

BAEN301CCT

British Literature

B.A. (English)

3rd Semester

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For UG 3rd Semester

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Unit - 1: Introduction to British Drama

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1.0 Introduction

Drama always finds a key place in literature. As a form of literature, drama complements poetry and prose. As a genre of literature, dramatic compositions are for the joy of reading, for performance on the stage and for relay from a studio. A drama can have elements of both poetry and prose. Dramatic works provide glimpses of the socio-cultural aspects of life besides revealing the historical and political events prevailing in a given space and time. Dramatic compositions enjoy a place of pride in English literature and their performance in theatres has always been popular in England. As the British Empire spread all over the world, English literature also found its way everywhere. The British drama was instrumental in the spread of the English language and literature across the globe. As dramatic works embody vital information about the socio-cultural factors that condition the production of the drama.

This expansion enriched English literature immensely; and in turn, English literature contributed to world literature. In the process, the British drama works came out of England, got translated into numerous languages, and were performed or adapted in the languages of the remotest corners of the world. Therefore, British dramas are treasure troves of information about English literature as well as the people, culture, history and politics of Britain. To appreciate all that it is important to trace the historical

growth of drama in England besides understanding the essential elements and the classification of British drama.

Check your Progress

1. How is drama related to literature?
2. What information does British drama provide about the English language and culture?

1.1 Objectives

- To introduce the readers to the conceptual terminologies associated with the genre and sub-genre of drama.
- To familiarize the readers with the genre of drama in general and British drama in particular.
- To develop understanding about the main elements of drama including plot, settings, characters, conflicts, and themes.
- To assist the readers in understanding the classification of drama and expose them to the various canonised types of drama.
- To enable the readers to understand and appreciate the distinct aspects of British drama.

1.2 British Drama

Etymologically, the word 'drama' is of Greek origin and it may refer to act or to do or to perform. A *Glossary of Literary Terms* by M. H. Abrams discusses the term 'drama' as a form of composition that is designed for performance. A dramatist is a person who writes/produces drama. Often, the word 'play' is used as a substitute for the word 'drama'. Accordingly, those who write plays are called playwrights. Some scholars maintain a distinction between the words drama and play. According to them the term, 'drama' would refer to writings that are meant to be performed whereas plays are literary compositions performed on stage. In other words, such scholars restrict drama to reading and play to performance. However, this chapter uses 'drama' and 'play' as substitutable synonyms. Drama as a genre has played a key role in the spread of English language, English literature and English culture across the globe. Dramatic texts written in English, their translations and adaptations have been performed all across the globe. To understand that let us examine a short historical overview of drama in England.

1.2.1 Drama in England:

In Britain, Drama has always enjoyed popularity and patronage as a form of literature and art. British dramatists/playwrights, who earned global recognition for their contribution to the field of drama, include Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, G. B. Shaw, T. S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, and Harold Pinter, to name a few. Their dramatic creations that earned recognition across the globe and positively contributed to the spread of English language and culture include the following: *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe, *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, *The Alchemist* by Ben Jonson, *Pygmalion* by G. B. Shaw, *Murder in the Cathedral* by T. S. Eliot, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter.

The Romans are credited for introducing drama in England though this genre was highly popular in Greece and India. The writing and performance of drama in England have their roots in the church services. The church provided patronage to theatrical activities and the clergy participated in the growth of theatre as playwrights and actors. Religion had a tremendous impact on drama and it occurred as the chief motif of early and medieval dramatic performances in England. Dramatic performances that undermined the power and dignity of gods, goddesses, saints, nobilities, etc. were considered offensive. Such performances were considered morally unfit and did not receive royal patronage. Obviously, these performances could not be part of the mainstream and were subjected to systematic extinction.

a. Elizabethan drama:

The mid-sixteenth century in England saw tremendous growth in theatrical activities and brought unprecedented recognition to British drama. Since this development took place during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the drama and dramatists of this time and tradition are known as Elizabethan. The writings and performances of drama during this time amply manifest the social attitude, scientific temper and religious beliefs conditioned according to the renaissance that entire Europe was experiencing. It would not be wrong to say that drama writing in English saw its peak during the Elizabethan Age. With Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare representing this Age, English drama started to impress the audience and inspire the authors beyond the territorial boundaries of England. The dramatic tradition during the Elizabethan Age was highly influenced by religious institutions. However, secular views also started penetrating into drama during this Age. Also, new models for dramatic works developed during this time perfected the models derived from the works of Latin and Greek philosophers.

b. Jacobean drama:

The death of Queen Elizabeth shifted the power to King James during whose reign writing and performance of plays in England experienced a recognizable shift. The plays

following this new trend are known as Jacobean Plays. Ben Jonson, John Webster, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley are the chief representatives of the Jacobean Age. William Shakespeare was actively writing during this era, but he followed the Elizabethan style and tradition. That is why his plays are not included in the list of Jacobean Drama. *The White Devil* by John Webster and *Every Man in His Humour* by Ben Jonson are important plays of this tradition.

c. Restoration drama:

Theatres were shut down following the order of the parliament in the mid-seventeenth century and opened only after the crowning of Charles II and restoration of the English monarchy. A new tradition of drama that emerged with this development is known as restoration drama in English literature. This new dramaturgical tradition was primarily meant for the upper class. Therefore, comedy of manners replaced the comedy of humour practised before as the dominating theme. A notable development during this phase was the participation of women actors in plays. Several Elizabethan plays were also rewritten in restoration flavours. *All for Love* by John Dryden and *The Orphan* by Thomas Otway are typical examples of restoration drama.

d. Victorian drama:

During the reigns of Queen Victoria drama writing seems to have declined, however, drama performances remained popular all over England. It was a time when lyrical poetry remained popular as earlier and fiction writing saw an unprecedented growth. The theatres flourished as their number grew manifold while the performance of plays by earlier greats like William Shakespeare drew big crowds. The drama during this phase focussed on social problems and issues of ordinary people. Most dramatic works during this era comprised three acts while some of them came in the form of episodes. Prominent dramatic works of the Victorian era include *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, *The Playboy of the Western World* by John Millington Synge and *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw.

e. Modern drama:

Modern drama refers to the body of dramatic works produced in the 20th century. Modern drama focussed on problems of life. These writings inherited and manifested some features of the Elizabethan drama. Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright is considered the father of modern drama and it is represented by the likes of G. B. Shaw, W. B. Yeats and T. S. Elliot. The British literary canon saw a revival of drama after the Second World War. During this phase, the works of dramatists like John Osborne, Samuel Beckett, J. B. Priestley, Peter Shaffer and Tom Stoppard stand out as they could create an impact on the audience. Among the works of these

great dramatists, *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne have received highly enthusiastic responses and vociferous praises.

1.2.2 Elements of Drama:

Plot, Setting, Scene, Characters, Characterization, Conflicts, Dialogues and Theme are indispensable elements of a drama. In addition to these, the background and structure of a play are important too. Understanding these elements well helps one to understand, analyse and appreciate a drama in fullness. Let us examine them individually to understand why they are essential to a theatrical performance.

a. Plot:

The term 'plot' refers to the arrangement or sequence of events in a play. This term is comparable with 'storyline'. Plot is also relevant to stories, films and novels. In drama, the plot unfolds as acts or scenes. Plot is a vital component of a play because all characters enact their roles according to the plot. The plot can be simple or complex. A simple plot has the sequence of events determined by one turning point. In other words, a simple plot is a straightforward string of events. Characters and events in a simple plot are predictable. In contrast, a complex plot may have more than one turning point. The events in complex plots are interwoven and have several twists and characters that are unpredictable. Major playwrights like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe are known for their distinct plotting styles. Plot tells what happens to the characters. It contains the events that control the progress of the play and determine its end. Several scholars discuss plot from the standpoint of a cause-and-effect relationship between the events. The major types of plays such as comedy and tragedy are determined by the plot they have. The plot in British drama has seen domination of structural trends; therefore British dramas are distinct from the drama of other places and are easily identifiable too. The term 'script' refers to the written/print pages according to which all actions take place in a play.

b. Setting and scene:

The term setting refers to the sum total of time, place and circumstance in which the play is enacted. The setting of a play contains the socio-cultural milieu and politico-economic situations that governs the play or that the play intends to portray. However, the term 'scene' refers to a part of a play that is often marked by a brief situation of action and ends with the fall of the curtains. A defining characteristic of a scene is that it has all actions in one (distinct) place and at one (point of) time. Some plays are lengthy i.e., they are of considerable time duration. Such plays are divided into smaller parts known as Acts and Scenes. The division of a lengthy play into acts and scenes provides the actors and backstage workers reasonable time to regroup, change costumes and prepare the stage according to the flow of narration. Acts and scenes serve

as units of analysis of dramatic work and help the audience easily follow the narration. The terms ‘act’ and ‘scene’ are often used synonymously as both refer to a part of a play. However, it is important to note that act and scene are not identical. Act and scene differ in their length. An act not only runs longer than a scene, but it can also comprise several scenes. Usually, drama in the Elizabethan Age comprised five acts whereas drama in the Modern Age comprised three acts. One-act plays (dramatic performance comprising just one act) are also common in modern times.

c. Characters and characterisation:

The term ‘characters’ refers to the real or imaginary persons being represented in a drama. Characters are actors performing their roles according to the script. The persons being represented by the characters may be real persons of socio-political, cultural and historical significance. Alternatively, the persons represented by characters in a play may be fictional. Characters portray the desires, actions, and contemplations etc. of people. The following four types of characters are most common: (a) Static characters, (b) Dynamic characters, (c) Stock characters, and (d) Symbolic characters.

The static or stable characters remain the same throughout the play. They are predictable and based on their initial actions it is easy to predict what they would do as the play advances. For instance, Prospero’s character remains unchanged in *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. Static characters are also known as flat characters. The dynamic characters go through metamorphosis, a process of change due to which their actions at the beginning of a play are in contrast with their actions towards the end of the play. Dynamic characters are also known as round characters. For instance, Ebenezer Scrooge is a dynamic character in *The Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

The stock characters represent typical persons or groups that the audience easily recognizes. They are used repeatedly. The presence of stock characters in a play helps the audience predict the kind of action that would unfold. Usually, the persons represented by stock characters are fictional and stereotypical while their motives are well-known. Supernatural characters refer imaginary characters such as spirits, ghosts, gods, goddesses, witches and fairies. Supernatural, extraordinary and magical powers are main features of supernatural characters. These characters are driven from metaphysical things, old superstitions, ancient beliefs and mythologies. Such characters have frequently occurred in British drama. William Shakespeare has used supernatural characters in comedies (for instance, see *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) as well as in tragedies (for instance, see *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*).

The characters are also studied on the basis of the action they perform in the play. Accordingly, the plot moves around the main character known as protagonist or hero. Usually,

the protagonist stands for the virtues established by the society. The protagonist positively affects the lives of the people around by heroic actions and inspires the audience by his/her courage and decisions. Occasionally, the protagonist does negative actions too. S/he would be called 'anti-hero' and his/her role would be called 'negative role.' In contrast, the protagonist and his/her actions are obstructed by another dissimilar character known antagonist or villain. The main purpose of an antagonist in a play is to do evil things, create obstacles for the hero and add to his difficulties. Predominantly, the antagonists are persons; but sometimes the antagonist can be a situation too. In numerous plays antagonists are responsible for the rise of the hero. The antagonists are often portrayed more powerful than the protagonists. Still, the protagonists are able to overcome the challenges and difficulties and defeat the antagonists, especially for the fact that they uphold the social and moral values.

Characterization is the process of presenting the characters. From the point of view of a playwright or dramatist characterization refers to the art of portraying actors and performers as the person intended in the plot. The term characterization refers to the way the characters of a play try to create the effect in the roles being enacted by them. Characterization involves the use of creative impersonation and techniques such as masking, dressing, voice modulation etc. In some plays the actors play their roles while the audience decides about the kind of characters they witnessed. In others, a narrator describes the characters to assist the audience in following the sequence of actions that unfold. Based on the two contrasting methods, the process of characterisation can be understood as a choice between 'showing' and 'telling'. Characterisation that follows 'showing' has the viewers evaluate the characters and its actions. In contrast, characterisation that follows 'telling' provides direct or masked information about the personality disposition, actions and intentions of the characters.

d. Conflicts:

The term 'conflict' refers to a scene or situation that has a struggle between two diagonally opposite forces. Conflict is an essential and frequently used tool by the dramatists. Treating conflict as the basis of a play, G. B. Shaw opined "no conflict, no drama." The use of conflict as a dramatic device helps the dramatists build tension and curiosity in the audience and thereby drive the plot forward. When a character participates in a conflict, s/he is either building it or standing against it. Conflict builds tension and curiosity in the audience and its resolution leads to the climax marking the end of the performance. The following two types of conflict are common:

- i. Internal conflict: A conflict in which a character is shown to struggle against his/her own ideas, beliefs and desires. The internal conflict portrays the mental state of the character

including the dilemma s/he is having. The internal conflict is purely psychological and it may be understood as person versus self.

- ii. External conflict: A conflict in which a character is shown to confront a person or situation that is not in his/her control. The external conflict portrays the mental strength of the character which is confronting a natural, supernatural or accidental enemy that sometimes includes even his/her own people.

e. Themes:

The term 'theme' refers to the central idea of a drama or play. Theme forms the basis for the plot and determines the actions performed by the characters. In other words, theme is an idea that occurs most prominently in the play. It can be love, friendship, power, justice, unemployment, jealousy, corruption, terror, greed, ambition, religion, etc., just to name a few. Therefore, themes can be anything that abundantly affects an individual as well as the larger masses. The theme of a play may be understood from dialogues used by the characters or from the lessons learnt by them. For the audience, theme is what they remember the play for. Usually, a play has only one theme, but it can have multiple themes also portrayed through different acts/scenes. A piece of drama may be classified according to its theme, for it is an important thing that the audience can identify with and express in a word or two or in a sentence at most. Theme has social significance, too. Examining the theme of a play one can understand the socio-cultural and political issues prevailing during the times when the play was written or performed. Besides issues of socio-cultural and political importance theme also enables the playwright in reinforcing the moral values and the tenets of religion. The themes like masculinity, politics, power and morality occur predominantly in the play *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare. In *The Merchant of Venice* by the same playwright hatred, prejudice and revenge occur as the themes. The themes in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett include humour, wait, suffering and boredom. T. S. Eliot has adopted martyrdom, spiritual power, eternity and loyalty as themes in his famous play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Similarly, the themes of the play *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe are sin and redemption.

f. Song, chorus and dialogue:

Song and chorus are important elements of drama because they help in creating a psychological impact on the audience. Song and chorus are always part of the dramatic performances in England. Chorus refers to singing by a group of people. Songs and chorus are important constituents of drama because they are performed in sync with the scene of a play. Song and chorus add emphasis to the scene being depicted. Often, the chorus would also include

dancing by the group singing the song. Song and chorus have played a contributory role in dramas, especially that of William Shakespeare.

It is important to note that the drama works in ancient and medieval ages were in the verse form. Verse dramas are drama works in which a significant part is lyrical. Verse drama has been the most prevalent form of drama from the Elizabethan Age to the Modern Age. Almost all dramatic works of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson would qualify as verse plays. Verse plays became out of fashion with the change in the taste of the audience and the emergence of other forms of writing. T. S. Elliot through *Murder in the Cathedral* tried to revive the verse plays in the twentieth century.

Dialogue is an indispensable element of drama, for it exhibits the literary techniques and rhetoric artistry of the dramatist. In an elaborate sense, all conversations on the stage would qualify as dialogues. However, in academic discourse dialogue refers to a script-driven conversation between the characters. Plays that have good dialogues are likely to stay in public memory for long. Many plays are identified by their dialogues. It is the dialogue that an actor combines with the costume to perform/produce a character. In turn, several characters are primarily remembered for their dialogues, especially if they are extended to day-to-day interactions. Occasionally, dialogues are so weighty that they become synonymous with the play in which they occur. Dialogues have the power to influence the way individuals and groups think in society. The audience also deciphers the play performance according to the dialogues used by the characters.

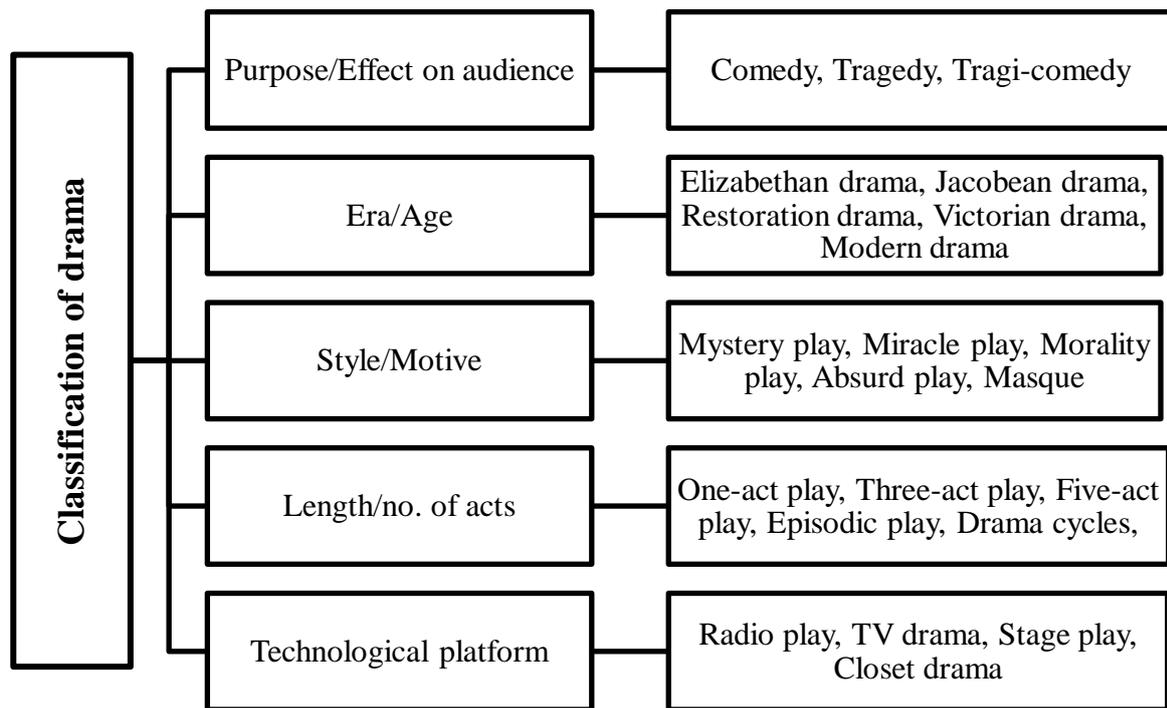
Since all instances of conversation cannot qualify as dialogue, two specific cases are taken up for discussion. First, when the flow of communication is internal or intra-personal or within an individual it is called a monologue. When the communication is between two or more individuals it is called a dialogue. However, the term 'dialogue' is also used as a cover term for statements made by individual characters, especially when such statements are weighty. In written dramas, the dialogues of each character appear with his/her name to enable the reader to comprehend who said what etc. However, dialogues in dramas that are performed on the stage are uttered by the concerned actors.

Some plays have a long speech delivered by a character in a scene or act. Such an instance of one-way speech is called a monologue. A monologue is not a play in itself. Rather, it is part of a scene or act in which only one character speaks. The monologue is presented as a speech that one character gives to other characters. In contrast, a soliloquy is what an actor says to himself/herself. Monologue and soliloquy exhibit the state of mind of the character who delivers it. Occasionally, dramatic scenes have instances of 'aside' that are short utterances made

by a character that the audience can hear but other characters cannot hear. The instances of aside in a dramatic performance are contemplative and suggestive in nature. These instances have the potential to engage the audience in the narrative and have hilarious effects on them.

1.2.3 Classification of Drama:

Drama as performance and as a genre of literature is of several types depending upon how a researcher wants to analyse it. There can be several bases for classifying the British drama. For instance, size of the drama, age/time, identified style, content, motif, etc.



Size of the play:

The plays can be classified depending on their size. Accordingly, the one-act plays are plays that have only one act. These plays are distinct from the ones that run into several acts. A typical drama from the Elizabethan age has five acts whereas a typical modern drama has three acts.

Comedy:

One of the most widely available and easily identifiable sub-genres of drama is comedy. It developed in Greece and was immensely popular in England too. The purpose of a comedy is to make the audience laugh. Comedy is marked by the presence of content that the audience finds hilarious. The hilarious contents may come in the form of dialogues or situations arising in the play. Comedy performances usually have happy endings. Comedy comprises a diverse range

of plays including farce, comedy of manners, comedy of humour, tendency comedy, festive comedy etc. Some comic plays that have enriched the English literature are as follows: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare; *Volpone* and *Every Man in His Humour* by Ben Jonson; and *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde.

Tragedy:

Tragedy is a dramatic composition that relies on misfortune and suffering. It is an easily identifiable and highly engaging sub-genre of drama wherein the protagonist has to suffer due to wrong actions or due to unfortunate circumstances. The suffering and defeat of the hero, often accompanied by a fall in character, evoke intense emotions in the audience. The purpose of tragedy is to reinforce the prevalent social values. It will not be wrong to say that tragedy has been the most dominant form of drama not only in England but in entire Europe. Several prominent philosophers including Plato, Aristotle, Freud, Hegel, Lacan, etc. have contemplated tragedies resulting in the production of tremendous ideas and theoretical discussions on the subject. The creative genius of playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Henrik Ibsen and T. S. Eliot has also come out appreciably well in tragic plays. The corpus of tragic plays is rich and diverse in English literature. To appreciate and analyse them properly, literary scholars and theatre critics have identified several categories of tragedy including revenge tragedy, domestic tragedy, social tragedy, and romantic tragedy.

The revenge tragedy of sixteenth-century England has revenge and repercussion for wrong actions as its driving theme. In revenge tragedy, the protagonist belongs to a high rank. The downfall in his/her status is a loss for the individual as well as the system. Plays like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare and *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe are representative examples of revenge tragedy. In domestic tragedy, the protagonist is an ordinary individual who suffers personally due to the prevailing social values. *Othello* by William Shakespeare is an example of domestic tragedy. Social tragedy focuses on issues emerging from the prevailing social order. In social tragedy, the suffering of the protagonist is not due to a fall in character but due to the deplorable socio-economic and political conditions of life. *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen and *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller are typical examples of social tragedy. Romantic tragedy is based on a plot that has hero and heroine falling in love but not able to live together. They defy the social and political norms but their union is opposed by all forces available. The climax of a romantic tragedy has heartbreak for the audience due to the tragic separation or death of the lovers. Romantic tragedy has received as much attention as revenge

tragedy but this category of tragedy is distinct from revenge tragedy. *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* by William Shakespeare are examples of romantic tragedy.

Tragicomic dramas:

Also known as comi-tragedy, tragicomic dramas are dramas that do not strictly belong to the category of comedy or tragedy because they have elements of both. Tragicomedy dramas constitute a sub-genre of drama that blends tragedy and comedy. A drama qualifying as tragicomedy may be a tragedy that has a lot of comic scenes, or it can be a serious play the climax of which leaves the audience in a happy mood. With plenty of indirect references, satirical dialogues and dark humour, tragicomedy serves as an instrument for criticising the state and expressing discontent for the policies. This form of literary composition is a product of creative experiments in the history of drama. Early drama writings did not have tragicomedies, but the form excelled in modern times. Plays like *Merchant of Venice* and *All's Well That Ends Well* by William Shakespeare and *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett are typical examples of tragicomedy.

History plays:

History plays, also known as chronicle plays, are dramatic works that are based on persons and events of historical significance. John Heminges and Henry Condell edited perhaps the first collection of Shakespeare's works and named it First Folio. This collection mainly comprised plays that focused on historical figures and contributed to the development of a subgenre mostly identified with William Shakespeare and known as 'history plays.' History plays refer to plays that constitute the sub-genre of drama that is based on historical narratives. History plays are distinct from the comic and tragic forms. These plays were highly popular in medieval England. William Shakespeare is considered the chief representative of history plays, for several of his plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* belong to this category.

Problem plays:

Problem plays are dramatic works that deal with modern social problems and create awareness about them. The themes in problem plays are socially and politically relevant. Problem plays aim at changing people's attitude and rationalizing public behaviour on topics such as illiteracy, inequality of wealth, unemployment, discrimination, gender gap etc. The plot is designed to make the characters encounter or debate the issue taken up. The audience is able to identify with the issues taken up by these plays.

Masque:

A distinct sub-genre of drama in which actors would use masks. Masque used to be very lively and dramatic as the actors would represent mythological figures disguised in masks. A

masque performance would occur in courts and involve actors in specially designed costumes besides tremendous singing and dancing. Such performances were popular during the Elizabethan Age as well as during the Jacobean Age. *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare has masque performances in it.

Closet drama:

The term closet drama refers to a distinct form of drama that is written for reading. The drama of this category is not intended for production and stage performances. This form gained a lot of popularity when theatres were banned in England from 1642 AD to 1660 AD and play reading replaced theatre-going for all who loved the works of drama. Since non-stage ability is a defining characteristic of closet drama, all forms of drama could be written with slight adjustments in the writing style and with the goal to make audience through readership. Closet drama saved the money required for paying the actors for performance and rent of theatres. The theme of the dramas written in this category varied from serious to non-serious ones. Lord Byron and P. B. Shelley, well-known for their poetic excellence, also produced closet drama. A social advantage of this form of drama writing was that the women writers of England who remained out of public performances could also engage in drama writing. Margaret Lucas Cavendish emerged as a highly successful playwright. A political advantage of writing closet drama was that it could deal with sensitive issues and still escape the scrutiny and censorship that were applicable to stage performances.

Radio and television plays:

The term 'radio plays' refers to a distinct kind of plays performed in radio studios. Though the audience cannot see the characters of a radio play, they are able to follow these plays due to the creative use of sound effects, music and a narrator. Some notable radio plays include *All That Fall* by Samuel Beckett, *A Slight Ache* by Harold Pinter and *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas. The term television plays refers to plays performed in a television studio for later broadcast on television channels. The introduction of these plays made the experience of theatre personal in nature. Both radio and television plays are first recorded and then relayed according to the schedule. These plays opened new dimensions in theatrical activities and created new avenues for acting. These plays threw new challenges too. Plays presented in the form of a serial on a radio or television channel are called soap operas. Often soap manufacturers sponsored these serialized plays, and soap advertisements accompanied their relay.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

This unit introduced the readers to the genre of drama in general and English drama in particular. It also exposed how drama/play as a form of literature reveals the socio-political, cultural and historical information about the place where it is written or performed. This unit acquainted the readers with the dramatic traditions that have prevailed in England; and explained various conceptual terminologies important to understand drama. The readers have read and understood the essential elements of drama including plot, scene, characters, conflicts, themes etc. They have also learnt about the classification of drama with particular reference to English literature. This unit provided the readers with some introductory ideas about British drama. The readers are now ready to understand and appreciate the place of drama in British literature.

1.4 Glossary

Absurd plays: A form of drama that emerged in the mid-twentieth century typically identified for showing unreasonable arguments, existential crisis and communication breakdown.

Aside: The term aside refers to short utterances by a character that the audience can hear but not the other characters.

Chorus: Singing by a group of actors in a drama.

Closet drama: A verse drama that is intended to be read instead of being performed.

Comedy: A type of drama that has hilarious content aimed at making the audience laugh.

Drama: A work of literature meant for reading and performance on stage. Drama is also known as 'Play'

Dramatist: A person who writes drama as a profession. A dramatist is also known as Playwright.

History plays: Dramatic works that are partially or wholly based on real people or events of significance.

Melodrama: A form of drama that is based on sensational plot, overly dramatic characterization, exaggerated dialogues, songs and music aiming at strong emotional appeal.

Modern drama: The drama produced in the 20th century with style and techniques different from earlier traditions.

Monologue: A long speech by a character in a scene.

Morality plays: A form of drama that focussed on reinforcing moral values through plot and characters derived from religious beliefs.

Motifs: The term motif refers to structures or images or ideas that occur repeatedly in a dramatic performance.

Mystery plays: One of the earliest forms of drama that portrayed stories from the Bible. Mystery plays are contrasted with miracle plays. Mystery plays often enact the Biblical events whereas miracle plays have saints coming and performing miracles.

Plot: Plot refers to the story or script. It is the sequential flow of actions that demonstrate the cause and effect relationship.

Protagonist: The leading or main character in a drama.

Soliloquy: A form of speech or monologue in which the character speaks to himself/herself aloud thereby showing his/her disturbed state of mind.

Tragedy: A type of drama that has a sad and sorrowful ending primarily due to the wrong actions or poor fate of the protagonist.

Tragicomedy: A drama that blends the elements of both tragedy and comedy.

Verse plays: Verse plays are plays that are written mostly in verse form. Rhymed verses or blank verses dominate the performance of such plays.

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The play Murder in the Cathedral was written by
(a) Ben Jonson (b) T. S. Elliot
(c) William Shakespeare (d) Henrik Ibsen
2. The credit for writing the play Doctor Faustus goes to
(a) William Shakespeare (b) G. B. Shaw
(c) Ben Jonson (d) Christopher Marlowe
3. A typical Elizabethan drama has
(a) Five acts (b) Three acts
(c) One act (d) Seven acts
4. The play Every Man in His Humour was written by
(a) Ben Jonson (b) T. S. Elliot

(c) William Shakespeare (d) Harold Pinter

5. *Arms and the Man* was written by

- (a) Henrik Ibsen (b) G. B. Shaw
(c) Charles Dickens (d) Samuel Beckett

Fill in the blanks:

1. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an example of Shakespearean
2. Restoration drama is named so because took the reign of England and monarchy was restored there.
3. Tragicomedy is a mixture of and comedy

True/False:

1. A closet drama was primarily meant for performance
2. The dramatic works of William Shakespeare belong to the Elizabethan Age

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

- 1 Discuss plot and distinguish between a simple plot and a complex plot.
- 2 Distinguish between act and scene as components of drama.
- 3 Distinguish between internal conflict and external conflict.
- 4 Distinguish between comedy and tragedy as sub-genres of drama.
- 5 Distinguish between Elizabethan drama and Jacobean drama.

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

- 1 Write an essay on dramatic traditions in English literature.
- 2 Discuss the essential elements of drama.
- 3 Discuss the classification of British drama with examples.

1.6 Suggested Readings

1. Abrams, M. H. 1999. *A Glossary of Literary Terms (7th Edition)*. Boston, Mass: Thomson Wadsworth.
2. Carter, Ronald and John McRae. 1997. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. London: Routledge.
3. Drabble, Margaret (ed.). 2000. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Oxford: OUP.
4. Nicoll, Allardyce. 1925. *British Drama*. London: George G. Harrap.

Unit - 2: A Brief Survey of British Drama

Structure

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Objectives

2.2 A Brief History of British Drama

2.2.1 Liturgical Plays

2.2.2 Mystery and Miracle Plays

2.2.3 Morality Plays

2.2.4 Interludes

2.2.5 Tragedy and Comedy Plays

2.2.6 Modern Drama

2.3 Learning Outcomes

2.4 Glossary

2.5 Sample Questions

2.6 Suggested Readings

2.0 Introduction

The beginning of drama in either nation is deeply incorporated with the way religion is practising in that nation. The role and connection of drama goes side by side as these are inseparable things. It is not only the case with British drama but with all the nations. If we look at the ancient forms of drama that were enacted in Roman and Greeks these too were concerned with the religious affairs and ceremonies of the people of their times. The importance of religion results in the creation of dramatic form. As the Bible was originally written mostly in Hebrew hence, common masses were unable to have any insight from it. In order to fill that gap and make it within the very access of common man new ways and means were derived so that they could be made acquaintance with the teaching of their religious book. For that purpose, they derived a method in which stories from that books were enacted by the living characters before the viewers and that form of enactment was termed as drama in which characters performed and enacted the stories.

When was drama originated in Britain or English drama is not known for sure but it is deemed that it makes its ways into England when Norman Conquest took place in 1066. Some are of the view that Norman brought it while few deemed that Roman brought drama into England. The very word drama is derived from Greek which means “action”, “to do”, or “to act.” In the word of William J. Long drama can be termed as “an old story told in the eye; a story put into the action by living performers.” As the drama has a distinctive connection with religion hence, it was not fully nourished until 10th century when church itself began to utilize dramatic form for different religious forms as a part of diverse services and rituals. The exact reason of dramatic incorporation into religious norms is unknown but perhaps it was meant to give in depth comprehension and to develop interest of its believers in religion and its rituals.

The oldest drama that is associated with church and has survived as well is “Quem Quaeritis”. It was the story of three Marys who came to visit the tomb of Christ and there they met angel. Their conversation was consisted of two lines which were inscribed in Latin and hence these lines were adopted and performed by clergy in a simple and common manner. It was the simplest form which later on began to become more elaborative and detailed. This simple sort of play or drama is termed as liturgical drama in which extracts are taken from scripture. The earlier dramas were inscribed by clergy, performed and enacted by the clergy men and these were in Latin language. It is also significant to note that these were not performed in all the religious centres means churches rather they were only limited numbers of the churches where these were performed as the numbers of the clergymen who can perform was limited.

Then from liturgical drama it turned towards other forms of dramatic art such as Miracle and Mystery plays. It is also said that in France Mystery drama was used to represent that was derived from the scripture and Miracles drama was meant to give insight to the life events of saints. However, in England there was no such distinction that could be marked. Even Miracles dramas were meant to highlight both: the scripture and the life scenario of saints. It is also significant to note that the earliest of the Miracles play which is known to us was “*Ludus Santa de Katherina*”. The writer of this play is unknown however it was performed by a French school instructor and his name was Geoffrey. Since their origin, Miracles plays have fascinated the attention of the masses and have attained their fame to a considerable length. These were originated from church, began to make their ways into the courts and courtyards. Then it happened that these plays began to make interference in the rituals of the church and hence these were banned in churches. So, by the 13th century Miracles plays were entirely shifted outside the church and religious places.

When the plays were entirely moved from churches to outside, the production and norms of the plays were being decided by the men other than the clergymen. So, there were certain amendments and modification which was perhaps the beginning of nourishment period of British drama. Since the language of church was Latin the plays were performed in Latin language. In the 14th and 15th centuries the plays were mostly shifted from Latin to local languages which were more accessible to the people of every region. Now, even the actors were taken from local community which had entirely replaced the clergymen who used to act in the plays of the past. After that plays were the events that became moving events. They were no longer to a particular place and indebted to specific themes and versions. The dramas which were acted in moving platform were termed as “pageants” and the acting area of those plays was called “pletea”. The stage where these were performed was distinguished into three sections hell, earth and heaven. Hell was meant for left side, earth for centre and the heaven for right side. The costumes of the characters such as who represented God, angels, biblical figures or saints were that of church men while those who were to enact on the behalf of common people, they used to wear the garments that was being wore by the people of that time.

The next phase or development of drama was that of morality plays or drama which were meant to personified the rivalry between virtue against vice. In such plays characters who were to perform were dignified in the persona such as good angel, bad angel, death, sin and seven deadly sins. The objectives for such plays were to give moral lessons to the people. Such plays were typically meant to end up with the set pattern that virtue had to win over vice. The characters who were to represent the vice or evil were comic, humorous and even mischievous in the form of clown or jester. The introductory version of such plays was termed as “interlude” which is the shorter version of morality plays. The instance of interlude was *The Four P’s* which was composed by John Heywood around 1497 and the examples of Morality plays were *Everyman* and *The Castle of Perseverance*.

The last but the most artistic period of English or British drama was the period which was termed as “artistic” period. It was neither meant to preach religious rituals nor to teach the audience with any sort of morality rather it was meant to show the people as they were. During that period English drama was still under everlasting influence of classical plays and its norms. The first of such sort of comedy was inscribed by Nicholas Udall in 1556 as *Ralph Roister Doister*. It was written in rhyming couplet and was divisional into scenes and acts. The first tragedy was *Gorboduc* that was written by Thomas Sackville and his fellow Thomas Northon in 1562. It was inscribed in blank verse and was also divided into acts and scenes. After that the

nourishment of English drama gradually began to make its mark on literary and artistic horizon in the form of regular plays and dramas. It was in its full swing during Elizabethan period and has reached to its present shape and form.

So, it can be summed up that the drama which was initiated earlier on for religious purpose in the church by the clergymen passed through many phases such as liturgical drama, then into Miracle and Morality plays followed by interlude with the influence of classic form of drama and had reached its artistic form which is still in full swing. Initially, the British drama was under religious dominance which was later transformed into secular plays, church was replaced by market place. It was meant to perform and exhibit religious ritual which was later transformed and had become a source of entertainment. It was short and stereotype which was later become diverse, multifoil and multi-layered. At present, it is not limited to just one or two types and themes, and sub matters are also numerous and dramatic forms too have gone transformation and have become versatile.

2.1 Objectives

After having gone through this unit the readers will be able to have enough knows how's of British Drama. In addition, they will be able to have subsequent objectives to achieve. At the end of the unit the readers will be able:

- To have the idea how British drama originated in England.
- To have insight how religion and church initiated the dramatic form for the promotion of religious rituals.
- To be enriched with the ideas how British Drama has passed through diverse forms to reached its present form.
- To have a thorough comprehension of Liturgical, Morality, Mystery, interlude and artistic form of British drama.

2.2 A Brief Survey of British Drama

2.2.1 Liturgical Plays:

Liturgical play is also termed as 'religious drama' as it was written and enacted under various religious contexts and places, largely in churches. It was initially meant to make the complex rituals easy to comprehend and perform for the devotees in churches. Usually, these

plays were based on religious rituals, written and performed by clergymen under the supervision of church and so forth. The subject matters and themes of these plays were based on morality and religious ritual. Hence, church and clergymen played a vital role in the nourishment of early form of dramatic art especially in England. Initially, as these acts were meant for specific purpose or rituals to perform hence were short, brief, and to the point completely under the veil and tone of religion. For example, *Quem Quaeritis* deemed as the first of this sort of play was mainly restricted to limited conversation between the angel and three Marys, enacted in the 10th century at the occasion of Easter.

The texts for such acts and plays were mainly taken from holy books and stories were derived from Gospel. These were mostly written in Latin prose and common masses were unable to comprehend them hence such dramatization enabled them to have derived some insightfulness from them. But later on, prose was taken over by the use of verse for the extracts of these plays. Initial modification of style led to other alternation such as language and control of church and institution began to decline with the passage of time and it began to slip towards individual. Individual inventiveness and modification began to indicate its true colour and the tone and authority of the church over form, tone and subject matter became loose though hold yet. This evolution and modification took place in 12th century. These were the beginning for the development of the plays apart from religion, churches and clergymen.

2.2.2 Mystery and Miracle Plays:

After initial phase of drama came the phase of Mystery and Miracle plays which were related with that of scriptural contexts. Though there is no distinction that was being made in England with regard to Mystery and Miracle plays but these two belong to diverse form of plays. The stories of religious or biblical events are dealt in with Mystery plays while Miracle plays are related with the life events of saints. But in Britain the scriptural depictions are interlinked with the life events of saints and hence a mixture is originated where there is no distinction left as far as Mystery and Miracle dramas as a form is concerned. The growth of the drama has attained much fame and fascination among the masses and hence in order to meet their requirement the drama has to be secularized. It resulted in the change of venue, actors and even the subject matter. It was now shifted from church to market place.

Now the play no more remained within the hold of clergy men rather it became a form of entertainment. After the change of venue, the previous place of enactment and performers tried to get back the hold they had over this form of dramatic art. But on market place it is not so easy

that things remain within the control hands and all the control of the enactment and subject matter completely shifted from church and clergymen to guilds. In spite of all the opposition from religious segments and church they continue to flourish this form of art. After church there are some notable centres for performing art and especially that of dramatic art. The centres which have contributed a great deal in holding such activities were Chester, York, Coventry, Wakefield and Townley.

Initially, the market place was a stationary platform but later on the concept of moving platform in the form of mobile theatre emerged and gained much popularity among the masses. In Miracle and Mystery plays there was no proper state of the art stage rather the sense of reality was being tried to visualized and incorporated through the utilization of various symbols and signs. Even supernatural elements were being portrayed in similar fashion. To sum up, it can be said that there was no perfect production in those plays. Their construction was rather chaotic, presentation was crude, stereotype themes and overformal expressions. But in spite of these drawbacks Mystery and Miracle dramas such as *Abraham & Isaac*, *The First Shepherd's Play*, *Noah*, *The Resurrection* and *The Second Shepherd's Play* attained much popularity among the audience. They supplied a bread of theoretical taste among the people which had later been culminated in Elizabethan era.

2.2.3 Morality Plays:

The transformation of British drama from Mystery and Miracle to Morality was almost spontaneous. When the previous form of plays was having much brilliance Morality play was having its debut. The prime purpose of this sort of play was also religious and to preach moral values to the masses. But there was a distinctive difference between the two in both form and content. Morality plays took abstract ideas and presented them in dramatic form before the audience. They were meant to show a clash between evil and virtue and virtue was shown as victorious at the end. There is always a tussle going on between virtue and vice and it is bound to indicate that good powers have an upper hand over vice and evil powers. In spite of all the circumstances goodness has to be up.

Such plays were true, real and having realistic touches and had abundance of comic and humour as far as the contents are concerned. Here, the author has attained much relevance and significance as he is the one who has to handle the themes and to bring to light the psychological trauma going among characters in plays and between good and evil in actuality. Two things gained much priority during the phase of Morality plays and these were the construction of the

plot and the art of character depiction. Like other form of drama such as comedy and tragedy Morality plays too have acts and scenes. Some notable series of Morality plays are *Everyman*, *Hyckescorner*, *Mankind*, *The Castell of Perseverance*, *The world and the Child*, *Wyt and Science*, *The Pride of Life* and *The Three Estates*. The role of Morality plays is very significant in the development of English drama as it has fully freed the play from the hold of religion and church.

2.2.4 The Interludes:

After Morality play English drama entered to another form of dramatic art and it is termed as the interlude. Although there is no strict and clear-cut mark of difference between the two but these two belong to diverse phases. Even the word interlude has no significance or connotation in itself except from being named after a phase or form of play. These plays were enacted by several characters in the seasons of festivals and in some businesses. These have very little strength of dramatic art of its own self rather these are lined in the same content and form of Morality plays. But there is a distinctive difference between Morality and interludes plays and that is that interlude is more prone to humanistic side and have very little to do with didactic and moral values to preach. In addition, the sense and value of realism is more apparent in them as compare to Morality plays. The significant names of these plays were *A Play of Love*, *The Four P.P.*, *The Play of the Weather*, *of Gentleman and Nobility*, *The Merry Play between John John the Husband*, *Tib his Wife*, and *Sir John, the Priest*.

2.2.5 Tragedy and Comedy Plays:

The next phase of English drama is that of tragedy and comedy plays which were greatly under the stimulus of Renaissance and tragedy was mainly influenced by Seneca. Seneca was a Latin playwright of Nero era. The theme of revenge and blood was the most fascinating element that was indebted by the English tragedian from him. Even the first tragedy in English literature *Gorboduc* was written on the same line. Even after that almost all the earliest tragedies were under the indebtedness of Seneca either in style or theme. A tragedy has subsequent formative personas i.e. plot, characters, thought, diction, spectacle and song. As this sort of play has unhappy and tragic ending hence, the concept of tragic hero is also essential factor as far as the nourishment of plot is concerned.

In addition, the persona of comedy could be traced in both morality and interlude form of plays which is culminated under classical influence in this phase. This sort of play is meant to provide entertainment and to amuse the audience by means of laughter. Unlike tragedy where

high class people are involved here people from humble and low background are involved. The environment of the comedy is also light and cheerful. It is usually dealt in with those plays which are to end happily. Though comedy is meant to correct and reform the conduct of human beings but in light and satirical manner. It has different types such as Classical Comedy, Sentimental Comedy, Romantic Comedy, the Comedy of Manners and Comedy of Humours. Satire and irony are the two top most devices used in comedy to maximise the effect. The first known comedy *Ralph Roister Doister* was written by Nicholas Udall. Apart from this, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* by William Stevenson was also highly popular of his time.

Apart from these two genres there was yet another form of play that developed side by side with comedy and tragedy and that was history plays. These plays too were on the same Seneca model to follow. The pageants were the one who had anticipated historical plays. But there is a distinctive difference as these were purely belonged to Britain as far as the theme and context were concerned. The illustrious history plays were *King of England*, *The Troublesome Reign of John*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, *The Reign of King Edward III* and *The True Chronicle History of King Lear*.

2.2.6 Modern Drama:

British drama faced a sort of decline during Victorian Age but it regained its boom in the 20th century. It was however less innovative as far as the techniques of the drama were concerned as compared to poetry and novel. It can be divided into three broader categories. The first category is that of social plays, second phase consisted of dramas that were in line with the spirit of nationalism and the last phase of modern drama was that of poetic drama. Modern British drama had several notable traits and the use of realism was the most illustrious and significant among those. The dramatists of that period were more interested in the problems of everyday life and they brought drama closer to the reality of life and its problems. Henrik Ibsen was the one who introduced and perfected the genre of realistic plays in British drama. He was the one who dealt the problems of life in a realistic and life like manner. The modern drama had been developed in line with the tone of problem play.

These dramatists dealt with the problems such as marriage, law and justice which were and are the problem of everyday and of common people. They had utilized theatre as a medium to vocal out the problems and to bring about reforms in a society. Problem play was yet a new sort of plays which had taken drama away from its conventional tones. Modern plays were, in addition, drama of ideas rather than of action. Dramatists utilized this medium to convey certain

ideas to the People and society. Reality of life too is based on the problem of everyday life and ideas. Initially modern dramatists were realists and they brought to light ideas but later on they shifted their attention from the bitter realities and turned towards the romantic aspect. T.S. Eliot was the one who introduced the poetic form of drama in English literature. Bibliographical drama was yet another trend of drama that was introduced in the modern era of English drama. These made use of historical and autobiographical elements as dramatic techniques.

Oscar Wilde and other dramatists had revived the comedy of manner and introduced the concept of comedy of Wits in English drama. Impressionism was yet another trend that was incorporated in English drama. It was based on the expressions of artists and dramatists. W.B. Yeats was chief among those who followed the pattern of impressionism. Later on, modern dramatists turned towards expressionism. It was the trend in which emotions and feelings of people were expressed rather than events and objects to be depicted. This sort of drama was deemed as a strong reaction to naturalism. This trend in drama was started in Germany and later on it made its way to modern English drama of 20th century in England. Another key feature of modern drama was that instead of projecting women as downtrodden and low-class entity they were portrayed as empowered and emphasized characters on modern plays. Even female characters showed tendency of modern dramatists towards the feminist approach and tendency.

Another popular trend that emerged after world war II was the drama based on the absurdity and was termed as the theater of the Absurd. It became trend of the writers of 1950s and 1960s. To such dramatists and playwright's human existence is meaningful and without any purpose. To them, the world is beyond the comprehension of man so he should not bother about it. It will always remain absurd and we have no choice but to accept it. Samuel Beckett was the chief among the pioneer of such school of drama and *Waiting for Godot* is a masterpiece and true representative of the Absurd School of thought. These writers however were not very comfortable with the term absurd and they preferred to be called as "anti-theater" or new theater. The dramatists of this trend were much influenced with the existentialism. They raised questions about the very existence of man. They deemed language as a meaningless medium of communication. Characters were engaged in meaningless speeches and illogical plots were very frequent among Absurd dramatists. Time, place and no characters or lack of characters was also common among them. They had however fondness for abstract values of life.

Modern English drama is characterized by its unique handling of subject matters related with the realities of life. It is also illustrious tone for them as far as the utilization of simile,

metaphor, symbolism and imagery are concerned. Characters of modern drama are common people and average people. Usually it centers around the common social issues of the common people. It is further illuminated with the utilization of natural and real dialogues of the characters. Themes usually revolve around politics, impact of war, women right, depression, anxiety, mental health, race and class discrimination. The language of this sort of drama is very natural and realistic. Modern dramatists have dealt in the psychological and inner description of character so well that it captures the attention of its audience. The flow of the dialogues and interaction among the characters is also natural and realistic. Last but not the least there are numerous trends that are key as far as modern drama is concerned. These include social drama, poetic drama, angry drama, Absurd play and menace plays. Henrik Ibsen is deemed to be the father of modern drama.

2.3 Learning Outcomes

Keeping in view the objectives of the study it is meant to serve the following learning outcomes as far as the readers or learners are concerned.

- The readers will be able to clearly mark the origin of drama in general and British drama in particular.
 - They will be enriched to distinguish the different phases through which British drama has gone through to reach its current form.
 - The readers of this study material after going through it will distinguish between liturgical, Morality, Mystery, interlude and artistic form of drama.
 - They will be able to designate the role of church and clergymen in the initial enrichment of dramatic form and how later the focus of attention in both form and shape changes.
-

2.4 Glossary

Blank Verse: It is a sort of poetry that is inscribed with regular meter but with unrhymed lines, mostly in iambic pentameter. It was originated in Italy, utilized during Renaissance and perfected by Marlowe.

Clergyman: It is a term referred to a male priest or a religious figure related with the services of church in Christianity.

Comedy: It referred to a form of drama or play which is marked because of the humour and satirical tone, consisted of jokes and sketches which are meant to make the audience laugh.

Elizabethan Era: It is usually referred towards the literary works that was done in England between 1562 to 1642. Marlowe and Shakespeare are chief dramatists of this notable era.

Interlude Plays: It was a form of drama which was short, ludicrous and merry in form and content which was deemed to be the transition from morality plays and Tudor plays

Liturgical Plays: It is related with the type of plays or dramas which were enacted in churches having stories derived from Bible and Gospel. In addition, the stories and life events of saints were also projected in these plays.

Rhyming Couplet: It is referred towards a verse of two lines having same length that are rhymed and having single thought. However, there is no restriction as far as the limit of length of the lines is concerned.

Tragedy: It is related with the type of play or drama that is opposite of comedy. Here tragic events and incidents are presented which are culminated at the tragic end and the collapse of the major character.

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The earliest form of drama was written in Roman and Greek but were staged first in England.
(a) Yes (b) No
2. The first comedy of British dram was written by Ralph Roister under classical influence.
(a) Yes (b) No
3. The first tragedy of British drama norms was written in the year 1560 by John Lyly.
(a) Yes (b) No
4. Liturgical form of British drama was mainly under the influence of church and religion in form and theme.
(a) Yes (b) No

5. Seneca was a Latin playwright of Nero era who greatly influenced the concept of tragedy in English drama.
(a) Yes (b) No
6. The earliest dramas of British were stages at the market place where clergy men were the performers.
(a) Yes (b) No
7. History plays set the tone for the nourishment of Renaissance for the English or British drama.
(a) Yes (b) No
8. The first phase of British drama in England was morality and interlude form of plays.
(a) Yes (b) No
9. The first tragedy of British drama was written by Thomas Sackville and his fellow Thomas Northon.
(a) Yes (b) No
10. Morality Plays were meant to create a harmony between two opposite facets of vice and virtue.
(a) Yes (b) No

2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How far do you agree with the statement that “history plays set the tone for the nourishment of Renaissance period as far as the English or British drama is concerned”?
2. What modification does the change of venue from church to market place bring about in the earlier phase of British drama?
3. Is there any distinction in British drama with regard to Miracle and Mystery Plays?
4. “Morality plays were based on the abstract notion of clash between vice and virtue” elaborate.
5. What role do the church and clergymen have as far as setting the tone of British drama in Britain is concerned?

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How did British drama originate and how did it reach to its present form and tone? Discuss.
2. What is meant by interlude and history plays in British drama? Do these forms of plays have any significant contribution in the development of English drama or not?
3. Discuss the following phases of British drama in detail.
 - a) Liturgical plays
 - b) Morality Plays

2.6 Suggested Reading

1. History of English Literature by Edward Albert
2. A History of British Drama: Genres- Development- Model Interpretation by Sibylle Baumbach
3. A Brief History of the English Drama from the Earliest to the Latest Times by William Edward Golden
4. A History of English Drama by Allardyce Nicoll
5. British Drama: A Critical History by Richard Dietrich
6. An Outline of English Literature William Henry Hudson
7. A Short History of English Drama by Benjamin Ifor Evans
8. English Literature by William J. Long
9. A Short History of English Literature by Pramod K. Nayar

Unit - 3: University Wits

Structure

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Objectives

3.2 University Wits

3.2.1 Christopher Marlowe

3.2.2 Thomas Kyd

3.2.3 John Lily

3.2.4 Robert Greene and Thomas Nash

3.2.5 George Peele and Thomas Lodge

3.2.6 Contribution and Role of the University Wits

3.3 Learning Outcomes

3.4 Glossary

3.5 Sample Questions

3.6 Suggested Readings

3.0 Introduction

The University Wits are a group of highly qualified scholars who belonged to either Oxford or Cambridge. These scholars have greatly influenced the trend and tone of English drama at one hand and have left much fascination for the dramatists who came after these scholars. The notable among those are greatly influenced by this group of scholars are William Shakespeare and John Webster. It is also said that William Shakespeare had borrowed some material from these scholars. For instance, Hamlet is under great fascination of *Spanish Tragedy* that was written by Thomas Kyd. In fact, these scholars of high intellect have moulded the tone of English drama to a great deal and also have given new dynamics to it.

These young writers who are in the group of University Wits were acquainted with each other to some or more extent. One of the most common features among these is that most of these have led an irregular and stormy life which was full of ups and downs. But due to much similarity of their work they were branded as a group that is widely termed as University Wits. It is noted through the study of their artistic works that there are numerous features which are common among them. First of all they have liking for heroic themes which are centred round the

lives of great figures. As their themes were heroic in nature so they treated them in a marvellous way. Among their work we can trace variety, diversity, fabulous description, lofty speeches, incidents that are involved in violent acts and full of emotional scenes.

Secondly, the style of their narration is also heroic in line with the loftiness of their themes. That is why it is noted that they were able to create strong and impact factors lines. The most eloquent among them was Christopher Marlow. He was well versed and is known for his use of Blank Verse. Thirdly, the themes of these scholars were usually tragic in nature. It is also very common facet in their works that the works, especially which were composed by them in the early phase of their artistic career, were lacked from humor and comic acts. Even when they tried to incorporate humor and comic it seemed immature and out of sort material as compared to other texts. Subsequent is the list of these scholars which are deemed as the scholars of University Wits.

- John Lyly (1554 to 1606)
- George Peele (1556 to 1596)
- Thomas Kyd (1558 to 1594)
- Robert Greene (1558 to 1592)
- Thomas Lodge (1558 to 1625)
- Thomas Nashe (1567 to 1601)
- Christopher Marlow (1564 to 1593)

Thomas Kyd is a significant name as far as University Wits are concerned. He is the one who is deemed to have originated the concept of revenge play. The features of this tone of play can frequently be seen in William Shakespeare's Hamlet and other plays of Elizabethan traditions in the works of Webster. The most famous among his work is *Spanish Tragedy*. Due to horrifying plot, madness and murder along with the death gave it an everlasting popular touch. It is said that the very play has influenced great lines which are later created by William Shakespeare.

Christopher Marlow was the most influential and greatest writer of his time and also among University Wits. He is the one who has veined tragic vision to English plays and literature. He has no liking for comic or humour events and scenes. His art of crafting character is very simple but his plots lack the loftiness which are seen later in William Shakespeare's works. Most notable thing about his characterization is that mostly the plot revolves around one

character that is why his plays are termed as one man show. But in order to estimate his true worth we have to put aside these ideas and have to look at his poetic vision and craftsmanship. He was lyrical and romantic who has quest for beauty and love. Artistically his plays are highly poetical. His verse is famous for his energizing burn, matchless diction, sensuous enrichment and its responsiveness towards the varying mood and tone. He is termed as the creator of “Mighty Lines” a term affiliated by Johnson. His great plays include *The Jew of Malta*, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, *Edward II*, *Tamburlaine* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*.

In spite of all the dwindling nature these scholars of University Wits have there is no doubt about the fact that they have contributed a great deal as far as the nourishment of English drama is concerned. As it is duly acknowledged by Allardyce Nicoll “they laid a sure basis for the English theatre.” Though it is their greatness in maintaining the classical norms along with their several innovativeness that they not only left everlasting impression on English drama in a very short span of time but also fascinated the imaginativeness of greatest dramatist of all times William Shakespeare in both form and themes. It is due to their contribution that enabled Shakespeare “a viable and fitting medium for the expression of his genius.” Another key feature with regard to their contribution is that though they have retained classical tradition of drama but they never fell prey to those norms and traditions. They maintained their freedom and individuality even at the risk of violating the very fundamental principles such as “the concept of three unities.”

They are not meant to just perform the copy of what Roman and Greek had inscribed, rather introduced a new form termed as romantic drama which was later adopted and perfected by Shakespeare. Few of these University Wits also paid much heeds towards the nourishment of romantic comedy. The chief among them are John Lyly, George Peele and Robert Greene. While the rest of them are interested in the nourishment of romantic tragedy i.e. Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd. Apart from this they are also meant for the reformation and modification of dramatic diction. The utterances of the characters they introduced were plaintive and responsive in all respects. The diction and tone that is used by Lyly is highly sophisticated, that of Peele enriched with rare sweetness, Greene utilized openness and geniality, Kyd introduced exaggerative bombast and Marlowe had utilized virtuosic brilliance as far the use of language is concerned.

3.1 Objectives

After going through the unit, the readers will be able to have glimpse of several aspects of University Wits. These can be summed up like this. The readers will be able to:

- Have glimpse of life events of the scholars of University Wits.
- Have insights to the artistic skills of these dramatists.
- Have acquaintance with the key features of the writers of University Wits which are common among them.
- Have insights to their literary and dramatic traits of each of these writers collectively as well as individually.
- Distinguish the role of University Wits in the nourishment of English drama.
- To have insights towards the various innovations that these scholars bring about in form and style of drama.

3.2 University Wits

3.2.1 Christopher Marlowe:

Marlowe was born on 6th February 1564 in the house of a well to do shoemaker of Canterbury and hence was very influential from his birth. He attended King's school at Canterbury and did his B.A. in 1584 and earned his M.A. degree after three years of B.A. He led a very conventional academic period. However, after earning his master degree he went to university where he became a part and parcel of fabulous scholars of their time like Rawley, Kyd and Nashe. It is due to the company and literary magnificence of this group that before the end of 1587 both parts of his first play *Tamburlaine the Great* were staged as show. Marlowe was a young man of merely 23 at that time and was able to establish himself as a renowned dramatist because of this play. After that though he lived only for six years but he left university and remained in the theatrical region of Shoreditch that is situated in London.

During that period, he had to travel a lot for government but he retained his London address where he had Kyd as his roommate. It is through Kyd we are known that Marlowe was having a violent temper and was cruel at heart. In 1589 he was imprisoned being a part of street fight in which William Bradley was killed by Marlowe's friend and later he was released on bail with a warning to abstain from such acts. In 1592 he was charged with assaulting two constables

and hence fine was imposed on him. In 1593 he was charged with atheism and blasphemy. After mere 12 days of this charge he was killed in a tavern. It is reported that he was invited at the tavern and after the supper he got struck into argument with Frizer over tavern bill. Marlowe hit his head with a dagger which is twisted back by Frizer which struck Marlowe head and killed him.

Although his dramatic period is very short but he has gained prominence during that period due to his four outstanding plays. First of them was *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus* was the second, *Jew of Malta* and *Edward II* were the third and fourth respectively. Apart from these four dramatic creations he had also translated Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Ovid's *Amores*. Though he wrote few poems but two of them become very famous *The Massacre of Paris* and *Hero and Leander*. He had perfected the art and use of blank verse as far as its usage in drama is concerned. Although his initial writing was used rhymed verse style but finding it very stiff and formal in nature he shifted completely towards blank verse. In this art he had modified the stress pattern to create more variety and emotionally fuller than before. Due to perfect handling of his innovative style of blank verse he is followed by Shakespeare who had utilized a natural flow of rhythm and blank verse.

In addition, the artistic style of Marlowe was having music and rhythm which is deemed as that of Milton, a renowned and learned scholar and poet. His use of blank verse in his dramas was metrically precise and concise, having imagery which was not present in English poetry at the time when he was utilizing it with perfection. Due to his artistic skills and masterful handling of blank verse he is deemed by critics as "Father of English tragedy and blank verse". Further, he is considered to be the true spirit of era that is termed as Elizabethan period. Last but not the least he was an artist who was duly recognised and admired by men of letters. Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist of all times has paid great tribute to him when he quoted few lines of Marlowe extracted from *Hero and Leander* in *As You Like It*. It is also said that Shakespeare was indebted to several themes from Marlowe in his plays.

3.2.2 Thomas Kyd:

There is a dearth of information as far as the life events and literary work of Thomas Kyd is concerned. It is reported that he was born in 1558 in London. He was the son of Francis and Anna Kyd. He attended Merchant Taylor's school where he was in the same period as that of Edmund Spenser who was the author of famous *The Faerie Queene*. After leaving school he used to be the roommate of an illustrious dramatist Christopher Marlow. Due to this very

intimacy Kyd was arrested due to the charge that was levied against Marlowe deeming him guilty. But when it was made known that it was Marlowe, not Kyd then he was released though it is reported that he was tortured during imprisonment and was not able to recover completely from it and later died in 1594, at the age of 35.

Although very little of his literary work has survived and is known to the word but we can have the idea that he was an influential writer of his time as is tributed by Johnson as “famous Kyd” and Meres termed him as “our best for tragedy.” It is quoted that in 1589 he wrote his *Ur-Hamlet* which is the lost and unknown version on which we have Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Due to the indebtment of revenge theme Shakespeare seemed to be very much impressed and fascinated towards his style and thematic handling. In addition, his verse is extremely powerful filled with emotions that are also the reasons behind his success as a dramatist. In 1589 he wrote his master piece that is *The Spanish Tragedy* which was the tale of a family revenge and corruption found in the court. It was published in 1592 and went for nine editions.

The Spanish Tragedy was written in blank verse with rhymed verse and mixed prose tone. In his masterpiece he has also incorporated the conventional and borrowed traditions of the past plays to keep the norms alive. He has utilized stichomythia to highlight the impact of urgency and combativeness in the dialogues of his plot and soliloquy to give insight to the motives and emotions that was happening in the mind of the characters being involved in the action of the play. The instance of stichomythia can be quoted from his famous *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Lorenzo: Sister, what means this melancholy walk?

Bel-Imperia: That for a while I wish no company.

Lorenzo: But here is a prince is come to visit you.

Bel-Imperia: That argues that he lives in liberty.

Balthazar: No, Madam, but in pleasing servitude.

Bel-Imperia: Your prison then be like your conceit.

Balthazar: Ay, my conceit my freedom is enthralled.

Bel-Imperia: Then with conceit enlarge yourself again.

3.2.3 John Lyly:

John Lyly is deemed to be the first influential superstar of Elizabethan age. He was born in 1553 or 1554 in Kent. He did B.A. from Magdalen College and M.A from Oxford University. Then he shifted himself to London and tried to find a suitable job and later turned towards writing. He published his first piece of art in the form of novel *The Anatomy of Wit* in 1578 which was full of romance, adventure and travel, attained a fabulous sensation among the readers. His second attempt was *Euphues and His England* which was published in 1580. His success and sensation were due to his matchless writing style which is unusual. Later on, he turned towards drama and dramatics art and in between 1584 to 1592 he directed more than seven plays which were as much a source of delight for the audience as were his books earlier.

In 1592 he abandoned the art of dramatization and hence both his fame and repute began to decline which continued till his death in 1606. The most amazing thing about Lyly was his writing style which has captivated London to a great deal and it is named euphuism after his own novel. His style of narration has few very distinctive features. One of them is short crispy parallel sentences and phrases which captured the attention of readers. Second one is that of striking utilization of similes derived from natural history and myth. Third and perhaps the most fascinating was the oft repeated usage of alliteration in his work. He has written *Campaspe* in 1584, *Sapho and Phao* in 1584, *Endimion, the Man in the Moon* in 1588, *Gallathea* in 1588, *Midas* in 1589, *Mother Bombie* in 1594, *The Woman in the Moon* in 1597 and *Love's Metamorphosis* in 1601.

3.2.4 Robert Greene and Thomas Nash:

The writing of Robert Greene is full of wit, imaginative facet and humour which highlighted his role as a key dramatic as far as University Wits are concerned. As far as his style is concerned it is not of the highest quality but his sense of humour is matchless. In addition, his method is less strict when we compare it with that of others tragedian. However, there is a lacking of crafting fabulous characters in his work. Robert Greene has written more and in reckless manner. His role is very much immense as far as the nourishment of English drama is concerned. He enacted *The Arraignment of Paris*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward, the First*, *The Love of King David and Fair Bathsheba* and *The Old Wives' Tales*. Thomas Nash, another scholar of the group is a journalist by birth. He has participated in political affairs rather actively. The tone of his writing was satirical. His writings *Unfortunate Traveller* and *The Life of Jacke Wilton* have contributed significantly as far as the nourishment of English novel is concerned. But as far as his dramatic art and writing is concerned that is almost

inconsiderable. He is more influential for his fiction as compare to his dramatic work like Thomas Lodge.

3.2.5 George Peele and Thomas Lodge:

Among all the University Wits George Peele attained much literary and artistic hack due to his well-known plays *Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First*, *The Old Wives Tales*, *The Love of King David* and *Fair Bethsabe*. The chief features of his works are romance, historical and satirical representation of events before the readers in a splendid manner. Moreover, his style of narration is also violent enough to be termed as absurd. The way he treated blank verse is matchless and has his own moments of poetry that can be seen in his works. His narration is fluent which is full of humour and pathos. In short, he is well versed due to his poetical potentials of his verse which has distinguished him from rest of the writers of University Wits group. Thomas Lodge has studied legal dynamics but leaving his law studies he plunged into literary horizon. Although his literary creations are few in number yet he is reported to be an actor of his time. The most fascinating of his work is that of *Rosalynde* which is said to be adopted by renowned dramatist William Shakespeare in his play *As You Like It*. Like Nashe his dramatic art is also not worth mentioning as compare to his fictional work which is summed up by Gosson as “little better than a vagrant, looser than liberty, lighter than vanity itself.” And Nicoll is of the view about him as “the least of the University Wits, for he gave practically nothing to the theatre.”

3.2.6 Contribution and Role of the University Wits:

They are the ones who laid foundation of the genre of English drama. Before them the form and condition of English drama was chaotic. It had a form but no enthusiasm and thrill in it prior to The University Wits. It was not in proper form and it was of ill structure. The dramatists of The University Wits gave it not only the form and structure but also the thrill and excitement required for it to be the popular form. They made it in line with the classical conception of drama. They added flavor, poetry and thrill to it. The groups of dramatists centered around Christopher Marlow. These were dramatists as well as actors. They were well familiar with the stage and audience and hence were quite well versed with what was the need and craze of the audience. All of them had same unified material through which they derived their stories and characters. Even common and similar names of characters can be found in their plays. They had added romance in play and their dramas were the true representative of the spirit of the renaissance.

They had contributed towards a great deal with regard to the romantic comedy which was perfected by William Shakespeare. They also initiated dramatic poetry in their plays. Lyly was well known for the production of lighter sentiment. Peele had a great contribution towards the enrichment of language and decorativeness as far as the poetic expressions were concerned. Although the plots of their dramas were loose but they had harmonized it so well that it connected all the threads of their stories into a perfect whole. As far as their themes were concerned, they were fond of heroic themes and subject matters. Marlow perfected this type of subject matters through the depiction of lives of great figures. He was the one who brought out a great revolution as far as the entire concept of the tragedy was concerned in medieval age. He introduced the concept of conflict and struggle in his plays. As their plays were heroic so in order to deal with them, they had devised heroic treatment as they imparted thrill, passion and fire.

Through Spanish Tragedy, Thomas Kyd inculcated the scenes of bloodshed and violence on the stage. The concept of delayed revenge was also included by him. Marlow introduced Blank Verse or what is known as mighty lines with great perfection and authority. His poetic flair was also admirable. The art of character portrayal among The University Wits was also marvelous. Their characters were not mere puppet they had passion, thrill and fire. Marlow characters were life like full of vigor and force. They were forceful and full of highest passion and wishes as that of Dr Faustus. Besides being a great contributor towards the nourishment of English drama their role and persona was also notable for English prose. Lyly was well known for his plays written on prose style and he was best known for romantic prose. *Euphues* his prose play was best known for its style which is known best as Euphuistic style in English language. Overall, they adopted a style that was heroic in nature so as to match the loftiness of their themes and to create mighty lines.

They were more prone towards tragic themes and subject matters and there was a lack of humor and humorous elements in their plays. Their plays had variety, splendor and grandeur as far as description and incidents were concerned. They were meant to craft sound and powerful lines that might remain alive forever. The University Wits had due regard for classical plays and they had retained their forms but they had their own way of handling the form and subject matters. They enjoyed ample freedom as far as the concept of unities in classical tragedy was concerned. They were committed not to just present before audience the copy of what Latin and Greek tragedies were rather, they introduced a sort of romantic plays which were later adopted and perfected by William Shakespeare. They also reformed the language of drama which was more poetic, powerful and fully inline with the impact of the dramas. Lyly had adopted the

concept of comedy; Peele gave it unusual sweetness and Christopher Marlow introduced the most poetic version of language known as mighty lines.

The contribution of Marlow was so impactful that he was not only the chief among The University Wits but also known as the father of modern English drama and Morning start of English drama. Shakespeare was even indebted to these writers of The University Wits. It is also said that if there was no Marlow there would have been no Shakespeare. The dramatists of University Wits drew their material for dramas from legendary works of classic and historical writing and perfected them with their own approach and appropriateness. Their dramas were full of suspense, emotions, thrill and supernatural elements. They made their significant contribution towards the enrichment of the plot and characters. They also altered the concept of tragedy especially Marlow. Before them the figure of the tragedy were kings and princess but Marlow tragic heroes were not born great and were not from nobility. They achieved greatness through their action and themes rather than through great and powerful figures. The lyrical persuasiveness of these dramatists was a key feature of their heroic greatness.

They had revolutionized the concept of drama as they had modified the form and structure of the English drama. They made this genre popular among audience as they were dramatists as well as actors who knew well the psycho of the audience. Especially Christopher Marlow was the first dramatist who divided the dramas into scenes and acts which brought about a structural coherence. Apart from the collective contribution and impact each of these dramatists had their individual impact and contribution as well. Thomas Kyd was well known for its well-crafted plot and powerful dialogues. His revengeful plots were later adopted by Shakespeare. Robert Greene was illustrious for his romantic settings and liberal utilization of Blank Verse. John Lyly was well known for his humor, romance and prose style. He mingled romance and humor in his dramas. George Peele was famous for his humorous, satirical and romantic handling. Marlow was the greatest among the University Wits who introduced ambitions instead of revenge in his drama. His concept of tragic heroes and tragic flaws were also matchless. The most notable contribution of Marlow was the perfection of mighty lines or Blank Verse.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

Keeping in view the objectives of this unit the readers will be able to benefit from it in several ways and subsequent learning outcomes will be achieved from it. The readers will be able to:

- To know the names of the scholars who are included in University Wits.
- To know the life events, literary works and artistic styles of the scholars of University Wits.
- To equip themselves with the common traits that are shared by the scholars of University Wits.
- Be familiar and well versed with the artistic skills of each of these dramatists.
- Be enriched with the role of this group of scholars with respect to the development of English drama.
- Be enriched to have insights towards the various innovations that these scholars bring about in form and style of drama.

3.4 Glossary

University Wits: A group of highly intellectual and educated scholars of Oxford and Cambridge who wrote at the closing years of 16th century.

Blank Verse: It is a sort of poetry that is inscribed with regular meter but with unrhymed lines, mostly in iambic pentameter. It was originated in Italy, utilized during Renaissance and perfected by Marlowe.

Heroic Themes: Related with literary themes and oft repeated ideas which involves heroic deeds and incidents often centred round some heroic figure.

Elizabethan drama: It is usually referred towards the literary works that was done in England between 1562 to 1642. Marlowe and Shakespeare are chief dramatists of this notable era.

Soliloquy: It is usually referred towards the act of articulation of one's own thoughts and emotions regardless of the presence of hearers. It is specifically utilized for characters in plays or dramas.

Stichomythia: It is a device that is consumed in verse drama in which single line, half line or two lines speeches which are designed to altering characters. It typically involves reputational and antithetical skills.

Euphuism: It is the writing style for which John Lyly is known for his dramatic art and it is named after his novel.

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The University Wits were closely associated with theatre.
(a) Yes (b) No
2. Scholars of University wits wrote at the closing years of 16th century.
(a) Yes (b) No
3. They are termed as University Wits because they attend Harvard University.
(a) Yes (b) No
4. Nicoll's articulated "the most talented of pre-Shakespeareans" about John Lyly.
(a) Yes (b) No
5. Marlowe is known for his mighty lines while John Lyly for his Euphuism.
(a) Yes (b) No
6. Kyd is deemed to be the father of English drama and also the father of Blank verse.
(a) Yes (b) No
7. Marlowe's plays were poorly formed and lack diversity of characterization, rather these are termed as one man show.
(a) Yes (b) No
8. Thomas Kyd wrote a marvellous masterpiece *The Spanish Tragedy* about which Nicoll articulated as "a Senecan play adapted to popular requirements."
(a) Yes (b) No
9. George Peele wrote *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* perfected with the utilization of blank verse.
(a) Yes (b) No

10. Shakespeare was indebted to a great deal with regard to themes and the use of matchless style of John Lyly.

(a) Yes (b) No

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How is Marlowe “the most talented of pre-Shakespeareans”? Illustrate your answers with arguments.
2. Discuss Euphuism and concept of Mighty Lines?
3. Which of University Wits’ scholar has impressed Shakespeare due to his theme of revenge? And how?
4. Discuss the concept of heroic themes and loftiness of style in the work of scholars of University Wits.
5. Why did Nicoll comment about Thomas Lodge as “the least of the University Wits, for he gave practically nothing to the theatre.”

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the role of University Wits’ scholars for the development and enhancement of English drama. How have they perfected the dramatic art during the closing years of 16th century?
2. Why for Christopher Marlowe is termed as “the father of English drama and blank verse”?
3. What are the chief traits that are common to all the scholars of University Wits with regard to their style and art of dramatization?

3.6 Suggested Readings

1. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1960.
2. Long, William J. *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English Speaking World*. Delhi: Aitbs Publishers, 2003.
3. Compton-Rickett, Arthur. *A History of English Literature*. Filiquarian Legacy Publishing, 2012.

Unit - 4: Life and Works of William Shakespeare

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts"

- William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

Structure

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Objectives

4.2 William Shakespeare: A Brief Biography

4.2.1 The Historical Background

4.2.2 Shakespeare's Plays

4.2.3 The First Folio

4.2.4 Categories of Plays

4.2.5 Poems and Sonnets of William Shakespeare

4.2.6 Types of sonnets

4.3 Learning Outcomes

4.4 Glossary

4.5 Sample Questions

4.6 Suggested Readings

4.0 Introduction

The most influential and world-famous English dramatist, actor, and poet William Shakespeare who is also known as the Bard of Avon or 'the Bard' was born to an English family of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden in the Stratford-upon-Avon on 26th April 1564. His writing is loaded with comedy, tragedy, philosophy, and most importantly diverse nature of human nature and behavior. Some of the famous quotes from his works are known and applicable to all ages such as "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 5), "To be, or not to be: that is the question" (*Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1), "More in sorrow than in anger", "When sorrows come, they come not single spies, But

in battalions” *Hamlet* and “I am no orator, as Brutus is, But (as you know me all) a plain blunt man. I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech to stir men's blood” *Julius Caesar*. Such quotes also demonstrate philosophical depth in his writing. Jane Armstrong’s book *Arden Dictionary of Shakespeare Quotations* (1999) scrupulously compiled and documented quotations of Shakespeare theme wise.

Sometimes, most beginners and new learners of English literature might wonder that why one needs to study William Shakespeare, especially the students from non- English-speaking countries. But one should be aware of the fact that a good writer and a writing belongs to everyone and everywhere. Such writers and their writing not only help us to understand the society of their respective time and place but also help us to enrich our understanding of creative works, use of language, stylistics, the art of articulation, dialogue writing, human nature, etc. Similarly, the study of William Shakespeare also facilitates us to understand the development of the English language, literature, society, polity of 16th century England. It also teaches us about Shakespeare’s extraordinary and innovative dialogues, rhetoric, story writings style, diverse construction of characters, and powerful quotes, and their universal appeals. These things make Shakespeare to be studied not only in English-speaking countries but also non-English speaking countries in the world even centuries after his death.

4.1 Objective

The objective of this unit is to introduce a piece of brief information about William Shakespeare, one of the best and notable English writers of all times, who has been translated into almost all major languages and taught and prescribed in almost all languages and countries in the world. It aims to provide a brief biographical detail of the writer, his career as a playwright, plays, poems, and sonnets. It gives a bird's eye view of his works, their characteristics, and his style of writing to the beginners of English literature. The unit is also designed to introduce the creativity, imaginative power of Shakespeare, his thematic and stylistic engagement as a writer through his works.

4.2 Life and Works of William Shakespeare

4.2.1 Shakespeare: A Brief Biography:

William Shakespeare is one of the most read, studied, influential and renowned writers across all ages, cultures, countries, and languages. Although there is no exact date of his birth noted or documented but most of the scholars considered that he was probably born on 23rd April 1564 in the Stratford – upon – Avon. He did not receive any university or higher education unlike his contemporary dramatists (University Wits: Christopher Marlow, Thomas Nash, John Lily, Robert Green, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Kyd who studied from Oxford and Cambridge universities) except that he attended King’s New School where he learned basic Greek and Latin. This is one of the reasons why some of the scholars suspect the caliber and ability of Shakespeare as a writer of writing such meticulous plays and sonnets. This often leads to suspect the authorship of Shakespeare’s work. One of the important parts of his genuineness and originality was that his personal touch to his work as he himself was one of the best actors on the stage of his time. His firsthand experiences with an expression on stage along with his profound creativity resulted in his plays unmatched by his counterpart. This has also given him space to edit or modify the plays while rehearsal on stage according to demand of the contexts. He had profound psychological maturity of human nature, poetic imagination, and cohesion of dramatic elements which separated him from his educated rivals.

William Shakespeare was the eldest son of Mary Arden and John Shakespeare. At the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway who was eight years elder than him and had already children. The newlywed couple had three children from their marriage. He disappeared for couple of years from public life. We don't have much detailed evidence about this time which is called "Shakespeare's Lost Years". There are various stories about his early life and these lost years. And perhaps there is a possibility of another question that ‘did he really lost his six-seven years or spend these years in becoming what he is today? Murray Roston in his *Sixteenth-Century English Literature* (1982) writes, “The next seven years in his life are blank and have given rise to much speculation. He may have been a schoolmaster, a soldier, a lawyer's clerk, an apprenticed actor; and there is nothing but guess-work to rely upon” (178). It was said that Shakespeare worked as a schoolteacher in a country. It was also said that Shakespeare also worked as minding horses of the theater patrons in London which subsequently introduce him to the world of play and actors. Later he started appearing in the London theater and started to establish himself as a good actor and playwright amidst the criticism from his actor rivals, playwrights, and critics. Robert Green used to make fun and criticize Shakespeare because he was trying to overtake the University-educated playwrights, the University wits. Murray Roston

notes, “By 1592, the year of Greene's attack, he must already have been established in London as a rising actor and playwright, particularly as Greene parodied there a line taken from one of his early plays, which readers, it was assumed, would easily recognize. Greene's attack was professional, not personal, and it is significant that in an age of venomous backbiting and professional jealousies not a single comment has been preserved from that era which was aimed maliciously at Shakespeare as a man” (178).

Shakespeare gained economic prosperity too and purchased huge house in London. He also won a company called Lord Chamberlin along with some of his friends who performed *Julius Caesar* in 1599 at Globe theatre which he owned on the banks of River Thames. This theater group received acclaimed in London and was given royal status after the death of Elizabeth I in the King James I reign. This company later came to be known as the King's men. He wrote plays for performance and were not documented initially. From 1594 with *Titus Andronicus*, his plays were started documented and published. By the time of his death there were eighteen of his plays published in the *quarto edition*. Two of his long poems were also published during his lifetime. After the bubonic plague, he started diminishing from the globe theater and became less active in theatric life. In his later life, he also collaborated some of his plays with other dramatists. "Shakespeare then collaborated with George Peele on *Titus Andronicus*, with either Thomas Nashe or Thomas Kyd on *Henry VI*, with Thomas Middleton on *Timon of Athens*, and with George Wilkins on *Pericles*. He later passed the baton of principal dramatist for the King's Men to John Fletcher by collaborating with the younger playwright on *Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the lost *Cardenio*” (Eric Rasmussen n.p.). He died on 23 April 1616 and buried in the graveyard of Holy Trinity Church with the following epithet on the grave:

“Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear,

to dig the dust enclosed here.

Blessed be the man that spares these stones,

And cursed be he that moves my bones”

4.2.2 The Historical Background:

William Shakespeare belongs to the Elizabethan Age (1558 - 1603) which is also known as the golden/renaissance age in the English history because of the most powerful and vibrant

reign of Elizabeth I, discoveries, innovations, and revival of the classics. This period was also marked by industrial advancements, empirical superiority, intellectual thinking, adventures and glory, nationalism, education, the revival of Greek and other classic literature, and course richness, and the making of distinct English culture and literature. The English drama took a fresh breath before the arrival of Shakespeare on the stage through the wits of “university wits” such as “Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Nashe, and Thomas Lodge, the generation educated at Oxford and Cambridge universities who used their poetry to make theatre, breathed new life into classical models and brought a new audience to the issues and conflicts which the stage could dramatize” (Carter, Ronald, and McRae, John 63). The plays of the 1550s and 1660s were having distinct categories of comedy and tragedy inspired and influenced by the Latin sources. The comedies are borrowed and designed from the works of Terence and Plautus whereas the tragedies are “largely from Seneca, with echoes from Greek antecedents in both cases. The medieval miracle and mystery play, and the kind of court 'interludes' played for the monarch, also contributed to the development of Renaissance drama. Its broad humor, its use of ballad, poetry, dance, and music, its tendency towards allegory and symbolism flow from this native English source. Thus, although drama went through rapid changes in the period, its historical credentials were rich and varied as indeed were its range and impact. It was an age when the need for a social demonstration of English nationalism and Protestantism climaxed in the public arena of a diverse and energetic theatre. This was the golden age of English drama” (Carter et al 63).

4.2.3 Shakespeare's Plays:

Shakespeare not only helps us to understand the 16th Century Elizabethan English society (1558-1603) but also the general human nature and behavior which makes the relevance of reading Shakespeare even in the contemporary times. If one looks at the earliest works of Shakespeare, they are merely rooted in English history and dynasties. It was a time when England started reign all corners of the world, the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) marked the superiority of the English race over others. Shakespeare also writes some of the works based on roman history, mostly documented in Plutarch's *Lives* such as *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus* (1605-1608), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607). His English history plays borrowed ingredients from the Holinshed's *Chronicles* (*Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Cymbeline*). Shakespeare like other writers of this time started glorifying the English tradition, culture, history, and manners. He tried “to trace the human elements behind this conquest of power” (Carter et al 82). Apart from history most of the Shakespearian plays like *Henry VI*(1589-92), *Richard II*(1595), *Henry V*

(1599), etc. depict the hero-worshipping of man – as a hero, king, and finest creation (?). In *Hamlet*, a monologue of Prince Hamlet also portrays the same theme of man, “What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!”. Hero worship and idealization of hero-worship were some of the main characteristics of the renaissance age. Another such incident in the *hamlet* where Shakespeare tries to define a man,

“What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more”.

Roland Carter (2017) observes, “Generally called the history plays, these works are on one level, a glorification of the nation and its past, but, on another level, they examine the qualities which make a man a hero, a leader, and a king. This is a process not of hero-worship, but of humanizing the hero. The king is brought close to his people” (81). Apart from this theme, many English writers like Joseph Conrad, Shakespeare, Alfred Tennyson et al. were criticized for having the colonial orientation in their writing, dwelling on the English superiority and European zeal of explorations by the postcolonial scholars.

Shakespeare's works try to cover a wide range of themes of individualism, history, morals, universalism, social, power, love, death, etc. Apart from history, tragedy, and comedy, his works were also deeply engrained in the great moral and philosophical issues of his time (Ronald Carter and John McRae 2017). Ronald Carter and John McRae point out,

“Time and again, aspects of human vulnerability are exposed, examined, and exploited for their theatrical possibilities. Love in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the same subject, in a comic vein, in *Love’s Labours Lost*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*; the theme of revenge and family duty in *Hamlet*; jealousy in *Othello*; sexual corruption and the bounds of justice in *Measure for Measure*; misanthropy, or rejection of the world, in *Timon of Athens*; family rejection and madness in *King Lear*; the power of money and the vulnerability of the minority in *The Merchant of Venice*; the healing effects of the passage of time, and hope in the new generation, in the late plays – with a final return to historical pageantry in *Henry VIII*, the monarch with whose Reformation it all began”.

(83).

The language of his play was a language of common people. The Shakespearean English was free from latinized Medieval English. He used modern English by distancing from medieval

English. "The theatre permitted him to create characters who embody the themes directly, and who speak to the audience in a language that is recognizably the same as they speak. From kings to ordinary soldiers, from young lovers to old bawds, Shakespeare's characters speak modern English" (Cater et al 83).

4.2.4 The First Folio (1623):

William Shakespeare's plays were merely written for performance rather than publications thus, got huge popularity among the theatergoers. This is the reason why for a long time his plays were not collected and published. Out of 37 plays, only 17 were printed in Shakespeare's lifetime and the remaining were not documented so far. We must thank to the fellow actors cum friends of Shakespeare John Heminges and Henry Condell who not only preserved the undocumented remaining plays but also published in a volume as *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* which is commonly known as *The First Folio* (1623) after his death. It contained 36 plays out of 37 that Shakespeare wrote which were mostly performed in the Globe Theater of London. *The First Folio* becomes important because it tries to preserve almost half of the plays of Shakespeare which include *Julius Creaser*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, etc. which were not printed so far. (*British Library*). The plays of Shakespeare starting from First Folio went under various editions, sophistication, and structural modifications. It was Nichols Rowe in 1709 tried to give a more structured form to his plays. This may be because this age is concerned over the structure of the play. He gave stage direction and locations of the scenes (Carter et al 2017).

4.2.5 Categories of Plays:

The First Folio tries to categorize Shakespeare's plays into comedies, tragedies, and histories. The history plays can further be divided into roman and the English history plays.

Tragedies	Comedies	Histories
<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	<i>Henry IV, Part 1</i>
<i>Coriolanus</i>	<i>As You Like It</i>	<i>Henry IV, Part 2</i>
<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Cardenio--A lost play.</i>	<i>Henry V</i>
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	<i>Henry VI, Part 1</i>
<i>King Lear</i>	<i>Cymbeline</i>	<i>Henry VI, Part 2</i>
<i>Macbeth</i>	<i>Love's Labor's Lost</i>	<i>Henry VI, Part 3</i>
<i>Othello</i>	<i>Love's Labor's Won--A lost play</i>	<i>Henry VIII</i>

<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Measure for Measure</i>	<i>King John</i>
<i>Timon of Athens</i>	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Richard II</i>
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	<i>Richard III</i>
	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	
	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	
	<i>Pericles</i>	
	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	
	<i>The Tempest</i>	
	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>	
	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	
	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>	
	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>	
	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	

The moment one talks of Shakespeare the four main tragedies *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* appear to our mind. *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* were also included into this category of tragedy. Some other plays are also called tragedies because of the tragic elements in those plays. These tragedies have some elements of the Aristotelian theory of tragedy. As Aristotle mentions in his *Poetics* “A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions” (12). Shakespeare’s tragedies have a tragic hero, *hamartia* (tragic error), supernatural elements, greed, fate/fortune, revenge, etc.

Shakespeare's comedies were as much as popular as his tragedies. His comedies also had some serious elements including tragic therefore some scholars further categorized his plays as “tragicomedy”. Most of his comedies have the 'happy ending' with a platonic union into a marriage. These comedies depict the struggle of young lovers to meet their love by overcoming certain obstacles, reunification, smart servants, pun, interwoven plots, disguises, pastoral images, etc.

Some scholars of Shakespeare did not find this categorization adequate thus they further divided these plays into problem plays, tragicomedy plays, romance play, lost plays, etc. The romance plays of Shakespeare first seems to appear in the work of Edward Dowden (*Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* 1875) wherein he used the term "romances" about Shakespeare's works such as *Princes*, *Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These plays also include tragic and comic elements along with courtly and pastoral scenes. Some scholars try to distinguish between "romance play" and "tragicomedy plays" by highlighting only tragic and comedy elements – the plays which are neither tragedy, not comedy such as *Princes*, *Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

The Shakespearean critic F.S. Boas in his work *Shakespeare and his Predecessors* (1896) tried to introduce the term "problem plays" for having ambiguous tone, social problem, and tragicomic material in plays like *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. Plays like *The Winter's Tale*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Merchant of Venice* are also counted under this category. Problem plays were initially associated with the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen.

Shakespeare's history plays as discussed above borrowed material from Plutarch's *Lives* and Holinshed's *Chronicles*. The role of a female character in his plays is also performed by the male characters. His plays are colored with Elizabethan masculinity and patriarchal dominance in power as well as in society. In her *Gender on Shakespeare's Stage: A Brief History*, Lucas Garcia observes that "The tradition of men portraying women on public stages dates back to the theatre of the Ancient Greeks, and is present in several other theatrical traditions from around the world. The reasons for the development of these traditions, which were to endure to various degrees for thousands of years, are intricately connected to how concepts of gender and sex were understood, and specifically the role of women in society. Ancient Greek women, like many women of Shakespeare's England, did not have the right to vote or own property, and were expected to remain at home and rear children" (n.p.).

5.2.6 Poems and Sonnets of William Shakespeare:

Shakespeare was best known for his dramas, but when in the early 1600s, the bubonic plague breakout in England many theaters were closed to avoid public gatherings including the London's Globe Theater which was for a long time know for associating with William Shakespeare. In the wake of this outbreak, the demand for Shakespeare's Sonnets including his other poems increased especially *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, and *A Lover's*

Complaint. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, a short poem. A sonnet is a classical form of English fourteen-line poem, written in an iambic pentameter, mostly with the theme of love. It is like an Urdu *ghazal* form of a poem. It has derived from the Italian word "sonetto" meaning 'a little song'. Shakespeare wrote the finest sonnets which also set as an ideal pattern of this form of English poetry.

5.2.7 Types of Sonnets:

- Petrarchan
- Shakespearean

The Petrarchan sonnet is one of the classical forms of love poem, derived its name from Italian master poet Francesco Petrarca anglicized as Petrarch (1304 – 1374). It was he who developed his type. These sonnets are written in two stanzas, 'octave' (the eight lines) and 'sestet' (the six lines) with the rhyme scheme *abba, abba* and *cdecde* or *cdccdc*. It was Sir Thomas Wyatt, politician cum lyric poet of the 16th century introduced this pattern of poetry into English. He introduced Petrarch's sonnet along with his sonnets to the English readers.

Shakespeare championed this style of sonnets, which later also become known as the English/Shakespearean sonnets. He distanced from the Petrarchan style. His sonnets comprise of three quatrains and a couplet with *abab, cdcd, efef,* and *gg* as the rhyme scheme. The couplet at the end plays an important role in giving the gist of the poem like in most of the *gazals*. Shakespeare's sonnets 1-126 are addressed to "Fair Youth" and from 127-152 are addressed to "the Dark Lady". Hannah Crawforth in her article "An introduction to Shakespeare's Sonnets" writes,

"The poetic persona who speaks through the sequence is not Shakespeare himself. While many readers of the poems have traced a love triangle between the 'poet' and two figures often called the 'Young Man' and the 'Dark Lady', the Sonnets themselves resist straightforward narrative. The poems seem to play with the reader in this regard, tempting us with hints of the kind of love story that underpinned other popular poetic sequences of the time, or the plot of a Shakespearean comedy. At the same time, the poems constantly frustrate our attempts to trace the exact moment at which the poet loses – or gains – the affection of his lovers, or to map the precise relationship between the two enigmatic figures that so preoccupy his attentions. It is also significant that one of the lovers is male; Shakespeare's Sonnets do not give us a predictably heterosexual romance

but rather a complex and intricate exploration of gender and sexuality that encourages ambiguity rather than resolution¹. Here are four sonnets of Shakespeare quoted from Dympna Callaghan's book *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (2007). [n.p.]

Here are two sonnets of Shakespeare for your reference:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sonnet 144</i></p> <p>“Two loves I have of comfort and despair, Which like two spirits do suggest me still: The better angel is a man right fair, The worser spirit a woman colored ill. To win me soon to hell, my female evil, Tempteth my better angel from my side, And would corrupt my saint to be a devil, Wooing his purity with her foul pride. And whether that my angel be turned fiend, Suspect I may, yet not directly tell; But being both from me, both to each friend, I guess one angel in another's hell: Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt, Till my bad angel fire my good one out”.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sonnet 116</i></p> <p>“Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments, love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove. O no, it is an ever-fixed mark That looks on tempests and is never shaken; It is the star to every wand'ring bark, Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come, Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, But bears it out even to the edge of doom: If this be error and upon me proved, I never writ, nor no man ever loved”.</p>
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4.3 Learning Outcomes

The specific unit tried to introduce a brief account of the life and work of one of the best English playwrights and poet (sonneteer) William Shakespeare. It highlights the historical background of the political, cultural and literary life of 16th Century England and the emergence of Shakespeare and his writing. It also tried to cover his writing style, poetry, sonnets, and plays.

4.4 Glossary

Queen Elizabeth I: Queen Elizabeth I (1533 –1603) was one of the most powerful queens of England in whose time England started dominating most of the parts of the globe. She was the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn who was executed when Elizabeth was just two and half years old and their marriage was declared illegitimate. She took over the throne after the death of her half-brother Edward VI. She was also one of the last *five monarchs of the House of Tudor*.

Hamartia: Aristotle in his *Poetics* discusses *hamartia* (a tragic error) in the life of the main character in the tragedy which leads his/her to meet such tragic destiny. Caught in such a situation which leads him to make an error in a judgment/action which further leads to his/her fall. It is an integral part of a tragic character. The character must not be completely good or bad so that audience will have some pity for him.

Anagnorisis: It is a moment in a tragedy where the main character discovers or recognizes the actual situation. Aristotle tried to identify the tragic character's realization of his/her true nature/identity. He writes, Anagnorisis is "a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune".

Peripetia: It is a reversal of fortune or circumstances in the tragedy. It is most important in the tragedy to a sudden change in a dramatic mood/plot. It is contrary to the audience's expectations.

Catharsis: As Aristotle points out that the *catharsis* is a purgation (purification) of emotions of pity and fear which was created among the audiences during the play, especially the tragedy. It also means "clarification".

University Wits: The university wits are the educated group of writers, especially the English dramatists of 16th Century England who studied at Oxford and Cambridge universities. These dramatists tried to use innovative techniques in plays. The group includes Christopher Marlow, Thomas Kyd, Robert Green, Thomas Nash, Thomas Lodge, George Green, and John Lyly.

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions:

One or two-line Questions

1. Shakespeare's Roman plays are based on _____.
2. Sonnet is a poetic form derived its meaning from Italian word ____ which means "little song".
3. Shakespeare's English history plays borrowed its ingredients from _____?.
4. Which of the following great dramatists is not a university wit?

Christopher Marlow, William Shakespeare Thomas Kyd, and Robert Green.
5. How many sonnets Shakespeare wrote?
6. Whom did Shakespeare addressed his sonnets?
7. Which of Aristotle's works defines the theory of tragedy?
8. What is the rhyme scheme of Petrarch's sonnets?
9. When did *The First Folio* publish?
10. Which of his contemporary dramatists criticized Shakespeare?

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Which are the major Shakespeare tragedies?
2. What are the different categories of Shakespearean plays?
3. Why First Folio is important?
4. What are the different types of Sonnets?
5. What is the difference between Shakespearean and Petrarchan sonnets?

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the basic characteristics of Shakespearean tragedies and comedies?
2. What is a sonnet, elaborate on characteristics of Shakespearean Sonnets?
3. Briefly sketch the biographical account of William Shakespeare.

4.6 Suggested Reading

1. Armstrong, Jane. *The Arden Dictionary of Shakespeare Quotations*. Thomson Learning. 1997.
2. Bloom, Harold, et al. *Bloom's Classic Critical Views: William Shakespeare*. New York. Infobase Publishing 2010.
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Units - 5: Shakespearean Romantic Comedy

Structure

5.0 Introduction

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5.3 Learning Outcomes

5.4 Glossary

5.5 Sample Questions

5.6 Suggested Readings

5.0 Introduction

In the beginning, William Shakespeare's comedies followed the classical theme but turned out to be filled with emotion, humor, and fancy after a certain period. *The Merchant of Venice* can be categorized into these categories. On the one hand, its theme has the maturity of Classical comedies; on the other, it lingers towards the theme of humor and wit, hence romantic. The play belongs to the middle period of Shakespeare's genius. It is assumed that Shakespeare

has used every ounce of wisdom to create a genius play like *The Merchant of Venice*. This play blends Shakespeare's experience as a philosophical poet and writer with his acute sense of making this work appealing to the young audience. Thereby, there is a balance between an elevation of thought and expression.

Romance as a concept belonged to an old tradition, and romance ideas were quite popular around that time. There are indeed many differences between classical comedies and Romantic comedies. The classical tradition remained strict when presenting characters with powerful force and the presentations were realistic, a lot spiritual, and highly critical. Contrary to that in Romantic comedies, Shakespeare added plenty of wit with a significant appeal to emotion rather than entirely relying on the intellect. As Meredith quoted, Shakespearean plays are “thunders of laughter clearing the air and heart.” Thereby, Shakespearean comedies rely on emotions to win the audience's sympathy with the characters' sorrows and happiness.

Critics tend to find Elizabethan comedy as a genre distinguished for its great fascination with marriage. Helen Gardner calls Romantic comedy “pure” as the genre is entirely different from the didactic tendencies of satire and the tragi-comedy that focuses mainly on the plot. Gardner assumed that marriage is the great emblem of pure comedy, by which the universe is reborn, and its endings are often an impulse with a sense of new beginnings. Its rhythm is the rhythm of mankind's life, which goes on and renews itself as nature's life does. There is no denying that the pioneer in the field of Romantic Comedy falls in the hands of William Shakespeare. However, his plays do not blindly copy their Roman and Greek prototype of comedies. It is not easy to put Shakespeare's oeuvre in a box and find commonalities. This module is designed to etch out salient features in Shakespearean comedies with particular reference to one of his masterpieces, *The Merchant of Venice* first performed in 1605.

Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Shakespeare, rightfully wrote, "He was not for an age but for all time." The era of Queen Elizabeth bears its testimony being mostly dominated by his works. Shakespeare keeps a strong foothold by excelling at plays, poems, sonnets, and Shakespeare as a person himself draws too much attention and fame. His touch in the field of comedies is remarkable. Shakespeare is famous as he is one of the best playwrights in building his work close to ordinary people's lives. Thereby, they are also known as comedies of life by introducing humankind's follies against fate's intervention by presenting flawed and real characters. Both the readers and the audiences get the opportunity of aesthetic pleasure from Shakespeare's works.

5.1 Objectives

The objectives of this unit are:

- To provide readers with a better understanding of the salient features of Romantic Comedy
- To have a better understanding of the role of disguise in Shakespearean comedies
- To analyze humour as an essence of his comedies
- To examine the role of strong female characters
- To have a better understanding of the necessity of interweaving subplots
- To understand the use of three unities in Shakespeare's works

5.2 Shakespearean Romantic Comedy

Common features of a Shakespearean comedy in a nutshell:

5.2.1 Mistaken Identity/Misconceptions:

Mistaken identity and disguise play a pivotal role in a Shakespearean comedy. For example, in *As You Like It*, Rosalind disguises herself as a man to guide her lover to become the man she desires. *Twelfth Night* shows another strong female character who dresses up as a man to offer her service to duke Orsino and make him realize his follies and whimsicalities. Swapping gender roles may seem old-fashioned initially, but they indeed produce humor; there is no doubt about that.

5.2.2 Logic against Emotion:

Shakespearean play is an example of an ongoing conflict between Apollonian ethics signaling reason versus Dionysian, responding to the call of desires. What should a human being do? Follow passion or, should listen to the brain? Shakespeare is a genius at this game, as his plays cultivate the conflicts so well in raising expectations at the audiences' heart.

For example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the female protagonist Hermia willingly disobeys her father by refusing the suitor her father has chosen. On the contrary, she engages herself in a romantic encounter with Lysander and is not afraid to face the death penalty for her actions. Her motives are being governed by emotion that made her irrational in the first place. Shakespeare deliberately does this to show two sides of human behavior: the heart and the brain. This attempt on the playwright's part has made his plays a success.

5.2.3 Elements of Fantasy:

Shakespearean comedies show the pettiness of humankind in the hands of the supernatural, the great game. Puck and Oberon, these two characters, decide the rest of the characters' fate in the play called *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* through magic and mischief. No matter what, Shakespeare is still famous today because he shows the pettiness of human lives under the great game of fate. Humans are insecure, unsure, with the improbabilities of life, and there is specific knowledge not beyond human comprehension. Thereby, Shakespearean works excel at convincing the magical elements a necessary tool to emphasize humankind's fragility before fate. There is a popular way of having a happy ending in comedies. If one observes minutely, the audience will find the magic's role in making this happiness permanent at the end of his wits.

5.2.4 Utopian Setting:

This is not so surprising that Shakespearean settings are almost perfect. The landscapes are rich and practically impossible to be real. Shakespeare purposefully chooses these locations because they are ideal for encouraging mishaps and mistakes, a typical romantic comedy feature. As a result, the whole world's audience might find it comforting as in their lives there is no scope of committing mistakes thoroughly and getting a happy ending as an element of surprise. That is why Shakespearean plays are so appealing, even today.

5.2.5 Broken-heart and Reconciliation:

Love is the central theme of a Shakespearean play. He deliberately puts the scenes of separation to make the backgrounds of reconciliation more interesting. Although there are uncertainty and a series of misunderstandings and mishaps, with the touch of magic or, cross-dressing everything gets settled at the end of each play. For example, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick and Beatrice hate each other to a level that a union between them seems

almost impossible. Both the characters initially remain disillusioned with broken hearts from their previous courtships and are unwilling to initiate a new relationship. However, in the end, they not only fall in love but end up getting married. Benedick and Beatrice's complicated relationship results from Shakespeare's genius of depicting human nature from an insightful perspective, and he was successful at doing so.

5.2.6 Happy Endings:

Last but not least important part of a Shakespearean comedy is a happy ending. Unlike his tragedies, there is, of course, a transformation of a bad fortune to a good one, as the characters start living happily ever after, and the marriage plays a crucial part in bringing this happiness. Audiences nowadays might find this attribute unconvincing, to consider a wedding as the harbinger of happiness. However, Shakespearean audiences back at his time hailed this attribute to go back home with happy faces. Ultimately, it also helped the playwright to finish his play with a happy note. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare's romantic comedies feature *deus ex machina* to bring happiness at the end. It is popularly known as 'god in the machine,' a device that emphasizes God's role in ushering events and gives the final happy touch to the play. Shakespeare uses this technique to resolve misunderstandings and apparent problems that are barring the reunion between two lovers. Technically, it's better to call it a comic denouement.

To put it simply, the numerous elements in Shakespearean comedy become an object of conflict and raise the sense of doubts. Even after that, his method of storytelling is one of his unique qualities. His wits scrutinize how human experiences might not necessarily be as they think they are; there are certain things there beyond anybody's control and for the fact, they prove how rationality will always stand in stark opposition to emotions. Henceforth, Ben Jonson was correct when he stated Shakespeare is for all ages. The writer, through his intricate ways of storytelling, unique plot structure, and naive yet complicated characters, made himself immortal through his oeuvre.

Check your Progress:

1. Do you think Happy Ending is a necessary feature of Romantic Comedy?
2. How does logic play against emotion in Shakespearean plays?
3. How does a Shakespearean comedy show the pettiness of humankind in the hands of the supernatural?

5.2.7 Categories:

In a nutshell, Shakespeare's romantic comedies can be divided into following categories:

- Assimilation of romance and reality
- Love as an important theme
- 'Love at first sight' as an often occurring motif.
- The role of music, frivolity, dance and mirth
- Multiple twists
- The role of opportunities or chance as a major factor
- Both the main and the sub-plots are well organized
- Intricacies in characters and the character portrayals are unique
- Disguise is a must when it come to Shakespearean plays
- Female characters tend to dominate
- Presence of strong, witty, and resourceful female characters

5.2.8 Samuel Johnson Critiques William Shakespeare's Violation of Unities:

Samuel Johnson's in his acclaimed "Preface" to the edition of Shakespeare's plays discusses three basic principles that a poet must possess, and they are: "how a poet's reputation is established; the poet's relation to nature; and the relative virtues of nature and experience of life as against a reliance on principles established by criticism and convention" (Habib 305). Johnson finds it fascinating how the virtues of the ancient writers differ from modern writers in many ways, by affirming that "the excellence of the ancient authors is based on a gradual and comparative estimate, as tested by observation and experience" (305). Habib discusses this notion of Johnson in this way:

If we judge Shakespeare by these criteria – "length of duration and continuance of esteem" – we are justified, thinks Johnson, in allowing Shakespeare "to assume the dignity of an ancient," since his reputation has survived the customs, opinions, and circumstances of his time (60–61). Johnson does concede, however, that Shakespeare had many faults. His first defect is that he is "more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." Johnson acknowledges that from Shakespeare's plays, a "system of social duty" may be culled. (306)

However, it is remembered Shakespeare never followed the tradition of being manipulated by fate or any divine rendition where incidents occur merely due to luck or chance. Habib writes:

The problem is that Shakespeare's "precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil," leaving his examples of good and bad actions "to operate by chance." And it is always a writer's duty, Johnson insists, "to make the world better" (71). For the unities of time and place, however, Shakespeare had no regard, a point on which Johnson defends Shakespeare by questioning these unities themselves. Like Corneille, he views these unities as having "given more trouble to the poet, than pleasure to the auditor" (75–76). (ibid)

Johnson finds it problematic that the three unities result from "the supposed necessity of making the drama credible." Habib simplifies it in this manner:

Such a requirement is premised on the view that the mind of a spectator or reader "revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality." The unity of place is merely an inference from the unity of time, since in a short period of time, spectators cannot believe that given actors have traversed impossible distances to remote locations. Such are the grounds on which critics have objected to the irregularity of Shakespeare's drama. (307)

There is no denying that Shakespeare's take on not following the ancient Classical rules resulted in some brilliant tragedies and comedies, leaving their appeal and impacts on the readers for centuries to follow. Habib further postulates:

In Johnson's eyes, such premises are themselves spurious: in a striking counter-argument, he appeals to Shakespeare himself as a counter-authority, asserting: "It is false, that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramattick fable in its materiality was ever credible" (76). Spectators, Johnson observes, are always aware, in their very trip to the theater, that they are subjecting themselves to a fiction, to a form of temporary self-delusion. And we must acknowledge that, "if delusion be admitted," it has "no certain limitation." If we can believe that the battle being enacted on stage is real, why would we be counting the clock or

dismissing the changing of places as unreal? We know, from first to last, that “the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players” (77). (307)

Johnson accepts the fact that Shakespeare lacked a formal way of learning; however, the most remarkable part of his excellence “was the product of his own genius.” Habib concludes by saying, “in contrast with most writers, who imitate their predecessors, Shakespeare directly obtained “an exact knowledge of many modes of life” as well as of the inanimate world, gathered “by contemplating things as they really exist” (Johnson cited in Habib 307-308).

Check your Progress:

1. What are the three classical unities?
2. Which unity was violated by Shakespeare?

5.2.9 Analyzing *The Merchant of Venice* as a Romantic Comedy:

The Merchant of Venice undoubtedly falls into the category of a romantic comedy. It contains the theme of love, humor, witty dialogue, strong female character, violation of the unity of space and time as significant themes. Shakespeare purposefully neglects Aristotelian unity of space and time and focuses on the unity of action even in his comedies. He considered the only relevant feature a play should focus on the unity of action. The characters look real even though Shakespeare worked hard to make the contradictions of his characters more convincing.

5.2.9.1 Love as the Central Theme:

Yet again, love plays a crucial role. Shakespeare’s ways of weaving three love stories here deserve much appreciation for their uniqueness. Shakespeare skillfully had interwoven all the stories together. The central part of the story is the love encounter between Bassanio and Portia. The love stories of Gratiano-Nerrisa and Lorenzo-Jessica get interesting with time. Shakespeare excelled at writing these stories, as together being so interconnected, they are so breathtaking that the audiences get effortlessly mesmerized.

5.2.9.2 Female Characters:

Shakespeare undoubtedly is a revolutionary playwright in his attempts while creating strong women characters. He makes the character of Portia predominantly with precision. The readers notice that Portia was a perfect example of a 16th Century woman, and somewhere some

of her actions project her as a woman ahead of her time. Shakespeare crafts the revolutionary and dominating spirits in Portia diligently. It is a known fact that women of the then century did not have the right to vote. However, with the revolutionary thoughts whatever could have been achieved by a woman of that time, Shakespeare gives his everything in creating a character like Portia believable. Portia is a good character for her diligence, intellect, and witty humor. She excels herself mainly in the court scene by handling the courtroom brilliantly. Although she is a rich woman, she has to follow her father when marrying the right person. Though rich enough, Portia cannot marry anyone of her choice; instead, she has to follow her father's will. According to her father's will, she cannot just choose a man and get married, although her love is an example of love at first sight. She cannot marry Bassanio, but she did more when the time required her to act to save the love of her life. Antonio's life was in danger as he took the money from Shylock. Therefore, it was in the hands of Portia to save two men at a time. And she was successful at doing so and proves herself worthy of being represented as a strong female character.

5.2.9.3 Three Love Stories in One Play:

There are three love stories in *The Merchant Venice*: Portia and Bassanio, Lorenzo and Jessica, and Gratiano and Nerissa. There is the bond of friendship and love between Antonio and Bassanio, which resulted in trouble for both the characters. Antonio's love for Bassanio is limitless, so much that he became a victim of Shylock too. He helped Bassanio multiple times, but this time, his encounter with Shylock proved to be a fatal one. However, Portia handled the situation and saved the day. Portia's love is unique too. She requested Bassanio never to lose the ring that she had given her. But Bassanio was willing to lose the ring when the situation demanded his best friend's life in danger. There were various perils, but the characters at the end were saved, and it can be said that their strong bonding, love, and trust amongst each other helped them have a happy ending. However, there is no denying that Portia should get the credit mostly.

5.2.9.4 Theme of love between Portia and Bassanio:

The play has focused on the themes of friendship, disguised appearances, and, most importantly, loves. The love theme centers around Portia and Bassanio. To get Portia's hand, Bassanio needed to participate in the casket test and select the correct one. Portia's love comes effortlessly. She deliberately orders that there should be music while Bassanio chooses. Luckily,

Bassanio smartly understands the message of Portia's suggested song and chooses the correct casket, and finds Portia's picture. Portia does not select Bassanio out of whim; instead, she picks him out of her practical wisdom. Bassanio is not arrogant after choosing the right casket, which shows that he is intelligent, sensitive, and thoughtful. Their love was meant to be a success.

5.2.9.5 Humour:

The play *The Merchant of Venice* is filled with humor. Humour is found in the witty character of Portia, Lorenzo, and Bassanio. Humour is also found in the ring scene and Shylock's whining and lamentation. Last but not the least, humor is prevalent in the characters of Lancelot and Gobbo. The play is a perfect example of a romantic comedy as it stands in stark opposition to the classical or Aristotelian concept of humor. The crucial theme being the fact Shakespeare deviated from the rules of three unities.

5.2.9.6 Classical Role of Three Unities:

There are two basic settings of the play: Venice and Belmont. The primary action of the game shifts from one place to another, repeatedly from Venice to Belmont and from Belmont to Venice. The period of the play is more than three consecutive months. Shakespeare neglects the Aristotelian rules of three unities. He has always focused more on the action and less on the time and space. Thereby there are two different settings, and also, the period has been stretched. More importantly, there are other tales somehow interconnected in a manner that it seems the audiences and readers have a unique story. The subplots bring fun and frivolity to the main plot.

5.2.9.7 Role of Fate:

Chance always plays a vital role in a romantic comedy by Shakespeare. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the event lays its webs everywhere. First, fate it was that Antonio was bound to lose his ships in a shipwreck and become penniless. Another example of uncertainty is that Antonio and Bassanio select Shylock, a money-lender to provide them with some loan. Lorenzo and Jessica's love story, respectively being a Christian and a Jew, results from fate adding significant color and changes in the text. Shakespearean comedy balances romanticism with realism, having the potential of taking us away from the quotidian realities. Most importantly, love as a potent theme breeds incongruities, follies, and frivolities, which are essential features of a Romantic Comedy. *The Merchant of Venice* is a perfect representation featuring all the various elements of

romantic comedy by fulfilling the categories of love at first sight, joy, disguise, strong female characters, and a happy ending where the characters start living happily ever after.

Check your Progress:

1. What is the role of fate in *The Merchant of Venice*?
2. How does humour become a necessary feature here?
3. What are the Classical roles of three unities?

5.3 Learning Outcomes

In the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Define the romantic comedy
- Understand the importance of love at first sight in a Shakespearean comedy
- Recognize various type of incongruities relevant in Shakespearean plays
- Know the differences between main-plot and sub-plot
- Identify the strong female characters in the Elizabethan age

5.4 Glossary

Comedy: A play that is distinguished by its sarcastic or humorous tone and its depiction of amusing people or incidents in which the characters inevitably triumph over adversity

Tragedy: A play that deals with tragic events and has an unhappy ending, especially one concerning the downfall of the main character

Tragi-comedy: It is a genre that blends elements of both comedy and tragedy

Romantic comedy: It deals primarily with young lovers' follies and misunderstandings in a light-hearted and happily ended the way that typically avoids serious satire

Disguise: Give (someone or oneself) a distinctive impression in order to conceal one's integrity

Humour: It typically evokes genial laughter, and in suggesting whimsicality or eccentricity, it can contrast with witty

Utopian: It is unrealistic and reflects a perception that things should be enhanced even more than is possible

Realistic: Having or demonstrating a sensible, realistic and practical idea of what can be achieved or expected

Ridicule: The submission to contemptuous and derogatory language or behaviour of someone or something

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is the setting of the play?
 - (a) Venice
 - (b) Belmont
 - (c) Both a & b
 - (d) None of above
2. When *The Merchant of Venice* was first performed?
 - (a) 1599
 - (b) 1602
 - (c) 1605
 - (d) 1608
3. Who is Portia?
 - (a) Bassanio's lover
 - (b) Lorenzo's lover
 - (c) Gratiano's lover
 - (d) None of the above

4. What was Shylock's profession?
 - (a) School teacher
 - (b) Painter
 - (c) Money lender
 - (d) King
5. How did Antonio lose his ships?
 - (a) In a storm
 - (b) Got stolen
 - (c) Both a & b
 - (d) None of above

Fill in the blanks

6. Gratiano's lover was _____.
7. Portia gave a ring to _____.
8. Jessica's lover was _____.

True/False

9. Portia and Bassanio are enemies.
 - (a) True
 - (b) False
10. Jessica is the leading heroine of *The Merchant of Venice*.
 - (a) True
 - (b) False

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a brief note on the character portrayal of Portia.
2. Do you think disguise played in this play? If, yes how?
3. Write a short note on the subplots of the play.
4. Does love play a significant role in this play? Discuss.
5. Do you agree that the character of Shylock is "too large?" Explain.

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How did Antonio save Bassanio? Discuss.
2. Portia is a strong female character in *The Merchant of Venice*. Explain.
3. Define and discuss romantic comedy in detail?

5.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit - 6: Characteristic Features of Romanic Comedy

Structure

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Romanic Comedy

6.2.1 Defining the Genre `Comedy`

6.2.2 The Origin of Comedy

6.2.3 Romantic Comedy – A Sub-genre of Comedy

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6.2.8 Mistaken Identities

6.2.9 Battle of Wits

6.2.10 Music

6.2. 11 Happy Union

6.3 Learning Outcomes

6.4 Glossary

6.5 Sample Questions

6.6 Suggested Readings

6.0 Introduction

The characteristic features of Romantic Comedy are found in a series of Romantic Comedies beginning with Aristophanes, Green and Lyly and Shakespeare followed by the lines of comic writers after him. Romantic Comedy is a sub-genre of the large genre of comedy that depicts the literary representation of human follies. In other words, a Romantic Comedy by Shakespeare is a combination of romance and comedy, that it is a mixture of both romantic and comic elements together producing a new taste for the readers or the audience. The Romantic Comedy together with both the romance and comic produces not just the comic side of life but

also it produces a love-happy side of life which William Shakespeare has demonstrated in his romantic plays such as *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *As You Like It*. Apart from Shakespeare's craftsmanship of comedies, many contemporaries and successors have sketched the various facets of comic life. The comic elements are sometimes so natural that they occur in day-to-day life, which the writers have captured the live incidences and have tinged them the color of imaginations. The Romantic Comedies thus have produced various aspects of comic effects which are the main substances of the unit.

6.1 Objectives

The objective of the unit is to familiarize the students with the genre of comedy and the features of Romantic Comedy in English literature. The definition and a brief historical development of comedy and also primarily the analysis of the literary texts will provide the learners a vivid picture of the characteristic features of the Romantic Comedies which represented the then-contemporary life. The present unit will focus on the textual descriptions and the thematic features of Romantic Comedies which appeal to universality and are thus relevant to the present world. Therefore, Romantic Comedy being the most important genre of literature that produces amusement has certainly been the object of study.

6.2 Romantic Comedy

6.2.1 Defining the Genre of Comedy:

Romantic Comedy is a sub-genre of the core literary genre, comedy which for centuries has been amusing and entertaining the readers. As comedy developed over the centuries as an inseparable part of literature, it gave birth to various forms of comedy and Romantic Comedy is the result of that development. Comedy is primarily a fictional text which amuses its audiences and demonstrates the follies of human characters for the audience to witness the mistakes and trivialities of human characters enshrined in the comic representations of human life.

To understand the root of comedy one has to dive deep into the etymological source given by Dr. Johnson. The etymology of the original Greek word, comedy perhaps originates as kosmos, or komai, and oda, and these words indicate the origin of the word comedy in the Greek region. Kosmos refers to 'revel', while the komai refers to 'village'. Aristotle advocated for the second term, referring to the word 'village' as there is an assumption that the comedians toured through villages when they were expelled from their towns for their disgrace. The other term, 'oda refers to 'songs' as actually, the comedy is a therefore song of festivity which in Divine Comedy Dante has termed it 'a rustic song'. Usually, the comedy was associated more with rural or rustic life than the urban as the comedians were more interested in the rural living environment associated with agrarian fertility. Furthermore, the Greek originated word 'comedy' at some point in time begins its relates to Dionysus, a God whose celestial attributes and patronages were more amazed with His forms of nature and agrarian fertility. The Zeus and Semele's son Dionysus was the deity of productiveness of nature and a plants soul (Stott, 3-4).

The broader meaning of the term comedy can be used to organize and understand the different sets of themes that are encountered time and again in various situations in life. These persistent themes cover the different forms of inversion, the world turned around, and the world where things are different. The social order is upside down. The slave rules the master and the man bites the dog where the actual scenario is the opposite. The normal scenario gets upside down and the reality is reimaged. Comedy is such a work of literary art that makes the world upside down. The foolishness, intellectual myopia, or the systematic social order is satirized and ridiculed and make them transformed into a new world of order. The social laws are mocked and turned upside down. Comedy can also be the word that can be expressed as a genre, symphony, or a chain of effects that demonstrate their presence in various situations and atmospheres. This is also a literary convention having structural qualities and representing a perfect reality (Stott, 2-3).

Chris Baldick in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms* outlines "comedy as a fictional text or play written primarily to amuse or entertain its readers by appealing to a sense of superiority over the characters depicted. A comedy will normally be closer to the representation of everyday life than a tragedy and will explore common human failings rather than tragedy's disastrous crimes. Its ending will usually be happy for the leading characters. In another sense, the term was applied in the Middle Ages to narrative poems that end happily: the title of Divine Comedy (c. 1320) carries this meaning" (Baldick, 62).

According to Aristotle, comedy is different from tragedy as comedy is a mimic representation of the world, but on the other hand tragedy represents noble actions of noble personages who are admirable and the characters have magnitude. (Aristotle, 1996:10) He argues that comedy originated in rustic entertainment and it showcases the people of 'low' class by nature:

Comedy is (as he has argued) an imitation of low people—not, however, concerning every kind of defect: the laughable is a species of what is disgraceful. The laughable is an error or disgrace that does not involve pain or destruction: for example, a comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not involve pain. (Aristotle, 1996: 9). Comedy was held low compared to tragedy. Comedy was never talked about seriously as a tragedy. Charles Lamb, while dealing with Shakespeare's plays, confined his observations and discussions to tragedy. (Stott, 19)

6.2.2 The Origin of Comedy:

The historical origin of comedy is traced to Greek society. The Greek comedy both old comedy and the middle comedy is confirmed, to begin with, Aristophanes. The old comedy which dates back to 520 BC to 400 BC indulged in abuse and profanity in a very artistic manner and the old was followed by the Middle comedy. In the Middle comedy, the abuse and profanity of old comedy were replaced by parody, a satire of myths, and criticism of philosophy and literature. Aristophanes as an example of Middle comedy has demonstrated his ridicule and satire towards the follies of the times in his comedies 'Birds and Frogs'. The Greek comedy which began with the subject of revelry, mirth, and delight in honour of Dionysus, the god nature, fertility, and wine, later moved towards the theme of ridicule and satire (Mundra and Sahni, 345).

The Roman Comedy in the times of Plautus and Terence further deviated from the Greek comedy. The Roman Comedy was chiefly based on intrigue and its object was to highlight the offenses against the social order or decorum. It is the Roman Comedy that created scorn and contempt for the offenders in the mind of the readers or audiences. The Roman Comedy writers used more satire as an instrument of exposing vices and appealed more to the mind than the heart of the readers. Therefore, the Roman Comedies not just created entertainment but also created scorn against the offenders in the reader's mind. (345)

Carrying the influence of Greek and Roman Comedy, English comedy began its journey from the early years of the 16th century to the present times. However, throughout the journey, the English Comedy has adapted various formations and natures and has come across different junctures of progress. The English comedy which began under the influence of Plautus and Terence produced the earliest English comedy, as Nicolus Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, and marched its journey ahead with the comedies of Lyly and Green - the University wits and reached its perfection in the hands of the legend, William Shakespeare who became the leader of the English comedy. He was influenced by Roman writers such as Plautus and Terence but he was unsatisfied with their classical themes of ridicule, castigation, and reform. He was a poet at heart and not a critic, and the classical themes of ridicule and satire failed to appeal to his poetic sensibility. He created an entirely new point of view in comedies. He composed comedies with the essence of love, romance, true fun, and delight. (346)

6.2.3 Romantic Comedy: A Sub-genre of Comedy

Romantic Comedy being the sub-genre of comedy has become the most popular form of entertainment. The comedies were popularized by Shakespeare with his plays like *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and also Goldsmith's play, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* of Oscar Wilde, and G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the recent writer Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit*. However, William Shakespeare is the master of all Romantic Comedies and their writers. His plays are classified in various forms of comedy such as romantic comedies, comedies free from romanticism, lighter comedies, and dark comedies. Romantic Comedies are among his prominent plays which have produced wide and universal appeal. For Shakespeare, the Romantic Comedies are about a lighter part of human life, unlike tragedies. Chris Baldick in his Dictionary of Literary Terms defined romantic comedies as comedies that manifest primarily the human follies and confusions of the young lovers, in a jocular and happily concluded way which generally shuns serious satire (Baldick, 292).

Further, M H Abrams defines Romantic Comedy which "represents a love affair that involves a beautiful and engaging heroine (sometimes disguised as a man); the course of this love does not run smooth, yet overcome all difficulties to end in a happy union. Many of the boy-meets-girl plots of later writers are instances of Romantic Comedy, as are many motion pictures, from *The Philadelphia Story* to *Sleepless in Seattle*". (Abrams, 50) Abrams also refers to most critical work *the Anatomy of Criticism* where Northrop Frye points out that Shakespeare in some

of his comedies has demonstrated a transition of the world conflict and trouble to the world of peace or green world – e.g., the fairy-hunted wood in *A Midsummer Night`s Dream*, or the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, - through instances of these comedies, it is shown that the occurrences of injustices in every day mundane life and world are soothed, adversaries reconciled and the true lovers brought together. (50-51)

6.2.4 The World of Fancy and Imagination:

The Romantic Comedies of Shakespeare take the readers away to a world of fancy and imagination far away from the world of sick, hurry, and divided aims. Though the atmosphere of these comedies is romantic and utopian, life keeps hovering over it and enters into it. The characters of these comedies are drawn from the world of men and women and have suffered like erring mortals of the work-a-day world. Realism and romance mix together; romance in the setting, and realism in characterization, and the “cardinal characteristic of Shakespeare`s romantic world is the union of realism and fancy (Nicoll)”. In this world of Shakespearean comedies, we hear the ring of pure laughter without any venom and cynicism. Through the humorous and sweet speeches of all his comic characters, Shakespeare abundantly exhibits gentle amusement and derives pleasure. “The genial laughter of Shakespeare at human absurdity is free from that amiable cynicism, which gives to the humor of Jane Austen a certain piquant flavor. It is like the play summer lighting which hurts no loving creator but surprises, illuminates and charms” (Dowden) ((Mundra and Sahni, 347).

To point out the world of fancy and imagination it does not lack in the literary contexts. In other words, fancy and imagination is a most crucial ingredient in the creation of the literary corpus. Furthermore, comedy is a more powerful vehicle that carries the readers into the world of fancy and imagination. It is a faraway world from the real and mortal world. Comedy since the beginning has been a perfect source of this transportation from suffering, sickness, and sadness to amusement, laughter, and merry-making. The writers beginning with Nicollus Udall, Plautus, Lyly, Green, Shakespeare, and his successors like G B Shaw, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Oscar Wilde, and many others have produced the Romantic Comedies which have created comic elements in the day-to-day lives.

Shakespeare`s *As You Like It* is an example of a perfect Romantic Comedy that violates all the rules and laws of classical and neo-classical comedies. *As You Like It* deals with love at first sight, uncontrolled emotions, passions, imagination and fancy, fun and laughter. The mixture of comic and tragic incidences together makes the text more romantic. The banishment

of Rosalind and the Duke Senior, Oliver's setting fire at Orland's house are sad incidences in the play. But the play as a whole gives the readers amusement and mirth. The play takes the readers to a faraway imaginary space, the forest of Arden. And the imaginary wood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The imaginary spaces, characters, and incidences are quite prominent in the Romantic Comedies as a concept of romanticism is always founded on imagination and fancy.

6.2.5 Love and Romance:

Romance in general means a passionate love between a man and woman and it includes any type of fervour and deep sentiment for someone. Love is the basis of romantic comedies. Love is the means of all human fulfilment. Rosalind and Orlando, Benedick and Beatrice, Viola and Orsino are all creatures of love and revel in the atmosphere of song and mirth, dance, and jollity. (347) The love Shakespeare presents on stage has certain common characteristics in his romantic stories. The stories deal with handsome men and truly young women who love one another but also bear break downs and disappointments in love. The characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* live in a world of make-believe which is a representation of more magical imagination than the worldly realities. They feel more intense than ordinary people the profound individual necessity for adoring experience revolved around such principles as unselfishness, allegiance, endurance, and commitment to the welfare of a much-loved person.

In *the Twelfth Night* the Duke with his luxury of love in idealness which he knows to be fantastical, Olivia's is an imaginative sorrow of the dead brother and thus has wild and irrepressible affection for Cesario, Viola carving for love of her master Orsino while serving him in disguise, even the dull-witted Malvolio making himself an easy duke of his imagination, are all romantic characters. The entire play revolves around the theme of love and romance. Viola being shipwrecked lands in the seashore of Illyria and decides to serve the Duke, Orsino. As she serves the Duke, she falls in love with him, of which he is unaware. Strangely, she disguises herself as a man, and as a result, she does not leave any scope for the Duke to feel attracted towards her. She is sent to Olivia with a proposal of love which is out rightly rejected by Olivia. But it is quite romantic as love knows no boundary; Olivia is extremely passionate about love with Viola disguised as Cesario. It is Sebastian, brother of Viola at the end that fulfils the love-triangle.

In the play, *As You Like It*, the most important romantic element is youthful love. Rosalind and Orlando, the prominent characters fall in love with each other at first sight. They face several difficulties. But they struggle to overcome them. Orlando goes to the forest of Arden

and composes verses in praise of Rosalind's beauty and virtue. Rosalind disguises as Ganymede and meets Orlando in the forest and makes love. The other characters like Celia and Oliver, Phebe and Ganymede also find love. In all the Romantic Comedies like *Importance of Being Earnest*, *She Stoops to Conquer* love has been the destination.

6.2.6 Plot and Subplot:

Romantic Comedy generally consists of a main plot and a subplot. Both the main plot and the subplot in almost all the comedies have a particular pattern or a structure. The main plot is structured with an eligible noble man and woman having fallen in love with each other but face difficulties to marry for some reason. The reasons could be their social incompatibilities or their longstanding family conflicts or the reasons could also be that their unconscious love for each, as is displayed in the case of the characters, Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, John Worthing, and Algernon Moncrieff in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. After a long battle and endurance the lovers are united and by some external forces like an unravelling of a secret of a puzzle by others. Following their successful unity, their marriage or their willingness to marry is rejoiced with songs and dance or a feast wherein all the disharmonious essentials are eradicated or adjusted with the general elation. The presiding divine being is Hymen, the God of marriage. In brief, even though the action in the comedies concentrates on divine gain, marriage becomes the end point.

The other important aspect of the comedy is the subplot. In the subplot the characters come from the lower section of society (labour, worker, servants, watchman, guards, and Mechanicals) or act as a source of fun like Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*. The subplot has in general two significant roles which are firstly to caricature the main plot and wittingly or unwittingly solve the problems of the characters in the main plot. In brief, there are times or situations where the main plot and the subplot intermingle, and the play ends with reconciliation both with the aristocrats and low people.

In most Romantic Comedies, the plots and sub-plots are prominent. In *Twelfth Night*, if the main characters like Orsino, Olivia, Viola, and Sebastian fall in love and after difficulties become united, the characters like Sir Toby Belch and Maria also face difficulties in the journey of love and at the end get united. In *As You Like It*, if the main plot is about the grand love of Orlando and Rosalind, the sub-plot consists of lower characters like the relationship of Celia and Ganymede, Oliver, and Aliena. *Midsummer Night's Dream* is also consisted of plot and sub-plot.

6.2.7 The Purpose: Social values

Romantic Comedy has a larger purpose which emphasizes on acceptance of social values. All through the romantic comedies, there has been an effort to entertain the readers. While entertaining the readers the comedies have also eliminated the social evils and adulterous or obsessive love in the characters to inculcate the social values in the minds of the readers. The Romantic Comedies have created situations where characters have gone to the extent of gulling the characters irrespective of sexual and physical frankness but never gone to the extent of sexual obscenity. The comedies have very subtly discarded the malevolent attitudes of the characters such as Malvolio's gullible but have highlighted and appreciated the uprightness of the characters as represented by the uprightness of Viola, Olivia, and Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind and Orlando in *As You Like It*. The decency and honesty is in the character of John Worthing and vices are in the character of Algernon Moncrieff in the play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The human follies is presented through the miser character Euclio in Plautus' *Pot of Gold*. Therefore, the purpose of the Romantic Comedies has not just entertainment but also correcting the vices in characters as reflected in society.

6.2.8 Mistaken Identities:

Mistaken identities, twists, and turns abound in Romantic Comedies such as *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *Twelfth Night* among others. Prominently in the *Twelfth Night*, mistaken identity is a major part played by the characters. Viola plays the role of a male attendant to the Duke, Orsino in pursuit of attaining his love. Viola is the sister of Sebastian. Both the siblings were drowned in the sea. Sebastian and Viola lost her brother and took shelter in Orsino's place where she became attracted but remained disguised for fear of being exposed. Throughout the entire play, Viola remains disguised as a male attendant and wins the Duke's heart at the end of the play when the mistaken identities of both Viola and Sebastian who was also mistaken by both Olivia and Duke Orsino to Viola. The physical resemblance of both Viola and Sebastian creates confusion and mistaken identities in the minds of the other characters in the play.

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind who is banished by Frederick from the court disguises as Ganymede wearing the dress of a countryman, and Celia disguises as Aliena. Both of them reach the forest of Arden to meet Orland who mistakes their identities but is found to be Rosalind, his beloved. In another play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, the mistaken identities are prevalent. Claudio is about to marry his beloved Hero. But the malcontent brother of the prince of Arragon

disrupts Claudio's marriage by letting him see that Borachio is wooing his beloved Hero., who is the maidservant, in disguise as Hero. Claudio mistakes the real identity of the maidservant thinking her to be Hero. He denounces the marriage. Hero, the beloved disappointed falls and dies. Later Claudio understands the trick made to him and repents. The play ends with the exposition of the identities. Claudio gets ready to marry a veiled cousin of Hero, who surprisingly turns out to be Hero herself. In other Romantic Comedies also mistaken identities are a major issue that creates endless laughter. The mistaken indemnities at the end of the plays lead to the climax and resolution of the events by exposition of real identities.

6.2.9 Battle of Wits:

Humour is an important feature of romantic comedies. It is through humour that the writers have satirized the human shortcomings and weaknesses and the follies. Over and over again the humor concentrates on a war of witticisms among the different characters in plays such as *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and also *She Stoops to Conquer*. The use of humor in comedies plays a pivotal role in amusing the readers creating an atmosphere of ridicule and satire. The speeches of Malvolio regarding Olivia are a source of humor that entertains the readers and thereby exposes the trivial and funny attitudes of a character. While the humor may not always be the only focus in the play, the main lovers even facing the difficulties move forward to achieve their goals and happiness in the end.

6.2.10 Music:

Music in the Romantic Comedies has been an inevitable feature. The musical stage has also been popular since long years. The Italian `comic opera` – opera buffa – is considered to be delicate and amorous in themes. *Il Barbiere di Seville* was a kind of pure comedy. *Le Nozze di Figaro* was certainly comical but supplemented in theatrical elements. And *L'elisir d'amore* was also conceivably among the most romantic of the comic operas. The tradition of operas at the end of the 19th century, became very renowned in America. The storylines of the comedies were usually buoyant, satirical, and also humorous. The operas usually demonstrated the larger-than-life romances with joyful endings. The music makes the play *As You Like It* more romantic as it has sweet songs that add special charm and a melodious environment to the play. The comic minor characters play songs for their amusement exposing their follies. *Twelfth Night* opens with a quote made by the Duke Orsino asks his men to play the music and comfort his ear as he is sick

in the love of the beautiful Olivia, saying if music can be the food of love and soothe one`s heart. Music has always been the summation of the mood of the plays. The Duke of Illyria says,

“DUKE. If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.
That strain again! It had a dying fall;
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour! Enough, no more;
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou!
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price
Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy,
That it alone is high fantastical.” (Shakespeare, 2032)

6.2.11 Happy Union:

Happy union as an ending of a play is one of the most prominent features in Romantic Comedy. It revolves around a love theme containing a happy ending. The romantic comedies are found in Shakespearean plays and also in some of the Elizabethan contemporary playwrights. These romantic plays mostly deal with romanticized or authentic love affairs. However, it is to

believe that the true love never finds an easy way to fulfilment. Throughout the play, there is a chain of events reaching climax through many difficulties and leading to the resolution of all the difficulties and finally the happy union of the hero and the heroine who struggled hard to be united.

In the *Twelfth Night*, several characters face difficulties to find their match. They struggle. Viola struggles to convince Duke Orsino. Olivia pines for Viola. Sebastian, Viola's brother is lost and then roams around the city and finally reaches the kingdom of Orsino. As the play nears the ending, in the cycle of events, Olivia meets Sebastian; Viola convinces and wins over Duke Orsino. The minor characters such as Malvolio, Sir Toby Belch, and Maria find their match and unite at the end leading to a happy union. In most romantic comedies, the happy union is a common phenomenon that leads to a common and expected ending of the plays.

In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the journey of the characters Jack and Algernon were not smooth. They went through difficulties, mistaken identities, and tests of characters but in the end, their identities are unmasked and they were united with their desired partners. Overcoming a lot of misunderstandings and confusion the love between the Young Marlow and Miss Hardcastle leads to marriage as a happy ending at the end of the play, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* ends with a happy union of the protagonists Orlando and Rosalind, and the union of the minor characters like Oliver and Aliena, and Celia. After facing many difficulties they reconciled with one another and end with a happy union through marriage. The plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing* among many others do not just entertain and amuse the readers but also demonstrate a journey of life through difficulties to happiness.

The characteristics of romantic comedies could be even wider. Various comic elements mixed with romance produce romantic comedies. They do not just amuse the readers, but rather the romantic comedies demonstrate the various aspects of human life through sometimes sufferings, pain, and tragic incidences but through also sometimes, trivialities, childish attitudes, stupidities, and frivolous. The comedies also can be romantic in the case of settings of the plays. The setting of the plays does not follow the classical rule of unity of action and setting. The scenes of the play take place at various locations which add very romantic and comic dimensions to the plays. The seashore of Illyria in *Twelfth Night*, the forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, a wood a few miles distant from the city of Athens as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are such examples of setting that produces a sense of romanticism.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

Through the reading of this write up the students will get a thorough idea about the genre of comedy and its sub-genre, Romantic Comedy in English literature. They can describe and define the word comedy concerning other literary genres. They can explain and elaborate the themes of Romantic Comedies available in different texts of English literature. They can also list out prominent English literary texts that demonstrate comic yet romantic aspects of life represented in the literary imagination. They can compare and contrast the literary texts and their comic and romantic side of life reflected in literature. The learners can also inspect certain other literary works for enquiring about the romantic and comic representation in literary worlds. Through reading this writing on Romantic Comedies the students can also compose essays and short answer questions on the themes of comedy in English literature.

6.4 Glossary

Romance: a narrative genre in the literature involving a mysterious, adventurous, or spiritual story relating to a love connection. It also focuses on the storyline of bravery and strong social values.

Comedy: a fictional genre in literature having the purpose of amusement and satirizing the human follies. It not only amuses or entertains the readers; it also makes amendments to the vice of human characters.

Satire: a literary cleverness of diminishing or downgrading a matter through ridicules and attitudes of laughter, disdain, contempt, or indignation. The true purpose of satire is to make amendments of vices by castigation.

Tragedy: a branch of drama that represents human suffering and primarily the unfortunate or sorrowful events that befall the main characters. It highlights the human errors and the subsequent purification or purgation of the errors.

Fancy: the power of imagination and depiction in artistic manifestation. The term is sometimes referred as a synonym for imagination, particularly in the sense of the power of visualizing and creating artistic form which is not existent, known, or experienced. Imagination is an alternative word for fancy and also it is known as supernaturalism. (Britannica)

Realism: In the arts, the precise, thorough, unornamented presentation of nature is more about the contemporary life. Realism discards imaginative veneration in respect of the close observation of external appearances.

Plot: In literary arts, plot is the structure of interconnected actions, intentionally selected and designed by the author for creating a coherent story. The plot in general involves a considerably higher level of narrative organization which normally does not occur in an ordinary story or a fable.

Subplot: It is a side strand of a plot and it runs parallel to the main plot. It has a storyline somewhat related to the events of the main plot and in a way, the subplot supports the development of the main plot.

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is another title of *Twelfth Night*? *
2. Whose identities are mistaken in *Twelfth Night*?
(a) Olivia (b) Viola
(c) Sebastian (d) Antonio
3. Why does Olivia offer a ring to Cesario in *Twelfth Night*? *
4. Find out the author of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
(a) William Shakespeare (b) Joseph Conrad
(c) Oscar Wilde (d) G.B. Shaw

5. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare was published in ____

- (a) 1595 (b) 1585
(c) 1600 (d) 1610

6. Which text can be considered the earliest Romantic Comedy _____?

- (a) Robert green`s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*
(b) Nicolus Udall`s *Ralph Roister Doister*
(c) William Shakespeare`s *As You Like It*
(d) Plautus`s *Pot of Gold*

7. Chronologically arrange the Romantic Comedies of William Shakespeare _____

- (a) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (b) *As You Like It*
(c) *Twelfth Night* (d) *Much Ado About Nothing*

8. Who is the author of *Pygmalion*?

- (a) William Goldsmith (b) Joseph Conrad
(c) G.B. Shaw (d) William Shakespeare

9. William Goldsmith`s *She Stoops to Conquer* is published in _____

- (a) 1595 (b) 1585
(c) 1600 (d) 1610

10. What is the source of William Shakespeare`s *As You Like It*? *

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Define what Romantic Comedy is. Provide some examples of Romantic Comedy in English literature.

2. What is the role of Music in Romantic comedies? Refer to *Twelfth Night*.

3. What are the romantic elements do you find in William Goldsmith`s *She Stoops to Conquer*?

4. How did Shakespeare alter the Romantic Comedy formula in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Briefly discuss.

5. What is the main plot of Romantic Comedy? Why does it have feasting or dancing in the end?

6.5.3 Long Answer Question:

1. Explain the romantic and comic elements in *Twelfth Night*.

2. Discuss in detail the features of Romantic Comedy in English literature.

3. Discuss the historical developments of the genre of Romantic Comedy in English Literature.

6.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit – 7: Plot Construction

Structure

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- 7.1 Objectives
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 - 7.2.3.7 Climax
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7.0 Introduction

The play *Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare came into hands in printed form in 1600 and only 19 copies have survived of that edition. The play centers around intolerance, revenge, prejudice, money, mercy, law, greed, friendship, and marriage. Technically speaking, the play belongs to the genre termed as comedy but it is often referred to as problem comedy or tragicomedy because here comedy is mixed with some serious and dark aspects of human life as well as nature. Pound of flesh, ring, and the game of casket have symbolic significance in the play. The tone of the play is comic, romantic as well as tragic at the same time. Law, cross dressing, and mercy in the end have been implied as a motifs in the play. Foreshadowing technique is very much evident in the opening scene and Shakespeare is well acquainted with the

wretched fate he is going to hand on two levels; the loss of Antonio's ships and the attitude of Shylock.

The setting of the play is 16th century period and it is set in Venice and Belmont. Though the play is written in a light tone and mood but at a time the scene becomes serious and dark especially, the scene created by Shylock with regard to pound of flesh. Clever dialogues and witty remarks among characters are the key features of the play. Deception and disguise also play an imperative role in the development of the plot. These have also acted as a source of humour as well as a source of survivor as far as the life and stake of Antonio in the play is concerned. As there is no narrator in the play likewise there are no clear cut hints of who is the actual hero or protagonist; Antonio or Bassanio. But as the role of Antonio is relatively passive so it can be summed up the way Bassanio saves Antonio and the way he wins Portia in the game of casket he is most likely the protagonist of the play.

Religious hostility between Jews and Christians is also a key feature as far as the development of theme is concerned. Shylock is furious mainly because of the attitude that is carried out against Jews and how a Christian has eloped with his daughter along with money. Money hence, has double role to play. His money is not returned in time by Antonio at one hand and a Christian has eloped with his daughter along with his money. The reversal of fate against religion comes into view when Antonio spares his money on the condition of his conversion into Christianity even then the half of his wealth goes to his eloped daughter Jessica. The play has numerous plots and there are many twists and turns as far as the advancement of plot is concerned. It is also asserted that friendship and love has more power than hatred and revenge. Bassanio is favoured by Antonio even at the risk of his life. It is paid back by him and his wife Portia when he was in deep trouble.

Family and friends reunion are also recurrent idea in the play we see that after gambling the life of Antonio in the hand of Shylock, Bassanio is able to win the love of Portia. Soon after the game of casket they marry. Though their new marriage is disturbed by the episode created by Shylock but it settles down amiably later on. On the other hand Jessica elopes with Lorenzo along with handsome amount of money. Reunion among Bassanio and Antonio also take place once Antonio is saved. He is able to become a rich merchant again by virtue of the fact that his ships safely landed on the port. The main conflict is Antonio takes loan for Bassanio from Shylock on a bond of a pound of his flesh. Rising action is when it is made known that the ships of Antonio are lost, climax takes place when Portia disguises herself as a lawyer and falling

action is the way Shylock converts to Christianity and the way he lends his half money to Jessica and her husband.

7.1 Objectives

The present unit is meant to achieve the following objectives. After going through the unit, the students will be able to:

- Know the historical and literary sources of the play.
 - Realize the religious grudges between Christians and Jews.
 - Comprehend the play is based on three plots.
 - Know the conflicts in most of the characters and plots.
 - Realize *The Merchant of Venice* is a tragicomedy.
-

7.2 Plot Construction

7.2.1 Historical and Literary Sources of Plot:

The Merchant of Venice has been written keeping the historical context that is the exile or restriction on the rights of Jews in Europe. Jews were also outsourced from England in 1290 and they were not having any access to English until 1655 when Oliver Cromwell allowed them to come to England. However, it was believed that even during that period Jews in a limited number were there in and around London. The major reason behind this restriction was their dealing the usury that they were addicted to. Scholars and critics believed that during that period they remained in England in the disguise of Christian and they continued to practice usury which is also seen in *The Merchant of Venice* in the form of Shylock who not only practiced that practice but he is also cruel and inhuman at heart. He lends the money on the condition that if loan is not paid within time period he will take the pound of flesh from the body of Antonio. It shows why usury and Jews were banned in England as usury is against the law of nature as in the words of Francis Bacon “against nature for money to beget money.”

Apart from utilizing a historical context in writing this play Shakespeare has also utilized the literary context and background in writing *The Merchant of Venice*. He has used medieval as well as modern literary sources in depicting the plot in the play. It is spotted by critics that

Portia's game of three caskets has been derived from the 13th century concept of tales and anecdotes that has been inscribed by Chaucer in *Gesta Romanorum*. It is also believed by literary critics that *The Merchant of Venice* has been derived from Christopher Marlow's *The Jew of Malta* which was written and staged a decade before William Shakespeare wrote this play. The concept of Jews, Christianity, and revenge go hand in hand in both the plays. Conversion to Christianity is also common however, unlike Shylock, Barabas physically harms the characters in *The Jew of Malta*. The ending of the two plays is also different as Shylock is treated gently while Barabas has been killed by his enemies as they get united against him. Another source through which the plot seems to be originated is *Il Pecorone*, a collection of short stories of 14th century which has been written by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino. It had an episode that involved an Italian merchant who owns a pound of flesh to a Jewish moneylender.

7.2.2 Plot Summary:

Antonio is a rich and wealthy figure of Venice. Being a rich and popular figure he has many friends. Among his friends there is a young man named Bassanio for whom Antonio becomes guarantor while borrowing money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. Bassanio tells Antonio that in Belmont there is a rich and wealthy woman whom he can win for marriage but for that purpose he has to look as rich and wealthy as other suitors to cast a good impression. At this Antonio informs young Bassanio that he can happily lend him the amount he requires but at present he himself is short of money as his entire money is tied up in a shipwreck which is in sea yet. However, he encourages him that he will not let him down rather he can take loan from moneylender by using Antonio's good reputation as a merchant.

At Belmont Portia tells Nerissa how she is fed up with the act of persistence stream of suitors. In addition, she wishes to be free from the obligation of the will that is made by his father. But the trouble with her is that she is unable to choose her husband as she can marry only to that person who will correctly choose out of three caskets from gold, silver and lead. As one of these caskets contains her portrait and that is the lucky casket. None of her earlier suitors than Bassanio could be successful in picking up the right casket. Even she was not interested in any of them. But when Nerissa mentions the name of Bassanio as a possible and suitable suitor the mood of Portia is enlightened at once because Bassanio had once come to Belmont and Portia was greatly impressed by him. On the other hand Shylock, who has a secret hatred against Antonio, is agreed to lend Bassanio the required three thousand ducats for three months on the surety of Antonio. He puts the condition that if money is not returned on the fixed day he will cut

one pound flesh from the body of Antonio. Antonio agrees as he is sure that his ships will reach within a month much before the bond will be due.

At this point another subplot emerges when a close friend of both Antonio and Bassanio whose name is Lorenzo develops a loving relation with the daughter of Shylock. The name of his daughter is Jessica. Lorenzo not only develops a close intimacy with Jessica but also able to elope her. She elopes with him with a huge amount of her rich father. This incident enrages Shylock and he becomes infuriate to take revenge. After this incident Bassanio leaves for Belmont to choose the casket. When he is asked to choose one of the caskets Portia immediately falls in love with him and beseeches him to wait few days before making an attempt to choose the casket. In the meanwhile Bassanio too is fallen in love with Portia. He rejects the gold and silver and chooses a lead casket. When it is opened, it carries the portrait of Portia. This makes both Bassanio and Portia overjoyed and happy. They decide that they should marry at once along with Nerissa and Gratiano who are also in love with each other.

There is happiness and enjoyment all over in Belmont until Bassanio finds a letter from Antonio which has stated that his ships are lost in the sea and if money is not arranged, Shylock will take a pound of his flesh. Once it will be taken he will not be alive. Bassanio becomes horrified but his wife Portia gives him the money to pay off for the bond to save Antonio. At this Bassanio leaves for the Venice with the money. On the other hand Shylock is enraged with revenge. He is not only adamant towards the money to be paid to him in accordance with the bond but his daughter also has eloped and his money has been stolen. Except fulfillment of the conditions of the bond nothing else could melt his anger. In the court of law which is presided over by the Duke of Venice, Shylock comes across his enemy Antonio who is surrounded by his friends. On the other hand Shylock is surrounded by enemies from all sides. Bassanio requests Shylock to accept the double amount and leaves Antonio but Shylock angrily refuses to accept the offer.

At this point of time, Portia and Nerissa enter the court in the disguise of a lawyer and law clerk respectively. Portia informs the Duke that she has been sent by a learned attorney whose name is Dr. Bellario in order to plead the case of defendant. She requests Shylock to be merciful but he does not pay heed to her. At this she offers triple amount to spare Antonio but he is unmoved. At this point of time she accepts that Shylock has all the legal right to take one pound of flesh from Antonio's body. But she warns him to be careful as he can take flesh but during the process not a single drop of blood must be spilled. If it does happen all his lands and

money will be confiscated. At this Shylock immediately agrees to the triple amount to be paid on the bond. But now Portia refuses. Shylock even shows his consents for mere original amount of the bond to be paid but again Portia refuses to accept his readiness. She reminds him that it was his demand to have the hardest interpretation of the law but now he himself has to face the consequences.

She also reminds him that he is an alien in Venice and he has attempted to claim and take the life of a Venetian person hence, his property will be divided between Antonio and the government and his life will be at the mercy of Duke. Now the life and property of Shylock was at stake. However, the Duke decides to spare Shylock if he pays half of his money to Antonio and the rest to the state. Antonio, at this point, says that he will not take money from Shylock if he agrees to become a Christian. He adds that if Shylock agrees to become a Christian he will leave the money for his daughter Jessica and her husband Lorenzo. Finding no way out Shylock accepts all these conditions and goes out of the court of justice. Antonio and his friends become happy and decide to pay whatever the young lawyer wishes. But to their utter surprise she refuses to take money and wishes only for the ring that is wore by Bassanio. Bassanio gets disturbed as it is given to him by his wife who told him to wear it always. But Portia in the disguise of a lawyer insists on her wish. Bassanio finding no way out unwillingly takes off the ring and gives it to the young lawyer.

On the same note Nerissa manages to get the ring from Gratiano she has given to him. It is a plan on the part of both the ladies to tease their husbands about the rings back in Belmont. When Bassanio and Gratiano come back to Belmont along with Antonio, their wives ask about the rings they gave them. Portia and Nerissa teasingly blame that they have given those rings to other ladies but both the men refuse. At this Portia and Nerissa after teasing and making fun of both the men discloses that they themselves are the learned attorney and the clerk whom they have given the rings soon after the judgment in the court of law in Venice. In this way everything settles down happily. Portia gives Antonio a letter which is bearing the news that all of his ships are safe and have safely landed on the port.

7.2.3 Analysis of Plot:

7.2.3.1 Three Subplots:

The plot of the play is consisted of three subplots. In the first plot we are informed that in order to win Portia, Bassanio takes loan from a moneylender Shylock with a contract that if the

money is not returned within three months he will take a pound flesh from the body of Antonio who stands as a surety for the loan. The second plot centers around how Bassanio is able to win Portia in the game of casket and how Antonio is taken into trouble as money could not be paid to Shylock. At this how Portia acts as a lawyer and authenticates the claim of Shylock in the court of justice. The third plot is about how Portia reverse the table by saying that he can take flesh but cannot spill a single drop of blood from the body of Antonio. This plot concludes that all the couples live happily after their marriage. Worries of Antonio are gone as he is spared from the clings of Shylock. In addition, his ships land on the port safely and he is rich again.

7.2.3.2 Settings of the Plot

The plot is set at two places one in Venice, especially the streets of Venice which is a hub of trade. Though Jews were legally banned to trade since 1290 but Venice had a law which permitted the non Venetian to trade as they had boosted the economy of the city to a great deal. It is the same law that assists Shylock claim for bond as is stated by Antonio:

*The Duke cannot deny the course of law,
For the commodity that strangers have
With us in Venice, if it be denied,
Will much impeach the justice of his state;
Since that the trade and profit of the city
Consisteth of all nations. (Act III, Scene 3)*

Though Antonio was a rich and influential fellow but exception cannot be granted to him as it will bring bad name to the overall impact of the city. It has created a strife based on religion especially among Christian and Jews in case of Antonio and Shylock. Hence, this setting of the play is tense and full of problems but on the other hand the plot that takes place in Belmont is easy, smooth, and cheerful. We witness the marriages and resolution of the issues that even arise out at Venice. Good news are also revealed and brought up at the same place.

7.2.3.3 Absence of Narrator

*It is a play that is written without a narrator. In most of the plays and novels we have narrator who narrates the entire tales. Often narrator is associated with the writer that narrator is the mouthpiece of the writer but in *The Merchant of Venice* there is no narrator rather a bunch of characters who come to stage and perform their part as the tale moves on till its culmination.*

7.2.3.4 Beginning of the Plot

The beginning of the plot and how the story unfolds is not happy one. Antonio is shown being sad as he gets to know that he is going to lose his friend Bassanio to Portia. While, Portia on the other hand is also unhappy and not in her natural flow as her father had died but has set a gamble in her life. She is unable to choose a husband of her choice as her father has left her in a lottery game. Keeping in view the will of her father, her would be husband has to choose one of three caskets carrying her portrait in order to obtain her as his wife. So far none of the suitors could choose the right casket to win her. The other reason for that is Portia does not like any of them.

7.2.3.5 Conflict Arise

After unhappy beginning there arises the conflict in the plot as a key element. Everyone here has one or the other conflict. Antonio's conflict is that he is going to lose his friend yet he is willing to pay anything for him. It is due to this fact that he is ready to sign a bond with Shylock on unfavorable conditions merely because of Bassanio. As Shylock has old hatred and religious grudge against Antonio. Bassanio too has conflicts. First conflict is that he is poor. He has not paid his previous loan to Antonio and he is again in need of money. His second conflict is the conditions imposed by Shylock as he thinks it unfair to risk the life of his best friend but Antonio relaxes him that everything will be alright. His third conflict is the game of casket as he has to choose one and it can turn either way. He can have Portia as a wife in case he chooses the right casket but in case it is otherwise he will lose her forever. Out of impatiently Bassanio decides to play the game without any delay. Shylock has his conflict too as his daughter has eloped with Lorenzo with lots of money. He wants to take revenge of it. His second conflict is the hatred and religious grudge against Antonio.

7.2.3.6 Complication among Conflict

After choosing the right casket Bassanio is allowed to obtain his love and it seems that his conflicts are resolved as he will have lots of money to repay his loan. But soon a letter is handed over to him which describes the sad fate his friend Antonio is going to have. His ships have lost and he is unable to repay the loan to Shylock. Shylock, due to his old hatred against him and because of the elopement of his daughter with a Christian, wants to take revenge from Antonio and demands one pound of flesh from his body. It is also narrated in the letter that finding no way out Antonio has resigned to the fate. He only says that he wants to see his friend Bassanio before meeting his fate. Bassanio, finding no alternate, has to leave his young newly beautiful bride to go to Venice to see his friend. Portia lends him the required money to pay off

to spare Antonio. In addition, she sends her people in disguise to see the proceeding of the court and to see what can be done on their part to save the life of Antonio.

7.2.3.7 Climax

The trial is held in the court. Shylock demands only one pound flesh and nothing else. Bassanio offers him the required amount to fulfill the bond payment but Shylock refuses. Bassanio even offers him the double amount to spare Antonio but Shylock is unmoved. Finding no alternative Antonio has resigned to his fate and he is seen shirtless in order to meet his fate as Shylock wants only one pound of flesh from the body of his old rival. This scene is the climax of the story.

7.2.3.8 Anticlimax

When Shylock is not ready to take the money and insists on taking the flesh, a learned doctor and a clerk are introduced to the court to defend the case of Antonio. Portia in the disguise of a lawyer offers Shylock triple amount to spare Antonio but he is still unmoved. At this a twist in tale takes place as she asks Shylock to take a pound of flesh as his legal right but not to spill a single drop of blood from the body of Antonio otherwise all his wealth and property will be taken away. At this Shylock hastily agrees to take the triple amount but the lawyer refuses to pay him the amount. He is even agreed to the actual amount but she is disagreed. The Duke decides that Shylock will be spared in case he pays half of his wealth to Antonio. Antonio says that he will not take the money if Shylock becomes Christian and that he will give that half of his wealth to his daughter Jessica. Shylock in helplessness agrees to all the conditions. At this Portia and Nerissa demands the rings from Bassanio and Gratiano as their fee and come back to Belmont.

7.2.3.9 Happy Ending

The plot culminates at the point that Antonio is released. The issues of rings are also resolved. All the newly couples happily live afterward. Another happy event takes place when Portia comes with the news to Antonio that his ships are saved. They have safely reached and landed on the port. Hence, everything is resolved in a happy and light note. There is a merry making environment all around Belmont. Antonio is rich again while others enjoy blissful marriage with their partners.

7.3 Learning Outcomes

The present unit tried to bring out the historical and literary sources of the play *The Merchant of Venice*. After going through the unit, students came to know the play is a tragicomedy by one of all time greatest playwrights William Shakespeare. Students are familiarized with the plots and conflicts in the plots and characters. The students also realized the age old enmity between Christians and Jews. Through the detailed summary given in the unit, the students could comprehend the story of the play.

7.4 Glossary

Tragicomedy: A play or novel containing elements of both comedy and tragedy.

Casket: Box, Chest

Motifs: Theme, Idea, Concept

Imperative: Important, Crucial, Essential

Stake: Investment, / a wooden post to which a person was tied before being burned alive as a punishment, / risk.

Climax: Peak point

Usury: The practice of lending money at high rates of interest

Anecdote: A short account of a real incident or person

Conflict: Clash, Dispute, Disagreement

Culminate: End, Conclude

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Questions

1. In which year *The Merchant of Venice* was published?
(a) 1616 (b) 1590
(c) 1600 (d) 1690
2. Who is the protagonist in the play?
(a) Antonio (b) Bassanio

- (c) Shylock (d) Portia
3. Which casket contains the portrait of Portia?
- (a) Gold casket (b) Silver casket
(c) Lead casket (d) None of these
4. Who does choose the correct casket?
- (a) Antonio (b) Bassanio
(c) Lorenzo (d) Shylock
5. Who is in disguise of lawyer in the courtroom in *The Merchant of Venice*?
- (a) Nerissa (b) Lorenzo
(c) Portia (d) None of these
6. Why do Shylock and Antonio despise each other?
- (a) Religious Differences (b) Commercial differences
(c) Social differences (d) All the above
7. Who is the merchant of Venice in the play?
- (a) Lorenzo (b) Antonio
(c) Bassanio (d) Gratiano
8. What is Shylock's profession?
- (a) Lawyer (b) Sailor
(c) Merchant (d) Usurer
9. If Antonio cannot pay the money back in three months he must give Shylock:
- (a) A piece of land (b) A pound of his flesh
(c) His car (d) None of these
10. Bassanio wants to marry Portia for what reason?
- (a) She has money (b) He loves her
(c) He is lonely (d) She is beautiful

7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Delineate the character sketch of Antonio.

2. Why was Shylock so adamant to take a pound of flesh from Antonio's body?
3. What was the condition to win the hand of Portia for marriage?
4. Discuss the character of Portia.
5. Explain the ending of *The Merchant of Venice*.

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Is Shylock a victim, a villain, or some combination of both? Discuss.
2. Discuss the trial scene of courtroom in *The Merchant of Venice* in details.
3. Discuss *The Merchant of Venice* a play about bonds and debts.

7.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit – 8: Themes in Merchant of Venice

Structure

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Objectives

8.2 Themes

8.2.1 Revenge

8.2.2 Prejudice

8.2.3 Friendship

8.2.4 Money & Wealth

8.2.5 Mercy

8.2.6 Self interest vs. Humanity

8.3 Learning Outcomes

8.4 Glossary

8.5 Sample Questions

8.6 Suggested Readings

8.0 Introduction

As the play opens it is made known to the readers and audience that a beautiful, wealthy and virtuous heiress of Belmont Portia has captivated the attention of numerous suitors to be her would be. Among her suitors there is a noble man whose name is Bassanio but he is penniless. Without amount to woo he can never be able to win Portia. So in order to won her, he takes loan from a Jewish moneylender Shylock on the guarantee of his friend Antonio. On the condition that if Antonio is not able to pay back in due time Shylock will take a pound of flesh from his body. After lending money Bassanio is able to choose the right casket and hence able to win Portia as his bride. Portia is also happy at this and gives him a ring as a sign of her love which he has to wear all his life. In the meanwhile Jessica the daughter of Shylock runs away with Lorenzo and they come to live there as well. Lorenzo is an intimate friend of Bassanio.

Jessica not only deserts her father but has also stolen lot of his money with her which infuriates Shylock. He is angry that his daughter has eloped with a Christian at one hand and with his money on the other hand. Among weeding, delight, and happiness they are informed that Antonio's ships have not reached and he is unable to pay for the loan. Shylock is shown appealing to the court of Venice to let him take a pound of flesh as he is already fired up.

Bassanio immediately leaves for Venice to save his friend Antonio. When Shylock is not agreed to any payment plan for his loan except the pound of flesh, Portia comes in disguise of a lawyer and turns the table. At first she offers him the amount of the loan even extra money to let Antonio spare from pound of flesh. Later on she tries to persuade him through her famous speech on mercy when he is unmoved. But Shylock is not interested in money or mercy he is frying in anger and revenge.

The episode of her daughter along with money and secret hatred against Antonio assisted by hatred against entire Christian community makes him mad with anger. At this she comes up with the view that under law he is entitled to take a pound of flesh from the body of Antonio as per the terms of bond but he has to ensure that not a drop of Antonio's blood should spill out during the process. Otherwise all of his property and money will be liable to confiscated. In addition, he will have to face the execution as per Venetian law on the charge of plotting to take the life of a Venetian person. At this Shylock agrees to take the previously offered amount and spare Antonio from pound of flesh but this time Portia refuses to give him any money. Now it is the time of Antonio and his lawyer to put their condition to let Shylock go out of the court. They agree to let him go on the condition that half of his money will go to Lorenzo and he has to convert himself into Christianity. Finding no way out Shylock agrees to the terms and comes out of the court hopelessly.

Here the main episode of Antonio and Shylock ends but Portia and her assistant in disguise demand the rings from their husbands as a token of thanks to their services in the court. Both the suitors though unwillingly give their rings to them and both the ladies hurry back to Belmont and wait the return of their husbands. On their husband arrival they tease them by asking about the rings but later relate the entire scene. In the meanwhile ships of Antonio have arrived as a return of fortune. In this way play ends happily except for Shylock.

8.1 Objectives

Current study is meant to achieve the subsequent objectives based on the themes or recurrent ideas projected in *The Merchant of Venice*. It is meant to

- Highlight the mindset and nature of both Christian as well as Jews as depicted in the play.
- Pinpoint the worldly and self centered approach side by side kind and human feelings.
- Indicate the contrast in view the two opposite schools of thoughts with regard to lending loan in Venice at the time when play was written.

- Assert the fact that friendship and human values are more respectable as compare to self centered and monetary values.
- Project the idea that those who do not take mercy on others have to face the music of their wrong doing in this very world.
- Underline the fact that money and wealth does not mean that we are happy and contented. Money is a dual edge weapon as is shown in the play.
- Indicate that human relations, values and friendship need sacrifices but it comes to rescue when we find no way or have shelter.

8.2 Themes

8.2.1 Revenge:

It is a powerful and destructive force that is employed in the play. Shylock wants to hurt Antonio in one way or the other at any cost merely because he wants to hurt and takes revenge from entire Christian community. He is doing so to take revenge of his daughter that has eloped with a Christian along his money that he is why he is infuriated. Shylock is so full of revenge that in the play he justifies his act of hurting Antonio and entire Christian community in these words “If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?” Shylock deems that he has been disrespected by Christian because of the episode of his daughter in addition to the secret hatred that he has against Antonio. So, as revenge is natural so he tries to take revenge from Antonio in order to satisfy himself. He is not ready to alter the conditions of the bond merely because he wants to punish Antonio for revenge. But he forgets that he is less logical than emotional and that is why table was turned other way at the end of the play.

8.2.2 Prejudice:

Shylock has a prejudice against all Christians and he is not ready to trust them. In the play when he first appears on the scene he comes up with the remark about Antonio as “I hate him for he is a Christian”. Later he asks his daughter to close the house because he has no trust on Christian. It is the result of his strong hatred towards Christian that his daughter Jessica runs away with a Christian Lorenzo and out of hatred and prejudice he deems it a betrayal. This episode has permanently destroyed his ideas towards Christians. On the other hand Christians too have deep prejudice against Shylock because he is a Jewish. Though out of necessity Antonio takes loan from Shylock but his opinion about him remains the same “I am as like to call thee

[dog] again / to spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.” It is representative of his deep hatred and prejudice against Shylock. It becomes more vibrant in the mind of Christian when Antonio fails to repay the loan and Shylock shows merciless attitude towards Antonio. It is culminated when after change of fate Antonio puts the condition of Shylock change into Christianity that indicates that he as well as other Christians has deep prejudice against Shylock's Jewish identity.

8.2.3 Friendship:

This is yet another very recurrent idea that has dominated the entire action of the play. Antonio feelings for Bassanio is so strong that despite the fact that he has not returned his previous loan Antonio is ready to arrange another loan for him even at the risk of his own life. Their friendship is so strong that though Antonio has hatred and prejudice against Shylock but for his friend Bassanio he is ready to take loan from him even at a condition that later turned his own life at risk. Their strong bond is indicative from the fact that when Shylock puts cruel condition of taking a pound of flesh from Antonio's body if he is not able to repay in time, Bassanio asks Antonio not to take loan but Antonio says that he is more than happy to die for his friend. In return Bassanio remarks about Antonio “life itself, my wife and all the world / Are not with me esteemed above thy life” also asserts their strong bonding. And in the later part of the play when Antonio is in trouble Bassanio leaves his newly bride and comes back to Antonio to save his life. He offers Shylock double amount to save his life. Hence it is a two way bonding that takes entire action of the play around it.

8.2.4 Money & Wealth:

Money and wealth is yet another major theme in the play. Numerous wealthy figures are projected in the play such as Shylock and Antonio. But the irony is that despite the fact they have countless money yet they are unhappy and in trouble one way or the other. Antonio is a rich Merchant but not only has he suffered at various ends in his life rather his fate turns to miserable because his ships have not received. Portia is a rich heiress but because of the condition for her marriage that his father puts she complains about this world as “my little body is awearry of this great world.” Shylock is yet another major figure who is wealthy yet he is unhappy and discontent. Money has been put as a source of greed as well as a test for friends. Antonio has money but he is not greedy and selfish but Shylock has money which makes him greedy, cruel and inhuman. Money also acts a resolution of the problem as Bassanio takes money to play the game of casket to win Portia. When Antonio was in trouble due to lack of money to repay the loan Portia suggests “You shall have gold / To pay the petty debt twenty times over.” Again money comes to resolve the issue.

8.2.5 Mercy:

Mercy which is a divine quality is yet another significant idea or subject matter in the play. The conflict between Shylock and Antonio has a major role in defining the concept of mercy. Shylock by law and according to the terms of bond is eligible to take one pound of flesh from the body of Antonio but everybody expects a mercy and feeling of humanity towards him on the part of Shylock. These feelings become strong when Antonio well wishers offer him more than double amount to let him go. But here Shylock shows merciless attitude which develops even more hatred and prejudice against Jewish on the part of Christian. Later on when the table is turned and Shylock is in trouble he is expecting that Antonio will treat him just like the way he has treated him but unlike him Antonio shows mercy and kindness. He even asks him that if he turns into Christianity he will not take any amount rather it will go to his own daughter. However, in between these two acts is the role of Portia who acts smartly to save Antonio but when Shylock is shown in trouble and gets ready to accept the amount offered to him previously Portia declines his offer just to put him in his shoe.

8.2.6 Self interest vs. Humanity:

Another major idea that is depicted through Christian and Jews is that Jews are shown as cruel, inhuman and selfish in the form of Shylock. While on the other hand Christians are projected as human who has strong feelings for their relations and friends even at the cost of their money and life. Antonio and Shylock both are wealthy and lend other loans when they are in need. But there is a difference in their mindset. Antonio lends loan without any interest and even puts his own life at a risk when others need money. While Shylock is a cruel and inhuman who puts merciless condition while extending loan of taking a pound of flesh if loan is not paid in time. On the other hand, Antonio values his relations even at the cost of his life but Shylock is not ready to make his own daughter happy despite having everything in the world. This all is indicative of the fact that Jews are the ones who are always motivated by money and self interest even at the cost of their dearly relations but on the other hand Christians love human and humanity. They extend their services for their friends and near and dears ones like Antonio and Portia who lends his husband the money he needs to save his friend Antonio.

8.3 Learning Outcomes

This unit will assist the learners to accomplish and achieve the subsequent learning outcomes with respect to the themes of *The Merchant of Venice*. It will assist them to

- Discern the nature and mindset of two opposite and conflicting ideologies Jews and Christians as depicted in the play.
- Unearth the worldly, materialistic and monetary values over love, humanity, relation and friendship.
- Have know-how about the loan and interest system along with inhuman condition of the bond at one hand and interest free loan on the other hand.
- Knowledge about the role of mercy in human life. Those who do not show mercy to other human have to suffer in the end.
- Learn the fact that money, power and authority are not a sign of happiness and contentment.
- Discern that hatred and prejudice against other human beings lead towards insecurity, unhappiness and destruction.

8.4 Glossary

Jew: A member or descendent of the Jewish people

Moneylender: A person who lends money and charges interest

Weed: Prepare

Spurn: Scorn, Despise, Disdain

Culminate: End, Conclude

8.5 Sample Questions

8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. In case of Portia which casket must be required by suitor to be picked up?
 - (a) Gold
 - (b) Silver
 - (c) Lead
 - (d) Copper
2. What is the reason behind Shylock cruel condition when loan is taken from him?
 - (a) Hatred

- (b) Love
 - (c) Inhumanity
 - (d) Enmity
3. The name of Shylock daughter is
- (a) Lorenzo
 - (b) Jessica
 - (c) Portia
 - (d) None of these
4. By origin Shylock is a
- (a) Muslim
 - (b) Hindus
 - (c) Jews
 - (d) Christian
5. With whom the daughter of Shylock elopes
- (a) Antonio
 - (b) Bassanio
 - (c) Lorenzo
 - (d) Cook
6. Which of this conflict with far reaching influences is depicted in Merchant of Venice?
- (a) Cultural
 - (b) Economic
 - (c) Academic
 - (d) Religious
7. How Antonio does behave to the inconsistent demand of Shylock in taking a pound of flesh from Antonio's body?
- (a) He cries
 - (b) He becomes restless
 - (c) He accepts
 - (d) He declines
8. Who comes to rescue Antonio in the disguise of Doctor of law?
- (a) Portia
 - (b) Jessica
 - (c) Judge
 - (d) His brother

9. What does Bassanio give the law clerk as a reward after she saves Antonio?
- (a) Money
 - (b) Gold
 - (c) Ring
 - (d) House
10. What news Antonio receive at the end of the play after he is saved?
- (a) He is married
 - (b) He gets money
 - (c) His lost ships arrive
 - (d) He becomes landlord

8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Why does Antonio accept the inhuman condition of the bond while taking loan from Shylock?
2. What is the actual reason behind Shylock condition of “pound of flesh” in the bond?
3. How Bassanio is able to win Portia despite having a humble background?
4. What is the result of hatred and prejudice in Merchant of Venice?
5. Love and friendship has more value than self centered and monetary values. Discuss in the light of Merchant of Venice.

8.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss mercy vs. inhumanity in light of Antonio and Shylock in Merchant of Venice.
2. Why is Shylock shown so merciless and self centered? State at least three reasons.
3. What social and historical context Shakespeare has projected in Merchant of Venice?

8.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit – 9: Major Characters

9.0 Introduction

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Major Characters

9.2.1 Antonio

9.2.2 Bassanio

9.2.3 Portia

9.2.4 Shylock

9.3 Learning Outcomes

9.4 Glossary

9.5 Sample Questions

9.6 Suggested Readings

9.0 Introduction

The Merchant of Venice is one of Shakespeare's most complex plays, with several opportunities for delving into character and motivation. Few other works of literature contain such intricate characters who appear so infrequently, such as Shylock, who appears in only four scenes but leaves an unforgettable impact. Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, regarded as the highest form of romance, brings orientalism and the concept of 'other' to the fore. The psychological topic of Shylock, the Jew, is also explored in the play. The conflict between the two communities, Christians and Jews, is also depicted. Christians always refer to themselves as the 'Occident,' while Jews and Muslims refer to themselves as the 'Orient,' and hence the 'other.'

The Merchant of Venice is a tragicomedy with a romantic element. There are romantic, tragic, and comedic themes in it. These elements have been combined in a striking way. This drama vividly depicts Elizabethan and Jacobean society, including its people, language, culture, politics, and so on. The skillful blending of romantic, humorous, and serious components gave it realistic basis and served it capture the audience's attention during the historical period. The drama appears to begin in an eastern style, with Antonio, the protagonist, feeling sad and uninterested, and knowing why. Salarino's talks demonstrate that he has an oriental mindset.

9.1 Objectives

The objectives of this unit are:

- To learn about William Shakespeare, one of the most famous dramatists in English literature.
- To comprehend the elements of a tragicomedy.
- To be able to appreciate and comprehend terminology such as stage setup, characterisation, dialogues, soliloquy, and other terms linked to play as a genre.
- To comprehend the relevance of William Shakespeare's opening act in his plays.

9.2 Major Characters

One hopes to bring out the active social, political, religious, and cultural elements of the Elizabethan time by analysing and interpreting Shakespeare's characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. Understanding the construction of a character, as well as his or her evolution, behaviour, and conduct, is helpful in comprehending numerous facets of society. It reveals the dramatic characters' motivations and insights. It captures the essence of the dramatist's personal reflections on his time's cultural landscape.

9.2.1 Antonio:

Antonio, the title character, is a wealthy guy from Venice who claims to have never borrowed money but is willing to lend it to friends at no charge. His trade ships are his main source of income as a merchant. In terms of his personality, he is a middle-aged rich, influential, and powerful man from Venice, but he is still depressed on the inside. One obvious, dramatic explanation for Antonio's quiet sadness is that William Shakespeare cannot give Antonio too much to do or say without depriving his key characters of valuable discussion time. As a result, Shakespeare portrays Antonio as a quiet, dignified character.

One of Antonio's most defining features is his compassion and friendliness. Bassanio can go to Belmont in the latest clothing to woo Portia, and he finds delight in presenting his handsome credit standing. His good deeds are intended to aid his colleagues, but he will never cease accepting more than the original amount in exchange. Antonio's kindness knows no bounds, and he is eager to go the extra mile for Bassanio, even if it means putting himself in danger.

Antonio is also a man of great integrity. Antonio is ready to fulfill the contract he made with Bassanio when he realizes that Shylock is acting within his legal rights.

“The Duke cannot deny the course of the law”, he says.

And later, he adds that he is “arm'd
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit . . .
For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it presently with all my heart.”

Antonio's bravery and integrity are finally rewarded towards the end of the play, when the three lovers are reunited and happiness reigns at Belmont, Portia brings a letter to Antonio informing him that the rest of his ships have safely returned to port.

Finally, we may claim that Antonio is one of the play's main characters. He is upset since he is unaware of the situation of his friends and ships that are travelling in the water. He is unable to properly express his grief. His buddies say that if they had as much merchandise to worry about as Antonio, they would be upset as well. His entire fortune is invested in numerous marine projects to far-flung locations. But Antonio is fully aware that it is not the lack of money that bothers him, but rather the absence of his friend Bassanio.

Antonio possesses a combination of mental and emotional attributes that drive him to assist others who come into contact with him. He is generous and kind to everyone. Because of his fair qualities, he earns the respect and admiration of his friends. For the sake of his companions, he endures. Among his friends, he is respected for his social duty. Salarino describes him as a “nice gentleman” who “treads the earth,” while Bassanio describes him as “the warmest friend” and “the kindest man.”

9.2.2 Bassanio:

Bassanio plays Antonio's close buddy and Portia's favourite suitor in the play. He is a young Venetian trader who admits to living beyond his means on several occasions, forcing him to borrow money from his friend Antonio. He asks Antonio for money at the start of the play so he can move to Belmont and pursue Portia as a wealthy man. Antonio, on the other hand, recommends that he acquire a loan from a moneylender and offers to be the loan's guarantee. Antonio approached Jewish moneylender Shylock on behalf of Bassanio and requested the money on loan. Bassanio travels to Belmont with money in hand and successfully marries Portia.

Although he is financially irresponsible, Bassanio is compassionate and loyal to his friends. Despite the fact that he needs money to pursue Portia, he declares he would “rather linger in [his] necessity” than let his friend Antonio embrace such a risky relationship. During Antonio's trial, Bassanio gives up “[his] hands, [his] head, [his] heart” as a substitute for Antonio's pound of flesh. Despite the fact that he is reckless enough to play with money, Bassanio is hesitant to risk his friend's life. Despite his immaturity, his good qualities win Portia and Antonio's affection and love.

Bassanio's character is more finely drawn than Antonio's, yet he lacks the same power and personality as Portia and Shylock. He is not mature at first, but rather an opportunistic man who pursues Portia not only for her beauty but also for her money. He has borrowed money from a number of Venetian merchants. His main motivation for marrying Portia is to pay off all of his obligations. He refers to her as “value” and “worth,” as if she were an investment rather than a wife. Furthermore, he approaches Portia for marriage as if it were a legal arrangement rather than a romantic one. He asks Portia to “affirm,” “sign,” and “ratify” their relationship when he selects the correct chest. During Antonio's trial, Bassanio emphasises his friendship with Antonio over his marriage, despite the fact that his marriage is devoid of such feelings. He even takes away the ring Portia gave him as a symbol of their relationship.

Portia, on the other hand, tries to convince Bassanio that marriage comes first and that it requires appreciation. When she first gives Bassanio a ring, she is metaphorically presenting herself to him. Bassanio effectively gives Portia away by giving it away. Portia makes a pledge to his “soul” in order to reclaim the ring. Portia obtains equal command within her link as a result of this, as they are now both hers. With the passage of time, he learns to value his wife beyond her wealth, to actually love her, and to speak to her openly and honestly. Despite this tiny weakness, Portia recognises it and loves him profoundly.

When learning about Bassanio's character, the first step is to eliminate all questions and uncertainties about his financial habits. His first request for a loan from Antonio is entirely natural for him. He is a romantic merchant who is young and impetuous. Young guys in love, like him, are frequently in need of money; this is due to the fact that he has always lent money. Shakespeare's plot necessitates the presence of such a figure in this play.

Bassanio isn't particularly strong or powerful, but he is unquestionably nice and noble. To begin with, he has some of the play's most memorable lines - words with music, richness, and dignity. Second, he demonstrates his generosity and affection, particularly when he has just gained Portia and receives Antonio's danger message. He is immediately and deeply concerned about Antonio's well-being, and he is anxious to do whatever he can to help his friend. The scenario is heightened here, necessitating a passionate, almost impossible rescue operation.

9.2.3 Portia:

Portia is the play's romantic heroine, and she must be shown on stage as both beautiful and intelligent. She is shown as a strong, powerful, and confident woman who has chosen Bassanio as her spouse. Before Portia marries, she must investigate Bassanio's behaviour, as he must select between three caskets, only one of which will allow him to be with her. Portia is bound by her father's laws, and she is concerned enough to caution him and give him hints in the hopes that he

would make the right decision. The three caskets, gold, silver, and lead, must be chosen while grabbing everyone's attention, particularly Portia's, for the one he chooses will change the path of her life.

After learning more, Bassanio expands the process of voting for judgment of each casket by using scholarly remarks to highlight the flaws in each casket and what it represents. Portia feels humiliated by her dead father's wish, but she is serious in yielding to her father's wishes as well as society's great demands. She instills in her future husband the importance of being trustworthy. When Portia determines that she genuinely wants to get Bassanio in Act III, Scene II, she nails the severe and serious component of selecting a companion. "I pray you, delay," she pleads. "Wait a day or two before you take a chance, because if you make the incorrect decision, I'll lose your business" (3.2.1-3).

She appears before Bassanio makes his choice from the caskets to win her love, but only if the lead casket is chosen. He'll have a photograph and some lines written by Portia to congratulate him on his selection in the lead casket. While choosing on the casket, Bassanio says:

"Therefore, thou gaudy gold, Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee; Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge 'Tween man and man. But thou, thou meager lead, which rather threaten'st than dost promise aught, Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence; And here choose I. Joy be the consequence!" (3.2.101-7).

Bassanio attempts to appear intelligent when all he wants to do is win her over with his interest in her money. Bassanio believes that after he marries Portia, her riches will become mine, and I will be able to pay off all of my debts. When Bassanio unlocks the lead casket, he finds a picture and written verses from Portia, and the casket appears to be empty because it is wide open. Bassanio can't help but be devastated by the casket because it is exactly what he expected, but he is far from satisfied that he chose the perfect casket.

Ms. A. Jameson identifies Portia from *The Merchant of Venice*, Beatrice from *Much Ado about Nothing*, and Rosalind from *As You Like It* as intelligent characters in her book *Shakespeare's Heroines*. Portia is without a doubt the most intelligent of the three. Her intelligence isn't snobbish, and she doesn't wear it on her sleeve like a badge of honour.

She then presents him with a ring that binds them together. "I give them with this ring, which when you part with, lose, or give away, let it foreshadow the ruin of your love and be my vantage point to exclaim on you," she adds as she presents the ring. (3.2.171-4). Bassanio is warned by Portia that if the ring ever slips off his finger, they are in a relationship. In a way, it appears like she

is putting the brakes on Bassanio and her own relationship, as if she doesn't want to lose any hope or trust straight quickly. Salerio arrives with a letter for Bassanio from his friend Antonio, stating that he is in need of assistance, that his ships have gone missing, and that he is in debt to Shylock, a Jewish businessman in Venice. Antonio has borrowed money from Shylock and given it to Bassanio when he is in need, causing Antonio to become bankrupt. Portia encourages Bassanio to go and save his friend and pay the debts borrowed from Shylock, Portia says, "You shall have gold to pay the petty debt twenty times over." (3.2.306-7) Portia is telling Bassanio not to worry about the 6,000 ducats when he only requested, "For me, three thousand ducats."

Bassanio is prepared because of Portia, and when they marry, he will have complete authority over all of Portia's assets and will have access to all she has. Portia must remain at her position until he returns with Antonio, and she can only hope that the ring she gave him does not fall off his finger.

Her remark in Act III, Scene II, indicates that she is carrying out her late father's intention to marry the one she genuinely loves by directing Bassanio's fated course to allow him to be with her. Portia's Father's will will be nothing but deceptive and misleading if the right casket is not picked correctly, therefore part of the choice in marriage is his full assistance in choosing the perfect casket. As a result, Portia is pleased because everything has gone according to her father's wishes.

Another one of Portia's traits is that she is extremely courteous and sympathetic. She has genuine affections for the Prince of Morocco, but she politely reassures him. His sentiments are spared since he does not recognise the irony in her statements. He is "as lovely / As any comer I have looked at yet / For my affection," she says. She gives Morocco the respect he deserves for his position. But when he's gone, she admits that she didn't care for him. "Draw the curtains," she adds, with a kind riddance.

When the Prince of Arragon comes, Portia addresses him with all the respect that his status demands. She refers to him as "noble." "O, these purposeful fools!" she exclaims after he has failed and fled. Both of these men are shallow, greedy, and self-centered to her, but she is as ladylike as possible to their faces. When Portia allows her new husband to go to try to help his best friend out of his predicament, he tells her, "You have a lofty and a real conceit / Of god-like amity."

Finally, after the play is over, what we remember most about Portia is her wit and humour. Portia is witty even when she complains to Nerissa about the terms of her father's will: "Isn't it hard, Nerissa, that I can't choose one or refuse none?" Then she ticks off the idiosyncrasies of the six suitors who have arrived at Belmont to try for her hand, like a computer. They're either juvenile, irritable, volatile, ignorant, overdressed, weak, or have a drinking problem. When it's announced that they're leaving, she's clearly relieved to be free of them all.

She loses all her control after falling in love with Bassanio, until she regains her control of herself, she takes matters in hand at the very end of the play, and there she presents total command of the situation. "You are all amazed," she tells them, and then she shows them a letter from Padua, explaining everything, and she gaily invites them inside where she will continue to explain and entertain. She is a delightful creature, one of Shakespeare's most intelligent and captivating heroines.

Portia's actions demonstrate her love for Bassanio. As a proper hostess should, she invites him into her home. She has recently married the guy she loves, and she has given up her possessions as a charming green orchard in which to live and enjoy her love. She declares:

Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours
Is now converted. but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants
Queen o'er myself: and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours,- my lord's! (3.2.166-171)

Bassanio's love for Portia is sincere, and he is willing to go to great lengths for her. The storey of the caskets lottery and the processes represent their mutual affection. When he selects the appropriate casket, there is no doubt in our minds that he is deserving of being Portia's loving husband. He expresses his love for her by having it stream through his veins and mixed with his blood, and he is ecstatic about it.

9.2.4 Shylock:

In all of Shakespeare's drama, Shylock is one of the most vivid and memorable characters. He's a divisive character, and his portrayal has sparked a lot of discussion. Some have referred to him as a murderous villain, while others believe that, despite being a villain, he deserves sympathy. It is critical that we evaluate him objectively in terms of his character. He clearly has his unforgivable character traits, and he deserves to be labelled a villain. However, he is also a victim of others' wrong doings, therefore he deserves sympathy as well. In this aspect, Fletcher has his opinion:

Shylock is a type of national suffering, national sympathies and national antipathies; he is an object of bitter insult. He is surrounded by his Christian enemies whom he is too weak to oppose; he doesn't have his life among them but money, no hold on them but interest, no feeling toward them but hate, no indemnity out of them but revenge.

Shylock is a Jewish moneylender and trader. Money lending is not disgusting, shady, or even unappealing in and of itself. Money-lending, on the other hand, becomes odious and repugnant when a money-lender becomes an exploiter by demanding exorbitant interest rates. Shylock is a moneylender who strives to benefit himself and amass wealth by taking advantage of other people's financial needs. He is a dark humorist, a moral absolutist, a religious bigot, an ogre, and, astonishingly, a sentimentalist all at the same time. As a result, he acts as both a villain and a sad figure in *The Merchant of Venice*. He despises Antonio because he donates money to the poor without charging interest and is responsible for lowering the interest rate in Venice. Shylock has already amassed wealth through usury, yet his yearning remains unfulfilled. This is due to the fact that he is regarded as a In the play, there is a disgraceful character. This is an inborn characteristic of his because he is Jewish, and Jews have historically been viewed as usurers. Because Jews are endowed with sharp minds and talents, they are recognised as a multitalented people.

Shylock's character is driven by three forces: his desire for vengeance, his desire for wealth, and his desire for his race and faith. He astounds us not just with his avarice, but also with his religious beliefs. His hate of Christians is racial, not personal. He despises Antonio first and foremost because he is a Christian, and secondly because he lends money at a cheap interest rate.

Shylock despises not only Christians, but their religion as well, and he despises them vehemently. This could be one of the reasons he despises Antonio: Antonio is a Christian. He does not eat pig since he is a Jew, and he does not want to join the Christians at a celebration where pork will be served. There is no obligation to prefer or loathe a certain type of meat, but no one should despise another for eating meat or a specific type of meat. Patience and tolerance, as in all other situations, are the best approaches to take. Shylock despises Christians who consume pork. In one of his talks, he mentions the Biblical account of how Christ enticed the devil to take up the form of a pig. This is, nevertheless, a minor flaw in the play. He'll get there eventually. He eventually agrees to attend a Christian dinner, and his justification for doing so further diminishes his standing in our eyes. He wants to feast at the expense of Christians who are wasteful and waste money unnecessarily. He can save a little money at home by having a meal at the expense of Christians, and this is the pinnacle of miserliness and meanness.

The Jews had a reputation for being misers in the past, but this is no longer the case now. When Launcelot Gobbo declares that he is "famished" in the service of the Jew, he is referring to Shylock's miserliness (that is, starving). Shylock, on the other hand, tells Launcelot that he would not enjoy the same amenities in Bassanio's service as he does here, at the Jew's mansion. We find it amusing because, despite being a huge miser, Shylock considers himself to be very generous.

Shylock is known for emphasising the distinctions between Jews and Christians. Shylock's Jewish identity, like that of other Jews in the city, separates him from the rest of the Venetians and forms a rift in the city's social fabric. For Shylock, the contrast between Christianity and Judaism is the source of his alienation. For example, as a Jew, he avoids dining with Christians since he does not eat pork, which is served at Christian dinners. Shylock mutters as Bassanio invites him to dinner:

Yet, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into: I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.

Shylock is a deceitful and cunning character. He initially shows his hesitation to provide a loan to Antonio due to Antonio's poor treatment of him. However, a sense of selfishness develops in his head, and he agrees to lend the money. If Antonio does not repay the loan within three months, he has the right to cut off a pound of Antonio's flesh from the area closest to his heart. Shylock uses deception to get the bond signed. Because he believes that the bonds are a weapon that he can use if Antonio fails to return the debt. In this regard, Shylock demonstrates considerable cleverness and even an incapacity to foretell the future.

Various aspects of Shylock's character become apparent throughout the debates about the link that take place between him, Antonio, and his buddy Bassanio. He reveals himself to be a cunning, deceptive, modest, and haughty man in this scene. He occasionally references Biblical texts to defend the interest, which are analogous to prove the propriety of charging a price for services rendered to others. In any event, the entire sequence in which the transaction takes place casts a negative light on Shylock's character. He appears to be a terrible individual who deserves our contempt and loathing.

Shylock is a man who is not just vengeful, but also bloodthirsty. From the beginning, he appears to be plotting to exact vengeance on Antonio for earlier ill-treatment. Antonio sees his need for a loan as an excellent opportunity to get revenge on him. Following that, the Duke's numerous pleadings and brilliance did not move him to pity. He is unaffected by Portia's powerful appeal for pity tails. When it appears like the court's decision would be in his favour, he feels proud, and he begins to luxuriate in Portia's initial statement that he has a very good case.

“My deeds upon my head,” he informs the judge, “there is no power in the tongue of man to change my resolution to take a pound of flesh.” He merely invokes the law, which rights him to the penalty and forfeiture of his bond, and he clings to his new position.

Because of his sceptical disposition, Shylock never trusts anyone. Neither his servant nor his daughter can be trusted. Despite the fact that his scepticism has no merit in him, we must recognise that he is completely justified in his doubts. His servant, as well as his daughter, despise him. While the servant simply quits his job, his daughter runs away from home with a Christian and steals a large sum of money as well as his valuables.

Shakespeare, like Marlowe for his *Jew of Malta*, takes the figure of Shylock from this mediaeval literary tradition. Some critics have claimed that Shylock is an example of Elizabethan (and Shakespeare's own) anti-Semitism, while others have viewed Shylock's creation as a response to such bigotry. Shakespeare, as a brilliant dramatist, was unconcerned with anti- or pro-Semitism, save in the way it affected particular characters in his plays to achieve the essential drama. The play is thus categorically not anti-Semitic; rather, it is about anti-Semitism due to Shylock's involvement in the love intrigues.

Shakespeare never used the depiction of an individual to seriously define or condemn a community; he only did so for comic effect, producing miniature caricatures for our enjoyment. Shylock is depicted in broad strokes; he is a "villain" in the romantic comedy sense, but because of Shakespeare's multi-dimensionality, we are supposed to sympathise with him at moments and despise him at others. Shakespeare's mastery of manipulating our emotions in relation to Shylock is a testament to his talent as a character creation. Shakespeare never used the depiction of an individual to seriously define or condemn a community; he only did so for comic effect, producing miniature caricatures for our enjoyment. Shylock is depicted in broad strokes; he is a "villain" in the romantic comedy sense, but because of Shakespeare's multi-dimensionality, we are supposed to sympathise with him at moments and despise him at others. Shakespeare's mastery of manipulating our emotions in relation to Shylock is a testament to his talent as a character creation.

Shylock is not simply a villain, but he also possesses a few redeeming qualities. He is the race's champion. He spoke passionately on the discrimination that Jews have always faced from Christians. In his address, he makes a strong case for Jews, opening with, "Has not a Jew eyes? Isn't a Jew endowed with hands, organs, dimensions, senses, emotions, and passions?" He also has fond memories of his deceased wife, Leah. He claims that this jewel was given to him by Leah when he was still a bachelor, and that he would not have given it (the jewel) for a desert of moneys when he learns that his daughter had given it away in return for a monkey. Furthermore, his character is characterised by a commendable intellectual energy and vigour.

Because of his good attributes and values, he is treated with compassion when he is treated unkindly at the end. At the same time, we must remember that he is essentially a cruel guy filled with animosity toward Christians, particularly Antonio. He can appear to be a monster at times,

especially while sharpening his knife in preparation for cutting off a pound of flesh from defaulters like Antonio. If he can't think of anything else to do with it, he'll use it as bait to catch fish. "O my ducats!" he yells at the same time. "O my Christian ducats!" exclaims my daughter. And at the end, as he staggers out of the court, a ruined man and a zealous Jew who must now convert to Christianity, he becomes a pitiful figure. Shylock's character profile is so complex that it beyond the comprehension of the common person. It all depends on how serious the playwright's vision is in regards to the Jewish question. The author personifies resentful persons, revengeful goals, sectarian violence, and opportunism as negative forces that disturb the foundations of society by portraying Shylock as a representative of his community (Jewish). They are labelled as anti-social elements because they live in society while conspiring against it. "The villainy you teach me I will execute," Shylock states as a representative of such characteristics (3.1.55). The portrayal of Shylock as a representative of the Jewish community by Shakespeare exposes the Jewish community's vexatious aims against Christians.

9.3 Learning Outcomes

Dear students, this lesson taught us about four key characters from Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. We learned in this unit that Shakespearean comedies frequently have complicated plot twists and usually end in marriage. We've also learned about tragicomedy and concepts connected to play as a genre, such as stage setup, characters, dialogues, and soliloquy, among other things.

9.4 Glossary

Ducat: Formerly a gold coin of various European countries

Shylock: A merciless usurer in a play by Shakespeare

Gormandize: Overeat or eat immodestly; make a pig of one

Enrobe: Adorn with a robe

Morocco: Soft pebble-grained leather made from goatskin

Belmont: A racetrack for thoroughbred racing in Elmont on Long Island

Casket: Box in which a corpse is buried or cremated

Bond: A connection that fastens things together

Venice: The provincial capital of Veneto

Enthroned: Put a monarch on the throne

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Questions

1. As the play opens, with whom does Antonio discuss his troubles?
 - (a) Bassanio & Gratiano
 - (b) Bassanio & Lorenzo
 - (c) Salerio & Bassanio
 - (d) Salerio & Solanio

2. Which character speaks the following lines?

Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth,
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad.

 - (a) Bassanio
 - (b) Antonio
 - (c) Gratiano
 - (d) Solani

3. What does Antonio tell Shylock that he never does?
 - (a) He never worries about his ships
 - (b) He never speaks to a Jew
 - (c) He never eats pork
 - (d) He neither lends nor borrows

4. Why does Shylock say that he wants to lend the money to Antonio and Bassanio?
 - (a) He wants to become a Christian
 - (b) He wants to make money off of them
 - (c) He wants to be friends with them
 - (d) He thinks they might introduce him to more poor Christians

5. What does Shylock reference many times during his conversation with Antonio and Bassanio?
 - (a) The Old Testament
 - (b) His hatred of Christians
 - (c) His love of the Jewish people
 - (d) The present rates of interest

6. What does Portia tell Morocco he must do before selecting a casket?
- (a) Go to the temple
 - (b) Put down his sword
 - (c) Seal his fate with a kiss
 - (d) Go wash his hands
7. Who is the last one to arrive outside Shylock's house?
- (a) Solario
 - (b) Bassanio
 - (c) Gratiano
 - (d) Lorenzo
8. Who brings Lorenzo a letter?
- (a) Old Gobbo
 - (b) Bassanio
 - (c) Launcelot
 - (d) Gratiano
9. What reason does Antonio give for being sad in the opening scene of the play?
- (a) He stands to lose a fortune in his present business ventures.
 - (b) He owes a fantastic sum of money to Shylock.
 - (c) He gives no reason.
 - (d) None of the above
10. From what character flaw does Bassanio believe Gratiano suffers?
- (a) Mean-spiritedness
 - (b) A lack of depth
 - (c) Vanity
 - (d) None of the above

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. How does Venice differ from Belmont?
2. How does Portia first encounter Bassanio?
3. What plan does Bassanio have to pay Antonio back?
4. Why is Antonio not worried about his wealth at the beginning of the play?
5. According to Shylock, why does he hate Antonio?

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Bassanio contacts Shylock regarding the loan. What are the terms of the loan? What does it mean for Antonio to be "bound" to a loan?

2. Describe Shylock. What stereotypical characteristics do you notice in the way Shakespeare's words present Shylock's character? What do you see that defies stereotypes?
3. Discuss the theme of friendship and loyalty in the play *The Merchant of Venice*?

9.6 Suggested Readings

Unit - 10: Language of William Shakespeare

Structure

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Language of William Shakespeare

10.2.1 Shakespeare's Style of Writing Plays

10.2.2 Shakespeare's Use of Sentence Structure

10.2.3 Shakespeare's Use of Diction

10.2.4 Wordplay of Shakespeare

10.2.5 Implied Stage Action

10.3 Learning Outcomes

10.4 Glossary

10.5 Sample Questions

10.6 Suggested Readings

10.0 Introduction

Dear readers, we know that language is the medium of communicating a message. Whenever we want to express our wishes, opinions, and ideas to the other person or people, we use language as a means of expression. Although there are many languages in the world yet the use of all the languages is same. We in India have different dialects (dialect is a regional variety of a language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language) and the other countries too have their own dialects. Writers use different languages within a particular language that makes it difficult to understand them. For example, while writing a play in English language, a writer can use some Latin and Greek phrases, slangs (slang is words, expressions, and meanings that are informal and are used by a particular group of people) and dialects etc. Shakespeare being a writer with universal appeal has contributed alot to the development of English language. Most of the readers may find it difficult to read Shakespeare's language, however, it is an issue that can be solved with an ease. Those readers who are familiar with Latin, French, and German,

as well as those who have read poetry, will have no trouble in grasping the language of poetic play. Others will have to strive to make sense of complicated sentence constructions. Shakespeare's words can be difficult to read even for people who have mastered the talent of reading universal sentence forms. Mostly, these issues are handled for us in the theatre by actors who learn the language and express it for us so that the key meaning is heard and at least felt when combined with stage action. When we read on our own, we must follow the same pattern as the actors: go over the lines (with a dictionary in hand) until the puzzles are solved, lines reveal their poetry, and people speak in works and phrases that are satisfying and delightfully remembered. In this section, we will attempt to learn Shakespeare's language and to observe how the skillful organisation of sentences, words, and phrases accomplishes various goals.

Check your progress

1. What is the use of language?
2. What is a dialect?

10.1 Objectives

- To learn the special use of language by Playwrights,
- To learn art of decoding the language of playwrights especially Shakespeare,
- To observe the art of sentence structure by Shakespeare,
- To observe the use of different linguistic techniques to produce dramatic effect and meaning in *The Merchant of Venice*,
- To experience the use of stage action by Shakespeare.

10.2 Language of William Shakespeare

Shakespeare witnessed a period when the English language was rapidly evolving. He is a significant figure in English literature who contributed to the language's development. Shakespeare recognised the rapid change in language and took advantage of it by attempting to add new phrases, words, and idioms. He was always interested in using modern English's newly emerging grammar and spelling patterns to create aesthetic ambiguity. Shakespeare's use of language is based on several sophisticated patterns, which are essentially the themes and ideas in both prose and poetry. Shakespeare employs motifs (repeated concepts, symbols, words, etc.) such as “honest” in Othello, “Time” in Macbeth, and “Act” in Hamlet to build some lexicon with his own unique artistry.

However, Shakespeare's word preferences are important not only in providing specific meanings but are also helpful in enacting those meanings. In others words, Shakespeare's words are used to act according to his will. He avoids the use of unmeaningful words. Shakespeare, for example, makes use of particular Latin derived terminology and ordinary native English lexicon with which he is successful in exploiting the dramatic effect in his play Macbeth. Let us observe the following lines from the play and examine the lexical technique:

“If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success but that this blow
Might be the be-all-and-end all-here
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come...”

(Macbeth Act 1, scene 7)

This soliloquy presents the two lexicons of Latin and English. Shakespeare does it to serve his purpose. The Latin words are used in order to show that Macbeth is unable to find a common term to describe the heinous act of murder. When a person witnesses the murderous scene he must be suprised and at the same time becomes dumb for a while. So the words like “assassination”, “Surcease”, and “Consequence” come out as the words are rare, unsaid and the act is equally unspoken. Macbeth is in a way dumb to express the situation. He is unable to bear the murderous scene. The two possibilities are portrayed by two sorts of diction, a double voice, as Macbeth is torn between the surface look and the dismal reality. A similar contrast between formal Latinate and informal Anglo-saxon language may be seen in a number of plays that contrast different ways of perceiving.

Shakespeare is expert in showing the dichotomous ideas. The duality is also used in *The Merchant of Venice*. In this play there is a debate between competing ideas of justice and charity, profit and suitability, Gentile and Jew: “Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not Jew Hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affectations, passions...” (Act 3, scene 1). Shakespeare's language is enchanting and captivating in terms of surface form and formal invention and evolution; nevertheless, when it is at its best, the language's resources become a subject, pervading the text's entire internal design and architecture.

Check Your Progress

1. Shakespeare has used fluidity of language to coin new words and phrases.....true/false.
2. Motif is an idea that appears frequently in a story.....true/false.

10.2.1 Shakespeare's Style of Writing Plays:

Shakespeare's plays are written in both prose and verse. Prose and verse are used extensively in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Prose: Shakespeare is always using dichotomous ideas in his plays. He knows that there are different classes in society. There are common masses and also nobility is there. So he chooses prose for common masses. Obviously when we talk in daily life we talk in a simple language. There is no complex terminology used in our day today conversations. So, Shakespeare opts for prose when he has to use common people in his plays. It is sort of a language aimed to make the listener feel as if they are using their own language. Hence, there is no rhythm or metre in these lines. To use this language he selects common people to utter such dialogues like killers, servants, and porters. Many important personalities, though, can also communicate in prose, because the middle class people have also the access to use it. For example, 'Merry Wives of Windsor' is mostly written in prose because it is about the middle class society.

Lancelot Gobbo from *The Merchant of Venice* speaks in prose. For example:

“To be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master who (God bless the mark!) is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the friend, who (saving your reverence) is the devil himself” (Act 2, scene 2)

Lancelot Gobbo, Shylock's servant, despises Shylock's methods which makes him ponder about a new job. We classify it as prose because it has not got the rhythm, rhyme, and runs freely

without regard for where the line should end on the page. We can also suppose Launcelot is a commoner who makes use of an Elizabethan slang. To differ the status of a class in a society needs a difference in behaviour of a person even in his words he/she utters. For this special purpose Shakespeare uses prose for his common characters.

Verse: Shakespeare's plays are mostly written in verse. In Shakespearean plays, a verse speaker is a noble or a member of the upper class, just as a prose speaker is a commoner. His plays were usually about noble characters. He uses a blank verse as his poem form. It doesn't rhyme, but each line has an inherent rhythm that follows a predictable pattern. In his writings, he always preferred iambic pentameter. Let's have a look at an example:

“The pound of flesh which I demand of him is dearly bought. 'Tis mine, and I will have it” (Shylock, Act 4, scene 1).

Here, every other syllable's accent is inserted in this position on the line, as is the natural accent of each word.

Shakespeare occasionally found it necessary to remove a vowel from a word in order to keep the line's flow. For example, in Portia's speech, strain'd and bless'd are pronounced as a single syllable:

“The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives and him that take”

(Act 4, scene 1).

Shakespeare employed this writing technique to direct the action on the stage. When two characters are speaking, one of them may finish the ten-syllable line that the other character started, demonstrating that one line must swiftly follow the other. A shared or split line is what this is referred to as. Consider the following scenario:

“Portia: You stand within his danger, do you not?

Antonio: Ay, so he says.

Portia: Do you confess bond?

Antonio: I do.

Portia: Then must the Jew be merciful.”

(Act 4, Scene 1).

Trochaic Verse: Shakespeare uses a different kind of verse at some key points. The accent is reversed, and the line is cut in half. An accented syllable is followed by an unaccented syllable in this metrical foot. In *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*, where magic or ritual is involved,

he regularly uses this verse. In Macbeth, the witches talk in trochaic verse, which differs from that of the earthly mortals, giving them an unnatural sound, for example:

Witch: "Round about the cauldron go;

In the prisoned entrails throw".

(Act 1, scene 1)

You can count the syllables in the lines while we read or perform a Shakespearean play. You'll be astounded by Shakespeare's consistency. Then draw a circle around the syllables that have the accent. You'll note that he puts the emphasis on the most critical terms. Words like "the," "is," and "and" that have no meaning are usually seen on the unaccented lines. Iambic pentameter has been dubbed a "heartbeat," and it appears in each of Shakespeare's lines.

10.2.2 Shakespeare's Use of Sentence Structure:

We can only understand the meaning of an English phrase or sentence if the words are in the correct order. Take this example: "The snake bit the boy" and "The boy bit the snake" have very distinct meanings despite the fact that the constituent phrases are identical. This occurs because in the English language, the place and order of words are extremely important. The reader may be perplexed by the unique arrangement. Shakespeare makes use of such a unique order of words readers get astounded to see and perceive anything out of it. One must read his play multiple times to understand these unique patterns.

For the sake of rhythm, Shakespeare regularly deviates from the "standard" English phrase structures. He does it for the purpose of laying stress on a specific word in a line's poetic rhythm, and to allow character his/her own speech patterns or to let the character talk in a unique fashion. The performers will only be able to give a competent presentation of the play if they have figured out the sentence patterns and can express the sentences clearly. When reading a play, we should do the same thing: if we're perplexed by a character's speech, we should observe if words are being expressed in an unexpected order.

Shakespeare frequently conveys unpleasant emotions in unusual ways (e.g., instead of "he does not go", we find "he goes not"). When Antonio says in the first line of *The Merchant of Venice*, "I know not why I'm so sad," he is utilising this structure; Selarino responds in Act 1, scene 1, "Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad."

Shakespeare's sentences are frequently difficult to understand because he omits words rather than using unique patterns or interruptions. We say, "Heard from him yet?" And our hearer adds the missing "Have you?" When Gratiano says, "Well, keep me company but two years more,/Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue" (Act 1, Scene 1), he omits the

words “if you” before “keep”. Omissions are infrequent in *The Merchant of Venice*, and they appear to be utilised primarily to generate regular iambic pentameter lines.

10.2.3 Shakespeare's Use of Diction:

You may notice some new vocabulary as you begin reading the first acts of a Shakespeare's play. These words are no longer in use, which is why they are unknown. Such words can be found in the opening scenes of *The Merchant of Venice*. There are words like “sooth” meaning truth, “piring” meaning peering, “an” meaning if, and “doit” meaning jot. Only by reading more of William Shakespeare's plays will you get familiar with these terms.

Shakespeare uses obscure words in all of his plays as he does in *The Merchant of Venice*. For example, the word yet is used in lieu of “always,” the term straight is used in place of “at once” or “immediately,” the phrase disabled is used in place of “depleted” or “reduced,” and the word ripe is used in place of “urgent” in the opening scenes of *The Merchant of Venice*. Such words will become more recognisable to you as you continue to study Shakespeare's language.

Most of the words used by Shakespeare appear weird not because they have remained static and fluid in English across time, but because Shakespeare has used them to create a dramatic world with its own space, time, and history. *The Merchant of Venice* is a great example of Shakespeare's use of language to create dramatic worlds. Shakespeare succeeds in creating two such worlds in this play: the commerce world of Venice and the romantic world of Portia's estate of Belmont.

He builds a background mythology that underpins Bossanio's quest in the first and third scenes of the play, referring to “argosies,” “signiors,” “ventures,” “shallows,” “ducats,” “the Rialto,” and “Usances”; in the same scenes, he refers to “Jason,” “the Golden Fleece,” and “Colchos strond.” The “local” references help to build the worlds in which Antonio, Bossanio, and Shylock live in Venice and Portia and Nerrisa live in Belmont. As you progress through the play, these are the worlds you'll get increasingly familiar with.

10.2.4 Wordplay of Shakespeare:

Shakespeare uses language in such a way that entire books have been written and may be written on the subject. Shakespeare makes use of literary terms like puns, metaphors, malapropisms, and similes. A pun is a combination of words that sound alike but have completely distinct meanings (or one word that has multiple meanings). “Suffrance is the badge of all our tribe,” Shylock says in the third scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, appearing to play on two meanings of sufferance (“forbearance” and “suffering”); his line “And all for use of that which is mine own” contains a pun on the word use, which means both “lending with interest” and “putting to use.” The pun on gentle/gentile is the one that is heard the most in this piece. It's

not always clear when “gentle” means “gentile,” but in numerous instances, such as “gentle jew,” “Now by my hood, a gentle and no Jew,” and “we all expect a gentle answer, Jew,” the pun appears to be extended. Shakespeare's ingenuity has used a prolonged pun to great effect.

In some of Shakespeare's plays, he used malapropisms (grotesquely misused words) in humorous sequences. Both Lancelot Gobbo and his father, old Gobbo, are prone to such gaffes. Lancelot, for example, uses incarnation to mean “incarnate” and impertinent to mean “pertinent”; Old Gobbo uses infection to mean “affection” and defect to mean “effect.” Lancelot also uses rebuke and agitation for “approach” and “cogitation,” respectively.

A metaphor is a word play in which one object or idea is expressed as if it were another object or idea with which it has characteristics. When Bossanio says to Antonio, “If you please/ Shoot another arrow that self way/which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,/ As I watch the aim, or to find both/or bring you latter hazard back again” (Act 1, Scene 1), Antonio's loan of money to Bossanio is metaphorically depicted as an arrow, and Antonio is encouraged to shoot a second arrow in the same way as he shorted the first (i.e., get back both the loan for which Bossanio is now asking and the first loan, now lost).

Metaphors are commonly employed to represent complex topics, and the speaker is provided vocabulary to help him or her communicate the idea or feeling to his or her listener and audience. Metaphors play an important role in expressing character emotion in several of Shakespeare's plays. Similes abound in *The Merchant of Venice* for example, when Bossanio describes Portia to Antonio, he says, “her sunny locks/ Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,/ Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' Strond,/ And many Johnsons come in quest of her” (Act 1, scene 1), equating her hair to the golden fleece sought by Jason and the Argonauts, her estate of Belmont to the land where the Fleece was to be found, and her suitors.

10.2.5 Implied Stage Action:

Finally, while reading Shakespearean plays, it's important to keep in mind that we're reading a performance script. It should be noted that the speech is produced for actors who have to act it in different situations such as, while moving, while gesturing, while picking up objects, while weeping, and while waving their fists at the same time. Some stage action is described in “stage directions,” while others are conveyed directly in the dialogue. Jessica says “Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains” in Act 2, Scene 6 of *The Merchant of Venice*, implying that she throws a chest (allegedly laden with jewels and money) from her window. When Bassanio exclaims in the trial scene, “Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?” (Act 4, scene 1), from Gratiano's later phrase, “Not on thy sole but on thy soul, hard Jew,” it is apparent that Shylock sharpens his dagger on the sole of his shoe.

Many situations, though, are less apparent. It's unclear what Antonio does to cause Shylock to declare “How like a fawning publican he looks!” when he describes Antonio's entrance (in Act 1, scene 3). It's also unclear how Lancelet's interaction with his practically blind father should be staged. Lancelet kneels (his father instructs him to get up), and his father replies, “Lord revered may He be, what a beard hast thou? Dobbin, my filly, has more hair on his tail than you have on your chin.” “It would appear, then, that Dobbin's tail develops backward,” Lancelet responds. When I last saw him, I'm sure he had more hair on his tail than I do on my face” (Act 2, scene 2). Where Lancelet kneels, it is customary for him to turn his back on his father, causing the father to misinterpret his son's long hair for a beard—but this is a point when the director (and we, as readers, in our imaginations) can select how the joke should be played.

Working closely with Shakespeare's language, readers have noticed that proposed stage action has been extremely fulfilling over the past four centuries. Attending a fantastic theatrical performance may be more pleasurable—though this is not universally agreed upon. One finds pleasure while staging a Shakespearean play, revisiting the passages is more fun because it continuously provides new meanings (or new questions) the more one reads them. These are pleasures that, form any, rival (or at least complement) those of the performed text, and that make “breaking the code” of Elizabethan poetic theatre and letting loose the extraordinary language that makes up a Shakespearean text well worth it.

10.3 Learning Outcomes

Dear students, the unit furnished us with the information about the language of William Shakespeare. We learn't the special use of words on important occasions by Shakespeare in his plays especially, in *The Merchant of Venice*. We also came across the wordplay by Shakespeare, particularly the use of puns, metaphors, similes, and malapropisms in his play *The Merchant of Venice*. We also get some knowledge about the techniques used by Shakespeare in his plays. The readers of this unit will be able to better deal with the play *The Merchant of Venice*. However, the unit is not exhaustive, there are other books to learn the art of reading Shakespearean plays. You can check some of the books included in suggested readings.

10.4 Glossary

Dialect: Dialect is a regional variety of a language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language.

Slang: Words, expressions, and meanings that are informal and are used by a particular group of people.

Motif: Recurring ideas or symbols in a play, novel or a story.

Meter: A meter is described as the basic rhythmic structure of a line within a work of poetry.

Pentameter: Line of verse containing five metrical feet.

Iambic: Unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Simile: Comparison between two things using “as” or “like”, e.g., Bob is like a lion.

Metaphor: Two diverse things are compared without using “like” or “as”, e.g., Bob is a lion.

Idiom: A group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g., “once in a blue moon” meaning rarely).

Pun: Paronomasia, or wordplay with various meanings, is a type of wordplay that uses several meanings of a phrase or similar sounding words for a comedic or rhetorical effect.

Melapropism: The unintentional misuse or distortion of a word or phrase.

Soliloquy: An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud by oneself regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play.

Jew: A person or group of individuals whose traditional faith is Judaism and who can trace their ancestors back to Abraham through the ancient Hebrew people of Israel.

Gentile: A non-Jewish person from a non-Jewish nation or faith; notably, a Christian as opposed to a Jew.

10.5 Sample Questions

10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The word “honest” is repeated in Shakespeare's:

- (a) Hamlet
- (b) Othello
- (c) Macbeth
- (d) None of these

2. In which of the following play does Shakespeare use Latin and ordinary lexicon to achieve “Dramatic Effect”:

- (a) Othello
- (b) Macbeth
- (c) Hamlet
- (d) All of these

3. "Merry Wives of Windsor" is written in prose because:
- (a) It is about higher class (b) It is about middle class
(c) It is about foreigners (d) All of these
4. Shakespeare uses prose for:
- (a) Kings (b) Women
(c) Common Men (d) All of these
5. Shakespeare uses verse for:
- (a) Noble Men (b) Upper class
(c) Both of these (d) None of these
6. Who said, "The pound of flesh which I demand of him is dearly bought. 'Tis mine, and I will have it"
- (a) Antony (b) Bossanio
(c) Portia (d) Shylock
7. Trochaic is:
- (a) Stressed Unstressed (b) Unstressed Stressed
(c) Two Unstressed followed by stressed (d) Two stressed followed by unstressed
8. Which of the following metre has been dubbed as "heartbeat":
- (a) Trochaic metre (b) Anapestic metre
(c) Iambic metre (d) None of these
9. "He was the lion of the fight" is an example of:
- (a) Simile (b) Metaphor
(c) Alliteration (d) None of these
10. "Hang on her temples like a golden fleece" is an example of:
- (a) Metaphor (b) Simile
(c) Alliteration (d) Personification

10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on 'trochaic verse' used by William Shakespeare in his plays?
2. Discuss briefly how William Shakespeare uses sentence structure in '*The Merchant of Venice*'?
3. What is a pun? Give an example of its use in *The Merchant of Venice*?
4. Comment on the wordplay of William Shakespeare?
5. Discuss the special use of prose by William Shakespeare in his plays?

10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the different styles that Shakespeare employ in his plays. Explain in reference with The Merchant of Venice?
2. Write an essay on the use of diction by William Shakespeare in his plays? Cite some examples from the play The Merchant of Venice?
3. How does William Shakespeare create formal Latin vocabulary and informal native English vocabulary for dramatic effect?

10.6 Suggested Readings

- Holmer, Joan Ozark. *The Merchant of Venice: choice, hazard, and consequences*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1995.
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Unit - 11: Style of William Shakespeare

Structure

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11.2.1 *The Merchant of Venice*: Introduction

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11.0 Introduction

One of the reasons why Elizabethan age is called the golden period is because of William Shakespeare's literary genius. Unschooled and dismissed by his erudite critics as an “upstart crow”, William Shakespeare style of writing has been unparalleled. At the time when the theatrical effects were limited, the effective use of language, references, images and symbols were crucial in creating the visual and aural affect. Shakespeare excelled in this art by use of poetic expression in blank verse. Shakespeare along with Christopher Marlowe popularised blank verse in their tragedies. Known to have introduced by Earl of Surrey in 1540, the form was later perfected by Shakespeare through his famous tragedies and John Milton. Blank verse is unrhymed iambic pentameter with alternating stresses on the syllable. It mimics natural rhythm of speech and thus is more real without any bearing of artifice. Blank verse is also used to deliberate on something grand, sublime and lofty. The famous soliloquies of Hamlet, Henry V, plotting speeches of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are all in blank verse. Prospero's speech on relinquishing magic and Caliban's moving complaint in *The Tempest* are also delivered in blank verse.

performed and adapted innumerable times and is very crucial in analysing the perception towards Jewish people in the Elizabethan times. Inviting criticism of racism and xenophobia, *The Merchant of Venice* unpacks numerous attitudes and practices of its time.

The play is situated in the trading city of Venice where Bassanio, a young aristocrat is under debt after losing all his inheritance and is in need of money to pursue a rich heiress called Portia. Antonio who is Bassanio's friend finds himself helpless because he is unable to lend him money as all his fortune is stuck in his returning ships. Antonio decides to visit the moneylender Shylock to borrow money for Bassanio. Shylock and Antonio share different religious views, which remains a bone of contention between the two. Shylock lends money with a "merry bond", a devious condition is set as legal clause, that in the absence of repayment Shylock will be entitled to a pound of flesh from Antonio's body.

Portia is a young lady surrounded by many suitors and only the one who selects the right casket out of three will be allowed to marry her. Bassanio selects the right casket by choosing the 'lead' casket out of gold and silver. Bassanio wins over Portia with his impressive judgment. Antonio on the other hand loses all his ships on the sea and is unable to repay the loan. Pleased with the news, Shylock is ready to claim his revenge through the bond claiming for a pound of flesh. Bassanio tries to save Antonio by offering the money on Antonio's behalf but to no avail. Portia disguised as male lawyer Balthazar pleads for mercy but Shylock remains adamant and stubborn to exact his revenge. Portia with her ready wit and acumen discovers a flaw in the bond. The bond demands for flesh and not the blood hence the flesh should be extracted in the manner that no blood is spilled. Portia through her clever literal interpretation of the bond makes the execution of the bond impossible. She also accuses Shylock of a crime as she points out to another Venetian law of executing 'aliens' of attempting to kill a Christian. Shylock thus loses on all counts and is completely vanquished.

The present unit will discuss the style of Shakespeare with respect to the use of language and context. As one of the later plays of Shakespeare, one can see a very well defined and developed Shakespearean style in *The Merchant of Venice*. The play is often seen as romantic comedy yet it addresses some serious issues of the time.

11.2.2 *The Merchant of Venice* as a Tragi-Comedy Play:

The Merchant of Venice reveals some interesting insights into the changing style of Shakespeare's plays. Written after a romantic comedy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and romantic tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* seems to be a combination of both. In the character of Launcelot Gobbo, comic elements can be traced. The just punishment accorded to Shylock also fits into the comic strain. However, in the recent modern understanding

of the play, *The Merchant of Venice* posit some serious moral dilemmas to be categorised as “problem play” especially in the coerced conversion of Shylock towards the end.

By defying the neat boundaries of comedy and tragedy, the play opens itself into complexities of human existence where grave and perplexed issues are combined with light-hearted romantic interludes. As a romantic comedy inspired by love, the play offers three romantic plots; Portia and Bassanio; Gratiano and Nerissa; Jessica and Lorenzo. Apart from love, elopement and the play also use the device of disguise and cross-dressing where Portia and Nerissa disguise as male lawyers leading to theatrical comic confusion. The superior intellectual prowess displayed by Portia is also in line with the romantic comedies. Consequently, the romantic plots are not without the barrier and challenges. Portia can marry only the one who can select the right casket, which by the romantic coincidence is Bassanio. Jessica is Shylock’s daughter who is in love with Bassanio and Antonio’s friend called Lorenzo. Going against her father’s wishes, Jessica elopes with Lorenzo adding more ire to his hatred. The romantic resolution to the marriages of Portia and Nerissa are subjected to the tragedy of Antonio who had pawned himself for Bassanio. The interconnected story of Antonio adds tragic elements. Antonio has not only lost all his wealth with the sinking of all his ships but now also stands to lose his life according to the bond. Antonio is saved by the loophole in the “merry deed” and the play end on a happy note. All lovers are united with their beloved and Shylock loses not just all his money, daughter, his cherished ring, ducats but charged under Venetian law, he had to plead mercy for his life. He is spared only on the condition that he would convert to Christianity.

The treatment meted out to Shylock and his obvious religious stereotyping has come under the modern scanner as tragic and pitiable. Shylock’s speech in Act 3, Scene i, is a clear accusation and a tirade of an inflicted and persecuted community.

To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his

sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

Shylock's moving speech above is a clear indication of the alienation and marginalisation he receives in a Christian society where his values and practices are not accepted because of his religion. The coercive attempt at his conversion also implies persecution of his religious identity. The charges of antisemitism in the play often presents Shylock as a tragic character who has not met justice in being compelled to convert into Christianity and loss of all his wealth. With the problematic reading of Shylock, *The Merchant of Venice* further veers towards the different contours of tragedy.

11.2.3 Shakespeare's Innovative use of the Sources:

Shakespeare like many of his contemporaries is known to have borrowed from the previously known work and giving it his own style and twist. Be it historical plays like Richard II, Henry IV or romantic comedies like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest*, Shakespeare uses the old and familiar plot and surpasses it with his immaculate wit and inventiveness. As a result, Shakespeare's plays without being original become uniquely his.

Il Pecorone (The Dunce) by Sir Giovanni Fiorentino is considered to be the inspiration for *The Merchant of Venice*. The original story carries the story of selfish and greedy Jewish moneylender who lent money in lieu of the pound of flesh. While the Jew was defeated and plot foiled in *Il Pecorone* but Shakespeare adds the moral dilemma by forcibly converting Shylock to Christianity.

The casket story is also complicated to fully develop the character of Portia and Bassanio and to project Bassanio of truly deserving Portia by selecting the right casket after careful consideration. Furthermore, the subplot of Jessica and Lorenzo is also Shakespeare's addition not found in *Il Pecorone* where Shylock's daughter Jessica elopes with Lorenzo and converts to Christianity thus justifying Shylock's anger and revenge. Shakespeare inventiveness is crucial in adding layers to Shylock's character. Shakespeare's Shylock ceases to be stock character of a Jew as in *Il Pecorone* but a complex human, much like Caliban of *The Tempest* who does not fail to draw attention to his miserable plight. Shakespeare's style of humanising even the supposed villain of the story renders it to multiple and often contradictory interpretation.

The Jew of Malta by Christopher Marlowe is also an obvious inspiration for the character of Shylock with whom the Elizabethan audience was already familiar. The Christian governors punished Barabas, the Jew of Malta by confiscating all his property. Enraged Barabas decides to seek revenge by plotting evil for the people of the town. He kills the nuns by poisoning their

porridge but Barabas is finally trapped and pushed into a boiling cauldron to die. Marlowe's depiction of Barabas borders on a caricature. Dramatized as a comic buffoon, Barabas is a source of entertainment despite his crimes and wickedness. Shylock on the other hand is more humanised version of Barabas. By exploring the psychological state of Shylock, Shakespeare is able to portray his villain with traces of sympathy. This is a peculiar style of Shakespeare where the villain is not a pure evil but defined by his context.

In situating Shylock within the prevalent tradition of antisemitism, by making him raise some crucial questions and also pointing out the hypocrisy in Christianity, Shakespeare is able to present Shylock's complaint as a lingering concern. Shakespeare gives Shylock enough reasons in the play to justify his anger and revenge. As Shylock remarks "the villainy you teach me" shows the pain of antisemitic attitudes behind his merciless and ruthless behaviour. Shakespeare contrived Jessica's plot to make Shylock appear reasonable in his evil plot against Antonio. Although his demand for the pound of flesh shows his innate evil designs, yet being betrayed by his own daughter makes him a wronged father. By manipulating the earlier sources, Shakespeare in his unique style is able to create sympathy for the villain, be it Macbeth or Richard III. Unlike Barabas of *The Jew of Malta or the Jew* or *Il Pecorcone*, Shylock stands out as the most memorable depiction of the Jew of Elizabethan times owing to Shakespeare technique of giving voice to the marginal thereby breaking the stereotypes and conventional mind set. In making the villain argue their case so passionately, Shakespeare allows the possibility of an alternate discourse.

11.2.4 Biblical Allusion and Allegory:

Shakespeare use of Christian images and myths in the play points towards its theological dimensions. Many critics believe that it is inspired by the medieval morality plays. The use of allegories and allusions also impart a consciously built thematic unity. The Christian concept of love runs through the entire play. Antonio's melancholy in the beginning of the play is the result of not the worldly concern as suggested by Gratiano, "You have too much respect upon the world:/ They lose it to buy it with much care" (Act I, Scene i) clearly recalling Mathew from the Bible. Antonio is saddened because of the parting with his friend Bassanio as testified by Salerio "I think he only loves the world for him" (Act I, Scene viii). Antonio's love is characterised by empathy, care and concern. While Bassanio is unable to repay his previous loan, Antonio is eager to "venture" for him to an extent of pounding his own flesh. Unlike Shylock, Antonio as a paragon of Christian virtue lends money without interest and helps those who get trapped by Shylock's usurious ways. By contrast to Antonio's selfless Christian love, Shylock's 'thrift' ways are unchristian and evil. He is greedy, niggardly, stingy with his servants. His love

for the worldly things overtakes all other relationships including that of his daughter. When Jessica elopes with Lorenzo, Shylock cries for his daughter and money in the same breath, “My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!” (Act II, scene viii, 15). He mocks Antonio’s “simplicity” in lending money without interest and displays pride and self-righteousness in censuring Bassanio's feast as "shallow foppery". Shylock conspire and contrive a plan to exact his revenge upon Antonio, thou call’dst me dog before thou hadst a cause, /but since iam a dog, but beware my fangs” (Act III, scene iii, 6-7).

Antonio and Shylock thus symbolise two different theological worlds of the New Law and Old Law respectively. Shylock calls himself of “sacred nation” and Antonio, as “fawning publican” is a reference to the parable of Pharisee and the Publican from the Matthew. The Christian belief that righteousness is impossible on the fallen men unless it is replaced by faith also echoes in the trial of Antonio.

The argument on the usury is also situated in the biblical context. Shylock justifies his trade by bringing the analogy Jacob’s breeding of ewes and rams to multiplying money through interest. Antonio on the other hand considers usury as “barren metal. "If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not/ As to thy friends, for when did friend- ship take/A breed for barren metal of his friend? /But lend it rather to thine enemy" (Act III, scene i, 27-30),

Shylock’s gradual loss of servant, daughter and his wealth echo the biblical curse upon the nation “Behold your habitation shall be left unto you desolate” while his subsequent conversion is the Christian prediction of the final conversion of the Jews. “The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind” (Act I, Scene iii, 173-174). Shylock’s daughter Jessica voluntarily converts to Christianity and Lorenzo prediction about Shylock conversion “If ever the Jew her father come to heaven/it will be for his gentle father’s sake” (Act II, scene iv, 33-34) which is an allusion to Paul’s prophecy that Gentiles will ultimately be the saviour of Jews. The play also maintains the analogy of Devil with Shylock. Jessica’s escape from Shylock as “our house is hell” can be seen her rescue from damnation to salvation. The identification of Devil with Jew is repeated several time in the play as was the common understanding in the Elizabethan anti-Semitic mindsets with the direct allusion to the Bible “You are of your father the devill, and the lustes of your father ye will doe: Hee hath bene a murtherer from the beginning”. (John, viii, 4)

While Antonio’s story exemplifies Christian love for friendship, Bassanio’s casket story where he selects the right casket in order to win Portia implies allegorical understanding of love. In the casket story, Morocco selects the gold casket, which shows that he desired Portia for her wealth. Arragon picks up silver, which according to him represents “as much as he deserves”.

Bassanio by selecting the lead casket, shows his Christian attributes in being selfless, without pride and ready to venture. Bassanio's renunciation of silver as ornament and gold as transience and corruption of the worldly things makes him the most deserving of the three. Bassanio's detachment in the romantic love can be equated with the Christian and mystical love from the Songs of Solomon. The defeat of Morocco (the pagan) and Arragon (the Spaniard) can be seen as the rejection of anti-Christian values and worldliness.

The trial episode is the culmination of the defeat of the old law and the establishment of Christian love with the rejection of revenge. Portia's speech on mercy echoes Ecclesiasticus xxxv.19 "O how fayre a thyng is mercy in the tyme of anguish and trouble: it is lyke a cloud of rayne that commeth in the tyme of drought". The trial of Antonio and his righteous cause is presented like 'Parliament of Heaven', a popular mystery play in France known for its debate between four daughters of God about the fate of Mankind. Truth and Justice demand the law of God to be served, Mercy and Peace implore God to forgive Mankind. The courtroom scene in the play is based on the same heavenly debate where Mercy and Peace is invoked by Portia but to no avail. Unmoved by pleas of mercy, Shylock obstinate insistence also reminds the Elizabethan audience of the crucifixion of Christ. Antonio is willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of his friend and to pay his debt is an uncanny resemblance with Christ's sacrifice to save the mankind. Shylock exclaims "my deeds upon my head" (Act IV, Scene I, 202) indicates collective guilt of the Jews for Christ crucifixion; His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew xxvii, 25)

Shylock's conversion is prerequisite for the mercy under Venetian law. Recalling Paul's declaration that a man is not justified by the works of law but by the faith of Jesus Christ. In denying Portia's request for mercy "tarry a little" Shylock contention on law is defeated by a greater law of Venice (Shakespeare's invention).

11.3 Learning Outcomes

After reading the above unit, the students will be able to:

- To appreciate Shakespeare use of poetic expression.
- To identify Shakespeare with a unique style in writing that makes him distinct from other dramatist of his time
- To understand the use and significance of religious allusions and allegory in the play.
- To comprehend Shakespeare skilful use of the sources in creating memorable characters.

11.4 Glossary

Abode: It refers to delay

Argosy: Large sized merchant vessel. It is corruption of 16th century word ‘Aragouse’

Black Monday: It refers to the Easter Monday. Lancelot describes it as a ‘movable’ day in the play

Cater Cousin: ‘Scarce cater cousin’ refers to cousins who are not in talking terms with each other

Cerecloth: It refers to the winding sheet dipped in melted wax

Egall: Equal

Gaberdine: A loose long coat with long sleeves

Gravel-Blind: It is comical connection between sand-blind and stone-blind

Guiled: It refers to someone endowed with guiles and treachery

Intergatory: Interrogations to the defendants under oath in search of truth

Jew’s Eye: It refers to something, which has a great value and is precious

Knap: It refers to biting with a sound of crackle

Mind of Love: Scheming love

O’er-look: It refers to look upon with an evil eye in witchcraft

Peise the Time: It refers to weighing with deliberation each and every precious moment. The word Peise is technically used for clocks in the Elizabethan times

Reed-Voice: It refers to squeaking voice in music

Roth: It refers to obsolete spelling of ‘ruth’ which means grief and calamity

Sand-Blind: It refers to partial blindness

Servitor: It is a term from theatre, it refers to an attendant

Set Forth: It refers to extol or to serve at the tables

Sibylla: It refers to Sibyl of Cumac whom Apollo

Single Bond: It refers to the bond without the names of the sureties attached

Sonties: It is diminutive of saint

Slubber: It refers to slovenly manners

Thrift: It refers to thriving success

Vendible: It refers to an old maid who is past her marriageable age

Venture: It refers to taking risk, commercial speculation

Wind About: It refers to 'beat about the bush'

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Portia takes on _____ name in her disguise.
(a) Balthazar (b) Antonio
(c) Gobbo (d) Lancelot
2. On what grounds does Portia argues Antonio's case in the courtroom scene?
(a) Justice (b) Faith
(c) Mercy (d) Trade
3. What does Shylock demand in the absence of the repayment of his loan?
(a) Double amount (b) Pound of his flesh
(c) Confiscation of Bassano's wealth (d) None of the Above
4. Which casket is chosen by the Prince of Arragon?
(a) Silver (b) Gold
(c) Lead (d) Iron
5. How does Antonio lose all his money?
(a) By gambling (b) By paying off others debt
(c) With the sinking of the ships (d) By Shylock's evil plotting
6. Jessica swaps her father's ring with a
(a) Cat (b) Monkey
(c) Parrot (d) Dress
7. Lancelot plays the character of
(a) Jew (b) Moneylender
(c) Fool (d) Priest
8. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Who says these lines?
(a) Antonio (b) Portia
(c) Bassanio (d) Shylock
9. 3000 ducats are the money
(a) Jessica steals from Shylock (b) Antonio loses in the sea
(c) Shylock lends to Antonio (d) Shylock is forced to pay

10. Tubal is

- (a) Antonio's servant (b) One person who tries to help Shylock
(c) A fool (d) A lawyer

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What was the condition under which Shylock agreed to lent money to Antonio?
2. How did Portia plan to marry and was it successful?
3. What made Antonio sad in the beginning of the play?
4. How does Shakespeare describe the relationship between Jessica and Shylock?
5. Do you agree with the charges of antisemitism levelled by Shylock in the play?

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss *The Merchant of Venice* as a tragi-comedy Play.
2. Comment on Shakespeare's use of disguise in the play as an effective strategy used by female characters
3. Critically comment on the theme of Justice and Mercy as it is discussed in the trial scene.

11.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit - 12: Relevance of *Merchant of Venice* in the Contemporary World

Structure

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Objectives

12.2 Relevance of *Merchant of Venice* in the Contemporary World

12.2.1 Xenophobia and the Discrimination of the 'other'

12.2.2 Power-dynamics and Economic Control

12.2.3 Love and Relationships

12.3 Learning Outcomes

12.4 Glossary

12.5 Sample Questions

12.6 Suggested Readings

12.0 Introduction

Literature and art are born out of human life and are deeply associated to its various facets and dimensions. Generally, literature and art have a historical origin which makes them relevant to the times in which they emerge, but there are literary texts and artistic works as well which do not have such temporal limitations. Though these texts are produced during a specific time period, but such works of literature and art share a timeless and universal existence, and are relevant to past, present, as well as future of humanity. It is these literary and artistic responses which can be revisited and reread, so as to relate them to the contemporary human existence. Such examples can be found in most of the literatures and art forms of the world, and same is true for English literature as well. We have had some prolific writers in the history of English literature whose works are still relevant to our lives and times, and may be these works would be read in the coming times as well. *The Merchant of Venice*, a play by William Shakespeare, is one such literary text which has a contemporary relevance to the present world. To visualize the contemporary relevance of literary works, there are some recent examples which we need to

recollect; soon after the eruption of Covid-19, many readers went back to read works like *The Plague* (a 1940s novel by Albert Camus). Another example can be taken from the area of films and theatre; how plays from the past are revisited to represent contemporary issues and happenings of human life; to screen the contemporary condition of Kashmir via the film *Haider*, Vishal Bhardwaj (an Indian film Director) took aid of the Shakespearean Play *Hamlet* and set it in accordance with the happenings and politics of Kashmir. There is an unending list of such examples wherein we can find how literature is relevant to life at different time periods irrespective of its spatial, cultural, and temporal origins.

12.1 Objectives

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the relevance of Shakespearean play *The Merchant of Venice* to the contemporary world. As discussed in the Introduction to this chapter, a good work of literature does not lose its relevance with time, and that relevance is not generally impacted by the origin of such works; be it the writer, the space where the work is written, the culture and people it talks about, and the time period in which the work is composed. What matters is the crux of the text, which can resonate at any place among people of a different place and culture. Such literary and art works can have a social, cultural, economic, political, historical, ecological, or religious/spiritual relevance to our lives. Likewise, in this chapter, we will find out how the 16th Century Shakespearean play *The Merchant of Venice* is still relevant to some aspects of human lives in the current times. We will try to point out and discuss how Shakespearean art and thoughts still resonate in the contemporary lives.

12.2 Relevance of *Merchant of Venice* in the Contemporary World

Many of William Shakespeare's plays have incorporated characters and themes which have had a universal appeal, and which have not died out with time. *The Merchant of Venice* is one such play in which are woven multiple strands that depict the human life of Elizabethan times, but these strands are timeless and universal, so they are equally valid during the present times. *Merchant of Venice* is a play which mainly moves around the character of Antonio, a Venetian merchant, who takes a hefty loan from a Jewish moneylender, Shylock, and fails to pay it back by the stipulated time. The following action opens up a Pandora's box, apart from the main action many other dramatic scenes of the play depict some crucial issues of the times. One such example in the play is the character of the Jewish moneylender Shylock and his famous speech regarding Jews in a

majority Christian community “Hath not a Jew eyes?”, which is basically a representation of human values in a community where the minority is seen, perceived, and treated as the ‘other’. Likewise, the speech of Portia, wife of Bassanio disguised as a lawyer, regarding mercy is another aspect which is put across in the play. Furthermore, the dynamics of power within an economic and social set up is also put forth through the characters of Antonia, Bassanio, Shylock, Portia, the suitors of Portia, and the servants of these characters. The play also displays the complexity of human relationships by bringing in the themes of marriage, love, and friendship, and we know the centrality of these relationships and emotions in human life.

Regarding the contemporary relevance of the play *Merchant of Venice*, Jay L. Halio in the Introduction to his book *Understanding The Merchant of Venice* writes:

Among the many issues that merit discussion, besides the central one of anti-Semitism, are the relationships between parents and children (there are three sets of them in the play), particularly involving permission to marry, the position of women in society generally, justice and money, friendship, matrimony, and the various other kinds of bonds that connect human beings with each other. Another important issue, one raised by the very existence of a moneylender, Shylock, in the play, is the problem of Usury. Christian doctrine generally opposed lending money at interest and exerted tremendous political pressure to prohibit it in England during the Sixteenth century. (Halio xiii)

The play represents characters whose actions and thoughts still have relevance in current times. This may not sound obsolete and surprising to readers who quite often find that while reading a literary work or watching an audio-visual text, the text is talking about them, about their personal experiences, about their times, the people around them, their friends, and the happenings around them. So, this shows that a literary work which has been written or composed earlier resonates in contemporary world as well. Likewise, many of the thoughts, themes, and issues that have been central to *Merchant of Venice* find their echo in the contemporary times. Some of these themes/issues include; Xenophobia and the discrimination of the ‘other’, power-dynamics and control, and love and relationships. We will be discussing these issues and themes thoroughly in this section and try to understand their relevance to the contemporary world.

12.2.1 Xenophobia and the Discrimination of the ‘other’:

One of the central issues that have been discussed quite often as far as *Merchant of Venice* is concerned is that of anti-Semitism. The play represents this process of othering and discrimination of Jews in a very subtle and artistic manner. The play is Judeophobic in the obvious sense, and it is

also gynophobic as Portia is the most obvious instrument of patriarchal will literally as well as metaphorically. Jessica's condition is also emblematic of the position of woman in a patriarchal system. The intersections of religion, gender, nation, and race club up to manufacture a condition of othering and xenophobia. A 'comic' representation of such kind of othering and xenophobia can be visualized in the play as:

Comedies also create onstage images of closed communities of right-thinking people, from which outsiders are excluded by being laughed at. If the Merchant of Venice has always seemed one of Shakespeare's more problematic and disturbing comedies, this may be because it examines networks of society more closely than usual, and treats outsiders—one in particular—with a severity that seems to go beyond the comic. (Leggatt)

The othering and discrimination of individuals in this Shakespearean comedy results in a condition of Judeophobia, which is mainly put across via the character of Shylock, but we also find its echo upon reading the other Jew characters living in a predominantly Christian community. Talking about this, Harold Bloom in his book, *Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages*, writes, "I am arguing that *The Merchant of Venice* pragmatically is an anti-Semitic play, though Shakespeare does not seem personally to have been an anti-Semite. Yet nearly any assertion about Shylock, whether made by Gentile or Jew, is difficult to sustain." (Bloom xi). So, the play is setting up a performance in which a few characters from the Jew community living within a majoritarian Christian populace are othered, seen as 'different' as far as their beliefs are concerned, and in this whole process they become targets of a systemic discrimination in various spheres of life. This systemic process of 'othering' and discrimination, which ultimately leads to the dislike of these individuals/communities, also creates a feeling of dislike, lack of trust, and hatred within the communities. This xenophobia or fear of the other is what creates a wedge and puts these communities in a condition where they see the othered communities as the outsiders and enemies. Shakespeare represents such a scenario in the play as:

The Merchant of Venice is Shakespeare's most controversial play. Its alleged anti-Semitism continues to engage both literary critics and theatrical reviewers every time the play is staged or a new edition is published. Although Shylock appears in only five scenes, he dominates the action [...] In fact, the play raises more important issues today, perhaps even more than in the 1590s, when it was first produced and printed. (Halio xiii)

The most prominent character representing this feeling of anti-Semitism and othering is Shylock. But, to get to the base of this phenomenon we need to realize that this Shakespearean play

was composed “within a culture in which prejudice against Jews was pervasive and endemic. It can be argued that this goes back to the earliest days of Christianity, when the tradition began of making the Jews bear the guilt of Crucifixion” (Leggatt). A Jew moneylender (Shylock) who demanded “a pound of Christian flesh” is also an instance which shows the serious violation which could have been there between Christians and Jews.

The same goes for professions which were left for Jews to choose, for example, they used to be the servants and furthermore “Shylock’s profession of usury is also bound up with his race: barred from other occupations, the Jews of Europe took to money lending” (Leggatt). Not only Shylock but many other characters are also seen as ‘other’ and as ‘outsiders’ on the basis of their religion, place of origin, and skin. Like this, the play represents a very complex condition of xenophobia operating within the social and cultural system of Venice. Alexander Leggatt in his blog article, “The Merchant of Venice: A Modern Perspective”, puts up this condition as:

This brings us to the problem of the way comedy treats outsiders, and to the cruelty that so often lies at the heart of laughter. Portia begins her dissection of her unwanted suitors ‘I know it is a sin to be a mocker, but...’ (1.2.57-58) and goes on to indulge in that sin with real gusto. The unwanted suitors are all foreigners, and are mocked as such; only the Englishman, we notice, gets off lightly. [...] Besides, Morocco and Arragon are foreign princes, and Morocco’s foreignness is compounded by his dark skin, which Shakespeare emphasizes in a rare stage direction specifying the actor’s costume: ‘a tawny Moor all in white’ (2.1.0 SD). Portia’s dismissal of him, ‘Let all of his complexion choose me so’, (2.7.87), is for us an ugly moment. (Leggatt)

All these actions and scenes in the play depict a deep existence of xenophobia based on various factors like religion, place, race, gender, etc. And, in this systemic xenophobia, an othering of the minorities takes place, which in turn leads to discrimination and injustice.

Though, Shakespeare enacts these scenes based on his life during the 16th Century or earlier records, but while living in the contemporary world don’t we see a reflection of all such issues in our social and cultural set ups? The refugee condition, the diasporic processes, distinctions on the basis of race, religion, nation, and gender are creating havoc around the globe. An extreme condition of xenophobia and othering has been reached wherein the world communities have been setting a tradition of making the Muslims bear the guilt of extremism and terrorism just like “the tradition of making the Jews bear the guilt of the Crucifixion”. We are coming across various forms of violence which have their roots in xenophobic thoughts, whether it be on the basis of race, gender, religion, nation, or caste. In the recent times, we saw the killing of George Floyd in America which led to a

global backlash and highlighted the rifts and systemic violence operated by some whites against people of colour. Moving back to the Indic or South Asian context, there are a lot of intersections which lead to such a condition of life. The existence of *jati*/caste, the clash between different nationalities, the existence of refugees, the gendered existence of an individual within a patriarchal culture, the existence of multiple religions/languages/ethnicities/cultures are some of the things which need our attention so as to address the damage done to individual and social life within a xenophobic atmosphere. What needs to be taken care of is the process of othering based on such radical divisions, which ultimately leads to a lot of discrimination, violence, and loss of human life.

So, the Shakespearean play *Merchant of Venice* is not a text which we need to confine to the 16th century Venice or England, it has some important themes and issues which echo and find resonance in the contemporary times, and the condition of xenophobia and discrimination is one of these which has been a major barrier for human progress, betterment, and development.

12.2.2 Power-dynamics and Economic Control:

Another important aspect of the play *Merchant of Venice* is the representation of various power mechanisms functional in the social and cultural existence of an individual, a community, or a nation. This mechanism of ‘management’ and ‘control’ is associated with the economic, religious, ethnic, and gendered existence of various individuals in the community. All this power politics and dynamics, and economic control are not something new to our societies and nations. It existed in the Shakespearean times, or prior to Shakespeare as well, and it exists in our times in various forms and with different ramifications.

Merchant of Venice is such a text which portrays a complex power process, how it operates at the level of individuals as well as at the level of communities. The action and scenes in the play allow us to confront the scenes of life wherein we find a clash of individuals and groups, wherein the ones who have access to power, ‘control’ and ‘guide’ the life of the ones who lack such power and authority. And, this power is attained by means of majoritarian religious, gendered or ethnic privileges, and also by means of a higher economic status in the society. This scenario can be summed up as:

The control over individuals and groups from a supreme authority is explored throughout the whole text. Such power comes from the Christian and male Venetian citizens, as anybody who is not a male and Christian in the play is seen as inferior, be they male and Jewish, female, or any other race or nationality. Ironically, this power stems from Act I of the play, where Portia is powerless in determining her own fate, as seen with her line, ‘I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike’. Portia’s repetition of ‘choose’ which occurs

throughout this passage, indicates her subjugation, suggesting resentment to the ‘will’ of her late father. [...] This paradox seemingly indicates Portia’s unwillingness to be a participant. This indicates that Portia is in some ways an object or prize to be won. (“Modern Relevance”)

The passage quoted above gives us a comprehensive picture of the power modules operative at individual, familial, social, religious, ethnic, and economic levels in the text. Not only do we find the Jews of the place on the other side of this power relationship, but also other individuals and groups who lack power and belong to the other side as against the powerful authorities. And, in this manner their lives and their existence is under the scanner of people who enjoy positions of power.

The power web is not only confined to social-cum-cultural norms defined and prescribed by the dominant and majoritarian view of the place, but is equally evident in the economic disparities among people. Financial status of individuals and groups is an important factor in this game of control, authority, and power. And, this is not just a textual truth that we find in *Merchant of Venice* but echoes in our own contemporary lives in different forms. In the play we find:

In the interweaving of the play’s stories we see a chain of obligations based on money. Bassanio needs money to pay his debts, and plans to get it by marrying the rich heiress Portia. To make money he needs to borrow money—from his friend Antonio, who borrows it from Shylock, who borrows it, according to the patten of his trade, from Tubal. Once Bassanio has won Portia, she becomes part of the network, and the obligations become more than financial. (Leggatt)

The exchange systems for labour, trade, and commerce have been there in human societies since a very long time. The modes and means of these exchange systems have changed with the progress and development of humanity, and have given way to an exchange system based on currency or money. So, money is a very crucial factor in human lives, whether it is an individual, a community, or a nation. Money has also been an important thematic concern in literature of the world; examples can be taken from novels like *The Death of a Salesman*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Money plays an important part in the play *Merchant of Venice* as well, and all the episodes of the play are closely knitted to it in one way or the other. It is a reflection of the contemporary world where life is very hard without money, and a person needs money to survive, struggle, achieve and excel. It would not be wrong to say that *The Merchant of Venice* is a prototype of the economic disparities in contemporary society.

The drama begins with the tone of economy when friends relate the sad face of Antonio to the money he has borrowed from Shylock. All the major characters of the drama-- Antonio, Bassanio, Shylock, and Portia are connected to each other by a vicious cycle of money and wealth. Bassanio wants to get married to Portia and needs money to look suitable for her as she is queen of riches and beauty. Bassanio and Antonio know that the life of Bassanio will be luxurious once he wins over the heart of Portia as she will become beneficiary of the will of his late father. It does not become explicit how much Bassanio loves Portia but the love for the economy of Portia is very clear.

As evident from the play Antonio is a merchant from Venice who follows his business ethics honestly whereas Shylock- the Jewish moneylender has been painted as opposite of Antonio. Shylock's main purpose in life is to make money and to materialise this purpose he lends money to people on high interest rates. Moreover, Shylock hates Antonio as he doesn't charge any interest rate to money he lends to the people, and tries to help as much as possible. This character of Antonio proves very harmful to Shylock and his business. He wants to ruin Antonio somehow to build his image and business in the city of Venice. Shylock initially refuses to lend three hundred ducats to Bassanio on the security of Antonio but later he agrees on a strange condition. Shylock mentions that if Antonio fails to return the money Shylock will cut one pound of flesh from Antonio's body. Antonio signs the bond with Shylock thinking that his ships will reach Venice in a month or two, and he would pay Shylock the borrowed money back. Antonio is a very good friend and he never hesitates to put his life in danger for his friend Bassanio. This kind of friendship is very rare to find in today's world, seldom one reads about such friends who dedicate their life for the good of their friends.

So, money, wealth, and economy are things which have a role in framing the basics of human relationships as well. In the play, we find how relationships of love and marriage have money/wealth as a variable in between people, and how the same money can prove to be a sign of loyal friendship and care for the people whom we love. This interconnection between money and human emotions/relationships is not exclusive to literary texts only, but it is equally operational in human lives. The money factor cannot be excluded from our current lives and relationships as well, because it is something which is basic to our lives and survival.

This economic interdependence is something which is not specific to the mercantile societies of Venice or to the feudal economic system of medieval ages. Rather, such systems have been existent in different historical periods changing, evolving, and becoming more sophisticated with time. Can we think of our societies as free in terms of these domains of authoritarian control on the basis of cultural, social, and economic norms and factors? Such power dynamics and economic

control is very much evident in people, societies, and nations around us. Even our own individuality is enmeshed in these networks of power and control, and that is how we live our lives within sophisticated systems of power.

12.2.3 Love and Relationships:

The human social system is based on the bonds and interaction between fellow human beings within a community. And, what guides this bonding and interaction is a web of emotions, feelings, and various cultural, economic and political factors. The prominent emotions or feelings which run a social system are that of love and hatred, which precipitate into a number of relationships between individuals. While talking of these relationships, we cannot sideline the relations of kinship, parenthood, friendship, and marriage. We have been quite aware about the unifying and harmonizing qualities of relationships rooted in love and warmth, and also about the fracturing and damaging force of hatred and dislike.

Shakespeare, as a versatile playwright, has depicted such social relationships and their varied spins in most of his works. Be it the concept of love between a man and a woman, a bond between women or between men, the affection between parents and children, or the hatred between people on various grounds, Shakespeare has depicted all of these in his works. In *Merchant of Venice*, he has once again given us an opportunity to notice and read many such human relationships like love, friendship, parenthood, and enmity, which still have a relevance to our lives. Sahrab Abdi in an article, “Contemporary Themes of The Merchant of Venice”, talks about this as:

There are many loving relationships in the play and not all are the type that involves the love that a man has for a woman, or vice versa. Bassanio and Portia, Jessica and Lorenzo and Gratiano and Nerrisa are all types of love that involve a man and a woman, which are of course relevant to today’s society. When one looks deeply into these relationships, they would see parallels to the ones of today. For instance, the concept that all three marriages will probably not last, is a parallel to the number of divorces that are occurring today. (Abdi)

Not only this, there are also examples of hasty marriages in the play which ultimately results into failures. Though, the marriage between Jessica and Lorenzo is problematic because of many other reasons as well, but the thing is that marriage as a bond is being shown as a process dependant on various social and cultural norms which is still true for our times.

This Shakespearean play is a comedy and as far as the traditions of a comedy are concerned, these end in marriages. While reaching the climax *Merchant of Venice* as a comedy depicts and discusses the social linkages in which marriages are made. Some of these linkages and networks include the bonds among families, friends, parents, and children. The ring in the play which is being

exchanged “exemplifies the paradox of marriage; it binds two people exclusively to each other, yet it does so within a social network in which they have inevitable ties with other people, ties on which the marriage itself depends” (Leggatt). So, if we attempt to situate these scenes and happenings in the current scenario of our lives, we will find a deeper association between these Shakespearean thoughts and complexity and dynamic nature of present human relationships.

The theme of interracial marriage as depicted in the play is something which shatters the normalized traditions of marriage. For a Jew, it was too hard to marry a ‘gentile’ keeping in view the social stigma attached to such a relationship. The marriage between Jessica and Lorenzo is one such marriage which fractures the existent norms of the society, though there are a lot of pains associated to it when we see the mourning condition of Shylock post-marriage. This theme of inter-racial marriage is something which has more ramifications and relevance in the contemporary world, especially in South-Asian regions, keeping in view the division between humans on the basis of caste, religion, colour, and economic status.

Shakespeare also represents the relationship between parents and children in this play, which needs to be given a good thought in the contemporary times while coming across the condition of our elders who are being abandoned by their married sons and daughters. While representing this crucial aspect of the society, Shakespeare shows the relationship of Portia to her father as something which is one of ‘obedience’. Leggatt talks of this condition as, “Portia is also bound to her father. When we first see her she is chafing at the way her father has denied her freedom of choice in marriage: ‘so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father’”. This is where Portia finds herself in a very tight situation and she lets things go with the flow. She “sees the value of the test from her own point of view when she tells Bassanio ‘if you do love me, you will find me out (3.2. 43)’”. This is how Portia lets herself to carry the burden of the will of his father and that of his feeling of love for Bassanio. But, when we encounter the life of Jessica and her relationship with her father, the story turns out to be different. “She recognizes a real obligation to her father— ‘Alack, what heinous sin sit in me/To be ashamed to be my father’s child?’ and she hopes her elopement will end this strife” (Leggatt). And, when we go through the plot, we find that yes the condition of Jessica changes after her elopement, but the situation of her father Shylock, living as a member of a minority Jew community, becomes miserable. He suffers a lot of pain and humiliation at the hands of the Venetians. “The vicious taunts he endures from the Venetians identify him as an old man who has lost his potency”.

In addition to this parent-child relationship, Merchant of Venice, also puts forth the relationship between men as one where they go to any extent to help and care for one another. Like

other human relationships, friendship is a universal relationship which has not become extinct in the world. Shakespeare represents the notion of friendship of his times in the play as:

Many friendships appear in the *Merchant of Venice*, chiefly that between Antonio and Bassanio, which must have suggested to Elizabethans in Shakespeare's audience the biblical friendship of David and Jonathan or the classical friendship of Damon and Pythias. Other similar friendships were recorded and politicized wherein a man was willing to lay down his life for his friend, as in these examples, and as Antonio is prepared to do so for Bassanio. (Halio xv)

So, this shows the level of love and care that existed between true friends during Shakespearean age, and when we put this notion in contrast to the friendships of our age there can be some good lessons to be taken from it. There are many other scenes and examples in the play wherein we find how Shakespeare puts across the concept of friendship and how these thoughts are relevant to our times.

On the whole, *Merchant of Venice*, as a comic play enacts some important universal aspects of human society by means of these feelings and relationships, and puts the audience/readers in a position to locate and interpret these within their own spatial and temporal existence. There may be many other aspects in which this play has relevance to the contemporary world and contemporary human life, but to locate and understand these aspects we need serious readers who can recognize, grasp, and study such crucial aspects.

12.3 Learning Outcomes

Students will get a thorough idea about the universal nature of literature and its relevance to the contemporary world. They can understand the multiple dimensions in which a work of art is relevant to our times; be it individual, social, economic, political, cultural, or historical. The students will also learn the idea of othering, discrimination, and xenophobia, and how they have a relevance to the present times. The process of control of human beings in a social, cultural, and economic set up will also be discussed and students can have a better understanding of such a complex process, thereby enabling them to get an idea of the multi-dimensional forces that operate on human life. Furthermore, learners will also get to know the nature, importance, and complexity of human relationships, and how to study these in literary texts. Like this, learners will approach many other

texts of literature and art in order to locate such themes and issues. They can also compose write-ups and responses to various questions related to these literary aspects.

12.4 Glossary

Anti-Semitism: Opposite to people who belong to Semites.

Xenophobia: Dislike of or prejudice against people believed to be outsiders in terms of nationality, religion, ethnicity, etc.

Jati: Caste

Judeophobia: Fear of Jews

Gynophobia: Fear of women

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. After Bassanio chooses the right casket, what does Portia give him, and tell him never to lose?
2. Jessica elopes away with.....
3. What does Antonio have to do in order for Bassanio to receive money?
4. "If you do love me, you will find me out," who says these words in the play:
(a) Bassanio (b) Portia
(c) Antonio (d) Jessica
5. Bassanio is related to Antonio as:
(a) His uncle (b) His brother
(c) His cousin (d) His best friend
6. Who is the merchant of Venice?
(a) Shylock (b) Bassanio
(c) Tubal (d) Antonio
7. The prince of Morocco chooses:
(a) The gold casket (b) The silver casket
(c) The bronze casket (d) The lead casket
8. Shylock borrows the money from.....
9. Portia delivers a speech regarding.....
10. "A tawny Moor all in white" is a description for.....

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Do you think that a work of literature from the past can have a relevance to the contemporary times? Discuss briefly.
2. What do you mean by the term Xenophobia? Comment briefly.
3. Why is the Prince of Morocco rejected by Portia?
4. What does Shylock's demand for "a pound of flesh" suggest? Comment briefly.
5. How has been the theme of marriage dealt in the play? Discuss briefly.

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. The theme of othering, xenophobia, and discrimination is present in the play *Merchant of Venice*, discuss it in contrast to the contemporary times?
2. How does *Merchant of Venice* represent the theme of power and control? Do you think it has a relevance to our times? Discuss.
3. Are emotions, feelings, and relationships basic to human life irrespective of the limitations of space and time? Discuss with reference to the play *Merchant of Venice*.

12.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit-13: Introduction to the British Novel

Structure

13.0 Introduction

13.1 Objectives

13.2 An Overview of the British Novel

13.2.1 Novel in 18th Century

13.2.2 Factors Responsible for the Rise of Novel

13.2.3 The Social Environment of 18th Century

13.2.4 The Democratic Movement

13.2.5 The Emergence of Realism

13.2.6 Decline of Drama

13.2.7 Freedom of a Writer

13.2.8 Kinds of Novels that emerged in the 18th century

13.2.9 The Four Wheels of Novel

13.3 Learning Outcomes

13.4 Glossary

13.5 Sample Questions

13.6 Suggested Readings

13.0 Introduction

Dear Readers, This unit will give you an overview of the British novel in general. We will try to locate the historical background of the British novel and recognize some features of the period in which the novel emerged and developed as a genre. The 'novel' as a genre is difficult to define due to its open yet complex structure. Not only novel but other genres of literature viz. drama, short story, poetry, and other literary terms are challenging to define. Although some critics have attempted to locate the novel in ancient Egyptian texts and middle-eastern Japanese writings, it is essentially a western fabrication. The truth is that the novel began in England in the 18th century. After the death of Shakespeare in 16th Century England, there was a common slogan that it is not the death of Shakespeare but the death of drama. The writers afterwards tried their hand in other genres for example, in the Jacobean era 'masques' were written, in Caroline and Neo-Classical periods, poetry was written. The novel came into vogue after the decline of drama with the complete closure of theatres in 1642. After the rise of the industrial revolution in England, the writers switched towards novel writing generally because of two factors. Firstly, the common masses were no longer free and ideal to spend time watching

dramas. Secondly, with the establishment of the printing press newspapers, journals, bulletins and newspapers became readily available in the market and as such gave birth to new readership and thirdly, female writers were not much acknowledged so they started to write novels to prove their worth. They used pseudo names to write the novels and once their work was acknowledged, they used to reveal the names. For Example, Marry Ann Evans used to write under the pen name of George Eliot, Bronte/ Stormy sisters viz. Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, and Anne Bronte used to write under the pseudo name of Currer Bell, Elis Bell, and Acton Bell respectively. The novel in England flourished in the Victorian Era prominently with a quartet who are also known as four wheels of the novel viz. Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Tobias Smollett, and Lawrence Sterne. It was Sir Walter Scott who called Henry Fielding as Father of English Novels. E. M Forster in his famous magnum opus book *Aspects of the Novel* published in 1928 stated that a novel should have maximum wording of 50,000 words. Anything less than it would be considered a novella or a short story. Lorie Moore, one of the famous critics beautifully differentiated the novel and short story by saying that “A short story is a love affair, a novel is a marriage. A short story is a photograph, a novel is a film” This definition, on the other hand, is only a broad definition of the term 'novel,' and it would not apply to every sort of novel.

A novel is a kind of lengthy narrative fiction written in prose style, exhibiting a story concerning showering of characters in a specific setting. A novel is a complex narration as it inculcates a plot, setting, multiple themes, and many versatile characters. The story is crafted in such a way that it keeps the readers engaged from beginning to end. A novel is written on any or almost every theme, be it political, social, economic, scientific, psychological, etc. It can either be fictional or realistic as it covers the burning issues, truths, or facts of a particular time period. The novelist as a narrator or by being one of the characters in the novel narrates the story in such a way that it makes the readers connect with the overall plot, thereby invoking different responses in them.

13.1 Objectives

This unit has the following objectives:

- To provide an overview of the British novel.
- To offer an understanding about the emergence of the novel in 18th century
- To identify some prominent British novels
- To recognize the contribution of some important novelists.
- To highlight the factors responsible for the rise of the novel

- To know about the social realism of 18th century

13.2 An Overview of British Novel

Dear readers, we shall now discuss the novel in detail. A novel is a piece of prose of a reasonable length. However, not all novels are written in prose. Some novels were written in verses too like *The Golden Gate* by Vikram Seth. Remember so far as fiction is concerned, the difference between fiction and fact is not clear always. We are not sure what length should be considered suitable length to consider a short story as a novel. Interestingly, *The Immoralist* by Andre Gide is treated as a novel while *The Duel* by Antony Chekov is treated as a novella. However, both of these works are of the same length. Hence, it may be said that a novel is invented prose of a considerable length having a plot and definite end. It must have some complexity that imaginatively deals with human experience through a series of events by involving several people in a particular setting. Considering its broader framework novel has developed into an extensive range of types like picaresque, romantic, gothic, epistolary, historical, realist, campus novel, and many more.

As we know that the novel is one of the genres of fiction. Fiction may be defined as the art or the technique of arranging the representation of human life by virtue of written words. It is believed that when a work constitutes a considerable length to be treated as a book as opposed to it a mere part of the book then it may be said to have achieved novelhood. Also, it is a genre of fiction that has been a medium of entertainment, information, or a blend of both. In this light, any fictive art piece that is long enough to be adapted as a book can be said to have achieved “novelhood.” However, it also admits to quantitative categories, therefore, a relatively brief novel may be called a novella. Similarly, a very long novel may overflow and become a *roman fleuve* which means it can be in a series or volumes like the *Harry Potter* series. Hence length is an important dimension of the novel.

The word novel is derived from the Italian word *novella*, and is a late variant of *novellus* which means “new.” It was an enlarged anecdote that was found in the early 14th-century Italian classics like Boccacciou’s *Decameron* which exemplifies etymology clearly. However, it must be noted that despite some great novelists like Henry James, Tolstoy, Virginia Woolf, and some others, yet the term in some quarters carried little overtones and triviality. In most of the fictional works, the medium is prose and the description of events is not heroic but unheroic. Streets and taverns are generally a part of the setting. It is believed that it was more out of the need in Roman period to find a literary piece that could be anti-epic both in substance and

language. Interestingly, the term novel means *roman* in French and *romanzo* in Italian language. The genre achieved its first flowering in Spain at the beginning of the 17th century in an antique chivalric masterpiece called *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. It contains many of the elements of prosaic fiction as compared to the *Satyricon* or *The Golden Ass*. Novels have heroes, however, not in the classical sense or even in the medieval sense. The British poet W.H Auden says:

Become the whole of boredom, subject to
Vulgar complaints like love, among the Just
Be just, among the Filthy filthy too,
And in his own weak person, if he can,

Must suffer dully all the wrongs of Man. (The Novelist) A novel tries to presume those troubles of life that do not get a place in epic poem and to look at them as unheroic, unredeemed, incomplete, and to some extent absurd. Probably that is one of the reasons that there is scope or room for fictional writers like contemporary detective thriller or sentimental melodrama of MickySpiliane and Mrs. Henry Wood respectively.

Check your progress

1. Where has been the word *Novella* derived from?

2. Name any two novelists that you have read.

13.2.1 Novel in the 18th Century:

Today novel is considered an important art form of the English language. It is because it affects the grand aspects of language and that is why it is now considered an integral part of the art. But it can be claimed that the novel occurred primarily in 18th century. However it does not mean that there were no novels written prior to this period, it only means that there was an increase in the release of novels during this period or age. The 18th century was a period that lasted from 1685-1815

As we know that English novel is an essential part of English literature, therefore, it has evolved in varied forms and with modifications over the period of time. This period witnessed many revolutions that impacted the structure of the then society to a great extent. The trend of enlightenment thinking was at the fore of these revolutions. It was experienced in the French and American revolutions.

13.2.2 Factors Responsible for the Rise of Novel:

Some of the best gifts that the eighteenth century received were periodicals and novels, interestingly both had no precedents. These are both in prose forms and were suitable for the genius of the 18th century men and women. Both these literary productions (Periodicals and Novel) were advocates of the same sensibility in many respects. These literary products aimed at instructing humans to live a more purposeful life.

Out of these two literary genres, the periodical essay was more a peculiar product of the environment prevailing. It was born in eighteenth-century and ended in the same period after enjoying a brief yet phenomenal reputation. The 'novel' on the other hand survived not only survived but sustained and has attained more popularity with every passing day ever since its origin. Even today in most of the cases, we know that drama has become almost a defunct genre, while novel still holds its head high as a predominant genre.

It must be admitted that the novel arose in 1740 from lower forms to a substantial genre as no other genre did. The brilliant works of Richardson and Fielding were followed by two other major novelists, namely Smollet and Sterne. Immediately thereafter the entire English Literary air was thick and there was a huge production of novels. Let's consider now some of the important factors responsible for the rise of the novel in eighteenth century.

13.2.3 The Social Environment of the 18th Century:

According to David Daiches, the novel "was in a large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behavior from agreed public attitudes". Oliver Elton opines, "it came to express, far better than the poetry could do, the temper of the age and race." It is to be kept in mind that the eighteenth century is also known for the rise of the middle classes. There was an increase in trade and commerce and most of the people were becoming wealthy while many poor people found themselves in the respectable ranks of burgesses. The *nouveaux riches* were willing to lend themselves an aristocratic touch by appearing to be learned and sophisticated. This class of readers had been earlier neglected and ignored. The literary works before the eighteenth century were meant to be reading of the higher strata of society. The up- and-coming of the middle classes of the century demanded some sort of literature that should conform to their temperament and designed to voice their aspirations to meet their needs. England was turning into a country of big and small traders and, shopkeepers, these traders and shopkeepers are rich in common sense.

It is believed that these people took less interest in the exaggerated romances of heroes and heroines, they had no liking for villainy which interested the upper class of England, therefore, some new type of literature was demanded. Something which could express the ideal of the eighteenth century, the importance of individual life, to tell a man not about kings and crowns but themselves, their own life, their struggle, their motives etc. This was the main concern of the first novelists. They were read widely and their works got published in many countries which shows how powerfully this discovery appealed to readers. Not only was the novel a product of the emphasis on the common man, it also was in rapport with the psyche of the middle classes. According to Cazamian “there is a deep affinity between the dominant instincts of the middle classes and this branch of literature, the possibilities of which have remained intact. It lends itself better than any other to morality and sentiment.”

The novel has kept its explicit or implicit purpose ‘teaching’ something to the reader. The moral and ethical objective of the eighteenth century was taken for granted. The novel was yet another literary form like the periodical essay to inculcate morality and ethical good among the general masses.

13.2.4 The Democratic Movement:

The eighteenth century served as a warning for old English feudalism. It also broke many hurdles that were prevalent among many social classes. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 led to the dominance of parliament and the forging of the democratic spirit. This democratization reached its height in the eighteenth century, the century of coffee houses which were encouraged by free and frank discussions and deliberations. BonamayDombre in his *The Literature of Early Eighteenth Century*, there emerged two different classes of readers, the rich or sophisticated or the common masses. The motive of the democratic movement was to stress the importance of life and activities of the common masses. There was an urgency of a literary form that will act like a mirror to society and unlike tragedy and romance will depict a realistic picture about the various happening in society. There was a need for a literary form that would deal with the problems and guide to live a better life. No doubt the new form was novel, which was kind of a democratic epic. Writers like Richardson, Fielding, Sterne and Smollett and their followers advocate the theme of commoners. The protagonist of the novel *Pamela* (Pamela as main character) is the name of a female maidservant. If it was not the first of the novel of English literature, it was certainly the first nevertheless to associate the feelings and emotions of the middle class with it. Hence we may say that eighteenth century was a period of great transition. It may also be admitted that in eighteenth century drama, democratic spirit was also present.

Check your progress

1. Mention any two factors responsible for the rise of the novel in the 18th century.

2. Who is the protagonist of the novel *Pamela*?

13.2.5 The Rise of Realism:

The eighteenth century literature was filled with realism and was devoid of enthusiasm, passion, and suggestiveness which predominated romantic works. Every writer, whether a poet, essayist, dramatist or novelist believed that if they want their works to appeal to the general masses, it was essential on their part to present a rational appraisal of reality. Hence novel was yet another medium to explore the presentation of social reality. Most of the novelists in the 18th century were stark realists who presented a realistic picture of the then society. In this connection, David Diaches observes, “Like the medieval fabliau, also a product of the urban imagination, the novel tended to realism and contemporaneity in the sense that it dealt with people living in the social world known to the writer.” Thus it may be claimed that the novel became a favourable field of realism.

13.2.6 Decline of the Drama:

The fall of drama was a great factor responsible for the rise of the novel. It was no longer a forceful factor as it was in the Elizabeth period or even during the period of Charles II. The Licensing Act of 1737, which was meant to curb such scurrilous political satire as Fielding had leveled in his comedies against Sir Robert Walpole, in the words of Evans, “cut the very heart of drama”. It no longer remained an influential form of literature. The public demanded a new literary form that would present the bitter realities of society and satisfy their thirst for social reality.

13.2.7 Freedom of a Writer:

The emergence of the novel was also because novel offered more freedom to the writer than drama. It must be admitted that there are many limitations; he has to stay in the background and then complete the entire thing in a limited like two or three hours. This is not the case with the novelist, he can remain in omniscience and can intrude as in and when required or as per the demand of the script. Moreover, there is a limitation in terms of length, therefore the novel

offers a better choice of freedom than drama. Interestingly novel did not remain confined to Britain like drama. Hence novel was considered a welcome substitute for drama.

Another important thing was that novel had no precedent that was what made it different from another literary form like drama or poetry. Presuming that a writer wanted to write a drama, an epic or an ode, he had to look to the precedents to see how did write in such literary forms. This was not the case with the novel, they avoided this authority for there existed no model or authority before it. Therefore those who wanted to write a novel had to set a tradition and not follow any writer in the strict sense of following any authority.

13.2.8 Kinds of Novels that emerged in the 18th century:

Before Richardson and Fielding could shape the novel, some other writers had already started which helped the pioneers of the novel to a great extent. Some of the writers who had already started were: Swift, Dafoe and, Addison to name a few. *Gulliver's Travel* by Swift provides an interesting account despite the impossibility of "incident or action" there was an effect of reliability which was an important character of the novel. The Coverly papers of Addison and Steele were in themselves a kind of rudimentary novel. Most of these papers were read by readers as a domestic or social novels. They were rich in highlighting the oddities of the society, their lucid style was an inspiration for many novelists.

The period between 1840 to 1900 witnessed many writers. More than a hundred novels were written during this phase. However, the true pioneers of the novel were Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. There were others too but they were not as popular as these four novelists. Oliver Elton maintains: "The work of the four masters stands high, but the foothills are low." The case was different in, say, the mid-nineteenth century when so many equally great novelists were at work. Fielding was the greatest of the foursome. Sir Edmund Gosse calls Richardson "the first great English novelist" and Fielding, "the greatest of English novelists." Fielding may not be the greatest of all, but he was certainly one of the greatest English novelists and the greatest novelist of the eighteenth century. They were called "Four wheels of Novel". The four of them will be discussed in detail in the next chapter; still, we will try to discuss the four of them briefly for our understanding.

13.2.9 The Four Wheels of Novel:

1. Samuel Richardson:

There can be no denying that he is the father of the novel. He set the tone for the novel with his work *Pamela*. It is an epistolary novel. Richardson was good in human knowledge, especially about female psychology. He was aware of the general problems of the common

masses. He brought realism in novels to the best possible extent. His sentimentality and morality made him a popular figure not only in England but elsewhere too. He was often compared to Homer. However, even he was not spared for his morality during his period. In fact, Fielding was the important one figure who reacted against Richardson's sentimentalism and prudish morality. One important factor that may be considered a weak point of Richardson's writing was the length of the novel.

2. Henry Fielding:

Fielding holds the reputation of being the first novelist to introduce burlesque elements in the novel. He defined the novel as a "*comic epic poem in prose*". A mock-epic is a parody of epic as it treats an insignificant subject in such a manner that it appears of great importance. The protagonist is interwoven in many unsafe adventures occasionally. Fielding was different from Defoe and Richardson. He was from an aristocratic class and did not believe that sexual chastity virtue is above all other virtues. Fielding wanted to mock the morality view of puritans. The word Shamela in the title of the novel is a pun on the words of 'shame' and 'pamela'. Fielding's novels are in search of a realistic moral approach.

3. Tobias Smollett:

Smollett is also considered as the master of English novel along with Richardson and Fielding. But it must be admitted that his works are not much as standard as the works of Richardson and Fielding. Most of his works are picaresque. He did not follow strictly the traditions of the novel like plot construction nor did worry about morality. His heroes are mechanical puppets rather than living personalities. They are meant only for the bringing in of new situations. As a critic puts it, "Roderick Random's career is such as would be enough to kill three heroes and yet the fellow lives just to introduce us to new characters and situations."

3. Laurence Sterne:

His important work was *Tristram Shandy*, it appeared in nine volumes. Hudson says about *Tristram Shandy*, it was a "strange work of a strange man." If this can be considered as a novel then it is one of its own kind without any predecessors or successors. There was a remarkable proliferation in the novels after *Tristram Shandy*. However, no one could match Richardson or Fielding. It was observed that novel developed in various directions. Some of the areas that emerged were the novel of sentiment, the gothic novel, the novel of manners etc.

Check your Progress

1. Name the four novelists who are tagged as “Four Wheels of Novel”

13.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students are able to:

- Know the background of the British novel
- Understand the definition of the novel.
- Identify the factors responsible for the rise of the novel in 18th century
- Understand the social environment of 18th century
- Know about the democratic Movement of the 18th century
- Appreciate the emergence of realism
- Understand the types of novels that emerged in this century
- Appreciate the role of writers known as “Four Wheels of Novel and realize their contribution.

13.4 Glossary

Prose: a written or spoken language in its ordinary form without metrical structure

Drama: one of the genres of literature like poetry, prose and novel. The only thing that differs it from them it is staged and performed before an audience.

Protagonist: the main leading character of the story.

Genre: A category of art or literature.

Novel: A novel is a relatively long work of narrative fiction, typically written in prose and published as a book

Narrator: The mind from which all aspects of the story are necessarily told

Theme-: One or more direct or indirect statements about the human condition as evidenced through the work as a whole

Plot: The series of events which make up the story, traditionally, conflict, climax, [denouement](#), and conclusion

Setting: The place, the time, and the social circumstances of the work.

Tone: The general attitude of the author toward the characters or the subject matter of the book.

Characters: The sentient or non-sentient beings alive or dead who are the actors of the events.

Point of View: Perspective from which a work is told, 1st 3rd; omniscient, limited.

Society: A group of individuals living for a common reason as an organised group of people or a society.

Static: That cannot alter or never changing

Anarchy: Absence of law and order

Hinduism: A faith, philosophy and culture native to India, distinguished by the creationist viewpoint and a supreme oneness personified in several forms and natures.

Hierarchy: A political, economic, religious or social structure in which individuals are ranked above others with some supremacy.

Corruption: Bribery, the state of being tainted or debased.

13.5 Sample Question

13.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is not an essential element of a novel?
 - (a) Plot
 - (b) Character
 - (c) Destruction
 - (d) Theme
2. What is the leading character of a novel called?
 - (a) Protagonist
 - (b) Antagonist
 - (c) Confidant
 - (d) None
3. Which novelists used the 'Geroge Eliot' as her pen name?
 - (a) Jane Austen
 - (b) Virginia Woolf
 - (c) Elaine Showalter
 - (d) None
4. *The Golden Gate* is written by

- (a) Vikram Seth
 - (b) Thomas Hardy
 - (c) Mathew Arnold
 - (d) None
5. Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?
- (a) Jane Austen
 - (b) Emily Bronte
 - (c) Charlotte Bronte
 - (d) George Eliot
6. The novel *Pamela* is written by
- (a) Virginia Woolf
 - (b) Jane Austen
 - (c) Emily Bronte
 - (d) Richardson
7. The 18th century was a period that lasted from
- (a) 1885 -1985
 - (b) 1785-188
 - (c) 1685-1815
 - (d) None
8. The word 'Novel' has been derived from
- (a) Italy
 - (b) France
 - (c) Greece
 - (d) None
9. What does the word *Novella* mean?
- (a) New
 - (b) Young
 - (c) Old
 - (d) None
10. If the novel is told from a 'third person point of view', then the writer uses
- (a) I /us
 - (b) We /you
 - (c) They /he/she
 - (d) Us /me

13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short on the social environment of the 18th century.
2. Throw some light on the democratic movement of the 18th century.
3. Comment on the emergence of realism in the 18th century.
4. Discuss any two reasons for the decline of Drama.
5. Discuss Samuel Richardson as a novelist.

13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss in detail factors responsible for the emergence of the novel in the 18th century.
2. Novel as a genre was presented a true picture of the 18th century. Discuss.
3. Write a detailed note on the novelists considered as 'Four Wheels of Novels'.

13.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit-14: A Brief History of the Novel

Structure

14.0 Introduction

14.1 Objectives

14.2 Introduction to the Novel

14.2.1 Factors Responsible for the Rise of the English Novel

14.2.2 Four Wheels of Novel

14.2.3 Female Novel writers

14.2.4 Different Types of Novels in the 18th century

14.3 Learning Outcomes

14.4 Sample Questions

14.5 Glossary

14.6 Suggested Readings

14.0 Introduction

Literature consists of different kinds of writings that have evolved over the period of time. These writings in literature have their own journey with poetry being the oldest and novel being the latest. The rise of novel, itself is an interesting topic to read, as it was an outcome of new adventures, **evolving** societies and changing times. ‘Novel’ is the most recent **genre** in literature that came into existence in the eighteenth century. After prose writing, novel has opened gates for writers in the most widely used language across globe i.e., English. Since the **inception** of the ‘Novel’, it has maintained its popularity among masses as the most widely read of all kinds of literature in the twenty first century. Until the eighteenth century, fiction in prose writing existed but the books that we call ‘novels’, that became a fashion with all sections of the society including women, took a definite shape much later. The learners will find it interesting how ‘Novel’ as a writing style came into existence in the eighteenth century. They will further **acquaint** how novel has taken different forms over the period of time reflecting society in itself completely. Lastly, the learners will learn about the examination based questions.

14.1 Objectives

The following objectives will be achieved in this unit

- Introduction to the rise of English novel
- Explanation of the four wheels of the English novel
- Introduction to the female novel writers
- Introduction to the types of novels in 18th century
- Attempt examination based questions without any difficulty

14.2 Introduction to the Novel

The word ‘Novel’ is derived from an Italian word “novella” that means “new”, it is equivalent for *novelle* i.e., a prose fiction of middle length. It is a prose narrative of considerable length representing characters and action meant to tell a story published in a book form. Unlike Epic poetry, Novel tells the story of specific human character in prose form. It is now applied to a variety of writings that are extended works of fiction written in prose. M.H. Abrams writes on the feature of novel, “its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), **amplified** development of **milieu**, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes” (196). Long narrative pastoral romances written in English and Greek like Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica*, Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe* continued to influence novel writing in English.

Novels overtook all the popular forms of storytelling like epic poetry and chivalric romances, and **concretized** individualization in literature by sharing individual stories. The development of novel owes much to picaresque narrative in prose style. The picaresque narratives in Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) and Cervantes’ quasi-picaresque *Don Quixote* (1605) are among the **progenitor** of the modern English novel. Today, novels come in a wide array of subgenres. It is the only writing style in English literature that has become the bedrock of experiments of imaginative writing and it has become a great source of entertainment in the contemporary times.

The eighteenth century novels centred around real-life issues that lead to complex plot structures, realistic settings, represented people from different sections of the society i.e., from different professions, unlike earlier prose writings which mainly focussed on aristocratic class, individual experiences were celebrated and recognised through novel writings that common people could easily relate by looking into strengths and weaknesses of the characters. As people began to question the established societal norms through their writings, a probe into novel

writing depicts logic, rational thoughts and facts that rejected idealism prevailing in earlier centuries. As Drama began to decline, novel became a source of entertainment, information, enlightenment for general public as they could see themselves transported to realistic world represented in the novels.

14.2.1 Factors responsible for the rise of the English novel:

The emergence of coffee houses, leisure in literary activities, increased readership, establishment of publication houses and rise of middle class marks the social change in the 18th century. The factors that marked the transition from the Augustan prose, poetry and drama into novel are discussed in detail:

1. The Print Press: The Printing Press made newspapers, periodicals, bulletins, journals readily available in the market. Books became commercialized as the publication became easy due to the affordable price of ink, paper, bookbinding, etc. Literacy rates started **surging** as a result many writers started contributing through their writings. Thus, prose writing became dominant, it offered an introduction to new learnings, ideologies, movements in England and Europe. In the 18th century, the widespread appearance of newspapers and magazines attracted a large number of readers from the middle class. A significant number of people from the lower class started reading more and more books, newspapers, periodicals that helped them to know about the condition of the working class throughout Europe. This change brought about by Newspapers specifically encouraged the lower **strata** of society to share their narratives and conditions in prose writings. The prose writings included old romances in the language used by common people resulted in the rise of novels in England. Newspapers, journals, and magazines published letters in different editions. Periodicals became an important part of social groups and coffee houses as well. The new readers showed little interest in romances and tragedies. This gave rise to epistolary and episodic writings which matured into novels like Pamela by Richardson written in the form of series of letters. Thus, the opening of more publication houses to cater to new readership resulted in the rise of novels in the eighteenth century.

2. The Glorious Revolution: The Glorious Revolution of November 1688, is a term used by John Hampden in late 1689. It is a term associated with the deposition of James II and VII, King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the throne was taken over by his daughter Mary II and William of Orange. After this revolution, the democratic movements started surging all across England that emphasized giving power in the hands of the commons. In addition, the French revolution, the American Revolution, and the Haitian revolution questioned the structures that

subdued the voice of a common man for instance the monarchical system, slave trading, and human trafficking. Thus, revolutions became an important factor in the rise of the novel during that period as novel writing is an elaborated piece of prose writing with certain characters and actions meant to tell a story. During such movements, the commoners became the subject matter of the writings, and stories of the common people were celebrated in the novels that brought common people together. The ruling class was ruled out as subjects of newly evolved writing styles. In fact, the novels by the four wheels of novels are based on the life and experiences of common men. Moreover, this age came to be called the age of reason as accepted norms were replaced with rational thinking, logic, intellect, reason, and realism. This was marked by new discoveries in the field of science, change in new laws, revolutions across the globe.

Immanuel Kant in an essay titled ‘What Is Enlightenment?’ (1784) described this age as ‘Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own reason!’ Interestingly, people in the 18th century gave away with aristocracy and became interested to read about everyday events and the lives of fictional characters that were more close to themselves. Thus, characters like Robinson Crusoe, Tom Jones, etc became popular as they represented a life full of adventure doing away with the boredom of aristocracy. This century was overflowed with writings of all genres, especially novels.

3. The rise of middle class: The rise of the middle class in the 18th century had a significant effect on the rise of novels. Many merchants, travellers, and manufacturers amassed great wealth due to the growth of industrialization in England. These people made trades more lucrative by increasing their social and political influence. Due to exponential growth in trade and commerce, the newly rich class wanted to take over the canonical structures as they were neglected by the high-born writers who had been part of prominent universities. Thus, the rise of the novel was quite natural with the growth of the middle class who were ambitious and rational at the same time. David Daiches observes novel as a product of rising middle class, he writes, “was in a large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behaviour from agreed public attitudes.” Due to the widespread education among the middle class made them liberated in their thoughts, they began to challenge already established laws and conventions. All these changes and supposed chaos gave thought-leaders more subjects to write about other than the aristocratic class. As a result, the middle class further experienced some power that was never experienced before due to their prominence in the society wielded by the novel writing. In the 18th century, **patronage** of literature produced in England was taken over by the rise of the middle class.

4. Literacy: Due to the easy availability of printed books and newspapers, there was a surge in the number of people getting education. Many middle-class and lower-class people wanted to explore the world of knowledge through books and newspapers that was a privilege for high-class people. A large number of the population could read and write by the 18th century, thus there was a rise in readership. So, a number of publishing houses and books sprung up that made novels popular in England. The novel became a source of infotainment that could be read at any time without losing the storyline; it opened gateways for amusing stories from new far-off lands visited by merchants, travellers, and imperial representatives. Being literate became a necessity for people in the eighteenth century, a luxury to be enjoyed by all.

5. Decline of Drama: The decline of drama also contributed to the rise of the novel in the 18th century. Due to industrialization, many people started working in factories though the economic condition of the lower and middle class improved yet they didn't have much time to enjoy themselves at the theatres. In the 18th century, drama lost its fame as an influential literary form that it enjoyed during the Elizabethan Age. Due to affordable luxuries, one could read after work which created space for individual learning and knowledge.

6. Realism: The rise of realism in the 18th century also affected the growth of the novel. The pivotal subjects that concern the realist movement such as reason, intellect, and rationality became part of novel writing expressed in a simple language, just a play of words expressed in logical ideas.

14.2.2 Four wheels of Novel:

The novel writing in England matured with the contribution of writings by Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. They are known as the four wheels of the novel who lead a strong foundation for the genre to flourish in coming years.

1. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761): Samuel Richardson made a debut with the publication of the novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* in 1740. It is considered the first modern novel to be written in English. It is an epistolary novel i.e., written in the form of letters. The plot is simple and well written. The characters and situations are developed through the exchange of letters by the characters. It talks about the life of the heroine belonging to a common background. She goes through trials and **tribulations** in the novel and finally settles in a happy marriage. Richardson presented the morality of common people through this novel. Hudson in his book writes about Lord Morley's remark on *Pamela* stating that it is "landmark of a great social, no less than a great literary transition when all England went mad with enthusiasm over the trials, the virtues, the triumphs, of a rustic lady's maid" (146). Another novel that is attributed to Richardson is *Clarissa or The History of A Lady in eight volumes* (1748). It is regarded as one of the greatest

novels of the eighteenth century. It provided Richardson a good audience to read in the whole of Europe and established him as a novelist. It is a realist novel with psychological insights which led to the introduction of sentimentality into English novels. His works contain stories about common people told from psychological insights that are true to human nature. According to Ricket, by portraying females as protagonists he encouraged many female writers to write their stories in the form of novels. He paved way for *Tristram Shandy* and *Joseph Andrews*.

2. Henry Fielding (1707-54): Henry Fielding is known as the father of English Novels. He is the greatest novelist of the 18th century. He wrote his first novel *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams* in 1742, it's a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*. It is a picturesque novel that represents his deep understanding of human nature that he imbibed through his own understanding of life and experiences he has had example his understanding of criminality. It is a burlesque that narrates the adventure of Joseph Andrews and his friend Parson Adams. He completely rejects epistolary form and moralizing by Richardson in his novel *Pamela*. He introduced vivacious humor in his novel and genial insights into human nature. Fielding also wrote *The Life and Death of the Late Jonathan Wild, the Great* (1743) in which he presented glimpses of the ruffian mentality. *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749) is regarded as Fielding's masterpiece where he has canvassed numerous characters. It is a significant work as it represents a rich, vivid, realistic picture of the contemporary society of eighteenth-century England. His novels *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are regarded as the comic epic in prose and it is more than a picturesque novel. Another text by Fielding is *Amelia* (1751) where the protagonist is a good and faithful wife irrespective of temptations. The theory of novel writing in the preface is credited to Henry Fielding which formulated a definite shape and form to the novel, he wrote for his novels, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. Richard Church writes that Fielding brought forth rapidly growing literary form. He is a realist, a founder of modern realistic novels and novels of manners who presents common life with freedom and imagination. He presented to us a close-knit organic plot that reflects his craftsmanship in his novels. He broke away from the artificial style of writing and infused vitality and comic elements in the novels through the characters like Adams, Partridge, Mrs. Slipslop to cite a few. In his novels, he uses irony as a weapon of satire. He replaced Richardson's morbid morality presented in *Pamela* and other novels with a commonsense morality that is not overarching.

3. Tobias Smollett (1721-71): The most famous contributions of Smollett to this genre are *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), and *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), etc. His novels are narratives about adventures in life with a loose plot structure. Smollett wrote episodic novels where he presented the harsh realities

of life. Smollett expressed evils of life with the realism of the ship scenes in *The Roderick Random* that led to improving conditions in the naval service. Thus, most of his novels are the novel with a purpose. Dickens was much inspired by Smollett for presenting lively characters.

4. Laurence Sterne (1713-1768): *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759) by Sterne is the most celebrated novel that won him recognition in England. He writes about the experiences of the Shandy family. Through his odd characters like Uncle Toby and Corporal Trimm, he presents human eccentricities in a brilliant style. Lawrence Sterne had a university education and he became a celebrated author with the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* as big commercial success. It offered bawdy jokes, parodies, and a different kind of unpredictable narrative moving back and forth in time. The second novel by the author *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) has a remarkable style as it combines essays, travel, and fiction in a non-existent plot and chronology. A significant contribution made by Sterne in the novel as a genre is that of characterization. His characters are created with minute detail of gesture, expression, body language, etc that make his characters like a moving picture in front of our eyes. Sterne's non-existent plot and impressionistic characterization influenced writers to make use of the stream of consciousness technique in their writings. He is regarded to use the word sentiment for the first time as its contemporary understanding and usage. Sterne's impressionistic style of writing resonates with that of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Thus, these four novelists perfected this genre with sentimentality as seen in Richardson's work, humour in Fielding's writings, Smollett added liveliness and Sterne reflected impressionism in his works. The above-mentioned novelists laid down the pavement for the most popular writing form which is evolving ever since the eighteenth century.

5. Other Novelists: There were many other writers who explored this genre to make it popular during the eighteenth century among these were Oliver Goldsmith, Henry Mackenzie, William Godwin to list a few. Oliver Goldsmith gains popularity with his work *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). It has a simple plot blended with humor and pathos represented through erratic yet realistic characters to elucidate a romantic and gratifying picture of domestic village life in England.

Henry Mackenzie was a Scottish novelist who moved to London in 1765. He is also called Addison of the north. He was caught in the spirit of the time and used the concept of sentimentality established by Sterne in his works. Mackenzie shows the influence of Sterne in his quasi-ironic sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771). The novel is about the naive protagonist Harley's life in scrappy episodes and non-existent chapters. The novel highlights the tribulations of Harley, who lost his parents as a young boy, under the custody of numerous

guardians who moved to London in order to improve his financial state. This work through its sentimentality influenced the work of Charles Dickens in the following years. *The Man of World* (1773) is the second novel by Mackenzie where he shows a real picture of the world through a shady character. *Julia de Roubigné* (1777) is an epistolary novel written by Mackenzie.

William Godwin (1745-1831) was a prolific writer who encompasses the changing times of his period in his writings. He wrote *Caleb Williams or Things As They Are* (1794) in three volumes to show how man-made institutions destroy man. The story is about a servant who knows about the dark secret of his aristocratic master and is forced to flee as judicial/ legal institutions will destroy Caleb forever. The novel highlights Godwin's ideas discussed in his polemic work *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). Godwin was very famous among radical circles in London for his direct attack on the privileged aristocratic people. He married Mary Wollstonecraft who is among the pioneers of female writings in England.

In addition to the male writers, many females surfaced as professional novelists and journalists in the eighteenth century and voiced female perspectives through their writings. This shall be discussed in the next section.

14.2.3 Female Novel Writers:

Ian Watt remarks in *The Rise of Novel* (1957) that during the eighteenth century “the numerical (if not qualitative) majority [of novels] were actually written by women.” As women in the 18th century were devoid of leisure activities like hunting, drinking, etc they invested their time in reading novels which also motivated them to write about their stories. The new genre and changing times in the eighteenth century gave women an opportunity to explore their creativity and imagination through their works.

Frances Burney (1752-1842) is regarded as the first women novelist in English. Virginia Woolf called her “Mother of English Fiction”. In her works, one can find the influence of the four wheels of the novel. Her major work includes *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) written in an epistolary style inspired by Richardson, depicts the life of Evelina who is raised in a rural setup until she turns seventeen years of age. However, she explores the complexity of eighteenth-century England during her visits to London and Bristol. The novel is a sentimental novel mingled with the humor of Fielding and Smollett. Fanny Burney's other works include *Cecilia or Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782), it is a novel about the domestic life of Cecilia in eighteenth-century London and her search for a match, *Camilla, A Picture of Youth* (1796) concerns with the matrimonial and social fabric prevalent during that

time, and *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814) deals with the story of a mysterious woman trying to gain economic independence. Through her works, she inspired Jane Austen to write about feminine sensibility prevailing in nineteenth-century England.

Aphra Behn is regarded as the first woman novelist who earned living by her writing. Her famous work *Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave* (1688) is an interesting, adventurous yet horrifying narrative about an African prince who is captured and forced into slavery. The story of a captured African prince who is forced into slavery. *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684) is another famous work by her in epistolary form. She wrote vigorously to contribute fourteen novels and a dozen plays.

Eliza Haywood became the rival of Defoe with the publication of her first novel *Love In Excess* (1719) which was the bestseller that year along with *Robinson Crusoe*. It explores the treatment of a fallen woman along with education and marriage. *Idalia; or The Unfortunate Mistress* (1723) touches the amorous adventures of the protagonist in Italy. She was attacked by Alexander Pope in his *Dunciad* (1728) which almost destroyed her career.

Hannah More wrote one novel titled *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, which is about the life of a submissive wife. Jane Barker in her famous novel *Love Intrigues; Or, The History Of The Amours Of Bosvil And Galicia* (1719) depicts psychological realism.

Delarivier Manley, Penelope Aubin, Mary Davys, Sarah Fielding, Elizabeth Rowe are few other novelists who became virtuous professional writers who legitimized women's voice as novelists in the eighteenth century.

14.2.4 Different types of Novels in the 18th century:

1. Picaresque Novel: The word Picaresque came from the Spanish word "Picaro" which means a 'rogue' or 'rascal'. This is a genre of prose fiction that originated in Spain. It is generally an autobiographical account of the adventures in episodes of a low social class hero who makes his way into the world by his wit, comedy, and predominant satire. The story is narrated with realism as the rascality of the picaresque hero fall short of criminality.

Miguel de Cervantes was a Spanish writer who is regarded as the pioneer of the picaresque novels with his famous work *Don Quixote* (1605). Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594) is seen as an example of the picaresque novel in the spirit in English before Defoe. This form gains its popularity in the eighteenth century as it was extensively used by Defoe, Fielding, and Smollett. Defoe is credited to write the first picaresque

novel with the publication of *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722). It is a picaresque novel about a female protagonist who is an orphan and is thrown into a wicked world. The picaresque heroine makes her fortunes on her numerous amorous experiences till her old age. She is twelve years a whore, five times a wife, and twelve years a thief, eight-year a convict in Virginia, at last, she grew rich, lived an honest life, and died. Other noteworthy picaresque novels of the period are Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *The Life and Death of Jonathan Wild, the Great* (1743), and *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749). The genre became popular with the works of Smollett which included *Roderick Random*, *Humphrey Clinker*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and *Peregrine Pickle*. This novel type is realistic in manner, episodic in structure, and satirical in aim.

2. Sentimental Novel: The sentimental novel also called the novel of sensibility refers to the genre of fiction prevalent in the latter half of eighteenth-century England. The plot relies on the emotional sensibilities of the characters who are generally innocent, virtuous, compassionate, and have a charitable impulse towards a situation and nature that defines the course of action. The narration uses “language of tears” to invoke sympathy from the readers. The most famous sentimental novels in English are Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67) and *Sentimental Journey* (1768), Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1765–70) and Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800). In the nineteenth century it gave rise to domestic fiction that talk about the daily lives of the characters living in society. Frances Burney and Jane Austen were famous domestic fiction writers who observed life closely in their description of society.

3. Epistolary Novel: An epistolary novel is a novel written in the form of series of letters. The characters in the novel correspond with each other through letters; sometimes diary entries, newspaper **snippets** are also used to build the story. Through the letters, the characters outpour their thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Aphra Behn explored the genre through her writing *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), though this genre gained popularity in the eighteenth century with the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* in a Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel to Her Parents, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison. Henry Fielding wrote *Shamela* (1741), a parody of Pamela. John Cleland wrote an erotic novel *Fanny Hill* (1748) written a series of letters among the characters.

4. Gothic Novel: The term ‘Gothic’ originally referred to ‘Goths’ which means a Germanic tribe. It was referred to as Gothic romances or Novels of terror. It was an outcome of a revival of

interest in the medieval ages. The gothic romances first made their appearance in the poems of the late eighteenth century. The shift towards romantic tendencies from realistic lines played a significant role in the description of time, space, landscapes, and nature that contribute an important aspect of gothic fiction. Abandoned castles, churches, secret passages, haunted places, satanic forces, ghosts, supernatural terror, mystery, and emotions of fear and awe were the main elements of the gothic writings. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is among the pioneers of the gothic novels in English, Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* were famous terror novels with well-written plots creating suspense and horror throughout the novel, William Beckford's *The History of the Caliph Vathek* (1786) which deals with the mysteries of oriental **necromancy**. Satire mingles with sensation in his novels. Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, Miss Clara Reeve's *Old English Baron*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are few more examples of Gothic fiction of the eighteenth century.

Thus, at the close of the eighteenth century, we find novels that deal with social life and manners, symbolize emotional delight in nature and the medieval past, and undertake to right the wrongs of society. Moody and Lovett defined these three schools as the realists, the romanticists, and the social novelists which have continued in some form or the other till contemporary time.

14.3 Learning Outcomes

The learner is acquainted with the rise of novels in English and various factors contributing to its growth. The learner learned about the contribution of the key writers who made the novel writing a popular genre in England by presenting everyday incidences inspired by real-life characters weaved in extraordinary narratives. They learned about the contribution of female writers in experimenting with different kinds of novel writing. The learners can understand the reasons for the acceptance and popularity of novel writing in the twenty-first century. Further, the learner can read the books provided in the suggested readings to learn more about the rise of novels in England in detail. After the detailed study of the chapter, the learner will be able to write questions in the examination without any difficulty.

14.4 Glossary

Genre: A category in art and literature
Evolving: Advancing or growing gradually
Inception: Foundation/starting of an institution
Acquaint: Familiar
Ampler: Abundant, plentiful
Milieu: Social setting
Concretized: To give shape to an abstract idea
Progenitor: Forefather, one who started something
Surging: Rising, increasing
Strata: Layer, section
Patronage: Sponsored/funded by someone
Tribulations: Difficulties, sufferings
Snippets: A short piece of writing, an extract
Necromancy: A magic practice to communicate with the dead

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which one of the following is not regarded as the four wheels of the novel?
 - (a) **SamuelJohnson**
 - (b) Richardson
 - (c) Samuel Tobias
 - (d) Lawrence Sterne
2. Who among the following was a female novelist during the eighteenth century?
 - (a) Virginia Woolf
 - (b) Jane Austen
 - (c) **FannyBurney**
 - (d) George Eliot
3. Which of the following is not the work of Daniel Defoe?
 - (a) *Robinson Crusoe* (The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe)
 - (b) *Moll Flanders* (The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders)
 - (c) *Captain Singleton*
 - (d) *Shamela* (An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews)
4. Who among the following was also a famous journalist who published some 250 publications?

- (a) **Daniel Defoe** (b) Thomas Nash
(c) John Gay (d) Samuel Richardson

5. Who is known as a pioneer of English novels?

- (a) John Dryden (b) **John Bunyan**
(c) John Milton (d) John Keats

6. "Thus fear of danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than danger itself." Which novelist wrote these lines?

- a. **Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*** b. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*
c. Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* d. Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*

7. Who wrote the first modern novel- Pamela or Virtue Rewarded?

- (a) Daniel Defoe (b) Thomas Nash
(c) **Samuel Richardson** (d) Tobias Smollett

8. Pamela or Virtue Rewarded is also called:

- (a) **Epistolary Novel** (b) Science Fiction
(c) Travelogue (d) Picaresque Novel

9. Who stated the famous lines, "Fielding made Jane Austen possible by opening the central tradition of English Fiction"?

- (a) Samuel Richardson (b) **FR Leavis**
(c) Edward Gibbon (d) Tobias Smollett

10. Who said this famous line about Richardson that he "enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue"?

- (a) **Dr. Johnson** (b) Daniel Defoe
(c) Henry Fielding (d) FR Leavis

14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write about the four wheels of novel writing.
2. Discuss the characteristics of the novel.
3. What are the different factors responsible for the rise of novels in England?
4. What role did revolutions of the 18th-century play in the rise of the novel?
5. Discuss the major themes of the majority of novels written during this age.

14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the different types of novels that were produced during the eighteenth century?

2. Discuss the novel as a tool of emancipation and outlet of suffering for women in this age.
3. How has novel writing emerged as major writing in contemporary times. How are novels written during the eighteenth century different from contemporary novels?

14.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit-15: Important Novelists before Dickens

Structure:

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 Important Novelists before Dickens

15.2.1 Novel and its Pioneers

15.2.2 Novelists from Romantic Age

15.2.3 Contemporaries of Dickens

15.3 Learning Outcomes

15.4 Glossary

15.5 Sample Questions

15.6 Suggested Readings

15.0 Introduction

Novel as a genre of literature evolved in the English society because of inherent class conflict. A divide between elite ruling classes and common working classing have manifested in various domains and periods in British society. A notable incident of class conflict at political level was the formation of the Puritan Government in 1649, which signaled the dominance of middle-classes. With this began a new phase in the English society where the middle-class grew in size and readership. The novel and short story found their much needed readers who had time to read written-pieces of fiction at convenience. In this situation, novels not only provided them a source of entertainment after day-to-day tiring labor but also became a literary medium of their own as it contained characters that appear, speak, think and behave in ways they do. Over the centuries, the novel was influenced by societal and historical developments.

No novelist rose to the fame of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) until the Victorian period. Yet he was not the first writer to give the English readers a new genre called “novel”. Blessed with the sight to see beyond mortal beings and craft stories of human behavior and societal norms, Dickens set a benchmark for writers of later generations to produce novels that mirror society in its true form—filled with realistic characters, human anomalies, miseries, mundane circumstance, injustices, and a purpose to reform the society. Before Dickens could write his first novel, which was serialized for a magazine, many writers contributed to the development of the novel as a genre. A table given below gives you some important novels that appeared before the arrival of Dickens on the literary scene of the English soil.

Author	Work	Publication Year
Daniel Defoe	<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	1719
Daniel Defoe	<i>Moll Flanders</i>	1722
Jonathan Swift	<i>Gulliver’s Travels</i>	1726
Samuel Richardson	<i>Pamela or Virtue Rewarded</i>	1740
Henry Fielding	<i>Tom Jones</i>	1749
Jane Austen	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	1813
Charles Dickens	<i>The Pickwick Papers</i>	1836-37

In this Unit, we will trace the origin of the novel and discuss notable novelists who appeared before Charles Dickens, a British novelist of the 18th Century known for social realism in his fictional works. Some of the novelists who will be discussed at length in the Unit are Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Lawrence Stern, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott. In addition, minor novelists from Augustan Age, Romantic Age and Victorian Age will be provided for greater understanding of the English novelists who contributed to the genre.

15.1 Objectives

Objectives of the Unit are as follows:

- Provide an overview of English novelists from the start of novel as a new genre up to Charles Dickens
- Introduce important novelists before Dickens, right from Augustan Age to Romantic and Victorian periods
- Offer a brief survey of major and minor English novelists before Dickens

- Familiarize students with novels, themes, contributions, etc. of some of the prominent novelists who contributed towards novel as genre before the arrival of Dickens
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15.2 Important Novelists before Dickens

15.2.1 Origin of Novel and its Pioneers

Novel found its early fertile ground for emergence as a new genre in the Augustan period. It was a literary period that started from 1700 and ended in 1798. In the first half of the period, classical tendencies were in practice while the second half witnessed transition from classicism to romanticism. On a political front, two new parties emerged after the accession of Queen Anne in 1702. They were Whigs and the Tories. People began showing growing interest in politics and political discussions.

In the meantime, Coffee houses emerged as a central point of convergence for writers, thinkers, politicians, intellectuals and artists. The discussions in the coffee houses were marked with polished language, contemporary culture and lucid style. In a way, this coffee house culture contributed to the evolution of prose style of the day. One such prose writer, Joseph Addison clearly stated in *The Spectator* about the new tone in writing: “I shall endeavor to enliven morality with wit and wit with morality.” The period had seen assimilation of the aristocracy and the middle class. Subsequent to the emergence of the middle class, feelings, emotions and sentimentalism not only rose but also influenced the literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Decline of drama during the Augustan period made way for the novel. It was a genre that embodied the story of human life with all its mundane chores, emotions and feelings, hardships, adventures and so on. As many argue, the four pioneering figures of the novel are: Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne. They are also known as “Four Wheels of Novel”. Another prominent novelist of the time was Daniel Defoe. In their works, these writers apparently attempted to reflect life in its true spirit in the form of a story. Though they set a new trend with a new genre in England, this art of making a story out of lives of common man was refined at the hands of novelists in later eras.

Daniel Defoe (1660–1731)

Daniel Defoe was an English novelist known for his popular work *Robinson Crusoe* (1719–22), which has been translated into various languages across the world. His reputation encompassed

his abilities to write pamphlets and produce a periodical. During the reign of Queen Anne, he single-handedly brought out the *Review* from 1704 to 1713. It often served as an organ of the government and mirrored views of Tories. Through this paper, Defoe discussed morals, religion and trade besides commentary on current affairs. This periodical served as a remarkable influence for periodicals produced by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. Defoe produced an extended work of prose fiction titled *Robinson Crusoe*, a story of adventure with a hero and a situation that readers could easily identify themselves with. The success of *Robinson Crusoe* prompted him to produce more novels including *Moll Flanders*, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana*. His novels give his insight into human nature—his characters are ordinary human beings placed in unusual circumstances, living in solitude, and struggling in day-to-day life. His fiction is marked with matter-of-fact direct style, vivid details, random subject matter, moralizing tone, and naiveté. With his novels, he succeeded in holding the reader's interest.

Samuel Richardson (1683–1761)

Samuel Richardson was an English novelist and prolific writer who introduced sentimentality into the English novel. Though he printed close to 500 works such as periodicals and poetry in his lifetime, he started a distinct variety of writing called epistolary novels. Written in the forms of letters, his first novel *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1739) develops into a story as the characters exchange letters. The novel immediately became successful. Richardson skillfully blended morality and social purpose into the story while keeping the plot simple and Pamela's character well-drawn. His second novel *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* appeared in 1744. The characters of *Clarissa* and *Lovelace* have been given a realistic touch. The former contains psychological insight while the latter offers a fine example of scoundrel. Richardson's novels were immensely popular in his lifetime itself. His novels contain sharp details, an impeccable dramatic technique and an insight into women's thought and action. He earned a place for himself among English novelists through the power of his craft. *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* remains his last novel which appeared in 1753-4. He breathed last in 1761, and was buried in London.

Henry Fielding (1707–1754)

Henry Fielding was a novelist, essayist, playwright and pamphleteer during the Restoration period. Born in Somerset, he was educated at Eton College in classical literature and languages.

Along with Richardson, he was considered among the founders of the English novel. His first success came with *Shamela* (1741), a parody of *Pamela*. He was a witty man with a passion for justice and reform. With his humor and satire, he established his literary position. His ability to create a wide variety of characters representing varying social classes made his position strong among literary figures. His two popular novels are *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749). He also wrote comedies, satires, burlesques, masques and farces. His burlesque *Tom Thumb* (1730), political satires *Pasquin* (1736) and *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737) are worth mentioning. He edited two journals—*The True Patriot* (1745-1746) and *The Jacobite's Journal* (1747-1748). *Tom Jones* remains his comic masterpiece. This picaresque novel is hailed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge one of the "three most perfect plots ever planned". The novel has been adapted into motion picture and for stage multiple times since its first publication.

Lawrence Stern (1713–1768)

Lawrence Stern was an Irish-born English novelist and humorist. He was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge where he learnt Locke's philosophy. He wrote two novels—*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759) and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). Though he produced only two works of fiction, he rose to fame among his contemporary novelists because he experimented with novel as a genre. *Tristram Shandy* (1759) presents the story in a straightforward narrative with humor, sentimentality, absurdness, worldplay, innuendo, and unknown narrative devices. His novel pokes fun at *Pamela* for over-precise detailing and sentimentality. It dwells on two themes— isolation of people from each other and time. The isolation is caused by inadequacies of language whereas clock time and sensed time show discrepancy. It is still regarded as a precursor to stream-of-consciousness. On the other hand, *A Sentimental Journey* is a light-hearted comedy with a flavor moral sentiments. Though it has been translated into many languages, its comic effect is lost while sentiments get emphasized in translation. Besides novels, Stern produced a pamphlet, *A Political Romance* (1759) as a satire on Dr Francis Topham, and a piece on preaching, *A Fragment in the Manner of Rabelais* which was published posthumously.

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)

Jonathan Swift, an Irish-born English author known with pseudonyms Isaac Bickerstaff, Lemuel Gulliver and MB Drapier, was a trendsetting prose satirist who shot to fame with the novel *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). It is considered his masterpiece. The novel in four books recounts

voyages to four different fictional lands. Often criticized for misanthropy and deflating human pride, the novel reflects on the shortcomings of Enlightenment thought in a satirical way. Swift's style of writing shows use of two kinds of satire, namely Horatian and Juvenalian. Besides being a well-known satirist, he was an essayist, poet and political pamphleteer who initially supported the Whigs and later the Tories. Most of his works were published with pseudonyms or anonymously. He is remembered for *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), a prose satire, *A Modest Proposal* (1729), a satirical essay, *The Conduct of the Allies*, a pamphlet, *Journal to Stella*, a series of letters, and *Drapier's Letters*. His satirical essay *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* (1708) addresses many real and rhetorical arguments against Christianity. He also tried his hands at poetry, though without much success, and produced many poems most notably six odes. Mostly of his prose works were composed at Moor Park, including *A Tale of a Tub*.

Tobias Smollett (1721–1771)

Tobias George Smollett, a Scottish author known for the picaresque tradition of novel writing, was one among the “Four Wheels of Novels”. He set himself apart from Richardson, Fielding and Sterne with his unique style of writing that incorporated violence, brutality and the coarseness of language in his novels. He became a controversial literary celebrity with the publication of *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748). His second picaresque novel *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), a story with naval characters and a personal attack on Fielding and Garrick, is read widely. His third novel with a rogue hero titled *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* came out in 1753. Unlike his first two novels, the last one was less successful financially. His works are marked with grossness of satire, and keenness of caricatures.

In addition, minor writers have contributed towards the growth of novel in their respective ways as pioneers. Scottish novelist **Henry Mackenzie** (1745-1831) wrote *The Man of Feeling*, *The Man of the World* and *Julia de Roubigné*. **Horace Walpole** (1717-1797) published *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which is considered the first Gothic novel in English. He also wrote two more fictional works: *The Mysterious Mother: A Tragedy* (1768) and *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1785). British woman novelist **Elizabeth Inchbald** (1753-1821) published two novels of passion titled *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796). Anglo-Irish novelist **Oliver Goldsmith** (1728-1774) produced *The Vicar of Wakefield* in 1766—a sentimental novel widely read by Victorians and finds mention in novels of Eliot, Austen, Dickens, Bronte, Goethe and others.

15.2.2 Novelists from Romantic Age

Though poetry remained the dominant form of writing in the Romantic Age, a few fiction writers have made significant contributions to novel. Jane Austen and Walter Scott are among those novelists who took the genre to greater heights. On the other hand, some continued to imitate the Gothic style from their predecessors. .

Jane Austen (1775–1817)

Jane Austen, an English woman novelist known for her social commentary in novels, was born in Hampshire and began to write as a teenager. She wrote her first novella *Lady Susan* in epistolary form. This Georgian era author rose to fame with her comic novels of love. Her novels were set among the English middle and upper classes. Loaded with wit and social observation, her novels gave rare insights into the lives of early 19th century women. Two of her novels—*Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)—are considered literary classics and anthologized across universities and colleges. Initially titled *First Impressions*, *Pride and Prejudice* depicts a narrow world with accuracy and satirizes it too. Writing anonymously, she revealed her gender to show her male readers that a woman could write well. She also wrote *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815). Her two more novels *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published posthumously in 1818. Austen remains popular even today for her literary contributions—realist novels, defiance against gender roles and portrayal of women characters. Her works—only six novels—have enchanted millions of fans across the globe and adapted into movies, dramas and TV shows. Today she remains as popular as ever and is revered as much as any literary figure in the history of the English language.

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832)

Sir Walter Scott was a Scottish novelist popular for showing pageantry of history on broader canvases. He set a trend of historical novels with his first publication *Waverly* (1814). It was followed by a series of historical novels including *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), *A Legend of Montrose* (1819), *Ivanhoe* (1819), *The Monastery* (1820) and *St. Ronan's Well* (1823). Set in Scotland, these works are now known as the “Waverley” novels. His novels deal with the adventurous life of the Highlanders—people living on the border of Scotland and England. His historical novels, which are marked with chivalry and romantic elements, remain classics in Scottish and English literatures. He is considered the first English

novelist to elevate the scene as an indispensable element in action. His choice of the place and its detailed description make the action seem an outcome of the natural environment.

Other Novelists

Apart from Austen and Scott, a plethora of other writers have written novels in the Romantic period. **Frances Burney** a.k.a. Fanny Burney (1752-1840), an English satirical novelist, wrote *Evelina* which became a trendsetting work of the novel of manners. Her second novel titled *Cecilia; or, Memoirs of an Heiress* (1782) was also a social satire with an elaborate plot and moralistic themes. She brought out her last novel in 1796 as *Camilla; or, A Picture of Youth*. **Mrs. Anne Radcliffe** (1764-1832), a pioneer of the Gothic fiction, produced a number of novels including her most famous *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*. She uses supernatural machinery in her novels, which contain well-constructed plots, medievalism and romance.

Anglo-Irish writer **Maria Edgeworth** (1767-1849) began a new variety “regional novel” with her work *Castle Rackrent* (1800), which has inspired Sir Walter Scott. Historical novelist **Jane Porter** (1776-1850) produced *The Scottish Chiefs*, a novel popular among the Scottish children. **John Galt** (1779-1839), a Scottish novelist who portrayed rural life of Scotland and issues of Industrial Revolution in his works, wrote a number of novels such as *The Ayrshire Legatees* (1820), *The Annals of the Parish* (1821), *Sir Andrew Wylie* (1822), *The Provost* (1822), *The Entail* (1823) and *Lawrie Todd* (1830).

Susan Ferrier (1782-1854), a Scottish novelist, wrote three novels that became popular in her lifetime itself—*Marriage* (1810), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831). Portraying a vivid account of life and culture in Scotland, her novels comment on female education and marriage with touch of humor. She remained popular in the nineteenth century. Another Scottish novelist, **John G. Lockhart** (1794-1854) who is known for his seven-volume biography *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, published four novels. They were: *Valerius* (1821), *Adam Blair* (1822), *Reginald Dalton* (1823) and *Matthew Wald* (1824).

English novelist **Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley** (1797—1851) is popular for writing *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), a novel which has features that make it partly Gothic and partly science fiction. The title of the novel ‘Frankenstein’ became synonymous with the manmade monster she created as character. It could also be seen as a terror novel and possibly the first example of a science fiction. English novelist **William Harrison Ainsworth** (1805-82) published his first novel in 1826 anonymously but he rose to fame with *Rookwood*

(1834), which featured the highwayman Dick Turpin. His next novel *Jack Sheppard* (1839) was a story of burglar from the 18th-century. The glamorization of crime in a novel is categorized under “Newgate” school, of which Ainsworth and Edward Bulwer-Lytton were exemplary. He moved from crime to history and wrote about places. Out of around 40 novels he produced, a few of the historical novels are: *The Tower of London* (1840), *Old St. Paul’s* (1841), *Windsor Castle* (1843), and *The Lancashire Witches* (1849).

George P.R. James (1801-60) was a prolific English writer, novelist and historiographer. He produced more than sixty novels, of which a majority is historical in nature. Some of them are: *Richelieu* (1829), *Philip Augustus* (1831), *Henry Masterton* (1832), *Mary of Burgundy* (1833), *Darnley* (1839), and *The Smuggler* (1845). **Charles Lever** (1806-72), an Irish novelist know for *Charles O'Malley*, wrote as many as thirty novels besides short stories and essays. His picaresque novels depict Irish military life. Among his works are *Harry Lorrequer*(1839), *Jack Hinton* (1843), *Tom Burke* (1844), *Arthur O’Leary* (1844) and *Con Cregan* (1849). **Fredrick Marryat** (1792-1848) is considered a pioneer of nautical fiction. He wrote a number of adventure novels including *The King’s Own* (1830), *Peter Simple* (1834) and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836). His fiction is marked with a direct narrative style, lucid language, and humor.

Scottish novelist **Michael Scott** (1789-1835) is remembered for his two works—*Tom Cringle’s Log* and *The Cruise of the Midge*—written based on his observation of slavery in Jamaica. **Thomas Love Peacock** (1785-1866), an English satirical novelist, produced seven novels which were “comic romances”. May it be *Headlong Hall* (1816) or *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), conversation takes precedence over plot or character. His essay ‘The Four Ages of Poetry’ (1820) compelled Shelley to respond with ‘Defence of Poetry’.

15.2.3 Contemporaries of Dickens

The Victorian period has witnessed some of the greatest English novelists and novels. Besides Charles Dickens, the frontrunners who not only experimented with the form but also gave a new purpose and direction to the novel as a genre in the nineteenth century were Thackeray, Eliot, Hardy and Bronte Sisters.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863)

William Makepeace Thackeray, an Indian-born British novelist, is known for his masterpiece *Vanity Fair* (1847–48). Set in the early 18th century, the novel is about the Napoleonic period in

England. This novel, along with *The Newcomes*, *Major Gahagan* and other works, features the culture of Anglo-Indians. As a child, Thackeray not only observed Indian culture and traditions but also became orphaned at the age of five. His father served as the Collector of a district near Calcutta. *Vanity Fair* with an antiheroic subtitle “A Novel Without a Hero” deals with two woman characters—Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp. Of these two characters created by Thackeray, the latter stands out for being unprincipled adventuress. He also wrote a few more novels, including *The Virginians*, *Lovel the Widower*, and *The Adventures of Philip*.

George Eliot (1819–1880)

Mary Ann Evans, who is known in the literary world with a penname George Eliot, was an English novelist of the Victorian era and a contemporary of Dickens. Before publishing her own novel, she wrote for *Westminster Review* and later married its editor George Henry Lewes. He encouraged her to use penname George Eliot for her writings. In 1859, she published her first novel *Adam Bede*. Her other major works are *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Middlemarch* (1871–72), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Her works show that she was greatly influenced by lives of ordinary people.

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

Thomas Hardy, one of the greatest English writers of all time and most notable contemporary of Dickens, challenged the oppressive conventions of the Victorian society. Though he bore much criticism in his lifetime, his reputation spread far and wide making millions his fans globally. Most of his works are set in Wessex, a name that encompass counties of southwestern England. He wrote a number of novels, but five are hailed as masterpieces—*Tess of The D’Ubervilles* (1891), *Far from The Madding Crowd* (1874), *Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and *Jude The Obscure* (1895). Of these novels, *Tess* and *Jude* are considered his finest works and they contain worth-sympathizing working-class characters.

Bronte Sisters

Three Bronte sisters—Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), Emily Bronte (1818-1848) and Anne Bronte (1820-1849)—were English writers whose novels have become classics. In their first ever publication of a volume of poetry, they used pseudonyms: Currer Bell for Charlotte, Ellis Bell for Emily and Acton Bell for Anne. They retained these names for publishing their novels. In 1847, Anne's *Agnes Grey* and Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* were published. In 1848, Anne's *The Tenant*

of *Wildfell Hall* and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* appeared. The two novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, are heavily prescribed across universities and schools.

In addition to these notable contemporaries of Dickens, some other novelists of his time were:

Name of the Author	Popular Novels
R.L. Stevenson (1850-1894)	<i>Treasure Island and The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> <i>Kidnapped</i>
Charles Reade (1814-1884)	<i>The Cloister and the Hearth</i>
Anthony Trollope (1815-1882)	<i>Barchester Towers</i>
Balwer Lytton (1803-1873)	<i>Falkland</i> <i>Pelham</i> <i>Eugene Aram</i>
Chales Kingsley (1819-1875)	<i>Hypatia</i> <i>Westward Ho!</i> <i>Hereward the Wake</i>
Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865)	<i>Mary Barton</i> <i>Cranford</i> <i>Ruth</i> <i>Sylvia's Lovers</i> <i>Wives and Daughters</i>
Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825-1900)	<i>Lorna Doone</i> <i>Clara Vaughan</i> <i>Cradock Nowell</i> <i>The Maid of Sker</i> <i>Springhaven</i>
George Meredith (1828-1909)	<i>The Ordeal of Richard Feverel</i> <i>The Egoist</i>

15.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Unit, students would be able to:

- Know the origin of Novel in English
- Identify prominent novelists from Augustan Age and Romantic Age
- Know important novelists before Charles Dickens, understand the works they produced, and themes they wrote about
- Familiarize themselves with different types of novels and their pioneers
- Able to discuss in detail a few English novelists before Dickens by focusing on their works, styles, themes and contribution in general

15.4 Glossary

Gothic novel: A pseudomedieval fiction having a prevailing atmosphere of mystery and terror

Picaresque novel: A fictional work that depicts adventures of a roguish but appealing hero from low social class

Sentimental novel: A novel that exploits the reader's capacity for tenderness, compassion, or sympathy to a disproportionate degree

Newgate novel: a.k.a. Old Bailey novels, glamorized the lives of the criminals they portrayed and published in England from the late 1820s until the 1840s

Campus novel: a.k.a. academic novel; the main action is set in and around the campus of a university

Bildungsroman nove: A novel that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood

Realism: A literary movement that stresses on the faithful representation of reality in works of art and literature

Victorian period: The period of Queen Victoria's reign, from 20 June 1837 until her death on 22 January 1901.

Augustan period: The first half of the Eighteenth Century when English writers like Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift emulated Latin poets Horace, Ovid and Virgil—the trio from the reign of Emperor Augustus (27 BCE to 14 CE)

Bronte Sisters: Three English novelists—Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte and Anne Bronte—known with pseudonyms Currer Bell, Ellis Bell, Acton Bell respectively

Satire: A humorous way of criticizing people or ideas to show that they have faults or are wrong, often using exaggeration, irony, and other devices

Romanticism: A movement in the arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual

Wit: The ability to use words in an amusing and intelligent way

15.5 Sample Questions

15.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Robinson Crusoe appeared in the year _____.
2. “Four Wheels of Novel” are _____.
3. Tristram Shandy is a novel by _____.
4. The Vicar of Wakefield is written by
 - a. Daniel Defoe
 - b. Tobias Smollett
 - c. Oliver Goldsmith
 - d. Horace Walpole
5. “Newgate” school of novel writing is associated with ____ .
 - a. John Galt
 - b. Mary Shelly
 - c. Horace Walpole
 - d. William Harrison Ainsworth
6. Match the following:

(A)	(B)
a. Newgate	i. Smollett
b. Gothic	ii. Shelly
c. Picaresque	iii. Ainsworth

d. Sci-fi

iv. Walpole

7. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is published in the year _____.

a. 1813

b. 1919

c. 1731

d. 1819

8. Actual name of George Eliot was _____.

9. Match the real name of Bronte Sisters with their penname.

(A)

(B)

a. Currer Bell

i. Charles Bronte

b. Ellis Bell

ii. Ellis Bronte

c. Acton Bell

iii. Anne Bronte

10. Name of Indian-born English author is _____.

a. E.M. Forster

b. W. M. Thackeray

c. Oliver Goldsmith

d. Frances Burney

15.5.2 Short Answer Questions

1. Daniel Defoe is one of the earliest novelist. Discuss.

2. Justify Jonathan Swift as a satirist.

3. Write a note on Sir Walter Scott as a historical novelist.

4. Briefly comment on works of Jane Austen.
5. Write a note “Waverly” novels.

15.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. Explain origin and growth of novel as a genre.
2. Discuss “Four Wheels of Novel” in detail.
3. Write a detailed note on novelists from the Romantic era.

15.6 Suggested Readings

1. Arata, Stephen, et al., eds. *A Companion to the English Novel*. John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
2. Caserio, Robert L., and Clement Hawes, eds. *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
3. Eagleton, Terry. *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
4. Richetti, John. *The English Novel in History 1700-1780*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
5. Trotter, David. *English Novel in History, 1895-1920*. Routledge, 2003.
6. Abrams, Meyer Howard, and Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning, 2014.

Unit-16: Life and Works of Charles Dickens

Structure

16.0 Introduction

16.1 Objectives

16.2 Life of Charles Dickens

16.2.1 Dickens as a Reformer

16.2.2 Some Important Works of Dickens

16.2.3 *Pickwick Papers*

16.2.4 *Oliver Twist*

16.2.5 *Great Expectations*

16.2.6 *David Copperfield*

16.2.7 *Hard Times*

16.3 Learning Outcomes

16.4 Glossary

16.5 Sample Questions

16.6 Suggested Readings

16.0 Introduction

Dear readers, it must be noted that Charles Dickens was one of the great novelists of British Literature. Besides, being a novelist, he was not only an illustrator but also a social commentator. Dickens has given the world of literature some classical works, among his notable works are *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *A Christmas Carol*. He has been praised and acknowledged as one of the few writers who influenced English writing in the 19th century. He was appreciated for bringing a stark and real portrait of the Victorian era underclass only to produce a social change.

16.1 Objectives

This unit has the following objectives:

- To make students aware of the life of Charles Dickens.
- To familiarize students with the literary works of Charles Dickens.

- To present Charles Dickens as a great novelist of the Victorian Period.

16.2 Life of Charles Dickens

Dear readers, it is important in the first place to throw some light on the life of Charles Dickens for our understanding. Charles Dickens was born on 7th Feb 1812 in Landport Portsmouth. His real name was Charles John Huffam Dickens and Charles Dickens became a short version of his name. They were, eight siblings and he was the second child of his father, who was a clerk in the Navy office. John Dickens along with his wife Elizabeth Dickens decided to move to London around 1814 and after spending two years in London they again moved to Chatham, Kent. It was here that Charles Dickens spent his early childhood years of life. However, they moved back to London because of financial difficulty and settled in Camden town in London. Dickens was only 12 when he had to experience a defining moment of his life, because of the humble financial condition, his father was imprisoned, and he had drowned in debt, hence he had a lot of difficulty in managing his finance.

Charles was withdrawn from school only because his father could not pay the fee and had to work in a warehouse, where he would polish the shoe to support his family. It had a strong psychological and sociological implication on Charles. It is perhaps because of this experience that he understood poverty from a broader perspective. It can be said that because of his firsthand experience with poverty he became one of the influential and vigorous voices of the working class in the Victorian period.

Charles went to school soon after his father was released from prison. His formal education came to an end as he got the job of office boy at an attorney's office. Though he left formal education, he would study shorthand at night. He did serve as a shorthand reporter in the courts and newspaper reporter later as a parliamentary.

Dickens started to write and contribute his short stories and essays in magazines. His first published story was *A Dinner at Popular Walk*, this short story featured in a magazine called *Monthly Magazine*. It was published in the year 1833. He chose to write under the pseudonym **Boz** despite still being a newspaper reporter. His first book a collection of stories titled *Sketches by Boz* got published in 1836. It was in the same year he got married to Cathrine Hogarth, daughter of the editor of *Evening Chronicle*. They had ten children together before they finally parted ways in 1858.

We all know Dickens as a novelist; however, he continued his pursuit of journalism till the end of his life, editing *The Daily News*, *Household Words*, and *All the Year Around*. His

acquaintance with all these newspapers and journals helped him to cater the opportunity to publish his fiction at the beginning of his career.

The Posthumous Papers of Pickwick Club was published in parts from April 1836 to Nov.1837. It was one of the popular works of that time. It was after the *Pickwick Papers* that Dickens started to establish himself as a novelist. From there onwards, Dickens produced works regularly like *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *BarnabyRudge* as part of the *Master Humphrey's Clock* series, all of these were published in monthly installments before being finally published in the form of books.

In 1842, he along with his wife went to the United States and Canada, it is believed he wrote controversial *American Notes* (1842) it also provides some basis for *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Soon five Christmas books of Dickens followed, *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life* (1846), and *The Haunted Man* (1848). Dickens continued his success after living in Italy and Switzerland with books like *Dombey and Son* (1848) and the autobiographical work *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1861).

Dickens began his paid reading series in 1858 which earned a lot of fame. In all, Dickens performed more than 400 times. In the same year after a tenure hard year, Dickens separated from his wife. There were rumors that Dickens is involved in an affair with a young actress of that time named Ellen Tarnen. However, the exact relationship is not clear but it was central to Dickens's professional and personal life. In the closing years of his life, Dickens worsened his declining health by giving numerous readings. During his readings in 1869, he collapsed, showing symptoms of a mild stroke. He retreated to Gad's Hill and began to work on *Edwin Drood*, which was never completed.

Dickens mostly focused on fictional characters like lawyers, clerks, bankers instead of Industrial manufacturers. It is because Dicken's London was a commercial rather than an industrial metropolis. The only work which exposes Dickens of his arrogance for Industrialism is *Hard Times*, we never even got to know what is produced in Bounderby's Factories and the city of Coketown is portrayed in vaguely impressionistic terms as if he was watching it from a train. This is an external view of supposedly external civilization. He aimed to present himself as an aspiring writer and wished to project himself a man of the town. Dickens cannot be called an urban novelist merely because he writes about the city, it is more so because he writes about it in an urban way. We can easily see his prose tactics, his style filled with live energies of his surroundings, full of hyperbole, extravagant gestures, melodramatic exclamations, the abrupt

shift of the tone etc. If Austen is an art of the cameo, Dickens may be treated as one of the posters.

Being a human subject is a process in time. However, this evolution is not something that we see. This is so because in cities only that thing is real which you can perceive. Hence the characters in Dickens are the way we find in George Eliot, Eliot says in *Middlemarch* Character is ‘a process and an unfolding’. Needless to say, this view may be more rural than urban. Therefore, in any small close-knit rural community of the kind that Austen and Eliot depict our familiarity with others then would mean that we can see our way around them. We can perceive their lives in such a way that the city makes it look much less easy.

We are living in such a society where all the real power seems to have been taken over by materialism, things like money, institutions, commodities, poor relations, and human beings are falling themselves under the tyrannical sway and reduced like candlesticks. It can be claimed, it is money that motivates Dicken’s plot from start to finish. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens shares a suitably capitalized, and then becomes a character in its way, unlike the Pip’s Great Expectation. Dickens recorded his childhood experience working alone all his life in 1824 when his father fell in debt and was imprisoned. However, Dickens did not expose his manuscript and kept it hidden with one of his friends namely John Forster. Forster states that Dickens had not thought of the idea of *David Copperfield*, which was to take the whole world in his confidence. It was because the parts of the early struggle of Dickens’s life would appear in the book.

Check your progress

1. Write a short note of five sentences on the life of Charles Dickens

16.2.1 Dickens as a Reformer:

Dickens enjoyed the reputation of being a social reformer both in his lifetime and afterward. He is often credited for the reforms in education, public health, and criminal laws that helped Britain to be a hassle-free country. Dickens also was a serious critic of the structure of his times, therefore, all the officials whether politicians or bureaucrats or any other officeholders were strictly criticized by Dickens if he found them inappropriate. There were others too who claimed to be the social reformers of their society, they perhaps examined and diagnosed the ills of Brittan and had solutions for the same better than Dickens. However, Dickens stood on

shifting and uncomfortable ground among such writers; Therefore, it is unfair to say he did not deserve the title by any chance.

During Dickens's time, Brittan was going through several changes. Dickens was mature in the age of the railway, the telegraph, and the steam vessel. The Economic historians are often cautious now describing what was happening in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century as the 'industrial revolution.' There were dramatic changes in towns, especially in cotton towns of the industrial north of Brittan. It grew from one million inhabitants at the time of his birth to three million inhabitants at the time of his death.

Three men had the privilege to be remembered even after their death for their understanding of and their contribution to such changes. Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, and Jeremy Bentham. Adam Smith, his masterpiece *Wealth of Nations* (1776) had become a revelation for those who believed the government should not interfere with the economy in any case. If everyone will work for his own sake and advantage, Smith's famous 'invisible hand' would ensure that it is for the good of the public. There are of course many things that government should as they cannot be left in the hands of the individuals like defense, the system of law-making, enforcement, and many other things and maybe relieving the country from poverty, however, any interference in the economy would be harmful.

Thomas Malthus earned fame and recognition from his argument by stating that Population growth had a natural tendency to exceed food supply. There was a tremendous growth of population; this was referred by Malthus as a 'presaged disaster'. Malthus offered the solution as self-control on the part of the parents, otherwise, we may face starvation. He was often referred to as killjoy person. Dickens, however, set himself against such established doctrines. In *Hard Times*, Thomas Gradgrind's younger children were called Adam Smith, and Malthus and Dickens would amuse himself by imagining a book called *Malthu's Nursery Rhymes*. Gradgrind himself was a preacher of utilitarianism associated with Jeremy Bentham. Dickens cooperated with Utilitarians on the grounds of health reforms, but it must be noted that he was instinctively against the philosophies associated with Adam Smith, Malthus, and Jeremy Bentham the three influential powers on the government during his days. Dickens neither acknowledged their power and nor did he offer any critique of their understanding of society.

Dickens was working on *Morning Chronicle* during his reforms on poor law. The issue of the poor law in *Oliver Twist* was not an attack on a new piece of legislation. Dickens considered himself to be with those who were the victims of the law. Around 1850s Dickens published many articles in *Household Words* on industrial accidents, blaming mill owners and magistrates who would lend backwards to understand their situation. Dickens was certainly conscious of the

issues of his times and the issue posed by child labour in the working situation of the industrial revolution. However, it is interesting to know that none of his child heroes or victims has been shown directly associated or involved in such work. Dickens was more serious about the lack of education of the children rather than the work they had to do. He was particularly concerned with two things of his time, education of children and health.

At the beginning of the 19th century, there was a voice whether the mass of working-class deserve to be educated or not. It was believed that they are supposed to work and education would make them restless. Dickens by that time had varied experience of schooling and it was resolved that every child must have some kind of schooling. Thereafter even if someone wanted to work in a factory, he was allowed some schooling too. Two important factors promoted a new level of energy to engage with some of the social issues, the first was cholera which hit Brittan around 1832, and the second was the politics of public health. Dickens published several articles on health issues in *Household Words* and the journal entitled *All the Year Around*. Dickens did all that was possible to make Brittan Cholera free and reformed the health sector to a great extent.

Check your progress

1. Discuss in your own words the various social reforms that Dickens highlighted

16.2.2 Some Important Works of Dickens:

Dickens has written a great number of works. He was a great novelist of the Victorian period. Some of his works are, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Great Expectation* (1861), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House*(1852), *Hard Times* (1854), *The Little Dorrit* (1857), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1868), and many more. Here we will discuss a few of the important works of Charles Dickens for our understanding.

16.2.3 *Pickwick Papers*: This work of Dickens was published in the year 1836. The novel has 57 chapters. The novel is set in southern England between the years 1831-1837. It has given an enduring literary expression of “coaching days” of English life. While Dickens was writing his novel the British of his times was overtaken by railroads, macadam roads. The same is reflected in this book too at many instances.

The novel is about a Pickwick club which is presided by Samuel Pickwick and plans to establish a travelling society in which four members will travel England and make a report on their travelling. The four members who will travel are Mr. Pickwick, a retired businessman, Tracy Tupman, Augustus Snodgrass, though a poet but never wrote a poem, and Nathaniel Winkle a sportsman.

On their first journey, they are scolded by a cabman who apprehends them as informers. He manages to gather a crowd to confirm his suspicion. However, they are rescued by Alferd Jingle who travels to Rochester. Jingle being an adventurer is attracted to wealthy women. At Catham they witness army drills and met Mr. Wardle. He invites them, Pickwick visits him along with his friends in the evening and enjoys card games, flirting, storytelling, etc. Meanwhile, Tupman develops an affair with Mr. Wardle's Spinster sister Racheal while Mr. Snodgraas falls in love with Mr. Wardle's daughter. However, Tupman is deceived by Jingle, who elopes with Spinster sister of Mr. Wardle. Now Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick chase Jingle and are able to catch him with the help of his lawyer Mr. Perker. They buy off Jingle hence Racheal from entering into an unhappy marriage. The novel is filled with elements of comedy and sentiments. Some of the important characters in the novel are Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Wardle, Jingle, Sam Weller, Tony Weller, Bob Sawyer, etc.

16.2.4 *Oliver Twist*: This novel was published in the year 1838. Oliver is born in 1830 in England, his mother whose name hardly anybody knew died soon after giving birth to Oliver. He had to spend his first nine years of life in a young orphan house. Oliver later is transferred to an adult workhouse. Here he was bullied many times by other young boys to order more food at the end of every meal. Therefore, Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle decides to offer five pounds to someone who will take the boy away from the workhouse. Oliver was lucky not to be apprenticed to a cruel Chimney Sweep but was apprenticed to a local undertaker Mr. Sowerberry. Here too Oliver is involved in a fight after one of the other apprentices makes some disparaging comments on Oliver's mother. Oliver in response attacks him and therefore he has to tolerate the anger of Mr. Sowerberry. Oliver in a state of desperateness runs for London.

Exhausted Oliver meets Jack who offers him shelter in London in the house of Fagin. Interestingly it turns out that Fagin is a career criminal who trains orphans in Pickpocketing. After some days of training, Oliver along with two others is sent for pick pocketing. The other two try their hand at an elderly man and try to steal his handkerchief, Oliver is terrified and he escapes narrowly he almost ended up being caught for the theft. Mr. Brownlow whose handkerchief was stolen takes Oliver to his home; since Oliver was starving therefore he looked weak. Mr. Brownlow serves and nurses him back to his health. Mr. Brownlow is surprised to see

a photo hanging on the walls of his room resembling Oliver. Oliver was thriving in his house but then the two other partners came and took Oliver back to Fagin.

Oliver is sent for burglary by Fagin again with another person namely Sikes, in the entire episode Oliver is hot by the servant of the house while Sikes manages to escape. Oliver is taken into the house by Mrs. Maylie who lives there along with her adopted niece. They grow fond of Oliver, and he spends an idyllic summer with them in the countryside. But Fagin and a mysterious man named Monks are set on recapturing Oliver. Meanwhile, it is revealed that Oliver's mother left behind a gold locket when she died. Monks obtains and destroys that locket. When the Maylies come to London, Nancy meets secretly Rose and informs her of Fagin's designs, but a member of Fagin's gang overhears the conversation. When word of Nancy's disclosure reaches Sikes, he brutally murders Nancy and flees London. Pursued by his guilty conscience and an angry mob, he inadvertently hangs himself while trying to escape.

Maylie united Oliver with Mr. Brownlow; she confronts Monks and enquires about the truth about Oliver's parentage. We are told that Monk is Oliver's half-brother. Their father Mr. Leeford, who was married to a wealthy woman was not happy with the marriage and therefore had an affair with Oliver's mother Agnes Fleming. Monks tried his best that Oliver did not get his share of the property. Mr. Brownlow made Monk sign on the petition to ensure that Oliver gets his share of the property. In the meantime, it is also discovered that Rose is the younger sister of Agnes Fleming Hence she is the aunt of Oliver. Fagin receives punishment for his crime and Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver finally to live a peaceful life.

16.2.5 *Great Expectations*: This novel was published in the year 1861. A young boy named Pip is living with his sister and her husband in the marshes of Kent. One evening he sits in a cemetery looking at the tombstones of his parents and all of a sudden runaway convict appears from behind the tombstone of a grave. He grabs Pip and orders to get him some food and a file for leg irons. Pip accepts the order and gets him the desired food, soon the runaway convict is captured, but he saves Pip and claimed he himself stole the items.

One fine day Uncle Pumblechook takes Pip to play at Satis House, this is the house of a wealthy lady called Miss Havisham, she is an eccentric lady who wears an old dress always wherever she moves and when she leaves the house she stops all her clocks in the home. Pip during his visit meets a beautiful lady named Estella, she is very indifferent to him. However, Pip can't help himself falling in love with her. He dreams of becoming rich only to be worthy of Estela. He also apprehends that Miss Havisham is training him to become a gentleman only to get him married to Estella. However, he is disappointed after he understands the intention of Miss Havisham to make him regular and common labour to assist the family business.

Pip is now working with Joe, his brother in law with the guidance of Miss Havisham, Pip is working reluctantly however he is trying to better his education with the help of the plain, kind Biddy and encountering Joe's malicious day laborer, Orlick. One night, after an altercation with Orlick, Pip's sister, known as Mrs. Joe, is viciously attacked and becomes a mute invalid. From her signals, Pip suspects that Orlick was responsible for the attack.

Meanwhile, a lawyer named Jaggers brings the news to Pip that one of your well-wishers has left a large fortune for you. Pip is delighted that his dream of marrying Estella is becoming true. He apprehends that it is Miss Havisham who has left the large fortune to ensure that Estella likes the match for her. He believes that the secret benefactor is none but Miss Havisham. In all of this Mrs. Joe is dies and Pip is deeply grief struck by her departure. He is appalled at the loss of Mrs. Joe. After several years a known figure enters his room and informs him, it is the same convict, Magwitch, who had ordered Pip to get him some food. He tells Pip it is he, who has left the large fortune for him and not Miss Havisham. He was deeply moved by the kindness of Pip that he decided to devote his life to making him a gentleman.

Pip is surprised but he is morally bound to help Magwitch because is he pursued by police and Compeyson, his partner in the crime. Pip becomes complicated after knowing that Compeyson is the man who abandoned Miss Havisham and Estella is the daughter of Magwitch. Miss Havisham raised Estella only to break the hearts of men to seek revenge for her pain, however, Pip was too young to be experimented for all of this. Miss Stella is delighted to see Estella playing with the emotions of Pip. Although she pleaded with Pip to forgive her for all her misdeeds and Pip forgives her. She while sitting near the fireplace catches fire and she is in flames, hence she becomes invalid. She repented all that she did; meanwhile, Estella is married to an upper-class clout BentelyDrumblle. The end of the novel takes a dramatic shift when Magwitch dies and Pip loses his fortune. He wanted to marry Biddy but on his return to home he finds that she has married Joe already. He decides to work with his friend Herbert, after many years when he visits home he finds Estella lost, her husband treated her badly though he is dead now. Pip feels that Estella's indifference is replaced with a sad kindness, the two of them now in hand in hand roam together only to believe they will never depart again.

16.2.6 David Copperfield: This novel was published in the year 1850. It is an autobiographical novel. David narrates his story of youth when he happily lived with his mother and the nurse Peggotty. His father died even before the birth of David. While David was a child his mother married another man Mr. Murdstone. He is not a well-behaved husband, he treats David cruelly. He also brings his sister, Miss Murdstone into the house, therefore, doubling the troubles of David. Hence Murdstones send away him to school. David attends the school at Salem House

which is owned by Mr. Creakle. Peggotty takes for a visit to her home where he meets her brother Mr. Peggotty and his two adopted children Ham and Emly.

In the meantime, while David was on a visit he received the news about the death of her mother. He is neglected by Murdstones, he works in a wine bottling company of Murdstone with Mr. Micawber who mismanages his accounts. While Mr. Micawber tries to run to London to escape from his debt. David tries to look for the sister of his father Miss BestyTrotwood, He traveled a long distance to reach out to her. She takes him in on the advice of his friend Mr. Dick.

Miss Besty Trotwood sends David to a school that is run by Doctor Strong. Here David a friendship with Agnes, daughter of Mr. Wickfield. At Mr. Wickfield boarding is also another shrived fellow Uriah Heep. He intervenes unnecessarily in matters of people thus worsening them further. David visits Peggotty who is now married to Mr. Barkis to take suggestions on which field of the carrier he should pursue now. Miss Betsey visits London to inform David that her financial security has been ruined because Mr. Wickfield has joined into a partnership with Uriah Heep. David, who has become increasingly infatuated with Dora, vows to work as hard as he can to make their life together possible. Mr. Spenlow, however, forbids Dora from marrying David. Mr. Spenlow dies in a carriage accident that night, and Dora goes to live with her two aunts. Meanwhile, Uriah Heep informs Doctor Strong that he suspects Doctor Strong's wife, Annie, of having an affair with her young cousin, Jack Maldon.

David is married to Dora who proves to be an incompetent wife because she doesn't know household chores. However, that does not lessen the love of David for her by any means. Mr. Dick facilitates reconciliation between Doctor Strong and Annie, who was not cheating on her husband. Miss Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth's ward, summons David and informs him that Steerforth has left Little Em'ly. Miss Dartle adds that Steerforth's servant, Littimer, has proposed to her and that Little Em'ly has run away. David and Mr. Peggotty enlist the help of Little Em'ly's childhood friend Martha, who locates Little Em'ly and brings Mr. Peggotty to her. Little Em'ly and Mr. Peggotty decide to move to Australia, as do the Micawbers, who first save the day for Agnes and Miss Betsey by exposing Uriah Heep's fraud against Mr. Wickfield.

There is a strong storm that hits the Yarmouth and Ham is killed in the process of saving a wrecked ship sailor. The sailor is none but Steerforth, in the meantime Dora falls ill and dies. David leaves the country to travel abroad and when he returns the long-lasting secret love for Agnes grows. They get happily married with several children.

16.2.7 *Hard Times*: This novel was published in the year 1854. Thomas Gradgrind is a wealthy man living in England. He is devoted to rational philosophy. He guides his oldest children

Louisa and Tom according to the principles of this philosophy and prohibits them from plunging into any fanciful or imaginative pursuit. As the children grew older they both struggle with themselves, Tom turns a self-interested, becomes self-indulgent and a hedonist. Similarly, Louisa also struggles with her inner confusion. She feels incomplete in her life as if something very important in her life is missing. Finally, she married Josiah Bounderby who is a friend of Gradgrind and more than twice her age. He is also a wealthy man. He speaks about his success as self-made because he was abandoned by his mother when he was an infant.

Meanwhile, another impoverished “Hand” (a name that Dickens uses for the poor labours of the town) named Stephen Blackpool struggles with his love for Rachael. He cannot marry her because he is already married to a woman who drinks and remains absent from home for months and even years at times. Stephen enquires from Bounderby about the divorce that wants to take from his wife but learns that it is only for the rich.

James Harthouse comes from London to begin his political carrier. He wants to be a disciple of Gradgrind. He develops an interest in Louisa and tries to seduce her. Mr. Sparsit who had fallen on hard time tries to convince Louisa. Mrs. Sparsit witnesses Harthouse declaring his love for Louisa, and Louisa agrees to meet him in Coketown later that night. However, Louisa instead flees to her father’s house, where she miserably confides to Gradgrind that her upbringing has left her married to a man she does not love, disconnected from her feelings, deeply unhappy, and possibly in love with Harthouse. She collapses to the floor, and Gradgrind, struck dumb with self-reproach, begins to realize the imperfections in his philosophy of rational self-interest.

Sissy who loves Louisa decides to visit Harthouse and motivates him to leave the town forever. This infuriates Bounderby and he doubles his effort to trace Stephen. While Stephen was heading back to clarify the doubt and apprehension, he falls into a mining pit called Old Hell Shaft. Though he is found by Rachael and Louisa but he dies soon by giving an emotional farewell to Rachael. Gradgrind and Louisa realize that Tom is responsible for robbing the bank, and they arrange to sneak him out of England with the help of the circus performers with whom Sissy spent her early childhood. They are nearly successful but are stopped by Bitzer, a young man who went to Gradgrind’s school and who embodies all the qualities of the detached rationalism that Gradgrind once espoused, but who now sees its limits. Sleary, the lipping circus proprietor, arranges for Tom to slip out of Bitzer’s grasp, and the young robber escapes from England after all.

Finally “Mrs. Sparsit, anxious to help Bounderby find the robbers, drags Mrs. Pegler—a known associate of Stephen Blackpool—in to see Bounderby, thinking Mrs. Pegler is a potential witness. Bounderby recoils, and it is revealed that Mrs. Pegler is really his loving mother, whom he has forbidden to visit him: Bounderby is not a self-made man after all. Angrily, Bounderby fires Mrs. Sparsit and sends her away to her hostile relatives. Five years later, he will die alone in the streets of Coketown. Gradgrind gives up his philosophy of fact and devotes his political power to helping the poor. Tom realizes the error of his ways but dies without ever seeing his family again. While Sissy marries and has a large and loving family, Louisa never again marries and never has children. Nevertheless, Louisa is loved by Sissy’s family and learns at last how to feel sympathy for her fellow human beings”.

Dear Readers, all these novels discussed above are considered important works of Dickens. It was felt readers should be given at least an overview of these novels to create interest so that you can motivate yourself to read them.

Check your progress

1. Summarise your ideas about the theme of the novel *Great Expectations*

16.3 Learning Outcome

By the end of this unit, students are able:

- To identify Charles Dickens as a Novelist
- To know about the life of Charles Dickens
- To recognize Dickens as a Social Reformer
- To be acquainted with some of the important works of Dickens
- To understand the political and social conditions of the Victorian Period.

By the end of this unit, students can also discuss various themes that Dickens employed in his works. They will be able to discuss the treatment of social issues in the works of Dickens after going through this unit.

16.4 Glossary

Illustration: Providing examples with detail

Autobiographical: dealing with one's own life

Numerous: many, a lot of anything

Hyperbole: a figure of speech, exaggeration, overstatement

Extravagant: prodigal, lacking restraint in spending money

Melodramatic: overemotional

Tyrannical: Autocratic, oppressive

16.5 Sample Questions

16.2.1 Objective Questions

1. When was Charles Dickens born_____?
2. What was the real name of Charles Dickens_____?
3. In which period Charles Dickens wrote novels_____?
4. Oliver is an important character in which novel of Dickens_____?
5. Estella is an important character in which novel of Dickens_____?
6. Which novel of Dickens is autobiographical _____?
7. What is the name of the school where David was sent to study in *David Copperfield*_____?
8. When was *Pickwick Papers* published_____?
9. Pip is a character in which novel of Dickens_____?
10. Great Expectation was published in the year_____?

16.2.2 Short Answer Question:

1. Mention some of the important works written by Dickens.
2. Dickens was a social reformer. Explain
3. Write a short note on the life of Charles Dickens.
4. What are the autobiographical elements in *David Copperfield*?
5. Discuss the theme of the novel *Pickwick Papers*.

16.2.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Charles Dickens as Novelist.
2. What are the various themes employed by Dickens in his works. Discuss in detail.

3. Write a detailed note on the Victorian Period.

16.6 Suggested Readings

1. Bloom, Harold. *Charles Dickens*. New York: Infobase Learning, ed. 2013.
2. Cox, Oliver C. *Caste, Class and Race*. New York: Double Day, 1948.
3. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Volume II revised ed, Great Britain: 1994.
4. Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*, 9th ed., Great Britain: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1994.
5. Gradesaver on Oliver. Retrieved on January 25, 2021, from <http://www.gradesaver.com/lit/oliver/summary.html>
6. Mathias, P. *The First Industrial Nation*, 2nded. England Ltd. 1983.

Unit-17: Types of Novel

Structure

17.0 Introduction

17.1 Objectives

17.2 Types of Novel

17.2.1 Realistic Novel

17.2.2 Picaresque Novel

17.2.3 Historical Novel

17.2.4 Epistolary Novel

17.2.5 Bildungsroman

17.2.6 Gothic Novel

17.2.7 Autobiographical Novel

17.2.8 Satirical Novel

17.2.9 Allegorical Novel

17.2.10 Regional Novel and Others

17.3 Learning Outcomes

17.4 Glossary

17.5 Sample Questions

17.6 Suggested Readings

17.0 Introduction

The novel is a newly invented genre of fiction in English literature. It is a long prose narrative usually full of complexities that involve a series of events, several characters, and multiple themes within a specific setting. Although the novel dates as back as *Tale of Genji* by MurasakiShikibu in the 11th century, yet European or English novel made its first appearance in the early 17th century after the decline of drama. A novel can be defined as the practice or craft of conjuring up depictions of human existence through the power of words that instruct, distract, or both. The novel mainly replaced epic poetry as the popular mode of storytelling. Generally, novels narrate characters' individual experiences and thereby give a close portrayal of the world in which they live. The word novel is a shortened version of the Italian word novella, which means "new." A novella is a form of an extended anecdote, similar to those found in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a 14th-century Italian classic, each of which exhibits the etymology adequately. The stories are novelty items, newly minted diversions, and toys; they are not a reworking of well-known fables or myths, and they lack weight and moral sincerity. Despite the

lofty example of novelists of the highest seriousness, such as Virginia Woolf, Henry James, and Tolstoy, the term novel still retains connotations of lightness and frivolity. In addition, a tendency to triviality can be detected in the form itself. The ode or symphony appears to have an internal system that safeguards it from artistic or moral corruption, but the novel might fall into embarrassing commercial depths of sentimentality. The goal of this part is to look at the novel not just as a work of great art, but also as an all-purpose media that caters to all levels of reading. The novel is truly a hybrid genre because it is the loosest form of literary creativity and embraces many diverse sub-genres. It is always looking for a definition. From the start, it has fought hard against other genres. It is an extremely powerful tool for depicting human cognition and activity. It frequently includes letters, dialogues, narration, poetry, and so forth. A novel, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is defined as “a fictitious prose narrative of considerable length, in which characters and actions, representative of real life are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity”.

Novels typically explore the incongruous ideas, inner thoughts, and feelings that make it personal in nature. It is the sole reason that while epic poetry or other modes of narratives viz. drama, short story, poetry, etc were aimed to be read publically or received as an audience, novels are designed and addressed towards an individual reader. Although novels mostly emphasize individual experiences and individual readership, yet in its broad-spectrum, it encircles a wide variety of styles and kinds viz. historical, gothic, picaresque, epistolary, romantic, sci-fi, realistic, there are many types of a novel like romantic, horror, epistolary, picaresque, etc. we shall discuss some of them here for our brief understanding.

17.1 Objectives

This unit has following objectives for students:

- Students will be familiarised with the definition of novel
- Students will be introduced to the types of novel
- Students will be able to distinguish between various novels
- Students will know the elements of the novel
- Students will be able to differentiate between simple and complex plots
- Students will be able to know about the variety of characters used in a novel
- Students will be able to distinguish between character and its types

17.2 Types of Novels

Novels have been classified into many kinds by critics throughout history. It may not be a helpful endeavour to list all varieties of novels because no formal classification is conceivable because the same novel may belong to more than one type. As a result, in this part, we attempt to shape a diversity of novels.

1. Realistic Novel:

The realistic novel is an English literary genre that includes fiction based on true events or events that could have occurred in real life. The realistic novel aspires to portray society as it actually stands. There are no filters, fantasies, metaphysical elements, or unnatural elements in it. The events depicted in the novel are "actual" in the sense that they may occur in real life. A realistic novel is a great blend of fiction and an accurate depiction of real-life events or circumstances. This type of novel is also called the novel of manner. It is a humble attempt to present the realistic effect of something. It is characterized by complex characters with multiple motives. These characters are rooted in the social set and act accordingly to the highly established social setup. The characters generally exchange dialogue with other characters and undergo many plausible and everyday experiences. The example of a realistic novel can be *Looking for Alaska* by John Green and *Thirteen Reason Why* by Jay Asher.

2. Picaresque Novel:

Generally a picaresque novel recounts the adventures of an eccentric or disreputable hero in episodic form. This genre was formed after the Spanish word *Picaro* or *rogue*. Examples of Picaresque novels can be *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling and *The History of Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding.

3. Historical Novel:

This literary genre is about historical occurrences. The novel may depict real historical figures or a mixture of historical and fictitious characters. It has an adventurous nature to it. It gives off a historical vibe. The historical context is presented in the form of a novel named a historical novel. A historical novel generally refers to a novel that has been set before the time it was written. Some of the examples of Historical novels can be *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, *Vanity Fair* by Thackeray.

4. Epistolary Novel:

It is a type of novel which is generally narrated through various letters or documents. The epistolary comes from a Latin word *Epistola* means "Letter". It must be noted that not only letters but diary entries are also included in the epistolary novels. Example of an Epistolary novel

is *Pamela* and *Clarissa* by Richardson. *The Colour Purple* by Alice Walker is also an epistolary novel. Epistolary novels are novels that are written in the form of a series of documents or letters. This is one of the novel's most important forms. It portrays the joys and sorrows of life. The majority of the time, it is autobiographical in nature. It tackles some of life's most pressing topics. The main purpose of this genre is to provide readers an intimate understanding of the character's emotions, ideas, and sentiments, as well as to develop a connection with events through the medium of letters without the author's interpretation. In its most basic form, an epistolary novel is a story recounted through letters written by one or more characters. This work is also known as the novel of letters. Diary entries are also popular, as it was one of the first forms of the novel. The first epistolary genre is Diego de San Pedro's *Spanish Prison of Love* (*Carcel de Amor*). James Howell's literary work *Familiar Letters* or *Epistolae Hoelianae* is regarded as the pioneer of the epistolary genre in English. The epistolary genre was popular not just in the nineteenth century, but also in modern times. It can be found in a variety of formats, including letters, telegrams, journal entries, newspaper clippings, blog posts, emails, and even podcasts, all of which fall under the modern epistolary form.

5. Bildungsroman:

The words "Bildung" and "Roman" denote "education" and "novel," respectively. As a result, the word essentially refers to a novel about education, sometimes known as a novel about formation. It was first proposed by Karl Morgenstern in the early nineteenth century, but Wilhelm Dilthey popularized it in the early twentieth century. The fundamental aim of this genre is character improvement and moral development. In other words, a Bildungsroman is a coming-of-age novel that emphasizes not only the physical but also the moral and psychological evolution of a young character. This German term identifying 'growth'. It is a fictional autobiography that deals with the progress or development of the protagonist's mind and spirit and characters normally from boyhood to childhood. *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield* are examples of Bildungsroman's novel.

6. Gothic Novel:

If a novel depicts terror, horror, mystery, supernatural elements, doomsday scenes, decay death-haunted buildings, scary images then it can be called a gothic novel. You must be familiar with *Frankenstein* of Mary Shelly, *The Vampire* by Jon Williams, and *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. Gothic novels are frequently characterized as "wonder novels" or "horror novels." These are also known as pre-romantic novels. These books are packed with tension and action. Novels like this are full of passion, love, and romance. Strangeness and obscurity are also

themes in the genre. The setting is typically dark, mysterious houses designed to elicit fear and horror. For example Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.

Check your Progress

1. What do you mean by bildungsroman?

2. Give one example of each epistolary novel and picaresque novel.

7. Autobiographical Novel:

An autobiographical novel is based on the life of the author. It has personal elements in it. The story narrated is basically the story of the author in a real sense. *David Copperfield* by Dickens is an autobiographical novel. An autobiographical novel is a type of novel in which the author uses auto-fiction techniques. Any work of fiction that is based on the author's real-life conditions, events, or experiences can be classified as this literary genre.

8. Satirical Novel:

A satire by definition is the act of ridiculing the follies of a particular thing or person, it is used or intended to provoke readers to change their opinion about it. So, satirical novels identify the issues about certain things. A satirist novelist aims to improve the lacunas by offering a reasonable solution. Satire is a literary attack on a person or a group. This is an intellectual attack against a community or a single person by a writer. Although satirical novels are typically hilarious, their main objective is generally constructive social criticism, employing wit to draw attention to both specific and broader social issues. Simply said, it refers to a literary genre that ridicules and mocks human misbehavior and ridicules their follies, stupidities, and vices. An example of this genre is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

9. Allegorical Novel:

Usually any allegorical novel has two levels of meaning, one is surface the other is connotative or symbolic meaning. The symbolic meaning can be historical, cultural, political, or religious. *Lord of the Flies*, *Pilgrimage's Progress*, *Faire Queen*, and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* are some excellent examples of allegorical novels. Allegorical novels feature several degrees of meaning, such as surface meaning, which can be seen simply by looking at the work, and buried or in-depth meaning, which can be deciphered by reading the text intensively. These books aim to instil moral values in the reader.

10. Regional Novel:

A novel which is set against a particular background or an area or in other words we can say that a regional book is one in which the author describes a specific geographic region and its people. The piece is frequently set in a well-known location. The behaviour, language, social customs, dialects, culture, social relations of people, history, and other factors of the location that affect the character's life in the novel are featured in the regional novel. The literary genre is written to reflect the local flavour, character temperament, and way of thinking and feeling of a specific location. A regional book, on the whole, provides a detailed account of a location, scene, or region. Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* is an example of this genre.

11. Novella:

This genre of fiction first appeared in Italian literature. It is a brief piece of literature that is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. It usually has 60 to 120 pages in it. A novella, on the whole, displays fewer conflicts than a novel. Furthermore, the novel is far more perplexing than a short story. It is a shorter version of the novel. It is a short narrative prose fiction. As for the origin of the novella is concerned, it is dated back to the period of renaissance in French and Italian writing. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad is one such example.

12. Detective Novel:

It is a form of literary work in which a crime is first committed, then investigated, and finally the perpetrator is revealed. This story follows a clever detective as he attempts to solve a crime. Finally, the culprit is apprehended or put to death. These books are full of intrigue and mystery. The story depicts a society in its most realistic form. This style of work frequently has a convoluted plot. For example Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. It is extracted as a sub-genre from crime fiction or a mystery novel. In such novels, a detective generally investigates a crime or a murder. Examples of detective novels can be *A Study in Scarlet* (Sherlock Homes) *Sonar Kalla* by Satyajit Roy.

13. Mystery Novel:

It is a type of novel wherein a detective solves the crimes or series of crimes. This is also called a crime novel or detective fiction. It's a literary genre in which the core of a scenario or occurrence, usually a murder or other serious crime, stays a mystery until the story's conclusion. It's a smart solution to write mystery novels that are detective stories with a suspense component. For instance, Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*, Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*.

14. Psychological Novel or Stream of Consciousness:

When a novel deals with an internal conflict of the protagonist, then the novel may be treated as a psychological novel. The term stream of consciousness was coined by William Joyce in his book *Principles of Psychology*. The psychological novel is a story in which the author delves into the characters' emotional, spiritual, and mental life. To create the plot of the novel, the novel concentrates on the reasons for the character's behaviour. The psychological novel shows the character's inner self and motivations. The psychological novel and stream of consciousness are inextricably intertwined. The term "stream of consciousness" refers to the unbroken flow of thoughts, as well as the unbroken feeling of the cognitive process's heart. James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf are examples of Psychological novels.

15. Political Novel:

A political novel is a literary work that frequently criticizes or describes a society or political institution that is currently in place. It is a powerful way to express political events or provide social commentary. The genre focused on the possible development of societies, very often dominated by totalitarian governments. This type of novel must have a social and political message. The term generally refers to fiction in Europe and the Soviet Union reacting to Communist rule. Examples of political novels can be George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

16. Novel of Incident:

A political novel is a literary work that frequently criticizes or describes a society or political institution that is currently in place. It is a powerful way to express political events or provide social commentary. The novel focuses on what the narrator will do next and how the action will turn out. *Star Wars* is one such example.

17. Novel of Character:

This type of novel focuses on what the protagonist's motives are and how he or she turns out. The example of a novel of character can be *Emma* by Jane Austen.

18. Roman a clef:

This is a French term used for a novel that has key elements of imagery with a real persona of characters disguised as fictional characters Like *Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath. The term "Roman a clef" comes from the French phrase "a novel with a key." Authors compose a story based on their own experiences, but they use assumed or invented names to change the names and facts. Partially fictionalized novels based on true events are known as Roman a clef. In the

seventeenth century, Madeleine De Scudery, a French writer, created the first roman a clef novel. Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* is a good example.

19. Hypertext Novel:

It is a genre of electronic literature, characterized by the use of hypertext links that provide a new context for non-linearity in literature and reader interaction. The reader typically chooses links to move from one node of text to the next, and in this fashion arranges a story from a deeper pool of potential stories. Its spirit can also be seen in interactive fiction. Examples: James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Links are the most important tool in a hypertext novel for delving further into the tale. The reader in this novel does not follow a set path through the plot. Caitlin Fisher's *These Waves of Girls* is the most well-known example of hypertext fiction. In 2001, the fiction received an award from the Electronic Literature Organisation (ELO).

20. Sentimental Novel:

A sentimental novel is one that is emotionally extravagant. Characters' and readers' emotions are crucial in this sort of novel. Emotions take precedence over logic in the novel. This type of novel was popular in the 18th century. It celebrates the emotional and intellectual concepts of sentiment, sensibility. It is also called a novel of sensibility. Examples of this type of novel can be *Pamela* or *Virtue Rewarded* by Richardson, *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne.

21. Utopian Novel:

Utopia is an imaginative place or society where everything is perfect. This type of theme is presented generally in speculative fiction or science fiction. The setting of utopian fiction is described as lovely and idealistic, with ideal attributes. It represents a society free of chaos, sorrow, anguish, trauma, and other negative elements. Plato's *Republic*, Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and Francis Bacon's *Atlantis* are examples of Utopian novels.

22. Dystopian Novel:

A dystopian fiction, unlike a utopian story, depicts a gloomy and nightmare world marked by corruption, injustice, and poverty. Everything is dispersed in this style of narrative, and nothing is ideal. In every way, society is suffering greatly. Society is dominated by dilemmas, sufferings, anguish, and desperation. It is a typically disorganized society as opposed to a Utopian society. This sort of literature is exemplified by George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.

23. Anti-Novel:

When a novel does not follow the established norms or conventions and creates its own rules, such novels are called anti-novels. An anti-novel is an experimental work of literature that defies the novel's traditional norms. Anti-novel purposely breaks the rules of a novel, such as having a consistent protagonist and storyline, and so on. *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence and David Markson's *This Is Not a Novel* can be placed in this category.

24. Erotic Novel:

Erotic books are those that have a lot of romantic or sexual components in them. The evolution of romantic relationships centered on sexual interaction is the theme of these novels. The fundamental focus of these novels is on passion, romance, intimacy, attachment, love affair, and so on. Such novels generally depict romance or sexual content. They strongly explicit the erotic content. Jennifer Weiner's *Who Do You Love* and *His to Possess* by Opel Carew are good examples of Erotic Novels.

25. Roman fleuve:

The term "novel cycle" or "novel stream" is French. It is, in essence, a series of novels. Each novel is self-contained. Every novel is complete in itself. Each novel has its own title and unrestricted storyline, allowing it to be read separately. John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* is an example of Roman Fleuve. This refers to the set of novels that share a common theme and setting as well as characters. However, each novel has its own title, like Emile Zola's *Rougon Macquart*.

26. Interactive Novel:

It falls under interactive web fiction. In such fiction, the readers have the liberty to go to any part of the novel like by clicking on the hyperlinked text. So a reader can navigate down the pages of the novel or move to the page number of his choice. It has a non-linear story in which the reader can interact with the characters. A famous piece of interactive fiction may include numerous riddles, mazes, adventure games, and other activities Example: *Harry Potter* by J.K Rowling.

27. Adventure Novel:

In general, an adventure novel depicts jeopardy or elicits a sense of excitement in the reader. The events in this story take place in a world beyond everyday life. A novel whose plot deals with an adventures task, or an exciting undertaking that involves the risk of physical

danger. Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe are few such examples.

28. Pulp Novel:

The term originated from the magazines of the first half of the 20th century which were printed on cheap "pulp" paper for the general entertainment of the mass audiences. The pulp fiction era provided a breeding ground for creative talent which would influence all forms of entertainment for decades to come. The hardboiled detective and science fiction genres were created by the freedom that the pulp fiction magazines provided. Pulp novels are action-packed fiction that was originally published in low-cost magazines. The title of the story comes from the type of paper it was printed on. The stories in this genre should be short enough to be completed in one or several settings. Examples of this type of novel are *The Spider*, *Doc Savage*, *Blood N Thunder*, etc.

29. Cult or Coterie Novel:

Such novels generally emerge from fringes; they reflect the counter-cultural perspectives and often experiment with its form. *Speedboat* by Reena Adler is one such example.

Check your Progress

1. What do you understand by a romantic novel?

2. What is a dystopian novel? Give examples.

30. Campus Novel:

This genre of fiction takes place on a university campus. As a result, it's also known as an "academic novel." The story is told either from the perspective of students or from the perspective of instructors. A novel, the setting of which is located around the university, such novels are called a campus novel. They are also called academic novels. For example, Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

31. *Kunstleroman*:

Kunstlerroman is a sub-genre of *Bildungsroman*. It refers to a novel written by an artist. This style of fiction emphasizes an artist's maturation and evolution. *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce is a notable example of this type of novel.

32. Chivalric Romance:

It is a prose and poetry narrative form that became popular in Medieval Europe. It depicts the narrative of a brave and chivalric knight who sets out on a journey and encounters a variety of experiences. Thomas Malory's *Le Morte De Arthur* is an example of this style of literature.

33. Apocalyptic Novel:

It's a literary genre that foreshadows the supernaturally horrific events that will occur when the world ends. It is a prophetic literature genre. They are the oldest Jewish and Christian documents known to man. The apocalypse of Abraham, the apocalypse of Peter, and the shepherd of Hermas are just a few examples of this type of novel.

34. Magic Realism:

It's a form of literature that depicts the current world in a realistic manner while still incorporating mystical elements. It combines the real and the magical to create a surreal but convincing plot. *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are two examples of this style of fiction.

35. Metafiction:

Metafiction simply is fiction about fiction. It employs a narrative approach in which the piece explicitly states that it is a work of fiction. Directly addressed to the reader, story within a story, commenting on the story while delivering it, and a story about someone reading or writing a book are all examples of metafiction approaches. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* are examples of this type of novel.

36. Commonwealth Novel:

The term "Commonwealth novel" refers to the literature produced in Britain's colonies. Commonwealth novels show the parallels that exist throughout the former British Empire's colonies. Salman Rushdie, Chinua Achebe, ArunKotlakar, R.K.Narayan, Kazuo Ishiguro, and others are among the most popular authors.

37. Western Novel:

It is a fiction genre set in the Western United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. This genre of fiction concentrates on the cruelty of wildlife and is frequently set in an arid, isolated landscape of hills and deserts. In other words, the genre usually shows the life of a gunfighter or cowboy who rides a horse and is armed with a gun or pistol. Edward Abbey's *The Brave Cowboy*, Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*, and Alan Le May's *The Searchers* are all notable examples of this genre.

38. Documentary Fiction:

It's a form of a novel that's based on evidence gathered by the author in the fiction, or we might say it's based on facts. Documentary fiction is essentially a 20th-century version of the historical novel. It features historical figures and events. In addition, it depicts ordinary occurrences. Michael Winter's *The Death of Donna Whalen* and Barbara H. Foley's *Telling the Truth* are two examples.

39. Fabulation: In his book *The Fabulators*, Robert Scholes coined the term "fabulation" to describe the enormous and growing genre of primarily 20th-century fiction that is synonymous with magical realism. In many ways, this work of fiction defies the expectations of a novel.

40. Newgate Novel (Bailey novel):

These novels glorify criminals and highwaymen in a romanticized style. To put it another way, the Newgate novels portray wicked characters in a positive or exhilarated light. During the Victorian era, these books were extremely popular. These books are frequently referred to as crime novels. However, later on, William Makepeace Thackeray criticized such writings for supporting, promoting, and encouraging crime. *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens is a famous example of this type of novel.

It is interesting to note that there are various elements in a novel. Some of them are **Plot**, The Sequence of events in a story or a play, **Character**: The person and his characteristics in a work of fiction, **Theme**: The central idea or belief, **Point of View**: The angle from which the story is told, **Conflict**: The opposition of forces that ties one incident to another and makes the plot move, **Setting**: The time and location in which a story takes place.

17.3 Learning Outcome

By the end of this unit, students are able to:

- Comprehend the definition of the novel.
- Recognize various types of novels and their significance
- Familiarize themselves with the examples of new type of novels
- Understand the elements of a novel like a plot, character, theme, point of view, setting, style.
- The variety of themes that are employed by the novelists in a novel.

17.4 Glossary

Prose: A written or spoken language in its ordinary form without metrical structure

Drama: One of the genres of literature like poetry, prose, and novel. The only thing that differs it from them it is staged and performed before an audience.

Protagonist: The main leading character of the story.

Genre: A category of art or literature.

Narrator: The mind from which all aspects of the story are necessarily told.

17.5 Sample Question

17.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Plot is one of the elements of the novel_____yes/no
2. Protagonist is villain of the story_____yes/no
3. Gothic novel deals with horror_____yes/no
4. *Lucky Jim* is a campus novel_____yes/no
5. Who wrote *Jane Eyre*_____?
6. Mrs. Dalloway is written by_____?
7. If a character changes frequently what is called_____ dynamic or static?
8. The novel which deals with crimes is called _____
9. Autobiography is the story of an author about his own life_____true/false
10. Name one Utopian novel_____

17.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is an Autobiographical novel? Mention one example.

2. What is a Utopian novel? Give examples.
3. Explain the term *Bildungsroman*?
4. Define Gothic novel with examples.
5. What is a psychological novel?

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Define the novel and explain its characteristics?
2. Discuss Historical novel and Detective novel.
3. Explain in details the Political novel, Dystopian novel, and Mystery novel.

17.6 Suggested Readings

1. Georg Lukacs. *Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge, 1990.
<https://www.eng-literature.com/2016/01/different-types-of-novel.html> <https://www.britannica.com/art/novel>
2. Raymond Williams. *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*. Chatto and Windus. 1970.
3. Terry Eagleton. *The English Novel: An Introduction*. Atlantic Publisher, 2004.
www.britannica.com/art/novel

Unit-18: Aspects of the Novel

Structure

18.0 Introduction

18.1 Objectives

18.2 Aspects of the Novel

18.2.1 Plot

18.2.2 Character

18.2.3 Setting

18.2.4 Point of View

18.2.5 Style

18.3 Learning Outcomes

18.4 Glossary

18.5 Sample Questions

18.6 Suggested Readings

18.0 Introduction

Dear Readers, literature has many genres like Prose, Poetry, Drama, Novel etc. Each genre has some special features, elements and types like for prose we have fictional prose and non-fictional prose, for poetry, we have poetry in the form of ode, lyric, sonnet, epic, mock epic, elegy etc. Drama also has to be staged that makes it a little more practical than the rest of the genres. We have different types of dramas like tragedy, comedy, romantic tragedy, etc. Similarly, novel too has many elements like plot, setting, characters, theme, etc. In this unit, we will look at the various definitions of the novel. This unit aims to provide an overview of the novel also. The unit also focuses on elements of novel and deliberates all the essential elements features within those elements.

18.1 Objectives

The unit has the following objectives for the readers:

- To understand the various elements of novel.
- To comprehend the types of plots.
- To recognize various perspectives of narratives.

- To understand the complexity of characters.
- To recognize the importance of setting.
- To realize the significance of the style.

18.2 Aspects of the Novel

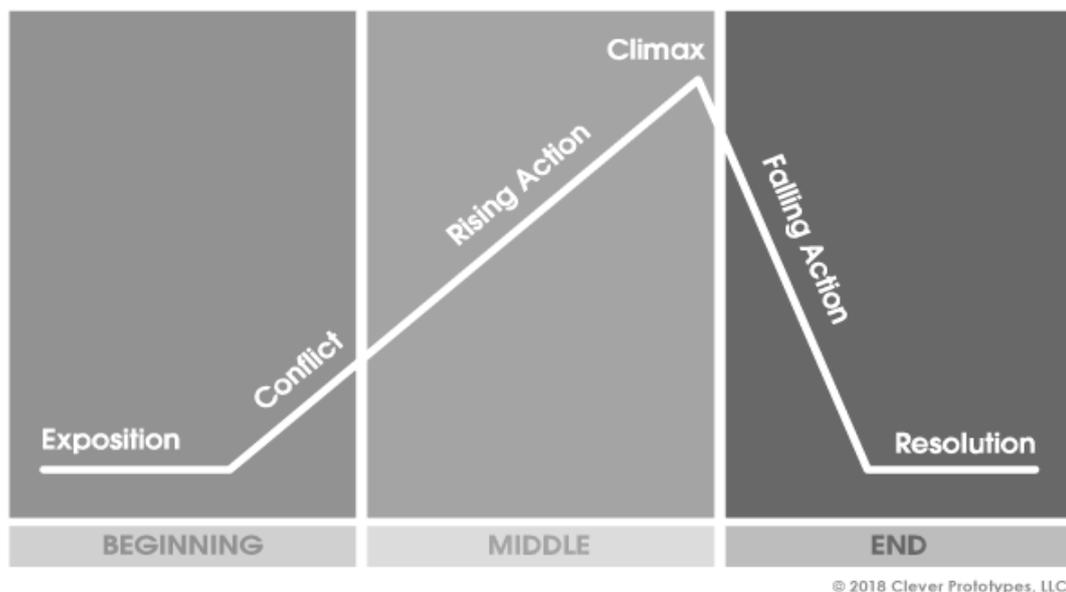
When we talk about the Aspects of the Novel, we are referring to the study of a novel through specific attributes. It is vital to examine every aspect of the story from several angles. To comprehend the novel, we must examine and evaluate it thoroughly. If you are going to read a novel, you must first learn about its various components before you can fully comprehend it. We cannot understand a novel until we are familiar with its various aspects. Plot, story, characterization, style, topic, narrative mode, the notion of space and time, fantasy, prophecy, pattern, rhythm, and so on are all elements of a novel. Let's take a look at each one separately

18.2.1 Plot:

A plot is a set of events that provide the story with conflict. The storyline is sometimes referred to as the 'spine of a story.' The term plot was originally mentioned in the 4th Century BC by Greek philosopher Aristotle in his popular work *The Poetics*. According to Aristotle, a plot is "a combination of incidents, events, situations, and actions in a story." Aristotle, on the other hand, saw the story as a necessary component of tragedy as a theatrical form. He called the plot "the soul of the tragedy". His definition, however, is equally applicable to other genres as well such as novels and short stories. According to Henry Hudson, plot, characters, language, time and location of the action, style, and so on are the main aspects of a novel. Aristotle never distinguished between 'story' and 'plot.' But there is a lot of difference between a plot and a story. In his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Edward Morgan Forster, a well-known critic, and writer draws a contrast between story and plot. A story, according to E.M. Forster, is a "narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence." He goes on to define a plot as "a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality." The term 'causality' is highlighted in this definition. This can be best illustrated with the help of the following example. "The King died, and the Queen died," is a story. Another picture for a story goes like this: "The King died, and the Queen died because of the grief of King." It is simple to understand the distinction between plot and story with the help of this example as "Causality" is the keyword to keep in mind here. In a nutshell, the plot is structured to logically convey events and information. The plot structure determines the structure of a novel.

A novel is generally boosted by a story line or a plot. In other words, it may be considered as the nucleus of the work of art, a jotting on an old envelope: for example, [Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol](#) (1843) might have been conceived as “a [misanthrope](#) is reformed through certain magical visitations on Christmas Eve,” or [Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice](#) (1813) as “a young couple destined to be married have first to overcome the barriers of pride and prejudice,” or [Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment](#) (1866) as “a young man commits a crime and is slowly pursued in the direction of his punishment.” The detailed working out of the nuclear idea requires much creativity, since the plot of one novel is expected to be somewhat different from that of another, and there are very few basic human situations for the novelist to draw upon. The dramatist may take his plot ready-made from fiction or biography—a form of theft sanctioned by Shakespeare—but the novelist has to produce what look like novelties.

One can recall Shakespeare sense of producing creative plots. A plot does not require any extraordinary effort other than a string or thread of devices to create an excitement or concern among the readers. A reader's interest may be born at the very outset by the mysteries, by the conflicts, frustration and may be finally be happy when all matters are resolved in the end. A plot follows a sequence; there is a beginning, middle and end. In other words a plot has the following steps: Exposition, Climax, Rising Action Climax Falling and Resolution. (See fig. 1)



(Source: <https://www.storyboardthat.com> fig: 1)

Dear Students, we shall discuss now these terms all one by one.

Exposition: It refers to the introduction of the story, here important characters are revealed, besides setting, mood and time is also introduced to the readers.

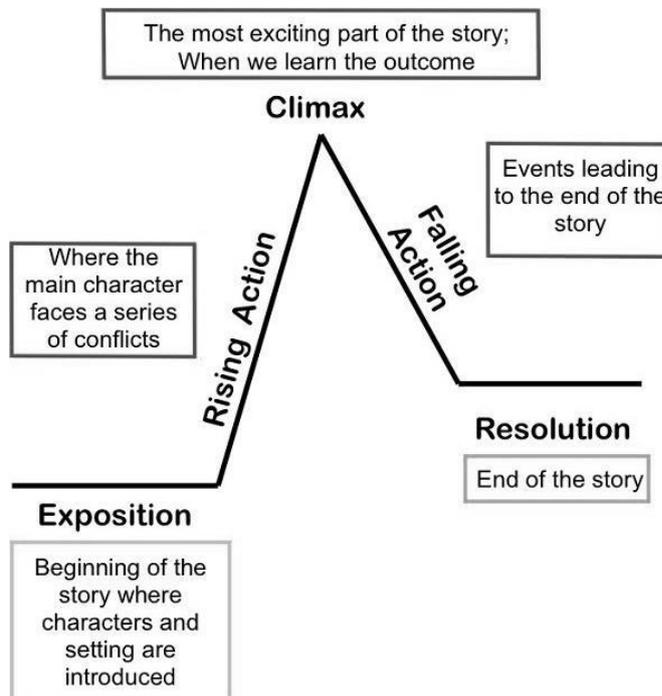
Conflict: It is one of the primary parts of the novel or the goal. Conflict simply is a problem that drives the plot of a story. The ultimate aim of the protagonist is overcome this problem or to win over it.

Rising Action: It simply means that all the leading events of the story lead eventually to a climax, whether it is character development or events that create suspense.

Climax: It is the turning point of the story. It is here that shift of the events takes place either side. This is the height or intermission stage of the plot.

Falling Action: This takes place only because of the climax, wrapping of all plot points, question answered and the development of the plot.

Resolution: It is the end of the plot in a story. It may leave readers sad, depressed or happy depending upon the type of the work whether it is romantic comedy, or tragedy. (See fig. 2)



(Source: <http://diagramcharts.com/tag/plot-diagram/ fig: 2>)

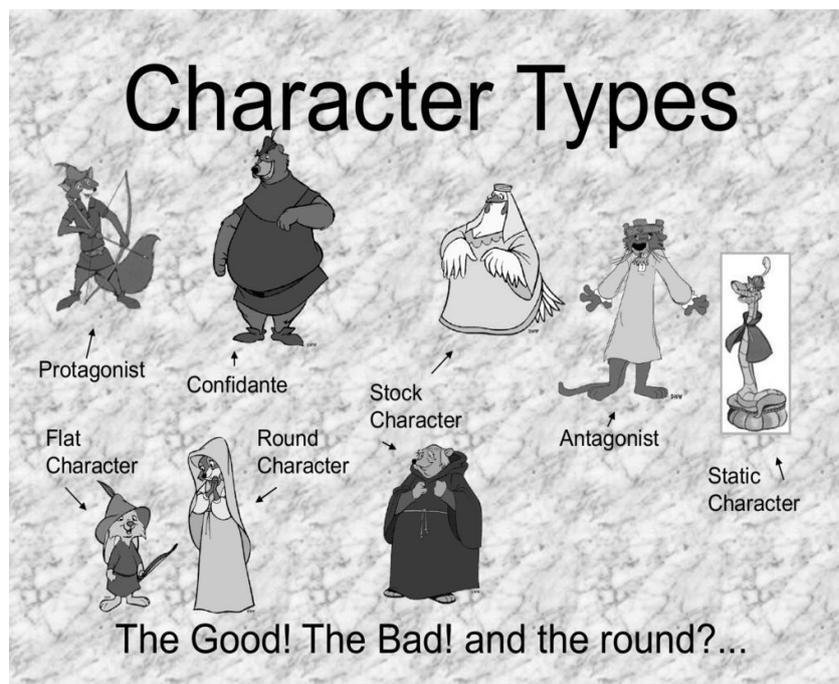
Check your progress

1. What is the end of story called?

2. What is the beginning of the story called?

18.2.2 Character:

This is the second important element in a novel. It was once believed and agreed that there can be a novel without a plot but not without characters. It is essential to bring characters to life. The details of characters can be thumbnail sketch to deep, or wordy, highly detailed biographies of a character. It is important to note that different genres require different characters. Characters are important for any plot of a story. However, it is the main character that has the greatest effect on the plot or story line. Some of the common types of characters found are **Protagonist, Confidante, Anti-hero, Antagonist, Flat, Round, Static, and Dynamic.** (See fig:3)



(Source:<https://studylib.net/> fig: 3)

Protagonist:

Dear readers we shall begin with protagonist, a protagonist is considered as the main character around whom the entire story revolves. We always see a protagonist fight all the odds and takes decision that helps the plot of the story to move forward. Generally protagonists are all

of heroic nature. They solve every issue and fight till the final resolution of any problem. If you're writing in the first person and choosing to tell your story [through a narrator](#) that will typically become your protagonist. However, that's not a hard and fast rule. Consider *The Great Gatsby*. In this novel, F. Scott Fitzgerald made Nick the narrator, even though Gatsby was the protagonist.

Antihero:

The antihero should not be confused as a villain, rather it is similar to a protagonist, it is just he lacks some conventional traits of a hero or heroic attributes. If you remember JK Rowling in her *Harry Potter* book created the character of Severus Snape, he is polar opposite to Harry Potter, in fact, he is a classic hero in every sense of the word. Jake Sparrow from *Pirates of the Caribbean* can also be considered as an antihero. Although he wouldn't be considered as a first rate citizen. Anti-heroes can be exciting characters; there is a lot depth in them.

Confidante:

It is generally regarded as the best friend of the main character. The protagonist confides himself in a confidante. It is him who offers advice or suggestion to the main character when he is struggling or fighting any problem. A confidante reveals the intention, plans and personality traits of a protagonist. It must be admitted it is not a hard and fast rule that a confidante has to be necessarily a human being it can be an animal as well.

Antagonist:

It is character which may be called as a villain of the story. He stands in the ways of the protagonist to halt his process of achieving his desired goals. They do whatever they can to block the path of the hero. In fact, they are the source of many drama thrilled scenes. If you remember *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby, who wanted Daisy, however, he could not have her because she was married to Tom. This made him Tom detestable for Gatsby, because he had to face off Tom. He was unlikeable because he was cheating on Daisy and would not let her to be with the love of her life.

Dynamic:

As the term suggest, a dynamic character is someone who changes over the period of time. This term is often associated with the main character or protagonist for all the transformation that he undergoes while resolving various issues. Let's remain with *The Great Gatsby*. "As mentioned, F. Scott Fitzgerald did something interesting with his creation of the narrator, Nick Carraway. Nick's evolution throughout the novel was extreme. He was a nice, hard-working boy who just wanted to secure a role on Wall Street. Then, he met Gatsby and

everything changed. By the end of the novel, Nick was totally disillusioned, sick of everything Wall Street stood for, and disgusted by his rich friends”.

Static:

This character is opposed to the dynamic character, someone who does not change. Generally the father, mother of the protagonist falls in this category of characters. They are wise, enlightening. The term is used for peripheral characters. Daisy's friend Jordan Baker in *The Great Gatsby* could be considered a static character. She didn't change much throughout the course of the novel.

Round:

Many people or characters have difficult spouse or mother, you are not in a position to decide whether they love or hate them. If you find this “difficult person” it can be referred as a round character. This type of character is complex in nature. They do not follow a smooth arch and are inconsistent in their approach and acts. To a great extent they neither are cruel nor kind. They are mostly conflicted and to the readers and protagonist, they are contradictory.

Flat:

A [flat character](#) is the opposite of the round character. These characters may be overtly kind or inately cruel - and it shows. When you think of a flat character, you'll immediately perceive one characteristic and that will, essentially, define who they are. In contrast to the complex nuance of a round character, a flat character is simple and obvious. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, is an example of a flat character. She's opinionless and, worse, a little clueless. She doesn't see that Claudius used her to seize the throne. In fact, most of the characters, especially Claudius and Polonius, use her as a pawn and she is completely unaware.

Foil Character:

A foil character is a character that contrasts with another character and has opposing tendencies. Its main purpose is to distinguish and emphasize the protagonist's or other characters' characteristics. Helen is the foil to Jane in the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. In *The Tale of Two Cities* Sydney Carton is the foil to Charles Darnay. In the name of honor, Charles Darnay rejects his family. He explains how to do the right thing for everyone, including Lucie and Dr. Manette. His soft goodness and compassionate demeanor steal Lucie's heart. Sydney Carton, on the other hand, is attractive and brilliant, but he feels as though he has accomplished nothing

meaningful in his life. He believes Lucie could be the solution to his troubles, but she is in love with Charles.

18.2.3 Setting:

It is one of the important elements of the novel. It refers to the scene or scenes where the action takes place. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the story's first setting is the Dursleys' house. Thereafter the action is moved to another place Hogwarts, similarly we see Harry fascinate along with friends when they discover the castle and its grounds. It would be safe to claim that Hogwarts is so well designed setting that it almost becomes a character on its own.

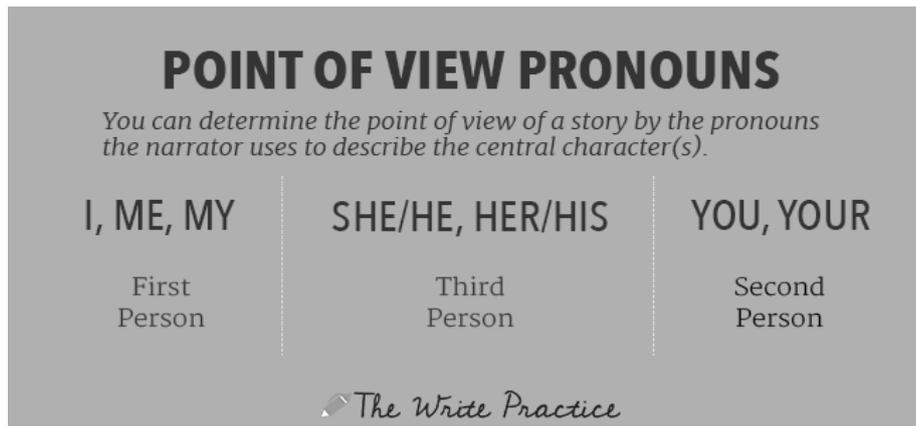
(See fig: 4)



(Source :Internet, fig:4)

18.2.4 Point of View:

Dear students, you should always keep this thing in mind that all novels are told from a certain perspective. The narrative can be first person, second person narrative or a third person narrative. Sometimes we have a third person narrator who is not a part of the story otherwise. Let us continue with *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, in this story we have a third person narrator who is not the part of the story, yet even here, the narrator speaks mostly from Harry's perspective, delving into his thoughts and feelings rather than those of other characters. There are some instances where an omniscient third person narrates the plot from multiple perspectives. Still there is also first person narrator who generally narrates or speaks for himself or herself. See fig. (5)



(Source: Internet fig:5)

18.2.5 Style:

Another important feature of a novel is its style. The way a writer writes and presents his thoughts and ideas is referred to as style. It is a literary style by which a novelist expresses his ideas using a variety of literary approaches, sentence structure, rhythm, and other literary components. Style can also be defined as the "voice" that a reader hears when reading an author's work. It varies from one author to the next. Every writer has a distinct style in which he or she expresses his or her thoughts or ideas. Tone, word choice, syntax, diction, grammar, language, and descriptive method are all used to create an author's style. It's a novelist's unusual accent. The reader learns about a particular novelist's creative talent through the use of style. Furthermore, style can be defined as the manner in which a novelist or writer employs various literary devices to organize her or his thoughts or message. As a result, style is the distinguishing factor that distinguishes an author from other novels. The way in which text is constructed is referred to as style. It's a literary term that's difficult to define. A single text or work of literature might contain a variety of styles.

Any author can make use of a particular language in a novel. He or she can make use of the syntax, word choice and other necessary linguistic elements. J K Rowling has made use of a fairly simple language in *Harry Potter*. However, one can see the use of the imagery and symbolism is frequent in the book. Similarly different authors have used different style in their works. The style of Dickens is different from that Hardy or the style Richardson is different from Virginia Woolf.

Finally, novels explore various themes that readers are able to grasp and absorb the meaning of the story or message. Harry Potter likewise revolves around various themes, thirst for power, love, friendship belonging and many more. Generally all novels revolve around a certain

theme or some sub themes, like identity, women emancipation, power, poverty, education, war, love, friendship. These are some of the common themes that authors generally write about.

18.3 . Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit students will be able to understand:

- Elements of novel like Plot, Character, Setting, Point of view, Theme, Style.
- Types of plot, like simple and complex,
- Exposition, Climax and Falling action in a plot.
- Types of characters like flat, round, static, protagonist, antagonist etc.
- Point of view in a novel,
- Setting and Style of the novel

18.4 Glossary

Prose: a written or spoken language in its ordinary form without metrical structure

Drama: one of the genres of literature like poetry, prose and novel. The only thing that differs it from them it is staged and performed before an audience.

Protagonist: the main leading character of the story.

Genre: A category of art or literature.

Narrator: The mind from which all aspects of the story are necessarily told

Theme-: One or more direct or indirect statements about the human condition as evidenced through the work as a whole

Plot: The series of events which make up the story, traditionally, conflict, climax, [denouement](#), and conclusion

Setting: The place, the time, and the social circumstances of the work.

Tone: The general attitude of the author toward the characters or the subject matter of the book.

Characters: The sentient or non-sentient beings alive or dead who are the actors of the events.

Point of View: Perspective from which a work is told, 1st 3rd; omniscient, limited.

Society: A group of individuals living for a common reason as an organised group of people or a society.

Static: That cannot alter or never changing

Anarchy: Absence of law and order

Hinduism: A faith, philosophy and culture native to India, distinguished by the creationist viewpoint and a supreme oneness personified in several forms and natures.

Hierarchy: A political, economic, religious or social structure in which individuals are ranked above others with some supremacy.

Corruption: Bribery, the state of being tainted or debased.

18.5 Sample Question

18.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is not an essential element of a novel?
 - (a) Plot
 - (b) Character
 - (c) Lecture
 - (d) Theme
2. What is the leading character of a novel called?
 - (a) Protagonist
 - (b) Antagonist
 - (c) Confidant
 - (d) None
3. Exposition is a part of:
 - (a) Plot
 - (b) Theme
 - (c) Character
 - (d) None
4. *Harry Potter* is a
 - (a) Campus novel
 - (b) Detective novel
 - (c) Horror novel
 - (d) None
5. Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?
 - (a) Jane Austen
 - (b) Emily Bronte
 - (c) Charlotte Bronte

- (d) George Eliot
6. Mrs. Dalloway is written by
- (a) Virginia Woolf
 - (b) Jane Austen
 - (c) Emily Bronte
 - (d) None
7. When a character changes frequently in a novel what do you call him
- (a) Dynamic
 - (b) Round
 - (c) Flat
 - (d) None
8. The climax in a plot means
- (a) Turning point
 - (b) Defensive
 - (c) Aggressive
 - (d) None
9. What does Resolution in a plot mean?
- (a) End
 - (b) Young
 - (c) Old
 - (d) None
10. If the novel is told from 'third person point of view', then the writer uses
- (a) I /us
 - (b) We /you
 - (c) They /he/she
 - (d) Us /me

18.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is meant by the plot of a story?
2. What do you mean by "Rising Action" and "Falling Action"?
3. Differentiate between a "round character" and a "flat character"?
4. Differentiate between a protagonist and antagonist of a novel.
5. Discuss the significance of setting in a work of literature.

18.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What is meant by 'point of view' in a novel?
2. Discuss the importance of 'Plot' and 'Character' in a novel.
3. Illustrate various stages of Plot construction.

18.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit-19: Oliver Twist: Introduction

Structure

- 19.0 Introduction
- 19.1 Objectives
- 19.2 Emergence of English Novel
 - 19.2.1 Victorian Literature
 - 19.2.2 Realism in Victorian Period
 - 19.2.3 Charles Dickens and his writings
 - 19.2.4 Background of *Oliver Twist*
 - 19.2.5 Publication of novel
 - 19.2.6 Synopsis of novel
 - 19.2.7 Contrary characters in *Oliver Twist*
 - 19.2.8 Social Issues in the novel
 - 19.2.9 Moral Values in the novel
 - 19.2.10 Critical Response of novel
- 19.3 Learning Outcomes
- 19.4 Glossary
- 19.5 Sampling Questions
- 19.6 Suggestive Reading

19.0 Introduction

Human beings are bound to live together with the people around. People differ according to their perception, feeling, temperament and thinking. This leads to the gap between the communities in the society. As it was seen during the **reign** of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), this period reflects major change in English writing. It began to show and remark the reality of society. It was the era of transformation of England from rural to urban one. People belong to this period realize their lives were changing. It was a period of economic expansion and rapid change and the population of England had increased to 6.5 million. England became one of the largest industrial centres, the new technologies were brought like industrial revolution, railway, steaming printing press etc. As England was known for the agriculture, people's existence was from the country side of England. However the industrial revolution was merely a beginning of

cruelty for the poor people whom forced to work in mills and factories for their livelihood. They were underpaid and ill-treated especially the women and the children. A strong division was brought between working class and the wealthy. It was due to Industrial revolution England became the first to encounter social problems despite being the first richest country in the world. This period is known for refined and conservative moral values. Their religious faith was breaking into Christian and in atheist beliefs. New genres were getting established. Amid the changes of this great age, two things stand out clearly that was democracy and education. People start protesting for the right to vote especially the women and the working class as they realize it is the common people who bears the burden and sorrow while privileged gain the most political and financial benefit. On the other hand growth of education had a great influence upon the life of people. As it was the age of newspaper and books, literary art began to flourish .People began to read more and more with the growth of libraries and development of publishing.

19.1 Objectives

Our primary objectives in this unit are:

- To give you an overview of the history of Victorian period
 - To acquaint you with the emergence of English novel
 - To provide you knowledge about the Victorian literature
 - To familiarise you with the Charles Dickens and his writings
 - To provide you the introduction of Oliver twist written by Charles Dickens
 - To familiarise you with the various issues which Dickens raised in the novel Oliver Twist
-

19.2 Emergence of Novel

The 19th century was the great age of English novel. As it was getting flourish increasingly among people due to the development of printing press. The rise of writers and philosophers led to many reforms in the Victorian society including the Slave abolition and child labour abolition. It was a high point in the history of English Literature when novels as a genre expanded. England became the centre of novel-readers as various transformations in the English society due to Industrial revolution were expressed brilliantly by the writers of the age. The novel became the tool to present a picture of life prevailing at that time especially in middle class people as they rose in power and importance. The middle class contribute rapid rise in the

popularity of the novels. Novelists tried their best to portray what the middle-class readers were interested to read. The novel in this era holds a great importance which the drama held in the Elizabeth age and never before, the novel has appeared in any age with such growth and perfection. Realism was the main focus of Victorian literature different from the romantic literature. The purpose was to portray realistic circumstances of people living at that time. Basically it was the **amalgam** of **optimism** and **pessimism**. Optimism in a sense of changes in the standard of living by progress in technology and Industrial revolution while the pessimism related to poverty, hunger and miserable condition of the working class. Therefore, it was the age of conflict with many social problems prevailing at that time from science to moral breakdown.

19.2.1 Victorian literature:

Literature of 19th century seems to diverge from artistic criterion to certain moral purpose. This age produced many writers who deserve to rank among the greatest of literature. The main motive of the writers was to project the basic problems of human experience through the presentation of great characters in their work. As we see in the novel of William Make piece Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* shows the world is dark and unfair place basically it satirizes middle-class society. Through the character of Becky Sharp, he shows his criticism towards the society. Thomas Hardy in his novels used to question religious and social structures through his characters. His novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Jude the Obscure*, and *The Mayor of Caster* bridgeanalyse the social confinement on the lives of people living in England and criticise beliefs relating to marriage, education and religion, that caused trouble in the lives of people. Bronte Sisters (Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte and Anne Bronte) created remarkable works like *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Bronte analyse myth, class and gender. *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte used gothic elements and showed **deception** and **bigamy** prevailing at that time. Another novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) by Anne Bronte was based on realism and is known as one of the first feminist novel. Another George Eliot was one of the famous female writer with an unbelievable intellect as she portrays thoughts, anxieties and inner feelings of characters as in her work *Middlemarch* (1871-1872) where she shows the growth of various marriages in a small town. There was also the great prose writers whom work hold the great importance in literature. Their main focus was the conflicting issues related to democracy, education, religion and politics. Poetry also plays an important role in Victorian era. It was totally different from the romantic poetry. The main centre of Victorian poetry was realistic view of people's lives revolving around the Victorian conflict prevailing at that time. Human misery was demonstrated. Two new forms were introduced at that time i.e.

Narrative Poetry and Dramatic Monologue. Narrative poetry was written in the form of story like Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and Christina Rossetti's "*Goblin Market*" (1862) while in Dramatic monologue speaker narrates the main part of the poem to an audience in poem itself. Examples are Robert Browning's "*My Last Duchess*" (1842) and Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Ulysses* (1842).

19.2.2 Realism in Victorian Period

Realism started as a literary movement in reaction to and as a departure from the idealism of the Romantic period. The word realism refer to faithful perception of the world in literature. Realism appeared in literature in the second half of the 19th century, mostly in novels. It was a mediation between the actual and ideal, particular and general, individual and species. The main motive of Realism was to recreate reality as it was. As a result, the plot was no longer the central focus of the author, but rather making interesting characters was high priority. It also laid stress on describing the substantial details of life, as opposed to natural world portrayed by Romantic period. It was the way to explore interior lives of characters and to show the transparency regarding the problem of representation of people. The writers of 19th C rejected the artificiality of both the Classicism and Romanticism of the institutions and on the demand for contemporary in an effective work of art. They believed that the artificiality misrepresented the harsh realities of life. They tried to represent the lives, appearances, customs, and the problems of the middle and lower classes, of the undistinguished, the ordinary, the lowly and the unadorned. They scrupulously set themselves to reproduce all the so far ignored aspects of contemporary life and society-its mental attitudes, physical settings and material conditions. In spite of rising prosperity, there was a huge gap evolving between the rich and the poor. The novelists of the period represent the modesty of true realism like George Eliot in her first novel *Adam Bede* (1859), consider the 'truthfulness' for the quality of many Dutch paintings, which idealistic people contemn. In the other novel *Bleak House* (1852) by Dickens encounter the depths of hardship, disease and loss suffered by the poor. Another novel *North and South* (1854) by Elizabeth Gaskell compares the rural south with the unpleasant conditions of the industrial north. Other novels which were of the realism genre were Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845). The novel gave a social commentary on the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The novelists of this age tried to represent this inequality that lay hidden under the outward affluence.

19.2.3 Charles Dickens:

Charles John Huffam Dickens, born on 7th February 1812, Portsmouth in Hampshire England belonging to a poor family whose father was sent to Marshalsea prison for his debt along with the entire family except for Dickens. He was nine years old and was taken out of the school to

work in the factory at the age of eleven. He was supporting his poor family by pasting labels on bottles, wandering like a homeless dog to survive. His life was transformed when he entered in journalism and his first work *The Pickwick Papers* got published in 1836 at the age of 25. It was published serially in 1836-1837, it was full of liveliness and **merriment**. It was an overnight success, he got acknowledge with too much fame around the Victorian society, huge audiences would gathered over his arrival in England. Dickens, the first famous author of that period, was known as the hero of realism as he made the stories out of incidents that he faced and the people who were facing the same. He was a brilliant enthusiastic observer with an active imaginary power which lead him to a famous novelist. Dickens used to produce the writings that public wanted, everything that Dickens attempted was full of liveliness and intensity. At the age of 15 he acquired knowledge of inns, stables and horsey persons which is seen in his novels. Dickens began drawing sketches to various magazines and newspapers under the pseudonym 'Boz'. At the age of 21 he made his first sketch by the name of "Mr. Minns and his cousin" and it was seen in his first book, *Sketches by Boz*, in 1835.

Dickens works break all the records of 19th century as his novels reflect the dullness of life in which people could relate themselves, as they actually live in it. He gained the knowledge of human life, by understanding the victims of society. He began to give dramatic outlook to his works by exaggerating the situations, voices and gestures of characters which pleased the audience. His empathetic soul gave courage to the weak, hope to the weary and fought against injustice. The novels of Dickens are full of symbolic images and situations of desperate alienation of the individual which is reflected in the characters of his novels. In other words we can say he was the victim of his own book. He edited a weekly journal for 20 years, wrote 15 novels and hundreds of short stories. He was an **unflagging** letter writer and agitated smartly for children rights and other social reforms. His work *Pickwick* was followed by *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Old Curiosity Shop* with many other works which indicate the limitless invention of his literary art. He also travelled to America where he was a popular novelist. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was his last work before he died. It was left incomplete. Themes, such as arranged marriages, child cruelty, betrayal, deceit and relations between people from different classes have been fully explored in his famous works.

19.2.4 Background of Oliver Twist:

Oliver Twist or The Parish Boy's Progress is known as one of the best novels of Dickens. The subtitle "*The Parish Boy's Progress*" was taken from the John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It was well-loved by the people of England as Dickens had already achieved success from his

first work Pickwick papers. The reason behind writing the Oliver Twist, was to **palliate** the evils under which poor were suffering. Oliver Twist is remarkable critique of poverty, industrial revolution, child labour and treatment of orphans. In the novel he shows the life of an orphan living in the streets. The protagonist of the novel is poor child, the miserable victim of society. He exaggerated the sorrowful condition of poor child and showed the sentiments related with him.

Charles Dickens's novels Like *Oliver Twist* represent the immense split in society. His novel *Oliver Twist* was great success as it is referred to as 'Newgate novel' and was written as a protest against the poor law of 1834. The raising of work house was induced by the Poor Law. The poor law promoted the poor people to depend on charity rather than utilising themselves in work or look for employment. The children were forced to work like savages, in other words child exploitation was happening at that time. The novel revolves around a boy namely Oliver who encounters a city of evils and avoid being corrupted. The plot is about how Oliver's life is changed from the work house to being an aristocrat. The novel exposes a lot of Victorian irreverence which Dickens had experienced as he was in poverty himself. In Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens shows us many of the social inequity of those historic times. He was disgust by the way the poor were treated. He believe that the characterisation of novel would affect the government to bring a change in the society. This novel is known for the **spunky** realism with which Dickens represent lower-class and the horrifying living circumstances of London slums. Dickens show the reality of England through his fiction.

19.2.5 Publication of novel:

Oliver Twist was a serial publication between 1837 and 1839 in a magazine called Bentley's Miscellany, of which Dickens was editor. This only hold the readers interest and increase the publicity of his novels. Many novels were issued serially at that time, space were given between months, of a year or two. Dickens start writing Oliver Twist in instalments before his first novel, The Pickwick Papers. The novel Oliver Twist was implausibly popular for the style i.e "Newgate novel", as this style was best-selling from 1820's to 1840's. The name was taken from the Newgate prison, the main prison for crooks (thieves, murderers, pickpockets) in London. While critics often denounce such novels for spreading immorality but the audience usually love them. Oliver Twist is the only "Newgate Novel" of Dickens. It has been adapted as a film and Broadway musical and has been believed a lasting worth since it was published. The novel Oliver Twist was not only based on the **seraphic** orphan but the worst environment he was

facing, mean people on London streets. The novel was considered as the exact painting of social reality that Dickens presented in public.

19.2.6 Synopsis of the Novel:

The novel is about the young orphan Oliver who is born in workhouse to a mother who is unknown. She dies after giving birth to him, and this boy Oliver was sent to an orphanage, where he was mistreated with other orphans and were fed very less. One day he ask for more gruel, Mr. Bumble and he indignant decided to get rid of him to Mr. Sowerberry. Eventually, after suffering again, Oliver runs away towards London where he meets a boy namely Jack Dawkins, or the Artful Dodger, he takes him to an apartment where he meets Fagin a gentleman. He offers Oliver a place to stay and food to eat. Oliver eventually after sometime comes to know that Fagin and his boys are pickpockets and thieves until he was wrongly accused in stealing the handkerchief of old gentleman Mr. Brownlow. Oliver then was taken to the courtroom where he fainted. Mr. Brownlow feels sympathy for Oliver and takes him to his own place. He takes care of him as a guardian but on the other Fagin was not happy of losing him. He had a fear to get exposed. He then made a conspiracy with his people to take him back. So one day Mr. Brownlow sends Oliver to return some books to the book seller where Nancy one of Fagin conspirator kidnaps Oliver and take him back to the evil Fagin. Oliver was forced on gun point by Fagin to go for robbery where he was shot by the one of the servants. The next morning Mrs. Maylie and her beautiful niece decided to protect him from the police and nurse him. Meanwhile, Nancy feels pity for Oliver when she overhears Fagin and Monks deal. Nancy decided to tell the truth to Rose Maylie that Monks is Oliver's half-brother, who is the big enemy of Oliver and is trying to destroy him. Finally all crimes committed by Fagin and his conspirators come to an end and they get a severe punishment. And at the end Oliver lives happily with Mr. Brownlow.

19.2.7 Contrary characters in Oliver Twist:

The characters in the novel are depicted as social commentary, criticising the hypocrisy and laws of government and criminal structure. Dickens through his characters points out the suffering imposed by the systems and their unfairness. Dickens serious purpose was to make the novel the instrument of morality and justice by the exaggeration of characters. In Oliver Twist he put across that the attributes of wisdom in humanity can be **irrecoverably** lost if it is exposed to unrestrained corrupting influences. For this reason Dickens laid great emphasis on environment in the development of characters in the novel. From the character of Oliver Twist to the character of Monks the novel depicts the two sides of the same coin. Oliver, the innocent and virtuous

exact opposite of his brother Edward Monks, Dickens shows us the dark side of the Victorian society as well as his optimism for a brighter future. These two main characters created by Dickens not only tell us about the courageousness of Oliver and Monks self-interest but he shows us the Victorian society that he lived in as well as the society it could become. Dickens throughout the whole novel provides numerous examples where Oliver proves himself righteous with no self-interest at all. Dickens through the character of Oliver represent how society should look like, while through the Monks portrayal Dickens shows the world is filled with greed and hate. Monks desire is to destroy the life of Oliver so that he could inherit all his property. Monks character shows the coldness, detachment of society where the only priority is self-interest. The novel displays the brighter side in terms of Oliver while on the other side it shows the darker side in terms of Monks. As Oliver and Monks have blood relation they could have loved each other but the society and its influences made monks to view Oliver as his enemy. Dickens expresses his views on Victorian society through these two characters, Oliver and Monk represent the best and the worst of humanity. Through the portrayal of Oliver he gives the role model to society. Dickens reflect the horrors that children were put across as a result of **covetousness** that labelled industrial society. Dickens not only shows the reality of people but he also tries us to show that change is needed.

19.2.8 Social Issues in the Novel:

Oliver Twist reflect the unfair treatment from the society, it exposes the poor condition of people specially suffering of children during Victorian era. Dickens raises the issues of persecution of Poor Law, the evils of London and the exploitation of children. Social issues like **disparity**, discrimination, prejudice was known to a great extent at that time. In *Oliver twist*, the children were facing hard time, they were tortured every day. The misery was very common in their life. There was no justice for them. They were treated as savages and were allowed to work for all day and night. Since we saw it in a character of Oliver as he had to go through many hard circumstances in order to survive. During the Industrial Revolution the condition was the same, the children were forced to work at a very young age. They had to struggle for their livelihood. While on the other social prejudice was much prevailing at that time as in the novel, the children were mistreated by the people who have much money. Children who come from lower background were even not considered to get affection. Prejudiced beliefs results in bias treatment of individuals on the basis of equality. In the novel Oliver was very flimsy because he did not get anything to eat. Nobody was there to take care of him. At that time there was so many children who were suffering. An orphan was not treated like the other children, they were assumed to be

worthless and lowest in the society. In the earlier chapters of the novel, the head of the workhouse appears to be very cruel. He did not balk to do violence to children if they get against the rules in workhouse. As in the novel *Oliver* just because asked for more food, the punishment he got was beyond his imagination. The life in the workhouses was very **unenviable**, the ill-treatment of children was everywhere, and children would get severely punished if they had done anything wrong. It was common to see children dying in the workhouses. The condition of that time was all depicted through the portrayal of *Oliver Twist*. The effects of Industrial Revolution were seen with the characters in the novel especially children.

19.2.9 Moral Values in *Oliver Twist*:

Despite the social conflicts in the novel *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens represents the moral values through the characters in the novel. He uses the novel *Oliver Twist*, as a perfect medium to explore important moral values in Victorian society as moral values plays an important role in shaping human life. As an audience we noticed that society uses various stereotypes as we have seen in the portrayal of characters in *Oliver Twist* like Mr. Bumble and Mr. Sowerberry. The moral values that could be seen in the novel with respective to the characters were:

(a) Courage: It is the ability to take stand on right thing in hard situations. From the novel we have seen in the character of Oliver, how he stand up for the right from beginning till end. In the starting of the novel he asks for more **gruel** to the master without fear. Although he appears to be weak but his courage pushes him to do the action. Throughout the novel we saw him fighting for the right with the courage.

(b) Honesty: From the novel we have seen in the character of Nancy, who work for the criminal Fagin. She feels pity while seeing Oliver suffering. She decided to tell the truth to Mrs. Maylie about the wicked plan of his master Fagin and Monks. Monks, half-brother of Oliver who is the biggest threat to Oliver as he wants all his inherited property from his father. He is the only proof, who knows Oliver's family background. However, she knows that her revelation will put her in danger. But instead she chooses the path of honesty, she is ready to face the consequences without being afraid.

(c) Sympathy: It is sharing the feeling of others (especially feelings of sorrow and anguish) or we can say feeling sorry for others. In the novel *Oliver Twist*, we have seen in the character of Mr. Brownlow. As in the novel he was the victim of pickpocketing. He thinks Oliver was the one who stole his handkerchief till the time he was proved innocent in front of the magistrate. He

feels sympathy for Oliver, as he got fainted in courtroom. He took Oliver to his own house and decided to take care of him as a guardian.

(d) Staunchness: It means trueness or we can say our attitudes and aims are not changed. In the novel we have seen in the character of Miss Rose Maylie. When she meets Nancy for the first time, she asks Nancy to leave Fagin and his criminal activities. She persuades her to live a better life. Although Nancy refuses, as she didn't want to betray Fagin, but Rose did her best to motivate her for a bright future.

(e) Generousness: It is the trait of being kind or we can say it is the concern of being good or willing to be charitable and pleasant. Meanwhile, in the novel we have seen in the characters of Mrs. Maylie and Rose. They decided to nurse him when he was injured. They try to protect him from police and save him from difficult situation. Oliver feels safe, he gets happiness and peace while being with them. Through Oliver Twist, Dickens not only show us the evil side of the society but he also gives us the moral messages which are implied in the novel. Therefore moral values are important to humanity. It should be known early in order to understand what is good and what is bad.

19.2.10 Critical Response:

Charles Dickens was glorified for representing the emotions of Victorian people through his novel Oliver Twist. The author was fully comprehended for his description of implacable reality. Dickens was admired to find good in all mankind despite the **grimy** environment of miserable orphans like Oliver. Dickens representation of evils of the work houses, starvation of children, factory system and **venality** done in the name of Poor Laws exist at that time catch the attention of reader. Despite being socially **pertinent**, Oliver Twist too faced criticism, the novel appeared too **mawkish** and lacking. The major criticism was raised by Jewish community against the negative portrayal of Fagin, the Jew. Fagin is considered as one of the most monstrous and villainous Jew character in all of English Literature. In 1854 the Jewish Chronicle demonstrated the criticism of Dickens in public. Despite the portrayal of Fagin, Dickens never openly mistreated a Jewish person nor did he openly hold any anti-Semitic beliefs. Dickens has been criticised for his selection of backdrop and characters. At times the novel incline towards the **sentimentality** that appears more **loathsome** to readers. Nevertheless it cannot be denied the novel plays a significant role in **denouncing** the Poor Laws, ill treatment of children, criminals and other social miscreants who are disregarded by so-called civilised people. Dickens goal was to show the reality of society and how Oliver lived and survived in the circumstances where

society did not need him. The novel illustrate the bright and dark side of human nature. This reason made the Charles Dickens one of the best figure of that times.

19.3 Learning Outcomes

In this unit, an attempt has been made to trace the brief history of Victorian era and emergence of literature. Charles Dickens has been introduced with a brief review of what is known about him. His contribution towards the society despite various problems and issues prevailing at that time. His empathy towards the poor and sincerity to social progress. The humanistic intention of writing the novel Oliver Twist and to understand the connection between history and literature. The key characters in the novel will be identified. You would analyse the purpose and the background of Dickens in writing Oliver Twist. How Dickens portray the moral values through characters in Oliver Twist and the social issues he raised in the novel was concern of that time. At the end you will find the criticism faced by Charles Dickens in writing the novel Oliver Twist. Further, the learner can consult the books and sites provided in suggestive readings below to learn more about the Victorian literature in detail. After the detailed study of the chapter, the learner will be able to answer the questions in the examination without difficulty.

19.4 Glossary

Reign: Rule

Amalgam: Combination

Optimism: Hope

Pessimism: Despair

Palliate: Lessen

Irreverence: Disrespectful act

Inequity: Injustice

Gruel: Porridge

Disparity: Inequality

Irrecoverably: Impossible to recover

Spunky: Courageous

Implausibly: Unbelievably

Seraphic: Kind personality

Unflagging: Energetic

Prejudice: Bias

Flimsy: Weak

Unenviable: Hard

Unrestrained: Uncontrolled

Implacable: Merciless

Grimy: Dirty

Merriment: happiness

Venality: Corruption

Pertinent: To the point

Sentimentality: Falsely emotional

Mawkish: Insincerely emotional

Loathsome: Repelling

19.5 Sample Questions

Answer the following questions below.

19.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The Victorian Era was known due to Industrial Revolution?

(a) True

(b) False

2. The novel got popularised in literature in the Victorian Period?

(a) True

(b) False

3. Charles Dickens wrote Oliver Twist for protesting which law?

(a) Death penalty

(b) Poor law of 1834

- (c) Law of estates
 - (d) Restoration Act
4. Oliver was born in?
- (a) Hospital
 - (b) Railway Station
 - (c) Workhouse
 - (d) Streets
5. What rule does Oliver violates in workhouse?
- (a) Asking for more gruel
 - (b) Pickpocketing his master's ring
 - (c) Try to run from workhouse
 - (d) Asking for new clothes
6. Who saves Oliver from getting arrested in charge of pickpocketing a handkerchief?
- (a) Mr. Brownlow
 - (b) Nancy
 - (c) Jack Dawkins
 - (d) Monks
7. _____ is the magazine in which Oliver Twist appeared in 1837.
8. _____ adopts Oliver at the end of the novel.
9. _____ is the Artful Dodger's real name in the novel.
10. _____ is the name of author who main theme of the novels is sufferings of children.

19.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Give a brief note on emergence of novel in Victorian period?
2. Write a short note on social issues raised by Charles Dickens in his novel Oliver Twist?
3. Discuss the critical reception of Oliver Twist?
4. Write a brief note on the villains of the novel Oliver Twist?
5. Discuss the publication of the novel Oliver Twist?

19.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What was the impact of Industrial Revolution on the people of Victorian society? Give references with the novel *Oliver Twist*?
2. How far Charles Dickens succeed in showing the problems of Victorian society in his novel *Oliver Twist*? Explain
3. The two main characters Oliver and Monks reflect the two side of Victorian society? Explain
4. Discuss the moral values implied in the novel *Oliver Twist*?

19.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit 20: Plot Construction (*Oliver Twist*)

Structure

- 20.0 Introduction
- 20.1 Objectives
- 20.2.0 Dickens' Plot Construction in *Oliver Twist*
 - 20.2.1 Plot Summary
 - 20.2.2 Analysis
 - 20.2.3 Conclusion
- 20.3 Learning Outcomes
- 20.4 Glossary
- 20.5 Sample Questions
- 20.6 Suggested Readings

20.0 Introduction

Oliver Twist is a novel by Charles Dickens, a Victorian novelist. This unit introduces the readers to the plot of the novel. The unit provides briefly, the socio-political context of the plot of *Oliver Twist*. Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* in the backdrop of the conditions in workhouses, child-labour, crime and poverty which was widespread in Victorian England, along with the growing wealth and progress of the country.

The Victorian Age roughly refers to the period Queen Victoria (1837-1901) has ruled over Britain. The period saw the emergence of Britain as the world's most powerful economy after winning the Napoleonic wars with France (1793-1815). This status of the great power and first industrialised urban society helped in the expansion of the British Empire worldwide. The period of Victorian age is considered to be "the modern period of progress and unrest" (Long 452).

Due to several reasons this period is a time of the "Victorian Paradox." This is because of the several contrasts and conflicts that were taking shape at this time. Some of these paradoxes had to do with the contrast between the rich and the poor; science and religion; men and women and the moral basis of authority.

The striking development that affected this period was the Industrial Revolution, because of which the Victorian period in England was a time of great prosperity. England had gained control over large parts of the world due to trade, slave-trade, colonial occupation and slave-based plantations. All these brought great wealth to the small island from all parts of the world. However, it was tragic to see that this wealth was not shared by all people of the land. In fact, the

gap between the rich and poor was so enormous that it appeared as if Great Britain was not one, but two nations: one rich and one poor.

Secondly, there was a conflict between Science and Religion. The authority of the Church had been challenged due to the increasing use of rationality. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was no debate between science and religion. Science was considered to be the result of some divine expression, and not separate from God. It was the development of a scientific temperament that directed intellectual inquiry towards the Bible and specially, the story of the Creation of the World., questioning its simplification of the process of life on earth, in the form of a story of Creation. In 1859, Darwin presented his theory of evolution in his book, *The Origin of Species* in which he argued that man has evolved from the lower species instead of being a production of some divine power. This led to a huge division among the intellectuals of the society, in which some spoke for and others against the theory. This created a “crisis of faith” among the ordinary people, who were traditional and religious. The growth of science challenged the teachings of the Bible. Doubt became the order of the day in Victorian England. The concept of religious sin was replaced with the zeal to participate in the rapid development of the period.

The third major influence in this Age was the emergence of Utilitarianism. This philosophy resulted from the arguments of Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo, James Mill, and Thomas Malthus regarding the morality of governance. They advocated a morality that can create happiness and reduce those decisions that can bring discontent. The utilitarian philosophy sought the betterment of society as a whole, and did not consider the idea of suffering of the individual. According to Utilitarians, an action is to be judged as good if it is able to create “the greatest good of the greatest number” of people in any given situation.

The fourth element of this age was the position of women in society. It was a strange fact that despite the ruling monarch of England being a woman, the women in Victorian England were seen as weak, incapable of being independent and were treated as secondary to men at home, as well as in the society. She was considered to be docile, loving and patient, “an angel in the house,” whose loving touch brought harmony to the home, and consequently to the society and the nation. Women had no right to study beyond a basic level, hold jobs or own property. Marriage was the only way women could get respect in society. The unmarried women were objects of pity and scorn, and subjects of jokes as spinsters. The Victorian poet Tennyson wrote a poem “The Princess: A Medley” addressing the matter of women’s higher education. It was widely appreciated and led him to the title of the Poet

Laureate of England in the Victorian court. The subject of women's freedom and individuality were in conflict with the existing ideas about the role of women in society. In short, Victorian society believed in the "doctrine of separate spheres" for men and women.

The Victorian English society represents various industrial, cultural, political, scientific and military changes which influenced the literature of the period. The literature produced in this era envisions the challenges of the labour class in the factories and ponders upon the emerging number of child labourers. It also depicts the treatment of women and children and reflects upon the plight of the lower class in the society

The Romantic Age gave way to the distinctly different Victorian poetry of Alfred Tennyson, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning' and the novels of Charles Dickens (1812-70), George Eliot (1819-80), Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65), the Bronte sisters, William M. Thackeray (1811-63), Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81). It is believed that, "more than 60,000 works of prose fiction were published in Victorian Britain by as many as 7,000 novelists" (Britannica).

The novel emerged as a new literary genre in this period. It has followed the "three-decker" or three-volume structure initially and it reaches the modern single-volume format only in the 1890s.

This period has noticed the flourishing of political, historical, religious, crime and comic novels. The novels also questioned different laws and bills through the literature of the period.

20.1 Objectives

The unit has been designed to fulfil the following objectives:

- To familiarise students with the novel and the main story
- To make students acquainted with the sequence of events that make up the plot of the novel
- To help students analyse the cause of certain occurrences, and their impact on the characters and the development of the plot
- To enable students to comprehend the relationship between the plot, characters and themes
- To understand the plot as author's representation of his times

20.2 Plot Summary of *Oliver Twist*

Oliver Twist was published in 1837-38, at London. At first it was published in the form of a series in Bentley's *Miscellany*, a periodical edited by Dickens. himself, between February 1837 and April 1839. In its first book edition it was published in November 1838. The novel is a mixture of a children's story, a detective story and is also a novel of social protest. It tells in vivid detail the darker side of the policies and administration in Victorian England

As discussed above, this was the time of the industrial revolution in Europe, and the new emerging towns were rich in comparison to most rural areas due to various reasons that affect rural economy such as farming and husbandry. Most of these people preferred to work in the towns and cities because of the wealth that these cities promised to anyone who worked hard. This promise turned out to be tragically untrue for a vast majority. Consequently, this migration caused great suffering as the living conditions for these labourers were pathetic and wages were not enough. Moreover, people in small villages also found themselves starving or falling ill due to lack of money. There was a great divide between the rich and the poor.

The care of the poor, those who find themselves in difficulty due to many factors, has been a cause of concern in all societies across time, throughout the world. Mostly it was considered a religious duty to take care of those who were less fortunate. In medieval times in Europe, the Church, through the monasteries, took on the task of looking after those who could not find work or had come upon bad times. But slowly with the declining power of religion and the corruption of the Church, this responsibility was taken over by the political state. So "The Poor Law" was first approved in England in 1601. This law included the incapacitated, blind, old, impotent, and other such in the category of the poor who were unable to perform labour. It demanded that parishes manage these poor people and look after the poor in their own areas. But the advent of the Industrial Revolution changed the situation and living conditions of England and created new problems with families, property and work. The peasants who lived in a rural community were more secure within their close family circles for many generations. The capitalist relationship between an employer and worker was dependent on the cash-nexus and the persistent rhythm of productivity, which left no room for respite. Moreover, the gap between the employer and employee was much more.

As a result, new policies brought in Gilbert's Act in 1782. This new law allowed Parishes to work together in bigger groups, in shared poorhouses. Secondly, these poorhouses were to provide shelter to the homeless, jobless and the destitute only till they became self-sufficient. This meant that the poorhouses brought relief for a brief period, helping the poor to work towards improving their lives.

These Poor Laws were criticized strongly, but the criticism focused on different aspects. There were a few who were critical of those whom they thought would just be taking advantage of the system, while the others found the system too harsh and supported a more generous system. It was the philosophy of Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, David Ricardo, and Thomas Malthus that went against the poor. Their moral position was that such a system would make them more dependent and idle. Since there was a lot of government money involved, a new law was made.

This was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, or the ‘New’ Poor Law. It was of great significance because it replaced the poorhouse with the workhouse. Before this amendment, poorhouses and almshouses were for the benefit of starving families and the homeless. The needy were provided with food, clothing, covers and if required, money. However, with the coming of the ‘New’ Poor Law, the workhouse became the only place for those who needed support. But this was a very demanding system, as they were designed to discourage rather than support the poor. They looked like prisons and were often located on the outskirts of small rural towns. It was required that these people live at the workhouse to get the benefits, instead of coming and going. Therefore, they were forced to leave their home and belongings. Tragically, families, husbands, wives and children used to get separated as the poorhouses segregated people on the basis of gender and age. The workhouse demanded intense labour from them in exchange for a negligible amount of food and shelter, and kept them working according to a strict timetable.

Dickens and his family are said to have been in a debtors’ prison, due to his father’s bankruptcy. Even though the debtors’ prison was a confined and dreary place, he appears to find it better than a workhouse. Most importantly, in the debtors’ prison, Dickens and his family could stay together, whereas the workhouse separated families. The inhuman nature of this arrangement for the unfortunate made him take up the issue on behalf of these voiceless victims of the governing laws. Therefore, in *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens uses the novel form to convey to his contemporary readers an understanding of the social situation faced by the lower classes of England, the helpless, men, women and children that he found intolerable.

Check your progress:

1. What do you understand by workhouses and poorhouses?.
2. What are the aspects of the Victorian period relevant to the novel?

20.2.1 Plot Summary

Oliver Twist is the story of an orphan named Oliver Twist from his birth to a time when he is about ten. It tells about his miserable existence in a workhouse and his adventures after he runs away from humiliation.. As mentioned earlier, this novel is considered to be a response to the New Poor Laws of 1834.

Oliver is born in 1830s in a workhouse located in an unknown village of England. He is born to a young woman who has been found on the street outside the workhouse. She had fallen down in a faint, which was a result of her weakness due to hunger and pregnancy. The doctor of the parish and an old woman who also lives in the workhouse attend the birth and help to bring him into the world. The baby is weak and sickly. His mother proves to be too weak to survive and after holding and kissing him on the forehead she dies. The woman's name is Sally and she notices that the young woman had no ring on her finger showing her to be unmarried. It appears that Oliver is an orphan , with the additional stigma of being born to an unwed mother, and since there is no one to support him, he will have to live in the workhouse. He is dressed up in the old clothes that are passed on from baby to baby in the poorhouses. He is thus marked as a parish child.

Oliver's fate appears to be in the hands of Mr. Bumble, who is the beadle of the parish church. It is the beadle who names him, finding his name alphabetically as he has already named infants from A to S. That is why he is named "Twist." Again, it is the beadle who decides that being a baby, he cannot go to the workhouse as yet. So, he is at first given into the care of Mrs Mann who runs a foster care centre with financial support from the Parish. that though the parish officials pay Mrs Mann "sevenpence halfpenny," she doesn't feed them adequately. Oliver and children like him are robbed of much of their share of nutrition and given very poor portions of food. Several children die due to malnutrition or neglect— "eight and a half out of ten," as Dickens says.

Mr Bumble visits Mrs Mann on Oliver's ninth birthday, and informs her that Oliver is too old to stay at her establishment. There had been an official search for Oliver's parents or family, but no one has been able to discover his mother's or father's identity.

Oliver is removed from the only place he has known as home, and taken to the workhouse, because a law had been enacted that required people in poorhouses and workhouses to work in return for food, clothes and shelter. There, he is given his task by a board of rich and well-fed men. He is to "pick oakum" in the workhouse. At the workhouse, he works with several other orphan children and is not even paid with enough amount of meal to sustain him. The authorities feed the growing children with a very thin gruel that hardly serves their hunger. The workhouse is not a shelter for the poor but a hellish place that "starves slowly." Oliver is encouraged by

other children to ask for more if he is hungry. When he goes to the master of the house, who is serving them and asks for “some more,” everyone is shocked. The poor children have been disciplined into accepting whatever is given to them and they are never allowed to complain or “ask for more.”

The authorities punish him and lock him up. Knowing that such a spirited boy can create problems for them, they offer five pounds as a reward to anybody who wants to take Oliver away. He is nearly taken by Mr. Gamfield, who is known to be so harsh to the boys who work for him that several of his child workers have died. Thankfully Oliver is spared that when the magistrate can see from Oliver’s face how afraid he is of the man. Finally he is handed over to Mr and Mrs Sowerberry, along with a sum of five pounds by Mr Bumble. Mr. Sowerberry is the parish undertaker, responsible for arranging the funeral and burial of the dead.

Oliver faces similar circumstances in his new workplace, lots of unkindness and food given unwillingly. But there is no change in his behaviour. He works tirelessly in the day time and sleeps in the coffins at night. He attends the funerals arranged by Sowerberry and through his eyes, the narrator can make the readers understand how the poor are disrespected by the parish officials, Sowerberry and the public, even when they are dead.

Noah Claypole and his girlfriend Charlotte, both of whom work for the Sowerberrys, keep bullying and teasing Oliver. One day when Noah refers to Oliver’s dead mother as “a regular right-down bad ‘un,” referring to the story of her being unwed, Oliver attacks him in a fit of rage. Charlotte and Mrs. Sowerberry rush to Noah’s aid, and the three of them beat Oliver and lock him in the cellar. Later, Oliver is beaten up and also caned by Mr Bumble, and locked up again. Oliver’s rage dissolves into tears when he is alone.

Oliver runs away early next morning. On his way out of town, he passes the workhouse where he used to live and sees his old friend, Dick, in the yard. He tells him that “they beat and ill-used” him, so he’s running away. He also says optimistically, “I am going to seek my fortune.” He requests Dick to keep quiet about meeting him and Dick vows not to tell anyone about Oliver’s flight and bids him a warm farewell.

Check Your Progress:

1. Write the sequence of incidents in Oliver’s life from birth till he goes to London.
2. What is the attitude of the parish officials towards the poor?

Oliver decides to walk seventy miles to London. He only had “a crust of bread, a shirt, two pairs of stockings, a penny in his pocket”. His journey is full of ups and downs and he faces hunger, cold, and weakness and only his strong will keeps him going. During his journey he experiences the meanness of the common people of the various village he passes. But he also meets a man and a woman who provide him food without expecting anything in return. On the seventh morning, just before entering London, Oliver faints when he reaches the town of Barnet. He is saved by a boy who introduces himself as Jack Dawkins. This is his original name but he is famous by the nickname, Artful Dodger. Jack shows him mercy by buying lunch and offers to help him reach London.

In London, Dawkins takes Oliver to a shady house and Dawkins strangely uses a password “Plummy and slam” to get into the house. But Oliver does not find it odd. Dodger introduces Oliver to “old gentleman” Fagin. Oliver is offered food at Fagin’s place and is assured of help. In the house, Oliver meets other boys of the same age, but like Dodger they also behave like grown men. They all have supper together and the boys drink and smoke and Oliver is so tired that he falls into a deep sleep right after dinner.

It turns out that the Artful Dodger is a pickpocket and a thief and works for Fagin, who is a crafty old Jew, who finds young innocent boys and girls coming from the villages and trains them to become thieves, pickpockets and robbers, or prostitutes like Betty and Nancy. But though Oliver sees the other boys trying to practice picking Fagin’s pocket, he thinks it’s a game and even joins in when Fagin invites him to try. Fagin actually wants to make Oliver a trained pickpocket like the other boys under him. He sends him on a pick-pocketing mission with Dodger and Bates. They go to the Highstreet and standing next to a gentleman reading a book at a book-stall take a handkerchief from his pocket. When he raises the alarm and tries to catch them, Oliver realises to his horror that they are really pick-pockets. He is so shocked that he starts running and so everyone mistakes him for the thief and runs to catch him.

The gentleman whose pocket is picked is not sure that Oliver is guilty. There is something about Oliver that reminds him of something, but he can’t recall it. So Mr Brownlow and the Book-stall owner manage to convince Mr Fagin, the magistrate at the Mertropolitan Police Station, that he was not the thief, and he is set free. Mr Brownlow takes him home with him and looks after him as Oliver recovers from his fever and weakness due to the happenings of the last few days. During his stay there he meets Mrs Bedwin, the housekeeper and thinks of her as a mother because of her kindness to him. Mr Brownslow can see the resemblance between the portrait of a girl in his house and Oliver, but Oliver is disturbed by the face in the painting. Mr

Brownlow is happy to have Oliver with him and assures him that he would like to keep him at his house and teach him to read and gain knowledge.

One day, Mr Brownlow sends Oliver to return some books and money to the book-stall owner,

but he does not return. Mr Bronslow is convinced by his good friend, Mr Grimwig that the boy is not honest and has run away with the money. They are disturbed by his disappearance. Though none of them want to suspect Oliver, they are not sure what to think. But once again chance plays a part and Mr Bumble again appears to shape Oliver's destiny. He reads an advertisement in a paper when he goes to London for some work, in which Mr Brownlow has offered an award for information on Oliver. Mr Bumble meets him and assures him that Oliver is not to be trusted. Finally, despite Mrs Bedwin's trust in Oliver, Mr. Brownlow is convinced of Oliver's guilt.

Check your progress:

1. How does Oliver Twist reach London and where does he find shelter?
2. Describe the games the boys play with Fagin.

The truth is that on the way to the shop, Oliver is caught by Nancy, who has been told by Fagin to find Oliver and bring him to his house. His clothes, the books and the money are taken away from him. He begs Fagin not to take Mr. Brownlow's things but no one listens. Fagin locks Oliver up, and leaves him alone so that he feels lonely and frightened. Oliver wants to run away but cannot find a way to get away. He sees Bill Sikes and Nancy, Dodger, Charley Bates, Toby and Fagin planning something. He finds himself forced to go with them on a burglary mission. Oliver's small size is used to get him inside a small window of a house. Oliver is determined not to do anything wrong but warn the people in the house about these criminals. But before he can do so, he is shot in the arm. Sikes and Toby Crackit pick him up and carry him outside the area of the house but leave him in a ditch close by and go back to London.

After spending a night in the ditch, Oliver manages to go to a door and rings the bell, but by the time someone opens the door he has fainted just outside the door. The owner, Mrs Maylie and her niece, Rose, are shocked to find the thief in this state and ask the servants, Giles and Brittles, to carry him to a room upstairs and call a doctor. They realise that he couldn't have been the thief and save him from the police. Dr. Losberne is a good man and helps Oliver to get better and more confident. He spends some pleasant days with them during which they all

develop a liking for Oliver and he for them. He also tells them about his earlier stay with Mr. Brownlow and expresses a wish to meet him. Dr. Losberne takes Oliver to London to meet Mr. Brownlow but they find out that Brownlow has left for West Indies a while back. Oliver feels sad at this news but feels happy in being away from the criminal gang. There is a Romantic angle with the arrival of Mrs Mylie's son Harry, who is in love with Rose. Oliver develops a warm bond with Harry too.

Check Your Progress:

1. Describe the incidence of the robbery.
2. Comment on Oliver's role in the incidents
3. Which new characters have been introduced in these chapters?

In the meantime, the plot is becoming more interesting when Old Sally, the nurse who had helped at the birth of Oliver, reappears at the workhouse where Mrs Corney is the matron. Sally confesses to the matron that Oliver's mother had given a gold locket and a ring to take care of the needs of Oliver, but she had kept it and pawned it. When she dies, Mrs Corney finds a ticket of a pawnbroker for some item in her hand. She keeps it without telling the others what Sally has revealed. She gets the locket and chain from the pawn shop. It so happens that Mr Bumble is interested in marrying Mrs Corney is a widow and well off financially.

The story returns to London and Fagin, who is very angry when he hears that Sikes and Barney have left Oliver behind. He rushes to a pub called, "The Three Cripples" to look for a man named Monks. With the entry of Monks the plot takes a new turn. Monks comes to meet Fagin at his house since he gets to know Fagin was looking for him. Nancy overhears a conversation between Fagin and Monks and realises that that Monks is somehow involved in Oliver's life. She learns that Monks was to pay Fagin for contriving to ruin Oliver. Fagin was to ensure that somehow, Oliver committed some crime so that he is forced to lead a criminal's life. Monks had been paying Fagin to keep Oliver with him and turn him into a criminal. She rushes to share her knowledge with Rose Mylie who she knows has taken Oliver to her home. Nancy tells Rose that she is part of the group of people who are behind Oliver's troubles. She admits that she was the one who had taken Oliver to Fagin when he was going to the book-stall on his errand for Mr. Brownlow. She tells Rose that these people are out to harm Oliver for some reason. She is very grateful for her kindness and tells her all about Monks devilish plot to harm Oliver. She tells her that Monks had told Fagin that Oliver was his half-brother and he hated him

because he could claim a share in his inheritance according to the will of his father. But Monks wants Oliver's identity to be hidden so that Monks himself can get hold of their family's fortune. Monks admits that if he were not afraid of punishment he would kill Oliver without thinking twice. He has been scheming with Fagin to get Oliver into trouble and even that day he had promised to pay Fagin if Oliver is found again. She promises to meet her on the London Bridge between eleven and midnight on a Sunday. Rose is very grateful for Nancy's help and worried for her. She offers to help Nancy get out of her sordid life. Nancy is overwhelmed by the kindness Rose is showing her but she refuses any help.

With the entry of Monks the plot nears a climax as his involvement in Oliver's life looks suspicious. In the following chapters, the plot moves towards some kind of recognition of the danger that Oliver may be facing. All the good people in his new life get together to save him from the bad. Since Mr. Brownlow's new address becomes known through the efforts of Oliver and Mr. Giles, Rose immediately takes Oliver there. Upon their arrival they also meet Mr Grimwig. Oliver has a happy reunion with Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Bedwin. Rose speaks to Brownlow alone sharing the information given by Nancy. Brownlow and Rose share the same with Mrs. Mylie, Dr. Losberne, Grimwig and Harry so that they are all able to discuss the situation and plan accordingly. They agree to spare Oliver the worry but decide to meet Nancy at the time and place suggested by her, if possible.

Nancy cannot meet Rose the next Sunday as Sikes is suspicious of her, but the Sunday after that she manages to get away because Sikes is away. She meets Rose and Mr. Brownlow, and when she describes Monks to them, he immediately understands who he is and his interest in Oliver. In the previous chapters Noah and Charlotte have reached London after stealing from Sowerberrys. They are now part of Fagin's gang. When Fagin finds Nancy going out at night he gets suspicious and wants to know what she's up to. So, he offers to pay Noah a pound to follow Nancy wherever she goes. At this meeting, Noah overhears everything and reports back to Fagin, who is so furious with Nancy that he tells Sikes about her. He says nothing about her loyalty and concern for her fellow criminals, especially Sikes, whom she doesn't want to betray or get into trouble. So, Sikes being a brute, starts beating up Nancy for doing something against his will when he reaches home. In a rage he kills her and runs away from his home and keeps trying to find some safe place to hide.

Check your progress:

1. Discuss the importance of Nancy's revelations to Oliver's friends.
2. Think about the people that Oliver has met in these chapters.

Monks reappears in Oliver's life through his connection with Mr Bumble. He meets Monks accidentally in a pub. Monks wants to know anything he can find out about Oliver, so Bumble is interested and when Monks promises him a lot of money in return for the information, he agrees to see what he can find out about the old woman who had helped at his birth. He remembers that Old Sally had told the matron, now his wife, something before dying. He asks her to reveal the details to Monks. They meet at a remote place near a river, and Mrs Bumble tells him Oliver's story and gives him the tokens of his mother. Inside the locket, he finds a wedding ring and two locks of hair. The name "Agnes" is engraved on the ring, along with a blank space for the surname. He drops all of them into the water so that no one may have any proof about Oliver's parentage.

While Monks is planning Oliver's ruin, Mr Brownlow is getting ready to catch him. He finds and captures Monks with the help of his men, and brings him to the Brownlow home. The mystery is resolved during this meeting. Monks's real name is Edward Leeford. Brownlow was a good friend of Monks's father, Mr. Leeford. Mr. Leeford was forced to marry a wealthy woman older than him by his family. The couple eventually separated but did not seek a formal divorce, and his wife and son Edward went to Paris. After sometime Mr. Leeford met Agnes Fleming, a retired naval officer's daughter, and they both fell in love with each other. They did not get married but Agnes became pregnant. It so happened that the family member who had forced Mr. Leeford, repented and left Mr. Leeford a fortune. Mr. Leeford had to go to Rome to claim his inheritance. Before that, he left a portrait of his beloved Agnes in Brownlow's care while he was away. Mr. Leeford's wife, took Edward with her to meet Leeford in Rome in order to take some share of his inheritance. Unfortunately, Mr. Leeford fell ill and died while in Rome. Brownlow knew for a certainty that Edward or Monks's mother burned Mr. Leeford's will, so that she could claim the fortune. Monks lived in the West Indies on this stolen fortune after his mother's death. Mr. Brownlow had gone to the West Indies to find Monks after Oliver was kidnapped, because he was intrigued by Oliver's resemblance to the portrait. Mr. Brownlow confronts Monks with the facts and forces him to confess and redeem himself by executing the will in Oliver's favour as desired by their father.

This is happening even as the criminals are being hunted and are caught by the authorities. Fagin and Noah are the first to be captured. The others are hiding in a dilapidated house in an area of London, near River Thames, called Jacob's Island. Sikes, Tony Crackit, Charley Bates, Kagsand MrsChitling are all there. When the police reach them, Sikes tries to get

on the roof with his rope in his hand. In his fear, confusion and guilt at murdering Nancy, he accidentally hangs himself. The others are taken away by the police.

Check your Progress:

1. How does Sikes die?
2. How do all the culprits get caught?

The last chapters of the novel tie up all the threads of the plot together to reveal the grand design. The good people come together to defeat the hypocrites and villains. In a reunion in Oliver's birthplace, Mr Brownlow and Oliver visit Mr Grimwig. Monks is also present and he reveals that when he and his mother had gone to Rome to meet his dying father, they had found a letter addressed to Agnes Fleming's mother and his will. In the will, Leeford has left a yearly income of eight hundred pounds to his son Edward and his wife. The will was in favour of the child that was to be born. If it were a girl, she would get her share unconditionally, but a boy would have to be an honest and upright person and neither dishonest nor a criminal. Monks and his mother had destroyed both the items and taken all the property without bothering about Mr Leeford's wishes. Rather, Monks's mother set out to take her revenge by first finding Agnes and then hounding her and her family.

It was Monks's mother who had caused the story about her affair and pregnancy to be known so that Agnes's father fled his hometown and changed his family's name. Agnes ran away to save her family from the shame of her condition, and her father died soon thereafter. His second daughter was very young and was taken in by a poor couple where she lived a tough life with them. Mrs. Maylie lived near this family and taking pity on the little girl she raised her as her niece. That child is Rose. Oliver is ecstatic to find that she is his aunt. Though he says that he prefers her as a sister. In such a short time, in that room, Oliver had found his whole family, where once he was a poor orphan.

In an interesting twist, the guilt of Mr. and Mrs. Bumble is also revealed by two old women who had overheard the conversation between Old Sally and Mrs Bumble as the Matron. They knew everything about the locket. Left with no defence, Mr and Mrs Bumble confess to their fault in concealing facts regarding Oliver's history. Mr. Brownlow makes sure that they are never allowed to be employed in such a position again. Harry gives up his political ambitions and vows to live as a poor clergyman so Rose happily agrees to marry him.

Dickens' melodrama is seen in the courtroom where Fagin is waiting to hear his sentence. The narrator focusses on "the helplessness of Fagin caught in the net of his crimes." Oliver and Mr. Bronslo visit Fagin in his cell on his last night before he is to be executed, and find him filled with terror at the thought of death and full of rage at being punished and is full of hate and desperation.

The final chapter brings to a close all the little unnarrated details. Rose and Harry get married, Mrs Mylie moves in with them and the three friends, Bronslo, Losberne and Grimwig shift near the rural church where Harry has joined as a priest.

Bronslo advises Oliver to share Leeford's property with Monks. Using his share, Monks travels to the New World, dies as a prisoner after losing his money and getting into bad company. Mr. Bronslo is able to adopt Oliver legally as his son. He takes great pains to ensure that Oliver is filled with all kinds of knowledge.

The Artful Dodger is the first to be punished, earlier in the novel. The other boys are in police custody. Fagin and Sikes are dead. But some get off and are able to live a reasonably decent life. Noah Claypole is pardoned because he testifies against Fagin. He and Charlotte settle into a life of bluff and fraud. This couple is shown to be naturally crooked. Charley changes his ways and begins his new life as a cattle-grazer. Mr and Mrs Bumble are reduced to poverty and misery, and finally became paupers in the same workhouse. Giles and Brittles remain in the service of the Mylie family.

The novel ends with the memory of Agnes Fleming, in a Dickensian mood of sentimental farewell to one who suffered so much due to her mistake.

Check your progress:

1. What is the story of Oliver's birth?
2. What is the narrator's attitude towards Agnes?

20.2.1 Analysis

The story is set in the 1830s in London and its surrounding countryside which remain unnamed. The plot is narrated by an unknown or anonymous narrator. This narrator is speaking on behalf of the author as well as all the characters. The narrator is sympathetic to the main

character and strongly critical and sarcastic with the figures who abuse their positions of responsibility. While dealing with the misfortunes of the gentle souls like Oliver, his mother Agnes and aunt Rose, and when describing the incidents around Nancy, the tone is mostly sentimental and shows anger against injustice.

The main action in the novel revolves around the conflict between the gentleness of Oliver by birth and the harshness of his social environment. He is raised in a poorhouse, sent to a workhouse and sold to an undertaker. Unable to take more humiliation he runs away to London with the hope of making his fortune but gets involved with a group of pickpockets, thieves and prostitutes. Oliver struggles against his situation, always resisting the immoral or wrong conduct of his associates. The novel creates a suspense around his birth, parentage and destiny. But chance plays a very important role in saving him time and again. The plot creates some mystery, conflicts and then twists around so that every misfortune takes Oliver closer to his real identity and finally enables him to rise above the poor and helpless conditions of the lower class. It is notable that Oliver is taken good care of by the lowest of the low in London, who are Fagin's group of petty thieves. Despite his innocent acceptance of Fagin's food, clothing and shelter he is repulsed by their crimes and remains aloof from them. In his many adventures, he is taken in by a well-to-do family of the Mylies but the gang of robbers and the villainous Monks keep searching for him and ultimately trace him to his new home.

The Fagin gang is also instrumental in uniting him with his family. The first victim of the pickpockets turns out to be Mr. Brownlow, who knows his mother's family. Nancy, the girl who forces him back into the Fagin headquarters, plays an important role in uncovering the plot of his half-brother, Edward Leeford/ Monks to stop Oliver from finding his real identity. It is Nancy who is able to reveal Monks's plans to Oliver's guardians. Mr. Brownlow gets the full story of Oliver's origins from Monks. But she has to pay with her life for this good deed, which is a kind of penance for her immoral life.

Finally, justice catches up and the plot moves swiftly towards handing out due punishment to Fagin, who is executed and Sikes dies accidentally by hanging. Nancy is a specially etched character who has got into a sinful way of life, but retains her innate goodness just like Oliver. But where Oliver is able to get away to a better future perhaps because he is blameless, Nancy has to die in order to redeem herself. But her death is also the beginning of the end of the gang, as if her sacrifice was necessary. Oliver and his new family live together in happiness, paying their respects to Oliver's erring mother, and forgiving Agnes Fleming for loving a married man.

The plot uses devices such as disguised or mistaken identities; hidden family relationships; surrogate families; Oliver's innocent face and his resemblance to a portrait. The device of sudden discoveries is used to move the plot towards the end that the author desires: the portrait in Mr. Brownlow's house, the locket that Old Sally has stolen, and Monks's pursuit of Oliver.

Dickens has used his masterly talent for retaining the interest of the readers. It is perhaps one of the few novels with the most elaborate chapter titles. These titles serve as synopses of the chapters. The plot is Episodic as it deals with different people and places. The journey motif is picaresque in the first few chapters when Oliver moves from one house to another and lives with different sets of people. This type of structure helps to introduce several characters and situations. The structure helps in increasing the scope for the representation of a large section of the English society.

The plot is also melodramatic and full of chance incidents and coincidences. He uses twists, suspense, irony, satire, humour and pathos which are key ingredients in Dickensian art of writing. The plot uses contrasting events, situations, characters and ideas to create the impression of the hypocrisy of people in positions of authority and their ruthless pursuit of wealth and power.

Just as Fagin and Sikes are ruthless in their pursuit of money, so Mr Fang and Mr Bumble are ruthless in the misuse of their positions of power. The pathos and sentimental tone is very Dickensian. But as always, the large canvas of life that Dickens succeeds in bringing to life, loses a coherence and tightness of plot construction. *Oliver Twist* is remarkable in that the seething sense of injustice felt by the author is woven with great skill in the plotting of the narrative and is transformed into a piece ironic humour. However, there remains a certain amount of rambling, particularly in the constant commentary by the omniscient narrator.

The novel has the Dickensian touch of lively narration. The novel served to focus public attention on the incredibly apathetic and inhuman manner in which paupers and orphans were treated in Dickens' time. The novel is the kind of art that is also based on reality and serves as a document recording some aspects of the social history of Victorian England.

20.2.2 Conclusion

At the time of novel's writing, Charles Dickens studied "The Poor Law" of 1834. His study (as a reporter) of the law builds up the backdrop and the prime motive of the novel, to divulge to the readers the mishappenings and the absolute horror of the middle class and poor citizens of London. The society that he wrote about in his novel, *Oliver Twist*, resulted from the

law and the cruelty often bestowed by the rich onto the poor for monetary gains. The law required people to get enrolled in workhouses and push to a daily limit of work for minimum wage, which eventually was breaking homes and hardly making ends meet. Dickens realized it was inconsiderate circumstances that led to poverty and the sickening of poor people.

Dickens showcases men and owners of the workhouses who were extremely cruel and operated on the belief that laziness was the cause of poverty. As per the law, only the people working in the government houses would receive assistance, although this turned out to be blatant exploitation. The ruthlessness of the officials and high-class people drained the poor physically, emotionally, and psychologically to the extent they believed that death would be the only kindly deliverance.

Mr. Bumble, Fagin, and Monks personify absolute greed in the novel. They act on their dispositions while maintaining a high standard of their certified morality. They are driven by greed and hurt the poor in the process. Fagin used to train children to pickpockets, although he never participated directly. He corrupts them to earn his living, and the children perish because of his ill work, all because they want bread and a living. Mr. Bumble is the epitome of hypocrisy and folly. He is a minor church official who has a grave misconception of the teachings of Christianity. He quickly devalues the essential virtue of Christ, compassion. He made the paupers suffer so much without a single ounce of mercy under his care. Monks, a wholly immoral and violent man, tries to put down Oliver ruthlessly.

Dickens, through these novels, tried to display the utter disgrace of society and the offenders of the Christian morality while putting on the robes of Christian philosophy. It is evident in the novel that Dickens researched profusely and did a remarkable job in showing a clear picture of the moral ethics of the society during the 1860s and 1870s. He has subtly yet strongly shown the demerits of the Poor Law and built his plot along the daily grind of life for the needy at the mercy of administrative violence. Art imitates life so that readers must have sympathized at every point and not just after the end of the novel.

Oliver Twist took up the cudgels for the poor and framed a powerful narrative that teaches us that having any power over others needs to be used in the service of the other, not self. Power, when compared with empathy, shall do true wonders. Despite the bleakness of the age, there is also an air of optimism with which Dickens creates his world. Points of conflict, climax and revelation are clearly marked in the plot. In fact, the plot unfolds the theme of “home-away-home” commonly used in children’s literature along with its resolution in a happy

ending. Dickens's *Oliver Twist* stands as one of the classic literary pieces and timeless perfection in print.

20.3 Learning Outcomes

It is expected that upon the completion of this unit, students are able to recall the events and incidents that have been presented in the plot of the novel. The story element is simple, *Oliver Twist* is the story of an orphan who becomes a victim of the policies of the Government that are based on Utilitarianism. The hypocrisy and greed of a society that considers itself superior and more morally upright than the poor, is shown through the plot. The complex presentation of these themes within the plot of the novel through a series of happenings produce the horror of this false morality in the reader and a sense of pity and fear for the wasted lives of infants, children and adults under the guise of charity. They should be able to analyse how any occurrence in the plot is related to the subsequent actions of the characters, and how the chain of events is designed to make the public sensitive to the inhuman conditions of the workhouses that came up in the reforms of 1834.

20.4 Glossary

At the gallows: to wait to be hanged.

Beadle: a minor church official.

Board: paid accommodation with meals.

Dilapidated: in a very neglected condition

Errand: a task that involves taking or bringing some item for someone.

Juvenile: young people

Pawn: to exchange an item for money that can be taken back after the repayment of the amount and interest within a certain time.

Parish: a designated area under one priest with its own church, constituting a kind of local government.

Pick oakum: To separate strands of old rope is called "picking," and the new threads are called oakum.

Unpropitious: not favourable or advantageous.

20.5 Sample Questions

20.5.1 Objective Questions:

A. Read the sentence and choose an appropriate option:

1. What does Oliver's mother do before dying?
 - (a) She tells her story.
 - (b) She cries in pain.
 - (c) She kisses Oliver.
 - (d) She tells her name.

2. Who takes care of Oliver after his mother dies?
 - (a) His father.
 - (b) A foster care centre.
 - (c) The nurse.
 - (d) His aunt.

3. What did Agnes Fleming give to Old Sally before dying?
 - (a) A letter
 - (b) A shilling
 - (c) A gold locket and chain
 - (d) A ring

4. Where do Oliver and Fagin meet for the last time??
 - (a) At Mr. Fang's office

- (b) In the law courts
- (c) In his prison cell
- (d) In Jacob's Island

5. Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* as a criticism of which law?

- (a) The Marriage Act
- (b) Gilbert's Act
- (c) Death sentence
- (d) The Poor Law of 1834

B. Read the following statements. State if they are True or False.

1. Oliver Twist is given his name by his mother.

- (a) True
- (b) False

2. Sally is the name of the nurse who helped at Oliver's birth.

- (a) True
- (b) False

3. Nancy is killed by the Artful Dodger

- (a) True
- (b) False

4. Rose Maylie is Oliver Twist's mother:

(a) True

(b) False

5. The novel ends with remembrance of Agnes Fleming.

(a) True

(b) False

20.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Where and in what circumstances is Oliver Twist born?
2. Write a short note on the conditions in the juvenile home where Oliver is first taken.
3. Why does Oliver run away from the village?
4. Explain in brief the incident in which Oliver is shot.
5. How does Mr Bronslo meet Oliver again?

20.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the life of the people who work for Fagin.
2. Elaborate on the role of chance in Oliver's life.
3. Write a detailed summary of the story of *Oliver Twist* as the victim of circumstances.

20.6 Suggested Readings:

1. Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*.
2. Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*.
3. Leavis, F.R., and Q.D. Leavis. *Dickens the Novelist*. New York: Pantheon, 1971.
4. Long, William J. *English Literature*. AITBS Publishers, 2016.
5. Reader, WJ. *Victorian England*. 1964

6. Richardson, Ruth. "Oliver Twist and the Workhouse." The British Library, The British Library.

7. Twain, Mark. *Tom Sawyer*.

8. Twain, Mark. *Huckleberry Finn*.

9. Wilson, Angus. *The World of Charles Dickens*. London: Secker and Warburg; New York: Viking, 1970.



Unit-21: Themes in Oliver Twist

Structure

21.0 Introduction

21.1 Objectives

21.2 Overview of the Novel

21.2.1 Theme of Child Abuse and Exploitation

21.2.2 Theme of Poverty

21.2.3 Theme of Good versus Evil

21.2.4 Theme of Institutional Cruelty

21.2.5 Theme of City versus Countryside

21.2.6 Theme of Love and Affection

21.2.7 Theme of Kinship and Friendship

21.2.8 Theme of Criminality

21.2.9 Theme of Disguised and Mistaken Identities

21.2.10 Theme of Class and Fate

21.3 Learning Outcomes

21.4 Glossary/Keywords

21.5 Sample Questions

21.6 Suggested Readings

21.0 Introduction

In this unit you will be introduced to Dickens second novel *Oliver Twist* published in the year 1837. It was published serially in episodic form in Bentley's Magazine with subtitle *The Parish Boy's Progress*. This title alludes to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* as well as 18th century series *A Rake's Progress* and *A Harlot's Progress* by William Hogarth. *Oliver Twist* is an early example of social novel where Dickens satirizes the hypocrisies prevalent in Victorian society. Dickens intended to write this novel in order to highlight the hardships faced by poor people in England due to New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. In this unit you will get an opportunity to read about the themes used by Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. You will note that this novel mainly focuses on the issues and the problems related to poor people during Industrial Revolution in Victorian England.

21.1 Objectives

This unit shall cover the following objectives:

- To get knowledge about historical background of Victorian Age.
- To get an idea of background of *Oliver Twist*.
- To summarize the context of the novel.
- To understand the significance of the novel with the time period it is written.
- To explore the various themes of the novel.

21.2 Overview of the Novel

The setting of the novel is in 19th century Victorian England. In this novel Dickens gives background information of Victorian England including issues related to Industrialization and New Poor Law. The novel reflects the problems faced by poor people at that time. Dickens throws light on the prevalent social issues like child labour and abuse and exploitation of poor. The poor were not given opportunity to prosper. Dickens also throws light on the patriarchal side of the society where women were treated like an object and were oppressed. The story revolves around the titular character Oliver Twist. Oliver, an orphan boy since birth has to face many hardships and gets unfair treatment in the society. Oliver is born in a workhouse and his mother dies after giving birth to him. He is sent to parochial orphanage where he along with other orphans had to suffer terribly. The orphanage is located around 70 miles from London where Oliver along with other orphans have to survive with too little food. The poor children and orphans were sent to workhouses as child labor was very common at that time. The events in the story are based on Dickens own life. The novel catches attention of the people as it deals with many social evils of the time. Oliver's life is miserable in workhouse and his sufferings represent the suffering of all poor people in society. When Oliver was of nine years of age he was sold as an apprentice to Mr Sowerberry by Mr Bumble. Due to repeated mistreatment and suffering Oliver escapes from there and fled to London where he meets Artful Dodger who is a member of gang of pickpockets led by Fagin. Oliver becomes part of this gang. On one occasion when the boys take handkerchief from an elderly man Mr Brownlow, Oliver gets confused and runs away in fear. The elderly man mistakes Oliver as guilty and gets him arrested. However, when he learned more about Oliver he offers to take care of him at his home. Oliver assumes that he has got rid of Fagin and his pickpockets but Nancy who is mistress of one of Fagin's men Bill Skies takes Oliver back to Fagin from Mr Brownlow. Oliver is then taken by the family (the Maylies)

whom he attempted to rob. The Maylies reunite Oliver with Mr Brownlow and Oliver is entitled to large fortune that he receives. Though he goes through different ordeals but eventually finds a good home and happiness. Dickens portrays the life of criminals and highlights the cruel treatment with poor children in Victorian England. Dickens satirizes the exploitation of children by rich people and their recruitment as criminals. It is a social protest against the condition of children and women.

Dickens in this novel throws light on prevalent social issues. His intention in writing this novel was to show the terrible condition of workhouses and to satirize the poor laws. The laws made by the government favored rich people and exploited poor. The rich became richer and the poor remain miserable. It pictures the negative effect of Industrialization on poor people. It highlights how difficult it was for poor to survive in Victorian England. Dickens mixes realism and satire in this novel. The story passes through different ends but ends on a happy note. *Oliver Twist* is a story with many interrelated themes. The theme of poverty is at the center of the novel. This poverty gives rise to cruelty, crime, child exploitation and abuse.

21.2.1 Theme of Child Abuse and Exploitation:

Dickens tried to relieve his lost childhood through different characters in his novels. He had sympathy for children and was concerned about their condition in contemporary society. Through his works he focused on the responsibility towards children. The situation in society has direct influence on its members. In the 19th century the industrialization had negative impact on the poor children. It gave rise to many workhouses and mills. The increase in mills and workhouses pushed the children to work. The ratio of children depends on number of parents working in workhouses because the owners pushed parents to bring their children with them for work. *Oliver twist* is a book of child abuse. The children in the novel face inequality like prejudice, discrimination and social injustice. There are about twenty to thirty children who worked at parish workhouse. This novel mainly focuses on the story of the orphan who lives in 19th Century Victorian London in the era of existence of child labour. Oliver experiences a very harsh life. Child labour was prevalent in Victorian London that snatched childhood from children. Dickens sympathy for the children makes him to emphasize the responsibility towards children in his works. *Oliver Twist* mainly deals with the issues of child abuse and the negative influence of the workhouses on poor children is exposed. Dickens wrote this novel as a reaction against Poor Amendment Act of 1834 due to which poor children were used for labour. He stresses on the abuse of poor children and orphans in parochial workhouses due to poor laws. It is seen at the very beginning when Mr Bumble picks up Oliver from the village to the workhouse. On the way Oliver is treated very badly and is asked to remain silent without

enquiring where to go and to follow him. This is just the beginning of harsh treatment with Oliver when he moves from parish authorities to the workhouse. These poor children were paid in the form of food and boarding. The condition of these children is very pathetic. Dickens mentions, "...where would be injury and injustice, the suffering, misery, cruelty and wrong that each day's life bring with it." (268). Child labor was dreadful factor of poverty. In order to save themselves from being homeless most of the families prefer their children to work. These children at the age of four or five start to work in factories and mills for long hours and at the appropriate age they are apprenticed. However, these children are apprenticed into the profession like chimney sweeping which may cause them early death. The children in the novel including Oliver are exploited with unpaid work. Oliver spends nine years of his life in the workhouse where he along with other children works hard but is not paid. Oliver along with other children is given little food and treated very rudely. Dickens mentions, "with a corn- factor to supply periodically small quantities of oat-meal and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and a half of a roll on sundays" (14), is the food given to poor children. Once when Oliver asks for more oatmeal he gets a punishment of imprisonment in a solitary room for a week. The young child like Oliver does not deserve to face the torture and work at workhouses. They had to live a hard life due to which many of them died young. Oliver's friend Dick hopes to die early so that he can go to heaven and "see kind faces that I never saw when I am awake". Dickens uses these words to expose that these poor children prefer to die young than to live life of abuse.

There are different forms of child abuse in the novel- domestic form, forced labour and slavery and child trafficking. Oliver faces domestic abuse when he lives in the workhouse where he is asked by one of the authorities to pick Oakum at six o' clock. He says "so you' II begin to pick Oakum at six o' clock" (Dickens 15). Oliver has to start his work at 6 o'clock that is why he gets no chance to attend school. This condition does not let Oliver to grow better than he could have. Thus Oliver in his young age has to spend several hours in domestic work. He starts working from six o' clock in the morning and does not get time to attend school. Besides doing domestic work Oliver is used for Industrial work. Oliver is very weak because he did not get proper diet and has to work for long hours. He is employed as a chimney sweeper by old gentleman who says him "...tomorrow morning you must up to chimney sweeping"(24) to which Oliver replies in positive and Mr Bumble also convinced old gentleman that Oliver is fond of this job. Oliver was offered to MrSowerberry by Mr Bumble to work as a servant in the shop of MrSowerberry. "...five pounds and Oliver Twist was offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business or calling" (17). Oliver lived as a slave and followed what

Mr Sowerberry says him. He was given dog's food and sleeps under counter among coffins. Oliver keeps working for his master without getting any salary. In the same way Dodger was employed as a pickpocket by Mr Fagin. Every day Dodger has to give his stolen money to Fagin and he was not given food if he does not steal anything. The children are also exploited in the form of forced criminal. Oliver meets Jack Dawkins in London who introduces Oliver to Fagin. Fagin is the head of the criminal gang who wants Oliver to be thief and teaches him to put pocket- handkerchiefs. Young children who work for Fagin commit crime. They steal and give their profit to Fagin. Dickens portrayal of these child pickpockets highlights how pitiful the life of these poor and orphan children is.

Dickens specifically deals with terrible effects of poverty on the children's life that gives rise to child abuse and exploitation. The poor children face discrimination and social inequality in the novel. They are exploited by the people who have money.

21.2.2 Theme of Poverty:

Oliver Twist gives a detailed account of horrible fates that poor people face. This novel reflects the lives of poor people who are suffering. Poverty is one of the main themes of the novel. The problem of poverty became one of the serious issues in 19th century England and that is the reason Dickens chose poverty as one of the main themes in majority of his novels. Poverty gives rise to crime which completely dehumanizes society. This novel particularly deals with how poor people were affected by the law of 1834 that created workhouses which leads to oppression of poor. Dickens gives real picture of poverty and how poor people are suffering. Poverty has degrading effects and worst consequences on society. Poverty leads to oppression and makes condition of poor terrible and *Oliver Twist* reflects the terrible effects of poverty on the individual's life. It deals with the terrible impact of poverty on Oliver's life and how poverty made his life miserable. This is shown when Oliver asks for more supper in chapter two and reaction of workhouse staff for Oliver's request. Dickens mentions, "For a week after the commission of the impious and profane offence of asking for more, Oliver remained a close prisoner in the dark and solitary room" (17). The master hits Oliver for asking more and through this Dickens satirizes his contemporaries who dehumanize the poor instead of educating them. The poor people were treated worst in a society. "Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months; at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger...that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him" (12). Dickens here highlights the condition of the poor who are hungry and dying in starvation.

Poverty gives rise to crime and violence in the novel. The poor children commit crime in order to escape from hunger. Poverty corrupts innocent characters like Oliver and Nancy and leads to criminality. Oliver is driven to theft and Nancy to prostitution only due to poverty. Nancy feels helpless and isolated and no one understands her feelings. Dickens mentions, “Bleak, dark and piercing cold, it was a night for the well housed and fed to draw round the bright fire and thank God they were at home; and for the homeless starving wretch to lay him down and die” (165). Through these lines Dickens brings to his readers the real condition of poor people who are in deplorable and bad condition. They are so poor that they can’t even fulfill basic needs of having a proper house. Dickens presents the world of poverty in a realistic manner.

21.2.3 Theme of Good versus Evil:

The fight between good and evil is prevalent from earlier times. Throughout this novel there is a battle between good and evil where evil continuously trying to exploit the good but at the end good triumphs over evil. There are good characters that represent goodness and corrupt characters that represent evil. Oliver represents good in contrast to his friend Fagin and the group of thieves who represent evil. Fagin and the thieves have some good qualities but most of the time they are seen committing crime. All the evil characters meet same fate. Fagin and the Skies die due to their crime. Oliver’s half-brother Monks represents evil. Monks want to ruin the life of Oliver so that he can keep the fortune that he illegally inherited from their father. Eventually, Oliver came to know the truth and gets his fortune while as Monks dies in another country. In contrast to these evil characters, the good characters like Oliver and Rose are represented as pure, virtuous and innocent. Both are kindhearted, affectionate and helpful to those who are in need. Oliver is abused throughout his life and is treated unfairly but he is eventually vindicated.

The characters of Nancy and Charles also represent good versus evil. Nancy hesitates to leave her life of crime but Charles who initially works as thief reforms himself and earns honest living. All the good characters in the novel especially Oliver faces many hardships and challenges. However, they remain true to themselves due to which they are able to triumph over darkness. Oliver grows in corrupt surroundings and evil companions but his purity remains stable. The good characters in the novel earn their rewards but Dickens highlights that the society in which they are living is unjust. *Oliver Twist* is a story about journey of a good person in a world of darkness, but there is a hope that goodness outcasts the evil and the evil people gets punished. In this novel there is a continuous struggle of good to overpower evil.

21.2.4 Theme of Institutional Cruelty:

Oliver Twist is the second novel by Charles Dickens where various societal issues have been explored by Dickens that depicts the realistic condition of England at that time. With the increase in poverty the workhouses run by parishes spread all over England. Dickens critiques the Victorian workhouses which run according to a regime of prolonged hunger, physical punishment, hypocrisy and humiliation. Although these workhouses were established to give relief to poor but it made their condition horrible. Instead of providing relief to poor, they abused them and made their life miserable. Dickens main aim in writing this novel was to draw attention of people towards deplorable condition of paupers. Dickens wrote this novel as a protest against Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which represents the cruelty of government against poor and helpless people. The poor people suffer due to poor law of 1834. Under this law the poor and orphans are placed in the workhouses where they are exploited and even deprived of their basic needs of life. These poor people have to live like prisoners in the workhouses. The cruelty of these institutions and government towards poor people is one of the prominent themes of *Oliver Twist*, and that makes it a social novel. Dickens criticizes the system of workhouses which gives rise to crimes. The people in the workhouses had to suffer and were treated as prisoners. Dickens writes;

the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be ‘farmed’ or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some thirty miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food, or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female who received the culprits at and for the consideration of seven pence-halfpenny per small head per week.(21)

Dickens deliberately uses these words to show how poor people worked hard in these institutions but were not paid. This is the reason poor remained poor and rich became richer. Dickens satirizes the cruelty of government institutions towards people but the cruelty of these institutions is not separated from the cruelty of people. In these workhouses the poor and orphan children had to work hard for long hours and they were not given proper food. The result was that these children grew up weak. Oliver has grown up as a weak because he did not eat anything. He was very dirty and people stared at his condition. Dickens states, “...and the people began passing to and from. Some few stopped to gaze at Oliver for a moment or two, or turned round to stare at him as they hurried by; but none relieved him” (65). Here Dickens emphasizes how people used to stare at Oliver because he was weak but nobody helps him. The owners of the workhouses were so cruel that they did not hesitate to inflict violence upon children. They

punished the children very harshly if they disobey in any matter which is evident from the scene when Oliver was punished for asking more food. Dickens in this novel presents dark and grim condition of institutions in England. He exposes the cruelty of these institutions that have given rise to crimes in England. Due to the criminal laws the paupers had no other option but to live a life of exploitation in these institutions.

21.2.5 Theme of City versus Countryside:

The novel takes place in both locations- city as well as countryside. Outside London everything is country. For Dickens country side is place for peace and warmth but city is crowd and disturbance. In the novel both city and countryside have symbolic meaning and stand opposite to each other. The city is dirty and corrupt but the country is pure and clear. Although Oliver escaped to London to find peace there but he is dragged into criminality. Oliver when living in city is forced into immorality but in country he gets peace and happiness and recovers his health. Dickens uses negative language while describing city but in countryside even poor are described as clean. Dickens idealizes the countryside. All the injustice and inequality suffered by poor occurs in cities like London or the city where Oliver is born. City is symbolic of impurity and countryside is symbolic of purity.

Dickens asserts that the people who have spent their entire life in cities find peace and happiness in countryside at the end. At the end Oliver settles with his family in the countryside giving happy ending to the novel. The countryside provides serenity that is not found in city.

21.2.6 Theme of Love and Affection:

Love is an emotion of affection, compassion and interest. Love inherits a compassion and kindness. In the novel the feeling of love and affection is described when Agnes gives birth to her son Oliver while risking her life. Dickens writes, “The pale face of a young woman was raised feebly from the pillow; and the faint voice imperfectly articulated the words, Let me see the child and die” (4). This quote depicts the love of a mother towards her son who only wants to see her child once before she dies. Harry Maylie loves his sister Rose Maylie who rejects him. Rose rejects her brother due to her bad and embarrassed past. Harry always tries to convince her but fails. He says her;

there is no pursuit more worthy of me, more worthy of the highest nature that exists, than the struggle to win such a heart as yours...for years- I have loved you, hoping to win my way to fame, and then come proudly home and tell you it had been pursued only for you to share; thinking in my day dreams, how I would re-mind you in that happy moment, of the many silent tokens I had given of a boy's attachment (228).

It describes the love and devotion from Harry towards Rose.

21.2.7 Theme of Kinship and Relationship:

It forms another significant theme of the novel. There are two types of relationships found in the novel. First it is formed with real and is lawful and the second relationship is formed with outlaws. Oliver is an orphan who is claimed by two families. Oliver has different relationship with different people like Mrs Mann, Mr Bumble, MrSowerberry, Nancy, Noah, Dodger, Fagin etc. Here we find man-man relationship, man-woman relationship, master-servant relationship, boy- girl relationship etc. The relationship between Oliver and Mrs Mann is important in the novel. After the death of his mother, Oliver was brought under the care of Mrs Mann in orphan's home. Mrs Mann was paid for Oliver's nourishment. Although she is a motherly figure to Oliver but she is a greedy woman who has no sympathy for Oliver. The amount of money she used to get from Parish authorities for maintenance of Oliver was not all used for him. Oliver is not only claimed by two guardians (Brownlow and Rose Maylie) who have right to claim over him but he is also claimed by community of thieves. Fagin and his group of thieves claim for Oliver to increase the number of people in his gang and for personal benefits. The familial values are illustrated by Dickens, "...the young lady would sit down to the piano and play some pleasant air, or sing...and Oliver would sit by one of the windows, listening to the sweet music, in a perfect rapture." (208). This reflects the family atmosphere created in Maylie's home. There is no distinction between rich and poor. They are happy together. There are different thieves in the group, and J. Miller mentions about the relationship of thieves;

The true relation of the thieves to one another is given not by the image of mutually loyal group crouching around their single candle in an underground room, but by the recurrent motif of spying. Fagin himself spies on Oliver and one other members of his gang; Nancy himself is spied on by Fagin's representative. Her betrayal of the thieves is thus discovered and her death brought about. And Oliver is spied on by Fagin and Monks as he dwells in what he assumes to be the total security of MrsMaylie's country home". (50)

Bates and Nancy represent loyalty. When Skies kills Nancy, a member of his own gang, he is denied by his own companions. Rose Maylie's attachment towards Oliver and latter's love and concern for her reflects affection needed by every human being. Mr Brownlow becomes fatherly figure for Oliver under whose care Oliver never deviates from the goodness which is inherent in him. In contrast, Monks who is actually Oliver's half-brother becomes his enemy and plots against him to destroy him and to become sole heir of Leeford's property.

21.2.8 Theme of Criminality:

Crime was common in London streets in Victorian era when Dickens was writing. Writers writing about crime were popular. Dickens chooses crime as one of the theme for his

novels filled with characters of murderers, prostitutes, pickpockets and presents it in a realistic manner, thereby horrifying the readers. In the preface to 1841 edition Dickens states;

It is, it seems, a very coarse and shocking circumstances, that some of the characters in these pages are chosen from most criminal and degraded of London's population; that Sikes is a thief, and Fagin a receiver of stolen goods; that the boys are pickpockets, and the girl is a prostitute...It appeared to me...to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid poverty of their lives; to show them as they really are, for ever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great, black, ghastly gallows closing up their prospect, turn them where they may; it appeared to me that to do this, would be to attempt a something which was greatly needed, and which would be service to society. And therefore I did it as I best could.

Dickens writes about crimes and the techniques used by young pick pockets in the streets to pick wallets. The Industrial revolution made rich more richer and poor more poor. Life was very horrible for poor people and it resulted in crimes. Many people chose to be thieves or to work in workhouses. The rise in poverty directly led to increase in crimes. It gave rise to murders, violence and terrible imprisonment. These people commit crime for their livelihood and to survive. Dickens intends to show that criminals are not born as criminals rather driven into crime.

Dickens in this novel highlights how criminals actually lived. Crime is not limited to lower classes only but the characters like Monks and Mr and Mrs Bumble also excess all levels of criminality. Fagin and his gang take thievery as a delightful game. After sometime they become habituated to this crime and cannot think about their without it. Dickens states; "What a fine thing capital punishment is! Dead men never repent; dead men never bring awkward stories to light. The prospect of the gallows too makes them hardy and bold. Ah, it's a fine thing for the trade! Five of them strung up in a row, and none left to play booty or turn white-livered" (9). These lines are spoken by Fagin teaching young children pickpocketing. In order to escape hunger, the poor children choose crime. Nancy is an unfortunate woman who falls into evil hands of Fagin due to her poverty. She is always haunted by the guilt of her criminal world. Nancy is a prostitute but Dickens portrays her as a victim. Dickens portrays that some criminals are forced into crime rather than born as criminals. These criminals are innocent victims who are driven into criminal world due to poverty. Fagin is depicted as devil in the novel and Skies is the villain who enjoys committing crime. Through the character of Skies, Dickens suggests that there are some dangerous criminal in the world. Skies and Fagin are natural criminals who have crime inherited in them. Nancy and Artful Dodger learn crime. Dodger is partner in crime not out

of choice but out of ignorance. *Oliver Twist* depicts the danger and excitement filled in the criminal world. Through different characters it explores what kind of people commit crimes and what kind of crimes are committed.

21.2.9 Theme of Disguised and Mistaken Identities:

This novel deals with mistaken identities. Many characters don't know who their parents are and some don't even know where their parents are. A person's name is his basic identity. Oliver's name is imposed upon him by Mr Bumble. His name is chosen randomly rather than inherited from his father. Mr Bumble always chooses the names of orphans randomly. Oliver's name is thus reflection of his status as another boy from orphans. Oliver has different identities in the world. The story of *Oliver Twist* revolves around mistaken identities imposed upon Oliver by other characters of the novel for their own benefits. Mr Bumble and the workhouse officials portrayed Oliver as ungrateful and indisciplined pauper. Monks also try his best to hide the real identity of Oliver for his own benefits so that he can claim over the inheritance of Oliver. Nancy pretends to be sister of Oliver in order to bring him back to Fagin. The parish world and criminal world of Fagin either deny Oliver's true identity or try to give him the new one.

Dickens has made the use of clothing as a symbol for identity of a person. When Oliver is enclosed in a blanket his identity is anonymous, but when he put some ragged clothes he becomes a parish child and when Mr Brownlow gives him suit to wear he receives a new identity. The young thieves who work for Fagin are dressed in a poor way and described as dirty. Dodger wears a long coat that is too big for young man but it matches his manners. Fagin described as "villainous looking" and wearing greasy clothes when he first met Oliver. When Sikes is first introduced, he is wearing soiled clothes with handkerchief around his neck. All the members of this gang look like underworld thieves.

21.2.10 Theme of Class and Fate:

Dickens highlights that the socio-economic circumstances into which one is born determines one's fate. When one is born as an orphan or poor, sets particular environment and options for children in Victorian England. In the novel Oliver and Rose suffer because of their identity as orphans. Oliver never gets love and affection from anyone until he meets Mrs Bedwin who nurses him at Brownlow's house. The society regards poor and orphan children as a burden. Oliver luckily falls into the hands of two loving families who take care of him. However the other poor and orphan children are not fortunate. The lives of children like Jack, Charles and young prostitutes like Nancy suggest that poor leads on a dangerous trajectory. Meanwhile, the middle class people who are neither rich nor poor look down upon poor because they want to feel superior to someone. Mr Bumble is an example of such type of people who abuse and

oppress paupers. On the other hand, Dickens depicts the rich prosperous characters who feel pity on Oliver and Rose and welcome them into their families.

Oliver may not have met Fagin and Sikes, if he would not have been shot during robbery. Fate changes Oliver's story completely. Oliver is lucky in this matter and is an example of good defeating evil.

21.3 Learning Outcomes

After going through this unit, you have succeeded in understanding the historical background of Victorian England and how Dickens reflects it in his writings. Although *Oliver Twist* is a book of child abuse but at the same time it reflects various social and political issues of his time. The novel projects the various classes of England and how social division affects the people and makes their life terrible. It highlights how Industrial Revolution led to the exploitation of poor children in England. The failure of Poor Law Act of 1834 is clearly reflected. Dickens not only exposes the realities of Victorian Society but also conveys a message, about the abolition of child labour altogether.

21.4 Glossary

Industrialization: the development of industries in a country or region on a wide scale.

Revolution: a changeover in use or preference especially in technology.

New Poor Law: The poor law amendment Act 1834 was an Act of the parliament of the United Kingdom passed by the Whig government of Earl Grey.

Alludes: to make indirect reference.

Child Labor: It is the employment of a child in an industry or business and is violation of basic rights of children.

Exploitation: the action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work.

Patriarchy: it is a social system in which men holds primary position in society and dominates women.

Protest: a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.

Oppressed: it is the feeling of being heavily burdened, mentally as well as physically.

Orphanage: a home or residential institution for the children whose parents are dead.

Apprentice: it means to agree for some work for a fixed period at lower wages.

Satirize: it means to attack or ridicule someone or something.

Contemporary: it means belonging to a same period or stated period in the past.

Historical: belonging to the past or based on history.

Imprisonment: the state of being physically confined in an institutional setting such as prison.

Parochial: it means related to a church parish.

Trafficking: it is the act of selling or buying people illegally and making money from work they are forced to do.

Pickpocket: a person who steals from people's pockets.

Juvenile: an individual who is under an age fixed by law (as 18 years).

Oakum: it is a loose fiber obtained by unraveling old rope and treated as with tar, used as a caulking material.

Coffin: it is a long narrow box typically made of wood in which a dead body is carried, buried or cremated.

Countryside: it means the land and scenery of rural areas.

Disguised: it means to change one's appearance in order to hide one's identity and remain unrecognizable.

21.5 Sample Questions

21.5.1 Objective type/Fill in the Blanks:

1. What is the subtitle of the novel *Oliver Twist*? _____
2. The novel *Oliver Twist* was published serially in episodic form in -----Magazine.
3. The subtitle of the novel *Oliver Twist* alludes to John Bunyan's-----.
4. Dickens in this novel satirizes the New Poor Amendment Act of:
(a) 1830. (b) 1832. (c) 1834. (d) 1836.
5. Whose mother dies while giving him birth?
(a) Oliver's. (b) Bumble. (c) Skies. (d) Fagin.
6. In the preface of which edition of this novel, Dickens discusses about theme of criminality in the novel?
(a) 1841. (b) 1843. (c) 1845. (d) 1840.
7. Who is the leader of gang of thieves?
8. Oliver was offered to MrSowerberry by Mr Bumble to work as a servant in an amount of -----pounds.
9. When was *Oliver Twist* published?

10. Which character in the novel is forced into prostitution due to poverty?

21.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How does the novel depict the condition of Victorian England?
2. Discuss Oliver Twist as a Social Novel?
3. How can be the child abuse and exploitation considered as main theme of the novel?
4. How is the relationship between different characters depicted in the novel?
5. How is countryside idealized by Charles Dickens?

21.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. How is Child Labour displayed in Oliver Twist?
2. Discuss the theme of poverty as reflected by Dickens?
3. How is the novel Oliver Twist connected to world of crime?

21.6 Suggested Readings

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Unit-22: Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* –Characterization

Structure

22.0 Introduction

22.1 Objectives

22.2. Dickens' Art of Characterization in *Oliver Twist*

22.2.1 Oliver Twist

22.2.2 Fagin

22.2.3 Nancy

22.2.4 Monks

22.2.5 Bill Sikes

22.2.6 Mr. Brownlow

22.2.7 Mrs. Rose Maylie

22.2.8 Minor Characters

22.3 Learning Outcomes

22.4 Glossary

22.5 Sample Questions

22.6 Suggested Readings

22.0 Introduction

This unit tries to make the readers familiar with the art of characterization with especial reference to Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. It briefly throws light on how the characters are categorized and how Dickens used his skills of creating his characters in *Oliver Twist*. It discusses in details some of the major characters and throws light on the minor characters as they appear in the novel.

22.1 Objectives

The unit has been designed to fulfil the following objectives:

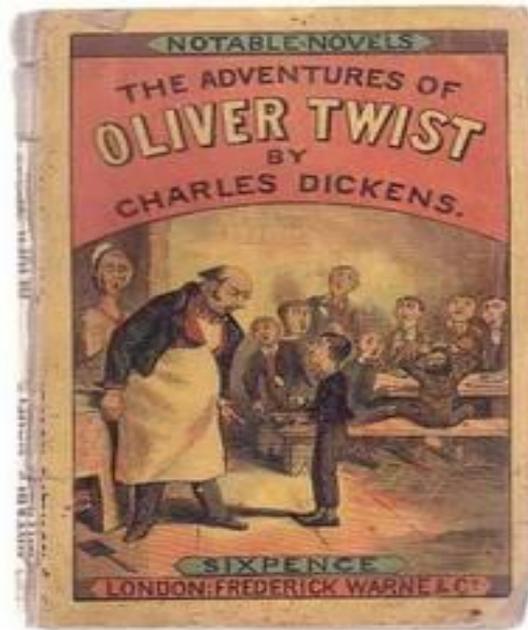
- Understand Charles Dickens' art of characterization
- Exploring the portrayal of various characters in *Oliver Twist*
- Trying to connect the fictional characters with real social conditions
- Understanding the values the characters represent

22.2 Dickens' Art of Characterization in *Oliver Twist*

In any conventional narrative, novel or short-story, “characters” become one of the most important aspect along with “plot”. There is a traditional approach or “Epic characterization” which divides the characters into good and evil, virtuous and damned, white and black. This sort of characterization is based on extremes making a person hero or a villain. In the literary narrative this characterization distinguishes a protagonist and an antagonist. Protagonist is the central character and antagonist may be seen as a villain or a character marked by contrasting ideas to a protagonist. Therefore, the term “hero” in the novel is now replaced by the term protagonist. As Aristotle says in *Poetics*, “plot is the soul”, and characters are the representations of moral values. The characters represent some value, opinion, ideology, position, thought, idea or emotion in a narrative. Aristotle has also developed the idea of “Grey character” in defining “Tragic Hero” who is “neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad.” He is otherwise good but only with one flaw or “hamartia” (“tragic-error”).

In the *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster describes two types of characters: Round and Flat. “Round characters” are those who evolve during the course of the novel. They keep on developing and changing as they come across various events. On the other hand, “Flat characters” are those who are limited in their approach and represent single idea or emotion. They do not develop along the course of the novel. They remain unchanged more or less.

Charles Dickens’s art of characterization is marked by these approaches. George Bernard Shaw, the famous dramatist, said that his purpose is not to distinguish the characters as black or white but to create grey ones. The idea of creating “Grey characters” was to portray life-like characters. These characters appear as real human beings, as real people with real life-like problems. This is how Dickens created his characters from the ordinary and everyday life-experience in Victorian Society of London. In fact, because of the spirit of Dickens, G. B. Shaw compared Marx and Dickens thus: “The difference between Marx and Dickens was that Marx knew he was a revolutionist whilst Dickens had not the faintest suspicion of that part of his calling.” Dickens gave voices to the characters who were exploited in the system marked by poverty, discrimination, malnutrition, and hunger. In this context, Arthur-Compton Rickett describes the humanitarian intention and spirit of social reform found in Dickens’ novels. His characters are vividly drawn with sense of humour, satire and pathos. He locates his characters in the society driven by class-consciousness, which has double-standards, known for its “Victorian Paradox” and “Victorian Temperament”. His characters attempt to challenge the established order and thrive in the most miserable conditions of London with its jails, opium-dens, and work-houses.



(*Oliver Twist* First Edition: Image 1)

Andrew Sanders describes Dickens's novels as "London Novels" or "Conditions of England Novels" (402). The novels and characters of Charles Dickens brought into light problems of factory workers and child labour. On the contrary, Dickens' contemporaries believed that poor people were inherently unscrupulous. *Oliver Twist* highlights that one should not be judged on the basis of one's birth. Although Dickens goes overboard and pushes Oliver, the central character away from reality. The Dickensian character Oliver is a prime embodiment of virtue. It is hard to believe that Oliver is capable of speaking Standard English despite his adverse conditions and poor education. Also Dickens tries to depict the abuse suffered by children. Oliver meets a gang of pickpockets and is forced to assist them in a robbery. According to him it is better to "run away and die in the fields." The criminal fraternity put Oliver through a lot of difficult situations. Yet he never loses his composure and stays dignified. *Oliver Twist* connects with the readers on a visceral level.

John Peck and Martin Coyle (2002) note that Dickens "challenges the inhumanity of aspects of the new social legislation" and "shares the anxieties of his time about potential disorder" so the most alarming elements in *Oliver Twist* are marked by its notorious characters: "Fagin and his gang, the violent Bill Sikes, and...the prostitute Nancy" (170).

David Daiches (1979) points out that when Dickens realized his talent in creating his characters he thrilled his readers with "eccentrics, villains, unfortunates, hypocrites, social climbers, *nouveaux riches*, criminals, innocents, bureaucrats, exhibitionists, self-deceivers, roisterers, and confidence men, human oddities of all kinds" (1051). In *Oliver Twist* we come

across characters from all strata of society. One of the achievements of Dickens in *Oliver Twist* is that it becomes difficult to decide between minor and major characters. Though the characters may appear minor yet they acquire a magnitude of their own and become crucial in the development of the narrative. On the other hand, the major characters may lead a prominent role yet they seem to remain flat. The characters are so placed in the novel that all of them seem to be important and unique.

Check your progress

1. What do you understand by characterization?

2. Briefly comment on Charles Dickens's art of characterization.

22.2.1 Oliver Twist

The opening of the novel predicts the character of Oliver Twist when the readers are told about his birth:

“The fact is, that there was considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration,--a troublesome practice, but one which custom has rendered necessary to our easy existence; and for some time he lay gasping on a little flock mattress, rather unequally poised between this world and the next...Oliver and Nature fought out the point between them. The result was, that, after a few struggles, Oliver breathed, sneezed, and proceeded to ...as loud a cry as could reasonably.”

(Dickens, *Oliver Twist*)

At his birth Oliver struggled for breath, for life. This marks his characteristic trait, his will to survive. Despite all the unfavourable circumstances, Oliver Twist survives.

Oliver Twist is born in a workhouse and his mother, Agnes Fleming dies giving birth to him. His father was already dead. So he is an orphan boy left to the cruelty of the world. This novel is written in “Third Person Omniscient Point of View” which means that the story of Oliver is told to us by a narrator who knows everything. Unlike the later novels of Dickens where the protagonist tells his story in “First-Person Point of View” giving a closer understanding of the character, Oliver's character is revealed to us by this third person narrator. However, this narrator has a soft corner for Oliver, so the focus essentially remains on Oliver.

This also marks a difference in Oliver Twist and other characters of Charles Dickens like Pip in *Great Expectations* and David Copperfield who grow up into an adult, suggesting a *bildungsroman*. But Pip remains a child and does not develop as such. Oliver Twist is more of a “picaro” (“rogue”), a picaresque hero, who have no fixed means of living, and keeps on travelling from one place to another. In a picaresque novel hero comes across the real face of society and exposes hypocrisy, hollowness, depravity, licentiousness, and debauchery. Oliver Twist faces similar circumstances of a society dealing in double-standards.

An important aspect of Oliver Twist’s personality is his face which reflects beauty and innocence of a child. His face is read by different people differently. While the good people are moved by his innocence the bad people try to exploit him. Associated with his outward appearance is his innate innocence. Unlike the other people in Fagin’s gang, he is the same inward out, pure of heart and intentions.

Oliver Twist is also luckier than other characters. He is as easily relieved as easily he is trapped. Whenever he is in trouble he is always saved. When he is born he finds his breath after a long time, when he is with Mr. Bumble he is bullied, he makes a narrow escape from becoming a chimney sweep, he is always saved even when he is with his gang, even when he is shot he is in good hands. Because of his good heart, destiny is trying to restore him to his rightful place. This also emphasizes the significance of his name as Oliver encounters the twists of life and destiny.

Another aspect of his character is sensitivity and softness that Oliver has for people around him. He remains concerned about the kind of the image Mr. Brownlow will have of him once he is kidnapped. He also prays for Rose when she falls sick. In fact his relationship with good people in the novel is of give and take. Being a helpless child he has nothing to offer for the help and care of these people but his good-heartedness and innocence.

All the virtues which are seen as a mark of a good human being are present in Oliver. He is honest, loyal, truthful, and kind. So when he confronts the gang when he is set out on an errand by Mr. Brownlow to deliver books in the shop, he says do anything to me but do not take the books and money which he has to give. When he is kidnapped and comes back he wants to tell Mr. Brownlow that he had not run away with his books. He was repentant to hurt Mr. Brownlow. Because of his own virtuous nature he also inspires goodness in other people as well. People around him compelled to show their generosity for him. He benefits from the good people, particularly women, be it Mrs. Maylie or Rose or even Nancy who even loses her life in attempt of saving him.

There can be a criticism of Oliver, who is the supposed protagonist of the novel, he has very little capability to be one. There is a dearth of qualities that usually define a protagonist,

where decisions taken by him affect the sequence of events. Instead of being a hero who is actively moulding his future, Oliver is the reward against which contrasting agencies are competing. Only once is he actively in-charge, when he runs away from a life of servitude to Sowerberry. Apart from this event, he is mostly passive as the Artful Dodger takes Oliver under himself and then again Brownlow becomes his decision-maker. He appears as an undeveloped character. Our understanding of his character is based mostly on the author's proclamations. His disposition is impressionable and placatory because his nurture has been cruel and authoritarian. Therefore, when the time comes that he is out alone in the world, Oliver lacks the defenses to face immoral and brutal situations. It is noteworthy that Oliver speaks remarkably little as he merely repeats the clichés of Charles Dickens.

Irrespective of such criticism Oliver stands prominent as a child-hero, who appeals "more to our sentiments than to our literary sensibilities." His character is incredible for the kind of virtues he has and the difficulties he faces. Nevertheless, he is symbol for poor, paupers and orphans. These marginalized factions were misunderstood and were tagged with evil. Oliver challenges these Victorian notions about the evilness of the poor. Poverty cannot define ones character. Unlike other paupers who indulge in crime, Oliver is also forced into but he is never convinced of such acts. He is marked by conventional picaresque dilemmas found in English novels. He keeps on deciding and judging between right and wrong and always sides with goodness. He is goodness incarnate. Through the character of Oliver Dickens wanted to challenge the prejudices of the Victorian society against the poor.

Check your progress

1. Describe the terms: "Bildungsroman" and "Picaresque"

2. Mentions any two major characteristics of Oliver Twist.

22.2.2 Fagin

Fagin, the master criminal, is not only ugly looking in appearance, but also repulsive in nature. He is the villain, the antagonist in the novel. Through the character of Fagin, Dickens sought to portray a character that showed the complexity of humanity. When angry, the old man may succumb to anger, but usually he indulges in the ironic humor that gave him the nickname "the merry old gentlemen." Fagin's dominance among the thieves shows his leadership qualities

to harness his evil plans. He is smarter and more thoughtful than his companions. He brags about his position to the young members of his group. Fagin understands his role in managing and organizing crimes. He is attentive and vigilant. His analytical power becomes evident when he lectures Oliver and Claypole on interdependence between outlaws. He has exceptional self-control even under extreme circumstances.

Fagin skillfully drives Sikes and Nancy to a life of crime. He has given enough orders to warn Sikes about excessive violence and is always on the lookout for the danger of inadvertent movement. There is some evidence that Fagin's corrupt nature still has some human emotions left. Several times he has shown evidence of kindness to Oliver. The night he piloted Oliver on the Chertsey expedition, he controls his urge to disturb the sleep of the tracked child. Next day he seriously asks Oliver to pay attention to Sikes unconditionally, for his own safety.

Despite his denial, Dickens could not conceal his entrenched stereotypes against ethnicity when it came to Jews and his characterization of Fagin was no exception. He has been foisted upon the epithets like ugly, simpering and full of avarice to say the least. His being referred to as "the Jew" with no holds barred and with relative ease cannot help but underline the distasteful attributes forced upon him for his association with a particular ethnicity. Identity is the mainspring of behaviour in what Dickens latently tries to underscore. His prejudiced characterization is not confined to his ethnicity but extends to a motif of unalloyed villainy. He is even dehumanized and branded a reptile in the possession of "fangs" akin to those of "dogs" and "rats". Fagin is labelled "the old one" a famous name attributed to devil. He is detested for casting nightmares on children and readers in the same manner. His end, when he has to face the gallows and people are at staring him in the face creates such a horrific scene that even surpasses the fear that Fagin has always conjured up throughout.

22.2.3 Nancy

Nancy is another character who becomes a victim of her circumstances. She finds herself near the fringe of criminal society. Her character is marked by conflicting thoughts. She is aware of her situation. She understands the difference between right and wrong. The thought to go on the right path has not been extinguished in her but she is entangled in a bad company. Despite her unwillingness she cannot stop her involvement in crimes. She is aware about her condition and finds herself hopeless. Nancy entered the world of criminals in sheer helplessness but she gets trapped in it.

Society is the mirror, and when Nancy tries to see herself in that mirror through Rose and Brownlow, only then she realizes that she has taken a wrong path that will inevitably lead her to

destruction. She is able to analyze her situation and she is convinced that she is so caught in the thickets of evil that no amount of good intentions or effort could extricate her anymore. She is a lamentable example of “human waste”, basically a good person who has drifted so far from the honest ways that no return is possible.



(Oliver trapped by Nancy and Sikes: Image 2)

One of the important issues of *Oliver Twist* is whether an adverse situation can harm an individual's being. As the novel progresses, it is the character of Nancy that best explains such a phenomenon. As Nancy has spent her childhood on the streets in extreme poverty, she becomes an excessive drinker and ends up stealing people to meet her needs. Some of the instances given by the narrator also suggest that she is a prostitute. Though none of her features is that of a noble person in the society, she behaves the exact opposite of her character when she gives up her life to save Oliver. She is one of the complex yet unique characters in the novel. She is also a “grey character” in *Oliver Twist* who represents both good and evil. Her definitive decision to accomplish something beneficial at an extraordinary individual expense is a solid contention for the moral soundness of fundamental goodness, regardless of the number of obstructions it might confront. Nancy's love for Sikes shows the ethical complexity of her character. She explains to Rose that for men devotion in love is for solace and it makes them feel proud to some extent but for her such devotion gives her a cause to commit something evil. Her explanation proves to be true when her love for Sikes ultimately leads to her death. There could be various effects and outcomes of the same thing in different circumstances. In the novel as well, virtues like truth, nobility and morality have clear significance but it is only through the character of Nancy that readers can comprehend that virtues and vices cannot have a clear division in any situation.

22.2.4 Monks:

Even after being a minor character Monks influence and manipulate many major characters and situation because of his background and connection with the protagonist, Oliver Twist. He manipulates evil characters like Fagin and his companions so much that he is even afraid of his mysterious presence. The nastiness in his character can be seen as a result of his childhood experience. His mother chained him in an irreversible childhood which made him cruel and malicious. His character makes it clear that it is not only poverty which can deprive human beings of humanness but also the lack of love, care, support and protection, especially in childhood. A troublesome childhood can easily disturb the psychology of a person and inner self. Monks characters stands testimony to this fact. Out of greed and selfishness he destroys his father's will which had allocated also a portion of share for Oliver. But Monks following the clever plans of his mother destroys the will to eliminate the possibility of dividing his property. In this attempt he becomes a modus operandi for bringing in all the troubles in the life of Oliver.

22.2.5 Bill Sikes:

Bill Sikes is a one of the most skilled burglar brought up in Fagin's gang. Sikes is Nancy's pimp and lover. His treatment of Nancy and his dog Bull's-eye is mixed with ambivalent emotions of love and cruelty. He is reckless and completely loyal to Fagin so much so that he even murders Nancy. He has become a ruthless criminal. He has lost all sensitivity, humanness and tenderness. He shuns any kind of discussions on morality. He is very serious and humourless. He has no concern for any human life, not even for his own. He takes a sound sleep until it is disturbed by the haunting face of his last victim. His fearlessness is more of a sign of stupidity than genuine courage. His bestial nature is a base amalgam of low intelligence and brute strength. Sikes lack in foresight and insights about the consequences of his actions. He is not even worried about the dangers that can occur in his trade. While Fagin hides his hatred for Sikes, Sikes could also not think about the effects of suppressing his contempt for Fagin. In a way Sikes invite trouble by inciting Fagin.

The only person that Sikes is shown to have some feeling is for Nancy. But even in this relationship Sikes remain aloof and sort of detached. He fails to realize that his mistreatment of Nancy can cause serious damage not only in their relationship but also in her psychology. Though Fagin understands that there is something wrong with Nancy's behaviour, Sikes is still clueless. He thinks that the oddity in Nancy's behaviour is because of her sickness. Taking the advantage of the situation, Fagin malevolently stimulates Sikes by revealing about Nancy's immorality. Lacking in judgement and prudence Sikes fails to see the trap of Fagin. He goes to

Nancy's home and murders his only friend. He is a type of irrational evil, beyond the light of humanity.

22.2.6 Brownlow:

Mr. Brownlow is one of the grey characters with good and bad traits. He is kind and hard at the same time. The first encounter that takes place between Oliver and Brownlow is in the police station where he testifies that he is not sure if Oliver was the thief. Once they are out of the police station Brownlow sees Oliver falling because of sickness. Seeing the condition of the boy, he takes Oliver to his house where he is given good care. When Oliver recovers he gives him new suit, cap and shoes. He also sets Oliver on the task of delivering the books to the shop. Later he is encountered by a man who accuses Oliver of being a thief but Brownlow discard it as a kind of misunderstanding. The visitor predicts that Oliver will not come back and he will side with his gang of criminals. Brownlow waits for Oliver but he never returns as he is kidnapped by Nancy. Oliver also attempts to clear the misunderstanding of Brownlow but he is unable to meet him as Brownlow had gone to West Indies. Nancy reveals everything to Rose. Rose then informs Mr. Brownlow about everything and he is relieved that Oliver was not involved in the wrongdoings. Later in the novel Brownlow with the help of Nancy unfolds the secrets about the relationship between Monks, Oliver and Rose. He is the person who is shown with a sense of righteousness. He takes the responsibility of setting everything right in the lives of the people around him. He forces Monks to accept his misdeed and ensure Oliver his share of property. When everything is resolved Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver. He moves to country along with Oliver and Mrs. Bedwin, where they live near Harry and Rose.

22.2.7 Rose Maylie:

Rose Maylie typifies as an example of ideal Dickensian womanhood. Though she appears as a minor character in the novel she fulfils the role of missing mother in life of Oliver Twist. She conforms to the Victorian idea of womanhood represented in the phrase "angel in the house." This phrase was first used by Coventry Patmore in his poem "The Angel in the House" (1854/1862) which he wrote for his wife. Though the phrase got popular later his idea of womanhood became a dominant one in the Victorian society. This image of woman came to be associated with devotion, dedication, passivity, beauty, grace, sacrifice and above all with purity. They were the qualities which were believed to be embodied in the angels. Rose Maylie conforms to this image of woman. In contrast to deprave and corrupting world around her, Rose

emerges victorious, pious and pure. She acts intermediary between Oliver Twist and the mischievous world around him. Initially Rose is introduced as a 17 years old girl, sweet and lovely, filled with positive vibrations.

When Oliver is brought sick to Maylie's Home both Mrs. Maylie and Rose are convinced that Oliver must have been through tough times. Rose says though he might have been wicked yet he is a child and he must never get mother's love. In Oliver Rose only finds an innocent child and not a nasty thief. She is against the idea of sending him to prison. In Maylie's House Oliver learns to read to write better. Rose along with Mrs. Maylie takes good care of him. Vulnerability of Rose becomes evident when she falls sick. She loses her strength and energy. She becomes deathly pale. The relationship of Rose and Oliver is very close. Though Oliver finds himself helpless in her sickness, he prays in the church. Oliver is relieved when he hears the news of Rose's recovery.

Mrs. Maylie warns Harry Maylie that there is no information about the family and lineage of Rose and so he might lose all the prospects of becoming a parliamentarian. But he is firm in his love and decision. When he discloses his decision of marrying her, Rose is also uncertain. She says there is a blot upon her name, she knows nothing about her family and parents. So she declines Harry's proposal. Later Nancy reveals the truth to Rose. Everything changes once it is revealed that she is the aunt of Oliver. Finally when Harry and Rose are married she grows into a lovely and caring woman, exemplifying the perfect image of womanhood.

2.2.8 Minor Characters

Minor Characters in *Oliver Twist* can be divided into the following groups:

Oliver Twist's Family

Characters in Workhouse

Characters in Sowerberry Household

Characters in Fagin's Group

Characters in Brownlow's Household

Characters in Maylies's Household

Characters in Administration

Oliver Twist's Family

Agnes Fleming is the mother of Oliver Twist. She is a daughter of a respected naval officer who has retired. She is a beautiful and charming lady. Her predicament begins when she falls in love

with Mr. Leeford and becomes pregnant. She is afraid for her family's reputation so she leaves them and dies unidentified in a workhouse. Oliver has gone in his appearance on his mother.

Mr. Leeford is the father of Oliver and Monks. He was intelligent and determined. His family forcefully marries him to a wealthy woman. He is not happy in his marriage so he separates from his wife. Later he comes across Agnes Fleming. As he falls in love with Agnes both of them decide to leave the country. But in an unfortunate incident he dies and Agnes is left alone in her state of pregnancy. He is already dead when the narrative begins.

Monks's mother was the wife of Mr. Leeford. She lived an immoral life and ignored her husband. She destroyed Mr. Leeford's will in which Oliver Twist was entitled to have a part of his property. Monks has presumably inherited his cleverness from his mother.

Characters in Workhouse

Old Sally is a pauper who helps Agnes during the birth of Oliver. She proves her meanness by stealing Agnes's gold locket which was the only clue to Oliver's identity.

Mr. Bumble is a pompous beadle in the workhouse where Oliver is born. He exemplifies the "victorian paradox" and hypocrisy. Though he talks about Christian morality, he has no pity, compassion and mercy for the orphans and poor people. He is greedy, selfish, and apathetic. His name typifies his character marked by its hollowness and pretensions.

Mrs. Corney is the matron of the workhouse where Oliver is born. She is married to Mr. Bumble. Just like him, she too is pretentious, careless and materialistic. She is very dominating and demanding in her treatment of Mr. Bumble.

Mr. Gamfield is a cruel chimney sweep. Oliver very narrowly escapes from becoming his apprentice.

Characters in Sowerberry Household

Mr. Sowerberry undertakes Oliver in his apprenticeship. He earns his living by making arrangements for cut-rate burials for paupers. However, he is very kind to Oliver.

Mrs. Sowerberry is Sowerberry's wife. She is very mean and critical. She keeps on criticizing her husband.

Charlotte is Sowerberry's maid. Charlotte falls in love with Noah Claypole and follows him like a slave.

Noah Claypole is a charity boy and Mr. Sowerberry's apprentice. He is a trouble-maker in life of Oliver Twist. He bullies Oliver and later he joins Fagin's gang.

The Artful Dodger is the most skilled and cleverest of Fagin's pickpockets. His real name is Jack Dawkins. He is of the same age as of Oliver Twist. He dresses up like adult men. This hints at the loss of his innocence and maturity he acquires before his age. He introduces Oliver Twist to Fagin.

Charley Bates is also Fagin's pickpockets. He is shown as light hearted with a ready laughter.

Toby Crackit belongs to Fagin and Sikes's group. He is dull and unintelligent. He is involved in burglary Mrs. Maylie's house.

Bet had worked as a pickpocket for Fagin in her childhood. Now she is a prostitute.

Barney is also Jew like Fagin and is an accomplice in his crimes.

Tom Chitling is a criminal. He works in Fagin's gang. He has also served his term in prison for doing nasty jobs for Fagin.

Bull's-eye is Bill Sikes's dog. It is as dangerous as his master. It functions as Sikes's alter ego.

Characters in Brownlow's Household

Mrs. Bedwin is a Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper. She is very kind and sensitive. She is not ready to accept Mr. Bumble's negative report of Oliver Twist.

Mr. Grimwig is a friend of Mr. Brownlow. He is pessimistic and cynical but he is a good human being.

Characters in Maylies's Household

Mrs. Maylie is a kind old woman. She is Harry Maylie's mother and adoptive "aunt" of Rose.

Harry Maylie is son of Mrs. Maylie. He is very handsome and ambitious. He wants to establish his reputation in politics but he gives up his dreams to marry Rose. Between the pomp and show of the material world he chooses the simplicity of Rose.

Mr. Giles is a butler in Mrs. Maylie's house. He is very loyal but also a big show-off.

Mr. Brittles is a handyman for Mrs. Maylie's estate. As could be noticed he is slightly disabled psychologically.

Mr. Losberne is a family physician of Mrs. Maylie. He is an old bachelor. He gets angry easily but he is good-hearted. He owes his loyalty to the Maylie family and so to Oliver Twist.

Characters part of Administration

Mrs. Mann is a superintendent of the juvenile workhouse where Oliver is brought up. Mrs. Mann physically abuses and half-starves the children in her care.

Mr. Fang is a magistrate who presides over Oliver's trial for pickpocketing. He is very harsh and power-hungry.

Duff and Blathers are investigating police officers dealing with the Mrs. Maylie's home burglary case.

22.3 Learning Outcomes

It is expected that on the completion of this unit students will be able to understand the art of characterization of Charles Dickens with reference to the characters in his novel *Oliver Twist*. The learners can recognize the portrayal of major characters and develop an understanding about literature, representation of various people through characters present in the novel. Dickens characters particularly are effective in developing a sense of awareness and sensitivity among the readers for the people who are under-privileged, poor, vulnerable and marginalized. The achievement of Dickens lies in his representation of characters from all facets of life.

22.4 Glossary

Paradox- means an inherent contradiction. "Victorian Paradox" imply that on one hand there are images of richness and prosperity, and on the other hand, there is poverty and squalor. People talk about morality and engage in dishonest and inhuman practices. This dichotomy marks the paradox in Victorian society.

Third Person Narration-In third-person narration the story is told by a narrator different from the central characters. The narrator is an observer or may be a participant in the events. S/he relates the actions of the characters by referring to their names or by the third-person pronouns he, she, or they. Third-person narration is of three types: omniscient, limited, and objective.

First Person Narration-In first-person narration the narrator tells his or her own story. S/he is usually a central character who narrates events from his or her point of view. The narrator uses personal pronouns as I/me/Mine or we, if the narrator is speaking as part of a group.

Buildungsroman- It is a novel about the growth or development of a character. It usually deals with physical, psychological, philosophical, moral, social and spiritual maturing and transformation of a protagonist.

Picaro- The central character in a picaresque novel is called as a *picaro*. *Picaro* means rogue, rascal or brute. Usually a *picaro* belongs to a lower strata of society. S/he has no fixed source of

income and keep on travelling from one place to another partly out of necessity and partly out of compulsion. Usually a *picarois* a thief, robber, bandit, or a prostitute who have change their names and hide their identity from the society.

22.5 Sample Questions

22.5.1 Objectives Questions: (please add at least 10 objectives, in the form of multiple choice, true false, or fill in the blanks)

Tick the correct option

1. Who is the father of Oliver Twist?

- a) Mr. Brownlow b) Mr. Leeford c) MrGamfield d) Mr. Sowerberry

2. Who is not a member of Fagin’s Gang?

- a) Bill Sikes b) Oliver Twist c) Jack Dawkins d) Harry Maylie

3. Who is not associated with the workhouse?

- a) Mr. Bumble b) Mrs.Corney c) Mrs Mann d) Mr.Losberne

4. Mark the Wrong pair:

- a) Agnes and Leeford b) Bumble and Corney c) Oliver and Nancy d) Rose and Harry

5. Which of the following pair is of criminals?

- a) Agnes and Leeford b) Bumble and Corney c) Sikes and Nancy d) Rose and Harry

6. Mark the wrong pair:

- a) Agnes-Oliver b) Mrs.Leeford-Monks c) Mrs Maylie-Harry d) Mrs.Corney-Sikes

7. Who is known as The Artful Dodger:

- a) Jack Dawkins b) Bill Sikes c) Charley Bates d) Toby Crackit

8. Nancy is killed by:

- a) Jack Dawkins b) Bill Sikes c) Charley Bates d) Toby Crackit

9. Monks is Oliver Twist’s:

- a) Uncle b) Half-brother c) Step-brother d) Real-brother

10. At the end of the novel who is called as “erring woman”:

- a) Nancy b) Mrs.Bedwin c) Mrs. Brownlow d) Mrs. Rose Maylie

22.5.2 Short Answer Question:

1. Fagin and his gang shows a bleak picture of Victorian society. Comment.

2. *Oliver Twist* projects a world of good and evil characters. Discuss.
3. Comment on the significance of the name of Mr. Bumble and Fagin.
4. Compare the characters of Nancy and Rose.
5. Comment on the role of Mr. Brownlow in the novel.

22.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the character of Oliver Twist.
2. Throw light on Charles Dickens's art of characterization in *Oliver Twist*.
3. Discuss the role of female characters in the life of Oliver Twist.

22.6 Suggested Readings

1. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature: The Restoration to the Present Day*. Vol. 2. Allied publishers private, 1979.
2. Peck, John, Martin Coyle. *A Brief History of English Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
3. Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Clarendon Press, 1994.
4. *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens (SparkNotes Literature Guide) by SparkNotes.
5. Kaste, Harry. *Cliff Notes on Dickens' Oliver Twist*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965.

Unit-23: *Oliver Twist*-Language

Structure

23.0 Introduction

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23.0 Introduction

The language of the novel is seminal to the flow and texture of its story or plot. If we take a worm's eye view of prominent novels written in English language, we may see certain standing out because of their flowery or strange or jargon-laden language. In this context, *Oliver Twist* stands out because of its characteristic dramatic element as it easily shuffles between tragedy and comedy and in doing so holds the reader's interest. Dickens' writing style is marked by immensely abundant linguistic creativity. He succeeds in using different language styles for different characters in consonance with their class and station. For example, the paupers speak in typical cockney style and the middle class in the refined British.

23.1 Objectives

The unit has been designed to fulfil the following objectives.

- To familiarize the students with the importance of language to the novel in general.
- To expose students to the art of using language for a particular purpose vis-à-vis *Oliver Twist*.
- To make students understand the nuances of language in *Oliver Twist* and the subtleties
- To enable students to appreciate the certain special uses and dexterity of language in *Oliver Twist*.

23.2 The Language of *Oliver Twist* -The Regional Dialect

Professor G.L.Brook remarks “*the remarkable thing about the popularity of Dickens is that it has lasted as it has. Much of his appeal lies in his mastery of comic effects, and the appeal of humor is particularly evanescent*”. He further goes on to say that one aspect that receives fairly large attention is the language in which they are written. Dickens makes a profuse use of the regional dialect in his novels. This adds a local tinge or colour to his novels. The dialect of which he makes the fullest use is the class dialect of the poor. Since his novels teem with poor characters and they are strewn here and there in most of his novels, his novels represent them in their own languages and dialects. The use of distinctive dialects, especially the *cant* variety (the variety which is distinctive of rascals and criminals), is prominent in the speech of two Street Runners Blathers and Duff. Further, the words *crack* for burglary and *blunt* for money are common in nineteenth century thieves’ *slang*. In *Oliver Twist*, we find that Dickens gives a proper language to each of his characters in keeping with the class he comes from.

23.2.1 *Oliver Twist*: A Novel of Protest and the Language of Protest:

Oliver Twist, the first of Dickens’s novels to be published in his own name, is far removed from *The Pickwick Papers* in both its atmosphere and its tone. As Elgar Johnson states in his biography of Dickens:

“From the sunny landscape of Pickwick, no more than dappled with shadow, *Oliver Twist* plunges into a confined world of darkness, an oppressive, lurid intensity from the workhouse to the criminal slum and the jail.”

Moreover, a critic, while describing the development of the story, called it a ‘*waking nightmare*’. We can imagine how the poverty and insecurity of Dickens’s early years must have affected his growth as a writer. Above all, he was determined never again to live in the deprived

circumstances of his life at the shoe blacking factory. One motive behind his phenomenal energy and speed in writing was an overriding desire for personal success and security.

Dickens presents his characters in their true colours. He takes us through the dark recesses of the juvenile crime-world. We find Nancy is caught in the mire of this crime-world and she finds a way out of it quite difficult. Her screaming in Chapter XVI at Fagin gives us the large picture of the world of thieves:

“the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home and you are wretch that drove us to them long ago, and that will keep me there, day and night, day and night, till I die.”

The above lines sensitize us to the world of crime and criminals and the cry of a character like Nancy moves us like anything. Young homeless boys are driven to crime and Oliver is one typical example of as to how these young boys are allured to it. As reflected in *Oliver Twist*, when a young boy gets trapped in the nightmarish world of crime, it is quite hard for to return. Thus, it is a real deathtrap after a small-time flash of joy. Dickens nicely captures the attendant pains and joys of this world of crime in the language it deserves.

23.2.2 The Language and the Oppressive Environs:

Dickens began writing *Oliver Twist* three years after a new system of administering relief to the poor was set up and named the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The first seven chapters of *Oliver Twist* take place in and around a workhouse established under the new system. Its way of working is thoroughly described to the minutest of details in these chapters. Dickens is protesting against what he saw as the inhumanity and injustice of the new system.

The proposal for the changes in the Poor Laws was made by Royal Commission in 1834. The following quote unequivocally, in its tone and tenor, gives us the shabby picture of what the typical workhouse was all about:

“By the workhouse system is meant having all relief through the workhouse, making this workhouse an uninviting place of wholesome restraint, preventing any of its inmates from going out or receiving visitors, disallowing beer and tobacco, and finding them work according to their ability.”

The lofty yet hollow tone of moral superiority in the report conveys the chagrin that the Victorians felt towards the poor. They believed the poor were to blame for their own condition and that unemployment was evidence of bad character rather than of misfortune.

Before 1834 there were two separate ways of providing help for the poor. Those who were able-bodied but unable to support themselves on their income or incapable of finding work were provided with 'out relief' which enabled them to continue living in their own homes, while gaining financial assistance from the parish. The non-able-bodied, on the other hand, including the aged, the infirm and the orphaned, were put into institutions called workhouses. Eventually these workhouses, which had originally been intended to provide work for the unemployed, such as spinning and weaving, became the dumping-ground for all sorts of destitute including lunatics and criminals. They acquired a very bad reputation. Not only were they being very inefficiently administered, they were also proving extremely costly. By the 1830s Reform of the Poor Law was desperately needed, since the system was clearly being abused while the number of poor was steadily rising.

Dickens language had to be a perfect match to the depressing conditions that the poor environs reflected. The author, through the words of the omniscient narrator, gives us a broad picture of the despicable conditions that the poor lived in. The choice of words seems to be perfect to match the degree of deprivation that they convey. The author parades the veneer of false morality and exposes the inhumanity and the regressive conditions in which the poor lived:

...they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they), of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. With this view... (they) issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays. They made a great many otherwise and humane regulations, having reference to the ladies, which it is not necessary to repeat; kindly undertook to divorce poor married people... and, instead of compelling a man to support his family, as they had therefore done, took his family from him, and made him a bachelor!

23.2.3 Dickens' Own Life and the Words of his Own:

Dickens was just twenty-five years old when he began writing *Oliver Twist* in 1837. He was then still in the process of completing *The Pickwick Papers*. His first novel, but, before finishing *Oliver Twist* in 1838, he was already in the early stages of his third novel, *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Furthermore, his methods of publishing added to the pressure. The novels came out in installments, published each month, and so Dickens condemned himself to a rigorous and strict writing regimen in which his material had to be produced by regular dates. There was never any

possibility of revising a novel when he had completed the first draft because there was no such thing as a first draft: there were merely monthly installments or, at some periods in his life, weekly installments which Dickens rushed to the publisher as soon as they were completed. We know that the ending of *Oliver Twist* was written at a furious pace to meet such a deadline.

Another reason for the urgency of Dickens's writing many well have been a desire to explore and understand the emotional hurts and deprivations he had experienced as a child. Throughout his novels there are prisons, criminals, people exploited by others and children who have to play the role of parent and look after dependents, instead of being looked after by their parents. Oliver, himself, is an isolated and vulnerable child at the mercy of unsympathetic institutions or of explosive criminals for much of the novel. In a similar way, Charles Dickens was, at a tender age, alone and exposed to a frightening world.

23.2.4 *Oliver Twist* and the Jargon of the Times:

Sylvère Monod while commenting on Dickens' style and way of writing says that he has steadily become "more of a fastidious stylist". He further attributes two adjectives to Dickens' writing- "mannered", and something teeming with "lyricism". Monod juxtaposes these twin qualities with Dickens early works and remarks that the earlier works of Dickens seem to be lacking in these qualities. Now, let's analyze the speeches of different characters in *Oliver Twist* and mark their respective ways of pronunciation or style. The substandard and vulgar pronunciation of Gamfield in Chapter III is a good example of Cockney :

"That's accause they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down agin,said Gamfield,that is all smoke,and no blaze,verreas smoke ain't o' no use at all in makin' a boy ,for it only sends him to sleep,and that's wot he likes.Boys is weryobstinit, and werylazy,gen'lmen, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down with a run.It's humane too, gen'lmen ,acause,even if they've stucvk in the chimbley,roastin' their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricatetheirselves' Let's mark the following words in the above paragraph for their cockney pronunciation and see as to how their Cockney pronunciation is far removed from their Standard one:

Acause is the standard *because*,*afore* is *before* ,*Chimbley*is *Chimney* and *agin*is *again* and*sinds*is *sends* , *verreas*is *whereas*, *vithis* *with* and *so on*.

Furthermore, we notice that Barney, young jew, has a chronic catarrh which goes to affect his pronunciation of nasals [*n*] and [*m*].

23.2.5 Giving characters their perfect mouth:

In *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens went beyond his practice of manipulating idiolects to create memorable characters for his serial public. In his third and structurally eccentric novel, criminal characters seem to use slang as a code for moving without detection in a harsh ideology constructed by England's "higher" orders; their flash or *cant* language, however, is also a decoding device for illuminating their plight at the hands of this higher social class. Their decisions and impulses to translate slang create spaces in the narrative in which we see them affirming their social and personal identities. An analysis of criminal slang—particularly in the Artful Dodger's trial scene—argues for a clearer sense of structure than is generally accorded the novel.

Thus, we see that there is a variety and variation in the characters in their respective languages. The characters can be identified with their class vis-a-vis their language and vice versa. Moreover, Dickens does not mince words in addressing to a particular character and does not arrogate to him anything beyond his position and status and thus he doesn't shy away from calling a thief a thief.

23.2.6. Special Use of Language and Symbols in *Oliver Twist*:

Oliver Twist thrives on the special and symbolic use of words to connote certain thought processes which otherwise betray any simpler description. For instance, 'Have the goodness to look at me', said Bumble, fixing his eyes upon her. (If she stands such a eye as that', said Mr Bumble to himself ...). The brackets used here are used as if the words couched within them are stage directions typical of a drama.

Moreover, there are some examples of *Neologism* as well. The term *Neologism* means the coinage of words. G.N. Leech dubs it as a "Lexical Innovation". In this context, there is an example in *Oliver Twist*. Jack Dawkins, on finding Oliver greenish in complexion, tells Charles Bates jestingly that he is from Greenland:

'A new pal', replied Jack Dawkins, pulling Oliver forward.

'Where did he come from?'

Greenland. Is Fagin up stairs? (*Oliver Twist*, VIII, 56).

The above use of words Green and Greenland is a typical example of Nonce-Use. There are among other linguistic and lexical innovations, many instances of Functional Conversion, Coinage, Compounding, Malapropism etc.

23.2.7: Choosing Words for Comparison and Contrast:

To elaborate the contrasts and comparisons in *Oliver Twist*, let's go through the following passage:

“the heavy bell of St Paul's tolled for the death of another day. Midnight had come upon the crowded city. The palace, the night-cellar, the jail, the madhouse; the chambers of birth and death, of health and sickness; the rigid face of the corpse and the calm sleep of the child – midnight was upon them all" (46.4). This is another moment of social leveling through the use of darkness: Dickens lists a lot of contrasting places – palaces, night-cellars (bars that didn't have liquor licenses), jails, madhouses, etc. – and also juxtaposes a lot of extremes: birth and death, sickness and health, corpses and sleeping children. Time passes for all of these extremes, and it's equally dark at midnight whether you live in a palace or a madhouse.”

Now read the following passage for the matter of comparison with the above:

The sun – the bright sun, that brings back not light alone, but new life, and hope, and freshness to man – burst upon the crowded city in clear and radiant glory. Through costly-coloured glass and paper-mended window, through cathedral dome and rotten crevice, it shed its equal ray. It lighted up the room where the murdered woman lay. It did." (48.2)

The following passage is a philosophical treatise. The author talks about the sun as selfless performer and an egalitarian entity. The author, through the conduit of this description serves an important moral purpose-of preaching humanity about the futility the pessimism

“The sun, like midnight, is a social leveler – it shines equally on everybody, whether through expensive stained glass, or through a window mended with paper or duct tape. He even uses the word "equal" – the sun "shed its equal ray" – after juxtaposing a bunch of extremes ("costly-coloured glass" and "paper-mended window," and "cathedral dome" and "rotten crevice"). And no matter how dark it was, you can bet the sun is going to come out. Dickens even makes the parallel between "light" and "life" explicit here – the sun "brings back" both.”

23.3 The Language of *Oliver Twist* -The Regional Dialect

The learners are able to:

- Locate the novel in the tradition as well as in its own milieu vis-à-vis the linguistic and structural aspects.

- Appreciate the special use of language in representation of different characters of different social groups and classes.
- Understand the importance of language to the plot of the novel in general and Oliver Twist in particular.

23.4 Glossary

Gruel: A thin Porridge

Pauper: A poor person or a destitute

Choleric: Someone who is given to anger

Controvert: Prove to be false or incorrect

Domicile: Place that someone lives at.

Voracious: Having a strong craving for food

Mollify: Appease someone's anxiety

Beadle: Minor official of parish with a range of duties.

Daffy: A widely used tonic named after its inventor Revd Thomas Daffy.

Porringer: A small bowl.

Per Diem: Latin meaning 'each day'.

Commons: Staple food, shared with others.

Day-book: Account book recording each day's transactions.

23.5 Sample Questions

24.5.1 Multiple Questions:

1. Which of the following is Mr. Bumble's favourite word?

- (a) Trick
- (b) Rash
- (c) Porochial
- (d) Parish

2. Malapropism is

- (a) Pronouncing words in a wrong manner.
- (b) Speaking many wrong words together
- (c) Talking a lot

(d) Ludicrous misuse of words

3. Which of the following dialect is used by thieves.

(a) Slang

(b) Cant

(c) Standard

(d) Both a and b

4. Counting the names of all the sounds and sights of the scene in the morning in chapter XXI : countrymen, butchers, drovers ,hawkers ,boys ,thieves ,idlers and vagabonds of every low grade, were mingled together in a mass is an example of...

(a) Hyperbole

(b) Enumeration

(c) Paradox

(d) None of these

5. ...*good unhealthy port* is an example of

(a) Simile

(b) Metaphor

(c) Oxymoron

(d) None of these

6. In thieves' slang the word *trap* means

(a) Doctor

(b) Driver

(c) Police officer

(d) Father

7. Named after its inventor, which of the following tonics has been referred to in the novel

Oliver Twist

(a) Honoto

(b) Daffy

(c) Trend

(d) Traix

State whether the following statements are true or false

1. *Oliver Twist* is written by Thomas Hardy _____

2. Oliver is the protagonist of the novel _____

3. *Oliver Twist* was published in 1890 _____

23.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is malapropism?
2. Give two examples of usage of Double Negation in the *Oliver Twist*.
3. Which particular variety of languages did the thieves use in the novel?
4. Identify the use of Enumeration in the text.
5. Write three sentences about the ending of the novel *Oliver Twist*.

24.5.3 Long Answer Questions

1. There are differences in the usage of language in *Oliver Twist* and other novels of the same era by Charles Dickens. Elaborate.
2. *Oliver Twist* is known for the usage of some special dialect as spoken in Victorian era, discuss.
3. How can we draw parallels and differences in the description of characters in relation to the languages they used? Elaborate with Examples.

23.6 Suggested Readings

1. Chesterton, G. K. *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*. New York, 1961.
2. Cockshut, A.O.J. *The Imagination of Charles Dickens*. New York, 1961.
3. Davis, Earle. *The Flint and the Flame: The Artistry of Charles and Dickens*. Columbia, Mo., 1963.
4. Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist, intro*. Humphry House. London, 1949.
5. Fielding, K.J. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction*. Boston, 1965.
6. Gissing, George. *Charles Dickens*. Port Washington, New York, 1966. (orig. 1924)
7. Gross, John and Gabriel Pearson, eds. *Dickens and the Twentieth Century*. London, 1963.
8. Johnson, Edgar. *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*. 2 vols. London, 1952.

Unit-24: Oliver Twist: Narrative Technique

Structure

24.0 Introduction

24.1 Objectives

24.2 Different Techniques of Narration

24.2.1 Narrative Technique in *Oliver Twist*

24.2.2 The Commanding voice of the Omniscient Narrator

24.2.3 Dramatic Tinge in the Narrative

24.2.4 Oliver Twist- not a Product of Pre-conceived Plot Construction

24.2.5 The Narrator and the Characters

24.2.6 The Omniscient Narrator as an Omniscient Preacher

24.3 Learning Outcomes

24.4 Glossary

24.5 Sample Questions

24.6 Suggested Readings

24.0 Introduction

The reception of a text by the readers or audience is, among other things, dependent upon the way the text appeals to the readers. The appeal of a text, in turn, rests on the way or style the story of the novel progresses. The mode or the mouth or the technique which the author uses is called the technique of narration. The technique of narration helps a reader to understand the various characters, perceptions and ideologies which the characters manifest and reflect. The author of a novel is, in essence, a story teller who throws before us a story page by page. The author seems to be at a vantage point overseeing the movement of the narrative. Moreover, the author can, at times, employ or choose a persona to tell a story from his perspective. That is where we find multiple voices in a narrative.

24.1 Objectives

This unit has the following objectives:

- To introduce to the students with the different techniques of narration in general.
- To expose students to the omniscient narrator as employed by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*.

- To make students understand the central importance of narration to the whole plot of the novel.
- To enable students to analyze and critically evaluate the importance of a certain narrative technique and its advantages and disadvantages.

24.2 Different Techniques of Narration

Often classified on the basis of the pronoun used, narratives are first person, second person or the third person. The first-person narrator(s) doesn't often use the direct I or we, but can be identified as one of the characters in the plot. The character, as part of the narrative, takes the plot forward by his introduction of the characters, his deliberations over their physiognomies, multiple traits, weaknesses, foibles etc. In the second person narration, the story is told by someone who is addressed as you. The second person narrator is at times used by the author as a vehicle to carry forward the narrative. In third person point of view, the narrator is most often outside the confines of the story. He seems to speak or narrate the story from a vantage position. The third person narrator addresses the characters either by their names or by using the gender-specific pronouns like he or she. The third person omniscient narrator, as the word omniscient connotes, introduces the readers to the physical appearances, mental make-ups and other leanings and feelings of the characters. Hence, the third person omniscient narrator is the general gateway to the plot of the novel.

24.2.1 Narrative Technique in *Oliver Twist*:

In *Oliver Twist*, we see the third person omniscient narrative technique. [Omniscient](#) means "all-knowing," and hence an omniscient narrator knows every character's life, thoughts and feelings to the minutiae. Let us begin from the beginning. The first chapter of *Oliver Twist* seems to begin in media res. The Omniscient Narrator unfurl before us an assortment of buildings with an aim to introduce us to the workhouse. It is in the workhouse that we are introduced to our protagonist and his genesis:

Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I 'will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse was born; on a day and date which I need not trouble myself to repeat, inasmuch as it can be of no possible consequence to the reader, in this stage of the

business at all events; the item of mortality whose name is prefixed to the head of this chapter.

The narrative progresses linearly and the readers see the story unfold layer by layer. The narrator seems to be all-knowing commentator who drops some multiple hints at the beginning of each chapter. The subtitle of each chapter helps the readers piece together the story that is to follow. The readers, in anticipation of the further information, read on. For instance, we see the chapter 9 is subtitled as “Containing further Particulars concerning the pleasant old Gentleman and his hopeful Pupils. The narrator here, like a typical or archetypal storyteller lends to the narrative some conventional touch.

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke, from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room but the old Jew, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round, with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the least noise below: and when he had satisfied himself, he would go on, whistling and stirring again, as before. (Chapter 9 *Oliver Twist*)

In the above paragraph the narrator first talks of the simple act of making coffee and then takes upon himself the onus of commenting authoritatively over the “*drowsy state, betweensleeping and waking*”. The narrator strikes us as a sagacious persona who first philosophizes Oliver's sleepy state and then further explicates the lessons that the routines like these teach:

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. There is a drowsy state, between sleeping and waking, when you dream more in five minutes with your eyes half open, and yourself half conscious of everything that is passing around you, than you would in five nights with your eyes fast closed, and your senses wrapt in perfect unconsciousness. At such times, a mortal knows just enough of what his mind is doing, to form some glimmering conception of its mighty powers, its bounding from earth and spurning time and space, when freed from restraint of its corporeal associate. (Chapter 9, *Oliver Twist*)

The third person omniscient narrator, at places, assumes the role of a moderator. He himself comments on the way the story progresses. For example, in the beginning of chapter 13, the narrator says:

“Some new Acquaintances are introduced to the intelligent Reader; connected with whom various pleasant Matters are related appertaining to this history.”

We further see a dialogue-type progression of the narrative:

‘WHERE’S Oliver? Said the Jew, rising with a menacing look. ‘Where’s the boy?’

The young thieves eyed their preceptor as if they were alarmed at his violence; and looked uneasily at each other.’ But they made no reply.

‘What’s become of the boy? Said the Jew, seizing the Dodger tightly by the collar, and threatening him with horrid imprecations. ‘Speak out, or I’ll throttle you!’ (Chapter 13, Oliver Twist)

In Oliver Twist we find, especially to the end, that the narrator chips in to comment on the progression of the story itself. Here he seems to be keenly following the main character to inform the reader about his life so far:

SPRING flew swiftly by, and summer came. If the village had been beautiful at first it was now in the full glow and luxuriance of its richness. The great trees, which had looked shrunken and bare in the earlier months, had now burst into strong life and health; and stretching forth their green arms over the thirsty ground, converted open and naked spots into choice nooks, where was a deep and pleasant shade from which to look upon the wide prospect, steeped in sunshine, which lay stretched beyond. The earth had donned her mantle of brightest green; and vigour of the year; all things were glad and flourishing. (Chapter 33, *Oliver Twist*)

24.2.2 The Commanding voice of the Omniscient Narrator:

From the very first word, the narrative form of Oliver Twist is the third person narrative form. The third person narration means that the narrator seems to stand at vantage point, with a thorough command over the doings of his characters- from birth, through their movement through the labyrinthine ways of the world. The third person narrator is a strong voice and presence in the whole narrative structure of a novel or a story. As the name has it, an omniscient narrator is a commanding, all-seeing and all-knowing voice. The omniscient narrator has an unbridled access to the consciousness of a few or many different characters. This particular perspective allows the writers to create a typical “godlike” or deliberately “authorial” persona that affords them to distantly comment on the action in multiple and different ways and perspectives.

Oliver Twist is undoubtedly a classic. *Oliver Twist* is the novel which documents the myriad problems faced by the common masses during industrial revolution in England. In the year, 1837 when Dickens began *Oliver Twist* in its episodic form, it was given a subtitle *The Parish Boys Progress* making it replicate the much-emulated John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *Oliver Twist*, the protagonist of the novel, goes through a series of hardships, only to emerge a changed and different character in the end. The omniscient voice lends the credence to the story by way assuming a powerful position of command and voice and the reader, at times, finds him as a guide goading from behind.

24.2.3 Dramatic Tinge in the Narrative:

Charles Dickens narrative style has a characteristic dramatic tinge to it. It shuffles between tragedy and comedy, and so successfully holds the reader's interest. Dickens's novels were published in the episodic form in the periodicals and so each chapter had to come to sort of a climax. Notably the writing style of Charles Dickens possesses a remarkable linguistic creativity. Since Dickens' novels, like a typical dramatic cast, teems with a panoply of characters and the characters come from varied classes and stations. Dickens hands out a unique language style and vocabulary to his characters commensurate with their societal position. For example, the urban middle class speaks in the refined British English whereas the paupers and the miscreants speak in the typical cockney style. Also Mr. Bumble, the beadle is shown often confusing the word parochial and pronouncing it as "parochial". As such an instrument to indict the Victorian society. In *Oliver Twist*, he has used the third-person narrative form and tries to narrate it from the perspective of an individual who belongs to the nineteenth century London. You will see that the narrative acquires an omniscient narrator's view, where the narrator knows everything and is recording each important event in the life of the protagonist as well the other characters.

The Examiner, September 1837 Edition (September 10, 1837), a reviewer asserted that this novel was an "exact painting" of the societal reality that Dickens wished to present to the public. Dickens was widely hailed for capturing the emotions attendant upon the death of Nancy and the intrinsic minutiae of Oliver's life as an orphan. The reviewer was surprised to see Dickens making use of the poor Law Debates in the first chapter of the novel, and he understood the social cause for which Dickens wrote. In conclusion of this review, the author states: "We leave him most whatsoever is most loveable, hateful, or laughable, in the character of the everyday life about him" (Dickens, 401).

24.2.4 Oliver Twist- not a Product of Pre-conceived Plot Construction:

Oliver Twist appeared month by month in the new magazine Bentley's Miscellany and there is flimsy evidence to indicate that Dickens had any preconceived notion of the whole novel when he brought Oliver's birth to the notice of the reading public in the first episode, that is, when he put elements of his story beyond recall by publishing them. Dickens always favored part-issue publication-not one of his novels appeared for the first time as a single and complete work; but later in his career he drafted ideas for the overall design of a work before any part of it was written and published. With Pickwick Papers still incomplete and obligations in addition to Oliver Twist pressing on him, the young Dickens lived more dangerously. Despite his overhaul of the text for book publications in 1838 and again in 1846, the uncertainties of Oliver Twist's origins show.

The novel is by its very nature a satire which reveals Dickens's artistic allegiances. Jonathan Swift's 'savage indignation' is heard again in the narrator's exposure of jacks-in-office whose cruelty, shuffling from mere coldness to sadism, is sanctioned, even dignified, by the ordinances of legislation driven by the social vision of Benthamism, the utilitarian ideology associated primarily with the philosopher, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). The high irony of many passages early in Oliver Twist is terribly repetitive and strained to sustain a reader's interest for long and this satiric mode was never to be Dickens's forte. His genius drew its inspiration from the satiric art of two other eighteenth-century masters, from the paintings of William Hogarth and the novels of Henry Fielding.

24.2.5 The Narrator and the Characters:

The variety and certain inexplicable strangeness of characters in Oliver Twist is perhaps one of his seminal achievements as a novelist. Some characters in Charles Dickens' novels seem to him only and they seem to be central to the plots in which they breathe and throb. Moreover, it seems that the meanderings of a public-school life must have its Steerforth, any description of the stratagems of criminal life must rest on its Bill and Nancy and moreover any fishing community its Peggotty. Dickens parades his characters in a typical dramatic style. His novels even display a 'cast-list' at the beginning. He seems to keep a note ready to describe the physiognomy of his character(s) and every word that the reader comes across vis-à-vis a character seems to expose him steadily to the reader. Dickens's characterization in Oliver Twist teems with variety. From one extreme, we have Oliver, a poor decrepit orphan, then Fagin, a scheming Jew and on the other Mr Brownlow, a gentleman, so very civilized and philanthropic.

Charles Dickens's writing involves a crafty evocation of landscapes, such as the marshy swathes in *Great Expectations* or Yarmouth beach in *David Copperfield* and the like. Despite seeming to write for a stage as a dramatist, the stage, in its a limited canvas and paucity of space, shall fail to accommodate the numerous changes of scene which occur in Dickens's novels. The 'stage' Dickens appeals to is the stage of the reader's imagination, and his narrative technique plays upon that 'stage' to draw us into his stories. Dickens' myriad "pictures" an integral part of the fabric of the narrative. It is through conjuring images on the stage of our imagination that he draws us into the story. Dickens remarkably captures London in its very ferment of life and in its variety and vastness. Moreover, the 'attraction of repulsion' of revulsion may also perfectly applied to Dicken's creation of settings in the novel. According to Robert Garland, what could be more eerie and sinister than the house where Monks meets Bumbles in chapter 38? It is set in riverside slum .Once a place of employment.....

....'it had; long since gone to ruin. The rat, the worm, the action of the damp, had weakened and rotted the piles on which it stood; and considerable portion pf the building had already sunk down into the water; while the remainder, tottering and bending over the dark stream, seemed to wait a favorable opportunity of following its old companion, and involving itself in the same fate' (*Oliver Twist*, p 38).

The above passage brings to us the delight which Dickens takes in piling on all these details of decay which combine with the thunderstorm and the sinister presence and actions of Monks to create the atmosphere of evil into which the former beadle and his wife have indeed bumbled. The omniscient voice seems to wield an enormous power and the power of the voice seems all pervading. This enormous narrative voice unfurls the world before our eyes-the vast and varied world around and in which Oliver treads along.

24.2.6 The Omniscient Narrator as an Omniscient Preacher:

In his preface to *Oliver Twist*, Dickens writes:

“As I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the dregs of life (so long as their speech did not offend the ear) should not serve the purpose of a moral, as well as its froth and cream, I made bold to believe that this same Once upon a time would not prove to be All-time or even a long time. I had read of thieves by scores; seductive fellows (amiable for the most part), faultless in dress, plump in pocket, choice in horse-flesh, bold in bearing, fortunate in gallantry, great at a

song, a bottle, pack of cards or dice-box, and fit companions for the bravest. But I have never met(except in Hogarth) with the miserable reality.it appeared to me that to draw a knot of such associates in crime as really did exist; to paint them in all their deformity, in all their wretchedness, in all the squalid misery of their lives; to show them as they really were, forever skulking uneasily through the dirtiest parts of life, with the great black ghaſt gallows closing up to their prospect, turn them where they might; it appeared to me that to do this, would to be attempt a ſomething which was needed, and which would be a ſervice to ſociety. And I did it as I beſt could.”

The full title of *Oliver Twist*; or, The Pariſh Boy’s progreſs invokes John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progreſs*, the moſt famous account in the language of how a ſtruggle againſt temptation and evil wins at laſt a ſecure reward. But ‘Progreſs’ alſo invokes Hogarth’s beſt-known and moſt powerful ſeries of images, *The Harlot’s Progreſs*, *The Rake’s Progreſs* and *Industry and Idleneſs*, and Fielding’s moral progreſs comedies, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. Both artiſts are ſummoned in the 1841 Preface to *Oliver Twist* as precedents for the author aſpiring to become ‘moriſt and cenſor of his age’ but Dickens hardly needed to proclaim his allegiance when ſcenes ſuch as this announced it ſo unmiſtakably:

By the bye,’ ſaid Mr. Bumble, ‘you don’t know anybody who wants a boy, do you? A parochial’ ſprentice, who is at preſent a deadweight; a millſtone, as I may; round the parochial throat? Liberal Mr. Sowerberry, him, and gave three diſtinct raps upon the words ‘five pounds:’ which were printed thereon in Roman capitals of gigantic ſize.

‘Gadſo!’ ſaid the undertaker: taking Mr. Bumble by the gilt-edged lapel of his official coat; ‘that’s juſt the very thing I wanted to ſpeak to you about. You know-dear me, what a very elegant button this is Mr. Bumble! I never noticed it before.’

‘Yes, I think it is rather pretty,’ ſaid the beadle, glancing proudly down-wards at the large brass buttons which embellished his coat. ‘The die is the ſame as the parochial ſeal-the Good Samaritan healing the ſick and bruised man. The board preſented it to me on New-year’s morning, Mr. Sowerberry. I put it on, I remember, for the firſt time, to attend the inqueſt on that reduced tradesman, who died in a doorway at midnight.’
(p.27)

The moral monſtroſity of the exchange is as clearly ſignalled in the reference to the parable of Good Samaritan as it is in the ſcene in *Joseph Andrews* where *Joseph*, ſtripped, beaten, and

robbed, is noticed by passengers in a coach, and a Lady, learning that ‘there was a Man sitting upright as naked as ever he was born,’ cries, ‘O fesus... A naked Man! Dear Coachman, drive on and leave him.’ But the moral import of the tableau works also because Bumble’s human monstrosity is so substantially realized and because, as in the rendering of such figures in a Hogarth composition, every detail confirms the larger truth of the whole. The ‘gilt-edged lappel’ of the coat that warms his fat body contrasts with the rags, also official issue, that cover Oliver’s starved frame. The Beadle’s cane recalls freezing mornings when Mr Bumble ‘prevented [Oliver] catching cold, and caused a tingling sensation to pervade his frame, by repeated applications of the cane’. Love of his own eloquence betrays Bumble into exactly Christ’s words about millstones around the neck of those who impede the progress of his little ones (Matt. 18:6), but, secure in his own self-esteem, Bumble does not know he is betrayed.

24.3 Learning Outcomes

The chapter aims at introducing the learners to the different techniques of narration used by writers to develop stories out of their ideas. The chapter demonstrates the technique of narration as used by the prolific novelist Charles Dickens in his novel *Oliver Twist*. The learners are expected to appreciate the narrative techniques used by different authors before Charles Dickens and thus compare and contrast the narrative techniques to better understand the ways which different writers use to tell their stories. Moreover, the learners are also expected to place Charles Dickens among his contemporaries so that they see as to how he differs from them vis-à-vis his art of writing and as to how he shakes hands with the tradition.

24.4 Glossary (add)

24.5 Sample Questions

24.5.1 Objective Questions

1. Which type of narrator does Dickens use in Oliver Twist?
 - (a) First person
 - (b) Second person
 - (c) Third Person
 - (d) Third person omniscient

2. Oliver Twist was written in episodic form with a subtitle The Parish Boys Progress. On this count, it is believed to resonate which famous novel of John Bunyan?
 - (a) The Holy War
 - (b) The Jerusalem
 - (c) The Pilgrim's Progress
 - (d) None of these

3. Which public building does the omniscient narrator give a fictitious name:
 - (a) The workhouse.
 - (b) The hospital.
 - (c) The hostel
 - (d) The storehouse

4. When was the notorious Newgate prison in London demolished.
 - (a) 1902
 - (b) 1903
 - (c) 1900
 - (d) 1912

5. Who, according to the narrator, takes care of Oliver after his mother dies?
 - (a) His father.
 - (b) A foster care center.
 - (c) The nurse.
 - (d) His aunt.

6. Who among the following is employed by Fagin on a secret Mission
 - (a) Mr Bumble

- (b) Mr Bolter
- (c) Noah Claypole
- (d) Mrs Bumble

7. Which of following characters is described as “lean, long-backed, stiff-necked, middle-sized man, with no great quantity of hair”:

- (a) Mr Bolter
- (b) Noah Claypole
- (c) Mr Fang
- (d) None of the above

8. How much is the parish willing to offer to someone to take Oliver off their hands?

- (a) 5 pounds.
- (b) 15 pounds.
- (c) 10 pounds.
- (d) 20 pounds.

9. What does the Point of View signify.

- (a) It signifies the way a story is told
- (b) It signifies the way a story begins
- (c) It signifies the way a story ends
- (d) none of these

10. In which ‘point of view’ is the narrator supposed to know all and everything about the characters.

- (a) Third- Person (omniscient) point of view
- (b) First Person Point of View
- (c) Second Person Point of View
- (d) None of the above

24.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is a Narrative Technique?
2. What type of Narrative Technique do we find in Oliver Twist?
3. Comment on the sentence “*you are nine years now and it is time you started work*”.
4. Comment on the character of Mr Bumble as introduced by the narrator.

5. What regular work does Oliver do in the workhouse?

24.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. In what ways does Dickens criticize the treatment of poor people by society in the first seven chapters?
2. Discuss the relationship between the workhouse scenes and the remainder of the novel. Do
3. The Narrative Technique in *Oliver Twist* has some cinematic touch, discuss,

24.6 Suggested Readings

1. Dunn, Richard J. *Oliver Twist: Whole Heart and Soul*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993.
2. Miller, J. Hillis. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958.
3. Raina, Badri. *Dickens and the Dialectic of Growth*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.
4. Slater, Michael. *Dickens and Women*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1983.
5. Swisher, Clarice, ed. *Readings on Charles Dickens*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1998.