calling people as spirits only to highlight the physical rejection of any real living being. He insists on calling humans-as-ghosts or even at times, ghosts-as-humans making it difficult for us to discern the differences.

*At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.*

Explanation

You must have noticed by now that these lines indicate a significant shift in the poem. It seems that in the midst of the silence and death, the speaker suddenly hears something. This time what he hears is something beautiful. It is a love song. It is embalmed with happiness.

Finally, as the title suggests, the thrush makes an appearance. However, if one hears more closely, one realizes that this sound resembles the gloominess which permeated the initial parts of the poem.

One might compare Keats *Ode to a Nightingale* with this poem. Keats nightingale was more happy and melodious than the one suggested by Hardy in this poem. Keats nightingale was immortal while Hardy’s thrush is combating a nasty storm in the middle of nowhere land. Nonetheless, the only positive thing about this bird is that it manages to survive despite the rough weather.

The tiny and adversity ridden bird has successfully managed to survive the despair and dejected atmosphere which even the speaker is unable to do. The bird has forgotten about the adversities and is simply singing merrily. The song does not make the ‘growing gloom’ disappear but at least it lessens the impact of the gloomy atmosphere. The song alone drew the attention of the speaker towards the bird as a welcomed distraction.

*So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air*

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Explanation

Once again the first four lines of the stanza get merged into each other. This also builds up the momentum as the speaker continues to give special attention to the song of the thrush. The bird is singing a happy song whereas the speaker is discussing that the world is full of lifeless people. Perhaps the bird is happy from within. Hence, nature with elements of art (the bird song) becomes the epitome of real art for the poet.

It is wonderful to figure out that the bird is happy. It seems that the speaker is also comforted by the ideas which make the bird happy and cheerful.

Yet the speaker insists that he is not happy. He now insists that he is not sure whether the bird is singing a song of ecstasy. The speaker just imagines that the bird is probably singing for a cause and the speaker might in time just get to know about the cause.

Finally, the arrival of the twentieth century becomes apparent in this stanza. In the final couplet, he manages to capture the perspective of the major writers of the successive decades. Hardy brings in a sense of negotiation by bringing in hope (through the speaker) though in a subtle manner.

2.4 LOUIS MACNEICE: AN INTRODUCTION

Frederick Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast. His father, John Frederick MacNeice, was a minister and ultimately became a bishop of the Anglo-Irish Church of Ireland. His father favoured Home Rule and was vocal against the Protestant bigotry and violence in Northern Ireland. When MacNeice was six-years old, his mother, Elizabeth Margaret MacNeice, was sent to a nursing home in Dublin as she was suffering from severe depression. MacNeice did not see his mother again after this and she died in 1914 of tuberculosis. His father remarried when young MacNeice was ten. Since then, MacNeice studied in English schools. He was highly impressed with the free and positive atmosphere at Sherborne Preparatory School in Dorset and Marlborough College. He lost his Irish accent and gave up his baptismal first name of Frederick and his father's faith. Henceforth, he could never feel at home with his father or in Ireland. However, he always held this recognition of himself as an Irishman in England in his mind.

MacNeice was brought up among books and started writing poetry at the age of seven. Moreover, he read modern poets as Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot. MacNeice was good in studies. He took a first in Honour Moderations (Mods) in 1928. However, his further studies took a backseat due to his courtship of the stepdaughter of an Oxford scholar, Giovanna Marie Therese Babette Ezra, to whom he dedicated *Blind Fireworks*. He respected his colleague E. R. Dodds but had no desire of becoming a scholar like him. MacNeice, despite his reservations and hesitations, was able to establish himself as a poet in 1930s with the publication of his work *Poems* (1935). *Poems* facilitated in establishing MacNeice as one of the promising new poets of the 1930s.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

8. What kind of transition does the poem *The Darkling Thrush* indicate?
9. How is the landscape portrayed by the speaker in the poem *The Darkling Thrush*?

NOTES

1935 was a significant year both professionally and personally. In the same year, his wife suddenly left him (and their year-old son), running away with a young American graduate student who had been staying with them in Birmingham. The couple was formally divorced in 1936. This incident inspired him to write about the loss of his wife. MacNeice was able to overcome his grief with the passage of time. From 1941 until his death, Louis MacNeice dedicatedly worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). He died on 3 September 1963, just before the publication of his last book of poems, *The Burning Perch*.

Prominent works of MacNeice include the following:

Poems

- *Blind Fireworks*
- *Poems*
- *Letters from Iceland*
- *The Earth Compels*
- *Autumn Journal*
- *The Last Ditch*
- *Selected Poems*
- *Plant and Phantom*
- *Springboard*
- *Prayer Before Birth*
- *Holes in the Sky*
- *Collected Poems*
- *Ten Burnt Offerings*
- *Autumn Sequel*
- *Visitations*

Plays

- *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*
- *Out of the Picture*
- *Christopher Columbus*
- *He Had a Date*
- *The Dark Tower and other radio scripts*
- *Goethe's Faust*
- *The Mad Islands*
- *Persons from Porlock*

Books (fiction)

- *Roundabout Way*
- *The Sixpence That Rolled Away*

Books (non-fiction)

- *I Crossed the Minch*
- *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay*
- *Zoo*
- *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats*
- *The Strings Are False*
- *Meet the US Army*
- *Astrology*
- *Varieties of Parable*
- *Selected Prose of Louis MacNeice*



Fig 2.3 Louis MacNeice

2.4.1 Prayer Before Birth

The poem *Prayer Before Birth* was written in London in 1944. It was composed during the Second World War. The poem employs free verse but it appears more like a prayer. The rhythms, insistent alliterations and consecutive repetitions give the poem a hymn-like appearance. Moreover, each stanza resembles a single long sentence.

I am not yet born; O hear me.

Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.

*I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me,
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.*

I am not yet born; provide me

With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk

NOTES

Check Your Progress

10. Where was Louis MacNeice born?
11. Why was the year 1930 significant for MacNeice?

*to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light
in the back of my mind to guide me.*

NOTES

*I am not yet born; forgive me
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words
when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me,
my treason engendered by traitors beyond me,
my life when they murder by means of my
hands, my death when they live me.*

*I am not yet born; rehearse me
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when
old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains
frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white
waves call me to folly and the desert calls
me to doom and the beggar refuses
my gift and my children curse me.*

*I am not yet born; O hear me,
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God
come near me.*

*I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would freeze my
humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton,
would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with
one face, a thing, and against all those
who would dissipate my entirety, would
blow me like thistledown hither and
thither or hither and thither
like water held in the
hands would spill me.*

*Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.
Otherwise kill me.*

Explanation

The speaker of the poem *Prayer Before Birth* is an unborn child. The child is addressing not just the divinity but also speaks to humanity in general. The child insists that it wants to be human or nothing else. The child dreams of being a free person once it is born and does not want to be trampled by whims of random people.

Prayer Before Birth is a dramatic monologue. It is written from the perspective of a child who is yet to be born. The unborn child through its monologue tries to express its desire for a free life that is devoid of manoeuvre and corrupt influence that pave the way for threat and terror in this world.

This poem was composed during the Second World War. The consequences of the war were everlasting and extremely depressing. A war only leads to devastation and destruction. A war is solely responsible for halting the progress of a country. The disillusionment is not unheard of. Human beings are mercilessly displaced and millions go astray. MacNeice in the poem highlights this fear (through the unborn child) of the threat that looms on mankind brought upon by the war. The poet voices his fear about how the anarchy of the world can have a detrimental impact on the innocence of a child.

The poem is divided into six stanzas and each stanza is slightly longer than the previous one indicating the growth of the baby which is inside the womb. The very first stanza talks about the apprehensions of the little child. The child asks the almighty to 'hear' him and keep him (the child) away from nocturnal beasts like the 'bat or the 'rat' or the 'stoat'. The 'bloodsucking bat' that the child mentions could refer to the parasites that exist within human beings. The child's plea suggests that the world appears to be infested with poison and the poet requests (through the child) to protect ourselves from those negative aspects of life.

In the next stanza, the child requires God to 'console' him because the child fears that the human beings who exists in this world may intoxicate him with dangerous drugs or manipulate him with their clever ways or probably, if it is really unlucky, 'rack' him in 'black racks' and 'roll' him in 'bloods-baths'. Needless to say, the child wants God to ensure him and surround him with nature; the only thing that has not been completely corrupted by man. The child also asks for some guiding light.

By the time we read the fourth stanza, we realize that the baby has matured a little. The child asks God for protection from the malice and corruption of the world. The poet mentions the words, 'treason engendered by traitors'. Probably, the child intends to suggest that the society, in due course of time, may compel him to take someone's life or the political traitors may force him to betray the cause of the motherland. The child asks for all forgiveness even before it is born.

The fifth stanza is about morals. The baby in the womb asks God to be its teacher and teach him how to act when he comes across adverse situations like bureaucracy or lecturing from senior citizens, his own child cursing him or the beggars' refusal to accept his gift.

The sixth stanza summarizes the entire poem. The initial lines of the sixth stanza probably hint at autocratic people like Hitler and Xerxes. The child asks God to keep him away from such men. Moreover, the child asks God to 'fill' him with confidence and willpower which will further help them to stand up against inhumanity and many such similar human beings who would go out of their way to destroy him in their desire to make the child an insignificant part of a machine. They might as well make the baby's face turn into 'one expressionless face' or like as if the child was a small stone which the winds plays with, 'hither and thither or hither and thither'.

Poetic devices

Louis MacNiece has incorporated a number of poetical devices in this poem. He uses figures of speech like repetition, personification, alliteration, assonance and so forth to

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focus the truth that he was trying to project through the poem. The usage of comma several times, suggests that the child is in an extreme urgency to extend his request to the almighty. If you notice the line ‘I am not yet born’ is continuously repeated in every stanza. This signifies that even though the child is still in the womb, he is aware of the misery and inhumanity that prevails in the world of human beings. The usage of ‘O hear me’, ‘O fill me’ arms the child’s prayer with more power and underlines the baby’s emotions and brings forth his plea more explicitly.

The poet, Loius MacNiece, includes alliteration and assonance to a large extent. Most prominent alliterations include ‘strong drugs dope me’, ‘with wise lies lure me’, ‘black racks rack me’. All these lines highlight horror that is coming in the mind of the unborn child. The creation of assonance through ‘bat’ and ‘rat’, ‘tall wall’, ‘wise lies’ gives a different yet enticing rhyme pattern to the poem along with its readers. The poem enlists themes and metaphors which are religion specific. The most obvious one is the use of the child which is used as the metaphor of Christ.

On a close reading of the third stanza, we realize that the poet has made use of personification. He has personified nature in the lines where he talks about ‘trees to talk to me, skies to sing to me, water to dandle me’. The lines make it more than clear that the child desires the company of nature and is frightened to have the company of the cruel human world. Somehow nature is considered to be unaltered by the influence of man. Again, the poet uses the image ‘mountains frown at me’. This image created in our mind paves way to create refuge that when everything is lost, nature is still there by our side.

The poem has many historical references as well. The poem was composed during the period of the Second World War. There are certain references which directly allude to it. The use of the phrase ‘cog in a machine’ suggests that the child has a feeling that the society will turn him into an insignificant existence, one that is absolutely worthless. This analogy has a direct reference to the First and the Second World Wars ‘where soldiers were “dragooned” into being an “automaton”’.

The final line is a long breathless sentence. The reader comes across constant repetition of images that bring out the agitation of the speaker. Throughout the poem, we realize that the poet effectively portrays evil and devilish images that showcase the decadent state of the human existence and the world that surrounds it. It also conveys the presence of evil that moves on endlessly and strives to haunt humanity.

The poem interestingly ends with a surprising conclusion and the child in the end, pleads to be killed and not to be allowed to be born. The baby is disinterested in coming to such a cruel world if his prayers are not answered. By using the prayer of the child, Loius MacNiece makes his poem a mouthpiece for denouncing the deplorable condition to which humanity is heading towards with the passage of time.

As far as the tone of the poem is concerned, the poem can be described in various ways. The unborn baby obviously appears to be apprehensive of the future which lies ahead him. A sense of urgency is reflected in his voice. The poem is scattered with apocalyptic as well as gloomy visions.

Check Your Progress

12. Who is the speaker of the poem, *Prayer Before Birth*?
13. When was *Prayer Before Birth* written?

2.5 MATTHEW ARNOLD: AN INTRODUCTION

Matthew Arnold was born in 1822 at Laleham in England. He was educated in Winchester and Oxford. In 1841, he won an open scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. His poem

Cromwell won the Newdigate prize in 1843. In 1845, he started teaching at Rugby. In the same year he was elected as the Fellow of Oriel College, distinction at Oxford. In 1847, he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, Lord President of the Council of UK. He remained loyal to France and French connection throughout his life. He died in 1888.

He represented his age in a profound manner by being the true voice of sensitive Victorian intellectual brooding over inevitable loss of faith and the meaning of life. Nineteenth century Hellenism, romantic interest in folk tales and legends, the preference for solitary meditation in evocative surroundings—these elements give a distinctive character to his poetry. His first volume was *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, which was published in 1849 anonymously was immediately withdrawn from circulation. In 1852, Arnold published his second volume of poems, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*. However, he did not reprint the long title poem because situations ‘in which suffering finds no vent in action, in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance, in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done’ are not fit subjects for poetry. ‘What are the eternal objects of poetry and at all times?’ Arnold asked in his 1853 preface and he replied, ‘they are actions, human actions, possessing an inherent interest in themselves and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet’.

Arnold is as great an exponent of Victorian elegiac as Tennyson. According to him, the main duty of a writer is to present his criticism of life in whatever medium he can as richly, luminously and broadly as possible. In his poem *Dover Beach*, he reflects the problems afflicting the Victorian society. Loss of faith is given its most memorable utterance; public values have disappeared and all that is left are the private affections, little society of love and friendship. His two best known poems are *The Scholar Gipsy* (1853), which is about the poet himself and his generations, and *Thyrsis* (1866), which is an elegy to Arthur Hugh Clough who died in 1861.



Fig 2.4 Matthew Arnold

2.5.1 Longing

Longing is one of Matthew Arnold’s most popular works. *Longing* is part of a collection called *Faded Leaves*. It will be interesting to point here that the five poems from *Faded Leaves* collection revolve around the theme of lost love. Each poem identifies the timeline from ‘the end of a love affair to the bitter-sweet memory and longing to be reunited in dreams’. In the very first poem, *The River*; we see the portrayal of the emotions of the

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Check Your Progress

14. Mention the prominent poems written by Matthew Arnold.
15. When was Arnold’s first volume of poems *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* published?

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rejected lover. In the second poem, *Too Late*, one comes across the reflection on the reality of 'at the wrong place, at the wrong time'. The very next poem or the locus of the collection *Separation* attains a pivotal point in the sequence of poems. It is, in this poem, when a raging heart soothes down, yet begs that no memory of this kind of love should be there with him. This memory was too painful to be treasured. The fourth poem, *On the Rhine* alludes to memory and the final poem *Longing* moves to pleading where he desires that his beloved must return to his dreams.

One comes across interesting similes and descriptions all through the *Faded Leaves*. Needless to say, Arnold appears to find solace in the constancy that nature has to offer which is in absolute contrast to the unbelievable ambivalence of the human world. While the first poem, *The River*, sets the mood of the surroundings that are described, it also presents a stark contrast to the inner feelings of the speaker. Nature again reappears in its most picturesque way in the fourth poem, *On the Rhine*. This poem attempts to calm down the anguish of the forlorn love that the speaker is experiencing at that point of time. In the very same poem, the snow-capped and moonlit Alpine mountains profess the speaker's own gradual demise. The peace of nature is described in the final stanza of the same poem as follows:

*Ah, Quiet, all things feel thy balm!
Those blue hill's too, this river's flow
Were restless once, but long ago.
Tamed is their turbulent youthful glow;
Their joy is in their calm.*

The sun of the dusk that appears in the fourth poem takes the readers to the much awaited dream land of *Longing*. In this poem, one realizes that day and night are juxtaposed with each other while the former is the source of the suffering of life and the latter is all about bringing death.

*Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For so the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.*

*Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to others as to me!*

*Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth,
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say, My love why sufferest thou?*

*Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For so the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.*

Explanation

The poem *Longing*, written by Matthew Arnold, is an expression of the speaker's love for his beloved. In the first stanza, the speaker states that if he dreams of the beloved at night, it will transform the wait to see her the next day much less painful. The lines clearly indicate that the speaker is in pain due to the absence of his beloved. The line 'The hopeless longing of the day' furthermore, justifies that the poet is certainly eager to see his beloved. The rational that without the existence of his beloved, the speaker is left directionless and helpless, suggests that perhaps this lady holds extreme significance in the day-to-day being of the speaker.

The speaker extends an appeal to his beloved to come to him, as she has done so many times before. She is more like a messenger from the radiant world. This happens to be the (assumed) origin point of meteors, especially when a meteor shower takes place. One can easily read the lines as the speaker comparing his beloved with meteor showers. Needless to say, meteor showers are almost always beautiful and amazing. They are admired by people all across the globe.

The speaker wants that the beloved should be as kind and humble with the people around her as she is to him. The use of 'thy new world' may imply that his beloved exists in different parts of the world. There is an uneasy reference to the fact that she might be no more or may be travelling overseas. Perhaps this is the precise reason why the poet is missing her so much. Else, she is in a state where he cannot physically get in touch with her anymore. Yet, the speaker wishes that even though he cannot physically see her anymore, he longs that she will be able to spread her kindness towards people in general, the way she had done to him.

*Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth,*

The above lines suggest that the meaning of the word truth moves across from honesty to faith and even to sincerity. There is no specific agreement with fact or reality specifically.

One entertains differing claims regarding a question like this: As to what constitutes the truth. Is it even possible to define as well as identify truth?

The poet is insisting his love to return to him. He desires that she should part his hair. He also wants her to kiss his brow while he is in his sleep. The speaker desperately longs to be in her real company again but for some unexplained reason that remains impossible.

The speaker desires that when he meets his woman finally in his dreams, she should explain to him why he is suffering even though she is not there with him for so long. This implies that love continues even after death.

*Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For so the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.*

Arnold repeats this stanza probably in a quest to further highlight the longing and pain that he feels for her in her absence. He keeps praying and pleading to her to visit his dreams.

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It is difficult to argue as to which of two poems by Matthew Arnold—*Longing* and *To Marguerite* wins our heart. That is because both poems are very different from each other. Nevertheless, many might suggest *To Marguerite* as better because the use of meter in *Longing* is very predictable and has a monotonous quality to it. The iambic rhythm hardly changes and many a times the poem lapses into sheer dullness.

2.6 SUMMARY

- The movement of Realism is an integral part of Victorian age. Although the literary scene during the Victorian period was dominated by novel, its achievement in poetry was not less significant.
- Among the early Victorians, the most prominent poets were Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Emily Bronte, Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, George Eliot among others.
- Alfred Tennyson was born on 6 August 1809 in an old Lincolnshire family. He was the first Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater.
- The influence of Lincolnshire countryside is clearly visible in the writings and especially, poetry of Tennyson.
- During this time in Cambridge, there was a rise in the reputation of Tennyson as a poet. In 1829 Alfred became the winner of the chancellor's gold medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*.
- In 1842 Tennyson published *Poems* in two volumes. While one volume comprised revised selected works from the volumes of 1830 and 1832, the other volume consisted of new poems.
- Tennyson embarked on writing poetic drama in 1874 and in 1875 *Queen Mary* appeared.
- The short poem, *Break, Break, Break* composed by Alfred Tennyson is an expression of his personal grief. But it is more than an individual cry of pain and despair. He has presented as a universal characteristic of our world.
- The narrator grieves the loss of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, a promising poet and essayist who had been engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily. Hallam died of a stroke in 1833 when he was only twenty-two.
- The poem, *Break, Break, Break* has similarity with W.H. Auden's *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* in which the death of a great poet does not affect anyone. In this poem also, the poet mourns the death of a dear friend who will never come back.
- Tennyson uses lots of punctuation, especially commas, which makes the poem move extremely slow, which when added with the context of the poem, heightens the feeling of sadness and depression in the poem.
- Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was a prominent writer of the Victorian era. He was born in a hamlet in Higher Bockhampton in the county town of Dorset. He spent his entire life, with the exception of a few years, in England.
- Thomas Hardy's works often met with a lot of pessimistic responses. His depiction of the seduction of the village belle in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and the sexual violence and innocent murders in *Jude the Obscure* met with unkind reception.

Check Your Progress

16. What is the theme of *Longing* written by Matthew Arnold?
17. What does the line 'The hopeless longing of the day' signify?

- Hardy's first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* was rejected and he was advised by Alexander Macmillan to improve his work.
- On 27 November 1912, misfortune struck Hardy as his wife Emma passed away. Though the couple has long been estranged, the death had a severe effect on Hardy. He wrote many compositions honouring her memory.
- Between 1920 and 1927, Hardy spent quality time writing his autobiography. It was published in two parts (1928 and 1930) under the authorial credit of Florence Hardy.
- In the poem, *The Darkling Thrush*, he calls nineteenth century as a 'corpse' which is lying in a 'crypt'.
- *The Darkling Thrush* was composed at the far end of the nineteenth century. The poem was first printed as *By the Century's Deathbed* sometime during December 1900.
- One might compare Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* with Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush*. Keats nightingale was more happy and melodious than the one suggested by Hardy in this poem. Keats nightingale was immortal while Hardy's thrush is combating a nasty storm in the middle of nowhere land.
- Frederick Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast.
- MacNeice, despite his reservations and hesitations, was able to establish himself as a poet in 1930s with the publication of his work *Poems* (1935). *Poems* (1935) facilitated in establishing MacNeice as one of the promising new poets of the 1930s.
- From 1941 until his death, Louis MacNeice dedicatedly worked for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). He died on 3 September 1963, just before the publication of his last book of poems, *The Burning Perch*.
- *Prayer Before Birth* by MacNeice is a dramatic monologue. It is written from the perspective of a child who is yet to be born. The unborn child through its monologue tries to express its desire for a free life that is devoid of manoeuvre and corrupt influence that pave the way for threat and terror in this world.
- Matthew Arnold was born in 1822 at Laleham in England. He was educated in Winchester and Oxford. In 1841, he won an open scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford.
- Arnold is as great an exponent of Victorian elegiac as Tennyson. According to him, the main duty of a writer is to present his criticism of life in whatever medium he can as richly, luminously and broadly as possible.
- *Longing* is one of Matthew Arnold's most popular works. *Longing* is part of a collection called *Faded Leaves*.
- The poem *Longing* written by Matthew Arnold is an expression of the speaker's love for his beloved.

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2.7 KEY TERMS

- **Eulogism:** It means to praise highly in speech or writing.
- **Requiem:** It refers to a hymn, composition, or service for the dead.

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- **Apocalyptic:** It implies forecasting final disaster of the world.
- **Dramatic monologue:** It is a technique devised by Robert Browning in which there is only one speaker speaking but there is a silent listener.
- **Pessimistic:** It is the tendency to stress the negative or unfavourable or to take the gloomiest possible view.

2.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The well-known works of Alfred Tennyson are as follows:
 - *In Memoriam* (1850)
 - *Idylls of the King* (1859)
 - *Ulysses* (1842)
 - *The Lady of Shalott* (1832)
2. In 1850, Tennyson became the poet Laureate of England.
3. The insistent beat of the poem *Break, Break, Break* emphasizes the relentless sadness of the subject matter in the poem.
4. Arthur Henry Hallam, a promising poet and essayist who had been engaged to Tennyson’s sister, Emily, died of a stroke in 1833 when he was only twenty-two years old. The shock at the sudden death of his best friend, Arthur Hallam, therefore, teaches us the priceless value of youth and good health.
5. Thomas Hardy’s life can easily be divided into three phases. The first phase (1840–1870) was marked by his early life, including first marriage, early compositions and a first unpublished novel. The second phase (1871–1897) was marked by his establishment as a writer, along with a prosperous writing career in the form of fourteen published novels and numerous short stories. The third phase (1898–1928) was marked by his attainment of a celebrity stature, moving away from composing novels and returning to poetry.
6. The name of Hardy’s first novel is *The Poor Man and the Lady*, which was rejected and he was advised by Alexander Macmillan to improve his work.
7. The major poems written by Thomas Hardy include *At an Inn*, *The Darkling Thrush*, *I Look into my Glass*, *The Ruined Maid* and *The Dead Man Walking*.
8. *The Darkling Thrush* written by Thomas Hardy indicates the change from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. Also, it indicates the change in Hardy’s creative approach, from writing novels he focused on writing poems.
9. The speaker portrays a bleak winter landscape in the poem *The Darkling Thrush*.
10. Louis MacNeice was born in Belfast.
11. 1930 was a significant year both professionally and personally for MacNeice. In 1930, MacNeice published his work *Poems* which established him as a poet. In the same year, his wife suddenly left him (and their year-old son), running away with a young American graduate student who had been staying with them in Birmingham.
12. The speaker of the poem, *Prayer Before Birth* is an unborn child.
13. *Prayer Before Birth* was written during the period of the Second World War.

14. The prominent poems written by Matthew Arnold are: *Dover Beach*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Longing* and *Thyrsis*.
15. Arnold's first volume of poems *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* was published in 1849.
16. The speaker's longing for his beloved is the theme of *Longing* written by Matthew Arnold.
17. The line 'The hopeless longing of the day' signifies that the poet is certainly eager to see his beloved.

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2.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Alfred Tennyson.
2. Write a short note on the childhood and youth of Thomas Hardy.
3. Briefly discuss the poetic devices used by MacNeice in *Prayer Before Birth*.
4. Why is Matthew Arnold regarded a representative poet of the Victorian age?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the poem, *Break, Break, Break*.
2. 'Hardy's female protagonists are based on the author's own notion of the feminine ideal.' Explain this statement with suitable examples from his works.
3. '*The Darkling Thrush* reflects Hardy's pessimistic outlook of life.' Discuss.
4. *Prayer Before Birth* is a poem belonging to the 'Auden Generation' poetry. Explain.
5. 'In most of Arnold's poems, we have noticed a melancholy strain.' Elucidate.

2.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 *THE NECKLACE*: GUY DE MAUPASSANT

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Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 About the Author
 - 3.2.1 Background of the Story
 - 3.2.2 Story in Brief
 - 3.2.3 Text and Important Passages for Explanation
 - 3.2.4 Character Sketches
 - 3.2.5 Theme
- 3.3 Summary
- 3.4 Key Terms
- 3.5 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 3.6 Questions and Exercises
- 3.7 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The Necklace or ‘La Parure’ in French is a famous short story by Guy De Maupassant. It was first published in 1884 in a French newspaper, *Le Gaulois*. It gained wide popularity and as a result, it was included in Maupassant’s short story collection *Tales of Day and Night* in 1885. *The Necklace* is considered one of the best examples of the realist fiction that intends to explore the harsh realities of the lives of ordinary people. It is a story of a young woman who is never satisfied with her meager lifestyle and makes a possible attempt to escape her destiny. Born into a family of lower economic status, she constantly feels that she deserves much better than what she has. As fate would have it, she is married off to a clerk who can only provide her with life’s basic necessities which is not what her heart desires. While her husband cherishes the small joys of life, she dreams of an exuberant life. Her destiny gives her a roller coaster ride from fulfilling her heart’s desire to bringing her back to the harsher world of reality. She understands the true meaning of impoverished existence only when she gets to experience it. She understands that denying the reality of one’s situation can bring about all the uninvited troubles, despite doing everything to make life appear different from what it actually is. Finally, life makes her wonder at its fickleness – how one small incident can overturn one’s life!

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand Maupassant as a short story writer
- Discuss the various characters of the story
- Discuss the theme of *The Necklace*

3.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant was born on 5 August 1850 to an affluent family at the Chateau de Miromesnil, in France. He loved his mother very much and hated his father who was an absent figure for the young boy during his childhood. He got his love of books from his mother. He had a fairly active childhood and spent much of it playing outdoor games. He was the eldest child of Gustav de Maupassant, a man of some means who squandered his wealth on women. His mother Laure Le Poittevin was an educated woman. She was a childhood friend of Flaubert. Maupassant dedicated *A Life* to him. His parents separated formally in 1863 and the young boy went to live with his mother and younger brother Herve at Etretat, Normandy. The Franco-Prussian war changed everything for Maupassant. The war destroyed the family's fortunes and Maupassant joined the Ministry of the Navy as a minor civil servant. Later he shifted to the Ministry of Education. Meanwhile, he began his literary career under the tutelage of Flaubert and Zola. He was a prolific writer and could soon purchase his own yacht La Louisette in 1883. His *A Life* proved to be a bestseller and sold over 25,000 copies. Maupassant suffered from syphilis. By 1883 the symptoms were fairly advanced (hair loss, headache, eye problem and others). The physical deterioration led to the writer suffering from depression. Maupassant attempted suicide by slitting his throat with a paper knife in 1892 and finally died in a psychiatric clinic in 1893.

Maupassant was unhappy in school and escaped from sadness through writing. Writing meant the purging of emotions to him. Writing became his escape from reality as a child. While at school he wrote a poem comparing his unhappiness with a soon to be married cousin's happiness. He was expelled from school because the poem was deemed obscene. This marks the beginning of his use of common images to refer to the misery of human life and also points to the later charge that a lot of his work is obscene. After this expulsion he enrolled in the Lycée Corneille in Rouen. Louis Bouilhet, Flaubert's close friend was his guardian here. Bouilhet's guidance and sense of himself as an artist inspired young Maupassant and rekindled his mother's connection to Flaubert, whose mentorship would eventually shape his career.

Work pressures contributed to his failing health. But the major cause was his brother, Herve's descent into madness, subsequent institutionalization and death. Medicines were available at the time to treat him but they were so expensive that Maupassant was compelled to write to finance his treatment. His place in French literature is evident from the fact that the leading intellectuals and writers of his age attended his funeral. His life is representative of the social and political changes France saw during the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, his influence goes beyond his contemporaries and can be seen in the works of writers like Tolstoy, Chekhov, Somerset Maugham, and O Henry.

In France, Realism began in the mid nineteenth century and was a movement in response to the Romantic movement that preceded it. According to the realists, the Romantics focused on the idealization of characters instead of a realistic portrayal. In contrast, the realists in France focused on the life of the middle class and portrayed their action and the consequences of such actions with little or no subjectivity. For instance, in *The Necklace*, the portrayal of Mathilde and her husband, the choices they make and the consequences of those choices is very realistic. According to proponents of realistic literature, social factors and the cultural environment plays an important role in the

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formation of character. Keeping in line with this view, realists lay a lot of importance to rationalism and scientific reasoning in explaining motive and behaviour. Flaubert was one of the earliest practitioners of the realistic genre in France. He wrote *Madame Bovary* (1857), a realistic novel in terms of motivation of action and representation of character. Later on realism went on to influence artists in other fields like painting. French painters like Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, and Édouard Manet were deeply influenced by realism.

Like his mentor Flaubert, Maupassant also believed that fiction should represent reality as much as possible. This influenced not just his characterization but also the structure of his work. In his characterization and description he tried to achieve objectivity rather than psychological exploration or romantic descriptions. His novels and short stories also had clearly defined plot lines and specific, observable details. Nevertheless, he disagreed that any fiction was ‘realistic’. His argument for this was simple — the very act of writing fiction implied the creation of an illusionary world by the artist to convey a specific idea and to inspire a specific response and effect on the reader. He did, however, believe that the closer the fictional world that the artist created was to ‘real’ life more incisive would be the revelation. In other words, if the artist was able to faithfully represent the facts he saw after a close, focused and detailed observation, he would be able to understand and reveal new depths and perspectives to even the most common, unremarkable aspects of life.

The Necklace was written with these ideas in mind. At no point of time does the writer explore Mathilde’s yearning for wealth and her unhappiness with her current state. He focuses on the bare facts and simply tells the reader of her unhappiness and of the things that she desires. He then goes on to inform the reader of what she does to fulfil these desires and her reactions when this happens. Later, towards the end of the story, he does not tell us about Mathilde’s reaction when it is revealed that the necklace was not real and that she has wasted the best years of her life chasing a mirage. He just reveals the information and leaves it to the reader to draw conclusions. At no point in the story does he hide the motivations behind her actions nor does he try to idealize the characters. There is no artifice or pretence either in his prose or in his treatment of characters.

Maupassant wrote over 300 short stories. While most of them deal with realistic tales of everyday people, he was also skilful in dealing with supernatural elements. In his stories, he focuses on the realistic and not the fantastical because according to him writing should not aim at ‘telling a story or entertaining us or touching our hearts but at forcing us to think and understand the deeper, hidden meanings of events’.

3.2.1 Background of the Story

The Necklace is set in Paris, the city of love and glamour, in the late nineteenth century. The story provides many clues to this period, as Mathilde Loisel’s fanciful flight in the ‘silent ante chambers hung with oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candlebra... long reception halls hung with ancient silk, little coquettish perfumed reception rooms...’ She often dreams of dainty dinners and shiny silverware, whispered gallantries and pink meat of a trout or the wings of a quail. In addition, to her imaginative setting, there is a realistic setting of the story, which is a poor dwelling place with bare walls, shabby chairs and ugly curtains. In contrast to her imaginative world where she finds herself having an elaborate meal in the most precious dishes, her real dinner table is round which is covered with a table cloth in use for the past three days. Most of the story takes

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place in the Loisel's mean dwelling and only some part of it is set in the palace where the ball takes place, although there is no description of the palace. We can assume the grandeur of the place by the measures of Mathilde's ecstasy during the ball. Later, with the twist of fate, Mathilde has to leave the house that she does not love much due to its impoverished look. She moves to a much smaller house than she could have ever wished for.



Fig. 3.1 Guy de Maupassant

3.2.2 Story in Brief

The Necklace is a famous short story written by Maupassant and revolves around the life of Mathilde Loisel. Mathilde was such a pretty and charming girl that it seemed she was mistakenly born in the family of clerks. Her beauty deserved much more affluent upbringing. As fate would have it, she got married to a clerk in the Ministry of Education. All her hopes and expectations of having the marriage portion, luxuries and recognition, and marrying a rich man were dashed against her destiny. She started leading a simple yet unsatisfied life because she yearned for the greater riches of life. She was as unhappy as she could be, leading an impoverished life; she believed that she had descended to lead a poverty-stricken lifestyle after marriage. Her constant sufferings upon thinking herself as being born for every luxury and delicacy that life can offer only elevated the level of her pain. The causes of her distress were numerous: the poorness of her house, the mean walls, the worn chairs and the ugly curtains. All these things, of which other women of her class probably would not even have been mindful, tormented and humiliated her. Her heart was full of regret and despair at the sight of her poor little Breton house maid. She dreamed of silent ante rooms, oriental tapestries, tall bronze candlebra, tall footmen in knee breaches sleeping in large arm chairs due to the warmth of the stove. She imagined vast reception halls hung with antique silk, exquisite drawers containing precious ornaments, and little perfumed rooms exclusively created for little celebrations with close friends and famous men, whose attention was sought by every envious woman.

However, she sat down for dinner with her husband at the round table covered with a table cloth in use for the past three days. She kept imagining the dainty dishes and elaborate meals in the middle of a fairy forest, served alongside murmured gallantries, as her husband uncovered the soup tureen and exclaimed with delight, 'Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that.' She longed for precious jewels and gowns which she never had, but she only loved those things and felt that she was made for them. Her

Check Your Progress

1. When did realism as a movement begin in France?
2. How did Maupassant escape unhappiness in school?

only desire was to be desired and envied. She had an old schoolmate, Madame Forestier, who was quite affluent and Mathilde avoided visiting her as she would come back more depressed than ever, and wept whole day out of agony and regret.

One evening her husband returned home holding a large envelope in his hand. He declared with an exultant air about it that there was something for her. She tore it swiftly and took out a printed card bearing the words that they were invited by the Minister of Education at the palace on 18 January. On reading the invite, she threw it across the table murmuring what she had got to do with that. Her husband was expecting her to be ecstatic for being invited to the palace, but to his surprise, she threw it carelessly. He told her that he had tremendous trouble in getting the invite, yet he managed to get it for her, as this was a great occasion for her to go out. She was furious at her husband's words and told him that she had nothing to wear for such a grand occasion. He hesitantly suggested her to wear the dress that she wore at the theatre. He was taken aback when she started weeping and two large tears trickled from the corner of her eyes. He asked her what the matter was, to which she replied that she had nothing to wear so she could not go to the ball. She wiped her tears and told him to give the invite to a colleague whose wife could afford a nice dress for the ball. His heart broke as he resumed to ask her the estimated cost of the gown that she would like to wear for the occasion. She answered four hundred francs after a much speculated calculation. He grew slightly pale on listening to her wife as he had been saving exactly the same amount for a gun that he wished to buy. He had planned a little shooting excursion with his friends next summer and had been saving money for it. Nevertheless, without hesitating a moment, he offered to buy her the dress that she desired with those four hundred francs.

Mathilde Loisel appeared sad and uneasy as the day of the ball drew closer, although her dress was ready. Her husband asked her why she had been behaving strangely for the past three days. She replied that she felt miserable for not having any jewellery and ornaments to wear with the dress. She said that she would not want to appear impoverished and it would be better not to go to the ball. He suggested her to wear flowers as they would look smart and not cost much, but failed to convince her. She asserted that she did not want to be humiliated by looking poor among other rich women. Her husband told her to go to her old school friend Madame Forestier and borrow some jewels. She was delighted by his suggestion. Next day she went to her friend's house and revealed her trouble. Madame Forestier brought her a large box from her dressing table and asked her to choose for herself. She tried various bracelets and necklaces, looked in the mirror and asked her if she had something else. However, she found a diamond necklace in a black satin case and her heart throbbed at her desire to wear that piece. She wore it around her neck with trembling hands and got lost in her own reflection in the mirror. She hesitantly asked her friend if she could lend her only that necklace. Madame Forestier agreed. Mathilde embraced her with joy and left with the diamond necklace.

Madame Loisel was a great success on the night of the ball. She looked prettier than any other woman present in the ball. She looked more elegant and graceful than anyone else. She was dancing and smiling with joy as she was the most sought after woman in the ball. Men wanted to waltz with her, they inquired her name, and even the Minister noticed her. She was drunk with pleasure and ecstatically dancing and celebrating her beauty. She had been victorious in getting all the admiration and attention that she had yearned for all her life. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight in a little room with other men whose wives were enjoying the ball.

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She left about four o' clock in the morning with her husband who had brought an ordinary wrap to cover her shoulders. The modest shrug was contrasting the exuberant ball dress and she was aware of the impoverished cloth as she noticed the expensive furs of other women. She wished to disappear so as not to be seen by other women in that ordinary shrug. However, Madame Loisel's husband told her to wait until he called a cab. She refused and hurriedly went outside looking for a carriage, shouting at the passing drivers. Desperate and shivering with cold, they walked down the Sienne, and at last found an old carriage on the quay; such carriages could only be found after dark as if their shabbiness would be shameful in the daylight. They reached their house and sadly walked up to their apartment. For her, it was the end of everything, as for him, he was thinking about the time that he should be in his office. She stood in front of her mirror, so as to have a last glance at her glorious beauty. But, she uttered a cry as the necklace around her neck was missing! Her husband, already half undressed inquired her and she revealed that Madame Forestier's diamond necklace had been lost. He was stupefied at her statement. They frantically searched for it in the folds of her dress, in the pockets of the coat, everywhere else, but it could not be found. Loisel put on his clothes and went out to search for it through the way they had returned from the ball. She sat on a chair in her ball dress, dumbfounded, lacking strength to go to bed. She remained seated without a single thought. Her husband returned home about seven o' clock without finding the necklace. He went everywhere: to the police station, to the newspaper offices to offer a reward, to the cab companies and anywhere he felt hopeful. She waited in bewilderment all day long. Loisel returned at night without finding anything about the necklace, he looked pale and worried. He suggested her to write to Madame Forestier that she had broken the clasp of the necklace and was getting it mended. He dictated to her the words to be written the letter. A week passed and they had lost all hope of finding the necklace. Loisel looked as if he had aged five years in one week. He said that they should arrange for replacing the necklace. The following day, they went to a jeweller whose name was there on the box, but the jeweller said that he only crafted the box and had no idea about the necklace. Then they went to different jewellers in search of a necklace that looked like the one they had lost, relying only on their memory of the necklace. Finally, they found a similar necklace in a shop at Palais Royal. Its price was forty thousand francs but the cost settled down to thirty six thousand francs. They made an arrangement with the shopkeeper and he agreed not to sell it for three days. Loisel's father had left him eighteen thousand francs, and he intended to borrow the rest of the money. He arranged the money somehow, borrowing some money, giving notes of hand, undertaking various agreements, doing business with money lenders and usurers. He mortgaged the rest of his life signing various documents without even realizing whether he could meet the terms and demands. With great sufferings and struggles yet to come, he managed to give the jeweller thirty six thousand francs. Madame Loisel went to return the necklace to Madame Forestier who was not happy with the delay in returning the necklace and complained that she should have returned it earlier. However, to her relief, Madame Forestier did not open the case to check the necklace as she feared that she could detect the substitution.

Thus, began the ordeal of the Loisels which they bore heroically. Madame Loisel was determined to pay off the debt and thus worked hard for it. She dismissed the service of her house maid and started doing all the household work herself, they moved to a smaller apartment and rented the garret. She would dress like a poor woman and bargained with the fruit and vegetable sellers to save whatever money she could. Her husband worked in the evenings as well as nights to earn more. At the end of each

month, they would pay off the notes and renewed others. Their struggle lasted ten years and after ten years they had paid off all their debt including the interest. Madame Loisel looked much older than before. Her appearance was no different than any other old, coarse and strong woman of a poor household. Her hair was unkempt, skirts were awry and hands were red. She swept the floor with long swishes of water making loud noise herself. However, when her husband was away to office, she would sit near a window and think about that fateful evening when she was the most attractive lady in the ball. She recalled the time when she was beautiful and admired by all. She would think about the fickleness of life as how a small thing or incident can change the entire course of one's life. Had she not lost the necklace, how different her life would have been!

One Sunday having gone for a walk in the Champs Elysees, Madam Loisel suddenly caught sight of a woman who was taking a child for a walk. She recognized that woman who was none other than Madame Forestier, who still looked young and charming as ever. She became emotional and thought of speaking to her. She hesitated for a while and then regained her confidence thinking that she had paid off all the debt and she felt like sharing it all with her. She went up to her and wished her good morning in a familiar voice. Madame Forestier did not recognize her as she had the looks of a poor old lady. She was rather surprised by a familiar address of a poor old woman. She said that she did not recognize her and told her that she had mistakenly taken her for someone else. Madame Loisel smiled and told her that she was Mathilde, her old friend. She uttered a cry on being told so. She said that poor Mathilde had changed a lot. Mathilde told her that she had led a very hard life on her account. Madame Forestier was even more surprised on hearing that. She asked how it was so. Mathilde reminded her of the diamond necklace that she had once borrowed from her. She confessed that she had lost her necklace and brought her back another necklace exactly like the original. She continued that her life completely changed in repaying the debt that they had undertaken for the payment of the diamond necklace. However, she told her with pride that all the agony had ended as they had paid off the debt after working very hard for ten long years. Madame Forestier was shocked to know that they had suffered so much on account of that necklace. She asked her if she bought a new diamond necklace to replace the one she borrowed and Mathilde confirmed it with joy. Madame Forestier was deeply touched by her story. She took her hands in hers and told her that her necklace was a piece of imitation jewellery and not real diamonds. It hardly cost five hundred francs.

3.2.3 Text and Important Passages for Explanation

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as though fate had blundered over her, into a family of artisans. She had no marriage portion, no expectations, no means of getting known, understood, loved, and wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and she let herself be married off to a little clerk in the Ministry of Education. Her tastes were simple because she had never been able to afford any other, but she was as unhappy as though she had married beneath her; for women have no caste or class, their beauty, grace, and charm serving them for birth or family, their natural delicacy, their instinctive elegance, their nimbleness of wit, are their only mark of rank, and put the slum girl on a level with the highest lady in the land.

She suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for every delicacy and luxury. She suffered from the poorness of her house, from its mean walls, worn chairs, and ugly curtains. All these things, of which other women of her class would not even have been aware, tormented and insulted her. The sight of the little Breton girl who came to do the work in her little house aroused heart-broken regrets and hopeless dreams in her mind. She imagined silent antechambers, heavy with

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Check Your Progress

3. Who was Mathilde Loisel?
4. Who was Mathilde's husband?

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Oriental tapestries, lit by torches in lofty bronze sockets, with two tall footmen in knee-breeches sleeping in large arm-chairs, overcome by the heavy warmth of the stove. She imagined vast saloons hung with antique silks, exquisite pieces of furniture supporting priceless ornaments, and small, charming, perfumed rooms, created just for little parties of intimate friends, men who were famous and sought after, whose homage roused every other woman's envious longings.

When she sat down for dinner at the round table covered with a three-days-old cloth, opposite her husband, who took the cover off the soup-tureen, exclaiming delightedly: 'Aha! Scotch broth! What could be better?' she imagined delicate meals, gleaming silver, tapestries peopling the walls with folk of a past age and strange birds in faery forests; she imagined delicate food served in marvellous dishes, murmured gallantries, listened to with an inscrutable smile as one trifled with the rosy flesh of trout or wings of asparagus chicken.

She had no clothes, no jewels, nothing. And these were the only things she loved; she felt that she was made for them. She had longed so eagerly to charm, to be desired, to be wildly attractive and sought after.

She had a rich friend, an old school friend whom she refused to visit, because she suffered so keenly when she returned home. She would weep whole days, with grief, regret, despair, and misery.

One evening her husband came home with an exultant air, holding a large envelope in his hand.

'Here's something for you,' he said.

Swiftly she tore the paper and drew out a printed card on which were these words:

'The Minister of Education and Madame Ramponneau request the pleasure of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel at the Ministry on the evening of Monday, January the 18th.'

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she flung the invitation petulantly across the table, murmuring:

'What do you want me to do with this?'

'Why, darling, I thought you'd be pleased. You never go out, and this is a great occasion. I had tremendous trouble to get it. Everyone wants one; it's very select, and very few go to the clerks. You'll see all the really big people there.'

She looked at him out of furious eyes, and said impatiently: 'And what do you suppose I am to wear at such an affair?'

He had not thought about it; he stammered:

'Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It looks very nice, to me . . .'

He stopped, stupefied and utterly at a loss when he saw that his wife was beginning to cry. Two large tears ran slowly down from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth.

'What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?' he faltered.

But with a violent effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice, wiping her wet cheeks:

'Nothing. Only I haven't a dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to some friend of yours whose wife will be turned out better than I shall.'

He was heart-broken.

'Look here, Mathilde,' he persisted. 'What would be the cost of a suitable dress, which you could use on other occasions as well, something very simple?'

She thought for several seconds, reckoning up prices and also wondering for how large a sum she could ask without bringing upon herself an immediate refusal and an exclamation of horror from the careful-minded clerk.

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At last she replied with some hesitation:

‘I don’t know exactly, but I think I could do it on four hundred francs.’

He grew slightly pale, for this was exactly the amount he had been saving for a gun, intending to get a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre with some friends who went lark-shooting there on Sundays.

Nevertheless he said: ‘Very well. I’ll give you four hundred francs. But try and get a really nice dress with the money.’

The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy and anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her:

‘What’s the matter with you? You’ve been very odd for the last three days.’

‘I’m utterly miserable at not having any jewels, not a single stone, to wear,’ she replied. ‘I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party.’

‘Wear flowers,’ he said. ‘They’re very smart at this time of the year. For ten francs you could get two or three gorgeous roses.’

She was not convinced.

‘No . . . there’s nothing so humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women.’

‘How stupid you are!’ exclaimed her husband. ‘Go and see Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her quite well enough for that.’

She uttered a cry of delight.

‘That’s true. I never thought of it.’

Next day she went to see her friend and told her her trouble.

Madame Forestier went to her dressing-table, took up a large box, brought it to Madame Loisel, opened it, and said: ‘Choose, my dear.’

First she saw some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross in gold and gems, of exquisite workmanship. She tried the effect of the jewels before the mirror, hesitating, unable to make up her mind to leave them, to give them up. She kept on asking:

‘Haven’t you anything else?’

‘Yes. Look for yourself. I don’t know what you would like best.’

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin case, a superb diamond necklace; her heart began to beat covetously. Her hands trembled as she lifted it. She fastened it round her neck, upon her high dress, and remained in ecstasy at sight of herself.

Then, with hesitation, she asked in anguish:

‘Could you lend me this, just this alone?’

‘Yes, of course.’

She flung herself on her friend’s breast, embraced her frenziedly, and went away with her treasure. The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and quite above herself with happiness. All the men stared at her, inquired her name, and asked to be introduced to her. All the Under-Secretaries of State were eager to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

She danced madly, ecstatically, drunk with pleasure, with no thought for anything, in the triumph of her beauty, in the pride of her success, in a cloud of happiness made up of this universal homage and admiration, of the desires she had aroused, of the completeness of a victory so dear to her feminine heart.

She left about four o’clock in the morning. Since midnight her husband had been dozing in a deserted little room, in company with three other men whose wives

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were having a good time. He threw over her shoulders the garments he had brought for them to go home in, modest everyday clothes, whose poverty clashed with the beauty of the ball-dress. She was conscious of this and was anxious to hurry away, so that she should not be noticed by the other women putting on their costly furs.

Loisel restrained her.

‘Wait a little. You’ll catch cold in the open. I’m going to fetch a cab.’

But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the staircase. When they were out in the street they could not find a cab; they began to look for one, shouting at the drivers whom they saw passing in the distance.

They walked down towards the Seine, desperate and shivering. At last they found on the quay one of those old night prowling carriages which are only to be seen in Paris after dark, as though they were ashamed of their shabbiness in the daylight.

It brought them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they walked up to their own apartment. It was the end, for her. As for him, he was thinking that he must be at the office at ten.

She took off the garments in which she had wrapped her shoulders, so as to see herself in all her glory before the mirror. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The necklace was no longer round her neck!

‘What’s the matter with you?’ asked her husband, already half undressed.

She turned towards him in the utmost distress.

‘I . . . I . . . I’ve no longer got Madame Forestier’s necklace. . . .’

He started with astonishment.

‘What! . . . Impossible!’

They searched in the folds of her dress, in the folds of the coat, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

‘Are you sure that you still had it on when you came away from the ball?’ he asked.

‘Yes, I touched it in the hall at the Ministry.’

‘But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall.’

‘Yes. Probably we should. Did you take the number of the cab?’

‘No. You didn’t notice it, did you?’

‘No.’

They stared at one another, dumbfounded. At last Loisel put on his clothes again.

‘I’ll go over all the ground we walked,’ he said, ‘and see if I can’t find it.’

And he went out. She remained in her evening clothes, lacking strength to get into bed, huddled on a chair, without volition or power of thought.

Her husband returned about seven. He had found nothing.

He went to the police station, to the newspapers, to offer a reward, to the cab companies, everywhere that a ray of hope impelled him.

She waited all day long, in the same state of bewilderment at this fearful catastrophe.

Loisel came home at night, his face lined and pale; he had discovered nothing.

‘You must write to your friend,’ he said, ‘and tell her that you’ve broken the clasp of her necklace and are getting it mended. That will give us time to look about us.’

She wrote at his dictation.

By the end of a week they had lost all hope.

Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

‘We must see about replacing the diamonds.’

Next day they took the box which had held the necklace and went to the jewellers whose name was inside. He consulted his books.

‘It was not I who sold this necklace, Madame; I must have merely supplied the clasp.’

Then they went from jeweller to jeweller, searching for another necklace like the first, consulting their memories, both ill with remorse and anguish of mind.

In a shop at the Palais-Royal they found a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They were allowed to have it for thirty-six thousand.

They begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days. And they arranged matters on the understanding that it would be taken back for thirty-four thousand francs, if the first one were found before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs left to him by his father. He intended to borrow the rest.

He did borrow it, getting a thousand from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes of hand, entered into ruinous agreements, did business with usurers and the whole tribe of money-lenders. He mortgaged the whole remaining years of his existence, risked his signature without even knowing if he could honour it, and, appalled at the agonising face of the future, at the black misery about to fall upon him, at the prospect of every possible physical privation and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace and put down upon the jeweller’s counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace to Madame Forestier, the latter said to her in a chilly voice:

‘You ought to have brought it back sooner; I might have needed it.’

She did not, as her friend had feared, open the case. If she had noticed the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she not have taken her for a thief?

Madame Loisel came to know the ghastly life of abject poverty. From the very first she played her part heroically. This fearful debt must be paid off. She would pay it. The servant was dismissed. They changed their flat; they took a garret under the roof.

She came to know the heavy work of the house, the hateful duties of the kitchen. She washed the plates, wearing out her pink nails on the coarse pottery and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and dish-cloths, and hung them out to dry on a string; every morning she took the dustbin down into the street and carried up the water, stopping on each landing to get her breath. And, clad like a poor woman, she went to the fruiterer, to the grocer, to the butcher, a basket on her arm, haggling, insulted, fighting for every wretched halfpenny of her money.

Every month notes had to be paid off, others renewed, time gained.

Her husband worked in the evenings at putting straight a merchant’s accounts, and often at night he did copying at two pence-halfpenny a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years everything was paid off, everything, the usurer’s charges and the accumulation of superimposed interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become like all the other strong, hard, coarse women of poor households. Her hair was badly done, her skirts were awry,

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her hands were red. She spoke in a shrill voice, and the water slopped all over the floor when she scrubbed it. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down by the window and thought of that evening long ago, of the ball at which she had been so beautiful and so much admired.

What would have happened if she had never lost those jewels? Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed to ruin or to save!

One Sunday, as she had gone for a walk along the Champs-Elysees to freshen herself after the labours of the week, she caught sight suddenly of a woman who was taking a child out for a walk. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still attractive.

Madame Loisel was conscious of some emotion. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She went up to her.

‘Good morning, Jeanne.’

The other did not recognise her, and was surprised at being thus familiarly addressed by a poor woman.

‘But . . . Madame . . .’ she stammered. ‘I don’t know . . . you must be making a mistake.’

‘No . . . I am Mathilde Loisel.’

Her friend uttered a cry.

‘Oh! . . . my poor Mathilde, how you have changed! . . .’

‘Yes, I’ve had some hard times since I saw you last; and many sorrows . . . and all on your account.’

‘On my account! . . . How was that?’

‘You remember the diamond necklace you lent me for the ball at the Ministry?’

‘Yes. Well?’

‘Well, I lost it.’

‘How could you? Why, you brought it back.’

‘I brought you another one just like it. And for the last ten years we have been paying for it. You realise it wasn’t easy for us; we had no money. . . . Well, it’s paid for at last, and I’m glad indeed.’

Madame Forestier had halted.

‘You say you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?’

‘Yes. You hadn’t noticed it? They were very much alike.’

And she smiled in proud and innocent happiness.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her two hands.

‘Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine was imitation. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs! . . .’

Selected Passages for Explanation

Reference to Context

1. [Mathilde] suffered endlessly hopeless dreams in her mind.’

Explanation

The above lines refer to Mathilde's endless agony at the realization that her hopes and dreams have been shattered on being married to a clerk and not a wealthy man as she desires. She has to dress up like an ordinary woman and feels that her lifestyle has become impoverished after marriage, although she is born and brought up in a poor family.

Mathilde is endlessly tormented by her poverty. She feels that she is entitled to receive all the riches and luxuries of life. She was stressed due to the poor house in which she lived, she wanted a bigger house; she hated to see the empty walls of her house, the sight of old and worn out chairs disturbed her and she was disgusted to look at the ugly curtains hanging in her house. These were the things of which other women of her class would not have bothered a bit, but she constantly felt miserable and angry at her poor standard of living.

Reference to Context

2. 'Ah, the good soup! or the wings of a quail.'

Explanation

The above lines are spoken by Loisel, Mathilde's husband. He is an exact opposite of his better half as he cherishes the little pleasures that life provides him. He enjoys them rather than cribbing for what he does not possess. The couple sits down to have dinner and Mathilde is depressed as usual on looking at the three days old table cloth, but Loisel appreciates the soup as he uncovers the soup bowl.

Loisel exclaims with delight that the soup looks good as he takes the cover off the bowl. He says that he loves to have it as there's nothing better than the soup. However, Mathilde was least interested in her husband's sense of gratitude. Rather she was busy imagining the elaborate meals served in shining silverware. She dreamt of tapestries gleaming on the walls with the pictures of ancient folk and strange birds in the fairy woods. She imagined delicate food served in dainty dishes, murmured gallantries, to be listened with a curious smile trifling with the rosy flesh of trout or wings of asparagus chicken.

Reference to Context

3. 'What do you wish me to do the whole official world will be there.'

Explanation

The above lines refer to a conversation between the Loisels regarding an invite. Loisel returns from the office and excitedly hands over a large envelope to Mathilde. She opens it and finds an invitation to the ball at the palace of the Ministry of Education. Instead of being delighted, as her husband hopes, she throws the invitation on the table.

Mathilde throws away the invite and asks angrily what he wishes her to do with the invitation. Loisel replies calmly that he thought it would make her happy because it seems a good opportunity for her to socialize as she always desires. He tells him that he managed to receive the invitation from the Ministry with great difficulty as everyone wants to go there but very few are invited. Being a clerk, it is a matter of pride for him to go to an official party where many high ranked officials are invited.

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Reference to Context

4. ‘Two great tears ran slowly is better equipped than I am.’

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Explanation

The above lines refer to Mathilde’s desperation and frustration as she wants to go to the ball but finds that she has no dress appropriate for the occasion. Her husband suggests her to wear the gown that she wears to the theatre but she feels tormented at the idea of not having a good dress. She begins to weep.

Mathilde starts weeping and two big tears trickle from the corner of her eyes towards her mouth. Her husband asks her the reason for crying and she pretends to overcome her anger with a calm gesture. She wipes her cheeks and replies that there is nothing that is bothering her. It is just that she has no gown appropriate for the ball; hence, she is not willing to go there. She sarcastically tells him to hand over the invitation to some colleague whose wife can afford a nice dress for the ball and can turn out better than her.

Reference to Context

5. ‘It annoys me not to haveor three magnificent roses.’

Explanation

The above lines refer to a conversation between Mathilde and her husband. Her husband offers her four hundred francs to buy a dress for the party and she manages to buy a beautiful frock for the ball. However, she behaves strangely for the past three days and her husband is worried for her. He asks her why she has seemed very queer and she tells him about her agony.

Mathilde tells her husband that she is sad because she does not possess a single piece of jewellery that she can wear with her new dress. She complains that she has nothing to put on and she would only be flaunting her poverty if she goes to the ball. So, it is better not to go to the ball at all. He suggests her to wear flowers instead of jewellery as they would look smart and also not cost them more than ten francs. He tells her that she can buy two or three beautiful roses and wear them with her new dress.

Reference to Context

6. ‘Haven’t you anymore? Then fled with her treasure.’

Explanation

The above lines refer to Mathilde’s conversation with her friend. On her husband’s advice to borrow some jewellery from her friend Madame Forestier, she goes to the latter’s house and discloses her problem to her friend. Madame Forestier brings her a box of jewellery and asks her to choose for herself. She tries various necklaces and bracelets in front of the mirror, but keeps asking for more.

Mathilde asks her friend Madame Forestier if she can show her some more pieces of jewellery that she can try. Her friend tells her to try as long as she finds what

suits her best as she has no idea what she would like most. Suddenly, Mathilde finds a beautiful diamond necklace in a black satin box and looks at it admiringly. Her heart desires it so badly that she picks it with her trembling hands and puts it around her neck. She is ecstatic to see her reflection in the mirror and hesitantly asks her friend, if she could lend her only that necklace. Her friend readily gives it to her and she embraces her friend in sheer delight of getting what her heart longs for. She kisses her friend and leaves with her treasure.

Reference to Context

7. 'She danced with rapturewives were enjoying the ball.'

Explanation

The above lines refer to Mathilde's joyful dance at the much awaited party where she is a success. She looks prettier than any other woman in the party. It seems that she has got all the attention that she had been yearning for years. She is wild with joy as she looks the most elegant and graceful of all women in the party. All men look at her and inquire her name; she is even noticed by the Minister. Everyone wants to waltz with her. Such admiration drives her crazy with unparalleled happiness.

She dances with an overwhelming ecstasy as if to celebrate her beauty and glory. She seems victorious and drunk with pleasure and passion. It seems that she has been waiting all her life for this moment of admiration and rapture. Her happiness knows no bound and she dances all night. She leaves the ball at four o' clock in the morning, while her husband has been dozing off in a little room, with other men whose wives were enjoying the ball.

Reference to Context

8. 'She removed her wraps..... but did not find it.'

Explanation

The above lines refer to the beginning of Mathilde's miserable life. She returns home from the ball after enjoying every bit of it and goes up to her house sadly as if entering a despicable place. It seems that everything has ended for her. However, her husband moves in casually with the only concern of reaching the office on time that morning.

Mathilde stands before the mirror so as to look at herself in all her glory that had been so admired at the ball. She unwraps herself and looks closely in the mirror. Suddenly, she utters a painful cry. She no longer has the diamond necklace around her neck! Her husband half undressed, rushes to her room on hearing her loud cry. She stammers and reveals that she has lost Madame Forestier's diamond necklace. He is awestruck on hearing that. They frantically search for it everywhere, in the creases of her skirt, of her cloak, in the pockets, everywhere, but it is nowhere.

Reference to Context

9. 'You must write to your friendto replace that ornament.'

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Explanation

The above lines are spoken by Loisel as he tries to figure out what to do next. He has searched for the necklace at every possible place. He has been to the police station, the newspaper office, and the cab companies but has not been able to find the necklace. He returns home empty-handed while his wife has been waiting all night for him to return with the necklace.

He comes home and tells his wife that she should write a letter to her friend Madame Forestier apologizing for the delay in returning the necklace. He says that she should give the excuse that she has broken the clasp of the necklace and is getting it mended. He thinks that this would give them some time to search for the missing necklace or in arranging for its substitute. She writes the letter as he dictates it. A week passes by without any clue to finding it and by now they have lost all hope also. Loisel's appearance has tremendously changed in a week's time. He looks five years older than his actual age. Finally, he declares that it is no use looking for the lost necklace as it would not be found, so they should think of replacing it with another similar necklace.

Reference to Context

10. 'It was not I, madame, could have it for thirty six.'

Explanation

The above lines are spoken by a jeweller who is approached by the Loisels. They decide to replace the diamond necklace. So, they try to locate the place from where it was originally bought. They find the address of a shop and go there to check if they can find another similar necklace. They go to the jeweller and tell him about their problem. He consults several books and tells them that he did not sell that necklace to Madame Forestier.

Instead he only designed the case and thus, his name was inscribed on the case. They felt helpless and went to different jewellery shops trying to find a lookalike of the lost necklace. They trusted their memory and tried to recall how it looked. Both of them were tired and broken-hearted due to the embarrassment that awaited them if they failed to find a substitute of the diamond necklace. Finally, they found a similar necklace in a shop at Palais Royal. They looked at it closely and gathered that it resembled the original piece very closely. Its price was forty thousand francs, however, the jeweller agreed to sell it for thirty six thousand francs.

Reference to context

11. 'Loisel possessed eighteen thousandwhether he could meet it.'

Explanation

The above lines refer to Loisel's financial crisis that falls upon him due to a diamond necklace. He makes an arrangement with the jeweller that he would not sell the diamond necklace to anyone for three days so that they can arrange the money to buy it. They also make an agreement with the jeweller that he would buy it back for the same amount in case they find the original necklace within a month.

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Loisel realizes that he already has eighteen thousand francs that his father left for him. He decides to borrow the rest of the amount and pay for the necklace. He goes from place to place borrowing a thousand francs from one person and arranging five hundred from another. He gave notes, entered into various obligations and agreements and did business with a number of usurers and money lenders. He nearly compromised the rest of his life with heavy debts, taking huge financial risks and signing various bonds without realizing whether he could meet the demands later.

Reference to Context

12. 'You should have returned Madame Loisel for a thief?'

Explanation

The above lines are spoken by Madame Forestier as she displays her displeasure over the delay in returning the necklace. She had happily given the diamond necklace to her friend Mathilde without making her uncomfortable and she expects the same courtesy back from her friend. However, Mathilde having lost the necklace does her best to replace it so that she is not ashamed in front of her friend.

Madame Loisel takes back the necklace to Madame Forestier who tells her in a cold voice that she should have returned it sooner. She should have realized that she might have needed it. Madame Loisel is worried about the authenticity of the necklace, she fears that her friend might just open the case and see that her necklace has been replaced. She fears that her friend may accuse her of stealing the necklace on finding out that she has returned a substitute and not the original one that she had borrowed. Nonetheless, to her relief, Madame Forestier takes the case and does not open it.

Reference to Context

13. 'She came to know what heavy Miserable money, sou by sou.'

Explanation

The above lines refer to the miserable life that Madame Loisel starts leading in order to repay the debts. Only when she herself lives an impoverished life, does she truly realize the daily torments of the poor and needy. However, she is determined to pay off the heavy debt and, therefore, plays her role heroically. The Loisels dismiss their house maid and shift to a smaller house. They also rent the garret.

Madame Loisel truly realizes the meaning of heavy household work as she takes up the chores in her hands. She does all the household work, including washing the greasy dishes with her delicate fingers and painted nails. She washes the dirty clothes, dries them upon a line and also goes down the street to fetch water. Now she dresses like any other simple woman and also goes to the grocer, vegetable seller and the butcher and bargains for the provisions so as to save money in every possible way.

Reference to Context

14. 'Madame Loisel looked old So beautiful and so admired.'

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Explanation

The above lines refer to Madame Loisel's transformation in ten years from a young and beautiful girl to an ordinary old woman. The Loisels work very hard to repay their debts and lead a miserable life trying to save every possible penny. They succeed in paying off their complete debt including the cumulative interest in ten years. However, the hard work and stress takes a toll on their lives.

Madame Loisel looks much older than her actual age. She bears the looks of an impoverished housewife who has turned strong and hard owing to the struggles of life. She has unkempt hair and awry skirts, her hands are red and she talks loudly while washing the floor. However, sometimes when she is alone and her husband is away to office, she sits near the window and thinks about that fateful evening when she was so admired for her beauty and charm at the ball.

Reference to Context

15. ' I brought you back another Most only
five hundred francs.'

Explanation

The above lines refer to a conversation between Madame Loisel and Madame Forestier who meet after almost a decade. Madame Loisel recognizes her friend who still looks young, beautiful and charming. She hesitates initially but then goes up to her and greets her. Madame Forestier takes some time to recognize her old friend and they talk about the last time they met. Madame Loisel tells her about the hardships that she faced because of her necklace.

Madame Loisel reveals to her friend that she had lost her diamond necklace and then replaced it with a new one exactly similar to the original. She tells her about the ordeal on account of the necklace and confesses that she is happy as the debts have been finally paid off. Madame Forestier is surprised to hear her friend's story of hardship and asks her if she bought a real diamond necklace to replace her necklace. Madame Loisel replies with pride in her eyes that the new necklace was very similar to the original, so she must not have realized the difference. Nevertheless, Madame Forestier is touched at the revelation and holds her friend's hand. Madame Forestier reveals to her friend that the necklace was not made of real diamonds and its price was not more than five hundred francs.

Check Your Progress

5. What invitation did Mathilde's husband bring home?
6. Why was Mathilde furious at her husband's suggestions about the dress?
7. Did Mathilde agree to wear flowers?
8. Why did Mathilde go to Madame Forestier's house?

3.2.4 Character Sketches

You will now go through the delineation of characters in the story, *The Necklace*.

Mathilde Loisel: She is a pretty and charming girl who is born into a family of clerks, which she believes is a mistake of destiny. She never believes herself belonging to a humble background and feels entitled to receive all the luxuries of life. Unable to change her circumstances, she leads a life of constant rebellion and is always yearning for the riches that life can offer. She is married to a man who looks after her and loves her but love is of no significance to her due to his poor status of being a clerk. She is always dissatisfied despite her husband's efforts of pleasing her.

Whatever she actually possesses is irrelevant and insignificant for her, she hates her small apartment, its bare walls and ugly curtains pain her, she does not appreciate

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the little sweet compliments of her husband and she is not at all grateful for anything in her life. She keeps dreaming of magnificent halls, perfumed rooms and vast taprooms, decorated with exquisite pieces of furniture. She lives in a state of turmoil and is so overcome by jealousy that she does not even wish to visit her old schoolmate Madame Forestier who is a wealthy lady. While dining with her husband, she is not even mentally present there, so much so that she does not even notice how her husband is delighted to have the seemingly ordinary soup.

Her reaction to her husband's attempt at making her happy by arranging the invite for the ball is completely driven with rage and agony. She throws the envelope the table and starts weeping. She complains to her husband that she has nothing to wear, so she will not go to the party. However, she is clever enough to get the desired amount from her husband for a new dress. She is inconsiderate and does not acknowledge at any point how her husband gave her all the money that he had been saving to buy a gun. Her only concern after arranging the dress is the accessories that she would wear with the dress. That is another reason for her to be depressed, and she does not hesitate for a moment to borrow the jewellery from Madame Forestier. She seems so fascinated by looking at her reflection in the mirror while trying different pieces of jewelley at her friend's house. Finally, she asks for a diamond necklace and happily takes it away.

Her happiness knows no bound at the ball where she seems to celebrate her beauty and flaunt her borrowed wealth. That is the only moment in the story where Mathilde Loisel is truly joyful. She is completely immersed in that moment of being in the company of wealthy people and being admired by them. She believes herself to be an inseparable part of that momentary illusion. However, the illusions does not last very long, and so she is back in the real world but she must pay for that one moment of utter happiness.

On realizing that she has lost the borrowed diamond necklace, she is dumbfounded. She writes a letter of apology dictated by her husband to her friend. However, she takes the responsibility of her action and bravely plays her part in repaying the heavy debts.

Her destiny causes her to experience the real poverty of which she had complained all her life despite leading a comfortable life. Soon she realizes the hardships of life but her spirit does not deter her from working even harder. Her beauty is compromised and the ten arduous years make her look much older than her actual age. Yet she is proud of having paid off all the money with her hard work.

Monsieur Loisel: Monsieur Loisel is Mathilde's husband who loves her dearly and despite his limited means, tries his best to please her. Mathilde hates the fact that her husband is a mere clerk with meagre income and never cares much for his feelings. There is a remarkable difference in their level of emotional contentment. While he cherishes the small joys of life and happily accepts the fact that there are certain things beyond his reach, his wife is constantly dissatisfied and yearns for things beyond her reach.

In his attempt to please his wife, he manages to receive the invite to the ball with great difficulty. He expects her to be happy but he is stunned to see her weeping on account of being invited to the ball with high officials. However, he tries to understand her point that she wants a new dress. He suggests her to wear the one that she wears to the theatre, but she is not convinced. He asks her how much money she wants for the new dress. As she tells him the approximate amount, he silently sacrifices his wish to buy a gun as he had saved exactly the same amount for it. He tries to pacify yet another

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tantrum of his wife, to arrange the jewellery with the new dress by asking her to wear fresh flowers, but she refuses, then he suggests her to borrow it from her wealthy friend Madame Forestier. He is happy and contented to see his wife enjoying the ball. He lets her enjoy and goes to sleep in another room fully realizing that he has to go to office the next morning. After his wife has had her full, she comes to him at four o'clock in the morning, he offers her a shawl so that she does not catch cold. She refuses to wrap herself in an ordinary shawl when other women were wrapped in expensive furs. However, they reach home and his only concern is that he must not be late to work that morning.

As soon as he realizes that Mathilde has lost the diamond necklace that she borrowed from her friend, he ventures back in the cold night to search for it. He comes back with a long and pale face and tells his wife to write a letter of apology to her friend. He is courteous enough not to make other person uneasy. He tries hard to find a jewellery shop where he can find a similar necklace and when he finds one, he is taken aback to hear the price, which is double the fortune left by his father. He does not hold himself back and arranges for the money from various sources not even realizing whether he would be able to meet the financial demands. He is heavily indebted but does not lose hope and works for extra hours in the evening and at night for ten long years. Finally, he earns enough money and pays back his debts along with the interest. He proves to be a loving and caring husband who does not hold his wife accountable for her actions and always tries to protect her.

Madame Forestier: She is a rich lady who happens to be an old friend of Mathilde Loisel. Mathilde avoids visiting her friend as she does not want to appear impoverished in front of her wealthy friend. However, when Mathilde does go to her house to borrow some jewellery, she treats her kindly and offers her to choose whatever jewellery she pleases. Mathilde is jealous of her wealthy friend and keeps asking if she has some more. She tells her to look for more and try what suits her best. Mathilde chooses a diamond necklace and asks her hesitantly if she could take only that. She happily agrees and gives it away.

Mathilde loses the necklace in a party and replaces it with another similar diamond necklace, a real one. Despite receiving a letter of apology from her friend, Madame Forestier speaks to her friend coldly and conveys to her that she should have returned it sooner. She does not bother to open the box and check the necklace and does not realize for ten years that the necklace has been replaced.

However, she meets Mathilde in a park after ten years and does not recognize her as Mathilde looks much older than her age but she looks just the same as ten years ago. On being told by Mathilde of her ordeal of ten arduous years on account of the diamond necklace, she is awestruck. She is touched with emotion on hearing her story and holds Mathilde's hands. She reveals to her that her necklace was not made of real diamonds and did not cost more than five hundred francs.

3.2.5 Theme

The main theme of *The Necklace* is the futility of the fascinating world of illusion in which Mathilde loves to live. The life that she dreams of living does not match the reality of her situation. She is unwilling to part with the illusory world that gives her solace in her fanciful flight. She does not want to accept that her real world is completely different yet a happy one in which she has a comfortable house and a loving husband. Instead, she dreams of the unreachable and unhappy world of her imagination. She does not appreciate

the pleasures of reality and suffers endlessly for the want of luxuries of life. She lets herself believe that her beauty and charm make her worthy of being wealthy.

In the beginning of the story, Mathilde thinks of all those things that she does not possess but feels entitled to have them. When she does not get what she wants, she feels tormented and humiliated. Although everything takes place in her mind, in reality, she fails to appreciate any aspect of her life, including a devoted husband. She constantly regrets that her beauty is being wasted without enjoying a luxurious life. She believes that she is spending a life well beneath what she deserves, so there is no reason to be happy.

Her belief is so firm that her joy knows no limit at the ball where for the first time in her life she has really stepped into the world that she always imagines. For her, happiness has a different meaning altogether, she is not happy because she has a loving husband, but she is happy because everyone in the party wants to dance with her. For her, happiness lies in the fact that she is wearing a beautiful dress and a diamond necklace, it does not matter to her that her husband has given her all his savings to buy that dress also, it is of least significance that the diamond necklace is borrowed from a friend. She does not even know whether the diamond is real or not, but she is happy like never before. The time spent at the ball is so precious to her that its memory does not fade even after ten years of hardships. She pays the price of that precious moment by spending the next ten years of her life in miserable conditions.

Structure

The Necklace illustrates the tightly knit ironic structure of a short story. Although it follows a standard plot of most stories, its integrated tone prevails throughout and provides it a unified structure. The beginning of Mathilde's married life is not so happy despite her loving husband, and she longs for what she has to pay in the end. Her beauty that she is so proud of fades due to her hardships for paying off the debts. Ironically, the necklace that she is so proud to wear leads her to lose her most precious asset—her beauty. The twist towards the end of the story shatters all the illusions and the reality is revealed. Mathilde gets the shock of her life that the necklace for which she actually wasted ten precious years of her life was not worth all her labour.

3.3 SUMMARY

- Henri Rene Albert Guy de Maupassant was born on 5 August 1850 to an affluent family at the Chateau de Miromesnil, in France.
- Maupassant was unhappy in school and escaped from the sadness by writing.
- Maupassant's place in French literature is evident from the fact that the leading intellectuals and writers of his age attended his funeral. His life is representative of the social and political changes France saw during the second half of the nineteenth century.
- Like his mentor Flaubert, Maupassant also believed that fiction should represent reality as much as possible.
- He wrote over 300 short stories. While most of them deal with realistic tales of everyday people, he was also skilful in dealing with supernatural elements in his stories.

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Check Your Progress

9. At what moment in the story do you find Mathilde truly joyful?
10. How did Monsieur Loisel react on realizing that his wife had lost the diamond necklace?

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- Mathilde Loisel was such a pretty and charming girl that it seemed she was mistakenly born in the family of clerks.
- Mathilde's constant sufferings upon thinking herself as being born for every luxury and delicacy that life can offer only elevated the level of her pain.
- She had an old schoolmate, Madame Forestier, who was quite affluent but she avoided visiting her as she would come back more depressed than ever, and wept whole day out of agony and regret.
- Mathilde's husband was expecting her to be ecstatic for being invited to the palace, but to his surprise, she threw the invitation card carelessly.
- Mathilde Loisel appeared sad and uneasy as the day of the ball drew closer, although her dress was ready. When husband asked her why she had been behaving strangely for the past three days, she replied she felt miserable for not having any jewellery and ornaments to wear with the dress.
- Mathilde said that she would not want to appear impoverished and it would be better not to go to the ball. He suggested her to wear flowers as they would look smart and not cost much, but failed to convince her. She asserted that she did not want to be humiliated by looking poor among other rich women.
- Mathilde borrowed a diamond necklace from her friend. Madame Forestier
- Madame Loisel was a great success on the night of the ball. She looked prettier than any other woman present in the ball. She looked more elegant and graceful than anyone else and danced all night.
- On returning home, Mathilde she found the diamond and reported the matter necklace was missing. Monsieur Loisel searched for the necklace everywhere to the police, went to the newspaper offices to offer a reward, to the cab companies and anywhere he felt hopeful. His efforts were in vain as he did not find the diamond necklace.
- Monsieur Loisel suggested his wife to write to Madame Forestier that she had broken the clasp of the necklace and was getting it mended. He dictated to her the words to be written.
- The Loisels went to different jewellers in search of a necklace that looked like the one they had lost, relying only on their memory of the necklace.
- The couple found a similar necklace in a shop at Palais Royal. Its price was forty thousand francs but the cost settled down to thirty six thousand francs. They made an arrangement with the shopkeeper and he agreed not to sell it for three days.
- Monsieur Loisel arranged the money somehow, borrowing some money, giving notes of hand, undertaking various agreements, doing business with money lenders and usurers. He mortgaged the rest of his life signing various documents without even realizing whether he could meet the terms and demands.
- After a period of ten years the Loisels were able to return the money they had borrowed along with its interest.
- One Sunday Madame Loisel suddenly saw her friend Madame Forestier.
- Mathilde told about the ordeal which she went through for having returned the diamond necklace which she had borrowed and eventually lost. Madame Forestier was shocked to know that they had suffered so much on account of that necklace.

- Surprised, Madame Forestier told Mathilde that her necklace was a piece of imitation jewellery and not real diamonds. It hardly cost five hundred francs.

3.4 KEY TERMS

- **Irony:** It is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words.
- **Waltz:** It is a dance in triple time performed by a couple, who turn rhythmically round and round as they progress around the dance floor.
- **Taproom:** It refers to a room in which alcoholic drinks, especially beer, are available on tap.
- **Monsieur:** It is a title or form of address used for or to a French-speaking man, corresponding to *Mr* or *sir*.

3.5 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. Realism as a movement began in France in the mid nineteenth century.
2. Maupassant escaped unhappiness in school by resorting to writing. Writing meant the purging of emotions to him. Writing became his escape from reality as a child.
3. Mathilde Loisel was a pretty and charming girl mistakenly born in the family of clerks.
4. Mathilde Loisel was married to Monsieur Loisel — a clerk in the Ministry of Education.
5. Mathilde’s husband brought home an invitation from the Minister of Education to attend a party at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening. He had managed to receive the invitation with great difficulty as there were limited number of invites and everyone wished to go to the grand party.
6. Mathilde was furious at her husband’s suggestion about the dress as he asked her to wear the dress which she used to wear at the theatre.
7. Mathilde bluntly refused to wear flowers with the new dress. She said that there was nothing more humiliating than appearing poor in the middle of a lot of rich women.
8. Mathilde visited Madame Forestier’s house because she wanted to borrow jewellery to wear with the new dress.
9. Mathilde Loisel is truly joyful only once in the story. It is that moment when she goes to the ball in all her glory. She dances with rapture as if celebrating her beauty and charm.
10. Loisel did not panic and did not blame his wife for having lost his diamond necklace. He was dumbfounded for a moment but soon regained his senses and responded to the situation very calmly. He searched the clothes and then went back to the street from where he had just returned without complaining and teasing his wife.

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3.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the theme of the story *The Necklace*?
2. How does the necklace act as a symbol of irony in the story?
3. How does the truth about the necklace impact Mathilde's life?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Assess the characters of Madame Loisel and Monsieur Loisel. How are they different from each other?
2. Discuss *The Necklace* as an example of realist fiction.
3. 'Guy de Maupassant is reckoned as one of the fathers of modern short story'. Explain.

3.7 FURTHER READING

- Prasad, B. 2010. *A Background to the Study of English Literature*. India: Macmillan.
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UNIT 4 *THE BET*: ANTON CHEKHOV

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 About the Author
- 4.3 *The Bet*: Text and Explanation
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Terms
- 4.6 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 4.7 Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Reading

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4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the short story, *The Bet*, written by Anton Chekhov in 1889, a wager is made that changes the lives of two people. In the story, a wealthy banker hosts a party which is attended by a young lawyer, among other guests. During the party, some of the guests engage in a heated debate on the subject of capital punishment versus life imprisonment. While the banker supports death, the lawyer insists that it is better to live in any manner than to die. To settle the point, the banker offers the lawyer two million roubles to spend fifteen years in a cell. The lawyer agrees, but at the end of fifteen years, he strangely refuses to take the money. In this unit, you will study the short story, *The Bet* written by Anton Chekhov.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Assess Chekhov’s skills as a short-story writer
- Discuss the theme and characters of the short story *The Bet*

4.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A Russian short-story writer and playwright, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is considered one of the greatest short-story writers in the world. Chekhov was born on 29 January 1860 in southern Russia. He was attracted to literature from a young age, and his first story appeared in a Moscow paper in 1880. During his student years, he wrote many short stories and sketches of Russian life for several periodicals. In 1888, his health began to weaken rapidly due to lung and heart complications, but he continued to produce short stories and plays. *The Steppe* and *Tedious Tales* — both depictions of Russian life — are known as his masterpieces. His four plays *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Sea-Gull* are considered *classics* of Russian literature. Chekhov died of tuberculosis on July 15, 1904, aged only 44.

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Fig 4.1 Anton Chekhov

4.3 THE BET: TEXT AND EXPLANATION

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words:
 - (a) Anton Chekhov's first story appeared in a Moscow paper in _____.
 - (b) _____ and _____ are known as Chekhov's masterpieces.
2. State whether true or false:
 - (a) Chekhov's four plays, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Sea-Gull*, are considered as classics of Russian literature.
 - (b) Anton Chekhov is a French short-story writer.

It was a dark autumn night. The old banker was pacing from corner to corner of his study, recalling to his mind the party he gave in the autumn fifteen years before. There were many clever people at the party and much interesting conversation. They talked among other things of capital punishment. The guests, among them not a few scholars and journalists, for the most part disapproved of capital punishment. They found it obsolete as a means of punishment, unfitted to a Christian State, and immoral. Some of them thought that capital punishment should be replaced universally by life-imprisonment. "I don't agree with you," said the host. "I myself have experienced neither capital punishment nor life-imprisonment, but if one may judge *a priori*, then in my opinion capital punishment is more moral and more humane than imprisonment. Execution kills instantly, life-imprisonment kills by degrees. Who is the more humane executioner, one who kills you in a few seconds or one who draws the life out of you incessantly, for years?"

"They're both equally immoral," remarked one of the guests, "because their purpose is the same, to take away life. The State is not God. It has no right to take away that which it cannot give back, if it should so desire."

Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five. On being asked his opinion, he said:

"Capital punishment and life-imprisonment are equally immoral; but if I were offered the choice between them, I would certainly choose the second. It's better to live somehow than not to live at all."

There ensued a lively discussion. The banker who was then younger and more nervous suddenly lost his temper, banged his fist on the table, and turning to the young lawyer, cried out:

"It's a lie. I bet you two millions you wouldn't stick in a cell even for five years."

"If you mean it seriously," replied the lawyer, "then I bet I'll stay not five but fifteen."

"Fifteen! Done!" cried the banker. "Gentlemen, I stake two millions."

"Agreed. You stake two millions, I my freedom," said the lawyer.

So this wild, ridiculous bet came to pass. The banker, who at that time had too many millions to count, spoiled and capricious, was beside himself with rapture. During supper he said to the lawyer jokingly:

“Come to your senses, young man, before it’s too late. Two millions are nothing to me, but you stand to lose three or four of the best years of your life. I say three or four, because you’ll never stick it out any longer. Don’t forget either, you unhappy man that voluntary is much heavier than enforced imprisonment. The idea that you have the right to free yourself at any moment will poison the whole of your life in the cell. I pity you.”

Explanation: On a dark autumn night, an old banker is pacing up and down his study, thinking about a party he gave in the same season fifteen years ago. He recalls in his mind the events of the party on 14 November 1870. The guests included a number of scholars and journalists. Among such clever people, the party had a lot of interesting conversation. One of the topics of conversation was capital punishment. Most of the guests disapproved of capital punishment. They considered it immoral and unfit for a Christian State, and wanted it replaced by life imprisonment.

The banker held the opinion that capital punishment is more moral and humane than life imprisonment. According to him, execution killed instantly, but life imprisonment was a painfully slow death. The banker got into a lively discussion with a twenty-five-year-old lawyer who, given the choice, preferred life imprisonment to capital punishment. For him, to live was better any day than execution. At this, the banker grew furious and challenged the lawyer that he (the lawyer) would not survive confinement. The lawyer, quite sure of himself, bet on fifteen years of life imprisonment and the banker put two million roubles at stake on the bet.

In the opening scene, the old banker recalls this ridiculous bet. At that time, the banker was very rich and two million were nothing to him. At dinner towards the end of the party, the banker ridiculed the lawyer, asking him to rethink his position. He felt that voluntary imprisonment was much more difficult than enforced imprisonment of the state. He pitied the lawyer, and called him an ‘unhappy man’.

The Regret

And now the banker, pacing from corner to corner, recalled all this and asked himself:

“Why did I make this bet? What’s the good? The lawyer loses fifteen years of his life and I throw away two millions. Will it convince people that capital punishment is worse or better than imprisonment for life? No, no! all stuff and rubbish. On my part, it was the *caprice* of a well-fed man; on the lawyer’s, pure greed of *gold*.”

Explanation: This is a very important point in the story. The old banker recalls the night of the party, fifteen years ago, and is filled with lament. He questions himself, ‘Why did I make this bet?’ He acknowledges the fact that the bet would have served no purpose since it still would not have convinced people, as to which was worse, capital punishment or life imprisonment. It was ‘all stuff and rubbish’, since it took away fifteen years of a young lawyer’s life and the (then) rich banker would have thrown away two million for this wild bet. This ridiculous bet was only the proud impulsiveness of a spoilt rich man and the greed for money of the young lawyer.

The Terms

He recollected further what happened after the evening party. It was decided that the lawyer must undergo his imprisonment under the strictest observation, in a garden wing of the banker’s house. It was agreed that during the period he would be deprived

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of the right to cross the threshold, to see living people, to hear human voices, and to receive letters and newspapers. He was permitted to have a musical instrument, to read books, to write letters, to drink wine and smoke tobacco.

By the agreement he could communicate, but only in silence, with the outside world through a little window specially constructed for this purpose. Everything necessary, books, music, wine, he could receive in any quantity by sending a note through the window. The agreement provided for all the minutest details, which made the confinement strictly solitary, and it obliged the lawyer to remain exactly fifteen years from twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1870, to twelve o'clock of November 14th, 1885. The least attempt on his part to violate the conditions, to escape if only for two minutes before the time, freed the banker from the obligation to pay him the two millions.

Explanation: At the fag end of the party, 'it was decided that the lawyer must undergo his imprisonment under the strictest observation, in a garden wing of the banker's house'. The lawyer would be under constant scrutiny of the banker and he would not be allowed to cross the threshold. The lawyer was allowed to drink wine, smoke tobacco, keep a musical instrument, in his case, the piano and read and write as much as he wanted.

All that the lawyer had to do, in case he required anything, was send a note through the only window. The confinement of the lawyer was solitary, with no contact with the outside world. The stipulated time of confinement was from midnight on 14 November 1870 to midnight on 14 November 1885. If the lawyer left even two minutes before the time, the agreement would be null and the banker would no longer be obliged to pay two million to the lawyer.

Fifteen Years

During the first year of imprisonment, the lawyer, as far as it was possible to judge from his short notes, suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom. From his wing day and night came the sound of the piano. He rejected wine and tobacco. "Wine," he wrote, "excites desires, and desires are the chief foes of a prisoner; besides, nothing is more boring than to drink good wine alone," and tobacco spoiled the air in his room. During the first year the lawyer was sent books of a light character; novels with a complicated love interest, stories of crime and fantasy, comedies, and so on.

In the second year the piano was heard no longer and the lawyer asked only for classics. In the fifth year, music was heard again, and the prisoner asked for wine. Those who watched him said that during the whole of that year he was only eating, drinking, and lying on his bed. He yawned often and talked angrily to himself. Books he did not read. Sometimes at nights he would sit down to write. He would write then a long time and tear it all up in the morning. More than once he was heard to weep.

In the second half of the sixth year, the prisoner began zealously to study languages, philosophy, and history. He fell on these subjects so hungrily that the banker hardly had time to get books enough for him. In the space of four years about six hundred volumes were bought at his request. It was while that passion lasted that the banker received the following letter from the prisoner: "My dear jailer, I am writing these lines in six languages. Show them to experts. Let them read them. If they do not find one single mistake, I beg you to give orders to have a gun fired off in the garden. By the noise I shall know that my efforts have not been in vain. The geniuses of all ages and countries speak in different languages; but in them all burns the same flame. Oh, if you knew my heavenly happiness now that I can understand them!" The prisoner's desire was fulfilled. Two shots were fired in the garden by the banker's order.

Later on, after the tenth year, the lawyer sat immovable before his table and read only the New Testament. The banker found it strange that a man who in four years had mastered six hundred erudite volumes, should have spent nearly a year in reading

one book, easy to understand and by no means thick. The New Testament was then replaced by the history of religions and theology.

During the last two years of his confinement the prisoner read an extraordinary amount, quite *haphazard*. Now he would apply himself to the natural sciences, then he would read Byron or Shakespeare. Notes used to come from him in which he asked to be sent at the same time a book on chemistry, a textbook of medicine, a novel, and some treatise on philosophy or theology.

He read as though he were swimming in the sea among broken pieces of wreckage, and in his desire to save his life was eagerly grasping one piece after another.

Explanation: In the first year of imprisonment, the lawyer suffered loneliness and boredom. He read light books, including comedies, romances and novels of crime and fantasy. He rejected wine and tobacco. Tobacco because it spoilt the air of his room and wine because it was better had with some company. The lawyer played the piano day and night. In the second year, the lawyer asked to read the classics.

In the fifth year of confinement, the lawyer asked for wine and the whole of that year he ate, drank and slept. He read nothing. He used to write something in the evenings, only to tear it up at night. He was often heard crying. In the sixth year, the lawyer read books of languages and read about six hundred volumes in a span of four years. He mastered six languages. He wrote a special message to the banker, in six different languages. The lawyer requested that if the language experts deemed the language correct, two shots be fired in the garden to let him know that his learning was perfect.

In the tenth year, the lawyer read only one book and this was the New Testament. In the fourteenth and fifteenth year of imprisonment, the lawyer attempted to reclaim the lost bits of his life and read myriad books on varied subjects. In the last two years, he read books on medicine, philosophy, natural sciences and Shakespeare.

The Last Night and Day

The banker recalled all this, and thought:

“Tomorrow at twelve o’clock he receives his freedom. Under the agreement, I shall have to pay him two millions. If I pay, it’s all over with me. I am ruined forever...”

Fifteen years before he had too many millions to count, but now he was afraid to ask himself which he had more of, money or debts. Gambling on the Stock-Exchange, risky speculation, and the recklessness of which he could not rid himself even in old age, had gradually brought his business to decay; and the fearless, self-confident, proud man of business had become an ordinary banker, trembling at every rise and fall in the market.

“That cursed bet,” murmured the old man clutching his head in despair....“Why didn’t the man die? He’s only forty years old. He will take away my last farthing, marry, enjoy life, gamble on the Exchange, and I will look on like an envious beggar and hear the same words from him every day: ‘I’m obliged to you for the happiness of my life. Let me help you.’ No, it’s too much! The only escape from bankruptcy and disgrace-is that the man should die.”

The clock had just struck three. The banker was listening. In the house every one was asleep, and one could hear only the frozen trees whining outside the windows. Trying to make no sound, he took out of his safe the key of the door which had not been opened for fifteen years, put on his overcoat, and went out of the house. The garden was dark and cold. It was raining. A damp, penetrating wind howled in the garden and gave the trees no rest. Though he strained his eyes, the banker could see neither the ground, nor the white statues, nor the garden wing, nor the trees.

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Approaching the garden wing, he called the watchman twice. There was no answer. Evidently the watchman had taken shelter from the bad weather and was now asleep somewhere in the kitchen or the greenhouse.

“If I have the courage to fulfil my intention,” thought the old man, “the suspicion will fall on the watchman first of all.”

In the darkness he groped for the steps and the door and entered the hall of the garden-wing, then poked his way into a narrow passage and struck a match. Not a soul was there. Someone’s bed, with no bed-clothes on it, stood there, and an iron stove loomed dark in the corner. The seals on the door that led into the prisoner’s room were unbroken.

When the match went out, the old man, trembling from agitation, peeped into the little window.

In the prisoner’s room a candle was burning dimly. The prisoner himself sat by the table. Only his back, the hair on his head and his hands were visible. Open books were strewn about on the table, the two chairs, and on the carpet near the table.

Five minutes passed and the prisoner never once stirred. Fifteen years’ confinement had taught him to sit motionless. The banker tapped on the window with his finger, but the prisoner made no movement in reply. Then the banker cautiously tore the seals from the door and put the key into the lock. The rusty lock gave a hoarse groan and the door creaked. The banker expected instantly to hear a cry of surprise and the sound of steps. Three minutes passed and it was as quiet inside as it had been before. He made up his mind to enter.

Before the table sat a man, unlike an ordinary human being. It was a skeleton, with tight-drawn skin, with long curly hair like a woman and a shaggy beard. The color of his face was yellow, of an earthy shade; the cheeks were sunken, the back long and narrow, and the hand upon which he leaned his hairy head was so lean and skinny that it was painful to look upon. His hair was already silvering with grey, and no one who glanced at the senile emaciation of the face, would have believed that he was only forty years old. On the table, before his bended head, lay a sheet of paper on which something was written in a tiny hand.

“Poor devil,” thought the banker, “he’s asleep and probably seeing millions in his dreams. I have only to take and throw this half-dead thing on the bed, smother him a moment with the pillow, and the most careful examination will find no trace of unnatural death. But first, let us read what he has written here.”

The banker took the sheet from the table and read:

“Tomorrow at twelve o’clock midnight, I shall obtain my freedom and the right to mix with people. But before I leave this room and see the Sun I think it necessary to say a few words to you. On my own clear conscience and before God who sees me I declare to you that I despise freedom” life, health, and all that your books call the blessings of the world.

“For fifteen years I have diligently studied earthly life. True, I saw neither the earth nor the people, but in your books I drank fragrant wine, sang songs, hunted deer and wild boar in the forests, loved women.... And beautiful women, like clouds ethereal, created by the magic of your poet’s’s genius, visited me by night and whispered to me wonderful tales, which made my head drunken.

In your books I climbed the summits of Elbruz and Mont Blanc and saw from there how the sun rose in the morning, and in the evening suffused the sky, the ocean and the mountain ridges with a purple gold. I saw from there how above me lightnings glimmered, cleaving the clouds; I saw green forests, fields, rivers, lakes, cities; I heard sirens singing, and the playing of the pipes of pan; I touched the wings of beautiful devils who came flying to me to speak of God.... In your books I cast myself into bottomless abysses, worked miracles, burned cities to the ground, preached new religions, conquered whole countries....

“Your books gave me wisdom. All that unwearying human thought created in the centuries is compressed to a little lump in my skull. I know that I am cleverer than you all.

“And I despise your books, despise all wordly blessings and wisdom. Everything is void, frail, visionary and delusive as a mirage. Though you be proud and wise and beautiful, yet will death wipe you from the face of the earth like the mice underground; and your *posterity*, your history, and the *immortality* of your men of genius will be as frozen slag, burnt down together with the terrestrial globe.

“You are mad, and gone the wrong way. You take falsehood for truth and ugliness for beauty. You would marvel if suddenly apple and orange trees should bear frogs and lizards instead of fruit, and if roses should begin to breathe the odor of a sweating horse. So do I marvel at you, who have bartered heaven for earth. I do not want to understand you.

“That I may show you in deed my contempt for that by which you live, I waive the two millions of which I once dreamed as of paradise, and which I now despise. That I may deprive myself of my right to them, I shall come out from here five minutes before the stipulated term, and thus shall violate the agreement.”

When he had read, the banker put the sheet on the table, kissed the head of the strange man, and began to weep. He went out of the wing. Never at any other time, not even after his terrible losses on the Exchange, had he felt such contempt for himself as now. Coming home, he lay down on his bed, but agitation and tears kept him a long time from sleeping....

The next morning the poor watchman came running to him and told him that they had seen the man who lived in the wing climb through the window into the garden. He had gone to the gate and disappeared. The banker instantly went with his servants to the wing and established the escape of his prisoner. To avoid unnecessary rumors he took the paper with the renunciation from the table and, on his return, locked it in his safe.

Explanation: The banker, still pacing his study, recalls the events of the past fifteen years. He is worried that since the lawyer has honoured the terms of confinement, he will have to give him two million roubles. The banker is no longer as rich as he was when he made the bet. He has lost a lot of money through rash speculation and debts. Now, if he gives the lawyer two million roubles, he himself will go bankrupt. So, the banker makes a plan to kill the lawyer in his sleep. The banker unlocks the lawyer's room and sees a dim candle glowing in the dark. He sees the emaciated figure of the forty-year-old lawyer. He seems to be sleeping with his head on the table. The banker thinks this is the right time to kill him. As he comes closer, he sees a letter lying on the table and thinks of reading it first.

In the letter, addressed to the banker, the lawyer thanks him for the books that gave him wisdom. He, however, renounces the money that the banker owes him. He called the banker ‘mad’ in the letter, for having ‘bartered heaven for earth’. Heaven was the supreme wisdom he gained from the books of the banker. In the books, the lawyer had ‘conquered whole new countries’ while sitting in the confinement of the banker's garden room. The two million roubles, which he thought of as paradise as a young lawyer, were now ‘earth’ or dirt to him. He holds the banker's way of life in contempt and has no desire whatsoever for the money. He wants to renounce the due amount by leaving five minutes before midnight, the completion of his fifteen-year confinement.

The banker is so moved by the letter that he cries and kisses the emaciated head of this ‘strange man’. He still cannot understand the enlightenment of the lawyer, who willingly renounces two million roubles. The next day, the guards announce that the man has run away.

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Check Your Progress

3. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words:
- The debate was about capital punishment being better than _____.
 - The banker felt that _____ imprisonment was more difficult than _____ imprisonment.
 - The banker admits that the bet was a result of his impulsiveness and the lawyer's _____ for money.
 - The lawyer was to be imprisoned in a _____ of the banker's _____.
 - If the lawyer violated the conditions in any way, or tried to escape even two minutes before the stipulated time, the banker would be _____ from the obligation of paying _____ millions.

Important characters

- **The banker:** He is a relatively flat character. He is a vain, proud rich man, who could not understand the gravity of the step of the lawyer, calling him a ‘strange man’.
- **The lawyer:** His character undergoes immense change over the course of the story. From a young lawyer, excited to gain two million roubles after fifteen years, he becomes a learned man from years of reading. He is able to renounce a big fortune, which to him is equivalent to dust, after the wisdom he gains during his confinement.

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Check Your Progress

4. State whether true or false:
 - (a) The lawyer lay dead on the bed when the banker entered his room.
 - (b) The lawyer made his contempt for the banker’s superficial world very clear and said that he did not want to even understand the banker.
 - (c) The lawyer left five minutes before the stipulated time so that he could win the bet.
 - (d) The lawyer had not desired for the two million roubles.
 - (e) In the tenth year, the lawyer read only the *New Testament*.

4.4 SUMMARY

- A Russian short-story writer and playwright, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is considered one of the greatest short-story writers in the world.
- Chekhov was attracted to literature from a young age, and his first story appeared in a Moscow paper in 1880.
- *The Steppe* and *Tedious Tales* — both depictions of Russian life — are known as his masterpieces.
- His four plays — *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Sea-Gull* — are considered as classics of Russian literature.
- In the short story, *The Bet*, written by Anton Chekhov in 1889, a wager is made that changes the lives of two people.
- In the story, a wealthy banker hosts a party which is attended by a young lawyer, among other guests. During the party, some of the guests engage in a heated debate on the subject of capital punishment versus life imprisonment.
- On one hand, the banker supports death, the lawyer insists that it is better to live in any manner than to die.
- To settle the point, the banker offers the lawyer two million roubles to spend fifteen years in a cell. The lawyer agrees, but at the end of fifteen years he strangely refuses to take the money.
- Some characters that are greedy in their younger years, such as the lawyer, change after attaining wisdom. However, for someone like the banker, it does not happen.
- The banker cries and kisses the lawyer, since he really needs the money. The banker is thankful that he does not have to kill the lawyer to keep his money.
- In his final act of locking away the letter written by the lawyer, he proves to us that his character was incorrigible and vain till the end.

4.5 KEY TERMS

- **Caprice:** It is an impulsive change of mind.
- **Priori:** It refers to proceeding from a known or assumed cause to a necessarily related effect.
- **Rouble:** It is the Russian currency.

- **Capital punishment:** It implies death penalty.
- **Posterity:** It refers to the future generations of people.

4.6 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. (a) 1880 (b) *The Steppe* and *Tedious Tales*
2. (a) True (b) False
3. (a) Life imprisonment
(b) Voluntary; enforced
(c) Greed
(d) Garden; house
(e) Freed; two
4. (a) False
(b) True
(c) False
(d) True
(e) True

4.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What was the term which the lawyer agreed to spend in the banker’s garden house?
2. How much money did the banker agree to pay to the lawyer at the end of the term?
3. Why did the lawyer reject wine and tobacco during the first year of his imprisonment?
4. How did the lawyer feel in the first year of his imprisonment?
5. What was the lawyer permitted to have during the term of his imprisonment?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the banker's party.
2. What were the terms and conditions of the bet between the lawyer and the banker?
3. What were the contents of the letter that the lawyer wrote on the last day of his confinement?
4. Prepare short notes on the following:
 - (a) The banker
 - (b) The lawyer
5. How do the two main characters in the story evolve over the course of fifteen years?

4.8 FURTHER READING

NOTES

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UNIT 5 *THE END OF THE PARTY:* GRAHAM GREENE

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Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 About the Author
 - 5.2.1 Approach to Religion
 - 5.2.2 Humanist and the Catholic
 - 5.2.3 Greene's Humanistic Religion: Contemporariness and Relevance
 - 5.2.4 *The End of the Party*: Text and Explanation
- 5.3 Summary
- 5.4 Key Terms
- 5.5 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.6 Questions and Exercises
- 5.7 Further Reading

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Graham Greene is one of the prominent writers of English literature. His works explore the ambivalent moral and political issues of the modern world. His appeal stretched beyond readers concerned with good and evil to embrace those who liked a good story. His writings depict the narrative skills of Robert Louis Stevenson. In addition, he had the talent for depicting local colour. His literary fame was acknowledged formally in 1966, when he was named by Queen Elizabeth II as a Companion of Honour. In 1986, he received one of the highest British honours, the Order of Merit. In his career, Greene wrote twenty-four novels, along with many short stories, essays and plays and two volumes of autobiography.

Although Graham Greene is best known for his novels yet *The End of the Party* has reckoned him as the master of short story in the twentieth century. In this short story, Greene utilizes subtle but eerie language of light to brighten the all-encompassing and overwhelming terror of his story's gloominess. *The End of the Party* features nine-year-old twins Peter and Francis Morton. The story begins with Francis waking from a dream foreboding his death. The twin brothers have been asked to attend a birthday party of a peer where they will play hide-and-seek. Francis will have to hide alone in the dark. Francis is afraid of darkness, something which his parent do not take seriously. Francis makes several efforts to avoid going to the party but in vain. The twin brothers attend the birthday party and subsequently, the children play the game of hide-and-seek. Unfortunately, the fear of darkness is so overwhelming for Francis that he dies. In this unit, you will study *The End of the Party* written by Graham Greene.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Comment on the writing style of Graham Greene
- Analyse his approach to religion, its contemporariness and relevance

- Discuss the themes of Greene's novels and short stories
- Describe the major themes of the story, *The End of the Party*

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5.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Graham Greene is a versatile modern writer. He has written twenty-five novels and nearly all of them have been made into films. He has also published many books such as short stories, memoirs, travel books, play texts, essays and children's stories. For literary critics there has always been a problem in placing him. His work does not fit into their historical and generic categories: it zigzags across the boundaries they have marked between the 'popular' and the 'literary', between the 'modern' and the 'contemporary', between the English and the international novel.

In literature, as in life, Greene has been a 'loner' making a path for himself in areas ignored or untouched by others of his time. Greene's novels are about men in crisis, men under pressure and men on the run. His journalistic skills help him set them in a more contemporary context that is at once recognizable. He had an uncanny instinct for visiting obscure trouble spots around the globe, which he employed as locales of his novels, for example, Sierra Leone in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), Cuba in *Our Man in Havana* (1958) and Congo in *A Burnt out Case* (1961).

Greene was born on 2 October 1904 at Berkhamsted near London. He was educated first at Berkhamsted School and then at Balliol College, Oxford. He worked as sub-editor at *The Time* from 1926 to 1929. Greene was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1927 and married Vivien Dayrell Browning. His first novel *The Man Within* was published in 1929. He categorized some of his works as 'entertainments' to mark them off from his more serious fiction, which he entitled 'novels'.

Some of his work under the 'entertainment' category are *Stamboul Train*, *A Gun for Sale*, *The Confidential Agent* and *The Ministry of Fear*. He also wrote many novels and travel books between 1930 and 1940. Greene served as literary editor in *The Spectator* from 1940 to 1941. Thereafter, he did wartime service in Sierra Leone and travelled extensively around the world. *The Captain & the Enemy* (1988) was his last novel. He died in 1991.

Greene always kept his distance from literary politics, neither belonging to any group or movement, and neither seeking nor receiving the endorsement of temporarily fashionable schools of criticism. However, every writer necessarily draws on literary tradition, however selectively, and Greene is no exception. In childhood and youth, his imagination was deeply affected by reading historical romances like Marjorie Bowen's *The Viper of Milan* and the adventure stories of writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard and John Buchan. Later, he came under the spell of Joseph Conrad's more profound and pessimistic tales of the outposts of the empire.



Fig 5.1 Graham Greene

Indeed, there is one quality above all others that makes Graham Greene's fiction both unique and valuable; it is his capacity for evoking the sense of place in a way that is as vivid and immediate as a newsreel and at the same time resonant with moral and metaphysical suggestion of a haunting kind. This is what critics have called 'Greenland'. It is essentially a feat of style, a combination of artfully selected details, striking figures of speech and subtly cadenced syntax.

The Heart of the Matter (1948) has the setting of the British colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa where Greene himself had served as an intelligence officer in the War. In this novel, Greene portrays the poignant and tragic downfall of a Catholic policeman, Major Scobie, who is unable to decide between hurting his wife, his mistress and God. So, he commits suicide. Nonetheless, Greene reminds us in one of his characteristic authorial asides, 'Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation,' and the ultimate fate of Scobie's soul is left open. Thus, *The Heart of the Matter* is Greene's imaginative exploration of Catholic metaphysics, which he initiated with *Brighton Rock* (1938), pursued with another novel *The Power of the Glory* (1940), carried forward in *The End of the Affair* (1951) and maybe climaxed with *A Burnt-out Case* (1961).

This series of novels brought Greene international recognition as a major novelist, but also gave him the less than flattering label of 'Catholic novelist.' Greene preferred to describe himself as 'a novelist who happened to be a Catholic' and even 'Catholic agnostic.' Greene was especially interested in a number of French Catholic writers – Leon Bloy, Charles Peguy and Francois Mauriac, who had pursued this paradox to extreme conclusions.

So even when the Catholic in Greene seems to overpower the creative writer in him, his approach remains rather liberal, practical and humanitarian in nature. Greene looks at religion from the perspective of the seedy, the corrupt and the most troubled among human beings. He probes deep into the basic function of religion in relation to the individual and tries to give it a human face.

5.2.1 Approach to Religion

Graham Greene and his contemporaries in British fiction like Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh and others, between the two World Wars and later, have been concerned with the gradual loss of the benevolent social values, which guided society earlier. The period between the two World Wars was also a period of man's quest for some satisfactory political ideology or the other, for reorganizing society in order to face the deep economic malaise and the onrush of technology.

An important feature of Greene's art is that he presents his ideas on religious matters with a difference. Catholicism, as it appears in his novels, is not merely a public system of religious code and dogmas. Nor is it body incorporate of faith needing exposition. It is, in fact, a privately worked out system of ideas and concepts, a source of impulses and a vast storehouse of rich symbols, which is thus, in some ways, vital to him as an artiste. As Greene does not draw a stern line demarcating the sinners and the saints in fixed categories, his perspective is that of a humanist. For his protagonist, the religious code does not symbolize any stifling of the natural feeling and emotions. Rather, it allows for free display of man's deep-rooted internal dilemmas to which Greene lends a patient ear.

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5.2.2 Humanist and the Catholic

Graham Greene is a prolific novelist and his interests range from pure thrillers and deeply religious and spiritual content to works with secular themes. His novels attempt to depict life in its panoramic variety. They are concerned with basic human situations that have perennial significance.

In his novels, Greene has largely striven to restore the religious sense and the sense of importance of the human act to the English novel. No other writer since Charles Dickens has so successfully combined immense popularity with complexity and craftsmanship. Greene's keen sense of involvement in the cause of the needy and the underprivileged and his staunch criticism of the monolithic and rigid religious code make him an advocate of humanism. Graham Greene was a Catholic convert, but he considered his conversion to be 'an intellectual conviction and not an emotional one.' However, this conversion made the theme of good and evil a recurring and predominant one within the framework of Greene's own notion of man as weak and helpless in the face of the circumstances he is placed in.

Greene may easily fall into the category of 'bad Catholic'. The more piously orthodox Catholic disclaim that their religion has anything in common with Greene's. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Greene grafted alien theological concepts on to the English novel without straining either the beliefs or the form. It is here that Greene's brand of Catholicism plays its unique and pragmatic role. Greene's development as a novelist has provoked equally strong reactions from both his fellow Catholics and his non-Catholic readers. It is doubtful whether anyone has ever written about him without using the word 'seedy'. His mingled air of shabbiness and salvation is indeed unique. No other writer in the present times has articulated evil with such drive and technique.

Graham Green's vigorous concern with evil, despair, adultery and physical love appear rather unpalatable and distasteful to his Catholic brethren, to whom he appears to expose 'all the beauty and horror of the flesh'. To the non-Catholics, his exaggerated treatment of squalor and sin appear as artistically irrelevant. However, critics on both sides undermine the fact that for this Catholic convert; Catholicism did not hand down some readymade solution to the problems. In order to testify his new-found faith, he had to carry to the extreme point both what he believed to be the human capacity for love, pity, fear and despair, as also God's capacity for showing mercy.

Varied themes of pursuit, betrayal, violence and suicide are explored by Greene in his novels to convey the message that violence is symbolic of the struggles going on at all time within man's soul and the externalization of this idea shows that 'today our world seems peculiarly susceptible to brutality.' Greene was struck by Cardinal John Henry Newman's view of a world full of injustice, corruption and sin where truth is crucified and virtue is defeated. What Newman observed as the (original sin) provided Greene with a basic framework of moral perception, but the treatment that Greene gives to his own worldview is contemporary. Modern-day situations are analysed by Greene but on account of his Catholic background, they acquire a metaphysical aspect. His moral vision that centres on the sinful and the depraved man also includes the idea of efficacious grace and piety, which any sinner can hope for despite holding a non-conformist and ambivalent stance in life.

Graham Greene's conversion to the powerful and prestigious Catholic Church was supposed to achieve a restraining and moderating influence on his inherent ambivalence. It suggested the recovery of self through faith. Religion was called upon to

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do what public school discipline and psychoanalysis had failed to do in his childhood. With his background of being a lonely, bored and suicidal child, Roman Catholicism was not likely to achieve the desired results. Greene remained resolutely himself. Instead of making him tame and subdued, the conversion created a highly complex situation. It unleashed a war between experience and dogma, reality and myth, turning his rebellious and inquisitive mind even more curious than before. Indeed there were some signs of a sense of belonging and spiritual assurance bestowed upon him by his new faith, but Greene was unable to harmonize the contemporary reality with the orthodoxy of belief.

The abundance of Catholic themes and symbols permeating his novels is one of the benefits he derived from being a Catholic convert. However, Greene eschews the clichés and claptraps of Catholicism and speaks from his personal experience. He subverts theology into his human worldview and seeks to explore the human predicament within the Catholic framework. This is not to suggest that Catholicism has ready-to-serve answers to the questions posed by Greene. In the words of David Pryce-Jones, the Catholic symbols of sin and evil appeal to Greene because they evoke the real world of man. They have been superimposed on a personal vision, which existed before conversion and which Greene has described in *The Lost Childhood*. Theology for Greene has been no easy release, no diversion of earlier compassion into easily accepted doctrinal morality. As Greene mostly takes up the underdog and the weak as his protagonists, he uses Catholicism with an earthly basis, divesting sin and evil of its purely supernatural trappings. He considers sin as something natural and humane, rather than endowing it with strict eschatological codification as something deplorable and demonic. To a convert like Greene, ‘the Catholic doctrine could add no more than an outward form and suitable grammatical clothing.’

There is an admixture of pointed polarity and an inevitable complementarity between Greene’s Catholicism and his work. He does not use his faith to promote individual anarchism through his rebellious and inquisitive protagonists. He does not use it as an excuse to go against what the scriptures state. Rather, his brand of Catholicism guides the depraved and oppressed man through a labyrinth of not very pleasant experiences of life towards an ideal, which is not necessarily God, to live by as in the case of Henry Scobie in the present novel. Just as Greene’s conversion to Catholicism was largely a revolt against his Anglican upbringing and against a monotonous and depressing routine of childhood days, with the mechanical arrivals and departures at school, so also the emotional depravity felt by the sensitive child along with his awareness of a ruthless world, indifferent and callous to his sensitivities, represented by the school as a microcosm of that world, was responsible for the growth of the humanist inside him. Greene himself had been looking for something humane, flexible and compassionate.

When humanists think of freedom of inquiry and tolerance, civil liberties and the rights of man, they think of the Church as an obscurantist and oppressor and of the freethinkers as bearers of enlightenment and campaigners for emancipation. Christianity has been hostile to humanism largely due to the belief that it undermines the basis of morals. Humanists are disposed to reverse the argument. They maintain that the Christian ethic is basically defective. It has denied man’s natural, social tendencies and encouraged a self-centred preoccupation with one’s own virtue and one’s own salvation.

Therefore, Christianity was in principle irreconcilable with humanism. An attempt at reconciliation was made when Rome adopted Christianity for its military and political purpose. However, with the ascendance of the Church, free inquiry was suppressed and the elements of humanist tradition—political freedom and personal independence—were

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trampled. With this background analysis of humanism versus Christianity, it would be a cumbersome effort to prove Graham Greene a Christian humanist. A Christian humanist may mean a Christian who gives full value to human life in this world and allows it a relative autonomy but he does so because according to his belief it is God's world and a God-given autonomy. The contrast here is with a fundamentalist preoccupation with salvation or with another worldly focus of interest. For the Christian the realm of independence is a realm of obedience since he has chosen the rule of faith. For the humanist there is no such rule and he begins and ends by being human and he shares with all others the human situation.

Following the same line of argument, the genre 'Catholic novel', attributed to Greene, also appears a contradictory term. The development of the novel is bound up with increasing democratization, with a degree of improvement in the education and status of women and with the whole liberal bourgeois ethos of the modern world.

Greene is not just a Catholic novelist indulging in ontological exercises through his stories. He is above all a humanist whose concerns are much varied and profound than of a mere theologian. He is also one of those pragmatic thinkers who have voiced the need for Christianity to mould its modes and methods of revolution. As Christianity stands today, it lags behind in the present day changing circumstances of a fast-growing, complex life. Greene sees the visible mundane world as an extension towards the spiritual one. Greene's humanistic concerns prevent him from adopting an enthusiastic, close-minded and sectarian outlook.

5.2.3 Greene's Humanistic Religion: Contemporariness and Relevance

Graham Greene's religious vision gives a contemporary, pragmatic and humane view of the world around. He uses his Catholicism as a 'point of transcendence' from which his culture can be placed and criticized. It paradoxically remains at the heart of the experience of being a Catholic, to be able to preserve a certain freedom or at least a tension with the church as an institution and an awareness of its imperfections. On the other hand, the sacredness of the church is protected by emphasizing its prophetic and providential functions. Greene made a cult of what he called 'disloyalty' and declared it to be essential for a Catholic writer. Throughout his career he displayed an overpowering awareness of the tension between the individual and the institutional church. His most famous 'Catholic' novels insistently raise the question of escape clauses and the fallibility of the institutional rules.

Greene explores in his novels a world of corrosion and decay, beleaguered and besieged by evil, apparently God-forsaken but finally redeemed by God. This world, though private, is not exclusive. Its lineaments are of our world and we recognize it as an externalization of our own world. The contemporary appeal of Greene's works shows that he is not just a period-writer constrained by the concerns of his own times. His awareness is certainly more acute and more arresting than of writers like Evelyn Waugh (1903) and C. P. Snow (1905).

Greene's disloyalty to his faith was largely responsible for bringing forth the modernist within him. In fact, the concept of disloyalty was an integral component of Greene's life-long experiences. He belonged to a middle class family having its own pretensions and fixed limits beyond which his puritan father, Charles Greene, and strict mother, Marion Greene, would never let him go. However, Graham Greene had a special

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interest in knowing about the distant and the unfamiliar. Besides, nothing could be outside the writer's mill. All could be used because all was about life. It was Greene's disloyalty to the strict discipline of school and family that prompted him to use rogues, spies, smugglers and criminals as characters. In *Why Do I Write?* (1948) Greene stated that as a novelist he was writing fiction, not propaganda and defended his right to be 'disloyal' to the church. He felt that as an artist, he must be allowed to write 'from the point of view of the black square as well as from the white.'

Uncertainty seems to be the driving force for Greene. He is, therefore, particularly attracted to characters who inhabit a spiritual borderland and who embodies some form of paradox, such as the catholic agnostics and the sinful saints. French Catholic philosopher and theologian, Jean Guitton finds that Greene habitually sees grace operating through sin and the worst sins—sacrilege and suicide—function as the means to grace. Grace comes 'not through the exercise of good, but through the experience of evil.' This explains the special attention and consideration that Greene shows for the sinner.

Graham Greene displays a variety of interests in his novels. The financial depression, the international capitalist monopolies, war-scare, the cold war—all these forms the multi-dimensional milieu of Greene's fiction. His characters live under an unholy amount of stress in such a world. They were all prey to some weakness and were often tortured by a universe they could not cope with. All of them were men divided against themselves, painfully aware not only of their personal failures and the ubiquitous malaise of society but also of their inner guilt and sin. Many of these characters were men on the run, pursued not only by their enemies but also by the unforeseen consequences of their choices made in their moments of crises.

A hero created by Graham Greene was both the betrayer as well as the betrayed. He faced a gamut of problems—crime and sin, guilt, flight and probable destruction. The freedom of Greene's protagonists was severely limited by their own compulsive actions and reactions and by chance encounters and happenings. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Greene supports determinism of some kind. However, tainted and complicated the lives of his characters may be, they were not denied the free will to lead an unconstrained and iconoclastic lifestyle.

The drama of good and evil in Greene's novel works itself out on the human plane through the realities of sin, suffering, death and grace. There is a pervasive sense of the implications of the doctrine of original sin in Greene's thought. The 'original sin' into which man is born creates certain theoretical problems, which are different from the 'actual sin', which man perpetrates for himself. Then again the question still has to be asked why God permits any kind of sin at all. If the recognition of sin in its various forms is indispensable, then there is a sense in which sin itself can be regarded as useful.

There is, therefore, perhaps, a way directly rather than by the mystery of providential grace, through sin to God. Dostoyevsky in his compassion for the peasantry of his time, saw the sinful actions of many Catholic followers, as the result of situational compulsions, but always done with pure intentions. Huysmans way 'down and out' means down into sin and out into grace. This idea also finds elaboration in Greene's novel. At the beginning of the *The Heart of the Matter*, Greene uses Charles Peguy's startling assertion that: 'The sinner is at the very heart of Christianity. No one is such an expert in Christianity as the sinner: no one, that is, except the saint.' Greene presents evil as something that limits and negates humanity and thereby has an irreducible element of mystery. Only when that mystery is recognized is there any possibility of coming to understand the underlying design of providence. For if the existence of evil has always

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been a stumbling block to the idea of God, it has also suggested the need for a saviour to deliver mankind.

It is possible that Greene's desire to go to the remote parts of Africa and Latin America and his choice of the harrowed and the depraved protagonists was an endeavour to seek out the primitive, unspoilt and unassuming aspect of human life.

Greene's basic commitment is essentially to human life as he himself admits in his report of his first journey to Africa in 1935. He regards this journey as pivotal as it was here that he discovered amidst some very real terrors, a thing 'I thought I had never possessed; a love of life.' After an attack of malaria, he found, 'I had discovered in myself, a passionate interest in living.' As a creative writer, he imparts to his work, what R. W. B. Lewis calls a 'solid sense of this earthly life?' In his novels, the human world appears in all its diverse forms.

Graham Greene's modernism with its liberal and resilient approach does not serve as an alibi for the criminal and the sinner to flout rules of law and scriptures. Nor does he use his brand of Catholicism to sermonize or proselytize. He also does not arrive at some simple, deducible logic as conclusion of his novel. Contrarily, his approach is rather ambivalent. He is not a supporter of individual anarchism, depicting the individual wilfully debunking social and religious norms, and getting away with them. Greene, as a sensitive writer, living in troubled times of history (1930s), analyses the actions of his protagonists as reactions to certain internal and external factors. Scobie's tensions are further heightened in the seedy, sordid and combustible atmosphere of the West African Colony. Thus, Greene's vision is not just theological and ecclesiastical but also has a broad, social and modern angle too.

Greene's modernist approach inspired him to pluck evil out of its isolation and to place it in the context of a world, which had produced it. Even in his new-found faith in Catholicism, Greene feels attracted to the church because of its belief in Hell. 'It gives something hard, non-sentimental and exciting.' Therefore, although the echo of the 'eternal fall' resounds in all his work, he does not overlook the other factors involved. Greene has progressively come to regard evil as a natural concomitant of the world and advocates a relentless struggle against it. His modern ideology has led him to the inevitable conclusion that sinners and criminals are not born but made by the world.

Greene's choice of locale also reflects his ingrained humanism. Since he is concerned with the harrowed and the necessitous members of society, the hot, sweltering colony of Sierra Leone interests him as a background milieu. It is easy to talk about the luxurious and easy-going life of the satisfied, rich man but a deep insight is required to give a correct and realistic picture of the nightmarish actualities of the life of the poor. Greene's prowess as a journalist helps him to depict an accurate and authentic picture of the background scene. However, his presentation is not just a modernist, disinterested report on the matter. The humanist in him observes the milieu and its complexities with keenness and compassion.

An aspect that reflects Greene's interest in contemporary issues was his sympathy for the new enthusiasm in the church for social justice. This idea entrusts the church with more than just the spiritual, other-worldly duties. Greene also showed appreciation for the worker-priest movement that started in France towards the end of World War II, whereby, in an attempt to bring the church near the secularized, industrial population,

certain priests went to work full-time in secular posts and shared the lives of the working people. The new church is a purified and simplified one, a church of the dispossessed. This is a church built perforce on humanitarianism, compassion and mutual forgiveness of each vice, a church whose only ‘power and glory’ are weakness and poverty through which God can work. This church does not strictly categorize human action as either sacred or profane but accepts human frailties in a humane spirit. To belong to this reformed church, Greene feels, is to experience a blessedness that is already a participation in the beginning of heaven on earth.

For many Catholics, Graham Greene being one of them, the new era has brought a considerable relaxation in the institutional structure of the church. Structures once seen as essential, permanent and absolute have come to be regarded as secondary. Father Austin Brierley in David Lodge’s *How Far Can You Go?* prophesizes ‘a time when the whole elaborate structure of priests and dioceses and parishes would melt away.’ Edward Schillebeeckx, a mainstream Catholic theologian, says that no more than a provisional identification is possible in our time between believers and the institutional church.

Greene’s observation of human nature shows his human realism. For Greene, human nature is not black and white but black and grey. He believes in relativity and not absolutism of morals. Religious code has to have the elasticity to give allowance to human endeavour as also to provide succour and relief to another human being. Despite the pervasiveness of the theme of sin and suffering in his work, Greene’s concern with its alleviation is equally omnipresent. He takes sides with whosoever tries to eradicate suffering from the lives of human beings. It may be the sceptical Major Scobie who readily gives up his life to save his dear ones from suffering.

5.2.4 *The End of the Party*: Text and Explanation

Peter Morton woke with a start to face the first light. Rain tapped against the glass. It was January the fifth.

He looked across a table on which a night-light had guttered into a pool of water, at the other bed. Francis Morton was still asleep, and Peter lay down again with his eyes on his brother. It amused him to imagine it was himself whom he watched, the same hair, the same eyes, the same lips and line of cheek. But the thought palled, and the mind went back to the fact which lent the day importance. It was the fifth of January. He could hardly believe a year had passed since Mrs Henne-Falcon had given her last children’s party.

Francis turned suddenly upon his back and threw an arm across his face, blocking his mouth. Peter’s heart began to beat fast, not with pleasure now but with uneasiness. He sat up and called across the table, “Wake up.” Francis’s shoulders shook and he waved a clenched fist in the air, but his eyes remained closed. To Peter Morton the whole room seemed to darken, and he had the impression of a great bird swooping. He cried again, “Wake up,” and once more there was silver light and the touch of rain on the windows.

Francis rubbed his eyes. “Did you call out?” he asked.

“You are having a bad dream,” Peter said. Already experience had taught him how far their minds reflected each other. But he was the elder, by a matter of minutes, and that brief extra interval of light, while his brother still struggled in pain and darkness, had given him self-reliance and an instinct of protection towards the other who was afraid of so many things.

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Check Your Progress

1. What is the important feature of Greene’s art on religion?
2. List some of the themes explored by Greene in his novels.

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"I dreamed that I was dead," Francis said.

"What was it like?" Peter asked.

"I can't remember," Francis said.

"You dreamed of a big bird."

"Did I?"

The two lay silent in bed facing each other, the same green eyes, the same nose tilting at the tip, the same firm lips, and the same premature modelling of the chin. The fifth of January, Peter thought again, his mind drifting idly from the image of cakes to the prizes which might be won. Egg-and-spoon races, spearing apples in basins of water, blind man's buff.

"I don't want to go," Francis said suddenly. "I suppose Joyce will be there ... Mabel Warren." Hateful to him, the thought of a party shared with those two. They were older than he. Joyce was eleven and Mabel Warren thirteen. The long pigtailed swung superciliously to a masculine stride. Their sex humiliated him, as they watched him fumble with his egg, from under lowered scornful lids. And last year ... he turned his face away from Peter, his cheeks scarlet.

"What's the matter?" Peter asked.

"Oh, nothing. I don't think I'm well. I've got a cold. I oughtn't to go to the party." Peter was puzzled. "But Francis, is it a bad cold?"

"It will be a bad cold if I go to the party. Perhaps I shall die."

"Then you mustn't go," Peter said, prepared to solve all difficulties with one plain sentence, and Francis let his nerves relax, ready to leave everything to Peter. But though he was grateful he did not turn his face towards his brother. His cheeks still bore the badge of a shameful memory, of the game of hide and seek last year in the darkened house, and of how he had screamed when Mabel Warren put her hand suddenly upon his arm. He had not heard her coming. Girls were like that. Their shoes never squeaked. No boards whined under the tread. They slunk like cats on padded claws.

When the nurse came in with hot water Francis lay tranquil leaving everything to Peter. Peter said, "Nurse, Francis has got a cold."

The tall starched woman laid the towels across the cans and said, without turning, "The washing won't be back till tomorrow. You must lend him some of your handkerchiefs."

"But, Nurse," Peter asked, "hadn't he better stay in bed?"

"We'll take him for a good walk this morning," the nurse said. "Wind'll blow away the germs. Get up now, both of you," and she closed the door behind her.

"I'm sorry," Peter said. "Why don't you just stay in bed? I'll tell mother you felt too ill to get up." But rebellion against destiny was not in Francis's power. If he stayed in bed they would come up and tap his chest and put a thermometer in his mouth and look at his tongue, and they would discover he was malingering. It was true he felt ill, a sick empty sensation in his stomach and a rapidly beating heart, but he knew the cause was only fear, fear of the party, fear of being made to hide by himself in the dark, unaccompanied by Peter and with no night-light to make a blessed breach.

"No, I'll get up," he said, and then with sudden desperation, "But I won't go to Mrs Henne-Falcon's party. I swear on the Bible I won't." Now surely all would be well, he thought. God would not allow him to break so solemn an oath. He would show him a way. There was all the morning before him and all the afternoon until four o'clock. No need to worry when the grass was still crisp with the early frost.

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Anything might happen. He might cut himself or break his leg or really catch a bad cold. God would manage somehow.

He had such confidence in God that when at breakfast his mother said, "I hear you have a cold, Francis," he made light of it. "We should have heard more about it," his mother said with irony, "if there was not a party this evening," and Francis smiled, amazed and daunted by her ignorance of him.

His happiness would have lasted longer if, out for a walk that morning, he had not met Joyce. He was alone with his nurse, for Peter had leave to finish a rabbit-hutch in the woodshed. If Peter had been there he would have cared less; the nurse was Peter's nurse also, but now it was as though she were employed only for his sake, because he could not be trusted to go for a walk alone. Joyce was only two years older and she was by herself.

She came striding towards them, pigtailed flapping. She glanced scornfully at Francis and spoke with ostentation to the nurse. "Hello, Nurse. Are you bringing Francis to the party this evening? Mabel and I are coming." And she was off again down the street in the direction of Mabel Warren's home, consciously alone and self-sufficient in the long empty road.

"Such a nice girl," the nurse said. But Francis was silent, feeling again the jump-jump of his heart, realizing how soon the hour of the party would arrive. God had done nothing for him, and the minutes flew.

They flew too quickly to plan any evasion, or even to prepare his heart for the coming ordeal. Panic nearly overcame him when, all unready, he found himself standing on the doorstep, with coat-collar turned up against a cold wind, and the nurse's electric torch making a short trail through the darkness. Behind him were the lights of the hall and the sound of a servant laying the table for dinner, which his mother and father would eat alone. He was nearly overcome by the desire to run back into the house and call out to his mother that he would not go to the party, that he dared not go. They could not make him go. He could almost hear himself saying those final words, breaking down for ever the barrier of ignorance which saved his mind from his parents' knowledge. "I'm afraid of going. I won't go. I daren't go. They'll make me hide in the dark, and I'm afraid of the dark. I'll scream and scream and scream."

He could see the expression of amazement on his mother's face, and then the cold confidence of a grown-up's retort. "Don't be silly. You must go. We've accepted Mrs Henne-Falcon's invitation."

But they couldn't make him go; hesitating on the doorstep while the nurse's feet crunched across the frost-covered grass to the gate, he knew that. He would answer: "You can say I'm ill. I won't go. I'm afraid of the dark." And his mother: "Don't be silly. You know there's nothing to be afraid of in the dark." But he knew the falsity of that reasoning; he knew how they taught also that there was nothing to fear in death, and how fearfully they avoided the idea of it. But they couldn't make him go to the party. "I'll scream. I'll scream."

"Francis, come along." He heard the nurse's voice across the dimly phosphorescent lawn and saw the yellow circle of her torch wheel from tree to shrub. "I'm coming," he called with despair; he couldn't bring himself to lay bare his last secrets and end reserve between his mother and himself, for there was still in the last resort a further appeal possible to Mrs Henne-Falcon. He comforted himself with that, as he advanced steadily across the hall, very small, towards her enormous bulk. His heart beat unevenly, but he had control now over his voice, as he said with meticulous accent, "Good evening, Mrs Henne-Falcon. It was very good of you to ask me to your party." With his strained face lifted towards the curve of her breasts, and his polite set speech, he was like an old withered

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man. As a twin he was in many ways an only child. To address Peter was to speak to his own image in a mirror, an image a little altered by a flaw in the glass, so as to throw back less a likeness of what he was than of what he wished to be, what he would be without his unreasoning fear of darkness, footsteps of strangers, the flight of bats in dusk-filled gardens.

“Sweet child,” said Mrs Henne-Falcon absent-mindedly, before, with a wave of her arms, as though the children were a flock of chickens, she whirled them into her set programme of entertainments: egg-and-spoon races, three-legged races, the spearing of apples, games which held for Francis nothing worse than humiliation. And in the frequent intervals when nothing was required of him and he could stand alone in corners as far removed as possible from Mabel Warren’s scornful gaze, he was able to plan how he might avoid the approaching terror of the dark. He knew there was nothing to fear until after tea, and not until he was sitting down in a pool of yellow radiance cast by the ten candles on Colin Henne-Falcon’s birthday cake did he become fully conscious of the imminence of what he feared. He heard Joyce’s high voice down the table, “After tea we are going to play hide and seek in the dark.”

“Oh, no,” Peter said, watching Francis’s troubled face, “don’t let’s. We play that every year.”

“But it’s in the programme,” cried Mabel Warren. “I saw it myself. I looked over Mrs Henne-Falcon’s shoulder. Five o’clock tea. A quarter to six to half past, hide and seek in the dark. It’s all written down in the programme.”

Peter did not argue, for if hide and seek had been inserted in Mrs Henne-Falcon’s programme, nothing which he could say would avert it. He asked for another piece of birthday cake and sipped his tea slowly. Perhaps it might be possible to delay the game for a quarter of an hour, allow Francis at least a few extra minutes to form a plan, but even in that Peter failed, for children were already leaving the table in twos and threes. It was his third failure, and again he saw a great bird darken his brother’s face with its wings. But he upbraided himself silently for his folly, and finished his cake encouraged by the memory of that adult refrain, “There’s nothing to fear in the dark.” The last to leave the table, the brothers came together to the hall to meet the mustering and impatient eyes of Mrs Henne-Falcon.

“And now,” she said, “we will play hide and seek in the dark.”

Peter watched his brother and saw the lips tighten. Francis, he knew, had feared this moment from the beginning of the party, had tried to meet it with courage and had abandoned the attempt. He must have prayed for cunning to evade the game, which was now welcomed with cries of excitement by all the other children. “Oh, do let’s.” “We must pick sides.” “Is any of the house out of bounds?” “Where shall home be?”

“I think,” said Francis Morton, approaching Mrs Henne-Falcon, his eyes focused unwaveringly on her exuberant breasts, “it will be no use my playing. My nurse will be calling for me very soon.”

“Oh, but your nurse can wait, Francis,” said Mrs Henne-Falcon, while she clapped her hands together to summon to her side a few children who were already straying up the wide staircase to upper floors. “Your mother will never mind.”

That had been the limit of Francis’s cunning. He had refused to believe that so well-prepared an excuse could fail. All that he could say now, still in the precise tone which other children hated, thinking it a symbol of conceit, was, “I think I had better not play.” He stood motionless, retaining, though afraid, unmoved features. But the knowledge of his terror, or the reflection of the terror itself, reached his brother’s brain. For the moment, Peter Morton could have cried aloud with the fear of bright lights going out, leaving him alone in an island of dark surrounded by the gentle lappings of strange footsteps. Then he remembered

that the fear was not his own, but his brother's. He said impulsively to Mrs Henne-Falcon, "Please, I don't think Francis should play. The dark makes him jump so." They were the wrong words. Six children began to sing, "Cowardly cowardly custard," turning torturing faces with the vacancy of wide sunflowers towards Francis Morton.

Without looking at his brother, Francis said, "Of course I'll play. I'm not afraid, I only thought ...". But he was already forgotten by his human tormentors. The children scrambled round Mrs Henne-Falcon, their shrill voices pecking at her with questions and suggestions.

"Yes, anywhere in the house. We will turn out all the lights. Yes, you can hide in the cupboards. You must stay hidden as long as you can. There will be no home."

Peter stood apart, ashamed of the clumsy manner in which he had tried to help his brother. Now he could feel, creeping in at the corners of his brain, all Francis's resentment of his championing. Several children ran upstairs, and the lights on the top floor went out. Darkness came down like the wings of a bat and settled on the landing. Others began to put out the lights at the edge of the hall, till the children were all gathered in the central radiance of the chandelier, while the bats squatted round on hooded wings and waited for that, too, to be extinguished.

"You and Francis are on the hiding side," a tall girl said, and then the light was gone, and the carpet wavered under his feet with the sibilance of footfalls, like small cold draughts, creeping away into corners.

"Where's Francis?" he wondered. "If I join him he'll be less frightened of all these sounds." "These sounds" were the casing of silence: the squeak of a loose board, the cautious closing of a cupboard door, the whine of a finger drawn along polished wood.

Peter stood in the centre of the dark deserted floor, not listening but waiting for the idea of his brother's whereabouts to enter his brain. But Francis crouched with fingers on his ears, eyes uselessly closed, mind numbed against impressions, and only a sense of strain could cross the gap of dark. Then a voice called "Coming", and as though his brother's self-possession had been shattered by the sudden cry, Peter Morton jumped with his fear. But it was not his own fear. What in his brother was a burning panic was in him an altruistic emotion that left the reason unimpaired. "Where, if I were Francis, should I hide?" And because he was, if not Francis himself, at least a mirror to him, the answer was immediate. "Between the oak bookcase on the left of the study door, and the leather settee." Between the twins there could be no jargon of telepathy. They had been together in the womb, and they could not be parted.

Peter Morton tiptoed towards Francis's hiding-place. Occasionally a board rattled, and because he feared to be caught by one of the soft questers through the dark, he bent and untied his laces. A tag struck the floor and the metallic sound set a host of cautious feet moving in his direction. But by that time he was in his stockings and would have laughed inwardly at the pursuit had not the noise of someone stumbling on his abandoned shoes made his heart trip. No more boards revealed Peter Morton's progress.

On stocking feet he moved silently and unerringly towards his object. Instinct told him he was near the wall, and, extending a hand, he laid the fingers across his brother's face.

Francis did not cry out, but the leap of his own heart revealed to Peter a proportion of Francis's terror. "It's all right," he whispered, feeling down the squatting figure until he captured a clenched hand. "It's only me. I'll stay with you." And grasping the other tightly, he listened to the cascade of whispers his utterance had caused to fall. A hand touched the book-case close to Peter's head and he was aware of how Francis's fear continued in spite of his presence. It was less intense, more

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bearable, he hoped, but it remained. He knew that it was his brother's fear and not his own that he experienced. The dark to him was only an absence of light; the groping hand that of a familiar child. Patiently he waited to be found.

He did not speak again, for between Francis and himself was the most intimate communion. By way of joined hands thought could flow more swiftly than lips could shape themselves round words. He could experience the whole progress of his brother's emotion, from the leap of panic at the unexpected contact to the steady pulse of fear, which now went on and on with the regularity of a heart-beat. Peter Morton thought with intensity, "I am here. You needn't be afraid. The lights will go on again soon. That rustle, that movement is nothing to fear. Only Joyce, only Mabel Warren." He bombarded the drooping form with thoughts of safety, but he was conscious that the fear continued. "They are beginning to whisper together. They are tired of looking for us. The lights will go on soon. We shall have won. Don't be afraid. That was someone on the stairs. I believe it's Mrs Henne-Falcon. Listen. They are feeling for the lights." Feet moving on a carpet, hands brushing a wall, a curtain pulled apart, a clicking handle, the opening of a cupboard door. In the case above their heads a loose book shifted under a touch. "Only Joyce, only Mabel Warren, only Mrs Henne-Falcon," a crescendo of reassuring thought before the chandelier burst, like a fruit-tree, into bloom.

The voice of the children rose shrilly into the radiance. "Where's Peter?" "Have you looked upstairs?" "Where's Francis?" but they were silenced again by Mrs Henne-Falcon's scream. But she was not the first to notice Francis Morton's stillness, where he had collapsed against the wall at the touch of his brother's hand. Peter continued to hold the clenched fingers in an arid and puzzled grief. It was not merely that his brother was dead. His brain, too young to realize the full paradox, wondered with an obscure self-pity why it was that the pulse of his brother's fear went on and on, when Francis was now where he had always been told there was no more terror and no more—darkness.

Explanation

In *The End of the Party*, Graham Greene tries to portray a vivid setting to highlight the idea of Francis' (the younger twin) phobia for darkness. This almost inexplicable (apart from a fleeting mention) but enduring fear becomes the central conflict in the story which overwhelms both the siblings. The fear simply escalates from the beginning till we reach the end of the story. Sensory images are used liberally so that the reader can relate to the multiple sights, sounds and emotional outbursts that the two brothers undergo during the course of the narration. Greene dabbles into symbolism as well to provide foreshadowing of the fate that awaits the boys during the final scene of the story. All of these measures are utilized to provide the reader with a literary purpose in this particular work of literature. Also, it is organized into a typical narrative method used by short stories, with an apparent chronological order being implemented. It is also noted that he employed a secondary pattern that carries many attributes of description used for binding the setting of the fictional piece with the characters together.

As a literary function, the story incorporates scenery development, internal and external conflict within the younger brother, Francis, appeal of the senses to help readers relate to the twins' own senses. Moreover, symbolism is used to deliver a revelation of things to emerge for the two brothers. There is also a central theme of anxiety of being in the dark that encompasses the younger brother throughout the story. The scenes that are outlined in the play are extremely descriptive. Not just the settings but the characters, including their private conversations (which are constantly exchanged between characters), also help in developing the personalities of the twin brothers over the course

of the story. At the very outset, the short-story writer had provided vivid and graphic details on how he can set the scene. We see that the older twin views the bedroom as soon as he wakes up to the chirping noise of the early morning that was full of rain on that eventful day. We soon realize that the conversation carries the story forward as both the siblings are constantly engaged in conversations among themselves as well as other individuals. Based on these verbal exchanges the story unfolds for the readers.

It must be mentioned here that Graham Greene has described his short stories as ‘scraps’, and ‘escapes from the novelist’s world’. His short story, *The End of the Party*, which appears to be an exception on the surface level delves into the intense matters of faith, death, fear, along with human relationships. These are the common tropes that one comes across in many of his novels. Most of his works are woven into dark and supernatural tales. Chronologically speaking *The End of the Party* is one of Greene’s earlier short stories. This one first came out in *Nineteen Stories* (1947). However, currently it is included in *Twenty-One Stories* (1954), and *Complete Short Stories* (2005) anthologies.

The beautiful narrative revolves around twin brothers—Peter and Francis Morton. They share a disconcertingly close bond. The twins silently feel and experience each other’s reality as well as fears. In the story, Peter is projected as the stronger twin who always tries to protect his weak and anxious brother, Francis. Graham Greene tires to play around with the complicated nature of relationships that exists between the twins. They live through the strange juxtaposition of loyalty and repulsion that probably extends to being a ‘double identity’. Once the brothers are invited to an annual birthday party where they are expected to play hide-and- seek. Needless to say, Francis is unimaginably afraid of the dark. Then again, coupled with an unpleasant experience that had taken place the previous year, Francis is filled with utter fear at the very thought of joining the party. At the very outset, one can feel a sense of menace. In addition, this feeling unfortunately, lingers throughout the story. Many a times, Greene’s use of foreshadowing, his infinite references to darkness, death, bats or birds, appears a bit too repetitive. May be a little less usage of the device would have made the story all the more effective.

The idea of a ‘thing’, which also happens to be power, appears to be almost prophetic in the story *The End of The Party*. One gets a feel of this when Francis comes across a dream where death arrives like a big bird that is all set to pounce in the darkened house. It appears as if the dream appears to be a premonition of death before him. Unfortunately, the dream does not hold any significance to the adults. It appears as if the unemotional adults are swaggering like hens and chickens inside the dark room enjoying a game of hide-and-seek that unfortunately is a real terror for someone like Francis. As has been mentioned in *Graham Greene: Some Critical Considerations* by Robert O. Evans: ‘Like the bush villagers, the ancient joke of “frightening the child with what had frightened them” governs their unconscious actions. The spiritual terror that leads to death and a powerful realization of the essence of death are but impersonal games to the grownup, civilized world, as impersonal as the nurse’s cold torch making a beam through the darkness towards Francis’s death. But after death, the power of his terror, conveyed like an electric impulse, to his elder twin’s hand, overcomes all seedy civilization, all set programs at the birthday party.’ This story also reminds the readers of Greene’s *England Made Me* (1935) where again we come across twins where they have the power of ‘conveying their awe for death’.

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Check Your Progress

3. How has Graham Greene used symbolism as a literary device in *The End of the Party*?
4. What kind of relationship do the twin brothers—Peter and Francis Morton—share in the short story?

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5.3 SUMMARY

- Graham Greene is a versatile modern writer. He has written twenty-five novels and nearly all of them have been made into films.
- Greene's novels are about men in crisis, men under pressure and men on the run. His journalistic skills help him set them in a more contemporary context that is at once recognizable.
- Greene himself always kept his distance from literary politics, neither belonging to any group or movement, and neither seeking nor receiving the endorsement of temporarily fashionable schools of criticism.
- An important feature of Greene's art is that he presents his ideas on religious matters with a difference.
- Graham Greene is a prolific novelist and his interests range from pure thrillers and deeply religious and spiritual content to works with secular themes.
- Graham Greene's conversion to the powerful and prestigious Catholic Church was supposed to achieve a restraining and moderating influence on his inherent ambivalence.
- There is an admixture of pointed polarity and an inevitable complementarity between Greene's Catholicism and his work.
- Graham Greene's religious vision gives a contemporary, pragmatic and humane view of the world around.
- Graham Greene's modernism with its liberal and resilient approach does not serve as an alibi for the criminal and the sinner to flout rules of law and scriptures.
- In *The End of the Party*, Graham Greene tries to portray a vivid setting to highlight the idea of Francis' (the younger twin) phobia for the darkness.
- As a literary function, the story incorporates scenery development, internal and external conflict within the younger brother, Francis, appeal of the senses to help readers relate to the twins' own senses.
- Graham Greene described his short stories as 'scraps', and 'escapes from the novelist's world'.

5.4 KEY TERMS

- **Memoir:** It is a historical account or biography written from personal knowledge or special sources.
- **Newsreel:** It is a short film of news and current affairs, formerly made for showing as part of the programme in a movie theatre.
- **Proselytize:** It implies conversion or an attempt to convert someone from one religion, belief or opinion to another.
- **Psychoanalysis:** It refers to a system of psychological theory and therapy that aims to treat mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind.
- **Foreshadow:** It is defined as to give a hint beforehand that something is going to happen.

5.5 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. An important feature of Graham Greene’s art is that he presents his ideas on religious matters with a difference. Catholicism, as it appears in his novels, is not merely a public system of religious code and dogmas. It is, in fact, a privately worked out system of ideas and concepts, a source of impulses and a vast storehouse of rich symbols, which is thus, in some ways, vital to him as an artist.
2. Some of the themes explored by Greene in his novels are as follows:
 - Pursuit
 - Betrayal
 - Violence
 - Suicide
3. In *The End of the Party*, Greene dabbles with symbolism to provide foreshadowing of the fate that awaits the boys during the final scene of the story. Symbolism is used to deliver a revelation of things to emerge for the two brothers.
4. The twin brothers—Peter and Francis Morton—share a disconcertingly close bond. The twins silently feel and experience each other’s reality as well as fears.

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5.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Graham Greene.
2. What was Greene’s conversion to the powerful and prestigious Catholic Church supposed to achieve?
3. Mention the prominent works written by Graham Greene.
4. What excuse does Francis make for not attending the birthday party?
5. What is Francis afraid of?

Long-Answer Questions

1. ‘Graham Greene is a versatile modern writer.’ Discuss.
2. Do you agree that the narration of the story, *The End of the Party* is descriptive? Give reasons for your answer.
3. How does the dream seen by Francis act as a premonition of his eventual death?

5.7 FURTHER READING

- Marie-Françoise, A. 1983. *The Other Man: Conversations with Graham Greene*. London: Bodley Head.
- Bergonzi, B. 2006. *A Study in Greene: Graham Greene and the Art of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bosco, M. 2005. *Graham Greene’s Catholic Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNIT 6 LITERARY TERMS

Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Unit Objectives
- 6.2 Simile
- 6.3 Metaphor
- 6.4 Alliteration
- 6.5 Assonance
- 6.6 Personification
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- 6.23 Further Reading

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6.0 INTRODUCTION

Literary terms are words used in, and having specific meaning in discussion, review, criticism and classification of literary works such as stories, poetry, drama and essays.

There is no authorized list of such words. Words that are used frequently for the purposes described above come to be recognized as literary terms. Literary terms are essential to a complete understanding of literature. Let us take the example of paradox. A paradox is a seemingly true statement or group of statements that lead to a contradiction or a situation which seems to defy logic or intuition. Some statements cannot in any way be stated to be truths and continue being categorically self-contradictory. For example, Wordsworth's line 'The child is father of the man' in *The Rainbow* and Shakespeare's 'the truest poetry is the most feigning' in *As You Like It* are notable literary examples.

Another literary term generally used is assonance. Assonance reflects itself in the end of verse lines when the same vowel sound appears followed by different consonant sounds. It produces an imperfect rhyme. For example, *live-thin, rope-doll*. The use of assonance is rare in English literature. It was popular in old French poetry and still remains a preferred form in Spanish poetry. In this unit, you will study some of the common literary terms.

6.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the different kinds of literary terms
 - Give examples of simile, metaphor, alliteration, assonance, personification, hyperbole, epithet, epigram, synecdoche, iron, antithesis, imagery, oxymoron, onomatopoeia, paradox, metonymy and pun.
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6.2 SIMILE

Simile is a figure of speech where two seemingly unlike objects are compared. The comparison is usually introduced by words such as ‘like’ or ‘as’. Similes are not just restricted to literature and figures of speech. They are found in everyday oral conversation as well. Similes are easily identified even in music and popular culture.

Everyday examples:

- As blind **as** a bat. (Meaning: one who cannot see clearly)
- As busy **as** a bee. (Meaning: one who is extremely busy)
- Sly **as** a fox. (Meaning: someone who is extremely clever and cunning)
- Sweet **as** honey. (Meaning: one who is extremely likable)

Literary examples:

1. *O my Luve's **like** a red, red rose*

That's newly sprung in June;

*O my Luve's **like** the melodie*

That's sweetly played in tune. (A Red, Red Rose by Robert Burns)

In this example, the narrator suggests that his love is similar to a fresh red rose which blossoms in the spring season. Hence, a simile is used to highlight the beauty of the beloved.

2. ‘I would have given anything for the power to soothe her frail soul, tormenting itself in its invincible ignorance **like** a small bird beating about the cruel wires of a cage.’ (Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad)

In these lines, the pains and agonies of the soul are being compared with a bird that is put in a cage, while beating itself against the cruel and torturous wires of the cage and longs to lead a free life.

3. *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;*

Coral is far more red than her lips' red;

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

(Sonnet 130 by William Shakespeare)

This is an example of incorporating negative simile. The speaker instead of directly saying how beautiful the mistress is, focuses on aspects of beauty which are absent in the mistress. The speaker insists that the lips of the beloved are not as red as coral, nor is her skin as pure as snow.

6.3 METAPHOR

Metaphor is a figure of speech. It creates an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things or objects which are extremely different from each other. Yet there are some characteristics which are common to both the objects that are being compared and that becomes the basis of comparison. The word metaphor is derived from Greek word ‘meta’ meaning ‘beyond’ and ‘phero’ meaning ‘I carry’. A metaphor should be highly suggestive. As mentioned in *Elements of English Rhetoric and Prosody*: ‘A metaphor ... differs from simile only in form and not in substance... A metaphor is usually more lively and more pleasing mode of illustration than a simile.’ However, it should be kept in mind that a metaphor should not be far stretched.

Everyday examples:

- My brother was boiling mad. (Meaning: My brother was very angry.)
- The assignment was a breeze. (Meaning: The assignment was too easy.)
- Her voice is music to his ears. (Meaning: Whenever he hears her voice he feels happy.)
- The skies of his future began to darken. (Meaning: The coming times are going to be hard for him.)

Literary examples:

1. Mrs Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time **craning over garden fences**, spying on the neighbours. (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* by J. K. Rowling)

In these lines, the author has used a metaphor to compare Aunt Petunia or Petunia Dursley to a crane. Crane is a kind of bird that is graceful, yet at the same time, it is very powerful and has a very versatile neck. As the story progresses, the readers realize that she uses her long neck to get information about her neighbours.

2. ‘All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.’
(*As You Like It* by William Shakespeare)

Here, Shakespeare has likened the world to a drama stage wherein all human beings are merely actors on the stage.

3. *Every rose has its thorn,
Just like every night has it’s dawn,
Just like every cowboy sings his sad, sad song,
Every rose has its thorn.* (*Every Rose has Its Thorn* by Poison)

The lyrics used by the music group Poison is referring to a popular metaphor. Just as the flower that is extremely beautiful and delicate, this woman also possesses an aspect that can really hurt. The metaphor of the heartbreak that is felt can be compared with the way heart break is narrated in traditional westerns.

6.4 ALLITERATION

When two or more stressed syllables of a certain word group begins with similar consonant sounds or with vowel sounds alliteration takes place. We say something alliterates when the initial sounds of a word are repeated in immediate succession.

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Check Your Progress

1. Define a simile.
2. Give an example of a metaphor.

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It is believed that the function of alliteration is to highlight the beauty of a language within a specific context. It can also be used to unite words or concepts by means of repetition. Several times, alliteration follows rhythmic patterns. As can be seen from numerous examples, alliteration does not always begin with consonants but more or less they are usually the stressed syllables. Scholars suggest that alliteration is less common than rhyme, yet they always gain our attention because alliteration emphasizes certain aspects of the text that might not have been underscored otherwise.

Everyday examples:

One of the most common everyday use of alliteration takes place in tongue twisters. One popular use is given as follows:

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,

Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Literary Examples:

We come across alliteration most frequently in poetry. This figure of speech appears again and again in every form of poetry ranging from the simplest of poems to the most complex verse patterns.

The following are some of the popular examples from literature:

1. *The fair breeze blew,*

The white foam flew,

And the forrow followed free.

(*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S. T. Coleridge)

In this example, one can easily identify the repetition of the sounds in 'breeze/blew,' 'foam/ flew,' and 'forrow/ followed /free'. Let us not ignore the alliterative sounds produced from 'first' and 'burst' and 'silent sea'.

2. '... neither of those can feel stranger and stronger emotions than that man does, who for the first time finds himself pulling into the charmed, churned circle of the hunted sperm whale.' (Moby Dick by Herman Melville)

When we consider the words spoken in these lines, we realize that Melville not only accentuates the sound that the words offer, but also he infuses alliteration involving the words 'charmed' and 'churned' to produce a sense of intense tension as the narrator undergoes his first ride on a whaleboat, which incidentally happens to be too close to the massive animal (whale). Through alliteration, Melville manages to suggest a thing or two about the character of Ishmael.

6.5 ASSONANCE

The figure of speech, assonance, appears when two or more words close to one another reiterate the same vowel sound yet it begins with non-identical consonant sounds. Assonance differs from alliteration in the sense that alliteration deals with the repetition of the similar consonant sounds while in assonance it is the vowel sound.

Literary examples:

1. *He gives his harness bells a shake*

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dar and deep.

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

(*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost)

In this example, vowels appear successively to create an impact of assonance.

2. 'Poetry is old, ancient, goes back far. It is among the oldest of living things. So old it is that no man knows how and why the first poems came.' (*Early Moon* by Carl Sandburg)

When we look at the following passage, we realize that the use of assonance in a way sets the mood of what the writer intends to suggest.

Notice how the long vowel 'o' in this example helps to focus on the idea of something being old and mysterious.

3. *I wandered lonely as a cloud*

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze

(*Daffodils* by William Wordsworth)

In these lines, William Wordsworth employs assonance to create an internal rhyme in his poem *Daffodils*.

6.6 PERSONIFICATION

Personification is another figure of speech. In personification an object, an idea or an animal is laced with human-like qualities. The inanimate or non-human objects are sketched in such a way that we feel as if they have the ability to behave like human beings. Let us for example, consider the usage 'The sky weeps'. Here, we are attributing the sky with the ability to cry, which is a quality that humans or animals possess. Hence, we can suggest that the 'sky' in this example has been personified.

Everyday examples:

- Look at my BMW! Isn't **she** a beauty?
- Time and tide **waits** for none.
- The fire **swallowed** the entire forest.

The words in bold suggest the personified words and helps us associate actions of inanimate objects with our own emotional state.

NOTES**Check Your Progress**

3. What is alliteration?
4. Give one example of assonance.

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Literary examples:

1. ‘... away to the woods—away back into the sun-washed alleys carpeted with fallen gold and glades where the moss is green and vivid yet. The woods are getting ready to sleep—they are not yet asleep but they are disrobing and are having all sorts of little bed-time conferences and whisperings and good-nights.’
(*The Green Gables Letters* by L. M. Montgomery)

In this example, the absence of activity in the forest has been identified and personification takes place through the words that hint that the forest is getting ready to sleep. It seems as if the forest is busy in bedtime chatting and is expressing ‘good-nights’, each of which is common in human society.

2. ‘When well-appareled April on the heel
Of limping winter treads.’ (*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare)

One comes across two examples of personification in these lines. The month of April is projected as dressed up and the winter season limps. Here, Shakespeare personifies April (month) and the winter (season) by attributing them with two distinct human characteristics.

6.7 HYPERBOLE

The word hyperbole is derived from a Greek word *hyperbol* which means ‘over-casting’. It is a figure of speech which highlights an exaggeration of ideas. This is usually employed for the purpose of emphasis. It is a device that we use (at times unconsciously) in our everyday conversation. Let us for example, say, you want to convey something gross/surprising/unbelievable and you probably land up saying, ‘I saw it with my **own** eyes’. Obviously, ‘own’ is an exaggeration. Hyperbole is usually an unexpected exaggeration to authenticate a certain real situation.

However, we must not confuse hyperbole with other figures of speech like simile or metaphor. Though there is comparison involved in all three figures of speech but unlike simile and metaphor, hyperbole more or less underpins a humorous effect that is created by an overstatement.

Everyday examples:

- She is as **heavy** as an **elephant!**
- I am **dying** of shame.

Literary examples:

1. ‘*Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.*’ (*Macbeth* by William Shakespeare)

In these lines, Macbeth, the protagonist of the play, experiences the unbearable agony of his conscience after successfully murdering the king. Macbeth cannot forgive himself and regrets his sin. He is sure that even the biggest and most vast ocean cannot wash the blood (of murder) from his hands. The effective use of hyperbole in these lines only accentuates the gravity of the crime and the misery of Macbeth.

2. *I'll love you, dear, I'll love you**Till China and Africa meet,**And the river jumps over the mountain**And the salmon sing in the street,**I'll love you till the ocean**Is folded and hung up to dry* (As I Walked One Evening by W. H. Auden)

In this example, the poet has used hyperbole. The meeting of China and Africa, singing of salmon in the street, the jumping of the river over the mountain and the ocean being folded and hung up to be dried are impossibilities which can never take place.

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6.8 EPITHET

Epithet is a figure of speech that is descriptive in nature. It is used to describe a place, a thing or a person in manner so striking that it helps in making the qualities of that person, thing or place more pronounced than they actually exist.

By incorporating epithets, writers manage to describe the characters and settings more clearly. They convey multi-layered meanings to the text. As epithet is a literary tool, it helps in delineating the character and hence, makes it easier to understand. By using epithets, the novelists, essayists and poets develop concrete images in lesser words. Along with this, the metaphorical use of epithets turns each piece of writing into a colourful and rich work.

Literary Examples:1. *Here of a Sunday morning**My love and I would lie,**And see the coloured counties,**And hear the larks so high**About us in the sky.*

(Brendon Hills by A. E. Housman)

In these lines, the word 'coloured' is an epithet that is used to describe the lovely and pleasant spring season in those places where the poet desires to enjoy the company of his beloved.

2. 'God! he said quietly. Isn't the sea what Algy calls it: a great sweet mother? The snot-green sea. The scrotum-tightening sea! I must teach you. You must read them in the original. Thalatta! Thalatta! She is our great sweet mother....' (*Ulysses* by James Joyce)

In the given lines, Joyce incorporates many epithets to portray the sea. The epithets used are: snot-green sea, a great sweet mother and scrotum-tightening sea.

6.8.1 Transferred Epithet

Transferred epithet is a figure of speech in which an epithet or adjective is transferred from a person or object to which it actually belongs to another object or person to create a heightened effect.

Check Your Progress

5. Give one example of personification.
6. What does the word *hyperbol* mean in Greek language?

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Everyday example:

He is our only **ray** of hope.

The word 'ray' is associated with light. However, here it is used to connect with hope and convey a certain sense of desperation.

Literary examples:

1. *The ploughman homeward plods his weary way.* (*Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray)
2. 'You don't really criticize any author to whom you have never surrendered yourself. . . . Even just the bewildering minute counts; you have to give yourself up.' (T. S. Eliot, Letter to Stephen Spender, 1935)

In the first example, 'weary' has been removed from 'the ploughman' and has been added to the 'way'; in the second case, 'bewildering' has been associated with time instead of any human being.

6.9 EPIGRAM

Epigram is a figure of speech which suggests a sharp opinion with antithetical ideas placed side by side to induce surprise or shock.

Everyday examples:

- The child is father of the man.
- Art lies in concealing art.

Both the statements point towards something serious and underline a hidden meaning while using a language that might appear antithetical.

Literary Examples:

1. *To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.* (*Auguries of Innocence* by William Blake)

In these lines, the poet has mentioned about his existential and religious ideas.

2. 'Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly.'

'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.' (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde)

Oscar Wilde, the twentieth century writer was known for his skilful use of epigrams. Like his other literary works, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is also filled with numerous epigrams. If you take a close look this example suggest some hard hitting facts under a veil of humour.

Check Your Progress

7. What is an epithet?
8. Define an epigram.

6.10 SYNECDOCHE

Synecdoche is a combination of two words 'syn' and 'ekdoche'. It literally means 'the understanding of one thing by another'. In this figure of speech, a part of the whole is

substituted for something else or vice versa. At times, even an abstract concept is replaced with a more concrete one and vice versa.

Everyday examples:

- The rank and file streamed out of the city to see the sight. (Meaning: Rank and file implies the designation and post of people.)
- There is a mixture of the tiger and the ape in his character. (Meaning: The sentence implies the characteristics of tiger and ape whereas it only suggests the name of the animals.)
- Kalidasa is the Shakespeare of India. (Meaning: Greatness of one writer is established by name of another.)
- He gave the beggar a few coppers. (Meaning: Instead of saying coin, the material with which the coin is made, that is, copper is mentioned.)

Literary examples:

1. *The western wave was all a-flame.*

The day was well was nigh done!

Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright Sun;

(*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S. T. Coleridge)

In this example, the ‘western wave’ is a synecdoche because it talks about the sea by using the name of one of its components (wave).

2. ‘At midnight I went on deck, and to my mate’s great surprise put the ship round on the other tack. His terrible whiskers flitted round me in silent criticism.’ (*The Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad)

In this example, the friend of the narrator is described by just one word — ‘whiskers’.

6.11 IRONY

In this figure of speech, the real meaning of the words is exactly the opposite of what is literally conveyed. Irony is used by writers in all forms of writing such as fiction, non-fiction, verse and so forth.

Literary Examples:

1. *‘Here, under leave of Brutus, and the rest,*

(For Brutus is an honourable man)

I come to speak in Caesar’s funeral.’ (*Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare)

In these lines, the use of the word, ‘honourable’ is ironical because the speaker does not consider Brutus as honourable.

2. *Water, water, everywhere,*

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink. (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge)

In these lines, the poet ironically expresses the fact that there is so much water everywhere but not a single drop to drink.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

9. Give one example of the use of irony.
10. Give two examples of the use of synecdoche.

6.12 ANTITHESIS

NOTES

The word antithesis is a combination of two words ‘anti’ (against) and ‘thesis’ (placing). In this figure of speech, a word or idea is set against another so that what is said creates a heightened effect through the use of contrasting words.

Everyday examples:

- Man proposes, God disposes.
- United we stand divided we fall.
- Speech is silver, silence is golden.

In each of these examples, contrasting words are placed against each other so that a more significant idea can be expressed.

Literary examples:

‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.’ (*A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens)

The use of contrasting words brings out the antithetical ideas and highlights the difficult and conflicting times that Dickens’ is narrating in his literary work.

6.13 IMAGERY

Imagery is the use of figurative language which helps to represent objects, ideas and actions in such a way that it entices our physical senses.

Literary examples:

1. *Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.*

(*To Autumn* by John Keats)

In this example, use of auditory imagery by Keats is evident. The sounds produced by the animals intensely excite our sense of hearing. The bleating of lambs, the chirping of crickets, the twitters of swallows and the whistles of the robin becomes as lively as one can expect.

2. ‘It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window... Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass,... On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy; and the marsh-mist was so thick, that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village—a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there—was invisible to me until I was quite close under it.’ (*The Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens)

In this example, Pip, the protagonist of the novel, uses various images to describe a particular damp morning. The frequent use of the words ‘damp’ and ‘wet’ makes us feel uneasy and empathize with the poor boy who is suffering in cold. The dense ‘marsh-mist’ helps the readers in delineating the scene of mourning in a marshland and makes the scene vivid before the readers.

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6.14 OXYMORON

In an oxymoron, two words or phrases which have exactly opposite meanings are brought together to create a ludicrous or serious effect.

Everyday examples:

- Musical discord
- Noiseless noise

Literary examples:

1. *The shackles of love straiten'd him*

His honour rooted in dishonoured stood

And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true (*Lancelot and Elaine* by Tennyson)

In these lines, the use of oxymoron is apparent in shackles-straiten'd, honour-dishonour, faith-unfaithful, falsely-true.

2. *'The bookful blockhead ignorantly read,*

With loads of learned lumber in his head,

With his own tongue still edifies his ears,

And always list'ning to himself appears.'

(*An Essay on Criticism* by Alexander Pope)

In this example, Pope introduces oxymoron to develop wit in his *An Essay on Criticism*. Combinations like ‘bookful blockhead’ and ‘ignorantly read’ are used to describe a person who definitely reads a lot yet that reading is of no use because the individual neither understands the real meaning of what he reads nor utilizes his reading to enhance his personality.

6.15 ONOMATOPOEIA

Onomatopoeia is a word that phonetically mimics or resembles the sound of the thing it describes. By using this literary device, a writer makes his writing more expressive and the description more impactful. Let us say for example, ‘The gushing stream flows in the forest’. This line appears more powerful and has a larger impact than just, ‘The stream flows in the forest.’ When the reader reads those words, he can almost hear the ripples of the ‘gushing stream’ and that makes the usage more effective.

Onomatopoeia makes sure that the reader can ‘hear’ the precise word that is being spoken about; hence, making sure that the reader is completely part of the fictional world that is created with the use of words.

Check Your Progress

11. Define antithesis.
12. State the use of imagery as a literary term.

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Everyday examples:

- The **buzzing** bee flew away.
- The sack fell into the river with a **splash**.
- The books fell on the table with a loud **thump**.
- He looked at the **roaring** sky.
- The **rustling** leaves kept me awake.

Literary examples:

1. *'Hark, hark!*

Bow-wow.

The watch-dogs bark!

Bow-wow.

Hark, hark! I hear

The strain of strutting chanticleer

Cry, 'cock-a-diddle-dow!' (The *Tempest* by William Shakespeare)

These lines are spoken by the character, Ariel in the play, *The Tempest*.

2. *'I'm getting married in the morning!*

Dingdong! *the bells are gonna chime.'*

(*Get Me to the Church on Time* by Lerner and Loewe)

'He saw nothing and heard nothing but he could feel his heart pounding and then he heard the *clack* on stone and the leaping, dropping *clicks* of a small rock falling.'

(*For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway)

Each of the above examples, use sound producing words so that it is easy for the reader to establish a sensory association with the text.

6.16 PARADOX

Paradox is a figure of speech in which a statement (or continuous statements) is made that appears to be impossible as well as contradictory. Paradox, through its very usage invariably confuses the readers, but only to a certain extent. Paradox can be self-referential, at times, contradictory and many a times round about.

Everyday examples:

- I always lie. (Meaning: In case, someone always lies and if that is true, then by confessing it, the individual no longer remains a liar.)
- Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die. (Meaning: how can death die?)

Literary examples:

1. 'All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.'

(*Animal Farm* by George Orwell)

2. 'The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb;

What is her burying grave, that is Rainbow in her womb;'

(*Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare)

Check Your Progress

13. Give examples of the use of onomatopoeia.

14. Give examples of oxymoron.

6.17 METONYMY

Metonymy is a figure of speech where the name of a thing is replaced by the name of something else with which there is a close association. Metonymy should not be confused with synecdoche because synecdoche refers to an object by the name of one of its components. A car can be called a ‘wheel’, where the component of car (wheel) implies the whole car. Whereas in metonymy, the word used to describe one thing for other has a close association with that thing, like, ‘crown’ would imply power.

Metonymy is not metaphor. Metaphor relies on resemblance between two things that are different in nature. Metonymy, on the other hand, develops strong relationship on the equation between two ideas. For example, ‘The White House is concerned about terrorism’, here the White House symbolizes US government.

Everyday examples:

- India has decided to keep check on population. (India refers to the government.)
- The pen is mightier than the sword. (Pen implies the power of written words and sword refers to military/ political.)
- Let me give you a hand. (Hand implies help.)

Literary examples:

1. *As he swung toward them holding up the hand*

Half in appeal, but half as if to keep

The life from spilling.

(*Out, Out* by Robert Frost)

In these lines, the expression ‘The life from spilling’ is a metonymy because it refers to the spilling of blood. This establishes a link between life as well as blood.

2. *But now my oat proceeds,*

And listens to the herald of the sea

That came in Neptune’s plea,

He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,

What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain? (*Lycidas* by John Milton)

In these lines, John Milton introduces ‘oat’ for a musical instrument which is created out from an oak-stalk. Hence, ‘oat’ turns into the song that the poet is trying to compose sitting next to the ocean.

6.18 PUN

Pun is a figure of speech that plays on the words which has an underlying meaning and creates a humorous effect. This effect is created by using a word that implies two or more meanings. Pun relies on similar sounding words that have different meanings to produce desired effect.

Everyday examples:

- Why do we still have troops in Germany? To keep the Russians in **Czech**.
- A horse is a very **stable** animal.

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Literary examples:

1. *When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done for I have more.*
That at my death Thy Son / Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore
And having done that, Thou hast done;
I fear no more. (A Hymn to God the Father by John Donne)
 In these lines, the poet is creating a pun with his own name, that is, Donne and with the name Anne More who is his wife. Moreover, instead of sun he uses son.
2. 'They seemed to think the opportunity lost, if they failed to point the conversation to me, every now and then, and stick the point into me' (*Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens)
 In these lines, Pip, seems to be playing with the word—point.

6.19 SUMMARY

- Literary terms are words used in, and having specific meaning in discussion, review, criticism and classification of literary works such as stories, poetry, drama and essays.
- Literary terms are essential to a complete understanding of literature.
- Simile is a figure of speech where two seemingly unlike objects are compared. The comparison is usually introduced by words such as 'like' or 'as'.
- Metaphor is a figure of speech which creates an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two things or objects which are extremely different from each other.
- When two or more stressed syllables of a certain word group begins with similar consonant sounds or with vowel sounds alliteration takes place.
- Assonance appears when two or more words close to one another reiterate the same vowel sound yet it begins with non-identical consonant sounds.
- Personification is another figure of speech. In personification an object, an idea or an animal is laced with human-like qualities.
- The word hyperbole is derived from a Greek word *hyperbol* which means 'over-casting'. It is a figure of speech which highlights an exaggeration of ideas.
- Epithet is a figure of speech that is descriptive in nature. It is used to describe a place, a thing or a person in manner so striking that it helps in making the qualities of that person, thing or place more pronounced than they actually exist.
- Transferred epithet is a figure of speech in which an epithet or adjective is transferred from a person or object to which it actually belongs to another object or person to create a heightened effect.
- Synecdoche is a combination of two words 'syn' and 'ekdoche'. It literally means 'the understanding of one thing by another'.
- Irony is used by writers in all forms of writing such as fiction, non-fiction, verse and so forth.
- The word antithesis is a combination of two words 'anti' (against) and 'thesis' (placing).

Check Your Progress

15. Define metonymy.
16. Give one example of the use of paradox.

- Imagery is the use of figurative language which helps to represent objects, ideas and actions in such a way that it entices our physical senses.
- In an oxymoron, two words or phrases, which have exactly opposite meanings, are brought together to create a ludicrous or serious effect.
- Onomatopoeia is a word that phonetically mimics or resembles the sound of the thing it describes.
- Paradox is a figure of speech in which a statement (or continuous statements) is made that appears to be impossible as well as contradictory.
- Metonymy is a figure of speech where the name of a thing is replaced by the name of something else with which there is a close association.
- Pun is a figure of speech that plays on the words which has an underlying meaning and creates a humorous effect.

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6.20 KEY TERMS

- **Assonance:** It takes place when two or more words close to one another repeat the same vowel sound but start with different consonant sounds.
- **Hyperbole:** It is a figure of speech which involves an exaggeration of ideas with the objective of emphasis.
- **Transferred epithet:** It is a figure of speech in which an epithet or adjective is transferred from a person or object to which it actually belongs to another object or person to create a heightened effect.
- **Synecdoche:** It is a literary device in which a part of something represents the whole or it may use a whole to represent a part.
- **Onomatopoeia:** It is a word that phonetically mimics or resembles the sound of the thing it describes.

6.21 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. Simile is a figure of speech where two seemingly unlike objects are compared. The comparison is usually introduced by words such as ‘like’ or ‘as’.
2. An example of a metaphor is as follows:
‘All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players’. (*As You Like It* by William Shakespeare)
3. When two or more stressed syllables of a certain word group begins with similar consonant sounds or with vowel sounds alliteration takes place. We say something alliterates when the initial sounds of a word are repeated in immediate succession.
4. An example of assonance is as follows:
‘*Poetry is old, ancient, goes back far. It is among the oldest of living things. So old it is that no man knows how and why the first poems came.*’
(*Early Moon* by Carl Sandburg)
5. An example of personification is as follows:
‘*When well-appareled April on the heel
Of limping winter treads.*’ (Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare)

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6. *Hyperbol* is a Greek word meaning over-casting.
7. An epithet is a figure of speech that is descriptive in nature.
8. An epigram is a figure of speech which suggests a sharp opinion with antithetical ideas placed side by side to induce surprise or shock.
9. An example of the use of irony is as follows:
*'Here, under leave of Brutus, and the rest,
(For Brutus is an honourable man)
I come to speak in Caesar's funeral.'* (*Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare)
In these lines, the use of the word, 'honourable' is ironical because the speaker does not consider Brutus as honourable.
10. Two examples of the use of synecdoche are as follows:
 - The rank and file streamed out of the city to see the sight. (Meaning: Rank and file implies the designation and post of people.)
 - There is a mixture of the tiger and the ape in his character. (Meaning: The sentence implies the characteristics of tiger and ape whereas it only suggests the name of the animals.)
11. The word antithesis is a combination of two words 'anti' (against) and 'thesis' (placing). In this figure of speech, a word or idea is set against another so that what is said creates a heightened effect through the use of contrasting words.
12. Imagery is the use of figurative language which helps to represent objects, ideas and actions in such a way that it entices our physical senses.
13. Examples of the use of onomatopoeia are as follows:
 - The **buzzing** bee flew away.
 - The sack fell into the river with a **splash**.
 - The books fell on the table with a loud **thump**.
14. Examples of oxymoron are: musical discord and noiseless noise.
15. Metonymy is a figure of speech where the name of a thing is replaced by the name of something else with which there is a close association.
16. An example of the use of paradox is as follows:
I always lie.

6.22 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are literary terms?
2. What is the difference between an epithet and transferred epithet?
3. Give examples of the use of antithesis, onomatopoeia and paradox.
4. What is pun? Give examples.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Differentiate between assonance and alliteration. Give examples.
2. Discuss the use of personification and hyperbole in Robert Burns's poem, *A Red, Red Rose*.
3. 'Synecdoche literally means the understanding of one thing by another.' Explain.
4. Explain the differences between oxymoron and antithesis.

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6.23 FURTHER READING

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