

B.A. First Year
English Literature, Paper - I

POETRY



मध्यप्रदेश भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय – भोपाल
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Published by Registrar, MP Bhoj (Open) University, Bhopal in 2020



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

Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999

Regd. Office: A-27, 2nd Floor, Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, New Delhi 1100 44

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INTRODUCTION

Poetry cannot really be defined in specific terms. It is a form of expression that involves vivid imagination and creativity. Poetry, irrespective of the form it takes, helps us come to terms with not just change but also joy and sorrow. It helps us appreciate nature and the extraordinary energy and beauty that exist in the mundane objects, activities and routines of daily life.

Poetry, simply put, can be said to be any literary work which is used to express feelings and ideas. The use of a distinct style and the play of words to form a pleasing rhythm make reading poetry a very pleasant experience. This genre of literature has evolved over the years showing a marked difference in the works of modern poets and ancient poets. This book helps students appreciate the popular works of poets such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Donne, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith, William Blake, P.B. Shelly and John Keats. This book is divided into five units.

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

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UNIT 1 POETRY AND ITS FORMS

Structure

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a form of literature which uses aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language to express emotions. The history of English poetry spans over the middle of the seventh century to the present day. During this period, English poets have written some of the most enduring poems in Western culture, and the language and its poetry have become ubiquitous. Consequently, the term ‘English poetry’ is unavoidably ambiguous. It can mean poetry written in England, or poetry written in the English language.

The genre of poetry has evolved significantly and enables the reader and the poet to be transported to a world of imagination. It is also used as a tool of criticism by certain poets. Poetry comprises various forms and literary terms which makes it a richer tool of expression.

In this unit, we will discuss the meaning and aspects of poetry. The major literary terms and figurative devices to be used while writing poetry will also be discussed in this unit.

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1.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the concept of poetry
 - Describe the different elements of poetry
 - Discuss the different forms of poetry
 - Describe the figurative and connotative devices used in English poetry
-

1.2 COMPONENTS OF POETRY

Let us analyse the different components or elements of poetry in this section.

Prosody deals with the study of the meter, rhythm, inflection and modulation of tone in poetry. The use of a definite pattern in a poem is identified as meter. Rhythm is associated with the production of sounds that are an outcome of reading verse lines. Apart from this, prosody also deals with the process of scanning stanzas in order to identify the specific meter that is used in the poem.

1.2.1 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same letter at the beginning of consecutively following words or words occurring at short intervals. Example:

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet

When far away an interrupted cry

(Acquainted with the Night by Robert Frost)

Bore up his branching head: Scarce from his mould

Behemoth biggest born of earth upheaved

(Paradise Lost by John Milton, while narrating the birth of Behemoth)

Even without being aware of the technical name of this metrical ornament we used alliteration in our childhood in the form of tongue-twisters like:

- *She sells sea shells by the sea shore*
- *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.*

In everyday life, we use alliteration in the form of commonplace idioms like, *kith and kin, wit and wisdom, home and hearth, rhyme and reason, watch and ward* etc. The use of alliteration is very prominent in Old Germanic poetry and Anglo-Saxon poetry. The following example is taken from the Old English *Exeter Book*. This is a quote from the first riddle of the book:

Hwylc is hǣleþa þæs horsc ond þæs hygecræftig

þæt þæt mæge asecgan, hwa mec on sið wræce,

þonne ic astige strong, stundum reþe,

þrymful þunie, þragum wræce

fere geond foldan, folcsalo bærne,

ræced reafige? Recas stigað,

haswe ofer hrofum. Hlin bið on eorþan,

*wælcwealm wera, | þonne ic wudu hrere,
bearwas bledhwate, | beamas fylle,*

Here is another example from the Old English, *The Wanderer*:

*wadan wræclastas. Wýrd bið ful aræd!
Swa cwæð eardstapa, earfeþa gemyndig,
wraþra wælsleahta, winemæga hryre:
“Oft ic sceolde ana uhtna gehwylce
mine ceare cwipan. Nis nu cwicra nan*

The meaning of both the above quotes is not important; what one needs to observe is the excessive use of alliteration.

In the Old English period, alliteration had a functional role to play and it was used for organising the verse line. Caesura (a prominent pause) divided each line into two distinct half-lines. In the Middle English period the use of alliteration was functional as well as ornamental. Let us take a look at the following lines:

*In a summer season when the sun shone softly
I wrapped myself in woolens as if I were a sheep,
In a hermit's habit, unholy in his works,
I went out into the world to hear wonders
And to see many strange and seldom-known things
(Prologue of William Langland's Piers Plowman)*

We need to note that sibilants are hardly used in English literature. A ‘sibilant’ is any of the *s*, *z*, *sh*, *ch* (*tsh*), and *j* letters that produce a hissing sound when used consecutively. It creates a comic effect and using it continuously in a low tone produces a ‘whisper’. The English poets generally avoided using any of the above letters or any combination of these in excess. But Shakespeare does not shy away from using this technique. He writes in *Sonnet 30*:

*‘When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past...’*

But if alliteration is not used economically or effectively, it is unpleasant to hear. One of the most common criticisms against English writer Algernon Charles Swinburne is his over-emphasis on alliteration. For example, let us have a look at the following verse lines from his *Garden of Cymodoce*:

*From the lips everliving of laughter and love everlasting, that leave
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a snake to corrode it
and cleave.*

So glimmers the flower into glory, the glory recoils into gloom.

These lines are not pleasing to the ear and their overuse brings in a sense of monotony.

In the modern day, alliteration is used more for stylistic reasons than for operational value. In general, the rhetorical effect of alliteration consists in, though it is not limited to, providing embellishment in the form of beauty, elegance, emphasis, etc.

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1.2.2 Assonance

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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 similarity exists only with the vowel part and the dissimilarity between the consonants is not taken into account. The following example shows how it appears in poems:

Let me choose, and I will dwell

Where the sea, with sounding tread

Climbeth, till his feathery crest

Brush the mountain's feet.

(English rendering of Spanish La Ciencia del Verso)

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. The following lines (from *The Spanish Gipsy* by George Eliot) are a fine example of assonance in English literature:

Maiden crowned with glossy blackness,

Lithe as panther forest-roaming,

Long-armed nead, when she dances,

On the stream of ether floating,—

Bright, O bright Fedalma!

Old ballads are brimming with examples of this rhetorical device. If used inappropriately they are a trouble to the ear. Below is an example of its unimpressive use (from the *Epistle to GF Mathew* by John Keats):

Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream;

Or a rapt Seraph in a moonlight beam;

Or again witness what with thee I've seen,

The dew of fairy feet swept from the green,

After a night of some quaint jubilee

Which every elf and fay had come to see.

1.2.3 Rhythm

Rhythm is the lyrical progression or the calculated movement of language or sound. It is important for both prose and poetry. It manifests itself in the harmonic appearances of accents and halts. The monotonous occurrence of any sound or syllable is not pleasing because the vocal organs keep pronouncing similar sounds repeatedly. With the perfect flow of rhyme the quality of the language and the quality of the sound in a verse is enhanced.

In music and verse, the proper time division is an important element to keep the flow of the rhythm. The utility of having rhyme is that it indicates the connection between the words that form a part of the text. And as the reader, in course of time, gets used to the play of words, s/he understands the nuances that rhythm produces and appreciates it.

The rhythm of the verse manifests itself differently in different languages and different literary traditions. There is no constant or similar way of expressing rhythm

that is universally accepted. For example, in Japanese every syllable in a word is equally emphasised, thus making it a mora-timed language. In French, Catalan, Spanish, Latin, syllables appear at regular intervals as they are placed at nearly equal distances, thus making them syllable-timed languages. But in Russian, German and English the stressed syllables are placed at expected intervals and unstressed syllables are not of much importance. This group is part of stress-timed languages. Tonal languages such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Lithuanian, etc. are languages where the pitch of a word is responsible for conveying the meaning of the word.

The accents, syllables, or moras (according to phonology, it is the smallest unit of time taken to utter a syllable and it can also be called the shortest syllable) are responsible for providing certain timings to the language which in turn shapes the poems, though external influences can also bring in changes in the existing rhythmic pattern.

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1.2.4 Meter

Meter is the definite distribution of syllables in order to produce a harmonious effect. According to the western tradition, meter is the metrical foot and the number of feet appearing in each line. The various kinds of meters found in English poetry are as follows:

- (i) **Trochaic:** It derives its name from Greek *trecho* meaning ‘I run’. In this kind of arrangement one accented syllable is succeeded by an unaccented one. For example:

Ri 'ch the—tre a 's-ure

Swee 't the pla 'sure

(Dryden)

Due to its brisk quality, this form is used for lively subjects. Poems with a witty and humorous subject matter are composed in this foot. Some devotional poems also use this measure.

- (ii) **Iambic:** The word has its roots in Greek *iapto* meaning ‘to pierce’. Here, an unstressed syllable follows a stressed syllable. Example:

The ni 'ght is da 'rk and I 'am fa 'r from ho 'me

(Newman)

This is the most commonly used foot. Most of the sublime and graceful works are composed using this. Moreover, it provides for a lot of variety to experiment with.

- (iii) **Spondee:** It uses two continuous stressed syllables. Example:

The lo 'ng da 'y wa 'nes ; the slo 'w moon 'n climes; the dee 'p

(Alfred Tennyson)

This is frequently used because this meter does not conform to the rule of English prosody that states that one foot can contain only one accented and one unaccented syllable.

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(iv) **Pyrrhic:** This measure consists of two successive unstressed syllables. Example:

You chos'e the be'st amon'g us a stron'g man

(Alfred Tennyson)

Just like Spondee, Pyrrhic is also uncommon. Both the varieties are used to provide variation in a poem. But it must be noted that both Spondee and Pyrrhic succeed or follow each other wherever they appear.

(v) **Dactyl:** The word is derived from Greek *daktulos* meaning finger. In this one stressed syllable is followed by two unstressed syllables. Example:

Ge'n-tle in pe'r-son-age

Co'n-duct and e'qui-page

(Carey)

(vi) **Anapestic:** This English word originates from Greek *ana* meaning 'back' and *paio* meaning 'strike'. Here two unstressed syllables are followed by one stressed syllable. Example:

Of a li'fe that for thee'was re-si-gned

(Moore)

On close reading, one can see that it is the reverse of the dactyl meter. This is also another popular foot just like the iambic.

(vii) **Amphibrach:** This term too originates from Greek *amphi* meaning 'on both sides' and *brachus* meaning 'short'. In Amphibrach, the middle syllable is accented and other syllables are not. Example:

The wa'rm lay of lo've and the li'ght note of gla'dness

(Moore)

The total counts of metrical feet in a line are expressed as:

- dimeter — two feet
- trimeter — three feet
- tetrameter — four feet
- pentameter — five feet
- hexameter — six feet
- heptameter — seven feet
- octameter — eight feet

1.2.5 Rhyme

In general terms, 'rhyme' refers to the similar sounds produced by the words at the end of a line in poetry. During the time of Greeks and Romans, rhyme was not very popular. In English language, rhyme began to evolve through the religious Latin poetry. End rhyme, assonance and alliteration gained prominence in local verse during the Middle Ages. The popularity of rhyme gradually died out in the sixteenth century with the introduction of the blank verse. Many modern poets of the twentieth century use imperfect rhymes in their compositions. There are various

kinds of rhymes like masculine rhyme, feminine rhyme and triple rhymes. We will discuss a few of them in detail.

Internal rhyme

Internal rhyme is also known as ‘middle rhyme’. As the name suggests, it occurs in the middle of a line. The rhyming can take place among words within the line, or with a word that is part of the line and a word that is placed at the end of the line. Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven* uses this rhyme pattern:

*Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
“Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door —*

Another poem that displays internal rhyme is PB Shelley’s *The Cloud*:
*I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die*

Hard rhyme

It is also known as ‘identical rhyme’. When a complete syllable rhymes perfectly which includes both consonants and vowels, it is known as hard rhyme. At times, it uses the same word which has different meanings to create the rhyming process. This form is usually avoided unless the repetition holds a particular purpose.

Emily Dickinson’s *Because I Could not Stop for Death* exemplifies this rhyme:

*We paused before a house that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground—
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice—in the Ground.*

Soft rhyme

It is also known as ‘near rhyme’. This happens when two words at the outset give the impression that they rhyme but in reality they do not. Such rhymes have only similar end consonant sounds but the preceding vowel or consonant utterances are different. Henry Vaughan first used it in the English language. It was later used by GM Hopkins and WB Yeats.

1.2.6 Poetic Diction

Poetic diction describes the manner in which language is used in poetry. It is considered to be a perquisite of poetry but not of prose. It is not just limited to utterances but extends also to meaning and form. Every language and verse form has its own particular poetic diction. In some cases distinct special syntax and speech patterns are used specifically for poetry. Rhetorical ornamentations such as simile and metaphor, as well as other figures of speech are components of poetic diction.

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The earliest written information on poetic diction can be traced back to Aristotle's treatise on poetry, *Poetics* where he advocated that poetic diction should be well-defined. He also added 'the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor'.

In the eighteenth century, poetic diction meant complex figures of speech, use of archaic words, introducing strange epithets like '*the finny tribe*' for 'fish', invoking classical references that were in circulation during the Classical Era, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, creating a strong imagery for visual impact etc. It was during this time that distinct styles and usages for prose and poetry were advocated. Thomas Gray suggested that 'the language of the age is never the language of poetry' in 1742. But William Wordsworth challenged this use of 'inane phraseology' in his *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800). He did not consider any difference between the verse language and the language of the common man. But despite the challenge, poetry enjoyed a different language throughout the Romantic and the Victorian periods.

Poetic diction is at times used repeatedly to create various effects. For example, in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Anthony keeps repeating, '... Brutus is an honorable man,' which as one would realise that after sometime the statement becomes more ironical than complimentary.

Modern poets have tried to do away with poetic diction and have tried to minimise the emphasis on rhetorical devices, undertaking the responsibility to present things as they are instead of making them unnecessarily decorative. WB Yeats, TS Eliot, Ezra Pound et al incorporated ordinary speech into poetry. The Surrealists took the deviation from poetic diction of language further by repeatedly using catachresis. Catachresis is the incorrect use of figure of speech or word, which relies in change of rules of usage. For example, 'I will speak daggers to her.' (*Hamlet*)

1.2.7 Drilling and Demonstration

It is a method used in teaching language. This technique relies on repeated training or constant oral practice so that one can perfect the use of the specific language being learnt. Demonstration method is another method used in language teaching. It emphasises the technicality of how to learn a certain language.

1.2.8 Figurative and Connotative Devices

Various figurative and connotative devices are used while writing a poetry in order to enhance the imagination of a reader. This leads to a better experience of emotions by the reader while reading poetry. Some of the major figurative and connotative devices used in poetry are described in this section.

1. Simile

Simile is a figure of speech which depicts similarity between situations or objects that have something in common. 'Like' or 'as' are used in a simile. Similes allow an author to emphasize a certain characteristic of an object by comparing that object to an unrelated object that also has the same characteristic. For example, 'My love is like a red rose'. Simile and metaphor differ only in the degree of stylistic refinement. The simile, in which a comparison is made directly between

two objects, belongs to an earlier stage of literary expression: it is the deliberate elaboration of a correspondence, often pursued for its own sake. But a metaphor is a swift illumination of equivalence.

2. Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech of comparison stating an identity rather than a likeness, i.e., something is said to be that which it only resembles, e.g., ‘I fall upon the thorns of life’. (Shelley’s *Ode to the West Wind*), ‘the very honey of earthly joy’ (Cowley’s *The Wish*). Hamlet’s famous soliloquy begins,

*To be or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them.*

Hamlet is trying to decide which is the nobler course of action, suffering the blows of fortune or fighting them. The third and fourth lines both employ metaphors: ‘outrageous fortune’ is described in terms of ‘slings and arrows’, and ‘troubles’ are described in terms of a ‘sea’. Thus Hamlet’s troubles are only his personal feelings of unhappiness but by associating his feelings with such large and chaotic subjects as warfare and the sea, the individual experience is linked with vast and important aspects of life—almost making a huge statement about human experience.

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which similarities of two unlike things are seen as identical. For example, he is a donkey. In simile, the comparison becomes ‘He is like a donkey’. Metaphor is always an implied or compressed comparison. Aristotle, in *Poetics*, claims that for one to master the use of metaphor is a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilar. In *Macbeth*, ‘There is daggers in man’s smiles’, implies that men conceal enmity beneath their apparent good will as man might conceal a dagger under cloak.

3. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a kind of metaphor which mentions an important part of a thing which signifies the whole. For instance, hands stand for labour. It is closely related to metonymy. In fact, synecdoche is sometimes considered as a sub-class of metonymy. It is a figure of speech in which a term is used in one of the following ways:

- A part of something is used to refer to the whole thing, or
- A thing (a ‘whole’) is used to refer to part of it, or
- A specific class of thing is used to refer to a larger, more general class, or
- A general class of thing is used to refer to a smaller, more specific class, or
- A material is used to refer to an object composed of that material, or
- A container is used to refer to its contents

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4. Symbol

Inspired by the American Edgar Allan Poe, the French poets namely Stephen Mallarme and Charles Baudelaire initiated the movement of symbolism in the later part of the nineteenth century. A symbol represents something else, either by association or by resemblance. The word symbol is derived from the Greek verb *symbollein* which means 'to put together'. The term, symbol, when used in literature is often a figure of speech in which a person, object, or situation represent something in addition to its literal meaning. Even in day to day life, we come across certain symbols as flags and colours used in flags symbolize an idea. For example, green colour in the Indian flag symbolizes prosperity; orange colour stands for sacrifice and white for peace. Each nation has its different flag which symbolizes that country. Colours can represent different things depending on where you live. For example, in Asian countries, red symbolizes happiness, marriage, and prosperity; in some countries the colour of mourning is white. A river in a scene could represent the flow of life, from birth to death. Flowers can symbolize youth or beauty. An ambulance has a symbol of red plus. Temples comprise high tombs. Many political parties have their different symbols. In literature, use of objects, actions, scenes and structures to represent or suggest significant themes and ideas in a literary work is the technique of symbolism. In W. B. Yeats's poetry, there is recurrent use of Troy, the tower and swans. In the poem *In Memory of W. B. Yeats*:

*He is disappeared in the dead of winter,
The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues,*

Here, dead of winter and frozen brooks indicate emotionally frozen human soul. War is another dominant symbol. It is suggested that all wars are ultimately the same and emerge from insecurity and danger. They make us aware of the true human predicament. T. S. Eliot, also being a modern poet used symbols in his poem *The Waste Land* in which he represents death by water.

Symbolism is one of the most common devices used in drama (and in other forms of literature also). The use of symbols may heighten the emotional effect of a situation or a remark; the use of symbols may reveal character; but the use of symbolism always imparts an additional layer of meaning to the writing. While the apparent meaning lies on the surface, the symbolic meaning is often hidden from view because it lies deep. Ibsen makes use of symbolism in *A Doll's House* chiefly as a means of character-revelation.

Shakespeare is also known for using various symbols in his plays as in *Macbeth*, symbol of blood is used recurrently. It also depicts the psychological condition of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. It represents valour, guilt and justice.

5. Allegory

Allegory literally means other reading. In general, the characters in an allegory do not have individual or psychological identity. Instead they are representation of abstract ideas such as pride, humility, and meekness. It is a form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons and actions are equated with the meanings

that lie outside the narrative itself. Reading Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a journey of the humanity to the divine, the pilgrims representing all men. Hence, it is a literary device by which people, objects or events in prose or verse are presented symbolically giving a meaning other than the one actually described. Allegory is often used to convey a moral lesson. It has been used in Dante's *Divina Comedia*, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.

6. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech where animals, ideas and inanimate objects are given animate and human characteristics. This figure of speech makes readers able to visualize the vivid picture of that object: 'The yellow leaves flaunted their colour gaily in the breeze'. Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', includes personification. In a poem of James Stephen, *The Wind*, wind is personified as the poet says:

The wind stood up and gave a shout. He whistled on his two fingers.

No doubt, the wind cannot stand and shout. But the personification presents the wild action of the wind. Thus, personification makes an object lively and leaves a vivid impact.

7. Irony

Irony is a device used to convey a meaning which is the opposite of the apparent meaning. If it arises out of what is said, it is a verbal irony and if it arises out of what is done, it is irony of situation. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* affords several illustrations of the use of verbal irony because the audience knew that Viola is a woman in male disguise and the Duke is unaware of this fact. A similar situation arises in *As You Like It* when Rosalind, disguised as a shepherd, accosts Orlando, her lover, in the forest of Arden and talks to him as if she were a man. Disguise is often a fruitful source of verbal irony. *Macbeth* furnishes instances of the irony of situation in which circumstances convey opposite meanings to the agents on the one hand and the audience on the other. Duncan's visit to Macbeth's castle is one instance. He speaks warmly of the pleasure that it gives him but the audience knows that it means his death at the hands of his host. The 'porter scene' is another instance. He chatters on, drunkenly, as he admits Macduff and Lennox to the castle. Macduff talks lightly to him, while only the audience knows of the lawful discovery that will soon be made. Greek tragedy is full of ironic situations. One famous instance occurs when Oedipus calls down curses on the man who slew his father, King of Thebes. The audience is aware, though Oedipus is not, that Oedipus himself unknowingly committed the crime.

Irony can be comic, tragic or satirical, e.g., Henry Fielding's description of Blifil as 'this worthy young man' (*Tom Jones*), the remark made by Jane Austen's Mr. Bennet about Mr. Collins 'talent of flattering with delicacy' (*Pride and Prejudice*) and Thomas Hardy's portrayal of Jude's death in the middle of student festivities at Christminster (*Jude the Obscure*).

8. Paradox

Paradox is a statement which is self-contradictory and forces the reader to think about other sense or context in which it is true. It was cultivated by seventeenth

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century poets. It is also used to describe an opinion which is contrary to generally accepted idea. In general, a paradox involves a contradiction between the physical or material meaning of words and their spiritual, emotional, or supernatural connotation. Just as a pun is a form of ambiguity that plays on words, a paradox plays on ideas.

For example, Wordsworth says in his *Ode on Intimation of Immortality*, ‘child is the father of man’.

This statement is paradoxical because a child can never be the father but it has a deeper connotation that a child is pure and free from all ill-will and corruption in which a man gets involved as he passes from his journey from childhood to adulthood.

In another example from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Caesar’s speech contains paradox:

Cowards die many times before their deaths.

–Act II, scene ii: line 32

In another example, John Donne makes a plea to God which paradoxically mingles destruction and creation:

*Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend:
That I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.*

Here, paradox compels readers to think differently about the relation of God to men and women. In this it serves as an intellectual function: to adjust the beliefs and values according to which the paradox first appeared contradictory.

Shakespeare in Hamlet says: I must be cruel to be kind.

Paradoxes are commonly used in literature. Consider the ‘rule’ painted on the barn in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*: ‘All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.’ The idea of being ‘more equal’ is paradoxical, but that does not stop Napoleon from using that rule to oppress the other farm animals. A famous example of paradox is *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) by Lewis Carroll.

One should not confuse paradox with oxymoron. An oxymoron, or contradiction in terms, is often a phrase, consisting of two opposite words. Some examples of oxymoron can include ‘sad clown,’ ‘a dark light,’ or ‘jumbo shrimp.’

9. Antithesis

Antithesis is a contrast or opposition either rhetorical or philosophical. It is used to bring rhetorical effect as in *Paradise Lost*, characteristics of Adam and Eve are contrasted by antithesis:

*For contemplation he and valour formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only, she for God in him.*

–Book V, lines 297–299

Antithesis was mainly used by Pope and other eighteenth century poets. It is also a familiar device in prose, as in John Ruskin's sentence, 'Government and cooperation are in all things the laws of life; anarchy and competition the laws of death'. John Dryden's description in *The Hind and the Panther*, 'Too black for heaven, and yet too white for hell'.

Shakespeare's language is filled with antithesis. In *Macbeth* the witches chant 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair'. And later *Macbeth* comments on the occasion, 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'. Foul and fair are two opposites and set against each other.

In antithesis you must 'set the word itself against the word' (*Richard II*) for a variety of different effects. A comparison of two antithetical or opposite thoughts can show a lot to the actor and audience alike. Two opposing ideas in a line can show the scope of thought in a character's mind. Hamlet is contemplating two very serious ideas in the above quotation. Antithesis also very clearly and precisely illustrates the character's meaning through words.

Check Your Progress

1. What is 'alliteration'?
2. Define 'meter'?
3. What kind of methods are used in teaching language?
4. Name the kinds of meter used in English Language.
5. What is an 'internal rhythm'?

1.3 FORMS OF POETRY

There are various forms of poetry that have emerged over a period of time. These forms have undergone a transformation gradually over the years but their essence remains the same.

1.3.1 Ode

The root of the word 'ode' lies in the Greek word 'aeidein' which means 'to sing' or 'to chant'. This form is a part of the lyric poetry tradition. An ode is a poem that has a formal poetic diction, sometimes addressed to an absent person, or an object, and dealing with a subject which is serious in nature.

An ode usually has three segments: strophe, antistrophe, and epode. In the earlier days odes were accompanied by music and dance. The performance involved two choruses or individuals. The first chorus / individual recital or singing of the strophe, followed by the second chorus or individual reciting /singing of the antistrophe and then both together singing the epode. Romantic poets used this lyrical form to express their strongest sentiments.

There are three varieties of odes, distinguished by form and structure: the Pindaric, the Horatian, and the Irregular. The Pindaric ode is named after the classical Greek poet Pindar, who is acknowledged with introducing the ode form. It was performed by a chorus and accompanied by dancers. These performances

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consisted of strophe, antistrophe, and epode. Pindaric odes were performed to commemorate victories related to athletic pursuits. William Wordsworth's poem, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, is an excellent example of a Pindaric ode in English. It begins with a formal opening, the middle segment mirrors the opening and the ending - that is of varying length - is composed with a variety of metrical structures:

*There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;— Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.*

The Horatian ode owes its name to the Roman poet, Horace. It is more informal, less elaborate and more tranquil and meditative in tone than the Pindaric ode. This form is more apt when one is reading or writing for personal pleasure, rather than for theatrical performances. The Horatian ode has a regular pattern of stanza. An example is Allen Tate's poem *Ode to the Confederate Dead*:

*Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones yield their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
To the seasonal eternity of death;
Then driven by the fierce scrutiny
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
They sough the rumour of mortality.*

The third variety of ode, the irregular ode, is formal in manner and has the characteristics of the classical ode in terms of its thematic value. One of the well-known examples in this form is, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* written by John Keats. The other examples of this kind of ode are Robert Lowell's *Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket*, Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, and Robert Creeley's *America*. It is important to mention here that the 'qasida' form found in Persian poetry has similarity with this ode form.

1.3.2 Haiku

A 'haiku' is a very short poem. It consists of only seventeen syllables. Its subject matter revolves around a natural object and the poem's aesthetic appeal is of great importance. In a 'haiku', one does not encounter a distinction between form and content, a feature that is common in western literature. The writer becomes a part of the scene s/he is representing.

According to some experts, the length of a 'haiku' is usually the tenure of a single respiration. For example let's take the 'haiku' below:

*yellow leaves
on branches overhead –
now falling*

These lines narrate the specific moment that captures the fall of leaves from the tree and touching the ground. With the exhaustion of breath the moment has elapsed. This very short form depicts the short-lived momentary experiences of human lives. Hence, the interlinking of form and content in a 'haiku'.

The subject matter in a 'haiku' is mundane and commonplace, something that is perceived by the sensory organs of the author, but it turns out to be an awe-inspiring experience. It usually lacks the general rhetorical devices like rhyming, simile and metaphor. Juxtaposition of two seemingly different ideas is found which have their connection in the essence or theme. A 'haiku' is mostly descriptive - describing something that has caught the poet's fancy, and is not intellectually binding.

In the English literary scenario, poets began to experiment with the 'haiku' from early 1900s. As English is a different language than Japanese and because the contact and interaction with pristine nature is different, that's why the English haiku emerged in its own way. In English, a 'haiku' is usually around ten to fourteen syllables. The English language 'haiku' does not follow the Japanese syllable count.

During the early twentieth century, a number of mainstream poets, like Ezra Pound wrote a five-seven-five syllable form poem which they called 'hokku'. Poets like WH Auden, Donald Hall, Ruth Stone, John Ashbery and others too composed haiku without adhering to the Japanese form, content or subject matter. Richard Wright, the African-American novelist, composed many 'haikus' towards the fag end of his life. The following is an example from his book, *Haiku: This Other World*:

*Whitecaps on the bay:
A broken signboard banging
In the April wind.*

In 1956, the first English-language Haiku Society was founded in America. Robert Spiess is one of the prominent American 'haiku' writers. One of his 'haikus' from *Red Moon Anthology* reads like this:

*an aging willow—
its image unsteady
in the flowing stream*

Some English-language haiku magazines are *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Mayfly*, *The Heron's Nest*, etc. Monoku is a one-line variation of the three-line standard format. One example is:

'pig and i spring rain'

Another example is a 'haiku' of four lines:

*she watches
satisfied after love
he lies
looking up at nothing*

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Some prominent contemporary ‘haiku’ writers in English are Lenard D. Moore, Alan Pizzarelli, Paul Reys et al.

1.3.3 Tanka

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Tanka is a type of Japanese poetry. It is the oldest form of poetry in Japan, having originated in the seventh century. Tanka means “short song”. It is composed of five lines. The first and third line consists of five syllables and the rest of the three lines are of seven syllables. It is a thirty-one syllable composition. One example of Tanka is the poem *To live is to break* written by Ueda Miyoji:

*To live is to break
One’s heart for the sake of love;
A couple of doves,
Beaks touching on their way,
Are stepping out in the sun*

Tanka usually adheres to a 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 syllable count. The Tanka’s varied scope and spectrum of expression made it ideal for communication and became popular in the royal court as well as among the masses. The Japanese Tanka has a resemblance with the English sonnet form in terms of subject matter. It starts off with a serious matter and by the time it reaches the concluding lines there is a transition in the tone.

Lady Akazone Emon and Yosano are a couple of women poets who compose in the Tanka form. *The Tale of Genji* composed by Akiko and Lady Murasaki Shikibu contains over 400 Tanka. In the English language there are a few Tanka writers. Some of them are Amy Lowell, Kenneth Rexroth, Sam Hamill, Cid Corman, and Carolyn Kizer. Some Tanka available in translation are *One Hundred Poems from the Japanese*, *One Hundred More Poems from the Japanese* and *The Ink Dark Moon: Love Poems* by Ono Komachi and Izumi Shikibu, etc. The modern English-language Tanka are quite different in form, technique, and subject matter, in comparison to their Japanese counterparts. They do not follow any rigid rules, even composing Tanka in free-verse.

The following Tanka written by Ruby Spriggs deals with traditional subject matters of love, sorrow, nature etc.

*a sudden loud noise
all the pigeons of Venice
at once fill the sky
that is how it felt when your hand
accidentally touched mine*

Let us consider another Tanka, Geraldine Clinton Little’s poem:

*ah, summer, summer,
how quickly you fade. I cut
rusted zinnias;
place them on a glassed table-
top, as if time could double*

This Tanka is more complicated in structure and has three parts and makes use of enjambment. Robert Kusch’s Tanka is more minimalist in approach:

*Lightning on
the horizon
my child
takes a huge
bite from a pear*

Poetry and Its Forms

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1.3.4 Jintishi

In Chinese language the word ‘jintishi’ means ‘modern-style poetry’. But one can trace back the usage of this form of poetry to 222-589 A.D. This poetic form is based on a series of set tonal arrangements which are modelled on the four tones existing in classical Chinese language. Every couplet consists of the level, rising, falling and entering tones. There exists a predominant grammatical relationship among the words used in the poem.

The two basic varieties of ‘jintishi’ are *lüshi* meaning ‘regulated verse’, and *jueju* meaning ‘truncated verse’. *Lüshi* can be further sub-categorised into two forms:

- *Wülü* – is an eight-line poem with five characters in each line.
- *Qülü* – is an eight-line poem with seven characters to in each line.

Jueju can also be sub-categorised into the following two forms:

- *Wujue* – is a four-line poem with five characters in each line.
- *Qijue*—is a four-line poem with seven characters in each line.

The poems incorporate vibrant poetic diction that is full of allusion ranging from the mundane to history and politics. One of the greatest writers of this form was Du Fu, who wrote during the eighth century.

1.3.5 Ghazal

A ‘ghazal’ is a form of poetry which is found in the verses of Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages. It is usually composed of five to fifteen rhyming couplets. There is a refrain at the end of every second line. Each couplet is complete in itself. It is a composite whole in terms of subject matter and thought. A ‘ghazal’ usually deals with love or God. The last couplet usually bears the name of the poet who has composed the ‘ghazal’. The form is ancient, originating in sixth century Arabic verse. In its style and content it is a genre, which has proved capable of an extraordinary variety of expression around its central themes of love and separation. It is one of the principal poetic forms which the Indo-Perso-Arabic civilisation offered to the eastern Islamic world. The ghazal spread into South Asia in the 12th century under the influence of the new Islamic Sultanate courts and Sufi mystics. Although the ghazal is most prominently a form of Urdu poetry, today it is found in the poetry of many languages of Indian sub-continent.

1.3.6 Rubai

Rubai is also referred as Rubaiyat in Urdu-Persian poetic form. Each stanza of the ‘rubai’ is of four lines. And every first, second and fourth line rhymes. The first three lines contain all the ornamentations and poetic devices and the fourth line completes the meaning and the poem. In an ‘Interlocking Rubaiyat’, the third line

of each stanza rhymes with the first, second and fourth line of the next stanza. *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* is one of the most popular rubaiyats.

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Check Your Progress

6. What syllable count does a 'Tanka' adhere to?
7. Name one of the greatest writers of Jintishi.
8. What is an 'ode'?
9. What are the three main segments of an ode?
10. What is a 'Haiku'?

1.4 GENRES OF POETRY

A poetic genre is a classification of poetry based on the subject matter, style, or other broader literary characteristics. Described below are some common genres of poetry.

1.4.1 Narrative Poetry

A narrative is a story and any poem that tells a story is called 'narrative' poetry. Like every story, a narrative poem has a beginning providing the background of the story, a middle that narrates the course of action and a conclusion that tells how the story ends. Poems of this genre involve events, characters and actions.

Narrative poetry is the oldest form of poetry, having its origin in oral history. Before the advent of paper and the art of writing, people used to recall and narrate important events and lives of historical figures through songs. The incorporation of music, rhyme and rhythm into the narrative made it easier to recall; thus, laying the foundation for narrative poetry.

Narrative poems may have many characters but there are many verses which have only one character. There are some poems where the setting is not directly or clearly laid down, but it is just hinted upon. It might not always be related to external agencies and the focus can well be on internal dilemmas. Poems of this genre include epics, ballads, idylls and romances.

An 'epic' is a long narrative poem which talks at length about some serious heroic achievement which is important from the perspective of culture or state. For example the epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* - both composed by Homer - are based on Greek mythology. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* written by Valmiki and Veda Vyasa respectively hold a significant value in the Indian context. The oldest known surviving epic is the old English text *Beowulf*. Virgil, Dante Alighieri, John Milton, Giovanni Boccaccio are some of the well-known epic writers. One can find epics written in modern times as well, like, *Genesis: An Epic Poem* by Frederic Turner (1988), *Omeros* by Derek Walcott (1990), *The Descent of Alette* by Alice Notley (1996).

A 'ballad' is an orally transmitted song which narrates a story. It is mostly restricted to folk people who are literate or semi-literate. Though one can trace back the use of ballads to The Middle Ages, yet the first attempt to record it in

written and preserve it came in as late as the eighteenth century in England with Thomas Percy publishing his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). The literary ballad is also a form of song narrative but it is influenced by the traditional ballad in form, language and essence. Some popular examples include ST Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; Rudyard Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* and Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Goal*. With the advent of the twentieth century, ballad lost its appeal but made its way into the music scenario through Jazz, Blues, Pop and Rock in the form of slow, sentimental love songs. Johnny Green's *Body and Soul*, Cole Porter's *Every Time We Say Goodbye* and the Beatles *The Ballad of John and Yoko* belong to this category.

In subject matter and treatment idyll are completely different from epics. Idylls are short pastoral poems dealing with the regular and mundane life of the country folk or the peasants.

Romance is a form of narrative that was considered a part of the high culture of Medieval and Early Modern Europe. They depict tales of the aristocratic, chivalrous, and adventurous knights who go on quests. In most of these poems the Arthurian legends have been used.

Some narrative poetry like Robert Browning's *The King and the Book* is a verse novel. It is a long narrative of 21,000 lines containing a lot of drama. MH Abrams in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* identifies 'epic' or 'heroic poem' as a work which is a '... long verse narrative on a serious subject told in formal and elevated style and centred on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or ... the human race'.

Epics can be classified into:

- (a) **Traditional epics:** These are also known as "primary epics" or 'folk epics'. Traditional epics are not credited to any specific author(s) because they are just a written version of what has been orally passed down to generations. They were recorded in writing form centuries after they originated and became popular in oral culture, an example being the old English epic *Beowulf* or the Greek epic *Iliad*.

During their original composition they were designed to be crooned along with music. The opening lines of *Iliad* by Homer says:

—sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles...

The divine, quasi-divine and other non-earthly elements reflect an inherent interest in human life. As Homer inquires in the *Iliad* (line 9):

Which of the gods incited these two men to fight?

These writings are always of national importance, highlighting a significant national figure or an incident and tend to have a bias towards the culture they represent. They are based on myth, history, legend, folk tale and carry with them values for society.

In *Turbulent Times* there is a general lack of stability on the social and political fronts, a struggle for survival continues and a war is fought in order to restore peace and order. *Song of Roland* or *La Chanson de Roland* in old French, narrates the story of the Muslim invasion of

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Europe and epicentre of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is the Trojan War.

(b) Literary Epics: The scholarships of these epics are attributed to one author, like Virgil's *Aecia* in Latin or John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) in English.

Apart from these elementary differences both forms of epic follow the same conventions. They are as follows:

- The central theme is always serious.
- The language used is often oratorical in style and decorous. For example, Achilles is addressed as "Son of Peleus".
- The epic hero is always given a demigod stature; hence attaining vital significance and importance. Achilles was born to the sea-nymph Thetis. Goddess Aphrodite was the mother of Aeneas.
- The geographical setting of an epic always covers a large canvas. For example, in the *Paradise Lost* the story involves Heaven, Earth and Hell.
- Gods and supernatural elements are active participants in the progression of events. Typically, there are two simultaneous plots. The chief characters are epitomes of ideal human behaviour and conduct. Beowulf represented selflessness; Odysseus stands for endurance; Achilles possesses virtues and Adam advocates Christian love.
- The consequences of the performance of the hero have an effect on a large number of people and at times an entire race. For example, the future of the human race is under threat in *The Paradise Lost*.
- The protagonist's quest for the goal makes him undertake a very difficult journey, sometimes making him go through the underworld: both Aeneas and Odysseus undertake journeys to the realm of death.
- The epics start 'in media res' that is, in the middle of the action. The circumstances leading to the current course of action is conveyed through flashbacks.
- The epic usually employs the technique of invoking a muse at the very beginning of the poem and asking for her blessings to carry forward creativity with perfection. Milton in his *Paradise Lost* has used three invocations each at the starting of Book I, III and IX.
- The action performed by the hero is so powerful and extraordinary that it is difficult for an ordinary human being to undertake and perform it, for example, Achilles' achievements in the Trojan War.
- Every epic employs a number of extended similes, known as epic similes, to produce a greater effect in the storytelling.

- Epics usually contain a catalogue of characters which has figures from royalty and warrior groups and is devoid of commoners.
- Epic is usually an act in a mythical past whose chronological sequence of events is more or less known by everyone.

Apart from this, the term ‘epic’ has been applied to those works which invoke the spirit of a classical epic but deviate in many ways, like Dante’s *Divine Comedy*; Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* and Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) chronicles the events of a day in an ordinary man’s life but it is fashioned after Homer’s *Odyssey*, thus gaining an epic status. The term and concept of bourgeois epic was introduced by George Lukas. He considered any novel which depicted the capitalist life and society encompassing all aspects of capitalist world as a ‘bourgeois epic’. ‘Mock epic’ or ‘Mode heroic’ is a form of satire. It uses the elevated ground and the style of a classical epic but it has a trivial subject matter as its central theme. This form gained popularity in England during the neo-classical period. Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, which narrates the cutting of Miss Arabella Fermor’s lock of hair by Lord Petre without her permission is an example of mock-heroic poem.

The term ‘epic’ finds its reflection in cinema as well. In the context of cinema, a film is categorised as ‘epic’ if it has explored the multiple facets of human existence in a magnificent and ambitious drama. There are various kinds of epic sub-genres in movies: historical epics, religious epics, romantic epics, war epics, crime epics, etc. *Cabiria* (1914), *Gone With The Wind* (1939), *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), *The Godfather* (1972), *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), *Titanic* (1997), and *Jodhaa Akbar* (2008) are some notable films in the epic genre.

1.4.2 Dramatic Poetry

Dramatic poetry uses the verse form to narrate the story of an individual or elaborate some situation. It can also be described as a drama written in poetry form where the characters involved carry on verbal exchanges in verse and their conversations rhyme unlike a normal discourse, which is prosaic.

Dramatic poetry appears in various forms like Poetic Drama, Closet Drama, Dramatic Monologue, etc. Poetic Drama is also referred to as Verse Drama. This form is very old. The ancient dramas composed in both European and non-European cultures used verse as the medium to compose and communicate drama. Tragedies were mostly composed in verse form starting from Greek tragedies and continuing even at the time of Shakespeare; long after prose had made itself popular and common. Eventually prose became the vehicle for less serious compositions like comedies, and as a symbol of low life, as in Shakespeare’s work.

Even during the seventeenth century domestic tragedies like *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608) or *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (1603) by Thomas Heywood were composed in blank verse. But George Lillo’s middle-class tragedy written in prose - *The London Merchant or The History of George Barnwell* - turned out to be a turning point, bringing in a departure and a warning signal for the verse dramas which were still being composed by Lillo’s contemporaries like Thomson (*Sophonisba*, 1730) or Johnson (*Irene*, 1749).

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Eventually prose, the language of the masses, took over as the language of plays. Some verse dramas, like Percy Shelley's *The Cenci* (1886), Tennyson's *Becket* (1893) etc. stirred some interest, but the public's interest was gradually being captivated by prose dramatists like Sheridan Knowles. Stephen Philips was probably the last major nineteenth-century verse dramatist who tried to mesmerise the public with his blank-verse poetic dramas.

In the early phase of the twentieth century, poetic drama revived itself after coming in contact with the French movements of 'Symbolism' and 'Realism' and the Japanese 'No Plays'. JM Synge and Sean O' Casey, the prominent figures of Irish literary revival, wrote plays whose language was prose but had poetic appeal to them and followed a coherent dramatic structure. In the English literary scenario, *The Tragedy of Non* (1908) by John Marefield Flecher's *Hassan* (1923) and Gordon Bottomley's *Gruach* (1923) saw a revival in poetic drama. But it is TS Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) which is the most prominent example of poetic drama of the twentieth century employing free verse and the concept of symbolism. WH Auden and Christopher Isherwood incorporated criticism, humour and satire in their works.

William Vaughan Moody and Maxwell Anderson tried to incorporate poetic drama into the American stage but they did not gain much popularity. There were a few achievements at the individual level, for example when Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* (1953) was broadcast on radio. The Poets Theatre was founded in 1951 in Cambridge and it became the flagship organisation to commission and produce poetic dramas. Its founder Richard Eberhart successfully staged his poetic drama under this banner, *The Apparition* (1951) and *Visionary Farm* (1952). The 1950s and 1960s saw performances of adaptations of Anouilh and Giraudoux. Samuel Beckett and Ionesco were well-received - critically and commercially - both in the UK and the US and they incorporated surrealism into their poetic dramas. But for the last few years, poetic dramas have been more synonymous with experimental dramas.

The other form of dramatic poetry is 'closet drama'. These are also dramas in verse but meant to be read rather than acted or performed on stage and among the classical writers, Seneca's works are in this category. In the English literary scenario, closet dramas were popular in the nineteenth century. There was a conscious attempt made by the poets of the period to revive the dramatic standards because melodrama and burlesque had populated the stage. Attempts were made by Byron in *Manfred* 1817, and by Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound*, which was based on the Greek tragedy of Prometheus.

Another form of dramatic verse is the 'dramatic monologue'. Dramatic monologue is a lyric poem in which only one person speaks (hence, monologue) but it is implied that he is addressing his speech to a single person or many people around him who is /are silent listeners. As the protagonist speaks, he unfolds distinctive characteristic features of his own and provides the reader with an insight to judge him on certain parameters. Every dramatic monologue opens at a crucial juncture of the narrative. For example, in *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* the Bishop is waiting for his impending death as he unfolds his past secrets. In *May's Last Duchess* the Duke reveals his autocratic nature while narrating his 'last duckers'

to the person who has come with a proposal for his second wife. But in *Caliban Upon Setabos* there is no listener but the character is revealed through the monologue and the poem has a dramatic opening. Thus, the listener can be optional but the rest of the features are mandatory for a dramatic monologue. MH Abrahams points out that although Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* has a few salient features of a dramatic monologue: a silent listener, an opening at an important juncture – yet it is not one, because the poet and the speaker are the same person and the monologue does not focus only on the speaker's 'temperament' but moves around his experiences, memories, reflections, etc.

Ulysses (1842) by Lord Tennyson has the distinction of being the first proper dramatic monologue. The other prominent writers of this form are Mathew Arnold (*Dover Beach*), Robert Browning (*Men and Women*), DG Roselti (*The Blessed Damozel*), Robert Frost, Ezra Pound and TS Eliot.

1.4.3 Satirical Poetry

Verse can be used for attacking a person or idea in the form of satire. The word 'satire' is derived from the Latin 'satira', meaning 'medley'. The Oxford English Dictionary defines satire as ... 'a poem or in modern use sometimes a prose composition, in which prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule'.

Satire has permeated the literary scene since time immemorial. In the Classical age, Aristophanes, the dramatist, criticised Socrates and the judicial system of Athens in his *The Clouds* (423 BC) and *The Wasps* (422 BC). The Roman poets Horace and Juvenal became inspirations for their successors, leading to the establishment of two distinct forms of satire – Horatian satire and Juvenalian satire. Horatian satire is dignified and polished in its presentation whereas Juvenalian satire is crude and scathing.

The tradition of satire in English literature was introduced by Chaucer. Influenced by Chaucer many wrote poets satirical poems: John Skelton (1460-1529) who was the tutor of Henry VIII, wrote *The Bowge of Courte* (1498). It was a satire on the functioning of the court of Henry VII. In this work the poet used the octosyllabic meter.

During the Elizabethan period a few notable poets like George Gascoigne wrote satirical verse. Most of the other satirists like George Gascoigne, David Lodge, and Joseph Hall experimented with prose forms. But satire form reached its zenith in the seventeenth and eighteenth century England. Satires were composed in both prose and verse during this period. Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding, Richard Steel, John Wilmot, John Dryden and Alexander Pope were significant contributors in English while Voltaire and Moliere wrote in French. John Dryden, the first poet Laureate of England, wrote his satirical poem *Mac Flecknoe* in 1682. The subject matter was directed towards Thomas Shadwell, his political rival, a member of the Whig Party. Dryden had subtitled the poem as *A Satire on the True Blue Protestant Poet, TS*.

Alexander Pope's first major attempt in satirical poetry took the shape of *An Essay in Criticism*, first published in 1711. Though it is an essay, it is written in verse form. It is written in a heroic couplet; a form of rhyme used in epics, having lines in iambic pentameter. Pope's criticism is directed less towards the

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authors and more towards the critics. The other non-English poets who earned fame as great satirical poets are Ignacy Krasicki and Manuel Maria Barbosa du Bocage, the latter popularly known as Bocage.

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1.4.4 Lyric Poetry

In Greece during ancient period any poem which was accompanied by a lyre (a musical instrument) was called a Lyric. Lyric is a form of poetry that addresses emotional and personal matters. Basically, it is an umbrella term for any poem which is short and conveys personal feelings opinions has a single speaker and possesses a song like quality. It could be elegy, ode, sonnet song or hymn.

Lyrics in Latin literature are found as early as in first century BC by Catullus and Horace. In the Middle Ages in England 'lyric' poetry manifested itself through folk songs, hymns (a lyric with religious subject), songs of the troubadours (the poet and musicians of aristocratic origin in France). Lyric found its existence in other non-English counter parts of the globe.

'Eihazal' originated in Persia around tenth century. Thematically, this poetic form always centres on love and contains couplets. Omar Khayyam, Amir Khusrau, and Alisher Navoi are proponents of this form. In China, 'sanqu' poetry, written in regional dialects gained prominence. Petrarch developed sonnet style in Italy which was later used by many writers. The word 'sonnet' in Italian means 'little song', a fourteen line rhyming song following the iambic pentameter. Petrarchan sonnet is divided into two sections an 'octet' (first eight lines) and a 'sestet' (last six lines). 'Bhajan' in the Indian context refers to short religious poems; some exponents of these writings were Tulsidas, Kabir, and Soordas.

Lyric poem in sixteenth century gained prominence through sonnets composed by Sir Philip Sydney and Shakespeare. The early Romantics as well as the late Romantics like Wordsworth, Shelly, Byron, and Keats also used this form in various experimental ways. Lord Tennyson was another major poet during the Victorian era. His poetry collection like *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) was well appreciated. *In Memorium* (1850) and *Maud* (1855) both written by Tennyson contains 133 and 27 lyrics respectively. There have been a few experiments with this genre in the modern period as well.

1.4.5 Prose Poetry

Prose poetry is a poem written as prose. It is a mixed genre that possesses the qualities of both prose and poetry. It is different from the micro-fiction or very short story. Many critics point out that it qualifies as poetry because of its succinct and terse length, use of metaphor, and special attention given in selecting language.

In the west, prose poetry originated in early nineteenth-century France. Some prominent names in this form are Aloysius Bertrand (*Gespard de la Nuit* in 1842), Charles Baudelaire (*Petis Poemes en Prose*, 1869) Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé et al. This genre latter gained popularity among writers of other parts of the world like English (Oscar Wilde, TS Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, Allen Ginsberg, Seamus Heaney, Russell Edson, Charles Simic, Robert Bly, James Wright); French (Francis Ponge); Polish (Boleslaw Prus); Portuguese (Fernando Pessoa, Mário Cesariny, Mário De Sá-Carneiro, Eugénio

de Andrade, Al Berto, Alexandre O'Neill, José Saramago, António Lobo Antunes); Spanish (Octavio Paz, Ángel Crespo); Russian; and Japanese. Examples of prose poetry can be found in the King James' version of the *Bible* in the *Book of Psalms*. In 1988 came out the long work written by Heathcote Williams called *Whale Nation* that is a prose poem and revolves around the celebration of whale life. The following is an example of a prose poem:

The Port

A Port is a delightful place of rest for a soul weary of life's battles. The vastness of the sky, the mobile architecture of the clouds, the changing coloration of the sea, the twinkling of the lights, are a prism marvelously fit to amuse the eyes without ever tiring them. The slender shapes of the ships with their complicated rigging, to which the surge lends harmonious oscillations, serve to sustain within the soul the taste for rhythm and beauty. Also, and above all, for the man who of mysterious and aristocratic pleasure in contemplating, while lying on the belvedere or resting his elbows on the jetty-head, all these movements of men who are leaving and men who are returning, of those who still have the strength to will, the desire to travel or to enrich themselves.

- Charles Baudelaire

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Check Your Progress

11. What is dramatic poetry?
12. Where did prose poetry originate?
13. Who are the proponents of the form, 'Eihazal'?
14. What is the difference between Horatian satire and Juvenalian satire?
15. Define an 'epic'.
16. What is lyric poetry?

1.5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Alliteration is the repetition of the same letter at the beginning of consecutively following words or of words occurring at short intervals.
2. Meter is the definite distribution of syllables that produces a harmonious effect.
3. Drilling and demonstration are the methods used in teaching language.
4. The kinds of meter used in English Language are the following:
 - Trochaic
 - Iambic
 - Spondee
 - Pyrrhic
 - Dactyl
 - Anapestic
 - Amphibrach

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5. Internal rhyme is also known as ‘middle rhyme’. As the name suggests, it occurs in the middle of a line. The rhyming can take place among words within the line, or with a word that is part of the line and a word that is placed at the end of the line.
6. Tanka usually adheres to a 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 syllable count.
7. One of the greatest writers of Jintishi form was Du Fu, who wrote during the eighth century.
8. An ode is a poem that has a formal poetic diction, sometimes addressed to an absent person, and deals with a subject which is serious in nature.
9. The three main segments of an ode are strophe, antistrophe and epode.
10. A ‘haiku’ is a very short poem. It consists of only seventeen syllables. Its subject matter revolves around a natural object and the poem’s aesthetic appeal is of great importance.
11. Dramatic poetry is any poetry that uses the verse form to narrate the story of an individual or elaborate some situation.
12. Prose poetry originated in early nineteenth-century France.
13. Omar Khayyam, Amir Khusrau, and Alisher Navoi are proponents of the form, ‘Eihazal’
14. Horatian satire is dignified and polished in its presentation whereas Juvenalian satire is crude and scathing.
15. An ‘epic’ is a long narrative poem which talks at length about some serious heroic achievement which is important from the perspective of culture or state. For example the epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* - both composed by Homer - are based on Greek mythology.
16. Lyric is a form of poetry that addresses emotional and personal matters. Basically, it is an umbrella term for any poem which is short and conveys personal feelings opinions has a single speaker and possesses a song like quality.

1.6 SUMMARY

- In poetry, prosody is anything that deals with the study of the meter, rhythm, inflection and modulation of tone.
- Alliteration is the repetition of the same letter at the beginning of consecutively following words or words occurring at short intervals.
- Rhythm is the lyrical progression or the calculated movement of language or sound. It is important for both prose and poetry. It manifests itself in the harmonic appearances of accents and halts.
- Meter is the definite distribution of syllables in order to produce a harmonious effect. According to the western tradition, meter is the metrical foot and the number of feet appearing in each line.

- In general terms, ‘rhyme’ refers to the similar sounds produced by the words at the end of a line in poetry.
- Poetic diction describes the manner in which language is used in poetry. It is a method used in teaching language. This technique relies on repeated training or constant oral practice so that one can perfect the use of the specific language being learnt.
- Ode is a part of the lyric poetry tradition. An ode is a poem that has a formal poetic diction, sometimes addressed to an absent person, or an object, and dealing with a subject which is serious in nature.
- Lyric is a form of poetry that addresses emotional and personal matters. A haiku is a very short poem. It consists of only seventeen syllables. Its subject matter revolves around a natural object and the poem’s aesthetic appeal is of great importance.
- Tanka is a type of Japanese poetry. It is the oldest form of poetry in Japan, having originated in the seventh century. Tanka means “short song”. It is composed of five lines.
- In Chinese language the word, jintishi, means ‘modern-style poetry’. This poetic form is based on a series of set tonal arrangements which are modelled on the four tones in classical Chinese language.
- A ghazal is a form of poetry which is found in the verses of Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages. It is usually composed of five to fifteen rhyming couplets. There is a refrain at the end of every second line.
- Rubai is an Urdu-Persian poetic form. Each stanza of the ‘rubai’ is of four lines, with every first, second and fourth lines rhyming.
- Apart from ‘forms’, poetry also has many different ‘genres’. A poetic genre is a classification of poetry based on the subject matter, style, or other broader literary characteristics.
- A narrative is a story and any poem that tells a story is called ‘narrative’ poetry. Poems of this genre involve events, characters and actions. Narrative poetry is the oldest form of poetry, having its origin in oral history.
- Dramatic poetry uses the verse form to narrate the story of an individual or elaborate some situation. It can also be described as a drama written in poetry form where the characters involved carry on verbal exchanges in verse and their conversations rhyme unlike a normal discourse, which is prosaic.
- Satirical poetry is used for attacking a person or idea in the form of satire. Lyric Poetry is an umbrella term for any poem which is short and conveys personal feelings opinions has a single speaker and possesses a song like quality. It could be elegy, ode, sonnet song or hymn.
- Prose poetry is a poem written as prose. It is a mixed genre that possesses the qualities of both prose and poetry. The birthplace of prose poetry is nineteenth-century France.

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1.7 KEY TERMS

- **Trochaic tetrameter:** Trochaic tetrameter is a meter in poetry. It refers to a line of four trochaic feet. The word “tetrameter” simply means that the poem has four trochees. A trochee is a long syllable, or stressed syllable, followed by a short, or unstressed, one.
- **Iambic:** An iamb is a literary device that can be defined as a foot containing unaccented and short syllables, followed by a long and accented syllable in a single line of a poem (unstressed/stressed syllables).
- **Spondee:** A spondee is a metrical foot consisting of two long syllables, as determined by syllable weight in classical meters, or two stressed syllables in modern meters.

1.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define the term 'poetic diction'.
2. Give examples of the use of figurative and connotative devices in English Language.
3. What is narrative poetry?
4. Write a short note on prose poetry.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the components of poetry. Give examples in support of your answer.
2. Evaluate the various forms of poetry.
3. Differentiate between dramatic poetry and satirical poetry.

1.9 FURTHER READING

O'Neill, M. 2010. *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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UNIT 2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND JOHN MILTON

William Shakespeare
and John Milton

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Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 William Shakespeare (1564–1616)
 - 2.2.1 Characteristic Features of Shakespeare’s Sonnets
 - 2.2.2 Themes in Shakespearean Sonnets
 - 2.2.3 Sonnet 3: *Look in Thy Glass*
 - 2.2.4 Sonnet 26: *Lord of My Love*
 - 2.2.5 Sonnet 18: *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day*
 - 2.2.6 Sonnet 116: *Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds*
- 2.3 John Milton (1608-1674)
 - 2.3.1 Milton’s Works
 - 2.3.2 Milton’s Poetical Prowess
 - 2.3.3 Political and Social Background
 - 2.3.4 Sonnet: *On His Blindness*
 - 2.3.5 *On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three*
- 2.4 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Key Terms
- 2.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the most influential movements, the Renaissance was a West European phenomenon which began in 1300. Originating in Italy, it quickly spread to Germany, France and England. The movement was not merely literary. It signified an overall change in culture and civilization, marking an end to the civilization and culture of the Middle Ages. Several reasons are attributed to the rise of the movement of Renaissance. One of the major factors responsible for the rise of the Renaissance is the increased interaction between different cultures and societies of those times. The society of the Middle Ages was characterized by feudalism and deep faith in Christianity. The second reason attributed to the rise of Renaissance is the advent of the crusades. The crusades brought about significant impact on the society of the time. One such impact was that the different societies and groups of the time started interacting more with each other. For instance, the crusades caused the religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam to clash.

Another significant reason responsible for the rise of the Renaissance was the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman texts and notions by the European thinkers.

The term Renaissance literally and etymologically means, a rebirth, without implying previous death. It was the revival of classical learning, art and literature, which marked the beginning of this movement. Although the Renaissance Movement

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began in Europe around the middle of the 14th century, in England it got established in the early 16th century and flowered during the middle and later quarters of the century, giving rise to unparalleled production of lasting drama, poetry, prose and fiction.

The term Renaissance is traditionally applied to the rise of the spirit of religious and scientific inquiry, and the transition from medieval to modern methods of study and thought. It was marked by a revival of classical learning and wisdom after a long period of cultural decline and stagnation. Thus, the term, Renaissance, is applied to the revival of art resulting from the rediscovery and imitation of classical models.

Some of the characteristics of Renaissance include the following:

- **Invention of printing:** The contemporaneous discovery of the art of printing by movable type (1438-1450) as well as new methods of manufacturing paper, coming so opportunely, disseminated the new learning all over Europe. For the first time, it made the *litterateur* independent of patrons.
- **Humanism:** Humanism strictly applies to the revival of interest in the classic literature of Greece and Rome. It put emphasis upon the worldliness of this life, not upon the otherworldliness of the life to come; it aimed to recapture an appreciation of classical antiquity by using the literate or humane studies. It aimed at liberating the free human personality.

The humanist aspect of the Renaissance introduced a wide range of ideas and themes in the literature of its time. Renaissance humanists such as Petrarch and Erasmus advocated the view that citizens should be educated on topics such as grammar, history, poetry and philosophy which would encourage the citizens to participate in the social and political life of the society. *Handbook of the Christian Soldier* (1503) written by Erasmus appealed to the educated men and women to become acquainted with the changes taking place in the society of the times.

- **The Copernican system:** Nikolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), a Polish astronomer, published his *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, the first work to draw attention to the fact that the earth and other planets move round the sun, which is at the center of our solar system. He upset the long held traditional theological and scientific beliefs, for his theory made the earth merely 'a restless midge hurtling through space', and man but 'an atom in the scheme of things'.
- **Fall of Constantinople:** Constantinople was captured by the Turks in 1453. Many Greek scholars, among whom were Demetrius Chalcondyles, Constantine Lascars and Andreas Johannes Lascars, found shelter in Italy. It is a mistake, however, to believe that the revival of the study of Greek in the west dated from the fall, for at least a half dozen Greek scholars had come to Italy before that date.
- **The Revolt against authority:** The Reformation was a logical result of the questioning spirit of the Renaissance, which got bored in the

dogmatic and repressive practice of the Church. The chief issue was the denial of the authority of a universal church and a reliance on the dictates of the individual conscience. In 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 ‘Theses’. He intended to highlight the corruption rampant in the selling of indulgences. Indulgences were being sold with the objective of reducing time which the departed souls would have to spend in purgatory. Luther’s actions are largely believed to have heralded Protestant Reformation. Luther was assisted by John Calvin and others in forming the group of Protestantism. Hence, it can be understood that Protestantism emerged from the division with Roman Catholicism during the Reformation in the 16th century.

The English Renaissance was largely literary and achieved its finest expression in the Elizabethan drama, which began to excel only in the last decade of the 16th century and reached its height in the first 15 years of the 17th century; its finest exponents were Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare.

Non-dramatic poetry was also extremely rich, and reached its peak in the same period in the work of Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, Shakespeare and John Donne, but it is best portrayed in the most ambitious project, (John Milton’s epic *Paradise lost*), which was published as late as 1667. Native English prose shaped itself more slowly than poetry. More wrote his *Utopia* in Latin, which was the vehicle of some other writers as well, including Francis Bacon owing to its advantages (for international circulation) over English at a time when the latter was little learned in other countries. Nonetheless, English prose developed with vigor in the writings of native English writers such as Roger Ascham, Thomas North, Richard Hooker, Francis Bacon, and in the translations of the Bible.

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2.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the age of Shakespeare and Milton
- Describe the life of Shakespeare and Milton
- Discuss the works of Shakespeare and Milton

2.2 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

John Shakespeare, the father of William Shakespeare was a man of meagre means. But his fortune turned in 1557 after he married Mary Arden, the daughter of a prosperous farmer, and earned a house, fifty acres of land and money in the form of dowry. In 1564, William Shakespeare was born to John and Mary Shakespeare. Nothing is much known about Shakespeare’s early life until 1582 when, as records suggest, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, daughter of Richard Hathaway. The date on Anne’s tombstone indicates that she was older to the poet by eight years.

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In 1593 *Venus and Adonis* was published; it was dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. But the dedication does not imply any connection between the poet and the patron. *The Rape of Lucrece* was published in 1594 again dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, indicating that he first achieved his literary distinction through his references. By 1594-5, he was already a part of Lord Chamberlain's Company as an actor. In the following years, Shakespeare's name is found registered in some financial ambiguities. But by 1598, Shakespeare seems to have emerged successfully in the professional front as his quarto editions of *Richard II* and *Love's Labour's Lost* appear that year and there is mention of his acting in Ben Jonson's works attached to *Every Man in His Humour*.

In the meantime, Shakespeare's reputation as a playwright was increasing so much so that publishers used his name in the first page of the books which was not written by him or were plagiarised texts. In contemporary literature, references to his works are abundant. John Webster, in the acknowledgement to *The White Devil* in 1612, has shown his gratitude to his predecessors and a few contemporary artists including Shakespeare. Shakespeare's poems earned him well but probably not the plays because a playwright, in those days, gave up all rights of his work by selling his plays to the manager or the company. His investment in real estate in Stratford and London brought him substantial fortune.

With the accession of James I after the death of Queen Elizabeth, his patronizing attitude and inclination towards art and culture turned out to be prosperous for Shakespeare as well as Lord Chamberlain's Company. The Revels Accounts of the Company's identify Shakespeare as one of the prominent actors. The recognition ushered by the court added to Shakespeare's fame. Jonson mentions of Shakespeare playing a role in *Sejanus* in 1603. But later his name does not appear among actors suggesting that sometime after Queen Elizabeth's death he gave up acting. Shakespeare died in April 1616. Seven years after his death, Heming and Condell, his former colleagues from the theatre, collected and published the First Folio consisting of thirty-six plays of Shakespeare.

2.2.1 Characteristics of the Sonnets

'Sonnet' is an abbreviation of the Italian sonetto ('little song') recited to the sound of a musical instrument. It is a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter. There are three types of sonnets. Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) popularized the sonnet in England and gave rise to many imitations. By the time Shakespeare came to compose his sonnets, an anti-Petrarchan mode of writing sonnets that satirized or exploited traditional motifs and styles had also developed.

His sonnets, numbering 154 in all, are Shakespeare's most popular works and were probably composed over an extended period from 1592 to 1598. It is very likely that some of them were in circulation in manuscript form as early as 1598. They were first published in quarto form in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe along with *The Passionate Pilgrim*. They are dedicated to an anonymous W. H. The general consensus is that this W. H. is William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke. This argument gets bolstered by the fact that Shakespeare's First Folio (1623) was also dedicated to him.

One of the distinctive traits of Shakespearean sonnets is the use of syntax,

rhetorical devices and diction. Shakespeare tries to bring about multiple meanings through the words and phrases used by him. He has also experimented with the structure of the sonnets as well. It is to be noted that as per the Petrarchan tradition, not all sonnets end with a conclusion or resolution of the prevalent theme in the sonnet.

Language has been used by Shakespeare to associate the mundane with something extraordinary. His use of language is beyond expression and short of words. The kind of language used in the sonnets is such that it transforms the situation into something else. The first few sonnets are directed at the young man. They have been labeled homoerotic, but they serve another purpose. They throw into the spotlight the tenuous nature of the actor-poet and the patron-aristocrat relationship through hate per formative use of language.

2.2.2 Themes in Shakespearean Sonnets

Love and beauty, time and mutability are the general themes evident in Shakespearean sonnets. His treatment of these themes is quite different from other writers. In a love poem, Shakespeare praises a young man rather than a maiden. He presents the maiden as not so beautiful but possessing a questionable virtue. Critics have discussed Shakespeare's paradoxical representation of love in the sonnets and that Shakespeare has also tried to immortalize the young man's beauty by defying destructive nature of time. Shakespeare's sonnets did not resemble anything that was written in the early 1600s. It was his choice to write on a young man than writing about a beautiful lady.

Few critics today read the sonnets as personal allegory. Indeed, most commentators assert that speculation about what these verses may imply about Shakespeare's life, morals and sexuality is a useless exercise. The speaker is as closely identified with each reader as he is with the writer who created him.

The sonnets give deep information about self-consciousness of the player-poet of his lowly status. Despite these drawbacks, the poet as a player dramatist has been able to bring to the poet's task an extraordinarily developed sense of language as a performative force. Shakespeare's dramatic art made possible the extraordinary uses of language in the sonnets.

Shakespeare's role as a man of the theatre thus conditions his sonnets in both sociological and aesthetic sense. They are products of a powerful hand steeped in the aesthetic practice of the stage, but they are also marked by the perceived social inferiority of that practice.

2.2.3 Sonnet 3: *Look in Thy Glass*

*Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form another,
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.
For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond will be the tomb
Of his self-love, to stop posterity?*

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*Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime;
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
But if thou live rememb' red not to be,
Die single, and thine image dies with thee.*

Summary and critical analysis

Sonnet 3, *Look in Thy Glass*, is addressed to an unknown young man, who refuses to procreate. The poem is written in the typical Shakespearean form which follows three quatrains and a rhyming couplet. The poem has fourteen decasyllabic lines. In the poem, the poetic voice is fixated upon an unknown young man.

According to the poet, the young man should have a child now. The poem refers to the story of Narcissus and his obsession of looking into the glass. The same obsession can be seen in the young man, who seems to be selfish. Hence, he is being encouraged by the lyrical voice to have children. The poet says:

*Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form another;*

The poet wants this young man to pass on his beauty to another by having a child. He should not act selfishly by keeping this beauty to himself only. He should bless a mother with a child, who will carry on his beauty, otherwise he would be cheating the world by not recreating and forwarding his beauty. He says,

*Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unless some mother.*

In the second quatrain, the poet gives reasons for the young man to procreate. To convince him, he gives an extended metaphor of farming. He uses many agricultural terms to discuss sexual intercourse. No woman would reject him '*for where is she so fair whose unearned womb/ disdains the tillage of thy husbandry.*' It is also not a good idea not to have children. Perhaps, the young man is foolish and selfish that is why, he is self-obsessed. However, he does not know that with the passage of time, his beauty will fade. He should pass it on to another generation by procreation otherwise his beauty will go to waste without creating or giving anything to this world.

In the third quatrain, the poet is trying to convince the young man by comparing him to her mother. He says that he is the reflection of his mother's beauty. The mother can see herself in her child, '*Thou art thy mother's glass and she in thee/ calls back the lovely April of her prime.*' She can recapitulate her youth in her child. The same is applicable to the young man. He can also see his child as his mirror and reflection. He can see the youth of his prime age in his children when he will grow old. The window is used as an idea to reunite past and present. In an emphatic tone, the poet tries to convince the young man by stating that his skin will be wrinkled with the fading of his youth but by seeing the youth in his children, he will be able to recapitulate his own youth which once gone, is gone forever. He says:

So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,

Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.

In the final couplet, the poet discusses the dire consequences of dying single. He says that if the young man does not procreate and dies before having children, no one will remember him or his beauty because his beauty will also end with him. As a result, his image will not be passed on to the world. He says,

But if thou live remembered not to be,

Die single and thine image dies with thee.

Imagery

The poet uses extensive imagery in this poem. The glass imagery is used repeatedly to foreground the main idea of the poem. The youth enjoys looking into the mirror/glass. He is also described as his 'mother's glass' or in other words, he embodies his mother's image. The poet is trying to convince the fair youth to have a child, so that his own glass image will stay on even when his youth will fade.

The poet also uses farming imagery and describes the fair man's future with both positive and negative outcomes. He tries to convince him by stating that he is so beautiful that no woman will reject him and refuse to bear his children and devoid herself of 'thy husbandry'. The poet also uses the imagery of death to depict the mortality of the fair youth that is, with his death, his beauty will also end. In order to keep his beauty alive, he should pass it through his progeny.

Metaphors

The poem is highly remarkable because of its abundant use of metaphors. Metaphors employed by the poet are not decorative but rather thematic. Different variety of metaphors gives the poem its aesthetic appeal. A deeper appreciation for his lover in spite of his narcissistic views toward his beauty serves as the overall rationale behind Sonnet 3. Here, the poet justifies his request for the procreation by referring to the inevitable death of the youth and thus, his beauty. It is quite apparent that Shakespeare was concerned with the questions of life and death all his life. This inevitability is manifested in the Sonnet 73 as well.

2.2.4 Sonnet 26: Lord of My Love

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage

Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,

To thee I send this written embassy,

To witness duty, not to show my wit:

Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine

May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,

But that I hope some good conceit of thine

In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it:

Till whatsoever star that guides my moving,

Points on me graciously with fair aspect,

And puts apparel on my tottered loving,

To show me worthy of thy sweet respect:

Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;

Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me.

*William Shakespeare
and John Milton*

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Summary and critical analysis

In Sonnet 26, Shakespeare pays a dutiful homage to a real life 'Lord'. His Lord is the Lord of his love. The opening words of the poem '*lord of my love*' depict the major conceit of the poem. Critics are of the view that it is addressed to the Earl of Southampton, the lord. The term '*lord*' could also be referring to the majestic beauty of the youth. The poet considers himself his loyal servant. The poem is written in a formal manner. The fair youth whom the poet loves, is his liege, his lord. In this sonnet, the poet is duty-bound towards his lord due to the lord's merit. His lack of '*wit*' or intelligence may make this '*embassage*' or his duty seem naked and meaningless. Quite eloquently, Shakespeare accepts his failure of using adequate words to express his love for the youth. The poet wishes his lord to use his superior wit to read '*some good conceit*' in the poor words which the poet has used. He emphasizes the '*bare*' quality of his poor message before the mighty genius of his lord. The poet continues his '*naked*' conceit which will be covered by the '*apparel*' of better words.

The poet will keep on waiting and looking towards the grace and blessings of the gracious stars or planets which may bestow some good fortune. During that time, when the conjunctions were in certain favourable states, the planets' aspects were then said to be favourable. Until the blessings of the stars bestow fortune and clothe his words sufficiently to express his love, he will keep on waiting until he becomes worthy of his respect. In the last lines, the poet says that until it happens, he will not boast of how much he loves the youth. He says:

Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;

Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me.

In the above lines, the words '*not show my head*' conveys the danger of loving above one's station. The sonnet depicts the young man's absence from the life of poet. The reason for separation is not clear though. He writes this '*written embassage*' with apprehension that perhaps his lord will not receive his message well on account of the poet's lack of wit or his station.

The crux of the twentieth century critical remarks on the sonnets was their subjects and poetic method. Analysis of official elements in the poems comprises surveys of the rhetorical tools, syntax and diction that Shakespeare employed here. The many and imprecise interpretations of his words and phrases have proved to be particularly fascinating and challenging—both for academicians and common readers. The impediment and indecision of Shakespeare's metaphorical language is also a critical issue, as is the hard-to-believe variety of tone and mood in the series. Shakespeare's divergences from or alterations of the poetic styles employed by other sonneteers have been a prominent theme of criticism as well.

More than a few of Shakespeare's themes are traditional sonnet topics like love and beauty, and the related motifs of time and change. Although Shakespeare takes care of these subjects in his unique style—most distinguished of these being his poems of love and admiration being addressed not to a fair maiden, but to a young man. He included another theme of fervour: a righteous and nice-looking woman. Reviewers have often drawn attention to Shakespeare's complex and opposing representation of love in the sonnets. Debates have been carried out

about the poet's declaration that through his poetry he will make the young man's beauty immortal, leading to his contrasting the critical nature of time. The subjects of friendship and its disloyalty are also critical topics worth deliberation, similar to the nature of the relationship between the poet and the young friend. The indistinct eroticism of the sonnets has affected readers differently. This has been accompanied by the declaration from some critics that the friendship between the two men is asexual and others saying that it is sexual in nature.

The fervour, passion and emotional vibrancy of the lyrics have induced a lot of readers and critics over the centuries into thinking that these must certainly be based on memoirs. In any condition, there is no evidence proving this. However, people over the centuries have been continually speculating about the substance of these sonnets. Literary critics have been trying to look at them from the point of view of 'what they tell us about their inventor'. Furthermore, researchers have unsuccessfully tried to identify the individuals who were the real prototypes for the individuals that the poet addresses in these poems. The enigma that still persists is that we have no fixed opinion about the degree to which Shakespeare's own knowledge is depicted in his sonnets. We cannot even say with surety if the people depicted in these poems are based on actual individuals or are the sole creation of Shakespeare's study, fantasy and understanding of the human spirit. Inconsistencies and uncertainties can be spotted in Shakespeare's sonnets. These poems present a stiff competition to generalizations and conclusions both in the characteristic and collective forms. Their complex language and differing viewpoints have led to a whole range of interpretations, all of which may at times emerge relevant—even as they are disagreeing with each other. Some reviewers read the sonnets as personal parables. Certainly, commentators maintain that speculating about what these verses indicate about Shakespeare's life, morals and sexuality is an unprofitable literary endeavour.

2.2.5 Sonnet 18: Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.*

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Summary and critical analysis

This sonnet is the most popular of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets. In sonnet 18, Shakespeare dexterously conveys the theme of beauty and the effect of time on it by using numerous poetic techniques. In this sonnet, Shakespeare also highlights the fact that he possesses the power to preserve the beauty of his beloved through poetry. This assertion led critics to claim that this sonnet 18 is not a love poem instead it is 'love-glorification poem'. Another set of critics have claimed that since Shakespeare refrained from detailing the features of his love, he was more concerned about praising himself rather than his beloved.

In the first line, he asks if he should compare her with a summer's day. However, in the next line, he says that like a summer day which is hot and the temperature is at maximum, she is more even-tempered and controlled in her passion. He finds her to be more constant and more beautiful than a summer's day.

In the next six lines, he says that violent winds shake the lovely buds of May off the trees and summer is way too short. Sometimes, the sun is scorching hot and frequently hides behind the clouds. All beautiful things will one day or the other lose their charm and beauty; the cause for this loss of beauty could be either some misfortune or by nature's planned course.

In the last six lines, after having talked about fading beauty of other things, he comes around to his lover again and says that her beauty and youth shall not diminish with the passing time, nor will she lose the beauty that she possesses.

Even the inevitable death will not snatch her from him. This is because he has made her beauty eternal by explaining it in the poem in verse form. He hopes that his verse will be read all through the coming times and her beauty will be talked about for times immemorial. He concludes by saying that as long as there is mankind on this earth, this poem will live on, making his lover immortal.

Structural analysis

The structure of this sonnet adheres strictly to the format of 14-line sonnet having three quatrains and one ending couplet. The rhyme scheme followed in the sonnet is the traditional English sonnet scheme of ababcdcd efefgg.

2.2.6 Sonnet 116: Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,*

*But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.*

*William Shakespeare
and John Milton*

Summary and critical analysis

In the beginning of this sonnet, Shakespeare tries to focus the attention of the readers towards the true qualities of love, for instance, true love is one which remains constant and steadfast even with the passage of time. In simple words, true love is immortal and immune to change.

In lines 5-8, the poet compares true love to a fixed star which tends to guide in case one loses one's right direction.

In lines 9-12, the poet draws an analogy between true love and beauty. He goes on to say that with the passage of time, beauty might fade but true love will remain constant. Love conquers all, as Virgil said in his Eclogue.

In the last couplet of the poem, the poet emphasizes the fact that if true love did not exist then all his writings on love, truth and faith are meaningless and in that case, he would have to revoke or withdraw his writings.

Structural analysis

Sonnet 116 follows the traditional 14-line sonnet format and the last two lines sum up the basic theme of the sonnet. However, the sonnet does not strictly adhere to the iambic pentameter format. Thus, it can be said that the sonnet has fourteen lines and a rhyme scheme ababcdcdedefgg - three quatrains and a couplet.

Check Your Progress

1. In which year was *Venus and Adonis* published?
2. What is the kind of imagery used in Sonnet 3: *Look in Thy Glass*?
3. What is the format of Sonnet 116: *Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds*?

2.3 JOHN MILTON (1608-1674)

A gentleman by birth, John Milton descended from a rich lineage of Miltons, belonging to York and Lancaster, near Thame in Oxfordshire, England. They did not inherit anything from the York family. His grandfather, John, was a staunch Catholic and the keeper of the forest of Shotover. He disowned his son, our poet's father, because he became a Protestant and renounced their ancestral faith. Milton's father, John Milton Sr, became a scribe or professional copyist for his survival. Also, he was so well-respected in his profession that he grew rich, and by the time he retired, he owned an estate of his own.

Milton's father married Caston, a gentle Welsh lady, and had two sons by her called John (poet) and Christopher (lawyer, who was a royalist contrary to his elder brother). Christopher Milton was religiously in favour of King Charles I during the war of the 1640s while John was his firm critic. However, as per John's wishes, he remained away from political turbulence through chamber-practice until

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he rose to fame when King James ascended the throne. Milton was born in his father's house at Spread-Eagle in Bread-Street on 9 December, 1608. Under the guidance of Thomas Young, John was home-schooled. Thomas Young, a puritan, became the Chaplain to English merchants at Hamburg. Milton wrote an epistolary elegy for him. Then, he was sent to St. Paul's School under the guardianship of Mr Gill high master of St. Paul's School, till he was sixteen. From there, he was sent to Christ's College, Cambridge which he entered on scholarship on 12 February, 1624. He was already a master of Latin and a poet when he joined college, where at once, he earned the praise of the politician Angelo Poliziano, who cited him as an example to the young students. His poetic faculty was outdone by his own contemporary Abraham Cowley. It is very difficult to assess his mental or intellectual power as many poets have surpassed John Milton in their very first attempt at poetry; however, their later endeavours could not attain the same glory as *Paradise Lost*.

2.3.1 Milton's Works

Turning to describe his work, Johnson says that at fifteen or sixteen, his translation or versification of two psalms 114 and 136, did not attract public attention. His elegies, composed while he was eighteen, show his great inclination for the Roman poets: Mr Hampton, the translator of *Polybius*, said that Milton was the first poet after the Renaissance, who wrote Latin poetry with classic grace. The great Elizabethan scholars like Walter Haddon and Roger Ascham wrote prose. It was only William Alabaster's *Roxana* which could be regarded as an elegy of substance, before Milton's elegies. Milton later published many of his poems, which he had versified at Cambridge, where he was not such a favourite of the people. In fact, he did not receive any fellowship. Also, it is said that the people at Cambridge were so angry with him that he was subjected to corporal punishment too.

The controversy and public indignation against him reached their peak when he was temporarily expelled from the university, as can be seen in the letter that he wrote to his friend Charles Diodati in Latin, which Johnson has quoted here. In the next paragraph, Johnson declares that Milton had no regret of what he underwent due to the expulsion. Probably, the author wishes to convey that Milton was of extremely stubborn temper like his father. Milton completed his Bachelor's degree in 1628 and his Master's degree in 1632. Johnson is of the opinion that Milton felt alienated due to the severity of his governors or his own obstinacy. This was reflected in his writings. He was dissatisfied by the curriculum as prescribed by Samuel Hartlib. This can be seen in Milton's discourse *Considerations touching the likeliest Way to remove hirelings out of the church*, where he ingeniously proposes that: the profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses should be applied to such academies all over the land, where languages and arts may be taught together; so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.

He found it objectionable that academic education permitted the clergy to act in plays. This can be evidenced from his words, when he scornfully describes

the clergy as ‘writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincalos, buffoons and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had or were near having to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles.’ Johnson strongly repudiates Milton’s notion of plays written by scholars.

Milton had entered the university with the intention of joining the clergy, but later rejected this idea. He contemptuously declared that whoever became a clergyman must ‘subscribe slave and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that could retch, he must straight perjure himself. He thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing.’ Johnson is of the opinion that probably obedience, civil or canonical is what Milton really objected to.

After finishing his studies, Milton returned to stay with his father at Horton in Buckinghamshire for five years during which time, he is said to have read the works of all Greek and Latin writers. Johnson says it is possible to believe that a person who read so much would not have the time to do anything else. However, during this time, Milton wrote a masque, *Comus*, which was presented in 1634 at Ludlow, which was at that time the residence of the Lord President of Wales. It also had the honour of being enacted by the Earl of Bridgewater’s son and daughter. Its source was Homer’s *Circe*.

Milton’s next work was *Lycidas* (1637), an elegy that mourns the death of Edward King, the son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland in the times of Elizabeth, James and Charles. King was very much loved by his Cambridge fraternity. Milton’s association with the Italian writers can be inferred from different longer and shorter verses (according to the rules of Tuscan poetry). It was at this time that he wrote *Arcades*. During his stay with his father, besides studies, he spent time at Harefield, the house of the Countess Dowager of Derby.

After his mother’s death, Milton decided to travel, having obtained his father’s consent and the directions of Sir Henry Wotton.

2.3.2 Milton’s Poetical Prowess

Milton found a natural refuge in poetry and this was displayed in his collection of Latin and English poems in 1645. Milton took a big house at Barbican to receive scholars. Johnson quotes Edward’s biography many times to give authenticity to his description. Milton’s adversaries called him a pedagogue and a school-master, however, Milton did not teach anyone except for his relations and a few sons of gentlemen. Like other poets, he could not undertake any mean employment. He joined the army for a short period to change his profession:

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a smaller house in Holbourn, which opened backward into Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published any thing afterwards till the King’s death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and ‘to compose the minds of the people.

Milton made some ‘Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels’ and was suspected of having interpolated the book called *Icon*

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Basilike, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made the Latin secretary, employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, and imputing it to the King; whom he charges, in his *Iconoclastes*, with the use of this prayer as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great:

Who would have imagined so little fear in him of the true all-seeing Deity . . . as, immediately before his death, to pop into the hands of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god?

This religious offence was scrutinised by Dr Juxon and Dr Birch who found his adaptation innocent though not without accusation. In his exile from Holland, King Charles II employed Salmasius, professor of Polite Learning at Leyden, to write in his father and the monarchy's defence *Defensio Regis* to which Milton replied in 1651: an answer which put Hobbes into a dilemma to decide whose language and arguments were better. Dr Johnson finds Milton's content foolish and has derided his adversary with 'so renowned for criticism, with vicious Latin.' Already weak in body and sight, Milton attained high fame and a thousand pounds by the English government for his answer which was read with awe. Cromwell dismissed the Parliament and became Lord Protector himself with powers that were more than the previous king. Milton saw the headlong fall of his own ideologies for the liberty of which he had advocated, but he still held the office of Latin Secretary and was now blind for some years. His wife died in childbirth having left him three daughters; he married Catherine, the daughter of captain Woodcock of Hackney, suitable to his temperament for a brief period as she died soon; and Milton dedicated a sonnet to her memory. In this period, Milton wrote many political manifestos and received their replies from different authors which were political arguments on different issues. He ceased to participate in controversies after a time and concentrated on his employment and personal studies. He was a man of repute both in and outside England:

As secretary to the Protector he is supposed to have written the Declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publicly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man is 'blind.' His later pursuits were: 'an epic poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

Philips describes how painstakingly Milton worked on his Latin dictionary throughout his life but could not publish it, though in the future, 'The compilers of the Latin dictionary printed at Cambridge had the use of those collections in three folios.' He began writing history, but his blindness obstructed him as it did in the case of his dictionary, and he could not finish history: 'and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest; a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate nor authors very numerous.' For his epic poem, he dwelt long on deliberation to select 'Paradise Lost' as his topic in place of his former choice of King Arthur. His Cambridge library readings show how he had derived source from the Mystery plays; and Johnson says—'Philips had seen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical

persons, such as *Justice, Mercy, Faith.*'

*William Shakespeare
and John Milton*

2.3.3 Political and Social Background

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

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

Following that, Charles I dissolved Parliament and had some of the leading members imprisoned. For eleven years, he governed without the Parliament, replacing it with the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission. During these years Archbishop Laud's policy of punishing Puritans caused large emigrations to America, and his attempt to impose episcopacy upon Scotland provoked riots. After being refused his demands for money and urged to conclude a peace with Scotland, Charles I dissolved the 'Short Parliament' (1640). The 'Long Parliament', summoned by Charles I after his defeat at the hands of the Scots, impeached both Strafford and Laud, imprisoning the latter and executing the former. By compelling Charles I to confirm a bill by which Parliament was not to be dissolved without its own consent, the actual control of the kingdom shifted from the hands of the king.

In the Civil War (1642-1648), the Royalists (or Cavaliers, represented by the Court, the Church, the Catholics, and the northern gentry) were the victors at first; but the Parliamentary forces (Puritans or Roundheads, represented by the bulk of the middle class, the merchants, artisans, London, and the southeast, who in contrast to the flowing locks of the Cavaliers cut short their hair), soon defeated Prince Rupert (1644) and annihilated the royal army (1645). The King surrendered to the Scottish army and was delivered to the English Parliament. Finally, after his

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escape from the residence assigned to him, he was recaptured, tried, and sentenced to death for murder and treason (1649). Thus, at last ended the struggle between Parliament and James I and his son Charles I.

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

In 1653-1658, when the 'Barebone's' Parliament was voted into dissolution, Cromwell, under an adopted written constitution, called the Instrument of Government, assumed the title of Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland. He was recognised for his strong foreign policy, which brought the Dutch War to a successful conclusion, and for a dictatorial home policy, which tolerated many sects, including the re-admission of the Jews, expelled since 1290. By 1658, the Protectorate had become virtually a monarchy. Cromwell's death (1658) was followed by a period of strife, under his son Richard. Finally, the Parliament voted (1660) to restore the monarchy with Charles II as King.

Social: Life and temper of the times

Horse-racing, bear-baiting, the sport of the cock-pit, and the theatrical performance were all condemned by the puritans, who looked down upon the Cavaliers as given to profane swearing and sensual excesses. To the King and his courtiers, on the other hand, the Puritan was a symbol of spiritual pride, hypocrisy, rebellion, and tyranny. But a typical Puritan was a person of high ideals, tolerant of different opinions; the spirit of the Puritan was a noble force. Two of the greatest English writers—John Milton and John Bunyan—were Puritans. Progress should also be noted in several fields—in philosophy by Bacon, in medical science by William Harvey, in mathematics by John Napier. While advances were made in the field of art, yet in general the fine arts obtained small patronage. On the whole the nation was prosperous.

General view of the literature

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

should be called the Age of the Cavalier and the Puritan.

William Shakespeare
and John Milton

2.3.4 Sonnet: *On His Blindness*

*When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide:
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmer, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work, or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
And post o’er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve who only stand and wait.”*

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Summary and critical analysis

This is one of the finest sonnets of John Milton. It is autobiographical in nature. It indicates the personal sorrow and faith of the poet. The poem is based on real life experience of Milton, who in 1655 became blind. The poem deals with the struggles of being blind and difficulty of maintaining one’s faith during such time. One can say that his relationship with god became complicated as his ability to write was threatened. The blindness shook his religious beliefs as he is now unable to understand his role in the cosmos. Thus, he is upset with god for wasting ‘*that one talent, which is death to hide*’. He wonders aloud questioning god’s intentions regarding him.

The poet is also frustrated because now he cannot serve god adequately as he says:

*...Though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account...*

By ‘*true account*’, he means his religious poetry in the praise of the god. Most of Milton’s works expressed religious fervour. Their aim was to clear the mysterious ways of God and his plans for mankind. Losing his sight must have meant inability to do the God any justice.

In final lines of the poem, Milton asks God about his purpose now that he has lost his sight. However, despite his earlier doubt, he arrives at a conclusion that god is more forgiving than he thought. In the end, he ensures himself that god would not expect anything which he cannot accomplish. From his frustrated tone in the beginning, the poet adopt much calmer tone in later stanzas. This calmness almost seem like he has an epiphany regarding his condition and faith. He realized that everyone can serve god in their own way. The faith is measured in terms of intentions and sincerity not the amount of time spend taking god’s name.

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1 to 8 lines

Milton seems to be rather impatient on the thought of his blindness. His blindness prevents him from using his poetic expertise to glorify God. He is quite keen to serve God with the aid of his poetic skills, as he is aware that God wants mankind to use their gifts. In a frustrated mood, Milton asks that how a blind guy like him serve him appropriately.

8 to 14 lines

However, in the later lines, Milton's doubt gradually waned. He realized that God is the embodiment of forgiveness and would not expect anything which he cannot accomplish. With these lines his faith is seen slowly returning. He realised that God does not need mankind to sing praises of him. He is the King of kings; his dominion is over the universe. He has thousands of angels doing his bidding, always flying over land and sea. He compares himself and other like him to those angels serving him. Only for a moment, Milton is perturbed by the notion that God may rebuke him for not using his poetic talent properly. He doubts if God is just in inflicting him with blindness and then expecting him to use his poetic talent. He almost seems distrustful of god. However, in the subsequent moments, his realization regarding the forgiving nature of god pulled him back from despair. Milton realizes that best way to serve god is to submit to his will with patience.

Although the poem concentrates on Milton's blindness, it is used more as a vehicle of exploring faith. Similar to his other religious poems, the poem explores the relationship of mankind with god and their role in this universe. The use of biblical references in the poem shows his firm belief in god. The poem is written in Petrarchan rhyme scheme.

Structural analysis

The structure followed by this sonnet is that of an Italian sonnet. The rhyme scheme is abba abba cde cde but the division between sestet and the octave is not neat as in an Italian sonnet. The sentence of the sestet begins on the line of the octave itself.

Theme of the sonnet

Milton is reaffirming his faith in god through this sonnet. This sonnet has been written in an autobiographical tone. He expresses the fact that he was gifted the talent of writing poetry and he desired of serving god by writing poetry. But now due to his blindness, he will no longer be able to write poetry and hence, serve god. He believes that the individual who patiently bears his condition and serves god is the true human being.

2.3.5 *On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three*

*How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arrived so near;*

*And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
 That some more timely-happy spirits endure.
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
 It shall be still in strictest measure even 10
 To that same lot, however mean or high,
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of
 Heaven;
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.*

*William Shakespeare
 and John Milton*

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Summary and critical analysis

On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three was printed twice during Milton's lifetime in the *Poems* of 1645 and 1673. This poem was most likely written in 1632, when he was at a very crucial stage of his life that is, just after his graduation from Cambridge. Milton mentions that though he does not look very mature like other contemporary poets, he wishes to use his talent and show his trust in God's will. Milton has written almost all varieties of sonnets-love sonnets, political sonnets, sonnets of personal meditation, elegiac sonnets, etc. The poet thus begins:

*How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
 Stol'n on his wing my three-and- twentieth year!*

The poet perceives time as his antagonist. It is characterized as a winged 'thief of youth'. The poet's adolescence has been stolen by it before he could make anything of himself. Time is a major culprit here as he could not advance his career at the age of twenty-three. Just like Shakespeare, who had also criticized time in many of his sonnets, Milton also blames time. However, the blame seemed unfair here.

Time is of fleeting nature. All youthful days of his life have spent in 'hasting' and have lost in 'full career'. The time has passed not idly but hastily with hard work and toil. The poet had not found any time in between his tasks. He was all occupied with work. These hasty days may refer to the days which Milton spent studying at Christ's college, Cambridge. This poem was written when he was still enrolled in the university. The poet was focused on studies and was busy reading the works of other poets but could not create his own works, about which he perhaps is disappointed. He says:

*My hasting days fly on with full career,
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.*

The cycle of nature is represented in metaphorical manner to symbolize the various stages of life. Spring stands for youth, summer is the prime time of life, autumn represents middle age and winter symbolizes old age or death. Milton's age is described as 'late spring', which does not seem to be very old to many modern readers but in 17th century, it was a crucial age. He feels grieved to see that there is no 'bud' or 'blossom' that has grown in his late spring. He is disappointed to see no creation of his own as his days have been spent in hastiness. Perhaps, he does not have any hope even for prime of his life. The tone of the

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poem is sad and melancholic. He has nothing to show to the world as his creation, which he regrets. If there is no bud or blossom in spring, how can one expect fragrant flowers in summer?

The poet further says that his inner maturity is not compatible with his outward youth of his body. His body seems to be young to others but his ideas has maturity, which is covered by his outward demeanour. There is a discrepancy between his appearance and inner reality. The world should recognize his inner flow of thoughts and sobriety. He maintains an artistic maturity in his ideas and philosophy which may not be interpreted clearly due to his young age or appearance.

After adopting a pessimistic tone in earlier stanzas, the poet suddenly becomes hopeful and optimistic by surrendering his fate to the will of God. God is the supreme power even greater than the force of time. There is a sudden shift in the poet's thinking when he stops worrying about the success. He consoles himself by submitting to the will of God. He says:

*Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of
Heaven;*

The poet's attitude towards time suddenly shifts as he realizes that by surrendering his lot and fate to the will of God, he can emerge victorious over the force of time. The sudden shift of the tone takes place from pessimism to optimism. The poet suddenly becomes positive towards the end of this poem. Initially, he was blaming the time for taking away his youth from him, but later he surrenders his fate to the mercy of God. He gives the burden of his destiny in the hands of god. He realizes that he should not be desperate for success in his life. He should not repent over the past days which he spent in hastiness and keeping himself busy with hard toil.

At the end of the poem, the poet's faith is restored in the supreme plan of God as he realizes that God must have a greater plan for him. The anxiety and worry of the poet get lessened. He says:

*All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.*

Structural analysis

This sonnet has been written in the format of the traditional Petrarchan sonnet in iambic pentameter. The octave follows the conventional Petrarchan rhyme scheme of *abbaabba*, while the sestet rhymes *cdcdde*, one of several conventional patterns.

Major themes

The poet in the beginning of the poem is complaining that time has passed too quickly and he has not been able to write sufficient number of poems as per his poetic ability. He is aware about his poetry writing skills yet he has spent considerable amount of time in studying in Cambridge. The theme developed by

Milton throughout the poem is that of fleeting nature of time and the crisis of faith in god.

*William Shakespeare
and John Milton*

The crisis created by Milton in the poem can be resolved when he decides to submit himself whole-heartedly to god. In the first eight lines of the poem, the poet says that time has passed too quickly. He is aware of his talent but has been unable to fulfill what he sees as his destiny. This leads to problem of having faith in god. He strongly believes that god will lead him to the right path where he can utilize his talent of writing poetry. It is to be noted that the sonnet format chosen by Milton is an apt representation of his views and ideas such that they can be applied even in the modern times.

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Check Your Progress

4. When and where was John Milton born?
5. In which year was *Lycidas* published?
6. When was the poem, '*On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three*', likely written?

2.4 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. *Venus and Adonis* was published in the year 1593.
2. The poet uses extensive imagery in Sonnet 3: *Look in Thy Glass*. The glass imagery is used repeatedly to foreground the main idea of the poem. The poet also uses farming imagery and describes the fair man's future with both positive and negative outcomes.
3. Sonnet 116 follows the traditional 14-line sonnet format and the last two lines sum up the basic theme of the sonnet. However, the sonnet does not strictly adhere to the iambic pentameter format. Thus, it can be said that the sonnet has fourteen lines and a rhyme scheme abab cdcd efef gg - three quatrains and a couplet.
4. John Milton was born on 9 December, 1608 at Spread-Eagle in Bread Street, London, United Kingdom.
5. *Lycidas* was published in the year 1637.
6. The poem, '*On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three*', was most likely written in 1632.

2.5 SUMMARY

- In 1564, William Shakespeare was born to John and Mary Shakespeare. Nothing is much known about Shakespeare's early life until 1582 when, as records suggest, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, daughter of Richard Hathaway.
- With the accession of James I after the death of Queen Elizabeth, his patronizing attitude and inclination towards art and culture turned out to be

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prosperous for Shakespeare as well as Lord Chamberlain's Company.

- 'Sonnet' is an abbreviation of the Italian sonetto ('little song') recited to the sound of a musical instrument. It is a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter. There are three types of sonnets.
- Language has been used by Shakespeare to associate the mundane with something extraordinary. His use of language is beyond expression and short of words. The kind of language used in the sonnets is such that it transforms the situation into something else.
- Love and beauty, time and mutability are the general themes evident in Shakespearean sonnets. His treatment of these themes is quite different from other writers. In a love poem, Shakespeare praises a young man rather than a maiden.
- Sonnet 3, *Look in Thy Glass*, is addressed to an unknown young man, who refuses to procreate. The poem is written in the typical Shakespearean form which follows three quatrains and a rhyming couplet. The poem has fourteen decasyllabic lines. In the poem, the poetic voice is fixated upon an unknown young man.
- In Sonnet 26, Shakespeare pays a dutiful homage to a real life 'Lord'. His Lord is the Lord of his love. The opening words of the poem '*lord of my love*' depict the major conceit of the poem.
- Sonnet 116 follows the traditional 14-line sonnet format and the last two lines sum up the basic theme of the sonnet. However, the sonnet does not strictly adhere to the iambic pentameter format.
- A gentleman by birth, John Milton descended from a rich lineage of Miltons, belonging to York and Lancaster, near Thame in Oxfordshire, England.
- The great Elizabethan scholars like Walter Haddon and Roger Ascham wrote prose. It was only William Alabaster's *Roxana* which could be regarded as an elegy of substance, before Milton's elegies. Milton later published many of his poems, which he had versified at Cambridge, where he was not such a favourite of the people.
- The great Milton's next work was *Lycidas* (1637), an elegy that mourns the death of Edward King, the son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland in the times of Elizabeth, James and Charles.
- Milton found a natural refuge in poetry and this was displayed in his collection of Latin and English poems in 1645. Milton took a big house at Barbican to receive Scholars.
- When the Tudor dynasty was brought to a close by the death of Elizabeth in 1603, James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Stuart, Protestant, and descendant of Henry VII of England, ascended the throne as James I.
- In the Civil War (1642-1648), the Royalists (or Cavaliers, represented by the Court, the Church, the Catholics, and the northern gentry) were the victors at first; but the Parliamentary forces (Puritans or Roundheads, represented by the bulk of the middle class, the merchants, artisans, London,

and the southeast, who in contrast to the flowing locks of the Cavaliers cut short their hair), soon defeated Prince Rupert (1644) and annihilated the royal army (1645).

- *On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three* was printed twice during Milton's lifetime in the *Poems* of 1645 and 1673. This poem was most likely written in 1632, when he was at a very crucial stage of his life that is, just after his graduation from Cambridge.

*William Shakespeare
and John Milton*

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2.6 KEY TERMS

- **Episcopacy:** An episcopal polity is a hierarchical form of church governance in which the chief local authorities are called bishops.
- **Puritans:** The Puritans were a group of people who grew discontent in the Church of England and worked towards religious, moral and societal reforms; the Puritans were one branch of dissenters who decided that the Church of England was beyond reform.
- **Psalms:** A psalm is a sacred song or a poetical composition which is used and sung to praise God.
- **Protestant Reformation:** The Protestant Reformation was the 16th-century religious, political, intellectual and cultural upheaval that splintered Catholic Europe, setting in place the structures and beliefs that would define the continent in the modern era. The term Protestant was not initially applied to the reformers, but later was used to describe all groups protesting Roman Catholic orthodoxy.
- **Restoration:** The Restoration of the English monarchy began in 1660 when the English, Scottish and Irish monarchies were all restored under Charles II after the Interregnum that followed the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. The term Restoration is used to describe both the actual event by which the monarchy was restored, and the period of several years afterwards in which a new political settlement was established.
- **Quatrain:** It is a stanza in a poem that has exactly four lines.
- **Metaphor:** It is a figure of speech used to make implicit comparison between two unrelated entities but which share some common traits with each other.

2.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short biographical sketch of William Shakespeare.
2. List the major characteristics of Shakespearean sonnets.
3. What are the major themes of Shakespearean sonnets?
4. Mention the significant events of the life of John Milton.

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse Sonnet 3: *Look in Thy Glass*.
2. What is the major theme explored in Sonnet 26: *Lord of My Love*.
3. How do you assess Milton's poetic prowess?
4. What do you think that the poet is trying to convey in *On His Blindness*?

2.8 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 DONNE, DRYDEN AND POPE

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 John Donne
 - 3.2.1 Metaphysical Poetry
 - 3.2.2 Neoplatonic Conception of Love
 - 3.2.3 Religious Enlightenment
 - 3.2.4 Search for the One True Religion
 - 3.2.5 *The Good Morrow*
 - 3.2.6 *Love's Alchemy*
- 3.3 John Dryden
 - 3.3.1 *Absalom and Achitophel*
- 3.4 Alexander Pope
 - 3.4.1 Criticism of Pope's Works
 - 3.4.2 *Ode on Solitude*
- 3.5 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.6 Summary
- 3.7 Key Terms
- 3.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
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3.0 INTRODUCTION

John Donne is the master of conceits and analogies. We can see this in most of his poems. In his poem, *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, he uses the conceit of compass. Husband and wife are parting from each other and the two ends of a compass embody this couple. The more the distance, the more they are tilted towards each other, which only makes their love stronger. If the wife is shedding tears, the husband says that she is shedding his blood and if she sighs in despair and distress, she sighs away his soul. A conceit is that stylistic device by which the poet can show similarity even between most dissimilar things. The poem *Flea* is based on a conceit by which a flea is termed as a 'marriage bed'. Unusual images are coined together in his poems.

John Dryden is recognized as one of the greatest English poets of the seventeenth century. He has written plays, poems, essays, works of literary criticism and so forth. However, he is best known as a satirist, even though he has produced only two satires, *Mac Flecknoe* (1682) and *The Medall* (1682). As a poet, Dryden developed his distinct style of writing, perfected with the use of heroic couplet and the use of metric variations.

The Age of Pope set up certain principles of composition which were to produce a classical harmony in poetry, Nature was systematically 'methodised' by means of poetic diction and emotional restraint. Pope's view of nature is perhaps typical for the early eighteenth century. In this unit, we will study major poems of poets of different periods including John Donne, John Dryden and Alexander Pope.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the concept of metaphysical poetry
 - Describe the life and works of Donne
 - Discuss the themes of *Absalom and Achitophel*
 - Understand the life and works of Alexander Pope
-

3.2 JOHN DONNE

John Donne (1572-1631) was born in the Elizabethan England. He was born into a religious Catholic family in 1572. He was an extremely devout man who was persecuted as he was a Christian. Though Donne is reputed for his sonnets and love songs, he had, in his early life, written religious poetry as well. His love poems and sonnets are marked by multiplicity of attitudes and moods. Metaphysics is a part of philosophy dealing with any subject that surpasses its traceability through the senses. Therefore, the mind, the time, free will, God and here, love, are all matters of metaphysical thought. *The Good Morrow* is a key sample of one of Donne's metaphysical poems.

According to John Dryden, he affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love. In this, Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault. Probably, the only writer before Dryden to speak of a certain metaphysical school or group of metaphysical poets is John Donne, Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649), who in one of his letters speaks of 'metaphysical ideas and scholastic quiddities'.

John Donne is renowned for using conceits in his poetry. In *Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, Donne tells his beloved not to shed tears and sighs because when she sheds tears she actually sheds her lover's blood and when she sighs, she sighs his soul away. Thus use of conceits leaves unforgettable impact of a poem. Donne incorporates the Renaissance conception of the human body as a microcosm into his love poetry. The Renaissance saw several people thinking that the macrocosmic physical world was reflected in the microcosmic human body. They believed that the body is ruled by the intellect just like a land is ruled by a king or queen.

He has also written Holy Sonnets. John Donne makes a plea to God which paradoxically mingles destruction and creation:

*Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend:
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.*

Here, paradox compels readers to think differently about the relation of God to men and women. In this, it serves an intellectual function: to adjust the beliefs and values according to which the paradox first appeared contradictory.

3.2.1 Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry is a kind of poetry that lays stress on the belief that the logical aspect rules the emotional; signified by sarcasm, absurdity and extraordinary comparisons of unlike features; the latter often being fanciful, to the limit of peculiarity. ‘Metaphysical poets’ was a term used for the first time by the eighteenth century poet and critic Dr. Samuel Johnson. He considered a certain group of poets, metaphysical, because he wanted to portray a loose group of British lyric poets who belonged to the seventeenth century. These poets were generally interested in metaphysical issues and had a common method of examining them. Their writings were marked by the innovativeness of metaphor (these included comparisons known as metaphysical conceits). The changing times had a significant influence on their poetry.

Discovery of the new sciences and the immoral scenario of the seventeenth century England were also other factors influencing their poetry. Metaphysical poets dealt with topics like God, creation and afterlife. The most popular metaphysical poets are John Donne, Andrew Marvell and Henry Vaughan among others.

Donne incorporates the Renaissance conception of the human body as a microcosm into his love poetry. The Renaissance saw several people thinking that the macrocosmic physical world was reflected in the microcosmic human body. They believed that the body is ruled by the intellect just like a land is ruled by a king or queen.

Most of Donne’s poems, such as *The Sun Rising*, *The Good-Morrow* and *A Valediction: Of Weeping* are based on the theme of love and involve a pair of lovers. They are represented as complete worlds unto themselves. The lovers are deeply in love with each other and oblivious to the world around them. Donne uses the analogy to express the extent to which the lovers are involved with each other. They are so engrossed that they forget their surroundings and behave as if they are the only people in existence. Nothing else matters to them except they themselves.

In *The Sun Rising*, the poet ends the poem by requesting the sun to shine only on his beloved and himself. He tries to convince the Sun by saying that by shining on the two of them he will actually be shining on the whole world.

3.2.2 Neoplatonic Conception of Love

The neoplatonic concept of physical and religious love was seen as a manifestation of the same desire. In the *Symposium*, physical love is described by Plato as the lowest run of a ladder. According to him, an individual is first taken in by a single good looking person; he is then attracted by pleasing personalities in general; then he is drawn towards great minds, great ideas and finally by beauty itself which becomes the highest rung of the ladder. This idea was adapted by Christian Neoplatonists several centuries later that in such a way the series of love built up to love for God and spiritual beauty. It is natural for Donne to use his religious poetry to romanticize the Christian love for God. However, the neoplatonic concept of love is seen in his love poetry in a slightly tweaked manner. For instance, in *To*

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His Mistress Going to Bed, written in 1669, the narrator claims to be madly in love with a nude woman stating that his love is much beyond the pictorial representations or illustrations of scenes from the bible. Many love poems reflect the superiority of the narrator's love to ordinary love claiming the narrator's love to be more pure and platonic. This love is described as divine.

3.2.3 Religious Enlightenment

Donne has always imagined spiritual upliftment and religious enlightenment as a form of sexual pleasure. He says that the satisfaction gained from religious devotion is comparable to the pleasure that results from lovemaking. Considering the age to which he belonged, his thoughts were rather radical. In *Holy Sonnet 14*, for example, the poet asks God to abuse him sexually so as to release him from worldly bonding. He believed that rape could make him chaste, which is rather ironical. In *Holy Sonnet 18* which was written in 1899, the narrator compares the entry into church with a sexual intercourse with a woman. These poems were as good as blasphemy. The religious passion they exuded saved them from being labelled as profane or scandalous.

3.2.4 Search for the One True Religion

The narrators of Donne's poems are shown as wondering which religion to select from the several options available. There were many churches that claimed to be the one true religion. In 1517, Martin Luther initiated many debates that resulted in the founding of Protestantism, which was considered to be a reformed version of Catholicism. This period was labelled as the Reformation. During this period, the mushrooming of various sects and churches led the common man to wonder which religion to follow, which was true or which was false. Donne also abandoned Catholicism to adopt Anglicanism. During this transition period he wrote 'Satire', which reflected these concerns. Here, the poet wonders how it would be possible to choose the appropriate church with so many choices available and with all claiming to be true. None of the poems directly claim one church to be the true representative of religion. No church outrightly rejects the idea of a true church or religion.

Motifs

Just like other metaphysical poets, Donne used vanity and analogies to build thematic relations between dissimilar objects. In *The Good-Morrow*, for instance, the orator uses metaphors brilliantly and employs spheres to jump from the description of the world to a description of globes before going on to describe his beloved's eyes and the flawlessness of their romance. Going beyond mere praise of his lover, the orator compares her to the sphere, which is a shape without faults; a shape that has without corners or edges. By comparing her to a sphere he also draws attention to the way his lover's face now means the world to him, or has come to represent the world. In his work *A Valediction: Of Weeping*, the orator uses sphere-shaped tears to establish a connection with pregnancy, the moon and the world. As the orator weeps, each tear comprises a tiny reflect of his lover. This is yet another example of the use of the sphere to demonstrate the perfect personality and physicality of the person being addressed.

In Donne's romantic poetry, journeys of discovery and conquest describe

the orator's mysterious and magnificent love affairs. European explorers began arriving in the Americas in the fifteenth century. They returned home with treasures and fabulous tales. During Donne's times, many settlements had been established in North and South America, and English society progressed due to the wealth that flowed back.

In *The Good Morrow* and *The Sun Rising*, the orators wish to discover adventure in the company of their beloveds. These works show how the beloved's body and personality are capable of mesmerizing a lover always. The orator of 'Elegy 19 calls his beloved's body 'my America!' or his 'new-found land'. He compares the subjugation of exploration with the subjugation of seduction. He compares his sexual escapade with his beloved to voyages of discovery. He highlights not just how spontaneous his act is but also how inevitable his act is. He states that his beloved will also be discovered and conquered in due time just like the Americas.

In most of his works, Donne indicates the 'reflects' seen in eyes and tears. He uses this motif to emphasize on the flawlessness of their love and how it would contain their love to form a complete world. *A Valediction: Of Weeping* depicts the process of bidding good-bye. As the orator weeps, he realizes that his tears are reflecting his beloved's image. Just like the tear falls away, his beloved will also go away. The expressions in their eyes are representative of the strong link between the lovers in *The Good Morrow* and *The Ecstasy*. The lovers find each other's images in each other's eyes. They see themselves safely enclosed in each other's eyes. They stare at each other mingling their souls as if expressions alone would suffice to access a person's innermost self.

Donne used many symbols such as angels and the compass in his works. His beloveds appeared to be divine and therefore, angels acted as the messengers from God. They helped in bringing the humans closer together and closer to divinity. The orator compared his lover with an angel in *His Mistress Going to Bed*. There, the beloved as well as his love for her brings the orator close to God. Along with her he is able to find paradise on earth. Angels were believed to administer the spheres and make it possible for the earth to rotate.

In *Air and Angels*, the orator uses Ptolemaic concepts to establish a relationship between his beloved and the angels. His lover's love rules him just like the angels reign over the spheres. When the poem ends, the orator discovers that there is a slight variation between a woman's love and the love felt by a man. The compass symbolizes the comparison between lovers: two individuals but joined bodies. The pictogram of the compass is an example of Donne's usage of the language of journey and conquest to explain the relationships between and emotions of lovers. Compasses assist sailors in navigating the sea, and, also help lovers stay in touch even when they are not together physically or not in each other's presence.

In *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, the orator compares his soul and the soul of his beloved to a twin compass. Also referred to as a draftsman's compass, a twin compass has two legs, one that is fixed and one that moves. The orator considers himself the movable leg, while his beloved is the fixed leg. As per the poem, their point of union and the stability of their love, makes it possible for him to trace an ideal circle even when he is located far from her. Though he can only trace this circle when the two legs of the compass are apart, in due time, the

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compass can be closed up, and the two legs pressed together again, once the circle has been located. Blood usually symbolizes life, and Donne uses it to describe various experiences in life, from erotic fervour to spiritual devotion. In *The Flea*, a flea creeps over a pair of would be lovers, biting them and sucking their blood. The orator imagines that the blood of the pair has blended together, and therefore their physical union is a must as they are already fused together or wedded within the flea's body. All through the Holy Sonnets, blood signifies passionate devotion to God and Christ. Christ is believed to have shed blood on the cross and died just so that mankind could be forgiven and saved. In the *Holy Sonnet 7* the narrator requests Christ to teach him to be apologetic, so that he is made worthy of Christ's precious blood.

3.2.5 *The Good Morrow*

*I wonder by my troth, what thou and I
 Did, till we loved? Were we not wean'd till then?
 But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?
 Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
 'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be;
 If ever any beauty I did see,
 Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.
 And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
 Which watch not one another out of fear;
 For love all love of other sights controls,
 And makes one little room an everywhere.
 Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone;
 Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown;
 Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.
 My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
 And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
 Where can we find two better hemispheres
 Without sharp north, without declining west ?
 Whatever dies, was not mix'd equally;
 If our two loves be one, or thou and I
 Love so alike that none can slacken, none can die.*

Summary and critical analysis

The Good Morrow is a metaphysical poem consisting of twenty-one lines, divided into three stanzas. The poet speaks to the woman he loves as they wake up after spending the night together. The poem starts with a direct question from the poet to his love. The poet maintains that he and his lover started living only when they fell in love. Earlier, they were just infants at their mothers' breasts or were involved in childish 'country pleasures'. Michael Hall says that *The Good Morrow* is a chronological and spatial poem. It is with the aid of this poem that the orator exposes his increasing maturity and awareness of his love as a reply to his thrilling passion. The musical theme of the poem reinforces this union. There are few examples that prove that the poem is sequential, such as it goes on from a

metaphorical phase of early life in the first stanza, to the dawn of the present in the next stanza and finally in the final stanza, to a never-ending point of view of their association in the times to come.

The poem starts with the poet questioning his lady love, asking her that he wonders what they did before they met and fell in love. He asks her if they had not completed weaning till then. Another option that he thinks they may be doing could have been that they were sleeping in the ‘*seven sleeper’s den*’. Here, ‘*seven sleepers den*’ could have more than one interpretation. According to Harold Bloom, a Christian and Muslim legend has it that seven youths of Ephesus hid in a cave for 187 years in order to escape from participating in persecuting the pagans during the dawn of Christianity. Surprisingly, these youths did not die, but kept sleeping for the complete period. Thus, the poet may be comparing the period before they grew aware about their love to the ‘*Seven Sleepers*’ in which they both ‘*snorted*’ or slept, in what seemed to be an infinite period of time. However, besides line 4, there are no other references that take the analogy further. The poet also feels if ever he desired anything beautiful in past, it was only a dream of his beloved. She is his actual dream.

The poetry indicates that it also considers space, as love is at first represented as being confined to ‘*one little room*’, or a cave, and later it is expected to expand to fill the whole ‘*world*’, and thereafter contracting all this love into an influential force that is contained in the lovers’ eyes. One can also consider the poem as the achievement of maturity by the storyteller, which can be witnessed in the succession of his life of physical pull to that of pure love, which in the end eagerly waits to conclude in being joined with his lover for perpetuity. Furthermore, a rising awareness is experienced by the storyteller about his love for the beloved. At first, he was in the company of other ladies, and he almost immediately realized that all these ladies just reflected the one that he was in fact looking for—the one true lady in his life. As well, the poetry is based on a subject of initiation.

The poem starts with the speaker characteristically sleeping in a cave, just like Plato’s analogy. Though, he is lastly released by his woman who makes him go into the daylight, or *The Good Morrow*. He is now a changed man who is getting increasingly aware of his love for the woman. Furthermore, the narrator stresses this union through the musicality of the verse. At first, the poem is concentrated on the couple with references that highlight ‘*we*’, but ends with sound that highlights ‘*I*’.

This is a symbol of the union of the two separate beings into a single ‘*I*’. Donne’s poetry is typically dramatic. A fine method of observing this is to see how the poems begin. In *The Good Morrow*, the ‘*I*’ voice keeps putting forth questions to which he insists an answer. Although the question put is a semi-rhetorical question—the other person is never allowed a moment to reply!

This is in striking contrast to the much gentle second stanza. It begins with a note of confined triumph and finishes with a convincing plea to enjoy their world. There are no uncertainties any more. Michael Hall, while analyzing the poem, says that, there are but a few people who express love as completely as John Donne. Donne, in this poem, makes full use of the innumerable devices of poetry for communicating his appealing message to his beloved. He makes use of structure,

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symbolic language, perspective and tone that supports the speaker in his undertaking, in a creative manner. In any case, all the characteristics of the poem are not completely evident because of the perceptive references and allusions by the knowledgeable poet. Instances of these elements which have not been clearly brought forth can be seen in the use of 'Seven Sleepers' den' in the first stanza, the discovering metaphors of the second stanza and the semicircular images used in the last stanza. Superficially, these allusions may appear to have been aimlessly made a part of the central concept. However, as the poem progresses, we will be able to understand that these allusions contribute immensely to further support the poet's message. We will find out that Donne's poetry is of the genre that effectively makes use of the devices in order to increase the poetic capacity of the verse. The intellectual allusions and references enhance narrator's message to his lover.

Cave analogy

The symbolic language that Donne uses coupled with the narrator's perspective and the tone, add beauty to the poem. Firstly, one can see the presence of sexual symbolism in the first paragraph. For instance, terms like 'wean'd' and 'suck'd' bring out breast symbols. Such weighty words even enable the identification of 'country pleasures' in the form of a metaphor for breasts. One more metaphorical example is the term 'beauty' in line 6 that in fact is a representation of the woman.

One can even notice the presence of 'metaphysical conceits' in the poem. An instance is the semi-circular imagery that represents the lovers in the final paragraph.

In the next paragraph, there is an instance of hyperbole where the narrator says 'makes one little room an everywhere'. This is evidently exaggerated and is physically impossible as well.

Paradox has also been used in the poem. As an instance, where the speaker says: 'true plain hearts do in the faces rest'. Evidently, this phrase is paradoxical since it is impossible for hearts to be resting in faces. One can also find an instance of metonymy in the final paragraph with the narrator stating: 'My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears'.

The narrator here does not actually mean that his face literally appears in his lover's eye, but that she is aware of him. Again, one can see the presence of two allusions in the poem, one with the 'seven sleepers den', the other with the 'hemispheres'. Moreover, an excellent instance of imagery in the poem exists.

One can find an appearance of this in the poem itself, and in the title *The Good Morrow*. Besides representing the actual sunrise, it also depicts the birth of *The Good Morrow*. This not only represents the physical sunrise, but also symbolizes the birth of an awakened person. Besides, the speaker's perspective is from the first-person viewpoint. In spite of the presence of two persons in the poem, it is only the voice of the male narrator that is prominent. Lastly, the tone is that of casual intimacy. There are hints pertaining to the casual atmosphere of the poem.

This is made evident by taking a glance at the rough language that the narrator uses, like: 'suck'd,' 'snorted' and 'got'. In spite of the roughness, the narrator is evidently infatuated with the women being addressed.

It is possible to interpret the phrase ‘*seven sleepers den*’, which is first brought in the poem, in several ways. This phrase may most directly be hinting at the Christian and Mohammedan legend of the seven youths of Ephesus who hid in a cave for 187 years so as to avoid pagan persecution during the dawn of Christianity. Surprisingly, these young people, instead of dying, continued to sleep for the entire period. Therefore, the narrator may possibly be drawing a comparison between the time before they became aware about their love through the term the ‘*seven sleepers*’ by saying that they both ‘*snorted*’, or continued to sleep, in that which seemed to be a seemingly unending amount of time and between the time when they fully became aware about their love and confessed it to one another. In any case, besides line 4, no allusions exist to carry the comparison further. There is, however, another possibility. In his article, ‘*Plato in John Donne’s, ‘The Good Morrow*’, Christopher Nassar makes a proposal that this reference could be exactly referring to Plato’s Cave Allegory. Book VII of *The Republic*, gives a description of an earth in which humanity has been held as a prisoner in a cave since the time that it was born. These ‘*prisoners*’ have been held in chains, which have been tied around their legs and neck. They can merely see the reflections on the wall caused by themselves and other objects that block the firelight. Therefore, all that the prisoners feel is real is actually all an illusion. They are committing a mistake of thinking about shadows as being ‘*shadows of shadows for reality*’. The analogy goes on with the release of a prisoner and his ascension from the cave to the external world. It is here that he ultimately discovers God, the world’s actual fact, as well as the illusionary character of the cave.

Donne’s narrator continues to draw comparison between his life before love and the imprisonment of Plato’s prisoners. Typically, when comparisons are drawn against their present love, all past pleasures have been merely fancies, and the women he ‘*desired*, and ‘*got*’ were merely a dream of this one woman. Finally, on ascending from the cave, he realizes the supreme fact of his lover and no longer has the desire to go back to the lustful cave of the previous times. The main objective of the exploration metaphors in the second stanza is to continue revealing that the narrator prefers his newly-built association instead of earthly and carnal things. The triplet of the second paragraph sees the narrator stating that:

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne,
Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one.

This evident digressing from the topic, in fact, goes on to support the Platonic relationship of the first stanza. Firstly, we should keep in mind the fact that the worldly chasings of Elizabethan England happened to be very different as compared to the current times. Constantly exploring the world happened to be one of the main activities that largely interested the people. Despite its continuing for quite a period of time, it was actually in the ‘Elizabethan-Jacobean era’ when discovery ‘saw its really great florescence’. However, there were several of this period who had knowledge about the Americas; however, only some had actually gone there. Whatever know-how they had was insubstantial. This knowledge resulted in the Elizabethans possessing an unclear view of the New World. Thus, such ‘*new worlds*’ signify a kind of dream, with them desiring to follow these dreams being

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directly associated with the illusions of the cave. The narrator sees this famous pastime merely as something being used to pacify slaves. He believes that this is far from being an activity for a liberal person like himself. He does not anymore feel that he needs to be searching for a 'new world' as he claims to have already found it in his being united with his lover: '*In possessing one another, each has gained world enough*'.

The semi-circular imagery in stanza three can be translated as something that is both acute in the spatial sense, and associated with a ridiculous Platonic perspective on the basis of mankind. Donne, in a way, collapses his geographical metaphor in the face of his beloved. Therefore, while he openly confesses his love for his beloved in paragraph two, the narrator also goes on to state that it is their eyes which contain their entire world of love. In any case, this perspective turns out to be very tough to be supported on seeing the lines that follow. This is due to Donne's narrator symbolically describing the pair as two different '*hemispheres*'. What could also be possible here, could be the fact that these two '*hemispheres*', in fact, signify the eyes. In any case, as the narrator is describing the couple, what might have been more exact would have been the narrator mentioning the four couples instead of two. Moreover, the cardinal point imagery is unclear when this interpretation is being used. Moreover, the semi-circular imagery even bears allusions to an absurd speech that Aristophanes makes in Plato's *Symposium*.

In his speech, Aristophanes is seen to relate a humorous legend of how mankind originated. Typically, Aristophanes is seen to state that in the starting of time, human beings assumed the shape of a globe. Every 'individual' had four legs, four arms with a single head and a face on each side. According to the story, the Greek God Zeus as a punishment for annoying him made two divisions of every individual, thereby separating them into two different beings. However, in spite of being different human beings, they continued to be divine halves who unendingly sought to reunite as one body. This instinct which comes naturally of that of reuniting the halves is how Aristophanes explains love. Thus, Donne's narrator is under the belief that he has found his other half in his beloved, and together they form the original whole. Moreover, this interpretation clarifies the cardinal point metaphor. For instance, the narrator states: '*Where can we finde two better hemispheares/ Without sharpe North, without declining West*'. The narrator here states the absence of '*North*' and '*West*' in their new united spherical world. The association will be all but cold, or '*sharpe*', it will not diminish or be '*declining*'. Rather, their relationship will be one which would be warm and filled with eternal love.

On the whole, the poem brings the poetic tools and learned allusions that Donne has so beautifully used, supporting the speaker. First of all, we carried out an analysis of the unique structure and musical elements in the poem. Then we went on to examine the way Donne has made use of the figurative language, perspective and tone for creating a narrator that readers would find easy to believe. Then, we looked closely at '*Seven Sleepers' den*' phrase, discovering that it has its roots in both Christian mythology and Platonic allegory. Then, we went on to gain a clearer comprehension of how Donne has used exploration metaphor in the second paragraph. Then we examined the Platonic base for the semi-circular metaphor in the third paragraph. Lastly, we investigated the poem from a holistic

viewpoint and realized as to how each of these various elements had their own contribution to the entire message. Therefore, we can conclude by saying that Donne's *The Good Morrow* is a poem that effectively makes use of tools for maximizing the poetic capacity of the verse. It consists of intellectual references that go on to support the message of the speaker for his lover.

The poem seems to conclude on a note of some uncertainty: 'If ... or ...' Perchance after all Donne cannot any longer keep up the vanity that nothing will come to change their love or encroach upon it.

Structural analysis

The structure of the poem is such that it enhances the poet's message to his beloved. It contains three stanzas, each including seven lines. Besides, every stanza has been further divided into a quatrain and a triplet. In his book, *John Donne and the Metaphysical Gesture* (1970), Judah Stampfer notes that each 'iambic pentameter quatrain is rounded out, not with a couplet, but a triplet with an

Alexandrine close a, b, a, b, c, c, c'. This division is not solely reflected in the rhyme scheme, but also in the verse. For example, the quatrain is made use of for revealing the poet's state of mind; whereas, the triplet permits him to ponder on that outlook. Besides, the first stanza methodically makes use of the assonance for reinforcing the term 'we', which is achieved by the long 'e' sound being repeated through different words. For instance, each of these terms have been taken from the first stanza: 'we', 'wean'd', 'countray', 'childlishly', 'sleepers', 'fancies', 'bee', 'any', 'beauty', 'see', 'desir'd', 'dreame', 'thee'. It is evident that far from being a coincidence this is an incredible technique to lay further stress on the two lovers being united as one. In any case, Donne makes use of the assonance for the reverse influence in the final stanza. Rather than concentrating on the couple, the narrator concentrates on himself by the reinforcement of the term 'I'. This is achieved by the long 'i' sound being repeated. For instance, each of these terms can be seen in the third stanza: 'I', 'thine', 'mine', 'finde', 'declining', 'dyes', 'alike', 'die'. Undoubtedly, the long 'e' sound has been used in the third stanza, but it is the long 'i' sound that rules. This results in an evident contradiction to that which the narrator says, besides the musical nature of the poem. From a musical perspective, instead of being primarily focused on the union, the narrator seems to be increasingly concerned with himself.

3.2.6 Love's Alchemy

*Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie;
I have lov'd, and got, and told,
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery.
Oh, 'tis imposture all!
And as no chemic yet th'elixir got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot
If by the way to him befall
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,*

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*So, lovers dream a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summer's night.*

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*Our ease, our thrift, our honour, and our day,
Shall we for this vain bubble's shadow pay?
Ends love in this, that my man
Can be as happy'as I can, if he can
Endure the short scorn of a bridegroom's play?
That loving wretch that swears
'Tis not the bodies marry, but the minds,
Which he in her angelic finds,
Would swear as justly that he hears,
In that day's rude hoarse minstrelsy, the spheres.
Hope not for mind in women; at their best
Sweetness and wit, they're but mummy, possess'd.*

Summary and critical analysis

The alchemy as a science was very popular in the Jacobean age. It aimed at the discovery of the elixir of life or the philosopher's stone. The elixir was supposed to be a mysterious substance which could cure diseases and prolong life. The mere touch of the philosopher's stone was supposed to turn the base metal into gold, but it was not discovered by the alchemists. John Donne refers to love's alchemy that is, the mysteriousness. The hidden mystery of love remains unresolved in the poem. Though he has enjoyed the fruits of love but the mysterious nature of love has made it unfathomable. Hence, those who claim to understand the true love are cheats according to Donne.

The poet says that:

*Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie.*

As far as he is concerned, he has loved, possessed his beloved and can share his love experiences with others, but still he does not know the secret of true love. He can go on loving, experiencing its pleasures and sharing it with others all his life, but he finds himself unable to explain the true nature of love. This is the mysteriousness of love. Those who claim to know its true nature must be impostures. It seems to be as mysterious as the science of alchemy which is yet to be discovered by the alchemists but they keep claiming that their pot is full of a number of chemicals and imagine that they have attained the elixir which can cure diseases and prolong life. Similarly, the lovers pursue true love which is unachievable and unfathomable like the alchemy. They keep dreaming of a rich and prolonged happiness in each other's company, but receive only a cold and wintery night. Their dreams are futile as the dreams of the alchemists who failed to discover the elixir even after devoting their whole life to alchemy.

The title, '*Love's Alchemy*', seems like an ironic phrase that sets the tone of satire from the very beginning of the poem. By the time John Donne arrived in

the literary scene, people had started considering alchemy as an absurd and impractical metaphysical idea. Similarly, the alchemy of love is also a ridiculous idea. By love's alchemy, Donne seems to be referring to the fantastic ideas of Platonic love, which all the Elizabethan contemporaries believed in. The title, thus, signifies that spiritual or metaphysical love was as impractical as alchemy. Donne believes in the connection between the mind and spirit, for it to be called true love. This connection is aided by physical intimacy. Hence, the title is a satiric attack on Elizabethan's platonic love.

Thus, the poet says that lovers should not spend their honour, savings, time, energy, youth and vitality by indulging in sex to derive pleasures which are vain and superficial. Love is not just about indulging in sex because if it was so then there is no difference between a sensitive soul like him and his servant. Love is also not solely spiritual because the lovers who believe that marriage is a union of minds not of two bodies, find their beloved only an angel or a spirit. He only hears the loud and coarse noise made by the band on the occasion of his wedding. Thus, the idea of an angelic woman is inherently incorrect. It is a myth. Without mind and soul, the women will appear to be dead flesh. Thus, John Donne does not glorify and idealize a woman by comparing her to goddess rather for him, woman is an earthly creature of flesh and blood. Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, Donne gives a human touch to his women characters in his poems.

The poet employs an argumentative voice to put his point across. The poet also uses speech-rhythm in this poem. The poem can be seen as the expression of his strong belief that physical and spiritual love inseparable. They are intertwined closely. He stands against the Platonic and Petrarchan glorification of women which was a trend in his time. The poet presents the complex nature of love—a blend of physical and spiritual. He does not believe in the myth of union of minds as he says:

*Tis not the bodies marry, but the minds,
Which he in her angelic finds,
Would swear as justly that he hears,
In that day's rude hoarse minstrelsy, the spheres.*

Donne in this poem is witty and paradoxical. His provocative attack on the spiritual love almost seems extreme. However, he approaches both of the extremes with same fervour and gusto in order to emphasize his point.

Structural analysis

The poem *Love's Alchemy* has been written in the format of two stanzas of 12-lines each. Some lines have been written in iambic pentameter. The poem uses the rhyming scheme aabbacddccee. The poet has made use of personification and alliteration as well.

The following lines have been written in iambic pentameter.

- *Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,*
- *Say, where his centric happiness doth lie;*
- *But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,*

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- *I should not find that hidden mystery.*
- *And as no chemic yet th'elixir got,*
- *Hope not for mind in women; at their best*
- *Sweetness and wit, they're but mummy, possess'd*

Line 10 of the poem contains iambic hexameter, a tongue-twisting, verbose 'odoriferous'. Here, Donne tries to symbolize the alchemists through this bag of wind.

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was John Donne born?
2. List the prominent works of John Milton.
3. What is metaphysics? Give some examples of metaphysical thought.
4. What does a twin compass symbolize in *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*?
5. What does the title *The Good Morrow* represent?
6. What is love according to Donne?

3.3 JOHN DRYDEN

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

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

With the start of the Restoration Period, Dryden was a changed man as he aligned immediately with the winner's side and welcomed King Charles II with a poem called *Astrae Redux* and followed it with another poem called *Panegyric to his Sacred Majesty*. He married the daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, Lady Elizabeth Howard, but the marriage which brought him 100 pounds annually, gave him little happiness. For some 20 years after the restoration, Dryden's main output consisted of plays, together with panegyrics, prefaces, prologues and epilogues.

The exposure of the style of his heroic play entitled *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) preceded his turning to those great satirical narrative poems in which he first revealed his full stature as a poet.

Dryden knew that plays were the most profitable branch of literature so he wrote them mostly from 1663 to 1681 knowing well that his genius did not lie in drama. During this period, he mostly wrote plays which were mostly coarse as the stage audiences during those times demanded vulgarity and Dryden complied. However, Dryden's position as a critic and writer of prose is almost as important in history as his position as a poet is. Dr. Johnson writes 'Dryden may be properly considered as father of English criticism', doing perfect justice to the eminent poet. Deft in his poetic craft, Dryden also punctuated it with essays discoursing topics such as characterization, diction, technique, structure, fashion and literary taste.

His first significant work in criticism was the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' (1668), which is a discourse on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays. While the plague ravaged much of London in 1665, Dryden and his wife Lady Elizabeth Howard retired to his father-in-law's house in Charlton. It was there in 1667 that he wrote his first great poem, *Annus Mirabilis*, which he wrote in stanzas of four lines each in alternating rhyme. Following this, in the year 1670 Dryden was appointed Poet-Laureate and Historiographer Royal. This placed Dryden in prosperous circumstances. Dryden, like Bacon, spent his last years in total devotion to creative writings. He went on to work with courage and energy, writing plays, poems and translations. *The Fables* his last work consisted of a collection adopted from the works of Chaucer and Boccaccio. Dryden died in 1700, the year of the publication of his *The Fables*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

3.3.1 *Absalom and Achitophel*

Text

*IN pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin,
 Before Polygamy was made a Sin;
 When Man on many multipli'd his kind,
 E'r one to one was cursedly confin'd,
 When Nature prompted and no Law deni'd 5
 Promiscuous Use of Concubine and Bride;
 Then Israel's Monarch, after Heavens own heart,
 His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart
 To Wives and Slaves: And, wide as his Command,
 Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land. 10
 Michal, of Royal Blood, the Crown did wear,
 A soil ungrateful to the Tiller's care:
 Not so the rest; for several Mothers bore
 To God-like David several sons before.
 But since like Slaves his Bed they did ascend, 15
 No True Succession could their Seed attend.
 Of all this Numerous Progeny was none*

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Absalom and Achitophel (1681) is the most famous political satire of English literature written in the Restoration period. It was written by John Dryden between 1631 and 1700, the most notable poet and dramatist of English letters of the Restoration Age. This mock epic is his best known piece of craftsmanship. Dryden was not only the most dominant poet of his age, but also one of the most learned men of letters in English literature. He established the literary trend of neo-classicism, which was followed by the Romantic Age. He bridged the gap between the legacy of Milton and the polish of the Augustan verse of Pope.

Dryden was a very learned man and even tried his hand in other genres of writing –poetry, drama and essays. The ‘heroic couplet’ was his permanent tool for verse, and it was considered his main contribution to writing. He experimented with the heroic couplet metre form and used it for all kinds of verses that he tried: satire, didacticism and description. In England, satire has been vigorously practised by geniuses, including Gascoigne, John Donne, Thomas Lodge, Hall, Marston, Cleveland and Andrew Marvell, but it flourished in the age of Dryden most beautifully. He paved way for masters like Pope and Byron.

Dryden had developed his style of satire by reading Juvenal, and applied the models of elaborate portraits based on the works of Horace and Lucan. Particularly here, he received ideas from Lucan about his political descriptions of Rome in the time of civil conflict when he describes the political parties of London. The poem *Absalom and Achitophel* was written when Dryden was in the prime of his mental genius. Hence, it shows his maturity of expression as evident from the work’s several intelligent passages and witty remarks. He has used Biblical themes very cleverly to serve his purpose of allegory. This poem is a piece of Tory propaganda written at the orders of Charles II, the then king of England. On the other hand, it also looks like an ode to the monarch (Charles II), who in this piece is represented as David (the king of Israel). The satire is also suggestive of Adam’s revolt against God, who is being tempted by Satan, and his fall. In the attire of the Biblical narrative, the poet presents the most interesting poem of the English language.

Briefly put, the story is of Absalom (the Duke of Monmouth), an illegitimate son of King David (Charles II) of Israel (England) and a doting father. Absalom is full of heavenly qualities that have placed him on a very high pedestal, because of which people admire him greatly. They admire him for his valour, humility, manliness and beauty. In the story, David’s wife is not able to give birth to a child. Achitophel (the Earl of Shaftesbury) is a talented but very crooked man and a one-time pardoned enemy of the king. He hatches a cruel plot against the king, and to serve this purpose he chooses Absalom as the martyr hero. He instigates Absalom against his father to usurp the throne because the king is old and not able to rule properly. In order for this, he cites the instances of the rising conflict among the people, the early Popish plot, the tussle between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, the king’s bias towards the Catholics and the discontent in the Parliament because of the rising tumult.

Absalom, in love and awe of his father and the nation, at first disagrees, but subsequently falls prey to this trap because of his ambition. Here, this temptation can be equated with the fall of Adam, who falls prey to Satan’s temptation.

Achitophel then gathers all possible enemies of the king, who earlier had been kind and loving, yet participate in this plotted destruction of the king. Together they go on a countrywide tour declaring Absalom the hero, meeting people, sympathizing with them and hinting about their plans. Eventually, they wage a war against the king.

After having endured them for long, King David stands up in his defence, and in a long, passionate speech declares that he will never allow Absalom to usurp his throne, which lawfully belongs to his brother. He also declares that he will fight with his enemies and accord them capital punishment to restore a peaceful reign.

In *Absalom and Achitophel*, Dryden has used the heroic couplet metre, where each line contains five iambic measures. This poem is an excellent example of seventeenth-century neo-classical mock epic poetry and allegorical satire. In the beginning, Dryden attaches an apology where he makes an appeal to his readers about his honest efforts towards writing this poem, his least attempts to tamper with the history and his use of satire.

Summary and Critical Analysis

Biblical characters: Original names

- **King David (the king of Israel):** Charles II
- **Dissatisfied Jews:** England
- **Absalom:** James, Duke of Monmouth
- **Wiser Jews:** Tories
- **Achitophel:** Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury
- **Jebusites:** Roman Catholics
- **Jews:** Protestants

Structural analysis

Absalom and Achitophel has been written in the format of heroic couplet, that is, iambic pentameter where pairs of lines form a rhyme. Lines 1-4 give evidence of using the aabb rhyming scheme. So, we can say that the poem is composed in iambic pentameter where there is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable in every line.

Lines 1-10

In the opening couplet, Dryden has highlighted the main theme. In a witty manner, he says that the story belongs to the age when polygamy was not considered a sin, but was rather sanctioned by the gods and priests. The story is about men who used to beget several illegitimate children and did not reveal them to society. Thus, this poem is about the king of Israel, a licentious man, who enjoyed the pleasures of life beyond social restrictions. The term 'Israel's Monarch' refers to David. He was married to Michal. However, they did not have a son. For this purpose, he had many wives and slaves to fulfil his needs. As a result, he fathered several children. Unfortunately, he did not have a legal heir to his throne.

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Lines 11-20

Michal belonged to a royal family. She was the daughter of Saul. Unfortunately, David and Michal did not have a son from the wedlock who could legitimately ascend the throne. The poet compares Michal to ‘a soil ungrateful to the tiller’s care’. Even though David had fathered several sons from different women but outside wedlock, so he could not find a ‘true succession’ to his throne. Of all the women and their sons who got lost in obscurity, the only one who stood out was Absalom, a beautiful, brave and able man. It is not clear precisely why—perhaps it was destiny that David begat Absalom with more gusto.

Lines 21-30

Dryden uses the phrase ‘*conscious destiny*’, which indicates that there were aims to fulfil for which Absalom was raised. He was very beautiful, as a man ought to be, and also a fit person. These qualities made him capable of staking a claim to the throne for which he deemed himself suitable. He fought several wars against England and brought fame to his nation and made his victorious way through the battlefields of Holland and France, whose rulers were on good terms with his country. At the same time, he was a friendly, talented and pleasant person. When a person would look into his countenance, he could feel his dignity and grace like a ‘paradise’. He was, therefore, a complete picture of charm, manliness and gallantry.

Lines 31-40

King David felt extremely pleased whenever he happened to glance at his son Absalom. In fact, David’s youthful image in his son renewed whenever he looked at his son. Absalom was so good-looking, pleasing and able that the King did not deny any of his son’s wishes to remain unfulfilled. King David was so happy with Absalom that he got him married to Anne Scott, the Countess of Buccleuch.

Although there were some faults in Absalom’s nature, ‘*for who from faults is free?*’, these were not noticed by his indulgent father. For example, Absalom, in the passion of youth, sometimes took the law for granted, but the king did not construe these misdeeds as offences but thought that the boy was full of ‘*young*’ desires and energies. In these excesses, the agents of Absalom made a murderous attack on Ammon (Sir John Coventry), which the king and his courtiers defended as an act of revenge against the attack Sir John Coventry had made on the honour of the King. These instances show that King David supported his son completely.

Lines 41-50

Absalom, the noble young man, is constantly showered with love and praise. King David reigned free of all disturbances because his son was there to protect him, though the fact that Absalom was his son remained a secret. Since this poem is an allegory, the setting is London and the ruler is Charles II. The poet further states that life is full of unpredictable happenings that men can neither explain nor forecast. It is God who decides between good and evil and favours or punishes humans accordingly.

There were conflicts in the kingdom of David created by some Jews. London had two very strong political parties: the Whigs, who were disloyal to the King, and the Tories, who were the loyalists. The English were temperamental, headstrong

and had determined opinions. This is why no king could rule them and not even God could please them. This led the English to believe that they could get away with all kinds of excesses, like those done by Adam in the Garden of Eden. They enjoyed every kind of liberty and behaved as if nothing could ever stop them from doing anything. Here, probably, the poet wants to suggest that the king is a divine ruler and those who go against him become objects of God's wrath.

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Check Your Progress

7. When and where was John Dryden born?
8. Name Dryden's first significant work in criticism.
9. When was *Absalom and Achitophel* written by John Dryden?
10. Who is Absalom in *Absalom and Achitophel*?

3.4 ALEXANDER POPE

Known as the 'Wasp of Twickenham', Alexander Pope was an outstanding figure of the neoclassical school of poetry in the 18th century. He was an English essayist, critic, satirist and one of the greatest poets of Enlightenment. He was born in London to Roman Catholic parents. Pope had received random education which was the result of unexpected circumstances. He was expelled from the Twyford School after writing a satire on one of the teachers. At home, Pope's aunt taught him to read. He learned Latin and Greek from a local priest and later acquired the knowledge of French and Italian poetry. Pope also attended Catholic schools secretly. Between his twelfth and seventeenth years, excessive application to study undermined his health and he developed a serious deformity in his spine, which in many ways distorted his view of life. By the age of twelve, he was not only an avid reader, but also an eager aspirant to the highest honours in poetry. When he was sixteen, he wrote *Pastorals*, which was his first published collection of poems. In 1711, Pope published his poem *An Essay on Criticism* followed by *The Rape of the Lock* in 1712. *The Rape of the Lock*, a mock heroic satire, was based on an actual event. The other books of Pope include *The Dunciad* and *An Essay On Man* (expressing Pope's ideas on man and the contemporary 18th century). Pope's poems have chaste and flawless style, witty and intense tone.

Pope had been influenced by Homer since childhood. In 1713, he declared his plans to publish a translation of the *Iliad*. His translation of the *Iliad* appeared between 1715 and 1720. According to Samuel Johnson, it was 'a performance which no age or nation could hope to equal'; however classical scholar Richard Bentley wrote: 'It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer.' Since the translation of the *Iliad* was extremely successful, Pope translated the *Odyssey*. The translation appeared in 1726; however, this time, confronted with the difficulty of the task, he took the help of William Broome and Elijah Fenton. Pope made an effort to conceal the extent of the collaboration (he himself translated only twelve books, Broome eight and Fenton four), but the secret leaked out. It spoiled Pope's reputation for some time, but his profits were not affected.

Some of the major works of Alexander Pope include:

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- ***An Essay on Criticism***: *An Essay on Criticism* is among Pope's first major poems. The poem was written in 1709 but was published in 1711. It is a verse essay written in the Horatian mode—a mode that has humour but is not satire—and essentially deals with how writers and critics reacted to the literary commerce of Pope's period. In *An Essay on Criticism*, Pope offers good criticism and opinion representing the ideals of his age.
- ***The Rape of the Lock***: *The Rape of the Lock* is a mock-heroic narrative poem. First published anonymously in Lintot's Miscellany in May 1712 in two cantos (334 lines), the poem was expanded and reissued under Pope's name on 2 March 1714, in a greater 5-canto version (794 lines). The final form became available in 1717 with additional content of Clarissa's speech on good humour. The poem can be classified as satire and revolves around a minor squabble which is compared to the quarrel between Gods.
- ***Eloisa to Abelard***: *Eloisa to Abelard* was published in 1717. This poem was inspired by the 12th century story of nun Heloise's illicit relationship and secret marriage to her teacher Pierre Abelard, then amongst the most popular philosophers in Paris.
- ***Three Hours after Marriage (with others)***: *Three Hours after Marriage* is a restoration comedy and collaboration between John Gay, Alexander Pope and John Arbuthnot. This work was published in 1717.
- ***Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady***: *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* is a poem in heroic couplets published in 1717. This 82-lines poem is among Pope's most enduring works.
- ***Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry***: *Peri Bathous, Or the Art of Sinking in Poetry* is a short essay published in 1727. The essay essentially ridicules contemporary poets.
- ***The Dunciad***: *The Dunciad* is a landmark literary satire published in three different versions. The first version (the 'three book' *Dunciad*) was published in 1728. The second version, *The Dunciad Variorum* was published in 1729. The first two versions were anonymously written. *The New Dunciad* appeared in 1743. It contained four books and had a different hero. The poem is based around the Goddess Dulness and the works of her chosen agents who bring stupidity and tastelessness to Great Britain.
- ***An Essay on Man***: *An Essay on Man* was published in 1734. The essay attempts to justify God's ways to man. It revolves around the natural order God has established for man. As man has no idea of God's purposes, he cannot criticize the same and must accept that 'Whatever IS, is RIGHT', a premise that was subsequently satirized in Voltaire's *Candide*.

3.4.1 Criticism of Pope's Works

A decade following Pope's death, critic Joseph Warton claimed that Alexander Pope's style of poetry was far from the best form of the art. The Romantic Movement had clearer views. Lord Byron identified Pope as amongst his greatest

influences; William Wordsworth however found Pope's works to be too corrupt to truly represent human condition.

The 20th century witnessed a revival of Pope's works. It was now found that his works were full of references to people and places of his period, and aided to comprehend the past better. English scholar Maynard Mack held Pope's poetry in high regard. He argued that Pope's moral vision equaled his undoubted technical excellence. The years 1953-1967 witnessed the production of the definitive Twickenham edition of Pope's poems, which was published in ten volumes.

Marxism and feminism, among other schools of post-structuralism, have more negative views of Pope. Laura Brown (1985) accuses Pope of defending the oppressive upper classes.

In *Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1985), Peter Stallybrass and Allon White alleged that Pope used the low culture which he despised to create his art.

Feminists are also critical of Pope. Ellen Pollak's *The Poetics of Sexual Myth* (1985) argues that the poet followed an anti-feminist tradition that regarded women inferior—physically and intellectually—to men. Carolyn Williams suggests that the role of the 'male' during 18th century Britain influenced Pope and his works.

3.4.2 *Ode on Solitude*

'*Ode on Solitude*' was written by Alexander Pope, when he was only twelve years old. This poem is one of his most popular one and is always included in anthologies.

Summary and critical analysis

Let us now start the analysis of the poem '*Ode on Solitude*'.

Lines 1–4

*Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.*

The first stanza begins with the word '*happy*'. While Pope could have used a more intricate word, the simplicity and commonness of his selection of word immediately sets the peaceful mood for the reader. This stanza explains how the man, or the individual talked about, in the poem is only concerned with what takes place within his inherited land. The stanza does not talk about anything like that the man is wishing to break free of this lifestyle; however, it claims that he is '*content to breathe... in his own ground.*' Thus, the poem begins with the story of a man who is able to limit to his desires and necessities to a few acres of land. This man is happy because he lives a life of contentment.

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Lines 5–8

*Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.*

Here, the poet continues to describe the happy man's life and how he gets milk from his own cows, makes his bread from the grain he grows in his own fields, makes his clothes from his own sheep's wool and gets shade and wood from the trees he grows. Thus, all the daily necessities of the happy man are met by his own cattle and field. In this stanza, Pope once again employs uniform language to stress upon the regularity of this farmer's life. He lists the areas from where the farmer obtains his resources to live his life. The poet uses simple language with very little hidden implications. The mention of how the trees are beneficial both in winter and in summer seasons reassures the reader that this farmer, though all alone, is provided for by nature.

Lines 9–12

*Blest! who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,*

In these lines, the poet describes the life of a happy man as a blessing because he is free from all the troubles and worries of the world. His life passes by easily because he has a healthy body and a peaceful mind. The quietness of the rural setting acts as a further blessing for the happy man. The stanza apparently expresses Pope's wish to experience this kind of solitude since he refers to this man as 'Blest'. Pope's eventful lifestyle, which was ridden with conflict on regular basis, seems to be a total opposite of this simple man. In the city, it is very much impossible to find this kind of peace, and then to enjoy it without being reminded of what lies outside of that safe zone. He also refers to the man as being 'in health of body,' something that Pope was never going to be able to achieve as he was burdened with health issues right from his childhood.

Lines 13–16

*Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most doth please,
With meditation.*

These lines state that a happy man is able to maintain a very balanced life. He enjoys a sound sleep in the night, gets time for study and rest, and is able to sincerely meditate on life and God. The third and fourth stanzas seem to mesh together with the line 'Quiet by day' for it can be recited as part of either. Although it rhymes with the stanza that it stands in, it can also be logically incorporated into the next stanza due to its coincidence with the phrase 'sound sleep by night'. Once again, this

meshing of stanzas shows the uniformity of this kind of lifestyle. Each day is so much just like the next that the happy man may not be able to differentiate where one week ends and another begins, just due to how repetitive his life is.

Lines 17–20

*Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me dye;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lye.*

In the last lines, the poet wishes to live an isolated life like the happy man and wants to leave the world silently without having a tombstone built for him as a memorial on his grave. The last stanza expresses the farmer's that is, poet's acceptance of his life. He comprehends that he is unknown and thus does not try to fight for his identity. He also recognizes that like all of the seasons he experiences, he will die as well. In most poetry, the concept of an 'unlamented' death seems extremely depressing; however, to this farmer, it is an ideal ending to a quiet life.

It is from this stanza that we come to know about the fact that this farmer does not have a family. It looks like this individual is so used to being alone that he does not make any effort to alter that situation, as it has worked for him for so long. This 'solitude' could also be an allusion to Pope's own love life since he never got married when he lived.

Structural analysis

Let us begin our discussion by first understanding what an ode is. The ode is a kind of lyric poetry which originated from the Greeks. The poem *Ode on Solitude* has five stanzas. The poem has been written in **iambic** rhythm. Pope's is tetrameter with a stanza ending dimeter verse. Pope's rhyme scheme is a b a b c d c d e f e f g h g h, with no ending couplet.

It is to be noted that the first and the second stanzas focus on the same subject while the third and fourth stanzas deviate and deal with a different subject within the same topic.

The first two stanzas define who is being praised in the ode, 'How happy he who ...,' while three and four reflect the blessing of such a one, 'Blest!'. The end stanza presents the poetic speaker's supplication to an unnamed listener: 'Thus let me live'

Themes

Pope in this poem has largely dealt on the theme of solitude. In the beginning of the poem, the poet reaffirms the fact that contentment can be found by living alone on one's farm land. The poet feels that instead of roaming all over the world, the individual can find satisfaction on one's own paternal acres of land. The poet further elaborates on the theme of living self-sufficiently by growing grain for one's bread, and warming oneself by burning trees from one's land. The poet further considers a person 'blest' who can live peacefully in good health. In the final

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stanza, the poet says that he would like to live and die peacefully without being mourned by anyone.

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Check Your Progress

11. Which work of Alexander Pope talks about the natural order God has established for man?
12. What does the poet wish in the last lines of the poem *Ode to Solitude*?
13. List the prominent works of Alexander Pope.
14. In which year was *The Dunciad* published?

3.5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. John Donne (1572-1631) was born in the Elizabethan England. He was born into a religious Catholic family in 1572.
2. The prominent works of John Milton are the following:
 - *The Sun Rising*
 - *The Good Morrow*
 - *A Valediction: Of Weeping*
 - *Holy Sonnet 14*
 - *His Mistress Going to Bed*
 - *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*
3. Metaphysics is a part of philosophy dealing with any subject that surpasses its traceability through the senses. Therefore, the mind, the time, free will, God and here, love, are all matters of metaphysical thought.
4. In *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*, the orator compares his soul and the soul of his beloved to a twin compass.
5. The title *The Good Morrow* represents 'actual sunrise' and 'birth of an awakened person'.
6. According to Donne, love is the blending of physical as well as spiritual love or rather mind and body.
7. John Dryden was born in the year 1631 to the village rector of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England.
8. Dryden's first significant work in criticism was the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' (1668), which is a discourse on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays.
9. *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) is the most famous political satire of English literature written in the Restoration period. It was written by John Dryden between 1631 and 1700, the most notable poet and dramatist of English letters of the Restoration Age.

10. Absalom is James, the Duke of Monmouth in *Absalom and Achitophel*.
11. Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* is the work that talks about the natural order God has established for man.
12. In the last lines of the poem *Ode to Solitude*, the poet wishes to live an isolated life like the happy man and wants to leave the world silently without having a tombstone built for him as a memorial on his grave.
13. The prominent works of Alexander Pope are *The Rape of the Lock*, *An Essay on Criticism*, *The Dunciad*, *An Essay on Man* and *The Poetics of Sexual Myth*.
14. *The Dunciad* is a landmark literary satire published in three different versions. The first version (the 'three book' *Dunciad*) was published in 1728. The second version, *The Dunciad Variorum* was published in 1729.

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3.6 SUMMARY

- John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley, etc. are some of the major names in the 17th century metaphysical poetry.
- The term, 'Metaphysical' came to be applied to them in a special sense, that is to say, they were not so described because their subject was the relationship to subject matter or the ultimate nature of reality; this is true of Milton and Dante, who have little else in common.
- It is true that some of them—Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw—were metaphysical in this generally accepted sense, but the adjective is applied to them to indicate not merely subject matter, but qualities of expression in relation to subject matter.
- Although in no sense a school or movement proper, the metaphysical poets share common characteristics of wit, inventiveness, and a love of elaborate stylistic manoeuvres. Metaphysical concerns form the popular subject of their poetry, which investigates the world by rational discussion of its phenomena rather than by intuition or mysticism.
- John Donne is considered the pre-eminent representative of the metaphysical poets.
- *The Good Morrow* is a metaphysical poem consisting of twenty-one lines, divided into three stanzas. The poet speaks to the woman he loves as they wake up after spending the night together.
- The title 'Love's Alchemy' seems like an ironic phrase that sets the tone of satire from the very beginning of the poem. By the time John Donne arrived in the literary scene, people had started considering alchemy as an absurd and impractical metaphysical idea. Similarly, the alchemy of love is also a ridiculous idea.

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- John Dryden was born in the year 1631 to the village rector of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England. He was raised a puritan who by the age of 10 years had read and assimilated as English translation of the works of the Greek historian Polybius.
- Dryden began pursuing higher education at Trinity College, Cambridge in the 1655. He was among the most highly educated men of his times and was one of the forerunners of the Augustan age.
- Having aligned with the Puritan party, Dryden wrote an elegy entitled *Heroic Stanzas* on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659 and it is these verses that made him famous all over the country.
- Dryden knew that plays were the most profitable branch of literature so he wrote them mostly from 1663 to 1681 knowing well that his genius did not lie in drama. During this period, he mostly wrote plays which were mostly coarse as the stage audiences during those times demanded vulgarity and Dryden complied.
- His first significant work in criticism was the ‘Essay of Dramatic Poesie’ (1668), which is a discourse on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays.
- *The Fables*, his last work, consisted of a collection adopted from the works of Chaucer and Boccaccio. Dryden died in 1700, the year of the publication of his *The Fables*. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.
- Absalom and Achitophel, one of John Dryden’s greatest political satires, is written in heroic couplets, which means it deals with an epic theme and also indicates the writer’s authority.
- In Absalom and Achitophel, Dryden comments on the Popish Plot (an alleged plot by Catholics to kill the king), the Exclusion Crisis (to prevent James, Charles’ Catholic brother, from inheriting the throne after Charles’ death) and the Monmouth Rebellion (an attempt to put the king’s illegitimate son James, Duke of Monmouth, on the throne). These events are set against the biblical story of King David and Absalom, his rebellious son.
- Known as the ‘Wasp of Twickenham’, Alexander Pope was an outstanding figure of the neoclassical school of poetry in the 18th century. He was an English essayist, critic, satirist and one of the greatest poets of Enlightenment.
- Pope’s poem, *Ode on Solitude*, is a reflective and meditative poem that focuses around the importance of leading a lonely and carefree life away from the hustle and bustle of the city life. It beautifully describes the pleasure of leading an unknown and balanced life mixed with study, recreation, meditation and sufficient time for oneself.

3.7 KEY TERMS

- **Hyperbole:** Hyperbole is a figure of speech that is exaggerated description or statement. Such exaggeration is used for vivid impact.

- **Godhead:** The term is used in Christianity to mean God, including the father, son and the Holy Spirit.
- **Theocracy:** It means governance of a country by religious leaders.
- **Paschal lamb:** The passover sacrifice or Paschal lamb is the sacrifice that the Torah mandates the Israelites to ritually slaughter on the evening of Passover, and eat on the first night of the holiday with bitter herbs and matzo.
- **Ode:** It is a poem written in praise of a person, thing or event.
- **Panegyric:** It is a speech or a piece of writing that completely praises a person or idea without criticizing it at all.
- **Satire:** It is a literary technique of criticizing the ideas or people in a humorous manner.

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3.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of John Donne.
2. Briefly explain the following passage from John Donne's *The Good Morrow*:
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.
3. Write a short note on the life of John Dryden.
4. What is the structure of *Absalom and Achitophel* (lines 1-50)?
5. What is the meaning of the following lines?
'Blest! who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away'

Long-Answer Questions

1. Evaluate the salient features of metaphysical poetry.
2. Discuss the structure of the poem *The Good Morrow*.
3. Comment on the title of the poem *Love's Alchemy*.
4. Analyse the main themes of the poem *Love's Alchemy*.
5. Examine the salient features of the hero of *Absalom and Achitophel*.
6. Do you think Pope's poem '*Ode on Solitude*' is a reflection of his own life? Give reasons for your answer.

3.9 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 THE AUGUSTAN AGE

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Thomas Gray
 - 4.2.1 *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*
- 4.3 William Collins
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4.0 INTRODUCTION

The term Augustan literature has been derived from the authors of the 1720s and 1730s themselves, in response to a term that George I of England preferred for himself. While George I wanted the title to show his power, the authors viewed it as a reflection of Ancient Rome’s transition from crude literature to extremely political and sophisticated literature. Due to the suitability of the metaphor, the period from 1689–1750 came to be known as ‘the Augustan Age’ by critics all through the eighteenth century (which included Voltaire and Oliver Goldsmith). The literature of the period was blatantly political and completely aware of critical dictates of the times. It was an age of enthusiasm, vivacity and scandal, of huge energy and inventiveness and outrage.

The political situation during this period comprised of Tories and Whigs. The Whigs and Tories supported different views and opinions. The Tories were the conservatives who were opposed to any change or development. They completely supported the monarchy and the Church. The Whigs supported industrial and commercial development. They were the descendants of the parliamentarians. The society of the Augustan period was generally divided into three classes: the craftsmen, farmers and rich merchants. It is also to be noted that the Augustan Age witnessed enhanced interest in reading. This was due to the printing of low priced books during this period. As a result, books became accessible to the lower class and middle class as well.

The age reflected an era when English, Scottish and Irish people saw themselves in the midst of an expanding economy, reducing barriers to education and the initiation of the Industrial Revolution. The most popular poet of the age was Alexander Pope. However, Pope’s brilliance to a certain extent lies in his never-ending battle with other poets. Moreover, his peaceful, seemingly neo-classical approach to poetry would always compete with extremely distinctive verse and stiff competition from poets like Ambrose Philips. It was at this period

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that James Thomson created his melancholic, *The Seasons* and Edward Young wrote *Night Thoughts*. It was also the era that saw a serious debate over the appropriate model for the pastoral. In criticism, poets struggled with a doctrine of decorum, of matching proper words with proper sense and of accomplishing a diction that would match the weight of a subject.

During the middle of 1700s, there emerged a new crop of poets called the Churchyard Poets. These poets were exclusively known for writing poetry with a solitary figure at the centre. This figure was seen walking in a ‘country’ instead of the city (London), which was a fashion at that time. The loneliness provided the figure with space and time to reflect upon various subjects, which were generally melancholic in nature. This trend was started by Thomas Gray whose *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard* (1750) set off a new craze for poetry of melancholy reflection. The poets included in this group are Thomas Parnell, John Keats, Thomas Warton, Thomas Percy, Thomas Gray, Oliver Goldsmith, William Cowper, Christopher Smart, James Macpherson, Robert Blair, William Collins, Thomas Chatterton, Mark Akenside, Joseph Warton, Henry Kirke White, Edward Young, David Mallet, William Mason, and James Beattie.

In this unit, we will study some of the major poems of these Churchyard Poets including Thomas Gray, William Collins and Oliver Goldsmith.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the characteristics of the Augustan Age
- Describe the life of Gray, Collins and Goldsmith
- Discuss the themes of the poetry of Gray, Collins and Goldsmith

4.2 THOMAS GRAY

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill, London, on 26 December 1716. His parents Philip and Dorothy Antrobus Gray had twelve children out of which Thomas Gray was the fifth child. Dorothy at one point of time left her husband but after rigorous perusal returned to him. He went to Eton College where his uncle was a teacher. Reminiscing his wonderful days at Eton College, he later wrote *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*. Gray was a delicate and intelligent child who loved reading literature. During this time, he made three close friends—Horace Walpole, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West.

Gray moved to Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1734. He did not like the curriculum, teachers and his classmates at Peterhouse. He found the curriculum boring, teachers ‘mad with Pride’ and his classmates ‘sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate Things’. Though he took admission as a law student, yet he spent most of his time reading classical and contemporary literature. In 1739, Gray went on a Continental tour with Horace Walpole. In 1741, Gray’s father passed away.

It was in 1742 that he took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer. He went to Cambridge and began a self-imposed

programme of literary study. He turned out to be one of the most learned men of this period, though he called himself lazy. He became a Fellow of Peterhouse and later of Pembroke College, Cambridge. He spent most of his life as a scholar in Cambridge. Interestingly, he is considered a leading poet of the mid eighteenth century even though his published work during his lifetime amounts to less than 1,000 lines. He was offered the post of Poet Laureate in 1757, which he declined.

In 1759, Gray moved to London to study at the British museum. In 1761, he returned to Cambridge. He made a few trips to London, some parts of England, Scotland and Wales; but remained in Cambridge for the rest of his life.

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

Some of his popular poems are:

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

4.2.1 *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.
Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,*

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*Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share,
Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.
The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:-
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.
Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:
But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.
Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,*

Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.
Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,
Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.
Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.
For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, —
Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upl
'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high.

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*His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.
'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;
'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne,-
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.'*

The Epitaph

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

Summary and Critical Analysis

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

The poem has the characteristics of Augustan as well as Romantic poetry since it was written towards the end of Augustan age, a period which marked the beginning of Romantic period. The poem exhibits balanced phrasing of Augustan age and emotionalism of Romantic era. It is believed that Gray began writing this elegy in 1742 in the graveyard of a church in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, and completed it in 1751. The poem was first published in 1751 and its improved

versions were published in 1753, 1758 and 1768. The poem is written in iambic pentameter and heroic quatrains. It is considered to be one of the masterpieces by Thomas Gray.

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

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

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

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

In addition, the poet also states that forefathers lying in the graves would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of working in the fields. A poem that deals with practical aspects of agriculture and rural affairs is called georgic verse. This stanza brings out the element of georgic verse in the poem, a verse that was quite popular in the eighteenth century. This relation of a farmer with soil also brings out the link of a man with nature. The element of nature was one of the major characteristics of Romantic poetry. Further, the poet warns the rich and powerful people not to scorn the ordinary people just because they are not popular and do not have annals written on their graves. Here he reminds the rich people that they would also die one day irrespective of the fact that they are wealthy and have a respectable position in the society.

He also tells the rich that they should not look down upon the modest graves of the ordinary people. He also implies that even though the powerful people have elaborate graves with profuse memorials and inspiring honours but these do not

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help in bringing them back to life. Their merits in life would not save them from death. He uses the phrase:

Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,

Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

In these lines, Gray personifies flattery and death as if death has a will which cannot be changed even with the help of flattery. Gray then wonders about the hidden talents and intellectual abilities of the common people. He states that they might have become powerful people or great poets but there was no one to patronize them. Their lack of resources forced them to resort to rustic life and forget all their ambitions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Structural analysis

The poem comprises of 32 stanzas and each stanza consists of four lines written in iambic pentameter as per the abab rhyming scheme. The format in which Gray wrote his elegy came to be known as ‘elegiac stanza’ format.

Themes

Primarily, the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* deals with the theme of death. An elegy is basically written to mourn the dead. In this *poem*, Gray is not mourning any leader or king rather he is mourning the rude forefathers’ of a small country village buried in the local churchyard. The use of words such as ‘knell’, ‘darkness’, ‘solemn stillness’, ‘solitary’ – all these words showcase the theme of death in this poem.

Another significant theme developed in this poem is the importance of love. Gray emphasizes upon the simple pleasures of life which individual enjoy during their lifetime. One such example is that of the children greeting their father once they return from their fields. Hence, the picture of family presented in this poem is one of joy and felicity. In simple words, Gray recognizes both family and friends as the simple pleasures of life.

Check Your Progress

1. When and where was Thomas Gray born?
2. Mention the prominent poems written by Thomas Gray.
3. Mention the incident which instigated Thomas Gray to write poetry.
4. In which year was Thomas Gray offered the post of Poet Laureate?
5. State one characteristic of Romantic poetry evident in the poem.
6. Why are memorials raised as per the speaker of the poem?

4.3 WILLIAM COLLINS

William Collins is a renowned eighteenth century English poet from England. The lyrical odes written by him deviate largely from the Augustan poetry and reflect a tendency towards the highlights of the Romantic period.

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

By year 1746, Collins was increasingly in debt. Subsequently, he agreed to liaise with Warton on a volume of odes. It so happened that Warton's volume of odes was well received whereas Collins' *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* did not receive a good response. His forthcoming repute was dependent on this very work. The ode form, which permits intensely poignant depictions and individual association with the theme of the poem, mark the poems. These poems went almost unnoticed during that period as they did not comply with the Augustan spirit of the times. In 1749, Collins uncle passed away leaving enough money for Collins to make him debt-free. However, the dismal performance of his literary works (poems) left him depressed.

This depression was further worsened by his drunken habit. This made him go further into a mentally imbalanced condition and 1754 saw his confinement to the McDonald's Madhouse in Chelsea. He was shifted from this place under the supervision of his elder sister in Chichester till he died in 1759. His was laid to rest at St. Andrew's church.

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

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

4.3.1 *In the Downhill of Life*

*In the downhill of life, when I find I'm declining,
 May my lot no less fortunate be
 Than a snug elbow-chair can afford for reclining,
 And a cot that o'erlooks the wide sea;
 With an ambling pad-pony to pace o'er the lawn,
 While I carol away idle sorrow,
 And blithe as the lark that each day hails the dawn
 Look forward with hope for tomorrow.*

*With a porch at my door, both for shelter and shade too,
 As the sunshine or rain may prevail;
 And a small spot of ground for the use of the spade too,
 With a barn for the use of the flail;
 A cow for my dairy, a dog for my game,
 And a purse when a friend wants to borrow;
 I'll envy no Nabob his riches or fame,
 Nor what honours may wait him tomorrow.*

*From the bleak northern blast may my cot be completely
 Secured by a neighbouring hill;
 And at night may repose steal upon me more sweetly
 By the sound of a murmuring rill;
 And while peace and plenty I find at my board,
 With a heart free from sickness and sorrow,
 With my friends may I share what today may afford,
 And let them spread the table tomorrow.*

*And when I at last must throw off this frail cov'ring
 Which I've worn for threescore years and ten,
 On the brink of the grave I'll not seek to keep hov'ring,
 Nor my thread wish to spin o'er again;
 But my face in the glass I'll serenely survey,
 And with smiles count each wrinkle and furrow;
 As this old worn-out stuff, which is threadbare today,
 May become everlasting tomorrow.*

Summary and critical analysis

In the Downhill of Life depicts the hardships faced by the poet during his difficult phase of life. He says that he finds himself declining on the path of life. His fortune is no better than an ordinary elbow chair which barely can recline or a cot which lies facing the vast sea. Here, by comparing his fortune to that of non-living things, the poet is almost dehumanizing himself. The poet represents his misery and troubles

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in a metaphorical manner. He uses the metaphor of 'downhill' to depict the misery in his life as he says:

In the downhill of life, when I find I'm declining,

May my lot no less fortunate be

Than a snug that o'erlooks the wide sea;

With an ambling pad-pony to pace o'er the lawn,

The poet uses the animal imagery ('pad-pony' and 'lark'), to depict his sorrow and pain. Even in his most miserable situation, he always stayed hopeful like the lark. As a lark, with an indifference, welcomes the new day, similarly the poet has always hailed the new day with hope. He is not ready to give up. He is filled with unleashed and impeccable strength and hope. He says:

While I carol away idle sorrow,

And blithe as the lark that each day hails the dawn

Look forward with hope for tomorrow.

The tone of the poem turns highly optimistic from here. He describes all the positive things in his life. The entrance of his house has both shelter and shade protecting against both sunshine and rain. He also has a piece of land for farming:

And a small spot of ground for the use of the spade too

His farm also have numerous animals dwelling there freely. The animals include cow which provide him with milk and a dog which he uses for hunting. The use of animal imagery depicts the desire of the poet to be wild and carefree.

The poet only wishes to have enough fortune so as to help his needy friends. His concern for his friends is perhaps the most heartwarming quality of this poem. The poem is written with the sense of brotherhood.

I'll envy no Nabob his riches or fame,

Nor what honours may wait him tomorrow.

He declares that he is not envious or jealous of any rich man or the glory bestowed upon him. He is also not concerned about any distinctions in future. He further expresses his wish for his house to be protected against the northern blast and its bleakness. The poem revives the rustic and pastoral setting as he says:

And at night may repose steal upon me more sweetly

By the sound of a murmuring rill;

The poet wants a restful sleep at night with the sound of murmuring stream or 'rill' in the background.

Although the poet enjoys his life or rather he is content with his life, which is free from any sorrow, his wish is to have enough to help his friends. The idea of sharing is again being reiterated which emphasizes his love for his friends. He can only share his fortune and peace with his friends and after he is gone he hopes that his friends would spread this cheer even further. The poet seems to want to leave a legacy in which his friends would honour his memory by being generous.

With my friends may I share what today may afford,

And let them spread the table tomorrow.

In the last stanza, the poet declares that during the last phase of his life ‘*when I at last must throw off this frail cov’ring*’, he would not desire longer life. He will instead remember his life calmly, examining it and appreciating it. His only desire is to be remembered by his family and friends after he is gone as he says:

*But my face in the glass I’ll serenely survey,
And with smiles count each wrinkle and furrow;
As this old worn-out stuff, which is threadbare today,
May become everlasting tomorrow.*

Unlike his contemporaries, Collins is not melancholic about his death. Most of the poets of his time were concerned with the mortality of human life. However, in this poem, Collins embrace it. He also happily embrace the old age. The poet also celebrates the move from city to pastoral life. The pastoral setting is so pure and uncontaminated with the hustle-bustle of city life. In this pastoral setting, he will remove his frail covering which he has been wearing for more than sixty years. Whenever he looks in the mirror to survey his face, he finds himself like an old worn coat which is ‘*threadbare today*’. The poet wishes that the smiles which shine on his wrinkled face will become eternal tomorrow. Thus, the poet wants to spend his life with smiles and contentment.

In another poem, *Ode to Evening*, which appeared in *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects*, the poet again celebrates pastoral elements. It remains one of the most beautiful lyrical poem of the eighteenth century. It is written in unrhymed stanzas of four lines. In *Ode to Evening*, the poet is seen at his best. The personification of the ‘evening’ makes it a masterwork. It is not just a time of dusk. It is the spirit of the ‘evening’ appearing as Nymph. She is depicted as being reserved by nature. She is serene and simple. In her tent, the sun sets and resets. She has been depicted as a composed maid. The poet desires to sing his songs to comfort her modest ear. He desires to learn some softened strain from the ‘evening’ herself so that when he sings it, she is pleased. The poem starts with an invocation of the spirit of the evening to teach the poet to sing a soft strain to it. She is not just a part of dead nature.

At times she comes across as contemplative Eve. She wants to hear the poet’s songs. Her hours are fragrant. Fairies, sleeping inside the buds at daytime, appear in the evening, filling the atmosphere with their fragrance. His song should be as soft as the murmur of the streams or the dying winds. The poet says that barring the cry of the bat and the beetle, there is complete calm all around in the evening. He wishes to go to some solitary and barren spot or some ancient ruined building among lonely valleys in the evening to watch its beauty. But if he is prevented from doing so by the ‘*chill, blustering winds or driving rain*’, he would like to go to a lovely cottage on the mountain side to watch the dark evening gradually descending over the surrounding landscape with the ‘*dusky veil*’. The poem ends with the poet’s conviction that the evening shall continue to inspire fancy (poets), friendship (friends), science (men of learning) and peace (lovers of peace) throughout the seasons of the year.

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A comparison can be drawn with the Spenserian sunrise described by William Blake in *To Spring*, also unrhymed, which emulates Milton and Collins in lyric condensation and quasi-allegorical imagery. There are significant textual variants in what is today the best-known of Collins's poems. *Ode to Evening* was a touchstone poem for early romantic poets and became one of the most frequently imitated odes written in the eighteenth century. The succinct picture of the setting sun, in the 8th book of the *Iliad* has very strong outlines, and commends the warmest approbation of our judgment; but, being unadorned by other circumstances, and wanting objects to enliven the landscape, the applause ends with the judgment, and never sinks deep into the heart:

Now deep in ocean sunk the lamp of light,

Drawing behind the cloudy veil of night

The following scene in Mr Collins' *Ode to the Evening*, being animated by proper allegorical personages and coloured highly with incidental expressions, warms the breast with a sympathetic glow of retired thoughtfulness: '*For, when thy folding star, arises, shews / His paly circlet...*' The lyric stanza, without rhyme, was first introduced by Milton, in his stiff, obscure translation of the 5th ode of the first book of Horace.

This new order of verse was adopted, polished and rendered exquisitely harmonious by Collins in his *Ode to Evening*. Collins wrote his admired *Ode to Evening*; he had a design of writing many more Odes without rhyme. If Collins lives by the reputation of one, more than of another performance, it strikes the critics that his *Ode to Evening* will be 'that' on which the voice of posterity will be more uniform in praise. It is a 'pearl' of the most perfect tint and shape. In smaller poems, blank verse has been rarely tried, except in numerous and nameless imitations of an indifferent prototype by Collins—a poet who had, indeed, a curious ear as well as an exquisite taste in versification; but both were of so peculiar a kind that neither the music of his numbers nor the beauty of his imagery are always agreeable. The very structure of the stanza of his *Ode to Evening* is so mechanical to the eye—two long lines followed by two short ones—that a presentiment (like an instinctive judgment in physiognomy) instantly occurs, that both thought and language must be fettered in a shape so mathematical, wanting even the hieroglyphic recommendations of the metrical hatchets, wings, altars and other exploded puerilities of the later Greek epigrammatists and the elder English rhymers.

Collins's *Ode* itself is a precious specimen of mosaic work, in which the pictures are set with painful and consummate skill, but have a hard and cold effect, beyond the usual enamel of his style. A critic Algernon Charles Swinburne says:

Collins' range of flight was perhaps the narrowest but assuredly the highest of his generation. He could not be taught singing like a finch: but he struck straight upward for the sun like a lark. Again, he had an incomparable and infallible eye for landscape; a purity, fidelity, and simple-seeming subtlety of tone, unapproached until the more fiery but not more luminous advent of Burns.

Among all English poets, he has, it seems, the closest affinity to our great contemporary school of French landscape painters. Corot on canvas might have

signed his *Ode to Evening*; Millet might have given us some of his graver studies, and left them as he did no whit the less sweet for their softly austere and simply tender gravity.' Collins is best known by his *Ode on the Passions*, but incomparably his finest and most distinctive work is the *Ode to Evening*. The superior popularity of *The Passions* is easily explained. It might be recited at a penny reading, and every line of its strenuous rhetoric would tell and every touch would be at once appreciated. But the beauties of the *Ode to Evening* are of a much stronger kind, and the structure of it is infinitely more complicated.

A critic George Saintsbury says:

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

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

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

The blank ode has for some time solicited admission into the English poetry; but its efforts, hitherto, seem to have been vain, at least its reception has been no more than partial. It remains a question, then, whether there is not something in the nature of blank verse less adapted to the lyric than to the heroic measure, since, though it has been generally received in the latter, it is yet unadopted in the former.

In order to discover this, we are to consider the different modes of these different species of poetry. That of the heroic is uniform; that of the lyric is various; and in these circumstances of uniformity and variety probably lies the cause why blank verse has been successful in the one, and unacceptable in the other. While it presented itself only in one form, it was familiarized to the ear by custom; but where it was obliged to assume the different shapes of the lyric muse, it seemed still a stranger of uncouth figure, was received rather with curiosity than pleasure, and entertained without that ease or satisfaction which acquaintance and familiarity produce — Moreover, the heroic blank verse obtained a sanction of infinite

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importance to its general reception, when it was adopted by one of the greatest poets the world ever produced, and was made the vehicle of the noblest poem that ever was written.

When this poem at length extorted that applause which ignorance and prejudice had united to withhold, the versification soon found its imitators, and became more generally successful than even in those countries from whence it was imported. But lyric blank verse had met with no such advantages; for Mr. Collins, whose genius and judgment in harmony might have given it so powerful an effect, has left us but one specimen of it in the Ode to Evening.’

With such similarity to *Ode to Evening*, we can appreciate the pastoral setting of the poem, *In the Downhill of Life*, even more.

Themes

Let us go through the relevant themes of this poem.

The poet reflects on the misery and predicament of human life as one of the major themes of *In the Downhill of Life*. The misery and predicament of human life is as vast as the sea. He is unable to face it. He seems to be an escapist. This misery is so overwhelming to the poet that he finds himself unfortunate to control and transcend it. He is unable to relax anywhere in his life. Human misery has been depicted metaphorically as ‘down-hill’.

Unleashed perseverance is another significant theme existing in the poem. Despite the miserable life, the poet is not ready to give up. He is not ready to yield to the hardships of life rather he strengthens himself with hope even in a despairing situation. He is hopeful like a lark. Generally, if we see pain around us, mostly romantic poets are escapists. Unlike John Keats, who wishes to flee with the nightingale, in the world of fantasy, on seeing the ‘fever and fret’, the poet is not keen to escape from the miseries of life rather, he is ready to face it with his bloom of hope and optimism.

The poem invokes the theme of brotherhood not only with other human beings rather the animals as well in this poem. There are cows in the barn. The house of the poet gives shelter to the animals and also shade from the winter and rain. The animals move freely here and there. They feel protected near the house of the poet. He is also a philanthropist. He always helps the needy. Without having envy for the ‘nawaabs’ and the ‘mughals’, he is satisfied with the purse which he always owes to help his friends.

Structural analysis

The poem *In the Downhill of Life* has an organized structure. With the use of animal imagery, the poem is written with freshness and liveliness. Even being in the midst of pain and misery, the tone of the poem is very optimistic. The language of the poem is lucid and metaphorical. The poet uses metaphor while describing the ‘lark’. He says: ‘While I carol away idle sorrow, And blithe as the lark that each day’. ‘Downhill’ also depicts the misery in life. The poem is written with rustic and pastoral innocence and simplicity. The murmuring sound of the stream gives him peace and love. He enjoys the beauties of the night while sleeping. The structure

of the poem is well-organized with the proper transition of thought. The poem has thesis, antithesis and synthesis. With the evident use of poetic devices, the poem strikes the readers effectively.

Check Your Progress

7. When and where was William Collins born?
8. In which year was *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* published?
9. What did Dr Johnson think about Collins' poetry?

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4.4 OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774) is an Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright, essayist and poet. He is best remembered for works like the pastoral poem titled *The Deserted Village* (1770), novel like *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and plays like *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773) and *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768). He is also the author of *An History of the Earth and Animated Nature*. He is also credited with the authorship of the popular classic children's tale *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* from where the phrase 'goody two-shoes' originated.

There is a bit of uncertainty pertaining to Goldsmith's date and year of birth. The authority file of the Library of Congress records informed one of his biographers that he was born on 29 November 1731. Some other record suggests that he could have been born on 10th November in some year between 1727 and 1731. It is now generally accepted that he was born on 10 November 1730. There is also some confusion regarding the location of Goldsmith's birthplace. His father being a worker in the parish of Forgnay as the Anglican curate made it to be as now generally believed that his place of birth must be in the city of Pallas close to Ballymahon a town in Ireland. Speculations ascert that he could have been born at the Smith Hill House residence of his maternal grandparents situated in the Roscommon County because it was where Oliver Jones, his grandfather worked as both a clergyman and the teacher of the Elphin diocesan school.

At about two years old, Goldsmith's father got appointed as the rector of Kilkenny West parish which was located in County Westmeath. His father's job, made the family relocate to the parsonage at Lissoy and resided there until Goldsmith's father left his mortal remains in the year 1747.

In the year 1744, Goldsmith headed to attend Trinity College (Dublin). He was tutored under the guidance of Theaker Wilder but Goldsmith's disinterest in his subjects- theology and law- had him slipping into the bottom of his class in terms of academic performance. Eventually he graduated from Trinity in with Bachelor of Arts in the year 1749. Goldsmith couldn't acquire any entry to a profession associated with the church or at the legal firms due to the low grade in his degree which came without any specific discipline or distinctions which that

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might have helped him in any light. His education, as it appeared, had given him a refined taste for exquisite clothes, performing Irish melodies, playing cards and flute playing. After this, he stayed with his mother for a very short while and tried his hands on various professions without meeting much success. He studied medicine without any specific reason at the University of Edinburgh as well as at the University of Leiden. He undertook a walking tour of places like Flanders, Switzerland, France and Northern Italy and tried to earn a living by playing his flute.

In the year 1756, Goldsmith settled in London. Here he again tried various jobs which included working as an assistant to an apothecary and playing the role of an usher in a school. He was perpetually in debt and was addicted to gambling. Despite this, Goldsmith managed to produce a great many works as a hack writer for so many publishers in London. He was soon noticed for the painstaking pattern in his compositions and hence, brought into the honorable company of Samuel Johnson. He became the founding member of 'The Club' (a literary club) in company of Johnson. Horace Walpole named Goldsmith as the *Inspired Idiot* as a result of the literary kind of talent that he possessed along with his unruly and indisciplined lifestyle. It was in this period that he adopted the pseudonym of James Willington who happened to be a fellow student at the Trinity College. Under the guise of Willington he published his 1758 translation of Huguenot Jean Marteilhe's autobiography.

Goldsmith was short in stature, extremely witty, simple by nature with no sign of cleverness. He was not financially stable during his lifetime. Nonetheless, his simplicity, love for children, good-heartedness were his essential qualities which sustained him in his life. Dr. Johnson assisted Goldsmith in his literary journey leading him to fame. Goldsmith, fortunately, was surrounded by a large group of intellectual men such as philosophers, critics, scientists and painters who constantly assisted him during his lifetime.

Goldsmith's contemporaries describe him as prone to envy, a generous but extremely disorganized person. As a story about Goldsmith suggests that he once planned to migrate to America but his plans never got executed because he missed the ship he was expected to board! He fell prey to premature death in the year 1774. Many are of the opinion that this probably was a result of his own wrong diagnosis of him suffering from kidney infection. Goldsmith was later on buried at Temple Church. A monument was constructed in his memory at the center of Ballymahon as well as in Westminster Abbey which bears the epitaph written by no one other than Samuel Johnson.

4.4.1 Memory

*O MEMORY, thou fond deceiver,
Still importunate and vain,
To former joys recurring ever,
And turning all the past to pain:*

*Thou, like the world, th' oppress'd oppressing,
Thy smiles increase the wretch's woe:*

*And he who wants each other blessing
In thee must ever find a foe.*

The Augustan Age

Summary and critical analysis

The poet addresses memory who he called a deceiver. It is a bewitcher to the joys of life. The memory is also addressed as 'importunate' and 'vain'. The whole past becomes rather more painful through the chains of memory. The poet curses memory because it gives him pain by recollecting the joyous past, which he cannot go back to and relive. The poet longs for the past as his present seems sorrowful. Memory acts like an oppressor who oppresses the speaker by bringing all past moments of joy to his mind. He says:

*Thou like the world, th' oppress'd oppressing,
Thy smiles increase the wretch's woe;*

It acts like the world itself which oppresses and suppresses the downtrodden and prefers rich and fortunate. The memory has been personified by the poet. Like our society, the memory too oppresses people with reminder of their past. Those who want to be blessed always find an enemy in the memory because it always comes with pain.

Style

In terms of style, the poem is written in simple and lucid language. The diction used by the poet is simple. The poem is written in metaphorical manner. The rhyme scheme is abab, cdcd. The poet has used alliteration in multiple instances like 'wretch's woe', 'past, pain' and 'find, foe'.

Themes

In the poem *Memory*, the poet has presented memory as a bewitcher as it makes the past more painful through the chains of memory. The past sorrows and sufferings come back to oneself through it. It revives the past and when one realizes that he cannot go back to the past to start all over again, this realization is also heart-piercing and rueful.

The poet has dwelt on the theme of memory as an oppressor as it oppresses all the joys of the past. The joys of the past makes one more grieved. It is 'importunate' and 'vain'. The recurring moments of happiness of the past come back with pain that one cannot re-live them.

Structural analysis

The poet addresses the memory as it is a human being. Memory has been personified. With the use of paradoxes, memory becomes very complex as it combines the elements of both happiness and pain. The poem is very short but the meaning is condensed. The poem is very pensive having an intensive subject. Only in two paragraphs, the poet completes the discussion on memory. Goldsmith is not the poet of verbosity and elaborative style. With the use of meager words, he very effectively appraises the merits and demerits of memory. The good as well as the bad moments of life can be stored in memory. Thus, the subject analysis done by the poet is very intense and paradoxical.

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Check Your Progress

10. When did Oliver Goldsmith complete his Bachelor of Arts from Trinity?
11. Mention the popular works of Oliver Goldsmith.
12. Who was Theaker Wilder?

4.5 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. Thomas Gray was born on 26 December 1716 in Cornhill London.
2. The prominent poems written by Thomas Gray are the following:
 - *The Progress of Poesy (1754)*
 - *The Bard: A Pindaric Ode*
 - *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*
 - *On a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes (1748)*
 - *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College (1742)*
 - *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West (1742)*
 - *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751)*
3. It was in 1742 that Gray took poetry writing seriously after losing his close friend Stacy James Ruffer.
4. Thomas Gray was offered the post of Poet Laureate in 1757, which he declined.
5. In the poem, *Elegy Written Country Churchyard* the poet states that forefathers lying in the graves would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of working in the fields. This relation of a farmer with soil brings out the link of a man with nature. The element of nature was one of the major characteristics of Romantic poetry.
6. The speaker tells us that memorials are raised because people spend their lives struggling therefore; they wish to be remembered after death. According to the poet, even parting souls wish their loved ones to cry for them and want praises to be written on their tombs.
7. William Collins was born on 25 December 1721 in Chichester, England.
8. The year 1747 witnessed the publishing of his work *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects*.
9. Dr Johnson’ penned down a sympathetic description of his former friend, Collins, in *Lives of the Poets (1781)*; however, he dismissed the poetry stating that it was contrived and was not executed well.
10. Oliver Goldsmith completed his Bachelor of Arts from Trinity in the year 1749.

11. The popular works of Oliver Goldsmith are *The Deserted Village* (1770), novel like *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and plays like *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773) and *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768).
12. Theaker Wilder was the tutor of Oliver Goldsmith.

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4.6 SUMMARY

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

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- William Collins was a well-known eighteenth century English poet from England.
- The lyrical odes written by him indicate a major turning away from the Augustan poetry of Alexander Pope's generation and moving towards the Romantic era that was to follow soon.
- Collins was born on 25 December 1721 in Chichester, England. His father was a hat maker who had previously remained a mayor of the town.
- The year 1747 witnessed the publishing of his work *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects*.
- His only other poems were the ode written on Thomson's death (1749) and *Ode on the popular superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, which were found out in an incomplete state after his death.
- After his death, John Langhorne, British translator, poet and priest, published his poems in a collected edition which gradually gained more recognition, although never without criticism.
- *In the Downhill of Life* depicts the hardships faced by the poet during his difficult phase of life. He says that he finds himself declining on the path of life.
- Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774) is an Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright, essayist and poet. He is best remembered for works like the pastoral poem titled *The Deserted Village* (1770), novel like *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and plays like *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773) and *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768).
- Goldsmith's major focus on publishing commenced in 1760 with *The Citizen of the World*, which went further to be showcased in the *Public Ledger* as series of letters. Goldsmith followed up 5 years later by composing a romantic 160-line ballad.
- Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village* which appeared in the year 1770 expresses the poet's concern towards the destroyed villages and eventually canvassing for the conversion of the productive agricultural space into ornamental gardens for the affluent as a prospective bid to bring an end to the position, rank, or behaviour of the peasant class.
- Goldsmith's writings have always brought out patterns that employ the characteristic of opposing pairs of work. But not much work has been done to relate this socio-economic aspect to the traveller observer figure who is the personification of such comparison and contradistinction.
- Goldsmith in his poem focuses on the issue of 'depopulation' that was turning out to be a common problem in the English countryside.
- Goldsmith mourns about the declining of the village world. For the poet and social commentator Goldsmith, the '*Sweet Auburn*' was the perfect, utopian rural landscape where the simple country folks lived in harmony with the beautiful nature. But this harmony was disrupted by the wealthy land owners

who belonged to the 'trade' and deprived 'the swain' off its 'hamlets roses'.

- The depopulation that the village experienced, when viewed from a larger perspective actually translates into a prelude to the further declining state of ethics and morality.
- In the poem, *Memory*, the poet addresses memory who he called a deceiver. It is a bewitcher to the joys of life. The memory is also addressed as 'importunate' and 'vain'. The whole past becomes rather more painful through the chains of memory. The poet curses memory because it gives him pain by recollecting the joyous past, which he cannot go back to and relive.

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4.7 KEY TERMS

- **Elegy:** It is a form of a poem which is usually written to mourn the dead or renowned people.
- **Annals:** It refers to a historical record of events arranged in a chronological order.
- **Georgic:** It is a poem or book dealing in agriculture or rural topics.
- **Churchyard poets:** This term refers to a group of eighteenth century poets who mostly wrote poems keeping a solitary figure at the centre of their literary works.
- **Apothecary:** It is a title used for a person who is proficient in preparing medicines.
- **Pastoral:** It is something associated with or related to country life.

4.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the salient features of the Augustan Age?
2. What are significant events of the life of Thomas Gray?
3. Write a short note on the life and works of William Collins.
4. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Oliver Goldsmith.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.
2. What are the views of critics on the ending of *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*?
3. What is the poet trying to convey through the poem *In the Downhill of Life*?
4. Evaluate the major theme of the poem *Memory*.

4.9 FURTHER READING

NOTES

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UNIT 5 THE ROMANTIC POETS

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 The Triumph of Romanticism (1798-1832)
 - 5.2.1 Social and Economic Conditions
 - 5.2.2 General View of Literature during the Romantic Period
 - 5.2.3 Chief Characteristics of the Romantic Period
 - 5.2.4 Romantic Movement
- 5.3 William Blake
 - 5.3.1 Blake's Revolutionary Views
 - 5.3.2 *The Tyger*
 - 5.3.3 *The Garden of Love*
 - 5.3.4 *A Divine Image*
- 5.4 P.B. Shelley
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- 5.5 John Keats
 - 5.5.1 Keats' Sensuousness
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- 5.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.10 Further Reading

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5.0 INTRODUCTION

William Blake was a poet of extraordinary genius who not only distinguished himself in poetry but also in painting and engraving. He was writing at the time of the French Revolution and in his poems we can see a direct influence of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. It was a revolution which brought to the limelight the notion of the rights of man. The common man for the first time became the subject of concern and the tyranny of the authority was questioned.

Like Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was a great literal revolutionary, who championed the cause of liberty. Shelley's radicalism was all round. He revolted against tyranny of the State, against corruption in morals and manners. His *Queen Mab* was an angry protest of an idealistic youth against a corrupt and coarse society. His *The Spirit of Solitude*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *Ode to Liberty*, *Mont Blank* were poems of revolutionary ideals which made passionate plea for the total freedom of human will and ideal social order.

Unlike Byron and Shelley, John Keats was more committed to the idealism of art than to the idealism of politics or philosophy. Keats devoted himself to the worship of 'art for art's sake' and acquired an excellence in the art of poetry. Although famous for his odes, such as *Ode to Psyche*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Autumn*, Keats also wrote longer poems, such as *Endymion*, *Lamia*, *Isabella* and *Hyperion*, which were all masterpieces.

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His writing initiated a new kind of poetic movement whose chief slogan was ‘art for art’s sake’.

One can perceive a direct bearing of the French Revolution on most of the Romantic poets. Romantics, in their search for the ideal were somehow looking for a just society—a society which was devoid of tyranny, oppression, suffering, and pain. In this unit, we will explore their search for an ideal and study about the emergence of romanticism as well as the literary background and works of William Blake, P.B. Shelly and John Keats.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the age of the romantic poets
- Describe the life and works of Blake, Shelly and Keats
- Explain the revolutionary ideas portrayed by Blake in his poems
- Discuss the concept of negative capability in Keats’ poems
- Understand nature as the primary source of energy in the poetry of Shelley

5.2 THE TRIUMPH OF ROMANTICISM (1798-1832)

The Romantic era or the period of Romanticism was a literary, artistic and intellectual period that originated in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850.

5.2.1 Social and Economic Conditions

The eighteenth century had seen a bloodless revolution in England. The invention of the spinning jenny, the ‘mule’, the power loom, the steam engine and the smelting of the iron ore by pit coal hastened the growth of industrial towns and a powerful banking system. New centres of population arose. Industrial England, aided materially by the system of laissez-faire, grew wealthy. The factory system was established. Against the unspeakable misery and degradation that developed was raised a potent cry for better conditions in factories, poorhouses and prisons for more humane treatment of children and improved educational facilities.

While industrial England presented its problems, agricultural England had its own share of problems. Large farms replaced small holdings, wages were inadequate, housing conditions were bad and pauperism increased. There was great distress, particularly in the period following 1845, when there was an increase in unemployment, bad harvests, heavy war debts and disregard of the rights of labour. The Tory party was supreme from 1784 to 1830. Not until 1832, when the Reform Bill was passed, were the middle classes enfranchised. Finally, the transition from an agricultural and commercial society to modern industrialism brought in its wake the evil of slums, exploitation of the masses, and the economic fluctuations between boom and depression. These vast economic problems have

not yet been decisively settled.

Perhaps the most influential interpretation of this condition can be observed in Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867-1894). It influenced not only literature but also art, music and philosophy. It manifested itself not only in England but also in Germany and France. For the simplicity, harmony and purity of the Augustan age were substituted the mystic and passionate as well as the free-spirited and capricious standards of the Middle Ages. The leading advocates of the spirit of idealism, as opposed to realism, were Rousseau in France, and Schelling, Schlegel and Lessing in Germany. In England, the rise of Methodism from the teaching of John Wesley made religion a vital personal experience, revealing its social responsibilities and becoming a recognized and political factor. The literary aims and ideals of the eighteenth century were swept aside.

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5.2.2 General View of Literature during the Romantic Period

During the later eighteenth century, many poets, revolting against the set and formal rules of the classical tradition, turned to nature and the simple life (a movement encouraged by the doctrines of J.J. Rousseau) and to the past, particularly medieval tales and ballads. Instead of confining themselves to the Town, the anti-Popeans turned away from the metropolitan outlook and spirit towards nature and rural life. Their subject-matter became the remote and unfamiliar out-of-door aspects of the world, or human nature in terms of the brotherhood of man. They renewed the sensuous elements of love and adventure characteristic of the old Romans. English romanticism, for example, was foreshadowed in the horror tales of Mrs. Radcliffe.

In place of the precision symmetry and regularity of the Augustan school, the poets of the new school substituted a deepening sense of wonder and mystery of life. In place of the poetry of intellect, they emphasized passion and imagination. In place of the conventional diction and the classic couplet, they revived earlier verse forms, such as the Spenserian stanza and the ode, and endeavoured to attain a simplification of diction. While it is true that the prevailing standards of neo-classical forms often cropped up in one way or another in the work of these poets of revolt, the subject-matter manifested a more direct break with rigid traditions. The essential ideas were a belief in the intuitive powers of imagination, in the value of the individual as opposed to group conformity and external authority, in the exaltation of rural life and external nature over urban life, of content over form, of the subjective over the objective and of the emotion and imagination over the intellect and judgment. Briefly, it was the victory of mysticism over clarity, colour over symmetry, sympathy over law, feeling over intellect and the romantic atmosphere of matter over classical precision of form.

5.2.3 Chief Characteristics of the Romantic Period

In the later part of the eighteenth century, before the official declaration of Romantic Movement in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge, there were a number of poets and prose writers between Neo-classical period and Romantic Movement. The Romantic Movement is known as 'liberalism in literature', which is simply the expression of life as seen by imagination rather than by common sense.

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Following are the characteristics of this period:

- **Against rules and customs:** The Romantic Movement was against any rule and custom. Thus, the literature of this period also tends to free the human spirit.
- **Inclination towards Emotions:** Romantic Literature is more inclined towards emotions and instincts totally contrary to neo-classical reason and intellect. This period speaks about individualism and man again becomes the most important entity, where the conventions are only imposed on man by ‘civilized society’.
- **Dominance of Nature:** Romanticism is a journey about back to nature. The oneness of man and nature emerges as the dominant theme of the poetry of this period. This age is all for happiness, joy and idealism of youth. It never talks about the harsh realities of life. If the poets sometimes feel sad on seeing the misery all around, they soon escape to the world of beauty and aestheticism. All Romantic poets, though different in their nature and temperament talk about nature. For Wordsworth, nature is divine, but for Keats, it is aesthetic. For Shelley, it is forceful, and for Coleridge, it is supernatural. But they all find a communion of man and nature. They discuss in varying degrees the role of nature in acquiring meaningful insight into the human condition. This age is emphatically an age of poetry. The glory of this age is the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Shelley, etc.
- **Taking cue from Imagination:** The poets were interested in expressing idealistic views, individualism. Their poetry was highly associated with nature. Their poems reflect their imagination and inspiration.
- **Expression of individual genius:** The Romantic Movement was the expression of individual genius rather than established rules. God for Romantic poets exist but His presence can be felt through other senses in the heart.
- **Emergence of women writers:** It was during this period that women were given a place in literature for the first time. Many women emerged as great novelists in this period, for example, Jane Austen, Mrs. Anne Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, etc.
- **Element of supernaturalism:** In Romantic poetry, supernaturalism also emerged as a dominant feature. This element of supernaturalism is evident in Coleridge’s poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*:

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she.

Thus, the Romantic Age is a flight from human nature to aesthetic nature. Before this period, morals and manners of people were satirized to reform the society. Novelists talked of the snobbishness of human nature. The real face of the upper class was exposed, but in this period, a relaxation of idealism was provided to the battered man, which was possible only in the lap of nature.

5.2.4 Romantic Movement

The Romantic Movement is said to have begun from the date of publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). It had on it the impact of the French Revolution which took place in 1789. The Romantic Movement in literature was preceded and accompanied by the change from monarchy to democracy in politics, from materialism to idealism in philosophy, from conservatism to radicalism in culture and from orthodoxy to emancipation in religion.

Great was the development in all fields of literature, especially in poetry, fiction, essay and literary criticism. English letters were characterized by an emotional and imaginative quality as well as by individuality in style. The pendulum swung from idealism to disillusionment and from revolt to reaction. The so-called Lake School of poets expressed new theories as to the subject-matter and language of poetry, the novelists succeeded in making their works rival the popularity of poetry, the romantic essayists developed a new prose type, and the later romanticists were poets of revolt who, unlike the Lake School, never recanted their revolutionary principles. It was an era of individualism. It was an age in which not only the watchwords of the French Revolution, namely Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, but also Democracy and Humanitarianism became the cry of the major English romanticists.

Check Your Progress

1. When was the period of Romanticism at its peak in most places?
2. Who were the leading advocates of the spirit of idealism?
3. Name the three glorious Lake Poets of the Romantic period.
4. What were the significant changes which took place in literature during the Romantic Movement?

5.3 WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake's major writings happened before 1798, which is the year considered by literary scholars and the critics to be the year which marked the beginning of the Romantic Era British Literature with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, a compilation of poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The Romantics brought forth a revolution not only in reacting against the classical dogmas of the eighteenth-century writing; but provided a fresh outlook by emphasizing on the role of imagination and individualism. Every age is either a reaction to the immediate age gone by or is a continuation with subtle changes. In the case of the Romantic era, it established itself as a reversal of the eighteenth-century Age of Reason. The term 'romantic' signifies a poetic creed in English literature and it connects a highly complicated set of attitudes and beliefs. Romanticism was largely a reaction against the prevailing Neo-Classical school of writing which laid great stress on form, structure and conventions of poetic diction. In a sense, reacting against a kind of sophisticated culture, the Romantics brought with them the 'Renaissance of wonder' where the natural world is revealed and vividly portrayed for the first time. This led to the idea of nature as an inspiring force, as felt by

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William Wordsworth and Percy B. Shelley. But it is not that this change that we perceive happened suddenly. This change of outlook about writing poetry was a gradual one. The Pre-Romantics (Thomson, Gray and others) had their contribution in achieving this change in the history of the English literature. Some literary scholars even include William Blake in the list of the Pre-Romantics, as William Blake was writing much before the Romantic poets had started writing. Whether we consider William Blake as a romantic or a pre-romantic poet does not matter as the philosophical, metaphysical, political ideas that are manifest in his writings remains intact. Moreover, if one looks at his poetry and tries to look at the major themes and ideas dealt in them, then one is bound to classify him as a Romantic Poet.

William Blake was born in London in 1757. From his childhood, he had the power of extraordinary imagination. When he was four, he spoke to his parents about the visions that he had. William Blake spent his childhood and youth at a time of revolutions which shook the world – American Revolution in 1775 and the French Revolution in 1789. These revolutions and ideas and his reading of different writers especially Scandinavian poet Swedenborg, created in him the persona of a rebel. In 1789, Blake published *Songs of Innocence* and *The Book of Thel* which established him as a poet of extraordinary caliber. Between 1790-1800, Blake created iconic works such as *Songs of Experience*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America: A Prophecy*, *Europe: A Prophecy*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Song of Los*, and *The Book of Urizen*, all of which discernibly demonstrated Blake's ideas on the Revolution. As the ideals of the French Revolution disintegrated during the Reign of Terror and into a war for national power, and lost sight of its original mission of liberating idealism; Blake began to lose his faith in humanity and in the revolutionary spirit. In Blake's final years of poverty and despair, he completed two of his most famous and respected religious works, *Jerusalem* and *Milton*.

5.3.1 Blake's Revolutionary Views

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

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

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

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

He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind. For him, imagination (like other Romantic poets) plays an important role not only in

poetic creation, but also in the development of human mind. Being a person born during the age of Revolution, he was attracted to the ideas of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ of the French Revolution.

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

William Blake also hated traditional Christianity which he thought cramped the soul rather than setting it free. Like all the Romantics who attempted a re-evaluation of Christian values after the French Revolution, William Blake also had his own interpretation of Christian religion and its use for the benefit of mankind. He was against the authoritarian God who is revengeful. Therefore, he thought of churches as a kind of prison as there is no individual freedom under the purview of the church. Therefore, in *The Garden of Love*, Blake writes –

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

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

William Blake’s hostile attitude towards traditional Christianity also influenced his interpretation of history. He identified three stages in history which corresponded to three stages in the life of an individual. The first stage corresponds to that of the Garden of Eden, or of primal innocence. The second stage was the eating of the forbidden tree or the Fall (that is, the phase of Experience). The third stage was that of achieving a higher state of innocence or redemption (when one is as clever as a serpent and as innocent as a dove). In the third stage, innocence cannot be corrupted anymore as one has the necessary cleverness of the serpent will not allow the corruptions to affect innocence. So from that point of view, the two

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contrary states – innocence and experience are absolutely essential as ‘without contraries, there is no progression.’ One can never be in the first stage of innocence forever; one will get into the phase of experience with aging and with the pressures of culture; but when one surpasses that to achieve supreme innocence, one is in an ideal. Blake through his two series of poems – *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is trying to concretize the notion of Supreme Innocence for the readers.

French Revolution

The French Revolution (1789–1799), was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France which laid the foundation of modern democracy as the ideas germinated by the scholars found a place in the hearts of the people of France and they revolted against the oppressive monarchy and religious system. The absolute monarchy of France collapsed within three years and feudal, aristocratic and religious privileges evaporated under the pressure of Enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship and inalienable rights. The people of France got increasingly agitated against the incompetence of King Louis XVI and the decadence of the aristocracy; leading to a Revolution in 1789 with the convocation of the Estates-General in May. In the first year of the Revolution, members of the Third Estate proclaimed the Tennis Court Oath in June, the assault on the Bastille in July, the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in August, and an epic march on Versailles that forced the royal court back to Paris in October. The next few years were dominated by struggles between various liberal assemblies. The republic was proclaimed in September 1792 and King Louis XVI was executed the next year. External threats shaped the course of the Revolution. Internally, popular sentiments radicalized the Revolution significantly, culminating in the rise of Maximilien Robespierre and the Jacobins and virtual dictatorship by the Committee of Public Safety during the Reign of Terror from 1793 until 1794 during which between 16,000 and 40,000 people were killed. After the fall of the Jacobins and the execution of Robespierre, the Directory assumed control of the French state in 1795 and held power until 1799, when it was replaced by the Consulate under Napoleon Bonaparte. The growth of republics and liberal democracies, the spread of secularism, the development of modern ideologies, and the invention of total war all mark their birth during the Revolution. Subsequent events that can be traced to the Revolution include the Napoleonic Wars, two separate restorations of monarchy (Bourbon Restoration and July Monarchy), and two additional revolutions (1830 and 1848) as modern France took shape. The revolution was not only significant for France as the ideas germinated before and during the revolution led to its spread across other countries of Europe, also in England, and then to the rest of the world, leading to modernization.

5.3.2 The Tyger

*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?*

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

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Summary and critical analysis

The Tiger, originally called *The Tyger*, is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and His creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. It is one of Blake's best-known and most analyzed poems. *The Tyger* is a highly symbolic poem based on Blake's personal philosophy of spiritual and intellectual revolution by individuals. The speaker in the poem is mystified at the sight of a tiger in the night, and asks a series of questions about its fierce appearance and the creator responsible for its creation. The first impression that William Blake gives is of seeing a tiger in the night, and, as a result of his state of panic, exaggerating the description of the animal when he writes:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
 In the forests of the night,

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

What immortal hand or eye
 Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

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

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

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

What the hammer? what the chain?

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp

Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

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

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Here, the poet wonders whether God was happy with his creation of the fearsome tiger. He does not understand why or how the deity, who is responsible for good and innocence, can introduce violence and evil in this world. However, the poet does not make any statements throughout the poem. The poem's last stanza is the same as the first one, which may indicate that the author is still not able to understand the world in which we live.

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

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

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

The poem is more about the creator of the tiger than about the tiger itself. In contemplating the terrible ferocity and remarkable symmetry of the tiger, the speaker is at a loss to explain how the same God, who created the lamb, could also create the tiger. Therefore, this poem subtly reminds that humans are incapable of completely understanding the mind of God and the mystery of his handiwork. The poem consists of six quatrains and each quatrain contains two couplets. Therefore, we have a twenty-four line poem with twelve couplets and six stanzas. A neat and balanced package, Blake's choice of 'tiger' has usually been interpreted as rendering an exotic or alien quality of the beast.

Structural analysis

The poem *Tyger* comprises of six quatrains in rhyming couplets. Trochaic tetrameter has been used in writing this poem. The last syllable is dropped so that the lines end with a stressed syllable to impart a strong rhyme. In the first stanza, we can observe that the word ‘tiger’ is written with a ‘y’ instead of an ‘i’. Here, the purpose of the poet is to give the word an inclination towards Ancient Greece. This is closely followed by the alliteration, ‘*burning bright*’.

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

‘*Distant deeps*’, in the second stanza is an alliteration, which is used to make remark on the distant depths. Subsequently, the poet writes ‘*On what wings dare he aspire?*’, the meaning of which is directly connected to God who created the tiger. In the third stanza, the creator of the tiger is seen as an artist, and the appreciation he has for the creator’s work is quite apparent. This is followed by the line ‘*and when thy heart began to beat*’, which highlights God’s power to create life. In the fourth stanza, God is portrayed as a craftsman, which can be gauged by the use of the words ‘*hammer*’, ‘*furnace*’ and ‘*anvil*’. Through his meter and techniques, Blake manages quite efficiently to enforce a chanting rhythm and powerful voice. Demanding questions and vivid images disprove the simple nature of his end rhyme, rather exploring a deep, driving question.

5.3.3 The Garden of Love

*I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.*

*And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;
So I turn’d to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.*

*And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.*

Summary and critical analysis

The Garden of Love was first published in 1789 by Blake who was a religious poet. It is about love, freedom and joy. According to him, religion should not be bound by rules and regulations. This place, the garden of love, has never been seen before by the speaker. In the middle of the garden, a new chapel has been built, where he used to play on the grass. He says:

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*I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen;
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.*

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The gates of the chapel were closed and a message was also written over there, 'Thou shalt not'. Then, he turned to the green garden which was always filled with sweet and fragrant flowers. But now, it is covered with graves. Everywhere there are tomb-stones wherever flowers used to be there. This is a grieving view. The speaker can see only the grave stones everywhere and the priests are walking in black gowns, taking rounds and carrying thorny branches to bind the joys and desires of the speaker. The poet says:

*And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.*

Garden is used here as a biblical image that is, the Garden of Eden, the paradise, which was lost by Adam and Eve after they succumbed to temptation and tasted the fruit of forbidden tree of knowledge. Through this poem, the poet shows his contempt for the religion as an organized entity based on doctrines, rules and regulations, which does not cultivate true love, liberty and equality. The institutes of religion were always detested by Blake. The warning on the doors, 'thou shall not' depicts the strict regulation which stands in stark contrast to the playfulness and freedom associated with the 'garden of love', where he used to play freely. The image of beautiful flowers which is replaced by the image of tombstones is quite symbolic. In this symbol, one can sense the softness of flowers and the harshness of the grave-stones. The site of the Chapel appears to be an embodiment of the Church, which is not found welcoming at all.

In this garden, life has been replaced by death. Grave-stones have replaced soft flowers. With the use of internal rhyme in the end of the poem, the power of the church has been represented through phrases-gowns/rounds and briars/desires. The poet's joys and desires are restricted by the commandments of the priests. The church does not seem to be the embodiment of love and freedom here, rather it represents power and authority.

The freedom and love are under danger and restrictions of organized religions. Religious institutions put undue restrictions and control on us. They kill our happiness by suppressing our innate desires and wishes. There cannot be any growth in this kind of garden.

Theme

The central argument of the poem is how love, freedom and joy are innate nature of a child. A child lives his life in a carefree manner. He/she is not obstructed by the simulation and dissimulation around him/her, which he/she experiences in the world. The world of adult tries to restrict and restrain the growth of a child. The same contrast can be viewed in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. The people are born with a natural feeling of love and happiness, but the world contaminates them with rules and regulations. The similar idea can be traced in

Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* in which he says that, '*The child is father of the man*'. A child has a close affinity with the celestial glory of God. They are unable to learn things under pressure and restrictions placed by the adult world. The poem contrasts two aspects-childhood and the world of adult.

The natural relationship of the speaker with the garden is conveyed in lines 4, 8 and 10. He tells how this garden used to be during his childhood. During his childhood, the garden represented fresh and fragrant flowers, which symbolized the innate and natural life and growth, but under the dominion of the church and the priest, the same garden is replaced with grave-stones, a mundane, dead image used by the poet to depict moral degeneration and religious doctrines.

The idyllic state of mind cannot be represented by this garden which embodies oppressive rules and regulations leading to hampering the growth of children. Instead of you can, it proclaims '*thou shalt not*', which restrict freedom, love and joy-the innate happiness of the children. Apart from the speaker, we see the priests walking in their black clothing along with the tombstones, carrying the motifs of death and disaster, binding the joys and desires of mankind.

Style

The language employed by the speaker is very simple and lucid. The speaker is taken aback by the sight of a chapel-a signifier of authority and power. The new chapel, in the garden of love, seems to be an imposter occupying a physical space which used to be a play area for children. The poem is written in a monosyllabic way. Chapel stands for rules and restrictions whereas '*green*' refers to the grass, which represents innocence or purity of soul. With the use of internal rhyme in the end of the poem, the power of the church has been represented: gowns/rounds and briars/desires.

The garden is also an allusion to the biblical Garden of Eden-an earthly paradise. The poem can also be read as a linker between pre and post states of the fall of mankind that is, before and after the fall of Adam and Eve. The poem is written in end-stopped rhyme scheme.

Symbolism in Blake's poems

Blake is considered the master of symbolism in English Romantic Poetry. Almost all of his poems are symbolically written. In his *Songs of Innocence*, Blake emphasizes the idea of the common man and his contentment in just living as opposed to the rich, who lead superficial lives. *Holy Thursday* recounts the annual marching of approximately six thousand poor children to St. Paul Cathedral. These children hailed from the charity schools of the city and were taken to the Cathedral to demonstrate their reverence for God and their gratitude to their benefactors. However, this ostensibly admiring poem contains hints of irony. The beadle seats the children '*in companies*' as if they were soldiers rather than children.

Children's innocence is compared to the natural world, in keeping with Blake's usual association between nature and the state of liberty. He compares their arrival at the cathedral to the flowing waters of the Thames. Blake describes the children in the second stanza as '*flowers of London town*', comparing the orphans to something as treasured as a flower. By doing this, he is emphasizing the

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beauty and feebleness of the children and banishing the assumed thought that the children are worthless and troublesome.

*Tw*as on a holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green:
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow.

Blake speaks of the children as metaphoric 'lamb's'. The lamb is the symbol of Christ, linking children to the Lamb of God. This is how Blake subtly expresses the special care and love that Jesus bestows on all children. All citizens of London gather in the cathedral to sit and observe the ceremony. In the third stanza, people watch the boys and girls raise their 'innocent hands' to the Lord and sing to heaven. Blake depicts a change in the children, who are no longer meek and mild. They are strong, and their voices are able to reach up to God and speak to heaven. The speaker is also moved by the heartbreaking image of the mass, and reminds the reader that orphans like these are actually angels of God. William Blake wrote this song as a take on orphans who would annually cleanse themselves and walk up to the church to sing. The children perceived this as a treat, which is an example of their innocent and bleak lives. It illustrates their innocence in the fact that they are orphans, poor and meek, with absolutely nothing, yet they get dressed, attend church with happiness, and praise the Lord. Once again Blake teaches one a sad lesson, a lesson that should be taught to many children today. Their voices become like 'a mighty wind' and produce 'harmonious thundering'.

As always, Blake favours the innocent children even as he despises the system which enslaves or abuses them. The 'wise guardians of the poor', the children's patrons, are seated 'beneath them'. Even though gratitude may be forced upon the children, their innocence, which is affirmed twice in the poem, trumps the self-serving nature of the spectacle. Blake concludes with the warning statement, 'cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door', which seems quite out of place. However, when compared to the Biblical account of the angels' visit to the city of Sodom, the driving away of an angel at the door becomes a more sobering image. Abraham and Sarah offered the angels hospitality. His pity for his guests resulted in his own family's rescue from the destruction about to strike the wicked city. Similarly, the reader is encouraged to 'cherish pity' even in the midst of a sin-stricken and cynical system that would use a parade of poor children as a show of public virtue.

Holy Thursday rightly belongs in Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, for the children are seen as angelic beings. They are 'flowers' and 'lamb's' and with 'radiance' they are 'raising their innocent hands'. In most cases, the Church of England considers Christ's Accession day to be 'Holy Thursday', (although some insist that 'Holy Thursday' can also be the day before Good Friday). In any event, during the late eighteenth century (when the poem was written), the children from the charity schools of London were marched to a service at St. Paul's Cathedral. They were, of course, accompanied by the 'beadles' who were instructed to enforce appropriate behavior. The last line is meant to be a direct allusion to the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews that reads, 'Do not forget to welcome strangers, for some have welcomed angels unawares' (Hebrews 13:2). Thus, we can relate the image of childhood in *The Garden of Love* to the overall understanding of childhood for Blake.

5.3.4 A Divine Image

*Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face
Terror the Human Form Divine
And Secrecy, the Human Dress*

*The Human Dress, is forged Iron
The Human Form, a fiery Forge.
The Human Face, a Furnace seal'd
The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge.*

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Summary and critical analysis

The Divine Image is an additional poem, added to the collection around 1804, after its first publication. It can best be read with *The Human Abstract* and *The Tyger* because they all deal with the same range of ideas.

According to poem, on their own, cruelty, jealousy, terror and secrecy hold no meaning. They are just abstract ideas. However, their association with human beings make these ideas powerful. This is because these feelings originate from the heart of human beings. In humans they assume their powerful and harmful form as the poet says:

*Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face
Terror the Human Form Divine
And Secrecy, the Human Dress.*

Human beings are jealous of each other, terrorises the weak ones, are cruel to each other and hold secrets from each other. Hence, overall the humanity is not tender or innocent, rather they are strong and harsh like iron. Humanity is as powerful and as destructive as the metal iron which has the capability of destroying. However, it is also constructive as without it our civilization would not have made any progress. Thus, humanity too cannot survive without these negative attributes. In a way, these negative attributes emphasises the good qualities which are harboured by mankind. The human heart is not soft and tender but a consuming mouth, like that of a beast: '*The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge*'.

The poem uses biblical allegory echoing the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. '*Human Heart*' symbolizes all virtues of peace, love and pity. Our heart should be the dwelling place of all these virtues. However, only external forces should not be blamed for the evil. Evil thoughts do not come from external sources rather they spring from the human heart. Theft, murder, sexual immorality, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, arrogance, slander, etc. all come from the human heart. They come from inside as heart is the abode of goodness as well as evil. God has to be found in the humanity itself. He cannot be found in outside forces. God has created human beings in His own image. Human was also '*Divine*' which reinforces the idea of rejection of transcendent God. God can be found dresses in human form. The poet says:

The Human Dress, is forged Iron

The Human Form, a fiery Forge.

The Human Face, a Furnace seal'd

The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge.

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The poet alludes to the Greek myth of the forge of Hephaestus, the Greek blacksmith, the God of fire, who helped in the making of Pandemonium-the dwelling place of all demons. The symbols of hammer and anvil are also used by him which symbolizes the demonic powerful tools with a powerful force within the creation. Thus, the demonic power exists alongside the Godly power. Both goodness and evil prevail in the world since the beginning of the creation. The image of 'furnace' also depicts the industrialization and the mechanization which took place in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The main point of the poem seems to be that the contrariness of all forces exists in human nature. Force and power exist along with fragile and tender. Heaven and Hell, both, impinge on human experience. Human heart stores both powerful and positive energies as well as evil thoughts.

The poem has a didactic tone by celebrating the Christian values and virtues. Man by nature possesses the virtues but fails to realize it. The poem is written in the simple and lucid language but condensed with deep thought and message. The poem is based on the ideals of brotherhood and love. God and man are the image of each other. Both complement each other. Blake is also created in the image of God because man is God and God is man. All the good ethics and virtues are naturally possessed by man which he fails to practice in his life after coming under the influence of bad and malign powers. But the cruelty also comes from within heart. External forces should not be blamed for evil. It is human beings who become jealous and corrupt. They harm each other out of jealousy and cruelty.

Comparison between *A Divine Image* and *The Divine Age*

Both the poems *A Divine Image* and *The Divine Age* are in the biblical context. *A Divine Image* is a part of *Songs of Innocence*, while *The Divine Age* is a part of *Songs of Experience*. As we have already discussed, *A Divine Image* is based on biblical allegory echoing the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. '*Human Heart*' symbolizes all virtues of peace, love and pity. Our heart should be the dwelling place of all these virtues. All of the evils are not always empowered by external forces rather they come from inside the heart, which is the abode of goodness as well as evil.

The Divine Age personifies God in human terms. God is the apotheosis of the human ideals and desire. When we are in distress, we are in the need of help. We need someone to empathize and encourage us. God is the symbol of love and prosperity. He is the reliever of pain. Human beings embody the same dreams and desires which they find in God. To be relieved from distress, we need mercy, pity, peace and love. The poet says:

To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love

All pray in their distress;

And to these virtues of delight

Return their thankfulness.

God and man are the image of each other. Both complement each other. Blake is also created in the image of God because man is God and God is man. All the good ethics and virtues are naturally possessed by man which he fails to practice in his life after coming under the influence of bad and malign powers. But the cruelty also comes from within heart. When human beings are in distress, they thank for the positive qualities which are associated with God. We receive mercy, pity, love and peace from God and when we are in distress, we seek these virtues and return our thanks for these gifts.

There is essential unity between man and God because we complement each other. Man is the personification of God and the vice-versa. Thus God is the essential source of mercy, pity, peace and love. God can also be defined as ‘*Clemency, Benevolence, Amity and Affection*’. The poet says:

*Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.*

Both the poems are written in simple diction and accessible style. They are written in beautiful lyrical style of Blake. The poems are written in simple and lucid style in an uncomplicated manner. Lines of the poem are relatively shorter and the rhythm of the poem is iambic-unaccented odd syllables are followed by accented even syllables. The structure and meter of the poems are simple. There is a refrain used in the following stanza:

*For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.*

Check Your Progress

5. When and where was William Blake born?
6. What are the three stages in history which correspond with the three stages in the life of an individual as identified by William Blake?
7. Mention the prominent works of William Blake.
8. Why did Blake favour imagination over reason?
9. What opinion did Blake hold regarding Churches?
10. Why is alliteration used in Blake’s *The Tyger*?
11. Which texts deal with the same range of ideas as *A Divine Image*?

5.4 P.B. SHELLEY

P.B. Shelley was born in Sussex in 1792. His parents belonged to the class of nobility. As a child he was highly fanciful like William Blake. He was a sensitive boy who held self-respect above anything else. Shelley joined Eton College in 1804, where he was ridiculed and called ‘Mad Shelley’ by other boys. He was ill-treated as he revolted against the tyrannical system prevalent at the school. While

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at Oxford, he published his pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* because of which he was expelled from the university. First Shelley married Harriet, a school girl whose parents never agreed to this marriage. Even Shelley's own parents disinherited him for this. Later he eloped with Mary, who later wrote *Frankenstein*. Sadly, this elopement led to Harriet's well-known suicide.

Nature was obviously a primary source of inspiration for Shelley's poetry. In 1818, he left for Italy and never returned. The picturesque scenery of Rome and Pisa influenced *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Witch of Atlas*. His most famous short poems, *Ode to the West wind* and *To a Skylark*, are based on actual experiences in Italy. Shelley's nature poetry is concerned with the more immediate descriptions and feelings produced by the poet's experiences with nature. Of major importance in this connection are *Alastor, Mont Blanc, The Sensitive Plant, Ode to the West wind, To a Skylark* and several short poems. The concept of ideal beauty not only strongly influenced the form of Shelley's poetry, but also helped to constitute the theme of his work. The treatment may be narrative or reflective, but it always relies heavily on description.

Shelley's view of the landscape finds its two extremes in the ideals of the cave and the isle. The Platonic concept of the cave as the abode of thought and dream was one of Shelley's favourites. Thus, the mountain scenery is closely connected with his philosophic ideas. Descriptions like the following occur repeatedly in various poems, but with similar expressions:

. . . wintry mountains, inaccessible
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices gray.
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay,

The Witch of Atlas

Apart from the description of a stationary scene, the wild, mountainous landscape may engage in dramatic effects. The poems *Alastor* and *the Spirit of Solitude* are an allegorical voyage of the mind. The varying description of the scenery is symbolic of the tragic changes wrought in the poet's soul. The poet is a master in the rendition of sound impressions. He contrasts the roar of the waterfall with the harmonious sound of the wind in the trees. He describes a small brook in three different aspects, two of which involve sound effects:

.....the rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed- Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound* Now on the polished stones
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness...

Alastor

Shelley's love for the sea is connected with his love for waterfalls and brooks. He usually prefers to see it stormy, powerful and majestic. Shelley's dream maidens

are garmented in light. His fondness for water, which combines the effects of sound, motion and light, may also be the result of his view of a unified nature. In the poem *To a Skylark*, the water imagery is the underlying effect:

*From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody,*

To a Skylark

Shelley compares the mind of the poet to a mighty river, which has its origin in the pure and spiritual heights of an eternal power. *Mont Blanc* expresses this idea symbolically in the river Arve, which originates in the remote and serene mountains of Mont Blanc. The introduction of the poem hints at its symbolical meaning:

*The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves.
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,....*

Mont Blanc

In the purest form of spiritual mysticism, the poet identifies himself with the spiritual powers of nature and loses himself in them. Shelley is probably the greatest lyricist. Some of his famous lyrics are: *The Cloud*, *To a Skylark*, *Ode to the West Wind* and *To Night*. Comparing Shelley with Wordsworth, one critic says, ‘Wordsworth found and Shelley lost himself in nature.’ E. Blunden says of Shelley, ‘Shelley did not take up every subject for verse in the solemn, neutral way which we scholiasts are liable to ascribe to him.’

5.4.1 *Ode to the West Wind*

*O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!*

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II

*Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20
Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!*

III

*Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, 30
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know 40
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear;
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!*

IV

*If I were a dead leaf thou mightiest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed 50
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!*

*A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.*

V

*Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone, 60
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*

The Romantic Poets

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Summary and critical analysis

The poet celebrates the west wind which is the breath of autumn and is very aggressive and powerful. It takes away the dead leaves as if a ghost or spirit is behind its energy and aggressive attribute. He addresses the west wind as wild. All coloured leaves- red, black and pale, it takes it in its chariot and spread on its wintry bed. These seeds will be sprouted by its sister- spring. It moves like a cyclone from valleys to the hill. It is so powerful and mighty that one can feel its hue and odour everywhere. It has both the qualities of a preserver and a destroyer. It moves everywhere. The angels of lightening and rain are spread all over. The lower surge of the atmosphere is filled with the west wind. It seems as if the hair of a maiden has been lifted upward towards the sky. The west wind seems to be like a eulogy or elegy written or sung on the death of someone. The west wind brings the close of the year with it. It seems as if the vast dome is vaulted with congregation for death. The images of the black rain and fire also intensify the subject. The poet tries to integrate the paradoxical images to depict the west wind. One can also hear the powerful hailstorms which also depict the strength and might of the west wind. The poet is using the powerful imagery in the beginning of the poem to depict the intensity and aggressive nature of the west wind.

Further, the image of the sea has been beautifully crafted by the intellectual poet who says that the crystalline streams seem to be singing the lullaby for the Mediterranean Sea which seems to be sleeping and delving in the summer dreams. The old palaces and tombs which are submerged in the water of the sea get quivered with the powerful wave when the west wind moves and prepares a path in the midst of the sleeping sea. The poet uses lively and fresh images of the water and sea in the poem to depict the intensity of the west wind.

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The poet says,

‘ Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below

The sea- blooms and the oozy woods which wear

The sapless foliage of the ocean...’

Then suddenly the voice of the wind becomes uproaring with fear as several secrets and fears have been stored in the depths of the sea. The sea has witnessed the evolution as well as the decay of many civilizations.

Suddenly the tone of the poet changes and becomes mellowed. The poet says that if he were a dead leaf, he would like to fly with the west wind. If he were a cloud, he would like to fly with the west wind. The west wind is as uncontrollable and powerful as the poet had been in his strong youth. He was full of hope and vigour which he finds in the image of the west wind. But now the poet has lost his youth and has moved to his old age. Thus, he invokes the west wind to make him powerful as he had been in his boyhood. The poet seems to be bleeding in his pathless and thronged life. He has abundance of pain and suffering. He can also see misery around him. Hence, he requests the west wind to lift him and make him full of pride and life and swift like itself.

Further, the poet requests the west wind to make him a lyre so that he can sing the song of life and spread harmonies all around him. The fierce spirit of the west wind is such that it seems to be sweet even in sadness. The west wind can turn his miseries into happiness as all his sad thoughts can be awakened only by the wind. The wind can give a new lease of life to the dead thoughts of the poet. The wind can sprinkle the radical and unconventional thoughts of the poet in the universe and can create fervour in the universe timelessly. The poet calls the wind ‘the trumpet of prophesy’.

Themes

The poem *Ode to the West Wind* deals with various themes.

The first theme is Man and the natural world. Nature has been presented as extremely powerful in the form of West Wind which can travel far and wide across the world. The poet also wishes to be as omnipotent as the wind.

The second theme is that of transformation. The poet wishes that the wind should use him as an instrument to distribute his ideas and help him transform. He wishes that nature plays a pivotal role in uniting his spirit with the spirit of nature.

The third theme is that of mortality. The West Wind is the wind of autumn which heralds the arrival of winter. As winter denotes the arrival of death; likewise here the poet has drawn the analogy that the West Wind will bring the cessation of old, rigid conventions of the English society. Moreover, just as winter is followed by spring, in the same manner, the fading away of old customs will be followed by the arrival of new conventions signifying liberty and equality in the society.

Structural Analysis

The poem *Ode to the West Wind* has been written in iambic pentameter. The poem consists of five sections written in the format of terza rima. It is an Italian verse form consisting of stanzas of three lines in which the first and third lines

rhyme with each other and the second rhyming with the first and the third of the following tercet. Hence, each of the seven parts of *Ode to the West Wind* follows this scheme: aba bcb cdc ded ee.

Check Your Progress

12. In which year did P. B. Shelley join Eton College?
13. What was the primary source of inspiration for Shelley's poetry?
14. Which poems of Shelley were influenced by the picturesque scenery of Rome and Pisa?
15. Which element of nature is highly personified by Shelley in *Ode to the West Wind*?

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5.5 JOHN KEATS

John Keats (1795-1821) was not only the last but also the most perfect of the Romanticists. His mother and his brother died of tuberculosis and Keats himself suffered from the same disease. He was acutely aware of the pain and suffering which caused his premature death. Due to this, his poetry is marked by the awareness of pain, suffering and death. Keats died at an early age of twenty-six. However, he is regarded as a major poet and great genius. He displayed his concept of beauty and thoughts vividly in his odes. Unlike Byron and Shelley, Keats was more committed to the idealism of art than to the idealism of politics or philosophy. He is predominantly known for his odes, namely, *Ode to Autumn*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Psyche*. His odes represent his love of sensuous beauty, a touch of pessimism and a strong individualism.

Keats' treatment of nature in poetry is entirely different from that of Wordsworth and Shelley. He is not influenced by the pantheism of Wordsworth. He does not see any divine spirit in nature, but rather loves nature for its external beauty and charm. Keats is a poet of nature. He loves nature for its sensory appeals to his five senses, which are touch, taste, hear, sight and smell. Moreover, Keats has a sixth sense with which he observes nature so keenly. He loves nature for its own sake and his picturisation of nature is detailed and elaborate.

In *Ode to Autumn*, he describes the beautiful pictures of fruits and flowers. The ripe apples, the swollen gourd, the sweet kernel in the hazels and the honey in bee-hives have a rich sensuous appeal. The songs of autumn are the mournful sounds of gnats, the bleating of lambs, the singing of crickets, the whistling of the redbreast and the twittering of the swallows. The whole poem illustrates Keats's extraordinary powers of observation of the world of nature. In *Ode to a Nightingale*, he also presents various delightful pictures:

*And happy the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by her starry fays; etc.*

In the *Ode on Melancholy*, Keats paints a beautiful picture of rain falling from a cloud on the drooping flowers for his readers:

*But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,*

*That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud.*

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Keats follows Greek poetry in personifying the objects and forces of nature. They called the moon Cynthia, and the sun, Apollo. They saw Dryads in the wood and Naiads in water. In his *Hyperion* and *Endymion*, he follows Greek poetry to a great extent.

Keats's important poems are related to, or grow directly out of inner conflicts.

For example, pain and pleasure are intertwined in *Ode to a Nightingale*:

*MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk.*

(1-4)

Love is intertwined with pain, and pleasure is entwined with death in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*:

*I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild*

(13-16)

5.5.1 Keats' Sensuousness

Keats was considered the greatest romanticist who had always been a lover of beauty. He said in *Endymion*, '*A thing of beauty is a joy forever.*' As a sonneteer, he did not live to write many sonnets, but the few sonnets he wrote, are some of the best in English literature. For example, *When I have Fears that I may Cease to be*, *Human Seasons*, *On Looking into Chapman's Homer*, *Bright Star!*, etc.

John Keats is predominantly known for sensuousness in his poetry. This is the unparalleled quality of his poetic genius. Human beings are said to have five senses—touch, taste, hear, smell and sight but Keats is believed to have six senses because of his great power of intuition. He is especially known for his power of acknowledging the grief and pain of society but at the same time, his poetry is full of aesthetic qualities. His love of beauty in any form is supreme. He though was scared of death because of his tuberculosis, his approach to society was very positive. No Doubt, many of his poems are full of melancholy, gloom and grief but still he is the one who even in dire circumstances of his life sees beauty all around. *Ode to a Nightingale* is one of the finest examples of Keats's rich sensuousness. In the very beginning of the poem, the poet desires for red wine from the fountain of the Muses which appeal to our senses of smell and taste.

Keats's conception of love and beauty was unsurpassed. His sensuousness depends on the minuteness of details. In the present poem, he also creates an atmosphere of numbness and drowsiness under the effect of intoxication. He is more a poet of sensuousness than of contemplation. Every line of the poem is full of sensuous beauty.

There is a great difference between sensuality and sensuousness. Keats is not a poet of sensuality, a poet of depicting carnal pleasure or lusty rather his poems are strikingly sensuous. His pictorial senses are not vague. No one can deny that Keats had a very good eye and a remarkable feeling for the music of words; as a sensuous poet, he falls into the line with Marlowe and Tennyson. Keats is a sensuous mystic.

*MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:*

5.5.2 Keats' Negative Capability

Keats belonged to a literary movement called romanticism. The poet, in the real world, escapes or attempts to escape into the ideal. Disappointed in his mental flight, he returns to the real world. Usually he returns because he has not found what he was seeking. However, the experience changes his understanding of his situation, of the world. Keats considered poetry to be the embodiment of the ripest and the fullest experience mankind is capable of. The doctrine of 'Negative Capability' is aimed at not the egoistic self-assertion, but the negation of self. It is a capacity for objectivity in the midst of terrible personal suffering and a capacity to come to terms with this misery not through fact and reason but through an understanding of its true nature. It involves the ability to identify oneself with the subject of one's poetry or art.

Beauty for Keats is not an inert thing or a thing whose value lies in having no relevance to ordinary life. He sees the terrible truths of life so intensely that they become the elements of beauty. In *Ode to a Nightingale*, the poet writes:

*The weariness, the fever and the fret
Here where men sit and hear each other's groan.
Where palsy shakes a few sad last gray hairs.*

Keats is often associated with love and pain both in his life and in his poetry. He wants to accept all things in all moods. He wishes to reveal the beauty of life in life, to realize in his own work the principle that '*Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty*'. Negative Capability is closely related to the ability to 'perceive beauty'. In *Ode to a Nightingale*, Keats presents a very bleak and pessimistic picture of mortal life where:

*youth grow pale and spectre thin and dies,
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow.*

Keats can face the tragic predicament with honesty and courage. However, he also longs to enter the joyful world of nightingale on the 'viewless wings of poesy'. Therefore, Keats accepts life as a whole with all its shades and shines, as he is capable of objectifying the subjective experiences. To him, everything merges into Art and Beauty.

5.5.3 Ode to a Nightingale

*MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,*

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*Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, 5
But being too happy in thine happiness,
That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease. 10*

*O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South! 15
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim: 20*

*Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs, 25
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 30*

*Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night, 35
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways. 40*

*I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,*

<i>But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet Wherewith the seasonable month endows The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine; Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves; And mid-May's eldest child, The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine, The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.</i>	45
<i>Darkling I listen; and, for many a time I have been half in love with easeful Death, Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme, To take into the air my quiet breath; Now more than ever seems it rich to die, To cease upon the midnight with no pain, While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad In such an ecstasy! Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain— To thy high requiem become a sod.</i>	55
<i>Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! No hungry generations tread thee down; The voice I hear this passing night was heard In ancient days by emperor and clown: Perhaps the self-same song that found a path Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, She stood in tears amid the alien corn; The same that ofttimes hath Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.</i>	65
<i>Forlorn! the very word is like a bell To toll me back from thee to my sole self! Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well As she is famed to do, deceiving elf. Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades</i>	75
<i>Past the near meadows, over the still stream, Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep In the next valley-glades: Was it a vision, or a waking dream? Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?</i>	

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Summary and critical analysis

Ode to a Nightingale is the most well-known ode by Keats. The poem also contains strong subjective elements, dealing directly with Keats' personal life. The poet reflects on the conditions of human existence. He contrasts the misery of life with the bliss of art. The poet compares his own drowsiness to the joy of the nightingale. The bird soars freely and sings a song of external happiness, unaware of the miseries of human life which is full of weariness, pain and death. The poet expresses a keen desire to leave this world of sufferings, fever and fret. He wants to merge with the ecstatic world of the nightingale. At first, he thinks of entering this magical world through red wine, but later prefers to use the '*Viewless wings of poesy*'. He wishes to leave this world and reach the blissful world of the nightingale.

It is through his poetic imagination that the poet lands in the world of the nightingale. He wishes to die peacefully while the nightingale sings her sweet song. However, all of a sudden, his imagination fails and the poet returns to the world of reality. The song of the nightingale came to an end and disappeared in the next valley. The poet wondered if he had seen a vision or a waking dream. He enquires of himself whether he is awake or asleep. *Ode to a Nightingale* is one of the best poems written by John Keats. In the beginning of the poem, we can decipher that it is evening. The poet is sitting in a garden. He hears a nightingale singing a song. The blissful song of the bird causes pain in his heart. He feels as if he was numb and powerless, without any feeling or action. His senses become intoxicated as though he had drunk hemlock or a cup full of opium a minute ago. He sinks into the river of forgetfulness. The poet says that his condition is not a result of envy regarding the happy life of the nightingale. He is quite happy with the bird's happiness. He calls the nightingale a nymph of the trees. He imagines that the nightingale is singing her song in a spirit of joyousness in some sweet plot, sitting in a grove of green beech trees.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

The poet wishes to venture into the happy world of the nightingale. Initially, he would like to go there with the help of red wine. Such a wine should have been cooled deep into the earth. He wants to sing and dance with happiness like the people of the provincial area of France. Then, he wishes to drink a breaker full of the warm South, filled to the brim with bubbles rising from it. He wants to drink the particular wine in order to leave this world unseen and establish himself in the blissful world of the happy nightingale. The poet wishes to flee from this world, which is full of weariness, fever and fret. People suffer from a number of maladies and they sit and hear each other crying with pain. In the human world, nothing is safe. The old people suffer from palsy and their hair turns grey. The young people are not liberated from fever and fret as well. Here, thinking fills people up with despair and in this world, beauty and love are short-lived.

Then, the poet changes his idea of taking a cup of wine. He says that he will go the world of the nightingale with the help of his poetic imagination. In his imagination, he reaches the place where the nightingale is singing in full-throated ease. He finds that the night is beautiful. The moon is shining in the sky and is

surrounded by the stars. However, the place where the poet is sitting is dark. Only dim moonlight reaches there when the breeze blows and the branches move. In the world of the nightingale, the poet says that due to the darkness, he cannot see the flowers that are blooming on the ground. Nor could he see the flowers hanging on the branches of the trees. But in the sweet-smelling darkness, he can guess which sweet flowers must be blooming in the summer season. There should be the flowers of white haw thorn, eglantine and violets in the leaves. He can smell a musk rose around him. It is visited by murmuring flies in summer evenings.

The poet is in a dark place, but he is listening to the sweet song of the nightingale. He says that he has often wished to die an easy death. He has called death by delicate names in many of his poems. He has often requested death to come to him and take away his breath quietly. He wishes to leave this world peacefully and without any pain. The nightingale is pouring forth her soul with extreme pleasure. Even if he dies now, the nightingale would continue to sing, but his ears would not be able to hear her song. It would be the song of mourning for the poet. The poet, in his ecstasy, calls the nightingale an immortal bird. She is not born to die like human beings. As an individual bird, she will die sooner or later, but her song will remain alive in the world for eternity.

The same song was heard in the past by kings as well as common people. It was perhaps the same song which was heard by Ruth when she was standing in some alien cornfield. It brought comfort to the sad heart of Ruth, making her feel homesick. It was the same song that opens the magic windows of fairy castles on perilous seas in some lonely island. When the poet thinks of forlorn lands, it acts like a ringing bell. It brings the poet back from his imaginary world to the world of hard realities. The poet bids farewell to his imagination. He says that one cannot go on living in the world of imagination forever. He has to return to the world of hard realities sooner or later. The poet's imagination ends and he comes back to the world of harsh realities, finding himself alone. The music of the nightingale gradually fades away and he wonders whether he was asleep or awake.

Structural Analysis

Keats has used the rhyming scheme ababcbdecde while writing most of his odes, and *Ode to a Nightingale* is no exception to this scheme. This ode has been written in ten-line stanza format. The first seven and last two lines of each stanza are written in iambic pentameter, the eighth line of each stanza is written in trimeter with only three accented syllables instead of five.

Themes

Primarily, the poet is focusing on the theme of creative expression. It is the imagination of the poet which brings him to the world of the nightingale. He desires to be a part of the happy world of the nightingale. His imagination makes him visualize that the nightingale is singing in full voice in a beautiful place. Hence, the poet through the means of his poetic imagination is able to forget (for the time being) the suffering and mortality of his present world and enters the happy state of the world of the nightingale.

Intertwined with this theme is the theme of mortality of human life emphasized in this poem. The poet highlights the mortality of life and the problems associated

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with old age and he presents these aspects in contrast to the nightingale's song which he finds to be eternal. Words such as 'hemlock', 'Lethe', 'embalmed', 'darkness', 'requiem', tolling bell, 'plaintive anthem' – all denote the image of death.

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Check Your Progress

16. How is Keats' treatment of nature in poetry different from that of Wordsworth?
17. At what age did John Keats die?
18. Name some of John Keats' famous odes.

5.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The period of Romanticism was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850.
2. The leading advocates of the spirit of idealism were Rousseau in France, and Schelling, Schlegel and Lessing in Germany.
3. The three glorious Lake Poets of the Romantic period were William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey.
4. The Romantic Movement is said to have begun from the date of publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Great was the development in all fields of literature, especially in poetry, fiction, essay and literary criticism. English letters were characterized by an emotional and imaginative quality as well as by individuality in style. The pendulum swung from idealism to disillusionment and from revolt to reaction.
5. William Blake was born in 1757 in London.
6. William Blake identified three stages in history which corresponded to three stages in the life of an individual. The first stage corresponds to that of the Garden of Eden, or of primal innocence. The second stage was the eating of the forbidden tree or the Fall (that is, the phase of Experience). The third stage was that of achieving a higher state of innocence or redemption (when one is as clever as a serpent and as innocent as a dove). In the third stage, innocence cannot be corrupted anymore as one has the necessary cleverness of the serpent will not allow the corruptions to affect innocence.
7. The prominent works of William Blake are *Songs of Experience*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America: A Prophecy*, *Europe: A Prophecy*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Song of Los*, and *The Book of Urizen*.
8. Blake favoured imagination over reason because Blake held the view that imagination plays an important role not only in poetic creation but also in the development of human mind. He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind.
9. Blake thought of churches a kind of prison as there is no individual freedom under the purview of the church. He believed that love could not be found in the bricks and mortar of churches.

10. Alliteration is used in Blake's *The Tyger* to emphasize the strong, bright, shiny colours of the 'tyger'. The symmetry 'y' is highlighted in this stanza, which is closely related to the spelling of the word, because in Ancient Greece, symmetry is seen as 'beauty'.
11. *A Divine Image* can best be read with *The Human Abstract* and *The Tyger* because they all deal with the same range of ideas.
12. P. B. Shelley joined Eton College in 1804.
13. The primary source of inspiration for Shelley's poetry was 'Nature'.
14. The poems *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Witch of Atlas*, written by Shelley, were influenced by the picturesque scenery of Rome and Pisa.
15. The 'West Wind' is highly personified by Shelley in *Ode to the West Wind*.
16. Keats' treatment of nature in poetry is entirely different from that of Wordsworth and Shelley. He is not influenced by the pantheism of Wordsworth. Keats loves nature for its sensory appeal to his five senses, which are touch, taste, hear, sight and smell. Shelley intellectualizes nature unlike Keats.
17. John Keats died at an early age of 26 years.
18. Some of John Keats' famous odes include *Ode to Autumn*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Psyche*.

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5.7 SUMMARY

- The Romantic era or the period of Romanticism was a literary, artistic and intellectual period that originated in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was at its peak in most places from 1800 to 1850.
- During the later eighteenth century, many poets, revolting against the set and formal rules of the classical tradition, turned to nature and the simple life.
- Instead of confining themselves to the Town, the anti-Popeans turned away from the metropolitan outlook and spirit towards nature and rural life.
- William Blake spent his childhood and youth at a time of revolutions which shook the world – American Revolution in 1775 and the French Revolution in 1789.
- Between 1790-1800, Blake created iconic works such as *Songs of Experience*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America: A Prophecy*, *Europe: A Prophecy*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Song of Los*, and *The Book of Urizen*, all of which discernibly demonstrated Blake's ideas on the Revolution.
- William Blake was a revolutionary in every sense. His views on politics, religion, literature and science were all revolutionary as he could not accept the prevailing ideas and culture of the eighteenth century.

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- Blake held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind. For him, imagination (like other Romantic poets) plays an important role not only in poetic creation, but also in the development of human mind.
- William Blake also hated traditional Christianity which he thought cramped the soul rather than setting it free.
- For Blake, love is the supreme religion and it cannot be found in the bricks and mortar of churches, but in love for humanity. It is not that he did not have faith in the merciful and benevolent Christ, but he is against God the Father who, according to him, is authoritative and tyrannical.
- Blake through his two series of poems – *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is trying to concretize the notion of Supreme Innocence for the readers.
- The French Revolution (1789–1799), was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France which laid the foundation of modern democracy as the ideas germinated by the scholars found a place in the hearts of the people of France and they revolted against the oppressive monarchy and religious system.
- In writing *Songs of Innocence* Blake drew on and transformed two quite separate literary traditions. The first was that of pastoral poetry and the second tradition was that of morally-improving verse directed at children by Isaac Watts, Mrs Barbauld and others.
- Blake was not patronizingly dispensing moral lessons to the young from the height of his superior wisdom. His poems speak in all humility not only to children but to the childlike elements which persist to a greater or lesser degree in all human beings—trust and spontaneous joy uncorrupted by the world’s sorrow and evil.
- On the other hand, *Songs of Experience* at once strike an utterly different note from that of *Songs of Innocence*—one of resentment, bitterness, and anguish yet also of energy and sublimity, suggesting that innocence is not, after all, the most complete state of man.
- The world of experience is a fallen one; indeed it seems to have little memory, even of its unfallen state although it has a vision of an apocalypse which shall transform this world into a paradise symbolized as an awakening or a day break.
- *The Tiger*, originally called *The Tyger*, is a lyric poem focusing on the nature of God and His creations. It was published in 1794 in a collection entitled *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. It is one of Blake’s best-known and most analyzed poems.
- *The Tyger* is a highly symbolic poem based on Blake’s personal philosophy of spiritual and intellectual revolution by individuals.
- *The Garden of Love* was first published in 1789 by Blake who was a religious poet. It is about love, freedom and joy. According to him, religion should not be bound by rules and regulations.

- *The Divine Image* is an additional poem, added to the collection around 1804, after its first publication. It can best be read with *The Human Abstract* and *The Tyger* because they all deal with the same range of ideas.
- Shelley wrote *Ode to the West Wind* when he was in Italy. He was staying in the woods near the Arno River when the poem was composed. According to many critics, he was feeling detached and depressed because of the powerless political situation in his native England. Hence, the poem also reflects revolting mood of the composer.
- Shelley wrote about political and social issues, though his primary source of inspiration was nature. He requests the west wind to influence him with powerful ideas as the contemporary society needed it. He knew that a new outlook and perspective was required to bring forth a change in society.
- One of the major figures of the second generation of Romantic poets was John Keats. His odes represent his love of sensuous beauty, a touch of pessimism and a strong individualism.
- Keats' treatment of nature in poetry is entirely different from that of poets like Wordsworth and Shelley. He does not see any divine spirit in nature. However, he loves nature for its external beauty and charm.
- Keats is predominantly known for sensuousness in his poetry. This is the unparalleled quality of his poetic genius.
- The term, 'Negative Capability', was coined by Keats. The doctrine of 'Negative Capability' is aimed at not the egoistic self-assertion, but the negation of self.
- *Ode to a Nightingale* is the most well-known ode by Keats. The poem also contains strong subjective elements, dealing directly with Keats' personal life. The poet reflects on the conditions of human existence. He contrasts the misery of life with the bliss of art.

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5.8 KEY TERMS

- **Laissez-faire:** It is an economic system in which transactions between private parties are free from government interference such as regulations, privileges, tariffs, and subsidies.
- **Apotheosis:** It is the glorification of a subject to divine level and most commonly, the treatment of a human like a god. The term has meanings in theology, where it refers to a belief, and in art, where it refers to a genre.
- **Radicalism:** It refers to the principles focused on changing social structures through revolutionary means.
- **Personification:** It means giving a non-living object, human traits, such as emotions, desires and speech.
- **Negative capability:** The term was coined by Keats. The doctrine of 'Negative Capability' is aimed at not the egoistic self-assertion, but the negation of self.

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- **Enfranchise:** It means to give a person or group of people the right to vote in elections.
- **Methodism:** It is the eighteenth century movement founded by John Wesley with the objective of reforming the Church from within.
- **Sensuousness:** It implies giving pleasure to the mind or body through the senses.

5.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the social and economic conditions that prevailed during the Romantic Period?
2. What are the salient features of the Romantic Period?
3. Write a short note on the life and works of William Blake.
4. What are the biblical images highlighted in *A Divine Image*?
5. Prepare a brief biographical sketch of P. B. Shelley.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the poem *The Tyger*.
2. Evaluate the use of symbolism in Blake's poems.
3. Examine the major themes of the poem *The Garden of Love*.
4. Analyse *Ode to the West Wind*.
5. 'Keats is not a poet of sensuality rather his poems are strikingly sensuous.' Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Comment on the title of the poem *Ode to a Nightingale*.

5.10 FURTHER READING

- Ruston, S. 2007. *Romanticism*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
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