

BNEN202DET

Reading Essays

**B.A. (Hons.)
4 Year Programme
Second Semester (English)**

**Centre for Distance and Online Education
Maulana Azad National Urdu University
Hyderabad-32, Telangana- India**

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ISBN : 978-81-994195-6-8
Course : Reading Essays
First Edition : October 2025
Copies : 1000
Price : 83/- (The price of the book is included in admission fee of distance mode students)

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Centre for Distance and Online Education

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Director: dir.dde@manuu.edu.in Publication: ddepublication@manuu.edu.in

Phone number: 040-23008314

Website: manuu.edu.in

CRC Prepared by Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb, Faculty of English, MANUU

Printed at : Print Time & Business Enterprises, Hyderabad

Contents

Message
Message
Introduction to the Course

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Unit No.	Unit Title	Writer	Page No.
1.	Francis Bacon – “Of Studies”	Dr. S M Fasiullah, Assistant Professor of English (C), CDOE, MANUU, Hyderabad.	7
2.	Joseph Addison – “Sir Roger at the Assizes”	Dr. Sachin Laxmikant Patki, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Adarsh College, Hingoli, Maharashtra.	19
3.	Charles Lamb – “Dream Children”	Dr. Md Intaj Ali, Assistant Professor of English, Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal.	32
4.	George Orwell – “Shooting an Elephant”	Dr. Masrook Ahmad Dar, Guest Faculty, MANUU Law School, Hyderabad.	44
5.	J. B. Priestley – “On Doing Nothing”	Dr. Govindaiah Godavarthi, Assistant Professor of English, Dept. of English, MANUU, Hyderabad.	61
6.	A. G. Gardiner – “In Defence of Ignorance”	Ms. Durafshaan Habeeb, HOD, Dept. of English, Avanthi Degree & PG College, Hyderabad.	71
<i>Syllabus</i>			82
<i>Model Question Paper</i>			83

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Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by an Act of the Parliament. It is a central university with NAAC Grade A+. The mandate of the university is: (1) promotion of Urdu language, (2) accessibility and availability of professional and technical education in Urdu medium, (3) providing education through traditional and distance learning mode, and (4) a specific focus on women's education. These are the points that distinguish this central university from all other central universities and give it a unique feature. It has been emphasized even in the National Education Policy 2020 to achieve education in mother tongues and regional languages.

The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, there has been a dearth of course material in Urdu. Urdu University now has a repository of more than 350 books in Urdu and the number is increasing with each semester.

Urdu University considers it a privilege to be part of the national mission of providing material in mother tongue/home language as per the vision of NEP 2020. Further, the Urdu speaking community is no longer at a disadvantage in gaining updated knowledge and information in emerging areas or newer knowledge in existing fields due to non-availability of reading material in Urdu. The availability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created new awareness of attaining knowledge that could significantly impact the intellectual growth of the Urdu knowing community.

To facilitate the teaching-learning process for the distance and online learners, the Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) of the university ensures the preparation of self-learning material (SLM) in Urdu and the concerned language subjects.

MANUU makes available SLM to the students of Distance and Online Learning free of cost. The same is also available for sale at nominal cost to anyone interested in gaining knowledge through Urdu. To further provide access to learning, eSLM in Urdu/Hindi/English/Arabic is available for free download from the University website.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculty and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books for the FYUG B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com has begun on a massive scale. To facilitate the students of Distance and Online Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Material (SLM) is of paramount importance to the University. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Material and will fulfill the mandate of this University and justify our presence in this country.

With best wishes,

Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
Vice Chancellor
MANUU, Hyderabad

Message

In the present era, distance education is recognized as a very effective and useful mode of education all over the world and a large number of people are benefiting from this mode of education. Maulana Azad National Urdu University also introduced the distance learning mode since its establishment in view of the educational needs of the Urdu speaking population. Maulana Azad National Urdu University started in 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and the regular programmes commenced from 2004, and subsequently various departments have been established.

The UGC has played a vital role in efficiently regulating the education system in the country. Various programs running under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) are approved by UGC-DEB. The UGC-DEB has emphasized on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Since Maulana Azad National Urdu University functions as a dual-mode institution, offering both distance and conventional modes of learning, it develops in-house Self-Learning Materials (SLMs) to support its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These materials are structured into blocks and units in accordance with the credit distribution of each course and the guidelines prescribed by the UGC-DEB.

The Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) offers a total of nineteen (19) programmes comprising of UG, PG, B.Ed., Diploma, and Certificate programmes. Along with this, programmes based on technical skills are also being started. The CDOE has now launched 4-year UG program for July 2025 as per the NEP-2020. The honours programs B.A., B.Sc. & B.Com are design as per the NCF and it will help students in pursuing honours degree. From the year 2025-2026, the MBA program is introduced in ODL mode.

A huge network of nine Regional Centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and six Sub-Regional Centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, Varanasi, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. Apart from this, an extension center has also been established in Vijayawada. More than one hundred and sixty Learner Support Centres (LSCs) and twenty Programme Centres are run simultaneously under these Regional and Sub-Regional Centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. The Centre for Distance and Online Education makes full use of ICT in its educational and administrative activities, and offers admission to all its programs through online mode only.

The soft copies of Self Learning Material (SLM) for students are made available on the website of the Centre for Distance and Online Education and the links of audio and video recordings are also made available on the website. In addition, facilities of E-mail and WhatsApp groups are being provided to the students through which the learners are informed about various aspects of the program such as course registration, assignments, counselling, examinations, etc. In addition to regular counseling, additional remedial online counseling is being provided from the last two years to improve the academic standards of the students.

It is expected that the Centre for Distance and Online Education will play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward population into the mainstream of contemporary education. Changes are made in various programmes as per the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) in view of the educational needs and it is hoped that this will help in making the Open and Distance Learning system more efficient and effective.

Prof. Mohd. Razaullah Khan
Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education
MANUU, Hyderabad

Introduction to the Course

The course *Reading Essays* (BNEN202DET) is prescribed as a discipline specific elective course for the second semester undergraduate students of B.A. in the FYUG programme under NEP 2020. This course is specifically for students who opted the English major. It aims at providing the students an insight into the genre - Essay by providing both theoretical information and a close study of texts by famous essayists.

The objective of this course is to introduce you to the Essay in English. The course is divided into blocks. Each block consists of smaller units. In this SLM, under each unit the objectives, key points of the topic, learning outcomes, glossary and sample questions are given. At the end, a question paper is attached for giving you an idea of the pattern of the question paper. The syllabus is also placed in the SLM.

It is hoped that the Self Learning Material (SLM) in your hand will be helpful in acquiring knowledge about dramatic forms and techniques.

Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb
Course Coordinator

Unit-1: Francis Bacon – “Of Studies”

Structure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

1.2 Francis Bacon – “Of Studies”

1.2.1 About the Essayist

1.2.2 Summary of the Essay

1.2.3 Major Arguments

1.2.4 Critical Analysis

1.2.5 Criticism of the Essay

1.2.6 Relevance in the Present Era

1.3 Learning Outcomes

1.4 Glossary

1.5 Sample Questions

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1.0 Introduction

Francis Bacon’s essay “Of Studies,” published in 1625 as part of his collection “Essays,” explores the purpose, benefits, and potential pitfalls of studies and learning. Bacon, an influential philosopher, scientist, and essayist of the Renaissance period, presents his insights succinctly and elegantly, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach to learning. This essay remains highly regarded for its timeless insights and relevance.

In this Unit, we will explore major arguments, critically analyze them and understand how this essay is relevant to contemporary readers.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand Francis Bacon’s perspective on the purpose and significance of studies.
- analyze the balanced approach to learning that Bacon recommends.

- explore potential benefits and pitfalls associated with studies as discussed in the essay.
- critically evaluate Bacon’s arguments in the context of modern education and digital media.
- appreciate Bacon’s style, particularly his concise and aphoristic language.

1.2 Francis Bacon – “Of Studies”

1.2.1 About the Essayist

Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was an influential English philosopher, statesman, essayist, and pioneer of the scientific method. He lived during the Renaissance, a time when people began emphasizing reason, science, and human potential. Bacon strongly believed in practical knowledge, arguing that learning should be directly useful to people’s lives. He famously said, “Knowledge is power,” emphasizing the connection between learning and human advancement.

Bacon’s greatest contribution was promoting the scientific method, encouraging careful observation, experimentation, and logical reasoning rather than relying solely on traditional authority. This approach laid the foundation for modern science, shaping how we investigate the natural world today.

In literature, Bacon is best known for his concise, thought-provoking essays. His essays, such as “Of Studies,” “Of Truth,” and “Of Friendship,” explore various topics about human nature, morality, and society. They are admired for their sharp observations, clear language, and timeless wisdom. Bacon’s style is famous for its brevity and powerful aphorisms, making complex ideas easy to grasp.

However, Bacon has also faced criticism. Some argue that he emphasized practical knowledge at the expense of ethical considerations, while others critique his ambitious pursuit of political power, sometimes at the expense of personal integrity.

Today, Bacon is celebrated as a critical thinker who significantly shaped modern science and philosophy. His legacy continues to inspire discussions about the value of knowledge, the role of science, and the complexity of human behavior.

1.2.2 Summary of the Essay

Francis Bacon’s “Of Studies” remains a timeless exploration of the role and function of learning. Advocating a balanced approach, Bacon emphasizes the necessity of integrating

theoretical knowledge with practical experience. He cautions against potential pitfalls, such as intellectual laziness, affectation, and dogmatism. His thoughtful examination of different disciplines provides practical guidance for intellectual growth.

In the modern context, especially within an environment dominated by generative AI and social media, Bacon's insights offer valuable guidance for cultivating critical thinking, managing information overload, and leveraging personalized learning. Bacon's reflections encourage thoughtful engagement, moderation, and purposeful learning, essential qualities for contemporary students navigating a complex digital landscape.

Check your progress:

1. Bacon emphasizes the necessity of integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience. (True / False)

1.2.3 Major Arguments

Francis Bacon's essay "Of Studies" delves into the multifaceted role of studies in human life, examining their purposes, benefits, and practical applications. The essay can be divided into four sections for our convenience:

1. The Purposes of Studies
2. The Benefits and Uses of Studies
3. The Potential Drawbacks of Studies
4. The Practical Applications of Studies

The Purposes of Studies

Bacon begins by outlining the primary purposes of studies: "Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability."

- *Delight*: Studies offer enjoyment, pleasure, and intellectual satisfaction. They enrich one's solitude and leisure.
- *Ornament*: Studies enhance social interactions, making conversation more insightful and meaningful.
- *Ability*: Studies improve decision-making skills, practical wisdom, and professional competence.

Benefits and Applications of Studies

Bacon highlights the broader applications and practical benefits of engaging in studies:

“Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them.”

He underscores that truly wise individuals actively apply the knowledge acquired from studies rather than merely praising or dismissing them. Bacon further elaborates:

“Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted...but to weigh and consider.”

This encourages a critical and reflective approach, emphasizing the importance of contemplation and thoughtful evaluation.

- *Enhancing Natural Abilities*: “They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience.” Studies refine inherent talents, and their true value is realized when combined with real-world experiences.
- *Improving Judgment*: Engaging with diverse subjects sharpens one’s ability to assess situations critically.
- *Guiding Practical Affairs*: Knowledge gained from studies informs decision-making and problem-solving in various aspects of life.

Potential Drawbacks of Studies

Bacon acknowledges potential risks in misusing or excessively depending on studies:

“To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humor of a scholar.”

These warnings highlight three pitfalls:

Sloth: Excessive engagement in studies without practical application leads to idleness.

Affectation: Overusing studies merely to impress others appears pretentious.

Dogmatism: Relying solely on theoretical knowledge without practical experience limits one’s perspective.

Practical Applications and Remedies

Bacon further provides practical advice about the nature of learning and how different disciplines contribute uniquely to intellectual development:

“Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend.”

This passage outlines how each type of study nurtures specific intellectual qualities, helping individuals target particular deficiencies or enhance their strengths.

1.2.4 Critical Analysis

“Of Studies” by Francis Bacon is renowned not only for its concise wisdom but also for its practicality. Bacon advocates a balanced approach toward learning, one which appreciates both theoretical understanding and real-world experience.

Balanced Learning

Bacon’s concept of balance between theoretical study and practical application is more relevant today than ever. In contemporary education systems, there remains a persistent tension between theoretical knowledge and practical skill development. Bacon anticipates this tension and urges individuals to blend contemplation with action.

Contemporary Implications

In our current knowledge economy, Bacon’s warnings against excessive theoretical dependence are critically important. Scholars, particularly in fields prone to extensive theorization, must heed Bacon’s caution against dogmatic adherence to books without testing knowledge practically.

Limitations of Bacon’s Perspective

Despite its strengths, Bacon’s essay reveals certain limitations inherent in its historical context. He views studies primarily from an individualistic, elite perspective, largely overlooking collective or community-based educational outcomes. Modern educational philosophy increasingly emphasizes collaborative learning, a viewpoint not extensively addressed by Bacon.

Furthermore, Bacon’s dichotomy between theoretical knowledge and practical action, while insightful, may oversimplify the complexity of contemporary knowledge integration, which often requires constant interplay between theory, technology, and practice.

1.2.5 Criticism of the Essay

Francis Bacon’s essay “Of Studies,” renowned for its brevity and practical wisdom, has been critically examined from various scholarly perspectives. Critics often emphasize Bacon’s pragmatic view of education, which promotes reading as a utilitarian practice aimed primarily at personal growth, intellectual enrichment, and pragmatic application rather than purely scholarly endeavors. Major criticisms of “Of Studies” revolve around perceived oversimplifications, utilitarianism, and Bacon’s neglect of emotional or aesthetic aspects of learning. It also highlights Bacon’s brevity as both a strength in clarity and a limitation in depth.

Below are detailed examples from popular scholarly critiques of “Of Studies”:

Utilitarianism and Pragmatism:

Criticism under this theme highlights Bacon’s overtly practical approach, viewing studies strictly in terms of their immediate utility. Critics argue this perspective reduces education to mere functionality, neglecting broader, deeper intellectual and ethical implications.

Khan & Ishaq (2024) emphasize how Bacon’s utilitarian approach overshadows essential cultural and humanitarian values of education. Vickers (2002) discusses how Bacon’s pragmatic humanism is superficial, failing to engage deeply with broader cultural and educational ideals. Miller (1995) critiques Bacon’s metaphor “pruning by study,” arguing it reflects a restrictive, instrumental view of education, limiting deeper self-cultivation.

Stylistic Brevity and Oversimplification:

This critique addresses Bacon’s concise and terse style. Scholars suggest the brevity, though elegant, potentially oversimplifies complex intellectual matters, leaving critical gaps.

Sarwary & Samsor (2024) critically highlight Bacon’s concise paragraphs as limiting, reducing rich, complex intellectual topics into overly simplistic generalities. Naidu (2014) notes Bacon’s brevity results in dazzling and amusing but superficial explorations, neglecting detailed philosophical depth. Suzuki (1999) utilizes reader-response theory to show that Bacon’s stylistic conciseness can leave significant interpretive gaps, resulting in multiple and sometimes contentious interpretations.

Ideological and Philosophical Limitations:

This theme covers critiques concerning Bacon’s narrow philosophical stance and ideological biases—often considered too practical, neglecting broader or diverse philosophical insights.

Doina-Cristina (2021) identifies criticisms of Bacon’s methodological narrowness, arguing his pragmatic approach lacks comprehensive philosophical reflection. Snider (1991) explores feminist critiques highlighting ideological biases within Bacon’s utilitarian views, suggesting they perpetuate restrictive assumptions about knowledge.

Comparative and Contextual Analysis:

Criticism in this area contrasts Bacon’s approach with contemporaries or situates his essay historically, suggesting that Bacon’s views were contextually limited or overly narrow in historical vision. Ferrari (2016) contrasts Bacon’s structured and instrumental essays with Montaigne’s more exploratory, introspective style, emphasizing Bacon’s comparative limitations in philosophical

exploration. Dean (1941) criticizes Bacon for his pragmatic yet historically narrow approach, failing to contextualize his ideas within broader historical discussions effectively.

Humanist Traditions and Cultural Values:

Some scholars address Bacon’s relationship to humanist traditions and cultural values, critiquing him for a superficial engagement with these broader educational paradigms. Vickers (2002) rebuts accusations of anti-humanism yet acknowledges criticism that Bacon’s humanism is superficial, neglecting deeper cultural and educational contexts.

Theme	Critical Focus
Utilitarianism and Pragmatism	Overly practical and functional view of education, neglect of deeper ethical and emotional dimensions
Stylistic Brevity and Oversimplification	Terse writing style, potential superficiality and interpretive ambiguity
Ideological and Philosophical Limitations	Narrow philosophical scope, ideological biases
Comparative and Contextual Analysis	Limitations in philosophical breadth and historical contextualization
Humanist Traditions and Cultural Values	Superficial engagement with humanist educational traditions and cultural values

Check your progress:

1. Bacon’s brevity results in dazzling and amusing but superficial explorations, neglecting detailed philosophical depth. (True / False)

1.2.6 Relevance in the Present Era

In today’s digital era, marked by rapid technological advancements in generative AI and pervasive social media use, Bacon’s insights acquire renewed significance:

Information Overload

Bacon warns against the excessive consumption of information, a pressing issue today given the vast and relentless flood of digital content. Social media often promotes superficial engagement, aligning with Bacon’s caution against studies solely for “ornament.” Learners must

cultivate a disciplined approach to information consumption, focusing on depth rather than breadth.

Critical Thinking and AI

Generative AI has made information production instantaneous, heightening the need for critical thinking. Bacon’s emphasis on reading “to weigh and consider” underscores the importance of developing strong analytical skills to distinguish credible information from AI-generated misinformation.

Personalized Learning

Bacon’s suggestion that every intellectual shortcoming has a specific remedy aligns with AI’s potential to customize education. AI-driven platforms can diagnose individual learning needs and offer targeted solutions, mirroring Bacon’s tailored approach to addressing personal intellectual deficiencies.

Digital Citizenship

The ethical dimension of Bacon’s essay, urging moderation and thoughtful application, is highly relevant to digital citizenship. Students navigating social media platforms must balance digital engagement with personal, intellectual, and social responsibilities, echoing Bacon’s advocacy for moderation.

In a nutshell, “Of Studies,” presents a nuanced perspective on the role of studies in human life. He asserts that studies serve for personal delight, enhance conversational abilities, and improve judgment and competence in practical matters. However, he cautions against excessive study, using knowledge merely for show, or relying solely on bookish learning without practical experience. Bacon advocates for a balanced approach where studies and experience complement each other, leading to well-rounded personal and intellectual development.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

After studying this Unit, learners will be able to:

- summarize the key arguments presented by Bacon regarding the purposes of studying—delight, ornament, and ability.
- explain Bacon’s recommendations for balanced learning, emphasizing the importance of integrating theory and practical experience.

- identify and analyze the potential drawbacks of excessive dependence on studies, such as sloth, affectation, and scholarly dogmatism.
- discuss critically the relevance of Bacon's views in the contemporary world of generative AI and social media, focusing on issues like information overload and critical thinking.
- evaluate Bacon's essay by considering both its strengths and limitations in addressing modern educational challenges.
- demonstrate understanding of Bacon's literary style, particularly his use of precise and impactful language.

1.4 Glossary

Ability: Competence or skill gained from practical and intellectual pursuits.

Affectation: Displaying artificial behavior or speech intended to impress others.

Aphorism: A concise statement expressing a general truth or principle.

Contemplation: Thoughtful reflection or deep consideration of ideas.

Critical thinking: The objective analysis and evaluation of information or arguments.

Delight: Pleasure or enjoyment derived from studying or intellectual activity.

Discernment: The ability to judge well or distinguish accurately between different ideas or arguments.

Dogmatism: Stubbornly adhering to beliefs or theories without considering practical evidence or experience.

Experiential learning: Gaining knowledge through practical experiences rather than theoretical study alone.

Information overload: Exposure to excessive information, making it difficult to process effectively.

Intellectualism: Emphasis on reasoning, knowledge, and intellectual pursuits.

Ornament: Knowledge used primarily for improving social interactions or conversations.

Sloth: Laziness or excessive indulgence in studies without practical application.

Nuanced: Characterized by subtle distinctions or variations in meaning.

Pedantry: Excessive concern with minor details or rigid adherence to rules, particularly in scholarship.

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. According to Bacon, studies primarily serve which three purposes?
 - a. Delight, money, and fame
 - b. Delight, ornament, and ability**
 - c. Honor, power, and reputation
 - d. Pleasure, love, and respect
2. Bacon argues that excessive study can lead to:
 - a. Happiness
 - b. Wealth
 - c. Sloth**
 - d. Wisdom
3. Bacon believes knowledge should primarily be used for:
 - a. Impressing others
 - b. Practical application and judgment**
 - c. Gaining social status
 - d. Writing books
4. According to Bacon, which type of men actually use studies effectively?
 - a. Crafty men
 - b. Simple men
 - c. Wise men**
 - d. Lazy men
5. Bacon suggests histories make people:
 - a. Witty
 - b. Deep
 - c. Wise**
 - d. Grave
6. Which discipline, according to Bacon, makes men subtle?
 - a. Moral Philosophy
 - b. Mathematics**
 - c. Logic

- d. History
- 7. Bacon's writing style in his essays is best described as:
 - a. Long and detailed
 - b. Brief and aphoristic**
 - c. Poetic and complex
 - d. Dramatic and emotional
- 8. According to Bacon, using studies excessively for social impression is called:
 - a. Laziness
 - b. Wisdom
 - c. Affectation**
 - d. Judgment
- 9. Bacon suggests that studies should primarily help one to:
 - a. Believe without questioning
 - b. Contradict others
 - c. Weigh and consider information**
 - d. Memorize facts only
- 10. Bacon believes the proper role of logic and rhetoric is:
 - a. To make men wise
 - b. To enable effective argumentation**
 - c. To amuse and entertain
 - d. To encourage laziness

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Explain Bacon's concept of the purposes of studies.
2. Analyze Bacon's warning about the dangers of excessive study.
3. Discuss Bacon's views on the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical experience.
4. Bring out the criticism of Bacon's essay "Of Studies".
5. Attempt a summary of the essay "Of Studies in your own words.

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Provide a critical overview of Bacon's arguments in "Of Studies," highlighting its historical significance.
2. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of Bacon's writing style as seen in "Of Studies."
3. Critically comment on the relevance of Bacon's essay "Of Studies" in the Age of AI.

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Unit-2: Joseph Addison – “Sir Roger at the Assizes”

Structure

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Objectives

2.2 Joseph Addison – “Sir Roger at the Assizes”

2.2.1 About the Essayist

2.2.2 Sir Roger at the Assizes

2.3 Learning Outcomes

2.4 Glossary

2.5 Sample Questions

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

2.0 Introduction

With the rise of journalism at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the essay began to appear in periodicals deriving abundant material from the manners of the time. A revolution in the art of the essay and a great impetus to the essay from came with Richard Steele and Joseph Addison at the commencement of the eighteenth century in the periodicals known as *the Taller* and *the Spectator*. They employed the essay for the double purpose of entertainment and the improvement of the morals and manners of contemporary society. Their style was conversational; the sheets were read at the breakfast table by men and women alike, and especially on Sundays, when games and pastimes were forbidden and theatres were closed, they formed excellent reading in family circles. In their essays, Steele and Addison dealt with the “more immediate and passing scenes of life” with “temporary and local matters”. These essays did not like their forerunners make their first appearance in the book form. They came out periodically in the case of the *Tatler* three times a week. In the case of the *Spectator* everyday each essay filling a single folio sheet and costing one penny.

Even before the *Tatler* thus appeared, there were two periodicals that could in any way be said to have belonged to the periodical form of writing and it is possible they may have given Steele some ideas. As early as 1691, appeared John Dryden’s *Athenian Mercury*. This journal professed to resolve all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the ingenious of either

sex. Questions were invited and answered on all sorts of subjects such as love, literature, religion, manners and science. Sir William Temple and his kinsman Jonathan Swift were among the contributors and Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, Samuel Richardson, the father of the English novel and he author of *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* wrote verses in praise of this journal which however had a successful career not longer than six years.

Daniel Defoe is rightly called the father of the English Newspaper. He began his *review* in 1704 and it continued till 1713, appearing for the greater part of time three times a week. Defoe wrote it all by himself. Its aim was mainly political, but it also dealt with moral and social topics such as gambling, drunkenness, duelling, the stage, trade and the poor. Moreover, Defoe imagined a Scandalous Club, which heard complaints and gave judgement upon them, and it is clear that Steele took the hint from it for his Trumpet Club in the *Tatler* and Addison for the Spectator Club of the Spectator and Swift, Pope and Arbuthnot for their Martin Scriblerus Club. Defoe was an inventive genius. It was Defoe who, at the end of the Seventeenth Century discovered what is certainly true of a great majority of human beings, that they care but for a little reading at a time, wherein lies the secret of the rise and popularity of periodical literature.

The *Tatler* ran from April, 1709 to March, 1711 and the *Spectator* from March, 1711 to December 1711, again for a time under the guidance of Addison in 1714. From 1709 to 1712 therefore Steele and Addison were writing together and their joint labour in the field of periodical literature developed, in course of time, into the quarterly and monthly reviews and magazines and into the weekly journals of modern times. As the essays appeared at regular intervals more or less close, the author was able to give continuity to his ideas, and to carry the characters of his invention from essay to essay. Thus, the readers grew familiar with Mr Bickerstaff of the *Tatler* and Mr Spectator of the *Spectator*, and the immortal Sir Roger de Coverley, and the other satellites of the Spectator Club, Will Honeycomb, Andrew Freeport and others. Some of Steele's essays were very pathetic but wit and humour are the chief characteristics of these essays.

A host of imitations of the *Tatler*, including one in the provinces sprang up, but neither these nor those that imitated the *Spectator* are now remembered. An exception must be made in favour of Swift's *The Examiner* which was, however, a political journal. The best essays of Swift and Arbuthnot appeared in *The Examiner*. The next periodical that calls for mention is Dr. Johnson's *Rambler*, which appeared twice a week from March 1750 to March 1752. All the essays in this periodical with the exception of four were written by Dr Johnson. The *Sparkle* and humour of Addison's *Spectator* were lost. In the hands of Johnson, the Essay became more serious and the

style heavy and periodic. It was highly latinised. Nevertheless, the essay tradition was well maintained by Johnson, though as Lady Mary Wortley Montague wittily observed, it followed the *Spectator* “as a packhorse would do a hunter”. Dr Johnson, however, is one of the most striking personalities in English literature. He is the hero of the greatest biography in English language that of *Boswell* and he gathered around himself some of the greatest men of the time. Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, Sheridan and Goldsmith and dominated over them at all the weekly meetings of the Literary Club, more familiar to us in Boswell’s pages with the shorter title of the *The Club*. But at the time of *The Rambler*, Johnson was comparatively an unknown man. Though many journals had sprung up after the *Tatler*, the *Spectator* and the *Guardian*, the *Rambler* is usually ranked as the first of the classical periodicals after the *Guardian*. A few years later, Johnson contributed to the *Universal Chronicle*, a series of papers called the *Idler*, which went on from 1758 to 1760. In the interval between the *Rambler* and the *Idler*, Johnson had contributed several interesting essays to *Hawkes worth’s Adventure* (1752 – 1754).

Goldsmith contributed to *The Bee*, a periodical that ran only a few weeks, some essays characterised by his wonderful simplicity, grace and kindly humour. In 1760, he contributed anonymously to Newbery’s daily paper the *Public Ledger*, a series of papers purporting to have been written by a Chinese visitor to London, Lien Chi Altangi. These were written in the form of letters sent by Lien Chi Altangi to his friend Fum Hoam at Peking and also some letters received by Altangi from his son, who had a romantic career. Like the portrait of Sir Roger De Coverly in the *Spectator*, Goldsmith gives us portraits of the Man in Black and Beau. Thus, these essays were published in book form in 1762 under the title of *The Citizen of the World*. After Addison and Steele, it may be said that Goldsmith was the first to capture and revive the secret of the illustrious essayists of Queen Anne’s time.

Check your progress:

1. Who wrote *Robinson Crusoe*?

2. Who were the pioneer writers of the periodical essay in 18th Century?

3. Who wrote *The Tatler*?

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- comprehend the concept of Periodical Essay.
- understand well-known writers of 18th century periodical essay.
- learn periodical writing of Joseph Addison.
- know the character Sir Roger de Coverley designed by Addison.
- understand qualities of Sir Roger de Coverley in the Assizes.
- learn broad minded character of Sir Roger de Coverley.

2.2 Joseph Addison – “Sir Roger at the Assizes”

2.2.1 About the Essayist:

As Bateson says, “Crucial innovations in a literature occur when some sub-literary form ceases to be trash and becomes the vehicle of aesthetic experience”. (p.118 – *The Penguin History of Literature*, Vol. 4). The 18th century periodical essay was such a sub-literary form which was the result of “a reaction against that reaction” – it was a reaction against the anti-puritan reaction of the Restoration Comedy. The periodical essay was the by-product of the polemical journalism of the later 17th century. The periodical essay was a higher kind of journalism which enjoyed the privilege of:

- a) Rebuking, reforming the individual rather than the nation.
- b) Being social and moral in its objective rather than being political.
- c) Entertaining readers.

Steele became the engineer of this transition in Augustan Literary Culture, but its genius was of course, Addison. Addison’s *The Spectator* with its series of essays presents with rare playful irony and at times bitter satire on human failings, his portraits of the country squire Roger de Coverley and other characters. The Victorians preferred Addison to Pope as their model of irony, satire and refined prose style. Macaulay praises him for his moral purity, which we find, even in his merriments. Addison alone, says Macaulay knew how to ridicule without abusing, who without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit with virtue. He rescued English humor from the obscenity of Restoration Comedy.

Addison and Steele were school fellows. Addison wrote in Steele's *The Tatler* as well. Addison's prose style, even today, is considered the best, in the whole range of English literature, more consistently excellent than even Shakespeare's, Dryden's, Arnold's, Shaw's etc. Dr. Johnson calls Addison's prose style "Model of the middle style – on grave subjects not formal, on high occasions not groveling, pure and exact without apparent elaboration." In other words, Addison's prose style was a combination of the high style of the epic, tragedy and ode genres, and the low style which contained mostly colloquialisms. In his commentary on the four essays on the pleasures of imagination in *The Spectator*, Hugh Blair calls Addison's style 'elegant'. In his essay no 116 in *The Tatler*, Addison calls a woman "a beautiful animal that may be adorned with furs and feathers". Here, Addison's ambivalent – attraction and repulsion, attitude towards women is not less stinging than Pope's in *The Rape of the Lock*. The description of Will Wimble in *The Spectator* no 108, "he hunts a pack of dogs than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare" presents a concrete detail of country life. Addison's one of the best essays in the *The Spectator* is that on "What is a classic" which Eliot has adopted verbatim. Eliot says that Addison's use of prose "realizes the genius of the English language. Addison's essays on *Paradise Lost* reveal his critical temperament and his closeness to Aristotle's concept of the epic. In the essay no 411 of *The Spectator*, Addison appears to us as a romantic, where he uses dreams as a literary genre in his vision of Mirza. In fact, England's progress towards romanticism was facilitated by his essays.

Check your progress:

1. What is the purpose of 18th Century periodical essay?

2. What are the views of Bateson on 18th century periodical essay?

3. What quality of Addison's find in essay no 411 of *The Spectator*?

2.2.2 Critical analysis of the Essay:

'*The Spectator*' was a periodical started on 1st March 1711 and it was published till 6th December 1712. It was published for about two years. Actually Richard Steele started the periodical, but Joseph Addison took a predominant share in the management of the journal. The name for the journal was carefully chosen that the journal observes each and every person in the society and their activities in sundry fields of life, just as the spectators of a play or a match observe

the total activities of the performance. Yet, the nature and form of the periodical was not as it is today. It aimed at publishing information current and ancient and now and then it gave vent to local or some important news. But due to the lack of communication it was not possible for the editors to publish day to day news. And they gave way to publishing some article about the major historical or literary events of the past and writing and commenting on the contemporary writers and their literary activities. Nevertheless, *The Spectator*, in a limited measure, acted as the communicator to the particularly, noble and upper class.

Assize is to assess or to fix the quantity or price. In Scottish it is a trial by jury. The plural Assizes means periodical sittings of judges on circuit through the English countries with a jury. Old French 'Assizes' means an assembly of judges. Addison has delineated the character of Sir Roger Coverley in this article. In each article the reader comes to know one characteristic quality of Sir Roger. In the present article we see how Sir Roger as a Judge as well as a Jury dispenses with his responsibility. Addison's enthusiasm to ennoble Sir Roger is an endless pleasure for him. He wants to make the knight a noble man, a model and a perfect man. He is nonpareil in any aspect of human activity. As Sir Roger is very popular in the country, so he is a popular and just man in the neighborhood. Addison describes in detail some of the litigations with a view to show how honestly Sir Roger handles a case. He is an impartial judge and selfless.

As usual Addison begins the article with a quotation from some great ancient writer or poet. It represents the gist of the article. Addison develops the theme out of the allusion. It is like an epigram. 'An agreeable companion upon the road is as good as a coach'. The traveler gets satisfaction from his good companion as much as he gets from a coach or it may be said that a good companion is more desirable than a coach. A coach only saves us from the labor of walking but we may be bored without a dear friend in the company. This is an ordinary description of Sir Roger's day at the Assizes. The humorous episode in the article makes it worthwhile. Addison has successfully produced the country atmosphere.

The author of the '*The Spectator*' thinks that a man should first of all try to avoid the reproaches of his own heart and then his second concern should be to escape the reproaches of the world. If he later comes in conflict with the first, one should give primary importance to the first that is one should avoid the reproaches of the heart. Sir Roger is fortunate enough in keeping peace within himself and at the same time in winning the love and respect of all around him. The author has seen how the people shower affection and good will upon him. He tells how the other day Will Wimble and he accompanied Sir Roger to the country assizes.

On the way, Will Wimble joined two simple countrymen who were riding ahead while Wimble began conversing with them. Sir Roger told the author about these two men. One of them was honest yeoman. He was also an expert hunter and rarely spent money on his dinners for he hunted hares and pheasants for his meal. The other man who rode beside him was a notorious fellow always engaged in law-suits. He was quarrelsome fellow and irritated people by bringing in law-suits against them on silly charges. As a result of this, he has practically lost all he was left with by his father. When Sir Roger and the author went near, Wimble sopped and told Sir Roger a dispute arose between himself and Tom Touchy. Touchy is the man who approaches the court for slightest pretext. In the conversation Wimble told about his hunting exploits. One of the exploits concerned the fishing at a certain part of the river. And Touchy caught a chance of picking quarrel with Wimble. That Wimble must come to the court because the fishing at a particular part was objectionable. Sir Roger heard both of them remained silent for a moment and then said that much might be said on both sides. On hearing this Wimble and Touchy looked quite satisfied.

When they arrived at the assizes they found that the court had already started. But the judges made room for Sir Roger. The session was proceeding and Addison was very pleased to see the solemnity of the atmosphere when suddenly he saw that Sir Roger rose to speak. The hall became silent at once and people gazed at him with wonder, amazed to find him speaking with the judge.

On their way back home, the spectator (author) and Sir Roger chanced upon a very pleasant incident. When they arrived near his estate, they decided to rest at an inn just on the verge of his estate. The inn-keeper was once a servant of Sir Roger's household. In order to show his respect to the knight, this person had put up a picture of Sir Rodger on his sign board. When Sir Rodger came to know about this, he told the inn-keeper that it was too great an honor for him and suggested that he should alter the picture. Thus, the man brought a painter and had the picture changed. When Sir Roger came to the inn, the inn-keeper wanted to show him the altered picture. He brought it and showed. The alteration were really remarkable. The author of the Spectator discovered a faint resemblance to Sir Roger beneath the whiskers and the monstrous face. Sir Roger then asked him whether it was possible for people to discover his own face in the picture. The author at first remained silent, but being pressed too much, he replied wittily that 'much might be said on both sides'.

Tom Touchy is an interesting character in the article. His peculiarity is not uncommon. In every society we see men like Touchy and they systematically exploit the protection given by law

in a laissez faire. Touchy is a nuisance creator. His name is also interesting and symbolical. That he is like prickly bramble and whoever touches it the thorns stick to him. This Tom Touchy is very famous for 'taking the law' of everybody. There is not one in the town where he lives, that he has not sued at a quarter session. He is a rogue and once he had the impudence of going to law against a widow. He plagued give much trouble a couple of honest gentlemen so long for a tress pass in breaking one of his hedges.

So for as the character of Sir Roger is concerned, there appears a nobility trust upon him. There is nothing remarkable or a gallant feat that happens in the portrait of him. However there is humor regarding the picture of Sir Roger. He asked the alteration for no purpose. Because when it was altered, everything had gone wrong. That Sir Roger could not be identified out of the picture. It appears that the painter had drawn the picture from the description of Sir Roger from the faithful servant and hence there is least resemblance to the man whose picture it was. The author also reserves his judgment about the picture, as Sir Roger had reserved his about the dispute between Wimble and Touchy. It is a sly remark on the nature of Sir Roger. The frowning and staring features are not pleasant ones, the reference of Saracerist lead adds to the solemnity of the article. This is one of the adventures of Sir Roger that provides much pleasure to the author.

An Assizes is a sitting of the court of justice in the country. The sitting is not regular, as it is in consideration of a small number of cases that are brought to the court in the country. It is like a mobile court sitting at a particular village periodically and the neighboring people of the country should sue their cases at the time. Sir Roger was a jury and he was a man of impartial verdict that all the neighborhood knew it. Sir Roger and Wimble and the author of the Spectator were going for the assizes according to the programme. On their way William Wimble had some dispute with a quarrelsome man Tom Touchy. It took some time to deal with the dispute and Sir Roger was a little late when he reached the place of assizes.

The court had already started with the proceedings. But when Sir Roger came, other judges and juries made room for him to sit and he was the chair for the occasion. It shows how Sir Roger was respected. Sir Roger was an expert advocator and soon he began to express his opinions on the law-suits that were under consideration. The author of '*The Spectator*' was listening to the proceedings with much attention and was greatly satisfied with the proper accomplishment of such a public administration of the laws. After an hour and in the midst of the hearing of a case. Sir Roger got up at once and began to speak. It was surprising for all others. He meant to tell in short about an urgent business he had to attend and asked the committee for an excuse. Upon his first

rising the court was hushed and a general whisper ran among the country people that Sir Roger was up. His speech at the assizes was very little and there was nothing to comment on it. It appeared that Sir Roger had not prepared himself to attend to the cases to the full sitting. This is how Sir Roger dispensed with assizes.

The essay presents an aspect of the character of Sir Roger Coverley. He is an ideal man, a model and an example to be followed. And hence, the authors of *The Spectator* repeatedly bring him in the essays and try to connect him to the themes directly or indirectly. In the present article, Sir Roger is a jury, for a mobile court in the country. The assizes refers to that. According to the programme of the assizes Sir Roger sets for the place where the court was to sit. The sentence under reference, speaks of the encounter of Wimble and one Tom Touchy, between whom a dispute arose. Touchy was going to the court to present his law-suits and Wimble happened to speak to him just to make friendship with him. During the conversation between them Wimble gave an account of his adventures in fishing. He mentioned about such an act of a day in a particular part of the river. Touchy at once picked a quarrel with him saying that it was unlawful to go fishing at particular spot and Wimble must face the consequences of court proceedings. And Touchy himself would complain against him. Wimble tried to convince him that it was not his intention to violate law if at all there had been one. He pleaded for his innocence. But Touchy was not a man of consideration. He was a sort of brain worm seeking after persons who he could involve in law-suits. Sir Roger gives many accounts of cases that Touchy sued. There is not one in the town where he lives that he had not sued at a quarter session. Thus, Wimble was helpless against Touchy and at the suggestion of Wimble both come to Sir Roger and tell about the dispute. Sir Roger could not set aside the legal implication involved in the matter. He registered the case at once and asked them to appear before the judge because ‘that much might be said on both sides’.

Sir Roger was returning after attending the quarter session of the mobile court in the country, when the party Sir Roger, Wimble and the author of the *Spectator* was very near to Sir Roger’s estate, they decided to stay at an inn for some time, take rest and proceed. The inn-keeper was an old servant of Sir Roger and out of respect and obedience, he had got a picture of Sir Roger and hung it in the sign board. Before reaching the inn, Sir Roger come to know about it and he did not like the idea for he thought that he did not deserve to be commemorated in that way. Such honor should be showed to great persons like a duke or king. He had asked the inn-keeper to modify the picture by adding whiskers and turning the face to gravity. He also recommended the painter. The inn-keeper followed the instructions and the picture was changed into Saracen’s head

as it was suggested. A Saracen was a moor or Berber or an Arab or a Syrian nomad. The purpose was to disfigure the picture and people should not identify it with Sir Roger. When the party came to the inn, Sir Roger asked the inn-keeper to bring the picture before him. He seemed to be glad to see the alteration made in the picture according to his instructions. But at the same time, he became serious to see that there were some races below the whiskers and Sir Roger could have still been traced. Through the resemblance was far-fetched one. Sir Roger moved the picture of the head towards the author and asked for his opinion about it. The author of the Spectator could not say anything at first. But after some time he passed his remark saying that ‘that much might be said on both sides’. The statement is an imitation of Sir Roger’s words who had said the same upon the dispute between Wimble and Tom Touchy. Thus the author has wittily concluded the passage by adding something to the mirth and gravity of Sir Roger.

Check your progress:

1. In which year was the periodical ‘The Spectator’ started?

2. Who suggested the innkeeper to change the picture on the wall?

2.3 Learning Outcomes

After going through the Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the concept of Periodical essay.
- know 18th century periodical writers.
- comprehend the writing and skills of Joseph Addison.
- understand the character of Sir Roger de Coverley.
- know social work done by Sir Roger de Coverley.

2.4 Glossary

Aesthetic: Concern with beauty or the appreciation of beauty.

Ambivalent: Having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone.

Assizes: Periodical sitting of judges or circuit through the English countries with a jury.

Bramble: A prickly scrambling shrub of the rose family, especially a blackberry.

Colloquialism: A word or phrase that is not formal or literary and is used in ordinary or familiar conversation.

Delineated: Describe or portray something precisely.

Duelling: A contest with deadly weapons arranged between two people in order to settle a point of honour.

Groveling: Obsequious behaviour aimed at obtaining forgiveness or favour.

He is within the game-act: This refers to old game laws by which persons were not allowed to obtain a licence unless duly qualified by birth or estate. The required qualification was ownership of lands of the minimum yearly value of 100. The Yeoman deserves that.

Inventive: Having the ability to create or design new things or to think originally.

Laissez-faire: The policy of leaving things to take their own course without interfering.

Litigations: The process of taking legal action.

Merriments: Gaiety and fun.

Mirth: Amusement especially as expressed in laughter.

Nonpareil: An unrivalled or matchless person or thing.

Obscenity: Offensive or disgusting by accepted standards of morality and decency.

Old Business of the willow tree: The old law suit which a willow tree was concerned.

Packhorse: A horse used to carry loads.

Petty Jury: The Jury which sits in court to give a verdict on the cases tried, as opposed to the grand jury which decides before trial whether the accused shall be sent for trial or not.

Polemical: Expressing or constituting a strongly critical attack on or controversial opinion about someone or something.

Prickly: Likely to cause offence or controversy.

Rebuking: Expressing sharp disapproval or criticism.

Repulsion: A feeling of intense distaste or disgust.

Saracen's Head: A very common sign that was a relic from the Crusades, and may still be seen as in the Lamb Saracen's Head in Westminster. Saracen is a Syrian or Arab nomad, an opponent of the Crusaders. A Moor or Berber.

Solemnity: The State or quality of being serious and dignified.

Sundry: Of various kinds.

The Widow: A perverse widow who was brought before the jury with whom the knight fell in love.

Vent: Give free expression to strong expression.

Verbatim: Exactly the same words as were used originally.

Will Wimble: A fiend of Sir Roger de Coverley.

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The periodical essay "*The Tatler*" is written by _____.
(a) Daniel Defoe **(b) Addison and Steele**
(c) Oliver Goldsmith (d) Dr Johnson
2. Who is the central character in "*The Spectator*"?
(a) Tom Touchy (b) Charles
(c) Steele **(d) Sir Roger**
3. Swift's '*The Examiner*' is a _____ journal.
(a) Social (b) Economical
(c) Political (d) None of the above
4. The Spectator was a periodical started in _____.
(a) 1st March 1711 (b) 1st March 1712
(c) 1st June 1711 (d) 1st June 1712
5. Sir Roger is a _____ in the essay 'Sir Roger at the Assizes'.
(a) Prisoner **(b) Jury**
(c) Innkeeper (d) None of the above
6. Who filed a case against Will Wimble in the court?
(a) Sir Roger (b) Innkeeper
(c) Tom Touchy (d) Addison
7. Whose picture the innkeeper had put up on the sign-board?
(a) Steele (b) Charles
(c) Jesus Christ **(d) Sir Roger**
8. Where did Sir Roger and Will Wimble decide to stay after returning from the court?
(a) Hostel (b) Home
(c) Inn (d) None of the above
9. Who was having dispute with Tom Touchy?

- (a) Will Wimble (b) Sir Roger
(c) Addison (d) Steele
10. Who is called the father of English Newspaper?
- (a) Addison (b) Steele
(c) Dr Johnson (d) Daniel Defoe

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who are major writers of periodical essays in 18th Century?
2. What is the purpose of periodical essay in 17th century?
3. What did Will Wimble told to Sir Roger on their way?
4. Why did Sir Roger suggested to innkeeper to change the picture?
5. How did the quarrel takes place between Will Wimble and Tom Touchy?

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a detailed note on dispute between Will Wimble and Tom Touchy.
2. Sketch the character of Sir Roger.
3. Write a detailed note on the incident of Sir Roger and the Innkeeper.

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Addison, Joseph, and Steele, Richard. *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator*. Edited
2. Bond, Richmond. *Studies in the Early English Periodical*. Chapel Hill: The University of Carolina Press. 1957. Print.
3. Edward, Albert. *History of English Literature*. Revised by J. A. Stone. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1979. Print.
4. J. Robert. 1945. Allen. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961.
5. Smith, Gregory. *The Spectator in Four Volumes*. Dutton, New York. Everyman's Library.
6. Walter, Graham. *English Literary Periodicals*. New York: T. Nelson and Sons. 1930. Print.

Unit-3: Charles Lamb – “Dream Children”

Structure

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Objectives

4.2 Charles Lamb – “Dream Children”

4.2.1 About the Essayist

4.2.2 Summary of the Essay

4.2.3 The Characters

4.2.4 Critical Contexts

4.2.4.1 The Autobiographical Elements

4.2.4.2 The Romantic Elements

4.2.4.3 Humour and Pathos

4.2.4.4 Quaint and Old-Fashioned Language

4.2.4.5 Literary Allusion

4.2.4.6 Sympathy for Imperfection

4.2.4.7 Significance of the title

4.2.5 Features of the Essay

4.2.6 Let Us Sum Up

4.3 Learning Outcomes

4.4 Glossary

4.5 Sample Questions

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

3.0 Introduction

“Dream Children: A Reverie” is one of the most popular and celebrated essays by Charles Lamb in the history of English literature. As an essayist, Lamb used most of the features of an essay in it. It has been written in a conversational style by different characters. Unlike Bacon, Lamb is not an objective essayist. His essays are much inclined towards his personal life, humour, pathos, likes, and dislikes. In a word, his essays are his own personal reflection. The current essay, as prescribed in your syllabus, “Dream Children,” belongs to his famous work *Essays of Elia* (1823), published in London magazines. While reading the essay, you will not learn any didactic or moral lessons; instead, it will leave an indelible impression on your minds and hearts, as if you

have been transported into Elia's world. As a reader and learner, you can empower your imaginative thoughts to associate yourself with the imaginary character of Lamb.

Check your progress:

1. *Essays of Elia* is a collection of _____.
2. Who is the author of *Essays of Elia*?
_____.

3.1 Objectives

This Unit is written for the students interested in learning about Charles Lamb as an essayist and gaining a critical understanding of his essay, "Dream Children." Specifically, it is prescribed in the syllabus to achieve the subsequent learning objectives:

- To make the readers and learners familiar with the life events of Charles Lamb, such as his autobiography, education, and personal life.
- To make them aware of Lamb as an essayist.
- To make them comprehend the different personal and autobiographical incidents of Charles Lamb that have been depicted in his essay, notably Dream Children.
- To understand the importance of the essay in the Romantic era.
- To understand Lamb's importance as a romantic.

3.2 Charles Lamb – "Dream Children"

3.2.1 About the Essayist:

Charles Lamb was born on February 10th, 1775, in London, England. Until 1789, he attended Christ's Hospital School. He was quite close with both Leigh Hunt and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. From 1792 until his retirement in 1825, Lamb worked as a clerk at East India House (the headquarters of the East India Company). Mary Lamb, Lamb's sister, murdered their mother in 1796 due to insanity. The Lamb was powerful and assumed responsibility for Mary. His most notable accomplishments were his remarkable letters and essays published in the London Magazine under the pen name Elia. He wrote in a highly personal and mannered style. In the year 1807, Lamb and his sister published *Tales from Shakespeare*, a retelling of the plays for children. He died in Edmonton, Middlesex, on the 27th of December, 1834.

Check your progress:

1. Which literary work was coauthored by Lamb and his sister?

2. Which English writer used the pen name Elia?

3.2.2 Summary of the Essay:

The essay starts with the references of how children love to listen to stories in order to stretch their imaginations. Their traditional grand-uncle or even grandame generally aids this story and their imagination. This is where the narrator's children crept in, in order to listen to the stories about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a house in Norfolk. In that ancient yet enormous house, there was a wooded inscription that talked about the story of the children and their cruel uncle, which was known as the ballads of the children in the wood. This story of the Robin Redbreasts was lost after a foolish rich man substituted the wooded inscription with a more modern marble piece. Here, Alice looked like her mother and gave one of her looks. Then the narrator went on to tell them how religious their grandmother was and how she was not the mistress of the house but was only in charge because the owner preferred to live in a more fashionable and modern house. Though she lived in that house as if it were her own, when it came to decay, and all its ornaments were pulled down, they were taken away to the new fashionable mansion of the owner. In that house, however, the ancient furniture looked like a tomb in Lady C's tawdry-gilt drawing room. That would be foolish, as John said. The narrator also described how, because she was such a good and religious woman, her funeral was attended by both gentry and poor. She knew the Psaltery and a significant portion of the Testament by heart. The narrator also depicted how their grandmother was the country's best dancer and a cancer disease destroyed her zeal. However, her good spirits were not defeated by cancer. She was also very religious and thus courageous, and therefore, she lived in the house alone with the apparitions of the infant. The narrator also depicted how he used to spend time in that house while looking at the twelve Caesars who had been Emperors of Rome and were made of marble. He also depicted how he would stroll along the house all the while, looking at its ancient furniture and ornaments, and how a gardener would occasionally cross him. He was never tired of walking across the large house, and he would never try to pluck the nectarines, and peaches were almost like a forbidden fruit to him. He also never tried to have a taste of the red berries and grapes because he loved ripening along with them instead of trying to taste them. The narrator also depicted how their great-grandmother loved their uncle

“John L” a little more than the other grandchildren because he was handsome and had the spirit of youth full in him. He was almost like a king to the others, and instead of strolling across the house, he would join hunters and would ride horses. However, he loved the house too. When the narrator was lame footed he, John would carry him on his back. But when John also became lame footed, the narrator didn’t make enough allowance for his impatience. After his death, the narrator missed him badly, and the pain of his death haunted the narrator more and more. The narrator wanted to play with him; he missed his kindness and his love. The children started crying in this situation, and they wanted to listen to the stories of their pretty mother. The narrator depicted the wooing days of Alice, which lasted for seven years, and how she was coy and shy at first. This is where the child Alice gave one of her mother’s looks, and it was hard to distinguish who was sitting right there. Then the narrator had awakened from his dreams and he understood that he was dreaming. In the last part, he heard the children say, they are not of Alice, not of him, and they are nothing at all; they are thoughts lost on the shores of Lethe, the river of oblivion, and thus, the children of Alice call Bartrum the father.

3.2.3 The Characters:

Mrs. Field: Charles Lamb’s great grandmother.

Uncle John: The elder brother of the author who was older than him by about 14 years

Alice: An imaginary girl, through whose eyes Lamb saw her beloved Ann.

John: A boy imagined by the author.

3.2.4 Critical Contexts:

3.2.4.1 The Autobiographical Elements:

In “Dream Children”, the autobiographical details are used imaginatively to sustain the readers’ interest. Lamb describes his childhood and adolescence, including his happy days at his grandmother, Mrs. Field’s, mansion. The essay contains a description of Lamb’s mode and manner of living in Mrs. Field’s mansion during his holidays. Lamb is the implied hero of his essay. He reveals with assurance everything he has loved and lost, coveted and enjoyed. This autobiographical element has rendered Lamb’s works deeply intimate and affecting.

“I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels ...”

The affectionate relationship with his elder brother John, his appearance, courage and affection for the author have all been described with eerie details. Lamb’s profound grief at the death of his brother is, too, revealed here. The essay records his sense of unhappiness and regret

for his lonely and bachelor life and his courtship with Ann Simmons. Apart from “Dream Children”, in essays like “The South Sea House”, “Christ’s Hospital Five”, “Thirty Years Ago”, “A Bachelors Complaint”, we come across his personal activities, his jobs, his studies, and his professional life.

Check your progress:

1. Mention two autobiographical elements implied in the essay.
-

3.2.4.2 The Romantic Elements:

Charles Lamb, as an essayist, emphasized the quality of finer imagination, feelings, psychology, and emotions in interpersonal relationships. Lamb was a city-minded person. He was different from Wordsworth and Coleridge in his perception of Romanticism. In his essays, Lamb elaborated on Romanticism. The association of the Romantic Movement with “return to nature” does not really mean what is associated with only nature but also what is natural in human beings. Furthermore, that is how Romanticism aptly justifies the etymological evolution of the Enlightenment that preceded it. In “Dream Children: A Reverie”, we find all the components of Romanticism. Personal experiences of joy and sorrow are scattered throughout his essays. The unfulfilled desires and longings get subjective expression throughout the essay. Charles Lamb had a genius for reminiscence. It is for this reason that he has been called “A Visualizer of Memories.” The essay’s allure stems from its imaginative depiction of romantic emotion. This essay is “A Lyric in Prose” and conjures up old acquaintances, architecture, mental hauntedness, etc. The sensuous descriptions of the succulent fruits and smells of the garden, recalling scenes from childhood and from later life, all indulge the author’s sense of romantic aesthetics. Lamb has a propensity to mystify others, like other romantic writers. In order to make his essays entertaining, he provides some false information and advice. In “Dream Children: A Reverie,” Lamb discusses his brother’s untimely passing. His essay is pitiful because of this. But John Lamb did not pass away young. Lamb tells his dream children once more that he courted Alice W-n. However, he genuinely loved Ann Simmons.

3.2.4.3 Humour and Pathos:

Lamb’s essays are an excellent admixture of humour and pathos. His essays have a wonderful blend of humour and pathos. Lamb, in his personal life, faced much disappointment. But, in his essays, there is an attempt to laugh the tragic and pathetic away with humour. As a result, rather than lamenting the tragedies, he attempts to make light of them through his humor.

The essay is a memoir that talks about his failed past. John's death and failed relationship with Alice represent the idea of pathos in the text. The idea of the path is represented in front of his "dream children." He gets back to his past and relives it through his dream children, almost in a state of unconsciousness. There is a vivacious description of his brotherhood and courtship. However, just as he depicts the death of his brother, the children take him away to the stories of Alice. Thus, the pathetic is constantly followed by the humorous. It's amusing and amusing to see a bachelor man dreaming about his children and representing his lady love Ann with Alice. But it cannot be denied that within that very humour, there is hidden pathos. Behind the humorous element are the hidden pains of a man who considers himself a complete failure. Thus, the text is a perfect juxtaposition of humour and pathos.

3.2.4.4 Quaint and Old-Fashioned Language:

Charles Lamb is known for his unique style of writing, which often includes the use of quaint and old-fashioned language. This style of writing was common during the Romantic period, when writers sought to express their individuality and creativity through the use of language.

In Lamb's essays, he often employs archaic or poetic language, such as "thou" instead of "you," "hither" instead of "here," or "morn" instead of "morning." He also uses expressions that were popular in his time but are no longer in common use, such as "peradventure" instead of "perhaps," or "methinks" instead of "I think."

While this use of language may seem strange or even outdated to modern readers, it was a deliberate choice on Lamb's part. He saw language as a living thing, constantly evolving and changing, and believed that by using older forms of language, he could connect with the past and express his own unique voice.

Furthermore, Lamb's use of quaint language adds a distinctive charm to his essays, creating a sense of nostalgia and whimsy. His style is characterized by a combination of humor, irony, and sentimentality, and his use of archaic language adds to the overall effect.

3.2.4.5 Literary Allusion:

Charles Lamb was well-read and his essays often include literary allusions and references to classical literature. He uses these references to illustrate his points and to show his readers the depth of his knowledge. Here are a few examples of literary allusions found in Lamb's essays:

"Dream-Children: A Reverie" - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several works of literature, including Shakespeare's "The Tempest" and "Hamlet," Milton's "Paradise Lost," and Sir Philip

Sidney's "Arcadia." Lamb uses these allusions to create a dreamlike, fantastical atmosphere in the essay.

"The Superannuated Man" - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several works of literature, including Shakespeare's "As You Like It" and "Macbeth," Milton's "Paradise Lost," and Samuel Johnson's "Rasselas." Lamb uses these allusions to explore the idea of retirement and aging, and to reflect on the passage of time.

"A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig" - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several works of literature, including the biblical story of Isaac and Abraham, and the Greek myth of Prometheus. Lamb uses these allusions to explore the theme of sacrifice, and to create a humorous and playful tone in the essay.

"On the Tragedies of Shakespeare" - In this essay, Lamb alludes to several of Shakespeare's plays, including "Hamlet," "Othello," and "Macbeth." Lamb uses these allusions to explore the nature of tragedy and to reflect on the enduring power of Shakespeare's works.

Check your progress:

1. Name any two literary works that have been alluded by Lamb in his essay "Dream Children".

3.2.4.6 Sympathy for Imperfection:

One of the recurring themes in his essays is the idea of sympathy for imperfection, which he explores in various ways throughout his work.

In many of his essays, Lamb expresses his empathy for those who are flawed or imperfect. He recognizes that all humans are prone to error and that it is often our imperfections that make us interesting and endearing. In his essay "Imperfect Sympathies," Lamb writes, "I am not of that cold-blooded order of beings who can be contented with the smooth and plausible surface of things, but must look below into the depths of human nature, and see there the seeds of every kind of vice and virtue."

In "Dream Children: A Reverie" by Charles Lamb, the narrator reflects upon his own life and regrets not being able to marry the woman he loved due to family circumstances. The story is an exploration of the power of imagination, memory, and the human condition.

One of the central themes of the story is the idea of sympathy for imperfections. The narrator feels a sense of empathy for the imperfect aspects of his life, such as his inability to marry the woman he loved, and this sense of empathy extends to his dream children.

In the story, the dream children are a manifestation of the narrator's imagination and represent his desire for a perfect family. However, as the story progresses, the dream children begin to reveal their imperfections, such as their inability to remember their mother's face. Despite these imperfections, the narrator continues to feel a deep sense of sympathy for them.

Through the character of the narrator, Lamb suggests that imperfections are a natural part of the human condition, and that sympathy and understanding should be extended to those who have them.

3.2.4.7 Significance of the title:

The essay by Lamb takes place in a dream. The children in the essay are a mere representation of the author's imagination. They also represent the author's failed love relationship with Ann Simmons. The astonishing aspect of the essay lies in the fact that the children are its driving force of the author's imagination. They also represent the author's failed love relationship with Ann Simmons. The astonishing aspect of the essay lies in the fact that the children are its driving force. They have no representation in reality, and they only occur in the author's dreams, only to get lost in oblivion on the shores of Lethe. However, without them, we would not be able to know the seven years of the author's courtship. We would not be able to relive his relationship with his brother and remain in complete oblivion of the author's personal struggles. Thus, being a creation of imagination, the children become the crux of the essay. Thus, the title of the essay is apt and justified.

3.2.5 Features of the Essay:

- a. Written in Simple Prose
- b. Doesn't subscribe to the enormous plot structure of a novel
- c. Doesn't germinate out of an innate conflict like a drama
- d. No use of heightened rhetoric
- e. It follows a linear narrative structure

3.2.6 Let Us Sum Up:

Lamb's essay is a representative of the romantic era, where the imagination reigns supreme. The essay is an autobiography that works both as a romantic prose and a memoir due to its emphasis on individuality. The essay is also a personal tribute to Ann Simmons, who is represented in the essay as Alice. The essay has a wonderful admixture of humour and pathos that makes the romantic fervour of the essay even more heightened.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

After going through the Unit, learners are expected to understand:

- The autobiographical elements in Lamb's writing.
- Key features of Romantic prose.
- Aspects of Charles Lamb's personal life.
- The use of humour and pathos.
- Characteristics and structure of an essay.
- The significance of the essay's title.

3.4 Glossary

Couchant: Lying like an animal on legs with head raised

Filial: Relating to a son or daughter

Ekphrasis: The literary device of describing a piece of art

Superflux: Superfluidity or excessive flowing

Dace: A small freshwater fish, usually found in a pond

Tegument: An insect or parasite's tough outer layer

Tawny: An orangish brown or yellow color

Coxcomb: A dandy, or a vain man

Rake: A wealthy person with unsavory or promiscuous habits

Manducation: Eating, or chewing

Chit: A short notice of money owed

Salopian: A native of the English Salop shire

Welkin: The sky or heavens

Defiliation: The separation of a male child from his parents

Descant: To ramble, often tediously

Deportment: A person's conduct, behavior, or manners

Endenized: To make someone or something a member of some group

Incunabula: An early printed book

Fuliginous: Covered in soot or dusky

Foppery: Excessive concern with one's appearance or show of wealth, in the sense of a British fop

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Questions:

- 1) Who is Lady C?
 - a) Grandmother of the children
 - b) Great grandmother of the children**
 - c) An imaginary lady
 - d) The wife of the rich man
- 2) Who is Ceaser?
 - a) A king
 - b) An imagination of the author
 - c) A marble sculpture**
 - d) The gardener
- 3) Why did the poor and gentry attend the great grandmother's funeral?
 - a) She was poor
 - b) She was rich
 - c) She was scary
 - d) She was religious**
- 4) Alice looked like _____.
 - a) Her mother**
 - b) Her father
 - c) Her brother
 - d) None of the above
- 5) Who was Bartrum?
 - a) Narrator's brother
 - b) Alice's brother
 - c) Elder Alice's husband
 - d) Author's younger brother**
- 6) Whom did the mansion belong to?

- a) **A rich gentry**
 - b) The great grandmother
 - c) Ann Simmons
 - d) The author
- 7) Who is John?
- a) Author's brother
 - b) Bartrum's brother
 - c) **Narrator's brother**
 - d) None of the above
- 8) What is testament?
- a) **A religious book**
 - b) An imaginary book
 - c) A heretical book
 - d) A romantic idea
- 9) Who became lame footed?
- a) The narrator
 - b) The author
 - c) **John**
 - d) Both narrator and John
- 10) Who tried to look courageous after hearing about the apparitions?
- a) John
 - b) Alice
 - c) **Great grandmother**
 - d) None of the above

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who was Ann Simmons?
2. What is the theme of the essay Dream Children?
3. What is the ballad of the children inscribed in the wood and where is carved?
4. Why did both the rich and poor people attend the funeral ceremony of Mrs. Field?
5. What is the significance of the apparition of two infants?

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What Autobiographical elements do you find in The Dream Children?
2. Justify the Title of the essay, Dream Children: A Reverie.
3. How would you see Dream Children as a juxtaposition of Romantic Humour and Pathos?

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Lamb, Charles. *Select Essays of Elia*. New York, Cincinnati. American Book Company Publishing, 1909.
2. Dream Children - A Reverie By Charles Lamb, YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E44S5BosNuc>.

Unit-4: George Orwell – “Shooting an Elephant”

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 George Orwell – “Shooting an Elephant”
 - 4.2.1 Historical and Cultural Context
 - 4.2.2 Colonial Burma and British Imperialism
 - 4.2.3 Orwell’s Experiences as a British Officer
 - 4.2.4 Themes and Literary Devices
 - 4.2.5 Power and Imperialism
 - 4.2.6 Moral Ambiguity and Conformity
 - 4.2.7 Symbolism, Metaphor and Imagery
 - 4.2.8 The Elephant
 - 4.2.9 Colonial Oppression
 - 4.2.10 Personal and Political Implications
 - 4.2.11 Personal Consequences of Imperialism
 - 4.2.12 Power Dynamics and Resistance
 - 4.2.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.3 Learning Outcomes
- 4.4 Glossary
- 4.5 Sample Questions
- 4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

4.0 Introduction

Written in 1936 George Orwell’s essay, “Shooting an Elephant,” is a significant addition to his literary repertoire, already distinguished by works such as *Down and Out in London and Paris* (1933) and *Burmese Days* (1934). The essay’s history can be traced to Orwell’s tenure as a colonial official in the British Empire, where he navigated the complexities of administering authority in India and Burma during the interwar period. “Shooting an Elephant” serves as both an extension and a critical reflection on his earlier literary endeavours, encapsulating the moral predicament, power struggles, and cultural clashes emblematic of British colonialism.

Orwell's essay, "Shooting an Elephant" takes us to the heart of Burma, where he grapples with the uncomfortable juxtaposition of his role as a colonial officer and his personal aversion to imperialism. His animosity toward the British Empire aligns with the sentiments of the indigenous Burmese population, who harbour a deep-seated resentment toward their colonial masters. In this charged atmosphere, Orwell becomes a symbolic embodiment of the Empire, eliciting disdain and ridicule from the Burmese, who view him as the face of their oppressors.

Central to essay's narrative is the unsettling incident of an enraged elephant wreaking havoc in a bazaar—an event that serves as a metaphor for the broader colonial context. Orwell's internal conflict mirrors the overarching tension between imperial authority and indigenous resistance. The pressure to maintain an authoritative facade before the Burmese crowd coerces him into a moral dilemma—a dilemma emblematic of the Empire itself. The act of shooting the elephant, while a focal point of the narrative, extends beyond a mere physical act; it symbolizes the Empire's desperate attempts to control and subdue the colonized, all while struggling to conceal its own vulnerabilities and insecurities.

Orwell's narrative lays bare the brutality inherent in the imperial endeavour. The protracted agony of the wounded elephant serves as a haunting reminder of the merciless grip of colonialism. The crowd's delight in witnessing this spectacle underscores the pervasiveness of the Empire's authority, as well as the subjugation and humiliation experienced by the colonized population.

In "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell skilfully weaves a narrative that is both allegorical and deeply personal. Through this essay, he offers a critique of imperialism, illuminating the moral dilemma, psychological strains, and ethical transgressions that underlie the exercise of power. As we explore this seminal work, we will look into the historical, cultural, and political context of colonial Burma, dissect the essay's major themes, symbols, and literary devices, and engage in a thought-provoking discourse regarding its enduring relevance in today's world. Orwell's essay continues to resonate as a timeless exploration of the human condition under the weight of imperialism, inviting its readers to confront the ethical dilemmas that persist in the shadow of power. The essay's relevance lies in its ability to prompt readers to question not only historical injustices but also contemporary power dynamics, ethical choices, and the human condition.

Check you progress:

1. What is the central moral dilemma faced by George Orwell in "Shooting an Elephant"?
2. How does the wounded elephant in the essay symbolize the impact of colonial rule?
3. What role does the Burmese crowd play in the essay, "Shooting an Elephant"?

4.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand the historical and cultural context of the essay.
- analyse the major themes, symbols, and literary devices used by Orwell.
- explore the personal and political implications of the essay.
- discuss the essay's relevance and impact on literature and society.
- engage in critical thinking and reflection through exercises and questions.

4.2 George Orwell – “Shooting an Elephant”

In “Shooting an Elephant,” George Orwell takes us on a journey through his experiences as a British colonial police officer stationed in Moulmein, Burma, during the era of British imperialism's dominion over the region. What makes this narrative particularly captivating is the personal and moral conflict that simmers within him. Orwell himself holds a strong aversion to imperialism, which sets the stage for the exploration of the complexities inherent in his role.

The narrator grapples with being perceived as an oppressive figure by the Burmese population. While his personal convictions align with their resentment towards the British, his association with the colonial authority brands him as an enemy in their eyes. This inherent contradiction exacerbates his dissatisfaction with his job, as it becomes inextricably linked to the larger imperialist framework.

The story takes a decisive turn when the police officer receives a distressing call regarding an escaped male elephant. The elephant is in a state of heightened aggression, and the handler is too distant to control the situation. The officer subsequently goes on a journey to confront the rogue animal, and this marks a pivotal moment in the narrative. It is at this juncture that Orwell takes his readers to a journey into the power dynamics at play in a colonial setting.

As the officer confronts the elephant, a massive crowd gathers, eager for a spectacle and hoping to claim the elephant's meat. Here, the central dilemma of the story unfolds. Although the officer has no desire to shoot the creature, the overwhelming presence of the crowd coerces him into taking action. It is at this moment that Orwell lays bare the irony of his position – while he appears to hold authority, it is essentially a facade, and his actions are dictated by the collective will of the crowd.

The reluctant officer fires a series of shots, ultimately bringing down the elephant, but not before enduring a profound moral and ethical crisis. The aftermath of his decision prompts a range of reactions from the onlookers. Some justify the shooting, citing the elephant's lethal threat, while others condemn it for the loss of a valuable and otherwise peaceful animal.

In this essay, Orwell offers readers a glimpse into the intricate interplay between personal morality, societal pressure, and the dehumanizing effects of imperialism. The story underscores the profound ethical dilemmas faced by individuals caught between their own convictions and the expectations of a society embroiled in the complex web of colonialism.

4.2.1 Historical and Cultural Context:

The essay "Shooting an Elephant" is set in colonial Burma during the early 20th century when the British Empire had control over the region. This context is crucial for understanding the power dynamics within the story. The British had a lot of authority, and this created tensions in the cultural and social fabric of Burma.

Burma is a culturally diverse place with various ethnic groups and languages. The essay touches on the cultural clashes between the British colonizers and the Burmese people, which reflects the broader cultural complexities of colonial societies.

Imperialism is a central theme in the essay. Orwell, as a British police officer, represents the British colonial authority. However, he personally opposes imperialism, which creates a moral conflict. The narrative sheds light on how imperialism can dehumanize both the colonizers and the colonized.

The Burmese people in the essay strongly resent British imperialism, and this anti-colonial sentiment is evident in their interactions with the narrator. It mirrors the broader anti-colonial movements happening around the world during this time. Orwell's role as a police officer in the story illustrates the use of force and oppression to maintain colonial control. It highlights the moral dilemmas that people in such positions face.

4.2.2 Colonial Burma and British Imperialism:

In exploring the historical background of Burma during the era of British colonial dominance, we uncover the foundational elements that shaped the events chronicled in Orwell's essay. British imperialism was propelled by a confluence of factors, including economic interests, geopolitical manoeuvres, and the overarching ambition to extend the boundaries of their empire. It is imperative for this unit to comprehend how these motivations converged to mould the dynamics between the colonising power and the indigenous population.

When Orwell wrote “Shooting an Elephant,” Burma was under the rule of the British Empire. British imperialism in Burma meant that the British had control and authority over the country. This control had a significant impact on the lives of the Burmese people, and it is the backdrop against which Orwell’s story is set.

The British Empire’s presence in Burma led to a lot of tensions. The Burmese people resented the British rule, seeing it as oppressive and unjust. They didn’t want the British there, and they felt that their own culture and way of life were being undermined. This sense of discontent is important to understand because it plays a big part in the story. It’s why the Burmese crowd in the essay is hostile toward the British police officer.

Orwell himself, as a British police officer in Burma, represents the face of British imperial authority. He is the one who has to enforce the rules and regulations of the British Empire. However, he also feels the moral weight of his role, as he personally disagrees with the British imperial project. This moral conflict is at the heart of the essay and is a consequence of the broader British imperialism in Burma during that time. The essay shows how the British Empire’s control over Burma influenced the lives and decisions of both the colonizers and the colonized.

This exploration, therefore, necessitates an examination of the impact of British imperialism on the social and cultural fabric of Burma. The chasm of power and ideological disparities between the British colonisers and the Burmese natives engendered simmering tensions, intricately weaving themselves into the narrative’s backdrop. An astute understanding of this historical context provides a nuanced perspective on the intricate power dynamics at play and the far-reaching consequences endured by both the oppressors and the oppressed.

4.2.3 Orwell’S Experiences as a British Officer:

This unit explore Orwell’s personal experiences as a British police officer stationed in Burma and provides valuable insights into his perspective and the fundamental themes running throughout the “Shooting an Elephant.” Orwell’s journey as an officer led him to confront the less savoury aspects of the colonial rule, gradually chipping away at his initial enthusiasm for imperialism.

Orwell’s role as a British police officer gave him a unique window into the workings of the colonial regime. He witnessed first-hand the mechanisms by which imperial authority was exerted. This experience not only exposed him to the structural hierarchy of the colonial system but also thrust him into a complex and often contradictory position.

Orwell's daily interactions with the Burmese population were instrumental in shaping his perspective. These encounters provided him with an intimate understanding of Burmese society, their customs, and the challenges they faced. Through these interactions, we begin to appreciate the multifaceted nature of Orwell's role. He was, on the one hand, a representative of imperial authority, tasked with enforcing its rules, and on the other, an individual grappling with personal convictions that stood in opposition to the very system he was upholding.

Orwell's observations of the local population and his growing awareness of the hardships they endured allowed him to see the disparities and inequities inherent in the colonial order. His experiences as a British police officer in Burma were pivotal in shaping his views on imperialism and his deep-seated critique of the power dynamics that underpinned it. These experiences laid the groundwork for the profound themes explored in "Shooting an Elephant," making his personal journey an integral part of the narrative's fabric.

Check you progress:

1. What is the historical backdrop for George Orwell's essay "Shooting an Elephant"?
2. How does British imperialism impact the characters and their moral dilemmas in the essay?
3. How do Orwell's experiences as a British officer influence his perspective in "Shooting an Elephant"?

4.2.4 Themes and Literary Devices:

"Shooting an Elephant" is a rich and multifaceted essay that explores a multitude of themes and employs a range of literary devices. The interplay of these themes and devices enriches the narrative and offers readers a more profound comprehension of the subtle layers within the essay. By dissecting these themes and literary devices, we can understand different layers of Orwell's narrative and gain deeper insights into its subtleties.

4.2.5 Power and Imperialism:

At the core of "Shooting an Elephant" lies a probing exploration of power dynamics interwoven with the fabric of imperialism. This narrative uncovers the intricate relationships between the colonial authority and the local population, providing a profound understanding of the pervasive effects of imperialism on all those affected.

Orwell employs vivid and engaging language to illustrate the numerous facets of power and its role as an instrument of control and domination. His narrative choices reveal the ways in which power is wielded and resisted, and the resulting consequences of oppression. Through this

exploration, the essay offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of power and its enduring influence on society. It sheds light on the often paradoxical nature of power, where both the oppressors and the oppressed experience its impact, albeit in different ways. In doing so, “Shooting an Elephant” paints a thought-provoking picture of how power operates in the context of imperialism and its far-reaching consequences.

4.2.6 Moral Ambiguity and Conformity:

One of the central themes in the essay revolves around the examination of moral ambiguity and the compelling force of conformity to societal norms. This theme is prominently illustrated through the inner turmoil experienced by Orwell’s narrator, providing a lens through which the tension between personal ethics and the societal expectations imposed by the colonial system can be scrutinized.

The moral dilemma at the heart of the narrative prompts contemplation of the profound compromises individuals are driven to make as they attempt to assimilate into established structures, often doing so at the expense of their own ethical principles and personal integrity. It illustrates the intricate interplay between an individual’s moral values and the external pressures exerted by the larger society. This complex interplay takes centre stage, highlighting the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters and, by extension, offering a deeper exploration of the human experience within a context where societal conformity frequently clashes with individual moral convictions. Through the narrator’s internal conflict, the narrative illustrates how individuals grapple with the moral complexities inherent in navigating the expectations of their society, shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of morality and conformity within the larger framework of the story.

Check you progress:

1. What central theme is explored in “Shooting an Elephant” that relates to power dynamics and imperialism?
2. How does the essay depict the moral dilemmas of individuals caught between societal conformity and their personal ethics?

4.2.7 Symbolism, Metaphor and Imagery:

In “Shooting an Elephant,” Orwell masterfully employs symbolism, metaphor, and imagery to enrich the narrative. These literary devices act as a tool through which readers can explore the multi-layered significance of the essay.

The central symbol in the narrative is the elephant, representing the oppressive burden of imperialism. This majestic yet wounded creature metaphorically embodies the destructive and dehumanizing consequences of colonial rule. The essay thus unveils the inherent contradictions within the imperial system, portraying a powerful message about the impact of domination on both the colonizer and the colonized.

Furthermore, the crowd that gathers to witness the elephant's shooting is a symbol of societal conformity and collective pressure. This vibrant illustration underscores the influence of group dynamics and peer influence on individual behaviour. It highlights the role of societal expectations and the allure of spectacle, shedding light on the complex dynamics of conformity within the community.

Orwell's use of vivid imagery is equally compelling, particularly when describing the elephant's suffering and the picturesque Burmese landscape. The detailed imagery surrounding the elephant's agony emphasizes the brutality of the act and the moral dilemma faced by the narrator. These vivid descriptions evoke a sense of tragedy and loss, advancing a deeper emotional connection between the reader and the narrative.

Furthermore, the imagery of the Burmese landscape, including the town, paddy fields, and huts, serves to set the stage for the ethical and moral conflicts experienced by the narrator. It accentuates the striking contrast between the natural beauty of Burma and the destructive impact of imperialism. The lush landscapes become a backdrop against which the complex interplay of power, morality, and conformity unfolds.

Through these powerful literary elements, Orwell's essay explores the human experience under the weight of imperialism, inviting its readers to explore its profound themes in a vivid and thought-provoking manner. The essay is a testament to Orwell's adept use of symbolism, metaphor, and imagery, which elevates the narrative to a higher plane and offers a richer understanding of the essay's thematic complexity.

4.2.8 The Elephant:

At the very heart of the essay's symbolism lies the elephant. However, its significance transcends mere corporeal existence; it metamorphoses into a living metaphor that embodies both the tangible might of power and dominion and the intangible weight of oppressive imperialism. This dual role of the elephant encapsulates the paradoxical nature of imperial rule - a force both formidable and vulnerable.

As the narrative unfolds, the climactic scene of the elephant's shooting takes centre stage as a symbol of immense import. It serves as the crucible wherein the narrator's profound moral dilemma is forged. The act of shooting the elephant becomes a symbol, crystallizing the interplay between personal conscience and the mandates thrust upon the colonial machinery. Through this symbol, Orwell challenges readers to confront the multifaceted dynamics of power, the enduring repercussions of imperialism, and the personal sacrifices exacted by the relentless pressure to conform.

4.2.9 Colonial Oppression:

Orwell's literary canvas is adorned with vivid imagery that masterfully portrays the unrelenting realities of colonial oppression. The dilapidated edifices, squalid streets, and the wretched living conditions of the indigenous population materialize as visual representations of the dehumanizing aftermath wrought by imperialism. Orwell's meticulous craftsmanship in painting this visual underscores the stark disjunction between the perceived superiority of the colonizers and the harsh, gritty realities endured by the colonized.

This vivid imagery extends its reach to the portrayal of the Burmese crowd and their collective actions. Through these immersive depictions, readers gain a valuable understanding of the sway of group dynamics and the pervasive influence of societal pressures. This imagery acts as a poignant reminder of the internal conflict endured by individuals caught in the tug-of-war between personal convictions and the weight of communal expectations.

Through the eloquent use of symbolism and the vivid imagery, Orwell not only impels readers to grapple with the latent meanings concealed within "Shooting an Elephant" but also provides them with a multifaceted lens through which to examine the intricacies of the human condition and the profound impact of societal structures. The elephant symbolizes the intricate nature of power and imperialism, while the evocative imagery unveils the harsh realities of colonial oppression, ensuring that readers engage with the essay on a deeply immersive and contemplative level.

4.2.10 Personal and Political Implications:

"Shooting an Elephant," is an exploration of personal experiences and moral dilemmas. it extends to reveal profound political implications that are intrinsically linked to the context of imperialism. Orwell's narrative explores more than just his internal conflict and individual choices; it also meticulously examines the wider dynamics of power and control. By doing so, the essay

effectively highlights the extensive and lasting consequences of imperialism, impacting both the colonizers and the colonized.

Orwell's narrative is a masterful portrayal of the inner struggle experienced by the protagonist, who serves as a representative of imperial authority. This personal conflict, arising from his moral disagreement with the British imperial project, serves as a microcosm of the broader political implications of imperialism. The tension between individual ethics and the imperatives of colonial machinery reflects the ethical struggles faced not only by the narrator but also by those involved in the larger imperial enterprise.

However, it is through Orwell's astute examination of power dynamics that the political implications of imperialism are most vividly illuminated. The narrative presents the British Empire as a dominating force that imposes its will upon subjugated peoples. The story exemplifies how imperial control exerts influence over the lives and decisions of those it touches, both colonizers and colonized. The actions of the narrator, reluctantly following the expectations of the crowd and the imperial system, demonstrate the dehumanizing impact of imperialism on the individuals involved.

The far-reaching consequences of imperialism are not limited to its oppressors but extend to the oppressed as well. The Burmese population, represented by the crowd's hostility, embodies the resistance to colonial rule. Orwell's narrative underscores the resentment, loss of agency, and cultural erosion experienced by the colonized. The narrative, therefore, encapsulates the overarching political implications of imperialism, highlighting the insidious and pervasive influence it exerts on the lives of all involved.

4.2.11 Personal Consequences of Imperialism:

Orwell masterfully crafts the protagonist, an officer of the imperial police, as a complex character entangled in the intricate web of his personal beliefs and the demands imposed by the colonial structure. The pivotal moment of the elephant's shooting unfurls as a profound juncture in his life, forcing him to grapple with the ethical dilemma that invariably accompanies the wielding of power within an oppressive regime. The inner turmoil gripping the narrator operates as a microcosm of the corrosive effects of imperialism, ensnaring individuals in moral compromises that safeguard their societal standing and reputation.

Furthermore, the narrative explores the psychological landscape, uncovering the significant toll endured by the colonizers themselves. The unrelenting pressure to uphold an image of supremacy and the haunting dread of losing face within the rigid colonial hierarchy combine to

create a sense of alienation and isolation. Orwell skilfully uncovers the inner thoughts and feelings of the narrator, exposing a conflict filled with guilt, empathy, and a desire for freedom from the pressure to conform. These personal effects highlight the harmful impact of imperialism, affecting not only the colonized but also those responsible for enforcing its rules.

4.2.12 Power Dynamics and Resistance:

Within the essay's fabric, Orwell meticulously scrutinizes the intricate power dynamics that define the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. Through the vivid portrayal of the Burmese crowd and their collective actions, he lays bare the simmering tensions and resentment incubated by the overarching presence of imperialism. The initial passivity displayed by the crowd transforms into a shared experience of defiance and resistance upon witnessing the shooting of the elephant. This collective reaction serves as a poignant symbol of the potent force that unity can wield in the face of oppressive powers.

Orwell then offers a probing exploration of power as a double-edged sword. While the colonial regime exercises dominion over the colonized, it simultaneously subjects the colonizers to its own set of expectations and constraints. These prevalent power dynamics underscore the inherent fragility of authority and the capricious manner in which it is both wielded and experienced. By laying bare the complexities that underpin power dynamics, Orwell challenges readers to question the legitimacy of oppressive systems and to contemplate the far-reaching ramifications they impose upon both the oppressed and those entangled within the intricate web of authority.

Through this comprehensive examination of personal and political implications, "Shooting an Elephant" extends an impassioned invitation to readers. It implores them to confront the ethical dilemmas meticulously woven into the very fabric of imperialism. Orwell's adept delineation of the inner conflicts endured by individuals enmeshed within oppressive systems brings to light the profound psychological toll exacted upon them. The narrative also underscores the transformative potential of unity in the face of oppressive powers, urging readers to question established power structures and engage in thoughtful reflection on the enduring consequences of imperialism.

Check you progress:

1. What broader political implications does the essay explore alongside personal experiences and moral dilemmas?
2. How does the essay illustrate the political implications of imperialism through the narrator's moral conflict?

4.2.13 Let Us Sum Up:

In this Unit on George Orwell's essay, "Shooting an Elephant," we have thoroughly examined various aspects of the text, including its historical and cultural context, themes, literary devices, symbolism, and personal and political implications. Let's provide a brief summary of the key points that have been central to our discussion:

- Our journey began by introducing "Shooting an Elephant" as a thought-provoking essay that explores the complexities of imperialism, power dynamics, and moral dilemmas. We explored Orwell's personal experiences as a colonial police officer and the ethical conflicts he faced.
- In the section on historical and cultural context, we examined the background of British colonial rule in Burma, understanding the motivations behind imperialism, the tensions between the colonizers and the colonized, and Orwell's evolving perspective as a British officer in Burma.
- Subsequently, we conducted a detailed analysis of the essay's themes and the skilful literary devices used by Orwell. Themes such as power and oppression, morality and conformity, and the narrator's internal struggles took centre stage. We grasped the intricate dynamics between the imperial authority and the subjugated people.
- Our exploration also included a close examination of symbolism and imagery in "Shooting an Elephant." We discussed the symbolism of the elephant as a metaphor for imperialism, power, and moral choices. Additionally, we uncovered Orwell's effective use of literary devices like metaphors, irony, and vivid imagery.
- Finally, in the realm of personal and political implications, we explored Orwell's critical view of imperialism, the corrosive impact of power, and the dehumanizing effects of colonialism. We considered the essay's reflections on identity, empathy, and the challenges of navigating conflicting loyalties in a colonial setting.

This summary brings together the key insights we've gathered while studying "Shooting an Elephant." A continued exploration of these deep themes, promoting critical thought and self-reflection is encouraged as we explore the complex territory of imperialism, power, ethics, and the intricacies of human existence, as portrayed in Orwell's essay.

4.3 Learning Outcomes

Through this Unit, students will gain contextual awareness by understanding the historical and cultural backdrop of British colonialism in Burma. They will explore the thematic analysis, examining key themes such as power, morality, and conformity in literary texts. Moreover, students will learn to recognize and explain literary devices like symbolism, metaphor, irony, and imagery, enhancing their textual interpretation skills. This unit encourages critical thinking through discussions of ethical dilemmas and fosters cultural sensitivity by exploring the impact of imperialism on both colonizers and the colonized.

Furthermore, students will develop comparative skills by comparing the narrative to historical and contemporary instances of imperialism, thus broadening their understanding of the subject matter. They will engage in analytical writing, enabling them to construct coherent essays backed by text-based evidence. Additionally, students will explore themes of empathy and identity while applying the lessons from the text to contemporary issues of power and morality, nurturing their critical engagement with complex societal topics.

4.4 Glossary

Colonialism: The practice of establishing political and economic control over a foreign territory, often involving the settlement of people from the colonizing country.

Conformity: The act of matching one's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours to fit societal norms and expectations, often driven by social pressure or a desire for acceptance.

Dehumanization: The process of depriving individuals or groups of their human qualities, rights, or dignity, often occurring in oppressive or discriminatory contexts.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of others, often fostering compassion and connection.

Ethical dilemma: A situation in which a person is faced with a difficult choice between morally conflicting options.

Imagery: Vivid and descriptive language that appeals to the senses, creating mental pictures and sensory experiences for the reader.

Identity crisis: A period of uncertainty and confusion in which an individual questions their sense of self, often triggered by conflicting identities or roles.

Imperialism: The policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonization, usually involving the domination and exploitation of other nations or peoples.

Irony: A literary device in which there is a contrast or incongruity between what is expected and what actually happens, often used to convey deeper truths or commentary.

Metaphor: A figure of speech that compares two seemingly unrelated things, highlighting their similarities to create a deeper understanding or meaning.

Morality: Principles or values that determine what is right or wrong, guiding ethical decision-making and behaviour.

Oppression: The unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power, typically resulting in the restriction of rights and freedoms of individuals or groups.

Power dynamics: The ways in which power is distributed, exercised, and maintained within a society or relationship, often involving hierarchies, control, and influence.

Symbolism: The use of symbols to represent ideas, concepts, or qualities beyond their literal meaning, often adding depth and layers of meaning to a literary work.

Subjugation: The act of bringing someone or something under control or domination, often through force or oppressive measures.

Post-colonialism: An intellectual and cultural movement that examines the social, political, and cultural effects of colonialism, including issues of power, identity, and cultural hybridity.

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is the central theme of “Shooting an Elephant”?

- (a) Love and friendship
- (b) Power and oppression**
- (c) Adventure and exploration
- (d) Justice and equality

2. Which literary device is used to convey a deeper meaning in the essay?

- (a) Simile
- (b) Foreshadowing
- (c) Alliteration
- (d) Symbolism**

3. What is the historical backdrop of the essay?
- (a) Ancient Greece
 - (b) Renaissance Europe
 - (c) British colonial Burma**
 - (d) Industrial Revolution
4. What does the elephant symbolize in the essay?
- (a) Freedom and independence
 - (b) Strength and courage
 - (c) Authority and control**
 - (d) Innocence and purity
5. How does Orwell feel about the act of shooting the elephant?
- (a) Proud and triumphant
 - (b) Indifferent and apathetic
 - (c) Guilty and conflicted**
 - (d) Justified and righteous
6. What does the essay reveal about the dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized?
- (a) Mutual respect and understanding
 - (b) Harmony and cooperation
 - (c) Oppression and resistance**
 - (d) Equality and justice
7. What societal expectations contribute to Orwell's internal conflict in the essay?
- (a) Upholding traditional values
 - (b) Challenging authority
 - (c) Promoting peace and harmony
 - (d) Conforming to imperialist norms**
8. Which of the following best describes Orwell's critique of imperialism in the essay?
- (a) Justified and necessary
 - (b) Beneficial and progressive
 - (c) Corrupting and dehumanizing**
 - (d) Liberating and empowering
9. How does Orwell's perspective change throughout the essay?
- (a) From sympathy to indifference

- (b) From apathy to empathy
- (c) From resignation to rebellion
- (d) From idealism to realism**

10. What broader implications does “Shooting an Elephant” have for society and literature?

- (a) Promoting escapism and fantasy
- (b) Challenging social norms and conventions**
- (c) Reinforcing hierarchical power structures
- (d) Encouraging blind conformity and obedience

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the internal conflict Orwell faces in “Shooting an Elephant” and its moral implications.
2. Analyse the symbolism of the elephant in the essay and its significance in relation to imperialism and power.
4. How does Orwell’s personal experience as a colonial officer in Burma shape his perspective on imperialism in the essay?
5. Explain the theme of power and oppression as portrayed in “Shooting an Elephant” and its effects on both the colonizer and the colonized.
6. Discuss the role of conformity in the essay and its impact on individual morality and decision-making.

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. In what ways does “Shooting an Elephant” highlight the complexities of identity in a colonial context? Provide examples from the essay to support your answer.
2. Discuss the role of empathy in “Shooting an Elephant” and how it influences Orwell’s decision-making process.
3. How does Orwell use literary devices such as metaphors, irony, and vivid imagery to enhance the themes and messages in “Shooting an Elephant”?

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Achebe, Chinua. ‘An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness”’. *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2016, pp. 14–27.
2. Césaire, Aimé, and Robin D. G. Kelley. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Monthly Review Press, 2000.
3. Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Edited by Owen Knowles and Robert Hampson, Penguin Books, 2007.
4. Culler, Jonathan D. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd ed., new ed, Oxford University Press, 2011.
5. Orwell, George. *Burmese Days*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
6. ---. *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays*. Penguin Books, 2003.
7. ---. *Politics and the English Language*. Penguin, 2013.
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Unit-5: J. B. Priestley – “On Doing Nothing”

Structure

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Objectives

5.2 J. B. Priestley – “On Doing Nothing”

5.2.1 About the Essayist

5.2.2 Summary of the Essay

5.2.3 Critical Analysis of the Essay

5.3 Learning Outcomes

5.4 Glossary

5.5 Sample Questions

5.6 Suggested Learning Outcomes

5.0 Introduction

The essay “On Doing Nothing” examines the theme of tranquillity. The author argues that society would gain advantages from occasionally stepping away from its daily responsibilities and indulging in some leisure time. The concept of idleness was part of Priestley’s radio discussions, later compiled in the book *Open House*.

The essay “On Doing Nothing,” advocates the significance of idleness and relaxation in a world that emphasizes productivity. Priestly contends that contemporary society frequently overlooks the value of leisure, perceiving it as a sign of laziness, when, in fact, taking time to do nothing is crucial for fostering creativity, contemplation, and personal happiness. With humour and deep insight, Priestley advocates for the importance of unstructured time, suggesting that genuine inspiration and joy often emerge when we allow ourselves to be simple, rather than perpetually aim to achieve more.

In his essay “On Doing Nothing,” J.B. Priestley emphasizes the importance of taking breaks and embracing idleness amidst the busy pace of modern life. He argues that being lazy at times is not only acceptable but necessary for mental well-being and overall health. Priestley critiques the American tendency to glorify constant busyness and highlights the benefits of engaging in leisurely activities. Through humor and personal anecdotes, he makes a case for the

value of rest and warns against the dangers of overworking, suggesting that moments of inactivity can provide essential rejuvenation for individuals and society as a whole.

5.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- explore the central theme of leisure and consider the value of idleness today.
- analyse how Priestley effectively employs humour, irony, and personal reflection to communicate his ideas.
- connect the concepts presented in the essay to current conversations about work-life balance and mental well-being.
- develop and express personal perspectives on the significance of leisure, highlighting its role in enhancing individual and societal well-being.

5.2 J. B. Priestley – “On Doing Nothing”

5.2.1 About the Essayist

John Boynton Priestley, known as J. B. Priestley was born on September 13, 1894, in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, and passed away on August 14, 1984, in Alveston, near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. J. B. Priestley was a multifaceted talent—an English novelist, playwright, screenwriter, broadcaster, and social commentator. His diverse works are celebrated for their shrewd characterizations and thoughtful social critique, showcasing a range of insightful character portrayals.

J. B. Priestley’s father, Jonathan Priestley, was a headmaster, while his mother, Emma Holt, worked as a mill girl. Tragically, his mother passed away when Priestley was only two years old, and his father remarried four years later. Priestley attended Belle Vue Grammar School, but left at the age of 16 to take up a junior clerk position at Helm & Co. in the Swan Arcade.

Priestley served in the infantry during World War I and later studied English literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in 1922.

Priestley first gained recognition with his essays compiled in “The English Comic Characters” (1925) and “The English Novel” (1927). He achieved widespread popularity with his picaresque novel “The Good Companions” (1929), which revolves around a group of traveling

performers. This success was followed by “Angel Pavement” (1930), a realistic portrayal of office workers’ lives in London. Among his other notable novels are “Bright Day” (1946) and “Lost Empires” (1965).

As a playwright, Priestley excelled with comedies like “Laburnum Grove” (1933) and “When We Are Married” (1938). Influenced by John William Dunne’s time theories, he experimented with expressionistic psychological drama in plays such as “Time and the Conway’s” and “I Have Been Here Before” (both 1937), and “Johnson over Jordan” (1939). He used time distortion as the basis for his mystery drama “An Inspector Calls” (1946), which features moral undertones and skilled characterizations of ordinary people in domestic settings.

During World War II, Priestley became a prominent radio speaker, known for his patriotic broadcasts and Sunday evening programs. He produced over 120 books and was a literary spokesman for his countrymen, sustaining his public influence through his engaging personality. Despite refusing knighthood and a peerage, he accepted the Order of Merit in 1977. The 1970s saw a revival of interest in his work, with notable publications such as “Found, Lost, Found, or The English Way of Life” (1976).

J. B. Priestley’s works deeply explore themes related to the human experience, societal issues, and the nature of time. Influenced by John William Dunne’s theories of time, Priestley examines how past actions shape the present and future in plays such as “Time and the Conways” and “An Inspector Calls.” He critiqued social injustices, class disparities, and the implications of capitalism, reflecting his vision of a fairer society.

Priestley delved into the intricacies of human relationships—within families and communities—highlighting aspects of love, conflict, and reconciliation. He questioned the assumption that progress in technology and economics guarantees societal betterment, often revealing the moral and ethical dilemmas that accompany such advancements.

Having experienced World War I, Priestley frequently addressed its effects on individuals and society, emphasizing the futility of war and the necessity for peace. In “An Inspector Calls,” he focused on moral responsibility and the interconnectedness among people, urging audiences to reflect on the wider consequences of their actions. His ability to incorporate these themes into his narratives has significantly influenced literature and continues to resonate with contemporary readers.

Priestley, a British novelist, playwright, theater director, and essayist, is described by Michael George as “something of a professional Englishman,” and through his works, he has sought to

identify and articulate the elements that make up the English character. As a keen observer, Priestley is recognized for his precise and vivid portrayals of both characters and settings, as well as for his steadfastly humanistic perspective. (Refer also to CLC, Vols. 2, 5, and Contemporary Authors, Vols. 9-12, rev. ed.)

Check your progress:

1. J.B. Priestley wrote plays (comedies) like “Laburnum Grove” (1933) and “When We Are Married” (1938). (True / False)

5.2.2 Summary of the Essay

In his essay, Priestley warmly and thoughtfully encourages the idea that periods of idleness can be incredibly beneficial for both personal well-being and societal benefits. Divided into three sections, the essay captures the essence of taking a break from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

In the first section, the speaker reflects on a holiday spent with a friend in a secluded cottage in Yorkshire, a peaceful distance from the nearest railway. This friend, who embraced his leisurely lifestyle as a talented artist, made the experience even more enjoyable. They basked in the lovely weather, climbing to a height of two thousand feet above sea level, where they spent a languid afternoon lying on the soft grass, listening to the gentle sounds of nature. They enjoyed simple activities such as hiking, eating, and relaxing on the grass while gazing at the clouds. This vacation, characterized by warm weather and a tranquil atmosphere, was refreshingly revitalizing.

On a particular sunny day, they found themselves at an elevation of two thousand feet on a moor—a vast, quiet expanse. With little to distract them, they spent hours lying on the soft grass, engaged in simple pleasures like smoking, eating, and drinking from a cool spring without any meaningful conversation or planning. Their time together was free of expectation and competition, allowing them to relish the beauty of doing nothing—a reminder of the profound joy that can be found in simply being present.

In the second part, the narrator returns from his holiday, humorously expressing mock horror at being singled out for condemnation by a man named Mr. Selfridge. In reality, Mr. Selfridge had not specifically criticized the narrator; rather, he had made general remarks about lazy people. The narrator counters this criticism, arguing that idleness can be a positive attribute.

This perspective contrasts sharply with the hustle and bustle in the city. According to Priestley, being busy can often lead to more harm than good. He advocates for moments of laziness, asserting that it is not a lack of energy that causes issues, but rather a misdirection of energy.

Priestley posits that his version of “doing nothing” could be the solution to many of the world’s problems. He speculates that if kings, generals, and statesmen had taken a complete holiday in July 1914, a devastating and costly war might have been avoided. Furthermore, he argues that if the statesmen responsible for drafting the Versailles Treaty had spent a few days prior simply doing nothing, the world would have greatly benefited. He suggests that if busy politicians had taken a vacation and done nothing during August 1914.

In the third section, the narrator shifts focus to Americans, highlighting their wealth yet tendency to overwork. He suggests that the essence of the American spirit can be found in figures like Thoreau, who embraced a simpler, more spiritual existence in nature. The narrator revisits the English poet Wordsworth as another noble example of someone who chose a life of simplicity.

While American culture venerates hard work and industriousness, it is important to remember that celebrated writers such as Thoreau and Whitman also held a profound appreciation for the value of idleness. Wordsworth stands as a paragon of this philosophy, dedicating his days to the art of doing nothing, lost in reverie as he absorbed the beauty of the natural world around him.

In a poignant conclusion, the narrator muses that if Wordsworth were alive today, he would likely advise us to pause our hectic lives—to lie back on a sprawling moor and simply embrace the tranquillity of doing nothing at all.

Check your progress:

1. Priestley posits that his version of “doing nothing” could be the solution to many of the world’s problems. (True / False)

5.2.3 Critical Analysis of the Essay

In his essay “On Doing Nothing,” J.B. Priestley offers a thoughtful exploration of time, approaching it with a reflective and philosophical perspective. He critically analyses the pressures of modern life, where the relentless pace often leaves individuals feeling an urgent compulsion to remain in constant motion and productivity. In this context, Priestley advocates for the advantages of taking deliberate pauses to do nothing—moments dedicated to introspection and contemplation—which starkly contrasts with our society’s overwhelming emphasis on efficiency and achievement.

Priestley asserts that time need not always be consumed by frenetic activity; rather, he highlights the inherent value and richness found in moments of inactivity. He argues that by permitting ourselves to simply exist without the incessant drive to accomplish tasks or meet

expectations, we can cultivate a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Embracing these tranquil intervals fosters creativity, enhances mental well-being, and provides an opportunity to reconnect with our thoughts and emotions, ultimately enriching our lived experiences. Through his insightful reflection, Priestley encourages readers to reconsider their relationship with time and to recognize that true fulfilment can often be found in the quiet spaces of our lives.

Priestly paints a colorful picture to show how appealing doing nothing in nature can be. He talks about the moor, saying there is a little bit of everything in how the clouds and shadows change and the horizon shifts colours, which keeps the mind interested all day long. He also adds humor to tease those who take life too seriously and are caught up in work, making a solid case for why it's great to slow down and enjoy what life has in store.

J. B. Priestley wrote simple, declarative English intending to entertain his audience and to spread his socialist philosophy. His stylistic perspective is related to George Orwell's famous assertion that "good prose is like a window pane."

In "On Doing Nothing," J.B. Priestley delves into themes of tranquility, idleness, envy, and desire, particularly highlighting the importance of peace of mind. Early in the essay, it becomes evident that Priestley is reflecting on the benefits of stillness and relaxation. While walking on the moors with a friend, he experiences a profound sense of calm that starkly contrasts with the hustle and bustle of city life, for which he expresses gratitude. Priestley advocates for the idea that others could greatly benefit from embracing idleness occasionally. He draws a poignant comparison to World War I, suggesting that the course of history might have shifted had those in power taken a moment to pause and reflect in July 1914. He further argues that the delegates at the 1918 peace conference might have fared better had they temporarily stepped away from their usual responsibilities.

Priestley suggests that some individuals may envy those perceived as lazy, admiring their detachment from the demands of the world, even if it's unacknowledged. A character like Selfridge embodies this sentiment; while he criticizes laziness, he might recognize the benefits of taking a break from the hustle of life. It's a common tendency for people to scorn what they secretly desire to experience themselves. Priestley likely advocates for the value of stepping away from the chaos of everyday life, highlighting the difficulty many face in seeking escape. Those who resist idleness often garner sympathy from readers and potentially from Priestley as well.

Priestley emphasizes the role of religion in his argument, suggesting that those who engage in religious communities might benefit more from taking a break or being idle. This implies that some individuals can be excessively fervent in their beliefs—whether religious or societal. Priestley argues that a more relaxed approach could lead to fewer conflicts and a more harmonious society. He believes that society’s constant activity might actually cause more issues, as illustrated by his references to World War I. Additionally, Priestley critiques America’s perception of laziness as a major sin, using it to discuss the mixed virtues and faults of the American dream, which promises success through hard work. However, he suggests that pursuing this dream too relentlessly can be counterproductive, highlighting the necessity of taking time to rest and recharge.

The conclusion of the essay offers a compelling perspective, as Priestley references Wordsworth to bolster his views on laziness. This choice is particularly notable because Wordsworth is a renowned English poet, suggesting that Priestley may have had an English audience in mind. Furthermore, he also includes insights from the American poet Walt Whitman, proposing that Whitman might have possessed a certain inclination towards laziness that could have contributed to his success. The final sentence of the essay, “And he would be right,” is significant, as it underscores Priestley’s strong conviction in the value of taking periodic breaks and the benefits that can emerge from idleness. Ultimately, whether readers resonate with this idea is left to individual interpretation; some may contend that laziness is indeed the foremost sin, while others may champion the advantages of embracing leisure.

Check your progress:

1. In his essay, Priestley draws a poignant comparison to World War I. (True / False)

5.3 Learning Outcomes

After completing this Unit, learners will be able to:

- appreciate how periods of relaxation and doing nothing can enhance creativity, mental well-being, and overall productivity.
- evaluate the societal obsession with constant work and efficiency, questioning whether it truly leads to a fulfilling life.
- recognize that moments of stillness allow for deeper self-reflection and the development of new ideas.

- analyze contrasting views on idleness from literature, philosophy, and modern life, forming their own opinions on the balance between work and rest.

5.4 Glossary

American Dream: The term “American dream” refers to the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or their socio-economic status, can attain their version of success in a society in which upward mobility is possible for everyone.

Moorland: Moorland or moor is a type of habitat found in upland areas in temperate grasslands, savannas, and shrublands and montane grasslands and shrublands biomes, characterised by low-growing vegetation

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is the main theme of *On Doing Nothing*?
 - a) The importance of working hard
 - b) The value of idleness and relaxation**
 - c) The dangers of being lazy
 - d) The benefits of a strict schedule
2. According to Priestley, what is often mistaken for idleness?
 - a) Carelessness
 - b) Thoughtful reflection and relaxation**
 - c) Lack of ambition
 - d) Daydreaming
3. What tone does Priestley use in the essay?
 - a) Serious and philosophical
 - b) Humorous and reflective**
 - c) Aggressive and argumentative
 - d) Sad and melancholic
4. How does Priestley describe people who are always busy?
 - a) As highly successful individuals

- b) **As people who lack deep thinking**
 - c) As role models for society
 - d) As the happiest people in the world
5. What does the essay suggest about modern work culture?
- a) It is the key to happiness
 - b) **It leaves little room for reflection and true enjoyment**
 - c) It is the only path to success
 - d) It is irrelevant in today's world

True or False

- 6. Priestley believes that doing nothing is a waste of time. **(False)**
- 7. The essay criticizes people who take time to rest and reflect. **(False)**
- 8. Priestley suggests that moments of idleness can lead to creativity and deep thinking. **(True)**
- 9. The essay supports the idea that constant busyness leads to a more meaningful life. **(False)**
- 10. Priestley's essay encourages people to balance work and relaxation. **(True)**

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Examine Priestley's perspective on the relationship between rest, creativity, and personal growth.
2. How might implementing Priestley's philosophy of occasional purposeless time improve individual mental health?
3. Analyse the historical context that influenced Priestley's perspective on work and leisure.
4. In what ways does Priestley differentiate between laziness and meaningful idleness? How does he justify the benefits of "doing nothing"?
5. Compare Priestley's views on idleness with the contemporary idea of work-life balance. How relevant are his arguments today?

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. In what ways does Priestley differentiate between laziness and meaningful idleness? How does he justify the benefits of "doing nothing"?
2. How do Priestley's arguments relate to broader philosophical discussions about human value beyond economic productivity?

3. Explore how Priestley's argument challenges modern notions of success and personal worth.

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Joshua Gnana Raj. Brief Notes on J B Priestley's "On Doing Nothing." www.academia.edu,
https://www.academia.edu/88172196/Brief_Notes_on_J_B_Priestley_s_On_Doing_Nothing.
2. Murugesan, Gurujegan. "J B Priestley's On Doing Nothing." *BA English Literature*, IGNTU, <https://igntu.ac.in/eContent/IGNTU-eContent-773560201122-BA-English-2-Mr.GurujeganM.-Prose-4and5.pdf>.
3. "J. B. Priestley." eNotes, eNotes.com, Inc., <https://www.enotes.com/topics/j-b-priestley/questions/what-is-a-critical-analysis-of-the-essay-on-doing-3060444>.
4. J. B. Priestley | Playwright, Novelist, Social Critic | Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/J-B-Priestley>.
5. Dermot, and Dermot McManus. "On Doing Nothing by J.B. Priestley." *The Sitting Bee*,
<http://sittingbee.com/on-doing-nothing-j-b-priestley/>.

Unit-6: A. G. Gardiner – “In Defence of Ignorance”

Structure

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 A. G. Gardiner – *In Defence of Ignorance*

6.2.1 About A.G. Gardiner

6.2.2 Summary of the Essay

6.2.3 Use of Language

6.2.4 Improving Reading Skill

6.3 Learning Outcomes

6.4 Glossary

6.5 Sample Questions

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

6.0 Introduction

In this Unit, we will read A.G. Gardiner’s essay, “In Defence of Ignorance.” In your course on Reading Essays, you have read some essays by different authors. By now, you would have improved your reading and understanding of the essays. As you already know, an essay is a short composition in prose. By reading essays in English, you can improve your reading skills. You can also improve your vocabulary and spelling. If you pay good attention to the essays, you can also practice some grammar elements such as tense, parts of speech, active and passive voice etc. In this Unit, we will discuss what Gardiner has to say about ignorance. As students, you should remember that knowledge is important, and we should avoid ignorance.

6.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- read A.G. Gardiner’s essay, “In Defence of Ignorance”.
- understand the summary and main ideas of the essay.
- analyse the use of language and style in the essay.

- enhance reading comprehension and skills.

6.2 A. G. Gardiner – “In Defence of Ignorance”

The original text of the essay “In Defence of Ignorance” is given below. Please read it carefully. I have given the original essay in *italics*. I have also included some questions within the original text under the heading “Check your progress” to help you comprehend the essay. The comprehension questions given at intervals in the original text will help improve your reading skill.

“A young man wrote to me the other day lamenting his ignorance and requesting me to tell him what books to read and what to do in order to become learned and wise. I sent him a civil answer and such advice as occurred to me. But I confess that the more I thought of the matter the less assured I felt of my competence for the task. I ceased to be flattered by the implied tribute to my omniscience, and felt rather like a person who gives up a third-class ticket after he has ridden in a first-class carriage might feel. I surveyed my title to this reputation for learning, and was shocked at the poverty of my estate.”

Check your progress:

1. Who wrote to the essayist?

2. What did he want?

3. What did the author survey?

“As I contrasted the mountain of things I didn’t know with the molehill of things I did know, my self-esteem shrank to zero. Why, my dear young sir, thought I, I cannot pay twopence in the pound. I am nothing but the possessor of a widespread ignorance. Why should you come to me for a loan?

I begin with myself—this body of me that is carried about on a pair of cunningly devised stilts and waves a couple of branches with five flexible twigs at the end of each, and is surmounted by a large round knob with wonderful little orifices, and glittering jewels, and a sort of mat for a covering, and which utters strange noises and speaks and sings and laughs and cries.”

Check your progress:

1. What is the opposite of mountain in the passage above?

2. Who did he begin with?

3. What did his self-esteem shrink to?

“Bless me, said I, what do I know about it? I am a mere bundle of mysteries in coat and breeches. I couldn’t tell you where my epiglottis is or what it does without looking in a dictionary. I have been told, but I always forget. I am little better than the boy in the class. “Where is the diaphragm?” asked the teacher. “Please, sir, in North Staffordshire,” said the boy. I may laugh at the boy, but any young medical student would laugh just as much at me if I told him honestly what I do not know about the diaphragm. And when it comes to the ultimate mysteries of this aggregation of atoms which we call the human body the medical student and, indeed, the whole Medical Faculty would be found to be nearly as ignorant as the boy was about the diaphragm. From myself I pass to all the phenomena of life, and wherever I turn I find myself exploring what Carlyle calls the “great, deep sea of Nescience on which we float like exhalations that are and then are not.” I see Orion striding across the southern heavens, and feel the wonder and the majesty of that stupendous spectacle, but if I ask myself what I know about it I have no answer. And even the knowledge of the most learned astronomer only touches the fringe of the immensity. What is beyond—beyond—beyond? His mind is balked, as mine is, almost at the threshold of the mighty paradox of a universe which we can conceive neither as finite nor as infinite, which is unthinkable as having limits and unthinkable as having no limits. As the flowers come on in summer I always learn their names, but I know that I shall have to learn them again next year. And as to the mystery of their being, by what miracle they grow and transmute the secretions of the earth and air into life and beauty—why, my dear young sir, I am no more communicative than the needy knife-grinder. “Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir.” I cannot put my hand to anything outside my little routine without finding myself meddling with things I don’t understand. I was digging in the garden just now and came upon a patch of ground with roots deep down. Some villainous pest, said I, some enemy of my carrots and potatoes. Have at them! I felt like a knight charging to the rescue of innocence. I plunged the fork deeper and deeper and tore at the roots, and grew breathless and perspiring. Even now I ache with the agonies of that titanic combat.

And the more I fought the more infinite became the ramifications of those roots. And so I called for the expert advice of the young person who was giving some candy to her bees in the orchard. She came, took a glance into the depths, and said: "Yes, you are pulling up that tree." And she pointed to an ivy-grown tree in the hedge a dozen yards away. Did I feel foolish, young sir? Of course I felt foolish, but not more foolish than I have felt on a thousand other occasions. And you ask me for advice."

Check your progress:

1. What does the author consider himself to be?

2. What did he feel like, a knight or a carrot?

3. What was the young person giving to her bees?

"I recall one among many of these occasions for my chastening. When I was young I was being driven one day through a woodland country by an old fellow who kept an inn and let out a pony and chaise for hire. As we went along I made some remark about a tree by the wayside and he spoke of it as a poplar. "Not a poplar," said I with the easy assurance of youth, and I described to him for his information the characters of what I conceived to be the poplar. "Ah," he said, "you are thinking of the Lombardy poplar. That tree is the Egyptian poplar." And then he went on to tell me of a score of other poplars—their appearance, their habits, and their origins—quite kindly and without any knowledge of the withering blight that had fallen upon my cocksure ignorance. I found that he had spent his life in tree culture and had been forester to a Scotch duke. And I had explained to him what a poplar was like! But I think he did me good, and I often recall him to mind when I feel disposed to give other people information that they possibly do not need."

Check your progress:

1. What did the essayist recall?

2. Who drove him through a woodland country?

3. What was the profession of the old man?

“And the books I haven’t read, and the sciences I don’t know, and the languages I don’t speak, and the things I can’t do—young man, if you knew all this you would be amazed. But it does not make me unhappy. On the contrary I find myself growing cheerful in the contemplation of these vast undeveloped estates. I feel like a fellow who has inherited a continent and, so far, has only had time to cultivate a tiny corner of the inheritance. The rest I just wander through like a boy in wonderland. Some day I will know about all these things. I will develop all these immensities. I will search out all these mysteries. In my heart I know I shall do nothing of the sort. I know that when the curtain rings down I shall be digging the same tiny plot. But it is pleasant to dream of future conquests that you won’t make.”

Check your progress:

1. What are things that the essayist has not done?

2. What does he feel like?

3. What will the author be doing when the curtain rings down?

*“And, after all, aren’t we all allotment holders of the mind, cultivating our own little patch and surrounded by the wonderland of the unknown? Even the most learned of us is ignorant when his knowledge is measured by the infinite sum of things. And the riches of knowledge themselves are much more widely diffused than we are apt to think. There are few people who are not better informed about something than we are, who have not gathered their own peculiar sheaf of wisdom or knowledge in this vast harvest field of experience. That is at once a comfortable and a humbling thought. It checks a too soaring vanity on the one hand and a too tragic abasement on the other. The fund of knowledge is a collective sum. No one has all the items, nor a fraction of the items, and there are few of us so poor as not to have some. If I were to walk out into the street now I fancy I should not meet a soul, man or woman, who could not fill in some blank of my mind. And I think—for I must not let humility go too far—I think I could fill some blank in theirs. Our carrying capacity varies infinitely, but we all carry something, and it differs from the store of any one else on earth. And, moreover, the mere knowledge of things is not necessary to their enjoyment, nor necessary even to wisdom. There are things that every ploughboy knows today which were hidden from Plato and Caesar and Dante, but the ploughboy is not wiser than they. Sir Thomas Browne, in his book on *Vulgar Errors*, declared that the idea that the earth went round the sun was too*

foolish to be controverted. I know better, but that doesn't make me a wiser man than Browne. Wisdom does not depend on these things. I suppose that, on the whole, Lincoln was the wisest and most fundamentally sane man who ever took a great part in the affairs of this planet. Yet compared with the average undergraduate he was utterly unlearned."

Check your progress:

1. Can we have all the items in the fund of knowledge?

2. What are the historical figures named?

3. Who wrote the book *Vulgar Errors*?

"Do not, my young friend, suppose I am decrying your eagerness to know. Learn all you can, my boy, about this wonderful caravan on which we make our annual tour round the sun, and on which we quarrel and fight with such crazy ferocity as we go. But at the end of all your learning you will be astonished at how little you know, and will rejoice that the pleasure of living is in healthy feeling rather than in the accumulation of facts. There was a good deal of truth in that saying of Savonarola that "a little old woman who kept the faith knew more than Plato or Aristotle."

Check your progress:

1. Does the essayist encourage the young man?

2. What will the young man learn at the end of his learning?

3. Who knew more than Plato or Aristotle?

6.2.1 About A.G. Gardiner

A.G. Gardiner (1865-1946) wrote essays under the pseudonym (penname) Alpha of the Plough. He was an English essayist, a journalist, and Editor of Daily News. As Editor, he ensured that social issues were highlighted. His essays were published in an evening newspaper called The Star. The Star was published daily between 1988 to 1960. A.G. Gardiner selected the penname Alpha of the Plough. The Plough is the name of a constellation (a group of fixed stars in the sky) and Alpha refers to the brightest star in the constellation. "On Saying Please," "On Forgetting,"

and “Vanity of Old Age” are among his popular essays. A.G. Gardiner’s essays are easy to read and have the element of humour.

Check your progress:

1. When was A.G. Gardiner born?

2. What was his penname?

3. In which newspaper were his essays published?

6.2.2 Summary of the Essay

Let us now look at the summary of the essay prescribed for your study. The essay is divided into paragraphs of different lengths. In the opening paragraph, the essayist states the reason for the essay. A young person had requested the author to give him advice on how to become wise and knowledgeable. The essay is written in the form of a letter in reply to the young man’s request. First, the author states that he does not consider himself to be wise and knowledgeable enough to advise others. He considers himself an ignorant person and goes on to give the advantages of leading a life of ignorance later in the essay. When the young man requested him to suggest some books to read and give him tips to gain knowledge, he sent him a polite response. But when he thought about his own level of knowledge, he felt that he lacked it and felt that he was ignorant in many ways.

In the next two paragraphs, he tells us that he has very little knowledge. He compares his little knowledge to a molehill. In comparison, what he does not know is as huge as a mountain. He wonders why the young man wants a loan of knowledge from him when he owns very little knowledge. He also compares his feet and hand and fingers to a tree. He compares his head to a knob. In other words, he compares his body to something that is only ordinary and mundane.

In the lengthy paragraph 4, the author tries to prove his ignorance by saying that he does not know about his own body parts and their functions. He draws several terms from the field of anatomy and medicine to speak about his ignorance. Indirectly, the reader learns about his knowledge in these areas.

In the next paragraph, the author tells us how he tried to correct a person on a poplar tree. But he was proved wrong. He was made to realize that all poplar trees are not the same. The tree he was referring to was an Egyptian poplar and not what he thought it to be. From this, the author

wants to tell us that even in areas which he thought he had knowledge about, he was wrong. He lacked complete or elaborate information.

In paragraph 6, the author says that the young man would be surprised to know how many books he has not read, how many languages he cannot speak, and how less he knows about science. However, the author is not unhappy with his own lack of knowledge. He is happy with whatever knowledge he possesses. He compares knowledge to a vast estate of inheritance. It is as if he owns a continent but did not have time to explore it fully. He says that in the coming years he may gain more knowledge. But at the time, he remains realistic and accepts that when death approaches him, he may not have gained any further knowledge than what he currently has.

In the next paragraph, the author says that no one in the world possesses complete knowledge. Each person is aware only of the things near him and remains unaware of several other things around his inner zone. The fund of knowledge is a collective sum and is collectively owned by humanity. Every individual contributes to the sum of the collective knowledge. He says that if he goes out on the street now, he will meet people who will provide him some knowledge about things he did not know. Mere possession of knowledge does not make a person happy or wise. He concludes that the wisest man on Earth was Abraham Lincoln who abolished slavery from America when, in truth, he was an uneducated person.

In the last paragraph, the author tries to comfort the young man. He says he is not discouraging him from learning anything new. He wants the young man to know as much as he can about the earth and our life. But he wants him to remember that we know too little. Life is not about accumulating knowledge or facts. Having a healthy feeling about life is important. He ends the essay with a quote that a person who retains faith is more knowledgeable than the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle.

6.2.3 Use of Language

The essay is written in the style of personal, informal essay. It is written in first person and present tense. The essay is a reply in the form of a letter. It is a direct address to the young man. It is a subjective essay dealing with the author's feelings about knowledge and ignorance. The diction is easy and simple to understand. There are few allusions to great writers and philosophers. There is use of comparisons. There is gentle humour. The aim of the essay is to entertain. It is not didactic. It does not intend to teach the readers.

6.2.4 Improving Reading Skill

The main purpose of this Unit is to help you improve your reading skills. Learning to read correctly is important. It helps to understand the passage. It improves spelling and pronunciation. It helps us to modulate voice. We can use this essay to practice the use of pauses, to practice exclamations, to understand and comprehend the meaning of the essay, to learn new words and phrases. You must read the essay again and again to improve your reading.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this Unit, learners should be able to:

- understand the key ideas and arguments of the essay.
- appreciate the use of wit and humour in the writing.
- enhance your reading comprehension and analytical skills.

6.4 Glossary

Ceased: stopped; came to an end

Diaphragm: a piece of muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity

Epiglottis: a small piece of flap in the deep throat that prevents food from entering the lungs

Ignorance: lack of knowledge

Lament: expression of sorrow or grief

Omniscience: being present everywhere

Phenomena: (plural) something that exists and can be observed

Stupendous: huge; impressive; very large; great

Surmount: overcome

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who wrote the essay “In Defence of Ignorance?”
 - a. A.G. Gardiner
 - b. Robert Frost

- c. T.S. Eliot
 - d. None of the above
2. Who requested for advice on gaining knowledge?
 - a. Old woman
 - b. Young man**
 - c. Young girl
 - d. Mother
 3. Does the author consider himself knowledgeable?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No**
 4. What does the author compare the inheritance of knowledge to?
 - a. Continent**
 - b. Ocean
 - c. Lake
 - d. Hut
 5. Who are the two Greek philosophers mentioned in the essay?
 - a. Plato and Aristotle**
 - b. Plato and Coleridge
 - c. Aristotle and Socrates
 - d. Marx and Lacan

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What did the young man ask the author? Why?
2. Does the author agree to the request of the young man? Why?
3. What is the fund of knowledge?
4. What is Gardiner's main argument in "In Defence of Ignorance"?
5. Can anyone have complete knowledge? Why?

Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the advantages of ignorance, according to A.G. Gardiner?
2. Examine in detail the author's response to the young man.
3. What does the author say about knowledge and ignorance?

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

Gardiner, Alfred George. *Leaves in the Wind*. Czechia, DigiCat, 2022.

Gardiner, Alfred George. *Pillars of society*. Musson Book Company, 1914.

Latha, V., and A. Velusamy. “Comedy of Errors in Common Life: As Presented By AG Gardiner.”
Language in India 18.4 (2018).

Syllabus

DSE-2

Course Title: *Reading Essays* (BNEN202DET)

Scheme of Examination

Maximum Marks: 50 (Assignments: 15 & End Semester: 35)

Exam Duration: 2 hrs

Instruction Mode: Counselling Classes (Blended Mode)

Course Objectives: To introduce students to the various literary forms in essay writing and the background of English Essay.

Course Outcomes: Upon the completion of the course the students are expected to clearly understand and treat Essay as a distinct genre and learn about the rich and vibrant tradition of essay writing around the world.

Course Title: <i>Reading Essays</i> (DSE-2)	
Unit No.	Unit Title
1	Francis Bacon – “Of Studies”
2	Joseph Addison – “Sir Roger at the Assizes”
3	Charles Lamb – “Dream Children”
4	George Orwell – “Shooting an Elephant”
5	J. B. Priestley – “On Doing Nothing”
6	A. G. Gardiner – “In Defence of Ignorance”

Suggested Readings:

- Blaisdell, Bob, editor. *Great English Essays: From Bacon to Chesterton*. Dover Publications, 2005.
- Gigante, Denise. *The Great Age of the English Essay: An Anthology*. Yale University Press, 2008.
- Lopate, Phillip, editor. *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present*. Anchor Books, 1995.
- Williams, Emrys. *A Book of English Essays*. Penguin Classics, 2000.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER

Maulana Azad National Urdu University

Programme: **B.A. English (Hons)**

IInd Semester Examination

Paper Title: **Reading Essays (BNEN202DET)**

Time: 2 Hours

Total Marks: 35

Note: This question paper consists of three parts: **Part-A**, **Part-B** and **Part-C**. The number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

Part-A contains **05** compulsory questions of multiple choice/ fill in the blank/very short answer type question. Answer all the questions. Each question carries **1** mark. **(5x1=5 marks)**

Part-B contains **08** questions of which students are supposed to answer **05** questions. Answer each question in approximately 200 words. Each question carries **04** marks. **(5x4=20 marks)**

Part-C contains **02** questions of which students are supposed to answer **01** question. Answer the question in approximately 250 words. Each question carries **10** marks. **(1x10=10 marks)**

Part-A

1.
 - i. Bacon believes knowledge should primarily be used for:
 - (a) Impressing others Nicholas Udall
 - (b) Gaining social status
 - (c) Practical application and judgment
 - (d) Writing books
 - ii. Sir Roger is a _____ in the essay 'Sir Roger at the Assizes'.
 - (a) Prisoner
 - (b) Jury
 - (c) Innkeeper
 - (d) None of the above
 - iii. Who is Lady C in Charles Lamb's "Dream Children"?
 - (a) Mother
 - (b) Grandmother
 - (c) Great grandmother
 - (d) An imaginary lady
 - iv. What is the central theme of "Shooting an Elephant"?
 - (a) Love and friendship
 - (b) Power and oppression
 - (c) Adventure and exploration
 - (d) Justice and equality
 - v. According to Priestley, what is often mistaken for idleness?
 - (a) Carelessness
 - (b) Thoughtful reflection and relaxation
 - (c) Lack of ambition
 - (d) Daydreaming

Part-B

2. Attempt a summary of the essay "Of Studies in your own words.
3. Why did Sir Roger suggested to innkeeper to change the picture?
4. What is the theme of the essay "Dream Children"?
5. Explain the theme of power and oppression as portrayed in "Shooting an Elephant."
6. In what ways does Priestley differentiate between laziness and meaningful idleness?
7. What is Gardiner's main argument in "In Defence of Ignorance"?
8. Explain Bacon's concept of the purposes of studies.
9. What is the significance of the apparition of two infants in "Dream Children"?

Part-C

10. Discuss the role of empathy in "Shooting an Elephant" and how it influences Orwell's decision-making process.
11. What are the advantages of ignorance, according to A.G. Gardiner?